



# The Keepers of the Woods

by Frederick Foulds

**TRAIL OF CTHULHU**

# The Keepers of the Woods

“Scarce hoarier seems the ancient Wood  
Whose shivered trunks of age declare  
What scath of tempests they have stood  
In the rock’s crevice rooted there”

Sophie Dixon - 1829



# THE KEEPERS OF THE WOODS

## A Purist Scenario for Trail of Cthulhu

**Author:** Frederick Foulds

**Art and Layout:** Frederick Foulds

### Author's Notes

This scenario was originally created for, and won, the 2015 RPG Geek One Shot Gumshoe Scenario contest. It has been revised and expanded to a full scenario in this version (v1.1).

Credit where credit is due – the ideas for the Yeth-Hound and its abilities were drawn from Kenneth Hite's KWAS issue covering the Hound of Tindalos and Cthulhu Britannica: Folklore by Cubicle 7.

The places mentioned in the text exist in real life, although they are somewhat modified for fictional gains. Dartmoor is a beautiful area of England, and well worth a visit. Its folklore is the primary driving force and inspiration for this work, and several of its legends are prominently featured (the Hairy Hands, Yeth-Hounds and Old Crockern). Postbridge is a picturesque village and does not harbour a murderous cult. Princetown has really been described as a grim and windswept town, but makes an ideal base for a visit to the region. Finally, Wistman's Wood is as close to an enchanted Druid's grove as you will find. There is not, I hope, an avatar of the dark god Nyarlathotep lurking amongst its twisted boughs.

**Playtesters:** Richard Cooper, Stephen Hardy, Samuel Harvey, Ben Harvey, Jon Reed, Neil MacVicar, Kirsten Smith, Steve Ellis, and Matthew Tait. Your feedback has been invaluable to improving this work. Thanks also to Elizabeth Foulds for reading through the final text and identifying stray errors for me to fix. Any that remain are my own.

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The photographs of the East Dart Inn (page 19), Buller/Druid Stone (page 24) and Green Man carvings (page 22) were taken by Nigel Cox, Guy Wareham, and Richard Croft respectively and have been modified for inclusion in this work. The originals can be found on geograph.org.uk. These images can be shared subject to the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic Licence: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>

Some of the handouts in this scenario make use of templates and tools created by Cthulhu Reborn ([www.cthulhureborn.com](http://www.cthulhureborn.com)). A version of the autopsy report (Handout #3) is a freely available download distributed under a Creative Commons licence. The newspaper clipping (Handout #2) was created using Mutable Deceptions, Cthulhu Reborn's flexible PDF-based toolkit for generating Jazz-Age news articles, available for a small fee from DrivethruRPG or RPGNow.

*Trail of Cthulhu* was written by Kenneth Hite  
based on the GUMSHOE system by Robin D. Laws  
*Trail of Cthulhu* was created by arrangement with Chaosium Inc.

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## INTRODUCTION

January 1935 - an unexpected letter invites members of the Miscellany Society from the safety of bustling London to the isolated village of Postbridge in the heart of Dartmoor. On their arrival, they discover the professor they were to meet has died in a tragic car accident. Some attribute the crash to a local ghost legend. As they inquire into the professor's death, the investigators quickly become embroiled in a cycle of murders and sacrifice, underlain by a centuries old conspiracy involving the local populace. Behind it all lurks an ancient horror, one that will force them to question their moral outlook on life and potentially change them forever...

*The Keepers of the Woods* is a scenario for *Trail of Cthulhu*. It has been written as a one-shot adventure for the Purist style of play.

## The hook

The investigators receive a letter from their friend, Margaret Blackwood, a renowned professor of British folklore and fellow member of the Miscellany Society. It invites them to join her in the quaint Devonshire village of Postbridge, where Blackwood has made a remarkable discovery. Whilst researching the local folk traditions, she has apparently stumbled across evidence of a group who "*actively worship an ancient god*". However, after the investigators make their way from London to meet her, they are shocked to learn of the professor's death in a mysterious car accident, which the papers attribute to a local ghost legend, known as the 'Hairy Hands'.

## The horrible truth

The truth is that Blackwood's death was no accident. She died at the hands of a secretive organisation, known as the Order of the Green Man. The Order, however, is benevolent, despite its actions. It is tasked with keeping an avatar of the god Nyarlathotep, known as the Horned Man, confined to Wistman's Wood, near Postbridge. They do so through a ritual performed every twenty-five years, during which

three individuals must give their lives. Until recently, these have been members of the Order willing to die in service of the greater good. Blackwood was only killed after her research threatened to expose their task and place everything in jeopardy.

Over time, the Horned Man has become part of the local legends of the area. It is known to some as the Black Man of the Woods. Others call it Old Crockern. At times it is seen roaming the moors and woods, usually toward the end of each twenty-five year cycle, when its power waxes and its bonds are loosened. Strange beasts composed of mist and shadows often accompany it, which the locals call Yeth-Hounds. The investigators just happen to arrive at a time when the Horned Man is at its strongest...

## The spine

The investigators arrive in Postbridge and take up residence at Blackwood's former lodgings, the Thistle Lodge, which is run by the kind, but troubled, Hannah Bucknam. From there, they quickly discover that Blackwood's death was the result of neither accident nor ghost by talking to the Princetown police, or investigating the crash site. At the same time, they have the opportunity to research the folklore that surrounds the area. This uncovers tales of strange beasts roaming the moors and ancient sacrifices in the nearby woods, which are linked to the Horned Man and the Order's activities.

Bringing the evidence of Blackwood's death to Hannah Bucknam, or discussing the local folklore with William McArthur, a disturbed victim of the Great War, leads to St Gabriel's church. There the investigators can recover Blackwood's journal, which reveals what she discovered by talking to Hannah's husband, James. If they confront Hannah with this revelation, she reveals that James has been missing since Blackwood's death. She suspects that the Order of the Green Man is behind his disappearance and may threaten his life. All the while, the investigators are haunted by the growing unease surrounding the village, its unfriendly residents and a bone chilling cold that soon has the village in its icy grip. Vivid dreams, encounters with the Yeth-Hounds, and conflict with the locals may all dog their steps.

## THE AVATAR, THE ORDER, AND THE YETH-HOUNDS

These comprise the main antagonists for this scenario, although the Order of the Green Man is technically benevolent. The necessary details and background information to help the Keeper portray them are provided below.

### The Horned Man, lesser avatar of Nyarlathotep

The Horned Man is just one aspect of the multifarious cosmic entity known as Nyarlathotep. Originally worshipped by Iron Age people as Cernunos, it used its corrupting influence to instigate wars, sacrifices and murder. Upon being bound by the Order's ritual, the avatar found itself separated from the swirling multitude of energies that represent the Crawling Chaos' need to instil fear and insanity. Thus it was weakened and has spent centuries seeking its release. It bides its time until its bonds loosen, trying to influence the weak of mind and easily corrupted to help it break free.

### The Order of the Green Man

The Order of the Green Man is an ancient sect that resides within Dartmoor. Originating out of Britain's druidic cults, its founding members began to recognise that an abominable evil lurked within their pantheon of gods. They set out to bind it and release themselves from its influence. However, their power to do so was limited, leading them to resort to a constant cycle of human sacrifice, which the Order has maintained over multiple centuries. After their actions to subdue the Horned Man brought down accusations of witchcraft upon them in the 17th century, the Order has become much more secretive and restrictive. Since then, it has diminished and limits the dissemination of the ritual solely to their current leader.

### The Yeth-Hound(s)

The pack of black dogs that terrorises the land around Postbridge is in fact a single abnormally large Hound of Tindalos that serves the Horned Man.

The Order of the Green Man's ritual binding has also bound this hound to Wistman's Wood with its master. This has limited its ability to traverse the angles of time, restricting it to the dimensions of our world and enabling physical weapons to damage it. However, it still retains the ability to move itself back and forth through short temporal periods in the blink of an eye. This enables it to appear in multiple places at the same time, often avoiding attacks by shifting itself through space. It manifests itself out of a cloud of black mist, appearing as a huge black hound with burning red eyes. It stands around four feet high to its shoulders, making for a formidable enemy to combat. The living pus that shrouds a normal Hound of Tindalos is constantly sweated from the beast, causing it to be wreathed in a cloud of black-blue, sulphurous smelling smoke that burns like acid.

### Game Statistics

**Abilities:** Athletics 6 (refreshes 2 points per round and entirely between scenes), Health 16, Scuffling 30.

**Hit Threshold:** 4

**Alertness Modifier:** +3

**Stealth Modifier:** +1

**Weapon:** +1 (paw), acidic cloud (see below).

**Armor:** -2 vs. any (semi-physical hide); regeneration (see below); immune to chemicals.

**Stability Loss:** +2

**Acidic Cloud:** The Yeth Hound constantly sweats pus, forming a thick cloud of noxious mist around it. While in the cloud, its victims are damaged as if by strong acid (+1 damage modifier) each round until they leave. For gameplay purposes, this counts as when attacked by the hound, or when attacking the hound at close range.

**Regeneration:** The Yeth-Hound refreshes 3 points of Health per round. Its Health refreshes entirely between scenes.

**Phantom Pack:** The Yeth-Hound moves so quickly through time it can appear in the multiple places in the same instant. This has the effect of generating a "pack" of hounds. Only one Hound in the pack can be injured in any way, as the other iterations have in effect "already" escaped.

**Fleet-of-Foot:** By slipping through time, the Yeth-Hound is able to attack multiple targets. It may spend 1 point of **Scuffling** for each additional attack in a round, so long as each attack strikes a different target.

## The end

The climax of the adventure takes place in Wistman's Wood on the eve of the sacrifice. There are many ways for the investigators to end up there: through Hannah's insistence to save her husband; by following the clues in Blackwood's journal; or simply trailing a congregation of the Order's members across the moors. There, the final confrontation takes place.

How this confrontation plays out depends on how the players interpret the scattered clues they have discovered. It should be ambiguous as to whether the Order is a band of cultists, or a more benevolent entity. If the player's discover too early that they are a force of good, they may not be inclined to head to the woods. With that said, do not discourage players who suggest that the Order might be less evil than it first appears. Keep them second-guessing. That way, they will be inclined to go to the woods to get the answers they seek. Make them do it of their own volition, rather than railroad them.

As a result of this ambiguity, there are multiple ways that the adventure can conclude. Several of these are addressed under **Concluding the Scenario** on page 28. This is not a comprehensive list, however. React to your players' actions, and let them define how the situation concludes. Adapt any of the endings outlined in this book to your own ends.

## CREATING THE INVESTIGATORS

The investigators should all be affiliated with the Miscellany Society in some way. The society holds various meetings, lectures and demonstrations in a large, up-scale building on Museum Street, Bloomsbury, London. These focus on a range of subjects, from folklore and history to literature and the occult. It invites characters of every ilk with an interest in such matters. Perhaps they are a dilettante looking for something to alleviate their boredom, a professor interested in folklore, or an author trying to find the next muse for their writing. They may even be a down and out who regularly attends the society's public lectures, or of a criminal bent, happy to acquire rare texts for unscrupulous collectors.

Whoever the characters are, ask each player to decide the following:

- What drew them to joining the Miscellany Society?
- How do their investigators know each other?
- How do they know Margaret Blackwood?

Helping Blackwood conduct her research is the reason the investigators decide to travel to Postbridge. Players should bear this in mind when devising a link between her and their characters.



In addition, as this is a Purist adventure, you should use the restrictions on character creation detailed on page 26 of the *Trail of Cthulhu* rulebook. If you want to further restrict characters, it is recommended to make use of follow restrictions, originally outlined in *The Final Revelation*:

- Cap Health and Stability at 12, and Sanity at 10.
- Cap Credit Rating at 6.
- Reduce General Build points to 50 and Investigative Build points to 16 (for two players), 12 (three players), or 10 (four or more players).

It is also recommended you make use of the Drive Yourself Mad, Rave On and Keep Your Head rules (see *The Final Revelation* page 11) due to the potential for massive Stability loss throughout the scenario. After all, half the fun of *Trail of Cthulhu* is seeing the investigators lose their minds in the face of the Mythos.

While Sources of Stability do not have a prominent role in *The Keepers of the Woods*, it is useful to have the players develop at least one, as these can be used in the epilogue to the adventure. Likewise, Pillars of Sanity can be described briefly, but are not a focus of the adventure. However, they can be used as a tool to describe how investigators are affected by what they discover over the course of the scenario.

## SAMPLE INVESTIGATORS

Below are five investigators designed for *The Keepers of the Woods*. Each of their backgrounds describes how they became a member of the Miscellany Society and what links them to Professor Blackwood.

[\* = Occupational ability]

### Katie Lowell

**Concept:** Insolvent heir.

**Drive:** Adventure

**Occupation:** Dilettante

**Sex:** Female

**Sources of Stability:** My Aunt Emily, a generous, but stern spinster; my brother, Godfrey Lowell; my childhood friend, Anthea.

**Pillars of Sanity:** You can always count on family. Life is full of things to be enjoyed. The future can only be better than the present.

**Investigative skills:** Archaeology\* 2, Art History\*

2, Chemistry\* 2, Credit Rating\* 3, Flattery\* 4, Geology\* 1, History\* 1, Occult 2, Physics 2.

**General skills:** Health 8, Stability 10, Sanity 10, Athletics 10, Driving 10, Firearms 6.

During the twenties you spent your time as one of the 'Bright Young Things'. While your two older brothers were busy getting their degrees from Oxford, you whiled away your time in London's clubs. Partying was the name of the game and you played it well.

The depression has been somewhat sobering. It turns out your father wasn't as careful with his investments as he could have been. After his death in 1933, you were left with barely a penny. Your brothers had already begun to carve out their own self-sufficient empires, but what was left for you? If it weren't for a bequest from your Aunt Emily, you would likely be living on the streets.

Unfortunately, the bequest came with some restrictions. Emily wants you to make something of yourself. What that might be, though, you have no idea! You've already tried literature and languages, as well as that brief stint working in the pure sciences. You also tried geology for what its worth, but rocks as it turns out, are quite boring.

Your latest fancy is archaeology. You were driven to the profession after attending a lecture on the mythology of ancient Egypt at the Miscellany Society. It all sounded rather exciting and it certainly spoke to your sense of adventure! You talked to the professor, a Margaret Blackwood, afterwards and she encouraged you to pick up the trowel, which you did with great enthusiasm. Now she has invited you out to Dartmoor to help with her research. If what she says about this being "the discovery of a lifetime" is true, then things might be looking up.

### Sheldon Rawlings

**Concept:** Underhand book dealer

**Drive:** Greed (see *Bookhounds of London*, page 12)

**Occupation:** Criminal

**Sex:** Male

**Sources of Stability:** George McIntyre, your 'business' partner; Mary, your caring mother; Frank 'Lucky' Bridges, your old mentor.

**Pillars of Sanity:** Money makes the world go round. There is always something better just beyond the horizon. I can talk my way out of any situation.

**Investigative skills:** Accounting 1, Bargain\* 2, Credit Rating 2, History 1, Intimidation\* 1, Library Use 2, Locksmith\* 2, Reassurance\* 2, Streetwise\* 1.

**General skills:** Health 10, Stability 10, Sanity 10, Athletics 5, Filch\* 6, Fleeing 10, Scuffling\* 6, Sense Trouble\* 5, Shadowing\* 5, Stealth\* 4.

The Great Depression brought low many collectors, forcing them to sell their assorted valuables to more fortunate individuals. You act as a broker in such transactions. However, sometimes people are not willing to part with their treasured items, even when they are hard up. On occasion, you and your partner, a forger named George McIntyre, are required to use various underhand methods to produce the goods that your clientele request of you. After all, what the customer wants, the customer gets.

Your speciality is in books; you research them extensively, locate potential sellers, and obtain them by whatever means necessary. A number of your clients frequent the Miscellany Society on Museum Street. You attend there frequently, ready to service requests for obscure items and always producing the requested books on time. It is here you befriended Professor Margaret Blackwood. A strange woman, obsessed with folklore, she has presented several jobs, including a request for an 1834 edition of *The darker superstitions of Scotland* that provided quite the adventure to obtain and a princely sum as reward.

Her recent letter is intriguing; it entices you with the potential for further escapades. Perhaps there will be a reward for your services. It's not like London holds much for you at the moment. Your latest attempt to pass off one of George's forgery as a rare first edition has the police sniffing round like a pack of wild dogs. A trip to the countryside could be just the ticket...

## Gwendolyn Forster

**Concept:** Up-and-coming university lecturer

**Drive:** Arrogance

**Occupation:** Professor

**Sex:** Female

**Sources of Stability:** Your husband, John; Thomas Hodson, your old supervisor; Michael Greenhalgh, a promising student.

**Pillars of Sanity:** Humanity is the pinnacle of evolution. I am intellectually superior to those around me. There is nothing that I cannot truly understand.

**Investigative skills:** Anthropology\* 2, Assess Honesty 2, Bureaucracy\* 1, Credit Rating 3, Languages\* 2, Library Use\* 2, Occult\* 4, Oral History\* 2, Reassurance 1, Theology\* 1.

**General skills:** Health 10, Stability 10, Sanity 10, Driving 10, First Aid 6, Fleeing 10, Sense Trouble 5.

You are a lecturer in anthropology. In fact you're one of London's finest, or so you'd like to believe. Your friends and family told you that you couldn't do it, but you showed them. The only person to truly stand by your side and support you was your husband, John, and you thank him for that. Even if he is a bit of a wet fish.

You studied for your doctorate at Cambridge. It was so well received that you were instantaneously offered a visiting position at University College London. You spend most of the week teaching, but all those demands from students and faculty do take their toll. It is at times like these that you choose to indulge in your personal vice; you love to study and research the supernatural myths and legends of Britain. You have been fascinated with such things ever since your late mother took you on holiday to Loch Ness and told you of the monster that lurks in the lake.

Your fascination with the more occult aspects of folklore led you to join the Miscellany Society, which has allowed you not only to explore Britain's legends, but also that of other, more distant lands. Plus, you enjoy standing shoulder to shoulder with the male members, if only to see the looks on their faces.

You have recently befriended another strong woman who, like you, doesn't suffer fools gladly. Her name is Margaret Blackwood, a professor from University College London. Though you suspect you could still teach her a thing or two, she is a fascinating person and a font of knowledge to be plumbed. You must have made an impression, because she has just sent you a letter inviting you to join her on her current research trip in Dartmoor, and there isn't any more legend haunted place than that now, is there?

## Edward Tillman

**Concept:** Ex-police officer turned author.

**Drive:** Artistic Sensitivity

**Occupation:** Author

**Sex:** Male

**Sources of Stability:** Henry Langford, an old and dear friend; Pauline Halsey, your editor; your drinking buddy, William Browne.

**Pillars of Sanity:** Law is there for a reason. Any mystery can be rationally explained. Responsibility brings fulfilment.

**Investigative skills:** Architecture 2, Assess Honesty\* 1, Bureaucracy\* 1, Cop Talk\* 2, Credit Rating 3, Evidence Collection 1, Intimidation\* 1, Languages\* 1, Library Use\* 2, Occult 1.



**General skills:** Health 8, Stability 10, Sanity 10, Driving 6, Mechanical Repair 6, Scuffling 10, Preparedness 6.

Your retirement from the Met was forced by a nasty encounter with several crazed lunatics under the influence of powerful narcotics. You ended up taking a knife in the leg that left you with a large scar and a permanent limp. Your partner wasn't so lucky. Haunted by the fact you couldn't save their life, you took your leave of the force and sought a new career for yourself.

At the suggestion of your friend, Henry Langford, you decided to write about your experiences, producing serviceable fiction, but something was lacking. So Henry invited you to join him at the Miscellany Society for a talk on the *Witch Cults of Western Europe*. Superstitious nonsense, of course, but it planted a seed in your imagination and you found yourself returning to the society in search of material to add flavour to your novels. You began to turn away from crime and towards suspense, the supernatural, and the weird.

However, it wasn't until you started talking to Margaret Blackwood, a Professor of folklore at University College London, that the inspiration for your magnum opus came about. *The Revenge of Thoth* has since become your best selling book. Your editor couldn't be more please and has commissioned a follow up. Blackwood was helping you with the background to your next novel, *The Eye of Ishkur*, before leaving to do research. Perhaps this invitation to Dartmoor may prove useful for future stories?

## Richard Blake

**Concept:** Haunted veteran.

**Drive:** Duty

**Occupation:** Military - Medic

**Sex:** Male

**Sources of Stability:** Private Albert Cartwright, a soldier from your old section; Amanda, a nurse at the hospital.

**Pillars of Sanity:** True friendship can withstand all challenges. There is no worse horror than the horror of war.

**Investigative skills:** Credit Rating 3, History 2, Intimidation\* 1, Medicine\* 4, Occult 1, Outdoorsman\* 1, Reassurance\* 2.

**General skills:** Health 10, Stability 8, Sanity 8, Athletics\* 10, Firearms\* 10, First Aid\* 10,

Mechanical Repair 5, Scuffling\* 6, Sense Trouble 5, Weapons\*6.

In the Great War you served on the front lines as the medic for your section. You witnessed many horrors during your service to King and country; men cut down by gunfire, gas and shells all passed by your eyes and under your hands. Now those hands shake with the nightmares born from your experiences. But what keeps you up at night is the thought of the bone-chilling cold when the trenches sat exposed in the winter. Only keeping the fire banked high can ward off those memories.

It is safe to say that the war left you a changed man, but in the decade or so since your return from the front, you have done your best to adjust back into normal life, and took up a job in a local hospital. You owed it to those you lost to save the generations to come. It was difficult at first, and many a night ended at the bottom of a bottle. Your friend Albert, who kept you going through those torturous days on the front lines, saw your struggles and helped you find more acceptable pursuits to throw yourself into. It was Albert that first took you along to the Miscellany Club.

At first a chance to meet others and while away the time in pleasant company, you began to find some of the talks fascinating. So much so that you found yourself beginning to study aspects of folklore and the occult in your spare time. It kept you busy and your mind was prevented from wallowing on drearier subjects. Recently, you found yourself on the podium providing an entertaining account of the Druidic traditions of Celtic Britain. Afterwards, a Professor Margaret Blackwood approached you, congratulating you on your talk and enquiring about your research. Now you find yourself in receipt of a letter inviting you out to help her in Dartmoor. It is a call to action that you cannot refuse.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Here, brief descriptions of the major characters in the scenario are provided. Each description also contains three things you can do to help bring them to life during your game.

Unless otherwise stated, use the following statistics for all characters:

**Abilities:** Fleeing 5, Health 5

**Hit threshold:** 3

**Weapon:** -3 (Fists, inexpertly used)

## Hannah Bucknam, landlady of the Thistle Lodge

Hannah Bucknam is not a native of Postbridge. Originally born in Exeter, she moved to Princetown with her father, who worked in Dartmoor prison. After her father's death, she fell in love with and married her husband, James. She moved to Postbridge to be with him and has run the Thistle Lodge for the past eight years. At thirty-seven years of age, she is starting to display dashes of grey in her light brown hair. Usually cheery, though somewhat suspicious of the Postbridge locals, she is currently worried about her husband, especially as she has begun to suspect the nature of the Order. To portray Hannah:

- Speak softly.
- Look over the speaker's shoulder when making conversation, as if checking no one is there.
- Wring your hands, especially when talking about something difficult.

## Detective Lawrence Donnelly

Lawrence Donnelly is the only Detective currently stationed at Princetown police station. Overworked and underpaid, he is stern, but has an eye for details. He wears a suit pressed to almost military precision and sports a lightly waxed moustache. To portray him:

- Sit upright as if at attention.
- Speak curtly and directly.
- Run your tongue over your front teeth when thinking.

## Dr Elijah Winters, prison physician

An excellent doctor, Winters' skills are wasted at Dartmoor Prison. As a result, he bears a great deal of frustration over his situation and more than a lack of compunction for doing his job well because of it. However, he greatly appreciates anyone who takes an interest in his art. Winters is short and dark haired, with a well groomed beard. To portray Dr Winters:

- Talk with an air of indifference, as if nothing matters anymore.
- Become more animated when discussing medicine in any form.
- Mime scratching your beard when puzzled.

## Elizabeth Updike, Princetown librarian

As a small town, Princetown doesn't exactly have an extensive literary circle. As a result, Elizabeth finds her job as a librarian boring, but at least it gives her the time to read her novels. What she really looks forward to, however, is a juicy piece of gossip. She is in her late forties, dresses conservatively and has her silvering hair tied back in a bun. To portray Elizabeth:

- Act irritated towards those who interrupt your reading.
- Sigh a lot, especially when asked to fetch books.
- Act more interested if the conversation turns to gossip.

## Whitlaw, barman

Peirce Whitlaw runs the East Dart Inn in Postbridge and has done for all of his adult life. He is also a member of the Order of the Green Man, like many of Postbridge's residents. He is a tall, rotund fellow, with a bald head and bushy beard. Outwardly cheerful, he is suspicious of people who aren't local and dislikes those who act superior to others. To portray him:

- Speak cheerfully to those you like, and bluntly to those you do not.
- Serve locals with a much more friendly attitude.
- Mime pulling a pint, or cleaning a glass while talking.

## William McArthur, drunken veteran

Once a leading member of the Order of the Green Man, William's face was grotesquely disfigured by mustard gas burns during in the Great War, which have left him blind in his right eye. Now elderly and spent, he spends the majority of his waking hours drinking to escape the horrors he has witnessed, both on the front and at home. He has an intense odour of sweat and stale booze, and an extremely dishevelled appearance. To portray him:

- Slur your speech as if drunk and let the right side of your face sag as if paralysed.
- Lean in close when speaking, as if sharing a secret.
- Leer menacingly from your 'good' left eye.

## Father Blakely, leader of the Order

Father Blakely is the vicar of St. Gabriel's. He is also the current leader of the Order of the Green Man and, as such, is the only individual currently able to conduct the ritual in Wistman's Wood. He has learnt to accept that sacrifice is required to protect not just Postbridge, but all of Britain. He considers the murder of Professor Blackwood a necessary evil to protect the Order and prevent a greater calamity. In his late fifties, he has a powerful presence that commands respect. To portray the Father:

- Speak in a serious tone of voice that demands respect.
- Frown when discussing difficult subjects.
- Stare uncomfortably at those you are speaking with.

**Abilities:** Weapons 5, Fleeing 5, Health 8

**Hit threshold:** 3

**Weapon:** -3 (Fists, inexpertly used) or +0 (Sacrificial Blade)

## Peter Bulgrew, thuggish farmhand

A local farmhand, Peter Bulgrew has spent his entire life in Postbridge. He is formidable in stature, all wiry muscle shaped from tireless hard graft. What he has in pure strength though, he lacks in wits. Father Blakely has used this to his advantage, and currently employs Bulgrew as the Order's fists where needed.

Investigators should not underestimate him though; while he is certainly not the sharpest tool in the shed, he is keenly observant and can be a ferocious opponent once riled. To portray Peter:

- Speak with barely suppressed anger.
- Be quick to anger if insulted
- Crack your knuckles to emphasise a point or when looking for violence.

**Abilities:** Athletics 10, Scuffling 10, Fleeing 5, Health 12

**Hit threshold:** 4

**Weapon:** -2 (Fists) or -1 (Improvised weapon)

## James Bucknam, sacrificial victim

Hannah's husband, James, has also been a resident of Postbridge all his life. Like the other villagers, he is aware of the Order of the Green Man and their activities. Unfortunately for him, he also has a love for the drink, and a tendency to let his tongue run loose after one too many. Such was the case when Blackwood invited him out to the East Dart to talk. What he revealed resulted in her death. Father Blakely now holds him accountable and, as a result, James has agreed to be the final sacrifice in this cycle as penance for his actions. To portray James:

- Hang your head as if penitent.
- Speak with contrition.
- Maintain that you should be the one to give your life for the sacrifice.

## PROLOGUE: A LETTER FROM A FRIEND

The scenario begins with the investigators each receiving a letter from their friend, Professor Margaret Blackwood, on 14th January 1935. This may be sent to their place of residence, or can alternatively be received at the Miscellany Society's rooms, which can be found over the top of Wyndham's Books at 44-45 Museum Street, London.

The letter details Blackwood's current research into the folklore of Dartmoor (see Handout #1). She claims to have discovered something profound – apparent evidence for the existence of a living cult that worships an ancient god. She excitedly invites the investigators to join her in piecing together this puzzle, given their respective interests and expertise in this area, and gives her current address as the Thistle Lodge, Postbridge.

Give the players an opportunity to roleplay their reaction to Blackwood's letter, and gather any resources together. It is then expected that they will leave the confines of London and head to Dartmoor to rendezvous with the Professor.

## GETTING TO DARTMOOR

### Scene type: Travel

Investigators can travel to Dartmoor via a number of routes. Those with high enough **Credit Rating** (3+) may have access to their own car, or can at least hire one for the duration of their journey. Travelling to Postbridge via car takes between 5-6 hours, arriving from the east by driving through the centre of Dartmoor.

Less well to do individuals, or those who do not wish to travel by car, will have to make their way via the Great Western Railway. Those investigators with higher **Credit Rating** can travel in the luxury of First Class, while those poorer souls are left in Third. They board at Paddington station and travelling first to Exeter, then Plymouth and finally Tavistock, before boarding an infrequent, rickety bus to Postbridge. The journey takes some 6-7 hours in total.

However the investigators choose to travel to Dartmoor, they should set off early in the morning of the 15th to arrive at Postbridge in the early afternoon.

## A STORM BREWING

The weakening of the Order's ritual allows the Horned Man to draw the latent energy from the landscape surrounding Wistman's Wood to empower it and allow it to break its bonds. As a result, the weather in the region responds by growing colder and more arctic as the time that it can release itself draws near. The Keeper should bear this in mind, emphasising how the weather changes as the investigators progress through the scenario.

Beginning in London, the weather on the journey to Postbridge will go from clear and crisp to grey and icy cold. The sense of a storm brewing hangs in the air. The investigators should acknowledge that it is much colder in Dartmoor compared to the city that they call their home, but not abnormally so. At least at first.

As their investigations continue, describe the weather turning exponentially worse. Once they start to make enquiries about Blackwood's death, icy drizzle begins to fall from the sky. It soon turns to snow. By evening on the first day, the snowfall thickens; the temperature plummets and blizzard conditions reduce visibility. As the night draws in the snow already carpets the small village.

### A dead white world

By the morning, Postbridge is a grim and desolate place. Snow covers everything and the temperature is low enough to freeze standing water solid. Anyone venturing outside needs to wear multiple layers and even then the cold cuts them to the core. Small flurries of snow continue to fall, though the blizzard conditions of the previous evening have lessened.

Investigators spending 1-point in **Physics** realise that, while such snowstorms are not uncommon, the extreme, arctic cold is unnatural. The sudden drop in temperature to these levels in so short a space of time is not physically possible.

Due to the extreme cold, treat all investigators as **hurt** when undertaking activities outside.



You should describe their journey as a passage from the civilised world they are leaving behind, into Dartmoor's picturesque, albeit barren, landscape. Use the following as guides:

- As the train pulls away from the bustle of London, the city quickly melts into green fields and stony landscapes.
- Your car traverses down the roads, the terraced housing of the city's suburbs giving way to green fields and picturesque villages.
- As you arrive in Dartmoor, you are struck by the grim and foreboding nature of the landscape, as chill winds blow across its moors.
- The bus' wheels bounce over the unkempt road, jolting you mercilessly in your seat.

## Changing weather

The weather plays a key role over the course of this scenario (see A Storm Brewing). As the investigators move from London to Dartmoor describe subtle changes in the weather. Perhaps London sees a crisp, but sunny, January day. However, as they travel further west, the light begins to fade and the blue sky turns ominously leaden. Be sure to insert mention that, as they draw nearer to Postbridge, the temperature becomes steadily cooler, until it turns icy cold. Their breath fogs in front of their faces and all but the hardiest souls are forced to draw their coats tightly about their person.

## POSTBRIDGE

Postbridge is an idyllic rural village set in the heart of Dartmoor. Its buildings are stone built and set back from the single road that passes through its centre. Trees and hedges line this road, and many of the buildings are hidden from sight. It is best known for an ancient 'clapper' bridge, constructed in dry stone, which spans the river at the village centre and stands opposite the later 18th century road bridge.

Alongside the cottages and the small village store, there are several places that will be of interest to the investigators over the course of their inquiries: the East Dart Inn; St. Gabriel's church; and, of course, the Thistle Lodge.

## THE THISTLE LODGE

### Scene type: Core

A picturesque cottage that lays nestled along a trackway that runs away from the village proper, the Thistle Lodge should be the investigators first port of call upon their arrival in Postbridge. The building is stone built, with a small garden to the front that is given over to vegetables. Its façade is overrun with ivy so that, from a distance, it almost appears to vanish into the green landscape that surrounds it.

Hannah Bucknam runs the lodge with occasional help from her husband James, who otherwise spends his time as a local farmhand. James is currently not present (due to his imminent role as a sacrificial victim), but evidence of his presence is clear from the large coat and heavyset boots found by the door.

The lodge is homely and comfortable, if somewhat spartan. Accommodation is easily enough obtained and there is space to spare for all of the investigators, though some may have to share one of the four available rooms.

Hannah is welcoming and friendly to the investigators. As soon as they mention Professor Blackwood, however, she turns grave and asks whether they have seen the morning's paper. She will hand over a copy of that morning's local tabloid, the Tavistock Times, which carries a garish headline proclaiming the Professor's death as the result of a local ghost legend that has recently come to prominence, known as the 'Hairy Hands' (see Handout #2). Learning of Blackwood's death in such an abrupt manner is shocking; investigators must make a 3-point **Stability** test upon learning of their friend's sudden passing.

Talking to Hannah further can reveal the following clues:

- Blackwood left in the early hours of the morning. Hannah remembers being woken in the middle of the night by Blackwood's car as she set off at speed. She noted that the Professor had left some of her belongings, so assumed she was coming back.
- **Core clue:** Investigator's asking for further information about Professor Blackwood's death are told that the police from nearby Princetown are dealing with the investigation of the crash.
- **Core clue:** Any investigators using skills such as **Oral History** or **Occult** to ask about the professor's research will be told that Blackwood was working at the local library in Princetown before coming to Postbridge. Hannah can direct investigators towards William McArthur, the local font of folklore knowledge, who can regularly be found drinking at the East Dart Inn. She will also mention that Blackwood spent some time interviewing McArthur.

Hannah is disturbed and is holding back what she suspects about the Order and what has happened to her husband. A 1-point **Assess Honesty** or **Psychoanalysis** spend will detect this and suggest that she may not be telling the whole truth. However, she will not divulge what she knows about the Order of the Green Man, or her husband's disappearance, until confronted with further evidence (see page 23). If the investigators ask her about her husband, then she will tell them he is away working on one of the

local farms.

Investigators can ask to see Blackwood's room, and will be freely allowed to search it, though Hannah will advise them that the police have already found nothing of interest. The room has been tidied, and nothing linked to Blackwood can be found within.

From this point, the investigators have several paths they can take. The most obvious is to travel to Princetown and talk with the local constabulary. However, some may wish to talk to William McArthur earlier – this is perfectly acceptable and should not be discouraged. If they interrogate Hannah fully, they should also begin to suspect that everything is not as it seems...

## PRINCETOWN

Princetown is the highest settlement within Dartmoor, sitting between two nearby Tors - a colloquial term for hill. A small, grim little town, it sits at some 1,400 feet above sea level, with a climate of fog, rain, and snow. It is continually exposed to the wind from the north and east, which howls eerily down alleyways and across rooftops.

Princetown is home to Dartmoor Prison, which houses some of Britain's most serious offenders. In addition to this imposing building, the town contains the local police station, library, and two inns, the most famous of which is the Duchy Hotel, where Arthur Conan Doyle stayed whilst researching *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

The town is only a few miles from Postbridge down. The journey takes around 20 minutes by car, and slightly longer via bus. The route passes directly by the site of Blackwood's accident, although the majority of the debris has been cleared to the extent that it is not immediately noticeable when driving by. If the investigators wish to visit the accident site then this is the time to insert 'The Hairy Hands' (see page 18). This can be done either as they head toward Princetown, or on their return to Postbridge.

In addition to the scenes described below, the following can be obtained via a 1-point spend in any interpersonal skill (e.g. **Oral History**, **Streetwise**) when talking to Princetown residents about Postbridge:

- **Floating clue:** People in Princetown find Postbridge and its residents to be strange and reclusive. There are folk stories of people who have mysteriously disappeared on the moors surrounding the village. Some turn up later driven mad. Others dead. Most simply vanish.

# PRINCETOWN POLICE STATION

## Scene type: Investigation

A large building with whitewashed stone walls and a peaked slate roof is located in the centre of Princetown. It sits next to a green, on which stands a cross dedicated to those fallen in the Great War. A traditional blue lamp advertises it as the local police station. Inside, the desk sergeant sits behind a polished wood counter strewn with files and paperwork.

Investigators asking about Blackwood's death are directed to wait while Detective Donnelly is brought to talk to them. Donnelly will freely talk with the investigators and, through the use of interpersonal skills (**Cop Talk**, **Bureaucracy** etc.), the following clues can be had:

- Blackwood's car was found in the early hours of the morning by a passer-by. Evidence suggests she was speeding. Her car appears to have swerving from the road and collided with a tree at high speed.
- Blackwood had been staying in Princetown before moving on to Postbridge and had been conducting extensive research at the town library before leaving.
- The car wreckage was taken from the accident site to a local garage. No evidence of tampering was found.
- **Core clue:** Investigators enquiring about Blackwood's body are told that it has been taken to the only available morgue nearby, which can be found at Dartmoor Prison. Donnelly is currently awaiting the results of the post-mortem examination. He will vouch for any investigators wishing to visit the prison to view Blackwood's corpse and confirm her identity.
- **Core clue:** The articles collected from Blackwood's car and lodgings are currently stored in evidence. **Cop Talk**, or a 1-point spend in another appropriate interpersonal skill can be used to gain access to them.

If the investigators ask about the previous accidents mentioned in the newspaper, then either Detective Donnelly or the desk sergeant can provide them with the following information:

- The first accident involved the doctor, who died whilst driving home from an appointment. He was riding a motorbike, with his daughter in the sidecar. He appeared to have swerved from the road and was thrown from his bike when it ran into the ditch at the side of the road. He died of a broken neck. His daughter was thrown free, but was too traumatised to talk of the accident.

- The second accident involved the bus. No one was seriously injured. The driver of the bus, who was new to the route, described the sensation of something grabbing hold of the wheel and forcing him from the road. This account appears to be where the 'Hairy Hands' legend has arisen.
- The local 'psychic' the paper mentions resides in Tavistock. They are known to the police as a unrepentant grifter, whose word is not to be trusted. The police put no stock in tales of the 'Hairy Hands'.

A zero point spend in **Occult**, or skills such as **History** and **Anthropology**, used to try and discuss the local ghost legend of the 'Hairy Hands' further are met with derision from the staff sergeant. It is his opinion that the accident is nothing more than the result of a speeding driver on an unfamiliar road. However, a 1-point spend in **Assess Honesty** suggests that Detective Donnelly isn't so sure. A 1-point spend in **Reassurance** to get him to confide in the investigators lets them know that Donnelly found the accident strange, especially compared to the others, although as to why, he cannot tell them.

Once the investigators gain access to the evidence file containing Blackwood's things, the sergeant leads them to a small room with a desk, where they are made to wait. After a short time, the sergeant returns with a box file and a battered steamer trunk. Inside the box file are the articles recovered during the police investigation. Some were found in Blackwood's car (the clothing she was found in, the spectacles, and the pen), while the remainder were collected from the Thistle Lodge. The list of items is as follows:

- Several items of clothing, some torn, dirty and blood stained (evidently what Blackwood was wearing at the time of her death) and others from within the steamer trunk.
- A broken pair of wire-rimmed spectacle speckled with blood.
- A silver pen in a leather case.
- A library card for Princetown library.
- An engraved cigarillo case and some items of jewellery.

Investigators may suspect that the items left behind at the Thistle Lodge, such as Blackwood's jewellery and cigarillo case, indicate that she was in a hurry to leave, and this would be correct. It is clear to those who know her that she would not ordinarily abandon such items.

**Core clue:** A **Simple Search** reveals that one item is absent from Blackwood's possessions – her journal. All the investigators are aware that she would never go anywhere without it. Its absence from the evidence

file is therefore striking. If Detective Donnelly or the desk sergeant is questioned about this, they are adamant that it was not recovered from the crash site and was not found in Blackwood's room at the Thistle Lodge.

The journal can be located later in St. Gabriel's church, although investigators may wish to look for it in other locations first, the most obvious being Blackwood's room at the Thistle Lodge, the remains of her car, or even the crash site.

## DARTMOOR PRISON

Scene type: Core

Dartmoor prison sits in an isolated spot overlooking Princetown. The buildings are constructed of granite blocks, making for a grim, austere, and oppressive structure that sticks out from its surroundings. It is considered to have been one of the hardest and most severe prisons in England.

The investigators enter by passing under the main gateway and are met by prison guards who, after checking their credentials, accompany them down bleak stone hallways to the morgue. The shouts and curses of prisoners ring in their ears as they pass by.

After descending below ground, the guards finally leave them in the morgue and ask them to wait for Dr Winter. The room is tiled in white, with a large porcelain trough in one corner. Two glistening, white porcelain topped autopsy tables fill the centre of the room. One is spotless and empty. The other contains Professor Blackwood's corpse.

### Death echoes

A small window that lets in thin shafts of light dimly illuminates the room. If the investigators try and turn on the light switch, it does not appear to work. There is a smell of moss and damp in the air, and a sound, much like wind rattling tree branches can be heard. This grows to a piercing howl, much like that of a large dog or wolf, before cutting out just as the two cold cathode tube lights flash on and Dr Winters enters. The mossy smell vanishes. This experience results in a 2-point **Stability** test. If asked, Dr Winters heard nothing.

### The autopsy

Dr Winters has completed Blackwood's post-mortem report and agrees to let the investigators view it (see Handout #3). However, due to the police request for the report to be carried out as swiftly as possible, it

has been rushed. This is clear to anyone that views the report with a 1-point spend in **Forensics** or **Medicine**. A 1-point spend in an appropriate skill (**Reassurance**, **Flattery**, **Medicine** or **Cop Talk** all work well) will allow the investigators to examine the body. If one or more of them show medical expertise, Winters will be more amicable to them and will take the time to review the report with them.

Blackwood is nearly unrecognisable due to the horrific injuries that she has sustained. Examining her corpse entails a 1-point **Stability** test. However, doing so can reveal the following clues:

- **Core clue:** **Medicine** or **Forensics** used to examine the Professor's injuries confirms that she died of exsanguination from a laceration to the neck. However, many of the other wounds appear to have been inflicted post-mortem, especially many minor cuts caused by passing through the car windshield. There is also bruising around the wrists, suggesting Blackwood had been bound.

The following clues can be gained by further analysis of findings in Winters' report:

- Winters has recovered several tiny shards of opaque glass are embedded in Blackwood's neck wound. A 1-point **Geology**, **Archaeology** or **Anthropology** spend shows them to be fragments of obsidian, a volcanic glass that does not occur naturally in England.
- Vegetative matter was found under Blackwood's nails. A 1-point spend in **Biology** or **Outdoorsman** identifies this as oak bark and a species of epiphytic moss.
- Winters recorded a blue stain in Blackwood's hair. A 1-point spend in **Chemistry**, **Biology**, **History** or **Art** reveals this to be from the plant *Isatis tinctoria*, the basis of the pigment known as woad.

It should be apparent at the end of this scene that Blackwood was murdered and the car crash was likely staged to cover it up. Once the investigators have finished in the morgue, the guards return and escort them back to the prison entrance.

## PRINCETOWN LIBRARY

Scene type: Investigation

Princetown's library is situated in an elongated Georgian building off Barrack Road, north of the police station. The grey stonework presents a drab picture that mirrors the oppressive sky. It acts not only as the local library, but also as the town's public archive.



Its interior is remarkably different. Thick wooden shelving lines the walls, and the fire roaring in a grate opposite the entrance fills the space with warmth. Several oak tables provide ample room for study of the modest collection. There are, however, no signs of readers.

On entering the librarian, Elizabeth Updike, will look up from her book somewhat startled, but will return to it almost immediately. She will continue to ignore the investigators unless they attempt to converse with her, or they actively begin to go through the collections. Then she will, grudgingly, aid them in their requests.

Investigators can spend 1-point in **Library Use** to get Elizabeth to provide a record of what books Professor Blackwood referenced during her visit. By studying these books, the following clues can be had. Each requires a 1-point spend in an appropriate skill to obtain. Suggestions for point spends are provided, but the Keeper should be flexible.

- **Physics:** A paper on meteorological phenomena read to the *Devon and Exeter Institution* in 1911 catches your eye. It concerns a severe thunderstorm during which over 700 flashes of lightning were recorded within an hour, appearing to strike the same point over nearby Crocken Tor. The intensity is compared to the Great Thunderstorm of 1638, which legend attributes to the devil. The paper notes other strange weather patterns in the area are recorded at semi-regular intervals.
- **Archaeology:** A volume of the *Proceedings of the Devonshire Archaeological Society* records a number of Bronze Age settlements in the Postbridge and Princetown area. Curiously, several of these were rich in artefacts, providing evidence of household items and goods not usually found on sites of this period. It is as if the inhabitants just disappeared, leaving all their worldly goods behind.
- **Occult:** A copy of Alfred Watkins' *The Old Straight Track* can be found amongst the books Blackwood was studying. It describes the existence of alleged ley lines within the British landscape. Notes in Blackwood's hand, made lightly in pencil, suggest a series of ley lines, as well as several medieval beacons, exist that surround the local area. More esoteric theories would suggest that their placement is significant and magically powerful. The notes end with the cryptic statement, "*but would it be to keep something in, or out?*"
- **Anthropology:** As a folklorist, it is no surprise that several of the books Blackwood viewed concern Dartmoor's local myths. However, she appears to have paid particular interest to the legends of Old Crockern, a spirit, appearing as a horned figure and

associated with omens of death. It is said to roam the area near Wistman's Wood, which some say was once a druid's grove. The legend often mentions black, spectral hounds, similar in description to the Yorkshire Barghast, but known locally as Yeth-Hounds.

- **Art:** You come across a collection of poetry amongst the libraries books. One dreary piece of verse stands out. It describes stunted, oak woodland. When you ask Ms Updike about it, she informs you that the poem describes Wistman's Wood, which stands near to Postbridge. When you inquire further, she informs you of some of the tales associated to it; that it was once a druid grove. "*Sometimes*", she says, "*they say you can still see a procession, clad all in white, marching across the moors to the woods.*"
- **History:** You find several references to fifteenth and sixteenth century witchcraft trials among the books Blackwood was using. Through some rather tedious cross-referencing, you discover that three of the trials concerned women and men from Postbridge accused of performing 'heathen rites'. Of those accused, only one spoke out in their defence, claiming their actions were for the 'greater good'. The trials occurred roughly twenty-five years apart.
- **Chemistry:** You notice an article mentioning the death of a young boy in 1883. The body was found on Dartmoor and had been badly damaged 'as if by acid' and was accompanied by a 'sulphurous odour'. The only acid you can think of that matches the description is hydrosulphuric. While it can certainly cause death, it is too weak to cause the burns described. No clear cause of death was discovered, though several locals connected it to the legend of the Yeth-Hounds.
- **Medicine:** Blackwood's research contains several mentions of missing persons, who latter turned up exhibiting psychological shock. Three cases in particular are interesting. They occurred in 1856, 1830 and 1781 and exhibit a peculiar pattern; the individuals repeated the phrase "*release me*" when found, before slipping into a catatonic state. In each case, they died of apparent heart failure a few days later.

None of these are core clues, but add a layer of mystery and allude to events that may occur as the scenario progresses.

If the investigators ask what Blackwood planned to do after visiting Princetown, Elizabeth will tell them "*she planned to move on to Postbridge. She was after more information on the local folklore, and I told her that only William McArthur could provide it. He always was an odd fellow mind, but he's stranger*

*still and more reclusive after what happened to him in the war. He certainly knows more than anyone else about the myths and legends of Dartmoor?*" Paraphrase this if the investigators instead ask directly about McArthur. Should they ask about what happened to McArthur in the war, Elizabeth will be more than happy to fill them in.

## RETURNING TO POSTBRIDGE

Once the investigators are finished in Princetown, they will wish to return to Postbridge. This is a perfect time to insert **The 'Hairy Hands'**, if not already used.

In addition, as the investigators make their way back, continue to describe the changing weather – the icy drizzle that started on the way to Princetown now gives way to sleet, soon turning to snow that begins to settle on the cold ground and winding road.

## THE 'HAIRY HANDS'

Scene type: Floating

This scene can be used to give the investigators a jolt either on their way to Princetown, or their return to Postbridge. Alternatively, you may wish to implement it should the investigators expressly wish to visit the site of Blackwood's accident.

As the investigators head along the road between Postbridge and Princetown ask the driver of a car for a **Drive** skill test at difficulty 5. If they are travelling by bus, each investigator should make a **Sense Trouble** test at the same difficulty.

Whether the investigators pass or fail, the vehicle they are in veers from the road. Passed tests mean that the driver is able to retain some control over the car, or that bus passengers are warned of the impending collision and can brace themselves, to the effect that no severe injury is caused. On a failed test, investigators take 2 points of **Health** from cuts, bruising and other minor injuries sustained as their transportation careens into a roadside ditch.

Those driving describe the feeling of something grabbing hold of the wheel and wrenching the vehicle from the road. This calls for a 2-point **Stability** test.

It does not take much to get crashed vehicles back onto the road. Even the small bus that makes the journey between Postbridge and Princetown can be pushed from the ditch, though it calls for the investigators to get their hands dirty. Where the initial **Drive** check

failed, call for a **Mechanical Repair** test to ensure everything is in working order. If the test fails then the vehicle either does not start again, or splutters to a halt after reaching its destination, whichever is more dramatically appropriate. The bus driver can get his vehicle up and running again, though it takes both time and a certain amount of ungentlemanly cursing. He may also be reluctant to make the journey again, citing the curse of the 'Hairy Hands'.

While they wait for their vehicle to be checked over, the investigators notice that where they have crashed is also the site of Blackwood's accident. Car tyres have torn up the grass at the side of the road, and small pieces of glass and twisted metal can be found littering the embankment and ditch. A nearby tree has been heavily damaged; this is where Blackwood apparently met her end. On close inspection, the bark is stained with blood. The muddy ground displays a number of footprints, most likely from the police.

These facts can be discovered with a **Simple Search**. However, investigators using **Evidence Collection** or another appropriate investigative skill (**Physics** is an obvious choice) notice that the camber of the road at this particular point is unbalanced. Once they realise this, it becomes obvious that the unevenness of the road is what caused the pull on the vehicles steering, and is the probable cause of the multiple accidents on this road.

## THE EAST DART INN

Scene type: Investigation

Named after the river that flows through the village, the East Dart was once a 17<sup>th</sup> century coaching inn that served those travelling between Princetown and Moretonhampstead. It is now simply serves the labourers who work the farms surrounding Postbridge.

The plain, whitewashed exterior belies the warmth of the décor inside. The walls are painted a deep, rich green and there is ample seating for its patrons. Several tables crowd the floor, while a large, heavily stained oak bar takes up one wall. Behind this stands Pierce Whitlaw, the barman.

William McArthur can be found here throughout the day, arriving soon after the pub opens and leaving only when Whitlaw gently evicts him at closing. For most of the day, the pub is otherwise empty, filling only after 6pm as the farm labourers return from the fields for a pint or two. At this time, Peter Bulgrew will also be in the pub and will keenly observe any actions the investigators take.



## Interviewing William McArthur

McArthur sits huddled at the bar in a far corner of the pub. Whitlaw provides him with a reasonably constant supply of watered down beer, and keeps a watchful eye on the old man.

Investigators can question McArthur at the bar, but Whitlaw will easily overhear their conversation. In addition, anytime Peter Bulgrew is present, he will also take an interest in the investigators (see 'Furtive glances' below).

If they wish to draw McArthur away to a table to talk more privately, then a 1-point spend in an interpersonal skill, such as **Reassurance** or **Flattery**, helped along by the purchase of a bottle of hard liquor from the bar, can peak his interest. Alternatively, a 1-point spend in **Credit Rating** is enough to convince McArthur that the investigators can keep him well served with his drink of choice for the rest of the day.

Getting anything sensible out of McArthur is difficult. His speech is slurred and his sentences garbled, not only from the drink, but also his disfigurement and general state of mental distress. His attention has a habit of wandering and he is given to taking off at a tangent when talking about folklore, mixing legends with facts. As the investigators probe him for answers to their questions, he becomes increasingly more agitated, looking around the room as if the other patrons are spying on them (they probably are). However, over the course of the conversation, they gain the following answers to their questions:

### Did you speak to Professor Blackwood?

*"I spoke to her a couple of times while she was in Postbridge. She wanted to know about the local legends."*

### What did you and the Professor talk about?

*"We spoke on this and that. Blackwood asked me questions about the local folklore she had been looking into. I told her all I could. And that was a damn sight more than any books could tell her."*

### Did she talk to anyone else?

*"She talked to a few other locals at the East Dart. She didn't get much out of them as far as I know. Not that she would. Not many round here have time for outsiders. She seemed pretty frustrated about it too."*

### Do you know why she left Postbridge?

*"I've no idea. But last time I talked to her, she seemed agitated. Afraid, maybe? Perhaps she had a visit from one of the Yeth-Hounds?"* McArthur chuckles, a sound not unlike a drain gurgling.

### What do you think about the rumour of the 'Hairy Hands' ghost?

McArthur laughs, a hacking, phlegmy sound, before cryptically stating *"there are far worse things out on the moors than ghosts."*

A 1-point spend in **Occult** or **Anthropology** can get McArthur to elaborate on the legends that Blackwood was interested in and sets him rambling, happy to impart his knowledge of the local lore. However, through the disjointed narrative, the following can be gained:

## The Yeth-Hounds

*"I know of the Yeth-Hounds. How could I not? Seen them with my own two eyes, before the war put paid to them. Some things that men think are legendary have their basis in fact. People would do well to learn that."*

## Old Crockern

*"Old Crockern? Hah, that's what the locals round about call the old Horned Man O' Wistman's Wood. They call it an evil spirit and say sacrifice was made to it back in the civil war. Hung several fools who got caught for witchcraft."*

McArthur is a haunted man. His dealings with the Order and his time in the trenches in France have severely affected his mental stability. He continually drinks to try and rid himself of these memories. As a result, he chooses not to tell the investigators everything that he knows. Investigators who suspect this might be the case can make a zero point spend in **Assess Honesty** to determine that McArthur isn't being as forthcoming as perhaps he could. If the investigators press him, he begins to get more agitated and looks around the room furtively, before leaning in closer, his breath sticking of stale drink and rot. Just as he is about to impart his secrets, a loud howling can be heard from outside. At first it sounds like the wind whistling down the chimneystack, but as it progresses it becomes clear that nothing natural could conjure such a sound. This causes is a 2-point **Stability** test for all investigators who are present.

At the noise, McArthur visibly starts and begins to mumble *"No, no, not again. Not yet"* and *"The price is to steep"*. If the investigators try and ask what he is talking about, McArthur only says *"The price. It must be paid, or all will come to naught. Look to the church and you'll understand. Look to the dates on the stones. But it was all for good, wasn't it? It was all for good?"*

At this point Whitlaw will approach and berate the investigators for distressing the old man, likely calling into question their motives in the process. He then takes hold of McArthur under the shoulder and gently guides him out of the pub, soothingly saying, *"Let's get you home, young William, eh? Had a little too much drink tonight."* McArthur leaves without resistance. As he does, the investigators can still here him beseeching Whitlaw to confirm that *"it was all for good, wasn't it?"*

## Antagonist Reaction: Furtive glances

As the investigators interrogate McArthur, have them take a **Sense Trouble** test at difficulty 4. Those who pass will notice members of the pubs occupants

watching them suspiciously.

If the investigators choose to interview McArthur before the majority of the local farm labourers descend upon the East Dart after a hard days graft, then they notice Whitlaw keeping an eye on them. If Peter Bulgrew is also present, then he watches the investigators throughout their conversation while slowly sipping his pint of ale.

The investigators may choose to confront those that are spying on them. If they ask Whitlaw why he is watching them, the landlord will ask them why they are disturbing an old man and can they not see that all of his faculties are not fully there. He appears to care for McArthur and does not want to see him unduly upset.

Investigators confronting Peter Bulgrew are likely to receive a more pointed response. He will brusquely ask them if they have a problem and tell them to stop disturbing his drink. If the investigators press the point, he will get in their face, telling them that outsiders are not wanted sticking their noses where they do not belong. He will then down his pint, and sweep out of the pub, likely forcing himself past anyone who stands in his way.

If the investigators choose to ignore their observers, then Whitlaw intercedes between them and McArthur after the howling is heard. At this point Peter Bulgrew, if present, also stands up and leaves.

When he leaves, Whitlaw will take McArthur back home and see to it that he is put to bed. He will warn Father Blakely that the investigators are looking into Professor Blackwood's death, but only on the following day.

Bulgrew, on the other hand, goes straight to the Father on leaving the pub. Investigators wishing to follow him must make a **Shadowing** test to follow him to Father Blakely's house, another ivy clad cottage opposite St. Gabriel's church. Given that Bulgrew appears in the evening, and the weather has probably begun to turn toward blizzard conditions (see page 12), the difficulty of this test is 6.

If they succeed, then they can observe Bulgrew talking to Father Blakely in the doorway of the house. The road and driveway are open, however, and it is difficult to get close enough to hear anything over the sound of the blizzard. Investigators must make a **Stealth** test at difficult 5 to get close enough while trying to stay out of sight and make as little noise as possible on the snow. Regardless of whether they pass, they overhear brief snatches of conversation concerning people *"...snooping around..."*, and a peculiar, broken phrase *"is...binding... prepared"*.

If the investigators fail either of these tests, then Bulgrew notices their presence and will attempt to get the jump on them by hiding in the bushes that flank the road, either on the way to Father Blakely's house, or his the return. Allow any investigators involved in the scene a **Sense Trouble** test at difficult 4 to notice Bulgrew's presence before he launches himself from his hiding spot and proceeds to teach them a lesson with his fists. Bulgrew isn't a fool though; if he senses that he is outmatched, he will flee.

If the investigators manage to subdue and interrogate him, Peter will only say that he is doing the good will of the Order. They have always be there to protect this land, and that they always will be, so long as outsiders let them get on with their work.

## NIGHT TERRORS

As the evenings draw in, the strange influences surrounding Postbridge begin to make themselves felt as the Horned Man starts feel its bonds loosen. The following antagonist reactions can be used to harry and unsettle the investigators throughout the nights they spend in Postbridge.

### Antagonist Reaction: Howls in the night

This scene is particularly dramatic if used after the investigators have interviewed McArthur and heard the howl from outside the village. It works especially well if you can isolate one of the investigators.

During this scene, one of the investigators catches sight of the Yeth-Hound from a distance. At first, they smell sulphur on the wind, and hear a low panting sound. This slowly becomes an unnatural growl. As the investigator look around, they notice two red points of light just beyond the border of the village, perhaps shining through the snow filled air, or ablaze in the dark of the night. Then the beast howls, a screeching, unnatural sound that rends the air and sets investigators to clamping their hands over their ears. Experiencing this is a 2-point **Stability** test.

If any investigator is unperturbed by such unnatural sounds and investigates their source, they see a hulking, black shape, somewhere in size between a large dog and a small horse. As they approach it dissipates into a fine black mist, leaving two fading spots of light where its eyes once were and an intense, acidic and sulphurous stench that hangs in the air. Witnessing this clearly supernatural event invokes a 3-point **Mythos Stability** test.

**Note:** At this point, the Yeth-Hound is still bound by the Order of the Green Man's ritual. They cannot enter Postbridge itself, choosing instead to terrorise the inhabitants with their howls and bide their time until their bonds are slipped. Although they can freely roam the surrounding moorland, it would be considered poor sportsmanship to unleash them on unsuspecting investigators who step outside the boundaries of the village. It is recommended to save them as an active threat for the climax in Wistman's Wood.

### Antagonist Reaction: A dream of death

During the night, one of the investigators experiences a disturbing dream that depicts an encounter with the Horned Man.

After the investigators retire for the evening, one of them awakens from their slumber. The lodge is dark and empty, and their companions are absent. They feel something tugging just at the edges of their consciousness, which compels them to set out over the moorland. As they cross the snow-shrouded heath, the sensation that drives them forward increases in urgency. They feel the landscape growing colder all around them and the icy air claws at their flesh. Eventually, they approach the stunted, twisted trees that form Wistman's Wood.

As they approach, they can hear strange chanting carried on the wind that appears to originate from the wood and a figure materialises from between the branches. Cloaked all in black, it bears a crown of broken and malformed antlers on its head. Leaden words speak directly into the investigators mind. "*Release me*". As it speaks, the figure reaches out and lifts up its head. The investigator briefly catches a glimpse of a white and featureless face. Then they feel a cold pressure and the sensation of a blade being drawn across their neck, as if someone slits their throat from behind. They start awake.

Experiencing the dream calls for a 3-point **Stability** test.

This scene is best used on an investigator whose **Stability** is starting to slip. Alternatively, you may wish to use this on an unsuspecting player, or one that you know will play along with the scene. In the event that the player tries to resist the compulsion to venture out to the woods, you can use a **Hard Driver** to try and motivate them. However, if they continue to resist, don't force the dream on them. Allow them to awaken with the vague sensation, as if something tried to reach out and touch their mind during their sleep.

## ST. GABRIEL'S

### Scene type: Core

St. Gabriel's church stands to the north of Postbridge. Constructed of Dartmoor granite, it is a dark, grey edifice marking the edge of the village. A number of gravestones jut haphazardly from the ground surrounding it and from the cornices leer queer, carven faces wrapped in leaves.

Investigating the grounds of the church can provide the following clues with a 1-point spend in the appropriate skill:

- **Architecture** used to examine the church reveals that, despite the date stone proclaiming its construction in 1865, parts of the church are old. Very old. Some of the windows appear to be of Norman design, while other elements could be Anglo-Saxon. A piece of graffiti on a corner stone, written in Latin, looks to be of Roman date.
- Most of the gravestones date to within the last century. However, **History**, or another suitable skill, can be used to detect older graves that have become overgrown. Some of these date back as far as the 1600s. On discovering this, the investigators notice that some of the newer graves reuse older headstones. On one, a date beginning 1342 can just be made out.
- **Theology** or **Art History** can be used to examine the carvings and identify the motifs as the Green Man. It is considered a pagan icon, though it has

been incorporated into Christian iconography. A further 1-point spend in **Occult**, **Anthropology**, or **History** recalls that the Green Man is considered a benevolent entity and is often associated with healing, rebirth and hunting.

A **Simple Search** of the graveyard, after speaking to William McArthur, reveals a pattern in gravestones. There are trios of headstones, usually dated within several days of each other. These deaths appear to have occurred repeatedly over roughly twenty-five years periods.

### Inside the church

The door to St. Gabriel's stands unlocked. Inside, the walls are painted a gleaming white that reflects the light entering through the tall, thin windows. Wooden pews line the nave and a carved oak rood screen separates the congregation from the sanctuary and altar, which is dressed in green cloth.

The church roof consists of a series of intersecting arches, carved from oak. They bear a pattern that, on close inspection, consists of leaves and foliage entwined around sets of antlers. Where the arches meet the walls, the motif of the Green Man can be seen. These can be interpreted according to the spends listed in the previous section. If the investigators have already seen the carvings on the outside of the church, then no additional spends are required to notice these features.

Toward the rear of the church, and to the right of the sanctuary, is a door that leads into the vestry.



This door is locked. A 1-point spend in **Locksmith** is needed to open it. Another option to gain entry to the vestry is a 1-point spend in **Architecture**, which allows the investigator to recall a window on the outside of the building. With a boost, someone should be able to gain access to the vestry through it.

## The vestry

Father Blakely's personal sanctuary is spartanly furnished. A bookcase and desk stands against one wall. Several sets of vestments hang from hooks next to the door. Under the desk is a small safe. The following clues can be gained by searching the vestry:

- Blakely's desk is partially covered with sheaves of paper. **Theology** can be used to quickly scan over them, revealing them to be sermon notes and essays on Christian theology written in several hands. Several concern themselves with self-sacrifice. When carefully read, they appear to advocate literal sacrifice of the body to achieve a higher purpose, although what purpose that might be is not fully disclosed.
- **Core clue: Locksmith** can be used to gain access to the safe. Within it are a number of valuables, including a silver collection plate and communion vessel. It also contains a hardbound journal, which the investigators will instantly recognise as Professor Blackwood's.
- **Core clue: Evidence Collection** or a **Simple Search** of the bookshelves reveals a volume of interest amongst the bibles and religious texts. This leather-bound book bears the title *Testamentum Vigilum*.

## Blackwood's Journal

Blackwood's journal is written in her easily recognisable, flowing script. The majority consists of anecdotes about her travels, both in Britain and further afield, and extensive notes on her research into all manner of folklore and mythology.

The last few pages of the journal concern the few days prior to her death (see Handout #4). They begin by describing Blackwood's attempts to interview the residents of Postbridge, but swiftly turn more sinister. It appears she uncovered the Order's activities while interviewing a drunken James Bucknam one evening. Blackwood's attempts to follow up on this revelation, both with James and other residents, were rebuffed. One night shortly afterwards she describes seeing a procession of figures heading out over the moors towards Wistman's Wood, which she followed. Her last entry is rushed, the writing spidery and smudged. Blackwood witnessed the first sacrifice in the current

ritual cycle, and mentions the howling of the Yeth-Hounds and something she saw that she could not, or would not, describe. The journal ends with the words "*they are coming for me...*"

## The Testamentum Vigilum

This leather-bound volume shows evidence of continual rebinding. The pages consist of assorted materials; the majority are paper of varying quality, whilst the earliest are written on vellum. It is clear that the book has been repeatedly added to over a period of many years.

Reading the text is difficult. It is written in a corrupted form of Latin and Old English, and some parts appear to be encoded with a cypher. It discusses a variety of occult and esoteric subjects. Investigators with suitable **Languages** are able to make some sense of the document. Alternatively, **Cryptology** or **Occult** can be used to piece together part of what the books contains. This information should be considered a **Core clue** for the purpose of obtaining it.

The title translates roughly to *The Testament of the Watchers*. Its contents are mainly records of a quasi-religious order, known as the Order of the Green Man. Some of the dates match those seen on the gravestones the investigators may have noticed outside, while others go back much further. The earliest pages are primarily of interest. They appear to describe a ritual designed to bind some form of entity. However, it is unclear whether this is binding to service, or for the purposes of imprisonment. Some passages mention fluctuations in the power of this binding, which has required continual re-strengthening at varying points. Studying this tome imparts 2 points of **Cthulhu Mythos**. The text can be studied extensively to obtain the ritual spell *Call/Dismiss Horned Man* (see page 27), which may become useful at the conclusion of the scenario, depending on the investigators actions. Extensive study of the text takes a total of eight hours, which can be halved with a 1-point spend in **Occult**.

## CONFRONTING HANNAH

### Scene Type: Core

After investigating Margaret Blackwood's death the players will have begun to suspect all is not right in Postbridge. On occasion, however, they may find themselves at a loose end as to how to proceed with the investigation. At this juncture, they should remember that Hannah Bucknam might not have divulged her full story.



Getting Hannah to talk requires the use of a zero point spend in an interpersonal ability, such as **Reassurance** or even **Intimidation**, leveraged with additional information that suggests Blackwood's death was not an accident. This could be the evidence that suggests Blackwood was murdered, the knowledge that the professor's journal has been taken, or even the journal itself, if the investigators have recovered it prior to talking to Hannah.

Depending on the tactics the investigators employ, this scene can play out in various ways. For example, if they use **Reassurance**, then they may calm Hannah down, perhaps making her tea to steady her nerves, before drawing out her tale. On the other hand, **Intimidation** reduces the poor woman tears as she pours out her story to them, all the while shaking violently. The players should be made to feel pretty wretched if they employ strong-armed methods.

Once they get Hannah to open up, she quickly spills her story, providing the following clues:

- She suspects there is some kind of cult in the village, that it has been a part of Postbridge for many years and that it is tied intimately to the church. Hannah is unsure of its purpose, but has been able to piece together the fact that the majority of the village is involved in some way. She once asked her husband about it, but all he would tell her it that its actions were for the good of the village.
- She is aware that one of the villagers, a man made Nathaniel Brancepeth, has gone missing recently. None of the other villagers seem to have noticed, nor care about his disappearance, and it has not

been reported to the authorities. After Blackwood's death, she suspects that this may be down to the cult.

- Her husband had been speaking with Blackwood shortly before her death. He had been drunk and she had overheard him mentioning the cult to the professor. James had referred to them as "*the keepers of Wistman's Wood*".
- She is sure that Father Blakely, the local vicar, is the leader of the cult. He came around to talk to James shortly after his conversation with Blackwood. If the investigators have yet to find Blackwood's journal, she suggests that the vestry within St. Gabriel's would be the best place to look.
- **Core clue:** Hannah is incredibly worried about her husband. He is known to sometimes spend a night on the local farms while working the moors, but he hasn't been home since Father Blakely came to visit. Hannah is adamant that the cult has something to do with his disappearance. She is too afraid to ask anyone in the village for help and begs the investigators to help her find him.

If the investigators agree to help find her husband, Hannah thanks them profusely. She will happily help them in any way that she can. This includes providing any items (within reason) that the investigators may require. Should they request weaponry, however, then the Thistle Lodge has little to offer. James Bucknam has a old, poorly maintained shotgun that Hannah will let them borrow (treat as a Remington M32 12-gauge; see *Trail of Cthulhu* page 186), and they can obtain a woodsman's axe (+0) and several sharp knives (-1) that make for serviceable weapons.



## AVOIDING CONFRONTATION

Although not in the spirit of playing a horror game, some players may actively try to avoid heading into the climax of the scenario. Here are some ways to deal with this.

### What if they call the police?

It is possible that investigators uncovering the Order's cycle of ritual sacrifice will want to involve the authorities and inform the Princetown constabulary. Unfortunately for them, this will be difficult. Postbridge only has one telephone from which to contact the police. This is in the East Dart Inn. Whitlaw will allow them to use it, but investigators who have already sensed the villagers' disposition towards them would be wise not to use it in case they continue to inform the Order of their intentions. Even if they do decide to contact Detective Donnelly, help is not forthcoming. The snow storm effectually isolates the village. In addition, the Horned Man's increase in power has begun to affect the inmates of Dartmoor prison, causing insanity and rioting, which the Princetown constabulary are desperately trying to contain.

### What if the Investigators will not go to the wood?

Hopefully this will not happen if the players are engaged with the atmosphere of *Trail of Cthulhu* and are committed to a horror roleplaying experience. However, some players expecting a confrontation with the Mythos just may not want their investigator to go to Wistman's Wood. They may wish to escape the village, although the snow and arctic cold should deter any attempts to flee on foot. The low temperatures will also hamper travel by car. Ice has the potential to freeze wipers and weld the brake shoes of a 1930s car, not to mention impairing visibility through the windshield - such vehicles generally did not have heaters. Poor road conditions and snowdrifts will prevent travel by car even if the investigators manage to get any vehicle they have started.

While both of these scenarios can be considered railroading, heading to Wistman's Wood is designed to be the ultimate climax to this adventure. That said, should investigators truly not wish to head there, then they may wait out the evening of the sacrifice in the Thistle Lodge. In doing so, they commit James Bucknam to his death. It is left to the Keeper to formulate a suitable conclusion in this situation. Perhaps after completing their ritual, the Order of the Green Man comes seeking them, resulting in a desperate chase out of the village. Alternatively, upon learning that they intend not to help her husband, Hannah Bucknam commits suicide, leaving the investigators to discover her body the following morning. Creative Keepers should have no trouble in coming up with an ending that evokes the bleak cosmic horror that the scenario tries to emulate. Of course, appropriate consequences, such as **Stability** tests or combat, may result.

## INTO THE WOODS

### Scene type: Core

By now the investigators will have discovered that Blackwood's death was no accident. Nor did a malignant spirit kill her. Instead, she was most likely murdered and they should suspect that the Order of the Green Man was behind it. After talking to Hannah Bucknam and reading both Blackwood's journal and the *Testamentum Vigilum* they will be aware that some form of ritual has been taking place in nearby Wistman's Wood. If they have studied the dates on the trios of gravestones and those recorded in Father Blakely's tome then they should suspect this has been taking place over an unfathomable number of years.

However, what they might be unsure of is what the Order's purpose is. The clues they have discovered are ambiguous. Are they a force for good, or evil?

The investigators will likely wish to head to Wistman's Wood to continue their investigations. As they do, describe the following to them:

- As they begin to head out across the moorland, the snow blessedly stops, revealing a landscape blanketed in white.
- The walk to Wistman's Wood takes around two hours through the snow. The temperature is below freezing. The closer they get to the woods, the colder it feels, as if it were drawing all the warmth from the surrounding landscape. This calls for a 2-point **Stability** test.

- The easiest access to the wood is from the south. Upon reaching its southern border, the investigators discover a large boulder. Upon it is carved a head crowned with horns or antlers. Those with **Anthropology**, **Archaeology**, or **History** can make a 1-point spend to realise this motif is reminiscent of the Iron Age god Cernunnos, though the face is strangely devoid of features. The image appears to have been placed as a warning.
- The woods consist mainly of oak and cover some nine acres. The trees are stunted, with branches that reach to the sky like twisted fingers. Their gnarled trunks are covered with epiphytic mosses and lichens. A zero point spend in **Biology** or **Outdoorsman**, along with knowledge gained from the autopsy, reveals that these mosses are the same as those found under Blackwood's fingernails.

Different groups of investigators may choose to go to the woods at different times. Some will want to pre-empt the arrival of the Order and their sacrifice. Others may wish to wait until nightfall and follow the trail of light cast by the villager's lanterns as they trudge across the moorland. Either of these options is valid, but will require you to modify the descriptions above relative to whether they travel during the day or at night.

## THE HORROR CONFRONTED

### Scene type: Core

The scenario conveniently comes to a climax on the day the investigators discover that all their enquiries lead to Wistman's Wood. That evening, the Order of the Green Man attempts to perform the final part of their ritual and keep the Horned Man bound for another cycle of twenty-five years. It will take place in the dead of night, in a small clearing at the heart of the wood.

Around midnight, members of the Order gather in Postbridge. A total of fourteen individuals, both men and women, are present. These include Father Blakely, Peter Bulgrew, Pierce Whitlaw and James Bucknam. All of them, aside from James, are dressed in white robes. James is not restrained in anyway, and travels with the Order willingly.

The first the investigators notice of the Order's activity is the sight of lanterns moving out of Postbridge and across the moorland towards Wistman's Wood. Alternatively, if the investigators headed to the wood first, they notice a string of lights heading towards them from the direction of the village.

As the members of the Order approach the wood, the

air becomes eerily silent. Have each investigator in the wood make **Sense Trouble** tests. Those who pass immediately notice the silence. There is a complete absence of noise, as if the landscape has drawn breath in anticipation. No creatures can be heard and no wind rattles the branches overhead. Everything is still. Realising this results in a 2-point **Stability** test.

If they are unimpeded, the Order and their sacrifice will make their way to the heart of the wood. There, twelve of the Order will break away and form a circle around the edge of the clearing. Each of the twelve pulls back their hoods and extend their arms out towards each other. Their faces and arms are covered with blue sigils that are painted with woad. Father Blakely stands in the centre, while James kneels at his feet. Both of them are also decorated with esoteric symbols.

As the Order begins to perform their ceremony, piercing howls suddenly breaks the silence that has shrouded the wood. The snarling and barking of dogs echoes all around. As the ritual reaches its peak, the shadows appear to draw themselves together and a tall, mist-like figure bearing a pale face that is devoid of features and a rack of malformed, twisted antlers slips out between the trees. If the investigators witness the manifestation of the Horned Man, they must make a 5-point **Mythos Stability** test.

The Order intends to sacrifice James Bucknam to complete the binding through the casting of the *Call/Dismiss Horned Man* ritual spell. Should they manage to complete this, then Father Blakely plunges an obsidian blade into James' neck at the height of the ceremony, cutting his throat. As his blood spills to the ground, the trees of Wistman's Wood respond, reaching forth to entwine their branches around the Horned Man. Despite its writhing, the black robed figure is drawn down into the earth, sealed away for another twenty-five years. Whether this actually happens, however, depends on the investigators actions...

### Confronting the Order

The investigators may confront the members of the Order either before they get to the clearing in Wistman's Wood, or during the ritual itself. If they do, Father Blakely will try to diffuse the situation. He is aware that the investigators have been making enquires about Blackwood's death, and possibly know something of the Order's sacrificial rites. He attempts to explain the purpose of the ritual and is adamant that it must be completed.

Investigators who demand to know why Blackwood had to die are rebuffed. Father Blakely explains that she had begun to uncover the Order's actions and,

## BINDING THE HORNED MAN

In order to bind the Horned Man, the ritual ceremony to do so must be completed. This involves casting the ritual spell *Call/Dismiss Horned Man*. If Father Blakely is still alive and the investigators do not disrupt the ceremony then take it as read that he is able to cast the spell successfully. However, if it falls to the investigators to finish the ceremony, then they must cast the ritual spell described below, using the **Inertia** rating for dismissing the avatar.

### Call/Dismiss Horned Man (lesser avatar of Nyarlathotep)

This ritual spell is used by the Order of the Green Man to bind the Horned Man to Wistman's Wood. The spell must be cast in a woodland clearing at night. A total of thirteen participants must be present for the ritual to have any effect; twelve will form a circle around the caster, who stands in the centre. The caster must use a blade to slit the throat of a human sacrifice in order to draw the avatar's attention. As the sacrifice's life blood drains to the earth, the caster chants a litany and calls upon the ancient wood to bind the avatar.

**Stability Test Difficulty:** 5 (4 with an **Anthropology**, **Occult**, or **Theology** spend)

**Opposition:** Rituals used to Call the Horned Man pits the caster's **Stability** against reality's **Inertia** of 8. Rituals to Dismiss the Horned Man face its **Inertia** pool of 25 if it does not want to leave.

**Cost:** Calling the Horned Man necessitates a sacrifice of mental faculties and costs 5 **Stability**. Dismissing the Horned Man is mentally taxing and the caster's mind is lashed by psychic energies, costing 10 **Stability**. This can be shared amongst the other participants in the ritual. These costs must be paid before making the **Stability** test to cast the spell.

**Time:** The ritual requires 1 minute per point of **Stability** sacrificed to cast the spell.

For the purposes of the scenario, the other members of the Order do not know this spell. As a result, any contributions to the spell's costs are made at a 3:1 ratio, as discussed in *Trail of Cthulhu*, page 110. If it was not already obvious, the Horned Man does not want to leave and will resist being dismissed.

after observing their ritual, had sought to flee the village. Fearing that she may bring the authorities upon them, they had done what was felt necessary to silence the professor and, at the same time, further their efforts to keep the Horned Man confined.

If the investigators attempt to appeal to James Bucknam, he explains that his sacrifice is necessary for the protection of the village, but most importantly, his wife. Although it was not supposed to be his time, he is prepared to give his life in service of the Order's greater work.

Any investigator can make a zero point spend in **Assess Honesty** to tell that, whether or not any of this is the truth, Father Blakely and James Bucknam believe it utterly.

### Antagonist Reaction: Unleashing the hound(s)

To increase the tension and put pressure on the investigators to decide how they wish to proceed,

any extended discussion between the investigators and members of the Order will be interrupted by the Yeth-Hound. It begins by trying to kill members of the Order, thus impairing their ability to complete the ritual. The massive hound appears as if from thin air, coalescing from black mist, its red eyes piercing the dark. Its appearance will no doubt instil chaos and confusion, and will cause the investigators to make a 5-point **Mythos Stability** test.

If any of the Order dies at the jaws of the Hound, then the investigators can stand in their place, should they wish to complete the ritual. If Father Blakely dies, however, the consequences are much more dire. As the only individual with the esoteric knowledge to conduct the ritual, his death has the effect of halting the sacrifice and breaking the ritual cycle. The investigators can complete the ceremony themselves, but must have obtained the ritual spell *Call/Dismiss Horned Man* from the *Testamentum Vigilum* in order to do so and must cast it as described in the Binding the Avatar box.

## CONCLUDING THE SCENARIO

There can be many endings to *The Keepers of the Woods* depending on how the investigators respond to the Order of the Green Man. The ambiguity over whether the Order is actually good or evil is purposely designed to force the investigators into making a difficult moral choice, and one that may not work out the way that they intended. In every case, there is the potential that the investigators' action may result in the shattering of their Pillars of Sanity.

While the ending is left to your own devising, the following examples of how the scenario can be drawn to a close are provided as a point of reference. These are the most common endings that resulted from playtesting of *The Keepers in the Woods* and all of them can be used to provide a satisfactory conclusion. That said, these are not set in stone and you, as the Keeper, should respond to your players actions to provide the most fitting finale.

### Sacrificing James

If the investigators are convinced by Father Blakely and James Bucknam's arguments to continue with the ritual, they may decide to let the Order continue with their sacrifice. Alternatively, if Father Blakely dies, they may find themselves in the situation where they are forced to sacrifice James to complete the ritual. Either way, they will knowingly commit a man to death. This results in a 5-point **Stability** test and an immediate loss of a point of **Sanity**.

The investigators will also have the difficult task of explaining to Hannah Bucknam that her husband has died. The Order of the Green Man may also look on Hannah as a potential weakness to their task of keeping the Horned Man bound. Whether they seek to remove her permanently, or go into hiding until the next ritual cycle is left for the Keeper to determine.

### Martyrdom

One of the investigators may substitute themselves as the sacrifice in James' place. To convince James to let them stand in his place, the investigators must make a 2-point **Reassurance** spend. Multiple investigators may contribute to this expenditure of skill points.

The investigator who puts himself/herself forward becomes the new focus of the ritual. They must give their lives to complete the ceremony. Investigators who witness this must make a 6-point **Stability** test. If the investigators are forced to enact the ritual themselves and kill their companion the potential **Stability** loss increases to 8 points. Again, a point of **Sanity** is also lost.

### Halting the ritual

The worst possible outcome is that the ritual is brought to a complete halt. This may occur if the investigators decide to attack the members of the Order, or the Yeth-Hound is allowed to take its vengeance, disrupting the ceremony and allowing the Horned Man to break free. This happens when the number of participants in the ritual is reduced below the required thirteen, plus their sacrifice.

This ending may also occur if the investigators try and fail to complete the ritual, such as in the event of Father Blakely's death. In some playtests, the investigators decided to shoot Father Blakely outright without any discussion in an attempt to save James Bucknam's life. If you are feeling lenient, then you may opt to allow the investigators one final chance to complete the ritual and bind the Horned Man. Less gracious Keepers, however, can simply decide to enact the following.

The disruption of the ritual enables the Horned Man to finally break free of its bonds and bring its full strength to bear upon the villagers of Postbridge. The howling of the Yeth-Hound intensifies in celebration of its master's release. The pale, featureless mask that covers the Horned Man's face begins to crack and crumble, while its body starts to reduce to an effervescent, roiling black mist. This is the Black Wind, the Crawling Mist, the Pool of Shadows; a seething mass of darkness that flows out from the centre of the wood. Where it passes, life is extinguished. It first deals with those remaining members of the Order, before heading across the moors to Postbridge, accompanied by its eager hound. There it will lay waste to the village's residents, leaving behind nothing but empty houses in its wake.

Investigators witnessing this must make a **Mythos Stability** test, with the potential to lose 12 points of **Stability**, accompanied by a 4-point loss of **Sanity**. Even if this test is passed, investigators still lose 4 points of **Stability** and 3 points of **Sanity**. At the same time, they are strongly encouraged to flee from the wood. Investigators must make a difficulty 8 **Athletics** or **Fleeing** check to escape safely, dodging trees, manifestations of the Hound and the black mists of Nyarlathotep. Once they pass the edge of the forest, they can easily avoid their pursuers, who head directly for Postbridge.

Investigators who fail their test may be caught and attacked by the Hound, or enveloped by the mists. If attacked by the Hound, allow them to fight. If they are exceptionally lucky they may get away – allow them another test to flee.

On the other hand, Keepers feeling especially evil may have the mist flow up and over them. Investigators touched by the mist feel as if an icy hand suddenly grips them around their heart. Their breath freezes in their throats and they quickly fall lifeless to the earth. That is not the end for them though. Nyarlathotep feeds on the insanity of the human race and, to gain such sustenance, the Horned Man takes the living consciousness of the investigator into itself. There it will remain, forever, mingled with the screaming minds of those others that the avatar has managed to ensnare.

## EPILOGUE

To bring the scenario to a close, set up a scene with each investigator that survives. Get each player to focus this scene on how their investigator returns to their normal life after their encounter. Such scenes will vary drastically depending on the outcome of the conclusion in Wistman's Wood.

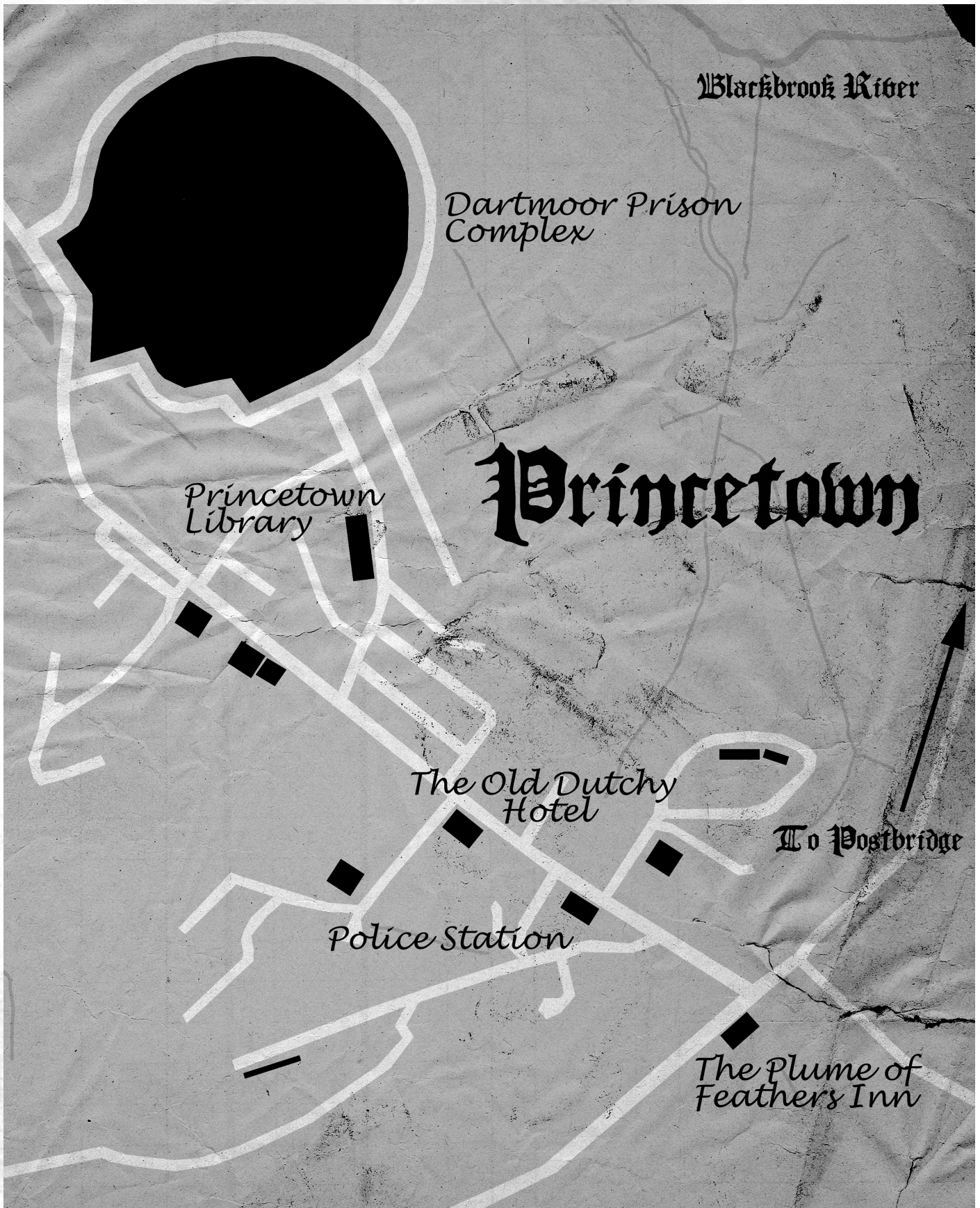
If the investigators managed to bind the Horned Man for another twenty-five years, ask how they cope knowing that this cycle of death and sacrifice will continue. Can they live with themselves knowing that a human being had to die to prevent a lurking evil from gaining a foothold on their island home? And what do they tell the family of the poor soul who gave their life so that they might live? Perhaps they will return to London and throw themselves wholly into their jobs. Or perhaps they give up the life they

knew and move away, putting as much distance between them and the memories that Dartmoor dredges up for them. Those driven to the brink of insanity, or beyond, may find themselves locked within the padded walls of a cell in Bedlam.

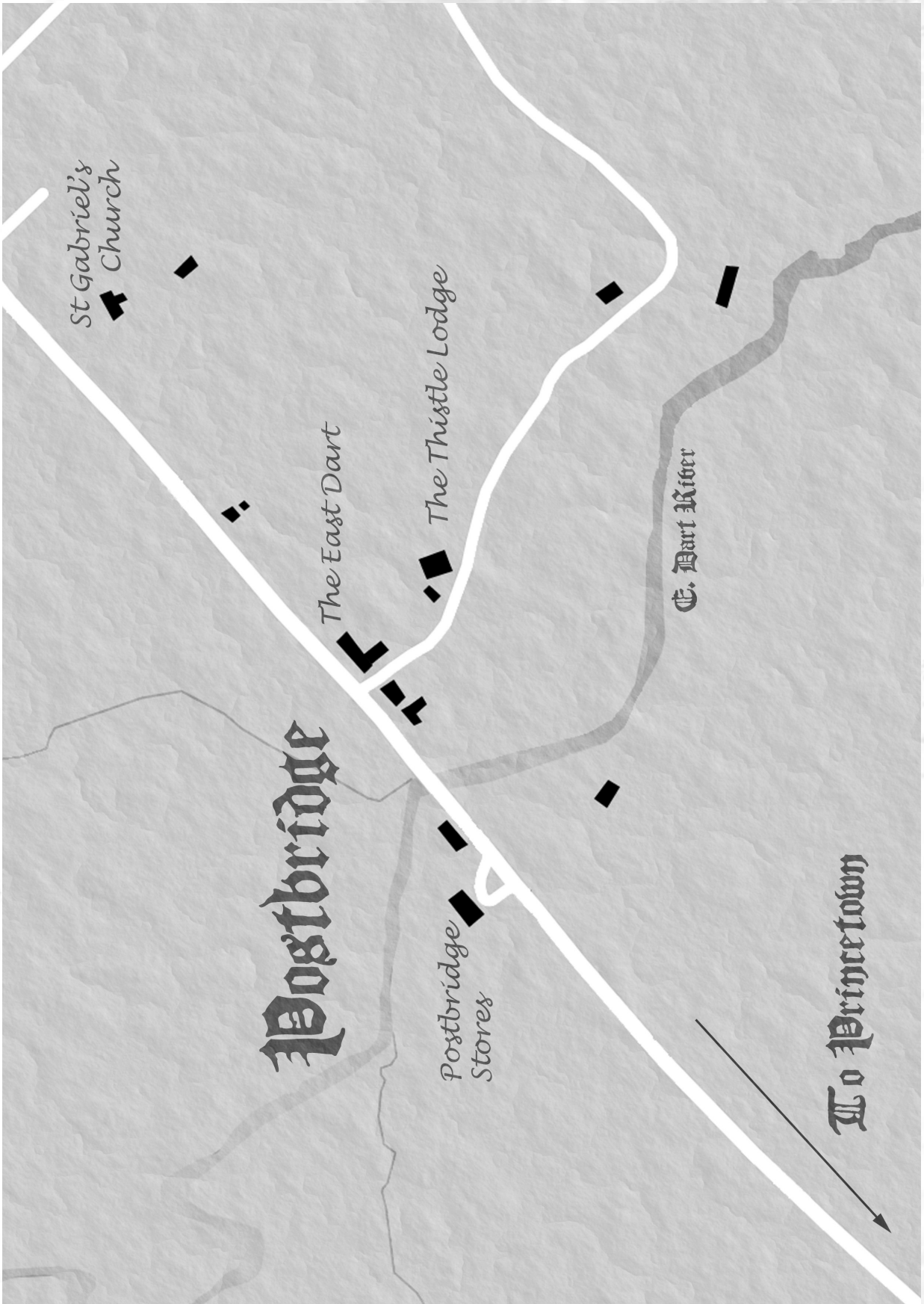
Should Father Blakely have died in their confrontation in the wood, but the investigators still managed to complete the ritual, do they let the Order of the Green Man dwindle away to nothing, knowing that the Horned Man will be released once again in a quarter of a century? Some may wish to devote themselves to the Order's cause; they will become a part of the nightmare that continues once the others take their leave of Dartmoor.

If the ritual to contain the Horned Man fails and Nyarlathotep takes his vengeance on the Order, then it is highly likely that many of the investigators may have met their demise at end of the adventure. Some may survive, however, though few would call them lucky. Again, ask the players to describe how they plan to return to their lives knowing that a great evil has been unleashed on the world. Its machinations may not have fully come into effect as yet, but the future surely holds nothing good. Perhaps some will return to the silent and empty houses of Postbridge seeking answers that they will likely never received. Other may spend their remaining days constantly haunted by what their actions have brought about. Perhaps one day, one of them will catch a glimpse of something out of the corner of their eye while walking home at night: a pair of shining red eyes glinting from within the darkness...





**Map of Princetown**



Map of Postbridge

How to Address a Postcard  
Postcard Addressing Form  
Postage & Return to Sender

My dearest friend,

I have made a most remarkable discovery! Who would have thought that Dartmoor held the key to my research? An extant group who actively worship an ancient god, right here in England. You must come to Postbridge at once! Your advice and insight into this matter would be most helpful. I have accomodation at the Thistle Lodge.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours,

Prof. M. Blackwood



The Miscellany Society  
44-45 Museum Street  
Bloomsbury  
London  
WC1A 1LY

## UNSEEN HANDS STRIKE AGAIN

A road outside the village of Postbridge, Devon, sees third accident in as many months.

Margaret Blackwood, Professor of Folklore at UCL and winner of the Cootes Lake Medal, was driven from the road to her death in mysterious circumstances last night.

Two similar accidents include the death of a doctor and a motor coach crash, the driver of which claimed it was as if two "large, strong, hairy hands" grabbed the wheel, forcing him to swerve.

A local psychic suggests the presence of a malign spirit, possibly a murder? Authorities are dismissive of such fancies, claiming the deaths result from drivers on unfamiliar roads.



**Handout #1 (above):** The postcard from Professor Blackwood inviting the investigators to Postbridge.

**Handout #2 (left):** Newspaper clipping detailing Blackwood's accident.



# POST MORTEM EXAMINATION REPORT

DECEASED **Margaret** **Joan** **BLACKWOOD** FACE **W** SEX **F** AGE **50s**  
First Name Middle Name Last Name

HOME ADDRESS **N/A** OCCUPATION: **Professor**

TYPE OF DEATH: Violent  Casualty  Suicide  Suddenly when in apparent health  Found Dead   
 In Prison  Suspicious, unusual or unnatural  Cremation

Comment: **Motor vehicle accident**

If Motor Vehicle Accident Check One: Driver  Passenger  Pedestrian  Unknown

Notification by: **Mr G. Wallis** Address: **12 Tavistock Rd. Princetown, Devon**

Investigating Agency: **Princetown constabulary, Detective L. Donnelly**

Description of Body  Clothed  Unclothed  Partly Clothed

Eyes **Hazel** Hair **Black/Grey** Mustache **N/A** Beard **N/A**

Weight **10 st 6 lb** Length **5' 4"** Body Temp **28 degrees** Date and Time **15th January approx 1 a.m.**  
Stone Pounds Feet Inches

Rigor: Yes  No  Lysed

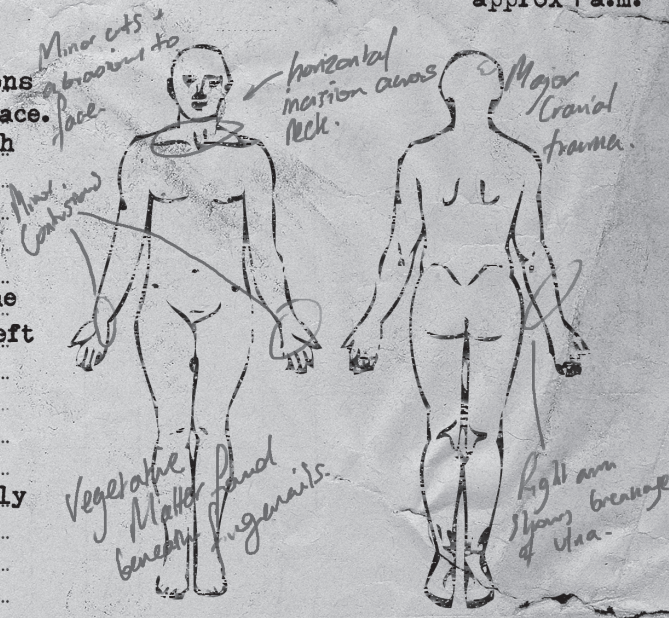
Marks and Wounds: **Deceased has multiple incisions across the body, especially to the hands and face. Incisions to face likely from passing through windshield.**

**Contusions are present on the wrists and also face.**

**Severe blow to cranium causing fracture of the parietal. Fracture and displacement of the left mandible is also in evidence.**

**Right ulna fractured. Does not protrude.**

**Major incision to carotid and jugular, probably caused by passage through glass. Fragments of black glass in wound.**



PROBABLE CAUSE OF DEATH	MANNER OF DEATH	DISPOSITION OF CASE
<b>Exsanguination from carotid artery.</b>  <b>Deceased likely knocked unconscious on impact.</b>	(check one only) Accident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> Homicide <input type="checkbox"/> Pending <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Not a medical examiner case <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. Autopsy requested Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Autopsy ordered Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Pathologist <b>D. E. Winter</b>

I hereby certify that, after receiving notification of the death described herein, I took charge of the body and made enquires as to the cause of death and that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and believe. Notification has also been made to the Registrar for an Entry of Death to be made, pursuant to the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1926.

**15th January 1935** **Dodman Prison, Princetown** **D. E. Winter**  
Date Place of Investigation Signature

**Handout #3 (above): Blackwood's autopsy report.**

**Handout #4 (see following page): Blackwood's journal detailing the events prior to her death.**

January 9, 1935

My research has led me from Princetown to the quaint Devonshire village of Postbridge. The inhabitants are somewhat strange and unwelcoming, though my landlady, Hannah Bucknam, is a dear. My attempts to discuss the folklore of this locale, however, are currently thwarted by the unhelpful attitude of its residents.

January 11, 1935

I write with great excitement. I have recently made the acquaintance of my landlady's husband, a cheerful man named James. He has been most helpful. While out drinking at the village's local inn, I inquired about the local folklore of Dartmoor and, after divulging some rudimentary tales, he struck me with a revelation that I had not expected. He hinted that a sect resides within the village, the roots of which might hark back to the times of the druidic orders. Perhaps Anna Bray was correct that nearby Wistman's Wood could be a druid grove. I have penned a letter to my friends back in London to tell them of this news and bid them come join me in what could be the discovery of a lifetime! Their expertise would be greatly helpful in unravelling this mystery.

January 12, 1935

My enquiries amongst Postbridge's citizens have all been rebuffed. I am no closer to confirming or

denying what James Bucknam has revealed to me. Furthermore, he refuses to divulge anything further. In fact, he now beseeches me to drop my lines of inquiry, last night going so far as to raise his voice! I wonder if the visit from the local Father had anything to do with his silence? Still, I am unperturbed. I will uncover the truth!

January 13, 1935

Still I am thwarted at every turn. The villagers are impossible to deal with and, at times, most rude. I am all but ready to drop my enquiries and move on to more fruitful pastures.

I have seen a group of the locals heading out of the village. It is late. Close to midnight? Perhaps this is my chance...

My God. No one should have to witness such horrors. That poor soul - slaughtered in the prime of his life. And the howling of the beasts! It shall haunt me for the rest of my days. Then it appeared. Such a being does not bear description. It caused such a state of shock that I nearly lost my faculties, but I managed to turn and run for all I am worth. I heard a shout, but kept going. I must contact my friends and warn them not to come. I write this in case I do not make it out of this place. I fear the worst. They are coming for me...