

Tickets-of-Leave are small self-contained additions to the [Convicts & Cthulhu](#) setting for Lovecraftian roleplaying in the early penal colonies of Australia. Each includes a selection of game elements which can either be used collectively as a thumbnail sketch of a mini-scenario, or can be used in isolation to provide pieces that enhance a scenario of your own invention.

Convicts & CTHULHU

TICKET of LEAVE #6

Night of the Convict Dead

CREDITS

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Introduction

The penal colonies of early Australia are not healthy places – a combination of disease, poor hygiene, and occasional periods of starvation (when supplies ran low) all conspire to make the lives of most convicts and settlers more than slightly unwholesome. This, coupled with the regimes of brutal corporal punishment – and occasional capital punishment – mean that Death is a frequent visitor to the colonies.

This [Convicts & Cthulhu](#) Ticket of Leave explores the practical aspects of death in the colonies, namely the burial and disposal of the corpses of the dead. This is a macabre topic, but one which is a very helpful

jumping-off point for any number of tales of horror and otherworldly mystery. After all, where would the tales of H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allen Poe, (not to mention George A. Romero) have been without a ready supply of corpses ...?

In the early days of colonial settlement there was remarkably little care taken to ensure the proper and consistent burial of the dead, and few records kept of the location of graves. This curious situation offers some interesting potential for tales of grave-robbing and necromancy: this supplement explores one such example. It also offers some historical notes of convict era burial locations and customs, in case the worst should happen and an investigator or cherished NPC goes to their maker and must be interred.





Burials at Sydney Town

By the era of *Convicts & Cthulhu*, the settlement at Sydney has been in existence for about two decades, and in that time there have already been several different sites used for the burial of the dead. All of them share one important property – they are unconsecrated ground. This is because, for the first 27 years of its establishment the burial sites used at the colony’s main settlement were unconnected with a church, being simply plots of land set aside as makeshift cemeteries.

During the first four years of the settlement at Sydney there was no official record kept of deaths and burials. In these early years, two sites in the area now called “The Rocks” were used for burying dead convicts – these were locations then at the extremities of the settlement. These places were not far from the site of the Gaol. At the same time another location out on Dawes Point (at a place known as Campbell’s Ridge) was used for burying sailors and marines who had died.

There are many indications that the early colonial governors massively underestimated the rate at which people, and in particular convicts, would die in the settlement. A big part of the underestimation was due to the arrival of the Second Fleet, which had a terrible voyage out from England during which half the convicts shackled aboard the ships perished at sea. Clearly once they arrived, they had to be buried somewhere.

The higher-than-expected death rate meant that within just a few years the places set aside for burying the dead were all full. To deal with this problem the colony initially (and unofficially) set aside a place in 1790 near the Military Barracks to be used for burials. This was only a short-term fix for the problem, and was soon filled up. Finally, the first official burial ground – a large space at the south end of George Street – was created by Governor Phillip in 1792. This is the one-and-only cemetery in use in Sydney Town throughout the entire period of *Convicts & Cthulhu*. [For those with knowledge of modern-day Sydney geography, this burying ground was located approximately at the location of the present-day Sydney Town Hall.]

The “Old Burial Ground” of Sydney

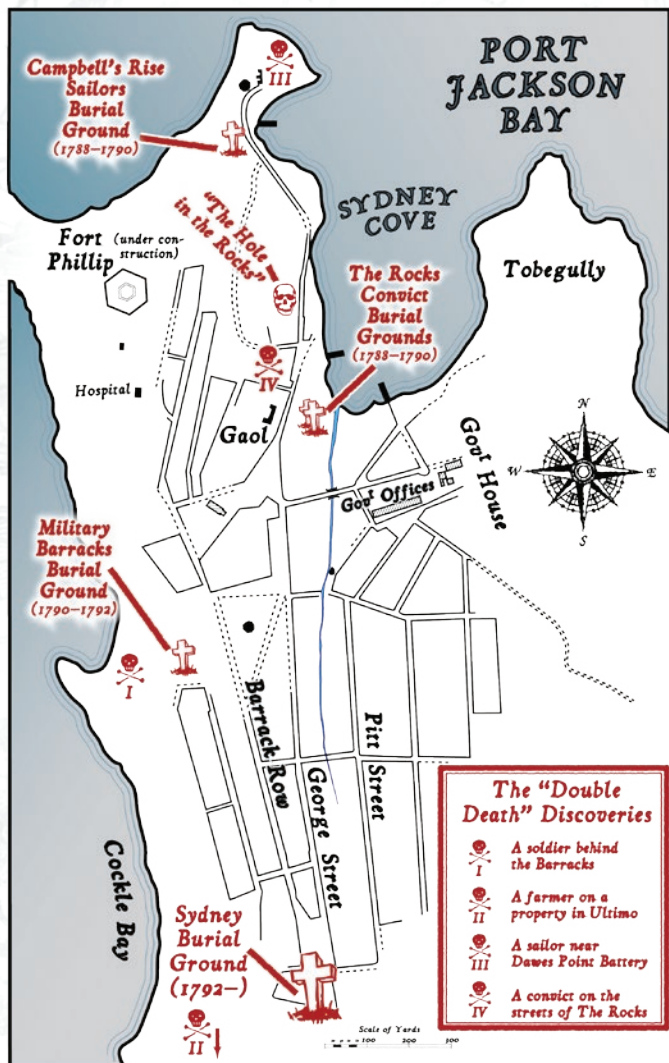
Sydney’s convict era public cemetery is known simply as “The Burial Ground” and stands near the corner of George Street and Kent Street. During the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era this is at the outskirts of settlement. In years to come this location will also be the site of a small church (St. Andrews), but this structure is not built until slightly after the time of *C&C* (in 1812).

The burial ground is unique in a number of ways. Firstly, it was never formally noted as an actual cemetery and was never consecrated by a religious authority. It was also extremely poorly administered, with no trustees over it, its management falling only under the jurisdiction of the Governor and the colony’s clergy. There are no official records kept of those buried there and only the grave markings indicate who has been buried where.

Perhaps most alarmingly, there is no real standardisation in the way in which bodies are buried – this means that while some bodies are buried deeply, others are interred in shallow graves only a few feet deep. This leads to horrible smells in the hot months (in particular, from November to February). To make matters worse, convicts have also been known to use the grounds as a kind of unofficial public latrine. Furthermore the burial ground has no fences or walls to separate it from adjacent fields meaning that pigs and goats wander freely among the graves. The former sometimes have been found digging for bodies that have not been buried deep enough in the ground.

The burial ground is not restricted to any particular religious denomination: people of all beliefs – even some Aboriginal peoples – are interred here. Some free citizens of the Colony, especially very religious ones, are suspicious of public burial grounds, preferring the model of burial ground attached to a church – prior to the founding of St Andrews in 1812 the best option for such burial is in Parramatta (see below).

While the general organisation of the burial ground is haphazard it is not entirely without formality. The burial ground is segregated according to status, with separate sections for soldiers and non-commissioned officers, officers, free settlers and



Burial Sites Around Sydney, old and new.

convicts. Headstones in the non-convict sections can be quite elaborate (indeed, a French visitor to the colony in 1802 noted its grave statuary is much finer than he had anticipated).

Other Places of Burial

While the Sydney Burial Ground at the end of George Street is the only currently-active place of interment in the Sydney Township, there are other places in the colony where corpses of dead Europeans are (or have been) buried:

- **Older sites in Sydney:** as noted above, the earliest burials (1788–1790) were either in the vicinity of “The Rocks” (for convicts) or out on Dawes Point (for mariners). Between 1790 and 1792, persons of all types were buried in the *ad hoc* burial ground behind the Military Barracks.


- **Traditional Aboriginal Burial sites:** Aboriginal people of the Sydney area dispose of their dead either by simple burial (for normal members of the community) or burial after cremation (for Elders). Personal belongings are sometimes buried with the dead. These burials often take place near water, either along river estuaries or on the coast. Aboriginal people who reside in town are usually buried (by colonists) according to British customs when they die.

- **Parramatta:** Unlike the situation in Sydney, the public burial ground in Parramatta township is directly tied to a church, St. John’s. The first burial at this location – a convict child – took place in 1790. [This cemetery, and indeed this headstone, still exists making St John’s the oldest European burial site still in existence in Australia.] The St. John’s Cemetery is little more than an open paddock adjacent to the church, at the outskirts of Parramatta. In the years shortly after the Convicts & Cthulhu era this is upgraded to have a fence and ditch enclosure to protect the graves. Although St. John’s is a Protestant church, the cemetery accepts all faiths.

- **Burials on Private Properties:** In some cases the deceased are simply buried on private farmland, perhaps beneath land they tended themselves. This is particularly common for farmsteads located in more isolated or outlying areas of the colony.
- **Ebenezer on the Hawkesbury:** Ebenezer is a small township of Presbyterians located on the Hawkesbury River; it has a church and (from 1807) a burial ground.

Burial Customs and Rituals

The era of *Convicts & Cthulhu* is one in which there is an ongoing shift in burial customs, away from the more pragmatic and functional mode common throughout the 18th Century, towards the more sentimental approach which typifies the first half of the 19th Century. Whereas the old ways emphasized expedience and sanitation when it came to the disposal of corpses, the newer focus is on more ritualised displays of grief.



By the end of the decades covered by *C&C*, it was not uncommon for ceremonies to inter the bodies of former well-to-do men and women to be stately affairs involving elaborate processions. In some cases people even took to hiring “undertakers’ mutes” – silent figures, sometimes children, who walked along solemnly behind the coffin. The goal of these ornate details was to help forge a link between funeral grandeur and respectability for the deceased.

In order to cater to more elaborate funerals, some fine cabinet makers also took to doubling as undertakers. Coffins were usually wood, sometimes decorated with brass tacks and held together with wooden pegs.

In the penal settlements it was normal for convict labourers to serve as gravediggers, digging graves for both their “social betters” and for others of their ilk. As noted above, the quality of the job performed by these convict gravediggers varied considerably.

Convicts themselves are buried with little formality: chain gangs of convicts are assembled to carry convict dead to the burying place, where a shallow grave awaits. The body is put into the ground unclothed and sometimes without even a wooden box. It is covered with quicklime, which is believed to be more hygienic than burning the body.

Military funerals are considerably more ceremonial, and usually feature a group of NSW Corps men assembled to beat the drums as the body is interred.

Wakes are common for the deceased. There is a significant variance in the tone and solemnity of these events, depending on the background of those involved. English wakes tend towards being sedate affairs held after the burial celebrating the life of the deceased. Conversely, Irish wakes are gatherings which take place before the corpse is interred, usually featuring drunken singing and dancing around the laid-out body of the deceased. Englishmen within the colony tend to see the latter type of overt grief as being evidence of the dissolution of the Irish.

All burials were public events, with processions of townspeople following the corpse.

Recent archaeology of the Parramatta convict hospital suggests burial of stillborn babies was done haphazardly on the hospital grounds.

Scenario: Night of the Convict Dead

The following adventure seed makes use of the early colony’s haphazard burial customs, as described in the preceding notes. It is set in and around the Sydney township, and can take place any time after or around the year 1800.


In addition to offering a specific story outline, three variants are offered to allow the Keeper to tweak the scenario in different ways, to fit the tone and background of his or her game.

Keeper's Introduction

The origins of this dark tale begin decades ago in London, where a wicked necromancer and murderer named Jonathan Stitch was engaged in a foul enterprise. Partnered with his wife Elizabeth, Stitch undertook a series of murders – at least a score – between the years 1768 and 1785. The motivations for these killings were tied to his ongoing hunger to master the magical arts of bringing the dead back to life. He had spent years studying mouldering tomes, but the honing of the dark skills of necromancy are only possible with a ready supply of corpses on which to experiment.

Unsurprisingly, the murder spree was eventually brought to an end when the husband and wife were apprehended by the constabulary. While the prime mover, Jonathan was also a cunning man and quite ruthless. He made a convincing case that it was in fact Elizabeth who was the chief instigator, with himself being just an unwitting accomplice. So it was that the court sentenced the “foul murderess” to hanging, while Jonathan escaped with the lesser charge of transportation to the penal colony of New South Wales.

Jonathan Stitch travelled with the First Fleet and arrived in Australia in 1788. His education and skills as a man of learning marked him as a convict who could do more to help the colony than merely breaking rocks and constructing buildings. In the years he has been in New South Wales, Stitch has been a model prisoner – seemingly someone who is willing to quietly serve his time before returning to his former life in England. Indeed this is the story he puts about to all. His demeanour and general



trustworthiness have led to increasingly trusted roles working as a minor clerk in Government House. This allows him to remain separate from the greater unwashed masses of convicts.

THE DARK SECRET OF STITCH

The mild-mannered and compliant face which Jonathan Stitch presents to the world is actually little more than a façade. In truth, he remains as black-hearted as ever, and has even managed to secretly resume his dark necromantic experiments by slyly abusing the trust placed in him. He is aided greatly in his foul work by the lax manner with which the colony accounts for its dead.

Stitch's plan has always been to continue his researches until he has mastered the art of resurrection. While he does indeed hope to return to London, his goal in doing so is mostly tied to using his skills at necromancy to bring his wife back from the dead. He may be a heartless would-be sorcerer, but is not entirely without remorse for betraying Elizabeth.

The brutality of convict life has allowed Stitch to commit regular secret murders and experiment on the dead. But despite this constant study, his goal of true resurrection – as opposed to mere corpse animation – has eluded him. Clearly his understanding of the arcane secrets is lacking some vital ingredient – but recent events have delivered an enticing new piece of information which Jonathan believes will reverse that situation.

Some months ago, while casually observing the cruel floggings carried out at the Sydney Gaol the would-be necromancer spotted a luridly tattooed convict being soundly beaten. While it is not uncommon for convicts to bear tattoos, it was the strange text tattooed on the man's lower back that caught Stitch's eye. While gibberish to the casual observer, these words were to Jonathan plainly part of a Satanic invocation to raise the dead. Seeing this necromantic tattoo text has inspired him into attempting a new avenue of research, marrying what he has learned from tomes with the new incantation, in a kind of unholy hybrid. In his hubris, Stitch is certain that this is the missing piece that will finally unlock the secrets of reincarnation. Sadly he is mistaken in that belief, and that error will likely result in a magickal catastrophe – the night of the convict dead.

THE TATTOOED CONVICT

In one respect – the diabolical nature of the tattooed convict – Stitch is quite correct. The man in question, one Bart 'Lucifer' Jones is a past member of a cabal of Cornish Satanists who was recently transported for seven years when caught stealing handkerchiefs. While this misdeed seems frivolous it was nothing of the sort – the cult brothers of Lucifer had need of personal items from prominent men in order to exert magical control over them. Thankfully for the handkerchief thief this curious fact did not come out in court. But even the petty theft charges were sufficient to land him a sentence of transportation to New South Wales.

Lucifer knows no actual magic but his tattoos carry many of the Cornish coven's occult secrets. In order to gain access to this source of mystical wisdom, Jonathan Stitch made use of both his influence at Government House and his one existing ally in the colony – a laughable soldier named Hamdean.

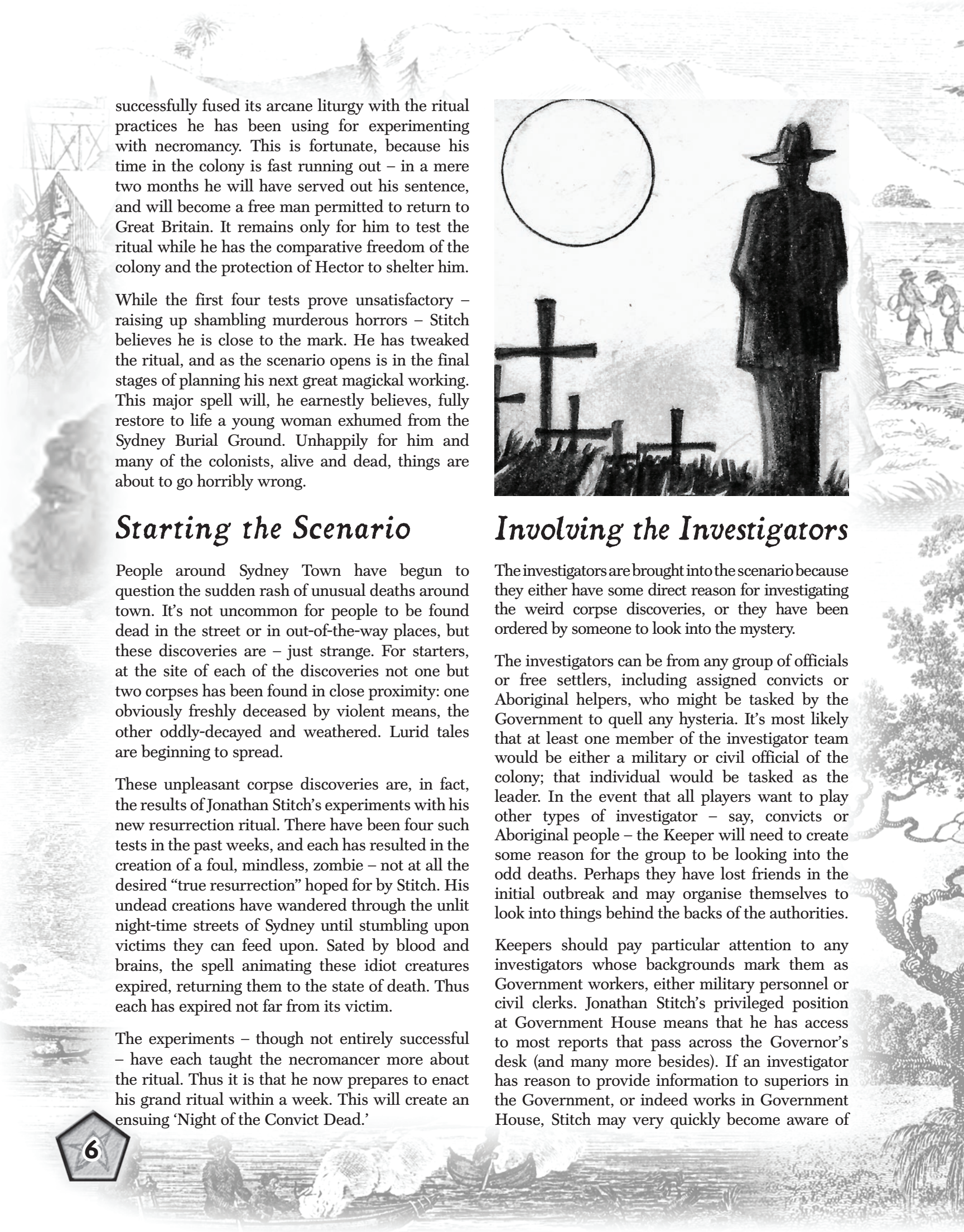
THE MALADROIT SOLDIER

Jonathan's one ally in iniquity is a degenerate NSW Corps officer by the name of Lt. Hector Hamdean. Hamdean is a plump self-effacing fellow with a joke name, whose comic-seeming persona hides the secret of being a necrophiliac and cannibal. He stumbled accidentally on Jonathan's activities and now the two work together to mutual advantage. Hector doesn't believe in the slightest in Jonathan's mumbo-jumbo, but recognizes that the necromancer's talents at silently obtaining dead bodies is a boon to his disgusting fetishes.

Hamdean has been an associate to Stitch for some months, but the discovery of the Tattooed Convict gave sudden purpose to the previously-informal alliance. The necromancer, realising that he needed some legitimate justification for long hours spent studying the convict's inked inscriptions, concocted a plan. Forging some papers, he readily arranged for Lucifer to become a convict personally assigned to Lt. Hamdean. With the latter in his pocket, he could spend hours poring over the disgusting man's skin without anyone ever knowing.

A STITCH OUT OF TIME

After weeks of studying the words of the Satanic invocation, Stitch now believes that he has



successfully fused its arcane liturgy with the ritual practices he has been using for experimenting with necromancy. This is fortunate, because his time in the colony is fast running out – in a mere two months he will have served out his sentence, and will become a free man permitted to return to Great Britain. It remains only for him to test the ritual while he has the comparative freedom of the colony and the protection of Hector to shelter him.

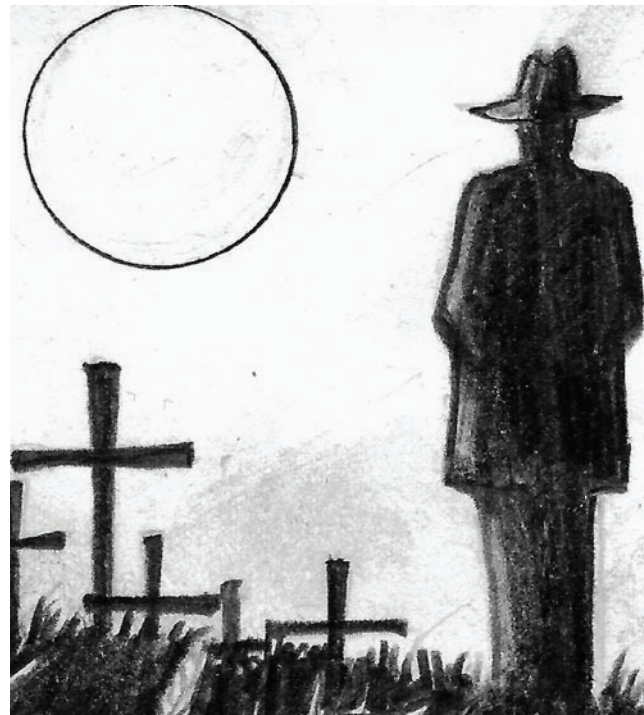
While the first four tests prove unsatisfactory – raising up shambling murderous horrors – Stitch believes he is close to the mark. He has tweaked the ritual, and as the scenario opens is in the final stages of planning his next great magickal working. This major spell will, he earnestly believes, fully restore to life a young woman exhumed from the Sydney Burial Ground. Unhappily for him and many of the colonists, alive and dead, things are about to go horribly wrong.

Starting the Scenario

People around Sydney Town have begun to question the sudden rash of unusual deaths around town. It's not uncommon for people to be found dead in the street or in out-of-the-way places, but these discoveries are – just strange. For starters, at the site of each of the discoveries not one but two corpses has been found in close proximity: one obviously freshly deceased by violent means, the other oddly-decayed and weathered. Lurid tales are beginning to spread.

These unpleasant corpse discoveries are, in fact, the results of Jonathan Stitch's experiments with his new resurrection ritual. There have been four such tests in the past weeks, and each has resulted in the creation of a foul, mindless, zombie – not at all the desired “true resurrection” hoped for by Stitch. His undead creations have wandered through the unlit night-time streets of Sydney until stumbling upon victims they can feed upon. Sated by blood and brains, the spell animating these idiot creatures expired, returning them to the state of death. Thus each has expired not far from its victim.

The experiments – though not entirely successful – have each taught the necromancer more about the ritual. Thus it is that he now prepares to enact his grand ritual within a week. This will create an ensuing ‘Night of the Convict Dead.’



Involving the Investigators

The investigators are brought into the scenario because they either have some direct reason for investigating the weird corpse discoveries, or they have been ordered by someone to look into the mystery.

The investigators can be from any group of officials or free settlers, including assigned convicts or Aboriginal helpers, who might be tasked by the Government to quell any hysteria. It's most likely that at least one member of the investigator team would be either a military or civil official of the colony; that individual would be tasked as the leader. In the event that all players want to play other types of investigator – say, convicts or Aboriginal people – the Keeper will need to create some reason for the group to be looking into the odd deaths. Perhaps they have lost friends in the initial outbreak and may organise themselves to look into things behind the backs of the authorities.

Keepers should pay particular attention to any investigators whose backgrounds mark them as Government workers, either military personnel or civil clerks. Jonathan Stitch's privileged position at Government House means that he has access to most reports that pass across the Governor's desk (and many more besides). If an investigator has reason to provide information to superiors in the Government, or indeed works in Government House, Stitch may very quickly become aware of

Four Sydney “Double Deaths”

When	Victim	Location Bodies Discovered	Corpse Raised From
Two weeks ago	A soldier	Near the Military Barracks	Burial ground behind Military Barracks
Eight days ago	A farmer	At a property near Ultimo	Private family burying ground on farm
Four days ago	A sailor	Near Dawes Point Battery	Sailors burial ground on Campbell’s Ridge
One day ago	A convict	The Rocks	Old 1780s convict burying ground in The Rocks

their activities. This could lead to subtle (or not so subtle) dangers later on: see the box “Abusing Colonial Authority” for some ideas about how the devilish paper-pusher might subtly make their lives a misery in order to put them off his scent.

Initial Investigations

Over the past two weeks four mysterious “double deaths” have occurred around Sydney. The box nearby summarises these grisly discoveries. The most recent of the incidents occurred just one day prior to the start of the scenario – for this discovery, the bodies are still in situ and can be inspected directly. The earlier cases have now all been long cleared away, but can still be investigated by researching written records, interviewing witnesses, and searching the area in which the bodies were found.

In each case two corpses have been found at the scene: one fresh and looking like it died by bloody violence and one old and mouldering. Inspecting the latest pair of corpses – still lying in a back street in The Rocks – will also reveal that the old, decaying corpse is horribly disfigured and partially eaten away by quicklime.

All of the murders seem to have had signs of a struggle between victim and corpse, despite the advanced stage of decay in the older-looking corpse.

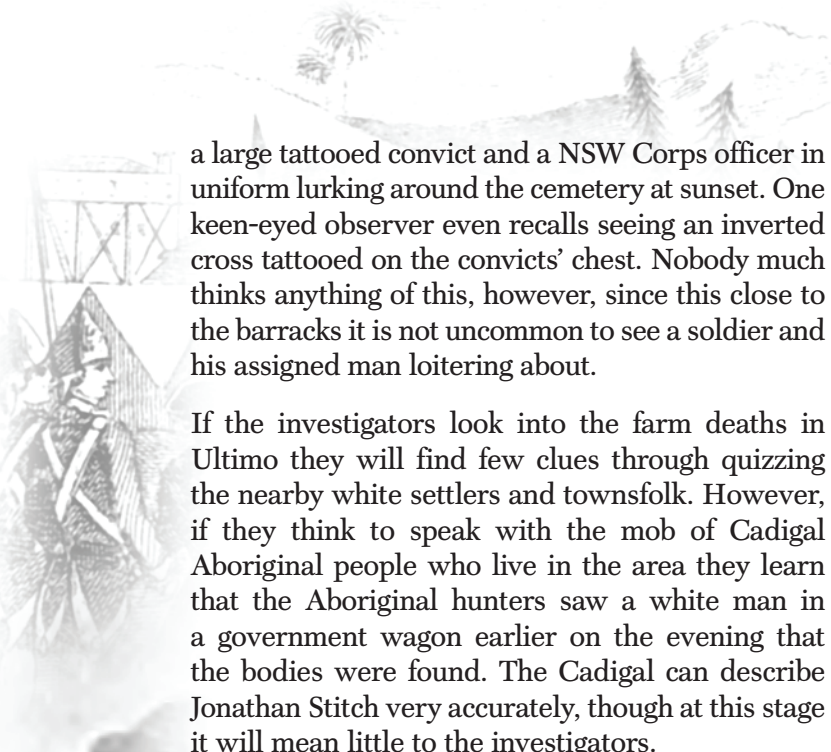
Careful inspection of the sites of the two most recent discoveries (coupled with **Hard Spot Hidden** rolls) will reveal the presence of a trail of quicklime and dirt leading from the scene. A **Track** roll will allow investigators to follow this trail; by further making a **Luck** roll the surviving track leads all the way back to the burial ground where the corpse was raised from the dead. Either through inspection of the

burial ground or by asking locals in the vicinity of the burying ground it is easy to discover that there has been evidence of recent disturbance of the ground at the cemetery in question. Most people don’t see this as odd, since it’s not uncommon to see dogs digging in the burial grounds (including, at two locations of the Keeper’s choosing, a yellowish dog fed by local Aboriginal groups – see “Further Investigations: A Dog Named Governor”).

If investigators check other old burial places they may discover additional evidence of grave tampering, and perhaps even the scant remains of tracks of grave soil which lead towards the locations where the mysterious deaths were reported. Examining these burial sites will show footprints and other marks of people moving around it and some candle wax and dried blood in a tight little pool of drops making a cross. If they later think to try to match the footprints to the boots of Jonathan Stitch and Lucifer Jones they will find a perfect match. Investigators who succeed in an **Occult** roll discern that the wax and blood at the scene might suggest an occult connection.

At one of the discovery sites (of the Keeper’s choosing), investigators succeeding in a **Spot Hidden** discover an additional clue. Lodged in some out-of-the-way spot is a strip of tarry fabric with crumbs of sandstone stuck to in it. A **Science (Geology)** or **Hard INT** roll will identify the stone fragments as being similar to rocks currently being quarried by convicts around The Rocks area of Sydney. This clue may eventually lead to a hideout in The Rocks where Stitch conducts his experiments (see “Further Investigations: A Hole in The Rocks”).

Asking around the Military Barracks about recent activity in the small burial ground nearby will yield results: several soldiers recall a few weeks ago seeing



a large tattooed convict and a NSW Corps officer in uniform lurking around the cemetery at sunset. One keen-eyed observer even recalls seeing an inverted cross tattooed on the convicts' chest. Nobody much thinks anything of this, however, since this close to the barracks it is not uncommon to see a soldier and his assigned man loitering about.

If the investigators look into the farm deaths in Ultimo they will find few clues through quizzing the nearby white settlers and townsfolk. However, if they think to speak with the mob of Cadigal Aboriginal people who live in the area they learn that the Aboriginal hunters saw a white man in a government wagon earlier on the evening that the bodies were found. The Cadigal can describe Jonathan Stitch very accurately, though at this stage it will mean little to the investigators.


Further Investigations

After the initial investigations the following leads (and red herrings) can be followed up:

- **Convict gossip.** Investigators asking around about hulking tattooed convict will quickly learn that only one man matches that description – the loathsome “Lucifer” Jones.
- ⑧ As much as Lucifer is a fearful presence, there are convicts who know of his secret activities, and that he was no mere handkerchief snatcher. Keepers should feel free to make these convict tales as lurid as possible.
- ⑧ Denizens of the Rocks have seen a man bearing Lucifer’s description hauling a large sack through the area on several different nights. They know better than to have asked him any questions. The area he covered can be narrowed to a few blocks (this is the area around “The Hole in the Rocks”, see below)
- **The Hole in The Rocks.** Investigators who have found clues pointing to The Rocks may be eager to scour the area for evidence of wrongdoing. This is easier said than done, owing to the generally scurrilous nature of those that live in this decrepit part of Sydney.
- ⑧ Asking around harbour-side dives elicits a dark tale: some locals believe a murderer rows ashore from a sinister ship in the harbour and prowls The Rocks. They say he keeps a small shack that hides an abandoned

cellar. This story is half true (see below), but the false half may have the investigators chasing out in the harbour. Fiendish Keepers may wish to have a strange-looking, but innocent ship in the harbour.

- ⑧ Lurking around The Rocks at night will generally prove fruitless unless the investigators can narrow down the area of their search (e.g., by only considering the vicinity where Lucifer was seen before). If they also have good descriptions of one or more of the suspicious characters seen at burying grounds this will be even easier. On any particular night the Keeper should ask for a **Luck** roll – if successful, one of the men can be seen lurking around a rough wooden door and silently slipping inside.
- ⑧ The building beyond the door is a small sandstone cellar-like pair of rooms, kept closed by a ramshackle wooden outhouse above it with a locked door. It is in fact an abandoned works now used by Jonathan Stitch and his allies for some of their grislier activities.
- ⑧ The cellar contains body parts and other grisly trophies of Hamdean and Stitch, as well as Satanic paraphernalia Stitch is too afraid to keep in his home. Stitch comes here every three nights, Lucifer about the same, and Hamdean once a week. It’s rare for all three to be there together.
- **Concerned for the Soul of Lucifer.** If the investigators latch onto Lucifer Jones – the tattooed convict – as a person of interest, they may begin asking around about him. Such inquiries will very quickly find them contacted by a most concerned missionary. Stephen Galt is a missionary, trader, and also a regular at Rowland Hassall’s shop in Parramatta. He has had his eye on “Lucifer” Jones for a while, believing that his many tattoos are Satanic in purpose. He has not found many people willing to believe such wild tales. A few people have offered the counter-suggestion that the weird symbols look Masonic (which is entirely false), but most people think they are simply gibberish. Once the investigators start asking questions, Galt will seek them out. If the Keeper wishes, the missionary’s knowledge about Jones can then lead the investigators to Hamdean (Jones’ assigned master) and perhaps ultimately to Jonathan Stitch himself.



- **A Dog named Governor.** Investigators who ask around about possible explanations for holes dug in Sydney burial grounds will eventually be told of a yellowish-brown stray dog that is often seen digging in the same sections of the cemeteries. According to locals, this mutt has been taken in by a group of Aboriginal peoples of the Cadigal clan who are currently camped out at the outer harbour. If the investigators track down this Cadigal family they can easily find the dog in question – they have named it after the current Governor including full honours (e.g., “The Governor the Honourable William Bligh”). The dog has nothing to do with the case but the Cadigal are happy to encourage any whites in thinking it is important, since they find white people’s fascinations incomprehensible at the best of times.

- **Government and Military Records.** If the investigators come to suspect Jonathan Stitch or Hector Hamdean of involvement, they may wish to peruse the colonial records to spot mention of those men. Such a search (if accompanied by a **Library Use** roll) can reveal much of their past as described in the Keeper’s introduction. The Keeper should, however, note that both Stitch and Hamdean are both sly individuals who are very good at presenting an unthreatening, even mild or bumbling appearance. It may take deeper investigation – such as talking with their peers or co-workers – to bring the full truth of their natures to light.

- **Jonathan Stitch’s House.** Once the investigators have learned Stitch’s name it’s quite likely that they will want to search the place where he lives. Stitch is a convict, but a trusted one and as such is allowed to keep a small house. This is located a street back from the row of military officers’ houses. The houses in this area are notorious for routinely falling down and being put back up. (Some superstitious locals believe this is because something peculiar is happening underground, but in reality it’s caused by remarkably poor construction.) Stitch’s house, however, is stable enough for now. If investigators break in and search it they will find, concealed under floor boards beneath his chamber pot, a sheaf of papers. These are old letters from Jonathan’s (long-dead) wife Elizabeth, dating back to their days together in England. If the Keeper wishes, these might reveal something of the couple’s murderous iniquity, if not Jonathan’s definitive role in it.



- **The Notebook in Stitch’s Office.** Another possible avenue of investigation is Stitch’s small office inside Government House. Stitch works here most days, but anyone with access to the building after hours can easily scour the office. On a shelf in this small and meticulously-neat room, the necromancer keeps his secret notebooks – hidden in plain sight as a leather-bound “Day Book” mixed in with dozens of other books of the same type. Investigators succeeding in a **Spot Hidden** roll will note that this volume carries less dust than its fellows. It is within the pages of this notebook that Stitch keeps his working notes about the ritual he is preparing (i.e., the spell he has cobbled together).

- **Hamdean’s Quarters – The Disappointed Blackmailer.** Investigators who suspect Lt Hamdean’s involvement may search the military barracks where he lives. A **Spot Hidden** roll made during such an examination will reveal an interesting note buried at the bottom of a filthy chest of socks. The note reads: “I know what you are up to. I want grog and plenty of it for my tongue to be stilled” and is signed off with a crude black smudge that might be a crow. If investigators ask around about possible authors of this blackmail letter, several people can inform them that the crow mark is used by Henry Crowe, a convict in a work gang. Sadly, the trail ends there: Crowe has recently gone missing. Investigators may suspect that Hamdean has somehow done away with his blackmailer, but in reality Crowe has simply absconded and is hiding out somewhere in the bush. If anyone thinks to engage Aboriginal trackers, they can easily find him (although he knows nothing much of interest to the case).



Complications

The main complication that stands in the investigators' path is that their two principal antagonists – Jonathan Stitch and Hector Hamdean – are clever and ruthless opponents. Stitch in particular, once he becomes aware that there is someone on his scent will not hesitate to abuse his limited authority to arrange for them to be killed. Some of the tactics he might employ are noted below.

- **Send 'Lucifer' after them.** Lucifer is a skilled murderer, and will make a formidable opponent if he decides to stalk and kill the investigators. He will take care to make it at night, in somewhere isolated location. Keepers should compensate by allowing a chance for any surviving investigators to get a good look at their assailant.
- **Send Lt Hamdean after them.** Against convict investigators this will be an especially effective measure, but could also be tried against anyone, given the extreme power wielded by the NSW Corps. In this instance he will get a junior officer to frame or otherwise accuse the investigators of some misdemeanour, so that they are dragged through the wheels of colonial justice. This is likely to result in the investigator being locked up for a day or so while things sort themselves out. The downside to this tactic is that it might somehow be traceable back to Stitch via the detailed paper-trail kept at Government House.
- **Send zombies after them.** This is trickier, since Jonathan has nothing like actual control over the unclean creatures he raises from the dead. His best bet is to wait until the investigators are standing close to a corpse (buried or otherwise) and animate it. This could prove to be a surprisingly effective trap – luring the investigators in via their own curiosity at the discovery of an open grave or a corpse in an unusual location (e.g., their front parlour), while lurking somewhere close by to launch the spell when it will create the most danger.

A Plan Gone Wrong: The Night of the Convict Dead

The casting of the great ritual which Jonathan Stitch intends as the culmination of all his years of research, is planned to take place on a night approximately 7 days after the scenario begins. This timeline is, however, not strict since it simply reflects the amount of time Stitch requires to properly meld his traditional magic ritual with the new information he has learned from Lucifer's tattoo and from his failed experiments. Keepers may move the big ritual forward or back by a day or so, if it serves a more dramatic purpose. Certainly the closer the investigators get to Jonathan and his plans the earlier he will go, especially if he attempts to kill them and fail.

After having already pilfered the smaller graveyards around Sydney, Stitch has plans to conduct his grand ritual in the large burying ground at the south end of George Street. The number of corpses buried here is much larger than in any of the smaller cemeteries, which makes the location of a suitable resurrection candidate much easier. However, the density of bodies here will (as it turns out) also create a serious problem.

This is because – unknown to the would-be necromancer – the spell that he has cobbled together does not bring one corpse back to perfect life, as he intends. Rather it brings every corpse within 20 yard radius back to shambling, zombie animation – at least temporarily (see the spell description nearby).

On the night, he proceeds to the burial ground on foot taking with him both his confederates. There he tries the spell. If he fails in the casting, nothing happens – he will go away, study and return another night (the Keeper should give Stitch a bonus on future casting rolls). When the casting finally succeeds the spell's effect will be quite spectacular. All corpses close to the necromancer which were not buried with religious or totemic items, are transformed into zombies. This equates to 50+4D10 corpses, with their reanimation spread over the space of a dozen minutes. Since most of the corpses are still buried they will need to claw their way out of their graves. The sight of a hundred decayed corpses pulling themselves from the earth is worth 1/2D4 Sanity Points.

Abusing Colonial Authority: A Villain's Primer

Jonathan Stitch and Lt Hamdean offer excellent examples of villains placed in positions where they have access to some degree of authority, even if not direct power. This offers them some unique opportunities to make life difficult for the investigators.

Abuse of an official position in Colonial society is rife; they even have a word for it – Malversation. While colonial Governors are under constant accounting scrutiny from the Colonial Office in London, at lower levels of power there is much leeway for exploitation. In this environment a villain out to make life hard for investigators could be problematic indeed. Keepers can elect to use some of the following guidelines for Jonathan Stitch's activities, or use them for any villain in a similar position in other adventures.

It should be noted though that the penalty for falsifying documents is very harsh, and can lead to imprisonment or flogging, re-transportation (depending on the era) and lengthening of sentence for a reoffending convict. Of course the promise of harsh punishment doesn't deter truly motivated individuals, who abide by the ageless creed of "just don't get caught doing it."

Some malversation examples:

- **Vexatious litigation.** Colonial society is strikingly legalistic and vexatious with legal arguments, which sometimes develop into bitter feuds. A falsified accusation sent to a vexatious individual, even one relating to something as trivial as a broken fence or stray pig, might end up in the magistrates court once the target retaliates. At the very least such a headache would tie up an investigator's time; in the worst case he or she might have fines levied against them, be subject to imprisonment, or even flogged.
- **Mired down in bureaucracy.** The bureaucracy of Colonial society is significant, and can be unleashed like a weapon on an investigator by a knowledgeable person. This is particularly true if the malversant is well-versed in the kinds of requests or other documents to send. Musters and stock takes are regular and time-consuming, curfews are regular, letters sent from the Governor often have strict time demands for reply on pain of gaining his disfavour (something especially to be avoided if the Governor is Bligh). The penalty for not meeting these bureaucratic regulations can be harsh.
- **False Orders.** People in the colony rarely ignore or question a direct official order, especially a letter that seems to have the Governor's endorsement. Investigators could be sent off to the hinterland of Hawkesbury or Newcastle on all kinds of wild goose chases, ordered to investigate rumoured stills, or activities of smugglers or the like. Of course, this might lead accidentally to actual genuine mysteries (and even entirely different Mythos encounters).
- **Missing Records.** Any time that official papers go missing it spells problems for someone. For military or bureaucratic employees, missing muster records or a misplaced ticket-of-leave might be an administrative problem. But for the convicts affected, the situation might be far more dire – if a ticket-of-leave convict or ex-convict is suddenly unable to prove their status they might find their freedom being revoked. This might mean imprisonment, re-transportation, or flogging.
- **Bribed magistrates or other officials.** Many magistrates, soldiers, settlers who hold a government office, and even convict overseers and trustees are very open to bribes. A well-placed bribe might lead to anything from minor inconveniences, such as having to answer to some trumped-up charge, all the way to fatal consequences (heavy flogging has been known to kill).
- **Unhappy assignments.** The assignment of convicts to settlers or to work crews is administered by Government House. A malicious clerk might arrange for a convict to be suddenly reassigned to a notoriously cruel master, or set aside for road work or other work gangs where the physical labour is back-breaking. These assignments might even take them away from Sydney, even out into the hinterlands, making continued investigations problematic.
- **Secondary Transportation.** The most extreme administrative manipulation would be the faking of orders to re-transport a convict to another penal settlement. In the early part of the Convicts & Cthulhu era (prior to 1804) the most likely sentence is transportation to Norfolk Island, although later there are other options – Van Diemen's Land, and Coal River. Given the remoteness of these places this would very effectively hamper any investigators for a considerable time.



Once he has set this horrific scene in motion, the callow Jonathan panics and flees the burying ground to hole up inside the military barracks to defend himself. The investigators are free to deal with this situation as best they can. In all likelihood, they will eventually find themselves joined by a contingent of NSW Corps soldiers, dispatched to put down the zombies. Sadly muskets are not very effective weapons against a zombie army.

As described in the box nearby, the spell has a duration of 12 hours. This means that, unless killed, the zombie horde will continue their hungry rampage until well into the next day. This has the potential to create significant havoc. Any person (i.e., non-zombie) that dies within that 12 hour period either near the burying ground or near one of the zombies will themselves also rise as a zombie. (Note this is the spell continuing, not true zombie contagion – for that variation, see below.) Clearly the investigators have some work to do.

Aftermath and Denouement

Regardless of whether the investigators succeed in preventing or quashing the Night of the Convict Dead, news of the horror will not be widespread. The Government suppresses the story of walking dead, claiming that a drunken bacchanal among convicts, officers and degenerate settlers desecrating the burial ground led to mad tales of animated corpses. Anyone heard retelling the story will be assumed to have been under the influence of such debauchery and flogged for having taken

part in it. Indeed the Governor himself will believe it was all a drunken riot, which has a very familiar ring to those with experience of colonial life.

Investigators who stopped the would-be necromancer before he could cast his grand ritual earn 1D4 Sanity Points; those who witnessed the Night of the Convict Dead but somehow stopped it erupting into wholesale slaughter will earn 1D6 Sanity Points. Killing or otherwise neutralising the mastermind of the operation (whether that is Stitch or, using the variant option, Lucifer) is good for a further 1D4 Sanity Points. Conversely, a conclusion which leaves the necromancer alive and on the loose is destined to result in a sequel – Dawn of the Convict Dead!

Tweaking the Scenario: A Trio of Variants

Depending on the Keeper's campaign and preferred play-style, he or she may want to adapt the scenario. Here are a few ideas for variations.

THE LUCIFER MOB

If using this option, the identity of the true antagonist is different. Stitch is just a failed pathetic pawn; the real mastermind is Lucifer Jones, who leads an actual Satanic cabal. Although Jonathan plays at being a necromancer, he is really nothing without the dark magic controlled by the cabal. Lucifer is the head of this order (which naturally numbers 13) and Hector is his catspaw. The Satanists intend

to raise the dead so that they might march on Government House and the Military Barracks and claim the colony as their own.

Lucifer is labouring under a false assumption that the army of dead can be commanded – in fact, they are simply mindless and hungry (since control was never part of Jonathan's original work that the cabal have co-opted). Thus his plans are somewhat doomed to fail.

Use this variant if there is a large group of Investigators or a more aggressive opponent is preferred: the cult will turn nasty very quickly and have some highly-placed members who can cause trouble for the investigators, aside from any violent threats.

CONVICT CONTAGION

For a nastier problem the Keeper can make the zombie's bites contagious, as is typical of movie or TV zombies. If using this option, anyone bitten or scratched by a zombie will transform into one within an hour, even if the victim is dead.

In this case the original corpse/murder sites will vary, with only one of them featuring both a victim and an old corpse. The rest of the discoveries will be either a corpse OR a victim, assuming the other has wandered off somewhere. Any corpse or victim will have suffered damage to its brain during the tussle, which will suggest one way of stopping the zombies. This is not intentional, but an accidental outcome of the previous struggle, provided as a clue to investigators.

THE BLACK MAN WITH THE HORNS

If the Keeper wishes to introduce an explicit link between the foul plans of Jonathan Stitch and the Cthulhu Mythos, he or she can use this option. Here, Jonathan has been inspired in his London atrocities by a shadowy figure always seen in silhouette with what seems to have goat-like horns. Stitch thinks it is the Great Lord Satan; instead it is an avatar of Nyarlathotep.

The avatar has followed Stitch to NSW where it has appeared at key times to inspire him in his madness. When he raises the undead, his spell unleashes a further horror: a gate has been opened in Sydney Burial Ground to allow horrors from beyond to creep forth thereafter. That is, until the investigators find some way to close it.

New Spell: The Resurrection According to Lucifer's Pelt

Cost: 1 Magic Point per corpse nearby (within a 20 yard radius); 10 Sanity points; 1 Hit Point of caster's blood.

Important Note: once the spell is cast, Magic Point loss is involuntary and immediate. If the caster does not have sufficient Magic Points to pay the cost (e.g., if there are more corpses nearby than he or she anticipated), the balance is made up by sacrificing extra Hit Points.

Casting time: 10 minutes

Duration: 12 hours.

The spell is a concoction of Jonathan Stitch's years of necromantic occult study and the secret spell on Lucifer Jones' lower back. It requires ritual incantations and lurid grovelling to dark powers, as well as the caster's blood. It is written down in Jonathan's journal, but would require a **Hard Occult** roll to decipher.

The ritual is flawed, and as a consequence this spell is unusual in that its assumed/desired effect (perfect resurrection of someone dead) can never be achieved, only the lesser substitute – the creation of mindless undead, willing to serve the caster.

Religious ceremonies, including those of Aboriginal people, protect against the spell and if such ceremonies were observed during the burial of a particular corpse, that body can never be raised using this spell. All other corpses targeted by the spell, however with rise from the grave in 1D10+5 minutes. Once raised from the grave, the undead are compelled to lurch to wherever the summoner is located. He or she can give them simple verbal commands which they will follow as long as these do not require any intelligence or initiative.

If the raised dead are not given a command, they soon wander off and devour whatever flesh they can for 12 hours. After this time the spell ceases and they are once again dead corpses.

(Keepers can assume Jonathan uses a simpler version of this spell to reanimate the dead before the adventure proper commences).

Statistics

Statistics for zombies and key NPCs are provided below.

QUICKLIME ZOMBIES

The corpses of dead convicts in the Australian penal settlements are typically buried naked and coated in a layer of caustic quicklime (designed to sterilize the bodies and prevent the spread of any disease). When such corpses are reanimated they return to life as Quicklime Zombies, foul lurching parodies of men and women with features partially melted by exposure to the chemical powder. The remnants of their quicklime immersion gives these zombies unique abilities to inflict harm.

Because the dead convicts from which they are made are typically strong and brutish sorts, Quicklime zombies are usually larger and brawnier than the average zombie, though just as mindless and slow-witted.

char	averages	rolls	
STR	75	(4D6+1)×5	Average Hit Points: 12
CON	50	(2D6+3)×5	Move: 5 (shambling)
SIZ	75	(2D6+8)×5	Average DB: +1D4
DEX	45	(2D6+2)×5	Average Build: 1
POW	05	05	Magic Points: 01

ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1

Bite 45% (22/9), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus + Chemical Burns (see below)

Dodge Quicklime Zombies do not dodge

SPECIAL POWERS

Chemical Burns: Quicklime Zombies are coated with quicklime, some of which still adheres to their bodies. Quicklime is a highly caustic powder which produces vicious chemical burns when it comes into contact with skin or eyes. It dehydrates the body and can slow decomposition, which means the zombie will be better preserved and tougher. Quicklime burns can occur from the lime itself, or from its dust. If



successfully bitten or grappled by a Quicklime zombie, a victim takes 1 additional Hit Point per round until the lime burn is treated. On a failed Luck roll, there is also burning to victim's eyes from the caustic dust – this results in the victim being blinded until treated. Rinsing with water is the usual treatment for burns to skin or eyes. On a fumbled roll on eye treatment, the character has permanent vision impairment.

Vulnerability to Water: Quicklime can swell and heat up rapidly when it comes into contact with water. Splashing the zombie with a large amount of water (at least a bottle's worth) will cause an additional 1D6-1 damage to the creature. However, if this brings the Quicklime Zombie below 0 Hit Points, the rapid chemical reaction will cause the creature to violently explode, showering everyone in a 2 yard radius in caustic flesh. Everyone within that area receives chemical burns as described above.

Armour: Ignores damage that does not specifically target the head and which does not deliver a Major Wound. If a head wound is achieved, damage is normal (but all such attacks are made with a penalty die). If a Major Wound is delivered, part of the Quicklime Zombie's flesh sloughs off into a noxious pile of highly caustic chemical soup. Furthermore, any attack which leads to the attacker's skin coming into contact with the Quicklime Zombie (or its sloughed-off flesh) will result in chemical burns as described below.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8 to see a Quicklime Zombie. Note that Quicklime zombies are naked, which some find confronting in this era.

TEN QUICKLIME ZOMBIES

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	Build	DB
One	70	40	65	30	-	05	10	1	+1D4
Two	75	35	90	25	-	05	12	2	+1D6
Three	70	70	80	40	-	05	15	1	+1D4
Four	50	50	55	45	-	05	10	0	none
Five	65	40	60	55	-	05	10	1	+1D4
Six	85	35	75	45	-	05	11	1	+1D4
Seven	55	65	95	45	-	05	16	1	+1D4
Eight	70	45	75	50	-	05	12	1	+1D4
Nine	40	25	90	45	-	05	11	1	+1D4
Ten	85	45	75	30	-	05	12	1	+1D4

Move: 5 Magic Points: 01

Fighting 45% (22/9), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus, plus chemical burn (see above).

Dodge Zombies never Dodge.

Armour: 1 point lime coated skin. Touching this causes chemical burns causing additional damage (see above).

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8 to see a Quicklime Zombie.

TEN STANDARD ZOMBIES

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	Build	DB
One	55	40	70	20	-	05	11	1	+1D4
Two	25	50	70	20	-	05	12	0	none
Three	60	55	55	45	-	05	11	0	none
Four	45	50	90	25	-	05	14	1	+1D4
Five	70	50	70	30	-	05	12	1	+1D4
Six	45	65	65	50	-	05	13	0	none
Seven	55	60	65	15	-	05	12	0	none
Eight	45	50	65	55	-	05	11	0	none
Nine	65	55	55	10	-	05	11	0	none
Ten	80	65	40	55	-	05	10	0	none

Move: 6 Magic Points: 01

Fighting 30% (15/6), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
Dodge Zombies never Dodge.

Armour: Major wounds delivered to the body will result in loss of a limb. Otherwise ignore damage except to the head (one penalty die on rolls to target the head).

Sanity Loss: 0/1D8 to see a Traditional Zombie.

JONATHAN STITCH

TRUSTED TICKET OF LEAVE MAN AND
DEGENERATE NECROMANCER, AGED 58

STR 40	CON 50	SIZ 50	DEX 70	INT 80
APP 45	POW 90	EDU 35	SAN 01	Hit Points: 9
Damage Bonus: none Build: 0 Move: 6 Magic Points: 80				

Brawl 60% (30/12), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills: Accounting 70%, Charm/Bootlick 50%, Credit Rating 35%, Insight 65%, Persuade 50%, Read/Write (English) 60%, Spot Hidden 70%, Stealth 55%.

Spells: Graveyard Kiss, Grey Binding (both of these may be found on page 244 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*), Resurrection According to Lucifer's Pelt (new spell, see nearby).

LT. HECTOR HAMDEAN

NSW CORPS OFFICER AND CANNIBAL,
AGED 32

STR 65	CON 60	SIZ 70	DEX 55	INT 70
APP 60	POW 50	EDU 55	SAN 05	Hit Points: 11
Damage Bonus: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 7 Magic Points: 10				

Brawl 60% (30/12), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
Sword 55% (27/11), damage 1D8+1 + Damage Bonus
Flintlock Pistol 60% (30/12), damage 1D6+1 [Range 10 yard; 1 shot per 4 rounds; Malfunction 95+]
Dodge 65% (32/13)

Skills: Charm/Bootlick 50%, Credit Rating 60%, First Aid 70%, Insight 40%, Ride 55%, Spot Hidden 60%, Stealth 65%.

BART 'LUCIFER' JONES

BRUTAL CONVICT MURDERER, AGED 41

STR 90	CON 80	SIZ 95	DEX 40	INT 50
APP 25	POW 80	EDU 10	SAN 55	Hit Points: 17
Damage Bonus: +1D6 Build: 2 Move: 7 Magic Points: 16				

Brawl 75% (37/15), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
Bullwhip 75% (37/15), damage 1D3 + half Damage Bonus [range 10 feet]

Cudgel 60% (30/12), damage 1D4 + Damage Bonus
Flensing Knife 60% (30/12), damage 1D6 + Damage Bonus (half Damage Bonus if thrown)

Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills: Credit Rating 25%, Intimidate 70%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 35%, Throw 60%.

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