

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 #4

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The Vanishing Ensign



Introduction

This [Convicts & Cthulhu](#) Ticket of Leave aims to provide the Keeper with a framework to motivate investigator travels out into the more remote outlying parts of the penal colony of New South Wales. It is inspired by a real historical event – the comprehensive muster of all troops and ordnance ordered by Governor Bligh in 1807 – using this as the basis for a campaign frame in which a group of investors are compelled to travel from one grimy NSW Corps outpost to the next. Also included is an outline sketch for an investigative scenario based around these

events, called “The Vanishing Ensign.” The scenario sketch features three possible conclusions, allowing the Keeper to choose whichever outcome best suits his or her campaign.

For maximum historical accuracy, this material assumes that events take place during the tenure of Governor Bligh, although in reality the colony’s governors were perpetually worried about the poor military resources at their disposal, and numerous smaller musters were ordered both prior and subsequent to Bligh’s muster of 1807. This means the Keeper can readily re-use this material for any other period within the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era as desired.

Returns from the Governour's Muster of all New South Wales Corps, January 1807.

Where Stationed	Sold Off	Depts	Sub alterns	Surgeon	Appt Surg.	Serjts	Drummers	Rank & File
Spence	1	2	3	1	1	11	10	266
South Head								6
Bay's Head								4
Parramatta		1	1			4	2	74
(Hampdenburg)								14
Wentworth								5
Norfolk Island			1			1	2	27
Port Dalrymple		1	3			4	2	63
Oral River						1		16
Furlough to England								3
Furlough to India								1
Sent to England on Comm'd						1		
Total	1	4	7	1	1	21	14	410



Historical Context: Bligh's Muster of 1807

One of the most prevalent concerns written about by early Governors in the records of the Australian penal colonies was the chronic lack of resources available to properly run the settlements. In a military sense, the colonies were allocated far fewer troops than what would sensibly be required to maintain order across such a large population of convicts. And those few men – most of whom were barely better than the criminals they guarded – were so poorly equipped that the notion that the military force could stave off the arrival of the much-feared French was almost laughable.

Although this constant problem plagued all Governor's from the time of the First Fleet's arrival until well after the period covered by *Convicts & Cthulhu*, one of those Governors – the irascible Bligh – took a unique approach to tackling it. Figuring that a detailed and accurate tabulation of all the poorly-provisioned military outposts in New South Wales would definitively prove exactly how thinly spread his military force was for the job of guarding the NSW Colony, Bligh commissioned a colony-wide muster. Based on this he made loud and blustering arguments to the Colonial Office requesting more men and more equipment. While Bligh's was not the only such demands made in the colony's early history, his were certainly among the most incendiary.

Bligh's muster took place between January and March of 1807, and those charged with collating the data were ordered that it should cover the entirety of the NSW Corps as well as a review of all the ordnance in the Colony (gun batteries, powder, powder magazines, etc.). In practice this required an enormous amount of travelling around both the settled and far-flung corners of the colony – since NSW Corps forces were stationed in many barracks, outposts, remote gun batteries, and other out-of-the-way places.

After the muster was complete, Governor William Bligh wrote to Lord Windham at the Colonial Office in London to appraise him of the state of the military in New South Wales. He included two pertinent enclosures – one a muster of the dispensation of officers and troops; the other a report on the state of the ordnance. Both were highly damning.

In practice, Bligh's grand tabulation of the inadequacies of the colony's military forces was received by the Colonial Office in London with about the same disdain they had shown to all previous requests for resources. This is to say, it was ignored entirely. However, the tabulation documents created by the muster itself – some parts of which are reproduced through this Ticket of Leave – provides an intriguing resource for Keepers wishing more detail on the dispensation of the NSW Corps in the colony.

The Grand Muster Campaign Frame

Bligh's Great Muster provides Keepers with an ideal vehicle for sending a group of investigators out into any number of far-flung parts of the New South Wales colony, simply by roping them into the collection of data. Obvious candidates for inclusion in such a mission would be investigators that are officers or soldiers of the NSW Corps, civilians or naval personnel working for Government House, or convicts assigned to the above. However, even if investigators are not already attached to the Government, they can easily be cashiered into service by Government House, typically by the Governor's secretary (see the Government House entry in *Convicts & Cthulhu*, page 35–36).

The muster group needs at least one NSW Corps officer as a leader and a clerk of some kind. If there are obvious investigators to fill these roles, then the Keeper should slot them into those duties. If there is no relevant investigator for one of these positions, the Keeper should make use of one of the NPCs described in the nearby box. Because these two roles will jointly provide the “leadership” of the muster group it is probably undesirable for both of them to be filled by NPCs (although an experienced Keeper could probably run an entertaining game in which the investigators powerlessly rail against the arbitrary and ill-informed orders of their superiors).

Called to the Muster

Investigators are called to Government House and told by the Governor's secretary they must undertake a muster of all military personnel and inspection of ordnance throughout the entire colony. If the timeline of the original (historical) muster is adhered to, this will likely be in January, which is very hot.

(Optional) NPC Leaders for the Muster Party

Lieutenant Richard Fitch, age 26, NSW Corps Officer

STR 50 CON 60 SIZ 45 DEX 65 INT 50
APP 45 POW 60 EDU 35 SAN 55 Hit Points: 10
Damage Bonus: none Build: 0 Move: 9 Magic Points: 12

Brawl 40% (20/8), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus

Carbine 55% (27/11), damage 1D10+4 [range 70 yards;
1 shot per 4 rounds]

Dodge 40% (20/8)

Skills: Credit Rating 75%, Insight 55%, Intimidate 65%,
Listen 35%, Stealth 60%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Fitch is a striving young man from a prosperous middle-class English family. He is tall, fair-haired and conventionally handsome except from some recent and persistent boils. Fitch is delighted to be in charge of this duty: he wants nothing more than to come to the Governor's attention. He has misread the political situation of the Colony entirely and is backing the Governor to be ascendant over the military and business factions. He is a bully to those under him and obsequious to those above. He prefers to lead from well behind and can usually be found swanning in the officer's mess while his underlings – the investigators – do all the work. No matter what, he will fail to credit them in any way.

Ensign Charles Rogers, age 33, Naval Ensign and Government Clerk

STR 60 CON 45 SIZ 65 DEX 50 INT 80
APP 50 POW 35 EDU 70 SAN 65 Hit Points: 11
Damage Bonus: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 7 Magic Points: 7

Brawl 30% (15/6), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus

Flintlock Pistol 40% (20/8), damage 1D6+1 [range 10 yards;
1 shot per 4 rounds]

Sword 50% (25/10), damage 1D8+1 + Damage Bonus

Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills: Accounting 70%, Appraise 45%, Charm/Bootlick
45%, Credit Rating 60%, Insight 55%, Sleight of Hand
60%, Spot Hidden 75%.

Rodgers is 33, silent and particular, with an uneasy manner with fellow humans. Rodgers was recently Purser on a convict vessel and applied for, and was accepted for, transfer to Government service, sensing more opportunity in the colony than regular shipboard service. He works out of Government House and wishes to do an exact job. He is usually disinterested in those around him and will only speak to correct someone's mistake. He is impatient with fools.

The investigators are introduced to any NPC leaders at this meeting, if such are needed. Furthermore, if no investigators are convicts the party might reasonably be allocated an NPC convict or two, or at least a couple of soldiers, to do their dirty work (use the generic statistics found on pages 93–94 of *Convicts & Cthulhu*).

Undertaking the Survey

Once the mustering party has received its commission, there are a range of activities which need to be undertaken either collectively or in smaller groups. Depending on the composition of the team and the Keeper's whims, tasks can either be arbitrarily dropped on investigators or they can

be allowed to pick and choose the order in which they are attempted. Whichever way the survey is performed it represents a huge amount of effort ... and by decree of the Governor the team only has six to eight weeks to complete its information gathering.

There are three main types of activities that form part of the survey:

- Searching records and communicating with satellite colonies;
- Visiting locations close to Sydney and Parramatta; and
- Visiting NSW Corps outpost locations which are located further afield.



Each of these types of investigator “missions” is described briefly below, along with some ideas about the kinds of scenario opportunities that could be unlocked through such research and travel.

SEARCHING CORRESPONDENCE AND RECORDS

One of the things that must be established for an accurate muster is the list of NSW Corps men who, for different reasons, are not currently in their normal postings. Some are on furlough (a leave of absence from service), some are currently incarcerated because of misdemeanours, some are currently in the hospital, and some are presently overseas on some form of government business. It will be the task of the muster party to scour all records at Government House in an attempt to establish which officers or regular NSW Corps men fall into these categories (since they will otherwise be missed during the count).

In an era in which paper records are the only form that exist, and relevant details are scattered across musty ledgers maintained by several different officials, this process is much more laborious than it seems. Furthermore it will likely involve many trips backwards and forwards between Government House, the offices of the colony’s magistrates, the Naval Officer in charge of the port, the colony’s surgeons, and any other colonial officials the Keeper wants to name. The task will also involve an inordinate amount of deciphering poor handwriting.

In addition to scouring the records kept at New South Wales, there is an expectation that the muster party will also correspond with officials in satellite colonies to inquire about the disposition of any NSW Corps men stationed at such places. At a minimum they are to:

- write to the commandant in Norfolk Island, and
- write to the commandant at Port Dalrymple (a small settlement on the north coast of Tasmania, then Van Diemen’s Land).

Letters can be sent with the Government correspondence dispatches. More enterprising investigators can seek out a ship in Sydney Harbour going to either location and entrust their letters to the Captain. In all cases, however, the muster party would be well advised to send correspondence early in the survey period – since delivering a letter to such remote locations is likely to take 2–3 weeks (each way).

Five ways in which scenarios could be spawned from research and letter writing (examples only; the enterprising Keeper is invited to expand on this list):

1. scans or cross-referencing of the official records might disclose some strange anomaly which points to Mythos activity at a certain place, or the actions of an individual with cult affiliations;
2. records of admissions to the hospital might include some strange – unbelievable – details that warrant validation first-hand;
3. reading through the record of recent letters between the colony and the tiny outpost at Port Dalrymple make it clear that one of the local Magistrates is deliberately hiding information about special cargoes of items shipped from this remote place back to Port Jackson;
4. with the colony records being usually exhaustive, a gap in the records reveals that someone has been tampering with the official record – perhaps to hide having made off with some goods, or even a whole ship;
5. a collection of correspondence that falls into the investigators’ hands after someone’s death reveals a series of curious postscripts in code, that are in fact an entire Mythos text.

VISITING SITES NEAR SYDNEY

The muster party is expected to personally visit each NSW Corps barracks and request a muster (basically, a head count) which is then backed up by any records for those absent. These requests are likely to be met with grumbling resistance, only overcome when the investigators display their letter of authority from the Governor.

In addition to inspecting the troops, the muster party is also charged with checking all ordnance, which means checking fortifications for structural issues, making sure the gun powder in its magazine can be used, and firing the guns and inspecting them for rust or other deterioration.

Close to Sydney, the muster party is most likely to visit the following locations:

- **Sydney Barracks** of the NSW Corps (*Convicts & Cthulhu*, page 39–40) – to inspect the muster of troops, check records and also inspect the gun emplacement attached to the barracks;
- **Government House** (*C&C*, page 35–36) – to inspect the force of soldiers stationed there as the Governor’s personal guard;
- **Sydney Hospital** (*C&C*, page 42) – to count NSW Corps officers and men currently incapacitated, as well as surgeons;
- **South Head** (*C&C*, page 53) – to inspect the gun emplacement there;
- **Dawes Point** (*C&C*, page 42) – to inspect the gun emplacement there (whose guns have the notorious reputation of flying apart when fired);
- **Georges Head** (a location slightly north of the South Head pyramid) – to inspect the newly-built gun emplacement (which, despite being only a few years old, is in terrible repair with a damp powder magazine); and
- **Fort Philip on Windmill Hill** (*C&C*, page 42) – to inspect the painfully-slow progress that is being made on the settlement’s only stone fort.

The Perils of Damp Gunpowder

One of the frequent problems highlighted in the final report prepared by the historical muster was that many of the colony’s stores of gunpowder were perpetually too damp to fire. English gunpowder at this time was mostly saltpetre combined with smaller parts sulphur and charcoal. Without a proper gunpowder mill, any attempts to dry out gunpowder usually require some kind of fire or at least a stove of some kind, and are tricky at best. Such attempts have been known to result in spontaneous explosion. If the investigators ever attempt to remediate the problems of damp gunpowder themselves – or are nearby when someone else tries to do so – the Keeper is justified in calling for a skill roll or simply a Luck roll to avoid being caught in a spontaneous blast.

VISITING SITES NEAR PARRAMATTA

As with the settlement at Sydney, the muster group will be required to visit all places in and around Parramatta township where NSW Corps are stationed or gun emplacements have been positioned. Travel between Sydney and Parramatta can be achieved either by road or by boat. In the former case, Government House will agree to issuing the muster party with one coach or wagon. If travelling via ferry boat the group will need to fund its own transport. As described on page 44 of *Convicts & Cthulhu*, the journey via either method takes a little over half a day.

Undertaking the survey of the Parramatta region will include at least a trip to the following places:

- **Parramatta Barracks** of the NSW Corps (*C&C*, page 47) – to inspect the muster of troops and check records;
- Gun Emplacement in the **Parramatta Town Square** – to inspect the ordnance;
- **Cabramatta Farm / Prospect Hill** (*C&C*, page 54) – this region to the west of Parramatta is primarily farmland but it also houses a gun battery manned by 5 full-time soldiers. This is close to the eastern-most extent of the settled regions, and the eerie Blue Mountains – from whose slopes some colonists fear that native tribes will attack – are clearly visible from here.

Five ways in which scenarios could arise out of visits to sites around Sydney or Parramatta:

1. An attempted test firing for a cannon fails; on closer inspection the blame for this embarrassing failure is laid upon a strange sticky bundle of inexplicable substance that someone (or something) has lodged deep inside the gun's workings. Questions are asked: who put this bizarre package in such a curious location, and why?
2. Cross-checking the records from a barracks with the results of the muster highlight some strange discrepancy; there are a handful of men who were present according to the records but nobody sighted them on the day of the muster. Although everyone claims to remember these phantom men very well, every person who is questioned remembers their basic description to be vastly different to anybody else's depiction.
3. Off-the-record discussions in the barracks highlights some concerns among the men that there is a certain group of men who are absent from the

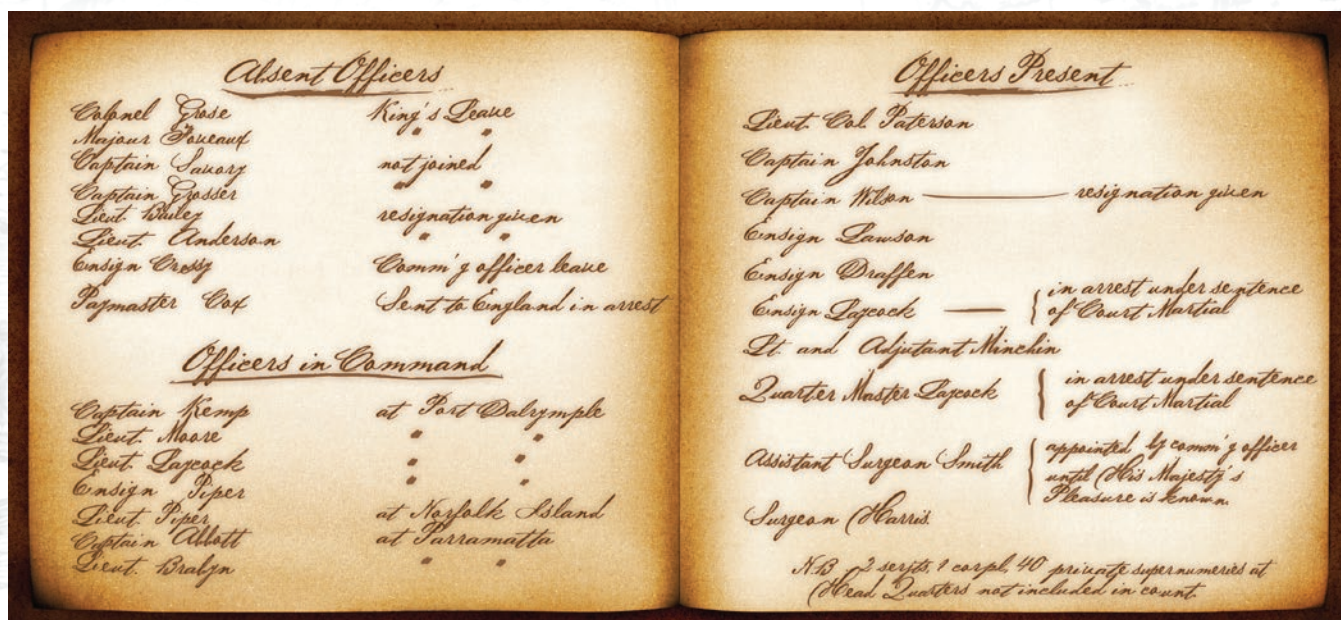
roll call each morning following a full moon, with no explanation offered. Although this has been brought to the attention of the superior officer, no action has been taken – although now the officer seems to number among the men who do not attend roll call after the moon is full.

4. A guard post is revealed to be regularly left abandoned at certain hours of the night. Strange lights in the sky are reported coinciding with this time and one elderly (not very credible) convict believes he saw a giant creature winging down from the stars.
5. One of the NSW Corps officers the party interviews is obviously mad (there are a surprising number of historical precedents for this), and believes a supernatural entity visits him in his dreams. His soldiers have been ignoring his lunacy, but the muster party needs to find enough information to either clear him or remove him from his position. How do they investigate someone's dream visitations?

ENCLOSURE TO THE GOVERNOR'S CORRESPONDENCE

STATEMENT OF ORDNANCE

	GUNS	
	12 Pounder	6 Pounder
Mounted at Dawes' Point Battery (but 8 carriages unfit for service)	12	2-Iron
At George's Head (carriages unfit for service)	4	iron
At Fort Phillip (dismounted)	-	8-Iron
In the Barrack Square (carriages unfit for service)	-	2 Brass Field-Pieces
In front of Government House (carriages unfit for service)	-	2 Brass Field-Pieces
Barrack Square, Parramatta (carriage unfit for service)	1	4 pounder iron



VISITING OUTLYING PLACES: COAL RIVER AND HAWKESBURY

Perhaps the most time-consuming aspect of the Governor's muster is the requirement to travel to the remotest outlying regions of the New South Wales colony, including the secondary penal camp at Coal River and the inland river settlements along the Hawkesbury River. Other, more sparsely settled regions, such as the area surrounding Botany Bay might also be included in the list of sites to visit should the Keeper wish it so.

Travel to any of these more remote places will almost certainly require a voyage by sea: to facilitate the muster the Governor has made available a small ship, the cutter *Guinevere*. Captain Spillman is its master and commander. He is dutiful enough when being watched, but will take advantage of the trips to do a little smuggling that the investigators may wish to impede or profit by, as they wish.


Details of the settlements at Coal River and in other outlying regions can be found in *Convicts & Cthulhu*, although much of the drama associated with fulfilling the Governor's orders in these wild outland regions will involve encounters that happen away from "civilisation." The Keeper is free to populate the unexplored bush country with all manner of natural or Cthulhu Mythos threats.

Few white folks have ever set foot in some of these territories, so the possibility of previously

unknown terrors is more than credible. Also, the sheer remoteness of some of these locations make them attractive places for strange cults to set up larger-scale operations, away from the prying eyes of townships and farms. Even apart from the unnatural threats that may be encountered in the unexplored woodland country, investigators who venture even slightly off the beaten track, or who wander too far from settlements, may easily run across indigenous groups who have little experience with European people. The reaction of such Aboriginal groups can vary from hostile (especially if the group has recently been savaged by white settlers), through to sympathetic (if the investigators seem to be in trouble).

The extent of the remote regions to which the muster party must travel can be expanded to meet the Keeper's wishes, perhaps dooming the investigators to dangerous travels up and down the entire length of the colony. At the very minimum, the group would need to visit:

- **Coal River Prison Settlement** (C&C, page 51–52) – to inspect the muster of troops and check records;
- The chain of small farm settlements scattered up the **Hawkesbury to Richmond Hill** (C&C, page 54) – to take stock of the defensive arrangements and NSW Corps deployments surrounding the sparsely populated farming region.



Five examples of scenarios that might begin with visits to outlying or remote parts of the colony:

1. A freak gust of wind drives the party's ship or boat ashore with such ferocity that it is temporarily damaged; the place in which they find themselves temporarily stranded seems well-populated by Aboriginal people. But this indigenous group does not seem to live a traditional life, rather it has come under the unwholesome power of an eccentric European who has introduced them to some unorthodox forms of worship.
2. Travelling inland from one of the settlements – perhaps as a “short cut” – the party strays into territory which the local Aboriginal peoples shun. In truth they have good reason to stay clear, since the very land itself is haunted by one of the malevolent spirits spoken about in the stories of Alcheringa.
3. Visiting the farmstead of a free settler family on the furthest outer reaches of settlement, the muster party find the normally stoic graziers in a state of abject fear. Just days ago a strange stone fell from the heavens, and the land beyond the now-foetid billabong seems to have taken on a decidedly unnatural glow. The local NSW Corps troops decided just yesterday morning to venture into the unwelcoming place to allay their fears ... but not a soul has yet emerged from the glowing fog-shrouded waterhole.
4. The muster party learns the NSW Corps stationed in a very remote area is almost entirely out of useable gunpowder right at the worst possible moment – when they come under attack from what initially seems to be an Aboriginal raiding party, but turns out to be something much worse.
5. The opposite of scarcity is occurring at one remote location. This place has an astounding stock of stores and ammunition. It seems the area might be a new staging ground for a bunch of smugglers working from the nearby coast – perhaps even a non-British vessel. It's possible that these criminals are associates of the Jenks Gang described in [Ticket of Leave #3](#).

Wrapping Up the Muster

Eventually the muster party will either run out of places to visit, or run out of time. In either case they will be obliged to return to Sydney and begin tabulating the data they have gathered. Of course, the bringing together of all the different disparate items of knowledge that they have unearthed along the way may allow them to discover a much larger, more significant truth about the state of the colony. This discovery might be a suitable occasion to propel the investigators into one final sanity-wrenching scenario which pits them against the forces of the Cthulhu Mythos, or one of its foul cults, in a high-stakes fight to the death.

Scenario Outline: The Vanishing Ensign

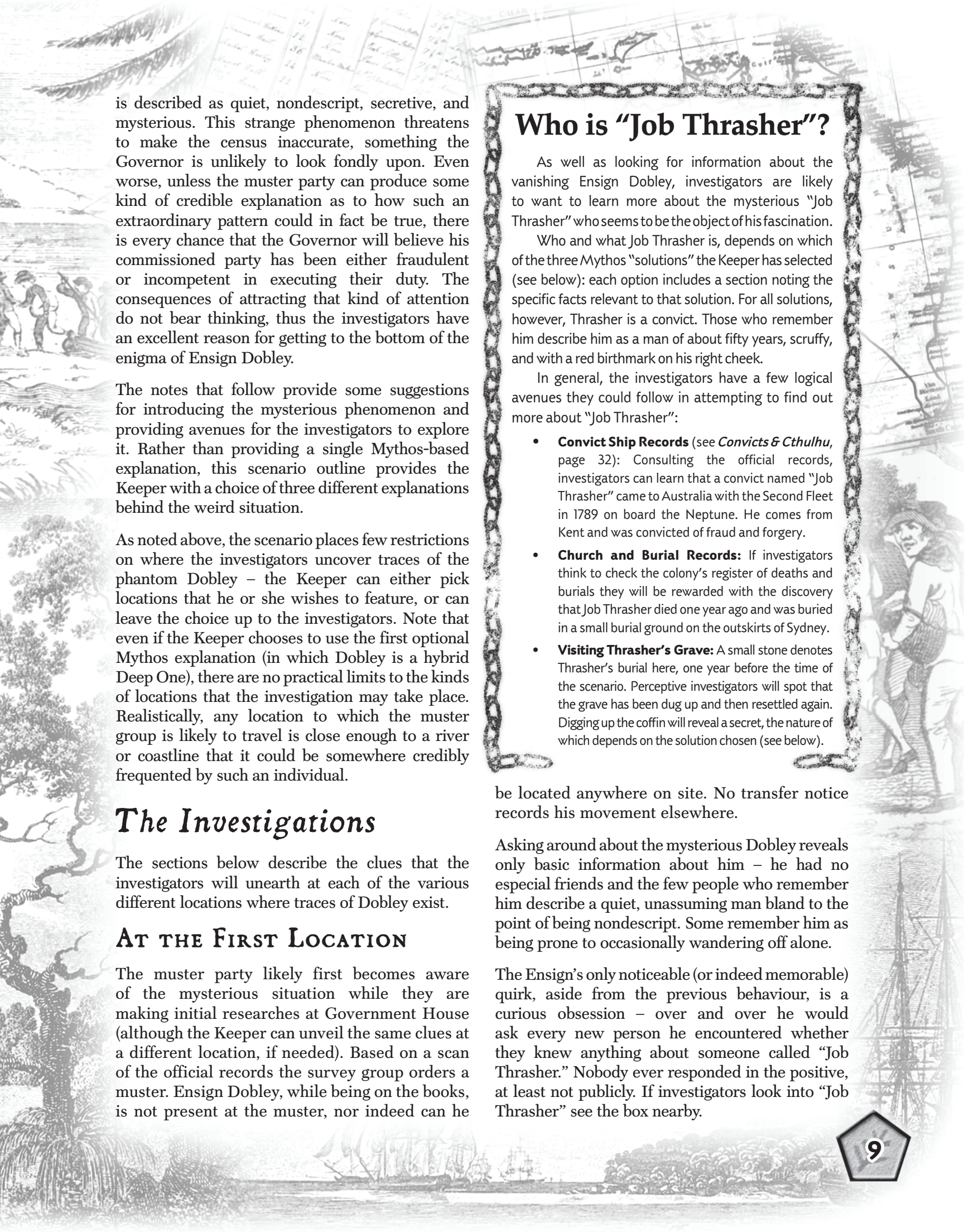
The Vanishing Ensign is a mystery adventure which uses the “Grand Muster Campaign Frame” described above. Keepers are encouraged to pick and choose the specific locations where the main scenario events unfold, using the descriptions of likely muster locations provided. In reality, the locations where clues are unearthed are largely interchangeable – investigators will only deduce the true significance of the mystery once they have visited several locations and begun to observe a peculiar trend in the information they have been gathering.

This scenario would make a good introductory adventure to begin a longer series of encounters and scenarios using the “Grand Muster Campaign Frame.” By extending their travels around New South Wales the Keeper can showcase the full extent of the colony, and all the horrors it conceals.

Keeper's Introduction

As the muster party travels around from location to location, their information gathering very quickly uncovers a most singular and unexplained thing. In every location they visit, the official records list a person by the name of “Ensign Ernest Doble” – and yet nobody they speak with seems to know who he is, nor indeed does anybody claim to have seen him recently.

The mysterious Ensign Doble seems to have arrived about a month apart in each location and



is described as quiet, nondescript, secretive, and mysterious. This strange phenomenon threatens to make the census inaccurate, something the Governor is unlikely to look fondly upon. Even worse, unless the muster party can produce some kind of credible explanation as to how such an extraordinary pattern could in fact be true, there is every chance that the Governor will believe his commissioned party has been either fraudulent or incompetent in executing their duty. The consequences of attracting that kind of attention do not bear thinking, thus the investigators have an excellent reason for getting to the bottom of the enigma of Ensign Doble.

The notes that follow provide some suggestions for introducing the mysterious phenomenon and providing avenues for the investigators to explore it. Rather than providing a single Mythos-based explanation, this scenario outline provides the Keeper with a choice of three different explanations behind the weird situation.

As noted above, the scenario places few restrictions on where the investigators uncover traces of the phantom Doble – the Keeper can either pick locations that he or she wishes to feature, or can leave the choice up to the investigators. Note that even if the Keeper chooses to use the first optional Mythos explanation (in which Doble is a hybrid Deep One), there are no practical limits to the kinds of locations that the investigation may take place. Realistically, any location to which the muster group is likely to travel is close enough to a river or coastline that it could be somewhere credibly frequented by such an individual.

The Investigations

The sections below describe the clues that the investigators will unearth at each of the various different locations where traces of Doble exist.

AT THE FIRST LOCATION

The muster party likely first becomes aware of the mysterious situation while they are making initial researches at Government House (although the Keeper can unveil the same clues at a different location, if needed). Based on a scan of the official records the survey group orders a muster. Ensign Doble, while being on the books, is not present at the muster, nor indeed can he

Who is “Job Thrasher”?

As well as looking for information about the vanishing Ensign Doble, investigators are likely to want to learn more about the mysterious “Job Thrasher” who seems to be the object of his fascination.

Who and what Job Thrasher is, depends on which of the three Mythos “solutions” the Keeper has selected (see below): each option includes a section noting the specific facts relevant to that solution. For all solutions, however, Thrasher is a convict. Those who remember him describe him as a man of about fifty years, scruffy, and with a red birthmark on his right cheek.


In general, the investigators have a few logical avenues they could follow in attempting to find out more about “Job Thrasher”:

- **Convict Ship Records** (see *Convicts & Cthulhu*, page 32): Consulting the official records, investigators can learn that a convict named “Job Thrasher” came to Australia with the Second Fleet in 1789 on board the Neptune. He comes from Kent and was convicted of fraud and forgery.
- **Church and Burial Records:** If investigators think to check the colony’s register of deaths and burials they will be rewarded with the discovery that Job Thrasher died one year ago and was buried in a small burial ground on the outskirts of Sydney.
- **Visiting Thrasher’s Grave:** A small stone denotes Thrasher’s burial here, one year before the time of the scenario. Perceptive investigators will spot that the grave has been dug up and then resettled again. Digging up the coffin will reveal a secret, the nature of which depends on the solution chosen (see below).

be located anywhere on site. No transfer notice records his movement elsewhere.

Asking around about the mysterious Doble reveals only basic information about him – he had no especial friends and the few people who remember him describe a quiet, unassuming man bland to the point of being nondescript. Some remember him as being prone to occasionally wandering off alone.

The Ensign’s only noticeable (or indeed memorable) quirk, aside from the previous behaviour, is a curious obsession – over and over he would ask every new person he encountered whether they knew anything about someone called “Job Thrasher.” Nobody ever responded in the positive, at least not publicly. If investigators look into “Job Thrasher” see the box nearby.



Regarding the apparent vanishing of Ensign, nobody can provide any elaboration. His soldiering seems indifferent at best; certainly not memorable. No-one has any explanation as to how he has managed to disappear. The only reason he has not been missed on the previous muster, is that none have been formally held in the six weeks since his arrival.

His record at Government House suggests he is only recently arrived in the colony, and was a conscript from Kent in England.

AT THE SECOND LOCATION

Once the investigators move to another location they will find the same anomaly: Doble is listed as part of the complement of soldiers but again is not present. Asking around unearths the same basic facts as previously learned in terms of his habits and behaviour. Once again, no-one has noticed that he has (apparently) slipped away somewhere. Regardless of whether the investigators are asking at a large barracks or a small battery (with a complement of a half dozen), the story is the same—he seems to have gone off with no-one noticing.

SUBSEQUENT LOCATIONS

Eventually, investigators will probably begin actively looking for Doble whenever they travel to a new location – and they will not be disappointed. Wherever they go looking for him, they find traces that he has been there. And at each place, the situation is the same as above.

The three possible Mythos “solutions” (see below) each incorporate some additional clues that the Keeper can provide to the investigators as pieces of the puzzle that they unearth by either speaking with those who remember Doble, or through finding other evidence of his activities.

THE FINAL LOCATION

The Keeper can choose how long the investigators must follow Doble’s trail before they finally track him down. The location of the encounter with the Vanishing Ensign – likely to be the grand finale for the scenario – can either be chosen ahead of time, or the Keeper can simply arrange for the investigators to stumble upon him whenever the pursuit stops being fun and engaging for the players. Alternatively the Keeper might wish to hold back the encounter

until his or her players have solved some difficult element of the puzzle, making the final encounter a reward for industrious or clever problem-solving.

However it is triggered, the encounter with Doble will play out according to the “Denouement” description in the particular Mythos “solution” the Keeper has chosen.

Three Possible Mythos Solutions

Three options are presented as possible Mythos-based “solutions” to the mystery of the Vanishing Ensign.

OPTION ONE: DOBLEY IS A DEEP ONE HYBRID

If using this option, the truth behind the mysterious events is that Ernest Doble and his erstwhile colleague both bore the taint of the Deep Ones.

Doble’s Secret: The Ensign avoided staying too long in any one place since his unusual physical appearance had a habit of attracting unwanted attention. His various vanishings were all timed to conceal phases when his sudden metamorphoses warped his appearance in more drastic ways. Doble does, however, have a latent ability to make people forget him, perhaps some kind of psychic power (see below). When the investigators finally track him down, he will likely try to use it to make them forget he ever existed.

Unique Clues:

- At the penultimate scenario location, someone remembers that Doble had a strangely “fishy” look to his appearance (which the Keeper can expand to fully-blown “Innsmouth Look” if he or she wishes).
- Recollections of Doble’s activities often include him moping around bodies of water.
- Some people describe Doble as apparently being under intense strain at times, sweating and shaking.
- Occasionally he could be seen crouched down near the water’s edge, apparently straining as though listening to something others could not hear.

Job Thrasher: Thrasher was also a hybrid. A settler in the final scenario location recalls that Thrasher and Doble were friends. Thrasher was an assigned convict who worked for the settler in question, and the man still has a notebook formerly owned by the convict. This contains drafts of letters by Thrasher and addressed to Doble, explaining the latter's condition and how he must ultimately go into the sea, where his brothers and sisters will guide him. Digging up Thrasher's grave shows that the convict died a violent death when his head was knocked in. Investigators will also find evidence that they are not the first people to exhume Thrasher's body – apparently someone already dug up the dead convict, searching for something. In truth, they failed in this mission: inside Thrasher's gut a fetish to Mother Hydra is still lodged. Fooling with it can summon her (probably unwanted) attention.

Denouement: When found, Doble is on sick leave, far gone down the road of Deep One metamorphosis. Doble killed Thrasher not wanting to accept what Thrasher was telling him and out of fear of being exposed. When confronted he flees to the nearest water. A whole colony of Deep Ones awaits him eagerly.

Ensign Ernest Doble as a Deep One Hybrid

STR 80 CON 70 SIZ 25 DEX 50 INT 50
 APP 30 POW 85 EDU 45 SAN 25 Hit Points: 9
 Damage Bonus: none Build: 0 Move: 8* Magic Points: 17

* Can also swim at Move 8

Brawl 45% (22/9), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
 Knife 45% (22/9), damage 1D6 + Damage Bonus
 Dodge 35% (17/7)

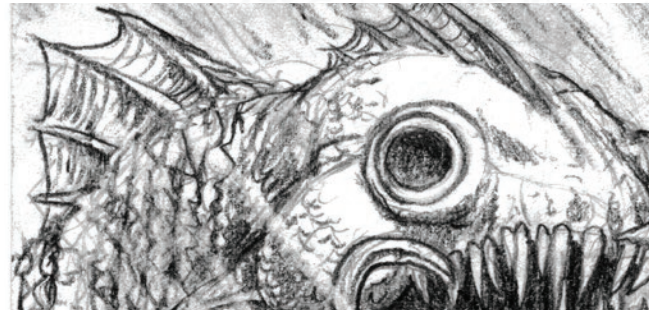
Armour: None

Skills: Credit Rating 20%, Insight 45%, Jump 45%, Listen 60%, Spot Hidden 45%, Swim 80%.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4 Sanity Points to see Doble's disgusting fishy features; if his innate Melt Into Background ability (see below) causes someone to forget the encounter, any lost Sanity Points are regained..

SPECIAL POWERS

Deep Lungs: can remain underwater for twice as long as a normal human



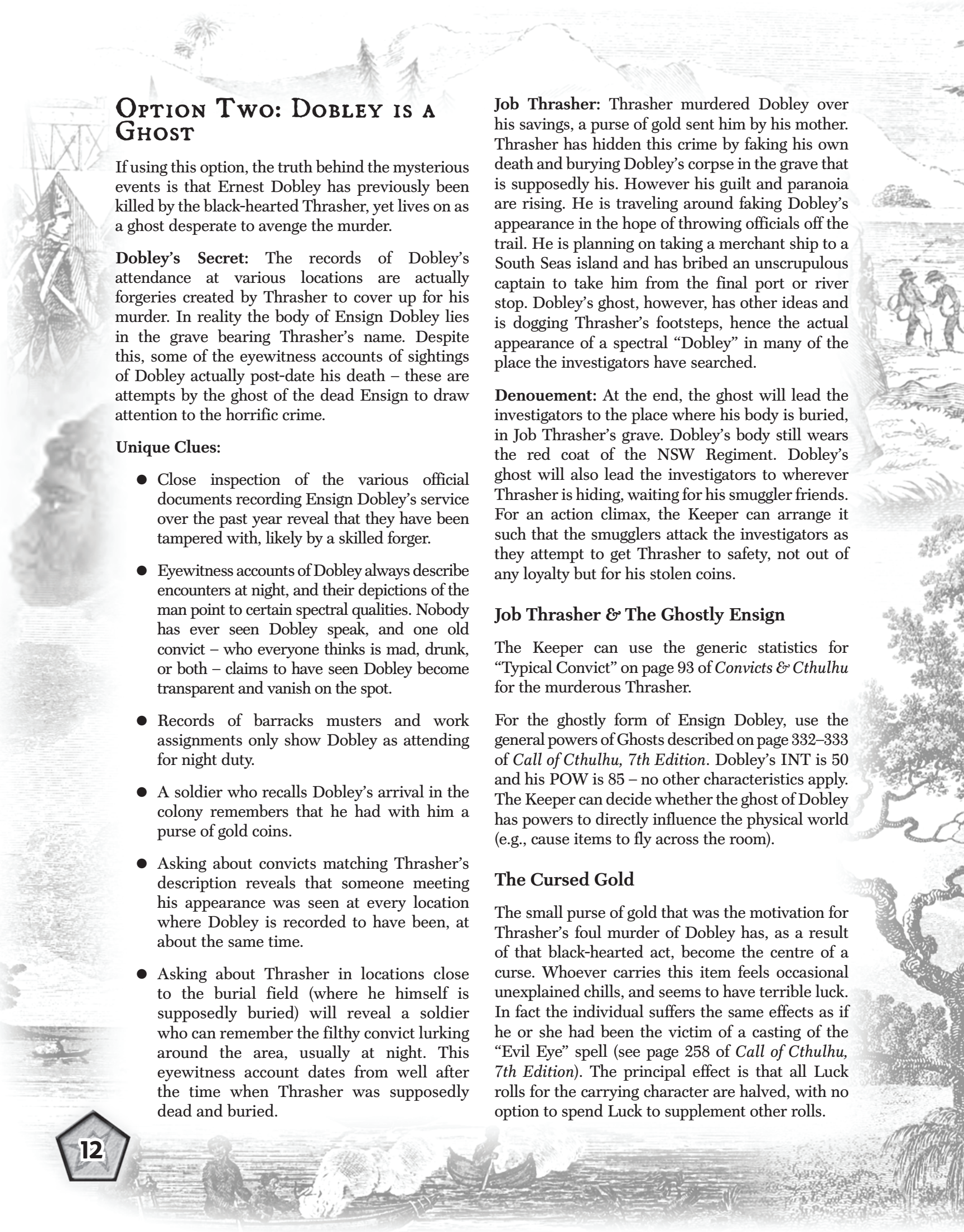
Melt Into Background: Doble has a unique ability to cause those meeting him to forget the encounter. This functions like the spell Cloud Memory (see page 250 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*). If Doble wishes to be forgotten he needs only sacrifice 1D6 Magic Points and 2 Sanity Points to invoke the power against any number of onlookers. Whichever of his targets has the highest POW characteristic must make an opposed POW vs. POW roll with Doble. If he gains a superior result, all observers will forget ever meeting him (and regain any Sanity Points lost to his hideous appearance). If both parties obtain the same type of result, onlookers will still remember meeting Doble although the details of the encounter will be very fuzzy in their minds.

Mother Hydra's Fetish

This four-inch carved statuette depicts a foul fish-human hybrid, carved in an unidentifiable green soapy stone. The fetish is unpleasant to the touch, seeming to subtly squirm in the holder's grasp (despite never visibly moving). If an individual holds the statuette for longer than five minutes, its innate unnatural force will attempt to infiltrate his or her mind. The holder must make a series of opposed POW rolls against the statuette's POW of 75; the first failure causes a vision of a vast green undersea realm, teeming with attractive members of the opposite sex; the second failure compels the holder of the statuette to travel to the nearest coastal region.

If the fetish successfully causes its bearer to reach the sea, one final opposed POW roll is allowed – success by the afflicted individual allows him or her a moment of clarity where the enormity of the horror of Mother Dagon is a sufficient shock to break the connection (causing a loss of 2/2D6 Sanity Points but allowing the holder to drop the fetish). If this final roll fails, however, the bearer of the fetish is compelled to walk into the briny depths loudly chanting an invocation entreating Mother Hydra to rise from the waves (and involuntarily sacrificing 3 Magic Points). Whether the great Mother chooses to heed the call is left as a question for the Keeper to decide.

If Mother Hydra is successfully summoned via the fetish, use the statistics provided on page 286–7 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*.



OPTION TWO: DOBLEY IS A GHOST

If using this option, the truth behind the mysterious events is that Ernest Doblely has previously been killed by the black-hearted Thrasher, yet lives on as a ghost desperate to avenge the murder.

Doblely's Secret: The records of Doblely's attendance at various locations are actually forgeries created by Thrasher to cover up for his murder. In reality the body of Ensign Doblely lies in the grave bearing Thrasher's name. Despite this, some of the eyewitness accounts of sightings of Doblely actually post-date his death – these are attempts by the ghost of the dead Ensign to draw attention to the horrific crime.

Unique Clues:

- Close inspection of the various official documents recording Ensign Doblely's service over the past year reveal that they have been tampered with, likely by a skilled forger.
- Eyewitness accounts of Doblely always describe encounters at night, and their depictions of the man point to certain spectral qualities. Nobody has ever seen Doblely speak, and one old convict – who everyone thinks is mad, drunk, or both – claims to have seen Doblely become transparent and vanish on the spot.
- Records of barracks musters and work assignments only show Doblely as attending for night duty.
- A soldier who recalls Doblely's arrival in the colony remembers that he had with him a purse of gold coins.
- Asking about convicts matching Thrasher's description reveals that someone meeting his appearance was seen at every location where Doblely is recorded to have been, at about the same time.
- Asking about Thrasher in locations close to the burial field (where he himself is supposedly buried) will reveal a soldier who can remember the filthy convict lurking around the area, usually at night. This eyewitness account dates from well after the time when Thrasher was supposedly dead and buried.

Job Thrasher: Thrasher murdered Doblely over his savings, a purse of gold sent him by his mother. Thrasher has hidden this crime by faking his own death and burying Doblely's corpse in the grave that is supposedly his. However his guilt and paranoia are rising. He is traveling around faking Doblely's appearance in the hope of throwing officials off the trail. He is planning on taking a merchant ship to a South Seas island and has bribed an unscrupulous captain to take him from the final port or river stop. Doblely's ghost, however, has other ideas and is dogging Thrasher's footsteps, hence the actual appearance of a spectral "Doblely" in many of the place the investigators have searched.

Denouement: At the end, the ghost will lead the investigators to the place where his body is buried, in Job Thrasher's grave. Doblely's body still wears the red coat of the NSW Regiment. Doblely's ghost will also lead the investigators to wherever Thrasher is hiding, waiting for his smuggler friends. For an action climax, the Keeper can arrange it such that the smugglers attack the investigators as they attempt to get Thrasher to safety, not out of any loyalty but for his stolen coins.

Job Thrasher & The Ghostly Ensign

The Keeper can use the generic statistics for "Typical Convict" on page 93 of *Convicts & Cthulhu* for the murderous Thrasher.

For the ghostly form of Ensign Doblely, use the general powers of Ghosts described on page 332–333 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*. Doblely's INT is 50 and his POW is 85 – no other characteristics apply. The Keeper can decide whether the ghost of Doblely has powers to directly influence the physical world (e.g., cause items to fly across the room).

The Cursed Gold

The small purse of gold that was the motivation for Thrasher's foul murder of Doblely has, as a result of that black-hearted act, become the centre of a curse. Whoever carries this item feels occasional unexplained chills, and seems to have terrible luck. In fact the individual suffers the same effects as if he or she had been the victim of a casting of the "Evil Eye" spell (see page 258 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*). The principal effect is that all Luck rolls for the carrying character are halved, with no option to spend Luck to supplement other rolls.



OPTION THREE: DOBLEY IS THE VICTIM OF FOUL SORCERY

If using this option, the truth behind the mysterious events is that Ernest Doble is a mindless puppet under the control of Thrasher, who is a powerful Mythos sorcerer.

Doble's Secret: Doble is an important ingredient in a large-scale Mythos ritual being performed by the disgusting convict Job Thrasher (who has faked his own death to avoid attention from rival cultists). The Ensign's role is to mindlessly trace out a huge path spanning the whole colony which, once completed, will cause Yog-Sothoth to manifest.

Unique Clues:

- Eyewitness descriptions of Doble should be adjusted to highlight the shabbiness of his uniform (his spare uniform is actually worn by a dummy buried in the grave that is supposedly Thrasher's, see below).
- At a remote scenario location (e.g., Prospect Hill in the far wilds west of Parramatta), someone recalls a curious event which links Doble and Thrasher – the Ensign was given the task to supervise a team of six convicts sent out into the wilderness to log trees. Job Thrasher was one of the men in this convict party. Despite being a clear day, the convicts

reportedly met an untimely end when lightning struck a tree causing a flash fire which killed them all. Ensign Doble survived the disaster but was never the same afterwards.

- If investigators manage to track down the location of the supposed lightning strike they discover no evidence of any such occurrence; instead they find magickal symbols carved into several of the trees.
- Investigators questioning convicts about Job Thrasher will discover that he is greatly feared; even his name invokes terror among convicts.
- At another remote convict location (e.g., Coal River), investigators find one convict – now missing an arm and a leg – that will say more about Thrasher, accusing him of madness and sorcery. He warns the convicts to stay away from him at all costs.
- Clues should eventually allow investigators to track down Thrasher's base of operations at a regional farm location; there is nominally serving as an assigned convict labourer but in reality he has slain the settler family and runs the farm himself.

Job Thrasher: Job Thrasher is really an ancient and terrible Mythos sorcerer who has faked his own death. A dummy effigy, a crude copy of Doble lies in Thrasher's "grave". Thrasher has turned Doble into his sorcerous puppet and has him tracing steps around the colony as part of a mighty spell Job Thrasher is planning. Part of the spell is a permanent type of Cloud Memory effect (see spell description on page 250 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*), making Doble hard to recall and able to easily avoid notice. The ultimate goal of the ritual spell is to summon Yog-Sothoth who Thrasher believes will grant him immortality.

Denouement: There are two likely outcomes – either the investigators track down Thrasher in his farmhouse before the ritual is complete, or the witless Doble completes his arcane transit across the colony and the door to Yog-Sothoth is opened.

In the former case, the denouement is likely to feature a showdown at the farmstead that Thrasher has occupied. His lair is protected by Mythos guards – he has at least a Shantak in the barn (see page 306 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition* for

statistics). If pressed, or if he fears someone is close to unravelling the mystery of Ensign Doble he can also summon a Hunting Horror (see page 299 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*).

If Thrasher's terrible plan comes to fruition and the summoning of Yog-Sothoth succeeds, the Keeper can use the statistics for the Outer God provided on page 331 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*. Few are likely to survive such an encounter with body and mind intact. Whether or not Yog-Sothoth grants Thrasher the immortality he desires is left as a decision for the Keeper.

Another way of derailing the plans of the sorcerer would be to somehow interrupt the shuffling cross-country journeys of Ensign Doble before they are complete. If Doble is caught the spell which keeps his senses dulled can be reversed or if he is killed, it is ended. The dummy of Doble serves as a focus the spell; destroying it will end the spell and reverse its effect such that it rebounds on Job Thrasher.

Job Thrasher, Mythos Sorcerer

STR 40 CON 70 SIZ 80 DEX 45 INT 65
APP 35 POW 90 EDU 50 SAN 0 Hit Points: 15
Damage Bonus: none Build: 0 Move: 6 Magic Points: 18

Brawl	80% (20/8), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
Fowling Piece	40% (20/8), damage 4D6/2D6/1D6 [2 barrels; Range 10/20/50 yards; 3 rounds to reload each barrel; Malfunction 95+]
Axe	80% (20/8), damage 1D8 + Damage Bonus
Dodge	25% (12/5)

Skills: Appraise 35%, Art/Craft (Wood Carving), Charm/Bootlick 65%, Credit Rating 10%, Cthulhu Mythos 8%, Insight 75%, Intimidate 40%, Natural World 45%, Navigate 65%, Occult 75%, Stealth 60%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Spells: Call Yog-Sothoth (variant, see below), Cause Blindness, Cloud Memory, Enthral Victim (variant, see below), Fist of Yog-Sothoth, Melt Flesh.

Thrasher's Wizardry

The strange influence that Thrasher has over the (currently-mindless) Ensign Doble is created by a variant version of the "Enthral Victim" spell (see page 258 of *Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition*). Thrasher's much more powerful magic requires several weeks of preparation, the sacrifice of 10 points of POW and the preparation of a ritual focus – in this case the dummy hidden in the grave. If the caster succeeds in overcoming the victim's POW, the poor unfortunate becomes a zombie-like slave who will mindlessly follow the last verbal instruction given by the caster. The influence lasts 3D6 weeks, although the enthralled victim can attempt a fresh opposed POW roll each day that he has not heard the voice of the caster – success breaks the spell. If the ritual focus is destroyed, the spell's effects are reversed with the original spell-caster becoming enthralled to his victim for the balance of time remaining. Thrasher is using the mindless Doble to enact an important ritual component of the unique spell he knows to summon Yog-Sothoth: rather than requiring a stone tower, this version requires a long and convoluted journey across a large area, during which the outlines of a tower are symbolically "drawn" across the countryside.

References

The historical details of Governor Bligh's muster of 1807, as well as the tabular figures compiled by this muster are both available in the *Historical Records of Australia, Vol 6*, pp. 130–132.

Scanned PDF versions of the original historical records can be obtained for free via the excellent [online resource known as the Internet Archive \(archive.org\)](https://www.archive.org). This repository collects a vast array of different historical and contemporary publications, as well as video and audio files which are free of copyright. The Internet Archive is a purely non-commercial operation, whose operation is funded by donations—if you value free, politically-unbiased, online archiving of material for current and future researchers, you may wish to consider donating (as we have) to keep this amazing resource alive and free.

The graphical depictions of the muster returns included here are recreations which agree with the raw data from the originals, but present them in an original format.

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