

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 scenario, or can be used in isolation to provide pieces that enhance a scenario of your own invention.



Convicts & CTHULHU

TICKET of LEAVE "II

The DISPENSATORY Of DOCTOR MACDEAD

CREDITS

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Introduction

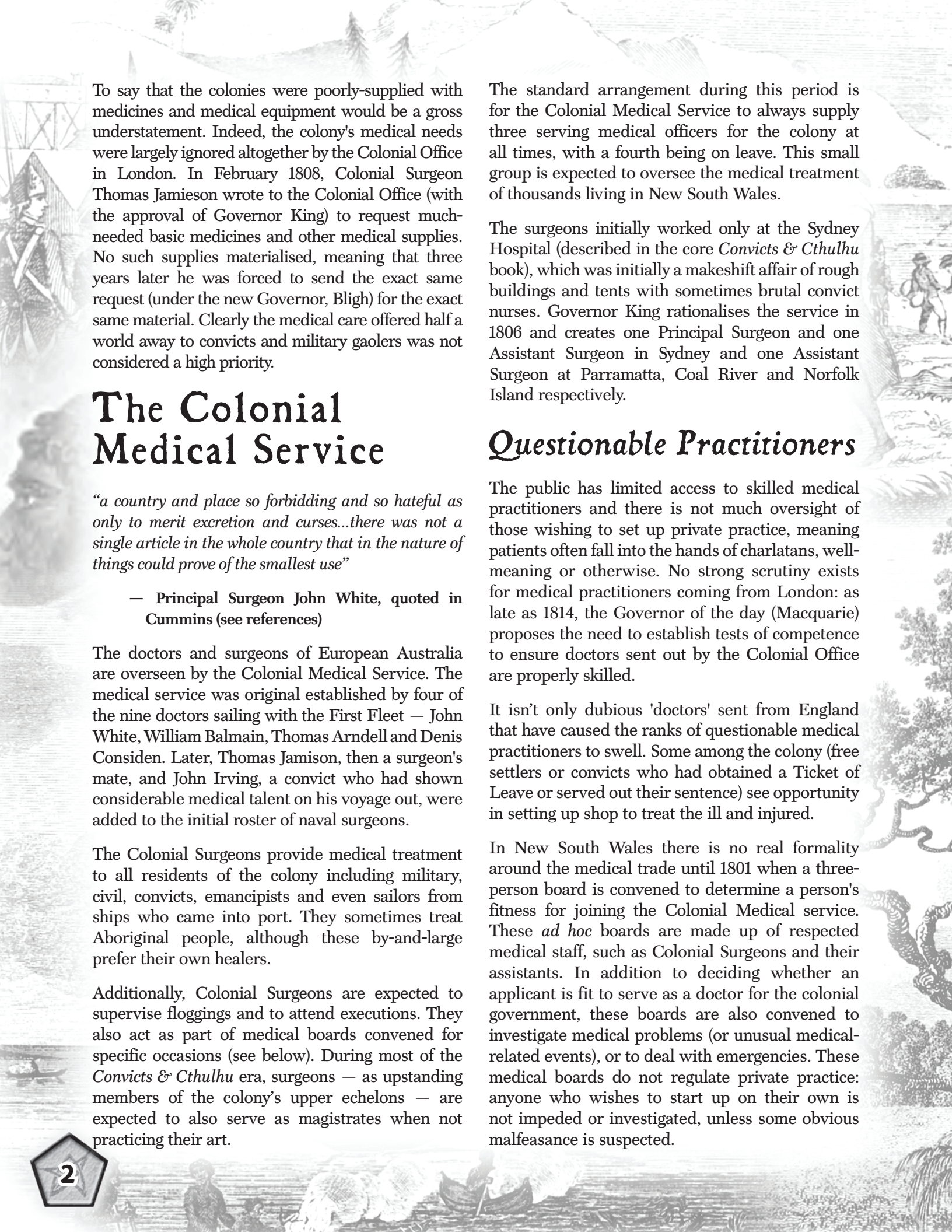
Investigators in Lovecraftian roleplaying games cross paths with the medical profession with an almost-alarming frequency. Whether it's the need for emergency treatment following a confrontation with ne'er-do-wells, or unearthing the nefarious misdeeds of would-be Herbert West types, investigators often find themselves in the company of doctors. In the penal colonies of early Australia, medical treatment was frighteningly primitive even by the standards of the day — and yet this is the only option available to most characters in a *Convicts & Cthulhu* campaign.

This Ticket of Leave provides an overview of medical practice in the colony of New South Wales, describing

the dire state of medical supplies from England as well as the historical Surgeons of the penal settlement. It also provides a medical-themed tale of darkness and horror, set in and around the hospital at Parramatta.

While certain medical practitioners in the Colony were coming to recognise the efficacy of traditional Aboriginal medicine ("bush medicine") and the importance of knowledge of the medicinal and healing properties of plants which were to hand in New South Wales, most still relied on European methods. That meant a reliance on concoctions made from European ingredients, often prepared in England and shipped to the colony to be administered in a European fashion. Practitioners also relied heavily on European medical books, which were rare items in the colonies.





To say that the colonies were poorly-supplied with medicines and medical equipment would be a gross understatement. Indeed, the colony's medical needs were largely ignored altogether by the Colonial Office in London. In February 1808, Colonial Surgeon Thomas Jamieson wrote to the Colonial Office (with the approval of Governor King) to request much-needed basic medicines and other medical supplies. No such supplies materialised, meaning that three years later he was forced to send the exact same request (under the new Governor, Bligh) for the exact same material. Clearly the medical care offered half a world away to convicts and military gaolers was not considered a high priority.

The Colonial Medical Service

“a country and place so forbidding and so hateful as only to merit excretion and curses...there was not a single article in the whole country that in the nature of things could prove of the smallest use”

— Principal Surgeon John White, quoted in Cummins (see references)

The doctors and surgeons of European Australia are overseen by the Colonial Medical Service. The medical service was originally established by four of the nine doctors sailing with the First Fleet — John White, William Balmain, Thomas Arndell and Denis Conisden. Later, Thomas Jamieson, then a surgeon's mate, and John Irving, a convict who had shown considerable medical talent on his voyage out, were added to the initial roster of naval surgeons.

The Colonial Surgeons provide medical treatment to all residents of the colony including military, civil, convicts, emancipists and even sailors from ships who came into port. They sometimes treat Aboriginal people, although these by-and-large prefer their own healers.

Additionally, Colonial Surgeons are expected to supervise floggings and to attend executions. They also act as part of medical boards convened for specific occasions (see below). During most of the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era, surgeons — as upstanding members of the colony's upper echelons — are expected to also serve as magistrates when not practicing their art.

The standard arrangement during this period is for the Colonial Medical Service to always supply three serving medical officers for the colony at all times, with a fourth being on leave. This small group is expected to oversee the medical treatment of thousands living in New South Wales.

The surgeons initially worked only at the Sydney Hospital (described in the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book), which was initially a makeshift affair of rough buildings and tents with sometimes brutal convict nurses. Governor King rationalises the service in 1806 and creates one Principal Surgeon and one Assistant Surgeon in Sydney and one Assistant Surgeon at Parramatta, Coal River and Norfolk Island respectively.

Questionable Practitioners

The public has limited access to skilled medical practitioners and there is not much oversight of those wishing to set up private practice, meaning patients often fall into the hands of charlatans, well-meaning or otherwise. No strong scrutiny exists for medical practitioners coming from London: as late as 1814, the Governor of the day (Macquarie) proposes the need to establish tests of competence to ensure doctors sent out by the Colonial Office are properly skilled.

It isn't only dubious 'doctors' sent from England that have caused the ranks of questionable medical practitioners to swell. Some among the colony (free settlers or convicts who had obtained a Ticket of Leave or served out their sentence) see opportunity in setting up shop to treat the ill and injured.

In New South Wales there is no real formality around the medical trade until 1801 when a three-person board is convened to determine a person's fitness for joining the Colonial Medical service. These *ad hoc* boards are made up of respected medical staff, such as Colonial Surgeons and their assistants. In addition to deciding whether an applicant is fit to serve as a doctor for the colonial government, these boards are also convened to investigate medical problems (or unusual medical-related events), or to deal with emergencies. These medical boards do not regulate private practice: anyone who wishes to start up on their own is not impeded or investigated, unless some obvious malfeasance is suspected.

Sample Colonial-Era Medicines and their Uses

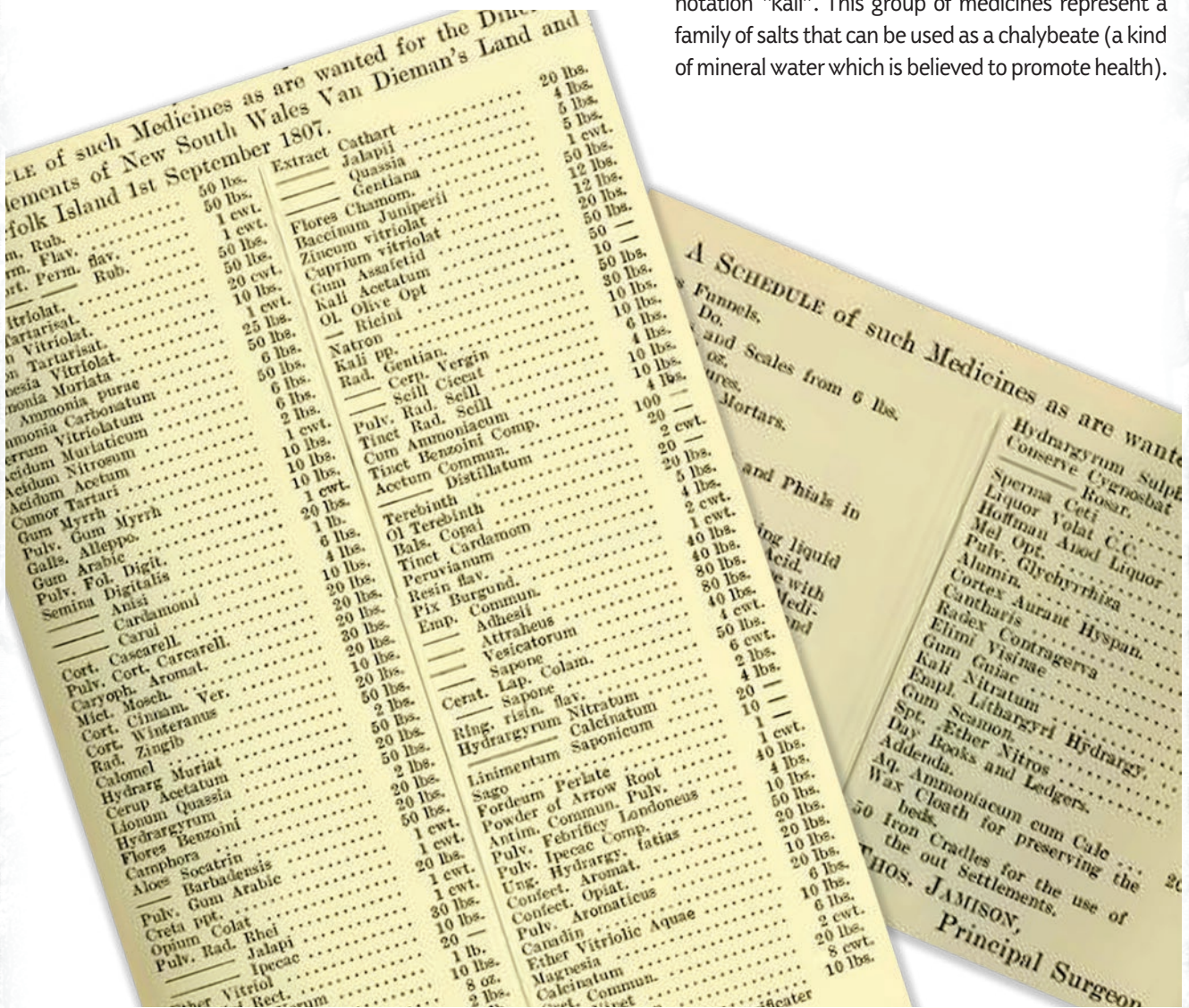
(from the schedule of Medicines)

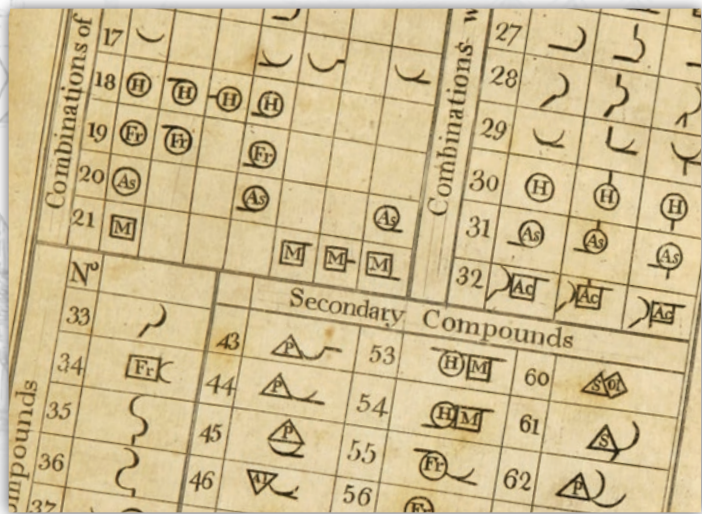
The list nearby shows the range of medical supplies requested for the colony in 1807. It includes many different substances, but these fall into two main groups – the “Simples” and items created by “Mechanical Operation”. The former include herbs, roots, leaves and sprouts usually of a European nature. The latter are medicines which have been manufactured by work with combining or separating substances, resulting in compounds or other substances that are not occurring in nature.

Many of the substances on the list were evidently prepared in England and sent out as premade compounds. The fact that the same list of items was still needed three years later suggests that there was no significant chemical knowledge in the colony to allow items to be synthesized.

Some examples of how these substances were used:

- **Acids** – anything listed on the schedule with the annotation “acidum”. These medicines are used primarily as purgatives, but also used for other forms of treatment. For example, the vapours of Acidum Muratium are considered effective against contagion (although must be used with care, since they are also known to sometimes be lethal).
- **Irons** – anything listed on the schedule with the annotation “ferrum”. These are medicines containing high concentrations of iron, and are used to treat haemorrhoids, diarrhoea, vomiting and fevers.
- **Salts** – anything listed on the schedule with the annotation “kali”. This group of medicines represent a family of salts that can be used as a chalybeate (a kind of mineral water which is believed to promote health).





JOHN WHITE (NSW COLONIAL SURGEON: 1788—1794)

White was born in 1757 and had been a surgeon's mate in the Navy since 1778. He was made surgeon in 1781 and was recommended for Botany Bay by his Captain, Sir Andrew Snape Hammond, while serving as Ship's Surgeon on the *HMS Irresistible*. White came from a wealthy family and was notably aloof. After assuming his role as NSW Colonial Surgeon White fought Australia's first pistol duel against his own subordinate, Dr William Balmain. Both duellers were injured and the duel suspended, although the antipathy between the men continued for years afterwards.

An Unworthy Rabble

All Governors and Surgeons throughout the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era are frustrated by the seeming indifference and consequent inaction of the Colonial Office where it comes to the health of the Colony. Governor William Bligh has an especially combative relationship with the Medical establishment during his tenure as Governor (admittedly this is hardly surprising, given he seems to manage a combative relationship with around half the colony). Bligh believes there are not enough doctors, and is frustrated that those who are charged with looking after the health of the colony appear to be more interested in trade and profit than healing.

The doctors themselves are also frustrated, especially with the lack of supplies and other support from the Governors and the Colonial Office in London. This is compounded by the Colonial Surgeons' obligation to attend to sick settlers and others not victualled by the crown without being paid a fee, a situation that will not be rectified until well after the C&C era.

The Colonial Surgeons

Short NPC capsule summaries are provided below for several of the major historical figures associated with medical treatment in the early colony at New South Wales. In addition to these, further information about NSW Corps Surgeon Dr. John Harris may be found in *Ticket of Leave #10* (along with an adventure featuring him and a fictitious junior surgical assistant).

White was especially challenged by the starvation conditions of the early colony and the rampant sickness of the convicts of the Second Fleet. However, by the time he resigned his post and returned to England in 1794 he had lowered the sickness rate in the colony considerably.

White's 1790 book, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, which included many illustrations of native plants and animals, was a major success in Great Britain. (The book is available free at Australian Gutenberg: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0301531h.html>).

After his time as Colonial Surgeon, White continued to serve in the English Navy as surgeon on ships and at Sheerness Naval Yard. He retired to Brighton where he died aged 75 in 1832. He left behind his wife and three children to her, as well as a fourth child Andrew, born to convict Rachel Turner in Sydney and who was brought up in England in White's household. Andrew White later joined the Royal Engineers, fought at the Battle of Waterloo, and returned to NSW where he lived in Parramatta with his mother from 1823 until his death in 1837.

WILLIAM BALMAIN (NSW COLONIAL SURGEON: 1795—1801)

Balmain was born in 1762 in Scotland. He served in the Navy as surgeon's mate before being chosen for NSW. He was White's third assistant and his abilities as an administrator were often eclipsed by his irascible temper, his argumentativeness, his quickness to take offence and his tendency to clash with his superiors (see his duel with White, above, as an example).

After falling out with White, his superior, Governor Phillip transferred Balmain to Norfolk Island to ease tensions between the men. However, when he returned to Sydney in 1795 having won the trust and support of the new Governor (Hunter), he continued to be ill-tempered. Indeed, on one occasion the irascible Balmain accepted the collective challenge to duel the entire NSW Corps (one after the other!) — although this insane act of bravado was later called off. Balmain argued with John Macarthur over the treatment of a medical orderly and nearly provoked a duel when he called him to his face “a base rascal and an atrocious liar and villain”.

Balmain involved himself in trade and agriculture, including the trade in rum. For all his troublesomeness he worked tirelessly as surgeon and magistrate and was one of the early advocates for legal reform of the colony's systems.

Eventually, he became disenchanted with Governor King and returned to England in 1801 where he died in 1803. He left his wealth to his three children and to his de facto convict wife, Margaret Dawson and their three children.

THOMAS JAMISON

(NSW COLONIAL SURGEON: 1802—1811)

Born in Ireland in 1753, Jamison was Surgeon's Mate on the First Fleet and acted as surgeon at Norfolk Island until 1799. In 1801 he succeeded William Balmain as Colonial Surgeon, but owing to a delay in returning from leave in England he did not take up the position until 1802.

Jamison led the team which carried out the first successful vaccination against smallpox in NSW. Jamison was dissatisfied with the support he received both from his assistants (he tried to court martial two of them but failed) and from the Colonial Office in terms of supplies and staff.

Though he worked successfully under previous Governors, he fell afoul of Bligh who considered him too interested in trade at the expense of medicine and claimed he was “not an upright man”. Jamison allied with Macarthur against Bligh in the Rum Rebellion and served under the Rebel Administration.

Jamison had many mercantile interests but was still a notably competent official. He died in London

A Campaign Frame: Investigators of the Colonial Medical Service

The upcoming release of the *Convicts & Cthulhu* RPG will feature the notion of “campaign frames”, frameworks for running sequences of scenarios linked by a common theme. These offer quick and easy ways for both Keepers and players to make use of different aspects of the colonial prison setting to create games with a particular flavour.

The Colonial Medical Service offers a tempting basis for a campaign frame, one in which players take on the roles of investigators attached to either the Sydney or Parramatta Hospital (or even one of their *ad hoc* boards) and sent out to look into medical “anomalies” that have been reported.

Investigators could be surgeons themselves, or assistant surgeons working for the Colonial Medical Service. Alternatively, they could be private medical practitioners who have been asked to assist or consult. Military doctors — such as those attached to the NSW Corps or from naval vessels, stationed in the colony or visiting — would make for another fine character option.

Players who aren't interested in playing medical practitioners might take on the role of non-medical members of one of the *ad hoc* boards. These groups also include religious ministers, powerful merchants, and other upstanding members of the community, any of which would could be used as an investigator background.

While most doctors and board members are men, this isn't universal — players who wish to play female investigators might play convict women serving as nurses or influential women free settlers.

Convict men are sometimes also involved in such deliberations — perhaps because of their medical knowledge (there are historical examples of this), perhaps simply to act as strong backs and willing hands. Aboriginal characters are also possible, representing the ever-present need for diplomats or guides when venturing out into the less-developed parts of the colony.

The investigator party would most likely report to the Colonial Surgeon but may also report directly to the Chair of a Board. Their investigatory remit could be very broad and encompass any mystery or strangeness with a medical aspect including strange illness or reports of contagion or disease. They could take investigators to virtually anywhere in the Colony, including on board visiting ships. See the introductory scenario in the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book (“Un-Fresh Off The Boat”) for an example which touches on several of these themes.

in 1811 leaving his widow Rebecca, their son and two daughters, as well as five daughters to convict Elizabeth Colley on Norfolk Island and another son to convict Sarah Place.

The Hospital at Parramatta

“I do not believe that there was ever such a place for want, debaucheries and for every vice as the general hospital at Parramatta”

— Reverend Samuel Marsden in a letter to the Colonial Office, 1818.

The scenario which forms the second half of this Ticket of Leave revolves around the Parramatta Hospital. In the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era this is a relatively newly-constructed building, which replaces a much more primitive facility.

Parramatta's First Hospital was the 'tent hospital' which operated between 1788 and 1792; this was not actually a tent but two long thatched buildings vaguely tent-shaped which accommodated 200 patients. With the population of Parramatta growing larger than that of Sydney a more permanent building, with improved conveniences, was desired.

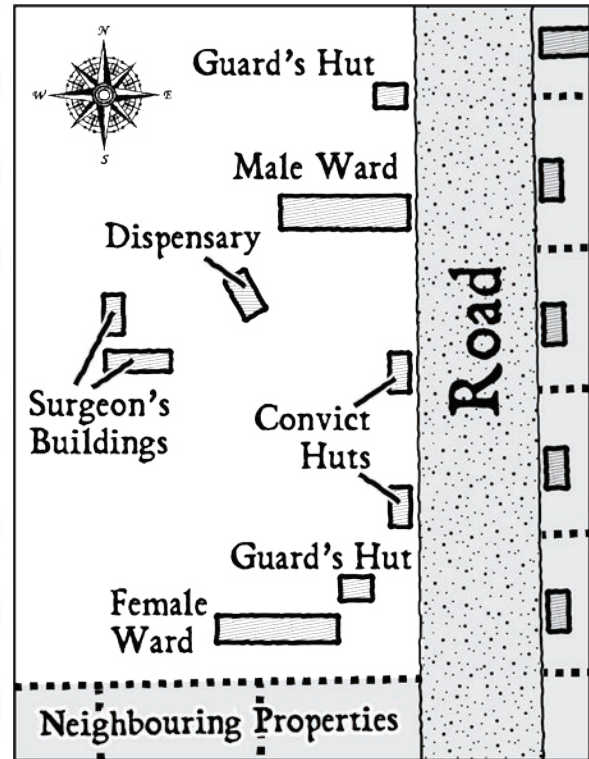
The C&C era hospital — a cluster of clay brick buildings, plastered and whitewashed — was built in 1791, and the patients removed to it in December of that year. In all, the hospital includes two wards.

Unfortunately, because of shortcomings in the building materials — the bricks are lacking limestone and are hence crumbly — the hospital has already become quite dilapidated. It will ultimately be demolished a decade or so after the C&C era. Historical detail about this hospital are sketchy, and largely come from work by archaeologists who have only recently uncovered the building's foundation stones. A rough map of the hospital (based on as much historical data as is known) appears nearby.

THE HOSPITAL BUILDINGS

All of the buildings are constructed from clay bricks, with plaster and whitewash over them, but all are in a state of disintegration owing to the lack of limestone in the mix. The buildings have low ceilings and no lights. There are no locks or bolts on any door, meaning people can come and go as they please.

Map of Parramatta Hospital



The following buildings sit within the hospital grounds (see the map for positions):

- **Two Ward Rooms (one Male and one Female):** In theory no fraternisation is permitted between the sexes but in practice this is difficult to police. The wards are badly crowded and conditions are foul. The windows are broken and the roof leaks whenever it rains more than just a little. Stores are kept at one end of the ward room but there is little here except the very basic staples and often not even these (rice and tea are especially missed by patients). It is not uncommon for dead patients to be left for a time in their beds, since the hospital has no mortuary.
- **Two Guard Huts:** these sit next to the ward rooms. The guards are usually convict overseers and on rare occasions NSW Corps soldiers.
- **Dispensary:** Here drugs and medicine are stored, but there is little enough of these, with many empty shelves. Like the other buildings this building cannot be locked, so there are routine thefts.

Surgeons of Parramatta

The Keeper's choice regarding when he or she wishes to set the scenario will dictate who is currently serving as head surgeon at Parramatta. The historical figures are described briefly below.

1788–1792: Thomas Arndell. Navy surgeon and assistant colonial surgeon. Was later made apothecary at Parramatta (1798) and was a farmer and grazier. Was a government loyalist and later fell out with both military interregnums of Grose and then the Rebel Administration.

1792–1795: John Irving. A First Fleet convict who was also considered the best surgeon in the colony until his death in 1795.

1796–1802 (approx.): John Harris. Harris was a surgeon and farmer as well as magistrate and controller of the police in Sydney, all while attending to his medical duties. He later became a bitter enemy of Bligh. (See also his write ups in both the core *C&C* book and *Ticket of Leave #10*).

1802 (approx.)–1808: D'Arcy Wentworth. Wentworth was a colourful figure from an impoverished aristocratic family who came to the Colonies to avoid being arrested for highway robbery. He later became NSW Colonial Surgeon (under Governor Macquarie) and was known for his tenderness to the ill, especially children. A tall handsome Irishman, his friendship with Jane Austen has led literary historians to speculate he may have been the original of Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*.

1809–1813: Edward Lutrell. Lutrell came to the colony with his wife and 10 children but disliked the medical profession and was considered an indifferent if not negligent surgeon.

- **Two Convict Huts (one Male and one Female):** These are accommodation for the convicts assigned to work in the hospital. The buildings are as run-down as any of the others.
- **Two Surgeons' Buildings:** These are accommodation for the Parramatta Surgeon and his assistant. They comprise living quarters for when the surgeon is attending, as well as an office and a surgery. (It should be noted most surgeons also maintain private residences elsewhere, so these accommodations are not always used.)

THE HOSPITAL STAFF

The hospital has one surgeon and one assistant surgeon. Its nurses, overseers, wardsmen and gardeners are all assigned convicts. Often the convict men are somewhat frail (being specimens too old or decrepit to perform hard labour elsewhere). Usually the women are assigned to hospital duty as punishment for misconduct. Both of these factors lead to the quality of care not being very high. Indeed, settlers have reported that some patients must be forced to attend the hospital against their will.


Scenario Seed: The Dispensatory of Doctor Macdead

This scenario seed takes place mostly in and around Parramatta, with a likely excursion to the secondary penal settlement at Coal River. It concerns itself with events surrounding an evil medical book used by a dubious medical practitioner to perform some terrifying and disgusting ... alterations. The scenario can be set any time after the building of Parramatta Hospital in 1792, although if the Keeper wishes to run it prior to 1801 (when Coal River was established) he or she will need a substitute location for the secondary place of punishment (e.g., the Hawkesbury River).

Parramatta and Coal River are described in the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book; Hawkesbury River will receive a more detailed treatment in the upcoming standalone *Convicts & Cthulhu* RPG.

Keeper's Introduction

Doctor James Macdead is a medical charlatan, sentenced to transportation in London as punishment for forging cheques from patients. Macdead had accrued a little medical knowledge from helping a ship's surgeon in his youth, and had enough knowledge to perform minor medical treatment successfully and pass off a lot of baffle-gab as medical knowledge. While his dubious treatments did no immediate harm to patients, his conniving ways did have the unfortunate side-effect of encouraging patients to leave their ailments untreated by reputable doctors. In this way he probably contributed to numerous deaths.



Macdead is, however, quite a clever man and managed to accrue some genuine skill in pharmacology prior to his arrest and sentencing. On his arrival in NSW he promptly began to treat people and achieved some minor popularity as an able convict medical assistant in a colony short on medical knowledge.

When eventually he attained his ticket of leave, Macdead set up shop in Parramatta and began to once again ply his somewhat dubious medical trade. One of the first things that he did was to send word back to family in England that he was in need of the modest library of medical texts that he had assembled (or perhaps stolen) over the years. His London relatives were only too eager to satisfy this request, boxing up the mouldy old tomes and paying to have them shipped on the next vessel bound for Botany Bay.

Macdead's collection reached him (eventually) in Parramatta, along with a crate of old medical apparatus. Both books and tools are a rarity in the colony and go a long way towards lending the hoaxer a (totally unwarranted) sense of trustworthiness.

However, when Doctor Macdead received his medical library he also received something else — something unexpected and unearthly. In among the box of tomes was a book titled 'The Dispensary of the Damned', a book which Macdead cannot remember ever obtaining. Outwardly it resembles a common pharmacopeia or dispensary, but this is just a disguise. In fact, the tome in question is not a real book at all, but a malevolent alien horror masquerading as a book.

THE CORRUPTION OF DOCTOR MACDEAD

Although mystified by the inclusion of the unexpected dispensary in the crate, Doctor Macdead was not one to pass up an opportunity to profit from someone else's error (or alternatively as he rationalised it, the munificent gift of some random stranger). Thus, James Macdead studied the book, while simultaneously growing his practice in Parramatta. The alien horror inside the book slowly gained a hold on him, at first dominating his dreams and then his waking thoughts. Soon, Macdead was little more than a puppet to the Thing in the Dispensary.

The book had its own sense of purpose, and soon it compelled Macdead to obtain raw materials and

A Convict Named Macdead?

Although the surname "Macdead" sounds like a pulpy made-up name, in fact James Macdead was the actual name of a convict sent to Australia. Which only goes to prove that real-life is always weirder than any fiction we can dream up.

The real Macdead wasn't a medical man, and didn't arrive in the colonies until well after the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era (he came in 1835, landing at Port Jackson from Scotland on the convict ship *Asia*). However, such a name is far too apt to pass up!

blend them using techniques written in its pages to make dark and unnatural chemical compounds. These he began to use in the treatment of patients, with increasingly terrible results. People treated with the medicines brewed using The Book's dark arts began to transform ... growing strange appendages, and in some cases warping their very form. These changes are not mere random effects, but rather are a part of a complex Mythos-related plot to open a bridge to elsewhere, to ultimately allow a baleful horror entry into our world.

THE BEST-LAID PLANS ...

While James Macdead's actions set in motion the series of monstrous transformations, he has not been able to personally see the fruits of his labours. Three weeks ago, he was caught forging a promissory note. As a Ticket of Leave convict, discovery of such a misdeed has been punished by the Colonial government, swiftly and harshly — Macdead was immediately sentenced to a period of punishment at the (notoriously harsh) convict mining camp at Coal River.

Before departing for his punishment, Macdead had enough presence of mind to entrust The Book to someone reliable (or perhaps the book itself compelled him to do so). He chose to leave it with his convict mistress, a girl named Maggie Miles, who works as a nurse at the Parramatta Hospital. A sly young woman, Maggie has decided to hide the medical tome in among the small collection of medical texts already at the hospital in a storeroom.

In the weeks since, Macdead has slowly gone increasingly insane at Coal River. But he has not been practicing his evil medicine in Parramatta, which means that the horrible schemes of The Thing in the Book have stalled, even as rumours of some

The Dispensatory

The Book that is at the centre of all the strange goings-on is a thick and worn-looking dispensatory (a book of medicinal formulae — drugs and other preparations — and methods of using them to treat different conditions). Similar books are also sometimes called pharmacopoeia.

Keepers who want to inject some historical realism into their game can readily find free online scans of period dispensatories which have an abundance of weird-sounding treatments. Macdead's "Dispensatory of the Damned" is particularly inspired by The Edinburgh New Dispensatory, which collected various Pharmacopoeias, including those from Edinburgh, Dublin and London, into one massive volume. That book served as a major text in the reform of chemical pharmacy in the Age of Enlightenment. The series was commenced by Doctor William Lewis in 1753. (A link to a full online version is below, uploaded by the US National Library of Medicine).

The book is divided into three main sections:

- Section One deals with the chemicals and elements as well as Pharmaceutical Operations, the latter comprising weighing, measuring, heating and combining with other chemicals.
- Section Two is the *Materia Medica*, which looks at the materials including animal, vegetable and mineral used in pharmacy and what general ailments they are effective against.
- The final Section, Preparations and Compositions, looks at how these materials are combined into medicines and to what end.

Illustrations from the real-world medical text may be found scattered through this Ticket of Leave.

of the weirder transformations it has wrought have come to the attention of colonial authorities.

The Thing in the Book is, however, not content to simply bide its time waiting for its disciple to return. Wedged into a bookcase in a back room rarely visited by anyone, the evil entity has been reaching out mentally to whichever minds it can reach. Until recently it had only been able to touch the mind of the convict girl Maggie, who likes to visit the store room whenever she can skive off from work for a short break to smoke or indulge in other vices. While not an ideal

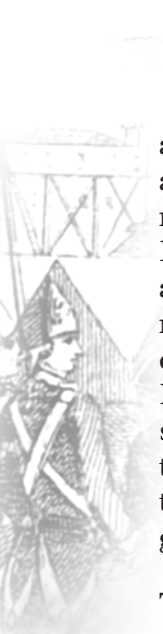


subject, The Book has been considering possessing the girl... but in recent days she has begun bringing a man back to the store room. Because, although serving as Macdead's mistress, Maggie has for some time also been mistress to a conniving hospital wardsman named John Wiley. The Book now has two options for subjects to ensnare ... and it is only a matter of time before one (or both) of them succumbs to its influence, reads the book, and becomes a new practitioner of medical mayhem. Then the path towards its ultimate goal will resume apace ...

Involving the Investigators

The investigators' involvement comes when colonial authorities decide that someone should look into the rash of weird medical-related stories that have been circulating. While one or two outlandish stories about strange mutations might be put down to lies, heavy drinking, or over-active imagination, a series of independent tales warrants investigation.

The easiest way to get the investigators on the case is for them to already be somehow connected to the medical establishment of New South Wales. This can be via tenuous connections such as being convicts



assigned to hospital duties, military or civil officers assigned to work at the Hospitals, or even a private medical official employed at the Governor's pleasure. It would be helpful if the investigator group includes at least one surgeon, even a ship's surgeon or surgeon's mate or a military officer with some medical skill (e.g., one attached to the Military Surgeon at the Parramatta Barracks). If no players want to play the role of surgeon, the Keeper might wish to add an NPC to the assigned investigation team with those skills (e.g., the fictional Assistant Surgeon Lt Jeremy Hale whose game statistics appear on page 23).

The scenario begins with the investigators being summoned by the colony's Principal Surgeon, Thomas Jamison (unless the Keeper has chosen a setting before 1803, in which case see "The Colonial Surgeons" on page 4). He meets them at Sydney Hospital — a location described in the Sydney Gazetteer section of the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book. If the Keeper is introducing an NPC surgeon such as Lt Hale, that individual will be introduced to them at the hospital.

Jamison tells the assembled investigators that there are persistent and wild stories circulating about some alarming medical symptoms exhibited by certain convicts and free settlers of the Parramatta region. Scattershot accounts and rumours abound including some horror stories that Jamison has no doubt have been encouraged by drink. The Principal Surgeon has asked for a list to be drawn up of all the Parramatta residents whose curious afflictions have been reported, though there may be other unreported cases as well. Beyond this list of four names — which Jamison will give to the most senior member of the investigator team — there is no further information. The names on the list are: Thomas Bradbury, Mary Hart, William Green, and Ann Gabel.

Jamison wants the investigators to look in to the matter, determine if any outbreak has occurred and if not, what other factors are leading to such bizarre reports. Once they have ascertained the truth they are to report back. If some action requires immediate medical treatment they are to administer it, or consult the Head Surgeon at Parramatta Hospital. Otherwise they must get clearance from Jamison's office as to anything more far reaching. The Principal Surgeon also gives the most senior investigator a note authorising the team to draw what medical supplies they need from Parramatta Hospital, with the caution that supplies are always low and should be used intelligently.

Jamison concludes the short meeting by wishing them luck and saying that he expects regular reports if the investigation of this affair is to take longer than three days.

The True Nature of the Threat

The true nature and motivation of the horrors behind the Parramatta mutations will depend on which of the options the Keeper has chosen (see Mythos Options on page 20).

- **Option A — Transpiercer From Yuggoth:** In this version, The Thing in the Book is an ancient and very peculiar weapon left aeons ago on Earth by the Mi-Go. Its purpose is to open a gateway which permits a force of Yuggothian warriors to emerge 'behind enemy lines.' The process for opening this gate involves the creation of nine mutated specimens who will collectively carry out the final ritual of opening.
- **Option B — The Beast of Nine Parts:** In this version, The Thing in the Book is a herald for one of the gods of the Cthulhu Mythos, and exists for the sole purpose of fashioning a fleshy form into which the god can incarnate. The creation of the god's future form involves mutating nine individuals then stitching together a single enormous body from pieces of their bloated and mutated corpses.
- **Option C — The Elevation of Doctor Macdead:** In this version, Doctor Macdead is himself an unwitting pawn of a malevolent Mythos cult who are well aware of the powers lurking within The Book and their potential to bring Mythos horrors into the world. This group has silently groomed Macdead to be their agent, knowing full well that the final ritual that will breathe life into the nine created horrors will also consume him.

Getting Started: Travelling to Parramatta

The trip from Sydney to Parramatta should be uneventful. Transport is available by either boat or road (with both described in the main *Convicts & Cthulhu* book).

When the group arrives at Parramatta they may be expecting that they will be able to obtain accommodation at the Parramatta Hospital itself, although those hopes will be quickly dashed. The humble medical facility has no spare room for them, forcing the group to seek out accommodation at a local inn (unless one or more of the investigator group is a Parramatta local or has friends or allies in the vicinity). If the Keeper needs a representative inn, the Freemason's Arms described in the core C&C book can be used for this purpose.

Parramatta Investigations

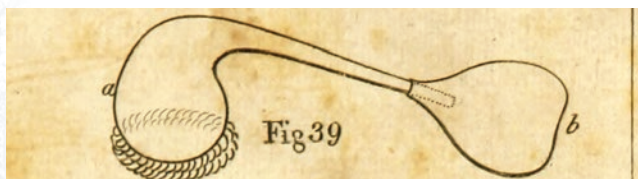
The investigators have a few different avenues of investigation open to them in Parramatta. They may choose to hunt down general rumours floating around town — these tales are even being whispered amongst staff and patients at the hospital. Alternatively, they wish to try tracking down the four people whose names appear on Jamison's list.

INVESTIGATING AT THE PARRAMATTA HOSPITAL

While the hospital forms a nexus for the activities that are to unfold, at the outset there is very little information that can be learned there. Asking about strange medical symptoms or other weirdness will elicit no specific details. Certainly, there have been no unusual cases observed among the unfortunates receiving treatment at the hospital, though most have heard some of the gossip circulating around town (see below).

The main staff that the investigators will interact with at the hospital will be the Parramatta head surgeon (see the box "Surgeons of Parramatta" on page 7 for a chronology of who filled this role during the year in which the scenario is set), and a few others as described below:

- **The Head Surgeon:** this doctor works directly under the Colonial Surgeon in Sydney and will generally be willing to oblige the investigators, at least so long as their



demands of his time and medical supplies are not too onerous. He is dismissive of wild tales of strange sickness and states outright that he has seen no-one suffering anything untoward presenting themselves at the hospital. If asked whether he has looked into the rumours circulating Parramatta he will curtly reply that he is far too busy to check on mad rumours!

- **The Assistant Surgeon:** in addition to the main surgeon there is a more junior doctor, Barnabas Ritter, who is supposed to be present at the hospital during daylight hours. While the investigators may spot Ritter occasionally, he seems to be missing for a lot of the time. In reality, the young doctor has a number of different vices (rum, women, and tobacco being just the beginning of a long list) that he likes to indulge in town whenever "things seem to be under control" at the hospital. This seems to be pretty much any time he feels the need. The investigators' impression that the Assistant Surgeon is little more than a nominal worker at the hospital will be reinforced when they learn that although Doctor Ritter has rooms allocated for his accommodation at the hospital, he never uses them. All of these details are well known to most staff (and some patients) at the hospital. The fact that Ritter's surgical room and its associated store room are seldom used has provided Maggie Miles with a convenient hiding place for The Book (and later may provide a handy location for carrying out additional surgical procedures).
- **Convict Wardsman John Wiley:** Wiley is 39 and hails from Birmingham. He works around the hospital doing odd jobs, mostly cleaning and carrying. The investigators will cross paths with him frequently as they move around the hospital. In addition to his work, Wiley also runs a number of lucrative scams and is an occasional paramour to nurse Miles (see below). If asked, Wiley claims to have been a medical orderly in the army but this is a lie, and if pressed he struggles to summon any details of his service except "fighting the French". Wiley is possessive of Maggie and likely to be violent if roused. (See page 19, for more on Wiley's involvement later in the scenario).

- **Convict Nurse Maggie Miles:** Although there are numerous nurses working at the hospital, Maggie is the one who investigators will run into most frequently at the hospital. She is 27 years old and comes from London. Maggie has a complex life. She is Wiley's mistress and also an accomplice to several of his illegal activities (happily sharing in the profits of his perfidy). The relationship between Maggie and Wiley is technically a secret at the hospital, but many of the convict staff have spotted the two wandering off together for daytime liaisons, so most have some suspicions about them. What nobody at the hospital knows, however, is that for some months Maggie Miles was also the mistress and secret accomplice of Doctor Macdead, assisting in his after-hours medical preparations. She has a rudimentary medical knowledge, ironically most of it learned from her foul patron. (See page 19, for more on Maggie's likely actions later in the scenario).

During early visits to the hospital, investigators probably have little reason to inquire about James Macdead, but should they return later with questions about the man, the following information can be learned (with appropriate social skill checks):

- **Medical practitioners** believe that the private doctor is little more than a talentless charlatan, probably not even trained in medicine. They scoff at the notion that Macdead provided any help to his private patients, asserting instead that he probably did them immense harm. Everyone seems glad to learn that Macdead finally got his comeuppance and has been exposed as the fraud he is.
- **Convict staff** have no particular love for Macdead either — he was an ill-tempered and scruffy man who was an occasional visitor to the hospital, though most think this was only to pilfer supplies (this is partially true, although he also visited Maggie). If asked, several convicts recall him meeting with Maggie at the hospital some weeks ago but haven't seen him since.

While it is easy enough for investigators to snoop around the Parramatta Hospital buildings, there is not much that they are likely to discover. The Book is currently buried in with a pile of other similar texts in the storeroom adjacent to the Assistant Surgeon's

medical room, though there is no particular reason that investigators would spot it there.

GOSSIP AND RUMOURS AROUND PARRAMATTA

Passing through Parramatta and talking to people at the hospital will uncover various rumours about medical oddities and other curious goings-on. The Keeper may call for social skill checks to convince Parramatta residents to pass on what they know (although most simply enjoy spreading gossip and won't need to be enticed too much to do so).

- Many different accounts exist of a strange and contagious illness doing the rounds of Parramatta. This odd disease causes weird pustules and lesions to grow on people's skin, especially around the chest and face.
- Some versions of the tale also suggest that victims of the "plague" have lost the ability to speak and can only make a strange high-pitched whistle.
- A few locals are saying that some illness that makes people grow tentacles has been contracted from the Parramatta River.
- Some of the wilder stories abroad in the taverns speak of sufferers' brains are exploding out of their noses and ears.
- Some say the symptoms are so hideous they cannot be described, and that family members have gone mad and locked the infected away.

While not all of these rumours are true, most of them have some basis in what eyewitnesses have observed of the transformations wrought by Doctor Macdead (albeit exaggerated and distorted in the re-telling).

TRACKING DOWN INITIAL SUFFERERS

Using the names on Jamison's list it is easy to ask locals for directions to the houses and farms where each individual resides. All of the named people live either in Parramatta township itself or on a farmstead close to town. They are all victims of Macdead's experimental treatment, although some are more advanced in their mutations than others: each of these four people has at least passed the first stage and entered full transformation,

though some only recently. All four of them have progressed to the point where own sanity has been shredded by the changes, and most of them no longer leave their houses for fear that someone will notice the changes to their body. For individuals who are especially advanced, it is likely that the sufferer's family has either gone mad also — or has fled, leaving the growing horror to fend for itself. Individuals who have so fled are likely to be hiding, and in denial, and in no way interested in contacting the authorities.

The Keeper can use the details below to improvise some suitably gruesome or pathetic scenes that investigators encounter when they visit each of the four victims' homes. They will likely learn very little from the patients themselves (since their minds snapped long ago); most of the information to be obtained will be gathered by talking to family and friends. Investigators are welcome to attempt a medical diagnosis of the victims they find (and make rolls against relevant skills), however the only thing that can really be learned is that none of these strange mutations resembles any medical condition reported in the normal literature.

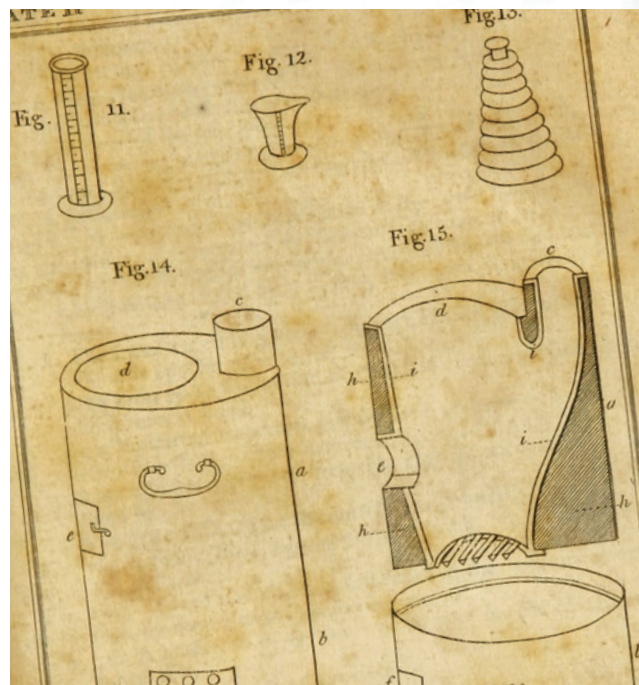
Thomas Bradbury

Bradbury is 53 years old and lives in a house in Parramatta township. He is a convict worker assigned to the farm of John Isley and family. A month ago Bradbury had complained of a cough and had consulted Doctor Macdead.

When investigators visit the Bradbury house they find that his wife answers the door and is reticent to accept visitors. She seems distraught and the place smells terrible. If they can convince her to allow them entry they can see Bradbury, a husk of his former self with a ropy green pseudopod protruding from the back of his neck. His wife says he has a second such tentacle beneath his clothing. The man is non-responsive, staring off into the distance.

Mary Hart

Mary is a free settler, aged 29 years; wife to George Hart. The two live on their farm in Toongabbie. Mary had fallen six weeks ago and twisted her leg, then come down with a fever. Doctor Macdead had been summoned out to the farmstead to treat her.



When investigators visit the farm, they will find it silent with nobody answering their knocks at the door. Mr Hart and the farm servants have all fled in fear (and are in hiding on other nearby farms). If investigators let themselves in, they can easily find the unfortunate Mrs Hart — guided by the terrible smell that pervades the entire house. In a corner of the main bedroom, is a huge green-white cocoon which looks like it has sat in place for some days. The surface of the protective wrapping seems to have been recently forced open — apparently from within — and a half-human, half-insectoid head sticks out of the hole. This is the victim, recently having completed her first transformation but left weak from malnourishment and unable to pull herself clear of the cocoon. She is the most advanced of the mutations.

While there is nobody else in the house, investigators can speak with neighbours at adjacent farms (and may even discover the hiding husband) to learn the history of Mrs Hart's affliction and treatment.

William Green

Green is a nineteen-year-old convict boy who works as a labourer for NSW Corpsman Sgt Joseph Mitchell. He lives with Sgt Mitchell in his small house in Parramatta township. Sgt Mitchell has not been living in his house in recent weeks, having been assigned duties elsewhere. However, his convict maid Eleanor Childs has been present for the duration

and has witnessed what has transpired with Green. William's original complaint was of headaches and nausea, and he visited Doctor Macdead at his home surgery on the road to Toongabbie.

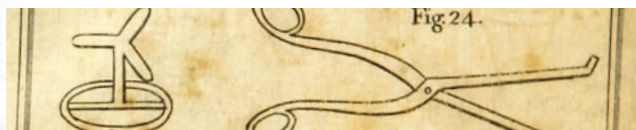
When investigators visit the Mitchell house they will find that the maid Eleanor is in a state of extreme distress, and has been frantically asking at the barracks of the NSW Corps for word to be sent to Sgt Mitchell that he must return to see to a matter "of some urgency." Initially Eleanor will resist any attempts to gain entry to the home, saying that she is under instructions from the master of the house to use force if needed to protect his chattels. If investigators talk her around or force their way into the house they can find William Green — insane and with a grossly distorted skull, which has started to separate under the pressure of something growing within. Peering through the cracks, investigators can see an oversized pulsing brain sits within his skull.

Ann Gabel

Ann is a 44-year-old convict woman who works for farmer Jeremiah Pettitt and family and lives on the family farmstead at Rose Hill. Ann initially complained of headaches and fever and, after some persuading the farmer convinced her to summon Doctor Macdead.

When investigators visit the Pettitt farm they will find that only Mr Pettitt remains in the house. If pressed he will say (untruthfully) that his servant woman has gone to Sydney to visit her cousin. In fact, Ann has been hidden by Jeremiah in the loft of the farm's larger barn, because he is too frightened by what she is becoming. He sent away his wife and the farm's convict labourers for the same reason. Investigators who wish to inspect Ann Gabel will need to either break through the man's wall of deception or search thoroughly through the entire cluster of farm buildings. If they find his wife (by either means), Jeremiah Pettitt breaks down in tears — saying over-and-over "I should never have told her to summon the surgeon."

In her hiding place in the barn, Ann is a drooling parody of woman. Her torso has begun to warp and harden, like the shell of some great insect. Massive spines protrude from her back.



Clues and Information

Talking to family and friends of patients can reveal several details. The Keeper should decide whether some of these facts require skill checks to tease from distraught relatives. Each interview should reveal just a couple of these points, forcing the investigators to piece together the whole picture from numerous different accounts.

- Each of the victims was a patient of the private Parramatta doctor known as 'Doctor' James Macdead;
- Each of the households had bought goods from the Riverman in the Red Boat in the last four weeks;
- Most family members are generally fearful of the Parramatta Hospital and its resident surgeons, saying that they wouldn't go to them unless they were at death's door. (This fear is borne from a general distrust of the authorities, although investigators may incorrectly jump to the conclusion that the hospital and its surgeons are somehow involved);
- The affected patients had been seeing Doctor Macdead for some time, and each had received treatment from him previously with no ill effects;
- At their last consultation with Doctor Macdead, the patients were given a concoction which the doctor told them would ease their particular affliction. The patients all took the medicines they were given;
- To a couple of patients, the doctor mentioned that the special treatment he has selected was a "progressive and novel" one he had discovered while consulting a new book — and he believed that this new treatment would yield marvellous effects;
- Each patient has not returned to the doctor, or been visited by him, since being given the medicine;
- One of the relatives the investigators speak with will happily admit that Macdead is "not really a doctor" but despite that he has a rare talent for helping out with all manner of minor problems; all of his treatments have been efficient in the past, and in fact far more reliable than going to the hospital for treatment;

- If asked, the relatives of each victim can confirm that none has had any contact with any of the other afflicted members of the list — at least not as far back as anyone can recall. Similarly, no immediate member of the victim's family has been in contact with any of the other victims either.

OTHER VICTIMS

Although the investigators began with a list of four reported victims of strange symptoms, those are in fact not the only people who Doctor Macdeed has maligned with his evil treatment. If investigators think to ask around the hospital, the local NSW Corps barracks, or Parramatta's pubs they may hear mention of other strange medical afflictions. As time goes on this becomes more and more likely as these (newer) cases of Macdeed's treatments begin to exhibit more severe transformations.

If the investigators already suspect that Doctor Macdeed is the common connection between the initial victims, they can also track down the remaining victims by seeking information about who else frequently consulted the not-so-good doctor for medical treatment.

However they find them, the investigators should eventually be able to track down three additional victims:

- **Richard Lift:** A 23-year-old convict boatman who lives on his boat in the Parramatta River with his friend Isaac Jones (aged 29). Doctor Macdeed treated him for bouts of palsy. If investigators inspect Lift's body they will find that there is a lump on his right leg that seems to be developing into a pseudopod-like protrusion.
- **John Langley:** A convict labourer, aged 30 years, who works on the public gang that does government construction and demolition around Parramatta. Langley originally became feverish and was attended by Macdeed in a worker's shack in Toongabbie. As far as the man's convict overseer is concerned, Langley is still convalescing in that same shack ... although he hasn't checked in on him for a week or more. If investigators visit the shack they will find Langley to be a raving mess, convinced that his head is going to explode from within.

The Man in the Red Boat

A few of the stories the investigators are told mention a "riverman in a red boat". If the investigators are interested in tracking down this reference they can easily find the individual they pertain to. He is a convict smuggler named George Ball. Ball is shifty about his work and only plies his trade at night because he deals largely in goods stolen from warehouses in Sydney, stolen from ships in Sydney Harbour, or smuggled in from boats on the Hawkesbury.

The Man in the Red Boat has a birthmark on the right side of his face and as afflicted with boils. He has recently been getting stolen medicine from Sydney hospital and bringing it upriver, which is how the local patients of Doctor Macdeed have come across him. (John Wiley at Parramatta will happily put him out of business if he finds this out, possibly by drowning him).

The Man in the Red Boat is a red herring, but adventurers can still provide a public good in stopping him, and certainly earn the approval of the Governor by doing so. Putting an end to his medicine-smuggling racket will also impress the Colonial Medicine Service, especially if the investigators can link him to a wider racket in selling stolen medicine (investigating such activities may also bring some of John Wiley's extracurricular activities to light).

If the Keeper wishes to expand upon this small plot point, he or she could easily make George Ball a part of a bigger gang of criminals. See *Ticket of Leave #3: Criminal Enterprise* for a ready-made band of hoodlums, the Jenks Gang, that could be employed for exactly this purpose.

- **Amelia Lemon:** A 27-year-old convict maid assigned to Thomas Kelly, a farmer at Toongabbie. Amelia first became sick with "women's problems" but after having been treated by Doctor Macdeed she wandered in a daze out into the bushland at the edge of the farmstead. Thomas Kelly has reported the young woman to the Colonial authorities as missing, but does not otherwise seem concerned for her wellbeing. In fact, he says she was "always next to useless anyway." The Keeper can decide on what has happened to Amelia — conceivably she could have been found and tended to by women from a local Aboriginal community (see the *Convicts &*

Cthulhu core book for details of the Aboriginal peoples of the region). If investigators manage to track her down and inspect her body, they can find that Amelia's body is just beginning to sprout vestigial wings.

Investigating these patients helps the adventurers confirm the same information as the previous sufferers, as well as providing extra information. In the case of Lift, Isaac Jones knows that Maggie Miles came to the boat and said she was following up for Macdead, but would not be pressed on his whereabouts, nor did she show much interest in helping the patient.

INVESTIGATING "DOCTOR MACDEAD"

It will quickly become obvious that all the sufferers have in common some contact with 'Doctor' James Macdead. This will naturally make him a suspect. Finding him is, however, easier said than done. The following notes provide the most likely avenues of investigation in Parramatta and the general information they might yield. Keepers should feel free to require successful skill checks to uncover some of the key details noted.

- **At Macdead's house and surgery:** Investigators can readily find the house occupied by James Macdead, which is between Parramatta and Toongabbie. The place is, however, completely empty and there is no sign of anybody living there. If investigators scour the place looking for unusual books, they find nothing of the kind (since Macdead gave *The Book* to Maggie before he was sent to Coal River). If the Keeper is using Mythos Option C ("The Elevation of Doctor Macdead") there is an additional clue in the house — see the option description.

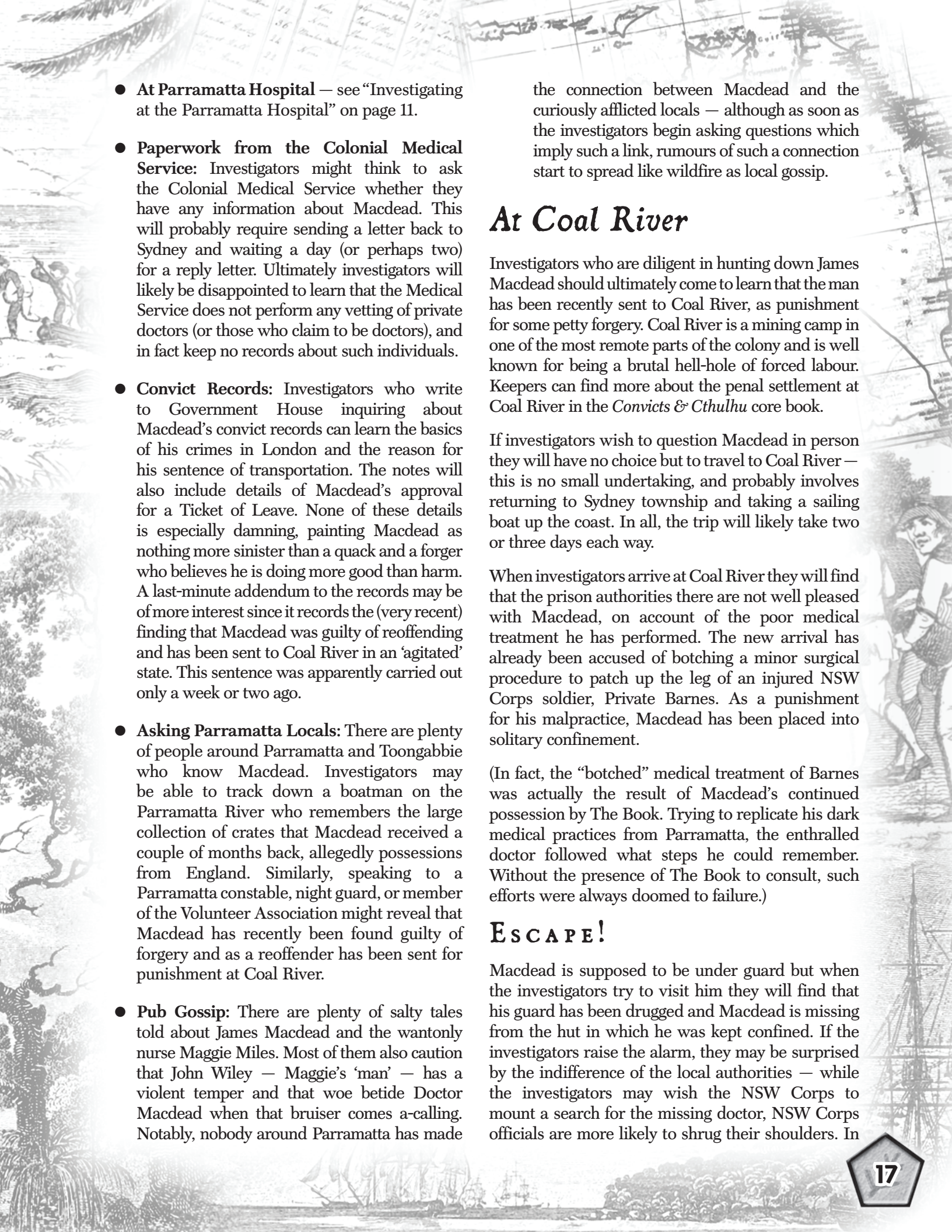
If investigators speak with Macdead's neighbours they can learn that several recall Maggie Miles as a regular guest and are happy to repeat the salacious rumour that she is his mistress, despite her relationship with John Wiley at the hospital. They will also note that in recent weeks Macdead became very secretive and bad tempered towards "good natured inquiring neighbours". Perhaps, they will opine, Maggie Miles is a bad influence — since she is known as a "bad lot".

Halting the Transformations

If the investigators have any compassion (or even simply medical curiosity) then they will likely want to determine whether there is some way to arrest or reverse the horrific transformations that sufferers of Macdead's treatments are undergoing. The simple answer is that these mutations are magickal rather than medical, and there is nothing in the repertoires of 18th century surgeons that offers any insight into treating such a case.

However, that doesn't mean that the afflicted are absolutely doomed; clever investigators may derive methods for derailing the horrible schemes of *The Thing in the Book*. Here are a few ideas; consulting the background for the specific Mythos Option the Keeper has selected may offer some additional ideas.

- **Death of the Patient** — by themselves none of the transformations will kill their victim. Indeed, it quite important to the schemes of the Thing in the Book that each of the victims remains alive until the final ritual is performed. If investigators choose to "put the victims out of their misery" they can certainly do so. Curiously, victims who are killed before the final ritual will slowly revert to human form in death.
- **A Secret in The Book** — the Keeper may wish to allow diligent investigators who get their hands on the *Dispensatory of the Damned* to find helpful secrets within its pages. One such secret might be a way of reversing the transformations induced by Macdead. To understand such technical material, investigators will need significant knowledge of the Chemical sciences as well as a grasp of Medicine that goes beyond mere first aid. Attempting such a feat also opens the investigator up to potential possession by the book. If successful, however, the reversing process found in the *Dispensatory* will halt the ongoing transformation immediately and take 1D3 days to reverse.
- **Destruction of The Book** — although it will likely remain a mystery to the investigators, *The Book* is the hub of the Mythos activity that is affecting Parramatta. If investigators can somehow destroy the book, all of the wicked deeds of Macdead (and any successors) will be undone. All transformations will instantly end, and over the course of days reverse. In both this and the above case the patient will outwardly remember nothing of their ordeal but their dreams are haunted by strange callings and shambings and they evidence a deterioration in their nervous disposition. Note that damaging *The Book* is not as easy as it sounds, since not only does the thing have a hard carapace armour (even in its book form), but when attacked is almost certain to break its disguise and revert to its monstrous form. See the statistics for *The Thing in the Book* at the end of the scenario.

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- **At Parramatta Hospital** — see “Investigating at the Parramatta Hospital” on page 11.
 - **Paperwork from the Colonial Medical Service:** Investigators might think to ask the Colonial Medical Service whether they have any information about Macdeed. This will probably require sending a letter back to Sydney and waiting a day (or perhaps two) for a reply letter. Ultimately investigators will likely be disappointed to learn that the Medical Service does not perform any vetting of private doctors (or those who claim to be doctors), and in fact keep no records about such individuals.
 - **Convict Records:** Investigators who write to Government House inquiring about Macdeed’s convict records can learn the basics of his crimes in London and the reason for his sentence of transportation. The notes will also include details of Macdeed’s approval for a Ticket of Leave. None of these details is especially damning, painting Macdeed as nothing more sinister than a quack and a forger who believes he is doing more good than harm. A last-minute addendum to the records may be of more interest since it records the (very recent) finding that Macdeed was guilty of reoffending and has been sent to Coal River in an ‘agitated’ state. This sentence was apparently carried out only a week or two ago.
 - **Asking Parramatta Locals:** There are plenty of people around Parramatta and Toongabbie who know Macdeed. Investigators may be able to track down a boatman on the Parramatta River who remembers the large collection of crates that Macdeed received a couple of months back, allegedly possessions from England. Similarly, speaking to a Parramatta constable, night guard, or member of the Volunteer Association might reveal that Macdeed has recently been found guilty of forgery and as a reoffender has been sent for punishment at Coal River.
 - **Pub Gossip:** There are plenty of salty tales told about James Macdeed and the wantonly nurse Maggie Miles. Most of them also caution that John Wiley — Maggie’s ‘man’ — has a violent temper and that woe betide Doctor Macdeed when that bruiser comes a-calling. Notably, nobody around Parramatta has made

the connection between Macdeed and the curiously afflicted locals — although as soon as the investigators begin asking questions which imply such a link, rumours of such a connection start to spread like wildfire as local gossip.

At Coal River

Investigators who are diligent in hunting down James Macdeed should ultimately come to learn that the man has been recently sent to Coal River, as punishment for some petty forgery. Coal River is a mining camp in one of the most remote parts of the colony and is well known for being a brutal hell-hole of forced labour. Keepers can find more about the penal settlement at Coal River in the *Convicts & Cthulhu* core book.

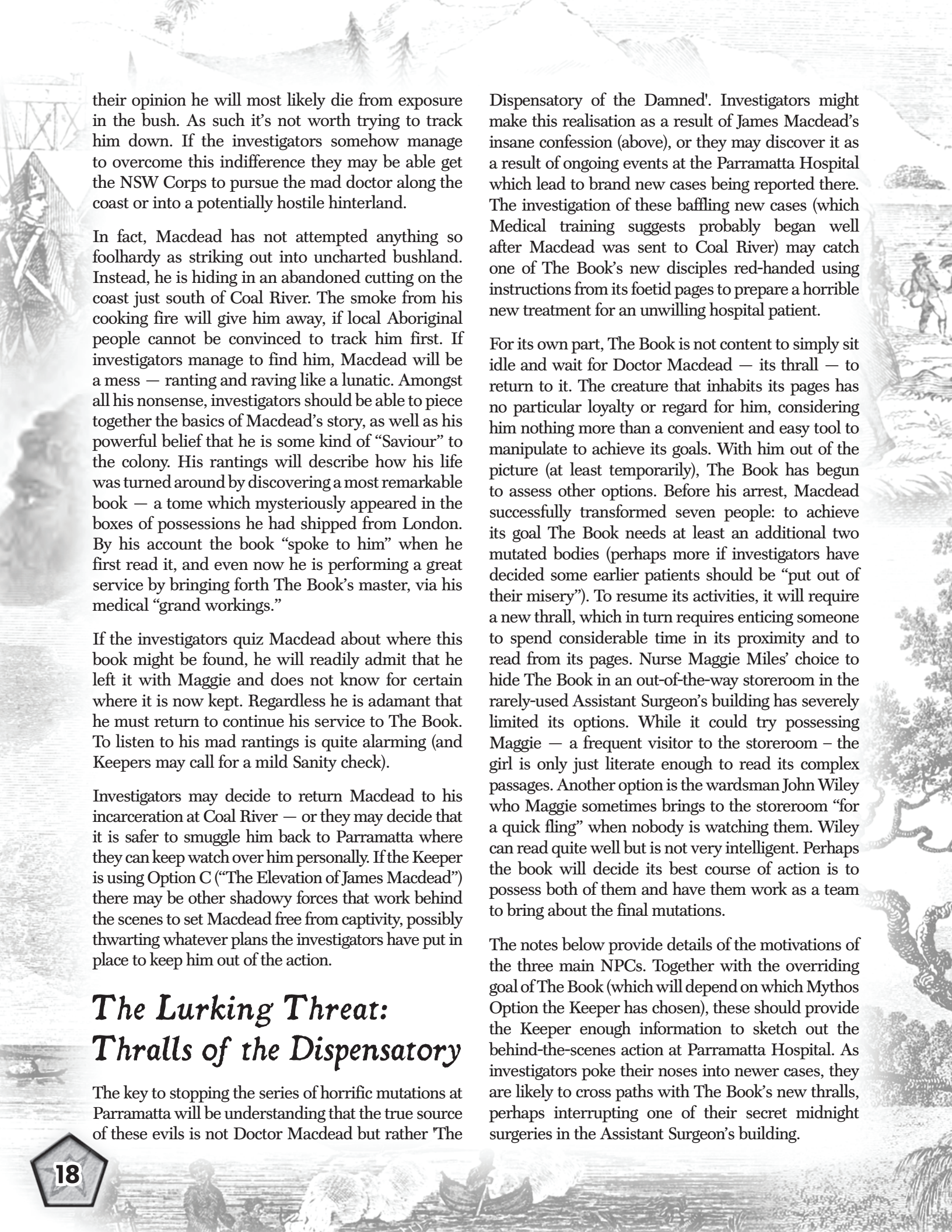
If investigators wish to question Macdeed in person they will have no choice but to travel to Coal River — this is no small undertaking, and probably involves returning to Sydney township and taking a sailing boat up the coast. In all, the trip will likely take two or three days each way.

When investigators arrive at Coal River they will find that the prison authorities there are not well pleased with Macdeed, on account of the poor medical treatment he has performed. The new arrival has already been accused of botching a minor surgical procedure to patch up the leg of an injured NSW Corps soldier, Private Barnes. As a punishment for his malpractice, Macdeed has been placed into solitary confinement.

(In fact, the “botched” medical treatment of Barnes was actually the result of Macdeed’s continued possession by The Book. Trying to replicate his dark medical practices from Parramatta, the enthralled doctor followed what steps he could remember. Without the presence of The Book to consult, such efforts were always doomed to failure.)

ESCAPE!

Macdeed is supposed to be under guard but when the investigators try to visit him they will find that his guard has been drugged and Macdeed is missing from the hut in which he was kept confined. If the investigators raise the alarm, they may be surprised by the indifference of the local authorities — while the investigators may wish the NSW Corps to mount a search for the missing doctor, NSW Corps officials are more likely to shrug their shoulders. In



their opinion he will most likely die from exposure in the bush. As such it's not worth trying to track him down. If the investigators somehow manage to overcome this indifference they may be able get the NSW Corps to pursue the mad doctor along the coast or into a potentially hostile hinterland.

In fact, Macdeed has not attempted anything so foolhardy as striking out into uncharted bushland. Instead, he is hiding in an abandoned cutting on the coast just south of Coal River. The smoke from his cooking fire will give him away, if local Aboriginal people cannot be convinced to track him first. If investigators manage to find him, Macdeed will be a mess — ranting and raving like a lunatic. Amongst all his nonsense, investigators should be able to piece together the basics of Macdeed's story, as well as his powerful belief that he is some kind of "Saviour" to the colony. His rantings will describe how his life was turned around by discovering a most remarkable book — a tome which mysteriously appeared in the boxes of possessions he had shipped from London. By his account the book "spoke to him" when he first read it, and even now he is performing a great service by bringing forth The Book's master, via his medical "grand workings."

If the investigators quiz Macdeed about where this book might be found, he will readily admit that he left it with Maggie and does not know for certain where it is now kept. Regardless he is adamant that he must return to continue his service to The Book. To listen to his mad rantings is quite alarming (and Keepers may call for a mild Sanity check).

Investigators may decide to return Macdeed to his incarceration at Coal River — or they may decide that it is safer to smuggle him back to Parramatta where they can keep watch over him personally. If the Keeper is using Option C ("The Elevation of James Macdeed") there may be other shadowy forces that work behind the scenes to set Macdeed free from captivity, possibly thwarting whatever plans the investigators have put in place to keep him out of the action.

The Lurking Threat: Thralls of the Dispensatory

The key to stopping the series of horrific mutations at Parramatta will be understanding that the true source of these evils is not Doctor Macdeed but rather 'The

Dispensatory of the Damned'. Investigators might make this realisation as a result of James Macdeed's insane confession (above), or they may discover it as a result of ongoing events at the Parramatta Hospital which lead to brand new cases being reported there. The investigation of these baffling new cases (which Medical training suggests probably began well after Macdeed was sent to Coal River) may catch one of The Book's new disciples red-handed using instructions from its foetid pages to prepare a horrible new treatment for an unwilling hospital patient.

For its own part, The Book is not content to simply sit idle and wait for Doctor Macdeed — its thrall — to return to it. The creature that inhabits its pages has no particular loyalty or regard for him, considering him nothing more than a convenient and easy tool to manipulate to achieve its goals. With him out of the picture (at least temporarily), The Book has begun to assess other options. Before his arrest, Macdeed successfully transformed seven people: to achieve its goal The Book needs at least an additional two mutated bodies (perhaps more if investigators have decided some earlier patients should be "put out of their misery"). To resume its activities, it will require a new thrall, which in turn requires enticing someone to spend considerable time in its proximity and to read from its pages. Nurse Maggie Miles' choice to hide The Book in an out-of-the-way storeroom in the rarely-used Assistant Surgeon's building has severely limited its options. While it could try possessing Maggie — a frequent visitor to the storeroom — the girl is only just literate enough to read its complex passages. Another option is the wardsman John Wiley who Maggie sometimes brings to the storeroom "for a quick fling" when nobody is watching them. Wiley can read quite well but is not very intelligent. Perhaps the book will decide its best course of action is to possess both of them and have them work as a team to bring about the final mutations.

The notes below provide details of the motivations of the three main NPCs. Together with the overriding goal of The Book (which will depend on which Mythos Option the Keeper has chosen), these should provide the Keeper enough information to sketch out the behind-the-scenes action at Parramatta Hospital. As investigators poke their noses into newer cases, they are likely to cross paths with The Book's new thralls, perhaps interrupting one of their secret midnight surgeries in the Assistant Surgeon's building.

THE CORRUPT NURSE: MAGGIE MILES

Prior to the arrival of the investigators in Parramatta, Maggie has not examined The Book herself, despite having been a willing accomplice to Macdead's earlier mad schemes. She believes that the doctor is onto something truly magnificent and his plans exercise her own capacity for cruelty and her desire to be above others. However, she is also smart enough to fear The Book, and cunning enough to try and put others in harm's way rather than handle the book directly.

Once the investigators start snooping around the hospital, Maggie will realise that it's time to act. She begins by trying to convince Wiley that there is potential profit to be had by using the formulae included in Macdead's old book to make the harmless rubbish that Macdead was peddling. Her goal is to either coerce Wiley into taking a leading interest in exploiting the 'secret medical book' or alternatively engaging him as a 'partner in crime' (depending on the Keeper's preference).

Maggie's is not especially keen to be the primary agent of The Book, and will instead try to engineer situations where someone else take that role. If she is unsuccessful in gaining Wiley's interest, she may latch on to a convict at the hospital who has some medical knowledge and attempt to set them up as The Book's new thrall. Alternatively, she might somehow arrange for The Book to end up on the desk of Assistant Surgeon Barnabas Ritter on one of the rare occasions he is in his office doing work. In a push she may even arrange for a medically-skilled investigator to stumble upon The Book in a lonely place, assuming that the baleful thing's mental can quickly take hold of them and bend them to its will.

THE MALICIOUS WARDSMAN: JOHN WILEY

As described above, Wiley represents the most logical person for Maggie to manipulate. If the Keeper decides that he eventually succumbs to greed, he will quickly become The Book's new thrall. This will bring about a visible change in his behaviour. Prior to being possessed Wiley is his normal cunning, bullying self. Afterwards he is more withdrawn, and less mentally stable, occasionally lashing out with incomprehensible violence.

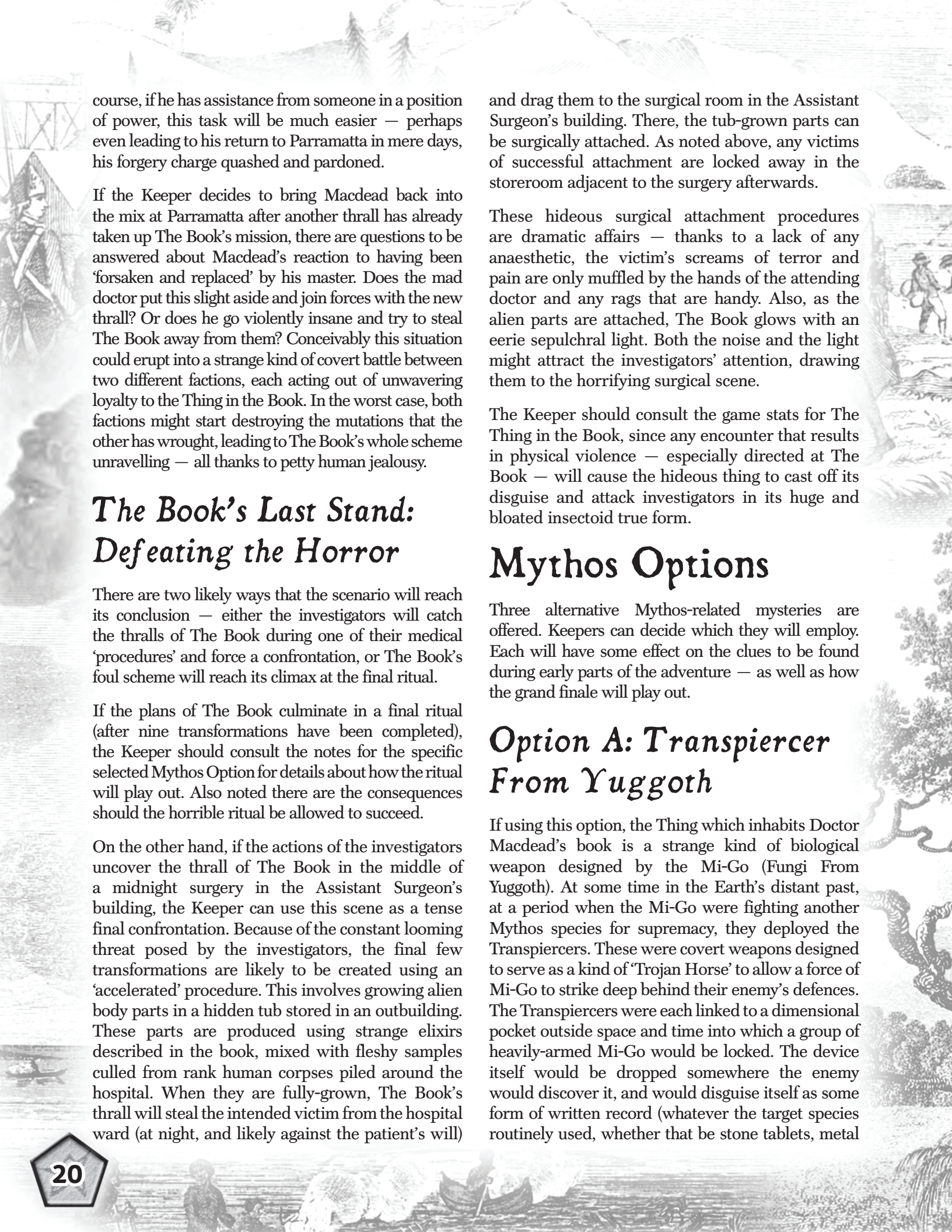


Once possessed, Wiley will resume The Book's plan, aiming to bring the number of transformed 'Gate Openers' to at least nine (as required for the final ritual). Unlike Macdead who was somewhat careful to ensure his victims were spread across a wide area, Wiley is not clever enough to employ any subtlety. Instead he will simply select victims at random from the current patients at Parramatta Hospital. Once they have been treated he moves his victims out of the main wards, purportedly to isolate them and stop any risk of contagion. In fact, he simply hides his victims away in the storeroom in the Assistant Surgeon's building, blocking the doorway with a heavy bookcase outside. Because of the general chaos that has enshrouded the hospital (perhaps created by the investigators themselves), it will be several days before anybody in authority learns of these unauthorised treatments.

THE MAD DOCTOR: JAMES MACDEAD

Macdead represents a wildcard that the Keeper can use to season the ongoing crisis in a number of ways. As described in the section on Coal River (see page 17), he will make efforts to escape his captivity there. If the Keeper has chosen Mythos Option C ("The Elevation of Doctor Macdead") he may even have considerable assistance in achieving that goal.

If Macdead gains his freedom he will be drawn inexorably back to The Book, an influence that stills claws at his mind. While travelling overland from Coal River to Parramatta would be a Herculean effort, it is not impossible (historically a few convicts did manage to make it from Coal River to the settlements at Hawkesbury and eventually reach 'civilisation'). Of



course, if he has assistance from someone in a position of power, this task will be much easier — perhaps even leading to his return to Parramatta in mere days, his forgery charge quashed and pardoned.

If the Keeper decides to bring Macdead back into the mix at Parramatta after another thrall has already taken up The Book's mission, there are questions to be answered about Macdead's reaction to having been 'forsaken and replaced' by his master. Does the mad doctor put this slight aside and join forces with the new thrall? Or does he go violently insane and try to steal The Book away from them? Conceivably this situation could erupt into a strange kind of covert battle between two different factions, each acting out of unwavering loyalty to the Thing in the Book. In the worst case, both factions might start destroying the mutations that the other has wrought, leading to The Book's whole scheme unravelling — all thanks to petty human jealousy.

The Book's Last Stand: Defeating the Horror

There are two likely ways that the scenario will reach its conclusion — either the investigators will catch the thralls of The Book during one of their medical 'procedures' and force a confrontation, or The Book's foul scheme will reach its climax at the final ritual.

If the plans of The Book culminate in a final ritual (after nine transformations have been completed), the Keeper should consult the notes for the specific selected Mythos Option for details about how the ritual will play out. Also noted there are the consequences should the horrible ritual be allowed to succeed.

On the other hand, if the actions of the investigators uncover the thrall of The Book in the middle of a midnight surgery in the Assistant Surgeon's building, the Keeper can use this scene as a tense final confrontation. Because of the constant looming threat posed by the investigators, the final few transformations are likely to be created using an 'accelerated' procedure. This involves growing alien body parts in a hidden tub stored in an outbuilding. These parts are produced using strange elixirs described in the book, mixed with fleshy samples culled from rank human corpses piled around the hospital. When they are fully-grown, The Book's thrall will steal the intended victim from the hospital ward (at night, and likely against the patient's will)

and drag them to the surgical room in the Assistant Surgeon's building. There, the tub-grown parts can be surgically attached. As noted above, any victims of successful attachment are locked away in the storeroom adjacent to the surgery afterwards.

These hideous surgical attachment procedures are dramatic affairs — thanks to a lack of any anaesthetic, the victim's screams of terror and pain are only muffled by the hands of the attending doctor and any rags that are handy. Also, as the alien parts are attached, The Book glows with an eerie sepulchral light. Both the noise and the light might attract the investigators' attention, drawing them to the horrifying surgical scene.


The Keeper should consult the game stats for The Thing in the Book, since any encounter that results in physical violence — especially directed at The Book — will cause the hideous thing to cast off its disguise and attack investigators in its huge and bloated insectoid true form.

Mythos Options

Three alternative Mythos-related mysteries are offered. Keepers can decide which they will employ. Each will have some effect on the clues to be found during early parts of the adventure — as well as how the grand finale will play out.

Option A: Transpiercer From Yuggoth

If using this option, the Thing which inhabits Doctor Macdead's book is a strange kind of biological weapon designed by the Mi-Go (Fungi From Yuggoth). At some time in the Earth's distant past, at a period when the Mi-Go were fighting another Mythos species for supremacy, they deployed the Transpiercers. These were covert weapons designed to serve as a kind of 'Trojan Horse' to allow a force of Mi-Go to strike deep behind their enemy's defences. The Transpiercers were each linked to a dimensional pocket outside space and time into which a group of heavily-armed Mi-Go would be locked. The device itself would be dropped somewhere the enemy would discover it, and would disguise itself as some form of written record (whatever the target species routinely used, whether that be stone tablets, metal

The background of the page features a faded map of a coastal region with various place names and a compass rose. On the left side, there is a vertical illustration showing several figures in a landscape, possibly engaged in a ritual or a battle. The overall aesthetic is that of an old, weathered document or a historical manuscript.

books, or carved hieroglyphs). The Transpiercers were designed to, once deployed, wait for a suitable target mind to come into their vicinity, overcome their will, and compel them to carrying out the lengthy ritual that would open a gateway between the Transpiercer and the pocket dimension.

Despite the fact that the war for which the Transpiercers were deployed was fought many millions of years ago, a handful of these dangerous weapons still exist. They are quite dangerous still, because the force of Mi-Go in the associated pocket dimension are outside time altogether — hence not only are they still alive, but they are still armed and ready for war.

The existence of the Transpiercers From Yuggoth is known to a few scholars of the Cthulhu Mythos (and investigators who are especially knowledgeable about such matters or who have extremely good Occult knowledge may have heard of them). They come to light only rarely these days — since most have been activated or destroyed long ago. But when they are discovered they are much-sought-after by certain secret societies, especially those who wish to see the influence of the Fungi From Yuggoth spread on Earth. It is a devotee of one such cult who was responsible for slipping the infected 'Dispensatory of the Damned' into the crate bound for Macdead in New South Wales.

Dutifully, the doctor has carried out the first parts of the multi-stage ritual, but more mutated specimens must be created before the final ritual of opening can be performed. When the requisite number has been achieved, the Thing in the Book will direct its thrall to take the assembled group of insane and altered men and women out to a remote location atop Prospect Hill, a few miles from Parramatta. There they will join hands in a circle and, when Pluto rises into the night sky, the enthralled individual will intone the final incantation. An impossibly bright light of shocking hue will descend from the skies — visible from Parramatta township, where most people will assume it to be some weird kind of lightning. Carried on this ultraviolet glow will be the shock troops of the Yuggoth battalion.

Additional Clue:

- If investigators ever inspect The Book in a very quiet location, they may be able hear the very faint sound of buzzing voices apparently coming from its pages.

Option B: The Beast of Nine Parts

If using this option, The Thing inside the Book is a curious and obscure Cthulhu Mythos entity known as The Herald of the Outer Dark. This creature's sole purpose is to bring about the creation of a physical form for an extra-dimensional horror (or perhaps a god) who cannot exist in our dimension naturally. Exactly which Mythos god or species has sent forth the Herald can be decided by the Keeper, to best fit in with his or her campaign and player group (however, logical candidates might be Nyarlathotep, or Yog-Sothoth, or even Azathoth).

The methods employed by the Herald to bring about the creation of its master's Earthly body are subtle. As the creature cannot easily interact with the types of matter found in our world, it needs to make use of agents — individuals whose will it overcomes, and whose hands it directs to build the warped fleshy forms which most resemble the alien entity's perfect form. These it recruits by hiding inside repositories of knowledge, in particular the types of written records that students of the Black Arts (easy targets for manipulation) are most likely to seek out.

Doctor Macdead served as an ideal pawn, and created the majority of the parts that will make up the Earthly body (the hideously warped human forms of Macdead's patients). But his arrest has halted the project with a couple of parts still to be made. Once these have crafted from additional human victims, the Herald will be ready to direct the enthralled individual in the matter of stitching the nine insane and mutated humans together, to form a single gestalt form.

To this final end, once the nine 'Gate Opener' transformations are complete, the Thing in the Book will direct its thrall to bring them all to the Assistant Surgeon's surgery in the Parramatta Hospital. In a complex and bloody 'operation' that will last for five hours (and incorporate lengthy ritual chants as well as disgusting abominations against human flesh), the afflicted humans will all die. But their conjoined body parts will all be stitched together into a perfect shape — perfect at least to the alien entity's aesthetics. At this point, the final ritual will be enacted and the extra-dimensional horror will inhabit the horrid gestalt thing.

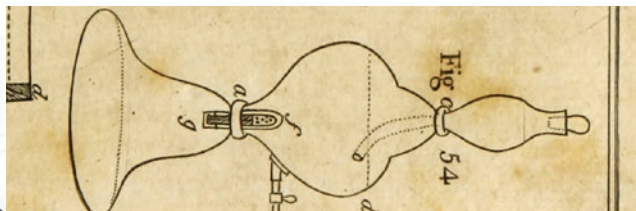
If this occurs, the terrible and disgusting patchwork thing will slay all who behold it and stalk off into the hinterland. There it crouches and sends psychic messages to the gullible and evil, that the colony may develop in even more cruel and depraved ways. Kind Keepers might allow investigators to follow its trail of destruction and mayhem and challenge it in the hinterland, but most likely it will vanish from all sight and its evil will simply seep into the fabric of the emerging colony. From time to time hideous mockeries will be born that will resemble some aspect of the Gestalt Entity.

Additional Clue:

- The families of some of Macdead's part-transformed victims have heard them utter occasional phrases in some kind of queer foreign tongue. To someone knowledgeable in the Cthulhu Mythos, these nonsense phrases suggest a relationship with a particular Mythos god — whichever one the Herald is working to build a new body.

Option C: The Elevation of Doctor Macdead

If using this option, the charlatan Doctor Macdead has been the victim of a Mythos cult from the very beginning. Selecting him for occult purposes to be their trailblazer in the new world, this group manipulated events to ensure his capture in London and sentence of transportation. Once installed in the colony, and established as a dubious medical man, the cult arranged for the 'Dispensatory of the Damned' to be silently added to the contents of the crate shipped from his relative in London. They know full well the true horror that lurks in the pages of the book, and the likely consequences of exposing the weak-willed doctor to its influences. So far, their scheme to use Macdead as an unwitting agent of darkness has largely been going to plan ... although the sentencing of the pilfering doctor to Coal River is certainly a setback.



The dark society behind the plot is known as the Cult of the Rancid Tome and is a shadowy group that sees in the southern continent a place where their foul beliefs, and the entities they serve, may thrive. It is highly likely that this debased organisation already has some members among the ranks of convict or free members the colony — the Keeper can decide exactly who acts in their interests. Such agents would likely be charged with the mission of watching over Macdead, and killing anyone who interferes with his progress. Indeed, such agents will likely be working to either have his incarceration at Coal River overturned, or perhaps arrange to 'break him out' of the prison settlement to allow him to return to his work at Parramatta.

While the Rancid Tome worshippers are responsible for setting events in motion, with Macdead currently out of the picture and The Book starting to work its dark influence on others, things are starting to take on a momentum of their own. The cult is likely unaware of this development, and would probably welcome it as a positive development anyway: as long as horrors are brought into the world, it doesn't matter to them who does it. The only reason they don't use the powers of The Book directly themselves is that they know (from hard experience) that wielding its power is a death sentence (see below).

If the schemes of The Book are allowed to reach fruition, its current thrall will be compelled to gather together the nine mutated humans and, under cover of night, take them to the site where the Parramatta Church is currently being constructed. Amid the foundations of the holy building the thrall will be forced to vivisect himself, carving off pieces of his or her own body to feed to the transformed 'Gate Openers'. As each twisted human shape consumes part of the thrall's flesh, it undergoes a second metamorphosis, turning into a Mythos servitor (the Keeper can choose a race of human-sized creature, or simply use the Fosterlings of the Old Ones described on page 40–41 of the *Malleus Monstrorum*). At the end of this bloody ritual, the thrall plunges a scalpel into his or her own heart. The nine Mythos horrors so-created are then loosed upon the streets of Parramatta to kill and feed with wild abandon.

Ironically, the incarceration of Doctor Macdead may mean that this grand plan may come to fruition (by someone else's hand) before he is able to return to Parramatta. If that is the case, after the dust has settled the doctor will be venerated by the cult as their "dark messiah" — and will likely become their

The Thing in the Dispensatory of the Damned

The Dispensatory of Doctor Macdead is possessed by this hideous creature, a foul monstrosity in service to greater powers and wishing nothing more than to bring its terrible masters to Earth that they may cavort and feast. To this end it controls readers of the book it inhabits and forces them to create monstrosities whose physical and mental characteristics are suited to being 'Gate Openers'.

It has two physical forms. Most of the time it resembles a suppurating malignant version of the book it has chosen to inhabit. To outward appearances the book appears normal, but a close examination reveals it is anything but (see its special powers below). If threatened, however, it reverts to its true shape — a long-legged insectoid thing with a massive pulsating brain from which tentacles extrude. The Thing will normally only change its shape when it is under physical attack and its powers of mental possession have failed.

In either form, The Thing can only communicate via mental contact — aside from such telepathy all it can manage is some disturbing gibbers and clicks.

STR 0/150* CON 100 SIZ 1/200 DEX 0/60 INT 80
POW 100 Hit Points: 10/30 Magic Points: 100
Damage Bonus: -2/+3D6 Build: -2/4 Move: 0/7

* The number before the slash is for the book form, the number after the slash is for the thing's true insectoid form.

ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting Attacks: The Thing can defend itself physically if it is attacked but must assume its true form to do so. Once it has assumed its true form the book it currently inhabits is destroyed, and it must find another in 1D3 days or wither and die.

Pincer 60% (30/12), damage 1D6 + Damage Bonus
Tentacle Lash 40% (20/8), damage 1D8 + half Damage Bonus
Dodge 60% (30/12)

Armour: 6 points of carapace in either form.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D4 to see its malignant book form. 1D4/1D10 to see the Thing's true form.

SPECIAL POWERS

Inhabit Book: The Thing can inhabit any book but prefers Chemistry (or Alchemy) texts or Medical text books since these better impart the dark knowledge it holds regarding the recreation of life in a way best suited to its Master's purpose. The Thing takes one hour to fully absorb a book, and must be uninterrupted during this time. Afterwards, it can make the host book seem outwardly innocuous but this illusion can be defeated. Anyone who succeeds in a POW check or who closely examines the book for 1D3 minutes will see past the illusion and perceive the book as a suppurating and disgusting parody of the original book it has inhabited (seeing this form requires a Sanity check, see below).

Possess The Reader: The Thing in the Book's primary function is to possess a reader of the text it inhabits. This requires the reader closely reading the book for at least 1D6 minutes. Following this the reader must make an opposed POW vs POW roll against the Thing or become its thrall. Those who become possessed begin to use the secret magic of the book to create mutations which can serve as Gate Openers. They are compelled to do so, and to resist costs them 1D3 Hit Points per day until they succumb or die.

Transform Gate Opener: Once it has possessed a reader, the book's goal is to manipulate that person into creating nine 'Gate Openers' for it to use in a final ritual. To this end the possessed individual will be compelled to find victims and use the book's power to transform them in disgusting and strange ways. This requires the possessed reader to create an item or element using the book's secret instructions which the would-be victim must then wear or consume. After coming into contact with the infectious item, the bodily transformation takes 1D6 days to commence and a further 4D4 days to complete. The transformation typically drives the victim quite insane (although kindly Keepers might allow a victim a Sanity check with a loss of 1D4/1D20).



Those transformed by the evil arts of the book suffer one of the following metamorphoses:

Roll 1D8

- 1 Grows An Alien Appendage — this is usually a tentacle but can be any kind of pseudopod. The appendage has 20 Hit Points and is autonomous of its host. It can Strangle at 40% doing 1D4 damage plus suffocation. The appendage can even strangle its host, detach and find another. The new host must fail an Opposed roll of its POW vs POW 50 for it to attach, otherwise it withers and dies.
- 2 Grows 2 Alien Appendages — as above
- 3 Grows 3 Alien Appendages — as above
- 4 Sprouts Alien Torso — victim's body sprouts bat wings, or its torso becomes a slathering maw always hungry for flesh, or barbs appear down its spine that can be detached or fired as weapons, or some similar mind-warping horror.
- 5 Insectoid Skull — the head of the victim distorts and resembles the cranium of a giant bug. Enough of the face remains, gibbering in horror, to create a disturbing image.
- 6 Pulsating Overgrown Brain — a great pulsating green brain replaces the victim's own and bursts out of the original skull. It hums and drools a fetid ichor. The victim gains psychic powers at the Keeper's discretion.
- 7 Two Overgrown Brains — As above except the victim can now only lie prone because of the brains' collective weight. Touching the ichor from this double brain causes visions of the otherworldly vistas — presumably the bizarre dimension to which the Openers seek to open a gateway. Sanity loss is 1/1D6 but may gain an insight into the book and its purpose.
- 8 Total Body Transformation — The victim's body grows a cocoon that it secretes from its pores in the usual transformation time. The cocoon remains on the body for a further 1D6 days after which the victim emerges a tentacular thing with a giant brain and bat wings, which flies off to join other transformed horrors.

Open Gate: Once nine 'Gate Openers' have been created, The Thing requires the possessed reader assemble them in a place of psychic resonance where the final gateway can be opened. Once this has been done, The Thing can immediately open the extradimensional rift and open the way for its terrible masters to travel to the Earth.

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Further Source Material

There are several other places where the Keeper can find information about medical practice in the early Australian colonies. A couple of these are freely obtainable online.

HISTORIES

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ONLINE

For a handy summary of Parramatta's General Hospital and some excellent sources, see Michaela Ann Cameron, *Parramatta's General Hospital*, 2015. <https://dictionary-of-sydney.org/entry/parramattas-general-hospital>

THE MEDICAL TEXT

William Lewis et al, *The Edinburgh new dispensatory: containing, I. The elements of pharmaceutical chemistry: II. The materia medica ...: III. The pharmaceutical preparations and compositions: including complete and accurate translations of the octavo edition of the London pharmacopoeia, published in 1791: Dublin pharmacopoeia, published in 1794: and of the new edition of the Edinburgh pharmacopoeia, published in 1803: illustrated and explained in the language and according to the principles of modern chemistry: with many new and useful tables, and several copperplates, explaining the new system of chemical characters, and representing the most useful pharmaceutical apparatus*. Published 1805. Online at <https://archive.org/details/2561027R.nlm.nih.gov>