

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 #12

Fallen Stars

CREDITS

Ticket-of-Leave #12 is written by Matthew Ruane with Geoff Gillan; original artwork by Reuben Dodd. Copyright © 2018. Published by Cthulhu Reborn Publishing.

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The **Convicts & Cthulhu** setting is published by Cthulhu Reborn Publishing and is available via RPGNow and DrivethruRPG as a "Pay-What-You-Want" title.


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Introduction

When Europeans first settled in New South Wales, their concerns were primarily setting up a functioning penal settlement from nothing. As such, their interest in exploring the strange new country that lay beyond the small settlements was fairly limited. However, as time went on and it became more obvious that the penal colony was not a short-lived prison settlement but a permanent British colonial possession, that began to change. By the time of the Convicts & Cthulhu era, there are several important people among both the colonial government and private free settlers that see a reason to fill in the blank maps and learn more about this peculiar continent they now call home.

The push to explore the wilds of New South Wales is driven by two main factors: a need for farmland as the settlement grows, and a sense of scientific curiosity in particular about the unique flora and fauna to be found in Australia. The chief impediment to early exploration is the high mountain range which bounds the colony to the west – the impressive Blue Mountains. Despite numerous attempts, no convenient pass has yet been discovered allowing colonists to traverse these mountains. Thus the lands beyond remain a complete mystery... notwithstanding the clearly fabricated convict stories of great inland seas or kingdoms of white-skinned inhabitants. And those simply cannot be true? Surely.





This Ticket of Leave supplement provides information about some of the early scientific expeditions that were sent to explore the Blue Mountains. It provides background details of some of the scientifically-minded colonial officials of the day, as well as details of the rugged unexplored interior they were charged with exploring. It also provides a detailed outline of a scenario which allows your *Convicts & Cthulhu* investigators to take part in a most unusual scientific expedition – all thanks to a curious meteorite which is believed to have come to ground in the remote western reaches of the colony.

The Scientific Elite

Men of leisure pursuing amateur scientific endeavours marked much of the Age of Enlightenment and many such individuals were part of the ruling establishment in the early Australian colonies. Indeed, one of the foremost British men of science around the turn of the 19th Century – Sir Joseph Banks – had a long association with Australia, having previously visited its shores as part of Captain James Cook’s 1770 expedition. Banks, a powerful man about London, would remain a central figure both politically and scientifically in Australia’s early colonial history throughout the entire *Convicts & Cthulhu* era. See the nearby box for biographical details on Banks. Other scientifically-inclined members of the colonial administration from this era included Governor John Hunter and Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson (see page 9).

Keepers who are interested in running a *Convicts & Cthulhu* campaign featuring scientific investigators may easily borrow from these historical examples of highly-placed learned gentlemen. Indeed, such a campaign might even feature a group of investigators who work under patronage of Sir Joseph Banks himself, charged with searching the colony of New South Wales for specimens of ever-increasing rarity. An alternative basis for the campaign might be the funding of scientific expeditions to satisfy the curiosity of the governor – this probably works best for Governor Hunter, but with some modification could work for others as well. The Keeper would need to decide whether the investigators’ missions are motivated purely by a desire for scientific discovery ... or whether these are merely a “cover story” to mask a more secretive task which the Governor wishes performed in a remote corner of the colony.

Some of the prior *Ticket of Leave* supplements include resources that would be helpful to such a campaign:

- *Ticket of Leave #7 (“Seams of Peril”)* describes a journey out into the wild bushlands, styled after the historical account of French NSW Corps Officer (and amateur scientist) Francis Barralier’s initial journeys into the hinterland west of Sydney around 1802. The present supplement provides another version of such an expedition.
- *Ticket of Leave #8 (“Gentlemen Convicts”)* describes how well-to-do men and women sentenced to the colonies banded together into a kind of “upper society” of convicts – conceivably including any number of scientific men and women of means.
- *Ticket of Leave #2 (“Tricolour Terror”)* describes the ever-present suspicion that perhaps the French have designs on the Australian continent; and are sneakily mounting a number of so-called scientific expeditions which might be genuine or might be the cover for espionage (or both).

It is inevitable that any campaign focussing on collecting botanical or animal specimens will involve voyages into the foothills (or higher reaches) of the Blue Mountains – these are the areas richest in both. If the stories are to be believed, the mountains also harbour stranger things – and if an expedition happened to stumble upon a convenient road through the impassable mountain range, well that would be a bonus.

Exploring the Blue Mountains

To the west of the colony of New South Wales lie the Blue Mountains, a formidable impediment to European exploration of the interior. This natural barrier forms a physical limit to the growth of the colony and the foothills mark the end of formal settlement by farmers. Unsurprisingly, Aboriginal people had not one but two widely-used “highways” which allowed them to transit across the lofty range; but had no reason to share that knowledge with the white-skinned invaders.

Sir Joseph Banks (1743 – 1820)

Sir Joseph Banks had a life-long, intimate connection with Australia which began when he was a member of Captain James Cook's expedition which first discovered the elusive eastern coastline of the continent in 1770.

Educated at Christ Church, Oxford, Banks had previously become a naturalist with a keen personal interest in botany. He studied botany with the assistance of faculty from both Cambridge and Oxford, but eventually, like so many other gentlemen of the era, would leave the university without a degree. Nevertheless, his inheritance would allow him to devote his life to pursuing his interests in all aspects of the natural world.

In the 1760s, he personally accompanied an expedition traveling to North America, in particular Newfoundland and Labrador, where Banks amassed a collection of artefacts and specimens of plant and animal life. In 1768, Banks was permitted to join Cook on his first expedition to the Pacific, with the naturalist bringing along a retinue of eight – though only four men, including Banks, would survive the voyage and return back to England.

On Cook's subsequent celebrated voyage of discovery, Banks once again accompanied him and became one of the first Englishmen to set foot on Australian soil when he landed at Botany Bay in the spring of 1770. Later on the same expedition he landed at Endeavour River in early summer where he collected "exotic" plant and animal specimens, as well as recording extensively in numerous meticulously-detailed journals.

Upon his return to England in July 1771, Banks began to assess his specimens. He also became involved with encouraging the House of Commons to establish a colony and penal settlement in Australia. Once the settlement was established in 1788, Banks began regular correspondence with each of the colonial governors, lobbying for more new specimens of animals and plants to be collected. These were often sent on return voyages back to England, for Banks to study there.



Seen in his day by many as the leading English authority on New South Wales, Banks remained closely tied to the colony's growth and expansion until his death. He encouraged naturalists and botanists to accompany numerous government sponsored expeditions of exploration as well as funding his own men to travel and collect specimens for study.

For a *Convicts & Cthulhu* campaign, Sir Joseph Banks – even though thousands of miles away – would make an excellent patron for scientifically-minded investigators. He might be a source of financial or political support to those pursuing botanical or zoological expeditions in Australia. Numerous ship captains and early explorers had extensive communication with Banks back in London and these men knew that the wealthy scientist would pay generously for information and specimens that shed light on the flora and fauna of New South Wales, the rest of Australia, and the South Seas.

(Source: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/banks-sir-joseph-1737>)

While from the very beginning of the NSW colony there have been expeditions to the Blue Mountains looking for passes through the peaks, no one will be truly successful until after the time of *Convicts & Cthulhu*. Indeed, established mainstream history records that white settlers did not discover a road through to the plains beyond the mountains until the 1813 expedition of Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson.

That does not mean to say that the regions surrounding the Blue Mountains were not the subject of earlier voyages of discovery – and depending on whose accounts you believe, it may even have been true that a rag-tag expedition led by a wild-eyed convict succeeded in finding a way around the mountains some fifteen years before the esteemed gentlemen explorers Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson.

The Convict Explorers

In the 1790s there were several attempts to explore the Blue Mountains region; two of the most intriguing of those were the convict-led expeditions by Matthew Everingham (1795) and that of John Wilson (1798). Both resulted in official reports of new discoveries conveyed back to the colonial government in Sydney, though little about their findings seems to have made it into the official histories.

THE EVERINGHAM EXPEDITION OF 1795

Matthew Everingham was a former clerk sentenced to transportation with the First Fleet (see nearby); his sentence served out in 1791 he took up a grant of farming land near Parramatta. According to contemporary sources, in 1795 Everingham set out with two other men – most likely fellow First Fleet convicts William Reid and John Ramsay – on a 13-day journey to explore the Blue Mountains. They left Parramatta on 30 October 1795 and returned on 11 November. Accounts suggest that they made it as far as the region that would later be named Mt. Irvine, before being forced to turn back due to limited supplies. This was in part due to the fact that their planning had consisted of simply carrying needed provisions in backpacks. Everingham is said to have walked the last three days barefoot because his shoes had given out. He sent letters about his “expedition” in 1797 to an associate in England, describing his incredibly journey.

THE WANDERINGS OF JOHN WILSON, AND THE EXPEDITION OF 1798

The convict John Wilson led a most remarkable life. A member of the First Fleet, he earned his freedom in 1792 whereupon he promptly departed the settled regions to live in wild bushland. Wilson apparently formed relationships with at least one Aboriginal community, and claimed that he could act as an intermediary of sorts between Aboriginal groups and settlers. Written accounts by colonists record that Wilson was heavily scarred with tribal markings, showing that he had achieved some degree of acceptance (and perhaps even initiation) in Aboriginal communities.

Matthew Everingham (1768 – 1817)

Everingham, who had been employed as a clerk to a London attorney, was convicted of selling two books he had obtained through deception and then offering them for sale. He was sentenced to transportation with the First Fleet in 1788. When he arrived in the colony, Everingham proved to be useful to the colonial administration, being one of the few convicts who could read and write. Because of this he was assigned to work with the colony's Assistant Commissary.

By 1791, his sentence had ended and he soon married. Everingham would then acquire a grant of land near Parramatta where he proved to be a prosperous settler. In 1795 he led an expedition into the Blue Mountains as described nearby. Surviving this ordeal, Everingham settled back into more mundane settler's affairs. In 1800 he was involved in drafting a protest letter to Governor Hunter, before moving to Hawkesbury and resuming his life as a prosperous farmer. In 1804, his homestead was attacked by an Aboriginal group, and though wounded during the attack, Everingham, his wife, and a servant survived. In 1816, Everingham moved again to Richmond Hill and had, by then, become a part of the colonial administration as a district constable. He would die through accidental drowning in December 1817.

(Sources: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/everingham-matthew-james-2030>; <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Everingham-93>; and <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/46349316>)

Wilson occasionally returned from the wilderness to Sydney. On one of these return visits he made the claim that he had travelled the entire countryside of New South Wales, over 100 miles in every direction. This also extended to a claim of having travelled over the Blue Mountains and into the plains beyond. These claims were generally scoffed at when they were made, but later accounts by 19th Century explorers suggest that Wilson's descriptions and observations were generally accurate.

In 1798 the NSW Governor of the day, Hunter, engaged the wild man John Wilson for a most unusual task. At the time, several tall tales were circulating among Irish convicts stating that there was a group of white-skinned people living an idyllic and free life at a location about 200 km (120 miles) southwest of Sydney. These spurious convict tales

were a source of concern since they were seen as giving hope to convicts, that should they manage to escape they may find a safe haven in this fictitious settlement. Hunter decided to disprove these tales once and for all by sending a travelling party to the reputed locale. He chose John Wilson to lead the expedition, which was otherwise made up of John Price, the governor's 19-year old servant, several armed NSW Corps guards, and four Irish prisoners. The group departed in 1798. The convicts and their guards soon turned back, but Wilson and Price continued on.

According to their account, the pair crossed the Nepean River and explored to area to the southwest, looking for a passage across the Blue Mountains. They found no such pass, but eventually located a way to skirt around the Blue Mountains to the southwest. In March of 1798, the men continued to explore this region and likely discovered Thirlmere Lakes. They reached almost to the site of modern-day Goulburn before turning back to report their findings to Hunter. They did not find any indication of the "lost colony" of white-skinned people mentioned in the convict tales.

There are suggestions in the historical record that Governor Hunter decided to withhold information about the Wilson/Price expedition. The expedition's maps and logs were kept secret by colonial officials (by order of the Governor), apparently motivated by a fear that convicts might choose to escape if they learned that there was an easy way around the mountains. However, Hunter gave Price's journal of the expedition to Sir Joseph Banks for study. In the journal, Wilson's bushcraft is credited with keeping Price alive. It also contains the first written mention of a koala.

John Wilson also participated in a second expedition in 1798 with two unnamed men which revealed more of the southern reaches of New South Wales. In 1799, he returned back to his life in the wild but he would eventually be killed in 1800 by an Aboriginal warrior after abducting a young woman for his own use.

While little is known of what happened to John Price, it is likely that he remained on the governor's staff until Hunter left New South Wales.

(Sources: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wilson-john-2803>; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/45798783>)



Blue Mountains Crossings – historical questions

Australian history is awash with contention and the 'first Blue Mountains crossing' is no exception. It is without a doubt that thousands of Australia's Aboriginal people crossed the Blue Mountains well before any white person had even heard of the Blue Mountains let alone visited the region.

When it comes to first European crossing some historians are sceptical of Wilson's claims and Price's journal. The journal was first accepted into Australian historiography by Thomas Whitely in 1904 who considered it 'established fact' that the 1798 crossing had taken place. However, in 1920 historian R. H. Cambage wrote that while Wilson certainly penetrated into the Blue Mountains regions, he probably only explored the Wollondilly region, rather than crossed the Mountains themselves. Cambage based this on scepticism about the distances described in the Price journal and the existence of a westerly flowing river. This seemed to reinstate the accepted view that Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson were the first who crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813.

In recent years the Wilson claim has gained more interest and some mainstream acceptance. Martin Thomas in his award-winning 2004 study *Artificial Horizons: Imagining the Blue Mountains*, notes that it is a striking irony that Wilson's journey, intended to debunk the myth of the inland white settlement, became itself a myth. He also argues that the celebrated Blaxland expedition was itself a fabrication, since salient details, for instance any Aboriginal contact and the crucial role of kangaroo hunter James Burns – the expedition's actual guide – were written out as far back as Blaxland's original accounts, thus making the official accounts a literal "whitewash".

(Source: Martin Thomas, *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004.)

Scenario: Fallen Stars

This scenario provides Keepers with an opportunity to send their *Convicts & Cthulhu* investigators along as members of a scientific expedition to the remote foothills of the rugged Blue Mountains. The team is charged with a most unusual mission — to hunt down the remains of a fiery “falling star” that was seen burning brightly in the skies above Sydney and Parramatta.

By default, the scenario is set in December, 1799 to occur sometime after the two convict-led expeditions into the Blue Mountains (described above) and also to tie in with the time of year when meteorite showers are most common in the region (October to January). However, if the Keeper is willing to make some small changes — mostly to the information given to the expedition at its outset — there is no reason why the scenario could not be run in another year or season.

This scenario was showcased at GenCon 2018, and as such has a slightly more linear “convention” style than those typically found in *Tickets of Leave* supplements. Keepers who wish to expand out the scenario with additional investigative elements, or other encounters can readily do so by borrowing pieces from other Ticket of Leave scenario seeds or those found in the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book. In particular, Keepers should note that this scenario is a variant of the adventure seed “The Hinterland Monster” found in the core book, although significantly altered.

The Star That Came To Earth

It is December, 1799 — the middle of summer, with Christmas celebrations not far off. Most of the colonists, convicts and free settlers alike, are working hard despite any joy that might come from thoughts of a day or two off work during the approaching holiday. Gossip is dying down now, but for most of the past week the colonists have talked about the extremely vibrant meteor showers that have nightly filled the skies over New South Wales with spectacular displays.

A week ago, during one of the brightest moments of the first meteor shower, many of the residents of the colony saw a large glowing meteorite (“falling star”) pass northeast-to-southwest over both Sydney and

Parramatta before apparently falling to earth with a loud crash. The best guess of those observing the westernmost part of its fiery trajectory is that the “star” might have come to ground somewhere near the foot of the Blue Mountains in a distant rugged country. One thing that everyone agrees is that for several hours after the loud impact, there was a bright glow on the western horizon that soon “burnt” itself out.

While the more superstitious among the convicts and settlers have their own interpretations of this curious astronomical event, the few men of science among the NSW elite recognise it to be a rare happening of potentially great scientific significance. These knowledgeable individuals are excited by the scientific possibilities of recovering a meteorite for study, and have petitioned Governor Hunter to arrange an official party to carry out such a mission. Fortunately, Hunter as well as the influential NSW Corps officer Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson, are themselves scientifically-minded men and readily agreed to the request. Already plans are afoot for collecting any important scientific discoveries retrieved from the meteorite impact to send back to Sir Joseph Banks in England.

Naturally, organising an expedition to the rugged and impassable foothills of the Blue Mountains is no small feat — but Governor Hunter has secret information that may make this task slightly less onerous. Because, unbeknownst to most of the colony’s residents, there have actually been two successful convict-led expeditions into the region where the meteorite is believed to have fallen. And from these the Governor will, under pain of utmost secrecy, share some information and a partial map. But anyone who seeks more details will quickly find all government officials tight-lipped. While this may seem to reek of some kind of conspiracy or cover-up, it is actually a tactic by the Governor to avoid furnishing any convicts who form part of the expedition team with details that might allow them to escape over the Blue Mountains to their freedom.

Keeper’s Introduction

The “falling star” that passed over the NSW colony and crashed to earth was not, in fact, just a piece of space detritus. Rather it was a piece of alien technology — an artefact of the Elder Things — summoned to earth aeons ago from an unknown but far-distant corner of the cosmos.

ELDER THINGS IN AUSTRALIA

Even though there have to date been no reported encounters with Elder Things in the Australian colonies, it is well established that the strange creatures have a connection with the eastern coast of the continent. It is rumoured that a long-lost Elder Thing city lies below the seas off the coast of New South Wales, and that from time-to-time strange alien artefacts wash up on the shores. However, out in the vast outback beyond the Blue Mountains are other artefacts and strange rock formations that are the buried remnants of the last Elder Thing city on Australian soil. When the climate changed millions of years ago, and the landscape of central Australia became more arid, the amphibious Elder Things escaped, though some tried to use their technology to hold back the climatic change occurring. Ultimately, they were unsuccessful. The city far outlived its inhabitants, with the strange technology which sustained the city continuing to function for long aeons before eventually beginning to fail about 50,000 years ago. Unprotected, the vast settlement eventually came to be consumed by the sands and the red soil that has blown atop it.

One of the remote surveillance outposts of this long-lost city was a facility located in the Blue Mountains, among the slopes of the peak that will one day be dubbed Mt. Irvine. The outpost itself lies buried under the weight of centuries of rock slides from the surrounding mountains, so it is unlikely that it will be unearthed by mankind any time soon. Regardless, the presence of this hidden station continues to exert an influence.

CALL AND RESPONSE

At some time in the distant past, perhaps triggered by the arrival of Aboriginal people to the region (approximately 40,000 years ago), the ancient technology of the Elder Thing city briefly awoke. From the heart of the ruined city a low-powered signal was broadcast, a beacon which pulsed over and over out into space. This signal was received in some remote corner of the cosmos by a small Elder Thing vessel, which heeded the summons and embarked upon the journey to Earth. So far distant was the alien vessel that its voyage through space has taken millennia. It has become encased in rock during its interstellar journey, and it was this "meteoroid's" fall to Earth that was seen

burning up in the skies above New South Wales. With the vessel burning up in the atmosphere and the millennial old guidance technology failing, the deteriorating navigation system instead shifted to the last coordinates of the surveillance outpost in the Blue Mountains. However, this too was for naught and the meteorite instead crashed short of its destination, ploughing into the forests covering the foothills and valleys of the foothills.

The meteorite, perhaps the largest to ever strike the Earth largely intact, landed in the foothills of Mt. Irvine, some 85 kilometres (53 miles) west northwest of Sydney. The crash site itself is 67.5 kilometers (42 miles) from Sydney and 14.5 kilometres (9 miles) from the actual mountain peak itself. The meteorite broke upon impact with the soil, crashing through the forest, leaving broken and shattered trees for miles, indicating its path of travel and intense velocity prior to impact. Fires were set by its impact, but since the area is temperate rainforest, they soon burned themselves out.

INSIDE THE METEORITE

Although the impact of the meteorite was both violent and destructive, the protections of the Elder Thing capsule and its accreted layer of rock has meant that most of its contents have survived somewhat intact. Pieces of the rocky coating have been strewn far and wide. Inside the meteorite is a mummified and nearly fossilized Elder Thing, which died in the more than three millennia long journey to Earth. Also inside the capsule were ten metallic containers containing alien plant samples as well as an eleventh one containing a proto-Shoggoth held in hypothermic stasis. If the scientific expedition charged with finding the crash site succeeds in their mission they will come into contact with these alien specimens — and may become infected by some of the extra-terrestrial life in cruel and horrific ways. If that happens, the challenges of surviving the harsh bush country of the Blue Mountains may become the least of the investigators' worries ...

Involving the Investigators

The primary way to involve the Investigators is for them to be made part of the official party organized by Lieutenant Colonel Paterson and Lieutenant Alastair Marrant. Paterson and Marrant are working under the authority of Governor Hunter,

but each have their own reasons for participating: Paterson to further provide new scientific materials for his good friend Sir Joseph Banks, and Morratt because of the opportunity for advancement, promotion and satisfying his own personal scientific curiosity. Morratt also hopes to make a name for himself with a new scientific discovery. Both men have ready access to any Government Stores they might need to ensure the expedition's success.

Paterson is quite a powerful figure in the colony and it is his money that is funding the expedition, though he himself will not be accompanying it. The task of leading the expedition has been given to Morratt (who may be either an NPC or an Investigator, depending on the needs of the Keeper's group). Morratt has been ordered to directly report back to Paterson upon their return with whatever the expedition has recovered. Paterson will then pack up the meteorite and anything else for shipment back to Sir Joseph Banks in England.

Morratt will assemble a group of Convicts for physical labour (especially if they have any scientific training or education). Morratt believes that any Convicts who "join" the expedition are largely expendable. Morratt will also ask for help from members of the colony's settlers if they express any scientific knowledge, have talents that Morratt will need such as surveying, or even simply show a willingness to explore the unknown. One or more NSW Corps soldiers will join the expedition, though the total size of the expedition, including Morratt, should number no more than 10 people. Finally, Morratt will have at least one Aboriginal guide accompany the expedition, believing that if nothing else, they will ease communication with other native groups the expedition may encounter. If there are no Aboriginal Investigators, an NPC guide will be provided.

If players are generating new Investigators to participate in the Morratt expedition, the following additional occupations (from *Ticket of Leave #5*) will be most suitable for this adventure. Those marked in the list with an asterisk are especially well-suited.

Indigenous Bush Tracker*, Indigenous Clever-Man or Woman, Indigenous Guide/Explorer*, Down-On-Luck Craftsman*, Fallen Clergy, Fallen Aristocrat, Laborer*, Political Agitator/Prisoner of War (especially if they have any scientific skills), Botanist/Naturalist*, Doctor, Explorer/Surveyor*, Mapmaker (Cartographer)*, NSW Corps Officer*, NSW Corps Soldier*, Farmer/Settler

Keeper's Timeline of Events

1 week ago: Meteorite crashes in the Blue Mountains among the foothills of what will one day be called Mt. Irvine. The fiery passage was seen by residents throughout the colony as well as by local Aboriginal tribes. A brief fire caused by the crash burns for 12-hours colouring the sky red throughout its duration.

5 days ago: Governor John Hunter summons Lt. Colonel William Paterson to discuss what should be done about the meteorite. Paterson's own scientific curiosity and personal connections to Sir Joseph Banks supports Hunter's idea that an expedition should be organized to try and recover the meteorite.

4 days ago: Hunter reveals information about the secretive expeditions of Wilson and Everingham to Paterson to aid in planning of his own expedition. Paterson is informed that the information is considered secret and its dissemination should be strictly limited.

3 days ago: Paterson calls for Lieutenant Alistair Morratt from the NSW Corps to put together an expedition to go out to recover the meteorite. Independently, members of a local Aboriginal community close to the crash site venture to explore the location. They discover several containers of a strange metallic hue apparently dislodged from either the meteorite or the dug-up soil and basalt stone where the crash occurred.

2 days ago: Morratt starts searching for convicts to accompany the expedition as well as gathering up NSW Corps soldiers. Morratt will also contact any settlers with scientific knowledge and/or experience to determine if they should accompany the expedition.

1 day ago: Paterson drafts a letter to be sent to Sir Joseph Banks on the next ship leaving for England indicating his hopes that a meteorite will be sent to England once it is recovered. Governor Hunter gives final approval for the expedition and requests for supplies from the government stores. Morratt meets with Paterson to provide a list of potential expedition members drawn from Sydney and Parramatta. Paterson then shares edited information about the Wilson and Everingham expeditions.

Today: Morratt addresses gathered expedition members in Parramatta and informs them they will be leaving the following morning. At the crash site, local Aboriginal hunters break through the weakened and damaged "outer shell" of the meteorite and discover the mummified corpse of an Elder Thing within. Several of the brave warriors flee in horror and revulsion.

Days 1 to 4: The expedition travels to the Blue Mountains crash site. On the way they hear cries from strange creatures in the foothills (Yowies), see disturbing coloured lights in the sky, and cross paths with some of the Aboriginal men who explored the meteorite crater. These once-healthy individuals are now very sick, harbouring an alien infection.

Days 5 and 6: The group reaches the crash site and recovers whatever can easily be carried on their small wagons. This is likely to expose expedition members to the alien virus, bring them face-to-face with the Elder Thing corpse, and possibly leave them with a cannister containing a Proto-Shoggoth in stasis.

Days 7 to 11: The expedition's return to Parramatta, accompanied by increasing sickness, attacks by some unnatural predators, and likely the escape of the Proto-Shoggoth.

William Paterson (1755-1810)

William Paterson was a soldier, explorer and lieutenant-governor. Like his good friend, Sir Joseph Banks, Paterson had a keen interest in botany. Paterson made several trips to South Africa in the late 1770s, and after his return to England in 1781, he became a soldier in the 98th Regiment, eventually serving in India. He was in constant contact with Banks and sent numerous specimens back to the English naturalist. Eventually, Paterson returned to England after his regiment was disbanded and he became a Captain in the NSW Corps, likely with the assistance of Banks. He arrived in Sydney in October 1791.

For the next two and a half years, Paterson was stationed on Norfolk Island, sending specimens back to Banks, and the two discussed publishing their findings. By September 1793, Paterson was back in Sydney and was planning an expedition to find a route through the Blue Mountains. That expedition failed, and in December 1794, Paterson became acting interim administrator over the colony until Governor John Hunter arrived. Paterson's brief rule was generally seen as one in which the New South Wales Corps' officers and men became wealthy at the expense of the other settlers.

In 1796, Paterson went home on sick leave and spent much of his time in England with Banks discussing plants and trees, as well as becoming a fellow of the Royal Society. Science was one of Paterson's chief interests and he maintained extensive and frequent contact with Banks while stationed abroad. Paterson was also an avid collector of botanical specimens and he was also responsible for introducing several plants (including peaches) to Australia during his tenure in the colony.

By March 1799, Paterson, now a Lieutenant Colonel, was ordered back to Sydney to investigate the allegations of widespread liquor trading by officers of the NSW Corps. He was back in Australia by November and spent much of his time investigating not only the liquor issue, but also the threat of rebellion by Irish convicts. He also would collect plants from the area around Hawkesbury and prepare samples to be sent back to Banks in early 1800.

While the political role Paterson played as Lieutenant-Governor during the early 1800s is beyond the scope of this Ticket of Leave, information is readily available at the source listed below. It should also be noted that unlike many of his colleagues in the NSW Corps, historical records show that Paterson was not swept up in the endemic corruption which he was investigating in Sydney and that he died a poor man.

(Source: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/paterson-william-2541>)




Getting Started

The adventure begins in Parramatta where the characters have been assembled by the authority of Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson and placed under the command of Lieutenant Alistair Marrant. They are ordered to head into the interior and as far as the Blue Mountains to recover whatever remnants still exist from the crash of the “falling star” and return them to Paterson and Governor Hunter in Sydney. Gathered before the Freemason's Arms Public House, the assembled Investigators are soon joined by Marrant, the expedition leader.

The young NSW Corps officer, somewhat bookish in appearance, is wearing a freshly cleaned uniform as he steps out of the public house. When first glimpsed, he is carefully folding away his spectacles and putting them in a metal case before placing them into his linen satchel. He steps onto a stone mounting block and addresses the members of the expedition. Behind Marrant are four NSW Corps soldiers standing at ease (some may be Investigators while the rest are NPCs).

Marrant will inform those assembled that they are preparing to head off on a scientific expedition to recover a fallen meteorite, and that they will be traveling quickly through largely unexplored



territory. Any free settlers among the Investigators are urged to use their remaining free time (about 30 minutes) to purchase any remaining supplies from Freemason's Arms Public House (for more information, see the main *Convicts & Cthulhu* book). Any convict Investigators are questioned to see if they need any additional supplies, but Morratt will under no circumstances provide convicts with weapons of any sort. Otherwise, if a convict's request is within reason, he will requisition the items from either the NSW Corps barracks or from the stores of the public house.

Once everyone is ready, the small expedition will set out. Two bullock drawn carts, currently full of supplies, will accompany the expedition. Lieutenant Alistair Morratt has possession of a hand-drawn copy of Everingham's map, and excerpts from Price's journal as well as a copy of Wilson's maps. These he carries in his leather expedition journal.

A MUCH-REVERED ABORIGINAL

A few miles out of Parramatta, the group has arranged to be met by a small contingent of Aboriginal warriors, in order to collect an indigenous guide who can lead the party safely through the remote Blue Mountains region. When the expedition arrives at the appointed spot they will be surprised — and perhaps slightly unnerved — by the large group of young Aboriginal warriors who approach them. Each of the men is dressed in full traditional hunting attire, carrying spears and boomerangs. Although the mass of Aboriginal hunters far outnumbers the expedition party, the warriors seem to harbour no hostility to the group. However, neither will they let them pass — if asked, they say simply that they are “waiting for big fella”. Hopefully the encounter is short and entirely civil.

After waiting at the meeting place for five minutes, the expedition will see an oddly mismatched pair of Aboriginals approach from out of the bushes. One is wizened and aged, wearing a mix of simple European clothing and traditional Aboriginal garb; the other young and spritely, in traditional attire. When they arrive, it is clear that the old man is much revered by the group of warriors who treat him like royalty. The old Aboriginal man speaks good English, introducing himself to Lieutenant Morratt as Bennelong. Any European who has been in the

colony for some years is likely to have heard of him (Keepers can allow a roll against a suitable skill or characteristic); certainly any Aboriginal investigator will know his name. Bennelong is one of the most famous Aboriginals of the age. In this time period he lives as a local traditional Elder for a community near Parramatta, but in earlier years he led a most remarkable life. He travelled to England with Governor Phillip between 1792–1795 and likely met with Sir Joseph Banks during his stay in London. Since 1797 he has lived in and around Parramatta after consulting with the new governor.

After exchanging pleasantries, Bennelong introduces his young protégé, Burruga, who he would like to offer as a guide to the expedition. Burruga, he explains, is young but has travelled far as a messenger between the local community and other Aboriginal groups, some quite distant. Travelling with a knowledgeable guide like Burruga is the only way Bennelong can imagine the white expedition surviving longer than a day. “Blue Mountains is no Hyde Park” he will quip.

Bennelong and his sizeable warrior retinue will accompany the party about an hour west of Parramatta before turning back, leaving Morratt and the expedition in the hands of Burruga. (More information on the much-celebrated life of Bennelong can be found in the *Convicts & Cthulhu* core book).

Travelling to the Blue Mountains

The expedition will take about four days to reach the closest spot in the Blue Mountain foothills near Mt. Irvine where the meteoroid fell. The wagons carry 12 days of supplies since Morratt believes it will take at least four days to reach the crash site and four days to return, leaving about two days to explore and secure the meteorite. Two extra days of food should provide sufficient rations if supplemented with hunting of local wildlife.

The challenges faced by the expedition on its voyage to the meteorite crash site and back are presented here as a day-by-day breakdown of events. This assumes that the party takes the most expedient route, makes good use of the (edited) maps at its disposal, accounts of previous white explorers, and advice from Aboriginal trackers. The Keeper is well



within his or her rights to make the players succeed in skill checks in order to unfailingly make progress each day towards the goal. Failed or fumbled rolls might indicate slower than expected progress, or even that the party becomes entirely lost. Given the minimal amount of food carried by the party, a long period of becoming disorientated may suddenly put the expedition in peril of starvation, perhaps needing to turn back early before the supplies run out.

DAY 1

On the first day, the expedition leaves Parramatta for what Marrant believes will be an 8–10 day round-trip expedition, hoping to cover between 13–16 kilometres (8–10 miles) each day. After departing Parramatta, the group will first encounter Bennelong (see above) and then enter into the grasslands beyond the settled regions. Kangaroos are encountered in the grasslands and can be hunted for food.

DAY 2

13–16 kilometres (8–10 miles) covered. The expedition will be travelling through a swampier landscape, with mangroves and the Nepean River impeding travel. The expedition will likely have to unyoke the bullocks and manhandle the wagons to get them across the river.

That evening, when the expedition camps, they will hear the howls of the Blue Mountain Yowies in the distance. The night-time sky is lit up by a dry-lightning storm, and the very distant crackle of thunder doesn't cut out the inhuman howling as the storm rages. Hearing the howls is a frightening experience and require a Sanity check (0/1D3).

When the storm ends, the night sky is filled with a strange bluish light coming from the direction of the (predicted) crash site, still many miles away. The bluish light will fade as dawn approaches. Although they will have no way of knowing at this point, this unearthly glow is caused by alien plant life spreading from one of the opened cannisters at the meteorite site.

DAY 3

13–16 kilometres (8–10 miles) covered. The expedition starts entering into the rising foothills of the Blue Mountains and Marrant begins to realize that his maps are no longer useful. The expedition is truly mapping new territory with every step. At mid-day, the expedition will come across a small Aboriginal settlement of the Gundungurra people.

Encounter: Aboriginal Settlement

The community's tribal Elders and Clever Men/Women will approach the expedition and will be intrigued by these white faces that few in their community have seen before. Even if a delegation includes an Aboriginal Investigator and/or Burruga, the Blue Mountains Aboriginal people will still be somewhat suspicious of them. However, this won't stop them readily sharing food and drink with them. If Investigators find a way to readily communicate with the members of this community (e.g., making use of Burruga's diverse language skills), they can question them about the meteorite. If they do so, the Elders and wise men will quickly inform the expedition that a young tribesman named Junba has recently returned from the site of the crash, but is also quite unwell. They will show the Investigators to the traditional bark hut where the extremely sick young man is resting.

Inspecting the sick Aboriginal, Junba, it is quite apparent that something serious is wrong with him. His dark skin has a glowing blue tint, the whites of his eyes glow with a similar blue tint, and he is running a fever. Small bumps are visible under his skin. However, Junba is still lucid for the moment, though hesitant of speech. If questioned, he will recount what happened when his friends found the meteorite and began to explore the ruined landscape.

Junba's fevered account first mentions several large objects "like water carriers" near the great rock — objects "shiny like sunlight on the lake, or a beetle's carapace", but shaped with straight lines on

First People of the Blue Mountains Region

(Reprinted from Ticket of Leave #7)

The vast Blue Mountains region covers the traditional lands of two groups of Aboriginal peoples, the Darug and the Gundungurra. Roughly speaking, Darug people inhabit the Cumberland plain while the Gundungurra reside in the mountainous areas and to the south into the Wollondilly region. Both peoples have a long and custodial relationship to the land, flora and fauna of the region, and have a diverse range of established sites in the area, one art site dating back 22,000 years.

(Sources: The Aboriginal Blue Mountains site has an historical and cultural overview as well as information on the current communities. www.aboriginalbluemountains.com.au/home)

every side, a little like the hard, straight lines of some rocks and crystals. This is the young man's attempts to describe the cuboid metallic cannisters at the crash site, filtered through the range of things that he has experienced. Junba will explain that two of the "shiny water carrier" objects were already broken when they arrived, and that they opened a third one by prodding it with a spear. When they did so, it showered them with "wind and blue spores."

The following day, the Aboriginal youths tested the sky rock itself, again prodding it with their spears. It was then that they realized it was hollow like a great "egg", perhaps one laid by Gurangatch, the rainbow serpent from the clan's songlines. There were already some small holes in the shell of the rock egg, but when they struck it hard, they broke through. Inside they saw a shiny disk and the dried flesh of a "monster", a type of beast that none of them had ever seen or heard of before. (This is the interior of the door of the ship, with the rocky build-up of the meteorite on the exterior. Think of it as the escape hatch or the entrance hatch to the ship itself.)

By Junba's account it was around this time that several of his fellows began to feel sick. Because he seemed unaffected by the illness, Junba was told to return to the settlement with one of the "shiny water carriers". When he arrived he was told to ask for help and advice from the Clever Men of the community.

What Brought The Star Here?

The meteorite began to break up as it entered the atmosphere, blazing a trail through the night sky. It's massive bulk originally more than 10 meters in diameter as it entered the atmosphere, was nevertheless partially under control headed to its intended destination in the Outback. Failing technology and disintegration of the rock coating meant that damaged navigation systems switched to locking in on a closer signal, the back-up beacon from the Elder Thing outpost deep beneath the Blue Mountains. Even with such a last-minute correction, the capsule was doomed. Travelling from northeast to southwest, the meteorite hit forested foothills and left a two kilometer (1.25 mile) long path of destruction before coming to rest in a small valley among the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

If the Investigators question Junba further he can supply the following details:

- There were several sealed "water carriers" at the crash site; Junba's group only opened one.
- He left behind perhaps a dozen of his fellow Gundungurra men at the crash site.

Investigators who make inquiries of the community's Elders can learn that the object that Junba brought back has been placed in another (unoccupied) hut. No one has touched it since Junba became sick and it has not been opened. Many in the settlement believe it to be possessed by evil spirits. However, if Investigators wish to take the strange object nobody will stop them doing so (see "The Metal Cannisters" on page 15 if Investigators decide to experiment with this object).

DAY 4

13–16 kilometers (8–10 miles) covered. On Day 4, the landscape through which the expedition passes turns into rolling hills rising towards the still distant Blue Mountains. Thick bush begins to give way to dense stands of trees, and the countryside becomes wetter as they enter a micro-climate temperate rainforest. As they approach within an hour of the crash site, there are growing signs of fire and physical destruction to the landscape as the meteorite plowed its way towards its final resting place. A successful Spot Hidden roll will result in

the Investigators discovering pieces (fist-sized or smaller) of the meteorite strewn on the ground, well before reaching the crash site itself.

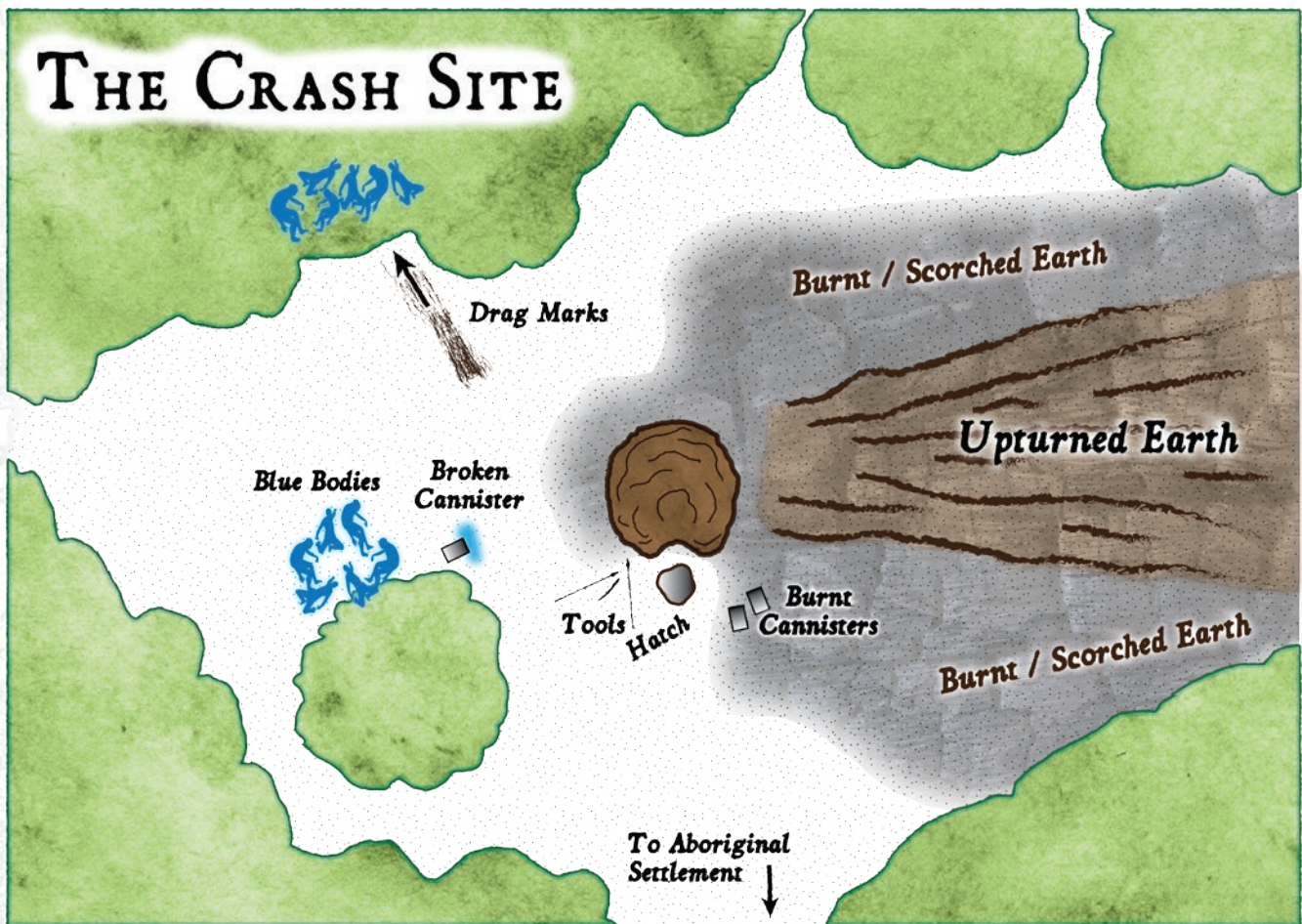
The expedition finally arrives at the site of the crash in the foothills of the Blue Mountains as night falls on Day 4. Standing atop the nearest ridge and looking down into the valley, the destructive passage is clearly visible to expedition members. The meteorite is also quite visible even in the waning light. The huge 5-metre high (16.5 feet) orb of meteoric rock lies half-wedged into the ground. To the northeast, a deep furrow of earth stretches into the distance. On both sides, trees lay broken or shattered, and in the clearing, the explosive stop resulted in the trees in a 10 meter (33 feet) wide circle being blow radially outwards and felled. Keepers who have seen photographs of the aftermath of the Tunguska impact can use that as inspiration when describing the scene.

Fires were set by the meteorites passage and impact, but since the area is temperate rainforest, the wet landscape soon extinguished most of the flames. Yet nature can't remove all signs of destruction in less

than two weeks so when the Investigators arrive, they will see signs of a brief but intense fire among the damaged trees and uprooted foliage.

Upon arrival, Marrant will order camp set up about 25 metres (80 feet) or so away from the crash site. A nearby stream will provide drinking water for the bullocks and the expedition. Once tents are set up and fires begun, Marrant will meet with the investigators to discuss how they are going to explore the site in the morning and what needs to be done to salvage the huge chunk of remaining meteorite. Marrant will discourage anyone from bumbling about the site in the darkness, but he will not stop any (non-convict) investigators from nosing around if they are insistent.

A quick survey of the crash site — all that is possible in the failing twilight — will quickly stumble upon the dead bodies of six of the Gundungurra men who were left behind (see below). The cursory search will also uncover several oddly-regular metal cannisters, some opened and empty, others intact. They lie scattered around the site. There is no sign of what was in any of those that are opened.





DAYS 5 & 6: EXPLORING THE CRASH SITE

When the sun rises next morning, the true magnitude of the horrific crash site will be quite apparent to all. Investigators who explore the impact site will need to make a Sanity check (1/1D6+1) as the true extent of its horrors slowly unfolds. There are three major features to explore: the rocky meteorite itself, the strangely-regular metal cannisters scattered around it, and the bodies of the dead Aboriginal men. Each is described separately below.

The Meteorite

At the centre of the scene of violent destruction is the massive rocky mass of the “fallen star”. It is a roughly spherical chunk of dark rock, about five metres (16.5 feet) across. The crash has left it partially buried, wedged firmly into the ground. From a distance it appears little different to any other large boulder, although as Investigators inspect it more closely it will become obvious that dark burn marks and scars cover its surface. These are evidence of the fiery path it cut through the atmosphere as it fell to earth. On one side of the meteorite there is a gash, large enough for a man to climb into. It is pitch black inside.

A closer view of the site also reveals the presence of several smaller regularly-shaped objects that seem to have been either thrown from the meteorite during the impact or removed by someone and strewn about the crash site. Their oddly rectangular shape marks them as clearly manufactured rather than natural. These metal cannisters are described below.

Investigators approaching the hole in the side of the meteorite will first spot the stone tools and spears that the Aboriginal men used to widen the aperture (or “crack the egg”). These lay discarded a few feet away. The investigators are also likely to spot a huge disk-sized piece of meteoric stone that has been chopped away by the Gundungurra men. Anyone examining this stone will realize the inside is lined with a shiny, nearly indestructible metal. This heavy rock is a perfect size to be loaded onto the expedition’s wagons as a scientific specimen.

Peering into the hollow rock will require expedition member providing some light source to clearly see what lies within. Once they have done so, however, they will be shocked by the strange metallic and technological interior of the meteorite. Investigators

who have a scientific background can clearly recognize that the vast banks of dials and buttons are likely part of some kind of scientific apparatus or similar contrivance, although it is something far beyond anything known to British sciences. Because the technology is so alien, the Keeper is encouraged to describe it in a vague and mysterious way that reflects the Investigators’ impossible attempts to comprehend it in terms of common 18th Century items and concepts.

At the heart of the metal-lined meteorite is the mummified and partially fossilized corpse of the dead Elder Thing. The Keeper should describe its bizarre form using the information on page 291–2 of the *Call of Cthulhu*, 7th Edition rulebook (or simply crib from Lovecraft’s novella *At The Mountains of Madness*). Witnessing a dead Elder Thing requires a Sanity check (0/1D6).

The Dead Aboriginal Men

The investigators will very quickly locate the blue, bloated corpses of six Aboriginal men not far from the meteorite. All have been warped by the alien plant virus, and many are now rooted to the ground like insane plant hybrids. Closer study of the bodies reveals that their skin has a bluish tinge, and that blue frond-like plants are growing from their mouths and other bodily orifices. The bodies are firmly attached to the ground by the roots of these frond-like plants and their stomachs are severely distended. If prodded or poked to rigorously, the distended stomachs will burst, spraying anyone within 3 metres (10 feet) of the body with blue spores. If left alone, the distended stomachs will burst themselves three days later spreading the spores onto the soil around where the bodies lay. Much of the crash site will then be rendered contaminated.

If the Investigators questioned Junba, they may recall that he described leaving about a dozen men behind – meaning around six of the Aboriginal men are still unaccounted for. A Spot Hidden roll will show drag marks heading into the rainforest to the northwest, away from the crash site. About 10 meters (30 feet) away, investigators will find the bodies of six more dead Gundungurra men huddled together and entwined by vines emerging from their glowing corpses. The choking blue flora has turning these unfortunates into a single swaying mass. Blue-tinged fern-like flowers crown their heads as spores erupt from mouths and ears from some unknown



pressure. An additional Sanity roll (1/1D3) should be required for this twisted and morbid sight.

Anybody who touches an infected corpse must check for infection (see the box on page 16).

The Metal Cannisters

Each of the metallic cannisters is a cuboid of shiny extra-terrestrial metal, approximately the same size as a keg used to store beer or rum. They are stasis containers created by the Elder Things to safely hold plant and animal specimens in a kind of suspended animation. There were a total of eleven stasis containers inside the meteorite when it crashed to earth; about half of those were thrown clear during the impact. Two of those ruptured during the crash, releasing the alien plants they contained (although the fiery blaze sparked by the crash quickly killed those specimens). Another of the cannisters that had been thrown clear was later opened by the curious Gundungurra men, exposing them to the plant virus which ultimately killed them. Another of the ejected containers was taken by Junba back to the Aboriginal settlement (and perhaps is already in the possession of the expedition).

Each cannister is 41 centimetres (16 $\frac{1}{8}$ th inch) along its long dimension and 35 centimetres (13 $\frac{7}{8}$ th inch) on the other two. All of the containers outside the meteorite — and all but one of those still inside — bear a series of three blue painted bands across their surface, and three blue diamond-shapes. The cannister taken by Junba also bears these marks. These containers hold further specimens of alien plants and spores. Each blue-marked container that is still sealed weighs about 16 Kg (35 lbs); cannisters whose contents have escaped weigh 10Kg (22 lbs).

Inside the meteorite (underneath the body of the dead Elder Thing) is a single example of a different type of cannister, bearing painted markings in a black-and-green chess board pattern. This container is the same dimensions as all the others, but much heavier 39 Kg (87 lbs). It is also cold to the touch and when exposed to the warm outside air, it will immediately become covered with frost and condensation. This stasis cannister holds a Proto-Shoggoth in suspended animation (see the box on page 18).

Investigators toying with any of the sealed cannisters (plant or Proto-Shoggoth) will find there is no obvious clasp or apparatus on their surface, but their relative

size and metallic composition means that they must surely be hollow. The only method by which expedition members can breach the containers is by inflicting physical damage to them. Any method which can overcome the cannisters' Armour of 4 and inflict an accumulated 10 Hit Points of damage will suffice. One of the sealed plant cannisters is precariously balanced in a way that it perches against jagged pieces of rock from the meteorite — overbalancing this container, deliberately or accidentally, might be sufficient to create a breach.

Piercing any of the containers is potentially hazardous to the health of expedition members (see "The Alien Plant Virus" box nearby for the consequences of exposure). Breaching the Proto-Shoggoth container will allow the alien horror to escape.

Planning for Salvage

Collecting samples from the meteorite crash site is a huge task, and the two days available to the expedition will only scratch the surface. One thing that will immediately become obvious is that the intact massive sphere of meteoritic rock cannot be broken down without several days of intense physical labour or loosened intact from the soil without the use of explosives. It is far too big in diameter (over 5–6.5 meters) for it to be carried on the expedition's wagons in one piece anyway.

After an initial inspection of the site, Marrant will convene a meeting to discuss how best to salvage samples from the site. He will solicit ideas from any of the expedition members (although will be dismissive of the opinions of convicts). At the end of the meeting, the following priorities will be set:

- The expedition will aim to "recover" the mummified and partially fossilized specimen of "an unknown Antipodean beast" (actually the dead Elder Thing) and load it onto a bullock.
- As many as possible of the intact cannisters are to be collected and loaded onto the wagons.
- If possible, smaller chunks of the rocky surface of the meteorite are to be broken off and loaded onto the wagons.

At the end of a long day's work, Marrant will order the camp to prepare for rest, and after meeting with the Investigators, he will decide whether more can be salvaged the following day. He would like

The Alien Plant Virus

Inside all but one of the sealed metallic storage containers are samples of an alien plant that the Elder Thing was carrying prior to the crash. The plants are blue colored, frond-like, and covered in fine blue spores that stick to clothing and flesh with small microscopic barbs. The alien plants are inimical to terrestrial life, acting as a kind of especially virulent parasitic virus. This is what killed the curious Gundungurra men who opened one of the containers (although their infection did not become apparent until 48 hours afterwards, when the extra-terrestrial plant life began growing within their bodies began to break out).

The alien plant virus will infect anyone who breathes in the spores, touches the plant samples with bare hands that have cuts or scratches, or comes into the contact with an infected person without any form of protection. Handkerchiefs, cloth tied around faces, leather gloves, or other forms of physical protection will keep the plant spores from taking root. Note that the sealed containers are pressurized, so when the lid is unlatched, it will be under intense pressure and it is likely some of the spores will spray out if the lid is not removed with great caution.

The Viral Reaction

STAGE 1: Infection occurs 48 hours after any unprotected target encountering the spores. The initial signs of infection appear within the next 12 hours (48-60 hours after exposure) displaying symptoms as a low-grade fever, general malaise, and a lack of appetite. An individual who experiences these early symptoms and realizes they might be infected makes a Sanity roll (0/1).

STAGE 2: Within 24 hours (60-72 hours after exposure), the infected victim will show a blueish tinge to their skin and the whites of their eyes, and they will notice small bumps along the flesh where the frond-like plant is spreading through their body. At night, their bodies will be seen to glow with an unearthly blue radiance. Seeing the effects of the spreading viral infection requires an additional Sanity check (1/1D3).

STAGE 3: At 36 hours (72-84 hours after exposure), convulsions will ripple through the body, and the fever will spike. The blue radiance is so bright that it can be seen during daylight as a faint aura. This stage requires a third Sanity check (1/1D6).

STAGE 4: At 48 hours (96+ hours after exposure), the victim will likely be fully infected, with blue frond-like plants coming out of their bodily orifices and small vines

erupting from the bumps in their flesh. Death generally occurs within the next 4 hours, and the body will swell up as the plant spores burst forth from the abdomen and the fronds root the torso and limbs into the soil. The final stage, especially seeing the alien plants emerging from the flesh, requires a final Sanity check (1D3/2D6).

Rolling CON: Keepers/Gamesters should take note that victims can delay the initial onset of the infection with a **Hard CON** roll.

- Success on this roll means the infection is fought off for another 12 hours. Three successful, consecutive Hard CON rolls mean the victim has fought off the infection entirely. Rolls should be made at the moment of infection, after 12 hours, and every 12 hours thereafter. If three consecutive, successful rolls have not been made by the time 48 hours after the initial exposure have passed, the victim should proceed through the stages of illness as listed earlier.
- A critical success on the initial Hard CON check means the victim has resisted the spores and the victim will recover after suffering the initial Stage 1 symptoms described above, including potential Sanity loss. For those lucky few, it will feel like a horrible cold or a bout of the flu. They are thereafter immune to this particular viral infection.
- A failure on the initial Hard CON check means the infected victim will move to Stage 2 almost immediately (within the next 1-2 hours). This requires a Sanity check as the patient realizes they are infected (1/1D3+1).
- A fumble on the initial hard CON check means the infected victim reaches Stage 3 almost immediately (within the next 30 minutes). Their mind torn apart by the viral spores and their flesh ripping and tearing as fronds and vines viciously erupt from the flesh, the victim becomes maddened and starts to attack the nearest person with a frenzy until subdued or killed. The victim loses 1D20 Sanity and suffers 1D6+2 Hit Points of damage as the alien spores attack the target's mind and bodily organs.

Cold: It should be noted that the alien plant can be destroyed by fire or cold, and when temperatures fall below 10°C (50F), the alien plant will wither and die. The arrival of wintry temperatures in six months will likely destroy the vast majority of plants and any spores that have spread.

to bring back more of the strange metallic interior and additional pieces of meteoric rock, but if he can be convinced that nothing more can be salvaged without more equipment, he will agree to leave the following morning. Otherwise the second day at the site (Day 6) will be spent salvaging whatever else can be recovered, including some of the strange technological machinery from the interior (all of it severely damaged and probably unrepairable with current technological knowledge).

DAY 7

Regardless of how successful they are salvaging on the second day at the crash site, at first light on Day 7 Marrant will order the expedition to turn back to Parramatta as supplies are beginning to run low.

Marrant orders the expedition to retrace its path and return back to Parramatta, working its way through the rainforest and hills back down the path they cut towards the crash site. Travel is much slower, with the expedition limited to making no more than 13 kilometres (8 miles), and that only by pushing man and beast to their limits.

During Day 7, it is likely that many expedition members will begin to feel a general malaise, as Stage 1 of the viral infection takes hold.

Encounter: Dingoes Ate My Elder Thing

Early in the afternoon of Day 7, about an hour after the expedition has stopped for lunch, an infected and mutated dingo pack attacks without warning. These disgusting specimens each have plants and vines growing out of its ears, mouth and abdomen. The dingoes are vicious and have been driven mad by the virus, which gives them supernatural strength and will drive them into a frenzy if they successfully bite a target. Statistics for Mutant Dingoes can be found at the end of the scenario.

The Keeper should remember to check for infection any time that members of the expedition are bitten by the mutated creatures. If the dingoes are driven off, they will not return. Any dingo killed will fall to the ground and begin to slowly dissolve as the plants within have exhausted their energy in this furious attack. Nothing will be left but a glowing blue residue.

After the creatures have been seen off, Marrant will order that any wounded expedition members be carried to the tribal village the following day where



they can be left to recover. Any dead will be buried where they fell. That evening, when the expedition stops for the night, CON checks for the advance of the viral illness should be made.

DAY 8

13–16 kilometers (8–10 miles) covered. The expedition will make a brief stop at mid-day at the same Aboriginal settlement they previously visited. It will soon become apparent that most of the Gundungurra people have abandoned the settlement, leaving behind only a few tribesmen who are gathering traditional foodstuffs to feed their relocated kinsfolk. If the Investigators ask about Junba, they will learn that he passed away yesterday. His body is now sprouting strange blue-coloured, frond-like plants from his orifices.

Wounded expedition members can be left with the Aboriginal people, but there is little that can be done to treat their injuries as all the traditional healers have left the settlement.

Once the expedition leaves the village, the heat of the day becomes nearly unbearable, especially for the sick or injured. Howls of the Blue Mountain

Yowies will again be heard in the distance and throughout the day. It is almost as though the baleful cries follow them along their path. As day turns towards night, the howls become screams. They still remain quite far away, but the sound is disturbing (Sanity check: 0/1).

If Investigators think to check on the items they are carrying back to Parramatta, they will quickly notice that the proto-Shoggoth container (if they retrieved it) is now rapidly defrosting and bulging slightly. The metallic cannister now has constant condensation on the outside of the metallic container and cold steam raising off the top. (If the Keeper is familiar with the sight of dry ice sublimating, he or she can use that to describe this odd sight although the discovery of dry ice post-dates the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era by some decades.) The proto-Shoggoth container has a 10% chance to burst free of its containment this day, but only if the cannister is mishandled or dropped.

The bullocks pulling the expedition wagons begin to show the first signs of illness when they stop for the evening. One of the NSW Corps soldiers is also showing signs of illness before nightfall, sweating and complaining of a headache. He will be listless and refuse to eat. Others may be showing similar symptoms.

DAY 9

The expedition will try to make 13–16 kilometers (8–10 miles) today, but as more members become sick, progress begins to slow.

The proto-Shoggoth container now has a 50% chance to spontaneously burst open, unless investigators have taken some steps to cool it or reinforce the container.

The Elder Thing corpse is also not faring well in the warmer conditions, obviously disintegrating in the summer weather, dissolving into thick mucus-like ooze. The stench of the dissolving corpse is quite revolting; however it does not attract any flies or insects. Seeing the dissolving corpse requires a Sanity check (1/1D3).

Further members of the expedition begin to exhibit symptoms of the viral infection as Day 9 progresses, including Marrant (if he is an NPC).

Encounter: Yowie Attack

That evening, once the camp is set up and the watch has been set, but well before midnight, another dry-

The Proto-Shoggoth

The Elder Thing scientist that piloted the capsule, had at some earlier time packaged a Proto-Shoggoth for transport. This was achieved by freezing the dangerous creature and placing it within a stasis cannister similar to those containing the plant samples. In order to distinguish this particular cannister, it was given distinctive markings (a black and green chessboard pattern). This cannister also has a thicker black base that contains a coolant regulator. After several millennia in space the cannister's hypothermic containment system is failing, with the impact having severely damaged its coolant regulator.

If the proto-Shoggoth is freed, it will immediately attack anything around it that has not fled from it in horror. It is made up of flesh from four different, humanoid-but-alien species and the flesh is particolored in shades no human would possess. There are more than a dozen eyes, four mouths, and several tattoo-like markings. The hybrid horror is highly intelligent and possesses skills from the original host bodies that were combined to create it, all of which came from far-advanced technological civilisations. See the statistics block on page 22.

It is highly unlikely that an Investigator can to find a way to reason with the Proto-Shoggoth, which will simply want to kill them. However, if players suggest truly inspired plans, the Keeper should judge them on their merits.

Longer term, if the Proto-Shoggoth were to somehow escape it would, over time, take on a more and more humanoid form. Such a survivor would head for the ruins of the Elder Thing outpost in the Blue Mountains and try to (somehow) build a spacecraft to allow it to return home. Obviously, such a plan would take many years to accomplish, and is far beyond the scope of this scenario. However, if the Keeper is interested in running a long-term *Convicts & Cthulhu* campaign, it is possible that the proto-Shoggoth could become a unique ongoing, highly intelligent yet insane threat.

lightning storm will light up the night sky. In the midst of the storm, the expedition will be attacked by three virus-infected Blue Mountain Yowies. The attack will begin with rocks thrown at those on watch, then vicious howls as the Yowies race into the camp to carry off anyone they have knocked unconscious or killed. Statistics for the mutated Yowies can be found at the end of the scenario.

Any Yowies killed by the expedition will be found to be infected with the alien plant virus. However, their more rugged constitution simply indicates that they are at stage 2 despite being infected several days ago. If a Blue Mountain Yowie body is taken as a specimen by the expedition, the expedition will be attacked a second time that night by a further four un-infected Yowies seeking to recover the corpse.

If the second wave of Yowies are driven off or killed, the expedition will not be attacked again. However, howls and screams will still be heard throughout the night until an hour before dawn when the storm ends.

DAY 10

The expedition will find it difficult to make the planned 13–16 kilometres (8–10 miles). If the expedition continues to push relentlessly forwards, the expedition members may just be able to reach Parramatta by nightfall. The Keeper should call for skill or characteristic rolls (especially for those who are infected) to allow for such speed.

It is more likely that the group's progress will decline sharply. More alarmingly, the expedition's food supplies will now be reaching critical levels, partly because some food is now spoiling in the hot summer conditions. This is further compounded by the miasmatic air from the rotting and dissolving Elder Thing, which quickly ruins any exposed food. Similarly, the party's supplies of fresh water may have become tainted by plant spores – or perhaps simply taken on an unpleasant smell which makes uninfected members of the expedition unwilling to touch it.

Marrant (if still alive) will seek advice from the Investigators as to how the remaining food and water should be distributed and rationed.

Late on Day 10, the bullocks pulling the wagons will collapse perhaps within sight of Parramatta. The beasts show obvious signs of the strange illness: blue frond-like growths from their mouth and ears.

If it hasn't already broken free, the likelihood of the Proto-Shoggoth escaping on Day 10 is 90% if no efforts have been made to cool or reinforce the cannister. Even if some efforts have been made, there is a 50% chance the monstrous thing will escape its captivity. If it does, the players will have to deal with the proto-Shoggoth escaping and immediately attacking the remaining expedition members and perhaps even the people of Parramatta.

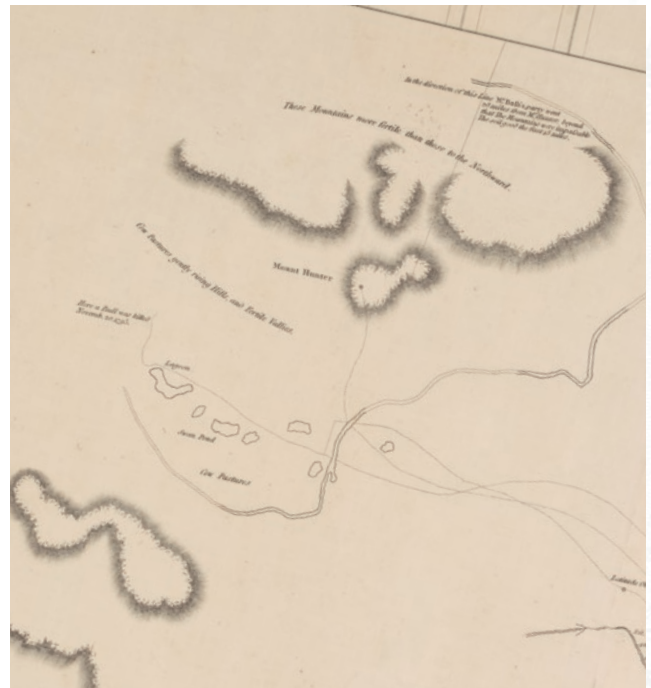
If Marrant is still alive and in his right mind, the scientist may make a shocking suggestion around the evening fire: it may, he says, be essential that the expedition quarantine itself rather than returning to Parramatta township (this is explored further below).

DAY 11

On Day 11, if the expedition has not yet reached Parramatta, Marrant will resolve that the expedition *MUST* halt immediately and quarantine itself, regardless of any objection that his plan may have received the night before. He orders that the party stop short of the town and remain there until the illness passes. Most of the members of the expedition are likely to be ill and some may be dead. If any of the Investigators are uninfected (or can convince Marrant they are healthy) they will be allowed to go into town to fetch a doctor from the Parramatta Hospital.

If the surviving investigators include a member of the NSW Corps, he will be urged to return to Parramatta Barracks and have a message sent to Governor Hunter and Lieutenant Colonel Paterson in Sydney.

By Day 11, the Elder Thing will be little more than dissolving goo unless it has been preserved in some way. The proto-Shoggoth will be released late in the day, just before nightfall, unless the container has been *BOTH* reinforced and chilled in some way.



Rewards and Penalties

Simply surviving the horrifying trek to the meteorite site and back is worth a reward of 1D6 Sanity points. Furthermore:

- If the investigators are successful in defeating the proto-Shoggoth, they should be rewarded with an additional +1D10 Sanity Points. In addition, success should also bring a boost to Credit Rating of +1D6%, especially if they saved the people of Paramatta.
- Defeating the mutated and infected dingoes will bring an additional +1D6 Sanity Points.
- Defeating the Blue Mountain Yowies should also be rewarded with an additional +1D6 Sanity Points. Bringing back a living specimen will bring great rewards from Governor Hunter and Lieutenant Colonel Paterson, including a boost to Credit Rating of +2D6%. If the party brings back a dead (and uninfected) specimen, they should be rewarded with a boost to Credit Rating of +1D6%.

Governor Hunt or Lieutenant Colonel Paterson will seize all maps, journals and any other form of written records from the survivors, as well as entreat them to remain silent about everything they have seen. Convict Investigators may be granted a ticket of leave in return for their silence or alternatively threatened with harsher work assignments if they display loose lips about what they discovered during their expedition.

Anyone who ignores the Governor's warning and does talk about a possible passage through the Blue Mountains or the presence of alien creatures and technology will be sent to Norfolk Island (or later, Van Diemen's Land) to ensure their silence.

If Lieutenant Marrant survives the expedition, he will be promoted to Captain, while any other NSW Corps soldiers will also be promoted and given land grants to buy their silence.

Free settler Investigators will be granted title to land beyond Paramatta and a small cash reward from the government.

Unknown to everyone, one of the blue-painted sealed plant containers does not contain a plant specimen, but instead contains a piece of extra-

terrestrial technology. If this is discovered before reaching Paramatta, the Investigators will be able to keep hold of a Crystal of the Elder Things (see *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition Keepers Rulebook*, p. 269).

The Price of Failure

Alternatively, if the investigators fail in stopping the myriad threats they encountered along the way, the colony may be facing not only a new invasive and deadly plant species but also the possibility of a proto-Shoggoth on the loose. The proto-Shoggoth will remain hidden in one of the valleys of the Blue Mountains until it is either discovered by a later expedition into the dangerous landscape or it has built a spacecraft (the former is much more likely). Failure to defeat the proto-Shoggoth, and knowing it is still out there in the wilderness, haunts expedition members resulting in an additional loss of -1D4 Sanity.

The invasive plant species will eventually spread for about 6 months, but when the weather changes as winter approaches, and the temperature falls below 10°C (50F), the alien plant will wither and die, saving the colony from the ravages of this dangerous extra-terrestrial menace.

Statistics

Game statistics for *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition* are shown below.

Lt. Alistair Marrant

NSW CORPS OFFICER AND EXPEDITION LEADER, AGED 30. (POTENTIAL HEAD OF INVESTIGATOR PARTY IF ONE IS NOT DRAWN FROM THEIR RANKS)

Marrant is from a middle-class English family, and he attended a local grammar school where he became interested in botany and geology. He is tall and rugged, though he has a faint speckle of pockmarks across both cheeks from a childhood bout with smallpox. Otherwise he is thought handsome and he is considered by the single ladies of the colony an eligible catch among the officers of the NSW Corps. While a competent officer, Marrant is also a bit bookish, and when he is off-duty, he is often travelling to collect samples of local fauna and flora.

He came to the attention of William Paterson when Marrant accompanied Paterson on his failed 1793 expedition to the Blue Mountains. His loyalty was rewarded when Marrant was appointed as a senior assistant during Paterson's brief rule as acting Governor. Marrant was invited to accompany Paterson back to England in 1796. There Marrant was introduced to Sir Joseph Banks and was briefly sent off to the Isle of Wight to recover some specimens Banks had left behind years earlier. Now back in Australia for the last few weeks, Marrant has been readjusting to the changed political climate in the colony. When Paterson decided to send a team to recover the fallen meteorite, he naturally chose Marrant to lead the expedition.

STR 60 CON 50 SIZ 65 DEX 50 INT 80
 APP 65 POW 60 EDU 55 SAN 60 Hit Points: 11
 Damage Bonus: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 7 Magic Points: 12
 Luck: 45

Brawl 35% (17/7), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
 Carbine 55% (27/11), damage 1D10+4 [Range 70 yards;
 1 shot per 4 rounds; Malfunction 95+]
 Dodge 55% (27/11)

Skills: Credit Rating 65%, Insight 55%, Intimidate 45%,
 Listen 45%, Natural World 50%, Science (Botany)
 35%, Stealth 40%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Burraga

ABORIGINAL GUIDE, AGED 21

Burraga is a distant relative of Bennelong, who is one of the most famous Indigenous community leaders in Australia. Burraga has been in and around Parramatta for the last six months or so, though he first came to meet his "uncle" Bennelong back in 1795 when he returned from England. Since then, Burraga has traveled from the bush to the colony several times a month, bringing news in both directions. Burraga has acted as a guide for some of the local settlers and is willing to do so for the right price. While he loves to hear stories of far-away lands, Burraga believes most Europeans could not survive a week out in the bush, so he carefully hides his disdain for anyone he thinks would die without his aid.

STR 60 CON 65 SIZ 65 DEX 65 INT 70
 APP 50 POW 65 EDU 65 SAN 60 Hit Points: 13
 Damage Bonus: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 8 Magic Points: 13
 Luck: 60

Brawl 55% (27/11), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
 Light Spear 65% (32/13), damage 1D6+1 + Damage Bonus
 Thrown Spear 65% (32/13), damage 1D6+1 + ½ Damage Bonus
 [range 24 yards]

Dodge 50% (25/10)

Skills: Credit Rating (with Europeans) 10%, Language (English) 30%, Language (Sydney region Aboriginal) 50%, Listen 70%, Lore (Aboriginal) 50%, Navigate 65%, Survival (Bush) 50%, Throw 65%, Track 65%.

Mutated Dingo Pack

2D3 DINGOES IN PACK; USE SAME STATS FOR EACH.

STR 70 CON 55 SIZ 35 DEX 70 POW 35
 Hit Points: 12
 Damage Bonus: none Build: 0 Move: 12 Magic Points: 7

ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting 50% (25/10), damage 1D6 + Infection
 Dodge 40% (20/8)

Frenzy: If a mutated Dingo successfully bites and inflicts damage, it will latch on to the target and go into a frenzy the following round. Make an opposed STR roll and if the dingo is successful, it will automatically inflict 3 additional points of damage each round it is still attached to its victim.

Infection: Anyone bitten by a mutated dingo has the potential to become infected with the same virus; see "The Alien Plant Virus" on "The Alien Plant Virus" on page 16.

Skills: Listen 75%, Track by Scent 85%.

Armour: 1-point skin; Fire, however, will ignore armour and do double damage.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to see a mutated dingo.



Proto-Shoggoth

HORROR IN A COLD STORE CANNISTER

Proto-Shoggoths are masses of human-coloured flesh with many of the textural features of genuine human flesh: muscle ridges, nipples, perhaps even eyes and mouths, all in odd places on the quivering flesh. The interior of the flesh may have incomplete organs and visible corded muscles, and the flesh seems to move as if breathing or heaving in response to some sort of stimuli.

Proto-Shoggoths cannot change the amount of mass or volume they possess, but they can reshape it at whim, creating limbs, pseudopods, orifices, or anything other physical extremity they might need for a particular task. This particular proto-Shoggoth is the result of an alien science experiment gone slightly awry. Unlike genuine Shoggoths, proto-Shoggoths are intelligent, cunning and also retain the skills and spells they had in their previous incarnation. This proto-Shoggoth knows no spells, but it does have access to several skills.

STR 165 CON 145 SIZ 135 DEX 75 INT 105
POW 105 Hit Points: 28
Damage Bonus: +3D6 Build:4 Move: 8 Magic Points: 21

ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting Attacks: Proto-Shoggoths can attack with a crushing blow, a bite or a swipe of its tentacle.

Crush 100% (50/20), damage equals 2 × Damage Bonus
Limb 50% (25/10), damage equals Damage Bonus
Bite 25% (15/5), damage equals ½ Damage Bonus
Dodge 30% (15/6)

Skills: The Proto-Shoggoth was 'built' from three humanoid-but-alien entities, and possesses skills from each of them. The Keeper can decide whether the Proto-Shoggoth has access to all the skills, all the time, or whether it shifts persona from one former body to another (and has the corresponding skills while inhabiting that persona).

Skills from Alien species 1: Medicine 50%, Psychology 35%, Science (Biology) 35%, System Operation 50%, Zero-G 25%

Skills from Alien species 2: Computer Maintenance 55%, Electronics 45%, Electrical Repair 35%, Technical Repair 60%

Skills from Alien species 3: Navigate 60%, Pilot Spaceship 65%, Science (Astronomy) 45%, Firearms (Electrical: Pistol) 45%

(Note that most of the non-standard, futuristic skills are taken from *Cthulhu through the Ages*, p. 53-54.)

Armour: None; however, proto-Shoggoths suffer only minimum damage from any physical attack against it. It also regenerates two hit points per round.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D10 to see a proto-Shoggoth.

Three Blue Mountain Yowies

For additional information about Yowies, see the *Convicts & Cthulhu* core book.

Yowies are short, malodorous hairy hominids which have been reported lurking in dark corners of most Australian regions but seem most common in forested areas of the southeast. Vaguely reminiscent of the Yeti of Himalayan folklore, the Yowies are elusive creatures which are only occasionally seen by people. Their exceptional abilities in camouflage means that most sightings end with the Yowie disappearing into landscape before the observer can get a clear view of the creature

	#1	#2	#3
STR	75	105	95
CON	85	85	110
SIZ	35	50	35
DEX	75	100	75
INT	65	30	45
POW	20	65	70
Hit Points	12	13	14
Damage Bonus/Build	0/0	+1D4/1	+1D4/1
Magic Points	4	13	14
Move:	9	9	9

ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting Attacks: Yowies can attack either with fists or by throwing rocks.

Fist 50% (25/10), damage 1D3 + Damage Bonus
Thrown Rock 50% (25/10), damage 1D3 + ½ Damage Bonus
Dodge 80% (40/16)

Armour: 4 points of thick hide and hair.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 to see a Yowie.

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