

The Marshwood Vampire

An Adventure for the Casting the Runes Roleplaying Game

By Linden Dunham

This adventure sees the Investigators called to the Marshwood Vale region in the west country county of Dorset. A local doctor's suspicions of a vampire preying on the district's inhabitants prove to be well-founded. The Investigators must find and destroy the foul creature in order to put an end to its depredations.

The adventure can take place in any year of the Edwardian period, but the season is assumed to be winter. The long hours of darkness favour the vampire, while the Investigators may find themselves hampered by the wet and muddy conditions for which the Vale is notorious.

Although this adventure uses real locations (notably Marshwood and Pilsdon Manors) my treatment of them is entirely fictional.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY

Marshwood Manor stands, or rather stood, below the northern slopes of Marshwood Vale. It was originally constructed early in the thirteenth century as a motte-and-bailey castle by the Manville family when King John granted them land and titles in the Marshwood area. It was subsequently rebuilt as a fortified manor house. In 1710 the then owner Sir Roger Manville made plans for the property to be rebuilt once again, this time as a grand hall in the English baroque style. Manville was an officer of the East India Company and spent long periods abroad on business. The fortune he made in the far east would finance the remodelling of the house and its grounds. Responsibility for demolishing the old house and supervising the construction of the hall was left to William Duggan, Manville's bailiff/estate manager.

Duggan was loathed by the estate's tenant farmers and labourers for the oppressive way in which he carried out his duties. Woe betide the tenant who fell behind with their rent. There would be no period of grace before they and their family were evicted, and their meagre belongings seized and sold. Duggan's unpopularity also extended to the wider Marshwood Vale. His propensity for violence towards poachers, trespassers, and anyone else he took exception to made him much feared in the district.

Duggan was also dishonest, diverting some of the Manville Estate rents into his own pocket. Sir Roger's plans to rebuild Marshwood Manor enabled Duggan to rob his employer on a grand scale. The old house was demolished, and the rubble and wreckage sold as building materials, with Duggan taking the proceeds for himself. Not content with this he also embezzled the funds intended for the reconstruction. Work on the new Marshwood Hall proceeded painfully slowly while Duggan furnished Sir Roger with infrequent reports by letter exaggerating the progress made. Duggan believed that Sir Roger would not return from abroad for some time, giving him ample opportunity to plunder the building fund and then make a swift departure from the Vale. Unfortunately for Duggan, Sir Roger returned early from the Far East landing at Bridport Harbour (now West Bay) and sending word by messenger of his imminent arrival. Realising that he was about to be exposed Duggan shot himself in the ruins of the Manor.

As was common with suicides at the time Duggan was buried at a crossroads. His body was desecrated by having a stake, in this case the fingerpost at Marshwood Cross, driven through his heart. The purpose of such profane treatment of the corpse was to ensure that the suicide's

ghost did not escape from the grave during the night, and if it did then it would be confused by the four roads, and unable to decide which direction to take.

The measures taken at Duggan's burial seem to have been only partially effective. Not long after his death residents began seeing his ghost lurking in the lanes of Marshwood Vale. The sightings continued at irregular intervals for the better part of the next two hundred years. Latterly, Duggan's malevolent spirit has started to manifest itself in a more physical manner.

A week ago workmen replaced the old wooden signpost at Marshwood Cross with a cast metal one. In doing so they removed the stake from Duggan's body, freeing him to walk abroad in physical form as a vampire and once again prey on the inhabitants of Marshwood Vale.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

The Investigators are contacted by Dr Robert Latham of Whitchurch Canonicorum in West Dorset. Dr Latham is a physician whose practice covers Marshwood Vale, a low-lying rural district surrounded on all sides by hills. He may have a prior connection with the Investigators (particularly if one of them has a medical background) or is aware of their interest in the supernatural. Alternatively, if the Investigators are affiliated with the Everlasting Club, The Society of Antiquities or The Oak Leaf League then Dr Latham is referred to them after contacting the relevant organisation. Latham is willing to travel to meet the Investigators, but he has a telephone and would prefer to call rather than spend time away from his practice.

Although a rationalist by nature, the doctor has encountered a phenomenon he finds difficult to explain by conventional medical science. He tells the Investigators that in the last week he has seen three patients exhibiting symptoms of blood loss anaemia – dizziness, tiredness, and shortness of breath. In addition, all three patients had injuries to their throats, in each case consisting of a single puncture wound. Dr Latham is certain the patients' blood loss occurred via the wounds but doesn't know what caused them. The patients themselves are unable to explain the injuries and become vague when questioned about them. The doctor appears almost shamefaced when he admits to the Investigators that *"it puts me in mind of stories from Habsburg Europe, or the old Penny Dreadfuls. I'm sure you know the kind of thing."*

Assess Honesty determines that Dr Latham is uncomfortable talking about the supernatural. He has reluctantly accepted that the injuries to his patients may

not have an entirely rational explanation but feels out of his depth. He will be genuinely grateful for the Investigators' assistance.

INITIAL RESEARCH

Dr Latham returns by train to Dorset (or concludes his phone call) leaving the Investigators to prepare for their own journey to the county. He is eager for them to come to Marshwood Vale as soon as possible, but the Investigators can be allowed a little time to carry out some research if they wish.

- ✿ No particular skill is needed to discover that Marshwood Vale is a low-lying bowl-shaped valley hemmed in by hills and located to the west of the market town of Bridport. It is sparsely populated with most inhabitants living in isolated farms and hamlets scattered across the region. Its primary form of agriculture is dairy farming, although there is some arable farming. The region is not especially prosperous.
- ✿ Use of **Geology** or **Library Use** skill reveals that the Vale's lower lias clay means that it drains poorly, and the region is often waterlogged which can make travel difficult in any season except summer. Individual farms and smaller settlements are often cut off for lengthy periods in the winter.
- ✿ Investigators with **History** or **Library Use** discover that King John awarded a large estate in the Vale to the Manville family in the early years of the 13th century. The Manvilles are still eminent in the district with many of the resident farmers and labourers being their tenants. The family seat is Pilsdon Manor which lies to the east of the hamlet of Bettiscombe.
- ✿ A **Class** skill of 5+, or investigative use of **Connections**, elicits the information that Sir Henry Manville the current squire of Pilsdon Manor is an amiable middle-aged man, regarded locally as a fair landlord. He is happily married with a grown-up family. His main interests are farming, shooting and hunting. He also serves as a local magistrate.
- ✿ **Occult**, **History**, **Folklore** or **Library Use** uncovers the story of larcenous bailiff William Duggan and his subsequent haunting of the Vale. The account found by the Investigators features the detail of him being buried at the crossroads but not the fact that the signpost was thrust through his heart. This detail can be passed onto the Investigators on a 1-point skill spend (optionally so can the details of the Bettiscombe Screaming skull – see **Aftermath** below).

DOWN TO DORSET

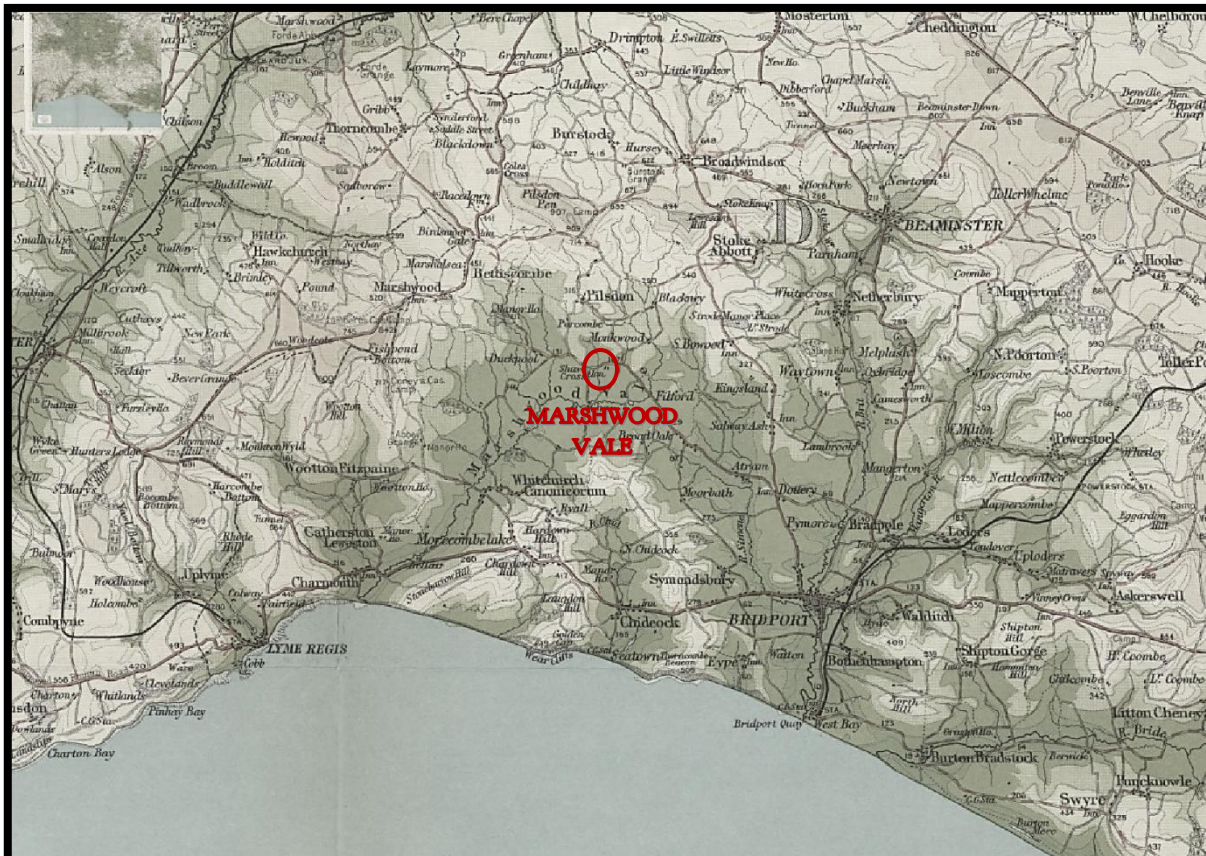
Investigators can travel by rail to Bridport via Maiden Newton courtesy of the Great Western Railway. Investigators who own a motor car have the option of driving down to the West Country but given the likely distance involved should make a **Driving** test to arrive in good time without the inconvenience of a mechanical breakdown, minor accident or running out of fuel. The GM can fix the test difficulty as they see fit, based on the distance travelled, road conditions and reliability of the Investigators' vehicle.

While willing to render the Investigators all reasonable assistance Dr Latham is unable to help with accommodation. He resides in a modest cottage with his wife and young son and doesn't have the space to put up a party of Investigators. However, lodgings can be found within the Vale at the nearby Five Bells Inn in Whitchurch Canonicorum, or the eponymous village inn in Shaves Cross. Accommodation can also be obtained in one of Bridport's several old coaching inns. This latter option does leave the Investigators some miles from the Vale though which may present difficulties when carrying out enquiries in the region (see **Getting Around** below).

GETTING AROUND

Marshwood Vale is crisscrossed by narrow lanes, tracks and footpaths. During the winter months these are prone to mud and flooding, particularly after periods of heavy rain. Travelling through the area in winter isn't always easy. Depending on the method of transport used by the Investigators they should make an **Athletics**, **Driving** or **Riding** test as appropriate against a difficulty of 5 when travelling between locations in the Vale. The consequences of failure are at the GM's discretion, but may include the following:

- ❁ **Walking.** An Investigator on foot who fails an **Athletics** test arrives exhausted and out of breath and lose 1 point of **Health**.
- ❁ **Driving.** As with the journey down to the West Country a failed test results in some form of vehicular mishap e.g. a minor accident, getting stuck in mud or the car submerged in surface water. A successful **Athletics**, **Mechanics** or further **Driving** test may be required to extricate the vehicle from difficulty.
- ❁ **Riding.** Horse transport runs similar risks of getting stuck as in a motor car but with injury to the mount or draught animals a real possibility. Mounted investigators also run the risk of a fall with attendant



MAP 1: South-West Dorset region

loss of **Health** due to injury (mitigated by a successful **Athletics** test).

If the Investigators are delayed by a mishap the GM can rule that there are adverse consequences in terms of them not obtaining a time-sensitive clue or being unable to take action in a timely fashion e.g. preventing the Vampire from attacking a victim.

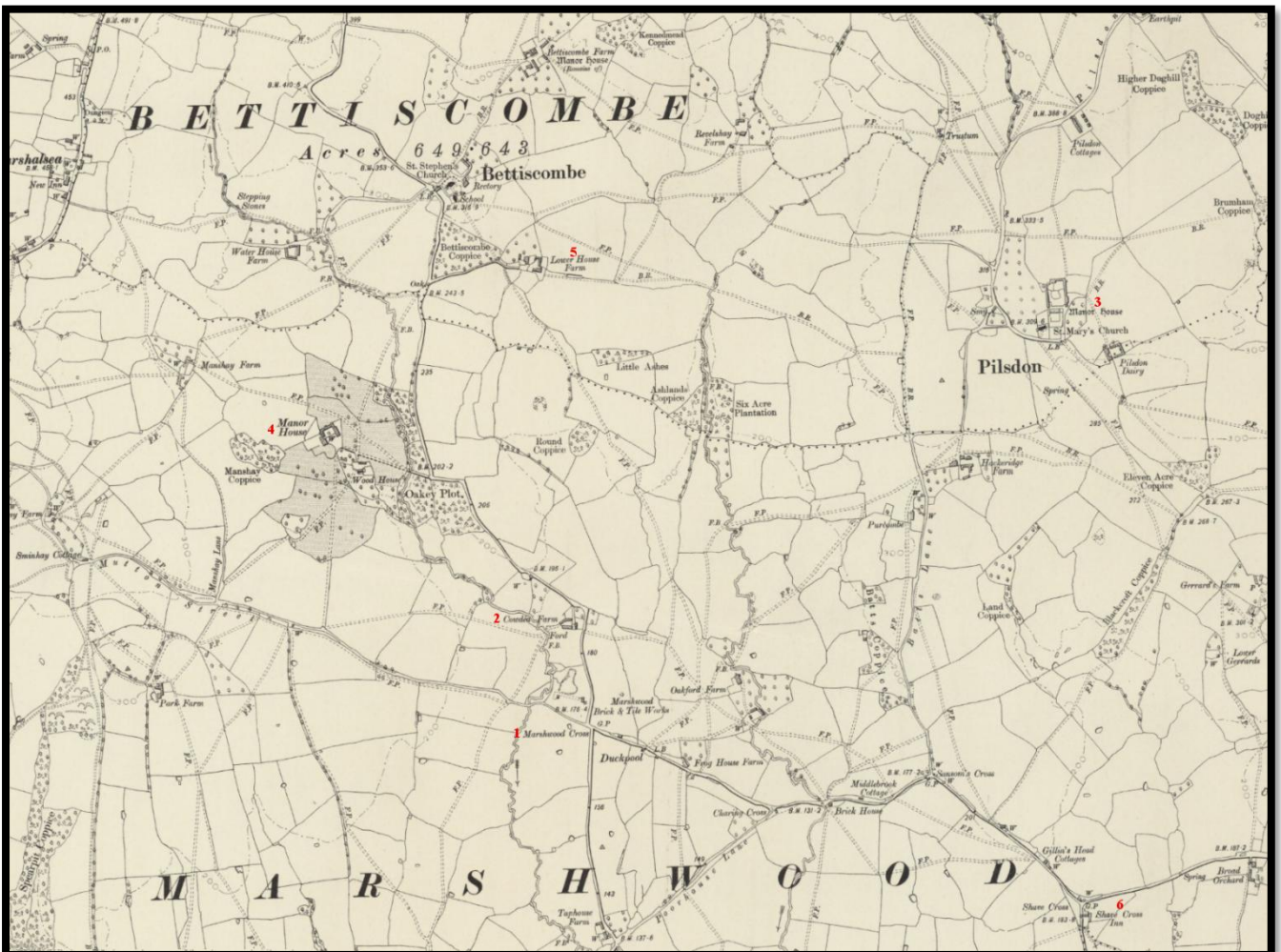
- ❁ **Map 1** provides a guide to the general topography of the South-West Dorset region, including Bridport and Marshwood Vale.
- ❁ **Map 2** shows the northern part of the Vale in greater detail. Locations relevant to the adventure are numbered in red for easy reference. They are:
 1. Marshwood Cross
 2. Cowdea Farm
 3. Pilsdon Manor
 4. Marshwood Manor
 5. Lower House Farm
 6. Shave Cross Inn

THE THREE PATIENTS

Dr Latham suggests that the Investigators accompany him on his rounds and will visit the three anaemic patients first, which takes most of the morning. The doctor has no objection to the Investigators interviewing the patients without him being present if they so wish, but urges them to proceed tactfully.

The three patients are Michael Bartlett, James Sansom and Molly White. All three are bed-ridden and have no real recollection of the Vampire's attack. Any character with the **Medicine** skill who examines them can confirm that their condition is very much as described by Dr Latham. The doctor has been treating them with Blaud's pills (iron tablets), but none have shown any sign of improvement.

The use of **Medicine** or **Biology** while examining their neck establishes that each injury was caused by a single human canine tooth, considerably enlarged from the normal. All three patients are vague about how they came by their injuries. **Psychoanalysis** or investigative use of



MAP 2: The Vale & Environs

Hypnosis is required for them to recover their memories sufficiently to impart the information contained in *Recollections* below.

MICHAEL BARTLETT

Tenant farmer and sole occupant of Cowdea Farm which lies a short distance north of Marshwood Cross. It may strike the Investigators as strange that there are no dogs on the farm. Bartlett was the first victim of the vampire, suffering two nocturnal visits from the creature.

Recollections. On the first occasion was woken in the small hours by the sound of his dogs barking. There was the sound of a scuffle outside and then the dogs fell silent. By this time Bartlett had come downstairs from the bedroom, loaded his shotgun, and opened the front door. He recalls there was a man standing there. Bartlett invited him in. He thinks they talked but can't remember what about. On waking in the morning he felt unwell and, found his dogs dead outside. After burying his dogs, he went to bed. The stranger returned the next night. Bartlett said he wanted "*to 'ave it out with 'im over my dogs*" but again thinks they just talked and he woke up back in bed. He hasn't received any more visits. His married sister Jane contacted Dr Latham after calling at the farm later that morning and finding it untended and her brother evidently sickening for something.

Bartlett buried his dogs in the nearest field to the farmyard. If the Investigators embark on the grisly task of digging up the remains, they recover the mutilated corpses of a terrier and a sheepdog. Both animals have literally been torn limb from limb.

JAMES SANSOM

Groom at Pilsdon Manor. The manor house is located to the east of Bettiscombe village. It has been the residence of the Manville family since the failed rebuilding of Marshwood Manor. Sansom lives in a cottage near the stables, away from the main house. He is a fit and active man in his late twenties, dismayed and angered at the sickness which has laid him low. Sir Henry Manville called Dr Latham to examine him on the first day of his illness.

Recollections. Sansom was woken in the small hours by the sounds of horses in distress coming from the stable block. He went out to investigate and encountered a man walking across the stable yard. He challenged the intruder, who turned around to face him. The only thing he recalls before he woke up slumped in a kitchen chair later in the morning, is that the intruder had "*a terrible face, all bashed in an' covered with blood.*"

MOLLY WHITE

Parlour maid at Pilsdon Manor, in her early twenties. Her room is on the top floor of the house along with the other servants' quarters.

Recollections. She has been visited twice by Duggan. On the first night, she was woken by the sound of scratching on her window. Opening the curtains she saw a man crouched on the roof where it slopes down below the dormer window. The man gestured to her to open the window and let him in which she did, although terrified by his appearance "*covered in blood, with a hole in his face*". The next thing she remembers is waking up, lying on the floor of the room. When house staff told Sir Henry that she was suffering from a similar illness to James Sansom Doctor Latham was sent for. The next night she was roused from her sickbed by the man at the window again and once more let him into her room, this time waking in her bed.

SIR HENRY MANVILLE

The Investigators are sure to encounter Sir Henry while at Pilsdon Manor. He is concerned for the welfare of his servants and worried that they may have fallen victim to an infectious disease. He consults with Dr Latham after the examination of James Sansom and Molly White and asks if he has any further opinion on the illness affecting his staff. Investigators accompanying the Doctor will also be asked for their views on the assumption they are experts of some kind. Investigators visiting the manor without Dr Latham will be buttonholed by Sir Henry and asked if they have any theories about what might be ailing his staff.

Sir Henry has little time for Investigators who talk to him about ghosts and vampires. That said, he knows his family history. Use of **Reassurance**, **Class** (if 5+) or **Charm** persuades him to recount the story of Duggan the dishonest bailiff, his suicide and subsequent burial at Marshwood Cross: "*Man was an utter scoundrel – nearly bankrupted the family.*" Sir Henry doesn't place any credence on the stories of Duggan's ghost walking the lanes around Marshwood Cross.

Sir Henry can also be persuaded to allow the Investigators to look at the estate office records. These go back several hundred years and confirm the factual details of Duggan's fraud, his death and burial. **Library Use** or **Book Keeping** reveals records of income and expenditure including a recent payment to Paul Adams, blacksmith, and Alfred Dennis, labourer, for work done constructing and erecting a new signpost at Marshwood Cross.

MARSHWOOD CROSS

A crossroads where one lane running north to south meets another running roughly east to west (Mutton Street). The lanes are bounded at the sides by narrow grass verges, ditches, and hedges, beyond which lie open fields. A derelict brickwork stands on land bounded by the northern and western lanes. On the corner verge between the south and west lanes is a signpost with four directional arrows pointing to Bettiscombe (north), Whitchurch Canonicorum (south) Marshwood (east) and Bridport and Shave Cross (west).

At first sight, the signpost appears to be a traditional wooden fingerpost but on closer inspection, it is apparent it is of metal construction and has only recently been erected. The post's black and white paintwork is fresh and unworn by the elements and the ground at the base of the post is still bare with no overgrowth of grass.

The new signpost was emplaced just over a week ago. Investigators with **Charm** or **Reassurance** skills or who make investigative use of **Connections** while making enquiries with local people will learn that the two men employed to construct and erect the sign were Paul Adams, blacksmith and Alfred Dennis, labourer. Sir Henry paid for the work to be done. Sir Henry readily confirms this if questioned, or if the subject comes up when the Investigators visit Marshwood Manor. The old wooden signpost was "*donkeys' years old*" and rotting away, with the upper part likely to tumble down at any minute. The explanation will be accompanied by grumbling about the uselessness of the parish and county councils. "*Should be their responsibility y'see, but you'll wait until judgement day before they do anything. Decided to pay for it out of me own pocket in the end. A spot of 'noblesse oblige' if you like. Got a couple of local chaps to do the work - Adams the blacksmith and a friend of his.*"

Investigators with the **Evidence Collection** skill detect a partially collapsed tunnel leading from the side of a ditch on the west lane in the direction of the signpost. Excavating the tunnel reveals that it leads to a small chamber rough six feet beneath the post. Inside is a partially rotted wooden coffin, with a hole in its lid. Investigators with **Geology**, **Biology** or **Medical** skills will be surprised at the coffin's survival. Both coffin and corpse should have rotted away

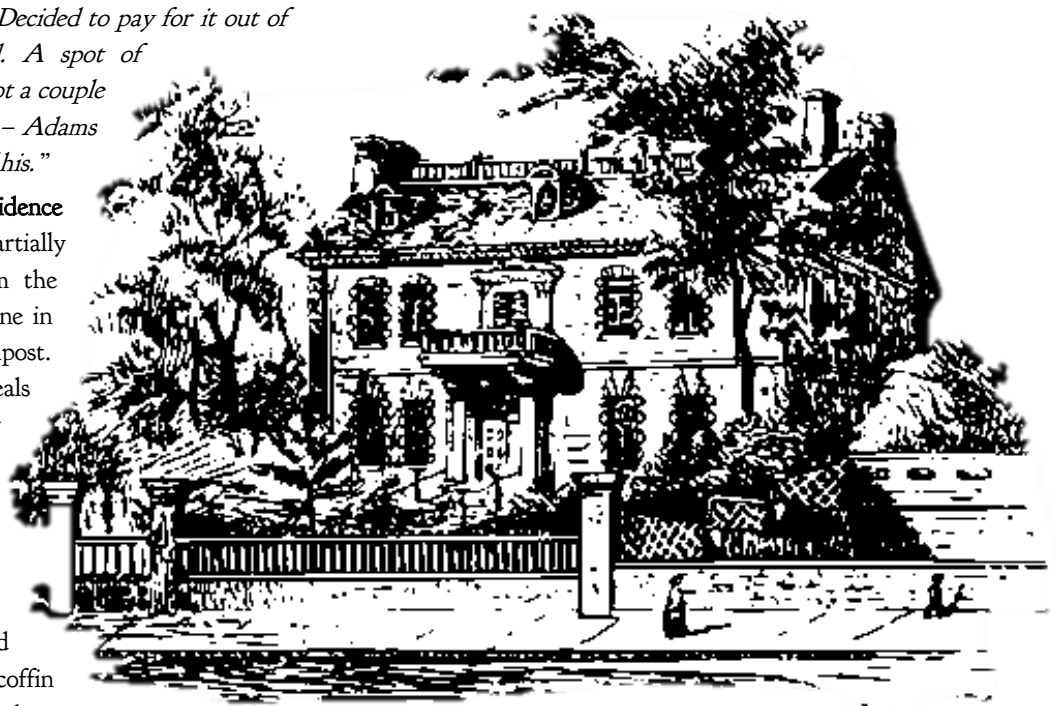
years ago in the wet clay of the Marshwood Vale. There is no sign of the corpse. No particular skill is needed to surmise that something clawed its way out of the coffin and into the ditch.

The coffin can also be recovered by digging beneath the signpost although that may attract attention and lead to an awkward encounter with Sir Henry Manville and/or the police.

THE SIGN MAKERS

Adams and Dennis are relatively easy to track down. Adams has a forge on the lane leading to Pilsdon Manor while Dennis lives with his family in a small cottage nearby. Both men confirm that they replaced the old signpost at Sir Henry's behest. Adams constructed the replacement signpost. Dennis helped him transport it to Marshwood Cross and did most of the groundwork i.e. digging. Whichever of the two men is interviewed an Investigator with **Assess Honesty** skill will realise that they are being reticent in their account of their work at the crossroads. Investigators with **Charm**, **Reassurance** or other suitable interpersonal skills convince them to tell the whole story:

The old wooden signpost was sunk surprisingly deep in the earth. Dennis had to dig down nearly six feet before it could be dislodged. When the two men drew it out, they found the base of the post had been reinforced with metal plates and capped with a sharp metal spike, the point of which was encrusted with thick reddish-brown liquid "*like blood*".



Both men are aware of the history and ghost stories surrounding William Duggan. They've never placed much store in the latter, but they admit to feeling uneasy at having possibly disturbed his grave. They tell the Investigators on removing the old post an eerie silence fell on the crossroads. "*The wind dropped, and the birds stopped calling.*" The two men finished their work as quickly as they could and returned home in a hurry.

Adams and Dennis are at a loss to explain why the old signpost should have fresh blood adhering to it, or why it was driven so deeply into the soil. Investigators with **Geology**, **Medical** or **Biology** skills realise that the corpse and any coffin should have rotted away in the wet clay soil of the Vale decades ago. Investigators with **Folklore**, **Occult** or **History** skills will be aware that suicides were sometimes buried at crossroads with a stake through their heart to stop their spirit wandering and haunting the surrounding area.

Adams chopped the old rotten signpost up and burned most of the pieces on a bonfire. He still has the four-foot-long lower section which being sheathed in iron is harder to get rid of. He did offer it as scrap metal to some local gypsies but they refused it, making the sign of the cross and gestures of warding against the evil eye. If the post is examined the tapered end is found to be encrusted with dried blood.

HUNTING THE VAMPIRE

The investigators have a lot of leeway in tracking down Duggan. Some possible courses of action are detailed below.

- ✿ Investigators may decide to keep a nocturnal watch for the Vampire. A natural location would be Pilsdon Manor. Duggan is fixated on the house, and the Investigators might be able to enlist the help of Sir Henry and his staff. Duggan will attempt to enter the house and feed on Molly White. Having learned his lesson at Cowdea Farm he takes care to avoid Sir Henry's dogs and those on neighbouring farms. Each time he visits the Pilsdon Manor he can be taken to have expended 2 points each from his **Stealth** and **Athletics** pools. If he encounters strong opposition at Pilsdon he will retreat and seek easier prey elsewhere. In the following nights he targets the farms and cottages in the vicinity of Marshwood Manor which may enable the Investigators to get a fix on his lair. He is indiscriminate and opportunistic in his choice of victims and will also attack anyone he finds in the open after dark (see **Optional Scene – The Poacher** below).

- ✿ Investigators mounting a night-time mobile patrol may encounter Duggan if they confine their area of operation to within half a mile of Marshwood Manor. Duggan will make use of the lanes, footpaths and bridleways but faces similar problems to the investigators in respect to the ground conditions.
- ✿ Whether the Investigators are static or mobile they can be construed as mounting a **Vigil** as detailed on p154 of **CASTING THE RUNES**. Spotting Duggan creeping through the countryside can be treated as a contest pitting the Investigators' **Sense Trouble** (or **Fieldcraft** if the GM allows the use of investigative abilities in contests) against the Vampire's **Stealth** (Difficulty: 4). If Duggan is sighted the **Vigil** segues into a **Stalk**, and/or a **Chase**, again as detailed in **CASTING THE RUNES**. Success on the Investigators' part allows them to track Duggan back to his lair in the ruins of Marshwood Manor.

OPTIONAL SCENE: THE POACHER

If the Investigators' enquiries make slow progress, this scene can be included to provide some additional clues and to impress on them that Duggan is a highly active and dangerous threat.

In the morning word reaches the Investigators via Doctor Latham that a body has been found on the track between the hamlets of Bettiscombe and Pilsdon. If they accompany the doctor to the scene, they find Dorset constabulary in attendance in the shape of Sergeant Rawlens and Constable Wade from Bridport police station. While the police are happy for Dr Latham to look at the body, they are less keen on giving the Investigators. Use of **Criminology**, **Reassurance** or **Charm** skills are needed to convince them that the Investigators are suitably qualified to examine the body.

Sergeant Rawlens volunteers that the dead man is Joseph Sibley, a local poacher and occasional odd-job man. "*Ol' Joe's a bit of a rogue, but no harm in 'im really.*" The Investigators may have previously encountered Sibley as the result of an 'Interruption' during a previous **Vigil** or **Stalk** in which case they found him furtive, unwilling to answer questions but not overtly hostile.

Sibley's body was discovered just after 5.30am this morning by Frank Meech, of Lower House Farm who was on his way to collect his cows for milking from the fields adjoining the lane.

Sibley's body is lying on its back on the ground, a leather bag beside him contains a trio of dead rabbits, collected from snares set in the area. A bloodstained knife is clutched in Sibley's hand, indicating he fought with, and

may have injured, his attacker. The dead man's skin is very pale and the front of his coat is bloody, although not excessively so.

Doctor Latham will examine the body in situ as best he can. He will point out a wound in Sibley's neck similar to ones displayed by Michael Bartlett, James Sansom and Molly White. There is also bruising and scratches on Sibley's face. Latham is of the view that Sibley was savagely attacked by an assailant of great strength. This will be confirmed when the body is more thoroughly examined on removal to Bridport General Hospital. The body exhibits extensive bruising on the torso, and the cause of death was shock and loss of blood. Investigators with **Medicine** or **Forensic** skills will be able to determine the cause of death in situ and confirm Dr Latham's view that the murderer was unusually strong.

If questioned Frank Meech will say that he heard nothing the previous night. However, the night before he woke up in the small hours, after hearing a commotion from the cows in the nearest field to the farmhouse. When he looked out of the window, he saw a dark figure moving along the track that goes past the farm in the direction of Bettiscombe. *"I called out to 'un, asking what he was up to, but he ignored me and kept on runnin' - not runnin' exactly, sort of lopin' along he was - goin; at a fair old clip anyway."* Meech is unable to further describe the figure. **Reassurance** or **Charm** causes him to comment, half-seriously, that *"maybe there's somethin' in those ghost stories about Duggan after all."*

Fieldcraft or **Evidence Collection** discovers footprints in the mud of the track. Whoever made them was barefoot and with long toenails almost like claws. The prints can be followed in both east and west directions. If followed west they give out on reaching the lane at Bettiscombe. Eastwards they stop where the track meets a footpath a couple of fields west of Pilsdon Manor (Duggan travels across the fields to the house, footprints in the grass can be found with a 1-point skill spend).

THE VAMPIRE'S LAIR

Duggan has made his lair in the ruins of Marshwood Manor where he ended his life two hundred years ago. Although the building was partially demolished and then left derelict, its cellars remain largely intact. Duggan rests in the former wine cellar during the day, emerging only at night to hunt. Investigators visiting the site of the old manor find dilapidated outbuildings surrounding the ruins of the house, Investigators with **Fieldcraft** or **Sense Trouble** skills notice that the area is unnaturally still and quiet, in particular there are no sounds of bird calls.

Investigators with **Architecture** or **Evidence Collection** skills discover the cellar entrance near the site of the house's kitchen, covered over with an old stone slab prised up from the patio. Lifting the slab requires an **Athletics** roll (Difficulty: 5) and reveals stone steps leading down into the cellars beneath the ruins.

Duggan does not require a coffin in which to sleep and if discovered in his lair during the day will be found slumped on a pile of straw and old sacks, his eyes open staring glassily at the far wall. Investigators approaching him must succeed in a **Stealth** (Difficulty: 5) roll to avoid waking him. As little direct sunlight penetrates down to the cellar Duggan won't be inhibited from attacking the Investigators if woken during the daytime.

If Duggan becomes aware that the Investigators have discovered his lair e.g. he sees them keeping vigil at the site, or they render it uninhabitable he seeks alternative shelter. His first choice will be the old brickworks next to Marshwood Cross but failing that he will resort to isolated barns, cattle sheds or any derelict building he can find.

VANQUISHING THE VAMPIRE

Duggan's reign of terror only ends when he is killed. If beheaded or burned his spirit emerges briefly above his body as a kind of transparent afterimage before dissipating in the air. His victims begin to recover their health from this point.

AFTERMATH

VAMPIRE CURSE

Although the Investigators have dispatched Duggan their victory may not have been without loss. Duggan wreaks further vengeance from beyond the grave by causing one of his dead victims to rise again as a vampire. Molly White or Joe Sibley would be the obvious candidates. Shortly after returning home from Dorset, the Investigators are again contacted by Dr Latham with news of another anaemia outbreak in the Vale. This new vampire is a spreader – eager to create more of its kind, and the Investigators could find themselves facing a small army of the creatures.

SCREAMING SKULL

Nearby Bettiscombe Manor has gained some notoriety for having on display the skull of an 18th-century slave, originally from Africa or the West Indies. Legend has it

that if moved from the house the skull starts up an unbearable screaming until returned to its original setting. Its placement in the house was originally done as a way of making amends to the dead slave after his master broke a promise to the dying man to have him buried in his home soil and had him interred in the local churchyard instead. The subsequent infernal screaming from the burial plot only ceased when the man's skull was removed and given a prominent place on display at the old manor which seemed to placate the dead slave's undead spirit.

In actuality, the skull is that of a woman and is 3000 to 4000 years old. Thus it may house a female spirit of incredible antiquity, or possibly the spirit of the former slave that entered the skull on his death. In either case, it is suggested that the skull is treated as a **Ghost** per p91 of **CASTING THE RUNES**, manifesting via 'Sudden unearthly scream.' If the ghost is female its age confers on it a sizeable **Health Points** pool which makes any attempt at banishment extremely difficult.

Alternatively, the legend of the screaming skull is a hoax, invented by a member of the house owner's family for their own amusement in the late 1890s. Accounts of it prior to that date are mysteriously absent.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

WILLIAM DUGGAN Risen Vampire Bailiff

Duggan's appearance is particularly horrific even for a Vampire. The lower right side of his face is just a gaping bloody wound. The ball from the pistol which he used to kill himself travelled through his lower and upper jaw, smashing the right side of his face and dislodging several teeth on that side including the upper canine. Duggan can only feed with his remaining left upper canine which leaves a singular bite pattern on his victims.

Although a feral creature largely motivated by bloodlust Duggan retains enough memory of his past life to feel a bitter (if unjustified) resentment towards the Manville family. After satiating his initial thirst by visiting Michael Bartlett, he found himself drawn towards Marshwood Manor. He will make repeated visits to the house either seeking out one of his former victims (Sansom or White) or attacking anyone else on the premises who appears vulnerable. If the Investigators have mounted a defence of the Manor sufficient to deter him or drive him away, then he will target the farms and cottages nearest to his lair.

In combat, Duggan fights ferociously, and if injured will be raised to a bestial fury which causes him to attack all the more violently. He drinks the blood of any vanquished opponents.

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ABILITIES: Athletics 14, Health 14, Scuffling 14, Weapons 8, plus Fieldcraft 4, Intimidation 4, Firearms 2. Stealth 4, Shadowing 4.

HIT THRESHOLD: 4 **STEALTH MODIFIER:** -1

ARMOUR: 0 (but invulnerable to mundane weapons)

STABILITY LOSS: +1 (for hideous appearance rather than transformation)

ATTACK: -2 (bite), +1 (sharp fingernails)

Duggan has the vampiric abilities and vulnerabilities described in the **CASTING THE RUNES** rulebook, except:

- a) He is unable to transform into a wolf or bat or a cloud of mist.
- b) He does not require an invitation to enter a building. His preference is to attract an occupant's attention and use his mesmerism power to force them to quietly give him entry. If this should fail, he is perfectly capable of smashing his way in.
- c) He has no powers of animal control.

DR ROBERT LATHAM Concerned country doctor

ABILITIES: Assess Honesty 1, Bookkeeping 1, First Aid 3, Forensics 1, Languages (Latin) 2, Medicine 4, Pharmacy 2, Reassurance 2, Health 6

SIR HENRY MANVILLE Amiable local squire

ABILITIES: Charm 2, Fieldcraft 3, Law 2, Health 6, Riding 6, Scuffling 3, Firearms 6

SERGEANT TOM RAWLENS Stolid Bridport copper

ABILITIES: Criminology 2, Law 2, Assess Honesty 2, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 3, Health 8, Scuffling 4, Weapons 5 (Police Truncheon -1 damage)

CONSTABLE SAMUEL WADE Young Bridport copper

ABILITIES: Criminology 1, Law 2, Assess Honesty 1, Interrogation 1, Intimidation 2, Health 7, Scuffling 4, Weapons 5 (Police Truncheon -1 damage)

CHRONOLOGY

The timeline below is intended to assist the GM in answering questions from the Investigators about when the vampire's attacks took place as well as giving an indication of Duggan's next moves. Depending on how quickly they move themselves the Investigators can be taken as arriving late on Day 5, otherwise some time on Day 6.

- ☛ **Day 1** – The sign at Marshwood Cross is replaced. Duggan is freed from his coffin as a vampire. Once night has fallen visits Michael Bartlett at Cowdea Farm and drinks his blood.
- ☛ **Day 2** – Duggan visits Bartlett again.
- ☛ **Day 3** – Dr Latham was called to Cowdea Farm by Bartlett's sister. Duggan visits Marshwood Manor and takes blood from James Sansom in the stable yard.
- ☛ **Day 4** – Dr Latham called to Marshwood Manor to examine James Sansom. Duggan returns to the Manor and obtains entry into the servant's apartments where he takes blood from Molly White.
- ☛ **Day 5** – Dr Latham again called to Marshwood Manor, to examine Molly White and James Sansom. Having now examined three of the vampire's victims Latham realises a pattern is developing and contacts

the Investigators to request their help. At night Duggan re-visits Molly White.

- ☛ **Day 6** – Investigators have an entire day to make enquiries. Duggan attempts to enter Marshwood Manor again. If successful he drains Molly White of blood, killing her.
- ☛ **Day 7** – Duggan continues his attacks on a nightly basis until killed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The real-life legend of the Dorset Vampire:
<https://www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk/featured-sites/eastbury-house/>

Crossroads Burials:

<https://oddlyhistorical.wordpress.com/2015/09/27/crossroads-suicide-burials/>

Marshwood Vale: <https://dorset-nl.org.uk/resource/marshwood-vale/> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshwood_Vale

Locating the scenario in Marshwood Vale was largely prompted by Paul Theroux's atmospheric, if rather sinister, novel **The Black House** which is set in the region.

The idea of staking a vampire using a signpost came from Stephen Laws' novel **The Wyrn**.

The details of Duggan's sleeping state inspired by the film **Vampyres** (1974, Dir: José Ramón Larraz)

Playtesters: Andrew Gill, Jon Price, Jessica Rickardsson.

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