

# The Shadow over Sidmouth

*A Call of Cthulhu adventure for a small group of investigators  
by RA Davey and Steve Hatherley*

It is spring. One of the players notices the following newspaper article:

## The Sidmouth Papers #1

### SLAUGHTER CONTINUES

For the second week the slaughter of lambs in the Sidmouth area continues.

Last weekend farmer Alfred Harris shot and killed a wild dog and it was hoped that this would be the end of the deaths. However, apart from a fall in the number of lambs found dead, the slaughter persists.

The search is on for a further wild dog in the area. And reports suggest that there may even be a pack of dogs responsible for the recent spate of killings.

## The Story so Far

Mr and Mrs Green are an elderly, and slightly eccentric couple that run a garden shop in Sidmouth specialising in shrubs and plants. About six months ago they received from their nephew five, fist sized, blood red seeds from Darkest Africa. The couple planted the seeds and they quickly grew. It soon became apparent that these

unusual and so far unrecognisable plants were not happy in the light, so the elderly couple moved them to the dark, damp fern section where the plants have continued to thrive ever since.

The plants, with their thick, hairy trunks and slender branches caused slight interest for their smell was most unpleasant. Only one was sold. Then, just two weeks ago, two were stolen – just before the horrific slayings of local livestock began.

The plants are, of course, Very Young Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. The two missing plants weren't stolen – they simply matured enough to become mobile.

## Getting the Players Involved

There are several ways of doing this; in desperation one of the farmers could hire the investigators; a reporter might sense a story, as might an author; the investigators may be visiting a relative in Sidmouth or their interests may be simply aroused by the above article.

**Sidmouth:** A quiet, peaceful town on the coast of Devon. Sidmouth nestles between several hills and enjoys an unusually mild climate. This, combining with the beautiful surrounding countryside has made it a very popular place to retire

to and over 70% of the inhabitants of the area are elderly. A considerable proportion of these old people are eccentric!

## The Thing in the Woods

**The Lurking Horror:** This is the Dark Young that has made the headlines. There were two of them but shortly before the farmers shot the first wild dog, the other moved out.

The Thing in the Woods lives upon Salcombe Hill and hides during the daytime, virtually undetectable. At night it stalks out from its lair and slays a lamb or two, that it finds, leaving behind only a charred, perforated skin. The farmers have taken to protecting their flocks but the Thing is sly and very patient.

**Halting the Terror:** The police are undermanned and unable to cope, so it is left to the farmers to deal with the local menace. Traps have been set, but each time they are discovered torn apart. The farmers are not willing to stay and keep

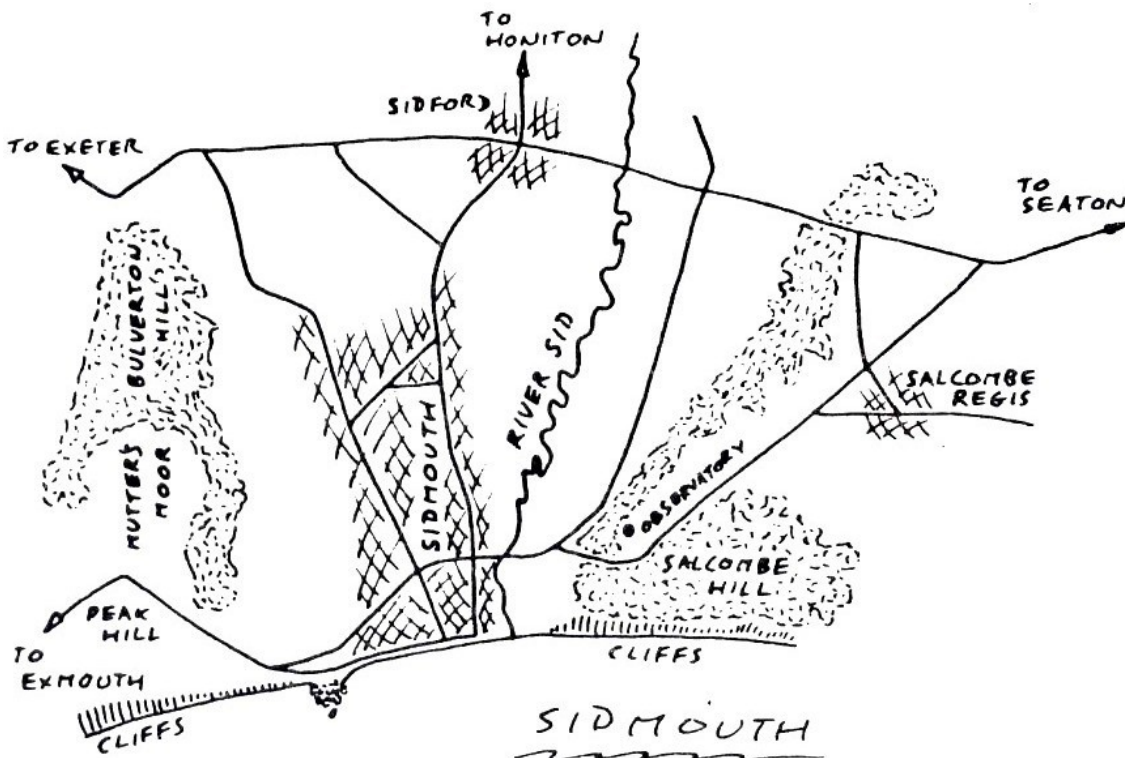
watch over the traps; the woods are unnatural enough by day, at night they seem positively terrifying.

A successful Zoology or Spot Hidden roll, whilst walking in the woods will reveal a total absence of large animal lifeforms (rabbits, badgers, foxes, etc.). The only noticeable tracks are the large cloven prints that the Thing has left, though the tracks never form a traceable path. No animals will enter the woods at all.

The farmers are scared and disorganised. With some leadership and initiative this Dark Young can be fairly easily killed.

## The Grapevine

Gossip in Sidmouth is one of the main industries, it is not hard for any-one to discover the local news and rumours – overhearing talk in shops, even some old dear tailing the investigators herself (she's far too senile to notice that the investigators are "newcomers"). While the group are dealing with The Thing in the



Woods they should hear that two of the Greens' plants were recently stolen – “the bad smelling ones”.

Failing this lead there will be a small article in the Sidmouth Herald, the local newspaper published on a Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Green: A nice, slightly odd, elderly couple. They will gladly show the investigators around their shop and answer any questions concerning the stolen plants. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll identifies these plants as very young Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath! A successful Idea or Spot Hidden and the investigators notice that three of the five Dark Young are missing. The last one was bought – The Greens have records in the shop to trace who purchased the Thing.

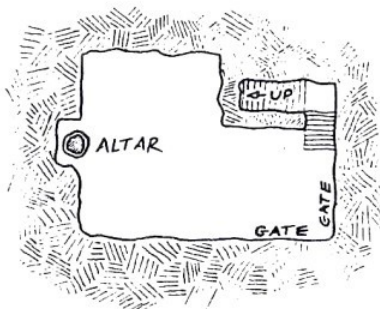
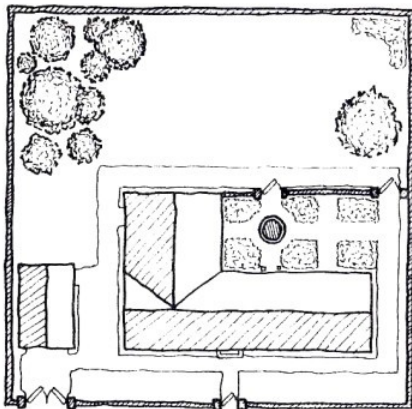
**Pruning:** The simplest way to dispose of the Dark Young is to actually buy the

Things (at £1 a time) and destroy them at the investigators leisure. If the investigators decide to break into the shop at night, mention the large canister of weed-killer that stands atop one of the shelves close to the plants – not that it will have any effect on the Dark Young.

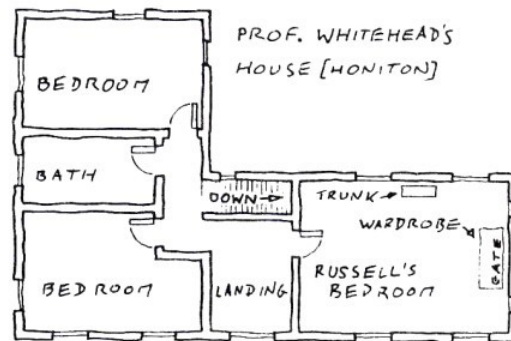
Mrs. Green sleeps lightly (the Greens live above the shop) so be sure that the investigators make their Sneak rolls. The Greens are on the telephone as are the police.

### The Disappearing Cats

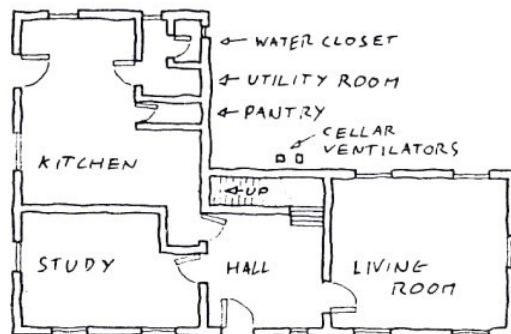
**Cat food:** Mrs. Edna Wheeler owns a rambling mansion halfway up Salcombe Hill. About a week ago the second Dark Young wandered into her home from the woods (this is when the killings of local livestock dropped some 50%). Mrs. Wheeler has, literally, dozens of cats, so



CELLAR



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

the Dark Young planted itself and began to feed. Only recently has she noticed the sudden decline in the number of her pets. She had thought that the putrid charred remains were leftovers of rodents that the cats had caught. Now the awful truth has dawned.

The police found nothing unusual (there was a rotting smell in one of the plant infested rooms in the house, but this odour was attributed to that of the cats). They offered advice, setting traps and the like, but the cats kept setting them off. Mrs. Wheeler is now alone in the mansion with her cats, but keeps an eye out for any wild dogs etc. The cats are noticeably discontent, but haven't left the house.

**Saving the Day:** The news about Mrs. Wheeler and her disappearing cats is now local gossip. If the players fail to pick this clue up, perhaps the newspaper article linking the cats and the livestock disappearance will alert them. The players should be prepared for this one, now knowing what to expect. This Dark Young should easily be slain, earning the eternal gratification of Mrs. Wheeler, for all that's worth.

## **Last of the Monsters**

**The Sale:** The third Dark Young was sold to Mr. Russell Whitehead, professor of mathematics at Exeter University. He lives alone in a large house on the outskirts of Honiton, a small town 8 miles from Sidmouth, and catches the train to Exeter each morning. Dr. Whitehead is a sorcerer who worships Yog-Sothoth, he spotted the Dark Young in Sidmouth and brought one. It now lives in his house where it is regularly fed with live meat.

Dr. Whitehead is a friendly and popular man, well known and respected – a “pillar of the community.” The fact that he practices magic and is a member of the widely spread cult entitled The Order of the Seven Stones is his secret. He keeps the Dark Young in his house basement, which is bricked and inaccessible except through the Gate hidden in the back of the wardrobe. He has moved his sorcerer's equipment out of the basement and into a locked trunk. The Dark Young is alone apart from a large granite font. Six men could just lift it – overcome its SIZ of 80 with combined STR.

When the font is filled with an even mixture of blood and a flammable liquid and set alight, the spell for Call Yog-Sothoth may be read aloud and then if successful the image of the Great Old One will appear in the whirling smoke.

The font may also be used to contact other members of the Order. The blood necessary for the summoning is delivered regularly to his doorstep, once a week by a member of the Order of the Seven Stones, during the early hours of the morning. Watching the house may reveal these deliveries.

**The Trunk:** Kept in Whitehead's bedroom, this old wooden trunk contains various items of magical significance. There are several sets of robes for wear during the summoning of Yog-Sothoth; the Pnakotic Manuscripts (containing Call of Yog-Sothoth, Brew Space Mead, Dread Curse of Azathoth); a diary including notes on how to operate the Gates and information pointing to a Deep Colony off of Sidmouth (actually this information

is incorrect, the colony lies off of Exmouth!)

The last item is a carefully wrapped, rune inscribed sacrificial sword. If under threat, by investigators using violence or if the professor believes he may get away with the crime, Dr. Whitehead may use the sword to murder the investigators.

**The Man Himself:** Dr. Whitehead, professor at Exeter University and Sorcerer. Age 48.

STR 13 CON 13 SIZ 9 INT 15 POW 20  
DEX 14 APP 16 EDU 17 SAN 20 HP 10  
Damage Bonus: None

Weapons: Butcher Knife 50% 1D6. Sword (in trunk) 50% 1D8.

Skills: Bargain 40% Chemistry 30% Credit Rating 50% Cthulhu Mythos 45% Debate 70% Drive Auto 30% Electrical Repair 30% Fast Talk 80% Law 50% Library Use 55% Oratory 65% Psychology 30%.

Spells: Call Yog-Sothoth, Summon/Bind Byakhee, Brew Space Mead, Create Gate, Enchant Whistle, Dread Curse of Azathoth, Fist of Yog-Sothoth.

He has read the University's copy of The Sussex Manuscripts containing Summon/Bind Byakhee and Enchant Whistle. (The book is held in the rare books section). He sometimes casts Call Yog-Sothoth within a large stone tower many miles away which he sometimes travels to using the Gate spell.

**Note:** Dr. Whitehead is a popular figure – killing him overtly will not aid the investigators in any way. If the party

manage to escape following any conflict between the investigators and Whitehead, the wrath of The Order of the Seven Stones may still befall them...

## **The Monsters**

### **The Thing in the Woods**

STR 21 CON 12 SIZ 12 INT 6

POW 8 DEX 13 HP 12 Move 8

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapon: Tentacle 50% 1d6+STR drain.

Armour: None.

San loss: 0/1D6.

### **The Thing Eating the Cats**

STR 20 CON 15 SIZ 11 INT 7

POW 10 DEX 14 HP 13 Move 8

Damage Bonus: None.

Weapon: Tentacle 50% 1d6+STR drain.

Armour: None.

San loss: 0/ 1D6.

### **The Thing in the Basement**

STR 28 CON 17 SIZ 20 INT 10

POW 13 DEX 14 HP 18 Move 8

Damage Bonus: +1D6.

Weapon: Tentacle 65% 1d6+STR drain.

Armour: 3 points of thick bark-like hide.

San loss: 1D3/1D8.

## Keeper's Notes

**Aftermath:** Further adventures and investigations readily spring to mind. Another Dark Young somewhere perhaps? What is the dread wrath of The Order of the Seven Stones? Where are the hideous Deep Ones? What will be Mrs. Wheelers "gratification"? Precisely what what blasphemous rites are needed to create the seeds, and how did Nephew Green find them? And, perhaps more horribly than all, someone, somewhere may have created the Bonsai Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath...

P.S. The co-ords of the tower (roughly) are Longitude 3° 13' 40" W, Latitude 50° 52' 35" N. But don't go there at night...

## Final Notes

(This scenario originally appeared in *Dagon* magazine, Issue 10, 1987.)

Steve Hatherley is also the creator of **Tales of Terror**, a collection of adventure seeds for *Call of Cthulhu* and other roleplaying games. For more details visit [www.talesofterror.net](http://www.talesofterror.net)

Maps by RA Davey