

The Lake Of Mist

A Call of Cthulhu scenario for keepers who want to get their own back...!

By Steve Hatherley, from the 'Adventurer' #10, pp 45-49. **Rewritten and reformatted as a PDF by Zenobia.**

Keeper's Background

This is a parasitic adventure; it requires a host to function properly. While the players are investigating some other Cthulhu Mythos sighting, slowly introduce the handouts enclosed. Bit by bit the players will (mistakenly) realise that something is afoot and go in person to investigate The Lake of Mist.

The Keeper should not force this situation on the players, let them make up their own minds to investigate the Lake. There is nothing but madness at the end of the scenario so the players should feel that they chose to investigate. That way they can only blame themselves.

The setting is Bodmin Moor, a particularly bleak and windswept part of Cornwall. Bodmin Moor is, like so much of Britain, rich in folklore and legend.

Handout 1:

Bodmin Moor

The most famous of all the Bodmin Moor legends is that surrounding Dozmary Pool. Like Tintagel on the northern coastline, Dozmary Pool (near the almost mythical Jamaica Inn) has a strong Arthurian connection. It is widely believed that King Arthur's famous sword 'Excalibur' was committed to these silent, brooding waters. Indeed, the sword has been known to reappear from time to time. The pool is also known to be haunted by the ghost of John Tregeagle who, on stormy nights, is pursued across the moor by a pack of howling demons.

There is a second lake on Bodmin Moor, one that is barely known. I have been able to find very little on this lake, except that a demon is said to be buried beneath it. The lake lies in a shunned part of the moor and it is widely believed that to enter its swirling mists brings madness.

The Moor has its own share of stone circles, too. The Hurlers, a group of three stone circles on the eastern side, are the most famous. They are said to be men turned to stone for playing the Cornish game of Hurling on a Sunday. There are about thirty or forty stones, but no one knows for sure. Less famous are the Trippet Stones which lie beyond St Breward. Local superstition has it that by walking round the circle nine times brings good luck.

On top of these, each village on Bodmin Moor has its own favourite ghost or demon to haunt it. The south western peoples are a superstitious group - more so than any other even in this enlightened age and their heritage dates back thousands of years. Bodmin Moor has a timeless quality about it that enables the casual visitor to catch just a glimpse of the past, and understand the centuries of myth and superstition which govern this strange land.

Taken from:- Myths and Legends in Cornwall, by G. Hall. Publ. 1921.

Keeper's note: Most of the above is verifiable from other sources. It should be discounted by investigators as worthless nonsense. The second lake is not mentioned anywhere except in the next cutting. It seems to have vague Cthulhu Mythos connections to which the players should be drawn.

Handout 2:

The ghost which haunts an unnamed lake near the tiny village of Garrow on Bodmin Moor is a particularly unpleasant one. The lake, known to the locals as Devil's Pool can only be reached by walking a long and tortuous path from St. Breward first to Garrow and then to the lake beyond. The lake is only around 200 yards long and is perpetually covered in fine swirling mists.

It was during the sixteenth century that a local girl was tried and found guilty of witchcraft. She lived by the lake and supposedly conversed with the "Great Daemon trapped beneath." She lies in an unmarked grave in a lonely part of the churchyard.

Not long after her burial, a series of bizarre deaths shook the tiny village. All those who persecuted the girl died a horrible death, their bodies covered in "hideous sucking wounds that never healed."

The lake is now shunned and the locals believe that walking the lakeside at night brings the devil's curse.

Taken from:- Cornwall Ghosts, by Alexander Bardy, publ. 1897.

Keeper's note:

This is the only mention of a young girl or witch. There are 3 unmarked graves in the churchyard, but the villagers know nothing of this legend. The graves entomb unknown persons found on the moor. The name "Devil's Pool" is common in English folklore.

Handout 3:

Another source of insight and power is Devil's Pool at Garrow in the West Country. There is a great source of knowledge hidden beneath this lake, ever mist-shrouded from the breath of its trapped inhabitants. The lake is a mirror, of that I am certain, a mirror to see the Gods with. Devil's Pool is watched over by the Guardians, men, half-men and not-men of ancient and terrible power living in tiny, shadowed Garrow. Do not cross the Guardians.

This quote is believed to come from one of the forbidden books but it is not clear which.

Handout 5:

DATE: 14th.

Garrow is a truly lonely place. Set in a desolate part of the Moor, it seems to attract only odd folk. I haven't seen anyone below 60 years of age here. They are all private people, willing to talk about the world, but strangely reserved when talking about themselves. The only sense that I got out of them about the take, is that I shouldn't go there at night.

I have booked a room at the Inn. It was a long and tiring walk from my car in Middle Candra to this ghastly place. Despite the locals' almost desperate warnings, I shall brave the twilight and see the Cake at its best. This could be some really useful information for my book.

My first impressions of the take; It is a short walk from Garrow to the take (I managed to glean from the innkeeper that they call it Devil's Foot) through the gentle mist. In this twilight world, the lake has an almost magical quality about it. Swathed in swirling mists, the surface of the pool - what I can see of it - is as smooth as glass. This is a truly unhallowed ground; diseased, twisted, slime-draped trees; mysterious tracks on the ground; a sense of timelessness; and the swirling mists. I thought I just saw someone beckoning. I must investigate farther, the locals never said anything about anyone living up here.

I found nobody, but a series of footprints leading to the water's edge.

He must have been wearing strange footwear because of the strange, almost clawed, imprint that he made. I have called out, but my voice is swallowed in the mists.

The air is so invigorating here. I feel wonderful.

I can hear voices. Low and guttural, they chant something. The mists part briefly to reveal figures, the villagers, holding aloft burning brands. They begin to circle the lake. Eerie.

I can hear something. A faint rippling or gurgling, I'm not sure which. The figures pass in the mist, their torches throwing shadows all around me. There is a truly loathsome stench wafting from the take. I can see something vast in the mist.

They are not human! The guardians - they are not human! One of the strange hooded watchers came close and I saw! I ran, but I can hear the sounds of pursuit.

The thing in the mist! It is all true, all of it!

The Guardians!

- This is the last entry in Terrance Greer's diary.

Keeper's Note: Mr. Greer's car was found in Middle Candra next morning, so it can only be assumed that he walked over the moors to his room at Jamaica Inn. This is a trek of maybe a mile and a half, over some very treacherous ground. How he managed to navigate the marshes unaided at night, and in the state that his diary indicates, we shall never know.

Handout 4:

We are saddened to hear of the sudden death of fellow journalist Terrance Greer who was struck dead last weekend while holidaying in his native Cornwall. Mr. Greer was a well respected occultist and member of the Golden Dawn society. He wrote the occasional article in occult journals and had a regular column in this paper.

He was found in his room at Jamaica Inn by friends. He had been researching for a book on haunted lakes and had just visited Garrow.

We shall be reprinting a series of his best articles from past issues of The Scoop.

- The Scoop, May 1923.

Keeper's Note: There is more to this story than meets the eye. By researching further, the players can find out that Mr. Greer was wearing his walking clothes, that he was muddy and had evidently just come off the moors when he died. Worse, upon his face was such a look of terror that it was diagnosed (correctly) that he simply died of fright. Although (it was supposed) that it would take a very great shock to frighten one such great occultist.

Terrance Greer was not an important member of the Golden Dawn. Neither was he the great occultist that The Scoop would have you believe. The Scoop itself is a London tabloid, dedicated to printing lurid stories and blowing them all out of proportion.

Mr. Greer did, however, have a diary on his person when they found him. It is now kept by his only surviving relative, his brother: Ronald Greer.

Handout 6:

Police Search

The Devon and Cornwall Constabulary were called out to find Lucy and Mabel Palmer yesterday. The two girls went missing on Bodmin Moor during a walk with their parents, the police so far, have found no trace of the two girls.

Mr. and Mrs. Palmer and their daughters were staying with relatives in St. Breward on Bodmin Moor, when they decided to go for the walk. Lucy and Mabel, 8 and 10 respectively, strayed too far and have not been seen since.

They were wearing pink and blue, light summer dresses. Residents are keeping a watchful eye for the girls.

- The Western Herald, July 1904

Keeper's Note: The 2 girls were never found. Some of the local constabulary who participated in the search are still on the force. Those that can remember the event recall that they never really expected to find Lucy and Mabel. The moor is too large to cover adequately.

Handout 7:

Walker Found

The man was standing in the yard when he was found. Richard J. Hellicar was found by the farmer, R. Jansen of Roughland Farm early Tuesday morning. Mr. Hellicar appeared to be suffering from shock, or had experienced a great fright. He had evidently been walking the moors.

- The Cornish Gazette, Sept 1909.

Keeper's Note: Mr. Hellicar has not spoken since that fateful night in 1909. He is currently one of the residents at the Sea View Home for the Insane, on the coast outside Port Issac on the North Cornwall coast. Mr. Hellicar responds to absolutely nothing, and has to be hand fed. His family pay for his upkeep. Whenever the sea mist rolls in, Mr. Hellicar begins to scream uncontrollably.

Handout 8:

Accomplished painter, Lawrence Beard, was so taken by Bodmin Moor during his stay a week ago, he has decided to move there. Beard, well known for his portraits of fictional characters, says he will continue his work as soon as he has finished moving. He moves to St. Breward tomorrow.

- London Mercury, September 1919.

Keeper's Note: Mr. Beard as moved to Garrow, not St. Breward as described. During his holiday, he was affected,

only mildly by the Devil's Pool, and decided to move closer. He has dropped out of society completely (including the art's scene), however his works now have a wider audience. His strange twisted images now adorn the walls of the collectors of the macabre.

Handout 9:

MR. JOHN WEBB has passed away. His funeral will be held tomorrow at the Sea View Home for the Insane at Port Isaac. He will be sadly missed.

- The Cornish Gazette - November 1903.

Keeper's Note: John Webb was put in Sea View after similar circumstances to those surrounding Mr. Hellicar, detailed above, Mr. Webb also withdrew into catatonia, and also screamed uncontrollably when the mist rolled in from the sea. Mr. Webb was affected badly by the lake, and had horrific nightmares each night.

Keeper's Notes

Bodmin Moor

Bodmin Moor encompasses little more than 100 square miles. It is an area of solitude, majestic vistas and unrivalled beauty. Of ancient slumbering countryside steeped in history. Its enthusiasts consider it to be the most beautiful place in Britain. Bodmin more (once known more accurately as Fowey Moor) appears in every Cornwall myth and legend: stone circles, granite tors, hut circles, Cheesewring Quarry, Dozmary Pool...

Garrow

Garrow is a tiny village just below Garrow Tor. To reach it, one must travel to St. Breward. From there you head east, onto the moor, then a rough track to Middle Candra (little more than a farm). From here a path leads past some hut circles (believed to be King Arthur's Hall) to Garrow.

Garrow is not on any maps, and consists of nine houses (two uninhabited and derelict), a small church and an inn. The buildings are made from moorland granite and are all small, well built buildings quite capable of standing up to the savage Cornwall weather. There are no cars in Garrow. A couple of villagers have horses and they travel between here and St Breward for supplies, post and news.

There is no-one under the age of sixty living in Garrow. Services are held in the Church on Sundays. The small graveyard is full of Garrow people, all elderly. The exception is three unmarked graves of varying ages. Buried here are strangers that died wandering the moor.

The Inn (The Garrow Tor) has only one small room and isn't geared to cater for guests. It comes alive during the evening, when all seven villagers congregate. It is closed Sundays.

The people of Garrow are private folk. They have all been drawn to Garrow for some reason, most don't know why.

They never go to Devil's Pool, it is too dangerous. Strangers to Garrow are always a cause for concern; they are always interested in the lake, and too much interest in the lake is very bad.

Most locals will avoid the players, the only information they give is not to go anywhere near Devil's Pool, especially at night. Of the seven locals, only three will talk for any length of time to the players : Lawrence Beard, Father McKenzie and John Dawson - owner of the Garrow Tor.

Lawrence Beard

The youngest and newest of Garrow's residents, he still paints. His paintings have turned to the macabre since he moved here. Indeed, the players may be familiar with

some of his works. None of his paintings overtly display anything to do with the Cthulhu Mythos, but tend to hint subliminally at things better unseen.

He welcomes newcomers to his home, and is pleased if they show interest in his (sometimes disturbing) paintings. Garrow is a little cut off so news is always welcome.

He will avoid talking about himself, and will warn the players to stay away from the lake. It is better left undisturbed.

Lawrence believes that something lives in Devil's Pool, and at night has nightmares about something rising from its depths. His paintings sometimes reflect his nightmares.

Father McKenzie

A large genial man, often given to drinking. His profession means that he cannot turn away from the players, but it is clear that he would rather avoid talking about Devil's Pool. He considers himself God's agent, watching over the pool. He is very unlikely to tell the players this, and never goes up to the lake.

The church has records of all those who dies here (they are all buried in the graveyard). The three unmarked graves are recorded as unknown people - evidently people affected by the lake. The rest of the graves are Garrow villagers and the occasional outsider.

John Dawson

Owner of the Garrow Tor, Garrow's one and only inn. He has a rather limited selection of drinks to offer, he only rarely goes into 'town' to restock. The inn has only one tiny room, accommodation just for one. This is the only place that players can spend the night in Garrow - the locals will not offer rooms for the night. Dawson is not a happy man and his pessimism spreads. He will foretell that the players will come to tragedy. He tells the players that they will never leave this place and will end up in one of the unmarked graves. He gets worse when he drinks, but never mentions any names or any specifics about the lake.

The Lake of Mist

The lake is about a mile out of Garrow. There is no track or path. After crossing some potentially dangerous marshy ground, the players can reach it.

Perpetually covered in fine, swirling mists, Devil's Pool is an eerie sight. The lake itself is about 200 yards long, and is supplied at one end by a trickling stream. Stagnant pools surround the lake, giving the area an unwholesome smell. There are no birds or animals. The plants seem twisted and unhealthy, the shrunken trees bare and

draped with slime-like moss. There is an atmosphere of almost tangible evil and malevolence.

There is nothing mysterious or evil about the pool at all. However, Devil's Pool seems to work on people's imagination, they begin to see things that aren't there. The ordinary trees become alive and festering, marks on the ground become footprints, the stagnant air becomes a loathsome stench. It is all imagination. There are no watchers, there is no great Daemon. Fuelled by reports and their imagination, visitors to the lake believe they see the watchers, see the Daemon. This includes the players.

If the lake is eerie and threatening during the day, then it becomes full of the stuff of nightmares during the hours of darkness. For the players, the lake will act as a catalyst for all their worst nightmares to come to haunt them.

Staying and watching brings terror and madness. The players have enough warnings. If, after the reports of so many people going insane, they still go up to Devil's Pool at night, then they deserve all they get

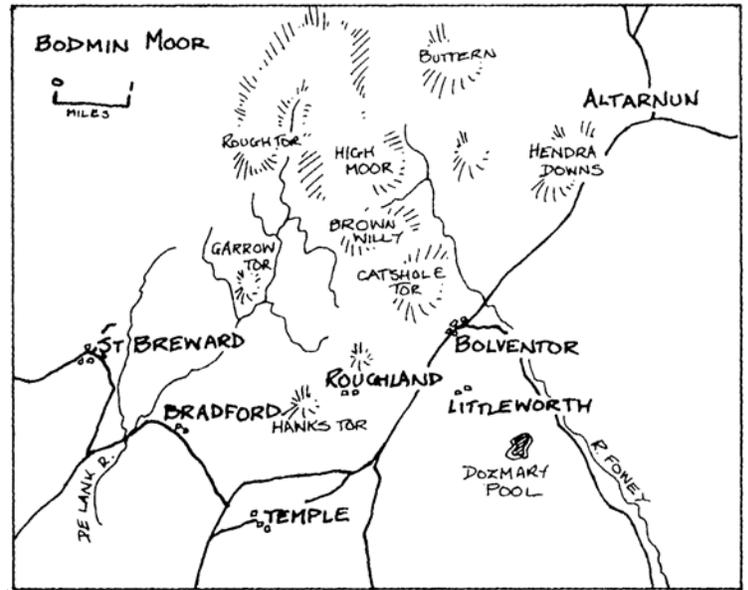
What the players actually see, depends on their previous exploits. It also depends on their expectations. If they have been dealing unsuccessfully with Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath in the past, then one (or more) will come plodding out from the darkness, if they expect in-human guardians, give them in-human guardians. If they expect a great Daemon beneath the waters, then let Mighty Cthulhu heave his greasy bulk out from beneath Devil's Pool.

Give the players what they expect, and make it worse. Human sacrifices, disgusting rituals. People they know are dead, loved ones being disemboweled... No limits.

If the players are so foolish as to fall asleep, then the Keeper can really go to town. While they may be shocked and maddened by what they see whilst awake, at least it is all mental damage. The players are never in any physical danger (although they should not realise it).

While asleep, however, such assurances are gone. The players become the sacrifices, become the disemboweled. Horrific things happen to them time and time again. Let them wake up, think it was a dream, then do it all again. No limits at all...

Should any players survive, they will be haunted by the memories forever. There really is no way to defeat the lake, but then there isn't anything to defeat. The best way of escaping the madness is not to go there. But then, the players were amply warned...



Appendix

The Legend of Dozmary Pool

This pool on the Cornish moor, said to be bottomless, is haunted by the spirit of Tregeagle, a man of position and wealth. Having sold himself to the Devil in exchange for a life of unbridled excesses and crime, "he marked each day with some damned deed." Now he pays for his bargain, by day in the agonies of impossible tasks, and by night, with dreadful howls and roars, fleeing through the night-storms before his Master's hell-hound pack.

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