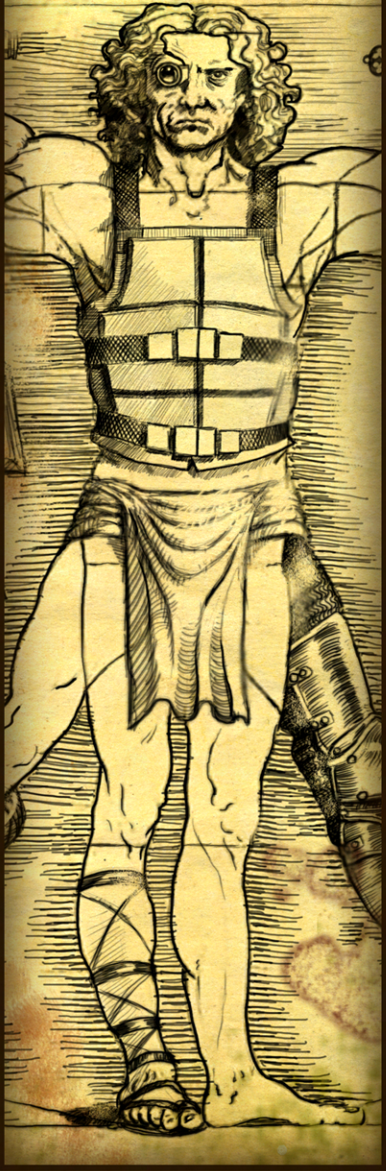


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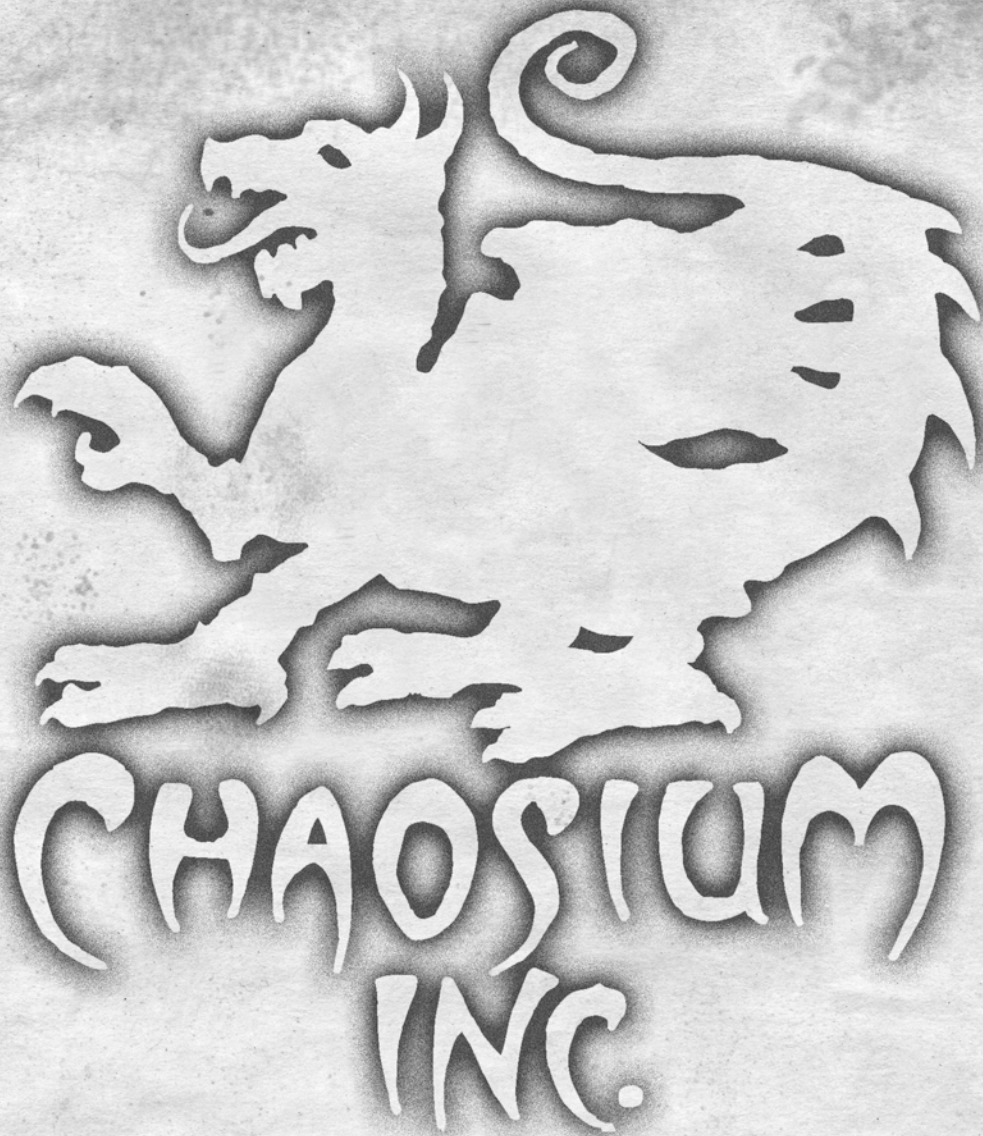
AGENTS OF THE CROWN

Super-Agents in Victorian England serving Queen and Country



VICTORIAN SUPERHERO ADVENTURE
FOR BASIC ROLEPLAYING






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Agents of the Crown

by
Scott Pyle





Agents of the Crown

Agents of the Crown! Victorian Superhero Adventure for Basic Roleplaying: The Chaosium Roleplaying System

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Agents of the Crown! Victorian†Superhero Adventure for Basic Roleplaying:
The Chaosium Roleplaying System

Introduction

Agents of the Crown (AotC) combines Victorian heroic action in the tradition of pulp stories, comic books, and the Penny Dreadfuls of the 19th century with the solid play and tremendous versatility of the Basic Roleplaying (BRP) system. AotC allows players to take the roles of super-agents in Victorian England serving Queen and Country combating evil in a myriad of forms. Whether foiling assassination attempts against the country's Royals or members of Parliament, or rooting out vile cult activity amidst the sweat and squalor of London's Bainbridge Rookery, the operatives of her Royal Majesty Queen Victoria know the truth. Evil is out there.

Its minions are legion. They inhabit the edges of England's vast, world-spanning empire, corrupting, waiting for their chance to sew chaos and disorder. And so the Agents of the Crown must face these threats as they come. Their lives are sometimes lost in the cause, but never given cheaply. Indeed, the Agents possess powers and skills beyond the average man or woman's. Whether by accident of birth, or from the borne of the world's brave new sciences, they are often more than human. Yet still it is their courage that most sets them apart from ordinary citizens, for they must endure hardships that run the gamut of human experience and beyond. One day it might be a terrible threat from beyond space and time, while the next it might be an all too human killer who stalks the innocent along rain-slicked cobblestone streets.





About the Victorian Era

The Victorian era of English history spanned the years 1837 - 1901, and began with Queen Victoria's accession to the throne on June 20, 1837, at the age of 18. Born on May 24, 1819, in Kensington Palace, London, Victoria was the daughter of Victoria Mary Louisa (1786–1861), daughter of the duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Her father, Edward Augustus (1767–1820), was duke of Kent and Strathern, and boasted an impressive lineage himself, as the fourth son of George III and youngest brother of George IV and William IV, kings of Great Britain. In 1840 Victoria married her first cousin, Albert, prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. This marriage of state soon blossomed into one of romance as the two fell deeply in love. Queen Victoria and HRH Prince Albert presided over a period of incredible progress and prosperity for England and the British Empire. The Empire's holdings abroad produced conditions for the development of a large middle class, although extreme poverty and cruelty still held sway among the lower classes. Along with great leaps in the economic conditions came advances in technology with the onset of the Industrial Revolution. Fashions and attitudes also began to change, with writers like Charles Dickens and many social reformers calling for better conditions for the working poor. The worlds of science, religion, and philosophy collided in 1859 when Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species*, a treatise on the theory of evolution. While citizens of the British Empire wrestled at home with issues of humanity's place in the nature of things, their armies fought wars abroad to maintain the sovereignty of a nation on whom the sun never set.

Amidst all of this chaos and upheaval step the aether-men. This monograph provides players an opportunity to explore what might happen if a race of super-men arose in the Victorian world. Would they be greeted as heroes, treated as the next phase in mankind's evolution, or seen as a threat to status quo by those in power? In AotC the government of Great Britain has chosen to use these super-humans as weapons to guard the security of the Empire. Some (the player characters) have chosen to accept this role, while others have rejected it and chosen to make their own way. Still others have become threats to the Empire, working with her greatest enemies to engineer her destruction.





Chapter I.

The Origins of Agents

Players and GM's will learn how to conceive and create their Agents using the options available in the Basic Roleplaying rulebook and the additional guidelines included in this monograph. Players will make decisions based upon the campaign's style, power level, and tone. This chapter also contains five ready-made Agents so players can jump right into the action.

A Note for Veteran Superhero Gamers

For players with a lot of past super-hero RPG experience AotC would be considered a low-powered take on the genre. Super-humans can do amazing things and help to change the course of history, but they cannot move planets, raze whole city blocks with an eye-blink, or any other godlike act one might associate with mainstream comic books. Super-humans, or aether-men as they will come to be called in this monograph, have changed the Victorian world and made themselves critical resources in the Great Game, but they are not akin to gods, or even demi-gods.

The Origin of Powers

When Halley's Comet passed close to the Earth in 1835 it was an event predicted and expected by a handful of noted sky-watchers around the world. It also represented a moment of cosmic significance to a number of weird cults operating in hiding in various far-flung corners of the world. One of those corners happened to be a dingy tenement in London's Bainbridge Rookery, home to the Cult of Dagon Rising. These servants of Dagon saw Halley's Comet as the harbinger of their god's imminent return, and attempted to siphon aetheric energy from the comet's passing to sunder the barrier between his realm and that of the normal world.

Excerpts from the writings of Dr. James Ridell,
Professor of Philosophy and Physics
Late of Oxford University
Missing since 1st June, 1849

The Nature of Aetheric Energy

The mystical or metaphysical force which binds and holds the world is Aetheric Energy. This strange force may take many forms, and has proven almost impossible to measure or define using modern Western methods of science and mathematics. According to some experts in the field of the meta-physical sciences, we live in an aetheric universe under extremely high aetheric pressures and what we call celestial bodies are produced by rotating cyclonic whorls in the aether. These whorls provide gateways into other aetheric universes where some speculate that ancient entities of unknown origin dwell.

It is conceivable that one can puncture a small "pin-hole" into the fabric of space near one of these whorls, thus accessing one of these other universes. Given the proper scientific or mystical apparatus, one could drain a small amount of aetheric energy from the target universe, communicate with its inhabitants, or further rend the "pin-hole" into a larger gateway and "invite" some inhabitant through. Although many of my more staid colleagues would reject this notion, the study of aetheric energy and the nature of its relationship to our plane necessitate a weird convergence of science and mysticism.





Just as this ritual reached its climax, the cult's hideout was stormed by a group of investigators hired by a wealthy industrialist with an interest in stamping out the activities of occult groups in London. The industrialist's name was Lord Harry Salisbury, and little did he know that the interference of his hirelings would set in motion events that would change the face of England and the world. With the ritual disrupted, and violence erupting all around them, the combatants barely noticed the growing cloud of aetheric energy gathering near the ceiling of the little room. In minutes the energy interacted with the powerful negative emanations generated by the savage combat in the tenement, causing it to grow more quickly and literally explode from the ramshackle building's windows.

Many of the tenement's occupants were killed by the powerful blast of spiritually charged cosmic energy, but a handful survived, including a number of cultists and investigators who had been at the nexus of the explosion's fury. In the meantime the cloud of aetheric energy began to disperse and spread about the East End of London. Carried by strong early-winter breezes, the molecular particles of aetheric matter that comprised the cloud were breathed in by hundreds of Londoners. Mediums and sensitives from around the world felt the effects of the botched ritual, as mystic barriers were weakened or even sundered in a calamitous chain reaction that caused further pockets of aetheric energy to seep into the material world. These seepage points were scattered in a seemingly random pattern around the world. Wherever they occurred, passersby would breathe the strange aetheric energy in before the clouds could fully disperse on the winds.

Breathing in aetheric energy had a profound effect on the bodies and minds of those humans and animals in close proximity to the clouds. Their body chemistry changed with the exposure, and some of them manifested strange effects, including, but not limited to, weird growths, tumors, blindness, respiratory ailments, and numerous other maladies. A lucky few suffered no ill-effects, and fewer still manifested actual benefits. These individuals began to display strange powers--tremendous strength, the ability to project rays of heat from the hands or eyes, regeneration of destroyed tissue, flight, and even more wondrous effects.

Over the ensuing decades even those individuals who did not demonstrate any special changes from exposure to the cloud of energy passed a supernatural birthright onto their offspring. Some of these children displayed powers similar to those that had manifested on the day of the incident, while others brought completely new abilities to the fore. Although these manifestations were exceedingly rare, they occurred often enough to catch the attention of powerful individuals in both government and the criminal underworld. These manifestations occurred mainly in London, as that had been the nexus of the aetheric cloud, but reports of children manifesting powers were recorded around the world, and the various agencies became interested in the potential value of these *iaether-menî*, as they came to be called by the journalists and scientists who witnessed their rare exploits.

In fact the term *iaether-manî* was first used in 1843 in the *Illustrated London News* in an article entitled *‘The Coming of the Aether-Man.’* The article featured an interview with a man who claimed he could fly, and that he owed his powers to a cloud of aetheric energy he'd been exposed to several years earlier. Accompanied by eyewitness testimony and several artists' renderings of the man literally leaping from the Tower of London and landing safely on the ground, the story became an immediate sensation. At this point the British government had been aware of the existence and nature of such beings, having held several of the transformed Dagon cultists in custody since the incident in 1835. However, discovering the nature of their powers and how to control them was proving difficult.

In 1836 during a secret session, Parliament voted to assign a special investigator to the case of these extraordinary new individuals. MP Quentin Walpole and others thought to use these extraordinary men and women in the service of Queen and country. Walpole and his staff spent a considerable amount of time tracking down the men and women who survived the blast in 1835, and in time would also seek out their children. The cultists they had in custody proved extremely uncooperative, and had to be sedated using opiates for fear they would use their fearsome powers to kill their captors and escape. When the *Illustrated London News* story hit Walpole's people questioned its author and eventually caught up with the flying man.





Percy Shelby had been one of three of Lord Salisbury's investigators to survive the aetheric blast on that fateful day. It didn't take the trio long to realize something strange had happened to them. Flush with aetheric power, they subdued the surviving cultists then fled the scene before authorities arrived. The three agreed to keep their gifts secret for the time being. Listless and without purpose, Shelby eventually turned to drink, and when drunk, lost control of both his ability to keep quiet about his gift of flight, and the ability to stay on the ground! It was he who had appeared in the Illustrated article and flew before so many witnesses near the Tower of London.

Meanwhile England's MPs began to quarrel about how best to use this burgeoning resource. The arguments bogged down in committees and divided the Houses along party lines. It was clear that a mediator was needed.

Prince Albert's Role

Members of Parliament and Royals alike knew that these "aether-men" were a resource that could be harnessed for the good of the Empire. It was HRH the Prince Consort Albert who seized the initiative at the urging of certain government ministers and in 1845 created the Royal Office of the Agents of the Crown, or the AotC as it came to be called by insiders. The popular but understated Albert's intervention broke the Parliament's stalemate and allowed for a neutral, third party to shape the destiny of the Agents.

Classically educated and regarded as a man of action and forward thinking, Prince Albert and his staff convinced a skeptical Queen Victoria that integrating these men (and women) of power into the workings of the British Empire was essential to her continued dominance in world affairs.

By 1845 England was not the only country in the world to report the increasing rise of "aether-men", but most nations seemed intent upon imprisoning them or worse, executing them outright as abominations of nature. Once Queen Victoria fell in behind the plan, Prince Albert sent his personnel on several recruiting drives and brought in a half-dozen aether-men. This first batch included a woman, a man of Chinese descent, and several members of the lower classes. Thus from the beginning the aether-men would represent a true mixture of sex, race, and class, for it was deemed early on that such conventions as racial and gender segregation were to be thrown out the window when dealing with subjects who possessed such wondrous powers.

After a year of recruitment and training the first official members of the Agents of the Crown, or Agents, as they came to be called, were ready for action. Their numbers had swelled to eleven active Agents and ten more undergoing the rigorous training program developed by Albert and his staff. In 1847 a pair of Agents foiled an assassination attempt by Irish separatists on Conservative MP Benjamin Disraeli, a man previously bitterly opposed to the use of aether-men by any arm of the British government. After the agents saved his life, he had a personal meeting with Prince Albert and the two came to mutual understanding on the value of the agents, and more critically, on who should decide how they should be used.





Heretofore Disraeli had argued that if used at all, the agents should not be controlled by the Royals, but rather should be managed as a further branch of England's military and answer directly to Parliament. After his rescue, Albert was able to convince Disraeli that the Agents of the Crown required the most agile leadership possible, one free of the endless debates that often occurred in Parliament. The two did agree that Parliament would appoint an MP to act as a liaison between it and the office of the Agents, just to keep them apprised of their current operations and perhaps more important in the eyes of some, to keep a handle on their somewhat swollen budget.

Prince Albert did not act alone in his administration and development of the AotC. Edward Lamb, son of William Lamb, the former Lord Melbourne who died in 1848, assisted the Prince in putting the office together and managing and recruiting the various aether-men. Lord Melbourne had been Queen Victoria's close confidant and political mentor before her marriage to Albert, and the two remained friends even after. Edward himself showed an unusual talent for finding aether-men, and revealed later to Albert that he himself was one, with his only power being the uncanny ability to track and locate his wondrous brethren. Once brought to the attention of Albert, Edward became an irreplaceable member of his staff at the tender age of only 19, and even succeeded him upon his untimely death in 1861.

As the action of the campaign opens, it is 1875, and Edward Lamb has been in charge of the Agents of the Crown for fourteen years. There are currently more than 300 agents stationed around the world, with more than fifty operating within England proper. No matter where they are stationed, all Agents possess written credentials confirming their identities and status. As there are many rogue aether-men about, this documentation can prove critical when dealing with other law enforcement or military officials. An Agent possesses about the same arrest and investigative authority as a police inspector from Scotland Yard, but his jurisdiction reaches well beyond the environs of London, or even the British Isles. In fact, wherever the British Empire lays claim to territory, a team of aether-men Agents may operate, so long as they do not impede an active military campaign, or otherwise interfere in too deeply in foreign affairs. Of course, those latter conditions can have a wide continuum of interpretation, and many a team of Agents has run afoul of some general resentment of their presence in "his" war.

The Death of HRH Prince Albert

In the "real" world Prince Albert died in 1861 of complications brought on by typhoid fever. His death cast a pall on the entire nation and threw Queen Victoria into a period of deep mourning that lasted several years. In AotC Albert perished (still in 1861) while he and Edward Lamb were on the hunt for another aether-man. The man's name was Aldridge Smith, a masonry worker from Leicester in central England. The seemingly routine trip turned to tragedy when Smith went berserk and lashed out with his powers. The concussive energies he released from his eyes were enough to kill, and they were intended for Edward Lamb, the man Smith correctly deduced had tracked him down. But anticipating Smith's unstable behavior, the uncanny Albert interposed himself between Lamb and the blast. He was dead in an instant. Smith was subdued by Lamb and his security team and taken into custody, where he died several days later under mysterious circumstances.

It was at this point that a vocal block in Parliament called for the end to the Agents of the Crown, and the rounding up of all aether-men for the greater public safety. Even through shock and mourning, Queen Elizabeth knew what Albert would have said to such reactionary thinking. One of her last acts before her self-imposed exile was to come before Parliament and speak on the need for the good work of Edward Lamb and his agents to continue. Parliament wavered in the face of the Queen, and the AotC lived on. Meanwhile, the Queen mourned her prince, and the entire Empire mourned with her.





Agent Operations

Agents generally operate in teams of three to six individuals. Lamb and his people generally try to assemble a team of Agents whose skills and powers complement each other and fit the needs of the duty station they are to staff. Generally, one Agent is named the team leader, or a highly skilled, competent, and resourceful normal operative (i.e., a man or woman with no aetheric powers) is placed in charge of the team. No matter who is in charge,†every team of Agents must answer to the Deputy Director for their area of operations, or theater, and the Deputy Directors answer to Edward Lamb, with Lamb consulting with the Parliamentary liaison and the Queen when things go terribly awry or a budgetary issue needs fixing.

Below is a schematic of the structure of the AotC organization as it stands in 1875:

Edward Lamb (Director of the Agents of the Crown)

William Ewart Gladstone (Liberal MP, House of Commons, Liaison to the Agents of the Crown)

Sir Charles Hemstock (Deputy Director, Asian Theater)

General Mycroft Beckham, Ret.(Deputy Director, Indian Theater)

Dame Caroline Brown (Deputy Director, European Theater)

Sir Howard Ladley (Deputy Director, British†Isles)

Major Tristan Hoare, Ret. (Deputy Director, African Theater)

Martin Pritchard (Deputy Director, South American Theater)

Earl of Derby--Frederick Stanley(Deputy Director, North American Theater)





The Sign of the Agents

Shortly after their inception as an official force, Edward Lamb commissioned the design of a symbol for the Agents. The symbol was a bust of a young, winged Britannia with a crown hovering over head and some iconic whirls at its base. This symbol was emblazoned on all of the AotC's official letterhead, and the Agents' papers marking their authority also carried the image.

A Note on Politics

British politics during the Victorian era is an endlessly†fascinating†subject, but one whose complexity places it beyond the purview of this monograph. However, the choice of Gladstone as the current liaison to the AotC requires some elaboration. By 1875, William Gladstone had just been ousted from his recent term as Prime Minister, but still retained his seat in the House of Commons. Smarting from his tough loss, but still wanting to remain relevant, Gladstone used every remaining bit of pull he had to secure the Liaison post. At the point of the campaign's beginning in 1875 he is embattled, and might be willing to use the AotC as a political pawn, or GM's can decide to play him "straight", taking his role as Liaison as a solemn duty above the fray of politics.

Alternate Power Origins

Agents of the Crown assumes a certain, specific source for super-human powers: aetheric energy. The source of this energy straddles the line between the supernatural and the super-scientific. Is aetheric energy the power of the stars themselves manifested through the bodies of mere humans? Or is it the manifestation of the mystical powers of Elder beings from other dimensions?

And what if a game master wants to do away with the idea of aetheric energy all together? or just "downgrade" it to one of many sources of a Victorian super-human's incredible powers? This is perfectly acceptable and can be handled in a number of ways. The "clock" on super powers in AotC starts ticking around 1835, but if a game master is unhappy with this assumption he or she can create another event that prompts their emergence. Maybe it's not Halley's Comet, but some sort of massive, worldwide plague that claims many lives and transforms select survivors into super-beings. Perhaps a freak earthquake in the Yucatan unearths a long-buried artifact that falls into the hands of some intrepid Victorian explorer, and he unwittingly activates it causing its energy to blanket the world transforming only those select few thousand individuals with Lemurian blood in their veins into super-humans.

If a GM wishes to play with the time line a bit, supers may have always existed as genetic mutants, children of the gods (or the elder-gods!), or some other device. Perhaps the advances of science also create formulas and devices which can transform a man into a savage version of himself or revive the dead using the power of a storm's electricity. The literature of the period certainly supports the assertion that science and the industrial revolution can transform man for good or ill.

No matter the change in the origin of powers, Britain still needs her Agents, and perhaps the thing that catalyzes that fact for the members of Parliament is political. The mere presence of foreign super-humans on the fields of the Great Game would certainly provoke England to recruit its own super operatives. Social outrage might also spark the emergence of some supers as they fight against the horrors of slavery and colonialism. The period of the setting is quite elastic and will support any number of themes employed by GM's and players when justifying the existence of their characters and non-player characters.





READY-MADE HEROES

These profiles will provide players and GMs a fast and easy way to get right into the action of AotC. They do not represent the full breadth of what players and GMs can design using the complete BRP rules; they really just scratch the surface of what is possible. Players and their GM should confer when using these ready-made heroes or building their own characters from scratch. The GM may have a specific theme or power level for her campaign in mind, and thus the ready-made heroes might require some adjustments before using them in play.

Character Creation Guidelines for AotC

The ready-made heroes were created using the Powers rules in chapter 4 the BRP rule book. Psychic Abilities (pg. 111) and Super Powers (pg. 141) were the two primary systems used in devising power sets for the starting characters. The point-based Character Creation option was also employed (see pg. 19 of the BRP rules). Instead of the normal 24 point pool for buying Characteristics, players receive 48 points, and they may exceed the normal human maximum of 21. AotC does not use the optional Education characteristic. Skills are based off of the epic level starting pool of 400 points, and have been assigned utilizing the Freeform Professions optional rule.

Player characters and important non-player characters (NPCs) enjoy a greater degree of survivability owing to their importance to the overall plot of the game. Total hit points for these important characters in AotC follow the optional rule for hardier player characters presented on pg. 30 of the BRP rules, calculating total hit points based on CON + SIZ. Unnamed non-player characters and other minor denizens of the AotC world have hit points based on the normal formula that averages CON + SIZ.

AotC features characters that possess amazing super powers originating from their exposure to the weird aetheric energies of Halley's Comet. In order to model this, the Psychic Abilities and Super Powers rules should be employed in building starting characters. When building a character using the Psychic Abilities rules, players should use the Epic option outlined on pg. 111 of the BRP rules, and they may allot additional skill points to psychic power skills from their starting skill pool. This models the additional training in power use they have received from their mentors in the Agents program. When building a character's power set using the Super Powers rules, players use the Epic power level option detailed on pg. 141 of the BRP rules, but instead of doubling their highest characteristic, begin with a set budget of 35 power points.

With their GM's permission, players who want to combine elements from both of these Power lists (i.e., a "Psychic Strongman") can elect to draw powers from both, but their starting levels are each one increment lower. So a player wishing to build his Psychic Strongman would have Heroic levels of both powers to draw from, in this case four Psychic abilities and 20 pts. in Super Powers.





AotC Character Creation Options Summary

- **Point-based Character Creation (48 pts. for Characteristics)**
- **Starting characteristics may exceed human maximum of 21**
- **Starting Skills points: 400**
- **Freeform Professions**
- **Education characteristic not used**
- **Psychic and Super Powers (Epic level: 6 psychic powers or 35 pts. in super powers)**
- **Player Character hit points figured using CON + SIZ**

“Normal” Player Characters

Players can choose to play non-powered Agents by simply selecting only the Super Characteristic and Super Skill super powers. When buying Super Characteristics, players should keep their final scores at 21 or lower. Super Skills for “normal” characters may be purchased, but no skill may exceed 100%.†A character built in this fashion will still be quite extraordinary, but won't have the flashy super powers of his or her fellows.

A Note on Professions

Agents of the Crown uses the Freeform Professions optional rule presented on pg. 41 of the BRP rules. Although set in the Victorian era, AotC is still a game about superhuman operatives fighting for Queen and Country, and most agents will have been recruited young and trained in the areas most critical to their work. This training could run the gamut from obscure knowledge of Asian cultures to advanced combat techniques, and especially the use of one's unique aetheric abilities. GM's should still take care to watch over their players as they make their characters. Even though characters are built at the epic point level, players should still endeavor to make well-rounded agents with more than just combat in mind. The agents will be asked to undertake a myriad of missions, not all of which will feature violence as the central means of problem solving. If GM's desire tighter control over the reigns of character creation, the Assassin, Explorer, Hunter, Sailor, Scholar, Solider, Spy and Warrior professions make excellent starting points for Victorian era super-operatives.

Alternately, GM's can use this new profession, the Super-Agent:





Super-Agent

You were recruited at a young age to work for your government, or perhaps some tragedy or major life event prompted you to start anew and you joined them later in life. Your powers make you an asset, but you also realize they make you a possible threat, so your minders keep a close eye on your movements. Still, you serve your country proudly, and enjoy the benefits that wielding super-human powers have brought you. Whether you can bend iron bars with your bare hands, read a person's mind, defy gravity, recover from any wound, or perform some other miraculous feat, you're special, and your government needs you. There are certainly worse ways to earn your keep.

Wealth: Affluent.

Skills: Brawl (or Martial Arts), Dodge, First Aid, Listen, Spot, and five of the following, as appropriate to the agent's role on his or her team: Disguise, Etiquette, Fast Talk, Firearms (any), Grapple, Hide, Knowledge (any), Melee Weapon (any), Projection (power), Repair (Mechanical), Research, Science (any), Stealth, Track.





Massive Objects in Combat

Super-strong characters will often be tempted to throw or wield large objects in combat. Using the rules on pg. 171-172 of the BRP rulebook, GMs can adjudicate whether or not a character can lift and wield an object. Putting aside the actual physics of a man-sized being hefting a massive object like a carriage, light pole, or steam engine, if the player makes his roll using the Resistance formula (pitting his active STR against the object's passive SIZ), he can lift and wield it, or throw it. If he fails, he drops the item. Once the model has a hold of the object, using it in battle requires a difficult Brawling check, halving the character's Brawl score before rolling.

Example: Bengal Tyger (STR 35, Brawl 85%) wishes to wield a nearby carriage (SIZ 30) in battle. The base chance to succeed is 50%, +25% for the difference between Bengal Tyger's STR and the object's SIZ, resulting in a 75% chance to lift and wield the item. Bengal Tyger's player rolls 53% on his check and he can now wield the carriage as a makeshift club at 43% on his skill checks.

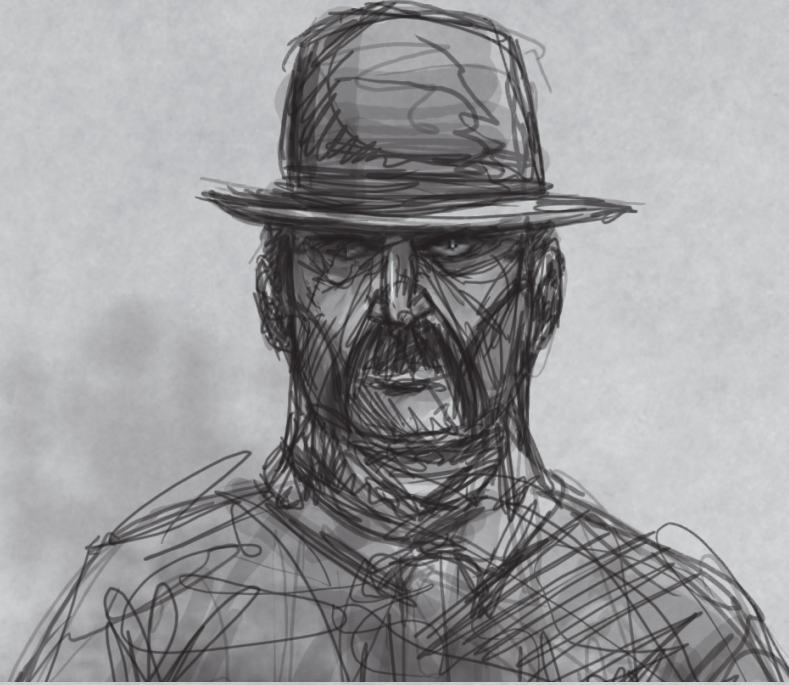
Damage, Reach, and Area

Massive objects wielded as makeshift clubs, or hurled from a distance, add extra damage to the attack, and count as area attacks as detailed on pg. 213-214 of the BRP rules. This means that the character wielding the object makes his modified Brawl or Throw roll, and if he succeeds all characters in the area will be struck by the attack unless they make successful Dodge rolls to throw themselves out of the way. An object can affect an area equal in diameter to its Size divided by 10 (SIZ/10) in meters. If players are using a grid map and miniatures to track position and movement in combat, the object affects a number of squares equal to its SIZ/10. If wielded as a club this area of effect must be adjacent to the character wielding the object.

A super-strong character adds the damage dice from his own STR to that of the object's SIZ, but does not add dice from powers like Natural Weaponry or Unarmed Combat.

Example: Bengal Tyger hefts the carriage (SIZ 30) and swings it at a pair of Clockwork Automatons standing just 2 meters away from each other. Because of their close proximity to each other, the carriage has a chance to hit them both. Bengal Tyger makes his 43% Brawl check, and each Automaton must now make a Dodge check or suffer damage from the crushing attack.





The Brawler

Some aether-men possess a natural aptitude for close combat, and these gifted pugilists derive great joy in throwing themselves into the thick of battle, heedless of their own safety. They are often gifted with amazing recuperative powers that allow them to recover from seemingly mortal wounds in record time. In a world increasingly dominated by the power of the gun, Brawlers are walking anachronisms. Their powers can manifest in many ways, from the crude but effective methods of the berserker to the elegant exoticism of the martial artist, the results are the same, a foe that is difficult to hit and capable of delivering massive damage with either bare hands or natural weapons like claws and fangs.

Brawlers are often outsiders. Some walk this lonely road because they hail from the Orient or the Indian sub-continent, while others project an aura of imminent violence that cause those around them extreme discomfort. Brawlers make excellent assassins or spies because they often possess innate agility and stealth unrivaled among other agents. Their inner demons can also make it easier for them to perform the unsavory tasks that the Great Game often requires.





Bulldog

The man called Bulldog knows very little about his past. Crown agents found him beaten near to death in the scum-encrusted alleys of St. Katherine's Docks. Although the hound agent who tracked him marked him as an aether-man, they had little hope for his survival when they brought him in. Surprising the lot of them, he miraculously survived the night and recovered from his wounds at a superhuman rate. However, he possessed no memory of his true identity. Short, squat, and powerfully built, but with a face only a mother could love, the agents who found him took to calling him Bulldog, and the name stuck. Owing allegiance to those who found him, and with no better prospects, the Bulldog accepted the offer to join the AotC, and has since become one of the group's most effective and reliable agents, showing all of the loyalty and tenacity of his namesake.

Bulldog

STR 16 CON 24 SIZ 9 INT 11 POW 14

DEX 16 APP 8

Age: 22 Height: 5-4 Weight: 160 lbs. Hair: Brown (shaved) Eyes: Blue

Move: 10

Hit Points: 33

Damage Bonus: +1D4+2

Armor: 2 kinetic

Attacks: Savage Bite 1D6 + 1D4 + 2

Skills: Brawl 75%, Climb 70%, Dodge 82%, First Aid 50%, Grapple 75%, Hide 70%, Jump 50%, Language (English) 55%, Listen 50%, Literacy (English) 25%, Sense 70%, Spot 45%, Stealth 60%, Swim 35%

Character Failings: Amnesia (+2 pts.), †Animal Rage (+2 pts., After taking damage, must make INT roll or dedicate all attacks to foe who damaged him and cannot disengage from battle until that foe has fallen)

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 2), Extra Energy 1 (+10 Power Points), Natural Weaponry (+1D6 unarmed damage, already figured into profile above), Regeneration (2 HP per round), Unarmed Combat (1 level, +2 damage on Brawl and Grapple, +2 pts. of armor when parrying barehanded, -5% to single attacker, +5% to unarmed attacks, all effects already figured into above profile).





The Bruiser

Superhuman strength accounts for one of the most common powers demonstrated by aether-men. These types have come to be called bruisers for their penchant for the trade of inflicting pain. The exact level of strength might vary from the ability to lift a thousand pounds over one's head to the ability to heft weights exceeding multiple tens of tons. Often this strength comes with a commensurate resistance to physical harm. Some bruisers may even be bullet-proof, but this rarely comes without some outward sign of their transformation. Such signs can include leathery skin, knobby growths akin to tree bark, or strange skin pigments.

Many Bruisers find it easy to fit into normal Victorian life, provided they do not show too many outward signs of their supernatural nature. They work as one-man dock gangs, unloading whole shipments of grain or other goods. They act as enforcers for the various mobs or gangs around London. Some even find their way to the church and work doing odd jobs around a small parish.





Iron Bloke

Joey Chapman is a fairly typical bruiser. Born in 1849 to poor parents, his powers developed when he was around ten. Raised on the rough streets of London's Stepney district, the Joey relied on superhuman toughness and strength to get the job done when defending his friends and family from the neighborhood's various gangs. Although his manner was often gruff, Joey refused to join a gang himself, primarily due to the upbringing of his tough but loving parents. He respected the crown and all it stands for just as his father taught him. Keeping his nature secret to the larger world, he enlisted in the army at the urgings of his parents. His knack for following orders and completing assigned tasks came from his sojourn abroad in the service of the British Military. His powers served him well while fighting bandits in the Sind province of India, and elsewhere in England's vast holdings.

Chapman returned home in 1869 to visit his parents, only to find them recently slain by local gangsters. Taking matters into his own hands, he roused the gang from its hideout by hurling a Hansom cab through the front wall of the storefront they were using as a hideout. He then methodically found and killed them all, save for a few too wounded by his initial attack to talk. Several operatives of the Agents of the Crown got wind of Joey's act of vengeance and quickly found him on his way back to his parents' home. They convinced him to join the Agents, and had his military commission transferred to their office. Now he serves Queen and country again, but this time he does not have to keep his incredible power a secret.

Iron Bloke

STR 58 CON 25 SIZ 15 INT 9 POW 10

DEX 12 APP 11

Age: 24

Height: 6'6" Weight: 270 lbs. Hair: Brown Eyes: Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 40

Damage Bonus: +4D6

Armor: 10 kinetic

Attacks: Pummeling Fists 1D3 + 4D6

Skills: Brawl 75%, Climb 80%, Etiquette (Street) 55%, Dodge 34%, Grapple 75%, Insight 25%, Jump 75%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 45%, Language (English) 70%, Listen 55%, Literacy (English) 40%, Spot 45%, Swim 65%, Throw 65%

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 10), Super Constitution (+5, already figured into profile above), Super Strength (+19, already figured into profile above).





The Flier

As long as humans have lived they have longed to fly. Some aether-men realize this dream on a most personal level, manifesting the power to defy gravity and soar with the birds. This power often reveals itself rather suddenly, brought to the surface by a brush with death usually associated with a fall from a great height, or some other accident. Some nascent fliers grow garish wings, prompting comparisons to the angels or demons of biblical lore.

Of course those fliers willing to cooperate with their respective governments quickly became prized tactical assets on the battlefields of the Victorian era, and displayed even greater utility as covert operatives on the many fields of the Great Game. Who better to quickly survey what the Russians are up to in the Khyber Pass than members of the Rajís flying Aether-Corps? No two fliers are ever quite alike, and many individuals manifest other powers that complement their ability to defy gravity. Hyper-efficient respiratory systems, enhanced vision, lighter bone structure, and toughened skin are but a few of the additional powers observed in many fliers. For some incredibly powerful aether-men, flight is merely one of a panoply of super-human abilities, and these individuals often make the most fearsome foes.





Dorset Eagle

Sarah Galloway lived near the coast in Dorset, South West England. Her father and grandfather both fished the rough waters of England's North Sea, and Sarah was expected to become a fisherman's wife. She did love the sea and the simple life in Dorset, but it was the sea birds that she loved most of all, spending long hours watching them from the sea-cliffs near her home. Although thinking it a bit queer, her parents encouraged her interest and even bought her some books on birds and their habits. She loved to watch the flight of the Gull-billed Tern, the Little Egrets, and the Ivory Gulls. Although their daughters fascination with birding made her seem strange to the friends and neighbors of the small town, Sarah's parents eventually saw that her passion was true and would lead her down a different path than that of fisherman's wife. Their intuition would soon prove all too true, as on the morning of Sarah's eighteenth birthday in the year 1865, the bright-eyed young woman from Dorset flew. Unlike many other such manifestations, Sarah's did not occur under duress, but rather during a moment of transcendent glory. As she prepared to watch an eagle from her favorite promontory facing the sea, the new day dawned, and she stood. She moved to the edge of the cliff as the eagle took off from a crag and dove toward the beach below; Sarah dove with him.

She was never able to explain how she knew at that moment that she could fly, but her instincts were true, and she soared with the eagle that day. Since then her life changed completely and she became an aether-man. Suddenly famous in her little town, Sarah soon left to join the Agents of the Crown and serve Queen and Country abroad. She still finds time to occasionally fly home to Dorset, where the eagle who accompanied her on that first flight often waits for her to fly again.

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Dorset Eagle

STR 12 CON 17 SIZ 9 INT 10 POW 17 DEX 15 APP 14

Age: 21 Height: 5'6" Weight 130 lbs. Hair: Blond Eyes: Blue

Move: 10/500 (in flight)

Hit Points: 26

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: 2 kinetic/4 wind

Attacks: Heavy Revolver 1D10 + 2, Knife 1D3 + 1

Skills: Brawl 55%, Climb 40%, Dagger 45%, Dodge 60%, Fly 78%, Grapple 25%, Insight 45%, Jump 35%, Language (English) 65%, Listen 25%, Literacy (English) 65%, Research 55%, Revolver (Heavy) 70%, Science (Ornithology) 51%, Spot 65%, Stealth 40%, Swim 45%.

Character Failings: Female in Victorian Society (significant inconvenience)

Super Powers: Adaptation 1 (Cold), Armor (Kinetic 2, Wind 4), Defense 5 (-25% to attackers, only while flying), Extra Energy 5 (+50 power points), Flight 15 (Fly up to 45 SIZ points), Super Sense 2 (Super Vision).

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The Maker

Some aether-men possess a mastery of the principles of engineering and the sciences, mixing that knowledge with their strange powers to create wondrous devices that defy the limits and laws of current technology. Steam-powered automatons, clockwork familiars, and wild conveyances that carry a man high into the air are but a few of the wonders possible when a maker has access to the necessary time and tools to bring his visions to life.

However, these devices cannot function for long once separated from the guiding hands of their creators. It is the maker's aetheric powers which allow the device to defy the laws of physics, and once a device leaves his care, this link is broken and the device quickly loses its functionality. This sad fact has prevented makers from producing their devices on a grand scale, denying them the proliferation one might expect from world gripped by the progress of the Industrial Revolution.

In some cases this inability to mass produce a maker's inventions is a blessing, for many prominent makers have created fearsome weapons of mass destruction that could kill or harm countless innocents. Still, for every madman with a giant, killer-automaton there is a maker with an iron lung or other benign device capable of aiding humanity.

Rumor has it that a handful of makers have learned the skill of imparting a small amount of their own essence into their devices to give them permanence even when out of their control. The occurrence of this sort of thing is rare, but might explain the growing number of sentient mechanical golems, or clockwork men, seen around London and other areas.





Spanner

As a child Louise Naismith knew she was different the moment she first got hold of some tinker toys and an old time piece and shaped them into a clockwork beast. The tiny amalgam of gears, wheels, and tin sheet could do little more than trundle about her parents' summer home on the Isle of Wight, but it proved a start. Her father recognized his daughter's aptitude and encouraged her, against the will of her more traditional mother. He hoped she could make something of herself as an engineer despite the obvious limits that might be placed on her due to her sex. Her mother feared that her daughter's fascination with building gadgets would become an obsession, and she would never marry and have a proper family. Both were right.

Naismith entered Oxford in 1865 at the incredible age of 15. She earned degrees in mathematics and physics, and studied the burgeoning disciplines of engineering and architecture. And she built things. Such wondrous devices issued from her campus laboratory as the storied university had never seen before! The campus was abuzz with talk of Naismith's incredible creations. Colleagues and rivals alike were especially amazed by their inability to create working prototypes of their own from her invention notes. She made no attempt to hide his design schematics, but her peers and instructors simply could not make their versions of her amazing automatons, whirly-gigs, and widgets work.

Edward Lamb noticed Naismith's work as well, and paid the young woman a visit on the campus in 1866. It took the pair only minutes to realize Naismith's gifts were more than mere natural talent she was yet another example of an aether-man. Lamb quickly coined the term imaker to describe Naismith's talents, and she was recruited into the growing ranks of the Agents of the Crown upon her graduation from Oxford in the spring of 1867. After the death of her father in 1870, she has spent the last five years caring for her mother.

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Spanner

STR 9 CON 15 SIZ 9 INT 18 POW 15 DEX 11 APP 13

Age: 25 Height: 5'5" Weight: 120 lbs. Hair: Red Eyes: Green

Move: 10

Hit Points: 24

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: 3 kinetic

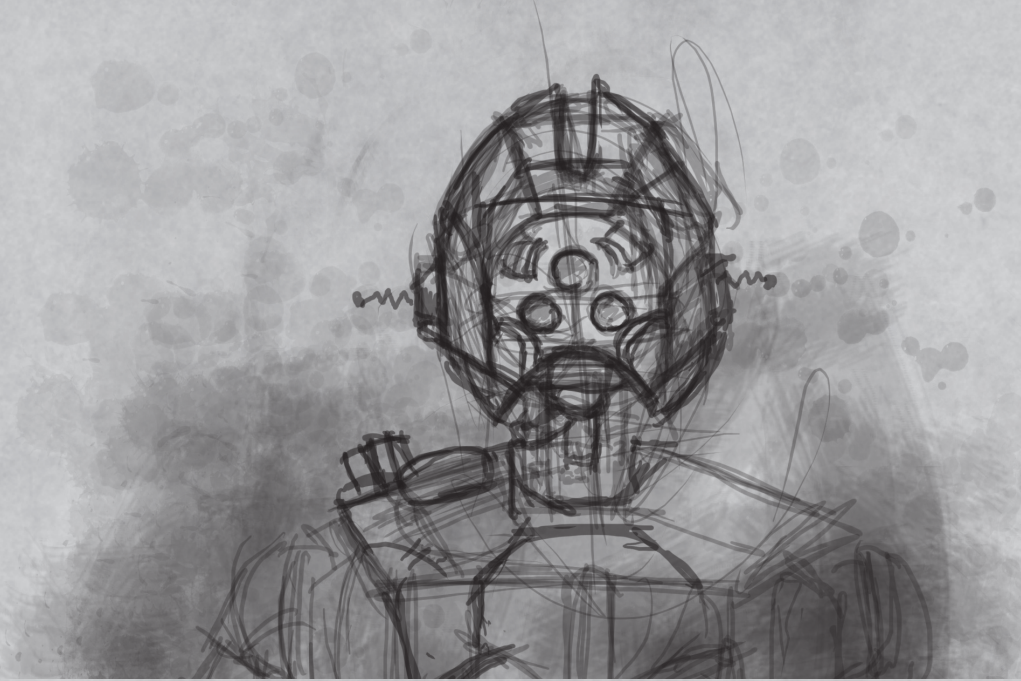
Attacks: Light Revolver 1D6 (impaling)

Skills: Brawl 45%, Climb 40%, Dodge 62%, Grapple 25%, Jump 25%, Language (English) 80%, Listen 45%, Literacy (English) 70%, Repair (Hydraulic) 75%, Repair (Mechanical) 85%, Research 65%, Revolver (Light) 60%, Science (Chemistry) 61%, Science (Mathematics) 61%, Science (Physics) 71%, Spot 45%, Swim 45%.

Character Failings: Dependent Family Member (Mother, significant), Female in Victorian Society (significant inconvenience)

Super Powers: Armor 3 (Kinetic, Armored Clothing, Gadget), Defense 4 (-20% to attackers, Refraction Field Belt, Gadget), Sidekick (Clockwork Automaton, Only Active within POW x 5 meters of Spanner, Gadget, see profile below).





Clockwork Automaton

Description: The Clockwork Automaton is a brass and iron humanoid with glass fittings. It has been built with a glass-plated face that houses its amazing X-Ray projector, and a glass panel on its back that projects the images it reveals when staring through solid objects. A flaw in the device's design prevents it from penetrating any substance lined with gold. The Clockwork Automaton possesses a rudimentary intelligence and can follow simple commands from Spanner. It communicates back to her using series of clicks, whirs, wheezes that only she seems to understand.

DEX 3 INT 2 STR 5 SIZ 5

Height: 4' Weight: 65 lbs.

Move: 10

HP: 5

Armor: 5 kinetic

Skills: Dodge 46%, Spot 65%

Super Powers: Armor 5 (Kinetic), Super Skill 2 (Dodge), Super Skill 2 (Spot), Super Sense 1 (X-Ray Vision, cannot see through gold)





Gender and Race in AotC

Agents of the Crown is set in 1875, the height of the Victorian era, a time of great change in the world, but still a time of great prejudice toward women and minorities.† It will be left up to the individual GM to decide how much† he or†she wants to get into the† social inequities of the time. Agents possess amazing powers making them valuable commodities to the Empire no matter what their gender or skin color. The Agents have many persons of color and women in their ranks, but this has not yet helped to change wider societal attitudes toward these groups. Under most circumstances they will encounter some degree of skepticism regarding their capabilities, and perhaps even outright indignation at their presence. Of course, a GM can choose to change this in his or her game--perhaps the presence of aether-men in England and abroad for the last thirty or more years has caused people to re-evaluate their views on race and gender. It comes down to an issue of comfort. If players and GM's are comfortable exploring issues of race and gender discrimination in their role-play, then this will provide an excellent vehicle for that exploration. If they would rather just stick to rip-roaring Victorian adventure, then the larger social issues can be easily ignored.

Psychic Power Reserve

Like Super Powers, many Psychic Abilities require a considerable number of Power Points to use regularly. Instead of selecting a Psychic Ability with one of their allotted slots, a player may instead choose Psychic Power Reserve, granting his or her character 10 additional Power Points he or she can use to fuel his or her other mental powers. This option may be selected multiple times, with each selection costing another one of the character's allotted powers, and granting an additional 10 Power Points.†

Example: Kurt wants his character, Mysterion, to have plenty of Power Points available to him when he uses his Psychic Abilities in combat. In AotC Psychic heroes normally begin play with 6 Psychic Abilities, but Kurt forfeits one of those six to get Psychic Power Reserve, granting him 10 additional Power Points to fuel his mental attacks. If he wanted even more points, he could forfeit a second power and gain 10 more Power Points, starting each day with +20 points in addition to those granted by his Power characteristic.





The Mesmerist

Mesmerists are aether-men who possess the ability to read thoughts, cloud minds, and even seize control of another person. Other notable tricks of the Mesmerist include empathy, psychometry, and precognition. Some argue that mesmerists have always existed in the world as traveling wise men, stage magicians, or other charlatans. Experts argue that it was the botched ritual in 1835 that opened the doors wider and allowed them to more readily access the power they had been leeching in little bits all along.

No matter when they emerged, the mesmerists exist now to bend minds for good or ill. Mesmerists serve prominent, but quiet roles in the Parliament, sitting back among the eaves and guarding against the presence of rogue members of their strange order. Indeed, one of the things the earliest investigators into the aether-man phenomenon declared was that the only sure way to stop a mesmerist (short of killing him) was with another mesmerist. A skilled mind-bender can detect and block the probing of another mind-bender, a truth quickly learned by HRH Prince Albert and his staff in the Royal Office of the Agents of the Crown. The Agents pursue and recruit mesmerists whenever and where ever they can, and the presence of a foreign mesmerist on British soil can be the cause for great alarm among the various agencies participating in the Great Game.





Mysterion the Magnificent

Henry Cavendish enjoyed the life of a stage performer's son as a child. He traveled the length and breadth of England as the willing assistant to the Great Rudolfo, his father, Lloyd H. Cavendish. He was seven years old in 1855 when his father disappeared on stage. He was performing a dangerous water-cell escape trick and simply vanished from the canister, never to be seen again. Orphaned and alone, Henry found himself at the mercy of the state. After several years in a less than hospitable orphanage he escaped and took to the streets. At the age of fourteen, in 1862 he felt the first true twinges of his power. While staying in a flophouse he was accosted by a man who tried to force himself on him. As the larger, stronger man pinned him down to a dirty, bug-infested mattress, Cavendish lashed out with his mind, instinctively focusing his will, lance-like, and skewering it into his assailant's brain.

The man screamed in shock, jumped up and rushed toward the nearest window of the filthy dormitory, hurling himself out of it and smashing himself on the street below. Cavendish quickly left the place, but everything about him seemed to have changed in that one moment of supreme focus and rage. His senses had sharpened, and he could read people. He could see into their minds, past their body language, their outward manners, deep into their thoughts. And when the need arose he could also defend himself, summoning mental blasts of focused thought-anger that stunned their targets into inaction.

He took to using his powers for confidence games, earning just enough money to survive on the streets for the next two years, until one day he met a mark he couldn't bamboozle with his powers. The man was plainly dressed, but carried himself with the ease of a noble-born. He said his name was Dillon, and when Henry tried his tricks on him Dillon laughed and asked Henry if wanted to make some real money serving his Queen and his country. Now sixteen, the young Cavendish was curious. He'd never been asked to do such a thing before. The government wanted him because he was special? He trusted Dillon and after several years serving as a confidence guard in Parliament, he eventually found himself recruited into the Agents of the Crown, a mesmerist for the government. He learned about the ritual on that fateful day in 1835, and realized with amazement that the day his father disappeared marked the twenty year anniversary of that event.

Mysterion the Magnificent

STR 8 CON 15 SIZ 12 INT 15 POW 18 DEX 10 APP 14

Age:31 Height: 6'3" Weight:150 lbs. Hair: Black Eyes: Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 27

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: none

Attacks: Punch 1D3

Skills: Astral Projection 68%, Brawl 25%, Climb 40%, Dodge 40%, Fast Talk 45%, Grapple 25%, Insight 60%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Philosophy) 55%, Language (English) 80%, Listen 25%, Literacy (English) 70%, Mind Blast 75%, Mind Control 65%, Mind Shield 68%, Perform (Stage Magic) 41%, Spot 45%, Swim 25%, Telepathy 68%

Psychic Abilities: Astral Projection, Mind Blast, Mind Control, Mind Shield, Psychic Power Reserve, Telepathy





The Ray-Man or Ray-Woman

Ray-men (or women, the term is applied to both men and women fitting this profile) possess the power to project beams of heat, lightning, or pure force from their hands or eyes, destroying solid objects as easily as human flesh. These living weapons inspire the most fear and awe among members of the public and the government. Other types of aether-men can be just as dangerous, but someone who essentially becomes a walking cannon seems to make those around him or her particularly nervous.

Ray-men may also exhibit other powers in addition to their command of deadly energies. Some can use their destructive powers for defense as well, creating an armored field of energy capable of soaking up punishment from physical blows, bullets, and even the kinetic force of a fall from a great height. Others harness their energy for flight or other forms of enhanced movement.





The Red Lance

London Bobby Edward McCawber's powers did not manifest until a terrible night in 1865 when he was on patrol in the East End neighborhood of Stepney. He caught sight of a group of toughs dragging a young woman into a dark alley across the street. He blew his whistle and ran to her aid, but when he reached the alley mouth he was ambushed by a fourth tough he hadn't seen earlier. Struck on the head and bleeding, he lay on the ground watching as the four men set upon the poor woman. Reaching out for his truncheon, which had fallen too far from him to grasp, he flailed helplessly as anger grew within him. He had grown up in the East End, and despite all of the bad he had seen there he knew it could be a good place. That's why he'd joined the force.

Now he watched impotently as everything negative any Londoner had said about Stepney began to unfold in one terrible series of actions. As his fingers convulsed in pain and anger, McCawber felt a surge of heat rush through his body, rushing down along his out-stretched arm toward his hand. Instinctively he stretched his fingers out, trying to flick the terrible heat and pressure off of him like he was some piece of offal. At that moment a crimson bolt of force issued from his outstretched hand, striking one of the tough's and knocking him senseless to the ground. In rapid succession two more bolts issued forth, one missing and striking the back wall of the dead-end alley, the other smashing into another thug and laying him low.

Seeing what had transpired, the remaining two thugs realized what they might be dealing with and rushed out of the alley, past the bewildered McCawber and out into the night. Their downed companions remained motionless. "You're one of those aether-men," the plucky woman said as she gathered her torn and tattered dress around her. She rose and walked toward McCawber, extending a shaking hand. He could see fear in her eyes, mixed with awe and equal portion of gratitude. "You ain't going to hurt me, are you love?" she asked in a thick Cockney accent as she helped McCawber to his feet.

"N-no, mam. At least, I don't think so." With that the shaken pair helped each other to the nearby station house several blocks away. In the ensuing weeks Edward McCawber's ill-kept secret that he was now an aether-man got out. The Agents of the Crown found him several weeks after that. McCawber was stunned when none other than Prince Albert himself paid him a visit and offered him a place in a growing group of special operatives. It didn't take him long to say yes.

The Red Lance

STR 13 CON 15 SIZ 10 INT 11 POW 15 DEX 16 APP 14

Age: 35 Height: 5'9" Weight: 160 lbs. Hair: Red Eyes: Green

Move: 10 Hit Points: 25 Damage Bonus: none

Armor: 3 kinetic

Attacks: Kinetic Blast 3D6

Skills: Brawl 45%, Climb 50%, Dodge 62%, Etiquette (Street) 35%, Grapple 45%, Insight 25%, Jump 45%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 55%, Knowledge (Police Procedures) 55%, Language (English) 65%, Listen 65%, Literacy (English) 40%, Projection 82%, Spot 35%, Swim 25%.

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 3), Energy Projection 3 (Kinetic, 3D6 damage), Extra Energy 2 (+20 Power Points)





Costumes and Secrets

Most Agents feel the need to conceal their true identities in order to protect their loved ones. Some wear wide-brimmed hats or masks reminiscent of the highwaymen of the 18th century to better shield their faces. Edward Lamb and his predecessors in the head offices of the Agents never balk when new agents declare that they wish to conceal their identities. In fact this sort of approach is encouraged, as it makes agents more adaptable to covert operations in other countries should the need arise. Although not as elaborate or colorful as super-hero costumes seen in contemporary comic books, Agents of the Crown can and do wear masks, and the more flamboyant among them might employ a cloak, cape, billowing coat, cowl, or other bit of fashion to further accentuate their look. Many Agents also take on colorful code names so that their true identities are never used in public. Indeed, many a muckraking journalist has labored to learn the true identities of the most popular Agents, but more respectable members of the press allow Agents their privacy, sensing that anonymity is integral to their ability to properly conduct their duties.

Still, there are other Agents who do not wear anything to conceal their identities. Some have no family to worry about, while have their loved ones sequestered away in remote countryside towns. Some fervently believe that wearing a mask is a sign of shame, and they will not hide behind them, but instead openly accept who they are what good deeds they are capable of doing.

The Livelihood of Agents

Keeping its operatives well fed and happy is an expense gladly incurred by the office of the Agents of the Crown. New agents stay in a dormitory facility within the Tower of London, and their meals and other material needs are seen to at no cost to them, while they also draw a handsome salary of £5 per week (by contrast, a member of the servant classes might make 10£ - 15£ in an entire year). After the first several years of their initial training and service, trusted agents are allowed to seek apartments in London, or if stationed elsewhere around the world, in a town or city nearby to their duty station. These accommodations would also be paid for as long as they were not too extravagant. This combination of excellent compensation and coverage of living conditions make being an agent a lucrative affair, but surviving long enough to retire and spend one's earnings is not always an easy thing. Many agents choose to have much of their salary sent to their families or other loved ones, seeing that they are lifted from poverty or kept in comfort while their super-powered loved ones risk all for the Crown.





Chapter II.

The AotC Campaign

Using this monograph and the Basic Roleplaying rules, GM's and players will possess the tools necessary to run AotC campaigns. GM's will find a number of options available to them when shaping their campaigns. These options cover campaign style, power level, and tone. Building setting elements like the characters' base of operations, patrons, and other background information will be facilitated by a number of GM devices called Plot Options. Combining various plot options will allow a GM to quickly create a fully realized back-story for his or her campaign.

Agents of the Crown GM's must first consider what the general thrust of their campaign will be. Will the players take the roles of secret agents? monster hunters? crime busters? or something else entirely? Most of this section assumes that the players will take the roles of Victorian heroes working for the British government to preserve the empire across the world. With a little work enterprising GM's can take the rules and background provided here and in the BRP rules and set their AotC campaign anywhere. Maybe the heroes work for the Czar of Russia (part of the storied Repon Cohorts), or perhaps they serve at the pleasure of the President of the United States of America. They may even be a group of independent agents set against the tyranny of the various colonial governments draining the local populace of the uncivilized world of their God-given natural resources. Whatever the case the campaign concepts below can serve as a starting point for nearly any style of game the players wish to tell stories in.





The Agents of the Crown Campaign Themes

The Great Game

The heroes become major players in England's bid to control Central Asia, India, and the Khyber Pass. They scheme and battle against the super-human agents of the Czar, the Kaiser, and the secret power of the Illuminati. Their missions take them all over the world, from the far-flung backwaters of the Empire, to lost temples near the rooftop of the world where ancient lamas hide the secrets of true power. It is they who act as the vanguard, keeping the forces of the great Russian bear at bay, and never allowing the sun to truly set on the British Empire. This campaign emphasizes travel, exotic locales, political intrigue, and action against agents from foreign countries.

Plot Option (Locale): Khyber Pass, Afghanistan

This remote mountain pass links northern India (what is present day Pakistan) to Afghanistan. Inhabited by sometimes hostile Afridi tribesmen of Pashtun stock, the Khyber has been the scene of horror and intrigue since the beginning of the great game. As the year 1875 dawns it has become the base of operations of a sinister organization bent upon the destruction of England and all she stands for in this world. The group (GM's can insert whatever foe they want in here) plans to foment civil war in the restive Sind province just south of the pass and spread revolution across the whole of the Raj, disrupting England's lucrative trade in goods like tea and cotton. These shadowy foes utilize a number of agents, including fierce Afghan tribesmen, and also have a number of aether-men at their disposal.

Plot Option (Locale): Bombay, India (The Raj)

This port city along the western coast of central India brims with intrigue and exoticism. By 1858 Britain had assumed direct control of Indian affairs from the East India Company, and to protect its interests there they placed several teams of Agents in the region, with Bombay being one of the first duty stations to be established. Given the presence of aether-men working for the Crown and those who oppose them close to hand, denizens of Bombay and travelers to the city often find themselves caught up in its many political and criminal intrigues. In addition to the small cadre of super-human Crown operatives in the city, deadly criminal cartels and Thuggee cults also control a number of aether-men, and they use them to oppose the law and further their dark conspiracies. Being a port town, Bombay has plenty of warehouses and a large dock district, providing perfect locations for set-piece battles and late-night intrigues.





Monster Hunters

The monsters are out there. Dracula lives and he has allied himself with the werewolves of the ancient forests, and vile flesh golems from forgotten laboratories. What do they want? World domination. They wish to control the world of man through human puppets and changelings. The Agents of the Crown possess the power to stop them. Only they can stand against the monsters in open combat and halt their nefarious plans. Can the agents do what is necessary to stop the beasts, even if it means that innocents may perish along the way? Can they stop the monsters without becoming them?

Plot Option (Locale): Romania††††

Formed in 1862 when Wallachia and Moldavia united in the aftermath of the Crimean War, this Eastern European nation contains the ancestral home of Dracula, prince of vampires and immortal lord of evil. Here Dracula still dwells, driven from his ancestral castle in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, but still dangerous and ever watchful for†a chance to strike at those who have pursued him and foiled his plans. It was Professor Abraham Van Helsing, working with a team of aether-men from England and France, who drove the dark lord from his roost and into hiding. Having survived, he now plots against the Empire from a hidden base beneath the streets of Bucharest.

Plot Option (Locale): Scotland

The Cult of Dagon has reformed in the British Isles in the quiet†countryside near Loch Ness. This time they succeed†in summoning a creature from†beyond time and†space! It's an aquatic beast that now lurks in the murky waters of Loch Ness, preying upon unwary fishermen and any others who†get too close to the water's edge. A spate of disappearances signals the alarm bell, and the Agents must come in and solve the mystery of the creature now dwelling in Loch Ness. Meanwhile, the cultists plot†to use their dark rituals to bring similar creatures to the Thames. Can an attack on London itself be far behind? †

Crime Busters

Victorian London is a cesspool of crime and every day the innocent suffer. Smuggling, thievery, and thuggery abound. Criminal masterminds sit behind the scenes pulling puppet strings of corrupt officials and petty criminals. Are there any honest authorities left? The Queen creates a small cadre of heroes tough enough to survive against all odds, and loyal enough to resist all forms of temptation. Or can they? The agents take on world-wide crime rings while also cleaning house on the home-front, all while trying to resist the lure of wealth and power a life of crime would bring them.

Plot Option (Foe): "Leviathan" Davis

This corpulent crime boss rules London's sporting underworld with an iron fist. His control of the underground fight and horse racing scenes have made him wealthy beyond all imagining, and allowed him to buy the services of constables and members of Parliament. His criminal network encompasses gambling, protection rackets, control of local gangs, kidsman (leaders of child pickpocket networks), and footpads. He possesses the ability to reach out and hurt nearly anyone who crosses him. He has grown too large (literally and figuratively!) for Scotland Yard to handle alone. Working on his own, a local aether-man vigilante attempted to end the Leviathan's reign, but found out too late that Davis himself possessed super-human powers. The crime-lord's massive bulk hid tremendous physical power and resiliency. He killed the vigilante with his bare hands and made an example of him. Now it will fall to the Agents of the Crown to end this growing criminal threat. Can they bring Leviathan Davis' underground empire down around him? GM's note: Complete game stats for Leviathan Davis appear in Chapter IV: Friends and Foes.





A Solid Case For the Criminally Insane Things are not going well. Retreat is almost inevitable.

A recent thuggish, and most odoriferous addition to my dastardly venture most ignorantly exclaims when babbling about Aether-men, "Nuffin' to be done 'bout it. Just a loadda 'orse shit. They--"

"You are by far the least pleasant person to participate in any of my previous ventures. Do not think for yourself, do you understand? You will follow my orders to the letter. I will ignore you for the rest of the evening."

"I'm fine wiff dat, chum--I'm the one breakin' the safe, 'member?"

A rolled eye and a snort. Denial and refocus. These are the things I must tolerate to make the world different in the ways I see fit. Thugs and street rats. Ordinary people proclaim that they cannot understand criminality. They pretend not to see right in all that I do. Blaming my genius on disorder of the brain. It never fails to arouse a chuckle. I very much hate the cows of London.

It was not going well. A simple task: to reclaim a vial of Simulacra-dyne† from a local police vault. Very important plans for the drug. Very sinister. Police slaughter is likely upon interference.†

Allow me to frame our little story. I am Malakai Duran. This is my recent project in circumvention of the law. This particular strike is political in nature. I oppose royal law concerning a serum dubbed "simulacra-dyne." Parliament ignores my demands because I am a criminal. Am I not also a citizen? A man? The corruption of the crown denies the potential of the sciences. Ironically, Aether-men survive this unscrupulous scrutiny.

Again, a frame to relate the nature of simulacra-dyne.

Simulacra-dyne:† a rare and unfamiliar hallucinogenic whose effects can only vaguely be likened to some of the hill fungi growing in the steamy windowsills of London's poverty-stricken cobblestone streets. As a bit of an expert on matters of legality, or rather, illegality, let me advise you that this particular alchemy is labeled Highly Prohibited by Royal Decree! It makes me chuckle, the blindness of law. They say it as such, Simulacra-dyne: fuel to dens of iniquity! Nay. It is anything but! The countless unexplored possibilities of simulacra-dyne. Even with only one personal experience of the effects of simulacra-dyne, I simply know it would be something groundbreaking. Simulacra-dyne lent me the hand of God! The† Crown fears that the serum might unveil a secret of our small universe; some ineffable truth finally made simple; dark secrets too skewed to imagine without plunging headfirst into a cold madness. The Crown fears even more the possibility that the average man might use the potion to better himself or to uncover the filth of the Crown's own nostrils. No, sire. simulacra-dyne is no fungus. And, yes, simulacra-dyne is very, very† dangerous. And, yes, the Crown should fear it. But not as much as they should fear the Aether-men.





It is not I, or any other villainous mastermind, that pose as the greatest threat to the crown. These Aether-men are as a ticking time bomb, waiting in lay; they themselves are even unaware of the disaster that they will bring upon London.

We criminal-type gentlemen operators have our work cut out for us and, as you can see, not all criminal activity is really very criminal when you lay it all out in ink. Simulacra-dyne's infinite potential is inhibited by the Crown. But more tangibly, the Aether-men. They are the real problem.

My brutish accomplice pulls up his sleeves and begins to work on the safe.

“Do you fink dat we’ll get froo the gate in enough time, Malkalai?”

“Yes. I do. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be here. You alone would be here, and I would be in my den enjoying a quiet evening. Waiting for news of your failure and incarceration. Also, my name is Malakai. Enough cows have died for the opportunity we are pursuing. Please don’t cause me to slaughter any more with your blubbering and fumbling.”

I can sense them. The Aether-men. They are here. Mindless automatons for the Crown; a splinter in my mind. They will stop us at the gate. My miscalculations annoy me. But no matter, I will depart as a wraith in the night. Home to my den. Awaiting the news.





World Explorers

Vast areas of the world's surface lie unexplored, its treasures and mysteries unknown to civilized society. The Blue Nile Falls near Lake Tana in Africa hide a secret cave where the remnants of an expedition of Prester John's knights made their last stand against angry natives. The drifting dunes along the Silk Road in Southern Asia have buried countless treasures and fallen societies beneath their shifting sands. The steaming jungles of South America's Amazon River Basin hide strange plants and exotic animals whose very natures hold unlimited promise to science and man's understanding of his world.

Plot Option (Locale): † Africa--Congo Basin

Deep in the jungles of the Congo rests the remains of the lost City of Ivory. Once the center of †an ancient and prosperous African empire, it fell into ruin when half of its populace turned to the worship of dark beings from beyond time and space. Tempted by green-robed, shambling priests, these heretics made war upon their brothers and brought the City of Ivory low. Reclaimed by the surrounding jungle, its remnants await foolish travelers who seek its secret riches and terrible truths. Its haunted halls have recently †claimed a famous explorer with powerful friends in Parliament. The Agents of the Crown must undertake an expedition to affect his rescue, or return his remains. Can they battle the deadly jungle, hostile natives, and the horrors of a death-haunted city to accomplish their task?

Plot Option (Foes): Pirates of the Indian Ocean

Off the coast of East Africa lies the island of Zanzibar, former capital of the slave trade. Despite the end of slavery in the Americas, the trade still continues here, and rabid bands of Zanzibari pirates prey upon ships laden with goods and human cargo. Answering a request from an influential ex-patriate who now resides in Zanzibar, the Agents must break up the pirate ring and restore order to the seas. Although instructed not to directly oppose the slave traders, can they resist the chance to end the human suffering brought on by the foul business?

Plot Option (Locale): Greenland

The Agents are asked to accompany British explorer George Nares on his expedition to Greenland. Once there they find more than they bargained for, with the expedition's chief scientist uncovering several strange obelisks covered in a bizarre, unknown script. Improperly handled, the obelisks will open a doorway into another world, unleashing a strange snow-beast possessed of a malign intelligence. Will the party (and the Agents) make it back to their ship in time? Can they destroy the obelisks and seal the passage to the other world before it's too late?

Mars Attacks!

The heroes must beat back invaders from Mars, as the horrors of H.G. Wells' War of the Worlds arrive on earth to enslave its populace and siphon its resources. After the initial strike the Agents must martial their forces and lead a counter-attack, or perhaps they must risk all and take to the heavens in a stolen alien spacecraft, striking at the alien fleet's mother-ship from low-earth orbit. A trip to Mars itself may be in order, attacking the aliens on their vulnerable home world while the bulk of their forces are campaigning against the Earth. Other planets may also hold hidden dangers, or even provide the primary threat. Perhaps the mist-shrouded world of Venus hides a race of vampiric aliens bent on using the people of earth as cattle. The known moons of the gas giant Uranus might also provide the spark for adventure. The moons Umbriel and Ariel harbor two warring populations of ancient Faerie who wish to use the Agents as pawns in their own Great Game of galactic domination.





Plot Option (Foe): Pawns of the Warlord

Instead of mounting a full scale invasion of Earth, Martian Warlord Durzon kidnaps a group of aether-men (the players) to use in his personal war with a rival warlord. The Agents are taken to Mars where they must battle the enemies of Durzon if they ever hope to see home. Here for the first time they see the terrible potential of Martian power, including hundreds of well-armed sky galleons capable of making the trip to Earth. They can play it straight and fight for Durzon to win their freedom, or try to steal a craft and make it back to Earth. Having seen the hardy warriors Earth can produce, Durzon and his fellows might come to the conclusion that a preemptive strike is needed before they grow too powerful and seek out new territory on Mars. This would be a perfect precursor to a full-on invasion campaign.

Plot Option (Foes): War of the Worlds!

Just like the classic book by H. G. Wells, Martians are invading Earth, and drawn to the high concentration of aetheric energy in England, they're starting with London! The Agents must investigate the sites of their landings and assess the threat. They will quickly come to realize these Martians see humans as little more than cattle to be herded and processed†as a dietary resource. The Agents will have to match their powers against the superior alien technology and mental might of the Martians. GM's should†refer to the†information in Chapter IV: Friends and Foes†when setting up encounters with†the Martians.†Technically savvy Agents might even be able to use the Martian transport pods to take the fight back to the invaders on their home planet.





Chapter III.

The Victorian World in Brief

This thorough guide to the Victorian world ranging from roughly 1830 - 1900 provides GM's and players with enough background to tell believable tales around the tabletop. Notes on finances, transportation, daily life in England, the British Empire's many holdings and much more render the setting in greater detail. Specific sections on London and Bombay circa 1875 are also provided. Some historical facts and dates have been altered to better fit the campaign background. This material is supplemented by a small section of period maps in the rear of this monograph.

KEY LOCATIONS-- NOTABLE PLACES IN LONDON AND BOMBAY

The spots discussed below make excellent locales for set-piece battles, villainous or heroic hideouts, or otherwise interesting meeting places in which to set any role-play scene.

LONDON

With a history that goes back more than 2,000 years to its time as a Roman trading outpost, the Victorian era London of 1875 is place of many contrasts. Juxtaposing vast wealth and possibility alongside unimaginable poverty and suffering, London holds more than its share of adventure and intrigue. Game masters and players wishing to learn more about London during the Victorian era should consult the bibliography for the source material used in the writing of this monograph. The rest of this section provides shorthand information on important locations and other aspects of life in London.

Buckingham Palace

This stately edifice has been the official town residence of the British monarch since 1837, and is located near Saint James's Park, London. The palace was purchased for the royal family in 1761 by George III, but was built some years before (in 1703) by John Sheffield, 1st duke of Buckingham and Normandy (1648-1721). Until the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, Buckingham Palace played second to St. James's Palace as the official residence of the royals. Remodeled by John Nash in 1825, Buckingham still retained its basic neoclassical structure and style. During the construction of a ballroom in 1856 an aether-man assassin infiltrated one of the work crews and made an attempt on the life of one of the Queen's advisers. Fortunately, several agents were nearby and prevented the disaster from occurring. The ensuing battle of super-powered combatants actually demolished several wall sections slated for destruction by the building plans. Afterward the Queen was heard to joke that she should employ more aether-men on her work crews to speed the completion of the tasks!

East End

In 1875 the East End of London forms the commercial and money-making quarter of the thriving metropolis. This sprawling area encompasses the Port, the Docks, the Custom House, the Bank, the Exchange, the General Post Office, and innumerable counting houses of merchants, money-changers, and brokers. In spite of the existence of so much wealth, the area still contains pockets of extreme poverty, including a few run-down neighborhoods where poorer workers and those who would prey upon them congregate. More than a few aether-men work in this area as private security operatives for larger financial concerns.





The Free Library of the Corporation of the City of London

This handsome, Tudor-style hall was built in 1871-72 and contains over 40,000 volumes, including several valuable specimens of early printing, and all the works on or connected with London that have ever been published. It also possesses a very fine collection of maps and plans of London, along with a series of English medals and other artifacts of the nation's history. The right side of the building contains the basic Reading Room. Admission is free for the reading room. Another area of the building contains a museum featuring Roman antiquities, including a strange hexagonal funeral column found in Ludgate Hill that might suggest the existence of aether-men even in ancient times. The library is open daily from 10:00 AM until 9:00 PM.

Haymarket Theater

Originally a summer theater, built by John Potter, a carpenter, and opened for the first time, December 29, 1721. It was known at first as "The Little Theatre in the Haymarket" to distinguish it from the other theater on the opposite side of the street, built by Vanbrugh a few years earlier. It's colorful past includes riots, changes in ownership, and rows over censorship of performances. In 1767 it was made a royal theater.

London Docks

This sprawling riverside complex is situated on the left bank of the Thames, between St. Katherine's Docks and Shadwell. The first and largest dock was opened January 30, 1805. The entrance from the Thames at Shadwell was added in 1831, and the vast New Tea Warehouses (capable of receiving 120,000 chests) were erected in 1844-45. This remarkable operation covers an area of some 90 acres: 35 acres of water and 12,980 feet of quay and jetty frontage, with three entrances from the Thames (Hermitage: 40ft. wide, Wapping: 40 ft. wide, and Shadwell: 45 ft. wide).

Tower of London

The most historic fortress of the city of London, the Tower is located on the north bank of the Thames River, and built on the remains of Roman fortifications. The tower complex covers†eighteen acres and†stands on a slight rise†referred to by Londoners as†Tower Hill. Four turrets flank the original tower, known as the White Tower or Keep,†and the entire complex is enclosed by two lines of fortifications. It was built about 1078 by Gundulf, bishop of Rochester (1024?ñ1108). Despite a restoration to its†exterior†the 18th century, the interior still†retains much of its original Norman character. Later buildings surrounding the original keep include a barracks and a chapel built in the 14th century and restored in the 16th century. Known as the Ballium Wall, the inner fortifications†feature†twelve towers. Several of these towers have notable historical significance. The Bloody Tower†was†made infamous as the location of the murder in 1483 of the English child king Edward V and his brother Richard Plantagenet, duke of York. Record or Wakefield Tower is†where the records were formerly kept and the royal regalia (symbols and emblems, such as crowns and scepters) are†guarded in the modern era.†Devereux Tower derives its†name from its most famous prisoner, Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, who was held there before his execution for treason in 1601.†Another Plantagenet, George,†duke of Clarence, supposedly also met his fate in Devereux Tower when he was drowned in a barrel of wine.†Jewel Tower†is famous as the former†storehouse of the royal†regalia.

The tower†also saw use as a royal residence as well as†a prison until Elizabethan times. By the time of the rise of the aether-men phenomenon in 1835, use of the tower as a prison†had been mostly†discontinued. In keeping with its somewhat dark history, executions were held either in the central keep or outside the tower on Tower Hill. As of 1875, the Agents of the Crown maintain an office and training facility in and around the Tower. The Jewel Tower houses an office for Edward Lamb and several assistants, and some secret†excavations below this have created a two acre square training area for newly recruited Agents. This area is in place to make certain new arrivals have at least a basic level of control of their powers.





Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory

These three edifices lie within or adjoin Westminster Hall, and are mentioned together in a grant of wardenship by Henry VII (1485). Heaven was a tavern where Pepys occasionally dined. Hell, formerly a prison for king's debtors, was also a tavern, but possessed of a much nastier atmosphere, though still much frequented by lawyers. Purgatory also acted as a temporary prison in ancient days.

The Rookeries

Collective name for any number of slums harboring the poor, petty criminals, and any number of dark cults and saboteurs, the Rookeries also produce more than their share of aether-men. Often little more than a wretched collection of winding streets and rundown buildings, they bare a well earned reputation for misery and squalor. Writers and social crusaders often refer to neighborhoods in the Rookeries as sinks of iniquity. One of the most notorious of the Rookery areas is a district bounded by Bainbridge Street, George Street, and High Street. Infamous for its many cul de sacs and grimy court yards, the poor residents of this Rookery, like many of its ilk across the city, live in constant fear of the gangs of thieves and other petty criminals who run its streets. House of prostitution, opium dens, and rundown tenements provide excellent bases of operation for a recently revived Cult of Dagon. They operate from an Opium Den on High Street, and already two Agents investigating the place have failed to return after entering its shadowed walls.

South Kensington Museum

Located in Brompton to the south of Hyde Park, the museum was opened in 1857 and operates as one of the subdivisions of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education. The Department uses the museum to further its chief goal of promoting art and science through the training of talented new students and returning researchers and professionals. It is open to the public free of charge on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Its many galleries and features include: the Museum of Ornamental or Applied Art, the National Gallery of British Art, the Art Library (50,000 volumes), and the School of Art. Many of the professionals working and teaching at the museum have done extensive research into the theory of aether-men and aetheric energy, as well furthering the study of the form of the aether-man, including some of the more radical mutations some aether-men undergo when their powers manifest. GM's should check the last section of this monograph for a map of the museum.

Trafalgar Square

Named after the famous Battle of Trafalgar (1805), this bustling area is considered by many to be the heart of London. It features famous architectural features Nelson's Column and the four lion statues that stand guard around it. In addition to the column and the bronze lions, a number fountains and statues also decorate the area. Perhaps the most notable building along the square is the National Gallery, established in 1824 to house the nation's royal art collection. Any attempt by thieves (super-powered or otherwise), to rob the gallery would likely result in a chase that would spill into Trafalgar Square, and the square itself would make an excellent location for a set-piece battle between opposing forces of aether-men.

West End

The concentration of greatest wealth in London lies in the West End. Quite simply, the population of the West End makes the laws, spends the money, and regulates the fashions of the times. The West contains the Palace of the Queen, the mansions of the aristocracy, the many social clubs frequented by the wealthy, museums, picture galleries, theaters, barracks, and Houses of Parliament, and countless government offices. It also contains a large number of parks, squares, and verdant gardens.





BOMBAY

The Bombay of 1875 is a large, prosperous and bustling port city along the west coast of India. It is located in the central region of the country, and serves as access point for imports and exports. Bombay's Agent operations are run by Deputy Director General Mycroft Beckham, Ret. Beckham maintains several offices around the country, and his office in Bombay sits in the Kilah, a massive stone fortification facing the port. Whole sections of the Kilah have been modernized and set up for use by Agents as a staging base and living space. Here Agents can relax while off-duty, or maintain their training in the use of their amazing powers.

Getting There

round 1875 the most common means for a British citizen to get to Bombay was by catching a steamer at Marseilles (France) and traveling through the Mediterranean. This first leg of the trip would often include a stop at Malta, and then the voyage would continue on through the isthmus of the Suez. While stopped near Egypt, passengers could often spend a day or more in Cairo before the trip resumed. Once through the Suez and a change of ship, the passage continued through to the Red Sea. Around ten days out from the starting point, the travelers would reach the port of Aden, where their ship would stop again to take on additional stores of coal. With agreeable weather, six days would be all that was needed to complete the journey from the fuel stop at Aden to the harbor of Bombay. In all the journey would take sixteen to twenty days, providing everything went relatively smoothly.

About the City

Excerpt from Agent's Primer on India, written by Deputy Director General Mycroft Beckham, Ret.:

"Some travelers of the day have remarked that Bombay is not so much a city, but rather a conglomeration of vast districts, situated a short distance from each other on an island which gives them a collective name. The city came under British control in 1661 when Charles II married Catherine of Portugal and she brought it along as her dowry. Some of Bombay's most notable features include the massive fort (called the Kilah) which faces the port, and a number of vast warehouses used to store cotton and other goods so central to the Raj's overall economy. In 1875 Bombay's population stands at around 700,000, with many of those individuals quite resentful of British rule in spite of the tremendous advantages we have brought them. Put your faith only in those natives whom the office of the Crown has labeled as trusted."

A Note on the Climate

Excerpt from Agent's Primer on India, written by Deputy Director General Mycroft Beckham, Ret.:

"Bombay, like so many other spots in the region, knows only two seasons, dry and wet. From March 15th to October 15th it rains almost constantly. The wet season is humid with average temperatures around 85 F. Between the months of June and September monsoons blanket the city in a torrent of rain water. The dry season offers residents and tourists cooler temperatures and lower humidity. Incoming Agents should be sure to bring several sets of clothing with them, including at least a week's worth of socks. Female Agents are encouraged to wear trousers when on official business in Bombay, especially during the rainy season. Pursuing suspicious sorts while wearing petticoats or other loose garments should be discouraged."





The Royal Hotel

One of the few hotels known to provide lodgings of acceptable quality, the Royal Hotel sits on the Boulevard of Mangoes just through the city's fortified gate. The establishment is run by Parsees, descendants of Persian Zoroastrians and known locally as "fire worshipers". Accommodations at the hotel are spartan, at best, with bedrooms separated by partitions of white-washed cloth, and with no furniture beyond a bed surrounded by a mosquito curtain and a table and two chairs.

Excerpt from Agent's Primer on India, written by Deputy Director General Mycroft Beckham, Ret.:

"This is where you are likely to stay the first night after your arrival in Bombay. A trusted native associate of the Crown will come by the next morning to move you to your permanent quarters in the Kilah."

The Parsees' Bazaar

This section of the city is inhabited almost entirely by Parsees who run a sprawling open-air market during the day and evening hours, their merchant stalls situated in the ground floors of their homes.† These colorful buildings line the winding street and form numerous alleys and dead-end passages ideal for trapping unsuspecting victims after hours. When darkness falls the Parsees retreat indoors and criminal elements take to the streets. Rumor has it that one of the local gangs of smugglers is led by an aether-man capable of bending iron with his bare hands.

Excerpt from Agent's Primer on India, written by Deputy Director General Mycroft Beckham, Ret.:

"We have a number of trusted associates among the natives of the Parsees' Bazaar, but do not let your guard down if an assignment or other cause brings you there. The Iron Sikh and his cohorts roam the bazaar after dark and they are dangerous lot to meet while with a team, and deadly to encounter when alone."

MONEY AND EXPENSES

English currency around 1875 is arranged without much reference to the decimal system. English gold coins are the sovereign or pound (l.=livre) equal to 20 shillings, and the half-sovereign. The silver coins are the crown (5 shillings), the half crown, the florin (2 shillings), the shilling (s.), and the six-penny, four-penny, and three-penny pieces. The bronze coinage consists of the penny (d.), of which 12 make a shilling, the halfpenny, and the farthing (1/4 d.). The guinea, a sum of 21s., though still used in reckoning, is no longer in circulation as coin as of 1880 or so.

The Bank of England issues notes for £5, £10, £20, £50, and £100, and upwards. These are useful for paying large sums. Foreign money does not circulate in England. One gold sovereign is equal to about 5 U.S. dollars or 25 French Francs.





Travel to and From London and North America

Routes to England from the United States of America and Canada

Cunard Line. A steamer from this company starts every Wednesday from New York and Every Saturday from Boston for Queenstown or Liverpool. Cabin fare is 80-100 dollars, or 16-20 sovereigns. Steerage passengers can travel at an economical rate of around 30 dollars. These steamers depart their London stops for America on Thursday and Monday respectively.

National Steamship Company. Steamers from Liverpool and also from London direct to New York every Wednesday. Cabin fares 10, 12, or 18 sovereigns; return-ticket 22 and 24 sovereigns. Steerage customers can trade comfort for a reduced rate 1 of 6 sovereigns. From New York to Liverpool every Saturday, and from New York to London weekly.

Allan Line. From the middle of April to the beginning of November a steamer leaves Quebec for Liverpool every Saturday, and another leaves Liverpool for Quebec every Thursday. Cabin fares 12l., 15l., or 18l. From Liverpool every other Tuesdays to St. John's, New Foundland Halifax, and Baltimore, returning from Baltimore every other Wednesday, leaving Halifax on the following Tuesday and St. John's on the following Thursday. Cabin fares 12l., 15l., or 18l.

The average duration of the passage across the Atlantic is 8 Ω - 10 Ω days. The best time for crossing is summer. Other competing Atlantic lines include American Steamship Company, North German Lloyd Line, Inman Line, and the Anchor Line.

Travel from England to the Continent

Dover to Calais, twice a day, in 1 æ hr.; cabin 8s. 6d., steerage 6s. Railway from London to Dover, or vice versa, in 2-4 hrs.; fares 20s. or 18s. 6d., 15s. or 13s. 6d., 6s. 9d. or 6s. 2d.

London to Calais, twice a week, in 10 hrs.; 12s. or 8s. 6d.

London to Marseilles, after taking a steamer to Calais, by rail, in 10 hrs.; 6s. or 4s

London to Rotterdam, three times a week, in 18-20 hrs.; 20s. or 16s.

London to Hamburg, five times per week, 36-40 hrs.; 2l. 5s. or 1l. 9s.

London to Boulogne, daily, in 9 hrs.; 12s. or 8s. 6d.

Brief Price List of Everyday Items and Services

GM's Note: Agents are well compensated and generally have their living expenses paid for by the government, but it might prove helpful to know some basic prices of items during the Victorian era (circa 1875) should the need arise. Prices are in listed in pounds (£), shillings (s), or pence (d), and in some cases might represent a week or more worth of expenditures.

Beer (3 pints)†4d

Boots 10s/6d

Bread (10 loaves) 2s/4d

Laundry 9d per week

Meat 4s per week

Men's Suit (fine) 2£/10s

Milk 11d per week

Overcoat 1£/15s

Rent 5s/6d per week

Tea (1/2 lb) 1s per week

Tobacco 6d per week

Vegetables (20 lbs) 1s





Many friends (and many whom I suspect are not!) have asked me in the course of my writings to comment in these pages on the sensation of aether-men. In my role as uncommerical traveler for the great house of Human Interest Brothers I have seen many little things and some great things, which by their fantastic nature caused me to doubt the quality of my own eyes. Yet here I write these words and tell my interested readers that I have witnessed the super-human first-hand on more than one occasion. This brief installment will deal with the first instance of my relationships with aether-men, those wondrous men and women said to risk life and limb for the glory of the Crown and the cause of the common man.

There are some small out-of-the-way landing places on the Thames and the Medway where I do much of summer idling. Chatham Dockyard is one of these places. Running water is favorable to day-dreams, and a strong tidal river is the best of running water for mine. I like to watch the great ships standing out to sea, or coming home richly laden, the active little steam-tugs confidently puffing with them to and from the sea horizon, and the sweat stained dock-men loading and unloading their cargoes, readying their unknown contents for delivery to the streets of London and beyond. While watching these objects and activities from the shade of an overhanging warehouse awning, I had occasion to witness a near-disastrous accident. A massive pallet laden with goods from a moored ship slipped its wrappings as it was being transferred from its ship-born resting to the docks below, sending a great crate the size of a stage coach down upon the shocked laborers who stood transfixed beneath it.

In the second it took the object to fall a man of mountainous shoulders stepped seemingly from nowhere to stand beneath the careening mass and catch it as you or I might catch the lightest pillow. For a bare moment he stood hefting the massive crate, and then went to one knee, setting it gently to the dock surface. The two men heid save stood jaws agape at his Herculean feat. The man merely stood and nodded obligingly, his face hidden beneath the shadows cast by his cap. He seemed almost not to notice the astonishment of myself and the other onlookers. He removed his cap to reveal a shock of blond hair and wiped his sweaty brow with the back of his hand, and then walked smoothly away into the shadows of Chathamís many neighboring warehouses.

To this taciturn, humble hero I am indebted for my first brush with the amazing aether-men! Seeing him at that moment was like seeing some great beast of Africa for one-self after hearing its like recounted by many an explorer. The experience left me hungry for more, and in my travels that is just what I received. But that, dear reader, will have to wait for another installment.

--Charles Dickens,

Writing in the publication All the Year Round,

June, 1860





The Population of London

Swelled by massive waves of immigrants throughout the 19th century, London's population by 1875 stands at around five million.

Religion in the Victorian Age

The default start time for an Agents of the Crown campaign is around 1875. Aether-men first appear in 1835, and during that period England's religious world revolved around the Protestant Church of England. Until 1850, the Catholic Church lacked direct control over its parishes and churches in England, but during that year Pope Pius IX restores the Roman Catholic hierarchy in U. K. This move came as a result of the Catholic Church's desire to minister to the influx of Irish Catholics from famine-ravaged Ireland into England.

Although liberals in England saw this as merely an extension of the position of tolerance that allowed Protestants and Catholics to co-exist in relative peace over the past decades, hard-liners in the Church of England saw the Catholic Church's resurgence as a direct challenge to their spiritual supremacy. Amidst the smoldering angers of religious hatred and mistrust Pope Pius IX also took the time to address the religious significance of aether-men. In December of 1850, some months after the re-establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy in England, the Pope released a Papal Bull that basically declared aether-men "human", and even declared them "special children of God."

Meanwhile, the officials of the Church of England had been less than welcoming to the appearance of super-humans in society. The lack of an official position was not helped by the fiery speeches of certain Vicars who called the aether-men "fiends in human form," and railed against their "god-like pretensions." Indeed some aether-men did use their new found powers for murky religious purposes, attracting cult-like followers and weaving biblical, mainly Judeo-Christian themes into their own self-made mythos. However, these zealots and fanatics were the exception rather than the norm among aether-men, as most either shunned the official positions on the church all together, or simply went about their religious lives as they always had. Until 1850 the Church of England could not arrive at a consistent, clearly stated position on the origins, greater purpose, and religious significance of the aether-men.

By 1850 the aether-men in England were becoming a sensation. Whether beloved or feared by the populace, their celebrity status was cemented by a growing list of acts of heroism for the Crown. Whether politically calculated or born from a sincere desire to include them in the Catholic Church's growing family of converts, Pope Pius' public proclamation of God's love for the Aether Men won the church great favor among many British citizens who might have otherwise seen them as interlopers.

Many other religions and spiritual belief systems were extant in the 19th century. Below each is summarized in the context of a world transformed by the presence of super-humans.





Agnosticism

Invented by Cambridge scholar Thomas Huxley in the 1860s, the concept of Agnosticism grew out of the thinker's natural tendency to question key aspects religious canon. In light of the appearance of the aether men decades earlier, and their subsequent documented feats of super-human power, Huxley and others naturally began to look back with some skepticism at the many stories in the Bible and in other religious and mythological texts. "The many miracles and displays of power in those sacred texts could indeed be the work of the aether-men of an earlier time," wrote Huxley to a fellow scholar at Oxford. He went on to state that "this theory does not necessarily discount the existence of a divine power, but does call into question how many interpreted his works."

Huxley's questions opened the door to more liberal interpretations of the nature of the "godhead," and the rise of science and the Industrial Revolution, coupled with the constant presence of the aether-men lent credence to a certain degree of circumspection when discussing religion.

Atheism

If the phenomenon of flying men and bullet proof women encouraged Agnostics to ask more penetrating and challenging questions of the religious elites, it lit a fire beneath the collective boots of a growing number of atheists, sending them out from the relative safety of their intellectual hiding places and into the streets, openly proclaiming that the aether-men were proof of man's natural progression as a species (see the sidebar on Evolution), and that many claims of the religious and the supernatural are really within the province of science.

Originally attributed to 18th century thinker Thomas Hobbes, the idea of atheism, or a rejection of the concept of a divine power, has begun to take root in the minds of many common folk. Some more militant atheists have argued that the Catholic Church's quick acceptance of aether-men as "special children of god" was merely a transparent attempt to co-opt a natural phenomena into the province of religion, like claiming that the reason the sun rises every day is that the hand of God stands behind it.

Buddhism

Sharing the trappings of both a religion and a philosophy, Buddhism is still quite exotic and mysterious to the westerners in the Victorian era. A gift from the enlightened Gautama Buddha himself, the tenets of Buddhism include ethical conduct, the performance of good deeds, a renunciation of worldly matters, the pursuit of clarity of thought through meditation, and appeals to enlightened beings for guidance. Practiced mainly in China, Tibet, and India, Buddhism's spread to places like London and Paris came mainly through the immigration of adherents from those countries to the western world. Open minded western travelers and explorers have also done some work in telling the story of Buddhism. Aether-men have gained acceptance by most Buddhists as part of the natural order. In China aether-men work for local warlords securing territory and enforcing order. In Tibet an order of militant, nationalist monks led by an aether-man named Shao-Kung control large monastery in the Himalayas. There they adhere to a more martial sect of Buddhism that preaches action against evil as the path to enlightenment.

Deism

Many of the other religions found themselves borrowing from the basic tenets of Deism as they struggled to integrate the reality of the aether-man into their own ethos. Born from the diverse writings and experiences of men like Copernicus and Francis Bacon, adherents of Deism maintain that God exists as part of the natural order of things, and reject the notion that the Bible is the direct message of God to his people. Deists also reject the concepts of the Trinity and the idea of mankind needing a savior. The beliefs of Deism stem from reason and the observation of the "natural laws" witnessed in nature.

When the aether-men appeared it required almost no effort for Deists of the day to "slot" the super-humans into their natural hierarchy.





Hinduism

Thought to be one of the oldest organized religious faiths, Hinduism comprises philosophy, theology, and mythology, and its teachings are spread across many holy books. As a polytheistic faith, Hinduism recognizes the existence of many gods in its pantheon. Complex and multi-layered, Hinduism is ultimately a search for the truth and purity of the soul.

Godly avatars called Devas play a large part in Hinduism, and when the first aether-men began to appear across the Indian sub-continent, they were mistakenly taken as physical manifestations of these Devas. Some less scrupulous aether-men used this confusion to their advantage, forming powerful cults of personality that challenged the order of things and existed only for the self-aggrandizement of the cult leader. British authorities and Indian religious leaders cooperated to unmask these men and women as frauds in order to control rising tensions between rival “Devas”. Many Indian aether-men became champions of rural villages and towns, protecting them from bandits, government exploitation, and natural hardships.

Islam

One of the three largest monotheistic world religions, Islam was founded in Arabia and based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (or Mahomet in the Victorian world of 1875). The word islam literally means submission in Arabic, but as a religious term in the Koran, it means submission to the will or law of God. Practitioners of Islam are known as Muslims, but in 1875 they would commonly have been referred to as Mohammedan, or Moslem peoples. Just as in other faiths of the time, when aether-men first manifested around the world, Moslem holy men, or Imams, had different reactions to them. Some Imams accepted Moslem aether-men as they would any other member of their mosque, but others decried them as foul spawn of the devil. Moslem scholars and high-ranking holy men quickly convened a council in Medina (Arabia) to address the role of aether-men in their world, and in Moslem holy law, called Shari’a. Since no case could be found in Shari’a that dealt with such beings, the principle of equity was invoked and the Imams, judges, and others of the council created a provision that stated that as long as a Moslem aether-men (or djinns, as they are commonly called in the Arab world) followed the laws of Shari’a, they could be accepted into the fabric of Moslem religious society.

Judaism

Despite rashes of anti-Semitism throughout Nineteenth-Century England, Judaism and Jewish people managed to make their own way in England. Many Protestant supporters, citing the need for fair treatment and acceptance of all religions, fought for Jewish acceptance into the fabric of British society. Key battles were waged for the rights of Jewish citizens of the Crown to hold public offices and fully participate in deciding the fate and direction of country.

Just as there were aether-men of Sikh and Buddhist faiths, so too were their Jewish super-humans. Some of these Jewish aether-men cloaked themselves in the teachings and beliefs of Kabbalah, a form of Jewish mysticism embracing the more esoteric teachings of the Talmud, the Jewish holy book. Other less pious individuals simply made their Judaism secondary to the fact that they could fly, project rays from their eyes, or see through walls. They were aether-men first, Jews second. Their presence in British society further cemented the role of Judaism as a legitimate, if minority, faith among a growing number of religious traditions.





Occultism

Any discussion of Occultism during the Victorian era must include the sometimes mysterious Order of the Golden Dawn, a group of magicians founded by Dr. William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott, and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers. These three men also happened to be Freemasons, and their association with that ancient order afforded them access to strange texts from the ancient, ante-deluvian city of Enoch. Westcott was able to decode these cipher manuscripts sometime in 1877, and in so doing unlocked magical formulae that allowed a skilled user to tap into the strange aetheric energies roiling in neighboring dimensions. Westcott and his fellows founded the Order of the Golden Dawn based on these principles. They became sorcerers of a kind, and set about codifying their new found order's rules of power and conduct.

The Order of the Golden Dawn was not the only place to turn for those seeking occult knowledge and power. Other orders arose claiming similar origins; some dusty text or scroll had given them access to powers similar to those of the now famous aether-men. However, membership in one of these orders did not guarantee one power. Indeed, the majority of these groups' members proved unable to wield fabled powers at all. The complex formulae and vexing metaphysical gymnastics require of the student a mind-numbing level of purpose most adherents could not muster. Many tried, but only a select few found actual power.

Spiritualism

The Spiritualist movement began with the writings of intellectual Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Swedenborg wrote that he could communicate with spirits, and outlined a detailed structure of the spirit-world. This hierarchy included the existence of multiple hells and heavens, and the idea that spirits could act as advisers to people in the waking world. Indeed, Swedenborg believed they could be intermediaries between humans and God. Swedenborg's intellectual descendants in the Spiritualism movement (many actually calling themselves Swedenborgians) seized upon the arrival of super-humans on the scene in 1835 as proof that there was a larger world unseen by human eyes. They reasoned that the existence of real powers wielded by spiritually transfigured humans proved that the spirit-world could act upon the waking one. Whether the accident in 1835 revealed what had always been there, or opened portals to the other realms Swedenborg wrote about, the incidence of supernatural activity increased dramatically after 1835, buoying the adherents of the Spiritualist movement swelling their ranks of believers into the millions by the mid-19th century.

Madame Blavatsky

Noted medium and mother of the New Age movement, Helena Blavatsky was born July 31, 1831, four years before the explosion of aetheric energy that unleashed a new population of super-humans onto the world. In her early travels during the late 1840s she unlocked the keys to her own mesmeric powers. Although she never referred to herself as an aether-man, she did display the ability to read the thoughts of her subjects on more than one occasion. Her astral explorations into the worlds beyond the physical realm coincided with the Spiritualism movement, and presented a serious threat to the organized religions of the day. Blavatsky mollified some of her critics by later developing the Theosophy movement, a belief that accepted many of the basic tenets of organized religions as fundamentally true, but ultimately flawed. This still enraged some radicals, and they sent their own aether-men to kill her on more than one occasion. Using her powers to sense when she was in danger, Blavatsky also surrounded herself with super-human bodyguards who did their best to protect her. After 1875 she traveled to India, making it more difficult for her foes to reach her. For a full game write of Ms. Blavatsky see Chapter IV: Friends and Foes..





Evolution

Introduced to the larger masses by the research of naturalist Charles Darwin in 1859, the theory of Evolution became a sensation and a source of controversy among intellectuals, churchmen, and philosophers of all stripes. The theory suggested that through the process of natural selection, the inherited traits of organisms change and adapt to their environment. The most successful organisms are those that adapt best to their environments, developing the most of effective means of obtaining nourishment and defending themselves. Of course, this theory incited controversy among religious factions who challenged Darwin's assertion that nature, and not God, set the developmental course of life on Earth. The conflict was further worsened by the advent of Social Darwinism, as philosophers and policy makers debated whether or not certain types of people were simply born inferior to others. This kind of thinking fed an ugly racism and was used to explain away the human suffering caused by colonialism. However, the now twenty year existence of aether-men threw these arguments of social engineering into chaos, for who could be worthier and fitter to dominate than a woman who could lift a fully loaded carriage, or a man who could read the minds of his fellows? Indeed, Social Darwinists were sent packing in most arguments when they realized they were no longer at the top of the evolutionary food-chain.





Time Line of English History & Events (1830-1880)

1830 Tennyson's Poems Chiefly Lyrical published; Wellington government falls

1832 Reform Act takes first steps toward increasing representation and voting rights

1833 Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Empire

1834 Lord Melbourne P.M.

1835 Halley's Comet passes close to Earth; botched ritual releases Aetheric energy clouds around the globe

1836 Parliament assigns special investigator to look into claims of people with superhuman powers

1838 Sirius becomes first ship to cross Atlantic entirely under steam power

1840 Opium War; New Zealand annexed

1842 Income Tax imposed; Hong Kong annexed

1843 Illustrated London News coins the term 'aether-men' to describe individuals with super-human powers

1845 Potato crop begins to fail; HRH Prince Albert forms the Agents of the Crown

1846 Potato Famine; Repeal of Corn Laws; Russel P.M.

1847 Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights published; Chloroform first used

1848 Public Health Act addresses crises in sewage and drainage

1849 Punjab annexed





1851 Great Exhibition held in London

1855 Palmerston P.M.

1856 John Hanning Speke explores the Victoria Nyanza lake in Africa

1857 Indian Mutiny (aether-men fight on both sides); Palmerston defeated, then returns

1858 India transferred to direct control of the Crown

1859 Livingstone on Lake Nyassa; Franco-Austrian War

1860 Great Expectations published; source of the Nile discovered

1861 American Civil War begins; Prince Albert dies at the hands of rogue aether-man

1863 Taiping Rebellion in China

1865 Alice in Wonderland published

1867 Disraeli P.M.; Reform Act

1868 Gladstone P.M.; Abyssinian Campaign

1870 Franco-German War

1872 Ballot Act introduces secret system of voting

1874 Disraeli P.M.; Ashantee War

1875 Gladstone assumes Liaison post with AotC





Chapter IV.

Friends and Foes

Numerous potential enemies and allies are listed, furnishing GM's with a host of story possibilities. Plots against the Crown, vile cults of the Elder Gods, angry denizens of conquered lands, sinister killers prowling the darkened streets of London, dangerous threats from beyond the stars, and many more potential enemies arise to confound the heroes and threaten every decent citizen's way of life. A number of friendly organizations and individuals will also help the heroes along their way. GM's should use these characters and creatures as a starting point for their rogues galleries. The world of Victorian science fiction and fantasy is filled with other possible threats that can be used to move a story along or challenge the players in new and unexpected ways. GM's looking to mine classic and popular literature for ideas should check the bibliography in Appendix II for more ideas.





Afghan Tribesman

By the mid 1870's Britain's soldiers had fought bloody battles on nearly every continent in the world. Yet any veteran of the first Afghan war would swear there was no more implacable a foe than the hardy tribesman of Afghanistan. Whether Pathan, Pushtun, or Hazara, the tough tribesmen of Afghanistan learn quickly and adapt well to new technologies and military techniques, while still maintaining their own tried and true methods of stealth, ambush, and mastery of one's surroundings. By the dawning of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880) many tribesmen were using modern British rifles obtained from dead soldiers or acquired from the British themselves in more peaceful times. However, some holdouts still relied on the traditional long-barreled jezail, a matchlock rifle with tremendous stopping power and deadly accuracy in the right hands. For close-in fighting no Afghan was ever without his fearsome chora long-knife. Born from a vast region mixing many cultures and peoples, Afghan skin colors range from fair to dusky, and tribal warriors wear the traditional loose angarka tunic and baggy trousers. In winter these are often supplemented with a sheepskin coat called a poshteen. For headgear most men would wear a turban called a lungi (which could also double as a kummerbund or sash), or the small kullah cap. Sure-footed climbers and stealthy fighters, Afghan tribesmen excel at fighting in mountainous terrain.

In AotC Afghans would be a likely foe in any campaign centered around the Great Game and set in the Khyber Pass region of the Raj (what is now the border of modern Pakistan and Afghanistan). Agents from Russia, Germany, France, or any other foreign power seeking dominance in northern Afghanistan and control of the critical pass between it and British India would likely have bought the services of one tribe or another. A band of Afghan raiders might be encountered running guns to the disaffected natives of Sind province, or smuggling a new, deadly strain of opium poppy into India to infect its inhabitants with a malaise of drug addiction. Any criminal mastermind or weird scientist operating in the region would also likely avail himself of a complement of Afghan guards.

STR 16 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 11 POW 13 DEX 16 APP 14

Move: 10

Hit Points: 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: 1-point poshteen coat

Attacks: Rifle (Musket) 65%, 1D10+4 (impaling)

Rifle (Bolt-Action) 65%, 2D6+4 (impaling) Dagger (Chora) 55%, 2D4 (impaling)

Brawl 45%, 1D3 + 1D4

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 32%, Etiquette (Tribal) 50%, Grapple 25%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Khyber Pass) 45%, Language (Pash-tun) 55%, Listen 25%, Spot 45%, Track 50%

Common Female Afghan Names: Areso, Afsana, Bahar, Bareen, Duniya, Fariba, Farah, Ghazal, Geeti, Haleema, Hadiqa, Iffat, Jameela, Lamiha, Mahira, Morsal, Naheed, Noria, Pareesa, Pakiza, Qamar, Razia, Rona, Suraya, Saira, Wida, Waseema, Zahra.

Common Male Afghan Names: Abdul Haq, Akhtar, Adeeb, Abbas, Baktash, Babar, Eqbal, Esmat, Fareed, Hadi, Hamid, Ismail, Imraan, Jabbaar, Kamraan, Kaihaan, Mujib, Moosa, Naseer, Naveed, Omed, Pashtana, Qaisar, Rafi, Ramin, Sorosh, Sadeed, Taher, Wahid, Younes, Zaki.





Charles Gordon Smith

(aka Chinese Gordon, Gordon Pasha, Gordon of Karthoum)

Born in London in 1833, Charles Gordon Smith was exposed to the aetheric cloud at the early age of two. The energies had a profound effect on his growing body, transforming him into an aether-man and changing the course of his life forever. At the age of fourteen he realized he possessed psychic powers granting him an uncanny sense for danger, precognition, and an iron will second to none. The son of a general, Gordon concealed his unique abilities and acceded to his father's wishes to pursue a career in the military. Receiving his commission in the Royal Engineers in 1852, he participated in conflicts around the world, including the Crimean War (1854), the Second Opium War (1860), and received a Colonel's commission in the Egyptian army in 1874. While in China he distinguished himself and earned the title "Chinese Gordon". At the opening of the campaign in 1875 he is Governor of Sudan, and dealing with rising unrest there. He finds himself plagued by dreams of a dangerous force rising some time in the near future, one that will cost him his life.

Any Agents sent to Karthoum (or anywhere in Sudan) on a mission will surely have to deal with Charles Smith. His psychic powers would allow him knowledge of their presence anyway, and he maintains a close relationship with Major Tristan Hoare, Deputy Director assigned to the African Theater.

Charles Gordon Smith

STR 13 CON 15 SIZ 12 INT 15 POW 14 DEX 13 APP 12

Age: 42 Height: 5'11" Weight: 175 lbs. Hair: Brown Eyes: Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 27

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: none

Attacks: Rifle (Bolt-Action) 50%, 2D6+4 (impaling)

Revolver (Medium) 65%, 1D8 (impaling)

Brawl 50%, 1D3 + 1D4

Skills: Aura Detection 64%, Clairvoyance 54%, Climb 50%, Danger Sense 64%, Dodge 51%, Etiquette (Military) 55%, Grapple 25%, Insight 55%, Jump 35%, Knowledge (China) 45%, Knowledge (Sudan) 45%, Language (Chinese) 40%, Language (English) 75%, Literacy (English) 60%, Listen 25%, Precognition 64%, Spot 45%.

Psychic Powers: Aura Detection, Clairvoyance, Danger Sense, Precognition, Psychic Power Reserve x 2 (+20 POW for Psychic powers).
Wahid, Younes, Zaki.





Chinese Boxer

Highly trained and fanatical martial artists, Chinese Boxers are members of fighting societies or clubs either in mainland China, Hong Kong, or in any large China Town in a western city. They might also work with the local Tong gangsters when they share the same purpose. Chinese Boxers generally work for the supremacy of Chinese culture, and came about as a direct result of oppression by occupying western powers in China, or†when operating in a western nation, as a result of the racist attitudes of their European or American neighbors.

In the world of AotC, they often work for a corrupt Mandarin, or warlord who uses them as shock troops against the heroes. Their high level of skill and almost blind obedience make them ideal henchmen. Although their martial arts skills do not make them the equal of an agent, they can still pose a serious threat in high enough numbers, and with the sheer number of young, disaffected Chinese both from the mainland and abroad, a Mandarin need never look very far for more reinforcements.

STR 14 CON 16 SIZ 10 INT 11 POW 15 DEX 15† APP 10

Move: 10

Hit Points: 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: none

Attacks: Martial Arts (kung fu)†55%

Brawl 65%, 1D3 + 1D4

Dagger (stabbing blade) 50%, 2D4 (impaling)

Skills: Climb 40%, Dodge 55%, Etiquette (Chinese Secret Societies) 50%, Jump 55%, Knowledge (China) 50%, Language (Chinese) 65%, Listen 55%, Spot 65%.

Common Female†Chinese Names: Changying, Cuifen, Daiyu, Fang, Huan, Jing, Liling, Meili, Nuying, Qingling, Shan, Suyin, Xiaojing, Xifeng, Zhilan.

Common Male†Chinese Names:† Bai, Changpu, Chenglei, Dong, Deming, Enlai, Gang, Gui, Hong, Huan, Jing, Pengfei, Shan, Tengfei, Xin, Yingpei, Zian, Zihao.





Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

The strange case of Dr. Henry and Mr. Edward Hyde began in the spring of 1873 when Dr. Jekyll, a brilliant young chemist, developed a serum that he believed would increase the strength and vitality of aged patients and allow them to more happily live out their remaining years. Never a man of exceptional physical gifts, Jekyll decided to test the first batch of serum on himself. The changes it wrought in him were drastic and life-changing. He grew larger, more savage, and seemed to revel in the idea of violence for its own sake. What Dr. Jekyll did not realize was that his serum awakened a dark spirit heretofore trapped within him, and when ingesting it he became an aether-man unlike any other. Although its effects lasted only several hours, the serum also had a powerful narcotic effect on Jekyll. He simply had to produce more and continue to ingest it. Soon his other self took on a name and persona of its own, Mr. Hyde. Although cruel, violent, and dangerous, Dr. Jekyll could exercise some control over his alter-ego, sometimes forcing him to do good even when his baser instincts told him otherwise. Hyde will never let any organization control him, and while transformed, he has battled teams of Agents several times to retain his freedom. For their part the Agents and Edward Lamb want the creature they know as Hyde captured and brought to the Tower for observation. Meanwhile, Dr. Jekyll fights a constant war with himself to retain control and keep his dark secrets.



Dr. Jekyll

STR 10 CON 10 SIZ 10 INT 20 POW 15 DEX 11 APP 10

Age: 31 Height: 5' 10" Weight: 175 lbs. Hair: Sandy Brown Eyes: Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 20 Damage Bonus: none Armor: none

Attacks: Brawl 25%

Skills: Climb 40%, Dodge 52%, Etiquette (Medical) 55%, Grapple 35%, Insight 55%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (History) 55%, Language (English) 100%, Listen 75%, Literacy (English) 75%, Medicine 45%, Research 65%, Science (Biology) 81%, Science (Chemistry) 81%, Spot 45%, Swim 45%.

Character Failings: Addiction ("Hyde" serum, expensive ingredients, strong compulsion to use, +3 pts.), Must ingest serum to become Hyde (+2 pts.)

Super Powers: Alternate Form (Edward Hyde, see below)

Mr. Edward Hyde

STR 35 CON 20 SIZ 16 INT 10 POW 14 DEX 11 APP 7

Age: 31 Height: † 6' 5" Weight: 275 lbs. Hair: Brown Eyes: Red

Move: 10

Hit Points: 36 Damage Bonus: +2D6 Armor: 5 kinetic

Attacks: Brawl 75%, 1D4 + 2D6 (crushing)

Grapple 75%

Skills: Climb 80%, Dodge 62%, Etiquette (Streetwise) 35%, Hide 30%, Insight 25%, Jump 75%, Language (English) 60%, Listen 75%, Literacy (English) 25%, Spot 55%, Stealth 90%, Swim 45%.

Character Failings: Cruelty (+1 pt.), Reckless (+1 pt.)

Super Powers: Alternate Form (Dr. Henry Jekyll, see above), Armor (Kinetic 5), Extra Power Points 1 (+10 power points), Regeneration 2, Super Sense (Dark Vision), Super Skill (Stealth +20%, already figured into profile), Super Strength (+5, already figured into profile).





Florence Nightingale

Born in 1820, Florence Nightingale experienced what she characterized as a divine calling in 1837. Two years before that she was with a missionary group administering to the sick and downtrodden of Bainbridge Rookery on that fateful day when the Cult of Dagon botched its ritual. A block away from the incident, she was bathed in residual aetheric energies. Her healing powers did not manifest until two years later while trying to save a woman experiencing complications due to childbirth. The woman and her child should have died, but Florence reached out to them and imparted within them a small bit of her own energy, enough to stabilize their conditions and give them a fighting chance. A deeply Christian young woman, Florence took this as a sign that she should take up the profession of nursing, better learning how to channel her new found special gift. Against the will of her family she took up nursing with an unmatched zeal, and served with distinction while caring for London's poor and indigent people. All the while she earned a reputation as a miracle worker, and many began to suspect she might be an aether-man of some kind. In 1847 she met Sidney Herbert, former Secretary of War, and developed a close friendship with him. He suggested she speak to HRH Prince Albert about joining the AotC, but Florence wanted no parts of the sensational violence and intrigue that she knew would accompany such an appointment. Herbert respected her wishes and used his influence to keep the AotC at bay. In 1854 she became famous by serving with distinction in the Crimean War. Her training, dedication, and super-human powers combined to make her a sensation. She saved many lives, and when she returned, she spurned a renewed offer of membership in the AotC.

She instead furthered the field of nursing by setting up schools and training other nurses to teach the profession to more young women. When the campaign opens in 1875 she is 55 years old and still working vigorously for her many causes. Her fame and her advocacy for the poor have made her targets to some unscrupulous individuals, and protecting her whether at home or when she travels abroad could be an excellent task for a team of Agents.

Florence Nightingale

STR 10 CON 15 SIZ 9 INT 15 POW 15 DEX 14 APP 12

Age: 55 Height: 5'6" Weight: 125 lbs. Hair: Gray-Brown Eyes: Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 24

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: none

Attacks: none

Skills: Climb 45%, Dodge 75%, Etiquette (Medical Profession) 65%, First Aid 95%, Grapple 25%, Insight 65%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 35%, Language (English) 81%, Listen 25%, Literacy (English) 70%, Medicine 85%, Science (Biology) 55%, Spot 25%, Swim 25%.

Super Powers: Extra Energy 3 (+30 Power Points), Heal 2 (Extra Healing: Disease, Poison).





Four-Armed White Ape of Mars

These large, vicious albino apes from the planes of Mars possess four massive arms, voracious appetites, and nasty dispositions that make them deadly foes. Although they roam the planes of Mars freely, they often find themselves used by one warlord or another to dispose of unwanted prisoners. They subsist on a diet of wild Martian grazing beasts and any unfortunate Martians (Red or Green) they stumble upon. Whether they finish a foe with their devastating bite, raking claws, or crushing arms, dying at the hands of one of these beasts is a terrible fate. These creatures make ideal foes for physically tough Agents exploring the wilds of Mars.

STR 60 CON 30 SIZ 30 INT 6 POW 10 DEX 15 APP 7

Height: 15' Weight: 1500 lbs. Hair: White Eyes: Red

Move: 10

Hit Points: 30

Damage Bonus: +5D6

Armor: 6 kinetic

Attacks: Brawl 75%, 1D3 + 5D6

Bite† 65%, † 1D6 + 5D6

Grapple 65%

Skills: Climb 90%, Dodge 60%, Jump 85%, Language (Martian) 20%, Listen 65%, Spot 55%, Stealth 40%, Throw 45%.

Character Frailty: Lighter Gravity Native (STR -5, CON -5 while on Earth)

Mutations: Extra Limbs (4 arms, grants 1 extra attack and one free parry per turn), Natural Armor 6 (tough skin), Natural Weaponry (Bite +1D6).





Sherlock Holmes

William Sherlock Scott Holmes was born in Yorkshire on January 6, 1854. Just how he became exposed to aetheric energies remains a subject of debate, but the outcome of the exposure was undeniable. From an early age Holmes' sharpened mental faculties were in evidence, but there seemed to be something more than just extraordinary genius at work (he was one of the rare few to attend both Cambridge and Oxford). Holmes seemed to be able to prise the innermost secrets from men's minds and even predict their future actions. He began using these powers to solve crimes, at first out of a simple mix of curiosity and boredom. Although his exploits were not at this early stage being reported they did not escape the attention of Edward Lamb. There were many criminal and even traitorous rouge aether-men active in London at the time. Lamb was conscious that a nervous and sometimes fearful public was always ready to distrust aether-men and anything to do with them and that any negative publicity could bring unwanted public and parliamentary pressure on the agency. Holmes' abilities and natural discretion seemed to be the ideal solution to countering villainous aether-men activities in London and the Home Counties.†

As the campaign commences in 1875 Holmes has just graduated from Oxford and joined the AotC. At first he acts as a confidential aide and advisor to Lamb, but by 1877 he has proven his mettle enough to be assigned as unofficial consulting detective to Scotland Yard, being given jurisdiction over any case suspected to involve aether-man activity.†

STR 12 CON 12 SIZ 10 INT†20 POW†20 DEX 15 APP 11

Age: 21 Height: 6'2" Weight: 165 lbs. Hair: Brown Eyes: Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 22

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: none

Attacks:†Brawl 85%, 1D3 (crushing)

Martial Arts (baritsu) 65%

Skills:†Climb 60%, Dodge†80%, Eidetic Memory 75%, Etiquette (Street) 55%, Grapple 65%, Insight 105%, Jump 65%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 55%, Language (English) 95%, Listen 85%, Literacy (English) 95%, Mind Shield 75%, Precognition 65%, Research 85%, Spot 95%, Swim 65%, Telepathy 85%. †

Psychic†Powers: Eidetic Memory, Mind Shield, Precognition, Psychic Power Reserve x 2 (+20 Power Points), Telepathy.





John Hamish Watson, MD

Dr. John Watson was born in Hampshire on 7 July 1852. He expressed an interest in medicine from an early age and seemed to have a knack for the healing arts. His parents sent him to the University of London, where he earned his doctorate in 1878. While at university Watson began to realize that his healing skills were far beyond ordinary. He also discovered that he had an uncanny way with the written word. His written arguments were so convincing that readers of his papers often forgot their preconceived notions and adopted his conclusions whole-heartedly. Strangely this ability did not extend to the verbal realm, a fact that Watson himself attributed to the requirement of total silence and concentration.†

Penniless and still not yet fully comprehending his gifts, Watson joined the Army Medical Services and were assigned to the post of assistant surgeon in the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers in March of 1880. He was present at the battle of Maiwand in July of 1880 where his extraordinary healing gifts saved his own life when he was hit by a jezzeil bullet. Other doctors rightly thought no normal man suffering such a grievous wound would be able to serve again and Watson was sent home an invalid. His powers came to the fore and by the end of his six week journey back to England he was almost as good as new again. It was at this time that Watson felt himself inexplicably pulled back toward London. There he was soon discovered by Edward Lamb, who immediately realized the valuable part Watson could play in his efforts to suppress public knowledge of the so-called iaether-villainsi. He was paired up with fellow agent Sherlock Holmes on January 1st, 1881 and the rest was history.

Obviously Watson is not yet an agent at the start of the campaign, but he could be included earlier as a university student in London or regimental surgeon on the Northwest Frontier.

STR 15 CON 15 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 13 DEX 12 APP 12

Age: 23 Height: 5' 10" Weight: 190 lbs. Hair: Sandy Brown Eyes: Blue

Move: 10

Hit Points: 27

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: none

Attacks: Brawl 55%, 1D3 + 1D4 (crushing)

Revolver (Heavy) 65%, 1D10+2

Rifle (Bolt-Action) 70%, 2D6+4

Skills:† Climb 40%, Dodge 60%, Etiquette (Military) 55%, Grapple 45%, Insight 50%, Jump 55%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 25%, Language (English) 65%, Listen 55%, Literacy (English) 60%, Medicine 75%, Science (Biology) 55%, Spot 65%, Swim 45%.

Super Powers: Extra Energy 2, Heal 2.





Excerpt from *My Life among the Aether-Men*, the unpublished memoirs of Dr. John H. Watson.†

Young Stamford's message simply said that Mr. Lamb desired me to meet them at the bar of the Criterion at noon. My curiosity at a fever pitch, I arrived half an hour early only to find Lamb, Stamford, and a tall, angular young man I did not know already there. Lamb matter-of-factly introduced him to me as my new partner. Thus it was on the first of January, 1881 that my association with that capital agent and aether-man Sherlock Holmes began. Holmes and I were given quarters at 221B Baker Street, one of the numerous properties and safe-houses owned by the agency in London and throughout the Empire.†

My assignment was a simple one compared to Holmes. He had the safeguarding of all of London from aether-villainy to contend with. I was merely to aid him in whatever small way possible and, more vitally, to concoct cover stories for any of his covert actions that might reach the public eye. This was deemed necessary to quell the rising suspicion and resentment by the general public of the aether-men as a whole which was brought about by the criminal activities of a small but very visible few. Although the Agency was doing all it could to counter the aether threat, pressure was mounting in parliament to investigate and possibly dismantle the Agency altogether on the grounds that the acts of this minority proved that aether-men could simply not be trusted.†

It was crucial then to not only maintain my friend's cover, but also to disguise the activities of aether-criminally in London and its environs. Some of his extraordinary dealings were transformed into more mundane criminal acts with but a few trifling changes. A diabolical device capable of turning a man's mind to mush, the work of an Italian mastermind smuggled into England by agents of the Camorra, was simply changed to a gem hidden inside a plaster bust of Napoleon. An attempt to steal agency papers detailing a method of harnessing aetheric energy to create a powerful bomb was disguised as an attempt to steal the plans of an entirely fictitious submarine. †

Many other near-catastrophes were handled in the same manner and with the same happy results. The possible backlash against the Agency was always quashed, but the number and frequency of attempts at villainy did not lessen. Holmes had early on discerned that there must be an aetheric agent behind the evil doings, but he was unable to put a name to the formless threat until the person of Professor James Moriarty was brought to his attention by Edward Lamb in late 1877.†





The Invisible Man

The man known only as Mr. Griffin lived in the same tenement where the Cult of Dagon conducted its botched ritual. Bathed in aetheric energy, his body was transformed and began to refract the light that struck it, rendering him invisible when naked. He eventually learned to control his power so that he did not have to remain invisible at all times. The strange energies also slowed his aging to the point where he became practically immortal. Instead of using his gifts for the greater good, Griffin turned to petty crimes like theft and vandalism. In the ensuing decades his ambitions broadened and he became a spy for any foreign power willing to meet his price. Along the way he developed a loathing for his fellow aether-men, and a special dislike for Agents and their service to Queen and country.

The Invisible Man would make an interesting foe in any adventure involving international intrigue and espionage. He would also be the ideal would-be assassin in an adventure where the Agents are guarding an important politician or visiting dignitary.

STR 12 CON 17 SIZ 10 INT 12 POW 16 DEX 15 APP 10

Age: 70 Height: 5'10" Weight: 175 lbs. Hair: Blond Eyes: Blue

Move: 10

Hit Points: 33

Damage Bonus: none

Armor:

Attacks: Brawl 65%, 1D3

Dagger 85%, 1D3 + 1

Revolver 80%, 1D8

Skills: Climb 80%, Dodge 130%, Etiquette (Street) 25%, Grapple 25%, Insight 25%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 55%, Language (English) 75%, Listen 75%, Literacy (English) 60%, Spot 30%, Stealth 100%, Swim 35%, Throw 25%.

Super Powers: Extra Energy 3 (+30 Power Points), Extra Hit Points 6, Immortality 2, Invisibility 10, Super Skill 3 (Stealth).

GM's Note: This NPC was built using identical rules to the ready-made characters in Chapter I, and with a few adjustments they can also serve as an additional starting character.





Jack the Ripper

No one is sure who the Ripper is, but in the world of AotC he began preying upon prostitutes in London's poorer districts in 1874, and has left a trail of seven badly mutilated bodies in his wake. With Scotland Yard baffled, the Agents have been called in to determine if the killer possesses super-human powers. The answer is yes. Whether nobleman, professional, or something else entirely, the Ripper is an aether-man gone rogue. His ability to escape seemingly seconds after the discovery of a freshly slain victim point toward super-human powers of stealth and elusiveness.

The details of the Ripper's origins and identity have been left intentionally vague so that GM's may use him to whatever end they like. Was he once an Agent who's slipped into madness? Is he a relative of one of the player characters, or related in some way to the Royal family? Was he the experiment of some diabolical scientist working in secret somewhere in London? Is he even a man at all? Could he be some primal manifestation of evil made flesh by aetheric energy? Discovering the Ripper's true nature can be every bit as fun and challenging as battling and capturing him, and the GM can decide what makes him who and what he is.

STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 12 INT 15 POW 18 DEX 18 APP 15

Age: Unknown Height: 6' Weight: 180 lbs. Hair: Brown Eyes: Red

Move: 10

Hit Points: 26

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: none

Attacks: Brawl 25%, 1D3 + 1D4

Knife 90%, 1D3 + 1 + 1D4

Grapple 75%

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 80%, Etiquette (Street) 85%, Insight 75%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 05%, Language (English) 80%, Listen 75%, Literacy (English) 60%, Spot 75%, Stealth 95%, Swim 65%. GM's Note: Add 150 pts. in an additional 5 skills of your choice. Suggestions: Medicine, Science (Biology), Etiquette (Court), Sense, Language (any).

Super Powers: Defense 3, Leap 2, Super Movement (Wall Walking), Super Sense (Dark Vision)





Leviathan Davis--Aether-Man Crime Boss (aka, The Whale)

Ruling the London underground from his heavily guarded tenement near the Tattersall's Horse Market in Knightsbridge Green, Leviathan Davis' immense wealth is matched only by his immense girth. This massive aether-man controls nearly all of the action on London's horse racing and boxing sports, and has his hands in many other minor games, protection rackets, and businesses throughout the city. He has viciously crushed all opposition to his rule over the years, and relishes the chance to use his formidable physical powers to intimidate his illicit associates and unfortunate victims. Also called The Whale by some of his enemies and closer associates, Davis has a penchant for chomping on raw fish during his daily audiences with those unfortunate enough to owe him money.

As suggested in the Campaign section above, Davis has grown too powerful for his own good and only a team of Agents can hope to take him down cleanly. In addition to his own formidable physical abilities, Davis has dozens of thugs and cronies at his beck and call. Just getting to face him will require excellent planning and guile, or a great deal of power and fighting prowess. Either way, taking on Leviathan Davis could form the basis for a series of adventures.

STR 45 CON 45 SIZ 25 INT 15 POW 15 DEX 8 APP 7

Age: 37 Height: 5'10" Weight: 550 lbs. Hair: White Eyes: Blue

Move: 10

Hit Points: 70

Damage Bonus: +3D6

Armor: 6 kinetic/5 electric

Attacks: Brawl 85%, 1D3 + 3D6 Grapple 65%

Skills: Climb 40%, Dodge 60%, Etiquette (Street) 95%, Insight 57%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 95%, Language (English) 79%, Listen 45%, Literacy (English) 55%, Research 45%, Spot 55%, Status 65%, Swim 29%, Throw 55%.

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 6), Armor (Electric 5), Density Control 20 (Increase Only), Extra Energy 5 (+50 Power Points).

GM's Note: The effects of Davis' Density Control power have not been figured into his profile. Before running any fight involving Leviathan Davis, GM's should consult the rules for Density Control on pg. 151 of the BRP rules. If Davis has even the smallest inkling that there will be trouble, he will activate Density Increase just before the battle begins to ensure him maximum survivability.





Martians

Three major races vie for control of Mars during the period covered by this monograph. The Green Martians, Red Martians, and Mollusc Martians all hold some claim on vast swaths of the red planet they all call home. Of the three races the Reds are most akin to humans, and the Greens certainly possess human-like traits aplenty (honor and savagery chief among these), but it is the Molluscs who are most alien, and least capable of understanding human ideals and desires. They possess invertebrate bodies that are little more than tentacled globules of wet flesh with a pair of green orbs for eyes. The Molluscs also possess power technologies to make up for their physical shortcomings. Of all the alien races in the solar system, it is they who are most likely to mount an invasion of Earth.

Green Martian Warrior

Across the vast, red wastes of distant Mars roam tribes of 10" tall, four-armed Martians renowned for savagery in battle. Their powerful, green-thewed limbs wield mighty blades of Martian steel and deadly radium guns that can unleash burning death. Any warlord who can control even one tribe of Green Martian Warriors can tip the balance of power on the planet in his favor. Even on the heavier gravity of Earth these warriors would make fearsome foes.

These mighty warriors should be a mainstay of any campaign that focuses on the red planet. In other campaigns they would make ideal foes for an Agent team that finds themselves transported to the hostile environs of Earth's marbled neighbor. Depending upon the tribe, they might also make valuable allies against the expansionist Red Martians who might seek to dominate the Earth.

STR 25 CON 20 SIZ 25 INT 9 POW 12 DEX 15 APP 8

Height: 10' Weight: 500 lbs. Hair: none Eyes: yellow

Move: 10

Hit Points: 23

Damage Bonus: +2D6

Armor: 3 kinetic

Attacks: Brawl 60%, 1D3 + 2D6 (crushing)

Martian Great Sabre 65%, 2D8 + 2D6 (bleeding)

Radium Gun 40%, 2D8 + 3 (impaling)

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 44%, Etiquette (Green Martian Tribal) 55%, Grapple 65%, Insight 25%, Jump 55%, Knowledge (Mars) 65%, Language (Green Martian) 65%, Listen 55%, Ride (Martian Mount) 65%, Spot 45%, Track 70%.

Character Frailty: Lighter Gravity Native (STR -5, CON -5 while on Earth)

Mutations: Extra Limbs (4 arms, grants 1 extra attack and one free parry per turn), Natural Armor 3 (tough skin).





Mollusc Martians

Ready invaders of Earth, the Mollusc Martians despise all vertebrate life forms, and see a low technology planet like the Earth of the Victorian era as ripe for harvesting of its natural resources. Seeing humanity as little more than a slave race readily convertible to the protein stew from which they derive their principle nourishment, the Molluscs of Mars are most curious about the strange energy they have recently detected on the planet. Drawn to areas with high concentrations of aetheric energy, England would be a likely spot for a Martian expeditionary force to land and gather data. It would also be an excellent proving ground for their latest fleet of walking combat machines.

Any operation of this nature would put the Agents of the Crown right at the front lines in defense of England. GM's eager to use this story angle are encouraged to read H.G. Wells *War of the Worlds*, the Victorian fiction that spawned just about every other tale of alien invasion.

STR 5 CON 9 SIZ 5 INT 20 POW 20 DEX 8 APP 4

Height: 2' 5" Weight: 75 lbs. Hair: none Eyes: Luminescent Green

Move: 5

Hit Points: 7

Damage Bonus: -1D4

Armor: none

Attacks: Mind Blast 85%

Skills: Brawl 45%, Dodge 16%, Drive (Tripod Walker) 75%, Grapple 45%, Insight 65%, Knowledge (Martian History) 65%, Language (Martian) 85%, Listen 55%, Literacy (Martian) 80%, Mind Shield 85%, Pilot (Space Craft) 70%, Projection 65%, Repair (Mechanical) 60%, Spot 65%, Telepathy 87%.

Psychic Powers: Mind Blast, Mind Shield, Psychic Power Reserve x 2 (+20 Power Points), Telepathy.





Martian Tripod Walker

Far too fragile, slow, and weak to enter battle unaided, the Martian Tripod Walkers provide the Molluscs with the battle machines they need to hold their territory on the red planet and seek new lands on Earth. Cylindrical metallic discs suspended on three segmented, tentacle like metal legs, the Tripod Walkers feature a single, glowing central eye. This glass-like eye telescopes out on yet another metal tentacle, giving the Mollusc pilot the ability to see around corners and over high barriers. Most important, the single eye lens also focuses the Tripod Walker's deadliest weapon, the heat ray that can melt the flesh from the bones of any organic matters it strikes. It can also work against inorganic matter, but not as quickly. The vehicles can be piloted by a single Mollusc, but can carry up to four should the need arise. They are also equipped with lashing metallic tentacles that deploy from the bottom of the cylinder and can attack foes that stray too close. They are also strong enough to clear large pieces of debris and collect samples for study. Engineered for Mars' lower gravity, Tripod Walkers seem slow and ungainly on Earth. Given sufficient time to adjust, Martian engineers could compensate for this defect.

Height: 30 ft. Weight: 5,250 lbs.

STR 55 CON 50 SIZ†† 40

Hit Points: 45 Power Points: 100

Damage Bonus: +5D6

Armor: 15 kinetic/10 heat

Weapons: Heat Ray (uses pilot's Projection skill %), 5D6 damage (burning)

Metallic Tentacle Lash 1D3 + 5D6 (crushing, uses pilot's Brawl skill %)

Powers: Armor 15 (kinetic 15, heat 10; cost=25 pts.), Extra Energy 10 (+100 Power Points; cost =10 pts.), Energy Projection 5 (heat; cost=50 pts.), Super Characteristics 145 (STR, CON, SIZ; cost=145 pts.), Super Sense 2 (Dark Vision, Sonar Detection; cost=20 pts.)

Power Budget Cost= 250 pts.





Red Martian Warrior

These crimson skinned humanoids dominate the surface and caverns of Mars, sharing humanity's dark penchant for war and conquest. It is the Red Martians who would be at the vanguard of any invasion of Earth, or any defense of their home world. Being the most populous race on Mars, they would also be the most likely race any visitors to Mars would meet first. Most Red Martians possess low to mid-level telepathic powers that might allow them to understand the intentions of a visitor from another world without speaking their language. Whether this would help in making any such meeting peaceful or one filled with conflict is up to the GM, and to a lesser extent his or her players. The Red Martians have built a society that is thousands of years old and steeped in a heady mix of mysticism, honor, and violence. They fight near constant wars over territory and resources with the Green Men of Mars, and the only thing they seem to have in common with their fellow Martians is a healthy respect for a foe's battle prowess. Show a Martian that you are a warrior and are willing to fight with honor, and you might have a chance at the negotiating table.

Any vile villain from Earth could try to use Red Martians as dupes in a scheme to undo both planets. Mars and the Red Martians are not without their own homegrown villains, and one such individual might not be above kidnapping warriors from Earth to use in his or her schemes on Mars.

STR 18 CON 20 SIZ 15 INT 12 POW 20 DEX 18 APP 16

Height: 6' 2" Weight: 185 lbs. Hair: Black Eyes: Usually Blue or Black

Move: 10

Hit Points: 18

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Armor: 6 kinetic (Martian Battle Harness)

Attacks:† Brawl 65%, 1D3 + 1D6 (crushing)

Martian Broad Sword 70%, 1D8+1 + 1D6

Radium Gun 60%, 2D8 + 3 (impaling)

Skills: Climb 40%, Dodge 76%, Etiquette (Red Martian Court) 55%, Grapple 65%, Insight 65%, Jump 55%, Knowledge (Mars) 55%, Language (Martian) 80%, Listen 45%, Literacy (Martian) 80%, Pilot (Martian Airship) 64%, Repair (Mechanical) 45%, Ride (Martian Mount) 55%, Spot 45%.

Character Frailty: Lighter Gravity Native (STR -5, CON -5 while on Earth)

Psychic Powers: Danger Sense, Telepathy.





Madame Blavatsky

Founder of the Spiritualism movement and noted aether-man, Madame Helena Blavatsky has made many enemies over the course of her controversial life. She founded the Theosophical Society and traveled Europe and the world discussing the nature of Spiritualism and humanity's place in the cosmic order of things. Her powerful psychic abilities have time and again allowed her to detect attempts on her life, and she has acted as an adviser to many to members of the English Parliament as well as government officials from other countries.

In the AotC campaign Madame Blavatsky would make an excellent adventure objective, with the Agents sent to protect her from possible assassination, or even to her return her against her will to England to serve some end of the Crown. In her later years she traveled extensively, so any adventure surrounding her could take place almost anywhere, utilizing exotic locales like India, Tibet, China, or even a large, wide-open western country like America.

STR 10 CON 14 SIZ 9 INT 17 POW 25 DEX 11 APP 10

Age: 44† Height: 5'4" Weight: 135 lbs. Hair: Black Eyes: Blue

Move: 10

Hit Points: 23

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: none

Attacks: Mind Blast 75%

Skills: Aura Detection 75%, Clairvoyance 75%, Climb 40%, Danger Sense 75%, Divination 85%, Dodge 22%, Etiquette (Society) 55%, Grapple 25%, Insight 95%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Philosophy) 85%, Language (English) 60%, Listen 55%, Literacy (English) 55%, Mind Shield 75%, Research 60%, Spot 65%, Swim 25%.

Psychic Powers: Aura Detection, Clairvoyance, Danger Sense, Divination, Mind Blast, Mind Shield, Psychic Power Reserve x 2 (+20 Power Points).





Professor James Moriarty

Of Irish heritage, James Moriarty was born in Liverpool in 1844. He was acknowledged as a genius as early as 1865 when his treatise on binomial theorems was published to widespread acclaim throughout the universities of Europe. This work earned him the Chair of Mathematics at a smaller English university that same year. He spent part of his time there writing his magnum opus, 'The Dynamics of an Asteroid'. Unfortunately Moriarty's genius was not restricted to mathematics. He was obsessed with perpetrating the perfect crime from youth and he spent a much larger part of his time turning some of his more lurid theories into practice by carrying out a one-man crime wave of sorts in the small university town. Nothing could be proved, but by early 1875 the weight of the rumors forced him to resign his post.

The start of the campaign in 1875 sees Moriarty settled in London making a modest living as a tutor to hopeful candidates for army commissions. Beneath the facade however, he still contemplates various criminal plots. He has learned a valuable lesson from his past mistakes though and while he now plans evil on a much larger scale he is slowly recruiting an army of henchmen to remove himself from the practice of his theories and thus insulate himself from suspicion. Few if any of these henchmen have any aetheric power, but Moriarty has forged them into a formidable network of thugs, agents, blackmailers, and middle-men capable of almost any heinous act imaginable.

STR 12 CON 10 SIZ 10 INT 20 POW 17 DEX 12 APP 10

Age: 31 Height: 6' Weight: 170 lbs. Hair: Black Eyes: Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 20

Damage Bonus:

Armor: none

Attacks: Brawl 55%, 1D3

Skills: Climb 50%, Dodge 75%, Eidetic Memory 75%, Etiquette (Street) 75%, Grapple 65%, Insight 65%, Jump 55%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 75%, Language (English) 95%, Listen 65%, Literacy (English) 95%, Mind Blast 70%, Mind Shield 85%, Research 75%, Science (Mathematics) 105%, Spot 95%, Swim 65%, Teach 65%.

Psychic Powers: Eidetic Memory, Mind Blast, Mind Shield, Psychic Power Reserve x 2 (+20 Power Points).





Repon Cohorts Strike Team.

Upon taking over as Czar of Russia in 1855, Alexander II looked at what Prince Albert had done in England with the Agents of the Crown and decided a more formalized usage of Russia's aether-man resources was in order. Modeling them after the intrepid explorers and operatives already playing the Great Game, Alexander created the Repon Cohorts, a formal branch of Russia's military machine dedicated to training and administering the activities of the country's super-human soldiers. Indeed, many of the first Repon Cohorts came from the military, while others were recruited in much the same way England found hers, by prowling the streets and countryside of the vast nation in search of young people with special powers. By 1875 the Repon Cohorts is nearly on equal footing with the AotC, and clearly ahead of every other nation save England in terms of the number of trained†super-humans in the field. Inevitable clashes have occurred between Cohorts Operatives and Crown Agents. Listed below is a typical three-operative strike team.

GM's Note: These NPC's were built using identical rules to the ready-made characters in Chapter I, and with a few adjustments they†can also serve as additional starting characters.

Snegurochka (Frost Daughter)

STR 10 CON 15 SIZ 9 INT 12 POW 17 DEX 12 APP 19

Age: 25 Height: 5'6" Weight: 135lbs. Hair: White Eyes: Blue

Move: 10/500 (in flight)

Hit Points: 24

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: none

Attacks: Energy Projection 74% (Cold Blast), 2D6

Brawl 45%, 1D3 (crush)

Skills:†Climb 40%, Dodge†64%,†Fly 76%, Grapple 25%, Insight 45%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Russian Mythology) 45%, Knowledge (Siberia) 75%, Language (English) 50%, Language (Russian) 80%, Listen 55%, Literacy (Russian) 40%, Spot 55%, Swim 45%.†

Super Powers: Energy Projection 2 (Cold, 2D6 damage), Extra Energy 2 (+20 Power Points), Flight 3,†Protection 1†(Cold), Weather Control 4 (Ice, Cold, and Snow only).





Tartar

STR 20 CON 20 SIZ 10 INT 10 POW 15 DEX 15 APP 8

Height: 5' 7" Weight: 150lbs. Hair: Black Eyes: Brown

Move: 20

Hit Points: 30

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: 5 kinetic

Attacks: Hurricane Charge 75%, 2D6 + 1D4 (crush)

Brawl 75%, 1D3 + 1D4 (crush)

Revolver (Medium) 60%, 1D8 (impaling)

Skills: Brawl 75%, Climb 50%, Dodge†80%, Etiquette (Street) 55%, Grapple 45%, †Jump 25%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 45%, Language (English) 20%, Language (Mongolian) 70%, Language (Russian) 40%, Listen 25%, Literacy (Mongolian) 25%, Ride (Horse) 45%, Spot 65%, Swim 40%, Track 50%.

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 5), Natural Attack² (Hurricane Charge, +2D6 damage, only after moving at least 10m), Super Speed 1.

GM's Note: Hurricane Charge is a fancy name for Tartar's Natural Attack power limited to use only after he moves. He needs momentum to use it. This limitation cuts the cost of Natural Attack in half. When Tartar uses his Hurricane Charge in combat he rolls his Brawl skill percentage.





Ursus

STR 52 CON 20 SIZ 20 INT 8 POW 10 DEX 13 APP 10

Age: 32 Height: 6'10" Weight: 325 lbs. Hair: Light Brown Eyes: Gray

Move: 10

Hit Points: 40

Damage Bonus: +3D6

Armor: 10 kinetic/2 cold

Attacks: Brawl 75%, 1D3 + 3D6 (crush)

Grapple 65%

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 56%,† Insight 25%, Jump 75%, Knowledge (Siberian Wilderness) 65%, Language (Russian) 50%, Listen 45%, Literacy (Russian) 30%, Sense 60%, Spot 45%, Swim 65%, Throw 65%.

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 10), Armor (Cold 2), Super Strength (+17, already figured into profile above), Super Sense 2 (Smell/Taste).





Thuggee Cultist

Servants of Kali, the Indian goddess of murder, Thuggees have plagued India's roads and remote areas for generations. Their favorite methods of killing include strangulation and the knife, but they are capable of adapting their methods to whatever the situation requires. Strangulation was most often accomplished using a yellow strip of cloth called a Rumaal. Thuggees most often travel in small bands, pretending to befriend trusting and weary travelers and then strangling them in their sleep, or when unawares, to help themselves to their goods. In some cases Thuggee membership carries family ties, and the practices and beliefs of are passed down from father to son. Thuggee membership knows no religious boundaries, and thugs can be Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh.

Thuggees make perfect henchmen for a villain based in India, but they might work equally well if transplanted to a western city like London. Their reverence of the Hindu goddess Kali, who is closely associated with the themes of death and destruction, would tie them nicely to an evil sorcerer or demon, or perhaps even an earthly avatar of Kali herself (see the Demigod write-up on pg. 361 of the BRP rules).

STR 14 CON 14 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 14

DEX 15 APP 12

Move: 10

Hit Points: 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: none

Attacks: Dagger (stabbing blade) 55%, 2D4 (impaling)

Brawl 55%, 1D3 + 1D4

Grapple 60%

Skills: Climb 40%, Dodge 42%, Etiquette (Street) 50%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (India) 45%, Language (Hindi) 58%, Listen 55%, Spot 65%, Track 40%

GM's Note: Before running any encounter involving Thuggee cultists GM's should refer to the Grapple Effects section on pg. 61 and the Choking, Drowning, and Asphyxiation Spot Rules on pg. 218 of the BRP rules.

Common Female Indian Names: Achala, Bindiya, Chitra, Desma, Gunjita, Indrani, Kanchana, Kunda, Mahima, Manogna, Pallavi, Poorvi, Sarasvati, Shanti, Ushma, Yogita.

Common Male Indian Names: Abhay, Ajit, Bhanu, Bhavesh, Devarsi, Dinesh, Gaurang, Gurcharan, Ishwar, Jagannath, Kartik, Manav, Omar, Rakesh, Ranjeet, Sanjog, Shailesh, Sohan, Vikram.





Chapter V.

The Affair of the Jade Skull!

Summary

This chapter provides a ready-made adventure allowing players to step right into the action and immerse themselves into the world of Victorian super-heroics. In the heart of London's East End lurks a vile villain from a lost world who calls himself the Jade Skull. Using strange elixirs to grant his servants super powers, he recruits his minions from the very dregs of England's poor and from the criminal underground. Masking his true nature and goals in the opium trade, the Jade Skull works to aid England's enemies abroad and foment chaos in her holdings in India and Africa. When a trusted inspector from Scotland Yard turns up dead in the Dock area of London, his case notes point to supernatural occurrences at one of the Skull's East End drug dens. Calling in the Agents of the Crown, Sir Howard Ladley (Deputy Director, British Isles) tasks the player characters' team with discovering the truth behind the Jade Skull's operations in London. After tangling with some of his deranged servants, they learn of his involvement with a corrupt shipping magnate and a plot to use his steam ships to run drugs, guns, and stranger cargo through the docks of the Thames. His most current plan is to bring large amounts of explosives into the city via the docks and use his minions to plant them around London, setting off several "warning" blasts to show government officials he is serious. He will demand tribute from them in the sum of £100,000 in gold from the treasury. He plans to use this infusion of gold to acquire more arcane artifacts and to strengthen his hold on his criminal empire. By the time the Agents run afoul of him, his plan to set off the initial warning blasts will be close to fruition.

Who is the Jade Skull? He was an Atlantean Priest in the days before the first pyramids arose in ancient Egypt. He wielded power born from the skies and his people's worship of those they called the Great Ones. But their pride was too great and they forsook their oaths to the Great Ones and tried to go their own way. They and their island continent were struck down for their effrontery. When Atlantis sank beneath the waves only a few of her children survived. The creature known today as the Jade Skull was one of those survivors. Long he floated on the waves of the Atlantic Ocean until plucked from the water by a group of passing natives. With his inhuman appearance and his natural powers he became like a god to them. He lived among them for generations, using their very blood to create elixirs that extended his already inhuman life to lengths beyond all reason. Then one day explorers came to the village, white men with weapons that spat fire and dealt death unlike anything he had seen since the oceans drank Atlantis. He became aware of a wider world that day, and swore he would rule it. He traveled first to the Orient where he took on his current guise to hide his inhuman features. Without his skull-shaped mask of pure jade to hide it his face is a desiccated husk, skin on bone with two glowing balls of orange fire where a normal man's eyes would be. Once he had established his criminal empire in China and Hong Kong, he moved on to Great Britain. He has spent the last twenty years strengthening his criminal empire, while using its resources to gather up the scattered remnants of his lost homeland, Atlantis.

The Jade Skull has watched the development of the Agents of the Crown with a mixture of fascination and worry over the last twenty years. Through the decades he took tremendous care in maintaining the secrecy of his existence, preferring to deal only from the shadows, and only with lesser minions. Slowly he has taken in some aether-men of his own, and created others using his powerful elixirs, crafting a small cadre of super-humans whom he has placed in key positions in his operations around the world. When the time is right and his super-human forces are fully marshaled he will unleash them on an unsuspecting London. Until then he will content himself to use his operatives sparingly to winnow down the ranks of the AotC.





Scene I: The Chase

Introduction: In this opening scene the agents will find the engraved watch of a Scotland Yard investigator on the person of a petty thief. This will hopefully lead them to inquire about the investigator's whereabouts. They will learn that the investigator has been missing for days.

Setting the Scene

The Agents pursue Edward "Rubber Fingers" Slocomb, a super-powered thief from one of London's largest gangs, across the rooftops of the Whitechapel neighborhood. Slocomb is the most prolific pickpocket and sneak-thief in London, utilizing his uncanny ability to stretch his elastic body to grab anything he pleases. Asked for their assistance in his apprehension by Scotland Yard, the Agents have finally tracked Slocomb down, and now the chase is on! As they leap from rooftop to rooftop, or follow him along street level, the GM should use the Chase rules on pg. 216-217 of the BRP rulebook to adjudicate the action.





Edward, "Rubber Fingers" Slocomb

STR 32 CON 15 SIZ 11 INT 10 POW 12 DEX 15† APP 9

Age: 31 Height: 5' 11" Weight: 165 lbs. Hair: Brown Eyes: Hazel

Move: 10

Hit Points: 26

Damage Bonus: +2D6

Armor: 5 kinetic

Attacks:†Brawl 65%, 1D3 + 2D6

Grapple 65%

Skills: Climb 65%, Dodge 70%, Etiquette (Street) 55%, Jump 85%, Knowledge (London Underworld) 65%, Language (English) 50%, Listen 55%, Sleight of Hand 45%, Spot 65%, Stealth 70%.

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 5),†Stretching†10 (Stretch up to 10m).

Notes on Stretching: Rubber Fingers†can use his 10 levels of Stretching to mimic 5 levels of the Defense power, giving foes a -25% chance to hit him in combat. Doing this requires him to spend a combat action, and†represents the constant inhuman contortions he twists himself into as he moves and fights, making him a difficult target. He can also mimic the Super Movement (Wall Walking) power, representing his ability to stretch to grab ledges and flatten his fingers to gain handholds.

GM's Note: This NPC was built using identical rules to the ready-made characters in Chapter I,†and with a few†adjustments†he†can also serve as an additional starting character.

If the Agents catch Slocomb he'll put up a bit of fight, but he's a coward at heart, and once he suffers more than 10 HP of damage he'll surrender. If the player characters†decide to search him they will find a number of personal articles that clearly do not belong to him. Among the list of items in his "goody bag" are: a set of gold-embossed combs, a half-carat diamond ring, several cameos containing pictures of various society personages, and a gold-plated pocket watch engraved to Inspector Ronald Chalmers, Scotland Yard. Anyone who knows about†police procedure can make a skill check to learn that watches of this nature are sometimes given to officers for distinguished service and are much prized. If questioned about it, Slocomb will maintain he got the watch in trade for some other goods from a fence in Stepney. According to Slocomb,†the fence told him†that the thief who brought it to him†pulled it from the corpse of a well-dressed man in an alley along the London Docks. If pressed, Slocomb will add that the fence received the watch just that morning.

If the Agents do not catch Slocomb it is easy enough for the GM to have the man drop his bag of stolen goods as he makes his escape, thus providing the same clue of the missing watch, only lacking the exposition to go with it. Either way, if the Agents inquire to Scotland Yard about the watch they will be told that Inspector Chalmers has been missing for over two days, and his wife (Mrs. Marsha Chalmers) has called after him repeatedly since then. They will learn he was working on a case of grave import that not many others knew about. If they speak with his wife she will tell them that one of the last things her husband told her was that he was going to check a lead at the docks on Pier 21.





Scene II: The Strange Case of Inspector Chalmers

AotC Deputy Director Sir Howard Ladley will encourage the Agents to pursue their investigation of Chalmers' disappearance. A visit to the Pier 21 area of the docks will uncover Chalmers' broken body slumped in an alley between two warehouses some fifty yards from the edge of the docks. The key with this scene is that Chalmers had snuck aboard a steamship owned one of the Jade Skull's pawns, and then was discovered by Bhanu Singh, one the Skull's aether-man enforcers. After a brief struggle, Singh broke Chalmers' neck then hurled him nearly fifty yards to the spot where he currently lies.

Puzzling this out is the key†to the next clue in the mystery.†If the Agents can discover that Chalmers was hurled from a boat some two nights ago, they can check the dock house records and learn that the steamship Pemberton was moored almost directly across from the mouth of the alley two nights ago. Checking the site and Chalmers' body for clues will reveal several key facts, and each fact is presented with the necessary skill needed to reveal it:

--Chalmers' was thrown from a great distance, struck a crate, then bounced into the mouth of the alley (Spot)

--Deep bruises on Chalmers' neck indicate he was likely dead before he was thrown, his neck snapped by some mighty hand (_difficult_ Spot, Medicine)

If players do not think to check the dock house's records for ship moorings during the estimated time of Chalmers' death, the GM can have them make Idea rolls for their characters to come up with this themselves. Additionally, certain Psychic powers like Intuition or Psychometry are ideal for this scene. When examining the dock house's records the players will need to make Research or _Difficult_ INT x 5 rolls for their characters. A success in either case will show that the Pemberton is now off on a run to Calais to pick up shipments of raw materials for clients in the garment district of London. The more important bit of information to be gleaned here is that the Pemberton is registered to a business called Snodgrass Imports, with offices in the Kingsland section of north central London. The address is 4 Stanley Road.

Access to a reading room, library (see the entry on the Free Library in the London section of Chapter III), or other information source, and a further Research roll will yield the name Rory Snodgrass--he is the owner of Snodgrass Imports. Recent articles in the Times of London had him in some financial difficulty, but of late he appears to have rebounded from his troubles and his business is flourishing. Further digging (another Research roll) will indicate that Snodgrass recently took on an anonymous backer who has helped him turn around his business. Never seen in public or mentioned by name, this backer will turn out to be none other than the Jade Skull.





Scene III: At the Office of Snodgrass Imports

No matter the time the Agents decide to call upon Rory Snodgrass, he will be in his little office at 4 Stanley Road. He spends most of his days and nights there trying to manage his company's steamship resources while keeping up with the demands of his not so silent business partner, the Jade Skull. Several weeks before the Skull revealed to him the full knowledge of who he was and what he intended to do. Although horrified at his strange partner's desire for world domination, Snodgrass' fear ruled him, and he has said nothing to the authorities, or even his own wife. He merely spends most of his time in his office trying not to fail the Skull. When the Agents arrive he will not be alone. The villainous Bhanu Singh will be there waiting for trouble in the little building's dingy backroom. Once the Agents arrive and start asking questions, Singh will attempt to do what he does best, kill them.





Bhanu Singh

STR 35 CON 2 SIZ 18 INT 10 POW 10 DEX 13 APP 11

Age: 34 Height: 6' 5" Weight: 260 lbs. Hair: Black (wears red turban) Eyes:†Brown

Move: 10

Hit Points: 43

Damage Bonus: +2D6

Armor: 5 kinetic

Attacks: Brawl 65%, 1D3 + 2D6 Tulwar 75%, 1D8+1 + 2D6

Skills:†Climb 60%, Dodge 56%, Etiquette (Street) 45%, Grapple 55%, Insight 25%, Jump 45%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 55%, Language (English) 50%, Language (Hindi) 60%,†Listen 45%, Literacy (English) 20%, Literacy (Hindi) 30%, Spot 45%, Swim 25%, Throw 45%.

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 5), Extra Energy 2 (+20 Power Points), Regeneration 6,† Super Movement (Trackless).

GM's Note: This NPC was built using identical rules to the ready-made characters in Chapter I,†and with a few†adjustments†he†can also serve as an additional starting character.

If they manage to defeat Singh and think to search his person the Agents will find a note with an address scrawled on it. If players do not think to search Singh GM's can have the note fall from his pocket during the battle, and they can notice it with a Spot roll.

The address is for a†rail yard warehouse†called the Goods Depot in Islington, a borough in the north central section of London. The depot lies just off of†York Road, and is bounded by a narrow channel of the river that feeds the Battlebridge Basin. The note says that the meeting is to take place at the hour of 9:00 PM that same evening. The journey from their current position in Kingsland and the Goods Depot in Islington is roughly two miles, and can be accomplished in less than a half-hour at a good pace. Assuming some of the Agents possess powers that allow them faster than normal movement, the journey could also be accomplished much faster.

If Singh manages to escape or get the best of the Agents, the GM could have him drop the note by accident (if he or she did not already employ this tactic in Scene I). An Agent possessing Telepathy might also pick up some of Singh's thoughts as he escapes. Worst case, they could try to track him to the warehouse, for that is his next destination (assuming it is close to 9:00 PM). Singh's Trackless super power will make conventional Track attempts almost impossible (see pg. 164 of the BRP rules), but he could be tracked by another super power like Super Sense (Smell/Taste) or even Super Sense (Super Hearing) on a bit of stretch. If the timing is off and the battle with Singh occurs earlier in the day, the Agents can try to tail him anyway. He'll go to a safe house east of Snodgrass Imports located on Manor Road in Hackney.

One way or another, getting the Agents to the warehouse will signal the start of Scene IV.





Scene IV: Showdown with the Jade Skull

The Jade Skull and a pack of his Chinese Boxer minions await Bhanu Singh's arrival at the Goods Depot, a dour-looking rail terminus in Islington. Several lamp lights illuminate the grounds, while thick cloud cover obscures whatever moonlight that might have reached the street level. Away from the Depot Agents can here the sounds of a busy rail yard whose many shift workers ensure that some industry is always afoot. However, nearer the Depot all seems quiet save for a few dogs barking in the distance, and Agents can hear the gentle lapping of the waters of the Battlebridge Basin against its bulwarks. No rail traffic appears to come near the Depot, and anyone with a good working knowledge of business or trade in London might think that a bit strange. In fact, the Jade Skull's many contacts among the disaffected rail yard workers have ensured that his business this night will be conducted without interruption. Or so he believes.

Not only does he await the arrival of Bhanu Singh, but also a courier from another part of town bringing him a small, plainly wrapped package that contains a highly volatile and somewhat new form of explosive. Contained within the box are several vials of liquid Nitroglycerin, samples which the Skull intends to apply his advanced knowledge of Atlantean alchemy to and make into a super explosive capable of blowing up whole swaths of London, or any other city!

The Goods Depot

This large warehouse sits at the end of a G.N.R. Railway Depot which abuts Regent's Canal. This terminus serves the north central area of London. Finished goods and raw materials are off-loaded here to make their way to their destinations in Islington, Kingsland, Hackney, and other surrounding areas. Several shipments of raw linen, cotton, and other materials lie stacked in the great wooden structure. Several sets of large double-doors face York Road, the most likely means of approach by the Agents. The other side of Depot is open to train cars, and five sets of tracks lead in and out of the structure. At the time of the meeting only a three-car train sits in the Depot. This train belongs to none other than the Jade Skull, and consists of a locomotive, coal car, and customized passenger car converted for the Skull's unique needs (windows with frosted glass and bars, reinforced doors, and a small holding cell for prisoners). This is the means by which the Skull will make try to his escape should things go awry.

The Action

It will be up to Agents how they want to play the scene. If they were not careful in tailing Bhanu Singh and he noticed them, he will arrive ahead of time and warn the Skull. If they stopped Bhanu Singh from making the meeting, the Skull will not immediately become suspicious of his tardiness, for he has the courier's arrival to handle. A dozen Chinese Boxers will be on the scene to protect their master, along with several thugs to man the train and see that it runs properly. The skull waits for the courier in the Depot several yards from the entrance to his custom train car. The courier is a nameless thug from one of the London gangs, and he will arrive at five minutes after 9:00 PM. If the Agents were patient and waited a bit to see what developed, they'll be rewarded with seeing the dirty little fellow show up with a package cradled carefully in his arms. If they rushed in exactly at 9:00, or even before, the courier will hear the sounds of battle and abort his mission. The dangerous explosives will then likely not play a part in the scene.





The Jade Skull

STR 15 CON 20 SIZ 14 INT 20 POW 25 DEX 15 APP 7

Age: unknown Height: 6'5" Weight: 130 lbs. Hair: none Eyes: Burning Orange

Move: 10

Hit Points: 44

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: 5 kinetic/10 heat

Attacks: Energy Projection (Kinetic) 75%, 3D6 (crushing)

Throw 65% (explosives, see text below)

Skills: Aura Detection 65%, Climb 40%, Dodge 80%, Grapple 25%, Insight 85%, Jump 25%, Knowledge (Atlantis) 105%, Knowledge (Blasphemous Lore) 85%, Language (Atlantean) 90%, Language (Chinese) 80%, Language (Egyptian) 80%, Language (English) 80%, Listen 65%, Literacy (English) 90%, Mind Control 85%, Mind Shield 85%, Research 90%, Science (Alchemy) 80%, Spot 65%, Swim 85%, Throw 65%.

Psychic Powers: Aura Detection, Mind Control, Mind Shield.

Super Powers: Armor (Kinetic 5), Armor (Heat 10), †Energy Projection (Kinetic) 3, Extra Hit Points (+10, already figured into profile), Extra Power Points 3 (+30 Power Points, usable for Psychic or Super Powers).

Key bits of villainous dialog:

--"You aether-men are resourceful, but your pathetic powers are as a gnat's sting to one such as I!"

--"Fools! I was ancient when the Pharaohs built the first pyramids!"

--"I control operatives in every government in every country in the world. Who is to say that I do not have several of your own Agents at my beck and call?"

--"Just as man is to the great apes of Africa, so I am to man."





Chinese Boxers (12, use profile from Chapter IV: Friends and Foes).

The Skull's Train Crew (4, use Thug profile from pg. 367 of the BRP rules, add Drive (Locomotive) 60% to the profile).

The Courier (1, use Thug profile from pg. 367 of the BRP rules).

Once the Skull sees that he is beset by a team of Agents he will seek to make his escape on his train. He will order his loyal Chinese fighters to delay the Agents then try to mount his train. If Bhanu Singh is present he will bring him as a bodyguard. His train crew will not fight unless the Agents board the train. If the courier arrived and make the handover of the explosives to the Skull, he will throw two of the four vials at the Agents in an attempt to destroy them. GM's should use the rules for dynamite listed on pg. 267 of the BRP rules. The vials are so unstable that anyone carrying one struck by an attack of any kind must make a LUCK roll or be caught in a cascading explosion. If the LUCK roll is made, the vials do not go off, but if it's failed, they all explode at once. GM's should roll damage dice for the blast equal to the number of vials carried times the base 5D6 damage rating for dynamite. The radius of the blast also increases by a multiple of the number of vials remaining.

For resolving attacks and damage on the locomotive and cars, GM's should use the rules on pg. 270-271 of the BRP book. To reflect the modifications made to the Skull's train and cars, the GM should add +2 to its Armor score.

Wrapping Things Up

Having the skull escape, or having his train cars explode due to a hit on the volatile vials of nitroglycerin, are both good ways to set him up as a recurring villain in the AotC campaign. If his train explodes it would be an easy thing to tell the players that no trace of his body could be found. The players will not know the extent of his weird powers, and might expect that he performed a Houdini-like escape, and who is to say that he did not? With his criminal network a veritable spiderweb stretching the length and breadth of the known world, there is no telling where the Jade Skull might show his hideous face again!

Appendix I. Additional Rules and Notes

Move and Attack

In the standard BRP rules characters can only move up to 5 units†and still attack in the same turn.† If players and GM's want additional dynamism in combat, they can adopt the Move and Attack optional rule. During the Statement phase of the round, a character declares that he or she is making a Move and Attack maneuver. When his or her turn comes up he or she may move up to his or her Walking pace and make a Difficult attack roll (halving the relevant skill). This may be either a ranged or close combat attack. Using this maneuver does not affect the character's Dodge or Parry attempts for that turn.

The Role of Fate

GM's running AotC are strongly urged to utilize the optional Fate rules on pg. 176 of the BRP rule book. These rules will give heroes greater control over their environment and also make them more survivable while remaining within the spirit of the core BRP mechanics.

Power Use in the Action Phase

GM's running AotC are strongly urged to utilize the optional rules for Power Use in the Action Phase detailed on pg. 189 of the BRP rules.





The Durability of Heroes

Investigation and role-play are both big parts of many Agents of the Crown adventures, but when the chips are down, and Queen and country are on the line, furious combat often ensues. In the standard BRP rules combat is a deadly affair, with injured characters suffering a long period of convalescence as they nurse their injuries and regain lost hit points. Even aether-men with plenty of hit points will eventually suffer a major injury or watch their HP totals be depleted in repeated battles with the enemies of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria. However, Crown Agents fueled by the mysterious power of aetheric energy are no mere mortals. This section introduces the optional rule of Heroic Recovery to your AotC games, and discusses the optional removal of the Major Wounds rules from games with a more cinematic character.

Heroic Recovery

Instead of making a natural healing roll once per week and regaining 1D3 hit points, GM's can introduce the idea of Heroic Recovery. When using this option all aether-men possess a Healing Bonus calculated by adding their CON + POW and comparing the number to the Damage Bonus chart on pg. 29 of the BRP rules. The corresponding dice bonus is their Healing Bonus, representing a dice roll they may make once per day to recover lost Hit Points. This bonus may only be used once per 24 hour period, and normally must be done during a period of quiet rest and meditation. It can be used during combat or in another stressful situation, in lieu of an attack or other action, but this requires a successful POW x 5 roll. If the roll fails, the Healing Bonus for the day is not lost, but it does not work at that moment. It can be attempted again on subsequent actions, or done automatically during a later moment of calm. Characters who also receive medical attention can still benefit from the 1D3 hit points of healing those services provide.

Aether-men with low or debilitated CON + POW characteristics (resulting in a "none" or negative result on the table) heal 1D3 HP when they activate their Healing Bonus. This represents the fact that although their personal power is weak, they are still aether-men. Results from a Healing Bonus roll can never take a character's HP beyond its normal starting value. Characters possessing the Regeneration power will heal at a much faster rate than others simply by virtue of their power, but they can still benefit from the use of their Healing Bonus in the heat of battle for a quick, cost-free boost to their own rapid healing, or even out of combat when they have spent most of their power point reserve for the day. A character may not employ his or her Healing Bonus if he or she is at zero or fewer HP.

Example: The Dorset Eagle (26 HP at full health, CON 17, POW 17) possesses a Healing Bonus of +1D6. Three days ago she sustained a series of minor injuries in battle taking her HP down to 14. On the fourth day her HP total stands at 23, and during a quiet moment of meditation she uses her Healing Bonus for the day. The Eagle's player, Jo Ann, rolls a 6 on her healing bonus check. Since her maximum HP is 26, the Dorset Eagle goes from 23 back to 26 HP, ignoring the extra three hit points.

Example: Bulldog (33 HP at full health, CON 24, POW 14, Regeneration super power) possesses a Healing Bonus of +1D6. He suffers injuries leading to the loss of 10 HP while battling some cultists. To conserve power points during the battle he could elect to activate his Healing Bonus in the thick of combat, but he would need to make a POW check to do so (70% in this case), and this would come instead of any combat action that turn.





Major Wounds

The rules for Major Wounds on pg. 208 of the BRP rules are appropriate for most realistic, grim fantasy, horror, and hard science fiction games, but might not fit a GM's vision of the super hero genre. Since AotC is a Victorian Supers game, leaving the Major Wounds rules as is might suit certain GM's and players' styles, but others may still want to give player characters that extra bit of toughness the action of the genre sometimes demands. In these cases player characters and important NPC's simply ignore the Major Wounds rules. GM's can still make them roll POW to avoid unconsciousness when hit with attacks that do half of their HP total or more in one hit, or when Minor Wounds reduce their HP, but Major Wounds are not rolled for as for normal heroes. In this variant the Fatal Wounds rules (BRP pg. 209) are still employed.

Grid-Based Movement

Page 202 of the BRP rules discusses the use of miniatures in games for tracking position and movement. This becomes especially useful in combat situations, and this section provides some additional guidance in implementing a square grid mat for use in BRP combats. All of the movement rates discussed here are for a Combat Round, as this is the most relevant measure of time when it comes to conducting combats in BRP. A standard player character possesses a walking Movement rate of 10 units. To convert this for use on a standard 1" square grid (the kind you will find in most hobby game stores), simply halve the number. So a character with a Move of 10 can walk 5 squares in a combat round. The chart below shows the rates of Movement for characters using different paces over the course of a combat round. These values were derived by halving the Movement Rates provided on pg. 181 of the BRP rules.

Walking 5 squares

Marching 6 squares

Running 15 squares

Swimming 3 squares

Super Running 30 squares

Flying 250 squares

A figure may not move through a grid square occupied by an enemy figure unless it possesses a power like Fly, Intangibility, or Invisibility. Figures may freely move through squares occupied by friendly figures. Two figures may not occupy the same square on the grid at the same time unless one of them is dead or unconscious.

In most cases characters possessing powers like Super Speed and Flight will be quite capable of getting anywhere on a grid map in the course of a single round's movement. The important thing for players concerned with tracking movement using miniatures is that everyone will know where their characters and the opposition stand over the course of the battle.

NEW POWERS

AotC uses only the Psychic and Super rules from the Powers chapter of the BRP rules. This decision was made for ease of character creation and play balance. It will be easier for a GM to build NPC's and for players to build characters and then take an accurate measure of their relative power if only two of the systems are employed. However, players and GM's can decide to integrate the other power systems (Magic and Mutations) into their AotC campaigns with little difficulty. Below several of the powers from those other power sets have been converted over to the Super Powers rules. Players can use these conversions as a guide to doing more of their own, or as a benchmark for creating entirely new super or psychic powers. Additionally, some completely new powers not offered in the BRP rules are presented for use in the game. It is up to the GM to approve the use of any power in his or her game.





Heal

Base Range: Touch

Duration: Instantaneous

Power Cost: 10 per +1D6 healed

Power Point Cost: 3 per +1D6

Each level of this power used heals +1D6 HP of damage.†The†base version†does not work against disease, poison, or radiation. The other details of this power work just as presented on pg. 98 of the BRP rules.

Power Modifier: Extra Healing

Cost: +5 per Extra effect

Players may purchase Extra Healing for their Heal power. Each 5 pts. they spend allows them to heal damage from an additional source: disease, poison, or radiation.

Immortality

Base Range: Self

Duration: Always On

Power Cost:† 5 per level (max 3)

Power Point Cost: none

Characters possessing this power do not age once they reach maturity. Level one of this power indicates an immortal born (or created) in recent years. This level of the power means that the character will never age, but has not been alive long enough to gain any extra skill points. Level two of this power reflects a character who has been alive at least a century, has done some traveling, and benefited from his or her experiences. Characters possessing level two Immortality gain 50 extra skill points that they may place in any skill they choose. Characters possessing level 3 Immortality are ancient, having been alive for many centuries or longer. They gain an additional 100 skill points that they may place in any skill they choose. Characters may gain this power during the course of a campaign (i.e., after initial character creation), but when doing so, may never gain a level higher than one.

Natural Weaponry

Base Range: Self

Duration: Always On

Power Cost: 10 per +1D6 damage

Power Point Cost: none

Characters with this power possess claws, a deadly bite, diamond-hard fists, killing hands imbued with aetheric or mystical energy, or some other enhancement that makes their close combat attacks more deadly. Every 10 pts. spent on this power grants the character an additional +1D6 damage on unarmed, close combat attacks. This damage stacks with extra damage from high Strength and the Unarmed Combat power.





Sense Aether-Man (Super Sense Power Modifier†Benefit)

Description: For +1 pt.†players may add this benefit to†one of their character's Super Sense powers. Each extra point spent allows them to add it to another Super Sense. Once added, the Super Sense can be used to detect the presence of aether-men, and subsequently,†it can also be used to assist in tracking them down over great distances. For example, if the character Bloodhound possessed Super Sense (Smell/Taste) along with the Sense Aether-Man benefit, she could literally smell the presence of aether-men nearby. Each one might have a distinctive scent, but all would be traceable using this power and the Track skill. Any other Super Sense could also be defined in this manner, and players should†consult with their GM to come up with any details required to make the combination work.



Appendix II. Bibliography

This detailed bibliography provides players and GM's numerous sources on the Victorian era, the history of the British Empire, super-heroes, and more.

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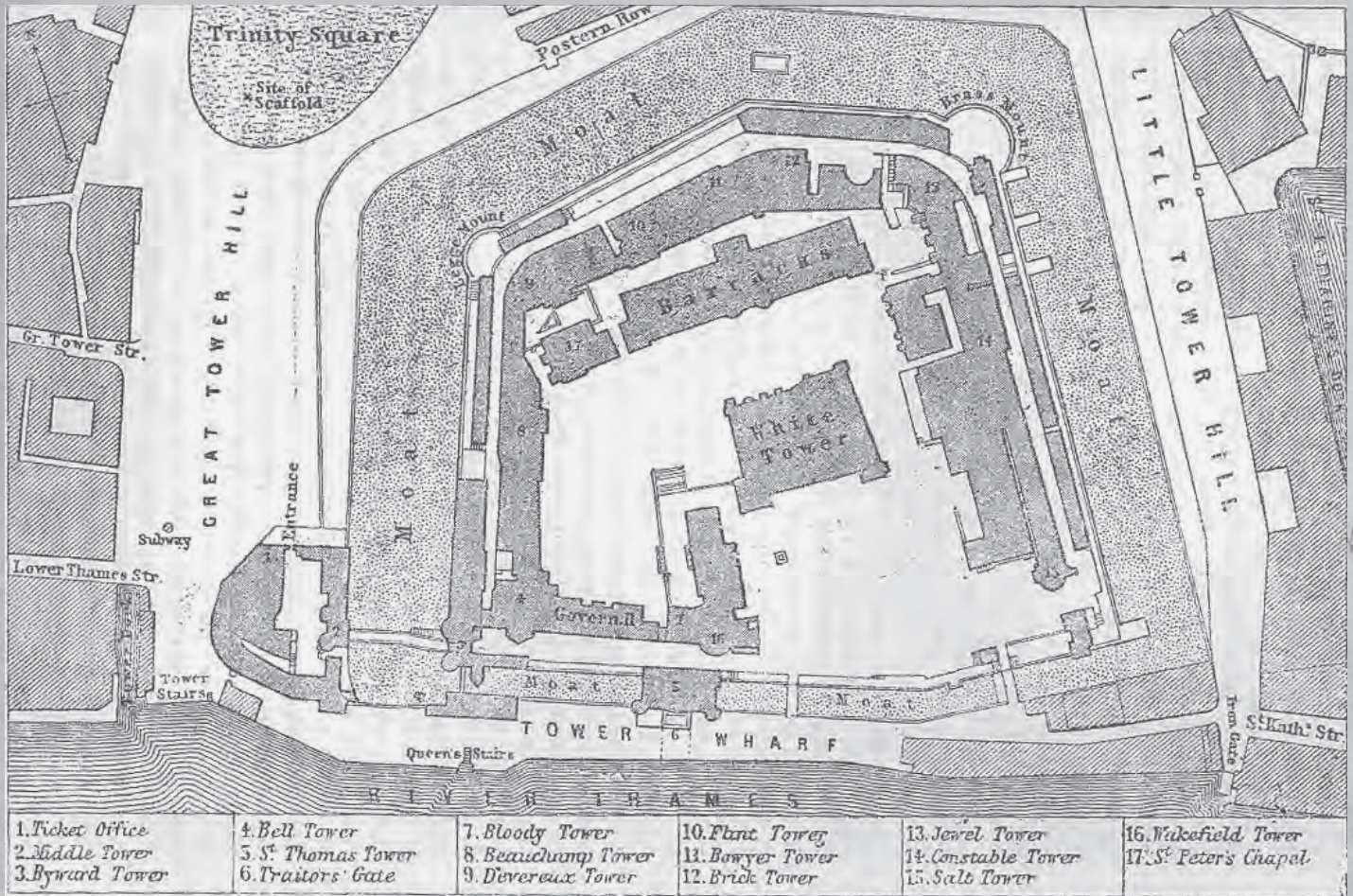
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Moore, Alan. The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (vol. II). California: America's Best Comics, 2003.

Web Sites

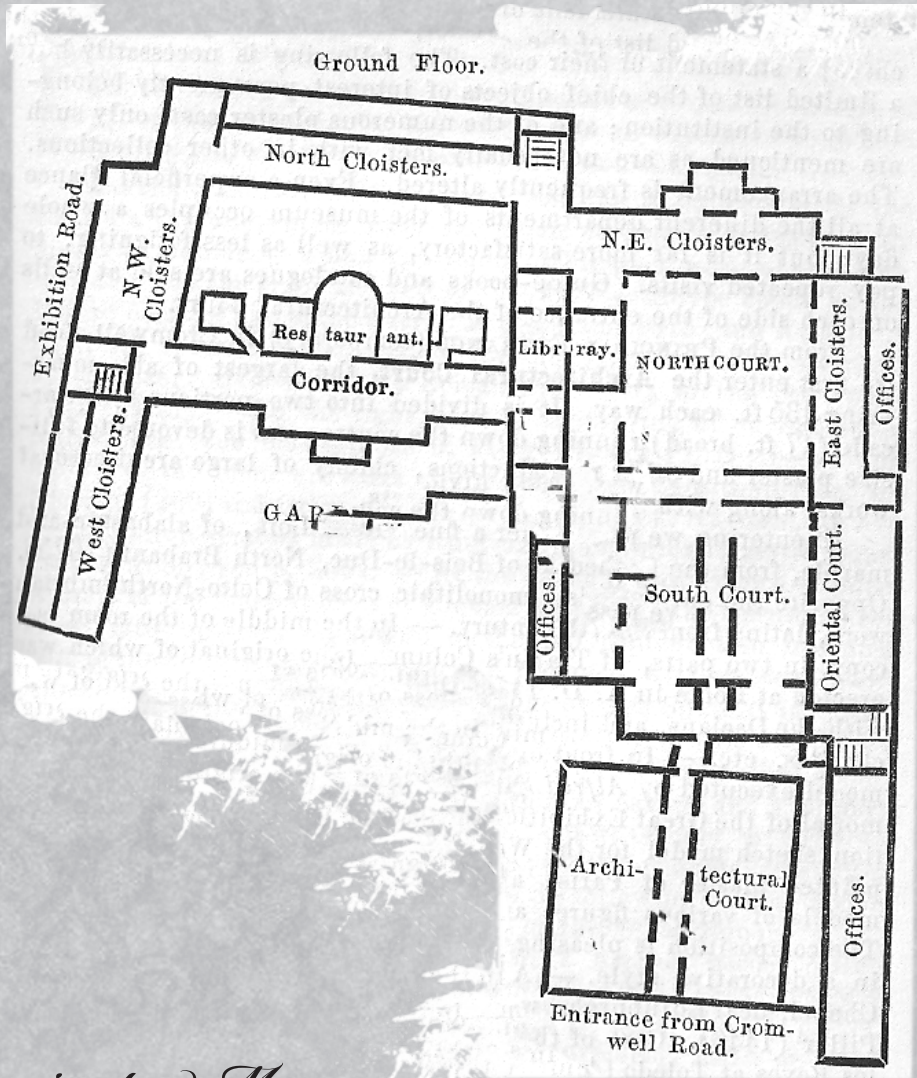
Victorian Web <http://www.victorianweb.org/>





Tower of London





South Kensington Museum

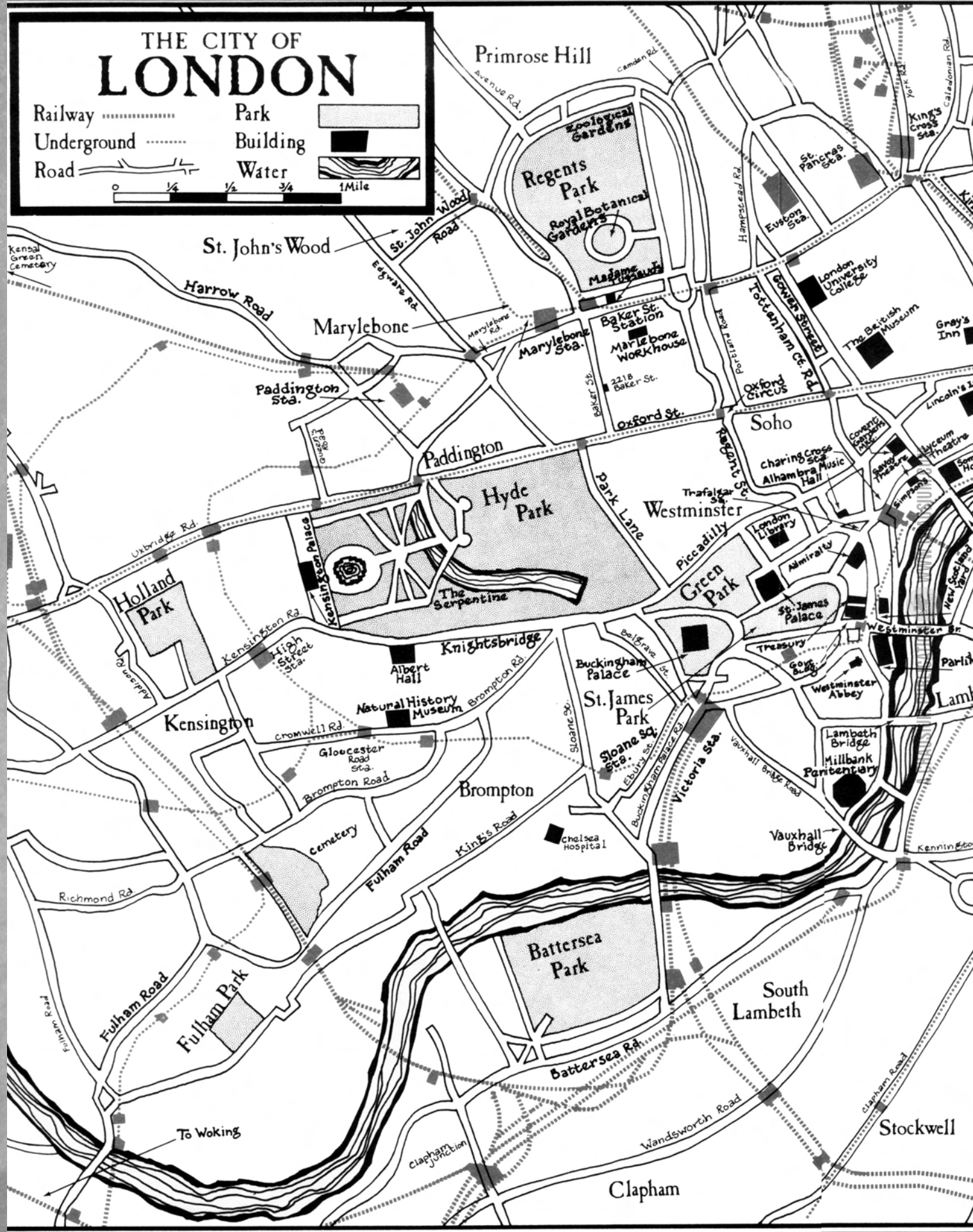


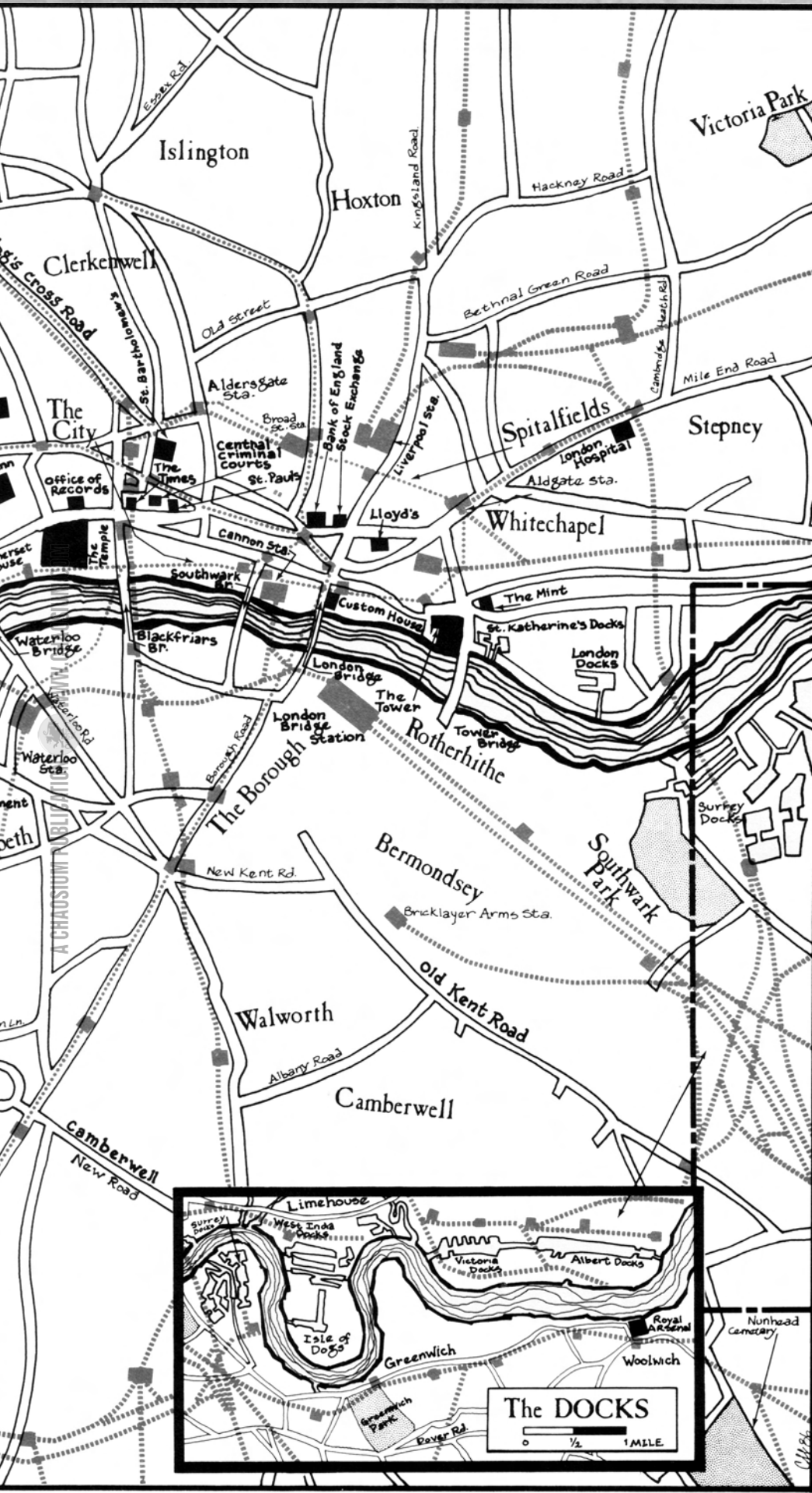
THE CITY OF LONDON

Railway
Underground
Road ————

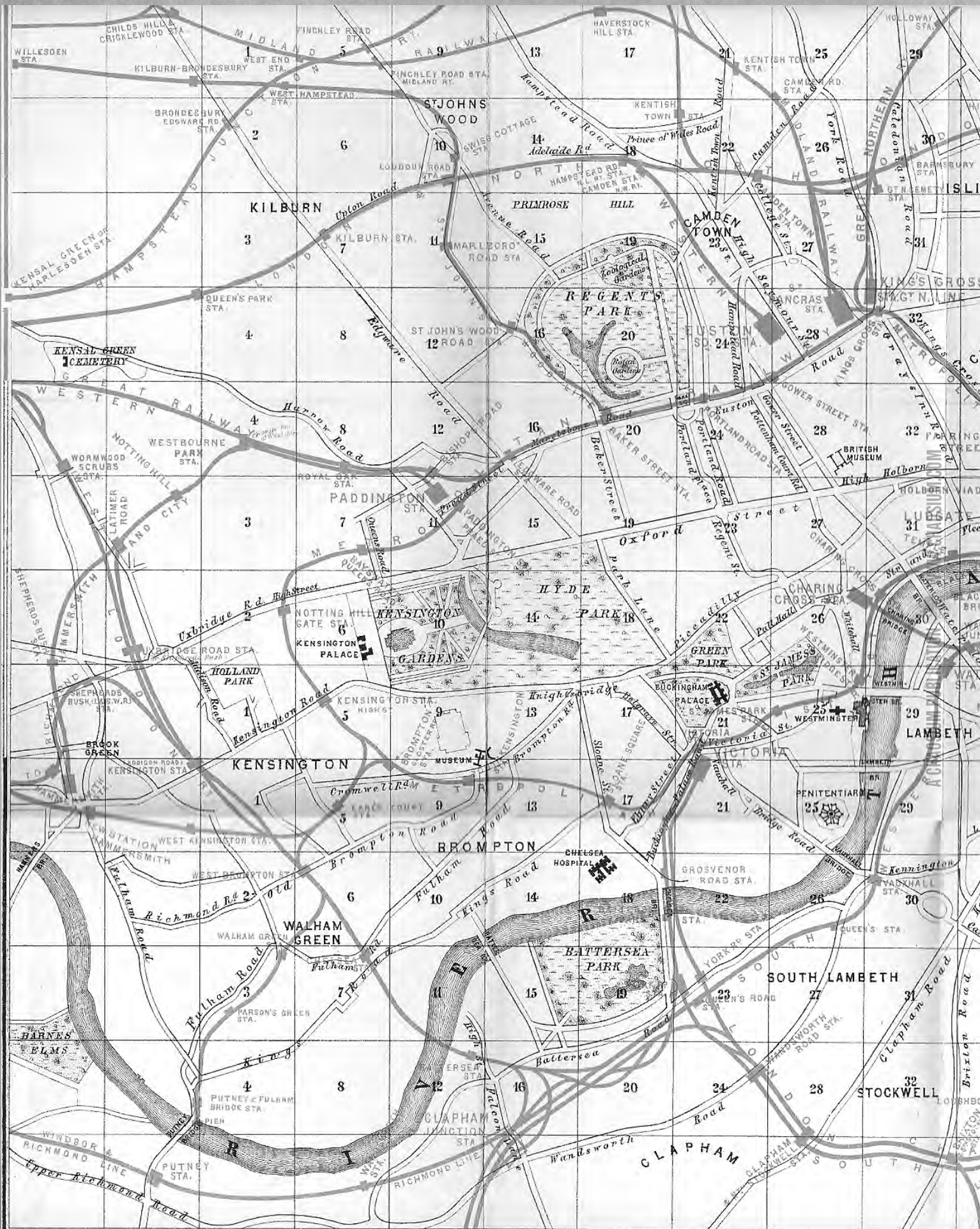
Park [shaded area]
Building [solid black square]
Water [wavy lines]

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1 Mile

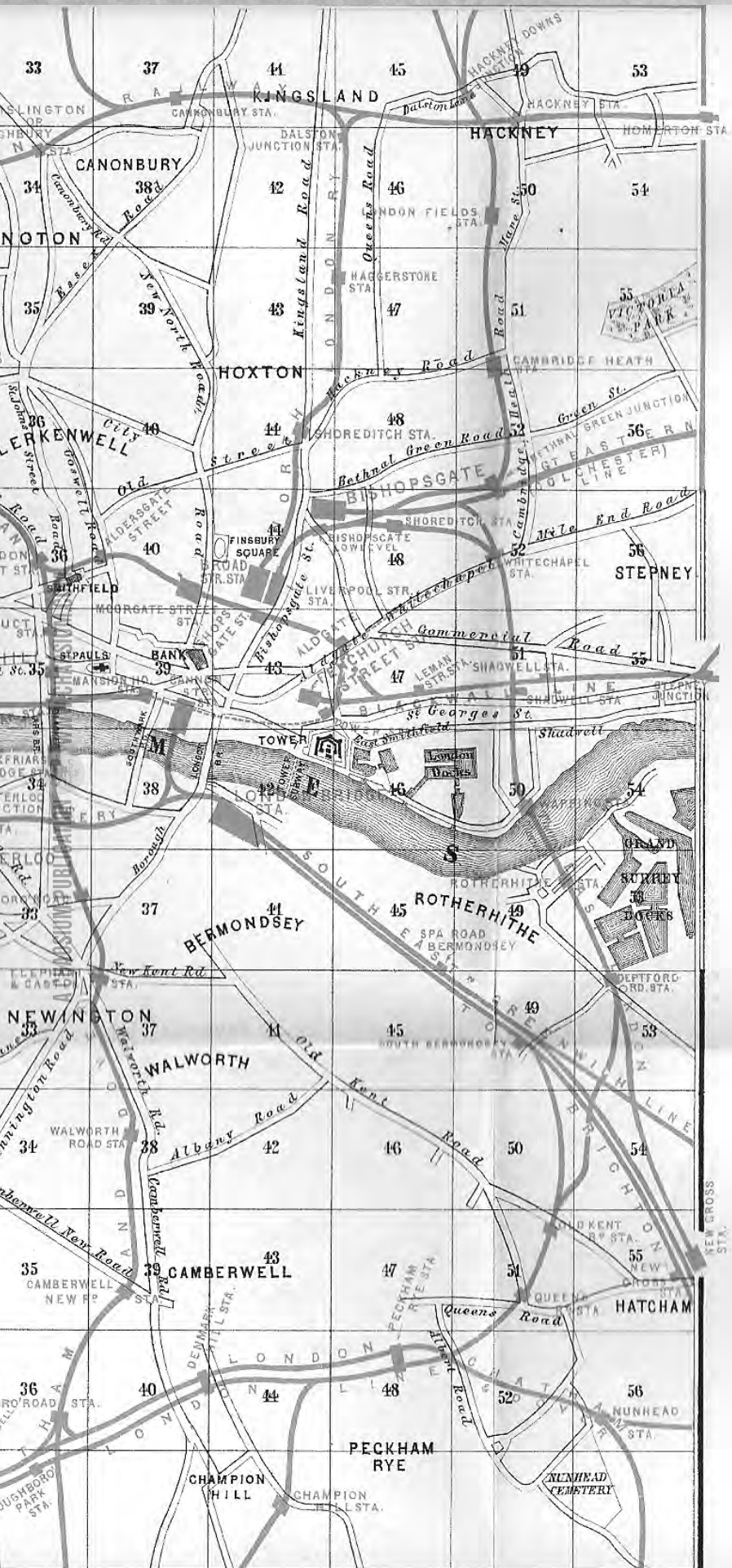





City of London

Map labels include: WILLESDEN STA., CHILDS HILL & CRICKLEWOOD STA., MIDLAND RAILWAY, FINCHLEY ROAD STA., HAVERSTOCK HILL STA., KILBURN-BRONDESBURY STA., WEST END STA., FINCHLEY ROAD STA., KENTISH TOWN STA., BRONDESBURY EDGWARE RD. STA., WEST HAMPSTEAD STA., ST. JOHNS WOOD, SWISS COTTAGE STA., KENTISH TOWN STA., CAMDEN RD. STA., KILBURN, OXFORD ROAD STA., NORTH HAMPSTEAD R.L. STA., CAMDEN STA., QUEEN'S PARK STA., ST. JOHNS WOOD 12 ROAD, MARLBORO' ROAD STA., REGENT'S PARK, ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, BOTANICAL GARDENS, CAMDEN TOWN, ANCRAS STA., KINGS CROSS, KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY, GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY, HORNOK ROAD, WESTBOURNE PARK STA., ROYAL STA., PADDINGTON STA., BAKER STREET STA., BRITISH MUSEUM, WORMWOOD SCRUBS STA., NOTTING HILL AND CITY, WESTMINSTER, HOLBORN, LUBGATE, SHEPHERDS BUSH, LATIMER ROAD, NOTTING HILL GATE STA., KENSINGTON PALACE, KENSINGTON GARDENS, HYDE PARK, CHARING CROSS, GREEN PARK, BUCKINGHAM PALACE, WESTMINSTER, BROOK GREEN, KENSINGTON STA., HOLLAND PARK, KENSINGTON HIGH ST., MUSEUM, BROMPTON, CHURCHILL SQUARE, VICTORIA, PENITENTIARY, WALHAM GREEN, WALHAM GREEN STA., BROMPTON, CHELSEA HOSPITAL, GROSVENOR ROAD STA., BATTERSEA PARK, SOUTH LAMBETH, CLAPHAM, PUTNEY & FULHAM BRIDGE STA., PUTNEY STA., CLAPHAM JUNCTION STA., WANDSWORTH, STOCKWELL, RICHMOND LINE, UPPER RICHMOND ROAD, PUTNEY STA., CLAPHAM COMMON STA., SOUTH, CLAPHAM COMMON, Brixton Road, WINDSOR & RICHMOND LINE, PUTNEY STA., CLAPHAM COMMON STA., SOUTH, CLAPHAM COMMON, Brixton Road.





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