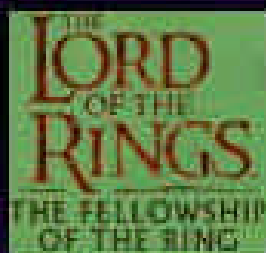




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Order of the Stone



Introduction

This adventure is the climax of the search of the Order of the Ancient Stone. The story is designed to pick up after the events in **War Buddy**¹ (<http://www.chaosium.com/cthu/lu/celaeno-coc/warbuddy.pdf>), **General Hospital**, and **Celestia Maria**. Alternatively, it can be brought in at a later time.

This adventure is set in England and Wales in the early 1930's. With minor modifications, the story could be moved to the 1920's or to the modern day.

Note: The Ancient Stone in this adventure appears much like Maen Llia in Brecknock, Powys, Wales. (<http://www.stonepages.com/wales/maenllia.html>).

Adventure Summary

After being marooned on Bermuda by the events on the Celestia Maria, the investigators make their way to Plymouth, following Lance Blake who murdered Jack Meredith. But Plymouth is only another waypoint. Following the cold trail of Lance Blake, the investigators reach the Welsh village of Hobbs Hollow and the secret of the Order of the Ancient Stone.

Background Information

Background

See **War Buddy**, **General Hospital**, and **Celestia Maria** for background information. Lance Blake attended Eaton with William Carter Acres, heir to the Acres fortune. During holiday, Lance often came home with William. One night during his stay, Lance was not able to sleep and he began wandering the grounds of the manor. He soon came to the ancient stone on a hill behind the manor house. A single, central stone, known locally as "the Ancient stone", dominates this hill. When Lance arrived at the stone, Aldebaran just rose above the horizon. In its baleful light, Lance had an epiphany and the history of the Ancient Stone was revealed to him. From that day forward, Lance set about forming the Cult of Hastur known as "the Order of the Ancient Stone". Over the years, Lance moved into the manor and assumed control of the Acres family. He supplanted William and finally killed him.

Dramatis Personae

Lance Blake

Lance Blake is the head of the Order of the Stone in Texas. He is the friend who met up with Jack Meredith and had him killed. He is the one who sent Karl LeBlanc after Father Henesey. Lance Blake arranged for the *Spectral Hunter* to guard the offices of the Order in San Antonio as well as ordered José Dominguez to take care of anyone who might be following Lance.

Lance Blake (Grand Master, 10th Level)

S: 12; D: 8; C: 15; I: 14; W: 13; Ch: 15

HD: 10d6 (58); Initiative: +3; AC: 14 (-1 Dex, +5 armor); Attack: Pistol @ +6 (1d10); Fort: +9, Reflex: +2, Will: +8.

Bluff +8, Cthulhu Mythos +10, Gather Info +9, innuendo +8, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (biology) +15, Knowledge (occult) +10, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +6, search +9, Sense Motive +9, Spot +11.

Point Blank Shot (+1 within 30'), Precise Shot (shoot into melee w/o penalty) Improved Initiative (+4 Initiative), Iron Will (+2 Will save).

Spell	Cost	Cast	Range	Dur.	Effect
Raise Night Fog	3 Int, 1d6 San	1a	150'	5 hrs	Pg. 147
Red Sign of Shudde M'Ell	2 Str/target, 1d8 San	1a	35'	Conc.	1d6+5/rnd
Power of Nyambie	1 Con (perm.)	1h	Self	Inst.	2d6 ability
Black Binding	3 Int, 1d6 San	1a	Touch	Inst.	Pg. 131
Suggestion	3 Wis, 1d4 San	1a	50'	10 hrs	Pg. 149
Spectral Razor	2 str, 1d3 San	1a	50'	Conc.	2d6

In addition to being the head of the Order, Lance is also a Chosen of Hastur (pg 190). Once Lance changes, he loses his spells.

Lance Blake (Chosen of Hastur)

S: 12; D: 8; C: 15; I: 14; W: 13; Ch: 15

HD: 10d12 (116/+80 Frenzy), Initiative: +3; AC: 20 (+6 natural, +5 armor, -1 Dex), Attack: +8/+3 (1d3+1/+6 Frenzy); Fort: +7; Reflex: +5; Will: NA.

Frenzy (7 rounds); Death Touch (successful grapple, Fort DC 25 or death); Draining Touch (touch attack; 1d10 hp & 1d6 permanent Con per round; Chosen gains +5 HP for each 5 HP lost; loose 10 HP each time Aldebaran sets); Dark vision 60'; fast healing 5; intuit direction; fire resistance 5; cold resistance 20; force resistance 20; sonic resistance 20; immunity to critical hits; immunity to death from massive damage; immune to anything requiring a Will save.

Hide +9; Listen +13; Move Silently +9; Spot +13; Wilderness Lore +13; Climb +6; Jump +6; Swim +6.

Endurance (+4 to Str skill over time); Power Attack (n/a); Track (follow); Whirlwind Attack while Frenzied (1 attack versus each opponent within 5').

SAN loss: 1/1d6 (witnessing the transformation: 1d6/2d6; full damage if the player knew the victim).

Dame Elizabeth Mary Anne Acres

Dame Elizabeth Mary Anne Acres is the reigning matriarch of the Acres family. Elizabeth runs the family business from Acres Manor. The Acres Manor is located in a remote area of Wales; near the village of Hobbs Hollow. Dame Acres has not been seen in two years; though it is known she still lives at the manor. Most people agree that she had a breakdown after her son disappeared and has been living as a recluse ever since.

William Carter Acres

William Carter Acres was the last Lord Acres. He mysteriously disappeared during the middle of his last term at Eaton. His erstwhile friend, Lance Blake, to close the bargain with Hastur, sacrificed him.

Bert I. Gordon

Bert, originally from London, drives a hire car in Bristol. He is the only one who will take passengers to Hobbs Hollow. Bert is an outgoing man and very friendly. Bert speaks in a Cockney accent. He can talk at length on a great many subjects, but he is tight lipped about the Hollow.

Bert has a bad elbow, which kept him out of front-line service during the war. He was stationed in Hobbs Hollow as part of the Home Guard. Bert always had wanderlust and used to be a "rambler" (one who walks for miles in the country side). During his time in Hobbs Hollow, he would talk daylong walks around the countryside. Once Sunday afternoon, he chanced upon the stone behind the Acres Manor. As he stood in front of the ancient stone, he began to have visions of strange, far away places. Well, this scared him so much that he returned to the barracks and never went wandering again.

After the war, Bert began his hire business. He has always driven to Hobbs Hollow, and he has seen how the village came under the evil spell of Lance Blake over the years. Many of his friends from the War are different now; most don't remember him. Bert has tried to tell the authorities that something strange is going on, but no one listens. So he tries on his own to help. But so far, he's not succeeded.

¹ War Buddy, its characters, organizations, and places are copyright 1998 by Michael C. LaBossiere (Ontologist@aol.com). They are used in this work without permission. This is not a challenge to the copyright.

Richard Burroughs

Richard Burroughs is a reporter for the London Observer. He has been with the paper for fifty years; and was a foreign correspondent during the War. Three years ago, he moved to the travel desk. He has since traveled all over Europe and the British Isles.

Richard has always had an interest in the stone circle and standing stones that dot the English countryside. Ten years ago, he came to Hobbs Hollow and found the Ancient Stone. The stone attempted to contact him by showing him the Yellow Sign, but for some reason, Richard wasn't completely enthralled like Lance was. The stone did make an impression, and he has been searching for years for what the Yellow Sign means.

Richard, on his latest trip to Hobbs Hollow, went to the stone again, but this time he met up with Lance. Now he is being held captive by Lance – to be used as the sacrifice to summon Hastur.

Visions

The shards of the Ancient Stone reveal images to whoever holds them. If a player holds a shard for longer than 30 seconds, he will receive a vision. Such a vision is a confusing mass of images and impressions, the first time someone receives the visions, they must make a Sanity Check (0/1d8).

In the last volume of this adventure, the party had the chance to acquire a copy of *The King in Yellow*. If any members of the party have researched his volume, they will be susceptible to the visions under certain conditions. These conditions are noted in the text of the adventure. Roll on the table below for a vision. Note that no player will ever experience the same vision more than once.

D6	Vision
1	There area is dark, with only a small rectangle of light about eye level. There are sounds of stones or bricks being mortared into place. Over this, can be heard the quiet sobs of a woman. This vision is of Dame Acres being walled up in the wine cellar of the manor. The vision reveals that there is a key clutched in her right hand.
2	A Viking long ship is sailing in a storm tossed sea. The waves are higher than the furled mast of the ship. The crew is all pulling hard on their oars, while a white-haired Viking stands at the tiller. Amidships is a large stone that, between flashes of lightning, illuminates the whole ship in a strange yellow light.
3	During a moonless night, a solitary figure approaches a large, single stone. The figure steps forward and places his hands on the stone and is immediately enshrouded in a yellow light. High up on the stone, a yellow rune begins to glow. This vision is of Lance Blake as he first encounters Hastur. The red star, Aldebaran, can be seen just over the central stone.
4	In a dark paneled room with a roaring fire, a small dinner party is underway. Three couples are sitting a long table enjoying after dinner drinks. Opposite the fire, a man has been nailed to the wall by his hands and feet. An iron mast obscures his features, but he is moaning quietly. A figure at the head of the table stands up; it is Lance Blake. He makes a toast to the Order of the Ancient Stone. All the guests participate in the toast.
5	In the galley of the <i>Celestia Marie</i> , two seamen sit hunched over a chessboard, intently watching the game. As one man reaches to move his piece, he freezes. Both men sit immobile except for their eyes. It is obvious that they are alarmed at their predicament. A third figure enters the galley carrying a large butcher knife. As he repeatedly plunges the knife into the two men, their eyes communicate their silent screams. This is a vision of the murders of the crew that occurred in the last adventure.
6	Lance Blake enters a library and goes to the astronomical stacks. He looks through some old books and finally pulls out a volume entitled "Stellar Timings, Royal Observatory, Greenwich, Volume XXII". He takes this to a table and quickly leafs through it. After a while, he stops on a page. He then searches his pocket for a piece of paper. He finds an old manifest and quickly scribbles something on the back. Then he returns the book to the stacks and leaves.

Events

The following is a rough outline of events that can occur. The events occur in the order given. The pacing of the events should be handled by the Keeper to keep the game moving but **do not overpower the players**. They should have time to investigate.

The sequence is set such that the events will happen in the order listed if the investigators do nothing to move the story along. Their actions may change how things happen.

Bermuda

The survivors from the *Celestia Maria* are subjected to quite a bit of questioning by the Bermuda authorities. Their story is, to say the least, a bit far-fetched, but it fits the facts and there is no evidence against it. Grudgingly, the authorities close the case and invite the investigators to enjoy the island – and to leave as quickly as they can.

Before they leave Bermuda, the character that read *The Yellow King* has a vision. If more than one character has read the play, randomly determine who has the vision.

Note: The Bermuda setting is a gold mine for **Call of Cthulhu**. A side adventure involving voodoo and the Old Ones is an obvious choice.

Plymouth

The Offices of Longfellow and Acres are just off Warf 4. The office is closed and there is a sign nailed to the door. The door is locked (**Disable Device** DC 17).

Attention

This office of Longfellow and Acres is closed. Please direct all inquiries to the home office in Hobbs Hollow, Wales.
We look forward to your custom.

An eligible character has a vision upon seeing the door.

Office Building

The layout of the Plymouth office is the same as the Galveston office. It has a single wooden desk against the west wall with two filing cabinets behind it. Hanging on the south wall are photographs of the company's four steamers. The desk and filing cabinets have been cleared out.

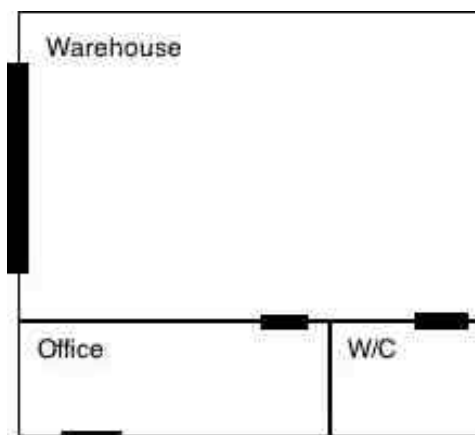
A chalkboard on the east wall lists information about each of the ships (arrival times, sailing times, cargo, captain, etc). A quick glance (**Spot** DC 5) at the chalkboard shows that the *Celestia Maria* is currently listed as missing.

Water Closet

The water closet is clean. It has the normal fixtures and a small bureau on the south wall. Stuck in the bureau, behind the top drawer, is a single piece of paper. The paper is a page from a ship's manifest. On the back is scrawled in a shaky hand the following:

V 22, p 133
Thursday, 4 February – 8:25 to 12:25
Friday, 5 February – 9:37 to 1:04
Tuesday, 17 May – 1:04 to 4:55
Wednesday, 18 May – 1:23 to 4:31

The first line is an abbreviation for "volume 22, page 133" – see #6 in the rumor table. The times given are the rising and setting of Aldebaran. A **Knowledge (occult)** check (DC 20), a **Cthulhu Mythos check** (DC 17), or a **Knowledge (astronomy)** check (DC 20) will reveal this fact. Investigation at a library (see below) or observatory will reveal that the next rising of Aldebaran is in two days time.



Warehouse

The warehouse is empty. It appears to have been swept clean.

Plymouth Library

The Plymouth library has a complete set of The Stellar Timings. This was the library where Lance did his research. If asked, the librarian remembers Lance – a well-dressed young man who came in often to look at the Stellar Timings. Few people refer to the books, and they are mostly professors or ships navigators. None, however, referred to them as often as Lance did. The last time Lance was in was three days ago.

Travel to Hobbs Hollow

There is no direct service to Hobbs Hollow from Plymouth, but the party can hire a car in Bristol. There is rail service from Plymouth to Bristol twice a day. The trip takes 4 hours.

Bristol

The trip to Bristol is uneventful, except for another vision.

In Bristol, there are a few cars for hire, but most won't take a fare to Hobbs Hollow. No reason is given or lame excuses. A successful **Sense Motive** (DC 15) check will reveal that the drivers are afraid of Hobbs Hollow. Eventually, the investigators will find Bert I. Gordon. He has a small bus (6 passenger) and will make the run to Hobbs Hollow. The trip takes about 5 hours along the small roads. The party will arrive at about 8:00 pm in front of "The Ring of Stones" pub. The Steeple of St. Timothy's can be seen for miles around. As the investigators arrive, they might notice (**Spot** DC 15) a slight yellow glow around the steeple.

The Hollow

When the party arrives in the Hollow, it is evening. They can get rooms at the Inn cheaply. From here, there are a few things that they could do:

1. **Sleep the Night.** If the party decides to bed down for the night, they will all dream the same dream – one of the visions from the table.
2. **Explore the Village.** If the party decides to look around the village, they will encounter one or two villagers. These will be reserved and not too talkative. If pressed, they will suggest that the party should go talk to the Innkeeper or the Lord. While exploring the village, the party will definitely have another vision.
3. **Head for the Manor.** If the party visits the manor house the butler, James, will meet them. He will say that the lady is not receiving visitors at this late an hour and ask them to please return the following day. If they persist, the butler will close the door in their face and have the groundskeeper whistle up the dogs (4-6).
4. **Head for the Ancient Stone.** If the party visits the ancient stone, they will all experience a vision. Then the groundskeeper will appear and whistle up the dogs.

Dog

HP: 13 (2d8+4); Initiative: +2 (Dex); MV: 40; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 Natural); Bite +3 (1d6+3); Scent; Fort +5; Will +2; Ref +5; Listen +5; Spot +5; Swim +5.

In general, the party will have to wait until the next day before doing anything constructive.

Day 1

The first day offers the investigator the similar options:

1. **Explore the Village.** If the party decides to look around the village, they will encounter one or two villagers. These will be reserved and not too talkative. If pressed, they will suggest that the party should go talk to the Innkeeper or the Lord. While exploring the village, the party will definitely have another vision.
2. **Head for the Manor.** If the party visits the manor house the butler, James, will meet them. He will say that the lady is not receiving visitors at this hour and ask them to please return for tea. If they persist, the butler will close the door in their face and have the groundskeeper whistle up the dogs (4-6).
3. **Head for the Ancient Stone.** If the party visits the ancient stone, they will all experience a vision. Then the groundskeeper will appear and whistle up the dogs.

Tea Time

Tea Time at the manor is a formal affair – the investigators will need to get appropriate attire. At the manor, they will be escorted into the parlor where

Richard Burroughs will be waiting. Richard will be talkative but hesitant to speak of the Ancient Stone. If pressed, he will refuse. A successful **Sense Motive** check (DC 15) will show that he is under a compulsion not to talk.

After a short time, Dame Acres will appear. She is nicely dressed and will be the consummate host. A successful **Spot** check (DC 20) or a "true sight" spell will reveal that Dame Acres is actually Lance Blake. Dame Acres will invite the investigators to stay at the manor and will send a servant to get their things. After about an hour, Dame Acres will quickly depart and say she'll see everyone at dinner.

Dinner

Dinner is a sumptuous affair, but Dame Acres will not appear. James, the butler, will say she is down with a migraine. At dinner, Richard will be no longer under the compulsion, but will not remember visiting the Stone.

Midnight

In the middle of the night, one of the investigators is woken by the sounds of movement outside. Looking through the window, the investigator will see the villagers carrying torches and walking past the manor toward the stone.

At The Stone

The villagers have been summoned to the Ancient Stone for the Summoning Ritual. They are standing in a ring around the Ancient Stone. In the center of the ring, are 8 stones formed into a V with the Ancient Stone at the apex. Strapped to the ancient stone is Richard Williams. He is wrapped in a white robe with his chest bare. Standing in front of him is a man wearing a yellow robe. He holds a black knife (obsidian) in his left hand. As the group chants, the stone begins to glow yellow. The figure with the black knife plunges it into Richard's chest. As the blood washes the figure, it begins to change. The figure in yellow (Lance Blake) begins to turn into the Chosen of Hastur. As a chosen, he will attempt to kill everyone around him.

At this point, it should be pretty obvious what the party should do...

Locations

Hobbs Hollow

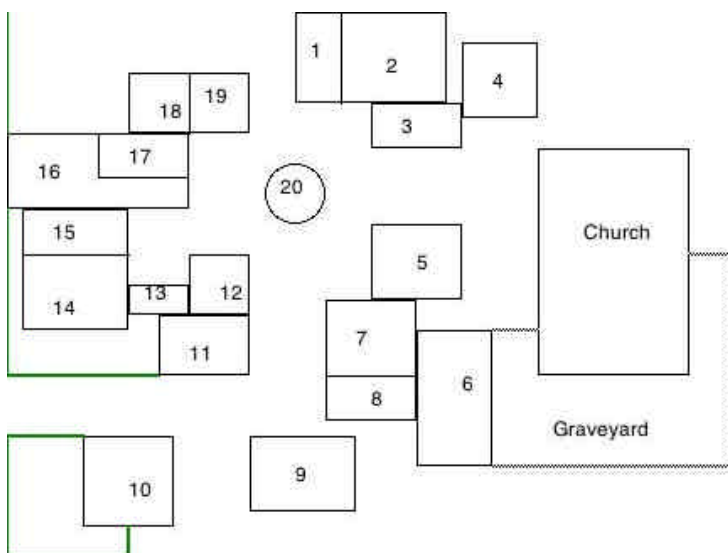
Hobbs Hollow is a small village in Wales; about 5 hours drive from Bristol. The town is in a hollow below the Acres Manor. The town has seen better days and is now almost a ghost town. Most buildings are abandoned or boarded up. The others are run down.

There are villagers in the Hollow, most work in the fields outside the village. The villagers are very quiet and do not speak to strangers. Anyone that hasn't been in the village for about 10 years is a "stranger". Some facts about the villagers are:

- There is no native that is younger than forty.
- The villagers often look up to manor as if expecting something.
- None of the villagers will go near the manor.

Below is a map of the village. Buildings and fences are outlined in black; hedges are in green. Following the map is a key for each of the buildings in the village. The key does not cover the boarded up or broken down buildings – these are left to you to fill in if you are so inclined.

On this map, the manor is north of the village by a half of a mile and the stone is a mile beyond that.



Church - St. Timothy is the local Anglican Church. It is a medium sized building in the gothic style. A close examination of the outside architecture (**Spot DC 15**) reveals that there are stone circles included in the normal Christian carvings. Inside, the church appears disused. Dust coats the floor and it appears it hasn't been disturbed in years. Spider webs and other signs of disuse are apparent. The great stained glass window at the far end of the church is a picture of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus, however, is standing in the center of a stone circle with a single large yellow stone behind him.

Graveyard – The graveyard of St. Timothy's is as unkempt as the rest of the village. The grass and bushes have grown wild, covering tombstones and monuments. A search of the graveyard will reveal the following facts:

- The most recent grave is dated 1916.
- The oldest graves, from the 1200's include a strange rune (the Yellow Sign) on their carving.

Arkwright's Grocers (#1)– The grocer's is open, but it is not well stocked. The proprietor is a large and rather ruff man with a bit of a stutter. He is surly and not inclined to talk much. If he thinks some one is not buying, he will strongly hint about a purchase and, finally, go into the back room and lock the door.

Ring of Stones Pub (#5) – The only public house in the village is the Ring of Stones. Brin Dwner owns it. Brin is an older, thin gentleman who tries to keep a neat inn. He is not a native of the Hollow, having inherited the Inn from his aunt about five years ago. Business is good but not great. Mostly locals frequent the pub with a few travelers. Currently, the party is the only guests. Bert Gordon, who is a close friend of Brin, brings all the guests.

The last guest, Richard Boroughs, was a travel reporter from the London Observer. He was in the area working on an article "the less traveled ways of Wales". He checked out two days ago to hike across country. He was especially interested in the Ancient Stone, the single stone behind the manor. When Richard checked out, he left a notebook.

Most of the notebook consists of notes for a travelogue. However, on page 35 is a notation about the yellow sign (see the handout section).

Welsh Historical Society (# 15) – Brin's wife, Abagale, has always been interested in history and after moving to the Hollow, she focused her energies into the local history. She has collected quite a bit of information about the area and the manor. She has some information about the Ancient Stone.

- Local legend has it that Vikings brought the stone here. They were led by Arnie Wulfesen who, the story goes, sacrificed his crew to the stone once it was erected.
- There are tales that during certain times of the year, the stone glows yellow. During these times, the wolves that normally howl out in the fields are silent.
- An early resident of the manor tried to have the stone removed to make farming easier. He disappeared after hiring the work gang to remove the stone.
- The villagers burned the original manor house, a medieval shell keep, to the ground when it was thought to be home to a coven of witches.
- A book written by the second Earl of Acres that covers the history of the Ancient Stone, *Menhir d' Acres*, is reportedly in the manor.

Statue of the Earl of Acres (#20) – The fifth Earl of Acres fought with Wellington at Waterloo. He is memorialized on his horse by this statue. The figure faces the manor with his left arm extended. His horse stands upon a large stone. An inspection of the stone (**Search DC 15**) will show the Yellow Sign carved in it just below the rider.

Acres Manor

The manor is a typical Elizabethan style manor with a significant number of rooms. Most of these rooms are mundane and have no bearing on the story. Those that do are listed below.

Wine cellar

The wine cellar is accessed through a trap door in the kitchen. There are many racks of wine bottles in the room. One wall is blank. A search of this wall (DC 15) will reveal that the construction is more recent than the surrounding area. Behind this wall are the remains of Dame Acres. She has been dead for about a year. Before she died, she had time to gouge out her eyes, pull out her hair, and bite off her tongue.

Sitting Room

The sitting room has paintings of all seventeen of the Earls. In each, they are wearing something yellow and close inspection of the paintings (**Search DC 15**) will reveal the Yellow Sign in each painting. On a table in the middle of the room is a sculpture of the first Earl. This is carved from a shard of the original stone. As such, it promotes visions.

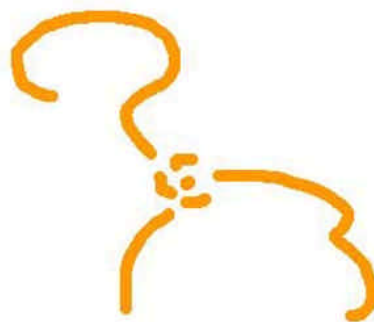
Library

The library has many volumes. A **search** (DC 15) will reveal the following books:

Menhir d' Acres – This manuscript is an exhaustive treatment of the Ancient Stone. This book documents the connection between the stone and the King in Yellow. It also includes the ritual for summoning Hastur. Examination Period: 1d4 hours (DC 10); contains 1 spell, Sanity Loss: 0 initial, 1d3 upon completion. Cthulhu Mythos: +1 rank.

The King in Yellow - See page 122.

People of the Monolith – See page 122.



And as I sat in the field the stone took on an eerie yellow cast. In the center of the stone, about ten feet up, a yellow symbol glowed and throbbed. I have reproduced it here on this page. In the subsequent years, I have examined most collections and histories of the Druids and I've found no mention of this sign.

The local legend, that the stone was brought here by the Vikings, has not helped either. None of the Nordic collections document such a sign.

So, I am no nearer knowing what this means ten years after I first saw it. It remains clear to my mind's eye even now; and it still unnerves me to write of it.