

## Stargate 1895 – The Story So far...

### Arrival

The exploratory team have been fully briefed by Holmes' second-in-command, John McKay, on the train journey to the Conway estate in Yorkshire. Nothing though prepares them for the actual sight as they alight from the carriages that brought them up from the small station.

In a deep quarry, behind Lord Conway's large gothic mansion, a military camp has been set up, far from prying eyes. The quoit has been re-erected in a 60' deep pit at the centre of the quarry and the rim of the pit has been fortified with three Lewis gun positions and a series of odd-looking tanks. Access to the pit is via a cage hanging from a quarrymen's steam crane.

It is explained that the enemy have made two further forays through the quoit, the second time in considerable strength. Both were repelled with few losses on the British side due to the Phosgene Gas pumped from the tanks you observed, hand grenades and the judicious application of Lewis Gun fire. The only way out of the pit is via an elevator at the end furthest from the Quoit itself. No attacks have been made in the last three days and Colonel Chalmers (Officer in Charge of the guard companies) believes that as no one came back the enemy have given them up for dead and cut their losses.

The bodies of the dead have been retrieved and a mortuary has been established in Lord Conway's Ice House. You are to join Dr. Elias Merchant, an anatomist in the employ of the Foreign Office, for the post mortem in the morning. The attacker's strange equipment has been stored in the Armoury and that will also be available for you to examine.

### The Conway Mansion

The main building of the mansion has been taken over by a wide range of staff reporting directly to Mycroft Holmes at his club in Horse Guards. Holmes never leaves his club, but is in constant communication by telephone and telegraph. The east coast main rail line runs within five miles of the estate and so photographs and artefacts can easily be couriered to him within 4-5 hours.

The exploratory team are given rooms on the second floor of the mansion, overlooking the rear gardens. Already there is a busy telephone exchange and telegraph office on the ground floor, a surgery with a twelve bed ward attached in the ballroom, a canteen in the former billiards room, laboratories in the outbuildings, and a host of rooms housing offices and accommodation for scientists, diplomatic staff and military officers.

The army seems as concerned with keeping the public out as keeping the enemy in. Barbed wire is being set up around the quarry, mansion and gardens, and all entrances are controlled. A stable has been fitted out as a temporary gaol. A local poacher and a journalist from the Yorkshire Herald are presently cooling their heels there until it can be decided what will be done with them.

At dinner the team are introduced to all key members of the Office of Exploratory Studies rapidly assembled force. Most seem intelligent and excited at the prospect of exploring the quoit. There is one, Abraham Malinowski, who is introduced as the team's Cosmologist. Through a thick Yiddish accent he tries to explain that it is most likely that the quoit actually transports those who pass through it to other planets around other suns. This kicks off a huge debate, and a couple of short fistfights, that lasts well into the wee small hours.

### The Post Mortem

Bright and early next morning, and far too soon after breakfast (kippers and eggs, with lashings of toast, marmalade and tea), you are taken to meet Dr. Merchant at the Ice House.

In front of you on slabs of ice are the bodies of fifteen men. You deduce that five of them are South American in origin and the others of a more near eastern type, though hard to pin down exactly which. All are tall, probably over six foot and well muscled.

In clipped tones the good doctor explains he has already carried out a peremptory examination of the cadavers and has found out a few interesting, and maybe extraordinary facts about them.

Besides the obvious wounds they have suffered from gunfire every man has a number of scars indicating previous combat wounds. Some of these would have easily killed an ordinary man, but these men seemed to have survived to fight again.

All but one of the men has a snake tattoo emblazoned on their foreheads. The last man, a large Turk, has the same design but in solid gold. Dr. Merchant believes this may have been made by pouring liquid gold into a mould on the man's forehead, an immensely painful operation.

Each man also has an identical and unusual cruciform scar, 9" across, on his abdomen. Initial probing shows that this may still be open, though there is no sign of infection or healing around the scar.

As you watch Dr. Merchant presses a pair of surgical callipers into the cross on the large Turk with the gold 'tattoo'. After some prodding and pulling he removes what can be best described as an 18" long centipede from the hole. This he places in a Wellington jar full of formaldehyde.

Quickly Dr. Merchant goes to each cadaver and pulls a similar beast from each one. He declares that these seem to be parasites of some description and he must retire to the laboratory to study them further.

### The Armoury

After a fine lunch of cold cuts and cheese, and a couple of stiff ports, you move onto the Armoury. This former estate farrier's workshop now houses the equipment taken from the enemy. You note that a group of soldiers have just finished building an earth bank some fifty yards behind the workshop and are erecting some wooden posts in front of it. It looks suspiciously like a firing range.

RSM Davies greets you. This enthusiastic Welshman quickly invites you inside and shows you what they have recovered. He keeps referring to them as the 'spoils of war' and 'my loot', but he seems an honest enough chap all the same.

First he shows you the enemy's armour. It seems archaic and very heavy. Davies has weighed a set and it comes in at sixty pounds, five ounces.

You ask about the 'eagle-headed helmets' that the reports Holmes showed you had mentioned. There are certainly no such items anywhere in the farrier's workshop. Davies breaks into a huge grin and says, "Watch this". He presses a small button on the gorget of the armour and suddenly the helmet folds out of the rear of the armour just like the folding roof on a Surrey. The reports are right, it does look like a stylised Eagle's head.

Next he gets out the weaponry. Every man except the leader was carrying a six-foot heavy staff. Each end is bulbous like an Indian club, though one is rounded and the other pointed. Although a ferocious-looking close quarters weapon you cannot imagine it would threaten a man with Lee-Enfield rifle at more than twenty yards. Davies looks at you and begins to grin again, "Come with me he says" and strides outside.

"I've had a little practice with this he says". He levels the staff, directing the more pointed end at the makeshift range. Depressing a button midway up the shaft makes the pointed end split into to four parts, between them writhes what looks like lightning. Activating a second button causes a bolt of light to speed out of the end and explode in the earth bank with a deafening crack.

With a second shot Davies manages to hit one of the targets. The five-foot fence post, some 8" in diameter disintegrates into a cloud of splinters. Davies' squad look dumbstruck and you reckon you probably look little better.

"I used the first one out in the woods." Davies declares. "I must have cleared half an acre in under two minutes". As far as I can tell

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you get about fifty shots out of one before it goes dead. One of the boffins up at the house reckons they run on electricity and is trying to work out how to 'recharge' it, whatever that means. Anyway this boyo is accurate, with a bit of practice, up to about 75 yards, after that the recoil makes it difficult to get a good shot in. I have seen a round hit a tree at over four hundred yards, but that was more luck than judgement. I expect these men were trained with it and so will be a bit better than me."

He leads you back into the Armoury. Off the bench he picks up what looks like three rounded cigar cases, hinged together so they form a 'Z'.

"The leader of the enemy squad had this, but never used it, took me a devil of a time to work it out." He explains. "Hey Collins, stand to attention".

"Oh no, not me again RSM", the pale young Private replies.

"Stand up boyo or I'll shoot you with the staff!" Davies bellows.

Slowly the Private stands to attention visibly shaking. Davies grips the lower arm of the Z like a pistol and points the device at Collins. He depresses a small stud and a bolt of what can best be described as lightning arcs across the room and hits the unfortunate man. He jerks briefly and then slumps to the ground.

"Don't worry gentlemen, he's just unconscious. He'll be up in about a quarter of an hour, right as rain." He folds the pistol away and continues. "We tested it out first on a horse. The first bolt knocked it out, just like Collins here. A second bolt, while unconscious, killed the beast, and a third, well the third turned the body to fine powder. A real officer's weapon." He smiles ruefully. "I've had thirty shots out of this so far and it's still going."

"The rest of the kit," he waves at a pile of stuff on the bench top, "we haven't been able to work out how to operate so far. But we will keep on trying".

### The First Operation

After dinner you are summoned to the Library. There McKay and Chalmers have arranged the armchairs in a semi-circle around the fireplace. Malinowski is already recumbent in one of them partaking of the brandy and cigars on offer on a side table. Dr. Merchant walks in behind you drying his hands on a towel, he looks decidedly pensive.

Once seated McKay brings you to order:

"Gentlemen, you have now had time to observe pretty much all we know about our new enemies. Feel free to ask any questions you like of Chalmers, Merchant, Malinowski and myself at the end of this briefing." He pauses to allow Chalmers to pass him a brandy.

"The situation, as you know, is grave. Lord Conway and his daughter may be in great peril and we have to do something quickly. Tomorrow you will be the first team to venture the quoit..."

"Star-gate McKay." Interrupts Malinowski. "It's a star-gate."

McKay stops, stares at the old cosmologist for a moment, seems to make a mental decision then yields the floor.

Puffing non-stop on his cigar Malinowski stands up and strides to the fireplace. There he unrolls a plan of the quoit and holds it up so you can all see it.

"Chalmers, hold it for Abraham will you." Requests McKay. Chalmers leans over and takes it from Malinowski who begins jabbing his finger at it.

"Each of the symbols on the star-gate's circumference is a constellation. Before you ask they are no constellations you will have ever seen, but careful study of ephemeris tables for the period in which it was buried in Egypt, show that they were common constellations at that time." He waits for you to take this in, but goaded by your puzzled indifference he continues.

"You have to press seven symbols to get the star-gate to operate. From Macfarlane's notebooks, and the observations of a bright signals officer during the enemy's escape in the last attack, we have concluded that six symbols represent the address you wish to

connect to, and the last is your point of origin." He beams at you, knowing he now has your interest.

"More importantly my brave friends that officer jotted down the symbols the enemy used, so we know where they went. You can follow them." Malinowski waits and then goes on, "The problem is that when you get to wherever you are going the symbols could be different so you will have to get the return address from the enemy. I have written some notes for you to study in a pocket book."

"I call it a star-gate because it uses stars to navigate the heavens by."

McKay rises and thanking the old man signals him to sit down. Malinowski could obviously have gone on for some time but sits down anyway. McKay nods to Dr. Merchant who doesn't rise but leaning forwards shares his latest findings.

"You will remember gentlemen, the parasites I took from the enemy corpses?" You nod and he continues. "From my examination of their physiology and their place in the enemy's bodies it is my conclusion that they were one, deliberately implanted, and two, shared a symbiotic relationship with their hosts".

"I cannot be sure, without examining a live one in a breathing host, but I would think it likely that the symbiotes may be the reason these men survived their many serious previous injuries. The observations of our soldiers is that they were very hard to kill, indeed one took eight bullets to the body before a ninth took out half his brain and dropped him."

He lets this sobering thought sink in for a minute, and lights a cigar.

"I am a military surgeon gentlemen, I fought both the Zulus and the Pathans. I know what is it you wish me to say. If you want to kill these men quickly then only two shots will work. The first is a clean headshot, you cannot heal a man with no brain. The second is a major wound to the abdomen, specifically just behind the sternum where the symbiote and the man's heart resides. It seems very likely the enemy would otherwise survive lesser wounds."

"Bring me back a live specimen and likely I will be able to tell you more."

McKay now steps forwards and addresses you all.

"Holmes has considerable faith in each of you and we will equip you as best we can, but what you will find beyond the quo... star-gate, none of us can guess."

"You will be behind enemy lines gentlemen", interjects Chalmers, "living on your wits. You have permission to use whatever means you deem appropriate to rescue and return Lord Conway and his daughter. Davies will equip you with anything you require and we have two mules for you to take with you loaded with supplies for seven days."

"Thank you Chalmers" says McKay "Right gentlemen any questions....".

### A Letter from the Royal Armouries

Col. Sir Angus Fraser (Ret'd), MC, VC, KCBE.

Royal Armouries - Special Operations Division,  
Woolwich Arsenal, London.

The Twenty-fourth of March 1895.

Sirs,

I have been asked to report to you the status of our supporting unit with regards to the equipping of the Explorer teams.

We established the division two weeks ago and have taken over the underground ranges at the Arsenal. There has been some unhappiness amongst the Arsenal's chain of command, but nothing a note from Horse Guards and Mr. Holmes has not been able to solve.

From our examination of the captured equipment we have been able to deduce the following:

1. Much of the technology is so far advanced as to be beyond our present capabilities to reproduce or even repair.

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2. The purpose of the weapons and armament is not War, but the occupation and intimidation of civilian populations and the suppression of technologically inferior hostiles.
3. Enemy soldiers (warriors?) are not invulnerable and we have our own technology that is capable of dealing with them most effectively.

Unfortunately the first point is indisputable and, unless considerable resources are forthcoming, likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

The second point though is far more interesting. From the experience that we have obtained from the expansion and maintenance of the Empire we know that certain archaic weaponry is often most effective against lower order opposition. For instance the use of Lancers to pursue Zulu foot, and in crowd dispersal in India. A point on a pole often has a far more terrifying morale effect than a Lewis Gun.

The enemy Staff Weapon is just such an item. Despite its very impressive firepower it is nonetheless an archaic weapon for the following reasons:

1. It's very restricted effective (i.e. accurate) range. Any British infantryman with a Lee-Enfield could pick off an enemy so armed long before they could return fire. Such a short range weapon could only be considered useful when you intend to close with a foe who has weapons of an even shorter range, such as civilians armed with stones.
2. The noise and light emitted by the weapon during firing is obviously designed to cow an enemy. It certainly doesn't seem to add to its ability to hit or kill.
3. It's sheer size (over six foot long) and weight (13lbs), as well as its extensive decoration, indicates that this is meant to impress an inferior enemy. It's unwieldy nature makes rapid target acquisition a problem. It's shape could also make accurate aiming a problem, but only if you are using it against an equally armed foe. Against crowds of civilians it would not be.
4. In hand-to-hand combat it could likely prove dangerous, but as a double-ended club it seems better designed for either ritual combat (duelling) or the capture of enemies. Against a soldier trained in the use of the rifle bayonet this lack of a killing blade could prove highly disadvantageous.

If we needed convincing of this conclusion though, the enemy's armour is the best example. Like the staff weapon it is very well made. Although heavy it allows a good range of movement, a bit like late medieval plate armour.

The helmet though is seriously problematical. When down the enemy soldier has a full range of vision, but when erected he loses about half his peripheral vision immediately. During their incursions through the Stargate it was noted that most enemy soldiers preferred to fight with the helmet down, especially after they found themselves under fire. Our conclusion is that the helmet is mostly ceremonial and intended, again, to impress or cow a civilian population.

In tests the armour has proved capable of resisting some of the effects of other staff weapons until you close to less than thirty yards. There is some property in the armour that allows it to dissipate the intense heat a staff shot can generate. We have measured this heat at about twelve hundred degrees Fahrenheit at the muzzle. The temperature obviously reduces with distance.

More interesting are the results of the ballistic tests we have performed. From these we have concluded that this armour was not designed with high velocity bullets in mind:

1. A standard lead rifle or revolver bullet can penetrate the armour at the shorter ranges nine times out of ten.
2. At longer ranges you either have to use a heavier charge or a specialised round to penetrate it.

With this in mind we have provided some cases of our new steel jacketed bullets, for both rifle and revolver. These have been designed to penetrate the enemy armour and then split into three parts inside their body causing maximum internal damage. Initial tests on an enemy corpse in full armour show that we can get a lethal penetration up to normal effective ranges of these two weapons. Ammunition for the Stargate Garrison's Maxim Guns is also on its way.

Mr. Quartermain's suggestion of using a double-barrelled elephant gun seems sound. We carried out a test with a Rigby and its penetration was impressive. Taking one such weapon along may prove very useful, especially at long range, though it's a bit unwieldy at close quarters.

From what you reported it seems that RSM Davies and his team have proven that the standard issue bayonet is more than capable of penetrating the enemy armour with a determined thrust. Given the anatomical information provided we would suggest that the men restrict their thrusts to the upper abdomen, below the shoulder and neck armour.

We would also like to offer the Explorer team the Mills-Fraser Mk1 grenade. Unlike the standard fragmentation grenade this has segments made of tempered and annealed steel points. It is heavier than the Mills Mk2, weighing about six pounds, but it should be able to shred the enemy's armour. Tell the men to be careful and get behind solid cover though, as the segments will pass through doors and plaster walls, like a knife through butter.

In a few weeks we should have a three inch mortar available that can propel a streamlined version of this grenade up to three hundred yards. We are just calibrating the ranging system before we offer it for field trials. At under twelve pounds in weight (including the base plate) we think this will give your Explorers a useful level of light support.

We are sending up a case of satchel charges. These contain fifteen pounds of gelnite with a mercury fulminate timed trigger. Should be enough to penetrate a fortress door, or blow an enemy encampment to kingdom come. The triggers come in thirty second, one minute and five minute variants.

We have not yet found an effective armour against the Staff Weapon. However, both the padded gambeson and brigandine combination, or the steel breastplate should offer good protection in close combat. They can help deflect some of the energy of a long range staff weapon attack, but at the closer ranges they are all but useless.

Some of our more creative chaps are trying out a tunic with pockets in which to insert solid ceramic plates. As you may realise ceramics can resist high temperatures, but are pretty useless against bullets. If the enemy only use the staff weapons then this might be an advantageous avenue to pursue. One of our chaps, Hawkins (son of the Admiral) is pursuing a theory of mirrored deflection, but this seems to have limited effectiveness as yet.

More promising are trials of an earthing suit against the effects of the electric gun. By encasing a man in a Faraday Cage (like a copper bird cage) it is possible to resist the electric gun's stunning effect. Unfortunately the cage is pretty big and not yet man portable. We shall persist.

Please let me know how the chaps fare on their first expedition. and remember to tell them to pick up any new technology or devices they may come across.