

From:  
Yacub Ashkell  
Associate Researcher

Office of Civic History  
Faculty Apartment 4B  
Avimoor Academy  
I Nugard Row  
The Peaks  
Ashmoor District

To:  
Preservation Grant  
Appropriations Committee (PGAC)  
The Bastion  
Avimoor Academy  
I Nugard Row  
The Peaks  
Ashmoor District

Dear Sirs,

Pursuant to my previous correspondence, this letter is intended to act as both additional clarification regarding my grant request and further elucidation of its supporting evidence. As previously discussed with Professor Emyr and Dean Avimoor, I am assured by Assistant Researcher Marier that the preservation of Kessledown Manor against rising floodwaters is of the utmost importance to both the department's studies of its history and the wider civic community - particularly owing to its involvement in the recent Tidal District Unrest.

Marier, as well as myself - though I doubt that bears mentioning - understand the gravity of working to document the location, despite it having been involved in such... unpleasantry, and he assures me that all members of his team remain fully committed to the tenets of the Civic Trinity, and that of the Lex, and I would be deeply disappointed should a Civic History departmental operation's mere proximity to a site of anti-establishment rabble-rousing affect our ability to carry out this vitally important research to the field.

Attached, members of the council will find a dossier of accounts, maps and our own original research recordings as compiled by Marier, at my behest - my duties being so demanding at this time as to prevent a personal site visit. It is my hope that examination of these artefacts and a fuller understanding of their historical significance may make the process of deciding whether funding will continue significantly less complex, as they not only illustrate how much we have been able to accomplish thus far, but also how much is yet to be uncovered. As elucidated in my earlier request, the academy's funding would allow us to further document the history of Kessledown, from its construction during The Settlement to the rise of its reputation as the so called "Ghost House" and finally its role in the fomentation of destructive anti-civic sentiment in recent years. (Editorial oversight on any publications will of course be given to Dean Avimoor and yourselves, in accordance with recent Lex rulings).

With that all said, I hope each of you is well and continues to be so. I congratulate you all on your ascension to PGAC board membership and hope to continue the close working relationship I had with your predecessors. I have a great deal of admiration for certain works each of you have published and, should this funding be assigned to us, I hope to work with my assistants to create works even a fraction as illuminating.

Yours humbly,

*Yacub Ashkell*



came the landing of our forebears on these shores. Notable amongst this first generation of migrants were the Shipwright-houses that had made the journey possible. Scions of the Ulyen Imperial core one and all, such recognisable names as Maerinian and Thavix arrived in force upon the virgin island and set about their great task of civilising it. While the aforementioned families continue in this role today, a majority of those originally leading the expedition found themselves usurped over the proceeding century (Houses Morgenstern, Cliffe and Zvartold falling into this category) and some - including the focus of this chapter - have since entirely disappeared from the spotlight of history. House Kessledown is of course not entirely gone (several Ulyen noble lines - not least the famed Dukes of Castra - trace partial heritage from Kessledown blood that remained in the empire) but its influence on our island nation has long since ended, and has done so with not inconsiderable tragedy and mystique. It is with this context established that we at last arrive at the focus of this chapter; Kessledown Manor.

Construction began at the direction of the first lord Kessledown, Kaminev, from plans brought from the Ulyen peninsula penned by the famed royal architect Crvel Eltrovani, and almost immediately encountered problems, as the original site chosen was unsuitably prone to flooding. Kessledown reportedly took this setback in stride and relocated the construction to its final site at the flattened apex of the then far above the waterline Felsdon Hill. This change in location required amendment of the original plans and Kessledown - a noted architect himself - undertook these. His major additions to the building included a set of extensive basements, taking advantage of existing cave systems below the site for the creation of a wineseller, subterranean library, storage vault and several other rooms whose purpose has been lost to time and bookworms along with their portion of the plans.

As construction continued, it became clear that



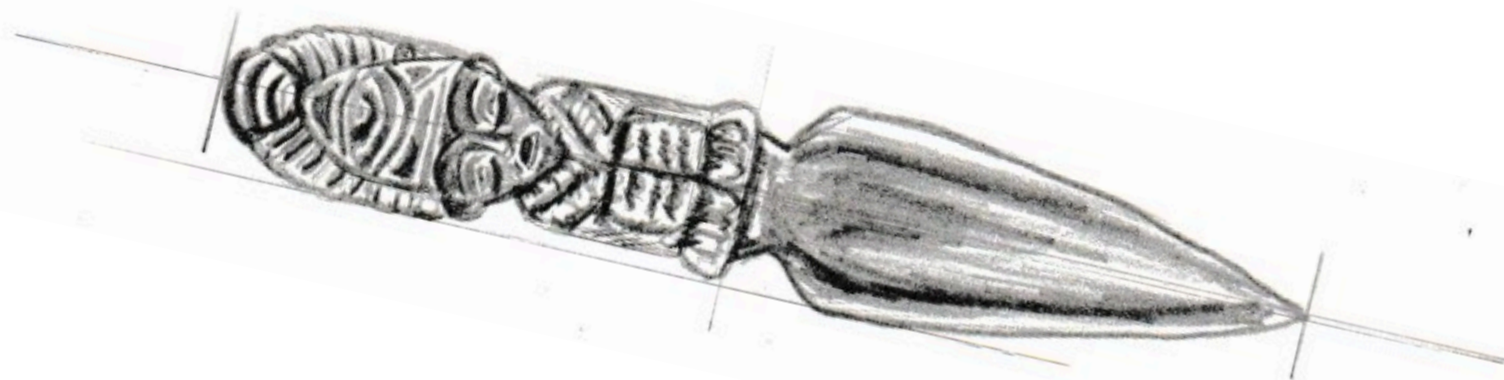
Description: A copper case measuring four palmspans square and one in depth. The artefact contains an undetermined number of mechanical pieces - gears and latches form what can be observed through extensive patina - contained behind a large and moderately damaged "face" composed of an intricately carved ring and cross-spars.

Era: Unknown.

Amongst the numerous objects recovered from the lower garden trench area is a mechanical assemblage of unknown providence (Pictured). This piece is of particular interest as its origins, function and manufacturer all remain a mystery to the team at this time. Attached is a sketch produced on site, though a more detailed recording of dimensions, components and context is pending. On site examination has noted that some of the gears from which the piece is composed appear to still rotate freely, though their role in the larger mechanism remains unknown. I suspect they play some role in the rotation of the front "face" which bears a number of carvings at equal distances around its circumference. This may suggest some form of timekeeping purpose, though the symbols do not correspond to any others encountered at this site, or known to me.

As per standard procedure, the piece will be packaged for transport back to the academy during the next collection in six tides' time.

*Jayna Fryse, JRA*



Description: A single-piece hand-knapped obsidian knife measuring three palmspans in length, and a half in width at its widest point. The artefact is emblazoned with a crouching figure in a ceremonial head-dress carved into its handle and pommel.

Era: Pre-colonial (suspected).

The artefact pictured above was found buried amongst a ring of stones seemingly removed from the retaining wall between the upper and lower gardens at a time contemporary to its burial. It is decidedly pre-colonial in design, appearing to have been hand-carved from a single piece of obsidian with primitive tools (most likely whalebone, as is consistent with other Zeshepi artefacts of this type). Lack of wear upon the blade suggests limited or no use, likely as a result of its significance as a ceremonial piece. This is supported by the artifact's context. At the behest of senior researcher Marier, the dagger and its surrounding stones have been packaged for transport back to campus for further analysis and atramantic preservation.

Contextual information for each of the seven stones can be found attached to this document.

On a personal note, with full knowledge of my low status to be asking for such action, I would like to request this particular artefact be rushed directly to the academy atramancers, as I believe it to hold some residual aetheric excitation. While I am by no means qualified in this field, my elective class for this past year has been in Atramantic Conservation and, applying my knowledge to the situation, this piece is consistent with ceremonial sacrificial knives already in the academy's possession. While I hope this makes the reason for my alarm obvious, I would urge contacting professor Thavix at the earliest possible moment for safety.

*Rolin Greaves, JRA*

## Operation "Gabion" Strategic Command Notice

From: Arco Tallister (Mjr)

To: Greycloak Commander Vjell Cendrix

Subject: Sit-Rep, Supply Requisition for Special Operation  
"Phoenix"

Sir,

Situation remains mostly unchanged. Insurgents remain entrenched in Kessledown House, having repelled three advances by Greycloak and Continental forces. Minor gains made in reclaiming two remaining minor strongpoints surrounding the manor.

Without additional support, strategic staff estimate this situation may remain for several months before victory.

Continental command informs me their forces will return to the mainland in two weeks at most. The sustainment of the siege is at this point untenable without something to break the line.

Fortunately, a solution has been presented, hereby referred to as Special Operation "Phoenix".

Atramancers provided by our Continental allies request the following to achieve a swift victory via arcane means:

50 Barrels of Pitch  
10 Sacks of fine sawdust  
10 Barrels of Whale Fat  
3 Barrels of Lamp Oil

With these materials, and volatile components the Atramancers are willing to provide, they propose to create an alchemical substance known as "Creeping Fire".

I seek your direct authorization to implement this plan.

**Operation "Gabion" Strategic Command Notice**

From: Vjell Cendrix (Cmdr)

To: Major Arco Tallister

Subject: Special Operation "Phoenix"

Proceed. Your mages will get their pitch

Last night I dreamt of clocks. I think I spent too long trying to get that mechanism from Kessledown working. I was in the clocktower in Wayfarer's square, the one the revolutionaries holed up in. But I was... in the mechanism. I was time, I think? I don't normally dream lucidly. But I was there; I chose to move the gears forward and when I did, a second passed. And I guess it must have been the history student in me, but I thought, "why don't I try going back?" So I did. And time did. So I kept going.

I don't know what message the Weaver was trying to send me with that dream, but I know what happened next. I saw time unspool like a drop-spindle. Coiling around itself languidly until it lay in loose coils at my feet. The clocktower was at the top of a mountain. Much higher than anywhere in Sarosa today. There were Zeshepi there. Living their lives. Fishing, dying, being born. All backwards; all of it was backwards. The tides swept stone back onto the mountain as it rose until the spire of the clocktower pierced the clouds above me. I saw the sun, blazing in the dark night sky. But it wasn't the sun, exactly. It was more... It was something else. It had gears of its own. And the stars were shimmering with each and every tick, tock, tick, tock.

And then it turned to look at me.

I felt myself withering in that gaze. Drying like a dead bird on summer flagstones. But I didn't wake up. I couldn't wake up. It wouldn't let me. It wouldn't let me. So I tried to look away. I turned my face from the sun, from its symmetry, to its refracted perfection in the clouds. And I saw other clocktowers. The clock face from the Mariners Hall. The Choralist Cathedral on Floodstone. I know Rolin was in that one. I don't know how I knew.

And then I realised the sun wasn't the sun at all. It was amber. It was a gemstone set to counterbalance the clockwork, like the tiny rubies in dad's old watch. The whole sky was made of gears, oil coated and black as smiling midnight. But I could hear them. I could hear them when I woke up.

Jessica shook me awake. I was sweaty, but cold. She said I'd been muttering something about Rolin. Something about that knife he found. She was scared, she was so scared. I... wasn't. I'm not. Writing this, the whole thing feels like... well, it feels like a dream. But... I think I should talk to Rolin before we go back to Kessledown today. Maybe the others too. The one thing that's stuck with me from the whole thing is that Rolin was there. Not just in the sense of he was in my dream, but actually, really, there as well - in one of his own nightmares.

From:  
Flynn Esworth  
Junior Research Assistant  
Faculty of Civic History, Avimoor Academy  
Flat 22A  
663 Navigator Street  
Cilston  
Old Port District

To:  
Jackub Ashkell  
Associate Researcher  
  
Faculty of Civic History,  
Avimoor Academy  
Faculty Apartment 4B  
Avimoor Academy  
I Nugard Row  
The Peaks  
Ashmoor District

Incident Report

Sir,

Writing to you because Professor Marier told me to.

Some of the student researchers didn't turn up today.

List of names:

- Jayna Fryse
- Rolin Greaves
- Maria Despareaux
- Callum Garrow

They were supposed to be excavating a section of basement, probably got scared after finding the remains at the ritual site in the lower garden. Coroner is expected later.

Professor Marier wants you to look into it because we're already busy and now very short staffed.

Kindly descend from your throne of rotting books and send us more personnel.

*Flynn Esworth*

and so it was said that when the ships of the First Wave settlers crested the horizon, the gazes of the passengers met with those of a figure atop what would soon be known as Kessledown hill. A woman, by many accounts; dark and long of hair and so pale of skin as to almost shine in the rising sunlight. Upon the establishment of their initial encampment, Erius "Red Quill" Quilton tells us that the Shipmasters Lewin, Maeser, and Kessledown struck out for the hilltop, guided by a small number of servants. Quilton was denied participation in the excursion, and tells us in his Foundational Memorii that "upon the fall of eventime, Masters Kessledown and Lewin returned, and the Lord Maeser was naer spoken of in public again". From this moment onward, histories of the early settlement period record innumerable sightings of a pale woman atop the hill, bloodspattered and glowing in the morning sun. Those same reports often tell, though their tellers know not why, of a sense of sadness upon seeing her. A slump to her shoulders, or the whisper of tears in the breeze carried down to them. Sightings of the Ghost of Kessledown Hill ceased soon after Shipmaster Kessledown moved the sight of his manse to its apex, though some less reputable accounts continue to speak of

To Whom It May Concern;

A number of noise complaints have been reported regarding the inhabitants of this property. This official warning has been issued with the full approval of Greycloak Captain Marques Raesen and carries with it the precedent for lawful entry and search of the property in the event that complaints continue. Should you wish to dispute this notice or provide explanation of the complaints it concerns, report to The Bailey on Shipwright's Close no later than

**of particular concern are reports of bonfires in the courtyard. As this is a non-commercial residential district, these acts are strictly outlawed and confirmed reports may result in a fine in excess of thirty-seven**

when viewed in separation these reagents each lack many factors required for apothecic transmutation, but combined, with care regarding their volatility present a great potential for

combine most carefully in a vessel of stone or iron. Extinguish all lights within sight of the work area lest fire's suggestion render immortality's elixir to doom

a fire in my chest the likes of which I have never felt before.  
Sweet Amara, I beg thee to respond with haste, for my ship leaves two days  
hence and I would have your response to hold my course true across all the  
seas. If you would grace me with an affirmative I would bring you a ring of  
starmetal from distant Drakara and place a crown of crystalised Vaelander Roses  
upon your head as my ancestors did their loves. Please. Write me back.

Yours with faith and hope,  
Oliver.

light of this that we humbly beg for your generosity at this time. The funds  
asked for would allow us to reconcile a number of discrepancies between a  
multitude of maps that have thus far been uncovered. The authors of each seem  
convinced of their accuracy to a degree suggesting first-hand knowledge of  
the site, which is incompatible with their wild variances. Additionally, the  
requested funding would allow for the team to be expanded by a further 3  
research fellows and their assistants for the next several months

make me a melody, Old One

time spiralling like the shell of a snail

fire in the heart of midnight, blackening even the abyssal dark

turned on the lathe of ambition

cleanse my sinner's bones

let me shed the filth of this plane and leap boldly to the next

let sapphires spill from my fingers

visceral crimson, burning pearl

make me a melody, make me whole