

# AVENUES & ALLEYWAYS



a **STATE** supplement

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Welcome to more of The City.

'Avenues & Alleyways' expands on the setting information presented in the a|state main rulebook (MRB). The core of this volume is thirty new burghs, industrial regions, notable buildings and other areas, all intricately described and detailed. Like the city areas in the MRB, each new place is presented with an overview, details of the security or military presence in the area, a specific highlighted location and a highlighted NPC.

In order to make locating these areas easier within the vastness of The City, the basic map has been re-done, with all of the new areas in this book added. In addition to this (and to make things that little bit easier), there are blow-up sections of the map, each showing one of the four quarters of The City.

But you won't just find new areas in 'Avenues & Alleyways'. Expanding upon the information in the MRB, there are discussion of law, education, health, weather and even the use of clockwork in The City. All of these are written to throw the existing setting information into sharper relief and provide both greater depth and greater focus to the world of The City.

You'll find this book is divided into several sections, each dealing with a specific kind of area. The sections are:

### **Burghs**

A range of burghs, from the comfortable middle class enclave of Coldbath Fell to the sodden morass of Grime Rain Stacks. Each have their own stories to tell and own part to play in the tapestry of life in The City.

### **Industrial Areas**

The grinding, thumping heart of The City, the centres of industry are just as varied as the burghs, running the gamut from the corroding chaos of Dark Cross Railway Yards to the thorough unpleasantness of the Bone Factories.

### **Notable Buildings**

Some buildings are too significant simply to be subsumed into the common mass. They offer something more: history, infamy or importance. Here, you can browse the gilded halls of The Grand Emporium or marvel at the mist-shrouded enigma of The Water Fort.

### **Other Areas**

Places that don't conveniently fit into any of the other categories, places such as the intimidating edifice of Ironbridge or the sinister quiet of The Foundations.

In addition to the many areas described in this book, you will also find short essays on aspects of life in The City. Covering a variety of topics, they are intended to expand upon and deepen the already existing body of knowledge relating to The City.





# Weather in the City

Like most other things in The City, the weather is frighteningly variable, unpredictable and often violent. Many areas within The City create their own micro climates due to topography, industry and the very fabric of The City itself. In the main, the prevailing weather across The City is cool and wet. Rain falls with alarming regularity, which, on the whole, is not necessarily a bad thing. The fairly reliable rainfall collects in tanks, cisterns, buckets and reservoirs providing a supply of (relatively) clean (almost) fresh water for drinking, washing and so on. It is reckoned that it rains on 70% of days throughout the year, although in some places it is close to 100% of the time.

Only during the middle months of the year does it become warmer and somewhat drier. Folk legend still recalls the Big Heat, a scorching heat wave of a century ago, when the canals almost dried out, the rain didn't fall and death and disease rampaged through many burghs. Luckily, there have been no such extremes of heat since then, but there have been extremes of cold. During the Freeze and Cold seasons, temperatures can plummet to way below freezing, a climactic effect which has particular consequences for the massed ranks of the poor and homeless. Every Freeze and Cold, deathdealers patrol the streets with increased vigour, picking up the poor, emaciated, frozen bodies that litter the alleys and byways of Mire End, Fogwarren, Merryhell and all the other areas with largely impoverished populations.

During colder times, there are often violent outbursts of temper as people strive to gain warmth and sustenance. Most residents of the TCMA remember the Folly Hills Rising of a few decades ago, when residents of that less than wealthy burgh marched on the grand halls of the Authority to demand increased gas supplies for heating and cooking. The entire event was brought to a juddering halt by the application of force and was one of the less glorious and most often remarked on incidents in the history of the TCMAA Provosts.

The bizarre, aggregated architecture of The City gives rise to that other weather phenomenon cursed by most of the population: the winds. Howling through streets, down canals and up alleys, sometimes the winds can blow a man off his feet, destroy stalls or overturn canal skiffs. Some boulevards and lanes are permanently afflicted with a fierce gale, a consequence of the buildings surrounding them. Down the Grand, Green and Red canals there is always at least a breeze, a fact which is utilised by some nomads who can be seen cruising the canals in their sail powered skiffs, swiftly moving down the canals or tacking laboriously up them.

The wind also serves to power creaking windmills and generators which sprout from rooftops all over The City. Their vanes creak and rattle as they transfer power through groaning assemblies of chains and cogs to sparking, unreliable dynamos. These wind generators are a valuable source of power for areas which either through a lack of means or through political disagreements cannot obtain power from organisations such as the Fulgurators or GRID.

Some of the winds in The City are so regular and reliable that they have acquired names of their own:



### **The Grand Canal Flow**

Streams from the north of the Grand Canal down towards Basin. Barges travelling down the canal often hoist sails to make use of this reliable and cheap means of propulsion.

### **The Crimson Zephyr**

Often only a mild breeze ruffling the surface of the Red Canal, the Zephyr can pick up during the colder months to a fairly stiff wind. Like the Grand Canal Flow, it is utilised by water traffic equipped with sails.

### **The Confluence Vortex**

Where the Grand, Red and Green Canals meet, a whirlpool of air sometimes forms if the conditions are right. When the confluence starts to form, winds can whip right up to the edges of the canals, making it highly unwise to venture out on to the water in small craft.

Aside from the generalised weather across The City, many areas display their own micro climates, bizarre weather conditions that seem to affect certain areas. Fogwarren is known for being permanently wreathed in thick mists, while Grime Rain Stacks suffers under a near permanent deluge of rain. These micro climates can prove both a boon and a hindrance for different parts of the population. In Fogwarren, the various cutpurses and muggers delight in the concealment of the mists, while the more law-abiding members of the population move about in groups, cursing the visibility (or lack thereof). In Grime Rain Stacks, the locals mutter and curse about the permanent drizzle pouring on to their heads. The only upside of the constant deluge is a regular supply of fresh water which is collected in rooftop tanks and reservoirs.

Generally, the weather across the seasons can be described as follows:

### **Cold**

Cold is one of the two seasons most dreaded by the population. A time of bitter winds, snow and icy rain.

### **Mist**

Whilst not as inimical to life as the seasons of Cold or Freeze, Mist is a time of variable temperatures and unpredictable weather. Coldness can suddenly descend, at other times the weather can be fairly moderate.

### **Burn**

The hottest season of the year, Burn is known for its high temperatures and occasional drought-causing properties. The high temperatures are enervating, making The City sticky, unpleasant and even more claustrophobic than it already is.

### **Damp**

Very similar to Mist, Damp is probably even more prone to persistent rain and drizzle. That's not to say that rain and drizzle aren't common features of life in The City at any point of the year, simply that during Damp, the rain is constant and aggravating.

### **Freeze**

Segueing neatly into Cold, Freeze is very similar in aspect, notable for its biting gales and hail showers.





City maps

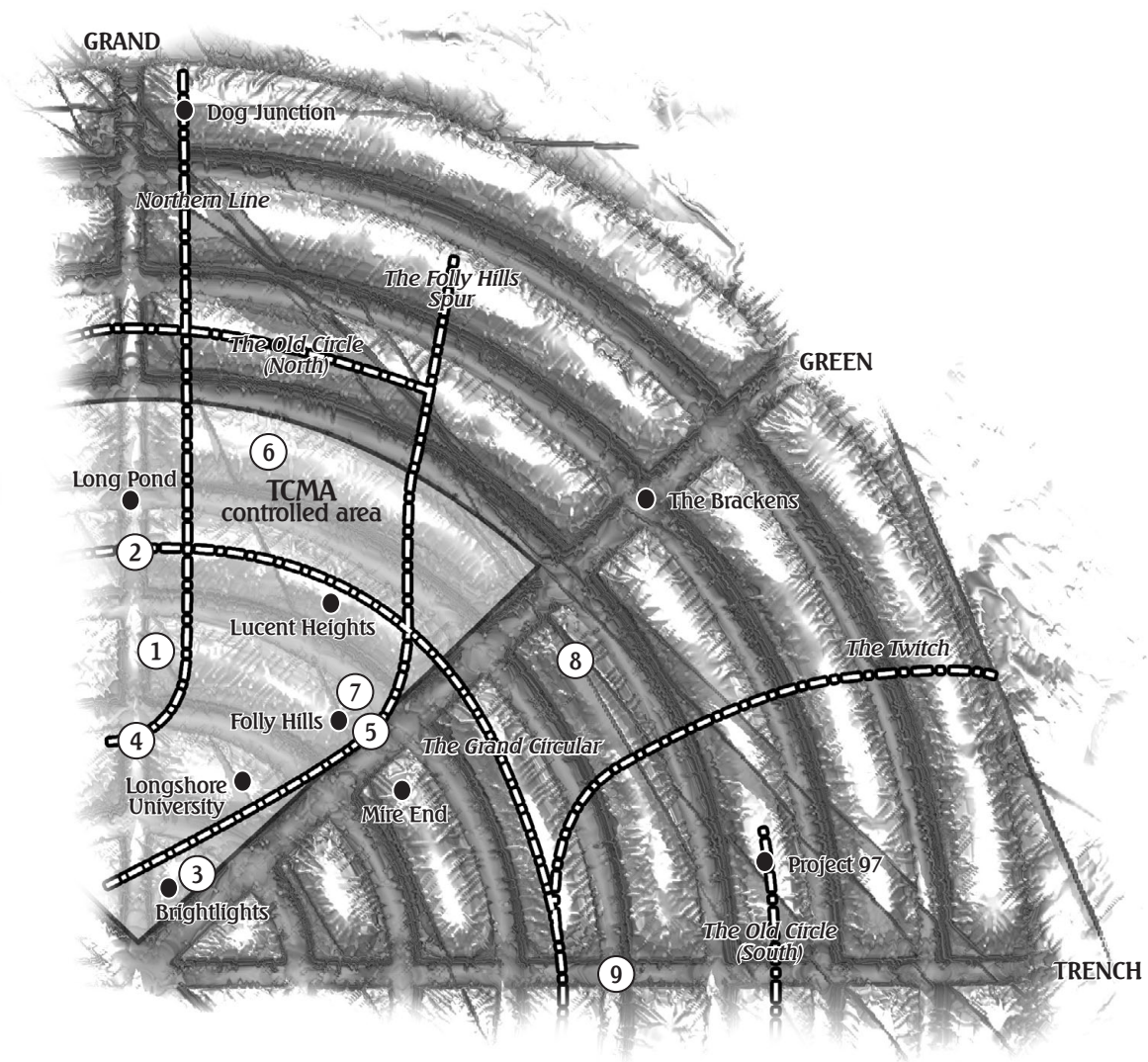




# city maps 0



Quadrants 1 & 2



1. Coldbath Fell
2. Dredgepool
3. The Grand Emporium

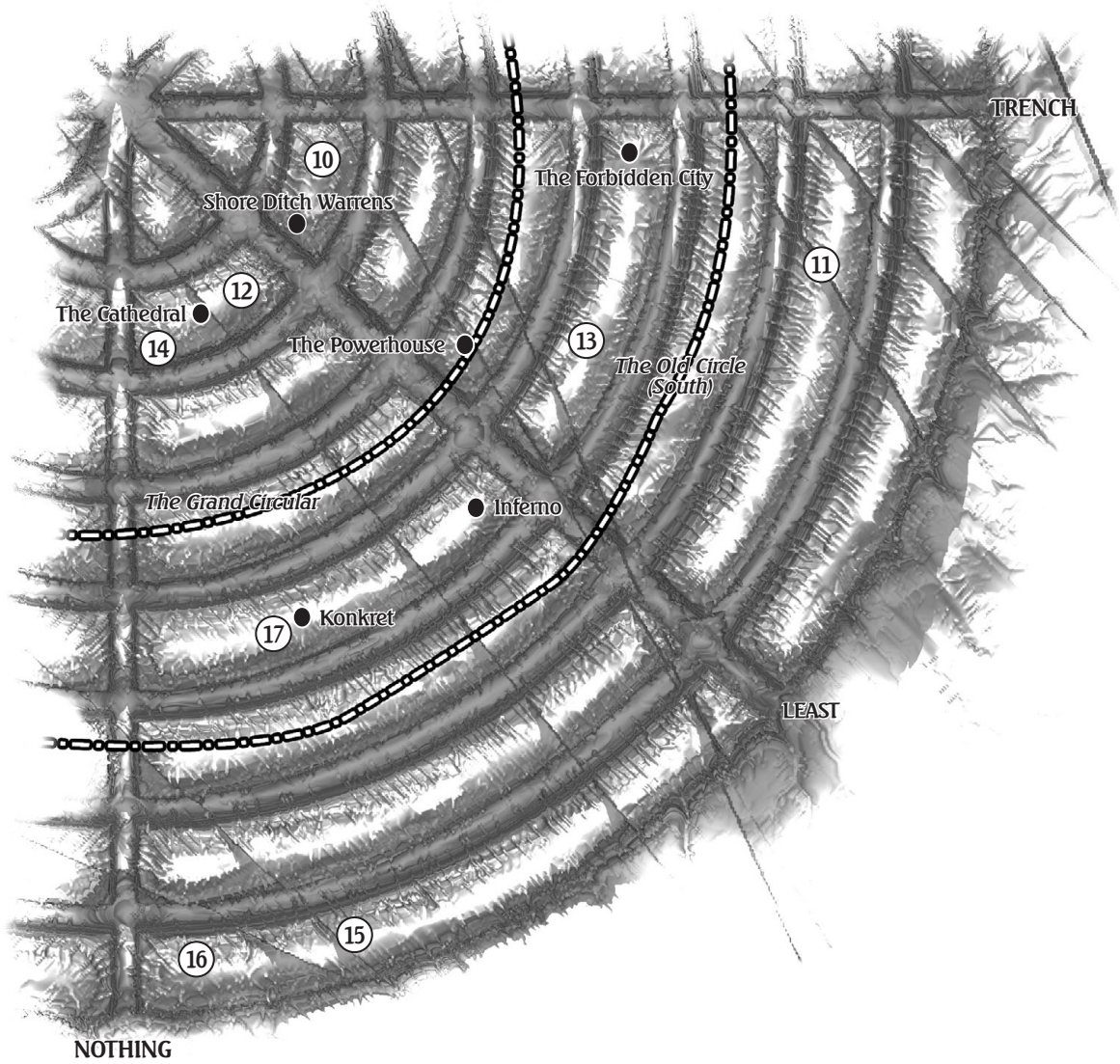
4. Ironbridge
5. The Lighthouse
6. Reeking Street Gasworks

7. Soulsgate Debtors Prison
8. Sullen Cut
9. Trench Locks





Quadrants 3 & 4



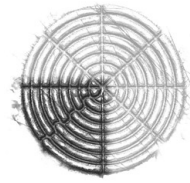
- 10. Crouch Lanes
- 11. The Foundations
- 12. George's Towers

- 13. Hammerman Wynds
- 14. The Hub
- 15. The Library

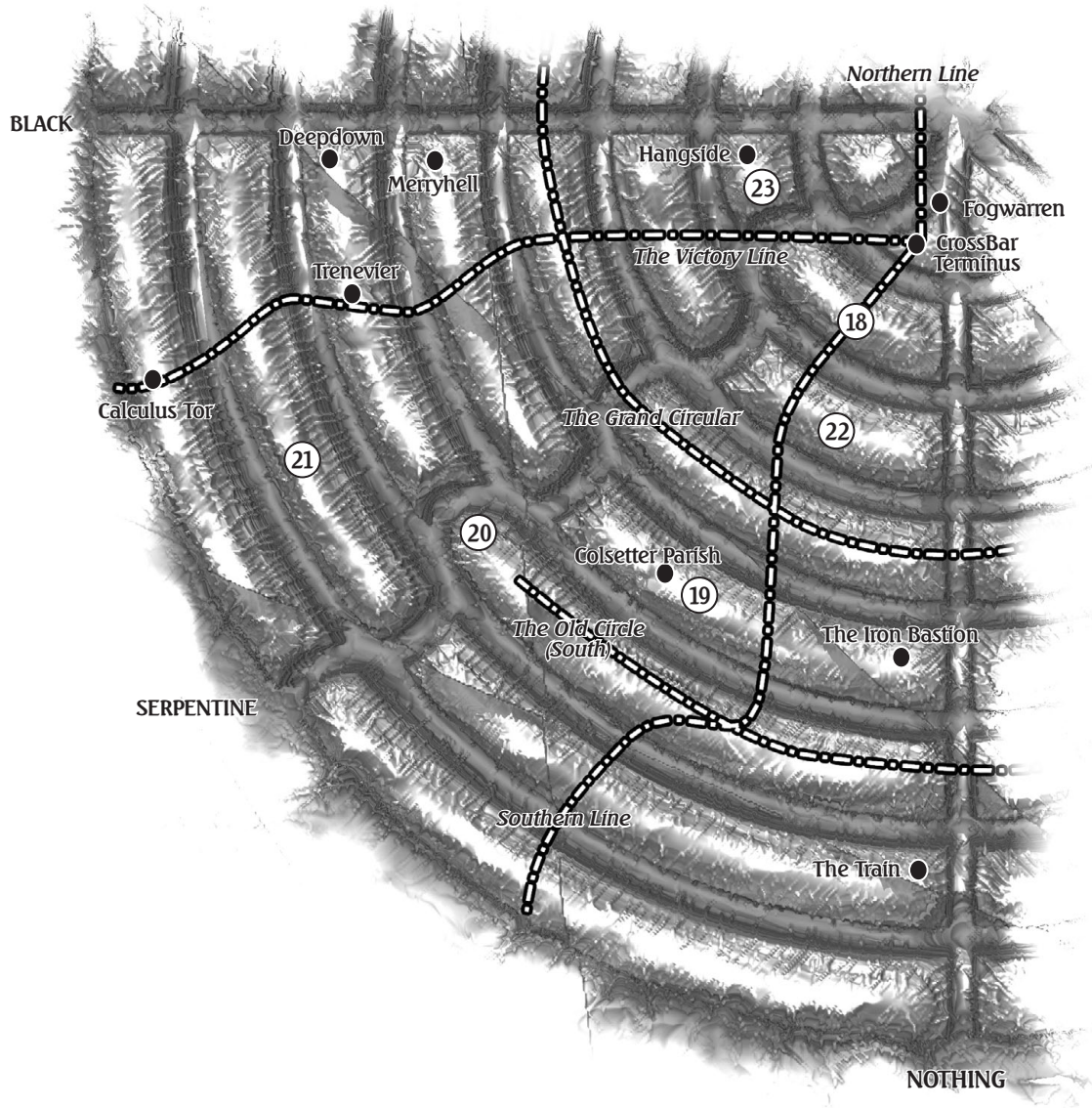
- 16. Nothing Gate
- 17. Rookery







Quadrants 5 & 6

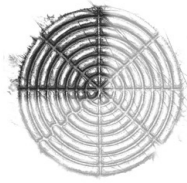


- 18. DarkCross Railway Yards
- 19. The Harrow
- 20. Lunatic Bend

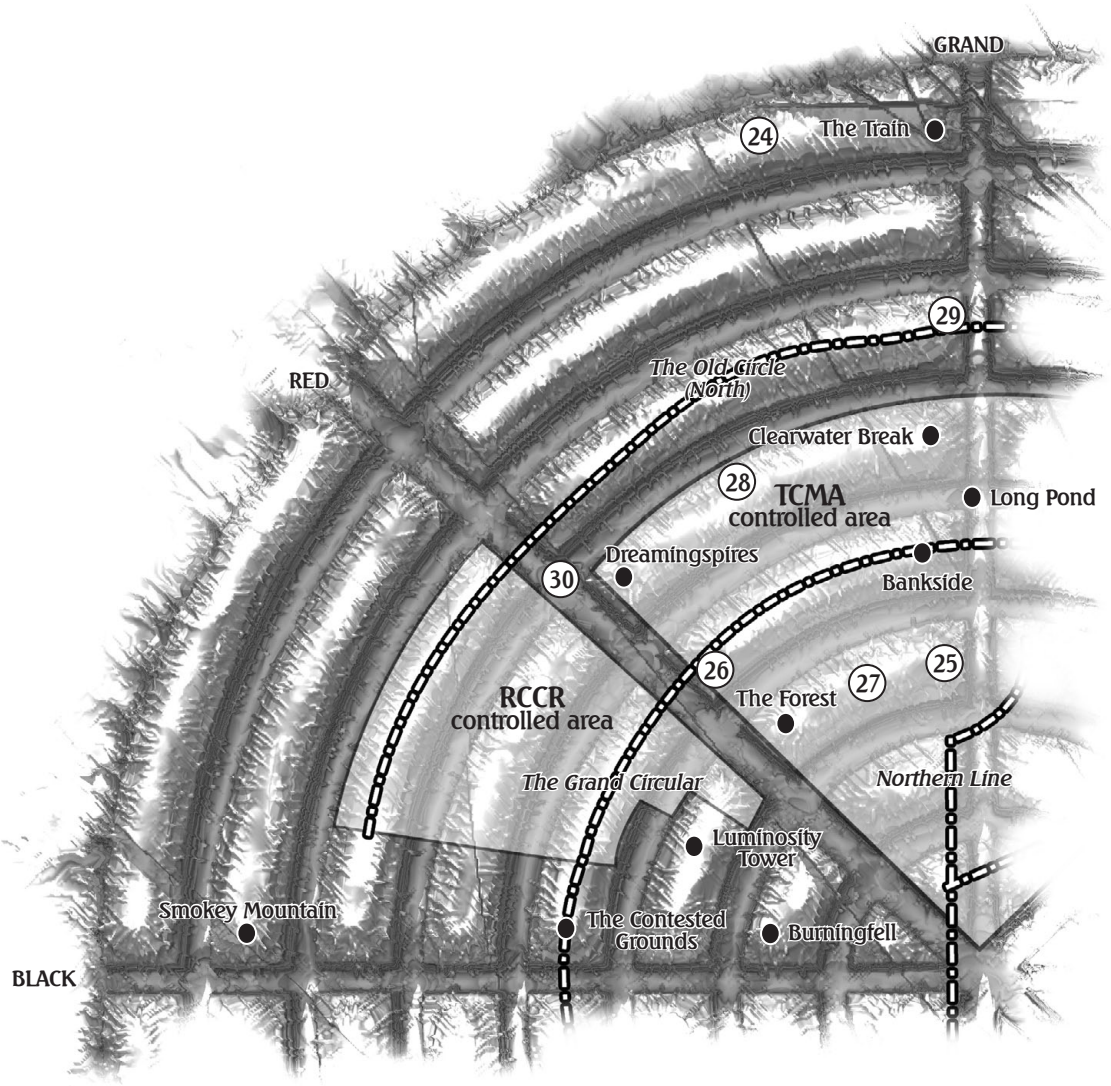
- 21. Machine Quarry
- 22. Skank Hill
- 23. Sleeping Vale







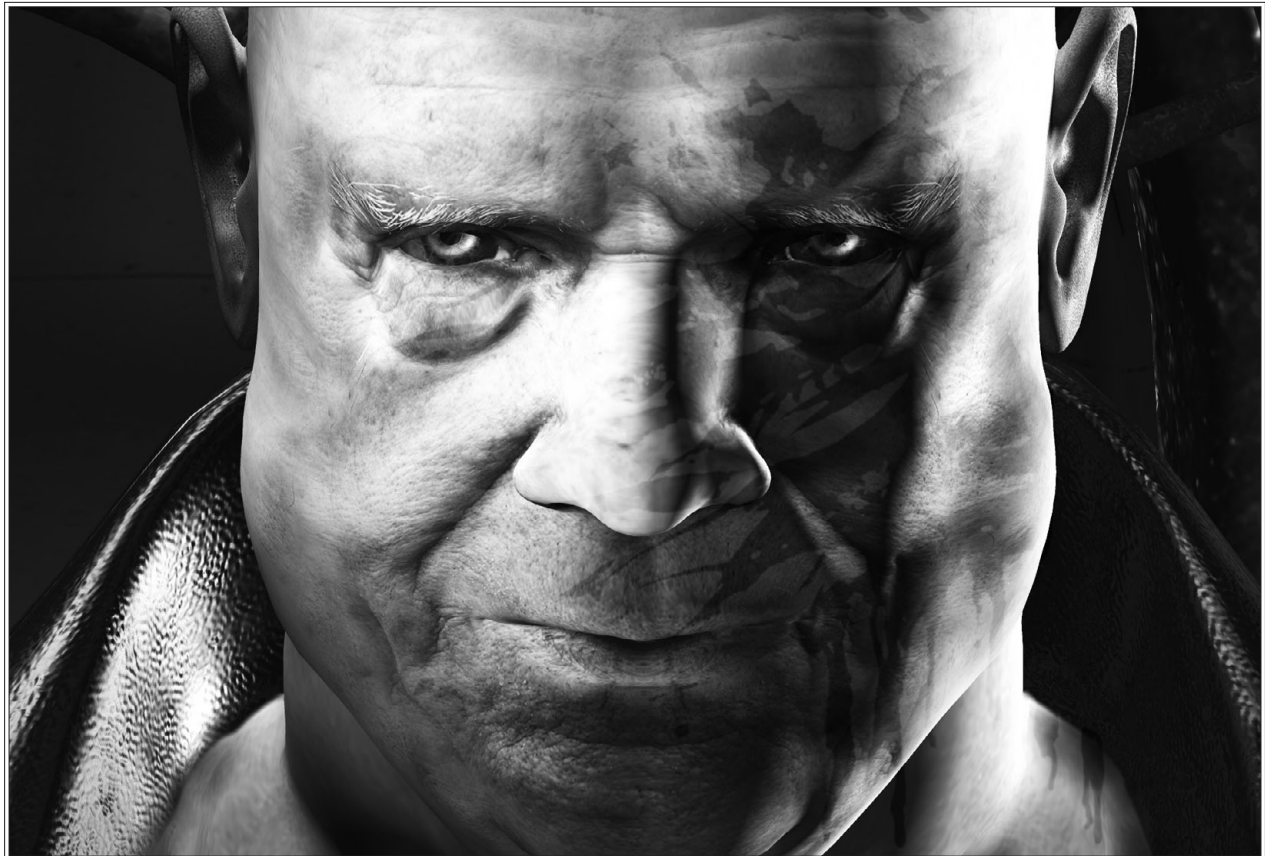
Quadrants 7 & 8



- 24. The Bone Factories
- 25. Central Park
- 26. The Commune

- 27. The Eastern General Infirmary
- 28. Grime Rain Stacks
- 29. Punchlake Power Station
- 30. The Water Fort





*"...gone, just like that. Never seen again. Some say the Hager were abroad, I says it's just some razorgang. Still, there was that thing, that second where we all blacked out. Strange. And I tell you..."*

Overheard conversation, Rookery

*"...and not, as you posit, some metaphysical force. I see them as being some form of scientific incarnation, the 'ghosts in the machine'. Yes, yes, I've read your paper and your credentials and conclusions are above reproach, but I fundamentally disagree with your findings. They are not spiritual, I am convinced of that. There is no God, no guiding intelligence. We are alone in a cold, dark place. Alone apart from them. They are..."*

Overheard fragment of conversation, Longshore University

*"Well, ye see here mate, we found this while we was knockin' through these old tunnels and suchlike. Most o' the boys, they wouldn't work down here, 'fraid o' tyrants and monsters, y'see. But my old mam, she always said I had no imagination, so none of it bothers me. But, we found something right strange. Old thingie, think it's called an 'alcove', off an ol' drain. Was sealed up with bricks, this here alcove. So we breaks it down and sees what's inside. Was a body. Well, more a skellington really, all just bones and rags. Nothin' to be scared off. 'cept for one thing. There was some loose bricks and dried up mortar on the floor of the alcove. Seems whoever this gadgie was, they had sealed themselves up."*

Recollections of an old miner, Sullen Cut



burghs







# Coldbath fell

**Region:** Lat 1, Ring 3

**Status:** TCMA Burgh

**Law:** Moderate high

**Wealth:** Moderate

## OVERVIEW

Segments of interview between Myron Booker of the Three Canals Clarion and Burgess Ornelia Jagerhoff (Independent, Coldbath Fell)

*Myron Booker: Burgess Jagerhoff, how do you react to recent suggestions in the press that beneath your altruistic activities, there lies a hidden agenda?*

*Ornelia Jagerhoff: I find such suggestions distasteful, but not entirely unsurprising. There are many vested interests within Coldbath Fell and the Three Canals as a whole who are concerned at the thought of someone such as myself actively campaign for the rights of the common man and woman in the street. These vested interests are...*

*MB: But how do you react to accusations, for example, that you are a collectivist and supporter of the Red Canals Collectivist Republic?*

*OJ: I refute such allegations completely! While I firmly believe in social justice and fairness, I disassociate myself from the extremism of the RCCR. Such rumours are merely perpetrated by my detractors in order to further damage my reputation in this community.*

*MB: However, you appeared as a character witness for a known seditionist, collectivist and anarchist accused of conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism.*

*OJ: Do you realise the falsity of that statement? How can one be an anarchist AND collectivist? The two concepts are mutually exclusive. Really, Mr Booker, I expected better from you. To answer the question, the person concerned was a close personal friend of my family and, while I do not share his political views, I felt compelled to speak out in favour of his excellent character. The charges against him were trumped up in the extreme.*

*MB: That as may be, Ms Jagerhoff, but let us turn to the Mire End situation. You have often times spoken out in favour of allowing the benighted burgh of Mire End to join the TCMA and gain the privileges and responsibilities associated with membership. Popular belief is that Mire End is a community of criminals, misfits and ne'er-do-wells. Do you endorse this belief?*

*OJ: Indeed I have spoken out in favour of Mire End and no, I do not believe that the majority of the population in that unfortunate area are criminals. They are poor people conspired against by a monolithic system. They should be given opportunities to excel and prove themselves worthy of admission to the TCMA.*

*MB: Burgess Jagerhoff, thank you for your time.*



Nestled between the teeming sprawl of Folly Hills and the eastern bank of the Grand Canal, Coldbath Fell is home to the middle-classes, the moderately well-off, in short, those who would describe themselves as 'comfortable'. The better-preserved western end of Folly Hills segues seamlessly into Coldbath Fell but there is still a perceptible line of demarcation between the two burghs.

One of the common questions in the TCMAA is: How did Coldbath Fell get its name? It doesn't sit on a hill and there appears to be no tendency on the part of the residents to bathe in cold water. One popular (most likely apocryphal) story is that just over a century ago, Burgess Lazenby drowned by tripping and drowning in a bath of cold water. It is said that the citizens of the area, with rather black humour, voted to rename the burgh Coldbath Fell in his honour.

As one proceeds through Coldbath Fell, the architecture changes gradually, as does the state of repair of the buildings themselves. Eastern Coldbath Fell is similar to Folly Hills, with tenement buildings constructed of brick and stone, albeit in slightly better condition. As you move towards the Grand Canal, the facades become slightly more elegant and better cared for. Porticoed townhouses and substantial three storey apartment blocks of considerable age and former grandeur become more apparent.



When the traveller gets within four streets of the Grand Canal bank, the buildings are very well looked after, clad in gay tiles or painted attractive pastel colours.

The most elegant and sought after address in the burgh is Reverie Street, a spacious boulevard flagged with smooth, grey, time-worn stones, with a narrow capillary canal running down the centre of the street. The canal is criss-crossed by artfully constructed iron footbridges.

While not the wealthiest or most desirable burgh in the TCMA, Coldbath Fell has a certain cachet which attracts the kind of residents to whom where they live is important. Successful entrepreneurs, aspiring politicians, businessmen and those of minor inherited wealth all live and occasionally, work here. Industry is almost totally absent, with shops, cafes, bars and small scale bespoke manufacturing providing the majority of employment. Every day the rickety, clanking trams travel up from Folly Hills bearing the workers who keep Coldbath Fell fed, watered and clean. Every night the same workers travel home to their damp, reeking tenements and whining families.

## Security/military presence

As a burgh of respectable, solid citizens, Coldbath Fell is, in the eyes of the Provosts, far more deserving of police attention than a stink hole like Folly Hills. Whilst not numerous, Provosts have a presence on the streets, tipping their hats to ladies and saluting gentlemen. Anyone who does not appear to be a resident of the area will be stopped and questioned, their TCMAA residency papers checked and, if necessary, a further interview will be carried out at the local bunker. Provosts are most numerous in the areas of the burgh which abut Folly Hills, acting on a perceived need to protect the good taxpayers of Coldbath Fell from the villainous scum of Folly Hills.

Coldbath Fell is seen as a 'cushy' posting by most Provosts, and competition is rife within the force to be assigned to the burgh. Bribes, blackmail and intimidation are common tactics when attempting to receive a transfer. Hence the reason that not all of the officers in the area are a 'spit and polish' as some residents would like to believe.

## highlighted location

### bowkers dressmakers

**Description:** Bespoke ladies clothing shop

Nestled at the foot of Reverie Street, low-doored and musty, Bowkers is one of the finest dressmakers in Coldbath Fell. Indeed, many clients would argue that it is one of the finest dressmakers in the entire City. In their cramped, shabby premises, Mr and Mrs Bowker cut, stitch and weave marvellous creations for the well-off ladies of Coldbath Fell. Their clientele is select and invariably wealthy, usually coming from old money. Ladies gather in the shop for whispered conversations, exchanging titbits of salacious gossip and juicy rumour. Then, there is the flipside to Bowkers, a slightly darker side to the laces, silks and fine cloths...

Mr and Mrs Bowker are, unbeknownst to much of Coldbath Fell, drug dealers. They peddle their wares to the refined ladies, desirous of something to give them that little 'edge'. In addition to selling them fine dresses, they also sell paper packets of fine powders, ready to be inhaled, ingested or injected. The clients to whom they deal are carefully selected, vetted and under rigorous instructions never to reveal their sources. It is not known where the old couple obtain their supplies or if they have any connections with some of the more notorious criminal groups. Suffice to say, they are a notable subversive element in the refined surroundings of Coldbath Fell.

## highlighted personality

### burgess ornelia Jagerhoff

**Age:** 27

**Height/Build:** 5' 7"/Elegantly slender

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Warm brown/Auburn

**Occupation:** Independent politician

**Affiliations:** The poor, oppressed and downtrodden

Representing the interests of Coldbath Fell in the arena of Three Canals politics, Burgess Jagerhoff is a crusader, a campaigner and a staunch believer in the rights of the ordinary man and woman.





Coming from a relatively well-off background in Coldbath Fell itself (her father was proprietor of Jagerhoff Beverage Brewers), she saw first hand the contrasts between the austere wealth of the 'Fell and the poverty of Folly Hills. The workers in her father's factory trudged in every day, rain or shine, to work for a pittance. Young Miss Jagerhoff was inspired to do something to better the lot of the common man and after completing her remarkably successful studies at Longshore University, she embarked upon a career in politics. Strangely, her own particular brand of social awareness, rampant idealism and fervent honesty caught the attention of the voters of Coldbath Fell, disillusioned after years of corrupt, conniving and self-serving Burgesses.

The well spoken, handsome, educated young lady with firm, honest beliefs was elected four years ago in a landslide victory, leaving certain vested interests rather hot under the collar. Not only does she serve the people of Coldbath Fell, she constantly strives for better conditions for the workers of Folly Hills who are continually exploited by the businessmen of the 'Fell. This has had the effect of making her a very popular figure in Folly Hills as well. It is indeed a strange sight to see a well-dressed, articulate young lady being paid homage to by the rough and ready denizens of Folly Hills. She is a remarkable young woman, but sinister elements appear to be plotting her downfall...

## Crouch lanes

**Region:** Lat 3, Ring 2

**Status:** Independent burgh

**Law:** Moderate, gang controlled

**Wealth:** Low

## OVERVIEW

"It's yer return valve, ye see! That's what's makin' the noise."

"What?"

"I said: IT'S YER RETURN VALVE!" the swarthy man emphasised his point by waving a large wrench at the tangle of pipes.

"Oh, yep. Got you."

"Look Mrs Curtisque, it's a small bit and won't cost much. You need to keep yer bairns warm and this place is freezin'."

"I know, Mr Guttersnape, but you know how it is, I've got...expenses." The frail woman stared fixedly at the floor and shuffled ragged shoes. Mr Guttersnape shifted his cap back from his forehead and rubbed his brow with an oil-stained hand.

In the narrow lane, a cluster of young men and women hunched conspiratorially in the shadows. One man cackled, throwing his aquiline head back and staggering into a wall. He clutched the top hat which sat atop his greasy mane of hair and pointed up to the building. The others nodded assent and grinned voraciously.

"Mrs Curtisque, yer bairns are freezin', look at them shiverin'. I know Ma won't want the money off you straight off, we can give you a bit 'o time. It's no problem."

"But...I don't think I'll have the money any time soon. Not that I don't want it done, you know. I just..." the woman tailed off and her roving eyes seems to find deep and abiding interest in one of the cracks in the wall. Guttersnape looked around. His eyes lingered on the gaggle of little children hunched on the room's single bed. There was a knock at the door.

A skinny young man in a top hat stood there, grinning from ear to ear.

"Mornin' missus. How you be doin' the day?" Mrs Curtisque quailed and started fumbling in her petticoats. "Just as long as you got our money, missus, there'll be no harm to the little uns." Much to his surprise, the young man found himself grabbed by the wrist and dragged into the room. The straight razor hidden in his sleeve tumbled to the floor as Guttersnape threw him bodily to the ground. "Right you fecking little bastard, I've had about as much as I can take. You jumped up gadgies are stoppin' good folks payin' for our services, and we don't like that. So here's the deal: you bugger off and leave Mrs Curtisque and her bairns alone and I won't beat you to within an inch of your life."

"Who the bleedin' buggery do you think you are?" exclaimed the young man from his recumbent position "I ain't takin' orders from you!"

"Guttersnape's the name, I'm a plumber."

"Oh shit."



*Guttersnape brought his wrench down on the man's arm with a resounding crack. The scream bounced off the walls and the children hid under dirty bed sheets. Guttersnape picked the howling young fellow up and threw him out of the door. "Now, you little shit, if you come round here again there'll be worse for you, me and my brothers will see to that."*

*Mrs Curtisque stared, gap mouthed at the scene. The plumber doffed his cap and made to leave.*

*"There then, you won't have any trouble from that lot no more. Shall I go get that valve for you? The bairns look right cold."*



Close neighbour of Shore Ditch Warrens and a burgh with a fearsome reputation for insularity and clannishness, Crouch Lanes is not a place for the claustrophobic or easily frightened. Massive subsidence in the burgh has canted many of the buildings over at unusual angles, turning the streets into ill-lit tunnels between the drunkenly leaning blocks. Girders and poles are everywhere, propping up walls and preventing the total collapse of a large numbers of dwellings. Some have even taken to living in the scaffolding and jury-rigged external supports, making the streets and alleys even more cramped and confined.

The situation underground is not, by any standards, better. The subsidence has cracked tunnels, re-arranged underground streets and disrupted sewers all over the burgh. The narrowness of these underground lanes is not helped by the piledriving and digging going on above, as columns and rods are driven down through the lower areas to support the listing buildings above. Many of the subterranean streets are little more than sewers with walkways along the sides. A filthy brown miasma hangs in the air, choking those forced to live in this sunless world.

Without a doubt, Crouch Lanes is a true labyrinth, with a reputation almost as fearsome as that of Bankside in the north. Gang rivalries are rife. Not an hour can go by without some faction or other stabbing, bombing, shooting, incinerating or beating another group. Many of these so-called disputes are over drilling rights, the rights to prop up the surface buildings.

Some disputes are over living space, food, or more criminal concerns such as drug dealing and prostitution. Although a small burgh council of some of the more civilly minded citizens exists, it offers no real solutions to the problems afflicting the area. Few people listen to its proclamations and even fewer pay any taxes to keep it going.

Services in Crouch Lanes are provided on an extremely ad-hoc basis. Sewage simply flows into the blockage-ridden, cracked system of tunnels and is conveniently forgotten about. Most dwellings see to their own water supply, setting up communal cisterns and catchment tanks on roofs and in courtyards.

Electricity and gas supplies are almost non-existent. Tapped cables run out to other burghs, stealing supplies from legitimate lines, but these are often found and cut a short while after they are put in place. The same goes for the rooftop wind generators set up to supply individual buildings with power. Before long, the outputs sprout a multiplicity of wires and connections, as unscrupulous individuals creep in and attempt to tap the generators for their own uses. Crouch Lanes is a burgh of violent thieves, all preying on each other.

The burgh council is regarded by almost all Crouch Lanes dwellers as an ineffectual talking shop made up of self-interested tradesmen, busybodies and half-witted do-gooders. The council meets every few days (in the back room of the Pissing Bitch, a local hostelry) and attempts to pass resolutions and organise life in the burgh. It is, without doubt, a failure.

## Security/military presence

'Security' is a very relative term when dealing with somewhere like Crouch Lanes. One man's security is another man's protection racket and vice versa. The burgh is stuffed full of gangs (of varying degrees of dedication and competence), vigilante groups (often hard to distinguish from the gangs they seek to eradicate) and nefarious criminal organisations. From the youthful vigour of the Steerward Reach Toy to the razor-wielding danger of the Black End Fetch, there's a disgruntled, violent group for every occasion.



## highlighted location

### guttersnape plumbing

**Description:** Thriving family business

Businesses in Crouch Lanes must always be on their guard. The gangs and crooks will take every opportunity to importune, extort and threaten. But not so Guttersnape Plumbing. Even in somewhere like the 'Lanes, skilled tradesmen are worth their weight in iron, able to construct, fix and repair. The Guttersnape family have been in the plumbing business for many generations, laying on water and gas supplies for residents of the burgh. This is not to say that their activities are always legal, far from it.

With offices in a three storey tenement which lists to such an alarming extent that walking from room to room can be likened to a brisk walk up hill, this extended clan carries out its vital business. Lower rooms are stuffed with pipes, valves, solder and tools, the upper floors serve as living quarters for the innumerable adults and children. And the reason for their being left alone by the gangs? Quite simply that the Guttersnapes are almost a gang themselves. Adept with wrenches and spanners, the plumbers have been known to dish out brutal beatings to anyone trying to interfere with their lawful occasions or inconvenience members of the family.

To make an appointment, one simply knocks on the leaning front door and waits for an answer. Grubby children scribble notes on much used scraps of paper and pass them on to Old Mrs Guttersnape on the top floor by means of an intricate pneumatic tube system. Old Mrs Guttersnape then assigns work to her sons, daughters, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. The prices they charge are not onerous and the service they offer is invaluable.

## highlighted personality

### beena nelf

**Age:** 21

**Height/Build:** 5' 3"/Fragile

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Brown/Very dark brown

**Occupation:** Student

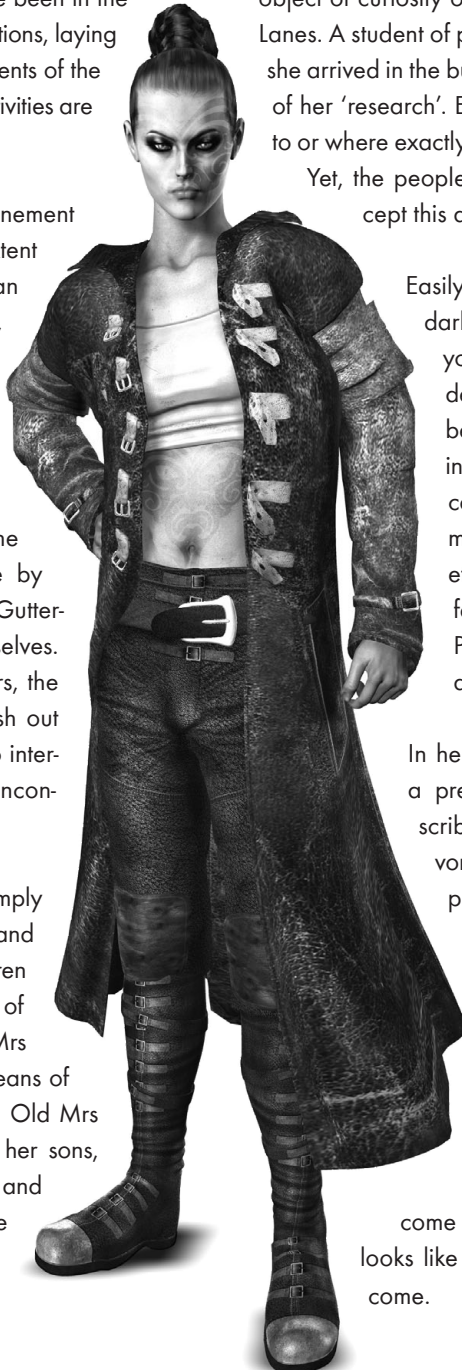
**Affiliations:** None

An unusual figure in the teetering slums, Beena Nelf is the object of curiosity on the part of the denizens of Crouch Lanes. A student of philosophy from Longshore University, she arrived in the burgh a while back, apparently as part of her 'research'. Exactly what this 'research' pertained to or where exactly it was headed, Miss Nelf never said.

Yet, the people of Crouch Lanes have come to accept this academic interloper in their midst.

Easily recognisable by her wild shock of dark hair piled high on top of her head, you would think that a slight girl wandering through Crouch Lanes would be the target of a variety of unpleasant individuals. Remarkably, this is not the case. The gangs leave her alone, the muggers decline to mug and pickpockets fail to pick. Most often found in her favourite haunt of the Pissing Bitch Public House, she holds her own in drinking competitions with the locals.

In her garrett room perched at the top of a precariously leaning tenement, Beena scribbles notes in a multitude of books, voraciously devours ancient works of philosophy and taps away on her battered and very worn dingin which screeches and whines through lack of oil and maintenance. Some Crouch Laners actually view her with a certain amount of awe, given her education and the fact that she can actually read and write. Suffice to say, Beena Nelf has become a fixture of life in the 'Lanes and it looks like she will be there for a long time to come.



# George's towers

**Region:** Lat 4, Ring 2

**Status:** Macrocorporate controlled area

**Law:** High

**Wealth:** Low/High

## OVERVIEW

*"How hot would sir like his bath this morning?"*

*The words still surprised the young man, even after three months of living here. "Er, nice and warm like."*

*"Certainly sir. I shall attend to that now."*

*As he lay in the huge bed Coran wondered just what he would be introduced to today. He assumed there would be further time devoted to teaching him how to talk 'proper', for some reason 'fuck' wasn't an acceptable word to use, and how to dress himself. He also guessed that they'd expect him to do stuff like read and maybe try and play some sort of instrument again. He cursed loudly and once again wished that he was back in Bankside, before his butler returned with the news his bath was ready. This was the problem, every time the learning and the acting got too much there would be some sweetener, like a hot bath, to keep him interested. Maybe he should have just mugged that rich Macrocorp guy that night rather than letting him speak first?*

*He shrugged as he got out of bed, too late now really. He got into the bath and managed to wash himself without farting once, then he dried himself and went to see what pleasures he would have to submit to today.*



Those who have done well in The City have done very well indeed and there are more than a few people who have no idea what to do with the vast sums of money they have amassed during their life. Some turn to drugs, to gambling, to physical pleasure, some reinvest it all and some keep it in trust in case their families ever need it, others devote it to projects. George's Towers is one such project, it is Macrocorp controlled social conditioning-Pygmalion on a grand scale, an experiment started by those totally divorced from real life in The City to see if

the 'common' people could be improved and turned into 'decent' citizens. A collection of the top Sideband people got together and built a complex on land not far from The Cathedral, they staffed and equipped it and then they went out to find people with which to populate it. Once they had a starting population they fed and clothed them, taught them Culture, introduced them to music, paintings and poetry and generally tried to turn them into the kind of people who would be able to pass at a Macrocorp party without anyone blinking an eye. Of course this meant that they had to get them out of the habit of caring for others or in any way thinking that the world did not revolve around them, but sure that is a small price to pay for learning how to live properly?

So far things have gone very well. The Patrons of George's Towers have continued to recruit some of the lowest denizens of The City they can find and with only a few notable exceptions these people have been broken out of their previous behavioural patterns and shown how decent people live their lives. Their cursing has ended, their homicidal tendencies channelled into more useful pursuits and all thoughts of their old lives and families banished. Only two Patrons and five serving staff have died during the course of the experiment and while the loss of the two was seen as a great pity somehow the others have struggled on.

Of course to keep Sideband happy there must be some return and so a number of the really successful subjects have been put in place in the Macrocorp as loyal employees to great effect. Some others have been sent back home after they have been educated, but lamentably they don't seem to readjust all that well and so far none of them have survived past the first year.

There is no sign of the George's Towers project stopping any time soon and it is still a very closely guarded secret amongst the upper echelons of Sideband. The group known as the Patrons feel sure that even if it was discovered it would be easy enough to explain away, but they also know that they could clear the area and dispose of any evidence in a matter of hours should they feel anyone was sniffing around. While it is possible that one of the subjects could ascend high enough to become one of the Patrons by that time none of their old life would be left and until then in the eyes of those in charge they are simply playthings that can be thrown out with the trash if necessary. Even with all of this in mind it is still surprising just how few people say 'no'.





## Security/Military Presence

George's Towers is extremely secure. Its existence is a closely guarded secret amongst those who run Sideband Media and while there are possible plans to turn the whole experiment into a television show the Patrons (as the group name themselves) are unwilling as yet to let the entire City see their project. They are somewhat worried that some in the Macrocorp may see this as a waste of money or that others would attack something seen as a weak point or, even worse, use the idea themselves to greater effect in some way. So the domain is heavily fenced and guarded by Media Break, all of the employees are well trained in self-defence (not always trained well enough though) and the area is constantly checked for any cameras or other recording equipment that doesn't belong to Sideband. To those outside George's Towers looks like a normal Macrocorp enclave and the Patrons aim to keep it that way.

## highlighted location

### the Viewing Room

**Description:** Torture Chamber

This room exists to show the test subjects how bad their previous lives were. Individual screens are set up to show each subject footage of where they once came from, ostensibly to demonstrate how much better off they are now, to show

them the horrid filth they came from and to point out how different their lives are from the lives their ex-neighbours are now living. In truth it acts as a form of torture to many of those who have taken the Patrons up on their offer. They who are not allowed to form attachments or even to interact too much with others in George's Towers are shown families and neighbourhoods working together. They who are not allowed physical pleasure are shown Ekranoplan races, drug takers and couples having sex. They are also shown the violence and depravation that exists outside of the walls of George's Towers, but after a few months the notion of a short, brutal life is forgotten and the memory of the rush of adrenaline as your racer shoots around the corner or the rhythm of sex is all that is remembered.

Truly the buildings on the other side of the Canal are always in better condition. Most still break and accept what they are being shown and what they are being taught, but with every visit to the Viewing Room the knife is plunged a little deeper and those who thought they were choosing paradise realise that they must leave all they were behind in order to do so.





## highlighted personality

**canius delass**

**Age:** 55

**Height/Build:** Tall/Thin

**Eyes/Hair:** Grey/Black

**Occupation:** Professional Butler

**Affiliations:** Sideband Media

DeLass can now barely remember a time when he did not serve the great and good of the Sideband Media Macrocorporation. He was trained as a child and as he grew his responsibilities also grew. After many, many years of service he was contacted by one of the group known as the Patrons. They asked him to take on a new project, to oversee George's Towers, a place dedicated to bettering the lives of those who had not been born into the educated classes, or even those who serve their betters. These people were the scum of the City, from places like Mire End and Bankside and the Patrons wished to bring them into the Macrocorp fold and show them how life could be lived when one had access to art and poetry and beauty. Of course he accepted. What else would he do?

Since then DeLass has overseen all of the serving staff of George's Towers, making sure not only that they do their jobs but that they are circumspect about where they work and what they do for Sideband. He has no tolerance for those who do not believe in the work they are doing or that in any way betray Sideband Media. Unbeknownst to the majority of those who interact with him on a daily basis he has the blood of more than one person on his hands. This is not to say that he is any form of martial artist, rather nobody suspects him capable of violence so when the situation does merit some form of action his victims are caught unawares.

DeLass does not like violence, but like any perfect butler he will do whatever it takes to protect his employer. Sometimes the look on the face of some of the 'guests' does disturb DeLass, he can still recognise despair easily enough, but he reassures himself with the knowledge that each and every person who passes through George's Towers will eventually go on to make the City a better place and that his masters have doubtless chosen the direct course of action, for what else could a loyal servant think?

## Grime rain stacks

**Region:** Lat 8, Ring 5

**Status:** TCMA Burgh

**Law:** Low

**Wealth:** Minimal

## overview

*"Good morning to you madam, I'm from the Community Service Board, I was wondering if you...."*

*"Fleck off, scum! We dorn't want yor type roun 'ere!"*

*Pebbles, fishheads and other items began to fly as Duthie hastily beat a retreat from the grimy lobby of the tower-block. Out in the street, the filthy rain did little to wash the ordure away. Duthie pulled the collar of his coat further up and jammed his bowler hat tightly onto his head. The CSB wasn't well liked in the 'Stacks, not well liked at all. 'Join the Community Service Board!' they said. 'It's a good career for an enthusiastic young man!' they said. Right. Getting hustled off to a cesspool like Grime Rain Stacks, spat on by the locals, punched in the face for doing your job, great career move!*

*The scrap of paper on which the address was written was becoming increasingly fragile and blurred. So much for this being a quick outing from the office. Whicker would doubtless be sitting in front of the stove, smugly thinking of how he avoided this particular assignment. Grinning oaf! Smug, self-satisfied arsehole! Patronage and nepotism counted for everything in the TCMAA. Just because Whicker had an aunt who was distantly related to one of the mayor's cousins, he thought he was top dog round here. The fact that there were only three of them in the office and Garmondley hadn't emerged from an alcoholic stupor for the past three days obviously had nothing to do with it.*

*"Oil Bastart!" came a yell from further down the street. Duthie turned just in time to catch a stone right below the eye. Caution was always the better part of valour round here. He ran.*

*Battered, bleeding, bruised and dispirited, Duthie arrived at the address on the now thoroughly crumpled and torn fragment of paper.*



*At last, perhaps this matter could be drawn to a close. Squealing came from behind the door, more than one child. His knock was eventually answered by a crushed, flattened looking woman in a grey overcoat. She clutched a greasy, fatty candle in her hand, holding it up high to better see the figure at her door.*

*"Yerrss?"*

*"Widow Haversham?"*

*"Yerrss."*

*"My name is Duthie, I'm from the Community Service Board." At this, the woman's face crumpled and tears began to flow.*

*"You can't do nothin' to us. We don't have no money, it's not fair. What are me and the bairns goin' to do? You can't send us out on the street! You can't!" She seemed on the verge of collapse, tears welling from her eyes.*

*"Widow Haversham, I'm not here to take anything from you. I'm here to inform you that the Community Service Board has looked in to your situation and has authorised a regular stipend in order to give succour and assistance to you and your children. I have the first payment of 6 pounds and twelve shillings here for you. Regular payments may be collected from the Community Service Board offices."*

*"Bless you sir, bless you!" The woman grabbed Duthie by the shoulders and hugged him until his breath was gone. Extricating himself from her embrace, he pressed the small packet of money into her hand, tipped his hat and bade her farewell. At least someone knew he had tried to do some good.*

*Duthie stepped from the stairwell and stared into the rain. Things didn't seem so bad now, perhaps things were on the up. Apart, perhaps, from the cosh wielding young men now approaching him. Oh dear.*

*"Oi! Scum! Come 'ere!"*



It's not that Grime Rain Stacks is a particularly violent, downtrodden or crime ridden burgh. It's not that the TCMAA pays very little attention to it. It's not even the broken down nature of the stacks themselves. No, it's the rain. It rains a lot in The City, but nowhere moreso than Grime Rain Stacks. Horrible, brown, sticky, penetrating rain. Rain that pierces the most waterproof of garments,

gets into every nook and cranny, and soaks everyone to the bone. Siting in its own little microclimate, the Stacks are affected by near constant rainfall, rainfall polluted by nearby factories. The inhabitants walk in a permanently huddled crouch, exhibiting puzzled, or even fearful, looks when the rain occasionally stops for a moment or two.

The grubby, stained and decrepit towerblocks which make up Grime Rain Stacks are twenty in number, huge, slab-sided oblongs of gloom. Various makeshift dwellings cluster around their bases, vendors hawk their wares in the shadow of the mighty towers. The streets themselves are actually built up above ground level, with boards, plates, planks and girders forming raised walkways above the rain sodden streets. This partial enclosure of the streets, the flooding of the sewers and the constant rainfall has turned the streets under the raised boards into a horrid waste disposal system. Rubbish, human waste and dirty water are all flushed down the streets, visible through the boards and girders, stinking and horrible. At night, the Stacks are dark and scary. Electricity is almost non-existent (it's hard to keep a functioning electricity supply in such an environment) and gas supplies are intermittent to the point of being unavailable. Homes and businesses are lit by fatty candles or fishoil lamps, only adding to the deep gloom of the area.

Some towers are in better shape than others. A few (most notably those towards the centre of the burgh) are in a dire state of repair, almost falling over due to neglect, rain and hundreds of years of rot. The concrete falls away in huge scabs, crushing whatever it lands on. This has lead to a whole raft of idiom used by the residents: "Getting scabbed" means being crushed under a falling piece of concrete, "Scabbing down" is the removal of dangerous pieces of concrete and their lowering to the ground on ropes (a dangerous and unpopular job, it must be said) and "Scabman" is a local term for a hired thug or killer (related to "getting scabbed").

Dampness, fungus and rot are, unsurprisingly endemic in all parts of the Stacks. This is not always a bad thing. Some of the more prolific fungi are actually edible and are harvested and eaten by residents of the burgh.



Little assistance is received from the TCMAA. The hated Community Service Board maintains a small office in the burgh, manned by a handful of dispirited and harassed souls whose only goal is to get away from the place as quickly as possible. The Provosts maintain a tiny bunker at the very edge of Grime Rain Stacks. In truth, it's nothing more than a rusting barge anchored on a canal, home to a depleted and depressed bunch of misfits and loners.

## Security/military presence

The TCMAA Provosts in Grime Rain Stacks are a sorry lot. Despised by the entire population, with little influence or sway, they keep themselves very much to themselves, filing spurious reports with their superiors, filling in false duty rosters and generally avoiding trouble as much as possible. The occasional foot patrol is met with sullen defiance by the general population; people round this way tend to have little use for the police. They tend to look after their own, resolving disputes privately and avoiding contact with the forces of authority. If the TCMAA is not willing to help them, then they are damn sure not to help the TCMAA.

## highlighted location

### the grimes lazarette

**Description:** Community hospital

While Grime Rain Stacks may not have much going for it in the way of civic amenities and general entertainment's, it does have one thing that many, equally poor, burghs lack: a hospital. Not that the Grimes Lazarette is much to shout about; a forlorn, three storey brick building crouched at the back of one of the towers, the windows of the hospital face on to a dingy canal, a view not likely to inspire recuperating patients.

The Lazarette was started many years ago as part of a benevolent movement set up to support the families of those killed by falling scabs from the towers. Bolstered by small donations from better off benefactors, the original support network for widows and orphans eventually

garnered enough money to set up a small, not very well equipped hospital for injured victims of the scabs. From those humble beginnings, the place has grown slightly to accommodate not just those injured by falling concrete, but to take in the sick and dying from all over Grime Rain Stacks.

The staff come and go and most lack even the most basic medical training. Much of the time, their ministrations consist of little more than folk remedies and mumbo-jumbo. However, there are always one or two staff with greater experience, often do-gooders come to the burgh to help poor, impoverished souls. Regardless of the level of experience, resources are always limited. Alcohol, bandages, plaster and the bonesaw are the most common methods of treatment. Many patients are simply made as comfortable as possible in their final days and hours.

## highlighted personality

### Prattleman

**Age:** Unknown

**Height/Build:** Moderate height/muscular build

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Black/No hair

**Occupation:** Gibbering freak

**Affiliations:** None (that are known of)

Flitting through the foetid spaces beneath the streets of Grime Rain Stacks runs Prattleman. Very few people have ever seen more than a staring eyeball, a clutching finger or a flash of pallid skin. Prattleman is more often heard rather than seen. High pitched, nonsensical chitterings waft up from below the streets, often following a single pedestrian as they make their way through the Stacks. Numerous legends and tales surround Prattleman. Some say he (or perhaps she) is a former Provost driven mad by too many years spent serving in the Stacks, condemned to a life beneath the rank towers. Other stories say that Prattleman is the ghost of all those crushed by falling scabs, their spirits driven beneath the ground by the manner of their dying. Suffice to say, no one can decide who or what Prattleman really is. It would take a soul with a strong stomach and nerve of iron to venture down into the sewers and culverts in search of the truth.









# hammerman wynds

**Region:** Lat 3, Ring 5

**Status:** Independent burgh

**Law:** Moderate

**Wealth:** Moderate

## OVERVIEW

*The clanging and banging and ringing never stopped in this place.*

*Twenty-five hours a day the hammers fell, the borers drilled, the saws cut and the presses rolled. Hammermen with practised eyes squinted down the newly cut barrel of a sparklock, checking that its aim would be true. Apprentices buckled under loads of iron rod and plate, wheezing as they carried their burdens through echoing workshops and factory yards.*

*High above the burgh, riggers swung between the dangling lines of the cablecars, calling out to each other in their lilting dialect, their tool belts swishing and swaying with their graceful movements. Some riggers sat atop pylons or even hanging from the cables themselves, eating their lunches of baked fish and tea.*

*In the low, sprawling dwellings, mothers smacked their children and scolded their babies. Kettles whistled and spluttered atop greasy hobs. Fish were chopped, dogs jointed and stock stirred to make dinner for the hardworking wage earners of the households. The tired men and women streaming from the factories and forges at the end of their shift would expect a hearty, hot meal.*

*At the base of the Witch Tower, children capered and played, daring each other to climb higher up the vertiginous structure. Older children lounged in the shadows, scratching their names in the brick of the buildings or pelting the younger ones with pebbles. The cablecars swung far above, carrying people, iron, dogs, guns or anything that could be manufactured, bought or sold in this place.*

*In the dark spaces between the strange spars at the heart of the burgh, shopkeepers touted their wares and peddlers snatched at the ankles of passers-by. Butchers, fishmongers, apothecaries and ironmongers existed side by side in this shadowed place, all crying their imprecations to the inhabitants as they strolled by.*

*This is Hammerman Wynds. A place of smoke, smells, noise and squalor. A place of industry, activity, commerce and business. This place would never be silent, not until the last foundry had lapsed into ruin and the final cablecar has swung its last and dropped like a stone into the buildings below.*



A sprawling, seething mound of activity, overshadowed by a web of cablecar lines, Hammerman Wynds echoes to the sounds of clanging metal and creaking cables. While primarily a dwelling area, the burgh is also home to numerous forges, smithies and works.

Buried beneath the aggregation of buildings, the heart of Hammerman Wynds is a strange circular construction approximately five hundred metres across. Massive black spars radiate out from a central hub, with smaller spars connecting the eight great arms. Lying flat on a bed of old foundations, cellars and ruins, this strange artefact must once have been visible to the naked eye, but now the structure is only visible from the inside due to the dwellings and factories which have accreted on and around it. Inside the structure it is a warren of narrow paths, vendors booths, dingy houses, low pubs and ramshackle stalls. Shafts of light sometimes pierce the roofs of buildings above, offering some dull illumination for this dark place.

Rising above the northern end of the strange circular part of the burgh is the Witch Tower, a slender pyramidal building, seemingly built from the same black spars as the interior of the circular area. The tower has become the centre point for the network of cablecars that stretch over Hammerman Wynds and in to the surrounding burghs. At a little over 250 metres in height, it is an imposing sight, festooned as it is with cables, lashed up shanties, cargo platforms and lifts.



Surrounding the great central circle and the tower is the main body of the Wynds, densely packed dwellings existing cheek to jowl with small iron works, gunsmiths and foundries. Cablecars and aerial ropeways descend at alarming angles into yards or even into deep cellars, acting as a means of bringing in raw materials or removing finished products. Hand-drawn carts rumble through the lanes, drawn by workers with soot-blackened faces and dusty clothes.

Cable cars call at high platforms built on to roofs, carrying workers on their swaying way across the burgh. The clanking sounds of the cars running over the supporting pylons is ever present, accompanied by the eerie creaking of the cables themselves.

The Wynds are famous for the production of armaments, primarily sparklocks. The ironworks serve the foundries, which in turn serve the gunsmiths. While gunsmithing is not the only industry to be found here, it is certainly the most common and the most profitable. Much of the activity is overseen by the Illustrious Union of Hammermen, a trade guild with branches spread out across the whole of The City.

The Hammermen are concerned with one thing, and one thing only: gunsmithing. Hammerman Wynds is the home of the Union and their greatest bastion of power. In order to engage in gunsmithing in the burgh, one must be a member in good standing of the Union, pay one's dues and offer respect to the hierarchy.

## Security/military presence

Hammerman Wynds, were it not for the influence of the Union, would be an anarchic free-for-all, a madhouse of industry, a riot of commerce. While they do not have a great amount of control over the majority of the populace, the Union does manage to bring a certain level of calm and order to the burgh.

The forges, foundries and factories all have their own wardens and watchmen, keeping an eye out for thieves and saboteurs. While there is no police force in the burgh, those who are affiliated with the Union can be safe in the

knowledge that the organisation looks after its own. It is this knowledge that dissuades many criminals from practising their black arts in Hammermans Wynds. To assault, rob or inconvenience a Union member in good standing would bring down the wrath of the Hammermen and they are not known for their tolerance of those who live out with the laws of decent society.

## highlighted location

### the witch tower

**Description:** Ancient relic

Looming above the burgh and casting a long shadow in the wan sunlight, the Witch Tower dominates Hammerman Wynds. The spindly, scarcely believable structure creaks gently in the wind and thrums with the vibrations of the scores of cablecars rigged to its slender spars. At the very top of the tower is the Eye, a hollow cylinder metres across. No cable car lines go this high, so the Eye is left staring blankly out across The City.

All the way up the tower there are small buildings and platforms lashed onto the spars, rickety lifts and hoists running up and down between them. These serve the terminal ends of many cable cars, loading and unloading people and goods. Some cars never call here, they simply use the tower as a strongpoint on which to lash the ends of their cables. Massive bolts, eyelets and carabiners twist around the structure, holding the cables fast. But sometimes not fast enough. Rusted cables have been known to part, pylons have been known to fall, dropping cars onto the roofs of the burgh, smashing those below, crushing those within.

The Witch Tower has an almost mystical attraction for the people of Hammerman Wynds. Young scallywags challenge each other to climb the dizzying heights and stand within the eye. Some do, and look out across the vastness of The City. Others are overcome with fear or vertigo as they clamber up the platforms and cables. Some unfortunates lose their grip and plummet to their deaths far below.



## highlighted personality

Guilietta Fricker

**Age:** 33

**Height/Build:** 5' 11"/Lanky but muscular

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Grey/Black

**Occupation:** Rigger

**Affiliations:** The Union, but not a member

Swinging above the Wynds, balancing on thick cables, dangling from pylons, hauling on ropes: this is the life of a rigger, one of those skilled artisans who keep the cablecars of Hammerman Wynds functioning.

Guilietta Fricker is one such rigger, a gangling, lanky woman with bloodshot eyes and callused palms. Guilietta is one of those people who seemingly have no fear of heights, depths or dangling from a thin rope many metres above an iron foundry. Were it not for men and women like her, the cablecars would quickly grind to a halt as the sprockets and wheels locked up, the cables frayed and the stanchions rusted. The riggers see much that happens below them, witnessing things that many would prefer remained unseen.

Living in a small shack bolted to the side of the Witch Tower, Fricker spends her days looking down on the burgh, watching the people meandering about like tiny insects. Her hearty laugh can often be heard from above as she witnesses an unfortunate incident or comical misunderstanding. Unlike many of her kin (who need some means of unwinding from the stress of their dangerous occupation), Guilietta has foresworn the imbibing of alcohol and the taking of any drugs. This is not to say that she doesn't let her hair down at times. She is an inveterate (and quite skilled) gambler, taking on the seasoned Hammermen and swarthy forgers in the dank pubs of the burgh.

## Lunatic bend

**Region:** Lat 5, Ring 6

**Status:** Independent burgh

**Law:** Extremely harsh

**Wealth:** Low

## Overview

*The cartwheels snicker-snacked over the rough roadway. The dogs shied and yelped at the strange sights and sounds. The people around this place were hateful and cowed. If it were not for the good coin she got for her tanned dogskins, Hetty wouldn't even bother dragging herself down here.*

*The dogs would be safe in the yard for now, she could wander about for a while, maybe get a cup of spiced tea. Her pocket watch showed she still had a couple of hours before having to get out of the burgh, before the Gentry would get fractious and start threatening punishments.*

*A man shuffled past in heavy manacles, blood dripping from the welts on his face and arms. His forehead was branded with the word THIEF, the letters raw and inflamed. People just stared dully at him and cast their hollow eyes towards the ground.*

*The crowd began to move, surging up the road. Crackling loudspeakers exhorted citizens to make their way towards the central plaza where justice would be meted out. Hetty found herself dragged along by the mob, an unwilling participant in their theatre of execution.*

*The crowd collapsed into silence. The scratchy voice of the loudspeakers counted out the numerous crimes that this man, this traitor, this insolent ingrate was guilty of. Fighting all the way, he was dragged bodily up the steps towards the looming guillotine.*

*Still he fought, even when held in place by the broad restraining bar. A small woman stepped gingerly out of the crowd. She wore a black armband and curtsied nervously at the assembled Gentry in their stovepipe hats. They nodded back and pointed at the lever.*



*The pump whined and the engine coughed as the pressure built up in the lines leading to the blade mechanism. Glancing about, the woman clutched the lever in both hands, stared fixedly at the man strapped into the machine and pulled.*

*There was no exultation from the crowd, merely the mute acceptance of justice. They moved away, going back about their business. Yet Hetty remained staring, staring at the woman who still grasped the lever. Try as they might, the Gentry could not prise her fingers from the corroded metal.*

*Hetty collected her dogs and cart and hurried for the portal, bodily throwing her armband at the man on guard. Only when safe by the banks of the Serpentine did she vomit, spewing dark liquid onto the ancient flagstones, only remembering the look in the woman's eyes.*



Nestling within the sixth bend of the Serpentine canal lies the despised and much maligned burgh of Lunatic Bend. With a politics and law all their own, the burgh has established itself as one of the most harshly authoritarian regimes in The City.

Lunatic Bend takes its name from its dim and distant origins. The burgh was once a sprawling region of asylums and prisons containing the mad, the unfortunate and the criminal. As time wore on, fewer and fewer souls were incarcerated within its walled tenements, concrete blockhouses and vermin-infested barracks. Eventually, the area was abandoned to the scurfs and furies, the buildings falling into disrepair and ruin. Then, after decades of silence, inhabitants began to drift into Lunatic Bend. The dispossessed of other burghs, drifters seeking quiet solace and criminals on the run seemed to gravitate towards its grim desolation.

Initially, the population kept itself isolated in cliques and gangs, but as numbers increased, contact was forced upon them and a strange sense of community grew. The buildings were restored and services laid in, but there still remained an isolationist tendency and fear of outsiders. As time drew wearily on, Lunatic Bend grew to become a recognisable burgh. But it became a burgh with a difference. Perhaps due to its origins, the politics of the area were harsh and unyielding. The laws of the burgh were rigidly enforced and terrifying in their penalties. Then there came the Gentry.

From the original drifters who came to Lunatic Bend, the Gentry became arch politicians and the arbiters of the law. With little or no mandate except their own will and determination, they imposed laws and political strictures through stealth and cunning. They saw this as an opportunity to mould Lunatic Bend in the way they wanted, to create a burgh suited to their own needs. Now, political participation is compulsory, even though there is only one party to vote for.

The Gentry have created a self-perpetuating oligarchy, the people too inured to change or fearful of the consequences to foment revolution. A vote for the Gentry represents not a choice as to who will rule, but a choice as to whom amongst a select clique will occupy a certain position.

To the outsider, the burgh is a strange place, surrounded as it is by its ramshackle wall. Within this wall, through the barbed wire, the place still resembles an asylum and prison, albeit an asylum and prison with shops, businesses and factories. The old buildings are much patched and repaired, but little has changed over the centuries. And at the centre of it all lie the ultimate symbol of the power of the Gentry: the guillotine.

## Security/military presence

Approach the wall of Lunatic Bend and you will notice a few portals piercing the brick curtain. Step nearer and the passer-by will sight grim faced men and women in stovepipe hats issuing coloured armbands to those whom desire entry. These are the lowliest members of the Gentry, the members who guard the gates and check the bona fides of those who desire entrance.

To gain entrance to the burgh, one must have some form of legitimate business to conduct. This normally revolves around providing goods or services that the burgh is unable to provide for itself. An outsider's time within the place is strictly limited and this is defined by the colour of armband they are issued with. A green armband signifies that you are allowed to stay a maximum of one hour within the burgh. A yellow armband allows a stay of four hours, and blue armband a stay of eight hours and a red armband (only given to the most trusted of individuals) allows a stay of one whole day.





And outsiders have much to fear if they stay too long. For they will be subject to the same harsh laws as the inhabitants of Lunatic Bend. The Gentry have designated many crimes worthy of capital punishment: murder, rape, theft of any kind, assault on a member of the Gentry, fomenting revolution and disparaging the good name of the Gentry are all punishable by a summary trial and the terrifying walk to the Guillotine. Incarceration or hard labour punishes lesser crimes in one of the restored isolation blocks.

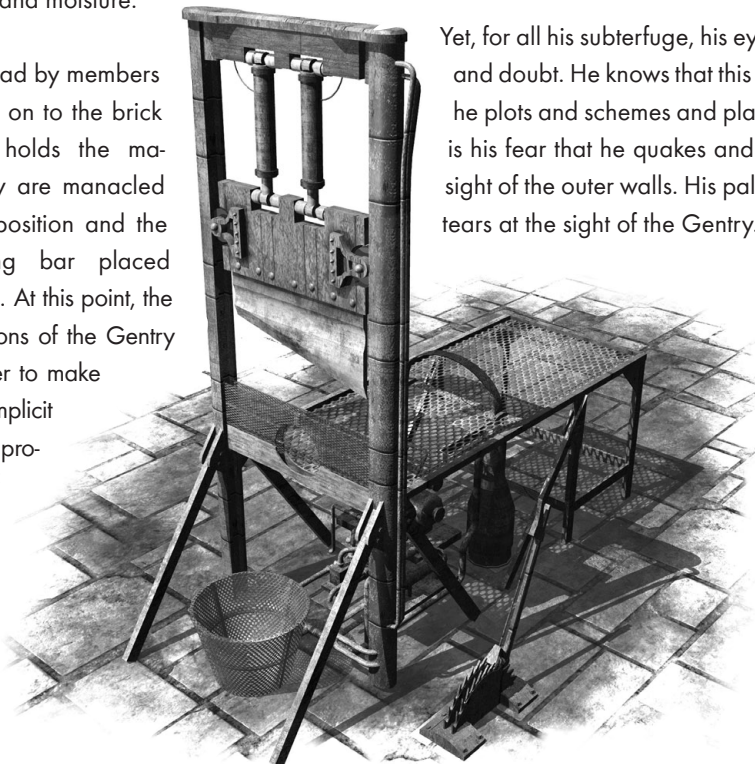
## highlighted location

### the guillotine

**Description:** Machine of execution

The Guillotine stands as a dreadful reminder of the dark past and of the terrifying present. Wrought from thick iron girders, this massive instrument of execution is concrete testament to the rule of the Gentry. The wide blade is dull with age and stained with blood. The edge has long since vanished, worn down by the necks of its numerous victims. The machine itself is powered by a hissing, leaking hydraulic piston which forces down cantilevered arms attached to the blade. Corroded pipes run from the Guillotine itself down to a barking engine and rasping pump, reeking of fishoil and moisture.

The victims are lead by members of the Gentry up on to the brick platform which holds the machine. Here, they are manacled into a kneeling position and the heavy restraining bar placed across their back. At this point, the twisted machinations of the Gentry take over. In order to make all inhabitants complicit in the execution process, the name of the executioner is drawn from all residents. To shirk your responsibility is to face the machine yourself.



Man, woman and child, none are exempt from their legal duty. Some are lucky and are never called, others are forced to grasp the rusted lever which activates the mechanism and watch as a life is snuffed out scant yards from their face.

## highlighted personality

### tasker wenham

**Age:** 41

**Height/Build:** 5' 5"/Stocky

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blueish grey/Grey-speckled brown

**Occupation:** Terrified criminal

**Affiliations:** None

Tasker Wenham is an outsider, though he covers the fact well. A cloth merchant from far off parts of The City, he came to the burgh on lucrative business but, through an unfortunate conspiracy of circumstances, found himself unable to leave. The loss of his outsiders armband and an overwhelming fear of what the Gentry would do him forced him to take drastic measures. He stole, mugged and importuned many citizens for clothes, money and food, seeking shelter in uninhabited rooms and dark alleys. He is constantly on the move, doing odd jobs, attending executions, blending in with the crowd.

Yet, for all his subterfuge, his eyes are filled with paranoia and doubt. He knows that this life cannot last forever and he plots and schemes and plans for his escape. So great is his fear that he quakes and shivers if he even catches sight of the outer walls. His palms sweat and eyes fill with tears at the sight of the Gentry.

Tasker Wenham knows that his time must come sooner or later. And lately, his thoughts have turned to darker matters, perhaps even to the ultimate escape, to the only way he can liberate himself from the bonds of Lunatic Bend.



# Nothing gate

**Region:** Lat 4, Ring 8

**Status:** Slum/Ghetto/Colony

**Law:** Variable

**Wealth:** Low

## OVERVIEW

*Scratch. Scratch. Scratch. In other areas of The City bleeders or dogs or maybe children would likely cause the sounds that filled the room, but here, in the pit known as Nothing Gate the sound came from the population. Darak scanned his eyes out across the room again, taking in every pathetic body that lay there, their limbs moving compulsively, their moans mixing with the ceaseless scratching to engender a sound that no human in their right mind would ever want to hear. Then again, what human in their right mind would ever have come here in the first place? He moved forward, stepping carefully over bodies, shining his fish oil lamp around the room, hoping for a moment of recognition in amongst the horror. He hadn't been gone that long and he had been returning with money, but when he got back she was gone, finally defeated by the squalor of her existence, finally giving in to a possibility of some pleasure before she died.*

*Finally he saw a face he recognised, gaunt and bandaged to be sure, but the face of his mother. Picking his way with caution he approached her, his light shining across her body. Darak's cry of shock and horror cut across the room, the moans silencing for a moment while the scratching continued. His light had not only illuminated his mother, it also revealed his brother and sister, huddled against her, their wrapped fingers moving up and down across their bodies, their young eyes looking up at him, pleading for another hit...*

●

At the edge of The City lies a place that few are aware of and even fewer ever visit. It is a point of last hope, a place that shows the lengths that people will go for a little pleasure and just how far those people can sink.

The physical representation of this lowest point is a cluster of buildings around the outer limits of The City, well within sight of where nobody can ever go with hope of return. Inside the buildings one very rich man and a host of those far less fortunate live, forever bound together. In truth Nothing Gate is home to one of the most successful Scrape dealers in the City, also one of the most twisted.

Some time ago Hergaul Devents set up his manufacturing plant by the Gate because it was well out of the way of the bigger gangs and far away from any sort of authority who might care about what he was up to. When one of his more regular customers asked for a continuing supply in return for everything he had Devents wondered what it would be like to see someone addicted to Scrape die, so he accepted and agreed to let the man come and live near the plant. This man got regular hits of the drug and enough food to survive until finally he succumbed to one of the many ailments commonly associated with Scrape and all the while Devents watched and saw the power he had and he loved it. So he spread the word.

Now anyone who wants and who has something to give can make their way to Nothing Gate and give their lives over to this drug lord. The transaction is simple enough, all of the addict's possessions are assayed and if they don't amount to a sum arbitrarily decided by Devents then they are made to work for a while as couriers or recruiters before they can finally abandon their lives to torment and brief euphoria. After that they may stay wherever they wish within the complex and they will receive a few meagre meals a day and enough Scrape to keep them from not leaving, although as they have nothing left and nowhere to go this does not have to be very much.

Now and again some poor soul does reclaim enough sanity to realise just how horribly wrong their life has gone and they stumble out of the building and past the edge of The City, but most of Devents' 'lodgers' never make this choice, they simply wait for the next hit to come and do whatever their landlord wants them to do.

Every so often the population swells to the point that another building is needed and usually the owners can be convinced that they would like to sell.



The threat of not only the armed and paid guards but also of the numerous addicts is generally enough to make anyone capitulate and the question is not whether the Nothing Gate operation can continue to go unnoticed, rather it is if anyone cares enough about the wretches who live in thrall there to do anything about it.

By now the compound looks somewhat military, with gantries and ladders added to the outside of buildings as they are acquired. The majority of external doors and windows are covered with wood or metal and the only entry/exit point Devents' guests are usually aware of is the double doors through which they were first admitted. With the exception of the Treasury and the small cramped office where they sign their life away the majority of the inmates only ever see the large dark rooms where they will spend the remainder of their lives. Most of these rooms have only two doors and admit very little natural light, if any at all.

There are, of course, other, less horrific, rooms in the complex, such as storerooms for food and weapons, dorms for the guards and Devents' lavish living quarters. In the heart of the warren of joined buildings and knocked-in walls lies the source of the pain and torment suffered by all of those who choose to die here. In a brightly lit room the Scrape plant works away, night and day, producing as much of the drug as possible, some for the denizens of Nothing Gate, the rest for consumption in all the dark corners of The City. With the exception of Devents' apartments every room is monitored in some way and anyone planning on an exhaustive examination of Nothing Gate would do well to tread very carefully indeed.

## Security/military presence

Nothing Gate has the massive advantage of being remote from nearly everything, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need some sort of security. Devents employs a wide array of thugs and enforcers to make sure that his business interests are secure and that any of his addicts who get funny ideas can be put back in their place. He sells Scrape as far into the City as he can and usually his pushers travel in pairs in order to better protect themselves or, if something goes really wrong, in order that at least some of the drugs can be saved.

So far none of the other gangs or any of the security forces have deigned to take more than a passing interest in Nothing Gate and this has allowed Devents to keep the on-site security costs reasonably low, but if he felt he was in danger of attack he could recall his pushers and recruiters and acquire some addition local help quite quickly. On top of all this there are the addicts. The inhabitants of the Gate vary between those newly addicted and those who are on their last layer of skin, but between them they would present if not a force then at least a delaying tactic in the face of a really threatening opposition. The top people in this organisation are almost sure that such a delaying tactic would give them long enough to take the money and run. After all, it's a big city and there are always those who want one last hit.



## highlighted location

### the treasury

**Description:** A heavily guarded storehouse and welcome area.

This building is both the most heavily guarded one in the complex as well as the one that everybody gets to see. Over the years the store has grown from one room to an entire building and the 'reception' area has been incorporated into it. Whenever someone arrives to hand over their lives they are interviewed and asked for personal details (for what is the point of watching someone die if you don't know at least a little about them?) and then they hand over whatever they have to give. Once this transaction has been completed they are given a hit of Scrape and allowed to ride out the pleasure. Once the come-down has started they are escorted through the Treasury, past all of the other belongings that people have handed over. They are shown the detritus of lost lives and they are shown their own belongings being thrown onto the pile. This entire walk is observed by Devents through hidden cameras and as yet he has never allowed anyone to be in the same room as he watches these recordings.

The contents of the Treasury are inventoried and items are regularly sold or bartered, but the stock is never allowed to fall too low. Anyone who actually managed to break in would be lost without the inventory list and several hours searching could yield anything from a dingin to a dogskin jacket. Or they might find nothing while the twisted ruler of this place looks on and decides what to do with them.

## highlighted personality

### hergaul devents

**Age:** 45

**Height/Build:** Tall/Thin

**Eyes/Hair:** Watery Blue/Straw Blonde

**Occupation:** Drug Dealer

**Affiliations:** None

When he started out Hergaul Devents, or "Master of Nothing" as he has begun to refer to himself, had the know-how to make Scrape and a couple of guys he knew would do pretty much whatever he wanted for a suitable sum of money.

Now Devents has several Scrape manufacturing plants, a well-paid group of workers and a whole rabble of addicts. His initial plans were to grow his operation and to make money, but that all changed when his first 'subject' turned up on his doorstep. The idea of someone handing over their life appealed to him so he agreed to the proposition and let the man stay. As he watched the life drain out of his victim, as he watched the compulsive scratching and considered all the ways this man could possibly die he realised that he enjoyed it, that he was taking great pleasure in all the possibilities offered up and in the fact that he had utter control over this human life and all its emotions. This was more than fun, this was power.

Handily for Devents it also ended up being quite profitable. Some of the lost souls who turned up at his doorway had enough to balance what they would use in Scrape and then some, plus there were those who barely lasted long enough to have any impact at all on his supply. Above all of this the drug lord stopped spending any money on whores or less addictive drugs for himself, he gained all his pleasure from the suffering of those who were dying under his roof and those who realised what they had condemned themselves to but were unable to do anything about it.

So, for now, it's business as usual. The blonde, thin and oily drug baron sits in his control room, observing the dying around him while he checks up on his pushers and recruiters out in the City. He feels safe down at Nothing Gate, content that he can defend himself against the other gangs and dealers and happy that no Macrocorp or other group will bother to chase down those he has enslaved. He feels sure his life will be long and profitable, but he would be so much happier if that young blonde woman would only scratch just that little bit harder.





# Rookery

**Region:** Lat 4, Ring 5

**Status:** Macrocorp housing area

**Law:** Low, occasionally harsh

**Wealth:** Moderate-low

## Overview

Chimes tinkled in the breeze. Through cracks in the corridor, light shone from the polished metal of the fetishes and charms. The small group of men were ill at ease, and it showed. Towering above them was an immensely tall woman, spindly and frail, like an elongated version of a normal person. The chimes swayed and the fetishes revolved in the breath of wind. The men stamped their feet and blew on their hands, colourless digits poking out from worn fingerless gloves. The tall woman scribbled furiously on a scrap of paper, absorbed in her own musings. The wind died and the chimes fell silent. High above, the thud of wind dynamos, below, the creaking and clanging of pipes. Another group stepped in to the corridor.

The group that ambled up the corridor with practised insouciance were oh-so-typical of the sneering, smug types that made up the gangs around here. Their baggy breeches and hobnailed boots contrasted starkly with the garish, artificially bright three-quarter length coats that they all sported. Beneath those coats were slung an array of machetes, hangers, daggers and goloks. They took their sweet time wandering up the corridor, their broken brown teeth glistening wetly beneath false smiles.

"Mr Broadbarn, this is 'Mr' Pitt. 'Mr' Pitt, this is Mr Broadbarn." Ironstead stood between the two men, a man and a boy, if truth were known, as they cautiously touched hands. Pitt slouched with exaggerated cool. Broadbarn merely stood erect in his fine coat.

"Pitt, I believe that some property of Mr Broadbarn's has come into your possession. Mr Broadbarn understands that you were not aware of its provenance when you obtained it and is therefore willing to make a very generous offer for its return."

"Eh?"

"Right, he knows that you didn't know it was his and he wants to make it worth your while to get it back."

"Ah!" The broken toothed leer was back "Yer carry a piece, do ya, Broadbarn?"

"Yes, I do. And it's Mr Broadbarn to you, boy."

"Now gentlemen, let's not get tense, lets be mature about this." Ironstead swiftly cut in lest a trading of insults quickly become a deadly exchange.

It had gone as well as could be expected. Broadbarn had got his property back, Pitt had received a handsome payoff. The fact that Broadbarn now knew Pitt's face didn't bode well for the future. He was the type never to forget being crossed. One of these days, maybe years from now, Pitt would end up at the bottom of a canal, missing a finger. Still, that was not the concern. The job had been done and payment received. Another line added to the map.



Standing in the shadow of Konkret, home to many who labour and sweat for Trilhoeven, the artificial canyons of Rookery teem with tumbling razorgangs, shuffling deathdealers, coquettish prozies and striding Grauschjager. Founded on a few blocks of drab concrete housing, Rookery has grown up and out as families expanded and Trilhoeven took on more and more people. Now, the additional stories teeter and tower above the dark streets, while the residents flick from side to side on ziplines, bo'suns chairs and bodged cablecars. From the bottom of the street, you look up to see thousands of windows, entrances, staircases, ladders, ropes and bridges. People come and go constantly, the noise is incredible. Even the capillary canals of Rookery have been built over, becoming covered sewers which empty into the wider ring canals.

Streetgangs, razorgangs, turfgangs, chasegangs; all are endemic in Rookery. From the top-hatted swaggering Micklemen to the silent coldness of the Toy, from the thuggish brutality of Ticks Alley Fleeto to the simpering foppishness of the dandified Garhuelen Mob, gangs are anywhere and everywhere. It seems to be the main pre-occupation of the youth of Rookery to join or start a gang, if only for some form of protection and sense of belonging. Rickety streets high in the air echo and boom with the sound of sparklocks and cartridge guns, the swish of knives and swords, the dull thud of clubs and coshes.





The gangs of Rookery seem to have a certain predilection for sparklock pepperboxes, seemingly valuing them above all other weapons. In the Rookery arms race, it's not how hitech your weapon is, but how many barrels it has and how many balls you can spit in the shortest space of time.

For those in Rookery with a job (a legal one, that is), Trilhoeven is the teat from which they suckle. The mighty macrocorp and its looming bastion close by are the source of all that is good and life giving. The manufacturing facilities which burrow beneath Konkret or occupy yards and streets surrounding the massive edifice are serviced by the poor souls of Rookery, trudging down hundreds of stairs, sliding down greasy poles or taking unreliable ziplines to join the throngs heading to work at each shift change.

Rookery is, quite literally, a maze. The additions that have accumulated over the decades are so numerous and random that a stranger would be lost within seconds of arriving. Even the original rooms in the old concrete blocks have been sub-divided, altered and changed beyond all recognition. In the winding, narrow streets in the sky, the air sounds to the tinkle of chimes and fetishes hung to keep away The Shifted. Some consider it bad luck to touch the ground, travelling to work on lines and cablecars, never letting their feet reach ground level. Others pray in chapels of the Third Church hidden in the turn of a corridor, or mutter darkly in the box-like space under

a set of stairs. Some peculiar beliefs have grown up in Rookery, particularly surrounding Trilhoeven and its sinister servants, the Grauschjager. Some groups want to smash Trilhoeven into the ground, to bomb and blast the macrocorp into pieces. Others treat the grey Grauschjager with a quiet awe, believing them to be holy avatars of a god-like power.

## Security/military presence

Trilhoeven really should be the prime force in Rookery, but to be frank, they simply don't care. Only when something directly threatens their interests do they intervene. Rabble rousing trades-unionists, free-thinking radicals and anti-macrocorp preachers are their biggest concern, whipping crowds in to a frenzy and encouraging them to march on Konkret with placards and righteous anger. Such matters are generally dealt with by dispatching a pair of Grauschjager to 'deal' with the situation. The Grauschjager are perhaps the only group that the people of Rookery, even the gangs, genuinely fear. The people know that the Grauschjager are totally lacking in anything approaching compassion, mercy or kindness. They carry out orders to the absolute letter, without so much as questioning the slightest detail of the mission they have to carry out. The people of Rookery fear the coming of the men and women in their peaked caps and enveloping grey coats. Nothing good ever accompanies their visits.



## highlighted location

### Swish Alley

**Description:** Street of bladesmiths

Swish Alley is alive with noise, the gentle tinkling of metal upon metal, the tapping of hammers and screeching of grinders. Hundreds of feet above the ground, wreathed in smoke and sparks, Swish Alley supplies the gangs of Rookery with the tools of their trade. Here, artisans craft fine iron blades, crude knives and evil weapons of more sinister intent. Swish Alley itself is a long, canted, slanting, wide corridor running for 150 metres through the upper levels of Rookery. Sometimes you need to take to steps or ladders to carry on your journey, sometimes there are abrupt twists, but always you are accompanied by the noise of metal on metal.

The corridor is lined with the workshops and booths or hammermen, bladesmiths and ironworkers of all kinds. Hanging displays of blades jangle in the constant harsh wind that rushes down Swish Alley to burst from the gaping hole at the southern end in a cloud of dust and metal filings. This gap, never patched or boarded, looks out on to the sinister arc of Konkret, a constant reminder of the power and might of the macrocorp.

mapmaker are vital if you wish to have any dealings in Rookery, and they don't come any finer than this strangely quixotic young lady.

Born and bred in Rookery, her ancestry is something of a mystery. While she has been here or hereabouts for her entire life, nobody can remember her parents or, indeed, any of her relatives. Immensely tall (at 6' 5", she easily towers over most people in Rookery) and frail, almost spindly looking, she slouches and hunches to reduce her prodigious height, only straightening up when engaged in serious business. Her contacts inside and outside of Rookery are formidable. She has dealt with the 3rd Syndicate, the Hohler Gang, Daylight, Trilhoeven, the Fulgurators, almost any major power group you care to mention. Her internal connections allow her to smoothly set up deals, her reputation for discretion and never double-crossing ensure that she can always get the people her client wants. Nobody attempts to double-cross Triona Ironstead; she has an intuition that scares many hardened criminals, a nose for a dodgy deal or impending backstabbing. From her windy, bare rooms high in Rookery, she is Queen of the mapmakers, an indispensable asset and vital figure.

## highlighted personality

### Triona Ironstead

**Age:** 37

**Height/Build:** 6' 5"/Spindly

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blue/Jet black

**Occupation:** Mapmaker

**Affiliations:** No strict affiliations, but many contacts

Navigating the complexity of the Rookery underworld is a difficult proposition for anyone. Even the most experienced gangers and crooks from outside would be hard pressed to make any contacts or connections within Rookery. That's where people like Triona Ironstead come in. She is a mapmaker, a go between, an interface between the criminal culture of Rookery and the criminal culture of The City at large. Smooth, urbane, diplomatic and well versed in dealing with twitchy, trigger-happy conmen, cutpurses and crooks, Ironstead negotiates deals, sets up meetings and arbitrates in disputes. The services of a

## Skank Hill

**Region:** Lat 5, Ring 3

**Status:** Independent burgh

**Law:** High, but unobtrusive

**Wealth:** Moderate-low

## Overview

*He lives alone, the Squire. Lives alone in his old house at the top of Skank Hill. He has servants, but no wealth. He has knowledge, but no wisdom. He has influence, but no power. Surrounded by the decaying tenements of Skank Hill, the rickety house of the Squire raises two fingers to The City and laughs in the face of convention.*

*The servants of the Squire go about their business clad in dusty russet and red rags, moving out from the house on their nocturnal errands and unlawful occasions. The locals mock them, but fear them. Taunt them, but quail from them. Loathe them, but love them. The Squire and*



*his servants are what keeps bad things out of Skank Hill, keep the rambunctious razorgangs in check and the petty peddlers impoverished and obsequious.*

*Nobody ever meets the Squire. The Squire stays in his house at the top of Skank Hill and never leaves. Oh, some may say that they once had an audience with the Squire, that they passed a few casual words with this august but ethereal personage. The are all liars, braggarts and buffoons, seeking to swell their own sense of self importance. Nobody meets the Squire. On the darkest of nights, though, a passer-by might chance to look up at the highest windows of his house and see a figure outlined in flickering gaslight. But the tattered curtains are always drawn back with unseemly haste, leaving only an after image of a man, but not a man.*

*Children throw pebbles at the windows of the Squire's house. They only do it once. Legend tells of a brazen local gang who broke into the house, determined to challenge the Squire for control of Skank Hill. Some say they can be seen to this day, wandering the streets, glassy eyed, eating scraps left by dogs, rooting in rubbish like animals, spitting and wailing when accosted by fellow men.*

*The Squire of Skank Hill is known by all and none.*

*The Squire of Skank Hill is legend and reality.*

*The Squire of Skank Hill is love and hate.*

*But only the Squire knows what he truly is.*



Rising gently above the Serpentine Canal, its gabled roofs poking above the mire of The City, is Skank Hill. All roads in the burgh, they say, lead to the Squire's house. For the Squire of Skank Hill is the dominating presence in this shivering little place. The streets drag themselves forlornly up the hill towards the old house where the Squire dwells. The tenements of Skank Hill have a crushed, broken look about them, their curiously peaked roofs sag as if on the point of breaking. But they do not break. Outsiders say there is a spell cast over Skank Hill, a strange power which preserves the burgh in this singular state of decay. The gossips and fishwives may have a point.

The casual wanderer would at first notice the pervasive sense of quiet gloom which wreaths the meandering lanes. Even the children who chase balls down the sloping streets and alleys are unusually muted in their play, their squeals and yelps no more than whispers. Raised voices are rare in these parts. Friends who meet converse in hushed tones and exaggerated gestures. Always they glance up the hill at the looming house of the Squire.

Many legends surround the Squire and his house at the top of the hill. Popular belief holds that the Squire is not human at all, but a Shifted being possessed of unusual perspicacity and understanding of men. Others would have it that the Squire is a mad automaton which believes its is a man. Further tales would have you believe that the Squire does not really exist, that he is merely the invention of a shadowy cabal made up of those who masquerade as his servants. Whatever the truth might be, those who claim to have encountered the Squire are universally derided as liars and braggarts. Many, however, can claim to have met his servants. Always clad in ragged cloaks and trows of faded red and spotted russet, they wear masks of boiled dogskin, with tiny slits for eyes and thin beaks for noses. The servants speak in whispers, but carry the authority of the Squire. They ensure that criminals keep out of the burgh.

Tales abound of attempts by criminal elements to establish themselves in Skank Hill. Gangs from neighbouring burghs have oft tried to sell their illicit wares on the streets, prise money from the residents or flex their muscles in new territories. They have all met with singular failure. More often than not, a few criminals are found wandering the streets, drooling and soiling themselves. Others have met more horrific fates.

A popular story is told of a dandified representative of the 3rd Syndicate, a top-hatted young man with a monocle and red bow tie. He was seen in the burgh, strolling around as if he was lord and master of the streets, announcing to the residents that they would soon have to pay 'tax' to the syndicate if they wished to continue their quiet lives. He was found early one morning in a dank alley, naked, wide eyed and screaming. It was said that he screamed for three days, his throat raw and bleeding, his fingers broken by the clenching of his fists. Then he died. Died of screaming. The 3rd Syndicate never returned.





## security/military presence

Skank Hill lacks what could be seen as any kind of formal policing. There is only the Squire and his servants. Nobody is entirely sure how many servants there are, as they are never seen in groups of more than three. Suffice to say, their presence abroad on the streets is seldom a reason for cheer. Their whispered instructions are often cryptic, occasionally explicit. They allow the people to go about their lawful occasions with a degree of freedom. Only when something occurs of which the Squire may disapprove, do they appear from the Squire's house on their missions to educate and inform.

## highlighted location

### the curiosity shop

**Description:** Second-hand shop

Tucked away in a crooked lane, hidden by the leaning buildings, its windows obscured by dirt and crushed bleeders lies the Curiosity Shop. A narrow place of dark corners and dusty shelves. The wind whistles through the ill-fitting door and swirls through the shop, creating vortices in the dust mounds. Many visitors would see the place as a repository for junk: broken dingies, rusted pans, short lengths of twine, patched clothes, ruined furniture, cracked glasses and blunt cutlery. Boxes and cases of items lie everywhere, with neither rhyme nor reason to their contents and arrangement. Only one person seems to know the contents of the shop, its proprietor Corinna Bantaskine.

Yet, it would seem that people are sometimes drawn to the shop, whether by accident or design. If they find themselves in need of a certain item, a particular object, the Curiosity Shop draws them in. Corinna can always, with a certain element of persuasion, dip her hand into a box, reach onto a shelf, rummage around in a case and come up with the exact item required. Some profess mystical awe at her abilities, other simply see her as a crazy woman surrounded by decay. And, on very rare occasions, when the nights are at their darkest, the servants of the Squire can sometimes be seen entering the shop, for purposes as yet unknown.

## highlighted personality

### corinna bantaskine

**Age:** Unknown, old?

**Height/Build:** 5' 2"/Unknown

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Reassuring green/Grey

**Occupation:** Shopkeeper

**Affiliations:** The Squire?

Swaddled in voluminous shawls, capes, skirts, blouses and hats, Corinna Bantaskine could either be very, very fat or very, very thin. Nobody is entirely sure. Her raggedy hands are clad in faded velvet gloves and strips of cloth, her feet invisible under her voluminous skirts. She is one of those fixtures of life in Skank Hill, like the Squire, a part of life which seems to continue regardless.

Corinna's voice is high and scratchy, cracked and broken like so many of the items in her shop. Her skin is as dusty as her shelves and were she to cease moving about her shop, she could easily be mistaken for a mannequin swathed in layers of old clothes. Nevertheless, she is a kindly soul and will to offer customers and browsers a warming mug of tea, should the weather prove to be inclement. Unlike many in Skank Hill, she seems to be without the cowed quietude which characterises those who live in the shadow of the Squire. She laughs and cackles and cocks a snook at the grim house at the top of the hill. She seemingly knows no fear and fears no man.

All in all, Bantaskine is just as much of an enigma to the people of Skank Hill as the Squire. While the Squire is feared and loathed, Corinna Bantaskine is feared and loved. Many avow that she is in league with the Squire, that she is protected by him, that (and only whisper this) she is the consort of the Squire. Suffice to say, Corinna says nothing on these matters, enquiries charmingly deflected with the scratchy laugh and a mug of tea.



# Sleeping vale

**Region:** Lat 6, Ring 2

**Status:** Independent burgh

**Law:** Moderate high

**Wealth:** Moderate

## OVERVIEW

Three times the bar owner had asked the revellers to leave; three times they had declined his strongly worded offer. Well-heeled 'Valers stared into their drinks and pretended not to notice the impending fracas. Sleeping Vale was regularly subject to invasion by these rough, undesirable elements from across the canal.

The unwanted patrons sat together with a glum sense of resolution. They had been quiet, unassuming, three men and two women, clad in what observers would judge to be their best clothes. The men looked tense and unhappy, the women simply scared.

"So, a fine birthday this turns out to be eh?" said one of the women, shooting a terse glare at the men. The gloom around them deepened.

"I'm right sorry, Annie. I though it'd be nice like. You know, get done up and come for a drink. Y'know, somewhere that ain't full of cutpurses and blaggards. A bit different." The speaker, one of the men, looked the most downcast of all, potentially close to tears.

"Well, yev made a fine mess of this time. These folks look like they want to give us a right old doing!"

At this, the door opened and two stolid looking men in rain capes and domed helmets ambled into the bar. A palpable sigh of relief rose from the assembled drinkers, although not from the unwanted group. The two men walked straight to their table, shaking their capes and wiping their sodden brows.

"Right you lot, out. We don't want your kind here, you know that. Just get."

"I'm sorry sir, but we ain't causing any trouble. It's my good lady's birthday you see, we just wanted to come somewhere nice for a drink and perhaps a bite of something good to eat..."

"I said: out. And I mean it!"

In the streaming rain outside the bar, five figures looked downcast as the two lawmen scribbled notes in the books.

"Look, I know you aren't here for trouble, just these folks can be sensitive. You know how it goes. Tell you what, there's a place on the Stockbridge Canal, nice little place, does some lovely fish, you take your wife there for dinner, nobody causes trouble there. And if they ask, just say Officer Weylander sent you, right?"

"Why, thank you Officer, you're a right gent if I may say so, a right gent!"

"Well, be off with you! And don't tell anyone else about this, I don't want Sleepin' Vale to be getting a reputation as a soft touch!"



Sleeping Vale sits fearful in the midst of teeming hordes of the proletariat. Comfortably lower middle class, secure in its smug, insular ways, it finds itself increasingly pressured by the cloth-capped vulgarians who stroll into the burgh with their pitiful pockets of pennies. Attracted by the relative abundance of better than average shops, pubs and entertainment, throngs from Hangside, Burningfell and other areas lower down the perceived social scale descend onto the 'Vale after the factories close, when their gates and machines fall silent.

The burgh has a high proportion of shops and leisure facilities per head of population when compared with the surrounding, poorer areas. It is this concentration of amenities, which indirectly causes the residents most concerns. Neighbouring areas are poor in terms of the leisure facilities they offer to the citizenry.



The burgh is the very typification of fading, struggling lower middle class values. Most of the residents are small-scale businesspeople, educated workers such as clerks and scriveners or skilled craftsmen and tradesmen. They do not have the wealth or influence of the residents of areas such as Clearwater Break or even Coldbath Fell, but they lead modest, comfortable lives. Yet, they know that their existence is threatened by the hordes that surround them.

Sleeping Vale is of interest in that it sits in a slight natural depression in the topography of The City. Most of the canals run on aqueducts, troughs or pipes, crossing streets that are more like canyons than thoroughfares. Buildings are uniformly high and narrow with alarmingly steep pitched roofs, often having many more storeys than appearances would suggest. 'Street level' is at the level of the rest of the surrounding city, the levels at which the canals run. However, the vast majority of the burgh sits below this, so peeking over a bridge would let you look down four or more stories to a darkened street far below. The complex, three-dimensional topography of the area can be confusing to visitors and deadly in the event of fire or flood.

Winding staircases and steeply zigzagging flights of worn stone steps are common in these parts, reaching up through shafts connecting streets, canals, alleys and boulevards, or clinging to the outside of the narrow buildings. Drainpipes festoon the skins of the buildings, although with different function from normal. In the depths of the streets, antiquated pumps chugs noisily away, sending water up the pipes to be emptied into the canals. This helps to prevent the lower levels becoming flooded with water seeping up from below and dripping down from above. When it rains (and it often does), the pumps are strained to full capacity. Many times the residents of the burgh have been forced to form human bucket chains to prevent certain alleys and streets becoming totally flooded.

## Security/military presence

Given the alleged depredations of the 'undesirables', who look to Sleeping Vale for their leisure pursuits, the burgh has a higher than average number of law enforcement officials.

Under the aegis of the Steering Committee (the main ruling body in the burgh), the Judicial Enforcement Officers patrol, detect and apprehend.

Their garb is considered humorous by some, consisting of tight breeches, a fitted jacket, slick rain cape and domed helmet. However, this has been the uniform of the Officers since time immemorial (or at least, as far back as anyone can remember) and is worn with pride by those who serve behind the badge.

They are, on the whole, quite a fair and even-handed police organisation, pragmatic about the needs and wants of the citizenry and less than inclined to use physical violence. Many officers come from outwith the burgh, but even those who have been born and bred in Sleeping Vale realise that the hard-bitten resentment towards outsiders is not an entirely healthy thing. On the whole, they would rather persuade people to leave by having a quiet word than coshing them and dragging them off to the cells.

## highlighted location

### the stack

**Description:** Restaurant

A popular and respected eating establishment, The Stack boasts some rather unusual physical features that set it apart from other restaurants. Built in to an old six storey main water transfer pipe running from one of the lowest parts of the burgh up to the main canal levels, each group of diners get their own room, a narrow little space serviced by a single waiter.

Given that the kitchens are on the lowermost storey, carrying food up the narrow, winding stairs would ordinarily be something of a problem. Hence a complex series of dumb waiters carry prepared food up the shaft to the assigned dining rooms where the dishes can be served by the waiter.

Although the food it is not exceptional, the service is of a high quality and the portions generous as the restaurant



can only accommodate a maximum of six parties at any one time, it never gets extraordinarily busy. Each room can hold ten people, sometimes a single party, sometimes two or three smaller groups.

## highlighted personality

**tam fourhill**

**Age:** 55

**Height/Build:** 5' 8"/Paunchy

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Brown/Grey

**Occupation:** Member of the steering committee

**Affiliations:** Sleeping Vale Steering Committee

Member of the Steering Committee, solid local businessman and pillar of the community, Tam Fourhill comes from the same lower middle class background as the majority of 'Valers; reliable, hard working and fundamentally boring. His main business is a canal haulage company which brings manufactured goods into the burgh, servicing the various small concerns which form a major part of the economy.

Nobody could ever accuse Fourhill of being an imaginative or creative man. Indeed, it would be hard to accuse him of being intelligent and insightful. However, he has made a name for himself as a voluble proponent of insularity and isolationism. His political platform is one of increased restrictions on people coming into the burgh and harsher law enforcement against those who choose to enter from places such as Hangside and Burningsfell. Needless to say, his stance is both populist and popular.

The ward which he represents has returned him for the past two decades with an overwhelming majority, his manifesto finding fertile ground amongst his constituents. Some of the more moderate elements in the burgh view him as a loudmouthed bandwagoner, the kind of man who only serves to increase the resentment building up against Sleeping Vale. Yet despite this, he continues to be a popular and influential figure, a strident voice agitating for oppression.

## Sullen cut

**Region:** Lat 2, Ring 5

**Status:** Independent burgh

**Law:** Moderate

**Wealth:** Moderate

## overview

*"I hate the Fortuna. My hate for it knows no limit. A boiling, swaggering, foetid, angry, miserable, drunken place full of vainglorious fools. Sullen Cut as a whole is like that. The people live in a permanent shadow, physical and spiritual. Their self-pity revolts and disgusts me.*

*Allegedly, I would find what I was looking for here. According to the dullards and morons who grunted their monosyllabic instructions. I clawed my way out of this place and despise the thought of coming back here. Coming back makes me feel like I'm drowning in filth.*

*The slap of cards being smacked down onto a rickety table. Hawkers yell and snort, thrust their wares under your nose, trying to tempt you with rancid sweetmeats and gritty candies. Whores, tarts and trollops of both sexes display flesh, squeeze buttocks, rub crotches and shout imprecations to the bustling crowds.*

*The bark of a sparklock is greeted with little more than a glance by the assembled masses, so interested are they in their own pleasures. Workers still covered in the filth of the mines paw and slaver over the human wares. Fondling, caresses, striking illicit deals with their chosen partners. The sounds of fornication mix in with the yells and cries.*

*Nobody recognises me. I was only a boy when I fought my way out of this place, finally raising my head above the mire and gloom. There's only one reason to come back, to shoulder through the squalor and degradation. A broken old prostitute, lined and worn, dragged down by years of abuse. She sags and slips, full of bile and vitriol. A repugnant sight, stomach turning and hateful. I catch her eye and try not to flinch..*

*Mother."*





Smog shrouded and depressed. Bowed down by the weight of its own self-pity. Sullen Cut lives up to its name in more ways than one. Permanently shrouded in thick smog that no wind disperses the burgh skulks away from the light, hiding at the bottom of its hole.

The community of Sullen Cut has sprung up in a deep gash gouged in the surface of The City. Many claim the gash dates from The Bombardment, others claim a natural disaster created it many years after that tragic event.

canals that had been left shattered and unusable for centuries. At great expense, they built three aqueducts over Sullen Cut (much to the consternation of the citizens of the time).

Now, the aqueducts have become as much of a feature as the gash itself, with dwellings creeping up their support legs, ziplines stretch from their arches and pipes snaking up to the canals themselves.



Suffice to say, its origins are obscure at best. Measuring a little over a mile and a half long and just over half a mile wide, the gash is permanently shrouded in a haze of brown smog which permeates all levels of the depression. Flooding is a constant problem in Sullen Cut, as it lies below the general level of the canals. The bottom of the 'Cut can often fill right up with water, necessitating the constant use of ramshackle pumps and windmills to drain the water out into the canals above.

Rickety buildings fill the 'Cut, obscuring its outlines and giving little hint as to its true nature. From the canal bridges which run over it, the burgh looks like a sea of roofs gradually sloping down to a central point. The bridges themselves are not exactly of the finest quality construction. These wavering aqueducts were built during the time of the Water Trade Federation, to re-connect capillary

Despite its pitiable state, Sullen Cut is, in fact, a hive of industry. Due to the fact that it hacks down through old layers of The City, it has become home to many miners and artefact hunters seeking to pillage and loot. Old tunnels and passageways leading off from the side of the 'Cut are explored and mined, with the bands of pillagers delving further and deeper under The City each day. Occasionally, they come across something worthwhile and valuable, most of the time they simply come up with rubbish or a few odds and ends they can sell as curios. Still, it keeps many citizens of Sullen Cut in a job, spending their days and night in the semi-darkness of ancient rooms and cellars, hoping for that one big strike that will make them rich.



## Security/Military Presence

As the economic prosperity (or lack thereof) revolves around the mining activities (or archaeological pillage as some would refer to it), law is fairly heavily enforced when it comes to protecting claims, mine workings and the miners themselves. To this end, law enforcement in the 'Cut is handled by the Sullen Cut Union of Mineworkers (who are known for having no sense of humour when it comes to remarks about the acronym for the name of the union), a trade union which has expanded over the decades to become a local council, police agency, welfare group and union all rolled into one. SCUM maintains a fair, but somewhat heavy-handed presence on the streets and canals. This having been said, non-union miners are treated fairly harshly and have little in the way of legal rights or protection under the law. The local police are all ex-miners who have received the job as a form of sinecure because of particular connections or due to the fact that they can no longer work the mines. Equipment is variable, but most carry a sparklock pistol, carbine or blunderbuss and all carry a baton or club of some sort, normally a pickaxe handle. While not overly brutal, the SCUM patrols are very one-sided in their attitude. Non-union activities are viewed with disdain, although 'furriners' are made welcome in Sullen Cut.

## Highlighted Location

### the fortuna

**Description:** Den of iniquity

When galleries, cellars and tunnels have been dredged of the last useful items, they are either closed off, given over to storing mine tailings or, occasionally, people move in and live in the ruins of buildings from times past. One of the most extensive examples of this is The Fortuna, an intertwining series of tunnels, rooms, vaults and galleries containing a staggering assortment of narcotic and sexual delights. Tolerated by the union and patronised by the locals, The Fortuna caters to every taste: private booths line the narrow galleries, rooms are given over to live shows and cabarets, private suites can be rented by the hour for intimate liaisons. The entire place is a warren, made worse by the omnipresent light, heat and smoke. Some miners wander in to The Fortuna after a particularly lucky strike, only to emerge days later bereft of their wealth and lacking any memory of what they actually spent their money on.

No one organisation actually exercises control over The Fortuna, it is a seething morass of private enterprise and individual initiative. Some pimps stake out particular areas, dollymops and rent boys will build their own little booths in a corner somewhere, deeper galleries will be utilised by enthusiastic individuals to build new private rooms and cabaret facilities. It is rampant free enterprise gone mad. Everyone is selling someone or something.

## Highlighted Personality

### desirae gormsland

**Age:** 30

**Height/Build:** 5' 5"/Average

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Brown/Red

**Occupation:** Prostitute with a plan

**Affiliations:** Even she doesn't know

Desirae wandered into the Fortuna some years ago on a mission of no importance and never came out. Duped into a game of chance, she found herself unwittingly and heavily in debt. Faced with the choice of a straight razor or earning her way out, she chose to keep her throat intact and accept the brutal horrors of life as a prostitute in the galleries. Few would willingly change places with her, suffering under the rough hands of hard-bitten miners in exchange for a few coins.

She now remembers little of her former life. She even finds it hard to recall how long she has worked the Fortuna. So many times has her debt been sold on, she finds it hard to keep track of exactly whom she owes money to or, indeed, if she still even owes money. But Desirae has a plan. Through the drunken mumblings of miners, she has been piecing together tales of Carson Alley, supposedly a treasure trove of loot hidden somewhere under Sullen Cut. Most dismiss this as conjecture and folk rumour, but Desirae knows better. She has kept a diary, cross referencing stories, rumours and snippets of conversation. Now she believes she has found the location of Carson Alley. If her dreams come true, Desirae Gormsland might soon be able to buy the entire Fortuna and fulfil her fantasy: to shut the place down.



## health & disease

By any reasonable standard, the general health of The City's population is appalling. Poor diet, awful sanitary conditions, lack of medical care and a simmering undercurrent of violence all contribute to the state of the vast majority.

For those who live in lower class areas such as Mire End, Folly Hills and Fogwarren, medical care is practically non-existent. For many people, the only medical care they have to call on is provided by the various streethealers, charlatans and occasional altruistic professional who has chosen to aid those who cannot aid themselves.

Streethealers are a mixed bunch, ranging from self-taught herbalists and apothecaries to religiously inspired faith healers and the entire gamut in between. Although they may move about The City on a whim, streethealers tend to attach themselves to an area for a reasonable period of time, often finding themselves becoming valued and respected members of the community. On the other hand, some are feared and whispered about in smoky pubs, inciting gossip about dark practices and mysterious deeds. None are entirely alike; all have their own little quirks, foibles and ways of going about their business. Some charge for their services whilst other act in what seems like a purely altruistic fashion, relying on the generosity of the community for their survival.

On occasion a burgh will be lucky enough to find itself home to one or more trained medical professionals; a doctor or apothecary. Even though there are many who fake credentials and practise medicine without any formal training or any qualifications, there is a large body of men and women who have undergone rigorous training and testing in order to gain entry into their chosen profession. Scattered about The City, there a number of respected (and not so respected) medical schools running courses in general practice, surgery, mad-doctoring, herbalism, pharmacy and so on. The best of these schools are the almost exclusive domain of the wealthy or well-connected, charging substantial fees for the years of training it requires to gain proper qualifications.

If an impoverished burgh does manage to attract a genuine doctor, then they will always find themselves overworked and in constant demand. Stress and pressure go hand in hand with the medical profession in The City.

The life of a burgh doctor is not one that is gilded with extravagance or wealth. They make do with the supplies and premises they can afford. They will, in the main, make use of balms, pills, potions and ointments made from herbs and other plants. Some of these may be placebos or simple palliatives, but many have a long history of efficacious use and have found their way into common medical textbooks.

For the wealthier members of society, access to quality medical care is much less of a difficult proposition. It is one of the extreme ironies of life in The City that those who have a lesser need of medical care are those who can access it most easily.



For those at the very pinnacle of society, the extremely wealthy or those in the upper echelons of macrocorporate life, there is practically no treatment that is unavailable. They have access to services that the common man on the streets of Sullen Cut could never even dream about. They are immunised at birth against common and rare diseases, undergo regular check ups and are whisked to private medical facilities at the first sign of any illness.

The extreme variance in the quality of care can result in the wealthy and privileged seeming almost superhuman in the eyes of those below them on the social scale. Wracked with diseases, plagued by the pangs of hunger and old before their time, the impoverished masses can only look upon the upper classes with awe, envy and hatred.

## common diseases

### The Bag Rot

A feared and disgusting disease, rumours of Bag Rot spreading through a burgh can lead to panic, mass exodus and civil disruption. In all but a handful of cases it is fatal to those who contract it, turning an ordinary person into a twitching, bloated mass within the period of a few days. In the early stages it results in uncontrollable coughing and spasms but as the disease progresses, it begins to liquefy the internal organs, causing vomiting, bleeding and, eventually, a painful death.

No physician in The City has yet isolated a cure for Bag Rot and epidemics still break out in many poorer areas. The vector for the disease is thought to be bodily fluids, passed on as a result of poor sanitation and bad hygiene. When an outbreak occurs, all manner of charlatans will appear on the scene, offering potions, protective masks, disinfectants and numerous other ineffectual preventative measures.

### Jail Fever

Dreaded by inmates and staff alike, Jail Fever gains its innocuous name from those places where it is most common. Even though it is known to occur outwith the confines of prisons and madhouses, it is a condition indelibly linked with places of incarceration. At first the symptoms are mild; chills, sweating and occasional shaking. As the disease begins to take hold, the victim finds it difficult to digest food, involuntary bowel movements are common and vision becomes distorted and blurry. Even though it is only fatal in less than 40% of cases under normal circumstances, the hellish conditions in many prisons mean that fatalities can exceed this figure by a substantial margin.

### Mudlark's Rash

An itching, burning inflammation of the skin, Mudlark's rash is (unsurprisingly) quite common amongst mudlarks and others who work in close contact with the water of the canals. Doctors theorise that it is simply an allergic reaction to pollutants in the water. There are various balms and potions which are said to treat this annoying but not particularly worrying condition. Whether or not these balms have any affect really depends on who makes them. So are simply a mishmash of herbs and oils with no really curative properties, whilst other have been tested and refined over the generations to provide some palliative effect.





### Stenhouse Cringe

A nervous affliction that causes uncontrollable twitching and outbursts from the victim, Stenhouse Cringe is named for the noted apothecary Farrish Stenhouse who first identified it as a disease many years ago. Stenhouse Cringe is known to be viral in origin, although the transmission vector can vary from case to case. It seems to be a very adaptable condition, leaping from victim to victim with alacrity. The virus is not in itself fatal, but it can cause lasting damage to the nervous system of the victim, leaving them with involuntary twitches and prone to spasms of a disturbing kind.

### Water Ague

A disease known for its high fevers and the rambling incoherence of patients, Water Ague is endemic amongst those who have no choice but to drink the waters of the canals. It seems to exist in almost every part of The City, with appropriately debilitating effects for huge swathes of population. Although children, the elderly and the very frail can succumb to Water Ague, it is rarely a killing disease, more of a painful and disturbing inconvenience. Most recover after a few days of hallucinations and intolerable fever.





Industrial areas







## The bone factories

**Region:** Lat 8, Ring 8

**Status:** Animal waste processing site

**Law:** Moderate

**Wealth:** Low

### OVERVIEW

*'What is that god awful smell?' The girl, gagging, covered her mouth with a handful of cloth and tried to breathe through the fabric in an attempt to cut off the pervading smell of rancid meat that permeated the place. When she turned to her companion she couldn't see his face as he now had placed a gas mask over his mouth, but she could tell by his eyes he was laughing. Irritated, she snatched the gas mask he offered her and secured it in place. He motioned forward with his hand and led her into the building.*

*Actinic light flickered and buzzed. The floor vibrated softly to the thump, thump of the machinery. Other figures in dirty overalls walked back and forth listlessly, some wearing masks like hers, others with strips of leather bound around the mouth and nose. Two huge pistons that worked slowly up and down topped the large round tank in front of her. Her companion stopped in front of the machine and turned to face her. His muffled voice sounded through the mask. 'This crushes the fuck out of everything. We take the pulp and package it as feed. The remains are dried and crushed as meal. Fish food.' She nodded as he talked. They moved on.*

*They moved deeper into the factory. People were loading things into other machines and the noise of turning blades and conveyors increased steadily. The smell intensified, seemingly seeping through the material of the gas mask. She shook her head at the sight of workers going about with bare faces. Tugging the sleeve of her guide she shouted 'How do they live with the stench?' He turned to regard her with bloodshot eyes as they walked. 'Everybody's got to live. They burn out the sense of smell with acid. The company does it. It doesn't cost.' She grimaced; glad the mask hid the motion.*

*They stopped by another tank. A grimy window afforded a view of the contents, a thick grey sludge. Occasionally something white rolled passed the window before disappearing into the murk. Fat bubbles swelled and drifted upwards, popping on the surface silently. 'What this?' She asked. She didn't look at her companion; the motion of the liquid was distracting, mesmerising in a sickening way. She felt her stomach turn slowly in time with the sludge.*

*'Glue. Nearly done by the look of it.'*

*She continued to look at the sludge, watching the white shapes appearing and fading into the murk. She had to ask. 'Where do all the bones come from?'*

*Her companion took his mask off, revealing his cracked face and red, sore lips. She turned to look at him. After a moment he replied 'Dogs. Mainly dogs.'*

*She turned back to watch the glue.*



The Bone Factories are a small group of industrial buildings on the outskirts of Dog Junction. The purpose of the factories is unpleasant but necessary – they process unused and inedible animal remains into foodstuffs and other useful products. Mostly these remains are bones; the people of the City leave very little waste. These are converted into mechanically recovered meat (where the bones are crushed and the resulting pulp of marrow and bone used as a foodstuff) meal (made from the remaining bone powder) and glue (extracted from fish and animal bones). The majority of the bones are dog bones from nearby Dog Junction, but it is well known among the workers that human remains make up a fair proportion of the feedstock, along with the carcasses of vermin and fish. Collection of feedstock falls to the Bone Men, a rather unsavoury group that range far and wide around The City collecting carcasses of any and every sort. Although told by the various companies that run the factories only to collect from 'official' sources, the Collectors are paid by the pound and are willing to deal with anybody. If you need a body disposed of and are keen to leave no trace, the Bone Men are certainly worth considering.





Dark, dank and wreathed in a horrific stench, the Bone Factories are terrible places to work. Many of those that do work within the factories take up the offer of a 'burn job', where the inside of the nose is cauterised with concentrated acid to destroy the sense of smell – it's certainly cheaper than a gas mask. The owners of the factories are a disparate collection of minor power brokers, but as members of I-Lok they command considerable respect amongst the community. For the most part no one knows who owns what in the factories and the owners visit so infrequently (who would?) that they have become near mythical. Foodstuffs created in the Bone Factories are found throughout the City, if you're delicate enough to worry about eating dog or diseased fish, a trip to the Bone factories is not recommended.

## Security/military presence?

The individual companies that run the Bone Factories supply the usual mixture of night watchmen and security men (basically thugs) you would expect to see at any business. However, with the disgusting conditions of the Factories and the fact that no one has a particular desire to steal rotten carcasses, security is minimal and the only thing the guards usually have to do is eject the starving that sometimes gather at the gates. Due to this rather lax approach to security the Bone Factories tend to be rife with criminal activity, usually of the smallest and pettiest type. The gangs (like most other sensible folk) steer clear of the Factories due to the stench.

## highlighted location

### Milligan's storage depot

**Description:** Vermin-ridden storehouse for process foodstuffs.

Milligan rents space in his storehouse out by the day, and all manner of Bone Factory goods can be found here, from foodstuffs to glue and fish meal. Also stored here are the feedstocks for the vats and tanks, i.e. bones, carcasses and other less-pleasant items. Unfortunately, those paying Milligan's rates are generally unconcerned with matters

of hygiene and the place is crawling with vermin, open nearly any packaging and a scurt will struggle from the produce within. Milligan does have a more lucrative sideline – being relatively far from the processing plants and therefore one of the better smelling places in the Bone Factories, most of the unscrupulous activity that permeates the area is channelled through Milligan's doors. All manner of criminal folk can be found here, though usually of the least savoury kind. Milligan prides himself on being able to find someone suitable for any job, and lots of potential candidates lurk in the warehouse waiting for his call.

## highlighted personality

### Milligan 'pig' kemp

**Age:** Unknown, appears in his early forties.

**Height/Build:** Short/Fat

**Eye/Hair colour:** Blue/Bald

**Occupation:** Depot owner and small-time criminal

**Affiliations:** Rumoured 3rd Syndicate connections

Bald, fat and glistening with sweat, Milligan Kemp or 'Pig' as most people call him is a major player in the local criminal scene. Running both his legitimate business and his criminal activities through his warehouse, he comes across as a whining sycophant of the highest order. Beneath this 'eager to please' exterior the Pig has a heart of ice and people who deal with him would do well to bear this in mind. He has no qualms about murder (with a ready disposal site next door) and plenty of young cutthroats eager to do anything to earn his favour. Correspondingly, Pig acts like 'The Man' in his own environment. His one big fear is that he will one day do something that upsets one of the owners, the near-mythical I-Lok members who own the Bone Factories. They have the power to shove him out of his warehouse and therefore out of business and there are plenty on the streets who would like a little piece of the Pig. His external attitude comes from this need to keep the power brokers happy. If you're down on your luck and willing to do anything it takes to earn your bread, Milligan may be the man for you.



# the commune

**Location:** Lat 8, Ring 4

**Status:** RCCR controlled isolated commune

**Law:** High

**Wealth:** High

## OVERVIEW

*Toby watched the final rounds of the Tournament of Promotion with satisfaction. His game was coming up next and he watched his two potential opponents wrestle with strategy and forfeits in this four hour long game of Matak. Old Chris was playing against a young man named John from one of the production lines.*

*Old Chris was using his usual strategies, unable to think outside the box and use new ideas, hoping that threat of physical forfeit would make the young man lose his nerve. Not a bit of it. John held his edge and accepted Chris' forfeit of life for the loser.*

*The to and fro of the game could be seen on the countless dirigibles floating above the communion and a million TVs and screens scattered across the City. Toby smiled as he watched the young man's bold strategy push Chris off the board, into a corner full of pre-placed traps. A simple but effective strategy.*

*Chris was an old friend of the family, and had first taught Toby how to play Matak, but times changed. As he approached the edge of the board to shake the young man's hand, and welcome him to the final game, he nodded almost imperceptibly to the snipers standing above the board.*

*He led the young game player away from the board, talking casually to him about his family and life. The sound of the bullets ripping his childhood mentor apart was barely audible above the cheering from the crowd outside.*

Located on the edge of the TMCA, on the opposite side from the RCCR controlled border, the Commune imposes itself on the area surrounding it with its gigantic stone walls and fences and the ever present hum of the dirigibles that hover above. Measuring approximately 1 1/2 miles by 3 it is a huge structure that has evolved over many generations to become the structure it now is.

Formerly a food and waste processing facility, it was an early attempt at making a self sustaining community, in the hope of escaping the horror of The City by creating an isolated utopia within the chaos. As this idea fell apart due to disorganisation, corruption it was taken over by the Ziegler family, a family already well known within the RCCR for benefiting from the rest of The City's obsession with entertainment and sport.

The Commune was expanded so it could include more living quarters, recycling facilities, factories and power plants. Several hundred workers and intellectuals were offered the chance to escape the horror of the outside world. Ziegler set about establishing 'the Commune' as the manufacturer of game components and sports equipment within The City, as well as having the largest captive workforce ever.

Isolating the people from the outside world, Ziegler provided them with water, self sustaining food processes, clothes and a roof over their head, in return for their loyalty to his company and the products that they made. The situation was idyllic for many a year until some employees grew tired of the same routine day after day and decided to leave. Unrelenting in their desire to leave, and unswayed by Ziegler's propaganda and charm he let them leave the central compound, only to have them gunned down as they left the main gate. Their bodies were strung up as an example to others, and since that day no one has tried to leave. Generations have now lived and died within the Commune walls.

This isolation from the outside world, has led to a society obsessed with gaming and making games to the point where elections for positions of power and responsibility in the factories and leadership of the entire complex are resolved by the playing of games. The games played vary but generally increase in complexity and scope as the position played for becomes more important.



Law is handled rather differently from the outside world as well. Although no one can leave the compound due to the threat of death, disputes within the compound are usually decided over a game. Fighting is rare and it is not uncommon to see two protagonists in a bar challenging each other to a game, rather than a crude, physical match. Within the Commune, intellectual, rather than physical, strength is what is admired.

The City outside pondered for a long time about what was going on inside the Commune: no waste, no people and no news ever come in or out: only goods are allowed to make that journey. However about 100 years ago, the Commune began to broadcast invitations to tournaments, documentaries on life inside the Commune and news on its latest projects, from a vast number of dirigibles, floating above the structure. Two of these tournaments captured the collective imagination: The Tournament of Acceptance, and The Tournament of Promotion.

The former is a series of games designed to show the competitors strength, morally, physically and mentally. The top ten placed in the tournament get to join the Commune with their families and live the idyllic life it promises inside. The latter allows those within the community to try for better positions, through playing games that can involve physical forfeits and possibly death for the competitors, but the benefits can far outweigh the drawbacks.

The Commune remains a mysterious but beguiling location and many camp outside its gates on a daily basis hoping to sneak inside and claim some of that life for themselves. Even the ever-present gun turrets provide no deterrent and it is a daily task to clean away the bodies from the front of the complex. There is only one way in to the complex. Play the games.

## Security/military presence

The security protecting 'the Commune' is ridiculously high compared to the surrounding area. A 10 ft high wall protected by electrified fencing and trenches, with gun emplacements staffed 25 hours a day surround the compound. Dirigibles float in the skies above, acting as advertisements and 'suppressive' devices: they are armed with machine guns and enough bombs to destroy the whole complex if necessary. Be assured, getting into or out of 'The Commune' is impossible unless you are given permission.

## highlighted location

### the board room

**Description:** Tournament Venue

Not a meeting room per se, but the place where the final rounds of major tournaments are played. An octagonal shaped room, located at the very heart of the compound, the 'Board Room' comprises of a floor that can be turned, via a sequence of mechanical cogs, into any playing area for any board or card game you care to mention. At the very highest levels of game play, it is even rumoured the board can be rigged to change as play continues, making the game more dangerous, tactically and physically.

The room consists of three levels, each of which can contain a board of any variety and several small annexes where smaller games and tutorials can be played by anyone of sufficient level to join the rather exclusive club that Mr Ziegler is president of. This club meets once a week to discuss strategy and new game developments, and also to receive news of the world outside, a privilege only reserved for a very few chosen game players. Naturally all these sessions give the club a huge advantage over any challengers, and in this way Ziegler can easily rig most competitions that occur. There is also a staircase on the third level, locked at all times and only used by the highest ranking members of the Commune. It is rumoured that at the top of this staircase is a room where games can be played whilst observing the world outside. It is also rumoured that the room is festooned with 'trophies' of Mr Ziegler's past glories on the boards below.

## highlighted personality

### nikolaus volikof

**Age:** 30

**Height/Build:** 5' 8"/Slight

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blue/Blonde

**Occupation:** Games Prodigy/Designer/Manufacturer

**Affiliations:** TCMMA

At thirty years of age Nikolaus Volikof is the most astounding game player to enter the Tournaments in over a hundred years. A brilliant strategist with a photographic memory for rules and games he has played, he is also a designer in one of the smaller factories that make up the



Ziegler compound. Along with this he is also a spy for the TMCAA dedicated to taking over from within what they have been unable to achieve from without.

His efforts so far have involved establishing a small rebel group within the compound, and training them to play games so they can rise to positions of power within the Commune. Slowly he has built up a loyal and dedicated following, feeding them stories of the glory that waits them outside in The City, that has grown lush and verdant over the preceding decades. Of course his propaganda is just as false as Ziegler's, but he has a captive audience who hang on his every word.

Over the last five years the number of people growing dissatisfied with the Commune has grown, and Volikof has seen his rebellion grow to such a size that he can no longer contain it. Soon he will have to make his move, and it is rumoured that he is likely to try for the greatest prize of all: Leadership of the Commune itself.

## DarkCross railway yards

**Region:** Lat 5, Ring 2

**Status:** Fulgurator-controlled industrial area

**Law:** High

**Wealth:** Moderate

### Overview

*Majestic, imperious and indefatigable, locomotive Challenger No.13 rolled out of Engine Shed Heavy 27 and on to the turntable. Flag waving Guild members guided the beast into place and with a heart-stopping screech, the turntable began to rotate.*

*An excursion by one of the 'Challenger' class engines was always an event. By far the largest locomotives on the railways, they were the pride and despair of the Guild. Demons for maintenance, they sucked up time and resources that could be better spent on lesser vehicles. Still, the Fulgurators had their honour and the Challengers were part of that.*

*The engine gradually backed away from the turntable towards the never-ending line of goods wagons in the siding. The destination was the rotting scrapyards at the end of the Folly Hills Spur. There, she would be loaded up with rusting iron and haul all those hundreds of tonnes of metal down to the foundries for reprocessing.*

*Insulated coats flapping, Fulgurators ran hither and thither as the engine inched towards the line of wagons. With an immense clank, the loco connected with the first wagon. Reinforcing chains were wrapped around the hitching mechanism, flags were waved and instructions shouted. A loud thrumming came from Challenger No.13 as the engine took up the strain and began to creep forward. Wagons groaned and grumbled as cold axles began to turn.*

*Then there was a screech and a fountain of blue sparks from the midsection of Challenger No.13. Flames began to spurt out of gaps in the bodywork and acrid smoke started to wreath the mighty machine. Guildsmen scream and waved their arms, hoses were dragged from bunkers and the engine doused in water. Relays cracked and popped, wires could be heard to snap and contort. Challenger No.13 ground to a halt.*

*The mighty beast was ignominiously towed back to the shed by lesser engines, a victim of the decay and disrepair which surrounded her. The scrap iron wagons would have to wait for another day.*

Second only in importance to CrossBar Terminus in the continued operation of the railway network, DarkCross is a web of tracks, sidings, turntables, sheds, pits and bays. Here lie the massive grimy sheds where rubber clad Fulgurators carry out painstaking maintenance on the precious engines. Here are the forgotten sidings where broken rolling stock rots into rust. Here, broken rails point towards the sky and vast points networks fuse into solid lumps. DarkCross is lit by hundreds of glaring lamps, constantly bathed in harsh, searing artificial light. In their coats and goggles, the Fulgurators scurry about their business, pushing wagons of tools and parts or crouching inside the guts of a dismembered engine.





Physically, the DarkCross Yards sprawl across several square miles of land a few miles south of CrossBar terminus. Many areas of the Yards lie abandoned and decaying, as the power of the Guild wanes and the number of engines available for use gradually decrease. The network of lines which runs through, below and above DarkCross is crazily complex, a vast network of points, sidings, main lines, turntables, branches, spurs and junctions.

The Central Signal Control Room is a manic hothouse of swearing, sweating Fulgurators, all scurrying about, heaving points levers, setting signals and bellowing into speaking tubes and telephones. Outsiders would be surprised to see the usual calm demeanour of the Fulgurators thrown aside in such a fashion. Nervous breakdowns are common and there are always one or two Guild members crying quietly in corners or wandering the corridors mumbling to themselves in a stupor.

Mounted on great iron or brick trestles, some lines wind above the chaos, other plunge below the yards into dark, dank tunnels and deep, steep sided cuttings. There are numerous turntables where the engines and rolling stock can be switched on to different lines. These grinding, ponderous constructions are almost as vital as the engines themselves, without them, the system would quickly come to an ignominious and clanking halt.

The engine sheds are no less chaotic, constantly alive with the sound of hammering, welding and sawing. Within these high roofed brick buildings, teams of Fulgurators cannibalise derelict engines or painstakingly hand craft precious new parts. For them, it is a race against rust and decay to keep the leviathans of the rails in working order.

## Security/military presence

As with all other elements of the railway network, the fanaticism of the Transit Militia remains undiminished in DarkCross. Heavily armed militiamen toting massive sparklock rifles patrol the rusting fences, walls and trenches which make up the periphery of the yards. With so many entrances, large numbers of militia personnel are required to guard all the possible ways in to the sprawling facility. Connecting all the guard posts, barracks and guardhouses is a decrepit telegraph system. The wires of the telegraphs hang between buildings, are looped over the electric lines and pinned to the sides of walls. Breaks in the system take an age to track down, even with dedicated technicians assigned to the job.

Essentially, anyone caught trying to break into the yards will be shot at, with varying degrees of competency and success. While the Transit Militia may not be the most accurate marksmen in The City, a three-quarter inch sparklock ball can be a persuasive argument against creeping



around the yards. Even legitimate visitor to the Yards can sometimes find themselves shot at, arrested, beaten or otherwise inconvenienced in some way. The only real way to ensure safety is to be in the company of a Guild or Militia member.

The Yards are also home to the headquarters of the secretive Flying Squad, a special unit of the Transit Militia tasked with investigating particularly violent crimes on the railways. Their offices are located in an unprepossessing little two-storey brick building located in the far north-western corner of the Yards. Few people would actually be able to direct a casual visitor to this building. Its presence, while not concealed, is not exactly advertised. The Flying Squad themselves are all hardened veterans of many years in the Militia, experienced enforcers with few moral scruples about using underhand tactics to get the job done.

## highlighted location

### engine shed heavy 27

**Description:** Fulgurator Workshop

The Fulgurators locomotives are big. Monstrous construction of iron and electricity. Outsiders are impressed by their scale and power. Then they see one of the 'Challenger' class engines. The 'Challengers' are the true giants of the railways; massive engines which pull the heaviest loads and largest trains. However, they are rare, temperamental beasts and only three of them remain in fully functional order.

In Engine Shed Heavy 27, skilled Fulgurators fight to keep their massive charges on the rails. In this, the largest of all the engine sheds, the three remaining 'Challengers' live. Many at Dark Cross maintain that, despite their prestige, their history and their sheer power to impress, the 'Challengers' should be scrapped and the parts used to maintain the regular fleet. For many, this is tantamount to heresy and strong words have been exchanged over this topic.

Such is the paranoia that some unscrupulous brothers will attempt to scavenge parts from the great engines, there are Transit Militia guards permanently stationed in the shed. Access to the 'Challengers' is strictly limited and being accepted into this clique within the Guild is consid-

ered a great honour by some. Around the walls, lathes, drills and presses clank, hum and whine as skilled craftsmen machine parts, from the tiniest spring to the largest coil.

But, a sense of gloom is settling over Heavy 27. Challenger No. 7 spends more time in maintenance than it does out on the rails. Challenger No.13 has suffered a mysterious series of failures in recent years and Challenger No.1, the oldest of the class, is ironically the only one to be trouble free. The craftsmen know that they have a war on their hands just to keep the precious locos in service. And it is a war that will be exceedingly difficult to win.

## highlighted personality

### superintendent reagan sweeny, commander of the flying squad

**Age:** 46

**Height/Build:** 6' 0"/Stocky

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Dull brown/Gingery

**Occupation:** Transit militiaman

**Affiliations:** Transit Militia

Uncompromising, foul-mouthed and brash, Sweeny heads up the much-feared Flying Squad. Not exactly the subtlest man in The City, he was specifically chosen for his current position due to his reputation as an individual who gets things done. Getting these things done tends to involve a certain amount of violence, brutality and abuse of power, but it certainly gets results. The many platoons of the Flying Squad all bow to Sweeny and his harsh rule.

As one of the few Transit Militiamen to be taken into the confidence of the higher echelons of the Guild, he has an immense amount of influence on the railways. Far from being a guardian of the railway law, he often sees himself as above the law, a maker, rather than protector, of laws.

A flat faced, square headed individual with broad shoulders and huge, spade like hands, he cuts a substantial figure. He is wont to illustrate particularly important points of order by punching subordinates in the face, hence the unusual number of broken noses within the Flying Squad platoons at Dark Cross.



# dredgepool

**Region:** Lat 8, Ring 4

**Status:** TCMA industrial area

**Law:** High

**Wealth:** Low

## OVERVIEW

A bout of raucous singing made a brief incursion into the semi-civilised atmosphere of the gathering. Verses regarding the upbringing of Mrs Boatbottom's daughters hung in the air, much to the embarrassment of the suited and stovepipe hatted worthies surrounded by partially paralytic mudlarks, dredgermen and fitters. A box was dragged in from a far corner of the workshop and a tall, weathered man in a burned looking dogskin apron stood unsteadily upon it.

"Now then, now then! Come on, brothers and sisters; let's have a bit of hush here! You apprentices at the back! Keep your peace for a bit there, show some bloody respect!"

The crowd calmed down slightly, flagons were lowered and boots shuffled. The stovepipe hat wearers removed their headgear and held their millenary nervously in sweating hands.

"Right, you all know that this is the last day we'll be working with old Xavier, which is why we're having this little party here. Now, Xavier has been a friend to all of us, apprentice, journeyman and master craftsman alike. After forty five year service, yes, forty five years, Xavier has decided to take his leave and enjoy a well earned retirement."

"And not before time!" Came a slightly slurred and hoarse voice from the back of the workshop. Cue good natured heckling and coarse laughter from the assembled crowd.

"Now then, now then." The speaker made a damping motion with his hands. "We're all gathered here to wish Xavier well and present him with a small token of the high esteem in which we hold him. Now, we've all been working on this for a while and I'd like to invite the man of the hour up here to receive his gift!"

A slightly bent old man dragged himself to the front amid much backslapping and hearty cheering.

*With an ostentatious flourish, the speaker whipped away a ragged cloth.*

*There stood revealed a perfect scale model of a dredger, shining in brass and polished iron. A tiny nameplate was inscribed with the name: 'Catherine's Kiss'.*

*"Speech! Speech!"*

*Slowly, uncertainly, the old man climbed onto the box and removed his cap.*

*"Friends, colleagues, respected engineers. I'd like to thank you for this here party and for your kind gift. It's a sad day for me, leaving the company of such estimable men.*

*And to leave the company of the vessel I have served so long. The 'Catherine's Kiss' has been my life. I've worked on her man and boy, caring for her, fixing her when she's broken. It makes me sad to leave her in the care of others. But, in many ways I can't leave her, not even to such worthy fellows as yourselves."*

*The room grew silent and engineers began to cast quizzical glances at each other. Apprentices giggled and nudged their fellows in the ribs, taking amusement from the miserable state of the old man. As for the old man, he merely stood in silence, extending his hand and letting a clutch of small metal objects tinkle to the floor.*

*"Xavier? What are you on about? This is a happy day, the day of your retirement. What have you done?"*

*The old man merely smiled a sad, slow smile as a deafening, dull thump echoed across Dredgepool. The roof of the shed clanged and vibrated as things rained down upon it. All present rushed to the windows. Only the speaker stood by the old man.*

*"Xavier? What have you done?"*



Just off the Grand Canal, a short distance before the chaos of Long Pond, lies Dredgepool. Accessed through rusted iron watergates which prevent the casual boater from wandering in, Dredgepool is where those belching leviathans of the canals, the dredgers, are stored, maintained and cared for. The TCMAA recognises the importance of keeping the canals free of obstructions, hence these ancient, battered machines are kept in constant service, their clanging bucket chains scooping silt, detritus and rubbish from the floors of the canal and dumping it in barges for re-cycling.



Dredgepool suffers under an assault of sound: the bang of rivet guns, the clang of hammers, the swearing of the mudlarks and dredgermen and the cacophony of the massive steam engines of the dredgers themselves.

A basin nearly half a mile wide and slightly oval shaped, the pool houses thirty dredgers, each one lovingly cared for by their swarming teams of mechanics, fitters, riveters, welders and crewmen. The northern side of Dredgepool has two large dry-docks for repairs to the corroding hulls of the vessels, deep-sided coffins of concrete and brick, their attendant pumping sheds and winch housings tiny by comparison.

Back from the water's edge, there are numerous sheds and workshops where the skilled hands of engineers can turn out replacement parts for their leviathan charges. Standing tall above the low-lying work sheds stands the Central Office, where dredging schedules are planned, repairs authorised and beseeching requests for more money are formulated. Surrounding Dredgepool is a high brick wall topped with rusting barbed wire and splinters of broken glass. Armed Provosts guard the gates, lest any miscreants attempt to disrupt the good work of the dredging crews.

The dredgers are all of roughly the same design, although decades (and in some case, centuries) of repairs and alterations have given them each a personality all of their own. They are all massive barges with a bucket chain arm in their very centre. The arm swings on a pivot high above the deck and swings down through a section cut out of the hull to reach the canal floor. Chains and gears drive the bucket chain, the power being derived from the huge oil burning steam engine located at the rear of the vessel. Rubbish from the bottom of the canals exits the buckets and flows down chutes and pipes into either the small internal hopper or, as is most often the case, into a barge waiting alongside.

The dredgers move slowly about the canals, driven by twin screws powered from the same steam engine that runs the bucket chain. They are neither fast nor manoeuvrable but as they are likely to come off best in any collision, most smaller craft assiduously avoid them.

## Security/military presence

The precincts of Dredgepool are guarded by the TCMMA Provosts. They walk the walls and stand watch on the locks in an effort to stop interference with the continued operation of the Dredgers. This being said, the workers in Dredgepool have little love for the blue uniformed policemen. Relations between the two groups have been on the wane for decade and the Provosts are becoming increasingly unreliable and disinterested. Consequently (and much to the annoyance of the TCMMA), some private guards have been hired to patrol within the walls. Well paid by the managers of the 'Pool, these freelance operatives skulk in the shadows and keep an eye out for sedition, infiltration and sabotage.

## highlighted location

### drydock no.2

**Description:** Rarely used dock

Even in places of iron, oil and mechanisation, there are folk tales. Even amongst the clanging hammers and screeching drills of Dredgepool, there are stories. For the workers of Dredgepool, the heart of these stories is Drydock No.2. Most workers will only go there under protest, few people will spend any time there. Despite the desperate need for dry dock space, No.2 is only used at the busiest times. Even the managers in their stovepipe hats mutter blessings and incantations when they walk near this gigantic concrete coffin.

Back in the past, a dredger named 'Blue Lady' was being serviced in the dry dock. Whether by oversight or deliberate sabotage, the main boiler exploded in a roiling cloud of fire and steam. Scores of workers and bystanders were burned and scalded to death. Others had ragged splinters of metal driven through their bodies. In a fit of anxiety, an unknown person ordered the dock flooded. Those poor souls lying at the bottom of the pit, their bodies seared by the explosion found themselves drowning in the dark tide. Their screams echoed around Dredgepool as one by one they succumbed.





The collective guilt of that time has never evaporated. It is said that the unquiet spirits of the dead haunt Dry Dock No.2, that the restless souls of those left to their fate scream for revenge on the living. Strange sounds from the vicinity of the dock are attributed to the dead. The whines and groans which sometime emanate from the bottom of the pit simply add grist to the mill of superstition.

## highlighted personality

### findo gask

**Age:** 22

**Height/Build:** 5' 9"/Pudgy

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blue/Dirty blonde

**Occupation:** Fitter

**Affiliations:** RCCR

Apprentice Gask is living the dream. He has been allowed in to Dredgepool to work on the fabled dredgers and learn their arcane secrets. He learns under the most experienced and skilled fitters and mechanics. The only trouble is that his dream is not to actually work here. His dream is to bring down the TCMAA by any means possible. Gask is a Collectivist, a spy for the RCCR and a potential saboteur.

He has been very careful to hide his origins. His father, Edzel Gask, was an anarchist and bomb-thrower in his younger years and his fervour has rubbed off on Gask the Younger. Findo claims to come from the Folly Hills Gasks, rather than the Long Pond Gasks. Fellow travellers within the TCMAA have altered his records to allay suspicion and provide him with cover.

Even now, Gask speaks sedition to his fellow apprentices. Nothing too overt, though. Anything too obvious would have him hauled before the beak and booted out of his job. Instead, he quietly converses and plants the seeds of thought. Findo Gask could be a very dangerous man.

## Machine quarry

**Region:** Lat 6, Ring 7

**Status:** Industrial machinery disposal site

**Law:** Self-policed

**Wealth:** Low

## overview

*Fergal ran his hands lightly over the machinery, feeling with his fingers in the dark. Cogs, gears and chains revealed themselves beneath his shaking touch, roughened by a film of decay. Muttering under his breath, Fergal squirmed further down the tunnel, scrabbling against the rotten machinery for purchase. He tried to keep the noise down as he moved, conscious of the consequences of discovery by the Machinists.*

*Thrusting his arms forward in the tunnel, Fergal inspected by touch the ruined machinery in front of him, searching for something of worth in the surrounding junk. And then he felt it. Hard, angular, sharp - undecayed machinery. Fergal's heart raced as he dug the piece out of the surrounding detritus. Once the object was free Fergal assessed it, running his hands over its shape. It was quite large, at least the size of his hand, and heavy, too. He shook it next to his ear. Nothing. Somehow squirming around in the tunnel, Fergal made his way back toward the light, pushing his find in front of him.*

*Cautiously, Fergal pushed his head out of the hole and surveyed his surroundings. No one was about but damn, it was darker than he had thought. Apparently he had spent longer in the hole than he imagined. If he were not careful, he wouldn't get out of the Quarry before night-fall. In the widening tunnel mouth Fergal swung his legs round and over the lip of the tunnel and dropped down onto the roof of the smashed road vehicle below.*

*Gasping in pain, Fergal rolled off the vehicle and fell a further three feet, landing on his back and knocking the wind from his lungs. He had misjudged the drop in the fading light and landed on an upturned spur of metal, which had easily sliced through the dog-skin sole of his boot and into the flesh beneath.*



*Grimacing in pain and gasping for air, Fergal levered himself into a sitting position and clumsily felt his torn foot. Blood, black in the poor light, welled between his fingers causing him to cry out in pain. He hastily pulled his scarf from around his neck and tried to bind the foot to stem the bleeding.*

*A noise. Fergal froze, pain momentarily forgotten and head cocked to the side. Surely it was too early, they shouldn't be out this early! He listened intently, but there was nothing. He must have imagined it. He returned to the binding, though still half-listening. Then again, somewhere to the left, the sound of something moving over a sheet of metal. Sweat beaded on his forehead as he returned to the binding, his blood-coated fingers slipping in haste. He heard it again, a crash of machinery tumbling, still some-way off, but nearer than before. He didn't stop this time, but he began to whimper as he worked. Once he had the binding roughly in place, Fergal tried to rise but found he couldn't support himself on his ruined foot. Sobbing in pain and fear, he got down on all fours and began to crawl in the direction of the hole in the fence where he had entered the Quarry. As he moved he heard the sounds behind him drawing closer, the slipping of metal on metal, the clatter of a landslide of cogs and wheels. Fergal crawled as fast as he could.*

*There was the hole. Feverish hope sparked in Fergal's mind, pushing back the wave of pain and fear that had threatened to engulf him. In the last failing light he made out the shape of the ragged gash in the razor wire fence and struggled toward it. If he could get through the fence, they wouldn't follow him through. They never left the Quarry. His fingers were bloody of their own accord now, blackened and cracked fingernails torn off by the rough angular metal debris he crawled across. His knees were torn and bloody too. If he could just reach the fence he would be safe.*

*Fergal pushed a hand through the tear in the fence and almost laughed with relief. He was through; he was going to make it. He heard the noises behind him, close now, very close, but he could get through. Fergal threw himself through the hole but he was pulled up fast, half in and half out of the Quarry.*

*Looking down he saw that the razor wire had caught his jacket, tearing into and entwining the fabric. Crying in fear Fergal snatched at the wire, cutting his fingers against the blades, desperately trying to extricate himself from the wire. Then he felt something touch his good leg. A caress. Fergal screamed. Back below the tunnel mouth the find lay in a puddle of oily water, forgotten. Fergal's screams echoed around the twisting walls of machine parts, then the silence returned.*



Ever wondered where those items of rusted scrap that are hawked on the Canal side come from? Chances are they were dug from the Machine Quarry. For more years than anyone recalls the Machine Quarry has been a dumping ground. But unlike Smokey Mountain, only one thing is dumped at the Quarry – machinery. Everything from broken down vehicles to worn out industrial machines, electronic goods predating the Shift to steam-powered engines too unreliable for use can be found here, caked in layers of grease and decay.

Many believe that the Machine Quarry is to blame for much of the pollution that infests the Black Canal and the metallic stink of rust adds an individual flavour to the air of The City. Over the years so much machinery has been dumped here that stratified layers of engineering have formed, the whole site sinking slowly into the ground under the weight of decaying metal. It is quite possible to dig down through the layers and to classify the rotten equipment by period, something Longshore University has long petitioned for, but so far in vain. Not many outsiders are allowed into the Machine Quarry, for the Machinists guard their home fervently.

The Machinists have been here as long as anyone remembers too. They dig the Quarry, mining for useful items amongst the debris of past times which they sell on throughout The City. Their trenches cut through the top surface down into the deeper layers, in fact so many trenches have been cut that the Quarry has come to resemble a weird maze of narrow paths twisting between towering mesas of metal instead of some simple tip.



From the sides of these trenches tunnels have been cut into the layers, many by Machinists believing they have uncovered a rich vein of machinery. Some of the towers of metal are so riddled with tunnels that they become worryingly unstable, and collapses are relatively common. Machinist work gangs dig through out the day, and their guards patrol the Quarry, armed with weapons constructed from rusty metal.

Machinists are easily recognised throughout The City, years of scratching though oily and decaying metal has affected their skin such that it becomes blackened, and infections picked up through cuts acquired from the broken metal are commonplace. The Machinists wear these afflictions as a kind of badge of office. They exist as a kind of co-operative, selling their finds on and pooling the profits.

By night however, even the Machinists desert the Quarry for the safety of nearby tenements. The trenches and tunnels dug by the Machinists have in many places broken through into sewers, drains and many other ancient tunnels. Despite efforts by the Machinists to seal these breaches, more seem to appear weekly, as if of their own accord. By night, Furies and even worse are thought to come up through the tunnels and run the twisted paths of the Quarry. No one has seen these creatures in many years, but the remains of those unfortunate enough to be caught in the Quarry overnight are testament to their continued presence. Luckily, these beings seem unwilling to leave the Quarry and so the Machinists are happy to leave them to their own devices. More able guards would be difficult to find.

## SECURITY/MILITARY PRESENCE

The Machinists provide security within the Machine Quarry. Work gangs on temporary relief from the various digs patrol the paths wielding clubs and blades constructed from scrap metal. They wear sheets of beaten metal strapped to their bodies as armour, which along with their blackened skin makes them a disconcerting sight. The Machinists are notoriously aggressive within their domain, and deal out punishment to trespassers in a most robust manner. Still, despite their ministrations many still break through the razor wire fence that surrounds the Quarry in the hope of making a find. There is no military presence within the Quarry, the Macrocorps consider the site exactly what it is – a waste dump.

## HIGHLIGHTED LOCATION

### TRENCH 441

**Description:** Fresh trench with a rich vein of finds thought to predate the Shift.

Located on the northern edge of the Quarry and within site of the fence and The City beyond, Trench 441 is causing some excitement amongst the Machinists. A rich vein of finds on the bottom layer of exposed machinery is noticeably different to the strata of detritus above, and though heavily decayed items from this area of the Trench have found a market amongst the scientists of Longshore University. The Machinists work this site through the day, and their intense activity has drawn some interest from the people on the other side of the fence, leading to a heightened security presence compared to the rest of the Quarry. Break-ins have been relatively common – many outsiders reckon that anything that raises that level of excitement amongst the Machinists has got to be worth some risk in acquiring. What the Machinists don't know is that the Department of Shift Studies at the University, for reasons unknown, has acquired many items from the Trench.

## HIGHLIGHTED PERSONALITY

### MACKIE FABBOT

**Age:** Unknown, appears in his late fifties.

**Height/Build:** Short/Skinny

**Eye/Hair colour:** Grey/Greasy black

**Occupation:** Machinist Dig Supervisor

**Affiliations:** None

Mackie is from the pragmatic school of Machinists. While others of the organisation surround themselves with semi-religious claptrap (much like the Fulgarators), Mackie is after one thing – money. Born into the Quarry (the only way to get into the Machinists is by birth) Mackie has made a point of driving for the top, either dragging all others around him along for the ride or shoving them aside. This sort of attitude generates plenty of enemies and there are many amongst his colleagues who would happily pan Mackie's brain in with a spanner, but Mackie does have one thing in his favour – a lucky gift for making extraordinary finds.



As long as he keeps digging treasures from the Quarry his life is secure. It was Mackie who first discovered the remarkable finds in trench 441. However, Mackie was soon ousted from that trench by his enemies and since then pickings have been slim. Many who notice such things have spotted a slight hint of panic in Mackie's eyes and the wolves are closing in.

## Reeking Street Gasworks

**Region:** Lat 1, Ring 5

**Status:** TCMA industrial area

**Law:** Moderate

**Wealth:** Low

### Overview

"So ye want a job with the gasworks, do ye?" The questioner was a beaky, dried out looking man who stared over the top of half-moon spectacles.

"Well, aye. Gone got made redundant down the docks and I thought you might be hiring folks the now. Just I've got a wife and three bairns to look after and...."

"Yes, I know. Yer wife and kiddies need you to bring home the money to put the food on the table. I know the score, heard it more than once."

The supplicant looked about the shabby room in a resigned fashion. Jobs at the gasworks were prized and precious rare. This man, this Mr Hardly, chief clerk or somesuch, he didn't look like the kind to be handing out jobs willy-nilly. Ho hum.

"So, what ye know about gas and such?"

"Er...not much about gas, but I'm a trained fitter, served my time as a 'prentice and darn good at it too. Can weld, fabricate, machine and stuff. Good with my hands."

Beaky Mr Hardly gazed solemnly out of the window. The sight that greeted him was uninspiring. The rust streaked blue gas holder towered above the yards, workshops, pressure vessels and bothies of the gasworks. He could see men and women slogging through the rain, pushing barrows of excrement to the processors, ready to have their precious gas drawn off.

"Well, I'm sorry laddie, but we're full up right now. Maybe if ye were to come back at sometime, we might have something for ye. Right now, I can't give ye anything.

Sorry lad."

The supplicant slumped forward, sighing deeply. Another failure, another day counting the few remaining pennies and trying to answer the kiddies questions. With mute resignation, he got up to leave.

"Laddie, how ye with heights?"

"Heights? Don't bother me none, never been feared of them."

"Well, I've had a wee thought. We need a strong lad who can work up top of those gas holders, fixing gaskets, joints and such. Think ye'd be up for that?"

"Aye! Aye, I would!" the supplicant ran round the desk and pumped Hardly's hand with vigour. "Thank you sir, thank you!"

"Ach, away with ye! Just be here at the eighth hour tomorrow morning and ask for Mr Garamond. Tell him I've signed ye up. Ye can have this shilling in advance, get some food and things for yer wife and bairns. Now get home and get some food into ye."

As the supplicant left, Hardly gazed out of the window again. The day was still dull and rainy, but suddenly it had taken on something of a brighter aspect.



A lot of people in The City rely on gas for light and heat. Many industries rely on it to power their machines. Despite this, few people actually like to think where all this gas comes from. Where it comes from is places like the famed Reeking Street Gasworks, noted in folksong and ribald poetry. Twenty five hours a day, every day of the year, trains, carts and wagons bring in the raw materials need for the production of precious gas. And the raw materials are? Shit. Mainly human and dog, collected from all over the place, gathered into stinking heaps, piled into carts and transported to Reeking Street to have their vital vapours collected.

The tall smokestacks of Reeking Street are a familiar sight to everyone in the area, as are the pressure vessels and cylindrical gas holders painted a fading shade of sky blue. The blue is streaked with rust and corrosion, but still manages to give the grim industry of the place a somewhat cheerful, innocent appearance. Hemmed in on all sides by warehouses and tenement blocks, the gasworks are served by a couple of clogged capillary canals, a single set of railway tracks and numerous narrow alleys and lanes.





As one of the largest gasworks in the TCMAA, Reeking Street really should cover a wider area of land, but necessity has caused it to expand upwards, over itself and underground, rather than horizontally outwards.

Within the crowded confines of the works, men and women push wagons and carts hither and thither, tend leaking pipes, regulate valves and unload barges. It's hot, messy, stinking work, but work for which the TCMAA pays well. Skilled craftsmen are valued here, as are strong arms and even stronger backs. The complex tangle of pipes, valves and vessels requires a small army to keep them functioning. Unsurprisingly, smoking is strictly forbidden within the walls of the works, hence the fact you can always see small clusters of stained workmen and women outside the main gates and by side entrances, puffing quietly on ne-betweened pipes and cigarettes.

In the centre of Reeking Street sits the squat Control Tower, a five sided, four-storey construction of red brick and iron bands, surmounted with a steeply pitched roof. Every room in the Control Tower is filled with dials, veniers, valves and levers controlling and monitoring every little part of the plant. Three shifts of supervisors each watch their own little part of the hundreds of dials, watching for any aberrations that might indicate a failing pipe, a collapsing gasket or a stuck valve. Telegraphs connect them to the bothies of various maintenance crews, whose job it is to go out and repair faults before anything drastic can slow down production or, in the worst cases, lead to a fire.

Many of the works at Reeking Street belong to the local union, the Mutual Assistance Co-operative. The Co-operative maintains a small benevolent fund for injured workers, orphans and widows, as well as curbing the worst



excesses of management chicanery. They also maintain a small social and welfare club in the gasworks itself (co-funded by the management) where irregular dances and children's parties are held. While not large or powerful, the union does manage to carry a sizeable chunk of respect and admiration, even from the higher echelons of the management.

## Security/military presence

For the Provosts of the TCMA, duty at Reeking Street is not exactly a prized posting. The smell, the noise and the sheer busyness tend to get to most of the Provosts assigned there. The constables and sergeants on duty tend to be found lounging in their gatehouse bothy, seldom venturing outside and then only with chemical impregnated rags tied around their mouths and noses. Workers tend to laugh at the Provosts and josh them for not being able to stand the smell. They forget that their own sense of smell and taste has been pretty much annihilated by year of working in and living around the fumes of Reeking Street.

## highlighted location

### the mutual assistance co-operative social & welfare club

**Description:** Meeting place and club

Located on the ground floor of one of the brick administration buildings at the gasworks, the Social & Welfare Club is a vital institution for those who toil their guts out to keep Reeking Street working. Consisting of a committee room, main hall, members bar and store room, the place isn't exactly large (it could, in fact, be described as 'snug') but serves its purpose well.

The Shop Stewards and leaders of the Co-operative hold their regular meetings in the committee room, often repairing to the bar afterwards to sup on some of the cheap ale which is on offer. Social events are irregular, but always well attended by workers and their families. On holidays and high days, the committee organises parties for workers children; small moments of hope and joy in their otherwise drab and dreary lives.

The committee also allows the main hall to be used for a variety of purposes; from children's literacy classes to ladies sewing circles. On some occasions, invited speakers are also welcomed to the club to give talks on a range of subjects or give slide shows about places and things of interest. All in all, the club serves a most useful purpose for the workers at Reeking Street.

## highlighted personality

### Mornington Blaseby

**Age:** 39

**Height/Build:** 5' 4"/Skinny

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blue/Bald

**Occupation:** Valveman

**Affiliations:** The Mutual Assistance Co-operative

Blaseby is a valveman, a specialist in repairing and fabricating the valves and flow mechanisms that regulate the gas coursing through the miles of pipes in Reeking Street. His skills and position give him the respect of his peers and, despite the atmosphere of the place and sometimes grim working conditions, he manages to maintain an outward appearance of good cheer and unrelenting joviality.

A small man (all the better for crawling through narrow spaces with a spanner clutched firmly in his hands), his head darts from side to side as he talk, his hands waving animatedly in the air. Blaseby is something of a likeable chap, always ready to help out struggling young apprentices or lend a hand where it is needed. He eschews membership of the union, preferring to carve his own path in life. Were he not such a respected craftsman and jovial figure, his non-membership might get him into trouble, but few raise any questions about such a popular chap.







## Education

Learning, knowledge and understanding in The City are as varied as its architecture and topography. Different social groups, castes, cliques, burghs, authorities, religions and guilds attach varying degrees of importance to the subject. Some go through life never having learned to read or write, others scale the dizzying heights of academia and themselves educate others.

Education is very much up to the preferences, finances and wherewithal of individual burghs or local governments. The Burgh Council of Fogwarren, for example, places little store in educating the masses, preferring to harbour its meagre resources for spending on policing and maintenance. Other areas, such as the Red Canal Collectivist Republic, place great store by education, enforcing minimum educational requirements, rigorous testing and stringent standards.

However, illiteracy and innumeracy are rife in The City, with those who can even write their own name being in a distinct minority. The huddled masses find little time to learn and even less reason to advance themselves. Perhaps a kindly foreman may educate a young apprentice in a few strokes of the pen, hoping he will make a more effective worker. More often, factory owners and bosses see literacy as the path to militant workers and unionisation, a thing which does little to benefit them.

Some businessmen and women are more enlightened. The fame of Archibold Flint, owner of the Mire End Cog Works, has spread throughout the surrounding burghs. Flint takes a great and personal interest in the education and wellbeing of his employees, a significant and heartening attitude in these dark times.

Education within The City can be divided into three basic forms; primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary education is concerned with children in their formative years, usually from age 4 or 5 until age 10 or 11. Secondary education is concerned with children aged between 10 or 11 up to 16 to 18. Finally, tertiary education covers perhaps the greatest breadth of age and knowledge. From the intellectual halls of Longshore University, through guild trade colleges to religious seminaries, tertiary education can involve anyone from age 16 upwards.

### Primary education

Primary education represents the most basic level of learning: the fundamentals of reading and writing, the basic of mathematics and arithmetic. An individual education to this level will probably have spent four or five years of their childhood attending school or being educated by private tutors or parents. This leaves them with a basic knowledge of the written word, how to understand it and how to write for themselves. In addition, they will also have a very basic grasp of the fundamentals of arithmetic, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing.





Other topics that may be covered during primary education might include a smattering of art (mainly finger painting, daubing with colours or drawing), a tiny bit of very basic history (although this is more akin to lessons in myth and folklore than anything else) and maybe a lesson or two in the most basic principles of science.

In the RCCR, every person is required to be educated to this level. In the TCMA, most areas have some form of primary education, although it is more rigorously enforced in the middle and upper class areas than in the less salubrious burghs. The lower class areas of the TCMA are sparsely furnished with schools and those which do exist are poorly maintained and attended, staffed by demoralised teachers, sick of empty classes and pitiful pay packets. Parents in the slums have little interest in education, their main concern being getting their offspring out earning a wage as soon as possible.

This is not to say that all of the poorer areas of The City are bastions of ignorance. Some of the most wretched communities take a great pride in educating their children in the hope that this will help them break free of the bonds of poverty. Those who dwell in the Railway Shanties of Mire End take immense pride in the education of their children, teaching them how to read, write and do sums. Despite their abject poverty and ramshackle hovels, they strive to teach the children as best they can.

In some places, religious and charitable groups provide educative facilities for the poor. However, these are often closely tied to their sponsoring organisations and can sometimes be little more than places of indoctrination. The Third Church of God the Architect maintains a number of 'parish schools' throughout The City, providing places of learning for the most impoverished families. That is should they choose to accept it. Charitable groups such as the Bright Advance Literacy Foundation offer a small stipend to parents who allow their children to attend their schools, although such opportunities are few and far between.

Suffice to say only the children of the middle and upper classes can really afford to attend schools, preparing them for secondary and tertiary education. For the lower classes, gripped in a cycle of unending toil, the opportunities for learning begin and end in early childhood.

## Secondary education

Should a child be lucky enough to proceed through some form of primary education, the prospect of secondary education looms large.

For the wealthy, this can mean sending their children off to one of the many boarding academies situated in some of the more pleasant areas of The City. Famous institutions such as Pound Academy and Minister Vault Private College charge substantial sums to take ten-year-old children and teach them for several years, giving them a grounding in the arts and sciences. Only those with independent wealth or the backing of substantial business interests can hope to obtain a place at one of these august places of learning. Parents will often put their children on to a waiting list as soon as they are born in the hope that, by the time their offspring are of age, they will be chosen to attend such a place.



For the less well off middle classes of the TCMA, a number of schools run by authority, usually under auspices of an individual burgh. Some offer better standards than others. Typical of these is the Stony Lane Burgh School, located on the northern edge of Coldbath Fell. Here, boys and girls are given advanced lessons in literacy, taught useful crafts, a modicum of art and a smattering of the most basic science.

Standards within the TCMA burgh schools vary immensely, there are even some in the most impoverished areas, catering for those with a drive to better themselves through education.

In stark contrast, the secondary schools of the RCCR are austere places, where children are regimented and selected at an early age, the aptitudes tested and their future position mapped out for them by the time they are 11 years old. The RCCR divides its secondary schools into artistic, technical and military branches.

In the artistic schools, young people are encouraged to write, paint, sculpt and express themselves in the appropriate fashion. Most are destined for a life in a clerical or administrative job, while a few are picked to serve in one of the more sinister departments of the RCCR, such as the Bureau for Good Will (essentially the propaganda department) or the Bureau for Collections (a rather obfuscatory name for the branch of the RCCR concerned with external spying).

The RCCR technical schools teach metalworking, dinginsmithing and all manner of skilled and semi-skilled trades. If a child shows little aptitude for any particular trade, they are shunted into 'consolidation' classes, a regime which prepares them for a life of unskilled labour.

Finally, the military schools are the fewest in number, but harshest in their methods. It is their duty to provide the future soldier for the RCCR, preparing for the day when there will be all out war between the collectivists and the rest of The City. Candidates with suitable leadership potential are moved into the 'commander stream' while those who are more suited to the role of an ordinary soldier are moved into the 'peoples warrior stream'. Conditions are tough in these schools, with brutality and beatings being the norm.

## tertiary education

Few people in The City ever manage to reach this level of education. Those that do so manage it through sheer perseverance, blind luck, wealth or influence.

The most noted and famous institution of tertiary education in The City is Longshore University (see a|state MRB p.96 for more details on Longshore). An ancient and intrigue shrouded place of learning, competition to enter its hall of academia is fierce, with the scions of well-off families seeing it as a ladder to social and financial advancement. While this is true, there are a proportion of students at the university who are genuinely dedicated to their studies and the furtherance of knowledge.



The TCMAA and the RCCR also provide tertiary institutions for particularly gifted pupils. Lank Street College in the TCMA is very highly regarded for its courses in the sciences, while the Hardgadley School of Fine Arts specialises in art, languages and journalism (the debating team of the Hardgadley School is particularly feared in the regular intra-college contests). RCCR institutions are far more specialised and, it must be said, difficult to get in to. Only the finest candidates from the artistic, technical and military schools are given the opportunity (and opportunity not to be turned down) to enter into these hallowed institutions. In truth, they are nothing more than advanced training centres for departments of the RCCR government, designed to educate and inform future leaders and commanders.

No choices are given in learning and strict patterns, laid down by political doctrine are followed to the very letter. Those who graduate from these schools are amongst the most highly regarded within that supposed society of equals.

The various religions in The City also provide a range of tertiary education's, from the penitential seminaries of the Third Church of God the Architect to the quasi-scientific observational schools of the Shining Sky. What is taught in these institutions of learning combines religious dogma and theory with a range of artistic and scientific disciplines. For example, those in the seminaries of the Third Church can find themselves manoeuvred into courses in architecture (a highly regarded profession within the Church, seen as glorify God in His majesty), engineering and history (as perceived by the Church, of course).

To a casual wanderer along the avenues and alleyways of The City, education may not seem foremost in the minds of many people. Look beneath the surface, however, and you'll see in some places, education and advancement are valued and prized. Even in the most deprived areas, the chance to learn, to better oneself and perhaps drag yourself out of the mire is an opportunity not to be missed. For all the rampant illiteracy, backwardness and stupidity, there are still those who look to knowledge for their future.





## Notable buildings







# the eastern general infirmary

**Region:** Lat 8, Ring 3

**Status:** TCMAA hospital

**Law:** Strict

**Wealth:** Moderate

## OVERVIEW

"Now, if one of you would care to move back the sheet covering this poor unfortunate, thank you Doctor Melville, you will note the many lesions and pustules covering the lower half of the body. Note the garish colouration and the quite astounding extent. Remarkable, isn't it? Would any of you like to hazard a guess as to the patient's condition? Yes, Melville?

No, no, no! Bag Rot? Do you ever read the textbooks, Doctor Melville? You do? Well, I would suggest that you look over the texts again. Bag Rot indeed! Would anyone else care to make a suggestion, hopefully with more perspicacity than Melville? Yes? Hollings, isn't it? Do go on.

Yes, that's exactly it. Well done Hollings! For those of you who may not have heard, Hollings correctly identified the condition as the Green Pox. Now there's no need to move back with such alacrity! Were it an infectious strain, I'm quite sure the patient would not be held in this particular ward! Dear me.

Now, if you would be so kind as to pass me that lancet, thank you, I shall demonstrate the correct procedure for draining one of the rather large and impressive pustules. Simply insert the tip of the lancet like so, twist and there you go! Would someone mind wiping that up please? Oh, anything will do, that rag there. The patient's shirt, you say? Well, I'm sure he can get a new one.

Now, were this sad soul abroad on the streets, it's most likely he would die within a short space of time due to the somewhat unpleasant effects of this particular disease. A breakdown of the internal organs, dementia and spasms all follow in fairly short order. Death is, understandably, nought but a short step away.

Ah, here comes Doctor Middleton, I'm sure she will have something to say about this most interesting case! Not a citizen of the TCMA, you say? Oh dear, that does place something of a different complexion on the case. And utterly impecunious as well? My, that is unfortunate. Well, it seems we have but one course of action. Melville? Hollings? Would you be so kind as to remove this patient and place him at one of the tradesmen's entrances? Thank you, I'm most grateful.

Now, would anyone care to take a stab at the condition this rather emaciated woman is suffering from?"



Towering over the surrounding buildings, massive and ancient, the Eastern General is one of the foremost hospitals in the Three Canals Metropolitan Area. This stunningly large building comprises numerous wings, miles of corridors and hundreds of wards, a maze of truly epic proportions.

Some view the Eastern General as a place of salvation and healing, others see it as a house of pain and suffering. Much of this can be attributed to the constant change of regimes and medical methods. Some years go by as a time of hope and belief in the healing abilities of the doctors and nurses. Then there are the darker years, when those in charge seem to care little for the patients in their charge.

Physically, the building is constructed of dark stone, patched with brick and shored up with sheets of corrugated iron. Standing ten stories tall (not including the cavernous spaces of the folklore-shrouded attics) and built around a series of shadowed courtyards whose depths never see a single ray of natural light, the hospital presents an initially forbidding face to The City. Over the main entrance are carved the ancient words of the institutions motto: 'Tend. Heal. Care.' Worn by time and crusted in filth, the words are scarcely readable these days and, in any case, precious few patients are actually able to make sense of the etched syllables.

The highest floors of the hospital are given over to isolation wards, wings for those with incurable diseases and wards dedicated to the imprisonment of those deemed too mad to walk the streets.



Such is the huge size of the place that standards of care can vary enormously from ward to ward. Some care for their dying or insane charges with tenderness, charity and dedication. Others are scarcely better than brutal prisons, where patients are mistreated, abused and demeaned. Some regimes have sought to codify standards of care across all of the incurable, isolation and insane wards, seeking to give equal care to all who find themselves in those wards. Other regimes have exhibited levels of contempt that would shame even the lowest backstreet ganger.

Head of the hospital is Dr Annalise Wainthorpe, a skilled medical practitioner who now finds herself behind a desk, signing forms, arbitrating in disputes, spending precious little time actually using her hard-won skills. Whilst not an intensely compassionate woman, Wainthorpe believes in the fundamental right of TCMA citizens to decent standards of medical care and attention. However, this does not mean that she extended these standards to outsiders and interlopers. Those without citizenship papers are either rudely ejected from the premises, charged for medical services or subjected to horrifyingly lower standards.



As you move lower down the stacked stories of the Eastern General, the wards are gradually given over to long term (but not incurable) patients, surgical wards, outpatient wards, clinics and administration facilities. The deep cellars and vaults under the place contain the colossal boilers and generators which give the hospital light and heat. In these dark places, there are also rumoured to be hidden cells and secret wards, where the most violently insane, the most hideously deformed or the most dangerously infectious patients are kept. Such rumours have never been proven to have any truth, yet they still manage to circulate, stoking the fires of folklore and myth.

The current regime at the Eastern General is fairly benign, given the harsh standards of some of those who have previously been in power.

## Security/military presence

As a major institution of the TCMA, the Eastern General is guarded by scores of Provosts and a cadre of thuggish hospital porters. While the armed Provosts guard the entrances and more sensitive areas, the porters patrol the corridors and carry out the more menial security tasks. Amongst the ranks of the Provosts, duty at the hospital is highly sought after, being viewed as something of a 'cushy', soft assignment. Given the corruption and nepotism within the ranks of the TCMAA police force, it is not always the most deserving officers who get this choice posting. Many Provosts at the Eastern General are thoroughly undeserving of the position, slovenly, unruly men and women who see no crime in stealing from patients and staff alike.



The porters are also a law unto themselves, having a spiteful, acrimonious relationship with the Provosts. Their powerful trades union sees to it that their often unreasonable demands are generally met. The preferential treatment that they receive is viewed with disdain by the hard working, less well treated nurses and auxiliary hospital staff.

## highlighted location

### Casualty Ward 2b

**Description:** Over-worked casualty ward

Known as 'The Hellhole' by any staff who have ever worked there, Casualty Ward 2B is one of the first ports of call for the sick, dying and badly injured. The time worn benches are always crowded with wailing, coughing and screaming people waiting for their chance to see a doctor or nurse. The waiting time is seldom less than 3 hours.

The damp, heavy air is wearily stirred by massive fans which hang from the high, vaulted roof. The sickly, enervating atmosphere is not exactly conducive to health or well being. Most of the junior doctors at the hospital have served their time in one of the casualty wards, working thirty, forty, fifty or sometimes even sixty hour shifts tended the broken and damaged. Their judgements are often clouded by tiredness or substance abuse, mistakes are common. When a patient is finally seen, this isn't always a guarantee of treatment. When the hospital is particularly busy, even the worst cases are often simply patched up and sent on their way, left to their friends and families to deal with as best they can.

## highlighted personality

### doctor yuyuan neil

**Age:** 26

**Height/Build:** 5' 8"/Emaciated and haggard

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Brown/Brown

**Occupation:** Doctor

**Affiliations:** None

A haggard, mad-eyed, nervous figure in a stained white coat, Dr Neil is one of the many junior doctors working their guts out in Casualty Ward 2B. Over time, he has learned to survive without sleep or a proper diet, pilfering stimulants from hospital stocks.

Despite his rough demeanour, Neil is a dedicated man, convinced of the need to give care to all those who may need it, regardless of social status or wealth. Few of the other junior doctors would disagree with his stance, but few will actively back him up in his confrontations with more senior members of the medical staff.

Neil is also worryingly aware that he is developing something of a cult following amongst the poor folks who require his services. Many frequent visitors will gladly wait for hours longer than necessary until he comes on duty, just to receive treatment from their adopted hero. Other doctors are openly critical of this and often have the porters and Provosts eject those who refuse treatment from less admired medical professionals.

## the grand emporium

**Region:** Lat 1, Ring 1

**Status:** Privately owned business

**Law:** Strict

**Wealth:** Very high

## overview

*Slickly sliding like fish oil on a canal, Gunfeather eased himself through the well-shod throng. Belief was everthing in these circumstances. Getting into Brightlights was one thing, getting into the Grand Emporium another. Here! Fabled! Legendary! So sweet and fragrant, heady with the smells of wealth and influence. How sweet!*

*A beautiful lady sprayed expensive musk from a crystal globe, sending a fine spray towards him. He drank in the powerful perfume, revelling in the scent. What was this? A tray of sweetmeats? Bonbons! Wrapped in the finest foil, so wafer thin and gleaming. Surely nobody could miss such a tiny thing? Maybe just one or two, to prove to his sisters he had been here. Such delicacies, the like of which he had only heard about.*

*Every floor of this palace, every corridor and wing, all chambers of delight and rapture! Such fine cloths, elegant cutlery, so many lovely, lovely things. Perhaps one day he may be here with money and buy a few choice items to decorate the home that he could see in his minds eye. What a lovely home it would be, so elegant and subtle.*





*The clinking of glasses, the waves of delicious odour from the gleaming samovars and salvers of tiny cakes. All so marvelously elegant and refined, realms of gentility that Gunfeather could only dream of. Sadly, he must leave. Time is short and tarrying too long would only bring despair down on his head. He walked from the store, head spinning with all he had seen.*

*Lovegrove reached out to touch the shoulder of the boy, his pale hands just about brush the cloth of his obviously borrowed coat. He had stolen, yes, a few bonbons, nothing much. But theft was theft. Lovegrove had followed him the whole time he had walked through the store, an interloper in this alien world. The look on the young man's face, a look of innocent wonder. The boy had never seen Lovegrove, no one ever did. That was his talent, his curse. Yet the boy had stolen.*

*Lovegrove turned and stepped back into the Emporium. In olden days, he would scarcely have hesitated in apprehending someone for palming a few sweets. But he had seen the wonder in the boys eyes, so childlike and innocent. He let him go.*



Pre-eminent amongst the boutiques, shops and purveyors of Brightlights, the Grand Emporium has served the well heeled and wealthy for nearly two centuries. Its grand, gilded façade overshadows all other shops, its staff outdo any fashionable boutique in their obsequiousness and attention to detail. None can match the breadth and depth of stock (some of it truly ancient) and level of service that the Grand Emporium can offer.

In truth, the Grand Emporium is a bastion of entrenched privilege and snobbery. Even in the rarefied atmosphere of Brightlights, access is jealously guarded. To have a credit account here is to belong to an exclusive club. Successful macrocorp execs, celebrities, those of inherited wealth and those basking in fading glory all come to shop, to see and to be seen. Depending on who you are and what your shopping needs are, there is a variety of places to go scattered amongst the six floors of the store.

For ladies who lunch, the Select Brasserie on the third floor is the most popular choice; it's tinkling fountain artfully masking whispered conversations full of innuendo and gossip. For the smartly turned out gentleman looking for a new suit of clothes, the menswear department on the

fourth floor is the location of choice. Here, skilled tailors, cutters and measurers practice their art, trimming the cloth to best advantage. A gentleman can enjoy a refreshing drink in the Club Room whilst the final adjustments are made to his new attire.

**Ground Floor:** The large revolving doors of the Grand Emporium debouch into the Main Hall, from which gilded staircases and ornate lifts ascend to the other five floors. The shopper is greeted by waves of scent from the perfume and toiletries counters located here.

**First Floor:** Artfully cut crystal glass, hand decorated plates and fine soft furnishings abound on the first floor.

**Second Floor:** Childrenswear, babywear and toys. The second floor is paradise for children and adults alike, a place where hundreds of pounds can easily be spent on knick-knacks that the average city dweller could only ever dream of.

**Third Floor:** Ladieswear, millenary, haberdashery and other products for the discerning woman about town. The Select Brasserie also occupies a goodly area of the fourth floor.

**Fourth Floor:** Mainly occupied by the extensive menswear department, the fourth floor also contains the sporting goods department.

**Fifth Floor:** All items for the home, from a set of cutlery to a complete kitchen can be found here. In-house artisans and craftsmen will hand-make items to order in a staggering range of materials.

**Sixth Floor:** Home to the snug but expansive Crystal Tearooms and the highly regarded Grand Emporium restaurant, the entire floor brims with exotic smells, clouds of tea vapour and the chatter of the money classes.

## Security/military presence

As befits its elevated status, the Grand Emporium maintains many squadrons of discrete guards and even more discrete store detectives to prevent the entry of undesirables and to see that none of the valuable stock is subjected to the 'five finger discount'. Ordinary guards are attired in plush green uniforms and wire-stiffened caps of soft, tanned dogskin.



Depending on their seniority and length of service, they will be adorned with greater or lesser amounts of gold and silver braid. Guards are always immaculately turned out, as any transgression of the strict rules governing appearance is punished by the docking of pay. Although not permitted to carry weapons, they do carry substantial coshes with which to subdue anyone attempting to 'make a scene'.

On the other hand, the store detectives are an entirely different proposition...

Drab, grey and anonymous, they blend in with the crowds so completely as to be unnoticeable. The best of them could follow you around all day and you would never notice. Always dressed in the most bland and boring clothes, they are masters and mistresses of stealth and perception. There is a gentleman's agreement with the Provosts that the store detectives are allowed to carry firearms, as long as they do not use them outwith the precincts of the Grand Emporium.

## highlighted location

### the select brasserie

**Description:** Opulent Eatery

The place to be for ladies who lunch, for couples engaged in intimate rendezvous, for those who appreciate the fine tea and excellent cakes, the Select Brasserie is the place to see and be seen. Elegant arched windows overlook the boulevards and lanes of Brightlights, their artfully cut facets maximising the natural light illuminating the interior of the restaurant. Each table comes equipped with its own brilliantly polished samovar to dispense hot tea at the merest press of a lever. Gently hissing pipes, polished and shining, lead up into the ceiling, bring water into the samovars, always making sure they are full to the brim.

Subtle and well-trained staff keep a careful eye on the table, always making sure their wealthy customers are cared for to the highest possible standards. Whether it be for a full meal from the superb kitchens or simply a light afternoon tea, the staff treat all customers with the same level of deference and humility.

If you are lucky enough to be a regular customer at the select, your table preference will be discretely noted, your preferred cakes always on hand and your favourite serving girl or boy on hand to attend to any additional requirements you might have. All in all, the Select Brasserie is a dining experience everyone should have the opportunity to sample at least once!

## highlighted personality

Jim Lovegrove

**Age:** 56

**Height/Build:** 5' 10"/Average

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Brown/Brown

**Occupation:** Store Detective

**Affiliations:** The Grand Emporium

Lovegrove has worked for the Grand Emporium for as long as he can remember. So adept at blending in and remaining utterly anonymous that people can walk right by him without even noticing his presence. A legend amongst the other store detectives, he has apprehended more thieves than any other individual in the history of the Emporium. Yet, for all his talents, Lovegrove is a man at a loss. In his quest to be the ultimate in anonymity, he has started to forget who he is. He scarcely remembers his own name and what has happened in his life. His mind is entirely occupied with the business of his job. Conversations are carried out in the same dull monotone, a blank voice without a hint of emotion.

He does remember parts of his life: growing up amongst the barges and boats of Long Pond, the girl who left him for a local gang leader, his first nervous day as a guard at the Emporium. Beyond that, little seeps through into his consciousness. At the end of the day, he goes home to his tiny flat in Brightlights, a dwelling generously provided by his grateful employers, eats a simple meal and goes to bed, never bothering to read newspapers or watch TV.

Jim is a blank canvas of a man, a human shadow devoid of life, love or emotion. Some say it is all an act, all the better to do his job. Others worry about Jim and try to get close, to no avail.



# the harrow

**Region:** Lat 5, Ring 5

**Status:** Religious prison and place of penance

**Law:** Harsh, religious

**Wealth:** Low

## OVERVIEW

*"And lo did Our Lord, the Great Heavenly Architect, make plain his desire for the race of man. No more shall we suffer the heretic or the blasphemer. Neither shall we seek to tolerate their presence in the midst of His subjects. And so did the great Creator Of All decree that we, His servants, should construct a place where the heretics and blasphemers could take their leave and learn the error of their sinful ways.*

*In His Wisdom did the Great Architect hold forth to His Prophets and decree that this monument to His almighty forgiveness should be built in black stone and hard iron and it should be raised by the sweat of mans brow and the toil of his back.*

*In time, the Prophets did cause this mighty construction to be raised as a sign to all of their piety and adherence to the word of God. And thus were penitents admitted to the sacred halls of this Holy place to admit their sins and serve penance for same.*

*And the Lord, in his infinite mercy, did decree that those who felt within themselves that they had sinned could come unto this place and have their path to His Heavenly City washed clean of degradation.*

*The Lord did also lay down the laws by which those who had sinned against his Church should be punished and made to serve penance. A court of His most worthy Cardinals should sit in judgement of the suppliant and mete out justice according to His Holy Writ.*

*These highest and most respected Cardinals, sitting in Holy Conclave, will have final power over the fate of the suppliant and decide his punishment in the Holy Halls of the edifice which God Himself has commanded raised.*

*And in these Holy Halls shall the penitents be cleansed of their sin and degradation through prayer, contemplation and excruciation.*

*And it was forsworn that this place shall forevermore be known as The Harrow."*



Built in black stone and slabs of iron, The Harrow is the ultimate place of penitence and repentance for the adherents of the Third Church of God the Architect. Whether is be through voluntary entrance to the darkened halls or through the labyrinthine processes of the Session Courts of Committal, a goodly number of people pass through the portals of the Harrow. Some never leave.

Overall, the building has a ramshackle, somewhat disjointed and lopsided look. It has, over the years, served a multitude of functions: palace, prison, fortress, and storehouse, to name but a few. The rise of the TCoGtA led to its current usage as a place of contemplation and penitence. The original tiered structure has sprouted additional rooms, lean-tos, gantries, wings and towers like fungus on a wharf piling. The old structure is cluttered with centuries of additions, repairs and add-ons.

Inside the Harrow, it is a maze of corridors, spiralling out from the central hall, echoing and dusty. The only sounds are the breathy sighing of the wind and the muted clank of the penitents' chains. As you proceed higher into the structure, it becomes increasingly rickety and unstable, with rotting banisters, crumbling stairs and precarious dormers. The topmost levels are abandoned and bereft, with only the wind sweeping in through ragged holes and broken windows. Beneath the Harrow, there are cells, vaults, galleries and tunnels. Ancient storehouses reside here, corroded lumps of machinery and the detritus of hundreds of years of habitation. On the sub-surface levels, there are also penitential cells, some for simple imprisonment, others for those whose sins dictate they must undergo physical excruciation.

There are two means by which a follower of the TCoGtA can end up within the precincts of the Harrow. They can either recognise their sins and aberrations and commit themselves for a period of contemplation and penitence or they can be judged by the Session Courts of Committal, the highest judgmental body in the Church.



Those who have chosen self committal generally have an easier time of it, merely being chained and forced to adhere to a strict regime of prayer, fasting and inner contemplation. Those who have been judged are generally the worst kind of sinner or have performed acts of heresy. Their punishment in the Harrow can range from simple imprisonment to horrible physical excruciations carried out by the skilled and dedicated Deacons of Iron. However, it is important to remember that the Harrow is not, strictly speaking, a prison or place of torture. The majority of penitents go to the Harrow of their own volition, seeking spiritual enlightenment or forgiveness for their sins. It must be admitted the arcane practices of the Deacons of Iron do lend a sinister air to the place, but the overwhelming majority of the TCoGtA followers view the Harrow with awe, reverence and respect.

## Security/Military Presence

As befits an important institution of the Church, The Harrow is guarded by a corps from the Lay Reserves Martial who stand ready to defend this spiritually vital building against heretics and non-believers. Heretical uprisings such as the Malhouvington Heresy proved the need for armed troops to be stationed at The Harrow, as the thick walls of the building would have made it a strongpoint for the heretics and very costly to re-take for the Reserves. Luckily, the guards are eternally vigilant.

## highlighted location

### the gun room

**Description:** Ancient gun emplacement

Unbeknownst to most inhabitants (both temporary and permanent) of the Harrow, there exists a room (or more accurately, a series of connected rooms) near the top of the building containing ancient artillery. Collectively known as the Gun Room, these squat cannons have lain mute for as long as anyone can remember. A few select members of the Lay Reserves Martial sometimes check the guns and oil all the necessary moving parts but other than that, they lie undisturbed and silent. How these fairly sizeable pieces of ordnance were positioned so far up the Harrow is cause for speculation. Even more worrying is the weight. The crumbling nature of the upper levels of the build leads to speculation that the sheer mass of the

guns could one day cause the entire top section of the edifice to come crashing down. Those in the know are at a loss as to how to resolve this problem, short of hiring massively expensive aerostats to winch the guns from their cradles.

The few rounds of ammunition which are still extant are kept in armoured, locked bins near massive hoists. The only keys to the bins are held by the current commander of the Lay Reserves Martial forces stationed in The Harrow. Were it necessary, the guns could potentially be brought into action with minimal delay. But why would anyone want to bring these fearsome pieces of artillery into action in the first place?

## highlighted personality

### brother gatekeeper

**Age:** Unknown

**Height/Build:** 5' 4"/Tubby

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Slimy green/Black

**Occupation:** Servant of the Third Church

**Affiliations:** Third Church of God the Architect

Even though there are numerous ways in to The Harrow, the most impressive and important entrance is the Gate of Supplication. Responsibility admitting penitents devolves to the august office of Brother Gatekeeper. While individual gatekeepers come and go, the position remains the same. Gatekeepers are never referred to by name, only by the title of their office.

The current Brother Gatekeeper is a pugnacious little man, obsessed by his own self-importance and the feeling of power which his position gives him. His attitude towards any and all penitents is nothing short of abusive. He doles out insults and deprecations with gay abandon, seeing all those who pass through the gateway as heretics, sinners and heathens. Although never armed, he carries the massive keys to the gate, stout iron rods which can easily be used to prod and bludgeon anyone who displeases him. For many who have revisited the Harrow over the years, the attitude of successive Brother gatekeepers never seems to change and this one is no different from the others: a minor functionary puffed up with the smug look common to minor power wielders everywhere.





# the library

**Region:** Lat 4, Ring 8

**Status:** Desolate Former Library

**Law:** None

**Wealth:** None

## overview

"Moynihan? Moynihan! Where are you? Help me! Hel..."

The white death swirled. The atmosphere was choked thick with dust. It filled the air like an abrasive soup. The howling grew louder, the scientist's screams for help drowned out in the desiccating white dust storm.

Suddenly overcome, the once shouting figure staggered to the ground, coughing and spluttering. His career was, literally, about to end in ruins. He had only taken his mask off for a moment, to better see the fountain and the boulevard. The air had been crystal clear, and he could see the Arch at the edge of the City. 180 degrees from there was the smog of Folly Hills, somewhere far distant, due north. A Folly on the Hills pointing here, but why? Then suddenly without warning a whitestorm had started up and roared quickly to a howling gale. Now the inquisitive researcher would be dead within the minute, and within a few weeks he would be part of the dust too.

"Fer God's sake, ye bloody fool. Feckin' mask, man. Feck'in m'ask. M'ask!"

The goggled figure of Shane Moynihan, swearing, slid sure-handedly across the smooth marbled ground, his gloved hand grabbed hold of the foolish scientist by the foot and dragged him unceremoniously back down the steps. The dull cracking of bone on marble was followed by the opening and shutting of a heavy door.

Inside, it looked like an old library shorn of books. Most of the Library was open to the elements, but not here. Here they were safe and could wait for the storm to pass.

The long-coated figure turned the scientist over.

"Ye feckin' mad, man? Feckin' mask!" Moynihan waved a facemask in an overly animated fashion. He put it down and reached into a leathered bag, producing a glass bottle of a clear viscous liquid from within.

"Drink! It'll do ye good, better than water. We go to the Arch when this has passed and don't ever take yer mask off again. Not here. Here it's Moynihan's rules, y'understand?"



The Library is the name given to one of the most desolate, austere and dangerous places in The City. It was once a library, but what books were once kept here no one knows. Certainly there are no books here now. All that remains of them are yard-deep drifts of dust. Thick silt blows around like mist, and is arranged in banks and dunes, here and there.

Frequently dust storms blow up out of nowhere and smooth the marble stone of the Library. When they stop the stark, empty and polished elegance of the Library is again shown to anyone brave, or stupid, enough to come here.

So, why would the occasional traveller visit the Library? Researchers from Longshore University and other high-thinking corporates believe that knowledge is power. If they were to find a hidden cache of books here that predated the Shift then they would be very powerful indeed. It is a fool's errand. For as much as anyone has searched here, there is nothing left from before the Shift save the solid and intimidating buildings that stand here. At least, that is the accepted belief.

To the very south of this area is the Arch. A massive triumphal monument parallel to the Nothing canal facing starkly out of The City. Between its columns you could almost imagine an army of angels marching into, or out of, The City, depending on your religious beliefs. Some cults say you ascend should you walk through the Arch. You certainly disappear, that much has been proved.



However, the Arch is not easy to reach even if it is easy to see from all over the Library. Leading directly to it is a long boulevard, the best part of a quarter-mile across that runs the entire length of the burgh. In the middle of the boulevard, half-way to the Arch is a grand and waterless fountain. In the centre of the fountain a human-scale statue of a robed woman, her right breast bared, points with a spear due north. Atop her head is a laurel wreath and her eyes are open staring starkly ahead, her back to the Arch.

The boulevard is death itself. It is open and exposed and its normally peaceful state belies the danger of the whitestorms that can start without warning. Rumours say that rare survivors have seen lights dancing in the whitestorms and the hissing crack of devils themselves as they feast on the flesh of anyone caught within the storms.

Either side of the boulevard is the Library itself. The buildings are grand and elegant, though mainly split asunder. Their scale dwarfs anyone who looks upon them, they seem almost built for people ten times the height of a man. Inside there are vast rows of stone shelving where books, presumably, once stood. Staircases and arched windows

feature in every room. The roofs are mostly destroyed and the winds blow dust from room to room.

In some places there are rooms that have been buried deep under rubble and silt. It is these rooms that most interest book hunters, or anyone wanting to hide away from the rest of The City. And there are some empty rooms sealed with strong, heavy doors.

## Security/military presence

None. There is no military or police force foolish enough to try and claim this burgh as their own. The dust storms of the Library easily provide as much security as this area needs. Anything, or anyone, careless enough to wander about the Library risks death in a sudden and withering cloud of white death. And all that will be left behind are large calcified chunks that will be worn to finer dust in time. One individual who does stay here is Shane Moynihan, a self-appointed guide to the Library. He knows the area better than anyone else, but that is not to say that he knows it very well. Moynihan has a set of rules that he lives by that have kept him alive here so far.



## highlighted location

### the reading room

**Description:** Desiccated archive

Scientists come here from Longshore University hoping to find pre-Shift books that may give clues to the history of The City. All that has been found so far are several yard-deep drifts of dust that were once books. Still, the investigators come looking through each building with great care.

The Reading Room is one such building. It has yet to yield anything significant for the academics who come here. These men of science risk life and limb on the hope of finding a life-changing book. All they find is a ruined building consisting of large open reading areas, set amid grand staircases and massive rows of library shelves. At one time this building could have housed an unthinkable amount of information. A sight that often stuns anyone who sees it.

The basement, buried under yards of fine, white silt is poorly explored and perhaps contains intellectual riches beyond an academic's wildest dreams. Or perhaps not.

## highlighted personality

### Shane Moynihan

**Age:** 34

**Height/Build:** 6' 4"/Powerful

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Green/Bald

**Occupation:** Ghostfighter/Library Guide

**Affiliations:** Longshore University.

A gregarious and confident man, Moynihan has appointed himself as a guide to the Library. He settled here some years ago initially to lie low, from who or what he won't say. He had heard rumours of the hostile atmosphere and laughed at the wild speculation about the dangers of the area. Surely it couldn't be that bad he had thought at the time, after all he had survived the worst that the Contested Grounds could throw at him.

Since then Moynihan has seen friends and visitors come and go, and the majority of them have been torn to dust by the whitestorms that spring up on the boulevard and sweep through open parts of the Library.

Consequently he always wears goggles to protect his eyes and is never without a mask in his long protective coat. Over the years Moynihan has developed a chain of bolt holes and safe places to hide in the Library. He has proved to be the only reliable option for travelling through this area safely and has gained valuable contacts with academics at Longshore University as a result.

What Moynihan won't tell you is that he has seen the strange dancing lights and heard the sharp cracks in the whitestorms. Neither will he admit that he feels he is not the only one staying here either.

## the lighthouse

**Region:** Lat 1, Ring 3

**Status:** Artefact of interest

**Law:** Low

**Wealth:** Low

## overview

*Joseph looked up at the tower through the powering rain beating down on his head. He could just make out the figure of Thomas, their newest member, scrambling his way up the side of the gigantic structure.*

*Surrounding the tower, he could see all the other members of Blitzen bowing their heads in veneration, as the first clap of thunder rung out across The City. Soon it would be time.*

*A bright light flashed in Joseph's face and at first he thought the lightning had already struck but it was just Thomas waving a flashlight to indicate that he had got to the top.*

*They waited.*



*In silence.*

*In the cold, wet dawn.*

*"Brothers" Joseph yelled across the wind and rain, "the time has come again to take the test".*

*"Take the test!" they replied in automatic unison.*

*"This morn our newest member will offer himself to the storm, to prove himself worthy to be taken to the underworld, where utopia!".*

*"Utopia!" they replied in ecstatic glee.*

*At that moment he looked to the heavens in praise of the storm. Lightning streaked across the sky and hit the tower, coursing through Thomas holding onto the outside of the metal cage atop the structure. He fell.*

*His charred and broken body fell beside Joseph, who leaned over to check his pulse.*

*"Lucky bastard" he whispered, and then turned back to the congregation.*



Located at the foot of the Folly Hills, this structure resembles an old factory chimney with some sort of glass dome on top. The inside of the dome is accessible from an old, and now rather rickety metal rung ladder, leading up the north face of the tower. Near the top the metal ladder becomes rope, making the last part of the climb hard on those who don't have a lot of upper body strength. The view from the top is quite spectacular, giving any citizen brave enough to make the climb a view over a large section of The City.

The structure is surrounded by what looks like a series of once elegant buildings, now falling into disrepair. Bits of statues and faded sculptures protrude from the corners of most of the buildings, but none of them are now intact. The area has less trouble than most, partly due to its appalling weather conditions, but some have tried to make their home here, and have found they can grow some edible plants and get fish from the nearby canal, scraping together just enough to live on.

The tower in the middle has been dubbed 'The Lighthouse' by this local populace for one reason alone.

'The Lighthouse' sits in an area high in electrical storm activity, i.e. lightning. When a lightning storm occurs in the vicinity of 'The Lighthouse' it tends to get hit, due partly to its entirely metal top, and partly for being the tallest structure in the vicinity. When this happens the entire top of The Lighthouse glows and crackles. After a few minutes the metal cage will glow brighter and brighter until it illuminates the entire area, then just as suddenly it will go dark, and a pulse of light can be traced working its way quickly down the centre of the old tower, disappearing when it contacts the ground.

This structure is revered by several of the locals, and a cult has sprung up round The Lighthouse, calling themselves Blitzen. They gather round it during the worst weather, giving praise to its seemingly mystical powers, believing that the light that disappears underground are devoted souls going to the world beneath where salvation awaits. To this end their rituals involve touching the metal cage when lightning hits to see if they are worthy to be 'taken'. Those who survive call themselves 'strikes' believing that the only way they will become worthy is to spread light through The City, to illuminate the darkness in the human soul. Many of the cult members are accomplished engineers and can be seen going about The City trying to rig up street lamps.

Exactly what The Lighthouse is for, or what happens during these frequent electrical storms, is a source of much speculation, apart from amongst Blitzen of course. Longshore University have sent many groups out to study the structure in the hope of discerning its purpose, and until recently have only been able to establish that the top of the structure is post-Shift, and the tower pre-Shift. In the last few months however, a particularly enthusiastic student has begun an archaeological dig to discover where the lighting strikes go when they hit the ground.

A hole drilled into the tower has revealed a complex collection of heavy-duty wires, and so far the excavations has uncovered large coils of sheet metal with similar looking wires extruding from them. These coils are part of an early attempt by post-Shift engineers, to provide energy to the power-bereft City.





The gigantic coils of metal are huge capacitors, with electrolyte soaked paper sandwiched between them. They can store vast amounts of power, and are connected by a series of interconnecting copper cables running right under the Folly Hills area in a wide arc leading away from The Lighthouse. If anyone could harness this power they would gain great sway and control in the area, and no doubt a lot of jealous enemies.

## Security/Military Presence

No official security is set up around The Lighthouse, though recent visitors from Longshore University have brought personal bodyguards with them, just to keep away nosey visitors, if nothing else. Blitzen do maintain guards near the tower, but they are lightly armed and afraid of confrontation. They are enough to scare away other vagrants in the area but not for the bodyguards that Longshore bring along.

## highlighted location

### blitzen headquarters

**Description:** Cult meeting place

To call it a headquarters is maybe a bit of a kindness to the organisation, it's more a pub with a private back room. The 'Thunderclap' pub, located on the ring of buildings that surrounds 'The Lighthouse' has been the Blitzen headquarters ever since the organisation formed. Comprising of a tiny bar and a large back room, as well as several rooms upstairs where members can stay, is entirely run by the organisation.

It is here that Blitzen do deals to keep the money coming in for food and basic amenities, and hold there nightly sermons, praying for a lightning storm to come so that they can be 'taken.' These gatherings are open to anyone within the community and most nights you will find a large cross section of the local populace making their way to these gatherings. Only about a third of any given gathering will be true believers. Others come for the warmth, company and occasional free food the group provides. Some come because, in the bleakness of The City it is nice to feel a sense of belonging.

The pub has become a shining beacon of light amongst the darkness of this part of The City, many members of the society being dedicated to maintaining the elaborate set of lights that festoon the outside of the building. At night the whole area is lit up, shining like hope in the darkest of places.

## highlighted personality

### Joseph Donner

**Age:** 41

**Height/Build:** 6' 1"/Slim

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blue-grey/Black

**Occupation:** Blitzen High Priest

**Affiliations:** Blitzen

Leader, figurehead and founder of the Blitzen movement, Joseph first came across the strange edifice that is The Lighthouse, whilst stumbling home drunk. A fierce storm was raging overhead, and as he approached he saw a man struck by the lightning that arced through the clouds overhead. Witnessing the transfer of power down the main shaft of the tower, he believed he had seen the man's spirit go to a better place, and thus Blitzen was born.

At first many took him to be madman and delusional, but some listened and it wasn't long before his suicide cult was up and running. Every day you can see Joseph and his followers praying at the foot of The Lighthouse, hoping that their supplication will be answered by being 'taken' during the next storm.

Strongly motivated to kill himself, deeply disturbed but charismatic and a brilliant orator, Joseph's cult is growing in popularity and number. However every time he is not taken, Joseph wonders if what he believes is real, and how long it will be before he is seen as truly worthy.





# Punchlake power station

**Region:** Lat 8, Ring 6

**Status:** Power production facility

**Law:** Very strict

**Wealth:** Moderate

## Overview

"Oh, how we planned and plotted! We schemed and surmised confidant in our will. We resolved to bring down the monster, to strike at its very heart. Our mission was set, our hearts prepared for the sacrifice.

An evil lurks at the heart of that towering giant; an evil wrapped up in method and madness. That devilish band, that motley assortment of mumbling technocrats. The Ancient & Honourable Guild of Fulgurators. Honourable? They know nothing of honour. They take and never give. They subjugate the people and dole out offerings in miserly amounts.

We cut through the decaying fence and made our way into the precincts of the dark place. We had heard so much of the vaunted vigilance of the guards, but we slipped past them like shadows, unseen amongst the tangles and wreckage. Bags of explosive we carried, great charges to destroy the very core of that beast which now loomed above us.

Clasping our weapons, we advanced. None of us spoke, we barely even breathed. Twice we were almost spotted by the dull-eyed minions who serve the monster; twice we eluded their gaze. It took us many long hours to advance cautiously, moving scant distances, watching, and waiting.

We came upon an area of rail lines. The rusted tracks ran here and there, seemingly without order or design. They thrummed and hummed with what we thought were the emanations of the hideous pile. Then we saw a great eye advancing towards us, a blinding light coming from nowhere. The eye emitted a horrible sound, a roaring, screeching wail. The rails thrummed all the harder.

Our quandary was great. Do we stay and hope to remain unseen by the eye or do we advance in the hope of evading it? The majority chose to remain where we were, skulking under machinery. We made the wrong decision. The eye belonged to a serpentine fiend from the very pits of darkness. It shouted defiance and rage at our small group as it came toward us.

Grinding to a halt, the hellion spat fire towards our hiding place. Showers of hailshot descended upon us, rendering our fragile bodies in twain. My brothers in arms died under that horrific onslaught, their heads cleaved from their bodies by the breath of the serpent. Minions were disgorged from under its swollen carapace, grey coats flapping and lamps weaving in the night air.

I must admit cowardice. I fled the scene, weaving and ducking all the way, chased by the minions in grey, their barking hounds ever on my trail. Scarcely did I stop when I flung myself bodily through the fence, continuing my headlong rush down the lanes and alleys. Eventually, I slumped in a forsaken corner, all breath and life dragged out of me by the pursuit. I call that towering place my nemesis and one day, I will defeat it."



Rising above the banks of the Grand Canal like a drunken giant, the four great cooling towers of Punchlake have become a landmark in the north-eastern regions of The City. One of the proudest achievements of the Ancient & Honourable Guild of Fulgurators, the station has been in continuous operation for over two centuries, its ancient turbines spinning constantly to provide electricity to the demanding masses.

A squat, massive brick structure with a slim cooling tower at each corner, Punchlake has a looming, intimidating presence, not helped by the rusty barbed wire of the fences which surround it. From the south, railway lines plunge from trestles and arches into tunnels that lead directly into the bowels of the station, bringing in workers and carefully machined, jealously guarded spare parts. Overhead, the massive main cables loop across the fences and out into The City, the blackened iron pylons marching through the tenements and over the canals.



At the heart of the building lie two decaying, decrepit fusion reactors which suck water from underground reservoirs and canals and spit it out as superheated steam into the turbines which turn the howling dynamos. The main turbine hall is a deafening cacophony of whirling turbines, screaming generators, rattling chains and wheeling cranes. Fulgurators go about their business, monitoring dials verniers, checking valves and watching temperatures. Twenty-five hours a day they keep their watch, always on guard for the slightest sign of illness in their deadly charge.

A substantial proportion of the energy produced by Punchlake is siphoned off into the railway network, powering the vital engines and lighting the rickety carriages. Consequently, the power station can be considered one of the three most important Fulgurator sites in The City, alongside CrossBar terminus and Dark Cross Railway Yards. If Punchlake were to fail, the very authority of the Guild would be at stake. If it should cease to produce power, then the Fulgurators know full well that they would have to go cap-in-hand to the macrocorps, begging for a trickle of precious energy. Punchlake can never be allowed to fall, not while there is a single Fulgurator left alive in The City.

## Security/Military Presence

As one of the main generating facilities of the Guild, Punchlake demands a substantial security force. Within the precincts of the power station, armed Fulgurators and Transit Militia patrol with heightened vigilance. The gates, railway entrances and tunnels are watched by hard-eyed, lantern jawed men and women, ever on the lookout for insurgents and infiltrators.

Access to the hallowed halls of Punchlake is severely restricted by the Guild, partially to prevent sabotage, partially to preserve their own self-created mystique. Only Guild members in good standing are permitted access to any of the areas involved in the production of electricity and even then, their movements are watched with a steely eye. Paranoia is rife within the organisation and nowhere is this more apparent than in Punchlake.

Such is desire to protect Punchlake, that the Guild has even gone so far as to dedicate an entire armoured train to its defence.

Usually kept in the engine sheds beneath the power station itself, the armoured engine and carriages of the 'Victorious Imperative' can be rolled out onto the tracks which surround the station to pound infiltrators with its massed guns. Mounting a variety of sparklock cannon, cartridge machineguns and other, more arcane, weapons, the 'Victorious Imperative' is a black armoured monster that occasionally rears up from its underground lair to breathe fire and fury. Unsurprisingly, the train has developed a folklore all its own.

## highlighted location

### Conduit Workshop No.2

**Description:** Large repair and fabrication shop

Maintaining the good working order of Punchlake is vital to the Guild. Without its continued operation, there would be serious doubts as to the survival of the Fulgurators as an organisation. Consequently, the power station has a vast number of workshops and small factories dedicated to maintaining the reactors. One of the most vital is Conduit Workshop No.2.

No.2 houses some of the most skilled artisans and engineers in the Guild, men who work on the very heart of the power station. It is here that pieces of the reactors themselves come for repair or replacement, where vital parts are laboriously machined or painstakingly designed from scratch. While many other functioning parts of Punchlake can be manufactured in other locations, it is only here that some of the most key elements can be constructed, such is the paranoia of the Guild.

The great hall of Conduit Workshop No.2 contains row upon row of lathes, drills and presses, all with their own Guild member striving to complete his assigned task.

On a mezzanine surrounding the hall are the draughtsmen and engineers, working away at drawing boards or engaged in furious discussion over the exact dimensions of a flange or washer. Only the most trusted Fulgurators are allowed access to this valuable location. Yet many of those who work here die relatively young, their time not yet come.





Senior members of the Guild are cagey about the reasons for this. They posit that such are the pressures of responsibility, their vital essence is used up far faster than any normal man. However, there is no shortage of volunteers for the place and the best and the brightest of the Guild compete for the high honour of serving in Conduit Workshop No.2.

## highlighted personality

### brother lachlan carraway

**Age:** 29

**Height/Build:** 5' 10"/Slim

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Green/Blonde (shaven)

**Occupation:** Fulgurator

**Affiliations:** Fulgurators and the Transit Militia

A strong, vital young man, Brother Carraway acts as a liaison between the Transit Militia and the Guild in Punchlake. This is an often thankless task, as relations between the Fulgurators and their paramilitary police force sometimes break down to an astonishing degree. Many Guild members refuse to have anything to do with the Militia, particularly when they have to deal with female officers. The misogyny of the upper echelons is well known and they take a dim view of the Transit Militia allowing women to join their ranks.

On the other hand, Carraway takes a more pragmatic view. The Militia is crucial to the Guild and many of its notable officers have been women. He has by no means become inured with the overarching sexism of the Guild and has a more balanced outlook on things. He acts as a go between, peacemaker and diplomat, soothing inflamed tempers and ensuring the continued co-operation of Transit officers.

Wiry and energetic, he maintains a small office near to the underground sheds which hold the 'Victorious Imperative'. An office filled with clicking dingins, hand-written reports and almost illegible ledgers. Daily he meets with Chief Inspector Cassandra Horth, his opposite number in the Militia. They take tea and talk of matters unrelated to Fulgurators business. The hard-bitten Horth has a motherly fondness for Carraway and a respect for his undoubted abilities. Were it not for this relationship, the fragile kinship between the two groups would be well on the road to dissolution.

## Soulsgate debtors prison

**Region:** Lat 1, Ring 3

**Status:** TCMAA debtors prison

**Law:** Very strict

**Wealth:** Minimal

## overview

"Dear Mayor Hardgadley,

*It is with great hope, but no little trepidation, that I write to you begging but moments of your valuable time. I fully realise that an august personage such as yourself must have many issues of importance to deal with and I would not presume upon your well-known good nature if I were not sure of my own unfortunate position.*

*Before I carry on, I must recommend to you the good offices of Warden Hegel, a most kindly man who has provided me with this means of communicating the nature of my unjust incarceration to you. He is a man worthy of regard within the Authority and I would beseech you to look favourably upon him.*

*As for my own situation, I have been most unjustly imprisoned with the walls of Soulsgate these past seasons. My imprisonment is no fault of my own. The mother of my former wife looks ill upon me and has sought manufacture a case of heinous debt against me. I can assure you, your honour, that I am a man of good standing and have never once defaulted on any individual who has been of good enough nature to advance me a sum of money.*

*The mother of my former wife paid me a regular stipend for assisting her in her business (a fishmongers of long standing in Folly Hills). When my lady wife and I separated, I was duly informed that I was in debt to the tune of two hundred pounds. The mother of my ex-wife produced documentation (which I believe to be a forgery) that intimated that the stipend had in actual fact been a loan to myself and not for services rendered.*

*I most humbly request that you, as a gentleman of high-standing and great regard within the Three Canals, take an interest in my case. Sir, I am at my wits end.*



*I have been incarcerated with common criminals of the worst kind and I fear that I cannot survive much longer within these black walls.*

*I am, sir, your most obedient servant,*

*Aled Hammerkind"*

*Letter found floating in Spiltwater Canal.*



Crouched amongst the back alleys and intimate byways of Folly Hills lies one of the Three Canals most feared penal institutions: Soulsgate. Here, those who cannot or will not pay their Council Tax, owe money to well-favoured businesses or have fines levied against them in the courts are imprisoned to work off their debt and pay their penance to society. They are sent to Soulsgate from all walks of life; well-heeled dilettantes rub shoulders with impoverished labourers and respectable businessmen share a food trough with common criminals.

Soulsgate is one of a handful of debtors prisons scattered about the TCMA; all exhibit the same general features,

yet none have such a fearsome reputation. No other debtors prison has so many, or so frequently used, punishment isolators. No other place has such a harsh, unbending regime. And none of the other TCMA prisons sits at the heart of so many horrific tales: Stories abound of abuse, molestation, murder and mutilation by guards and prisoners.

If anything, conditions in Soulsgate are worse than those in the feared mental asylum of Inferno. Many who have never seen the inside of this looming brick structure say this is impossible. In truth, they are quite wrong. At least in most parts of Inferno, the inmates are cared for to a certain extent (in so much as they get at least one regular meal a day and have access to what can charitably be called sanitary facilities). In Soulsgate, the washhouses are only for those who can afford to bribe the guards with favours of the most lewd and grotesque kind. All prisoners, apart from those in the dreaded solitary confinement isolators, are fed from massive troughs, filled daily with a rancid, putrid slop. Murder, rape and assault are all too common in Soulsgate. Long term prisoners form themselves into gangs, as much for their own protection as to persecute others.



The prison itself is constructed from the same black bricks as most of the rest of Folly Hills. The curtain walls are over thirty feet in height, topped with rusted iron spikes and rolls of corroded barbed wire. The walls are scarred with gouges, scorch marks and craters, evidence of years of attempted prison breaks and rescue attempts. There are only two exits and entrances to Soulsgate: the main gate facing on to Hanging Street and the 'dead gate', a narrow, gridded portal which empties into the Spiltwater Canal, a refuse ridden capillary which runs behind the prison. The main body of the prison is a single octagonal structure, pierced by a few grimy windows and topped with a faceted dome of rusted iron plates. The four above-ground storeys contain the majority of prisoners, housed in communal cells crammed with upwards of fifty unfortunates.

## Security/Military Presence

Being a warden in a debtor's prison is not a position of high regard. Guards and their families are shunned and despised by others in their community, the guards of Soulsgate even more so than most. They are dregs of society, thugs, bullies, sadists and drunkards. Armed with fearsome double-barrel blunderbusses and stout truncheons, the hundred or so guards rarely venture into the body of the prison, keep themselves to the observation rooms, kitchens, workshops and viewing galleries. Only when a particularly violent disturbance threatens will they venture into the communal areas, hefting their beaten iron shields and brutal clockwork-powered electric incapacitators.

## highlighted location

### the Opticon

**Description:** Chief Surveillance Post

Suspended from the domed roof of the prison is the Opticon, the central place of observation for the wardens. Huge plates of glass and iron spars make up the dodecahedral shape of the Opticon, providing excellent views over the central area of the prison. Speaking tubes, pneumatic messaging systems and telegraphs connect the place to other parts of the gaol, allowing the observing wardens to summon assistance or warn of danger with ease.

Needless to say, the Opticon is a focus for the hate and bile of the prisoners. They gaze up at the wardens in the glass bubble with unconcealed disdain. Generally, five or six guards are stationed here, alert and eager. They observe keenly through telescopes and binoculars, keeping watch for the slightest hint of trouble. During the not infrequent riots and insurrections, the Opticon becomes the control centre for warden activity, issuing orders to suppression platoons far below. No rioters have ever reached the hallowed sanctuary of the Opticon, but many plot and scheme and long for the day when the glass eye smashes to the floor.

## highlighted personality

### ORSON FELLBROOK

**Age:** 50

**Height/Build:** 5' 6"/Slight

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blue/Grey

**Occupation:** Menial worker

**Affiliations:** Various criminal groups

Once a prisoner in Soulsgate for the crime of defaulting on a loan, Fellbrook now works the wings and halls, pushing his worn broom, making a vain attempt to clean away the filth and ordure of the prison. Upon his release, he found himself strangely dislocated and uneasy, ill at ease with the world outside of Soulsgate. For this reason, he applied for a job as a cleaner, a menial worker. Trusted prisoners would take on most tasks such as this, but some of the wardens took pity on Fellbrook and gave him the meagre job.

However, Fellbrook has an interesting sideline within the walls of Soulsgate. Through various connections from outside, he gains the release of prisoners. He does this by arranging loans from various interests to pay off prisoners' debts. This may seem like a good scheme, but Fellbrook is in league with some very shady individuals. Consequently, when the blinking prisoners emerge from Soulsgate, they find themselves again in a prison of their own making. Those who have paid for their release expect nothing less than indentured servitude, slavery in their factories, forges and plants. The prisoners are greeted with rough hands and unfriendly faces, informed that they now must work hard to pay off the debt which they have incurred.



In this way, release from Soulsgate is no better than incarceration.

The lined, sagging, worn face of Fellbrook, his avuncular manner and easy humour take in many poor unfortunates desperate to get away from the filth and violence of the prison. Little do they know that once they have stepped beyond the walls, this kindly seeming old man has done little to help them and only coerced them into years of backbreaking toil. This is not to say that some of the wardens are unaware of these schemes. Many are in the pay of vested interests in Folly Hills and further afield in the TCMA. They handsomely supplement their wages with back-handers from these interests, making their own lives that little bit easier.

In short, there are always enough desperate souls for Fellbrook to prey on as he pushes his broom through the corridors of Soulsgate.

*It's not right. Pull that oar in son, just for a minute."*

*"So, can't nobody do something 'bout them?"*

*"What's to do? Poor, mad loons. They'll all die off eventually, son. Kill themselves off. And rightly too. There's enough trouble hereabouts without dafties cuttin' themselves up like that. Anyhow, look at those guns they got up there, you think a body would be fool enough to go against them?"*

*"No, Da."*

*"That big one up the top there, that's a culverin, that is. Blow this here boat clean out of the water, it would. And you and me with it, too. No, best to leave them alone and be at peace. Now, you better keep your trap shut when we get back. Your Ma finds out I've been talkin' like this, she'll have my hide, and your's too! You know what she's like."*

*"Yes, Da."*

*"Good lad, knew I could count on you. Now heave to that oar and lets be home, don't want to keep your Ma waitin'."*

## the water fort

**Region:** Lat 8, Ring 5

**Status:** Religiously-controlled fortification

**Law:** Harsh, religious

**Wealth:** Low

### OVERVIEW

*"So what's that place, Da?"*

*"That there's the Water Fort, son. Been here a long time it has."*

*"Does anybody live there, Da?"*

*"They do son, they do. Strange folks live there, folks it best not to ask questions about, you hear?"*

*"Yes Da. Da?"*

*"Yes son?"*

*"Why've I not to ask questions 'bout them?"*

*"Cos they ain't right, that's why. Those folks that live in there, they do bad thing to each other. Mind that oar there, son. Watch that barrel. Good lad."*

*"Look, Da! There's someone up there!"*

*"Don't stare son, they'll put a hex on you, sure as I'm sitting here."*

*"Why they do that?"*

*"Cos they're mad, that's why. All cooped up in that dingy old place, torturing each other, chantin' and somesuch."*

Situated at the confluence of the Red and 5th Ring canals, ownership of the scared outpost has been disputed almost since its very construction over 300 years ago. Built in the dim and distant days of the Water Trade Federation, the Fort served as a waystation for cargo barges, an observation point and, most importantly, a place for collecting taxes and levies on trade along the canals. Since the dissolution of the Federation, this grim fortification has changed hands countless times, serving as a military base, a warehouse, a gambling den and, under its current ownership, a quasi-monastery.

The main body of the Fort is circular in shape, constructed of massive stone blocks, tapering up from the water and pierced by observation points and firing slits. Two (now disused) gun platforms provided the place with its firepower in the form of heavy cannon. In the years since its construction, an additional barracks block, mounted on thick stilts, has been added to provide greater accommodation. All in all, this famous landmark presents a singularly unremarkable and unprepossessing face to the world.

Internally, there was never much to spark the interest of the casual visitor. Brutally functional in design, the interior consisted mostly of ammunition storage rooms, hoists, companionways and dull, cramped rooms serving various purposes.





If anything, the brick built barracks block is even more uninteresting. Monotonously uniform rectangular rooms and iron staircases of utilitarian roughness are the dominating features. Like military architecture all across The City, function comes before form, resulting in a hard, uncompromising environment.

In the current era, the Water Fort has come to serve a new function. In recent decades, ownership swayed back and forth between the TCMA and the RCCR, each seeking to use the building for their own (usually nefarious) ends. As it stands almost equidistant from the two rival areas, neither could make a compelling claim to ownership and the Fort was the site of a number of minor, but significant, skirmishes between the two sides. For now, the RCCR and the TCMA have withdrawn from the Water Fort, being replaced by unlikely new occupants.

The Order of the Unhealing Scar are a radical (some would say militant) offshoot of the Mortal God Church. Whilst they hold true to the basic tenets of the church, they have fashioned their own beliefs from that basic cloth and have established a small, but fanatical, following. They contend that while man is to blame for the death of God, only through suffering, pain and mutilation can man pay penance and usher in a reborn God. Suffice to say the mainstream church finds their practices a little disturbing

and resolutely refuses to acknowledge them as part of their faith. All members of the order are mutilated to a greater or lesser degree. Some are blinded, others are crippled, some hideously scarred. All of these mutilations are carried out at the behest of the penitential supplicant and inflicted by senior members of the order.

## Security/military presence

The Order of the Unhealing Scar is, some would say, a little paranoid. They are fearful of the more mainstream elements of the Mortal God Church, hence their retreat to this easily defensible bastion. The defence of the fort is generally overseen by the younger, more capable members of the order. More senior members are generally too badly mutilated to be of any use in such strenuous activities.

The younger brothers keep watch on the waters surrounding the fort and scan the canal banks with telescopes. Carrying on the tradition of the fort, they have also managed to source a few heavy sparklock jezails, a few sparklock sakers and even a large sparklock culverin from various unknown sources. These are kept in a state of readiness, mounted on the extremities of the fort, in the highest points of the observation tower and, in the case of the single culverin, on one of the old gun platforms.

Other than the occasional pot-shot at a passing RCCR gunsiff, the guns of the Water Fort remain relatively quiet. Such is the nature of the fort, anyone attempting to actually attack the place would be faced with a tough time of it. While not the most skilled fighting force in The City, the Order of the Unhealing Scar are a determined lot. Determined, at least, to hang on to their piece of property. Despite the age and poor condition of the guns, a blast of hailshot from a culverin would make many attackers think twice.



## highlighted location

### the magazine

**Description:** Holy mutilation chamber

Deep in the bowels of the fort, behind feet of stone, brick and iron, lies the long disused main magazine for the now vanished guns. In times past, bags of propellant and cases of explosive shells would be carefully loaded onto the clanking ammunition hoists and carried up to the gun platforms high above. Now that the heavy cannon have been removed, destroyed or rusted into uselessness, the magazine serves a different function. Below the waterline, sealed away from the rest of the fort, it is here that the members of the Order carry out their mutilations.

Senior members of the order gather in the magazine to chant and sign as the supplicant is strapped to one of the crude operating tables. With due reverence, they take up the sacred instruments of surgery and carry out their holy work, the supplicant shielded from pain by his faith and his recitation of the chants. Unfortunately, the faith of the individual being mutilated is not always as strong as it could be and some die before their holy mutilations can be completed. It is obvious to the senior members of the order that those who die during the procedure were unfit to be members of the order in the first place.

## highlighted personality

### Journeyman Uriah Quince

**Age:** 29

**Height/Build:** 5' 11"/Thin

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Blazing blue/Light brown

**Occupation:** Journeyman of the Order of the Unhealing Scar

**Affiliations:** Order of the Unhealing Scar

Relatively un-mutilated by the standards of the order, Journeyman Quince has only been with the brothers for a few years, hence the paucity of serious amputations and scarring. Other than a couple of missing fingers and the lack of his right ear, he appears unharmed. This will not, however, last for long.

Quince is a fanatic, dedicated even by the harsh standards of the order. His eyes glow with the fire of a true believer. In his duties as Captain of the Watch, commanding the younger brothers as they man the defences of the fort, he often stands on the gun platforms in all weathers, lashed with rain and pelted with hail, always keeping watch.

Unlike most supplicants, the senior members of the order have actually had to prevent Quince from undertaking more serious mutilations at this early stage in his career. His desire to have his body ravaged in the name of his faith is tempered by his strong sense of devotion and duty. He sees his position as Captain of the Watch as a holy mission, a mission which must cause him to put his own desires to one side for the time being. He longs for the day when one of the younger apprentices ascends to the rank of Captain and he can then move forward into a glorious world of pain and suffering.



# Law

Laws, and their application, vary widely across The City. A traveller moving from one burgh to the next may find him or her self confronted with a whole new justice system within a canals breadth. This has lead to uncountable unfortunate incidents, perceived miscarriages of justice and blatant misuse of the law. Here follows a discussion of law within The City, both as it applies in broad terms and in specific instances.

## Moral Law

Some idealists would hope that there are a broad set of moral laws which govern the behaviour of man. Sadly, they are mistaken. Even the basic right to life is open to interpretation and abuse. Of course, the vast majority of people do feel that there is something basically wrong with murdering someone. In essence, this can be seen as the bottom layer of moral law. While killing an individual may be unacceptable, there are many layers of reasoning that can be applied to the act.

As an example, in Fogwarren, to kill someone with neither rhyme nor reason is punishable under the law of the burgh. However, if that person has been caught in the act of breaking in to your residence, the homeowner is perfectly within his or her rights to take any action they deem necessary. This is, of course, very open to abuse. There have been cases of the more criminal elements of society using this situation to dispose of their enemies. The enemy is invited round to the residence, and then disposed of on some trumped up allegation. The local constabulary are often powerless to intervene.

There are areas of The City where even the most basic morality breaks down and crumbles. In places such as Dreamingspires or the Contested Grounds, humanity seems to fall apart and wither under an onslaught of horror and degradation. In Dreamingspires, there is absolutely no law. Everyone is at liberty to steal from everyone else, to murder, rape and assault with no fear of any controlling power. This is, perhaps, the ultimate expression of the total breakdown of society in these areas.

## Religious Law

Religions in The City hold sway over the lives of thousands of individuals. Most religions have their own laws and standards of behaviour, even if they are dressed up as edicts, precepts, catechism or whatever.

Religious law can, and does, come in to conflict with secular and military law, as different individuals place their religious beliefs above or below the legal standards of the societies in which they live. In areas (such as Colsetter Parish) which are strictly controlled and run by a given religion, then it is their religious laws which apply without regard to any secular or military law. Indeed, these religions can often have their own particular variations on military law, informed by their religious beliefs. Outside of religiously controlled areas is where the conflicts can occur.

For example, the right of a member of the Lay Reserves Martial of the Third Church of God the Architect is a fundamental part of the scripture of that military order. However, in some areas of The City, the carrying of personal weapons is strictly forbidden (although in the vast majority of places, such laws are flagrantly flouted).



As it is the religious duty of a member of the Reserves is to carry their armaments at all times, merely walking from Church property to another location can (and sometimes does) bring the Church into conflict with the local authorities.

Even on a less obvious scale, belief can often come up against the ambient laws of a given area. In general terms, the larger and more influential the religious institution, the more latitude they have in what they can get away with. Smaller sects and cults would find it very hard to muster any kind of case against a secular authority challenging their laws. Whereas, a body of the scale of the Third Church or Mortal God Church has enough power and influence to have their beliefs and laws considered.

### **Secular Law**

Secular' law covers all those areas not coming under the remit of religious or military law. Sometimes there can be a strong relationship with moral law, but sometimes the laws of an area can be completely amoral and lacking in compassion. Neighbouring burghs can have substantially different legal system, making life somewhat difficult for the casual wanderer. Only in the larger local governments can the legal system be common across a wide area.

Legal systems do not have to be based in a formal network of constabularies, courts, judges, magistrates and so forth. Some are based on clannish loyalties, gang terror or self-perpetuating hierarchies. The basis of the legal system will often give a good guide as to how it operates in society. For example, in Hangside the law is pretty much handled by the Hangsiders gang. They have absolute control over 'justice' within the burgh. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there is the TCMAA.

The legal system of the Three Canals is, like the rest of that confusing organisation, a mind-bendingly complex bureaucracy, with many layers of ward, burgh and superior courts, legions of magistrates, sheriffs and judges, a whole society of advocates, legal representatives and attorneys.

As it is the largest local government in The City, it's worth taking a bit of time to look at the set-up of the legal system in the TCMAA. On the very bottom of the heap are Ward Courts and magistrates. These cover perhaps a few streets or perhaps more in the larger burghs, arbitrating in petty disputes between neighbours, local businesses and very minor transgressors. Each Ward Court is overseen by a magistrate who is elected during the local elections and who may or may not have any legal experience at all.

Above the petty Ward Courts stand the Burgh Courts that cover, as the name may suggest, entire burghs. Overseen by a sheriff who is a legal professional, having served at least ten years (not necessarily consecutively), and is paid a stipend by the TCMAA. The Burgh Courts take on cases such as violent assault, theft, burglary and fraud.

The most senior judicial body within the TCMAA is the Superior Court, the highest lawmaking body. The Judges of the Superior Court have many years of legal training and experience, being repositories of the accumulated knowledge of the TCMAA. These courts deal with the most serious cases: murder, rape, serious fraud and so on.





The time taken to get a case to court can vary widely, sometime taking years as different courts deliberate, pass cases upwards or downwards or even reject the application for a hearing. Rejected applications can be appealed in a lower court, which starting the same laborious, tiring experience all over again.

### **Military Law**

Military law across The City is, like other forms of law, an immensely variable thing. Many professional soldiers adhere to a basic moral code in battle. This involves the sanctity of prisoners of war, the good treatment of said prisoners, the right to surrender and necessity for good treatment by ones superiors. However, there are many who do not adhere to even these most basic strictures.

Nowhere has the disregard for military law become more apparent than in the Contested Grounds. Some soldiers on both sides do uphold the basic soldierly virtues, conducting the war in as decent a manner as they can manage, respecting their enemies as brothers or sisters in arms. Many more cast basic decency and virtue aside, revelling in barbarity and bloodlust. Tales of mass executions, beatings of prisoners and all manner of vile conduct abound. Much of this is down to the unrelenting horror of the war in the Grounds, a conflict which can grind even the toughest warrior down until their only aims are to kill and survive.

The Contested Ground also attracts large numbers of scavengers and mercenaries, freebooters out to make a profit. These individuals and bands have scant regard for the sick, dying or wounded, stripping corpse or even harvesting the equipment from injured troops attempting to make their way back to their own lines. Military law means nothing to these people.

In a broader context, soldier must also face military justice if they have been accused of a transgression of formal military laws. Most of these laws are very basic and a soldier, if found guilty of breaking one, can expect only one punishment: death. Desertion, theft, murder, rape, assaulting a superior officer and many other crimes are punished in the harshest possible fashion. These laws are not exclusive to the Contested Grounds, they can be found in military unit, large and small, across the wide expanse of The City.





Other areas





# Central park

**Region:** Lat 8, Ring 3

**Status:** TCMA parklands

**Law:** Moderately strict

**Wealth:** Moderate-low

## OVERVIEW

"Ah, Burnham! Rather splendid bloom you have there. Something of your own devising?" The figure who was being addressed remained crouched close to the ground, a small pair of shears in one hand and a ball of twine in the other.

"Why yes, Mrs Dennehey, a breed I've been working on for, oh, five years now?"

"Splendid! And what a lovely flower it is too. You should be proud, it's certainly a worthy addition to the gardens." The standing figure leaned over and gave Burnham a jovial slap on the back. Laying down the shears and twine, he raised himself up from the earth and stretched.

"Well, I do my best, Mrs Dennehey. The public do love to come and admire our displays, so we must put on a good show. I remember when old Hake first took me on as his apprentice and said that..."

"Well, yes, most edifying. Splendid job there Burnham, do carry on!"

"Oh, right, well, of course. Take care Mrs Dennehey, all the best to you."

Pausing briefly to take a swig from the canteen on his belt, Burnham returned once more to his crouched position and carefully pruned another couple of leaves from the plant. There was, he mused, something immensely satisfying about watching something you had created grow and bloom, see it catch the eyes of a wandering family, provide them with a moment's appreciation of beauty and nature.

"Hey, there! Mr Burnham! Oi! Yes, you!"

Burnham looked up once more to see the uniformed figure of Gateskelle, one of the ubiquitous Parkies hurrying towards him. Gateskelle never moved fast, so something must most certainly be up.

"Marvellous, glad I found you!"

"Yes, Mr Gateskelle? How may I be of assistance?"

"Ah, well, you see, there's a tree been damaged. Some young vandals broke off a couple of branches and it's in a terrible state. Saddens my heart, so it does. Lovely old tree, out by the back of the house. Majestic big one, kind of..."

"Err...yes Mr Gateskelle, I get the point. You wish me to attend to the tree?"

"Right so, Mr Burnham! You'll cry your eyes out when you see it, awful thing to have happened."

"Well, I shall come at once!" stated Burnham as he put his twine and shears into his satchel, hoisted it on to his shoulder and dusted off his worn trousers.

"Lead on Mr Gateskelle and I shall follow. The last thing this city needs is another thing of beauty being destroyed. Let us resolve the situation."



An oasis of blissful tranquillity in the heart of the TCMAA, Central Park is a throwback to an imagined golden age, when The City was a place of laughter, joy and merriment. At least, that's how it goes in the popular folklore.

The most prominent feature of the place is Park House, a sprawling edifice of indeterminate purpose and age. It now serves a wide variety of functions; museum, storehouse, meeting place, café and numerous others. The museum focuses on the flora of the park, going into great detail about the various plant species, the efforts of horticulturalists to preserve the old and bring forth the new and the significance of certain noted plants (such as the famed Wooing Tree in the far northeast corner of the park).

Park House also serves as the headquarters for the Park wardens, affectionately known as 'the Parkies'. They occupy rooms on the first floor of the house, where they drink tea, rest and practice shouting "Keep off the grass!" and other famous slogans. Just below the Parkies rooms is the Park House Teashop, a popular spot for strollers and day-trippers. It offers hot tea and light snacks at reasonable prices. On rainy days it gets very busy and the queues can stretch for a fair distance round the house.

Despite the frequent cries of the Parkies, there's not much grass in Central Park that you actually have to keep off.





Only those areas that are being re-seeded, specially tended or otherwise cared for are off limits to visitors. On rare sunny days, families, courting couples and casual amblers can be found dotted all over the sward. Another popular spot is the boating pond, where for a couple of pence, you can hire a small rowing boat for a time and enjoy sculling around a body of water that isn't polluted, filled with rubbish or hideous to look at. The Hohler Gang and the 3rd Syndicate have long since given up the not so clever idea of dumping bodies in the boating pond, as it is only a few feet deep and the Parkies tended to have no small objection to this activity.

Aside from these heady delights, the park also has a substantial arboretum. Here, tall trees and verdant shrubs grow in profusion, providing all sorts of nooks and bowers where illicit trysts and clandestine meetings can be conducted.

It must be said though, all is not rosy in the garden. The Parkies and the horticulturalists have a hard time just keeping the grass, trees and shrubs alive, let alone in good condition. The polluted rain, the heavy feet of thousands of visitors and the predations of small creatures all make it a never-ending battle to keep Central Park looking green and welcoming. While the Parkies attempt to keep visitors from damaging the plants, the horticulturalists work away in their sheds, or wander the park with secateurs, shears, wire and bracing poles. Many of them have a slightly otherworldly expression as they go about their business. Most people just put this down to fumes from the cocktail of fertilizers that they use.

## Security/military presence

About the only force that could be considered 'security' in Central Park are the Parkies. Their powers, however, are somewhat limited. They can only act according to the bylaws of the park, and array of arcane rules that contradict each other in many areas. They have no powers of arrest or detention, they can only eject troublemakers or undesirables from the premises. Even then, those self-same troublemakers can quite easily make their way back in and continue causing trouble. During the hours of darkness, the Parkies keep themselves very much to themselves, those on duty tending to stay either in Park House or one of the little bothies scattered about the place.

## highlighted location

### the lovers' grove

**Description:** Tranquil glade

Set way back in the arboretum, the Lovers' Grove is a splendidly tranquil, soothing spot. Surrounded on all sides by the boughs of massive, ancient trees and artfully created over the years to offer a number of concealed bowers, it is understandably a location popular with courting couples and others seeking a few moments of solitude.

The Parkies and horticulturalists are well aware that the Lovers' Grove is used for assignations, trysts and amorous encounters and tend to take fairly lenient view of the goings on there. That being said, there have been occasions when they have had to exercise their powers and remove those using the reputation of the place to engage in underhand dealings.

At the very centre of the Grove is the ancient Wooing Tree, a venerable and fondly regarded landmark in the park. Folklore has it that if you ask for your beloved's hand in marriage whilst kneeling under the Wooing Tree, any union that takes place will be blessed with happiness and fertility. Consequently, it can get very busy at times, with suitors having to wait their turn to pledge their troth beneath the arching limbs.

## highlighted personality

### Mrs Margaret Dennehey

**Age:** 44

**Height/Build:** 5' 11"/Strapping

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Cheerful brown/Greying black

**Occupation:** Park manager

**Affiliations:** The staff of the park

A larger than life figure in the environs of Central Park, Mrs Dennehey is a statuesque woman of distinct manners and cheerful demeanour. Holding the title of Grounds Manager, she is in effective charge of all work taking place within the park, with responsibility extending to everything from the running of the tearooms to the activities of the horticulturalists.



Workers are often surprised to hear her jovial, booming voice emanating from behind them as she does her daily rounds. Many would swear that she seems too able to be in three or four places at once! Standing nearly six feet tall and with broad shoulders, Mrs Dennehey cuts an imposing figure in her utilitarian, hard-wearing clothing. Should she ever be required to reprimand one of the employees under her care, she can give a fearsome tongue-lashing, but her anger seldom lasts more than a few minutes. Not a woman to bear a grudge, she always attempts to see the good in people and forgive them their little mistakes.

## The foundations

**Region:** Lat 3, Ring 7

**Status:** Wasteland.

**Law:** N/A

**Wealth:** N/A

## Overview

A cold wind blew across the plaza, coming in from the Outlands, scouring the concrete smooth as it had for as long as anyone could remember. A few pitted and rusted shafts of metal were all that was left to suggest a great building once stood here, but no clues remained as to its size or purpose. The only thing now known about the place was that it could heal, that it could do things the doctors and healers of The City could not, it was even whispered that it could bring the dead back to life! Dimitri didn't believe that last bit, who could be so foolish, but he did believe this ruined place could save him from the disease that the doc said was eating him inside. He stumbled once again, a sharp pain shooting up from his stomach, all the while giving silent thanks that the most recent gang to try and make some money out of this place had either been scared off or chased away. He had nothing left to pay.

The once healthy man finally reached the edge of the smooth square, perfectly set in amongst the scrub that surrounded it. He sighed, knowing this was his last chance to turn back. Gritting his teeth he stepped out onto the concrete, feeling a shiver run down his spine as he did so. Pulling his coat tighter around his wasted frame he started to walk and stumble to the centre, hoping against hope

that this would work and that it wouldn't take too long. Most of the expanse was smooth, but here and there pillars jutted up out of the grey rock, often accompanied by twisted lengths of metal, testaments to the tall building that once stood here. Some of the smaller blocks helped Dimitri along, giving him something to lean to as he hobbled. Others forced him off his straight line, drawing curses and groans.

All the while the strange feeling grew. He wasn't sure if it was anticipation, fever, hope or something real, something working beneath the ground to reinvigorate him, to heal him. He stopped again, catching his breath, the wind blowing seemingly straight through him now. He turned briefly, wondering if this would be the death of him, then the warmth moved through him again and he realised that going back would certainly kill him. The dying man's vision began to blur, the concrete towers fading, only the centre point now in view, his final destination, a course he now could not change as the voices in the wind beckoned him forward...



Set amid some scrubland is a perfect square of concrete, likely the foundations of a building, concrete that has been worn smooth by constant wind and by the passage of people over time. Nobody knows what was once there, but as with so many things in The City the vast majority of people are only concerned with the present. The oldest memories and records of this place indicate that there have always been claims of strange voices and sightings around the Foundations and as these reports accumulated the whispering consensus was that the Shift had taken yet another part of The City.

It is not known when the rumours of the healing power of this abandoned place started to circulate, but at some unknown time someone claimed that someone they knew got better after visiting these ruins. The rumours spread and more stories were told and soon a steady trickle of pilgrims from all points started to head towards the concrete desert that soon acquired the simple name of "The Foundations." There were soon too many stories to deny and unscrupulous forces moved in to take control of this opportunity to make money. Still the people came, most deciding that the reward was worth the cost; then the first tragedy struck.



Shortly after returning from the Foundations a newly healed man killed his wife and two of their four children and then moved through his tenement building, killing half of every second family he found, until he was finally stopped. He did not babble, nor did he leave any explanation for his behaviour, rather he was silent the entire time and it took five or six blades to the chest and head to finally stop him. Subsequent to that the gang controlling the ruins lost several of their members and retreated back to more central areas, citing a drying up of pilgrims, rather than fear, as the reason for their withdrawal.

Since that time there were more incidents, causing the Foundations to lose favour with all bar the most desperate. While the majority of those who were healed lived their lives as before too many went mad in some unpredictable and often fatal way. From time to time gangs have tried to make a profit out of other people's wish for health, but none of them have lasted very long. All of them finally realise that the profit is not worth the pain, especially as the numbers journeying to this part of The City are nowhere near as large as they once were. So the Foundations sit lonely, the nearest Burgh at least a mile away, the whispered voices and strange shadows seemingly unobserved, save for the occasional traveller, a pilgrim seeking to gamble his sanity for a chance to be healed or to give up part of himself for the chance to be whole.

## Security/Military presence

Officially there is no security at all around the Foundations. The area is considered cursed and dangerous and no Burgh will take any kind of responsibility for it. Certainly the Macrocorps long ago decided that it wasn't worth the trouble. Every once in a while a new gang decides that putting a toll on access to the Foundations will be a nice easy money spinner, but after a few months (or on one particular occasion, one night) they too realise it isn't worth it. Equally the area is a common location for expeditions from Longshore University by students who decide they will be the ones to finally unlock the mysteries of the healing powers. These expeditions often bring with them a few hired guards who may count as a temporary security presence. However after a couple of days, due to fear or failure, they too will leave this desolate place to itself.

## highlighted location

### the centre

**Description:** Unexplained Depression

This is not so much a location as a focus. At the very centre of the square there is a small depression, caused by person after person sitting here in the hope of salvation. The area about it is stained with blood, food and bodily wastes, but the depression itself is clean. It is here that the voices on the wind are loudest and it is from here that the shadows can be seen moving in ways not directed by the sun, but it is also here that the healing power of the Foundations is at its strongest. The library in Longshore University have several works on this particular spot, each containing a different interpretation. In some cases comparisons are made to other "strange" areas of The City, in others electromagnetic readings are graphed and explained. Some claim it is the remnant of science no longer understood, others say the Shift, other scholars point to the amazing healing power of the human mind and body. What is certain is that nobody really knows. The general belief is that the answer will lie beneath this special spot, but any who have tried to dig have found the going hard and the discouragement strong. Madness and death have come swiftly to those who would disturb this golden goose.

## highlighted personality

### Shebner

**Age:** 29

**Height/Build:** Tall/Well built

**Eyes/Hair:** Brown/Black

**Occupation:** Ghostfighter

**Affiliations:** None

While many in The City distrust the healing power of the Foundations there are those who are willing to take that risk. Most of these desperate people only ever visit here once, but there are those, more determined, more in need, who keep on coming back. Shebner has been to the centre of the Plaza at least fifteen times and there are occasions she has stayed there long beyond the time it has taken her to heal. After every visit she feels fitter, stronger and younger, in fact when she made the last two trips she wasn't injured at all. The Ghostfighter has not told anyone that she relies on the Foundations for her medical needs,



especially considering the rumours that surround these ruins, but she does know this place has saved her life more than once and now it seems to be giving her the edge over those she must fight to make her living. After all these years she believes she's probably one of the best Ghost-fighters in The City and she may well be right.

So far Shebner hasn't suffered any of the side effects associated with the Foundations. Although her dreams have become that much stranger and sometimes she sees things others do not, but she can live with that and if it means that she can increase her prices then it's a gamble worth taking. Of course the biggest danger, for Shebner and The City, is what might happen if the gamble failed to pay off. The effects of the Foundations are unreliable at best and if the healing process was to turn Shebner's talents towards more homicidal ends then she would take some stopping; a dark thought indeed.



## the hub

**Region:** Lat 4, Ring 2

**Status:** Macrocorp Controlled Area

**Law:** High

**Wealth:** High

## overview

*Dave supped at the hot cup of tea, pausing for a moment to look at the monitoring screen, a mercifully quiet screen, devoid of alarms or red lines. He'd had a bad feeling when he came in this morning, but it looked like the team might actually catch a break for once and the balloons might be peaceful for at least a couple of hours. He put the cup down carefully, away from the array of equipment in front of him and tapped a few keys, bringing up the logs for the last couple of hours, noting that the troublesome balloons above the TCMA had been repaired in the requisite time, as per the contract they had with the Provosts. Those guys could really complain when something didn't work, of course the execs didn't really care, they had their money and the contracts always said, "Best Effort" but Dave didn't like it when parts of the network were down. And anyway, it wouldn't be the execs who'd have to answer the phone to a bunch of pissed off Provosts.*

*Slowly Dave ran down through the reports from the out-lying operations centres, checking that everything was being done properly, that there were no problems left unattended and that any faults were correctly diagnosed, not exactly exciting work, but when your network hung between 4,000 and 8,000 feet in the air you had to get everything right. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed the dataflow readout start to change; instinctively he knew something was wrong, he knew these systems so well by now. As the harried engineer turned his attention fully towards the readouts warnings started to appear, lines on the map turned red and Dave knew this wasn't going to be a quiet shift after all...*

*The operations manager started to type into his terminal, checking the readouts, flicking from machine to machine, trying to figure out exactly what was going on and how he could fix it before too many people noticed.*





*The pattern of errors only made sense if the fault was software, not hardware. There's no way all of the Cathedral balloons could be reading as offline while the directly connected ones were working? Dave called out to one of the other engineers to physically check the relays as data scrolled up the page. Then he noticed it, tell-tale traces of information, not real data, but data talking about data. There was something flowing out of the Cathedral, something very, very small, but obviously important. He blinked and the trace was gone, replaced by more alarms. The Operations manager sat back in his chair, wiping his brow, confident now that the alarms would soon go away. He shouted out to the engineers to stop their frantic troubleshooting and, sure enough, one by one the red balloons flicked back to green.*

*Dave sighed. Someone was using his network for their own ends, some very clever flowghost was disrupting the dataflows to hide what they were doing, but Dave had no idea who. He quickly and quietly edited the system logs, cleaning them, but keeping an unedited copy for himself. He wasn't worried about a rival macrocorp, that wasn't his problem and anyway, he didn't believe this was an attack. This was an inside job and unravelling this mystery to protect the integrity of his precious network might just be the most dangerous thing he'd ever do.*

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Barrage Balloon Communications, a subsidiary of SideBand Media, is the biggest telecommunications provider in The City. Its network is vast, made up floating balloons and hardwired cable, and it stretches far and wide (see a|state core rulebook, page 25). Getting this network into place was a tortuous and expensive job, but keeping it working makes the setup look like a walk in the park. There are operations and repair centres scattered all over The City with none more than an hour away from a balloon or its groundstation.

These centres are constantly manned, shifts changing every eight hours, but with some engineers working far, far longer than that if necessary. The skilled, and well paid, engineers maintain all of the systems, monitoring the network for faults, breakages and high winds. They take trips up to the balloons, they make repairs to the wires on the ground and they keep the dingins and datacores in the operations centres ticking over. The only thing they don't officially do is guard the centres, but on occasion they've also had to perform that task. However in the end it all works and the customers and, most importantly, SideBand are happy, even if they don't appreciate quite what's involved.

The biggest of all of these operations centres, and the one to which all of the others report, is the BBC Data Hub, located close to the Cathedral. SideBand is very aware of just how important the network is and they have no intention of it falling into anyone else's hands.



Fortunately most of the other groups want the network to stay in place, even if all the money is flowing into SideBand's coffers rather than theirs. It has been quite some number of years since anyone tried to wrest control of the BBC away from the Cathedral. Anyway, no other Macrocorp is quite sure where they'd start from the point of view of maintaining the whole thing. However considering the amount of data that flows through the systems in the Hub there are other groups who would be very interested in gaining access, if only for a few hours. The Hub also contains the various administrative departments of BBC, as well as the necessary areas to impress new clients and ensure the continued flow of money. These visitors are sometimes show some of the more impressive machinery onsite, the dingins and datacores that have the most impact, but it is very rare that anyone other than the engineers venture down into the depths of the Hub to use and maintain the really important equipment, the place that every flowghost in The City would love to go.

## Security/military presence

The BBC Data Hub is a very well protected building. Media Break guards are in place to defend against any and all threats, be they external or internal. The major danger is from a small-scale incursion rather than any major Macrocorp activity. If a single competent flowghost got his hands on the main dingins or datacores then the amount of information they could steal or possibly even alter would be staggering. The ancillary operations centres are also well guarded, but the possible damage that could be done there is far less. As far as Media Break are concerned it should be as difficult to break into the Hub as it would be to break into the Cathedral and so far they've been right.

The other side of security at the Hub is the preventative measures to keep nosy flowghosts out of the systems. The engineers are reminded everyday how unhappy the BBC management will be if the systems were compromised so as well as keeping their eyes on the sky the workers are forced to constantly review and update their data security systems. As a consequence the BBC network is probably the toughest one in The City and

it should remain so while the engineers remain well trained and "motivated". Thankfully for the BBC no one engineer could be forced into giving anyone full access to the system. Nobody is fully trusted and any suspicious behaviour on the part of an engineer would get the attention of Media Break very quickly.

## highlighted location

### the communications room

**Description:** A heavily guarded comms centre and datacore.

In the depths of the Hub is the largest collection of communications equipment in The City. The technology levels range from positively ancient to bleeding edge, but all of them are needed to keep the data flowing. Parts of the comms centre are clean and bright, the newer equipment shining, other parts are a jungle of cable and cogs, the engineers knowing which cables lead where more by intuition than any clear plan. Dingins sit side by side with optical computers, well guarded behind firewalls, all of them working away to monitor the network and process the constant data flows.

The datacores take up less space than the communications equipment, but they are vital to the network none the less. Again the technology spans the years, and while the project to move everything to more modern hardware has been ongoing for some years it has yet to be completed.

Officially BBC do not keep any of the data that flows across the network, however unbeknownst to most of the engineers and all of the customers some data is retained. SideBand and BBC know that this information could only be used as a last resort, but there are countless secrets hidden in the datacores, secrets that could destroy lives and potentially Macrocorps if they were ever to get out. It is a dangerous gamble, but as the information is inaccessible from anywhere other than the Hub it is considered a risk worth taking.



## highlighted personality

dave harding

**Age:** 35**Height/Build:** Tall/Medium**Eyes/Hair:** Blue/Long & Brown**Occupation:** Operations Centre Manager**Affiliations:** BBC

Born into a SideBand family it seemed from an early age that Dave Harding was destined to work in the gritty side of communications. He had an obsessive interest in comms equipment and dingins of all kinds, playing with the ones his mother would occasionally bring home. When he first heard about the BBC network hanging in the air above his head he found out all he could and when it came time for him to get his first job there was only one place he wanted to go. He started out as the lowest grade of engineer, but since then he has worked his way up the ranks, showing an uncanny empathy for the network, intuitively knowing when something is going to happen and able to fix some of the oldest and most cantankerous machinery. He seems most at home either buried in cables or bathed in the glow of a monitor, typing out arcane strings of commands, utterly absorbed by the data flow and still childishly excited at times by the network he manages.

The only problem is that recently Dave has noticed some anomalies on the network. He isn't quite sure what is going on, but some data appears to be taking strange routes through the tangled web of equipment on occasion, something that shouldn't happen by accident, but he can't figure out why it would happen by design.

While the centre manager isn't the most politically aware person in The City he does know enough to keep his mouth shut at the moment, but he's trying to carefully investigate what is going on without alerting anyone else. By now he sees the network as a pure thing and he also sees it as "his" network, so he is unlikely to react well to the knowledge that data is being improperly stored and the network "perverted." At the moment he uses his considerable talents to keep the BBC network up and running and while he could never bring himself to harm that network, he could be persuaded to turn against his employers in other ways if he discovered they were doing things of which he didn't approve.

## ironbridge

**Region:** Lat 1, Ring 2**Status:** Canal crossing point**Law:** High, but anarchic**Wealth:** Moderate-low

## overview

*The House of the Rising Sun was a popular stop-off point for travellers across Ironbridge. Halfway between the east and west portals, its rusted sheet iron walls were inscribed with the graffiti of ages. Transients daubed their names, gang sigils or simple marks on its flaking walls. Those selfsame walls rumbled and groaned as a train roared overhead, an express by the sound and speed of its passage.*

*Within its smoky interior, a shabby group of men and women clustered round pitifully small drinks, nursing them in the manner of the terminally impoverished. In the corner, an itinerant saleswoman talked loudly about her latest wares, importuning anyone unlucky enough to come within shouting distance.*

*The groups of men and women could be seen to be members of the Transit Militia, an unusual occurrence, given the ongoing hatred that existed between them and the Provosts of Ironbridge. They exuded a palpable air of misery, understandable given the events of the preceding day. All was not well on the tracks that crossed Ironbridge. The Provosts were rumoured to be behind a series of line breaks and stoppages, something that irritated the Militia beyond belief.*

*Still, all was not bad. The Militia, and these individuals in particular, had just gained a reasonable level of success in winning over the residents of the bridge.*

*A new policy handed down from on high, of giving Ironbridgers free transport on trains that stopped at the east and west portals had been greeted with acclaim. This was especially true amongst the older members of the community who often found it difficult to walk the crowded length of the bridge.*



*Taking a final pull on their drinks, the Militia group stood as a body and headed for the door. They were only too fully aware of the selection of harsh looks that accompanied them. Not everyone on Ironbridge had come to like them as much as the old folks did. Old suspicions and hatreds ran as deep as the Grand Canal. It would take a lot more than a few free train rides to win over these people.*



Most massive of the bridges crossing the expanse of the Grand Canal, Ironbridge has grown from merely a crossing point, to being a self contained burgh in its own right. The fused, rusted structure is festooned with dwellings, shops and small businesses, the thoroughfare crowded with hawkers, vendors and purveyors of a dubious nature.

Ironbridge casts a baleful shadow across the canal, its substantial cantilevers of iron girders fused into a single rusted mass of ancient metal. Over the years the bridge has built up an accretion of buildings on what was assumed to once be a simple crossing point of the greatest waterway in The City. The makeshift residences and jerrybuilt dwellings cluster around the cantilevers; only the mad or brave build anything above a certain level.

Businesses on Ironbridge consist of all manner and range of endeavours; from small engineering manufacturers to cobblers, from fish vendors to public houses. Most service industries are located on the lower deck, where passers by are more likely to feel the need to part with their hard earned (or stolen) cash.

As far as traffic goes, the bridge is split into two levels. The lower, darker, more sinister level is reserved for ground traffic and pedestrians. Here the ramshackle houses crowd in on the walkway and road, making the entire length of the deck a dimly lit, oppressive tunnel. The upper traffic deck is reserved for train tracks and tramlines. Running side-by-side, the tracks are not immune to the rampant construction activity seen on the lower deck. Trains and trams pass within inches of shops and homes, making them quake and shake with the force of their passage.

The very nature of the traffic set-up on the bridge leads to more than a little tension between the forces tasked to keep law and order intact. The Provosts view it as their duty to guard the bridge in general and maintain the peace. However, the Transit Militia views the train tracks as part of their domain, their own sovereign territory into which the Provosts may not travel.

As Ironbridge falls under the aegis of the TCMAA, the Provosts feel quite within their rights to be disgruntled, despite the long-standing agreement regarding jurisdiction over the railways. Needless to say, fights, disputes and all manner of underhand shenanigans are commonplace.

## Security/military presence

The main security presence on Ironbridge are the TCMAA Provosts, that unashamedly corrupt and brutal body of alleged law enforcers. Due to the vast number of transients who pass across the bridge each day, most crimes are never solved, a situation that doesn't exactly displease the Provosts. They have no particular desire to go chasing all across the bridge looking for murders, thieves and thugs. In the main, the Provosts here are lazy, shiftless and ineffectual.

The attitude of the Provosts contrasts mightily with the go-getting methods of the Transit Militia that protect the railway lines. An unusually efficient, dedicated group, they pursue their duties in protecting the railway with vigour and enthusiasm. In many ways, they are becoming more popular with the people of Ironbridge than the Provosts are, not least because they actually investigate crimes (if they can be connected to the railways) and apprehend wrongdoers.

All of the above means that the Provosts really hate the Transit Militia and the Militia view the Provosts as a useless crowd of slackers, which they probably are. The majority of Ironbridgers still support the TCMAA law enforcers, but that majority is diminishing daily.





## highlighted location

### the signal box

**Description:** Railway control station

Located at the very heart of the upper deck of Ironbridge, the Signal Box controls all the trains crossing that mighty edifice. Guarded by a seasoned platoon of militiamen, the 'Box looks more like an armoured watchtower than an item of railway furniture. Its leaded windows are thick and grimy, the signal cables running from its roof festooned with detritus.

Despite all of the above, the 'Box occupies and singularly important place on Ironbridge. Were it put out of action, many rail services across the Grand Canal would be heavily disrupted. Hence the fact that it is protected by a substantial force.

The Signal Box controls a vast array of apparatus along the length of the bridge and is connected to subsidiary signalling stations at either portal by heavily armoured telegraph lines. In the event of these lines being cut, each station is equipped with signalling flags and telescopes to allow communication to carry on regardless.

All in all, it would be an exceedingly difficult task to disrupt signalling, given the almost paranoid attitude that the Fulgurators and the Militia have about the place. Yet, rumours persist of secret plans to disable the Signal box, to cause massive disruption to the trains and cause vast embarrassment to the Guild.

## highlighted personality

### gerta winslake

**Age:** 32

**Height/Build:** 5' 6"/Wiry

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Inquisitive blue/Reddish brown

**Occupation:** Tracklayer

**Affiliations:** Provosts, Transit Militia, Fulgurators

One of the resident technicians whom maintain the TCMAA tramline on Ironbridge, Gerta is often to be seen wandering the upper deck, pry bar and wrench in hand, tightening bolts and removing obstructions. A fairly unprepossessing character, her simple garb of breeches, heavy padded jacket and military style cap do not attract much attention amongst the throng.

However, Gerta is privy to certain information that other, more obtrusive individuals may find it hard to come by. Working near the train tracks, she is often in contact with the Fulgurators who maintain the rail service going across the bridge. In fact, she has struck up something of a friendly acquaintance with some of the Fulgurators and Militia, an unusual and remarkable occurrence for an employee of the TCMAA.

In the ongoing series of disputes between the Provosts and the Militia, Gerta often finds herself used to pass clandestine notes between certain elements of the two organisations. Secretly, she rather enjoys this odd aspect of her chosen career, feeling herself to be involved in something bigger and more important than simply repairing tram lines.

## trench locks

**Region:** Lat 2, Ring 4

**Status:** Guild controlled waterway

**Law:** High

**Wealth:** Moderate

## overview

*Lashed alongside the swollen belly of a transport barge, the little boat bobbed and swayed as the lock gradually filled with water. Muckhew shivered and shook inside his coat as the penetrating drizzle continued to fall. On the big barge, the crew were enjoying tea and a smoke in their cubby. Blast them for being ungracious. Curse them for not extending a friendly hand during the hours it would take to traverse the locks. Muckhew started and yelled as something fiery landed on his head. A carelessly flicked fag end from the barge crew. Curse them! Curse them all!*

*Locksmen Society guards stood stock-still and dead eyed as the vessels transited into the next lock up. Rain streamed off their curiously domed helms, running down the shoulders of their slick coats. One of the guards sneezed violently as water streamed from his nose. The others glanced at him with vague expressions of concern on their faces. Rumours of a plague have been circulating around these parts; everyone was looking over their shoulders, fearing strangers, clutching kerchiefs to their faces.*



*Muckhew grabbed his rusting mug and started bailing out the skiff. Rain was beginning to fill the little boat, sloshing around his ankles, further darkening his mood. The trip down into the Trench had been a waste of time. Uxton could be blasted to pieces for the wrongness of his information. Never had one man proved so useless at providing anything approaching accurate data. So much for the fabled Complete Encyclopaedia, so much for the riches that the finder would gain. So much for Uxton and his leering assurances!*

*Run ragged in the depths of the Trench, threatened with disembowlement and whipped to within an inch of his life, Muckhew mused how exactly he would explain his failure to his wealthy patron back in Clearwater Break. Drag Uxton along with him as an excuse, most likely. The Complete Encyclopaedia was somewhere. But it wasn't here. And the knowledge that another rumour could be discounted did not warm Muckhew any as he ascended the ladder of Trench Locks.*



Just east of Mire End, as the Trench starts to drop into the dark abyss that gives it its name, stands one of the most impressive feats of engineering The City has to offer. Dropping down into the depths are the biggest series of locks on any of the canals. A twin line of massive basins, barred by huge iron lock gates. The northern line takes traffic down into the Trench, whilst the southern lock line takes traffic back up to the general level of The City. Each individual lock can easily accommodate the largest barges that traverse the canals, with many barges at a time being crowded into the lock basins for each flooding and emptying cycle. 25 hours a day, the air is filled with the noise of roaring water clanking metal, pounding gate engines and shouting people. Activity never stops at the locks.

Controlling the locks is the secretive and clannish Venerable Society of Locksmen. Having been in charge of this particular section of the canals for as long as anyone can remember, the Society exacts tolls from those using the lock system, funding its wages, repairs and other nefarious activities. The tolls themselves are not overly onerous and are calculated according to a strict, but fair, system of vessel size and cargo carried.

Society inspectors briefly check each vessel as it enters the top or bottom of the lock system, using their experience and practised eye to make a swift judgement on the toll to be charged. Trying to bluff the inspectors is a tricky proposition, which can result in an increased toll or, in the worst cases, being ejected from the locks altogether.

The mechanical operation of the locks is both simple and effective. A vessel enters a lock from the highest level of the canal. The iron lock gates are shut behind the vessel, enclosing it in a basin of water. The water is gradually emptied out of the basin through sluices and pipes to lower the water level to that of the next lock basin in the chain. When the water levels are equalised, the gates at the opposite end of the basin open and the vessel can transit into the next lock, where the process begins over again until the vessel has passed through all the locks and reaches the bottom of The Trench.

In order to ascend the locks, the same operation is carried out, only filling the basins with water rather than emptying them. A complex flow system keeps the locks functioning, filling and emptying. Most of this is achieved by simple use of gravity, but large pumping stations are also used at particular busy times. Each of the heavy lock gates also has its own engine on the canal bank. These are gigantic electric motors drawing on power supplied by the Ancient & Honourable Guild of Fulgurators and tended by specialists drawn from the Society.

## Security/military presence

The Venerable Society of Locksmen takes its duties (and its iron grip on commerce on this section of the canals) very seriously. Consequently, they maintain a high level of security in and around the locks. While not the best-equipped force in The City, the steely-eyed guards of the Society have a fanatical dedication to their cause and an admirable devotion to duty. Wielding specially made, waterproofed sparklocks and carrying massive hanger knives, they are on sentry at each and every lock gate, each engine house, and each pumping room. Like the Transit Militia on the railways, they will not hesitate to shoot anyone interfering with the smooth operation of the lock system.



Unlike the Transit Militia, they are not corrupt thugs and violent ne'er-do-wells. They have a fierce pride in their position and hold the good name of the Society above everything else. Should they be seen to have anything less than a pristine reputation, it would bring disrepute upon the entire Society. And such a thing would be unthinkable.

## highlighted location

### the society hall & social club

**Description:** Private members meeting venue

Half way up the flight of locks, cut into the side of the Trench, is the Venerable Society of Locksmen's Hall & Social Club. For an organisation with such a dour demeanour and miserable reputation, the Locksmen enjoy a drink and a dance as much as the next man (or woman).

In these hallowed halls, the men and women of the Society let their hair down, relax or carry out the more mundane, clerical business of the Society.

The entranceway is a revelation to those who expect austerity and blandness. Portraits of great members of the Society, revered relics from times gone by and ornate tapestries line the gas-lit walls. Attendants wait to take the rain-soaked coats of members and store them carefully on numbered pegs. The dining room on the first floor is normally rammed with hungry people chowing down on the famous fish stew and huge mugs of steaming spiced tea. The air is filled with the rich aromas of cooking, of herbs and spices from far parts of The City, all payment in kind to the Locksmen. The second floor houses the Grand Reception Room; a vaulted space used for important meetings, festival dances and elevation ceremonies. Busts of former Grand Masters stare down from nooks in the walls, casting their benevolent gaze upon the current membership.

The rest of the building is riddled with small rooms and offices, where clerks and archivists keep track of day to day business, of goods which have traversed the locks, of those who have committed transgressions and, of course, keeping the detailed files on each and every member of the Society.

## highlighted personality

### ariadne copse

**Age:** 74

**Height/Build:** 5' 3"/Stooped

**Eye/Hair Colour:** Intelligent green/Grey

**Occupation:** Grand Master of the Venerable Society of Locksmen

**Affiliations:** The Venerable Society of Locksmen

Current Grand Master of the Society, Keeper of the Lock Keys and Guardian of the Covenant, Mrs Ariadne Copse holds the supreme position within the Venerable Society of Locksmen. A spritely woman of advancing years, she knows everyone in the Society and everything that happens to it. From the lowliest journeyman to the most senior inspector, she always has a friendly word, a nod of the head or hearty handshake.

Having spent her life working on the locks, Mrs Copse knows little else but no one should think that she is unworldly, cloistered as she is in the Society Hall & Social Club. Information is filtered to her from all quarters, brought to her desk by a veritable army of assistants. Her intelligence and knowledge are second to none and her reputation for fairness is unimpeachable. She grants elevation to those who are most capable, not those who have the best family connections or who have simply served the longest.

Now well over seventy years of age, she realises that the time must one-day come when she hands over the mantle of responsibility to a younger man or women. But for now, her power and intellect remain undiminished, her enthusiasm for the job at hand still as strong as it always was.



## CLOCKWORK REVOLUTION

A popular power source in The City is a device that often goes unnoticed and disregarded. A mechanical system which is so common that people fail to recognise its usefulness and utility: clockwork. From tiny mechanisms powering, rather unsurprisingly, hand-crafted pocket watches, to more substantial constructions many times bigger than a man, every where you look there are gears turning, springs expanding and driveshafts whirring, all moving by clockwork.

At the most basic level, there are clocks and watches. While many, many people have little use for a time-keeping device (their lives being regulated by the drudgery of the working day), some members of society value a lovingly manufactured pocket or wristwatch. In some places, there are impressive public clocks, counting off the hours and minutes of the day. Most of these mechanisms are hand crafted by skilled artisans and costing rather substantial amounts of money. There are, of course, manufacturers of cheap watches, but these items have a tendency to work for a little while, then expire with a loud 'sproiinnnggg!' as the main-spring decides to part company with all of the other little parts. A watch of higher quality will often feature an engraved casing, a fine chain of precious metals or a sumptuous strap of the finest tanned dogskin. These things do not come cheap and many a watchmaker has become a wealthy individual by dint of their impressive dexterity and eye for detail.

Notable artisans in this field include Abelard Gallowglass & Sons (who are also dinginsmiths and gunsmiths of the 1st rank), Faultless Peerless (who only make pocket watches and charge some of the highest prices in The City) and Superior Timepiece (who, despite their name, produce rather cheap and nasty wristwatches for the less discerning end of the market).

Moving from the realm of timekeeping, clockwork can be found in a variety of industrial processes, powering tools, lights and even miniature factories. Miniature clockwork factories are much beloved of small-scale manufacturers who have to turn out a number of identical items quickly and efficiently. 'Factory' is something of a misnomer, as the items themselves aren't very large and look like metal boxes with various levers, handles, cranks and button protruding from them.

For example, a clockwork factory dedicated to the production of stamped metal parts for dingin cases would work as follows: the owner would put a stock of thing steel or iron plates into the hopper of the machine and proceed to crank the mechanism with vigour. Once fully wound, the operator would set the size of casing section to be produced by means of the buttons and levers on the machine. Once this has all been set up, the main actuating lever would be depressed, this allowing the mechanism to spring into action. With much whirring and clanking, the miniature factory would proceed to stamp out parts until the mechanism wound down. To produce a large number of parts, the system might obviously have to be rewound several times. This, however, is a not a problem, as a small child can easily be employed to crank the mechanism at appropriate intervals.





Artisans, mechanics and engineers have also found other uses for sturdy little clockwork mechanisms. The clockwork powered drill/screwdriver/cutting device is a common item in the armoury of the mechanically minded individual. Utilising a rugged mechanism wound by a protruding crank, the power pack buzzes away busily to itself, driving a flexible shaft (usually thin wire) which is covered in a durable cloth or dogskin casing. The rapidly revolving wire is attached to an endpiece to which can be fitted a variety of tools: small revolving saw blades, drill bits and screwdrivers being the most common. Although they have to be rewound on a fairly regular basis, these clockwork tools don't require batteries or any other power source (other than the strong cranking arm of the user). Such tools are popular with, among other people, ekranoplan mechanics working on fully fuelled and ready racing craft. The racing ships are volatile at the best of times and electrically powered equipment could cause a spark resulting in a rather hideous explosion.

Clockwork power can also be found attached to the ubiquitous sparklocks. Many of these dangerously explosive weapons are found with small mechanisms slung under the barrels powering tiny dynamos. These dynamos recharge the capacitors which power the ignition of the propellant. And, as capacitors can lose their charge over time, many users rig their sparklocks to activate the clockwork when the weapon is drawn, ensuring a full charge and avoiding a potentially embarrassing and fatal lack of power.

More complex sparklocks can also be found with clockwork powering sighting and targeting mechanisms. The clockwork can be used to run variable sights, such as those found on the Gallowglass 'Fearless' sparklock revolver. A tiny microscale dingin of high quality and craftsmanship draws its power from the clockwork mechanism and a series of miniature brass buttons and dials inset into its surface allow for programming. Users are given a (hand-written) list of codes which allow them to programme the weapon to take account of different ammunition, propellant loads and even whether or not it is raining or foggy. Then comes the clever bit. When aiming at a target, the user looks through a large, upright rectangular sight mounted towards the rear of the weapon. Then they use a small ratchet mechanism inlaid into the butt to bracket the target with two parallel bars, one aligning with the head, the other aligning with the feet. Then the dingin takes over. Taking the average height of a man as its baseline, the dingin computes the rough range to the target and adjusts the bars up or down accordingly. The user simply needs to keep the target bracketed by the bars, pull the trigger and the target is hit (in theory). The dingin can also be set for large or small targets, according to the situation.

However, whilst all very well and good, such aiming mechanisms are somewhat useless for the vast majority of the time. Precious seconds taken aiming, ratcheting and pressing buttons can mean the difference between the owner of an expensive sparklock ending up alive or meeting a ignomiuous dumping in a backwater canal. Most owners of such items have theme purely for show, a display of wealth and taste.

So, no matter where you look in The City, you are bound to see some form of clockwork whirring, ticking or clanking away.



Well, here it is.

After a long, hard slog, periods of hiatus, uncertainty and so on, Avenues & Alleyways is finally with us. And, without a doubt, this is a fact that I'm immensely proud of. Not only because stuff that I've written finally sees the light of day, but because of the immense team effort that has gone into producing this book.

As the words guy, it often seems that I am 'the creator', the one driving force behind a|state. In all honesty, that's simply not true. Paul is an equal creative partner in all of this. His art and graphic design contribute just as much to what you see before you as the words do. One of the pleasures of working with him is the fact that he takes the stuff I've written and creates pictures of what exactly I had in my head. Or, other times, he creates something that is so different, yet so captivating and provocative, that I feel compelled to change the writing to riff off the visuals. It's very much a two-way street.

Then there are all the other people involved, who also give an immense contribution to the production of a volume such as this. John Wilson, without whom Contested Ground Studios would never have existed, works away in the background keeping our feet on the ground and making sure that we don't blow all of the production budget on expensive coffee and jelly sweets. Gregor Hutton, who's editorial expertise, critical eye and patience are absolutely second to none.

And, to be fair, not all of the words in this book are mine. Iain McAllister contributed The Lighthouse and The Commune, Brian Nisbet took the time to create The Foundations, George's Towers, The Hub and Nothing Gate and Greg Saunders allowed us to use his creations of The Bone Factories and Machine Quarry. The City is a bigger, more vibrant, more exciting place thanks to their imagination and kindness.

Oh, and I should mention something about the name. 'Avenues & Alleyways' might be kind of obvious for a volume that deals with a dense urban environment, but there are influences behind it. And these influences are mainly musical. There are two songs that gave the name to this book. 'Midnight on the Murder Mile' by those drum-machine fuelled indie heroes Carter USM featured the chorus "If the concrete and the clay, beneath your feet don't get you, son. The avenues and alleys will do it. Just for fun." And 'Avenues & Alleyways' by Rancid had the words "Like a battering ram, coming through to you. Down every alleyway and avenue." It might sound strange, but music has exerted considerable influence on everything to do with a|state, so it's no surprise that the titles of this volume has come from there.

It's my hope (and the hope of everyone involved in the creation of this book), that Avenues & Alleyways will give entertainment and inspiration to those who are taking part in games of a|state.

Malcolm Craig  
November, 2007



