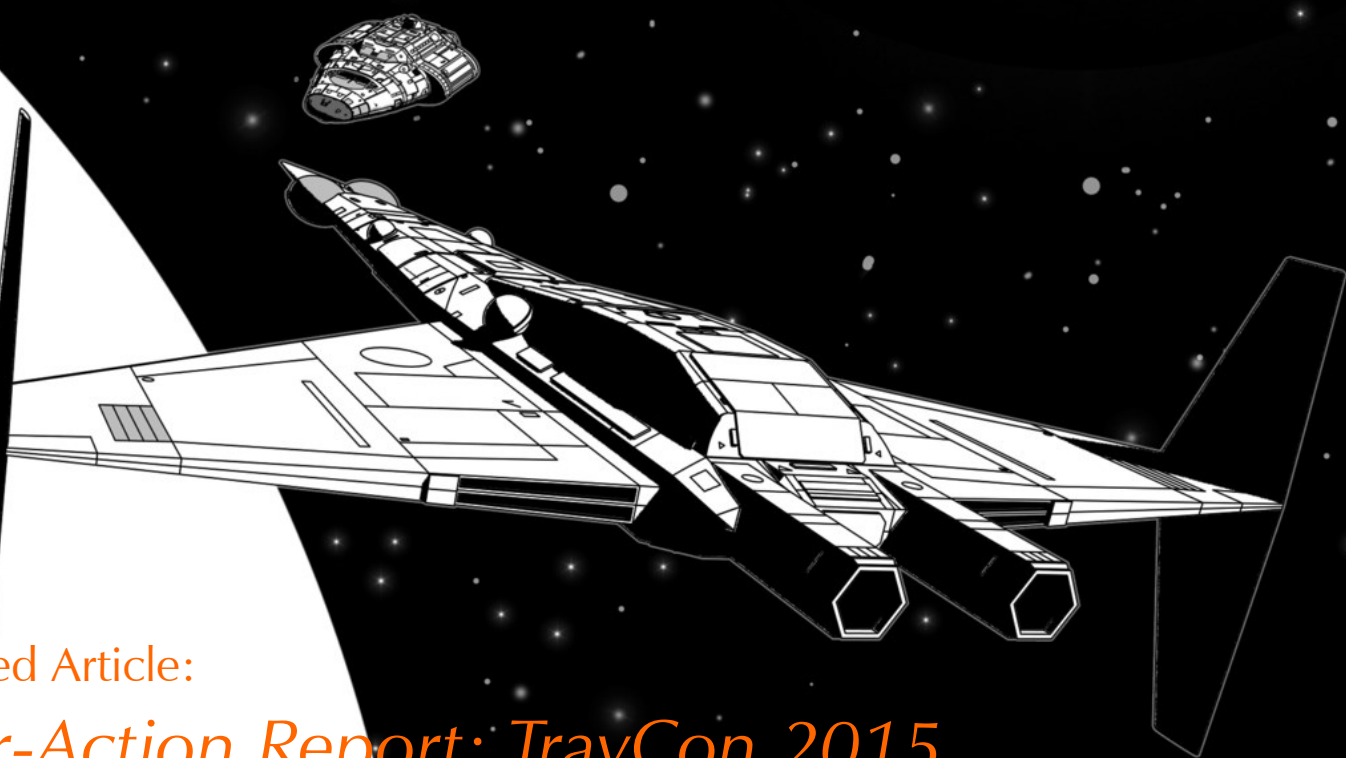




# FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Article:

## *After-Action Report: TravCon 2015*

by Timothy Collinson

Issue 068  
August 2015



## A Note About Production

*Freelance Traveller* is prepared using Microsoft Office Publisher 2010 running on a Windows 7 Ultimate x64 system. The program is reasonably easy to use, and produces good results with moderate effort; it also supports advanced typographic features such as typographic quotes and apostrophes, small caps, ligatures, swashes, and stylistic alternatives (if the advanced features are implemented in the font). Generation of the PDF files is built in to this version of Microsoft Office; no additional products are needed.

The title and heading typeface is ZapfHumanist BT, a Bitstream adaptation of Hermann Zapf's digital redesign of his 'hot lead' typeface Optima, chosen as a 'tie-back' to the title typeface of the original edition of *Traveller*. The black-and-orange of the section headings is also a tie-back to *Traveller's* origins, though we felt that the 'correct' red was too dark. The heading sizes vary from 12 to 16 points. Body text is set in Palatino Linotype, also designed by Hermann Zapf, and is set at 11 points for most body text, giving approximately the same text spacing as Times New Roman at 12 point (which was the original *Freelance Traveller* body text), but a lighter 'color'. Palatino Linotype also 'balances' better as a body text typeface to Optima as a titling typeface.

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*Judges Guild, from the product.*

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# From the Editor



As we were getting ready to “go to press” for this issue, we saw in some of the *Traveller* forums a bit of sad news: The SJGames license for *GURPS Traveller* sunsets at the end of 2015, and won’t be renewed. It’s always a little sad for *Traveller* fans when a licensee exits the community; it means that there’s one less source of material—and in the case of SJGames, it was *good* material.

On the other hand, they didn’t really seem to be doing much with it—after a good set of releases for *GURPS Third Edition*, and a few early on after the release of *GURPS Fourth Edition*, SJGames seemed to have “gone dormant” with their *Traveller* license; development of either their alternate late Third Imperium or Interstellar Wars settings just never seemed to reach their potential. One can mourn the lost potential, but in this case, it must be recognized that the potential was, simply, unrealized.

That, sadly, seems to be the case for much of *Traveller*, no matter from which source. A quick search, for example, of one major bookseller’s website shows 29 hits for “pathfinder roleplaying

game”; searching the same site for “traveller roleplaying game” yielded zero hits—and searching for “mongoose publishing” yielded 14 hits, only two of which were for *Traveller*. Looking at the various *Traveller* forums shows an apparent domination by ‘old timers’ or ‘grogards’, with only a limited amount of new blood coming in. Yet the same major bookseller mentioned above can keep selling SF that is frequently mentioned in the *Traveller* forums as being “*Traveller*-esque”—series like Weber’s *Honor Harrington*, Drake’s *Republic of Cinnabar Navy*, Moon’s *Vatta’s War*, or Lee and Miller’s *Liaden Universe*. I’m sure that not all the fans of these series are “*Traveller* grognards”; shouldn’t the publishers—especially major licensees like Mongoose—be making an effort to reach out to these readers, rather than just depending on the community to do so? Shouldn’t the terms of the various fan licenses be reconsidered and rewritten to allow the fans to write and distribute the kinds of material—and the formats—that would draw that potential new blood into *Traveller*? Let this be a call for open debate and discussion, and a revitalization of *Traveller*!



### The Beast of Karridan's Hollow

Reviewed by "kafka"

*The Beast of Karridan's Hollow*. Phillip Larwood, Michael J. Cross  
Terra/Sol Games <http://www.terrasolgames.com>

23pp. PDF

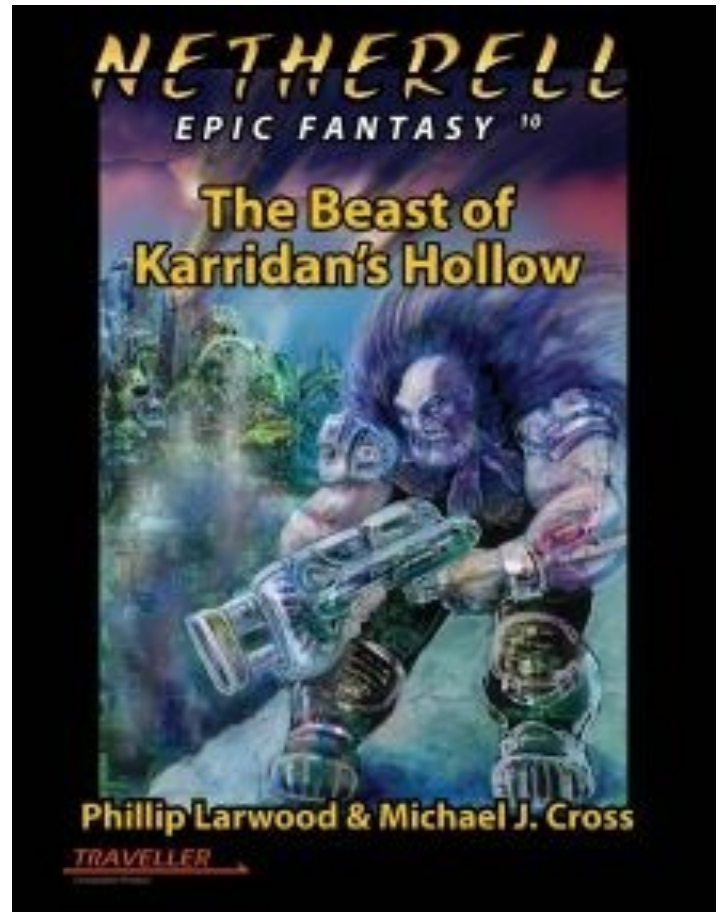
US\$4.99/UK£3.19

*This review originally appeared on rpg.net in January 2012 and is reprinted here with permission*

*The Beast of Karridan's Hollow* is an adventure for use with Terra/Sol Games' *Traveller* product, *Netherell* and will require both the *Netherell* sourcebook and *Traveller Main Rulebook* to play correctly. Referees without either one can wing it, but it would suffer from lacking the richness that both of those two volumes bring. For those that are not in the know... *Netherell* is the fantasy/magic supplement for the Mongoose *Traveller* RPG therefore, it is very hard to place this product as either Science Fiction, Science Fantasy or Fantasy but I think I will stick with fantasy as that is what the publishers have placed under the title... while not Epic, it certainly is memorable and does not hesitate in using the background previously presented.

But, as is always the case of such adventures, the introduction of fantasy characters to a science fiction milieu (although the game does allow for Galactics to take on the role of lower TL characters) is always fraught with danger of clichés seeping into the work. For sure, there are clichés but not the ones that you might expect; instead what you have is an intelligent adventure that emphasizes many aspects of *Netherell* without being too preachy or drag on the storyline.

The story involves tracking down bandits who have befriended an Ogre and dealing with the threat that the Ogre presents to a small village in exchange for 300 gold coins. Ogres on this planet translate into nasty brutes transformed by their exposure to "magical" energies (yes, Mutants by any other name). This Ogre also has a stick that can shoot fire and set things ablaze (yes, High Tech weaponry by any other name). This adventure deals with the



tracking down and solving of the mystery of the Ogre. What it lacks of actual classic fantasy adventure, e.g., dungeon delving (although, to be fair this is a "Wilderness" adventure), it makes up for in the richness of the encounters. So, I am glad that Terra/Sol did not opt for the clichés of exploring dark, damp holes in the ground, especially ones underneath a lake (one day I will share that adventure. All I will say... don't open Door#3 when there seems to be water leaking in). The adventure offers several possible outcomes, each with its own particular reward or punishment.

The adventure is sufficiently freeform enough to allow players a wide breadth of play yet the fact that they are constrained to the parish of Karridan's Hollow keeps it tight enough. Now, I don't generally play fantasy games (turned off by that whole 2e rules revision that even caused me not to play *Runequest*) but I have still followed developments in fantasy gaming. I would say this represents a superior form of play, for there are enough dynamic interac-

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Continued from page 2)

tions and speeches of various NPCs laid out, ample opportunity for smashing and stealing stuff and a worthy monster waiting at the end. However, it is laid out like a fairy tale hence probably the appropriation of the adjective “epic”... as it conjures something that is timeless and also origins lost in the mists of time. I liked that play was well grounded in Netherell, rather than using setting as just mere colourings, as in (for example),

DM: “We need an evil minion.... ok, you encounter a High Priest from uhh... Iuz”

Player 1: “But we killed Iuz in the last adventure...”

DM: “Ok, then, Horned Society... so this Iuz Priest, I mean Horned Society cultist begins to mutter something like a prayer...”

Here, instead, the NPCs and encounters are well keyed into the *Netherell* supplement... so yes, if you do not have it, you can wing it, but you certainly will lose some of the essence of the story. Which gives the feeling that this adventure was thoroughly playtested and played not simply written, for too many designers these days have forgotten the essence of play when they make their products and just insert things because it seemed “cool”. The adventure is a bit on the short side, which is ok if you were planning this as a one-shot, but it would require familiarity with Netherell which is where a Player’s Guide to Netherell (if one existed) would be handy. The shortness made me think that it was meant to be tacked on as an appendix to the main book, but shortness is good for those with busy lives. But with shortness also comes cuts; one of those cuts, is the absence of pregens – although, part of the “joy” of gaming is to generate characters and then take them on personal adventures... I see that and acknowledge that but for it to be a true one-shot, it is easier for it just run right out of the box... so I would have not minded the inclusion of some pregens, as I know within my gaming circles, there is no time to go through chargen, we come to play

and pregens are one way of getting the game up and running. So, if it does migrate to print, hopefully we might see the inclusion of pregens... or at least make them available on the website.

The writing is logical and business-like, as it describes the various encounters and background – otherwise there are no wasted words (save the needed OGL taking up two pages) and really gets you into Netherell. I found the restriction of the players to the parish of Karridan’s Hollow not at all indicative of railroad play but more about investigation and probing and because it is a wilderness adventure, it included maps. And, that is where I have a beef, that if it is going to deadtree, the map has to be reproduced as a player’s aid at the back of the book or even if it stays a PDF, have it on a standalone page. There is not much in the way of player visuals but enough for the Referee to keep the adventure running. The art contained within is really good and is completely in-sync with the text.

All in all, I would recommend *The Beast of Karridan’s Hollow*, if your *Traveller* players are itching for a fantasy game without losing the richness of the Mongoose *Traveller*. The adventure provides an excellent introduction to this world of magic and while it cannot be ported easily outside of Terra/Sol’s Twilight Sector setting without some thinking, it is fine for regular *Traveller* involving “galactic” of one sort or another. However, it remains a fantasy game with Science Fiction elements cleverly grafted on. 🌟

## TravellerCON/USA

TravellerCON/USA 2015 will be taking place October 9–11, at the Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center in Lancaster, PA. Registration is open; the full weekend is \$30 for referees or participants (age 12+ only) and may be paid at the door; vendor registration is \$60, paid in advance. There is a discounted room rate at the Resort; mention TravellerCON when making your reservation. Come play with us! More info can be found at the Con website, <http://www.travellercon-usa.com/> 🌟

## After-Action Report: TravCon 2015

by Timothy Collinson

For six years I've made my way to TravCon via bus, train, tube, tube, train, and taxi. You may even have travelled with me in previous issues wending my way north to Redwings in a journey that's not horrendous but has its irritations – in particular London's lack of a single hub terminus and lack of a 'joined up' Underground, necessitating not one but two tube journeys to get from arrival station to departure station. And despite several options that are about as good as each other in terms of time, none avoid stairs – an increasing consideration with CFS.

But this seventh year was different as fellow Traveller TH had passed his driving test. Congratulations! *Drive (wheeled) 0* added to your skill set and surely it won't be long before it increases. The practical upshot for me was that I could contribute petrol money and an extra pair of navigation eyes as well as packing a little more expansively than the minimum I might usually take. In went a couple of extra rule books I thought might be useful for the adventure I was running; in went *Traveller<sup>5</sup>*, which I was surprised to find quite a number of people hadn't seen in the flesh; and in went my *Firefly* game – which, although not strictly *Traveller*, is close enough that convention organizer Andy Lilly is happy to see such things – particularly to fill in time before the convention starts or 'after hours' moments.

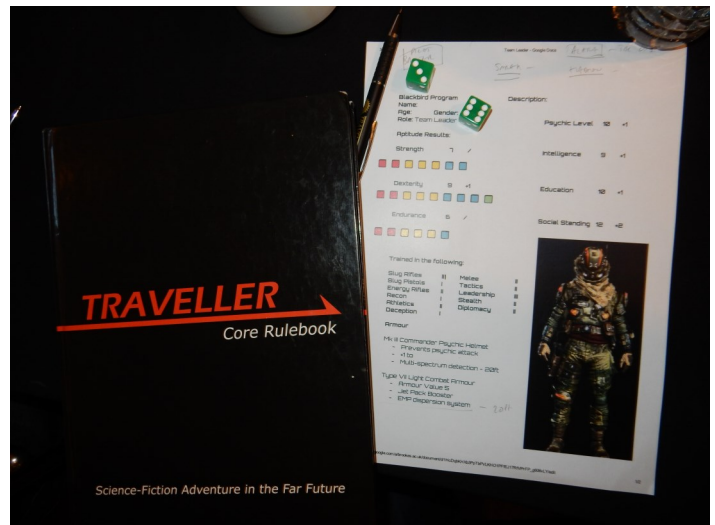


Firefly, all set up and ready to go.

Both of us had taken Friday off work to allow plenty of time for the 3 or 4 hour drive (allowing for breaks) of 152 miles. The journey was as uneventful as one might hope for with a newly-qualified driver and a co-pilot operating auxiliary controls from air-recirculation at the Hindhead tunnel to satnav functions. Even the often-horrendous M25 cooperated.

Redwings Lodge, our regular stop on the Old Great North Road, looked as welcoming as ever and Travellers were beginning to gather in the bar and TAS Lounge Alpha where Andy was setting up his modest headquarters once again. I probably made my first mistake at this point. Instead of lying down and grabbing a sleep which would have been really useful later in the weekend, I got a game of *Firefly* going for those who'd not seen it. We had enough time to give a flavour of how it worked and let those who were interested see how the mechanics and the story cards work. I didn't dare try the couple of story cards I'd come up with, but perhaps another time.

The convention format itself was the same as in recent years with five games in each of one four hour slot Friday evening, three on Saturday and one slightly longer five+ hour slot on Sunday. The usual mix of games was on offer from miniatures-heavy to almost dice-free role playing, from bog-standard *Traveller* merchants through *2300AD* to the first use of *Dynasty* I've seen at TravCon, from serious games to more light-hearted romps, from old favourites to



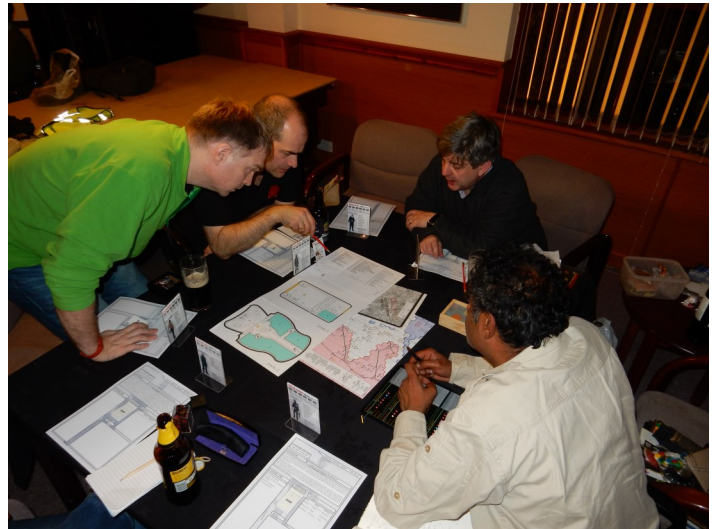
Tools of the trade



## Raconteurs' Rest

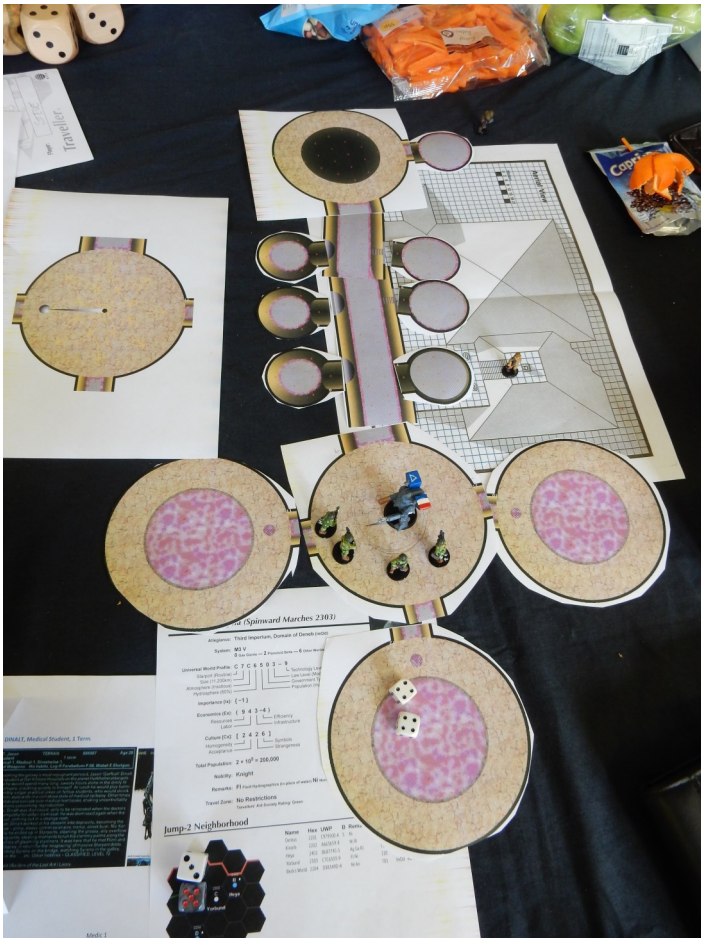
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character write-up telling me I was lusting after Syrena. No, I tell a lie, I didn't draw the short straw getting this character, sitting next to me Jeff did as he had to put up with what was to come. Now I'm usually one to cross the road to avoid a double entendre but keen to show willing I jumped in with both feet and twenty plus years of repression got unleashed with every bad pun and slightly off-colour line I could muster. Jeff took it in good spirit but I suspect it wasn't only Syrena who wanted to kill Dinalt by about half way through.



Ravi S's 'Pilot' looked rather intense at times.

to know what it was like. Off we went, uncovering various bits of the underground structure as we went (see photo). Syrena was doing her best to ensure she was paired up with anyone but Dinalt as we burst into the various rooms. Eventually we stumbled across a pit that contained *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*-style pods. In the pods were bodies and we soon discovered that they were clones of... us. (It was complicated.) Now, having been rebuffed by Syrena and being totally unused to the conventions of dungeon crawls, I thought that this might be my chance for redemption. Rescue the Syrena clone and either win the undying affection of 'our' Syrena, or that of the clone. *Win-win!* I thought. Of course everyone else was set to run for the hills as they knew perfectly well what the score was and the zombie-like clones started making short work of being terrifying and beginning to attack. Still utterly blasé my character moved in for an embrace... and while poor Dom had to face the fact that the player really hadn't seen the writing on the wall, I was perhaps fortunate that Syrena put aside her feelings and stepped up bravely to shoot her own clone in the face. It was a great moment in the game and in the convention. Believing that stories should have redemptive arcs for characters – you see I still hadn't quite got the hang of dungeon crawls – I then used the experience to decide that Dinalt was a changed man who might still worship Syrena but would do so politely and from a distance having learned his



'Deep Shadows', Dungeon Crawling in the Far Future

Now for those who know *Shadows*, you'll recall it was one of the first ever *Traveller* adventures ever produced and clearly showed its roots in *Dungeons & Dragons* style design. Indeed, one player did (good humouredly) complain when he realized it was a dungeon crawl. I was delighted, however. I'd missed the whole D&D thing at school and wanted



## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 6)

lesson. I think Dom, Jeff and the others were more shocked at that behaviour than the surprise of finding that I hadn't run a mile from playing Dinalt in the first place.

Saturday morning taken care of, lunch and a break fitted in, the afternoon saw a complete change of pace as I joined Graham S and his 'Extreme Sports'. This was unusual in being a rare example of the totally ordinary merchant trader crew getting on with life and seeing what turns up. As I've never been part of a regular gaming group this experience too was a novelty for me as TravCon adventures are rarely quite this straightforward. In fact so much so that I'm thinking I might try running something like this myself next year and arming myself with just the rule book, some encounter possibilities (such as *Supplement 13: Starport Encounters*), picking a spot on the map and seeing where we end up. Not sure I'm quite brave enough for that, yet. Graham, however, was, and with some terrific stand up character markers and gorgeous deck plans of a *Kankurur*-class Frontier Cruiser we were soon doing *Travellerish* things and eventually encountered some rather dark goings on a long way from anywhere.

I was playing a woman this time, Tara Vix with her name hinting at her attractiveness and former socialite/wastrel past. Peter D playing the only other



Browsing the vendors during a break.

non-male in the group was cast as Kel, a rather against-type gung-ho Aslan female. A highlight of this game was our decision to collect rumours at a local upmarket casino on a girls' night out. We both said we'd go dressed to kill. We didn't quite mean it in the same way however!



Graham S runs 'Extreme Sports'



Two Extreme Sportswomen

## Raconteurs' Rest

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'Aurore Five-O', Booking 'em in the Not-So-Far Future (2300AD)

As ever some retired to the nearby curry house for a second evening, some stayed in and ordered take away, and I believe some may have gone further afield. But the evening saw the third game of the day and another change of pace to a much anticipated sequel to last year's 'Trash Prevention'. Those who read the write-up of TravCon 14 (*Freelance Traveller*, September 2014) may recall that this involved a gang of chirpers clearing up a city from the garbage that piles up – both literally and metaphorically. In 'The Chirpers Strike Back' the SuckItUp refuse collectors were back in action this time having possibly witnessed a political assassination at the highest level. This had already run once on Saturday



Andy and Sarah Lilly, creators of 'The Chirpers Strike Back'.



Taking a break

morning and much mirth and merriment could be heard. Once again our voices were strained as we chirped for four hours but the characters were just as fun a second time around and the plot intriguing and involving. Once again the husband-and-wife duo of Sarah writing and Andy running (see photo) is not one to miss and we can only encourage them to ensure that their wonderful string of 'TP' adventures see the light of day in publication.



Pete G knows bootcamp.

Other games going on in other slots either looked intriguing or sometimes sounded intriguing. To mention just one 'You're in the Army Now' had Pete G (left) using his military experience to put his players through a bootcamp which appeared to involve some real square bashing, boot polishing and punishment. It certainly involved a lot of shouting.

## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 8)

You may have spotted that I've missed what I was up to on Friday night and through the Sunday slot. This was the slightly different thing I mentioned. Last year I wrote about running a game in which I'd split the players into two groups and for the first half hour ran them separately until they 'met'. ('Three Blind Mice', available for free from DriveThruRPG or 13Mann [<http://13mann.com/index.php/en/download/category/52-traveller-adventures>] if you've missed it.) Well, that probably grew out of an idea I'd had some 18 months before TravCon 15 when it had occurred to me that it would be cool to get together with another referee and have two completely separate games which somehow 'met' and had the players interact. For a long time I half thought about perhaps two crime syndicates running different parts of a city or asteroid and eventually clashing, but it didn't feel very



Robin F runs the classic 'Legends of the Sky Raiders'.

Travelleresque and it seemed far too combative for my liking although I'm sure it would have worked.

While still having not decided back in October what I might run at this year's TravCon I happened to be rereading Rob Grant's *Colony* and the first light that went on in my head was that I should run an adventure on a generation ship. The second thought that came to me was that this was the ideal moment for *Supplement 12: Dynasty* to allow different periods of the generation ship to be experienced; and the third thought was that this was also the perfect opportunity to have two lots of players meet: one group on the ship and one group finding the ship. I tried the idea on a couple of referees but they were busy with ideas of their own, or weren't keen on a collaboration, or feared that the idea would never work due to complexity, or didn't have time, or all four. I was a bit knocked back as I was convinced it would be a fun idea and I'd never seen or heard of it done in all the years of TravCon. However, I knew one more referee I thought I might ask despite it now being only a month before the convention. Perhaps I could sell it as 'I've got an idea for an adventure if you've not written one yet'. Enter Steve E whose meaty role playing I've enjoyed in the past, first as a lowly naval lieutenant pregnant with Norris' child, then as Strephon, Emperor of the Third Imperium! Steve had some concerns and outlined things which would be problems, things that could



Chirper hands during 'The Chirpers Strike Back'.

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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Simon B's miniatures wargame 'Convoy'

be problems, and one or two other pitfalls to avoid. But in a moment of extreme bravery he agreed to give it a go if we addressed the concerns. I sent him an outline of what was needed and what I was doing and in two or three lengthy phone calls we thrashed out the details and foreseeable problems together with their solutions and alternatives. While I'd written a ridiculous amount of material for my own side, I can safely say his advice and experience made the whole thing a sane proposition rather than a half-baked, hare-brained idea!

We'd arranged with Andy to be given two adventures in the same time slot and wrote teasers that were sufficiently attractive without giving the game



Ravi S takes refuge behind an asteroid ('Convoy')

away or looking too closely connected. And once again, having gone to some effort, I thought we might as well run the whole thing twice even if we couldn't possibly keep the secret for the second run.

My side was called 'Generation X' and was not only experimental in terms of the meeting, it was also experimental in using *Dynasty* at least as a basis if not fully implemented. My thought was to have the launch generation – well outside normal Known Space – making decisions about the ship, its layout, its crew and its organization; a tenth generation facing various problems 300 years on; and a final generation hundreds of years later still which had 'regressed' in knowledge. This is very traditional in many generation starship stories so I wasn't sur-



Your Intrepid Reported loses it chirping during 'The Chirpers Strike Back'.



An audacious experiment: Generation X (front) and Rendezvous with Karma (rear) were actually two different parts of the same adventure.

## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 10)



'Command and Colors' had Robin F using Striker and other rules.

prised at one player guessing that might be the way they were headed. The games would meet during this 'final' generation.

Steve's side of the equation was called 'Rendezvous with Karma' and involved a disparate group of merchants and scientists from the Imperium and elsewhere all with their own agendas which is usual in his games. They were on the trail of rumours about a strange vessel on the edge of Known Space and eventually managed to locate and catch up with what turns out to be a generation starship. Naturally they'd want to board; naturally my regressed crew would be a tad taken aback to have strangers enter their universe through a cupboard (airlock) they thought led nowhere... Let the interaction begin...

Steve and I had carefully set up quite a detailed timeline of certain marks to hit at certain times. The idea being to keep me on track particularly (his refereeing style is looser and more flexible) but also to ensure we had enough time for a final hour of our two groups of players inhabiting the same game space. We had no idea of how it would go, we had no idea of how the players would receive it, we had no idea if it would really work at all. It was another fearful moment, but Steve's confidence and experi-



Andy Lilly, the man who makes it all go.

ence was reassuring. In the event, I have to say my expectations were wildly exceeded.

I had my six players standing in a tribal 'conference' (traditional to keep the pow-wows short). Steve had suggested a short break as his players' characters opened the relevant airlock and suggested peering over our shoulders to see what we were doing. At the right moment I told my players that some strange creatures had entered their meeting space (a large cargo airlock with a side personnel lock) and here they were – as I gestured at the other group.

The looks on everyone's faces were worth the work, the stress, the fear. One player kept addressing me to say what his character needed to say to supposed NPCs, one was repeatedly muttering "I don't believe it, I don't believe it, I don't believe it" and all were flabbergasted. It really was a priceless moment which I wish I could have bottled. But of course, it was only a moment and everyone soon took it in their stride and the whole set up had engaged players enough that Steve and I could almost sit back and let the remainder of the game run its course. The generation ship was just a few years from running out of water and had other problems as well. The Imperials in addition had certain goals they needed to achieve in a limited time frame. On the Friday night the planned hour turned into nearly two as the players threw themselves into it and the

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## Raconteurs' Rest

characters thrashed out what was necessary on both sides. On the Sunday, in-character role playing continued right through the lunch break as players were so into the experience. The 'primitives' of the ship stayed wonderfully in character and I didn't find anyone using their metaknowledge of what was going on to abuse the situation. (Their deck plans had degenerated as well to just what they knew as TL0 inhabitants of a world they don't even know is travelling in space.) I should acknowledge a debt to Chris Beckett's wonderful wonderful *Dark Eden* which provided a lot of inspiration regarding language usage which helped with the role playing. There were some wonderful moments as a snooker cue stood in for a 'speakstick' to control who was talking; as Imperials tried to explain the reality of the universe, or as the primitives told the new arrivals a thing or two in their own terms and you could watch the hi-tech players slowly working out what they must 'really' mean.



Big games deserve big dice.

What was even better was that in a debrief well after hours on Friday night we asked that no one talk about it, difficult though that was, so we were able to run it again on Sunday with just the same surprise. (Although one player opted to play again and experience it from the 'other side' he brilliantly kept the secret to himself.) My recollections above are almost certainly an elision of both games as they're hard to pick apart.

Yes, there were problems, many of Steve's predictions were spot on but we had responses and headed them off at the pass where we could. Yes, I fouled up the first time in providing a crucial bit of information a little late which didn't help one side. Yes, there was a lot of stress in attempting this kind of thing – in particular relating to the timekeeping which was spot on in one game and not too far off in the other. And yes, there was the frustration that a couple of players struggled with some aspects of the game (one with the *Dynasty* side of things and one with the balance of power in the end game) for which I can only apologize. But was it worth doing? Absolutely. Would I do it again? Possibly. Not immediately, but if an idea presented itself that would work well in this format, I'd certainly consider it. Would I recommend it for other conventions? Definitely – especially if it would be unusual and could be kept a surprise. Although I'm half thinking it might be fun to see if we could get all five adventures in one time slot inter-related – perhaps from the outset! No, just kidding Andy. The stress would kill me.

It only remained after the Sunday slot to have the usual wrap up, auction and awards. The auction sold off the remainder of Derrick J's much loved *Traveller* ale and Dom M snaffled up my huge wad of adventure notes that are nearer a complete sourcebook for generation ships and the start of a bibliography of such stories in science fiction generally and *Traveller* specifically. I was thoroughly embarrassed to win the PFI award for the second year running thanks to my stupidity in Dinalt's attempt to kiss Syrena's dark clone; but that was immediate-

## Raconteurs' Rest

ly redeemed when my nomination of Steve E for his bravery in taking on such a hare-brained scheme won him the Starburst for Extreme Heroism! Much deserved.

Our thanks as ever to the Lilly family for putting on another great convention. My thanks to TH for driving there and back which really reduced the stress of travelling. My gratitude to the referees who wrote and ran such engaging games. And a huge thanks to all those who took the chance of playing 'Generation X' and 'Rendezvous with Karma' – I hope the fun outweighed the shocks you were thrown!



Steve E gets the SEH

## Active Measures

## Getting Off the Ground

### The Medicine Man

by Michael Brown

**Synopsis:** A primitive tribe asks the PCs to rescue its healer, kidnapped by a rival tribe.

#### Pre-Adventure Prep

The referee should select or create the following:

- An Imperial world with Starport Type E or X, Atmosphere 6 or 8, and Tech Level 0 or 1.
- Two primitive tribes, one smaller and weaker than the other. The natives need not be human.

#### Players' Information

The group is asked to meet with the chief of a small local tribe. They are told (through an interpreter if necessary) that until recently, they had the services of a healer who kept his people healthy and fit. A rival tribe kidnapped the healer and fled to their own territory, rough country a day's walk from the smaller tribe's lands. Sickness is sure to return to his own camp if the healer isn't returned.

The chief's clan, despite their physical fitness, is far too few in number to retrieve the healer themselves without risking a bloodbath. So he forced to ask members of the mighty Im-Peer-Ee-Um Tribe to reclaim their healer for them. He has little in the way of anything the visitors consider valuable, but he is open to negotiation. He also hints that perhaps the

PCs might spot something in the rival camp that they might want to take for themselves.

#### Referee's Information

The other camp is about 40 kilometers away; the chief can point the team in the general direction in which he suspects the rivals fled. The PCs can quickly and easily cover that ground with a vehicle.

The rival tribe occupies the summit of a low hill in rough scrubland. PCs with Tactics can tell the campsite was chosen with great care. The area is tactically sound, including unobstructed lines of sight in multiple directions; and abundant natural resources. Ex-military PCs can estimate the number of rival tribe members at around 150, occupying tents covered primarily with animal hides.

Upon being discovered by the tribe, the heroes will immediately be challenged by 5D+2 tribal warriors. Two-thirds of the fighters wield spears (*Book 1: Characters and Combat*), and the rest have short bows (*Supplement 4: Citizens of the Imperium*). If the adventurers are in a flying craft, the bowmen will do their best to bring the craft down; exposed PCs are preferred targets. Otherwise, the visitors will quickly be surrounded. If the PCs offer no resistance, they will be taken into the camp at spear-point.

On their way into camp, they glimpse a male human in one of the tents, clearly of Imperial origin,

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## Active Measures

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and dressed in a white uniform typical of a doctor. This is the healer the first chief wants retrieved. Clearly, he didn't tell the party everything.

The group is taken before the chief and given the opportunity to state their business. He is unwilling to part with the doctor, however, offering almost anything else instead. If the team persists, they are ordered to leave, at spear-point if necessary.

If the PCs fight or try to take the doctor by force, the natives ask no quarter and give none. The male tribe members (30% of the camp total) fearlessly attack the strangers, fighting to the death; while the women and children get to safety. Four warriors defend the chief fiercely at all times.

Any attempt at communication with the doctor without the chief's permission results in the team being asked to leave, as above. The group may secure permission on a Reaction throw of 10+.

Possible directions to take this adventure:

1. The doctor willingly traveled to the second tribe's location to in an effort to improve their health as well. Unfortunately, his departure was not only unsanctioned, it was done in such haste that it looked as if he had been abducted. He resists any attempt to rescue him.
2. The doctor was abducted, but is otherwise unharmed. He has made friends with his new hosts and doesn't want to see them come to harm. He resists any attempt to rescue him.
3. As 2, but the doctor is an unwilling guest. He is otherwise unharmed. He doesn't resist rescue attempts, but doesn't actively help either. The tribals react as if attacked, as above.

4. As 3, but the doctor eagerly participates in efforts to get rescued. He is unharmed.
5. As 2, but the doctor was injured during his abduction by the rival tribe (2D hits) and can't travel without help. He will neither help nor hinder efforts to rescue him.
6. Whether he went willingly to the rivals' camp or not, when the PCs arrive, the doctor is in the middle of a delicate procedure (surgery, childbirth, etc.) and refuses to leave until it is finished. The procedure or event takes 1D+2 hours. Meanwhile, the tribal members grow increasingly restless. Throw their Reaction to the PCs every hour; if a result of 2 (Violent. Immediate attack) or 3 (Hostile. Attack on 5+) comes up, the tribe attacks as outlined above.

If the group for whatever reason returns to the original tribe without the doctor, the chief will order his warriors to go and fetch their healer, even though his fighters aren't as powerful. The survivors of the resulting massacre will blame the PCs.

The referee must determine the flow of subsequent events.

### NPC

**Imperial Doctor** 6A5985 Age 26 Cr20,000

2 Terms Other (Medical)

Medic-3

If the tribe is nonhuman, and your version of *Traveller* allows a separate skill for alien medicine ("Xenomedic", here), give the doctor an additional term (and four years of age) and Xenomedic-2.

No reason has been created for the doctor to be on planet, nor for his working with/for the tribes. If such reasons are needed, the referee is encouraged to devise them to suit the needs of the campaign. 🌟

## Raconteurs' Rest

### The Old Scout: Sun Weather

by Jeffrey Schwartz

The storm raged outside the bar, hail pelting the windows and rattling on the sidewalk outside.

Someone said something about the weather being "unseasonable", and "It's defina-aly a-changing', it is. It's the sun that does it, you know." Someone else shouted them down as an idiot, and the good natured debate began as the beer continued to flow.



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Finally, someone asked the old man in the corner, "what's the worst place you've seen for weather, old timer?"

He brushed back his hair, thought for a second, and began to tell his story.

"Back in '03... or was it '13... Or '93. Anyway, I had the old IISS *Samantha*, and been assigned to act as a 'coast guard' ship based off a planet on the frontier. You know, a little rescue work, a little customs enforcement, a little anti-piracy show the flag stuff.

"Place had started out as an Imperial research station, with all manner of astronomical equipment to study the variable star the rock orbited. Weather was... horrid. Apparently the place had been pretty decent up to about 500 years ago, and then the star went variable. It had a 413 day year, which was nice, so you nominally had seasons of about 100 days. Nominally.

"Except the star was on a 1000-odd day cycle, where it would ramp up and ramp down its output. So you'd have a year of really really cold winter, no summer, and then it would ease into a hot-hot year, and back.

"As the astronomers started expanding their science station, someone noticed the ice looked funny in the coldest part of the winter. And then they noticed some weird crystals in the summer. And some really weird metal on the ground after the boiling and burning in the Hot Summer.

"As the oceans boiled down, they'd expose a big cliff of Monazite. It was near what was, in the wet part of the double-year cycle, a volcanic island. What was interesting was that as the cliff cooked and the water boiled down, the sea water trapped in the volcanic pool would boil, cracking the land sort of like fracking.

"That would release a seepage of sulfuric acid.

"Over the course of weeks, it would rain when the humidity got too high... and the rain was marginally cooler than the cliff side. Eventually, by the

end of Hot Summer, you'd see this grey mud, with streaks of silver in it near the top of the hill, and then farther down the hill this... goop... with metallic flecks that would set off a rad counter.

"Yeah, slow natural separation of Lanthanum and Thorium.

"You can imagine how fast LSP jumped on that.

"So now there's this whole complex of miners, all living aboard converted GCarrier skiffs, and operating grav dump trucks and loaders and such. During the times the world isn't hellishly hot or freezing cold, they work the cliffs, pushing mud back up to the top of the pile so it'll self-process next year. Worst part of the year, they migrate between the poles, avoiding the worst of the weather.

"Now and then, though, one of those gypsy miners has a mechanical problem with their skiff... and then it gets kinda interesting to go bail them out.

"But the weather... So there was this one fine spring day that the star's output was ramping up. Winter had it around -20C at the equator, and most of the miners had been hanging out at the north pole, pointed more toward the star, and it was only about 5C there at noontime. Helluva spring day.

"I get this radio call that a skiff was having problems, could I help out... so we load up the Type-S, figuring if the wind is too bad we'll just go exoatmo and not worry about it.

"Fly down there, great tail wind as the warm air made this high pressure zone and blew south... and then just past this mountain range, that warm, moist air hit a cold front and just went to ice. Of course, the pole is getting this heat pump, and the star isn't particularly stable, so when it has a CME, it ramps up heat output fast for a couple days.

"We'd found the skiff, grounded, and were in the middle of trying to fix the problem with his gravitics when the weather went into hurricane strength winds. That went on for a few days, but unlike a normal hurricane where it loses some strength at night, the pole was in the 30 days of straight daylight. It just kept getting fed more comparatively

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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warm air all 20 hours a day.... all dosed with water vapor from the ice cap.

"Which promptly condensed as it came over the ridge, and dropped as sleet driven by 100 to 120 kph winds.

"Ended up just battening the hatches in the S, with me, my second, and the miner and his wife and 2 kids aboard. Took six days for the storm to break, and another 2 days of hard work to clear enough ice off the hulls for us to lift." ❄️

## Critics' Corner

### Supplement 1: 760 Patrons, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

reviewed by Megan Robertson

*Supplement 1: 760 Patrons, Second Edition.* August Hahn.  
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>  
408pp, hardbound  
US\$49.99/UK£34.99

*This originally appeared on [rpg-resource.org.uk](http://rpg-resource.org.uk) in September 2012*

This is an incredibly useful Referee resource. It's usually billed as something to grab when you have players badgering for a game and haven't had time to plan an adventure for them, but it's just as useful as a planning tool, a jumping-off point for inspiring your own adventures by looking over the suggestions under the type of adventure or location that you have in mind. The ideas herein are also ideal as 'filler' adventures between elements of a plot arc in a longer campaign. Or indeed, you can run them as one-off quick adventures, provided you are happy winging it from a bare-bones idea.

The core idea is that in each instance, the characters are approached by someone who wants them to do something, usually for some kind of reward. They have been organised by type—some classified by the job that is to be done, some by the location in which the characters are when they get offered it. It's not something to read through cover-to-cover, it is a book to dip into for inspiration or for something ready-made, pick and mix as you please.

A common layout is used. First, the patron is described, and there is a section giving the information as given to the characters. There's more information for the Referee, especially about what can go wrong! Finally there is a table on which you can

## TRAVELLER

Supplement 1:  
760 Patrons

SECOND EDITION

roll 2d6 to determine the outcome... or of course if one of the outcomes listed catches your eye, go ahead and use it!

There is a wide variety of tasks to be done, from the trivial to the arduous. Many will make a whole adventure, even a series of adventures, if you want; others just an amusing side-trip between other events. You will find yourself returning to it again and again; it's worth consulting even when you have some idea of what you want to do... and if you are bereft of inspiration, you won't be for long after flipping through a few of the patron encounters! ❄️

## #16: Letting the Side Down

by Timothy Collinson

I'm fascinated by what drives referees to take on the challenge of running an adventure. Rarely rewarding financially and dreadfully time consuming, why bother? Judging by my own drives it's probably a mixture of things: desperation to play *Traveller* so-if-no-one-else-will-ref-I-will, players being appreciative of the effort, love of performance, wanting to tell a good story, eagerness to help out a convention organizer who has slots to fill, wanting to showcase *Traveller* to newbies, wanting to entertain a group of players, having an interesting idea and wondering where it will go, and probably as many other reasons as there are referees.

But it's that penultimate one that this year's TravCon ("After-Action Report: TravCon 2015", p.4) really brought home to me. I've been perhaps fortunate in that my first two years refereeing seemed to be so well received I was encouraged to do more. Last year I tried harder and ran two games in three slots but for the first time found myself apologizing for what had happened to a character – although the player took it in good heart. This year, amongst the 22 players involved in the 9 hours of role playing I was taking a hand in refereeing, I looked up at one point to find two players seriously unengaged and at another point found a player was struggling due to a corner he was backed into.

I wasn't upset with them for not loving the adventure, I was cross with myself for having failed them. There are so many games at TravCon in so few slots that hard choices have to be made and I always count it a huge privilege anyone chooses to play my adventures.

Trying to unpick the 'whys' afterwards, I discovered that one had found the mixture of dynasties rolling on across the ages and slipping backwards in terms of tech level had deprived him of too much psychological investment in his dynasty, another had found the lack of it being a standard format game too much of a change (perhaps my warnings had been insufficient), and the third suffered from two referees looking after a grand melee of 11 players at once meaning that individual character autonomy slipped through the cracks (I'd been warned about this and was trying hard to make sure I gave anyone who wanted it, time enough). In retrospect, I think all three players (and there may have been more I didn't pick up on), had fair complaints.

While I know you can't please all of the people all of the time, I certainly want to and the experience has been good in learning about boundaries, what works or not, and player engagement. It will also make me redouble my efforts to write and run the very best adventures I can even if they still fall short of perfection. Of course "deep down" "I really just want to be loved" as Ford Prefect and the Vogon captain in *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* argue but more than that I hate letting the side down. 🌀

## Doing It My Way

### Hazard: Matterslip!

by Michael Brown

*Shaansi hardly noticed the snap of cold air as she sped down the snow-covered slope. The wind on her face, the sunlight glinting off the ice, the sound of her skis atop the frozen blanket, the challenges of the backcountry—these gave her reason to live. Sure, she could get mostly the same effect with a gravboard, but there was nothing like*

*the feel of skis against snow; of controlling her motion through friction and body-sense, not through electronics and computers. Her friends—especially the younger ones—couldn't understand it, and she couldn't explain it to them. It just was.*

*A gravboard's advantage was that it was quieter. Shaansi didn't want quiet. She wanted the srrush of the skis as her constant companion. They drowned out all else: the sight of her father in that automed, her brother's be-*

(Continued from page 17)

*trayal, the court's decision... all lost in the sound and the blur of the slopes.*

*Unfortunately, the skis were also just loud enough to cover the first sounds of trouble. Shaansi missed the initial "thump" of the snowpack upslope separating. She became aware of the problem seconds later only as the barest hint of vibration and an increasing rumble. At first perplexed, her skier's training quickly took over. A glance uphill showed her white impending hell.*

*Fighting panic, she poled hard toward a patch of trees, hoping to use them to break the avalanche's power. The wall of snow loomed closer with each terrified glance at its progress.*

*Shaansi's fear drove her. Harder! Faster! She poled with all her might. The world became a slow motion blur. The approaching avalanche. The approaching trees. The fleeing birds. The horrible roar of the disaster, however, wasn't in slow motion; it steadily increased in volume, amping up her terror.*

*Almost there! Ten meters... five... then with a quickly-smothered scream of despair, she was brutally slammed away from hope and refuge. Her world became one of cold and pain as she was borne uncontrollably to an uncertain fate.*

Gravity exists universally. What goes up must come down. Anything sitting on a slope—especially if that object is in a precarious position to begin with—will eventually find its way to the bottom of that slope. Sometimes with disastrous results.

Matterslips are constant dangers in any raised terrain such as mountains and foothills. Composed of a variety of substances, they also vary in their danger.

*Author's Note: while based on real-world science, the concepts presented here are part of a game. Nothing presented here is intended to be used in real-life situations. Matterslips (avalanches, landslides, rockslides, and mudslides) are dangerous phenomena that cause injuries and death, and are best avoided. When in 'slip-prone areas, always observe authorities' warnings regarding their potential and the areas where they are likely to occur.*

## Defining a Matterslip

Matterslip is an umbrella term coined by Imperial scientists to describe a quickly-moving surge of material (including snow, rocks, earth, or mud) down a slope. The most stereotypical variant is an avalanche, a matterslip composed mainly of snow. Matterslips are also known (depending on composition) as landslides, rockslides, and mudslides.

Just as matterslips vary, so do methods of classifying them. Indeed, each world has its own system; Imperial authorities typically utilize the local classifications. For our purposes, matterslips can be broadly categorized on a scale based on their destructiveness:

1. Relatively harmless; no risk of injury
2. Capable of burying, injuring/killing unprotected beings
3. Capable of damaging/destroying/burying small vehicles (ex: ground cars) and small structures
4. Capable of damaging/destroying/burying large vehicles (ex: ATVs, Ship's Boats) and large structures
5. Capable of damaging/destroying/burying starships or small towns
6. Capable of damaging/destroying/burying anything in its path; an historical event

## The Making of a Matterslip

Matterslips are among the most common of natural hazards. All that's needed are some form of solid matter, a slope of 30°-45° (steeper slopes prevent accumulation; shallower slopes prevent the generation of the force necessary for the 'slip's power), and gravity. Usually the material involved is in a precarious position atop or along the slope, with either a stress fracture running through some part of it or part of its mass unsupported. When a trigger event occurs, a portion of the matter breaks loose and cascades downslope. Triggers can be anything that provides enough shock or resonance to cause a mechanical failure of the unsupported material; this is often seismic activity, but can include water erosion, human or other sapient activity, or volcanic action.

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Contrary to popular belief, matterslips cannot be caused by loud sounds; the trigger must be mechanical in nature.

Once begun, the 'slip builds by collecting other materials. In the beginning this is merely more snow, rocks, or whatever else the 'slip is composed of, but plant matter, vehicles, and structures in the disaster's path are also borne along if the 'slip is large and powerful enough. Most matterslips grow in size and intensity as they go, and can become quite large. A massive avalanche triggered by a strong earthquake struck the nation of Peru, on Terra's South American continent, in -2548 (1970 CE). The avalanche, 61 million cubic meters of material measuring over 900 meters wide and 17 kilometers long, buried two towns and killed over 20,000. An even larger matterslip on Terra's North American continent in -2505 (2013 CE) claimed no lives but measured 126 million cubic meters, shut down a copper mine, and fell into a 1.6 kilometer deep pit so hard that earthquakes were recorded.

Fortunately for potential victims, matterslips are short-lived. They move fast, and can reach speeds of 128 kph in 5 seconds. One can be over and done in the space of just a few combat rounds.

### Surviving a Matterslip

It is possible to survive a matterslip. The best way also happens to be the most common way: don't be in the path of one. This includes staying alert to the possibility of a 'slip:

- Watching the surrounding terrain for changes, especially sudden ones. Such changes include:
  - Cracks in the ground or paved areas appearing and slowly widening
  - Changes in stormwater drainage
  - Ground bulging at the base of a slope
  - Water breaking through the ground in certain locations
  - Cracks appearing in nearby structures
  - Vertical structures (poles, trees, etc.) tilting or moving

- Boulders or trees making unusual sounds or motions such as cracking or moving together
- Small "precursor" 'slips, especially if the remaining material appears precarious.
- Watching the weather; landslides and mudslides often accompany periods of intense or sustained, ground-saturating rainfall. Avalanches are most likely in the 24 hours following an intense snowfall (more than 30 cm.)
- Learning the history of the terrain from locals. The surroundings may have a history of such events.
- Paying attention to authorities' warnings about the possibility of matterslips.

Regardless of the type of matterslip, a common survival tactic is to move from the 'slip's center path as quickly as possible; the most force and fastest speeds usually happen in the middle of the 'slip.

If an adventurer is caught by surprise and/or moving aside isn't possible, survival depends on the nature of the 'slip:

Landslides, mudslides: the hero should curl up into a tight ball while protecting his or her head, including wearing a helmet. If within a multi-level structure, the hero should climb to the second level; this also removes him or her from the debris path.

Rockslides: the hero should get as close as (s)he can to the slope, protect the head, and not look up.

Avalanches: Surviving an avalanche is a bit more involved. Many avalanches are triggered by the victim or companions. If the snow fractures underfoot, jumping upslope past the fracture may be enough to avoid being caught in the 'slip. Heroes also should shed extra weight (such as backpacks, extraneous equipment, etc.) quickly in order to become as lightweight as possible. If the adventurer can grab onto a nearby object, this can prevent being carried away and buried if the avalanche is small. If escape or holding on isn't possible, the adventurer should begin swimming (yes, swimming) in order to stay closer to the surface of the snow. Adventurers who become buried are up against the clock; hypother-

(Continued from page 19)

mia and suffocation are certain unless rescue is nearby. Buried victims should dig an air pocket in front of their face (to prevent suffocation) and conserve their energy. While it's possible for the PC to dig him or herself out if near the snow's surface, in most cases rescue must come from outside.

### Aftermath of a Matterslip

A matterslip usually passes quickly. Once it has passed, the responses to the aftermath are usually the same, regardless of world or tech level: locate and rescue survivors (if any) and leave the area. Although a matterslip's danger may appear over, there may be more 'slips if the terrain is unstable or being affected by severe weather. Mudslides in particular often occur in multiples.

Matterslips are a strictly local phenomenon, so their economic and environmental impact is relatively small. Avalanches can take a toll on arctic tourism, but usually occur in wilderness areas where guests can be easily steered away from dangerous zones. Mudslides and landslides are another matter. Either can occur in urban or otherwise-developed areas, taking homes and shops with them. The economic impact in this case is far more immediate and painful. The stricken area can take months to recover from a severe 'slip, especially if essential services were also affected. Mudslides can affect infrastructure, with mud overwhelming commerce and sanitation facilities, burying roads, clogging or destroying waste treatment facilities, and destroying cropland. Naturally, a sufficiently large 'slip can completely bury entire towns.

### Refereeing a Matterslip

To begin, the referee must decide on the angle of the slope. Remember that matterslips occur on slopes of 30°-45°; for simplicity, the referee should decide on either 30° or 45°. The severity of the matterslip is also a factor; using the categories above, the referee can assign a severity or determine one by throwing 1D.

As noted, matterslips rarely just happen; there is usually a trigger. In the case of an avalanche, that trigger is often sapient activity. If the PCs are moving through an avalanche zone, a throw of 6+ means one or more of the party has triggered a break of the snow's fracture zone (DMs: +2 for heavy activity such as combat, +4 if they are deliberately trying to start one). If the trigger throw succeeds, each PC may immediately throw DEX or less to jump upslope and avoid being carried downslope.

Mudslides are more random. Sapient activity doesn't trigger one; they occur in a region of heavy rain or flooding. If either of these conditions exists, and there is sufficient slope (see above), throw 7+ for one to occur (DMs: +1 for every 15 minutes of heavy rain, +1 if the slope is 45°).

Landslides can happen very quickly, with the land suddenly sliding out from under creatures and structures, or they can happen over time. Once one begins, however, they behave as any other matterslip. The referee should decide whether the landslide is fast or slow. If fast, then it uses the same chances of being triggered as a mudslide (above), with the same DMs. If the landslide is slow, the referee should use a DM of +1 per day of heavy rain rather than every 15 minutes.

The referee should also consider the terrain. A mudslide obviously can't happen on a snow-covered slope, for instance.

A matterslip, once triggered, moves quickly—its speed is 10D meters per second. The referee should decide how far it has to travel to reach the victim—which establishes their reaction time—and the total distance to the bottom of the slope.

To calculate a matterslip's damage, use the following procedure:

- Divide the slope by 15. A 30° slope thus equals 2, 45° equals 3. This is the 'slope factor' (SL)
- Divide the 'slip's speed in mps by 10. This is the 'speed factor' (SP)
- Note the 'slip's category number (above).
- If the composition of the 'slip is solid (i.e., rocks or ice chunks), multiply by 2.

(Continued from page 20)

Plug the results into the following equation:

$(SL) \times (SP) \times (\text{category}) \times (\text{composition, if solid})$

This gives the dice of damage the 'slip does to whatever is in its path. It hits as a Club, and uses the same armor matrix (*Book 1: Characters and Combat*). Armor protects normally. If the PCs move to either side of the 'slip, where the force is less—or in the case of a land- or mudslide, curl into a tight ball—halve the damage. If they use trees, rocks, and other objects as cover, treat such objects as Cloth armor.

The victims are carried along by the matterslip for 1D-2 combat rounds. Multiply this by the meters per second (above) to determine the distance. If the damage done is greater than the sum of the hero's STR, DEX and END, (s)he is then buried and takes 1D of suffocation damage per minute (4 combat rounds) unless rescued.

### Forecasting a Matterslip

Scientists have studied the causes and the preceding conditions of matterslips, and can forecast them with some degree of reliability. PCs who closely monitor local weather conditions can often make these forecasts themselves. Electronic sensors may even give them a reasonable timeframe in which a 'slip will happen (for example, using sensors to detect and monitor the fracture zones in large snow deposits.)

### "I happen to know something about matterslips..."

Naturally, PCs with the most knowledge of and experience with matterslips are those who have lived or worked in 'slip-prone areas; especially avalanche zones, where knowledge of them is crucial to protecting slope-goers. Such individuals include wilderness guides, park rangers, game wardens, conservationists, geologists, and anyone else who spends a great deal of time in the outdoors.

Some *Traveller* careers are suited as background for a hero professing knowledge of matterslips. Scientists (*Supplement 4: Citizens of the Imperium*) are

obviously knowledgeable, but Hunters—who necessarily spend time outside tracking bounty across varied terrain—would have at least a passing knowledge of 'slips and their triggers. Barbarians may know the locales to avoid by intuition, or simply knowing the history of the area if prone to regular matterslips.

Several skills are useful in dealing with matterslips: Computer skill allows modeling to determine which areas are in danger of burial or destruction, with an eye toward mitigation or prevention. Demolition skill (*Supplement 4: Citizens of the Imperium*) lets heroes place charges or artillery in ways that grant control of a resulting 'slip, or trigger one prematurely to prevent a worse one. Electronics skill allows for the use of scanners to detect fracture zones, approaching weather that may increase the chances of a 'slip, and quick detection of victims. Recon skill gives the ability to spot conditions that lead to 'slips and plan routes to avoid them. Survival skill is also invaluable for this, as well as specific survival techniques and rescue operations.

### The Matterslip's Impact on the Game

Referees can use a matterslip in much the same way they can use any other natural occurrence: as a direct threat to challenge the PCs; as background or a preliminary to an adventure; as an additional obstacle to overcome during an adventure; and even as a deus ex machina in case the adventurers get stuck.

### Ship's Locker

**Avalanche Beacon** (7) Cr150. A miniaturized beacon that transmits a constant signal to aid in the location and rescue of buried avalanche victims. At tech level 9+, the signal includes inertial guidance and vital signs reporting. Mass negligible.

**Rescue Airbag** (8) Cr500. A backpack device that deploys by use of a ripcord to prevent burial in an avalanche. The airbag inflates, allowing the victim to float to the surface of the snow. At tech level 9, the bag comes with sensors that trigger the airbag automatically imminent burial is detected. Mass 2kg. 🌀

### Maranatha-Alkahest Sector

reviewed by Jeffro Johnson

*Maranatha-Alkahest Sector*. Dave Sering.

Originally by Judges Guild <http://www.judgesguild.org>

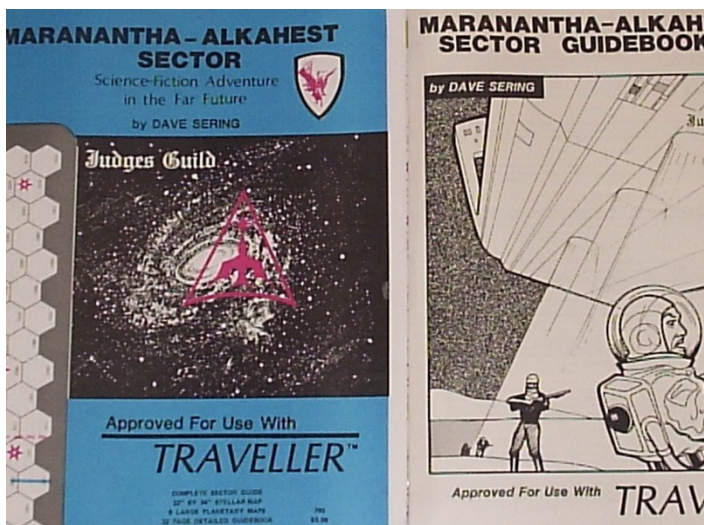
Currently from FarFuture Enterprises <http://www.farfuture.net>

24pp, PDF

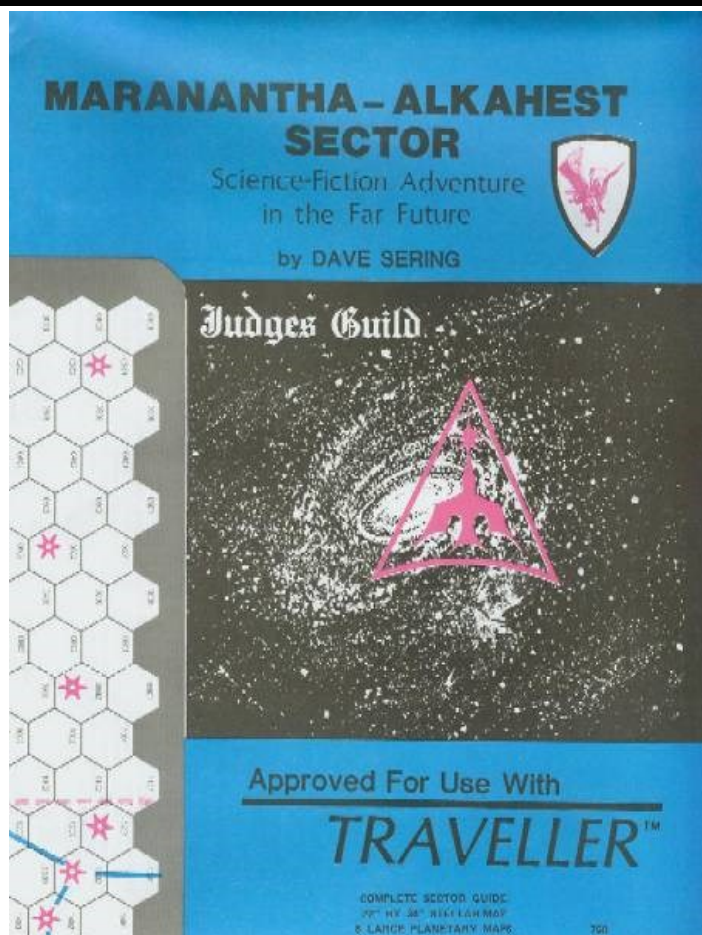
US\$6.70/UK£4.32

*This review originally appeared on the author's Wordpress blog (<http://jeffro.wordpress.com>) in July 2015.*

This supplement is pretty dang cool. Now, the production values are not on par with the classic *Traveller* LBB's. The paper is the sort of thing you'd give to elementary school students to do their class-work on. The subsector maps just don't have quite the verve of the ones that GDW put out. And yeah, the addition of an extra color on the world maps really gave the GDW world maps a lot of extra kick that you don't see here. Nevertheless, this thing is uber cool.



I'm not even sure how they pulled this off, though. I mean, anyone could roll up a sector map, sure. And anyone could go back over the results to clean them up a little. But these guys... they crafted this sector right between four major empires... but they did it without the Alien Modules. K'kree (1984), Solomani (1986), and Hivers (1986) are all referenced here. Everything is consistent with later canon. In fact... the outline of each of the nine interstellar polities presented here survive onto the map presented in *GURPS Traveller Second Edition*.



The thing I like about this product is that there's really nothing much you can do with it except start playing. That's genius, really. With *GURPS Rim of Fire*, for instance, I will read it cover to cover, then go back and pick a subsector and reread it a few times, then pick out a world to start a campaign on, then fret about the worlds that aren't detailed, then get distracted by something else and never really start a game. But that's just not how you run a game with the original Books 1-3. The whole idea of this product is that the players will be travelling through this sector, meeting up with random patrons, and (probably) mucking around with the trade rules. From there, who knows what will happen?

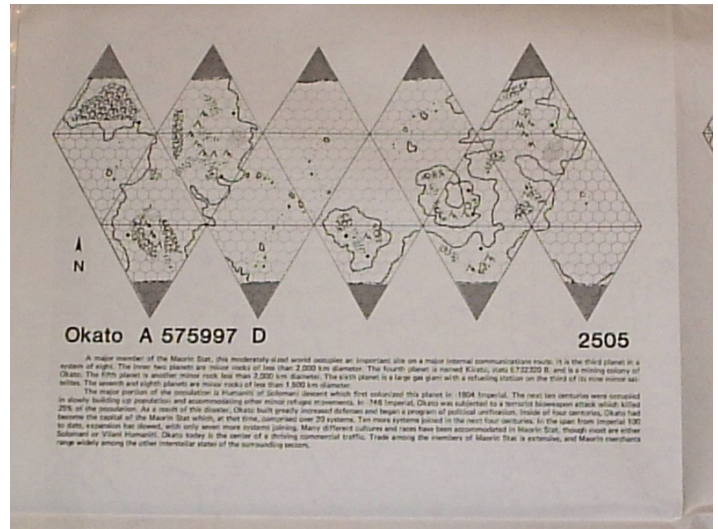
I really like the system for the random charts presented here, though. There is a 3d6 table for rumors... but on a 15, you check a d6 table for a given polity. Events differ from rumors in that they can occur only once. One third of the events are (again) from a d6 table for each polity... the remaining twelve are generic. If you get the same event twice, you either reroll or else check the local event chart.



(Continued from page 22)

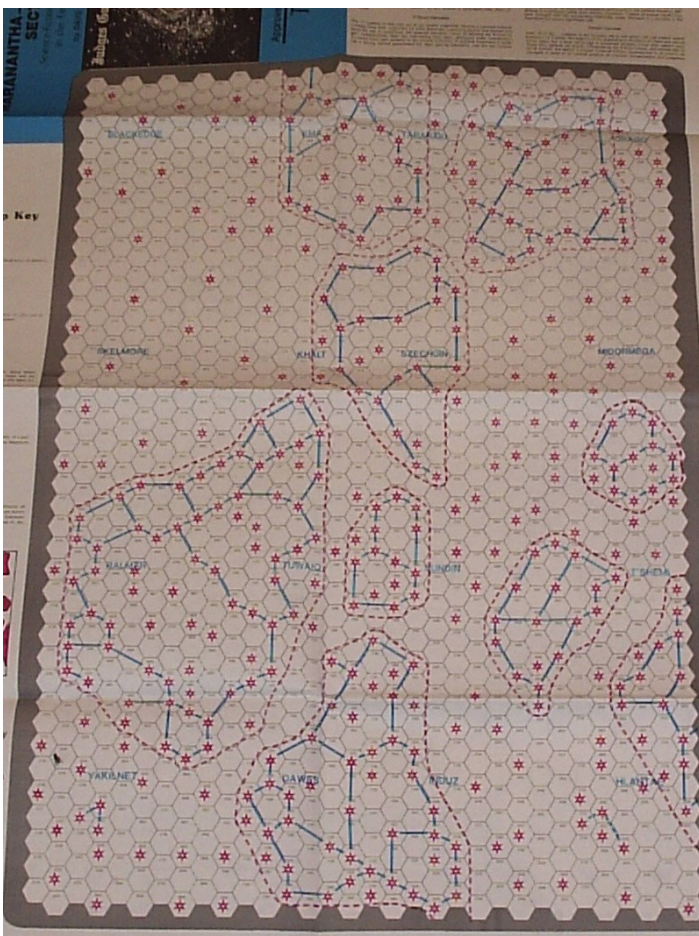
This is what makes it possible for you to start using this product right away without doing a big research project. The entire sector has a certain baseline tone... and each polity has its own character. You get the benefit of both types of local color without having to internalize details about the entire map. And as each event occurs, the precise world where it gets placed will gain a new factor that can color the way you interpret future actions that occur there. The referee that put all this together gives you something that's more "just in time" campaign design rather than some sort of artisanal masterwork that you can't ever truly master.

Eight of the worlds get a complete planetary map. The UWP data is in Book 3 format rather than Book 6 (1983), of course. It's interesting to see the



trade classifications spelled out. And the black hole on the Blackedge subsector is just plain wild! (it's marked as a Navigational Hazard right on the subsector map.) Other oddities are frequent use of attribute checks and lots of aliens and alien creatures.

It's possible that that this thing has something wonky going on with the data- it's hard to trust anybody to produce sane UWP data, really. But I gotta say, this is a really neat supplement, especially with a physical product. It's basically great big sector map that you can just hand to the players like its a road atlas or something; you just don't see that very often. (I know squinting at the compilation of subsector maps in the back of *GURPS Rim of Fire* was just plain painful. Bah!) I don't know why this isn't normal for the game. Sure, you can't cram something like this into either an LBB or a perfect bound book. Nevertheless, you'd think someone would have figured something out about this in the past couple decades! In this respect, Judges Guild is still at the cutting edge of space gaming. 🌟



## Flexible Battery Rules

by Bill Cameron

This article originally appeared on the pre-magazine *Freelance Traveller* website in 2002.

### Introduction

One odd aspect of ship combat as detailed in *Book 5: High Guard* is the concept of battery configurations, specifically those batteries consisting of turrets. While the idea that a single bay weapon or spinal mount is considered a single battery is intuitive, the idea that turrets must be collected into permanent battery assignments is not.

This variant introduces the idea of “flexible” turret battery assignments to *Book 5: High Guard* design and combat. An argument for the historical nature of flexible batteries will be made. The use and desirability of flexible batteries in combat will be discussed. The costs and requirements for either building a vessel with or retrofitting an existing vessel with flexible batteries will be covered also.

Hopefully, both GMs and PCs alike will enjoy introducing flexible batteries to their campaigns.

### Why flexible batteries?

Historically, fire control for weapons batteries onboard ships has been a challenge ever since the first cannon were installed. Hollywood aside, the great “line of battle” ships from the Age of Sail did not fire their huge broadsides of dozens of cannon all at once. Such a practice would have shaken their ships apart. Instead, broadsides were fired in a ripple pattern, each gun captain firing his piece in turn, from bow to stern, as the target came on bearing. Fire control existed in the person of the gun captain himself, he and his crew muscled their bulky charge with handspikes, raising the breech a bit or shifting the gun slightly to one side or another. With combat taking place at the range of a pistol shot, nothing better was really needed.

Then, the Industrial Age changed that.

Towards the turn of the last century, it was apparent to even the most hide-bound of naval officers

that fire control had not kept up with the guns themselves. The British off Alexandria and the Americans off Santiago were chagrined to learn just how few of the huge shells their new and mighty guns threw actually hit their targets. In the case of the Americans, only one or two 10-inch shells out of hundreds fired managed to hit any Spanish vessel.

The solution was both simple and controversial; centrally directed gunnery fire. Simple in that it worked, controversial in the fact that it removed control of the guns from the men serving them. Detractors bemoaned this loss of control, but the much-improved accuracy eventually won everyone over.

By the time dreadnoughts prowled the world's oceans, director fire control was the standard. But, individually controlled fire was never completely abandoned. It was kept around as a back up in case a ship's central control system was lost or damaged.

Even under central fire direction, a warship's batteries were not permanently grouped. A vessel could split the fire of its main turrets to engage more than one target simultaneously. Smaller guns could either tackle single aircraft alone or combine to claw a kamikaze out of the sky. Despite central fire control, crews could still mix and match their vessel's weaponry to precisely meet their needs in combat.

In *Book 2: Starships, Traveller* introduced local fire control as part of its space combat system. A gunner had complete control over the weapons installed in the turret she manned. Given the role-playing emphasis of *Traveller*, this was a natural and correct decision.

Later, in *Book 5: High Guard*, centralized fire control was introduced. Turrets armed with similar weapons could now be grouped into batteries to increase the chances of hitting an opponent, overcoming his defenses, and causing him damage. These battery groups were “set in stone”, however. Turrets were permanently assigned to a given battery at the time a vessel was designed and not by the crew in response to “on the spot” combat requirements.

If TL 5 and 6 warships without fancy electronics could flex their battery groupings as the combat sit-

(Continued from page 24)

uation dictated, why couldn't the near-magical vessels of the 57th century?

### Flexible Batteries – Combat Rules

**Battery Composition:** Simply put, during each offensive and defensive fire turn of a space combat round, a crew can join turrets armed with the same weapons into whatever battery sizes they see fit.

As previously stated in *Book 5: High Guard*, batteries must be comprised of similar weapons, i.e., beam lasers can only be grouped with beam lasers, missiles with missiles, and so forth.

If a vessel is armed with mixed turrets; meaning turrets holding dissimilar weapons, specific weapons in each turret can be grouped into a battery in the same manner as stated in *Book 5: High Guard*, i.e., pulse lasers with pulse lasers, sandcasters with sandcaster, and so forth.

**Battery Ratings:** The total number of weapons grouped into a battery will determine the specific USP code rating for that battery during that round. Check the number of weapons against the Turret Weapons table in *Book 5: High Guard* to determine the proper USP code. The requirements and bonuses listed in that table remain the same. The upper limit of 9 as an USP code remains the same also.

**Example:** Three missile launchers grouped into a battery will result in an USP code of 2. If TL13 or above, they will be rated at 3. Five TL13+ launchers will still only be rated as 3, as six launchers are needed to reach the next level on the table. No matter how many missile launchers are grouped together and despite any TL bonus, the flexed missile battery can have an USP code rating of no greater than 9.

**Battery Selection:** The decisions about a vessel's specific battery groups for a combat round should be declared prior to the offensive or defensive firing step. Players must announce the specific battery groups they use in each round prior to actually using them. In the case of *Book 5: High Guard*, the "Pre-combat Decision Step" is a good time to do this.

**Example:** An 800-dTon mercenary cruiser is armed with eight turrets. Four turrets have triple beam lasers and four turrets have triple missile launchers. The cruiser could fire each laser turret as a battery, resulting in 4 batteries with an USP code of 3 each. The cruiser could fire all four laser turrets as a single battery, resulting in one battery with an USP code of 4. The cruiser could also group two turrets in one battery and fire the remaining turrets as two batteries. This would give the cruiser a single laser battery with an USP code of 4 and two laser batteries with an USP code of 3 apiece.

If a player fails to announce specific battery groupings, a vessel's default battery groupings are used instead. Please see the section below detailing default groupings.

**Manning requirements:** Each battery grouping must have a gunner assigned to it. The gunner can either be present in a turret acting as part of that battery, a turret holding a weapon acting as part of that battery, or a dedicated fire control station on the vessel. A turret gunner can only fire a battery or the mixed weapons in her turret in the same fire turn. To be eligible to fire a battery, a turret gunner must have at least one weapon assigned to that battery present in her turret. Gunners at fire control stations can only fire batteries; however a battery can be made up of a single weapon.

**Example:** A 200-dTon free trader is armed with 2 turrets. Both turrets are mixed and contain a single laser, a single missile, and a single sandcaster. There is a gunner in each turret and a gunner at a fire control station on the bridge. The gunner at the fire control station could fire both lasers in a single battery, leaving the turret gunners to fire their remaining missiles and sandcasters. If a turret gunner fired the combined laser battery, he could not then fire the missile and sandcaster remaining in his turret. The fire control gunner could fire either of those weapons from her station as a one-weapon battery, but not both.

**Default Battery Configuration:** When a vessel is first laid down with flexible batteries, or a vessel is

retrofitted with flexible batteries, a default battery configuration is created. All turret weapons are grouped into batteries as described in *Book 5: High Guard*. If a player fails to announce specific battery groupings before combat takes place or if a vessel's computer is destroyed or off-line, the default battery configuration is used.

**Damage Results:** When a damage roll results in a turret or weapons hit, the *current* battery configuration is used to determine the proper damage. Destroy either the necessary number of turrets or weapons to meet the damage requirements.

**Example 1:** An 800-dTon mercenary cruiser is built with the flexible battery option. During a combat round, all 4 triple beam laser turrets are grouped into a single battery with an USP code of 5. The cruiser receives a weapons-1 hit during the current combat and her opponent chooses to inflict the damage on the single laser. *Book 5: High Guard* states that if only one battery of the type selected exists, then reduce the USP code by the indicated amount. The cruiser had grouped 12 beam lasers into the battery for an USP code of 5. An USP code of 4 requires at least 6 but no more than 9 beam lasers. Of the 12 beam lasers involved, 3 must be destroyed to meet the damage requirements, so one triple laser turret is destroyed.

**Example 2:** Another 800-dTon mercenary cruiser has currently grouped her four beam laser turrets into two USP code 4 batteries. She receives a weapons-1 damage result also. Because there are two laser batteries, one must be destroyed. In this case, two triple laser turrets are removed. If the cruiser had been using her lasers in four batteries, only one battery, i.e., one turret, would have been lost.

### Flexible Batteries – Design and Role Playing Rules

**Cost:** Vessels can either be built with flexible batteries or retrofitted with flexible batteries. If built, all weapon prices should be increased by 10% to reflect added equipment costs. If retrofitted, no new weapons need to be purchased, but 20% of the

weapons cost should be charged. Some vessels may retrofit only certain weapon types at one time, i.e., flexing their lasers but not their sandcasters. The price for such a retrofit should be figured for the affected weapons only.

Retrofits can be performed at any starport the referee deems fit to do the work, usually class A or B. Systems with high law levels, A+, may refuse to do the work at all.

The amount of time required for the retrofit can be assumed to be under two weeks and can be performed during a ship's annual maintenance period.

(Please note: all this refers to civilian or corporate vessels only. Military, scout, and paramilitary vessels can be assumed to already have flexible batteries at no additional costs.)

**Software:** The software for normal batteries and flexible batteries is *not* interchangeable. If a vessel has had its batteries retrofitted for flexible operation, then all software must be replaced before a flexible battery can use that option. In the case of Target or Launch, those programs must be replaced before lasers or missiles/sandcasters can be used. Any offensive or defensive program that is involved in firing or aiming weapons can be replaced.

The prices for flexible battery software are the same as for normal software.

**Example:** A vessel has been retrofitted with flexible batteries for all its weapons. Before the flex option for lasers could be used, the PCs must replace their Target program. New Launch and Target programs would be needed before their missiles could be flexed and a new Gunner Interact program installed before that feature could be used.

**Do It Yourself:** Referees will undoubtedly find their PCs trying to retrofit their vessels for as cheaply as possible. PCs can attempt to do the work themselves, thus saving on labor costs.

The skills required are gunnery, mechanical, and electronics. A minimum of one level in each skill is necessary. The work can be done in one week for each turret involved with a throw of 9+. Each skill

(Continued on page 27)

## Doing It My Way

level above one in any of the required skills can be used to affect the success roll.

Additional skill levels can also be spent to reduce the work period by one day at a throw of 8+. At most three characters can be used to perform the work at any one time, any more can not fit in the spaces where the work is done. Additional workers can be used on other shifts if desired, but each shift must have at least the minimum levels in the three required skills.

It is recommended that the referee roll secretly for a “fatal flaw” in the retrofit work. Such a failure, if it occurs, should show up at interesting moments.

The parts the retrofit requires will cost 10% of the purchase price of each weapon involved. These parts cannot normally be manufactured by the PCs, anymore than a missile launcher or beam laser can be manufactured by them.

These parts can be stripped out of another vessel with flexed batteries at the referee’s discretion. One vessel may not have all the parts another requires. Parts may also be damaged during removal. It is strongly recommended that the parts for one style of weapon not be used for another. Parts should not be interchangeable between manufacturers either.

*Example:* The crew of the *Zephyr* is attempting to retrofit their vessel. The three PCs involved in the work have gunnery-3, mechanical-2, and electronic-1. They have at least the minimal skill levels in every required skill, so the work can commence. They also have 3 levels beyond the minimal requirements, 2 gunnery and 1 mechanical. They could use those levels to either affect their success roll, or try to shorten the work period, or both.

**Writing Software:** PCs may attempt to write their own flexible battery software. The same skill and time requirements listed in *Book 2: Starships* apply. The same success and fatal flaw rolls apply also.

### Summary

Flexible battery rules should present referees and PCs with yet another to personalize their ships. Using flexible batteries to “outfox” or “outguess” the other side during battle should make space combat much more interesting. Finally, the software and hardware requirements of a flexible battery retrofit could provide any campaign with a long-term goal.

I know flexible batteries added to the fun of our sessions during my GM days. I hope they will do the same to yours. ☸

## Doing It My Way

### An Explosive Situation

by Michael Hughes

*This adventure originally appeared on the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2005.*

While visiting a backwater town, a huge explosion occurs on the street near the PCs. Soon bloodied and burned injured are staggering around, if they can. Within 10 minutes security and emergency workers arrive.

#### Possible directions to develop this:

1. The blast was an accidental result of a poorly maintained gas supply igniting. This is unknown (at least initially) and the PCs are immediately rounded up by security services for questioning.

2. It was a terror attack. The PCs—offworlders—are taken in and grilled (unpleasantly) at length.
3. As 2., but word has spread that suspects are ‘in custody’. A mob forms outside the police station, intent on killing the PCs. Police are forced to defend the station and enlist the PCs’ help.
4. It was a terror attack and a second planted device, a road mine, detonates, destroying emergency vehicles and killing paramilitaries and ER response teams.
5. It was a terror attack and armed rebels are waiting nearby. As emergency workers start attending, they attack, shooting anything that moves.
6. It was a rocket attack aimed at the PCs which just missed. The PCs seem to have been mistaken for another group of offworlders. Or have they? ☸

## Feedback

Please tell us ...

- what you think of both magazine and website
  - what you think of the articles we publish
  - how we can make our magazine better
  - how we can make our website better
  - what kind of articles you do or don't want to see
  - what you think of our look
  - how we can make it better
- Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:
- e-mail: [feedback@freelancetraveller.com](mailto:feedback@freelancetraveller.com).

- feedback form at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html>.
  - Forums:
    - Traveller Fanzine section of SFRPG: <http://www.sfrpg-discussion.net/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36>
    - Lone Star at Citizens of the Imperium: <http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13>
- Note: you must be registered with the forums to be able to use this method.**

## Traveller on the Internet

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

*Freelance Traveller* sponsors channels for *Traveller* fans on the Undernet and Otherworlders IRC networks, and the two channels are "bridged" so that if you're visiting either, you can see what's going on in the other, and talk to people there. For more information about both channels, see our informational pages at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travnet.html#IRC> and <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travchat/index.html>. Come talk "live" with other *Traveller* fans about anything at all, *Traveller* or not, and make both channels "jumping" places to hang out!

You can also run "play-by-IRC" game sessions in either channel; please stop in and ask one of the channel operators (FreeTrav or EMT\_Hawk) to schedule it, so we can ensure that the 'bridge' and the 'bartender' are set into a nondisruptive mode.

Please watch the *Traveller Mailing List*, the *Mongoose Traveller forum*, and the *Lone Star* section of the *Citizens of the Imperium forum* for announcements of Topical Talks!

## News About Traveller

### Recent Traveller News and Findings

July 2015

- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Starships Book I0000II: Assault Boat*, *Starships Book I000I00: Armed Freighter, Dhow*, and *Space Stations XVII: Small Pirate Base*.
- **Moon Toad Publishing** has released *Ship Book: A2L Far Trader*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Ships of Clement Sector 8: Berlin-class Colonial Destroyer*, and *Introduction to Clement Sector*.
- Jon Brazer Enterprises has released *Foreven Worlds: Tsokabar Subsector*, *d66 Biometric Security Systems*, and *d66 Gossip About a Ruler or Noble*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *The Third Imperium: Borderland: Counterweights and Measures*. 🌟

# Submission Guidelines

## What is *Freelance Traveller* looking for?

We're looking for anything and everything to do with *Traveller* – reviews of products, house rules, alternate settings, NPC profiles, world write-ups, adventures, equipment, starships, fiction, “color” articles... If you see it in *Freelance Traveller*, or on our website, we're interested in it. Even if you don't see it in the magazine or on the website, we might be interested; write to [editor@freelancetraveller.com](mailto:editor@freelancetraveller.com) and ask.

Some things that we want that you might not think of as “*Traveller*” would include reviews of non-*Traveller* products that easily lend themselves to being ‘mined’ for ideas for use in *Traveller*, or reviews of fiction (in any medium) that “feels” like *Traveller* in some way. In these cases, your article should focus on the *Traveller*-esque aspects of the item. There may be other things, as well; if you're not sure, write and ask.

## What about ...

The rule of thumb is “If it's a *Traveller* ruleset, or a setting that has been published for use with a *Traveller* ruleset, go for it!”. That includes the non-Official *Traveller* Universe settings that have been published for use with any version of the *Traveller* ruleset, including (but not limited to) *Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog*, *Babylon 5*, *Reign of Diaspora*, *Twilight Sector*, the two *GURPS* variants on the Official *Traveller* Universe, *Avenger Enterprises' Far Avalon*, and the forthcoming *Traveller Prime Directive*, and any others we may have forgotten.

## ...Hyperlite?

We've made the decision to support *Hyperlite* as though it were an alternate *Traveller* setting, much like *Twilight Sector* or *Reign of Diaspora*. The changes that Sceptune Games has made to *Traveller* to get *Hyperlite* aren't really much more than the differences between Classic *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller*, and *Mongoose Traveller*, and converting between any of those systems and *Hyperlite*, in either direction, should be ‘trivial’.

## ... Diaspora, or Starblazer Adventures?

If your article is about “crossing over” between these products and any of the “standard” or supported *Traveller* rulesets or settings, by all means, submit it! If it's support for those systems beyond *Traveller*, we'll accept and hold

the submission, but will not print it unless/until we've had a reasonable level of expression of interest in such support from our readers.

## How should I submit my article?

### What needs to be in the submission?

At the very minimum, we need the submission itself, your name (for credit), and a valid email address to contact you at if we need to.

### What format should I submit it in?

That depends on what you're submitting. Generally:

Text should be submitted in Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word 2003 (DOC) or 2007/2010 (DOCX), OpenOffice Writer (ODT), or plain text (TXT). Most word processors will support one of those; if yours seems not to, please write to us for assistance. Avoid PDF if at all possible; it is difficult to reformat PDFs for our magazine or website.

Graphics should be submitted in the format that's best for the type of graphic. Most of the time, that will be GIF, PNG, or JPG/JPEG. Submitting in higher resolutions is better; we have tools to resample a picture to make it smaller if we need to – but it's not possible to make a picture larger without it becoming pixellated.

If you're submitting a graphic that you'd like to see us use for a cover of an issue, please make sure that it will fit nicely on both US Letter and ISO A4 pages—we'll crop the picture to fit, to avoid distorting shapes, so please leave reasonable “margins”; don't run “critical” imagery right to the edge where it will look bad if we crop it. A good resolution is 100 dpi or more.

Plans (deck plans, building plans, maps, etc.) may be better submitted in a vector-based format such as CorelDRAW! format (CDR) or any format that can be imported into CorelDRAW! X4. Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG), Windows Metafile (WMF), Enhanced Metafile (EMF), Encapsulated PostScript (EPS), or Microsoft Visio (VSD) are some common vector formats that can be imported.

## How do I get it to you?

Email it to us at our submissions address, [submissions@freelancetraveller.com](mailto:submissions@freelancetraveller.com). Your subject line should specify the type of article that it is, and what section you think it should be put in, e.g., “Combat Rules for Doing It My Way”.

