GURPS® Fourth Edition

INFINITE WORLDS™

BRITANNICA-6™

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Introduction

This book is about *Britannica-6*, a world arising from an alternate history, diverging from our own early in the 19th century – and about running ***GURPS*** games there. It relates to the setting described in Book 2 of the ***GURPS Basic Set*** and in ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***, but it can also be used as a standalone campaign location.

In fact, Britannica-6 receives a one-paragraph discussion on p. 116 of ***Infinite Worlds***, and many thanks are due to Ken Hite, author of that book, for the idea. I developed it for use in a convention game, with the aid of the discussion boards associated with Steve Jackson Games' *Pyramid* magazine. Thanks are owed to everyone who contributed to that dialogue.

A Note on the Name

GURPS Infinite Worlds mentions seven "Britannica" timelines, and any campaign can see more discovered. However, Britannica-6 is the only one discussed in this book, so the name is sometimes shortened to "Britannica" for convenience.

Concept and Mood

As described in this publication, Britannica-6 should come across as a colorful, eccentric sort of world, with significantly divergent technology and enough intrigue (mostly between the rather loopy monarchs, aristocrats, and politicians of the local British Empire) to fuel any number of plots. That's not to say it's a comedy setting (although the "Ruritanian steam-tech" style can certainly support some comedy). The world's politics can turn all-too-literally cutthroat at times, and the local obsession with progress for its own sake, and unqualified belief in human perfectibility, sometimes lead to tragedy.

Britannica-6 is also a TL(5+2) "steampunk" setting of sorts. The technology isn't as divergent as some timelines that have advanced onto a steam-tech path – the local laws of nature don't seem to support anything *too* bizarre – but it's *used* with excessive enthusiasm. (Some variety is possible in this according to the type of game desired; see *Stylistic Variations*, p. 11.) It's developing particularly rapidly in specific areas, such as pharmacology and transport, with some striking breakthroughs, and the local rulers have adopted it as a tool for their rivalries and power games.

Significantly, this *isn't* a "Victorian" world, although the current date is 1887 and the British Empire is at full strength. It diverged before Queen Victoria had a chance to be born, so she never existed and the local culture is derived from the older "Regency" pattern, with little of the Victorian reaction into bourgeois respectability. Visitors who expect straight-laced Victorian culture are in for a surprise.

About the Author

Longtime RPG writer Phil Masters has written or contributed to a number of ***GURPS*** books, including ***GURPS Castle Falkenstein***, ***GURPS Who's Who 1*** & ***2***, ***GURPS Places of Mystery***, and ***GURPS Banestorm***. His last e23 project was ***Transhuman Space: Changing Times***. The version of Britain where he lives doesn't rule the world.

About *GURPS*

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at **www.sjgames.com** for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. To discuss ***GURPS*** with SJ Games staff and fellow gamers, come to our forums at **forums.sjgames.com**. The ***GURPS Infinite Worlds: Britannica-6*** web page is **www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/britannica-6**.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the books that interest you! Go to the book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Fourth Edition.* Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

Chapter One
The History of Britannica-6

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm sorry to drag you all away from your regular duties, but we do have an urgent mission for you.

*"Many of you will recognize the building in **this** picture – yes, it's Windsor Castle. British royal residence, west of London; some of you have doubtless played tourist there on Homeline. But I'm sure you've all guessed that the added towers are unusual. Officially, they're used for astronomical observations, but given the atmospheric conditions and light pollution over there, we have our doubts. Actually, we **think** that they house anti-airship weapons of some kind, but we don't have very good intel assets in place yet on the timeline, so we can't be sure. The odds are that whatever is in them makes a dramatic sound and light show when it's activated; it might or might not really be any good for shooting down airships.*

*"**This**, on the other hand, is a structure that's unique on any timeline we know. There are a few bridges across the English Channel on various Europe-dominated lines, but this design is a one-off. Yeah, and a bit gaudy . . ."*

While Britannica-6 possesses exotic technology that its inhabitants use in rather peculiar ways, it's also a timeline with an alternate *history* – and one with a fairly recent divergence point. Infinity Patrolmen and players who want to operate there successfully need to know something of its past.

Infinite Worlds

Such naïve outsiders are likely to be outtimers; readers not familiar with this should see pp. B523-546 or ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***. Infinity discovered this timeline a little while ago and now have a range of operations in place, though mostly still on a small scale – see pp. 27-30 for details. As a Quantum-6 world, Britannica-6 is quite accessible from Homeline, but represents a potential front in the war with Centrum.

Britannica-6 is unlikely to gain access to any sort of parachronic travel any time soon – the local understanding of physics really isn't up to the task, and its electronics remains quite basic, while any sort of outright paranormal activity appears to be non-existent here (which may just mean that it's kept very quiet, of course). Infinity scientists are pretty sure that Britannica's engineers couldn't begin to understand a conveyor even if they captured one intact, let alone replicate it. On the other hand, too many of those locals are enthusiastically efficient or inspired about too many things.

The Divergence

From the point of view of Homeline, the key to understanding Britannica-6 lies in the late-18th century – specifically in one of those unfortunate dynastic bottlenecks to which monarchies are so vulnerable.

The Heirs of George III

Whatever his other failings, before he slipped into his famous madness, George III (on this timeline as on Homeline) performed his dynastic duty admirably. He produced 15 children, with no fewer than seven sons surviving to adulthood. The crown was guaranteed to pass on smoothly to the next generation – and, anyone could reasonably assume, beyond.

However, his sons proved unlucky or much less dutiful. The eldest ruled in his father's place as the prince regent during the King's last madness and later became George IV. He was notoriously extravagant and self-indulgent, but not entirely stupid; and did allow himself to be married off to his cousin, Princess Caroline of Brunswick. Unfortunately the couple couldn't stand each other, and soon separated. They did produce one child, a daughter, Princess Charlotte, in 1796. Meanwhile, the Prince's brothers were largely avoiding marriage in favor of mistresses and generally living as they pleased around London and Europe.

Charlotte and Leopold

Princess Charlotte was regarded as a difficult child, who fell out with her mother (not that this was unusual) and whose movements were restricted after one attempt to marry her off

failed. However, in 1816 she did marry Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, an intelligent young prince who had already achieved moderately distinguished military and diplomatic careers, and the marriage proved happy. Her first two pregnancies ended in early miscarriages, but within a year she conceived with greater success.

This is where the divergence occurred. Whereas in Homeline history Charlotte died soon after giving birth to a dead child in November 1817, on Britannica-6, Leopold lost his temper with the doctors who were mistreating the (probably quite minor) health problems during pregnancy, prohibiting them from bleeding her. Stories suggest that he adopted a number of "folk treatments" that were, at the worst, harmless, and he certainly ensured that she received a reasonable diet. As a result, her son was born alive and well and Charlotte survived, soon regaining her full health. In fact, she would go on to produce a large, healthy, and *very* active family.

The Whig Revival

Charlotte's survival in turn produced a major political knock-on effect. At the time, the two main political parties in Britain were the Tories, who had effectively been in power for many years; and the Whigs, who had suffered from internal splits and the opposition of George III. Both were essentially made up of members of the aristocracy and landed gentry, but the Whigs were marginally more liberal and reformist. (There was also an outright Radical faction, but this was weak and the ruling classes, terrified by memories of the French Revolution, worked hard against it.) On Homeline, the Whigs lacked a strong image. Some of them had briefly supported Princess Caroline when George IV sought to divorce her, but that was more of a Radical cause and Caroline was something of an embarrassment. The Whigs were also drifting out of touch with most of the people, despite their traditional populism. They would only regain power in 1830, and then with a limited majority and a lot of compromises.

On Britannica-6, moderate Whig politicians began to associate themselves with Charlotte (a known Whig sympathizer) and Leopold, who were seen as a refreshing and popular alternative to the aging and increasingly reactionary royal generation preceding them. They made rapid progress, and in the election automatically triggered (according to the law of the time) when George III died in 1820 (a couple of months later than on Homeline), they gained enough seats to claim power. At first they had to operate cautiously, especially as the new king instinctively opposed many of the reforms they promoted, but their confidence grew even as George IV was subjected to polite persuasion from his daughter and son-in-law.

Hence, the Whigs were able to bring in a series of political and social reforms at least a few years ahead of the same changes in Homeline's past. They updated the electoral system (though never granting the vote to the general population!); freed up trade; and then, swept along on a wave of popular enthusiasm, eliminated the legal constraints on minority religions, including Irish Catholics. The relationship between the London-based government and Ireland remained difficult for years but gradually improved, especially when far-sighted Whig businessmen began investing in the creation of modern industries in Ireland. Tory landowners grumbled but lacked the ability to block these changes for long, and it became clear that attempts to reverse the changes could lead to outright revolt. Old-fashioned landed aristocrats in the House of Lords slowed things down a little, but found they couldn't risk too much obstruction given the support the Whigs now commanded.

"Two generations gone – gone in a moment!"

When Infinity's historians look at Britannica-6, they often comment that, while this particular timeline looks rather improbable, it's actually strange that there aren't more alternates with divergence points clustered around the death of Princess Charlotte. Before her pregnancy, she'd seemed a healthy enough young woman; she was happily married and popular with the public, and the prospect of an heir seemed to assure the future of the monarchy. However, the doctors applied what were then thought to be sensible principles during her third pregnancy – which meant regular bleeding and a strict diet. Then when the childbirth proved difficult, the obstetrician apparently panicked, failing to use forceps. Her son was stillborn, and in a few hours Charlotte herself died. (Left distraught by his failure, the doctor involved shot himself three months later.)

This tragedy provoked widespread mourning, sometimes compared to that following the death of Princess Diana two centuries later. It also presented the British ruling classes with a problem: Any potential heirs to the throne looked ill-suited and unprepared at best. The government went into negotiation with the royal princes, basically offering them bribes to produce children. Three of them, the Duke of Clarence (later King William IV), the Duke of Kent, and the Duke of Cambridge, raced to put aside their mistresses and get married. Clarence's two children didn't survive, but the Duke of Kent's only daughter did. Hence, when George IV died, he was succeeded by William, who in turn was followed by that daughter – Queen Victoria.

But all this makes Victoria, one of the most symbolically potent figures in history and the reliable figurehead of the British Empire for over 60 years, something of a historical fluke. If Charlotte's son had lived, or if she had survived in good enough health to try for another child, all that negotiation would probably not have happened, and would certainly have been delayed. The result might not have been Britannica-6, but there'd almost certainly not have been a "Victorian era" as such. Even a slight change in the dealings between the princes and the government – a different winner in the race – could have produced a different succession.

And yet, Infinity keeps discovering timelines with Queen Victoria, in the past or present. It's clear she's some kind of high-probability element, at least in the structure of n-dimensional paratime reality as Infinity can perceive it. This leads to lots of theoretical analysis, and a certain amount of cautious but intensive research in echo timelines with a current date around 1815.

Foreign Policy

By now, Britain had one of the most radical governments in Europe – and even the Tories were happy to tweak the noses of foreign absolutists from time to time. While British aid couldn't save the Liberals of Spain from defeat, it could force a compromise, putting Spain on the road to a less authoritarian government. Portugal moved just as fast in both histories, granting independence to its great colony in Brazil and accepting a system of constitutional monarchy at home – and cementing its long-standing alliance with Britain.

Thus, when a string of revolts and revolutions (mostly against Spanish rule) broke out across South America, Britain supported them (just as on Homeline), albeit partly to protect British trade in the area. It found an ally in the United States, which had a similar attitude. Here, American Secretary of State John Quincy Adams got on well with the Whig diplomats, and perhaps underestimated them. He and President Monroe always asserted the United States' right to first say regarding events in the Americas, but decided it would be impolite to make too much of this while working closely with Britain. Without a formally stated "Monroe Doctrine" on Britannica-6, Britain has exercised a free hand across the Atlantic ever since.

The Imperial Monarchy

When George IV died in 1830 (within weeks of the date of his death in Homeline history), Charlotte inherited the throne with Leopold as prince consort by her side. The British crown was once again secure – and the power of the Whigs was cemented for a generation and beyond. The dynamic British Empire, with its technologically driven industrial revolution, could make something of a fresh start.

Britain now had a growing royal family with a penumbra of associated aristocrats, continental cousins and allies, and powerful political associates. Thanks to their alliance with the Whigs, with their relatively egalitarian attitudes and willingness to support free trade, this loose group got on increasingly well with the burgeoning new class of wealthy industrialists. The traditional snobbery against "new money" gradually faded, at least in cases where there was a *lot* of new money. The old Georgian love of competition, of great gambles and aristocratic flamboyance, merged with the industrial society's admiration for economic success. Over the years, the new generation of "Bloods" – younger royal descendents, and their aristocratic and plutocratic friends – would come to measure their worth by their *winnings*, by bets and prizes. This sort of success could even trump ancestry, although the vague assumption that "blood will tell" has never really gone.

British India

One set of noticeable effects from the point of view of comparative historians on Homeline was in the British possession of India. With slightly more liberal attitudes as the norm, the governors and managers of the British East India Company were more inclined to associate with the local ruling classes, and sometimes to treat their Indian servants and troops rather better. In addition, relationships between British men and local women, up to and including "informal marriages," were socially tolerated; fewer British women shipped out to India in search of British-born husbands. Over the years, the products of these mixed relationships have developed into something of a "middle management class," trusted with many of the operations of the company and occasionally venturing into business on their own account. Backed by wealthy relatives' funds, they are helping launch a minor industrial revolution in India.

British administration was slightly more tolerant than what Homeline was familiar with (or perhaps they just stumbled across an effective system of indirect control and "divide and rule"), and although there were various revolts and uprisings, there was never any great "Indian Mutiny." Hence, the East India Company was never formally abolished, gradually becoming integrated with a patchwork system of British

The Kings of Hanover

One small oddity in 1830 involved the throne of Hanover, a German state which had shared its rulers with Britain since 1714. Its succession law prohibited women from inheriting, so the crown passed to George's oldest brother, the Duke of Clarence; on Homeline, the same law prevented Victoria from ruling Hanover, and its throne passed to her uncle, the Duke of Cumberland.

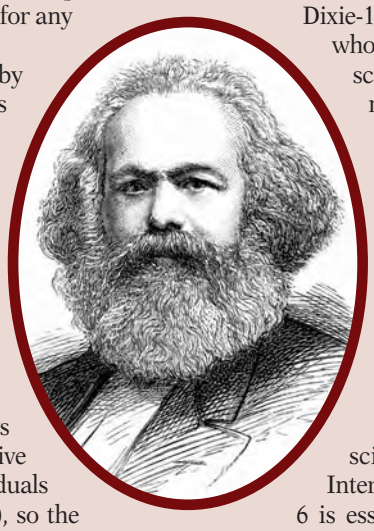
"William of Hanover" wasn't especially happy there. His great love was the sea and Hanover lacked much naval power, but William helped establish some government reforms (and commissioned a new dockyard) in the five years before he died, without heirs, in 1835 (his death came sooner in this history). The throne passed to his brother, the Duke of Cumberland – who, as on Homeline, became King Ernest Augustus I.

However, William's efforts meant that in this history the unpleasant and reactionary Ernest wasn't able to reverse as many of the reforms instituted before he gained power. Furthermore, Ernest's son George married sooner in his world and produced more children. They and their descendents were accepted as close relatives by the British royal family on Britannica-6 (though Ernest was never popular), and form an important subsidiary element in its squabbling, dynamic power structure. Hanover has followed Britain's lead in industrialization and technology, and Britain effectively guarantees the security of Hanover – prohibiting Prussia from taking it over, and thus keeping Germany more divided. The shipyards of Hanoverian Bremerhaven produce many swift motor-yachts and deadly looking warships.

Very Low Inertia

One curious fact about Britannica-6, from Infinity's point of view, is that this is a "very low historical inertia" timeline. Events here were significantly different from those on Homeline from the moment of divergence onward, and remain so even though some roughly parallel events do occur. The most obvious symptom is that *no* individuals from Homeline history who were conceived after mid-1817 appear to have direct counterparts in Britannica-6 history. Evidently, "butterfly effects" from the change rippled across the world, affecting the mechanics of human conception even where they would have been too subtle for any observer to perceive.

Infinity researchers have confirmed this by research into biographies and local census data. In a few instances, they've found individuals with the same names and parents and similar birthdates, most within a few years of 1817 – but in such cases they are fairly sure the individual in question was genetically different from his Homeline counterpart, leading to other careers and accomplishments. For example, Britannica's "Count Leo Tolstoy" (born 1828) was a rather unimaginative career-military officer. As the timelines went their separate ways 70 years ago now, few such people are left alive to observe (just as there aren't many individuals whose birth predates the event still around), so the researchers have generally given up looking for exceptions. They also now assume there was *no* subtle divergence too far before mid-1817 causing Leopold to act differently toward the doctors, as that would surely have influenced events as chancy as human heredity.



(Incidentally, one of the last major figures known to both histories was Karl Marx, born in May of 1818 and hence conceived before the point of divergence. Even if Leopold was acting differently by August 1817, the ripple effects were apparently not sufficient at that point to change this.)

This is technically interesting because Infinity has only a weak theoretical understanding of "parachronic inertia." Many scientists and historians find the whole phenomenon strange and *annoying*. The simple logic of the "butterfly effect," the subtle randomness of the world, says that, for example, a timeline that diverged in 1856 should never have had a version of Elvis Presley (born 1935) – and yet Dixie-1 produced precisely such an individual, who became a popular singer in the CSA. Some scientists are studying Britannica-6 to learn more about the phenomenon, and have found a need to make observations "on the spot." Fortunately, most want to perform technical rather than historical work, so Infinity can just transport them to a remote site or safe house, look after them for a few days, and transport them home – but there are exceptions who want to observe the *results* of inertia close up, and who can provide I-Cops or Scouts with interesting bodyguard assignments.

Centrum, with its superior parachronic science, understands inertia better, and Interworld's technical assessment of Britannica-6 is essentially routine (from *its* point of view – Infinity researchers would do a *lot* to get hold of a copy). However, Centrum scientists have their own obsessions and love of fresh data, and the need for ever more exact comprehension of timeline stability is critical to the war with Homeline, so they too might persuade their supervisors to send them to Britannica-6 with a package of instruments.

government in the subcontinent. There is less sense of division or distrust between natives and Europeans, and the local rulers with their great wealth could be accepted into upper class imperial society provided they were willing to play by its rules. Because few of them had been involved in revolts they were viewed with less suspicion, and their capacity for flamboyance was the equal of many of the Bloods. Indian gold has financed many a grand engineering scheme in far corners of the Empire, and a silk-clad maharajah or two is considered a fine ornament to any European high-society ball. In fact, the Regency-period fashion for Indian-style decoration is resurrected every few years in Britain, bringing some Indian craftsmen to the country along with the steady flow of servants and the odd musician or entertainer.

Craze-Driven Technology

More significantly, though, the new rulers of Britain showed a truly startling enthusiasm for science and especially technology. This was initially thanks to Leopold. Even in Homeline's history he had a fondness for new ideas, sponsoring the first steam railway in mainland Europe; on Britannica-6, his interests expanded into medicine after his wife's close call. Royal approval led to a fad among the wealthy classes for backing research (and taking a casual interest in the results). The Royal Institution received enough support that Michael Faraday's work on electricity progressed rapidly, while Charles Babbage's projects received the funding that enabled him to complete his difference engine and develop a programmable "analytical engine," albeit one very different from the design he produced on Homeline. (Curiously, Babbage was somewhat more successful in other "steampunk" timelines where he received no more backing; technology on Britannica-6 has never focused on programmable computers, although it uses the principle on occasion.) Later, Charles Darwin found his way into biology slightly earlier. Although he never traveled on *HMS Beagle,* he evolved a theory of evolution more slowly from studying other people's reports of wildlife around the world and from close observation of his back garden. Publication came much sooner, as he had more confidence that outrageous scientific theories would be accepted despite what conventional religious folk would think.

By then the descendents of Leopold and Charlotte, and their friends and social rivals, had combined this interest in technology with their love of competition and status games. They took to racing steam-carriages, sponsoring bridges and buildings (provided that they were the *longest* or the *tallest*), and boasting about the discoveries of their "household philosophers." As they had considerable influence in government, they also encouraged the creation of fast warships, giant weapons, and eventually completely new war machines – and gambled money or favors on their performance. Some of the wealthiest aristocrats awarded cash prizes for the most impressive new inventions or to whoever could achieve some technological feat first; while these objectives are usually more dramatic than useful, they do occasionally lead to further progress.

Incidentally, one individual who benefited from all this was Ada Byron, who never married the Earl of Lovelace on Britannica (she instead married an obscure but wealthy gentleman named John Withers-Fortescue), and never became particularly close to Charles Babbage. She did display the same mathematical interests and the gambling obsession, which made her a popular figure in society, and she gathered a group of brilliant young mathematicians who made some breakthroughs in statistics and probability before she died of cancer in 1854. "Ada's College" still exists as an informal society; Infinity would like to study it, but is nervous about some of its members' brilliance.

This focus on inventions that could win bets or impress the neighbors rather distorted progress on Britannica-6, but the sheer volume of funds pouring in and the raw enthusiasm of the aristocratic sponsors drove progress at a remarkable rate. There was also quite a bit of solid basic chemical, biochemical, and mathematical work going on behind the scenes, ensuring that inventors had the materials and analytical tools their ideas needed. Forced-draft steam engines were widespread by 1845 and compound engines followed in the 1850s, with multi-cylinder designs of various sorts emerging from numerous workshops by decade's end. By then, though, an inspired inventor seeking something with a better power-to-weight ratio had hit on the principle of internal combustion. Lacking confidence in the available electrical systems, and always willing to work with higher compression ratios, engineers came up with a kind of diesel engine – known as the "oil engine" on Britannica, where Rudolf Diesel would never be born. Ironically, though, a crucial earlier development *depended* on electricity, which was widely applied to chemistry: In the 1830s, one chemist stumbled across the idea of aluminum extraction by electrolysis, making that substance quite affordable not long after its discovery – and this lightweight, gleaming metal was *obviously* ideal for vehicle construction.

Even more radically, the recurrent dream of controlled flight inspired many sponsored workshops to wild and often lethal experiments. Winged, heavier-than-air flight proved tricky, although short-range gliders of various kinds appeared in several places; in the meantime, lighter-than-air flight was already known, and with better motors, balloons evolved into "aerostats." The first of these were co-opted for racing, but plenty of dashing young army officers eyed them and began suggesting military applications. True aerial battleships worthy of the name are something of a challenge (except in "anime-style" campaigns – see p. 11), but serious military aviation was a reality by the 1870s.

Belgium

One consequence of the survival of Princess Charlotte was that her husband spent the rest of his life based in Britain. On Homeline, by contrast, he was appointed King of the Belgians in 1831. In any case, on Britannica, political frictions in what was then all the United Kingdom of the Netherlands were resolved differently, with Belgium becoming only semi-independent. Hence, 19th-century colonial politics haven't involved Belgian kings called Leopold stirring up trouble – but regional discontents in the Netherlands remain a persistent problem in European diplomacy.

It should be noted that this accelerated, fashion-driven inventiveness is inevitably shallow, and the obsession with competition has some odd effects. For example, advanced steam and "oil" engines were applied more to road-carriages than to rail travel because racing carriages is easier than racing trains, and when these carriages met the problem that the roads on which they ran were often still at 18th-century quality, the solution was simple – better suspensions! Even the war machines are mostly used to intimidate neighboring powers and look good on parades and exercises; colonial wars are fought by cavalry and footmen little different from their Napoleonic predecessors (although they may have a light reconnaissance aerostat or two along for support). Meanwhile, the mass of the population gets around on horse-drawn carts, though they know something more advanced is *possible* if only because it periodically hurtles past or above them, unsilenced engines screaming.

British Hegemony

With even faster technological development, allies in France and New England who mostly followed the British lead (see below), and a German foothold that would keep Prussia in check, Great Britain became even more dominant more quickly on Britannica-6. It didn't have *everything* its own way, but the timeline got its codename from Infinity for good reason – and even Britain's bitterest European rivals soon came to assume that what they needed to do was emulate their inventiveness and flair.

With the exception of some African possessions (in truth, mostly lightly manned outposts along the coasts), the British Empire in 1887 isn't much larger than it was in Homeline's history – but it's even more confident of its supremacy. English is the international language of science and engineering, and increasingly (to French irritation) of diplomacy. Other powers can't challenge Britain openly, although they may utilize espionage and subversion to reduce the British lead. Meanwhile, refugees and emigrants seeking new lives have been less likely to head for the Americas and more likely to move to British colonies, perhaps looking to learn some of their engineering techniques in the process. There has also been far *less* migration from Ireland than Homeline saw. British governments didn't always handle the Irish "potato famines" that hit on schedule in the middle of the century perfectly, but they made an honest effort, and the Irish, who've had more political rights longer, now regard London fairly equably.

Other Western Nations

This is a whole *world*, and history has continued elsewhere whether or not Britain has been paying attention.

France

In 1830, around the time Charlotte was becoming queen, a small revolution in France replaced King Charles X with a constitutional monarchy under the more liberal Louis-Philippe, who happened to be a friend of Prince Leopold. French conservatives blamed British agents for this, though in fact the same thing happened on Homeline without such intervention. All Britain really had to do was take passive advantage of the wave of Anglophilia that swept France as the new liberal constitutionalists looked to their Whig counterparts for inspiration. A family friendship between the houses of Orleans and Hanover-Saxe-Coburg evolved into a formal alliance and produced several royal marriages.

Because of this friendship, France felt no great competitive pressure to establish an empire of its own, although it kept what it already held in Algeria and small parts of India. Instead, French bankers, businessmen, and aristocrats were more than happy to invest in British projects – both colonial ventures and great engineering. The British came to see the French as (slightly junior) partners in their great adventure, and later, sometimes as cunning manipulators who *bought up* the benefits of British genius. All the talk of "French subtlety and élan" combining with "British industry and resolve" occasionally misfired.

The British example facilitated more and faster social reforms in France. The problems that led to another revolution in 1848 and the downfall of Louis-Philippe, were mostly avoided in this alternate, and the House of Orleans continued to rule. In 1887, the king of France is Louis-Philippe's grandson Louis-Charles.

Prussia

Otto von Bismarck was born in 1815, before the historical divergence point, and wasn't the sort of man to let a different world history get in the way of his great career. Still, he had more of a struggle on his hands in Britannica-6. Even before he rose to influence in Prussia, that state was one of the dominant powers in Germany thanks to its military might, but any ambitions Bismarck may have held to unify Germany were blocked by Britain's continued interest in Hanover.

So Bismarck carefully secured British and French neutrality – and then Prussia looked east and south instead, bringing smaller and weaker German states under Prussian dominance in a "German League." This turned Bavaria into a nervous neutral, and then he confronted Austria. In a series of schemes that always stopped just short of war, he reduced Austria's influence in Germany and then made it into another browbeaten ally.

Prussia, now confronting Russia for influence in northern Europe, caused trouble by supporting local nationalist movements in Russian-controlled Poland. Bismarck had little real affection for these people, but he wanted to keep Russia off-balance and calculated that this was the best way to achieve that. Anyway, a weak Poland would be an easier neighbor to handle than a unified Russian Empire. This didn't mean "Greater Prussia" was especially gentle to ethnic-Polish citizens in its eastern provinces, but they received a few concessions to keep things easier for their rulers. Elsewhere in the world, Bismarck launched a few colonial projects to raise Prussian prestige, sometimes in areas claimed by the French on Homeline.

The Austrian Empire

Austria seems doomed to slip behind in 19th-century Europe, whatever happens. It's under pressure from Prussia to the north; not getting enough from its southern holdings in the Balkans or Italy to maintain its strength; and slow to industrialize. Thus the Hapsburg monarchs fell back on their holdings in German-speaking lands, Bohemia, and Hungary, and dreamt of past glories. However, there have been hints of a small revival in the last few years; see p. 19.

Italy

Left a patchwork of petty states after the Napoleonic wars, Italy produced much the same unification movement on Britannica-6 as on Homeline – and yet, despite an even less efficient Austrian Empire trying to stop the idea, it's been much less successful. This was partly due to some bad luck – several Italian rebel leaders were caught by the Austrians early in their careers – and partly because France produced fewer successful revolutionaries of its own to support their Italian counterparts. France and Britain were actually trying to support Austrian interests as a counterweight to Prussia.

As much as anything, though, the problem seems to have been that the country was infected with this timeline's obsession with competition above all else and technological romanticism. Italian artists were unwilling to produce works that glorified unification, and rebels wasted their energy arguing among themselves and coming up with spectacular and impractical schemes.

Turkey vs. Russia

Ottoman Turkey always had severe problems trying to keep up with Western industrialization, and the more radical European technology became, the worse this moribund, conservative empire suffered. Some European powers might have propped it up as a counterbalance or distraction to their rivals, but the Anglo-French alliance was mostly friendly with Austria, which never would trust the Ottomans, while Russia perpetually assailed the northern Ottoman borders – and Prussia was unable to offer the Turks more than token aid. Hence, Ottoman power in Europe has declined even faster and further on this timeline.

Greece achieved independence in the 1820s with support from the liberal, idealistic British Whigs, and most of the Balkan provinces achieved independence at various points throughout the century, usually falling under heavy Russian influence. Other European states didn't trust the Russians and worked to slow this process. One of Bismarck's masterstrokes was to present himself as an honest broker in this process. He ensured most of the cost of an anti-Russian policy was met by other states, Prussia looked fashionably liberal, and Russia was weakened and distracted.

The New England Secession

Vicious competition was also the order of the day in the United States, where the election of 1824 was even more contentious than in Homeline's history. John Quincy Adams was widely seen by his opponents as too friendly with the British, whose assertive, liberal policies were causing a great deal of inconvenience for the slave-owning South. Adams managed to scramble for a victory nonetheless, but then became bogged down in squabbles in congress for his entire term. Adams fought to establish a radical, technocratic version of the "American System," based on profits from industrialization rather than tariffs, emulating the great British industrial and scientific advances. The New England states and New York supported this enthusiastically; the South and West, with Andrew Jackson as their figurehead, fought it bitterly. When Jackson became president in 1829 (as in Homeline's history), he tried to reverse many of the changes, but without success – and by then, the Northeast was well into a British-style industrial-scientific takeoff. New York state lead in this, but most outsiders took to referring to the whole area in question as "New England," and over time, despite complaints from both New Yorkers and traditional New Englanders, the relabeling became standard.

By the mid-1830s, the United States was a deeply divided nation, with "Jacksonians" ranged against "Whigs" (whose only argument with Adams was that he wasn't radical enough). British investment and ideas were pouring into New England, to the personal outrage of Jackson, who was never fond of Britain. However, his followers increasingly saw the East as a lost cause. When a series of crises in the wake of the 1836 election led to suggestions in New York that the region should secede, some Jacksonians openly cheered (despite the opposition of Jackson himself). By 1840, the split was complete. The U.S. forces mustered, threatening to reclaim the region, until the British governor of Canada acted on his own initiative to send his regiments south. He offered to aid the "Yankees" against the "slave-holding rustics," and the United States backed down, "not wishing to fight to keep a crew of corrupt plutocrats with us when they'd rather be licking the boots of the King of England."

Subsequently, America has continued to expand westward, but more slowly on this timeline without the flow of capital and immigrants from the cities of New England. It's seen by British observers as a great rural backwater, inhabited by dull farmers, barbaric frontiersmen, and plume-wearing cavaliers with no grasp of modern tactics. (Still, some of the Southern aristocrats can be amusing company.) Some states' retention of slavery is a particularly sore point, although that institution is gradually fading; it's viewed as offensively *backward*. New Englanders, by contrast, are seen as good friends and almost British – a little rough round the edges, but clever in their way. They themselves look forward to the day when they can match and surpass British technology, and can boast of some crafty inventions and developments of their own; they'd certainly recognize the image of the "Yankee tinkerer."

The World by 1887

All this history has left the globe in an interesting but none too stable state.

An Empire of Competition

The key to this setting is its very powerful British Empire, which is, in fact, practically falling apart from all the royal and aristocratic rivalries and misguided applications of technology. Infinity analysts believe its economy isn't actually much stronger than that of its counterpart in Homeline at the same date – that technology isn't always applied in much *depth*, mostly being diverted to grandiose vanity projects, while agriculture is stuck in a distinctly pre-Victorian form. However, the sheer dynamism of the British system can sweep over many obstacles. The problem is deciding who is to direct all that energy.

While the Whigs brought in a lot of liberal reforms, the bargain they struck with their royal friends didn't actually remove much royal power. Rather, it directed that influence to helping Whig causes – and whereas in the Victorian era on Homeline "the monarchy" meant one rather retiring widow, on Britannica-6 it means a whole family of argumentative princes and dukes. Infinity analysts say that this Britain can barely be called a *constitutional* monarchy; royal power is very real.

Stylistic Variations

Britannica-6 can be depicted in various ways, depending the style of the ***Infinite Worlds*** campaign in which it appears; how wildly adventures there play; and whether they involve Infinity or purely native characters.

Realistic: This may be a relatively straightforward alternate-history setting in which science and technology have galloped forward in an impressive but not wildly implausible way, and local politics just happen to have developed a tendency toward freebooting. Local inventions are clever but there's little that a good engineer on Homeline couldn't replicate, although some ideas are certainly worth studying. All this advanced technology also runs *very* shallow; at heart, this is a TL5 setting with some flashy stuff for people who can afford it.

Vernean: Alternatively, Britannica-6 may have a strong "period SF" feel, giving I-Cops a sense that the laws of physics are a little more *relaxed* around here; some Britannica-made gadgets may even cease working when taken to other timelines. Some airships are bigger than anything ever built on Homeline (and yet are also relatively safe); the motors used in these and other vehicles are at the limits of TL7 efficiency or better; and local engineers seem to have a knack for designing structures that stand up as well as their materials can ever allow. The world may also puzzle Homeline economists and other social scientists: Relatively few of the local nobles go bankrupt, despite pouring vast sums into wild projects with dubious financial returns.

Cinematic: At the wildest, this timeline may be one of those extreme, implausible settings that gives sensible Patrolmen screaming headaches, and everyone else a sense that they've blundered into a movie with too many special effects. (The steampunk anime *Steamboy* has much of the right aesthetic.) There are more Earth-shattering inventions than anyone can count, most of them in the hands of wild-eyed aristocrats with no sense of responsibility, and there's no point in trying to discover how all this large-scale experimental engineering is financed – the aristocrats can always raise what money they need from somewhere. For that matter, there's an unlimited supply of hard-drinking, backstabbing nobles with nothing better to do than commission giant machines. For an added twist, exotic drugs from remote corners of the Empire may unlock "mesmeric" (i.e., psionic) powers in their users, and various sneaky but deranged Cabalist ritual magicians may become a serious problem, too.

The Moral Setting

Moral aspects of the setting can also be adjusted to taste. All those aristocrats and inventors may be prone to megalomania and treating the rest of the population rather thoughtlessly, but how crosstime visitors see the place is also a matter of style and presentation.

On the one hand, it can play as something of a scientific wonderland with utopian potential. These amazing inventions may be intended to inflate the egos and justify the compulsive gambling of a bunch of over-wealthy princes, but they can generally be turned to good, and competition serves as a harmless substitute for warfare. The world is largely run by European imperialists, to be sure, but they're a relatively liberal bunch, refreshingly free of Victorian priggishness and quite willing to treat non-Europeans as *almost* their equals. In the longer term, the empires may turn into democratic federations.

On the other hand, that Victorian priggishness at least derived from a certain high-minded morality that has never really caught on in Britannica-6; "devil take the hindmost" is practically the governing law in this world. Exploiting natives and the lower classes is seen as a little tasteless, it opens one up to attack by scary radicals, and economic texts say that it's inefficient – but it's not clear how many of the rulers actually think it's *wrong*. Industrial accidents, alcoholism, and venereal diseases are all running ahead of even TL(5+2) medicine's ability to cope, and one of these days the unstable, competitive international politics may slip into a 1914-style war in which the truth about all those gleaming military machines becomes all too painfully obvious.

Aristocracy has three successive ages – the age of superiorities, the age of privileges, and the age of vanities; having passed out of the first, it degenerates in the second, and dies away in the third.

– François de Chateaubriand,
Memoirs from Beyond the Grave

However, the families still have the sense to toss some favors to the politicians and the electorate from time to time, and their flamboyant games and sheer energy gives them a certain charisma, not unlike media celebrities on Homeline.

The Exile Game

In recent years, the furious competition among the Bloods has involved another risk. Since the 1840s or so, an added employment for the growing number of princes and royal dukes has been to serve as figureheads and occasionally even useful governors throughout the Empire. Some of these jobs were more interesting than others, and many of the Bloods don't especially want to spend their time supervising ditch-diggers in some tropical hellhole (although the more militaristic of them can be quite keen to lead expeditions on the frontiers). Eventually, the risk of being sent off to some outpost became a penalty for the losers in contests; taking such a job is rarely the stake in a single bet, but can be regarded as a fit treatment for someone who owes more than he can afford or who's lost too much family status. At the same time, new titles were sometimes thought necessary to keep family members happy, and some were attached to imperial provinces. There was often a sense that the Dukes of Ontario or New South Wales ought to visit their nominally associated territories occasionally, for the sake of form, making these titles into rather ambiguous honors.

The consequences for the provinces of the Empire have been mixed, but are often negative; being governed by a resentful losing gambler rarely makes for good administration, and sudden, unexpected changes when someone's personal position rises or falls make things worse. At best in such cases, local bureaucracies learn to run themselves, leaving the exile-governor with little to do until he becomes bored enough to exert himself. However, some of the "Exile Bloods" have resolved to make the best of the situation – and those with a few practical smarts or the good fortune to acquire and keep a decent administrative staff may even profit significantly from what was meant to be humiliation or punishment. Of course, this reduces the coherence of the Empire further as successful royal governors (who occasionally include junior aristocrats who've volunteered out of idealism or as a way to make a name for themselves, or even successful "self-made" commoners) transform provinces into self-contained personal fiefdoms. Some have launched great projects in their domains, relying on rumors and news reports to reestablish their prestige back home – and if those stories grow in the telling, well, who's going to go to the trouble needed to establish the more boring truth? The legendary Ice Dreadnaught (p. 51) is only one of the more spectacular of these projects. A few may *not* want to be heard about in London – none have actually attempted outright secession yet, but some are certainly channeling more tax revenues into their own accounts than they technically should.

Confused Rivals

Elsewhere in the advanced world, the idea has spread that "dynamic competition" is the key to Britain's success. This is true to an extent – free market capitalism can be good for economic growth, and much of their advanced technology was created to score status points – but because Britain carries it to extremes and makes a game of it, almost everyone else feels obliged to do the same. This means that the British Empire, which should be vulnerable in its lack of unity, doesn't face many organized challenges. France is happy bankrolling British endeavors, New England is a slightly inward-looking culture that focuses on technology (though that in itself may make it formidable in the medium term), the United States is bogged down in rural conservatism, Spain and Austria are far behind the times, and the independent South American states have a long way to go to catch up.

The Prussian Threat

Through the 1880s, though, it has gradually dawned on the British that they now did face some serious, organized competition in the form of Prussia. Wounded soldiers came home from colonial wars with tales of Prussian advisors helping their enemies, and they seem to be up to something in Italy while the border guards in Hanover grow increasingly nervous. The Prussian army isn't as technologically advanced as the British or French on paper, but a few experts mutter that its weapons are proven and reliable, its training is as good as any, and its staff officers are probably the best around. The nefarious Prussian spy has become a staple of popular fiction and sensational news reports, and like many clichés this one has a certain basis in fact. Russia might be a useful ally against this problem, but there's too much friction with British interests in Asia for the two nations to trust each other. Indeed, Infinity agents trying to find out more about Britannica's military technology have to worry about being taken for Prussians.

Chapter Two

Geography and Society

In the few weeks that had passed since his arrival in the notorious gambling town of Lyme Regis, Mr. Joseph Thorne of St. Louis had been much remarked upon. Appearing in the harbor one morning in his oil-engine yacht, the ***Madame Chouteau****, he had by nightfall challenged three young bucks of the gentry to drinking bouts and, it was widely considered, held his own in the contests. It was claimed by Mistress Sarah O'Hare, thought to be a sharp-eyed dame if not one whose word was ever quite trusted, that she had observed a horn-handled revolving-pistol of some description under his coat, but this, the chatterers held, was no more than 'twas to be expected of one from across the Atlantic. Still, in the aftermath of that rumor, some of the Fancy took a more tactful line in their converse around the fellow.*

While he had at first been assumed a Yankee, that being the most common sort of American seen in Society of late, those who had found time to consult their hotels' almanacs now understood Mr. Thorne to be most likely a citizen of the United States, and hence hot-tempered and given to dueling. As was murmured over the piquet tables, for a citizen of His Majesty to be obliged to do harm to a foreign visitor would be devilish inhospitable and possibly quite inconvenient, even as a matter of self-defense.

What exactly this dashing visitor sought in Lyme was a matter of pleasant speculation. There were those who muttered of bride-seeking, as ever when a wealthy stranger comes onto the scene, but few thought this likely; Lyme's reputation would hardly encourage such a project. Mr. Thorne gambled no more than most, and while he seemed happy enough to win, he took his losses with equanimity, and paid his debts promptly, so there was no clue there. He made no attempt to draw the many officers on leave in the town into unwise discussion, and though he rode out on occasion, it did merely appear to be for the exercise.

In short, Mr. Thorne represented a most entertaining puzzle, who filled many a pleasant hour over cups of tea or hot chocolate or glasses of wine. The only outstanding problem he presented was that no one had been invited aboard the ***Madame Chouteau****, which stood well off shore much of the time. That, it was felt, was most unsporting of this sporting gent . . .*

The peculiar recent history of Britannica-6 has created an even more peculiar world. In ***GURPS*** terms, Cultural Familiarity (Western) is usually applicable, but skills such as Gambling and Carousing can be essential . . .

Common Social Patterns

In brief, Western culture on this timeline combines a Georgian Regency social system, including a strong emphasis on competition, with a positive *obsession* with progress.

Class and Wealth

The success of the alliance between Whig politicians and British royalty and the upper fringes of the aristocracy comes from a paradoxical compromise: The hereditary rulers preserve their power in a dynamic, "progressive," capitalistic society, in exchange for their support for political and social reforms that somehow never quite touch them.

The contradiction underlying this is obvious to many people on the timeline, and Radical journalists frequently point it out in print. The aristocrats and their tame philosophers sometimes answer with references to a kind of Social Darwinism: Because they are descended from rulers and conquerors, they claim to have the hereditary capacity for rule as well as receiving an appropriate education for the task. By this logic, the furious competition between the "Bloods" – assorted royal princes and dukes with a taste for extreme gambling – preserves the "peculiar genius" of their class, thinning out the losers who haven't inherited or learned enough.

Furthermore, society is actually meritocratic in that wealthy capitalists are granted a place in high society and eventually hereditary titles. (It's easier for someone who has made money in the colonies; their involvement with "trade" is better hidden. "Nabobs" who made fortunes in India are sometimes seen as downright romantic, however dubious their actual careers.) That these people *buy* their rank isn't considered shocking, although making an actual flat cash payment would be thought a little crass; rather, an industrialist is expected to throw lavish parties, make large donations to political causes, sell products to the government and favored colonial governors at reduced prices, and maybe make gifts of fast

How to Be a True Child of Britannia

To repeat yet again – the love of competition is the driving principle of Britannica's society. This is particularly true in the upper and mercantile classes of the British Empire, but the attitude has spread to other classes and nations. The reason for these contests lies in gambling on the results, and the willingness and ability to pay one's gambling debts is a point of honor. Although Britain has a public (i.e., fee-paying) school system of a sort, the "public school ethos" has never developed on this timeline. "It's not the winning but the taking part that's important" would be regarded as a silly, soft-hearted idea, a comfort for the defeated. Not everyone can win every time and taking defeat in stride is good manners, but a loser is most respected if he comes back and wins the next time. All this is combined with a love of new technology that would embarrass a Homeline 1950s science-fiction fan. Not everybody thinks this way, but those who don't tend to define their beliefs in opposition to the prevailing view, criticizing the wastefulness or immorality of competitive behavior or large-scale engineering works.

Belief in Christianity remains the norm in Western society, but it's vague; outside Catholic southern Europe and parts of the United States where Protestant fundamentalism is commonplace, people pay little more than lip service to their religion. Radicals and other daring freethinkers espouse some kind of *deism* – the idea that there may have been a Creator, but He lets the world run according to natural laws without intervention, and belief should be based on observation of the natural world rather than faith in sacred texts.

This is still a male-dominated, sexist society; women are expected to stay at home and produce children. However, many people have a more-than-sneaking regard for female abilities, *especially* among the upper classes, whose womenfolk often hold households together and deal with the disasters caused by masculine competitiveness. Literature and poetry are seen as "female professions" in 1887. A number of women have distinguished themselves in these fields in recent years, while intelligent, creative boys are steered into technical professions. Female musicians are much respected and, most important, a few women have entered the sciences (though rarely engineering) and been successful. "Wollstonecraftian" feminism is another favorite radical cause, associated with campaigns for female education (there are a handful of university-level women's colleges). Upper-class ladies with enough determination can travel widely and participate in all sorts of activities. Few men bother denying that women are capable of a great deal, but those who prove themselves tend to be patronized or treated as slightly freakish.

Lastly, good manners remain the mark of a gentleman, and rising members of the bourgeoisie study handbooks intensively to learn how to behave. However, *formal* manners are almost entirely directed toward members of *other* classes; a person should be deferential to his superiors and politely condescending to his inferiors, but can chatter freely and loosely to his equals. (Some formalities are always due to members of the opposite sex, though.) Informality with superiors is presumptuous; toward inferiors, apart from a few deeply trusted servants and the lowest of the low, it's wildly eccentric – and because people don't like being treated as the lowest of the low, it's also resented.

airships and promising racing dromedaries to princes. Wealth converts into status more smoothly than it did in the Georgian era, and even more effectively than in Homeline's Victorian age, at middling levels as well as at the top of society.

Still, there is a substantial middle class that doesn't have as much power as they'd like, and a huge working class without any political rights. (A minimum property requirement remains for the vote in Britain, although this is reduced from time to time by bills bringing in new exceptions or adjusting numbers.) While governments haggle to buy off the threat of revolution, the upper classes keep the masses entertained with their wild and public lifestyles – and, just possibly, wield the implicit threat of all their high-tech war machines.

Race and Nationality

To the British, of course, British is best – but other nations have their places, and in 1887 there's fun to be had deciding exactly how they compare with one another. Social liberalism has even advanced to the point where skin color isn't too much of an issue; Indians are seen as interesting and clever, their upper classes' wealth commands respect, and they're good at cricket and polo. This is a general principle on the timeline. A foreigner who proves himself receives the respect he's earned, and even a complete newcomer can be interestingly exotic, while fierce internal competitiveness slightly weakens traditions of patriotism and chauvinism. Even hostile natives in the colonies can gain regard if they fight bravely or well; most Britons are honest enough in their liberal ideals to understand someone might object to being ruled from far away, even if it's actually necessary or justifiable. "Manly" fighting skills and aggression are both acknowledged as virtues. A governor who makes an honorable peace with such people is respected more than one who tries to wipe them out – though sometimes, the thinking goes, extreme measures may sadly be necessary.

Tolerance extends to intermarriage with other Europeans – if it's good enough for the royal family, it's good enough for their subjects. The Indian colonial habit of informal relationships with local women carries over to British men in other colonies, while formalizing such relationships is regarded as eccentric rather than *wrong*. But tolerance only goes so far; the idea of a white woman marrying someone of another race still makes most Britons queasy. Also, the British upper-class tradition of casual anti-Semitism isn't entirely dead, though it may seem a little dated.

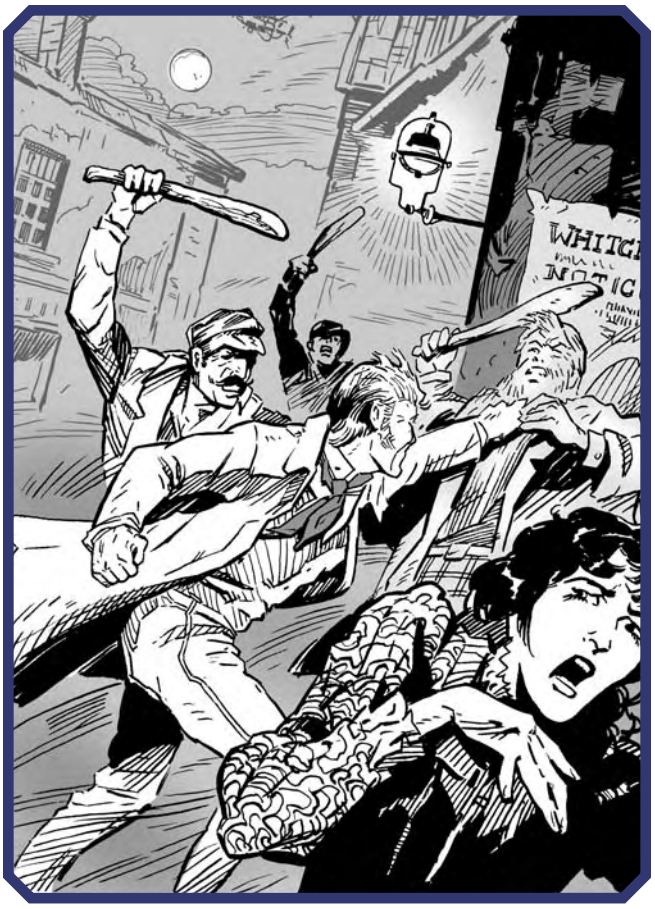
British patriotism may be weakened, but it's not defunct by a long way; the whole point of all those fancy war machines is to keep rival powers from trying anything aggressive. Britons

are at least dimly aware that some other nationalities are more united and may plot against British interests (which is put down to envy of British success). This demands action by bold and capable agents of the crown.

Progress!

The Britannica concept of "progress" takes many forms. Ideas such as political reform, the abolition of slavery, and most of all technological inventiveness, are all seen as important; they're the mark of the winner. This implies a pragmatic view of scientific research – it's not interesting if it doesn't produce something useful or exciting – but philosophers have been able to convince some people that abstract-looking research can lead to unexpectedly useful results.

The political aspects of this obsession are more high-minded, but they too emerge from a liking for results. Slavery is seen as immoral, but also *old-fashioned*; an abolitionist can feel a warm glow of morality while sneering at people whose ideas belong in the last century. Likewise, maltreating the working class is less productive than giving them some political rights so they become happy industrial workers. History, especially British history, is seen as the record of human progress in all spheres, from those times of ignorance and aristocratic tyranny to the modern age of science and constitutional monarchy; therefore the modern world must be as good as it could have gotten by now. This implies things could get even better, but somehow, in politics if not in science, influential thinkers have decided Britain has reached the summit. Nevertheless, appeals to modernity and progress always count as powerful arguments.



Crime, Law, and Enforcement

Things aren't perfect everywhere, of course. Sadly, philosophers admit, there are areas of society even in the heart of the Empire where progress hasn't advanced enough. There are still crimes to deal with.

In fact, there are quite a lot of them. The idealization of competition, and of winners over the defeated, means support for the poor from state institutions or private charities is erratic; the same attitude makes some of those unfortunates feel the only way in which they can win is by breaking the rules – by turning to crime. Severe penalties don't discourage them much; some are genuinely desperate, while other think only losers get caught. Furthermore, parts of Britannica-6 have what Homeline would call a serious substance-abuse problem, with addicts resorting to gin, opium, or byproducts of advanced pharmacology like semi-refined cocaine. These drugs aren't formally illegal – drug prohibition was largely a 20th-century idea on Homeline – but they make users incapable of holding down honest jobs while remaining desperate for a fix. And while drug prices aren't high, the poor can be *very* poor.

Hellfire Clubs

Another Georgian idea that survives to 1887 on Britannica-6 is that of the "Hellfire Club." There was only one such club at a time in the previous century, but the term now applies to a general class of institutions, widespread in British high society and spreading to the Empire, France, New England, and the United States.

Hellfire Clubs are usually upper-class groups, though some less wealthy individuals choose to ape or parody the idea. While the original, from 1720, was a dedicated Satanist group, and the most famous, operating around 1750, was mostly interested in a good, decadent party and maybe shocking the neighbors, the modern versions vary widely. What they have in common is a willingness to break social rules.

Most are merely riotous social clubs, sometimes veering into outright vicious behavior; one or two have a scholarly interest in unfashionable "gothic" aesthetics. Some try to work black magic, with no known success; others are venues for contests and wagers that the most decadent Blood would publicly call beyond the pale. A few are run by and for political Radicals (see p. 17), usually the sort of extremists who think it's necessary to tear down society and rebuild from scratch; and a very few are cover for subtler, though no less unconventional, revolutionary groups.

The solutions look, to Infinity agents, like a bizarre mixture of the old-fashioned and the fairly sophisticated. Britain and France never developed the idea of a modern police force, so the rest of the world didn't borrow the idea. Cities, towns, counties, privately owned estates, and even companies take responsibility for law enforcement within their geographical limits. London has the expanded Bow Street Runners and associated Bow Street Horse Patrol (which hasn't changed its name despite switching to one-man motorized tricycles), officially agents of the Bow Street magistrates' office, along with various neighborhood watchmen and dockyard patrols. Those mostly defer to the men from Bow Street when things turn serious. Elsewhere, crime prevention may be in the hands of local watches and constables or just any member of the public who responds to a hue and cry, as is theoretically mandatory in many places. Some enforcers are as amateurish as they sound; others are professional and efficient and may evolve into formal police forces over time. Many wear uniforms ranging from simple armbands to fancy pseudo-military garb issued by noble patrons. Freelance professional "thief-takers" function like private detectives and even more like bounty hunters; these range from cool, honorable consultants to brutal thugs. They are sometimes effective investigators, but they're only helpful to people who can afford to hire them or post a reward. In remote areas they may function as mercenaries, working in small groups to fight off bandits, (rarely necessary or acceptable in civilized areas).

The tools used by even ragtag figures are ingenious. They apply advanced science to their problems, and the Bow Street Runners and others employ full-time forensic scientists (called "criminological philosophers"). Detectives include senior watchmen and a number of keen amateurs, mostly gentlefolk fascinated by the science.

Convicted criminals face a range of penalties. The Georgian fashion for treating crime as a disease has declined – it may have sounded liberal, but some "treatments" involved, for example, isolating perpetrators to prevent "cross-infection," and many petty criminals were driven insane by the bizarre experiences inflicted on them. Prisons, the usual punishment in Western countries for most offences, are about at Victorian levels, but better basic medicine brings the rate of disease down significantly. In Britain, some crimes are still punished with transportation to the colonies, especially when some noble provincial governor wants a large, unskilled workforce for his bizarre project. This is widely feared. Serious crimes (murder in Britain) can be punished with death, but executions are no longer public.

The Heart of Empire

Britain is the undisputed power on Britannica-6 and sets the tone for its culture, but it draws much on other lands for ideas and styles.

King Leopold III

The supreme ruler of this global empire is the great-grandson of Queen Charlotte and Prince Leopold, a relatively young monarch who is genuinely liked by most of his people, though frankly they know little about him as yet. He enjoys hunting and other outdoor pursuits, but disrespectful folk observe this exercise isn't enough to save him from chubbiness. He's not on the scale of his ancestor George IV as yet, nor is he married, but he has taken a couple of mistresses over the years (he is rumored to have a special taste for exotic beauties). Several European dukes and princes are steering their daughters his way for marriage. Some individuals lower on the social scale are plotting to take advantage of his interest in less formal relationships.

Leopold pays attention when his ministers address him and isn't entirely stupid, but he has no head for administration – just enough sense to leave matters to those who do. He follows the accepted line in supporting progress, defending the Empire, and reforming the nation's institutions when necessary, though he thinks reforms should be gradual. He isn't especially knowledgeable about technology, although he has a racing enthusiast's shallow grasp of the terminology of aerostat and steam-launch design. He's less interested in non-mechanized races, to the irritation of people involved in those sports who are used to royal patronage.

Fortunately for them, his three brothers (and two of his four sisters) have a diverse range of enthusiasms. (His parents continued the Hanover-Saxe-Coburg tradition of fecundity.) Those men – the Dukes of Clarence, Kent, and Newfoundland – are ornaments to London society and leaders of fashion among the Bloods. George, the Duke of Kent, has fallen under the influence of his eccentric wife, the daughter of a minor Italian prince, and takes an unwise interest in causes like Italian unification. He seems to have a special talent for annoying the Austrians, whose friendship is necessary in case the Prussians cause trouble.

The Aristocratic-Whig Alliance

The Whigs were always an aristocratic faction, for all their taste for reform; they had to be to have any access to power in 18th-century Britain. They were originally the "country party," representing the rural upper class that wanted limits on royal power, against the Tory "court party." In the wake of the alliance with Charlotte and Leopold that brought them to dominance, the Whigs confirmed this association with new-money industrialists. They forged tentative links to the people, and to younger royals who wanted some power for themselves rather than letting their elders have all the fun. This left Tories to be seen as the party of the older generation and the old rural gentry.

The Whigs haven't ruled the country continuously since 1820, although they've been in power more often than not. The Tories have to follow the Whig lead to maintain any credibility at all; are swept along in the wake of "Whig progress"; and occasionally win elections when the Whigs grow complacent or make an obvious mess . . . or their friends in the royal family and the Bloods make themselves too unpopular. In 1887, the Whigs are in full control, though the biggest threat they face may be a split within their own ranks. The "reform" wing seeks to extend the vote to the rest of the country's male population and exert stronger control over the imperial provinces from London. The "engineer" wing's declared interest is in making best use of Britain's scientific accomplishments – which means making life easier for those industrialists and aristocrats who finance most of the research.

By now, the self-made capitalists of the early years of the Industrial Revolution have passed their wealth and power on to their children and grandchildren. This group sees itself as the "new aristocracy," sometimes in opposition to the old families but more often in alliance – so long as the aristocrats acknowledge their rights. Most get on well enough with the Whigs, but some worry about runaway technological progress making their lives difficult – new inventions can make whole factories useless overnight – or object to social reforms that increase their labor costs. Hence, some move closer to the Tories.

Rivalry and Engineering

Britain sometimes has the look of a crazy technological wonderland. Gleaming teardrop-shaped aluminum cars tear along the roads and aerostats cruise the skies between elegant cities of marble, cement, and steel. The wealth of a hundred nations flows through the bloodstream of the Empire, while dandies in intricate tailcoats stroll the streets arm-in-arm with ladies in stylish asymmetric dresses.

A closer look reveals problems. The roads on which those modern cars run are atrocious, and the modern buildings are rich men's fancy houses, a big town hall (in addition to older structures replaced by someone showing off sponsoring something bigger), and the odd grand tower with no great usefulness. The distribution of wealth is not only unequal, but bizarre – and those dandies (whose clothes are made of what Homeline calls nylon) spend much of their time and money betting compulsively on anything that moves.

Radicals

Like any complex human society, the British Empire on Britannica-6 has its revolutionary fringe. This consists of a diverse bunch of freethinkers, extremists, and demagogues, known collectively as "Radicals"; despite the paranoia of some members of the government, there are few large or well-organized Radical parties or revolutionary conspiracies. The moderate public faction, with its representatives in the British Parliament, is actually by far the strongest single group.

This radicalism draws on models established in the Georgian era and tends to be intensely romantic, even mystical. The heroes of English-speaking factions include Thomas Paine, William Blake, and Percy Shelley. Radicals work for the interests of the masses and argue against inherited privilege; they annoy mainstream Whigs by borrowing the rhetoric of progress and using it with more real conviction. Continental radicalism has a harder edge, partly because it faces more brutal oppression; it looks back to the French Revolution with considerable nostalgia, and is willing to countenance bloodshed. In New England, radicalism is seen as an amusing eccentricity; in the United States, it's suppressed as sedition.

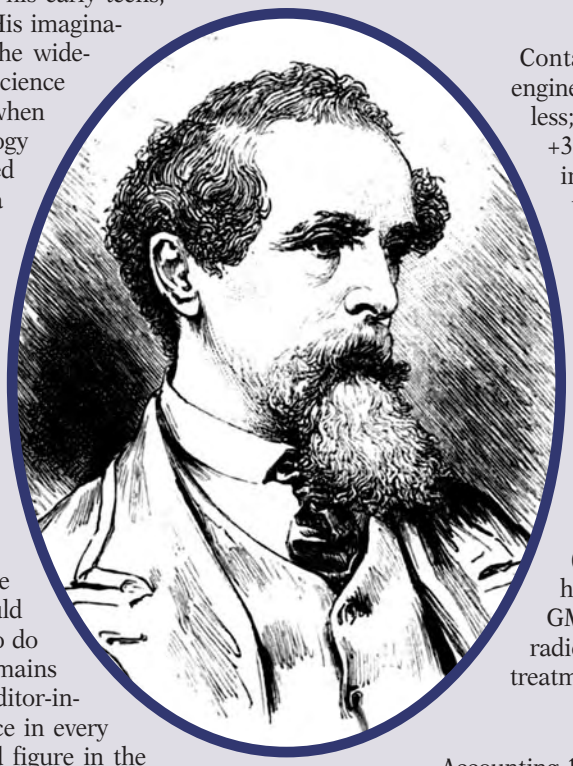
Some Radicals – actually only a small minority, despite what their enemies say – are associated with the drug-using subculture as a way of asserting their defiance of social norms (which is hard in a society as flamboyant as this one). These examples are usually members of mystical groups who revere poetic eccentrics such as Blake; they're an endless source of irritation to staid, practical groups who are more likely to be deists or even atheists, but they do produce some interesting pamphlets.

It's worth noting not all contests between Bloods or their imitators are technological in nature, though most have a distinctly *novel* aspect. For example, there's a persistent fashion for racing unusual animals – dromedaries are a favorite choice, and small fortunes are spent importing these creatures from Arabia, learning how to breed them, and training jockeys. Another species proving popular for racing (without riders!) is the ostrich, though it can be hard to train or persuade to follow a course. Thus the country is studded with tracks and stadiums; wise builders design them for use in a wide range of events, including athletics. There's no cult of amateurism in sport; track and field events are dominated by professionals, and rules against using drugs in training are skimpy at best. (That science is in its infancy, but is developing fast in secret!) Then again, an amateur who takes on the professionals and wins becomes a popular hero, and drug enhancements would be considered "unmanly." Prizefighting remains popular, too; it has evolved a set of rules to reduce fatalities and stave off moralistic criticism, including the use of rather light gloves, but nothing as restrictive as Homeline's "Queensbury rules."

Mr. Charles Dickens (161 points)

Somewhere in the files on Britannica-6 compiled by the Infinity Patrol and White Star, one harassed historian mentions that the noted British writer Charles Dickens, who was born in 1812 before the divergence point, not only achieved success in his chosen profession, but – unlike in Homeline's history – is still alive in 1887. However, he didn't choose to become a novelist. The odd thing is that no one from Homeline has taken any serious interest in this subject yet; White Star didn't find any alternative Dickens novels in the shops or libraries, but didn't investigate why not.

The fact is at some point in his early teens, Dickens took a different path. His imagination was evidently caught by the widespread new enthusiasm for science and especially technology, so when he became a journalist, technology was where his interests continued to focus. Over time, he earned a name as a specialist in the field, and eventually founded a highly successful magazine, the *British Engineering Review*, that has occupied him ever since. He wrote a few short stories, most concerning heroic engineers, but never found much money in it; tracking down a full set of these would be a moderately lengthy task.



Being 75, Dickens might have retired long ago, and he could afford to, but he doesn't want to do so. He *enjoys* his work and remains the proprietor and honorary editor-in-chief of the *Review*, with a piece in every monthly issue. He's a respected figure in the engineering world, and is treated as an impartial arbitrator in disputes between leading professionals. (Many company owners are aware that his sympathies verge on the radical, but acknowledge his honesty, fairness, and technical expertise.) He's also spry and energetic for his age; the health problems that killed him much younger on Homeline seem to have passed him by here.

Dickens would be an interesting and useful contact for visitors from Homeline, with added amusement value – and his autograph would be worth a bit back home, too. He's sharp and imaginative, though, so visitors with the Secret to protect should be careful around him. Tracking down his complete literary works, or even just creating an anthology of his technological writings, could be a modestly profitable exercise for White Star staff or freelancers; if he heard that anyone was doing such a thing, Dickens would be flattered but puzzled as to why they'd bother.

ST 8 [-20]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 9 [-10].
Damage 1d-3/1d-2; BL 13 lbs; HP 8 [0]; Will 12 [-10]; Per 13 [-5]; FP 9 [0].
Basic Speed 4.75 [0]; Basic Move 4 [0]; Dodge 7.

Social Background

TL: 5+2 [0]
CF: Britannica-6 Western [0].
Languages: Britannica-6 English (Native) [0]; Britannica-6 French (Broken/Literate) [3]; Britannica-6 German (Accented) [4].

Advantages

Contact Group (London consulting engineers; business skills, level-15; 15 or less; usually reliable) [60]; Reputation +3 (Respected expert commentator, in the engineering profession, all the time) [7]; Social Regard 1 (Venerated, as a respectable older man) [5]; Status +1 (free from Wealth) [0]; Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

Disadvantages

Bad Sight (Nearsighted, Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10]; Curious (15) [-2]; Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5].

Quirks: Code of Honor ("Gentlemanly"); Low-frequency hearing loss (-1 or -2 penalties at the GM's option); Moderate but serious radical sympathies – believes in equal treatment for all, workers' rights, etc. [-3]

Skills

Accounting-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Airshipman/TL(5+2)-14 (IQ) [1]; Area Knowledge (Britain)-14 (IQ) [1]; Area Knowledge (London)-14 (IQ) [1]; Area Knowledge (Manchester)-14 (IQ) [1]; Boating/TL(5+1) (Motorboat)-10* (DX-1) [1]; Current Affairs/TL(5+2) (Science & Technology)-18 (IQ+4) [12]; Detect Lies-11 (Per-2) [1]; Driving/TL(5+2) (Automobile)-12* (DX+1) [3]; Expert Skill (Scientific Theorizing)-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Literature-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Mechanic/TL(5+1) (Automobile)-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Photography/TL(5+1)-13 [1]; Professional Skill (Journalist)-17 (IQ+3) [12]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-14 (IQ) [1]; Writing-16 (IQ+2) [8].

*Bought up from IQ-based default.

Note: Dickens' Expert Skill gives him a broad knowledge of the jargon and common themes of research in the sciences, but no significant laboratory experience; he can follow scientists' conversation, but not join in.

Continental Europe

Even the proudest citizen of the Empire freely acknowledges that their nation is part of the larger European civilization. It sees itself as standing a little apart, and being a bit better, but the British royal family is forever marrying into the royal houses of the Continent. The aristocracy isn't far behind in this, especially when its members are looking for sources of joint investment in some grand project or another, so European affairs are often in the newspapers. In any case, an interest in the moderately exotic and colorful is regarded as a sign of forward-thinking open-mindedness – and communications aren't so advanced that those foreign nations can't preserve many crucial cultural differences.

France

The most obvious example of this ambiguity lies just across the English Channel. France is doing well, and gets along fine with Britain officially and unofficially. The two nations work closely, especially when they need to keep certain German states in their place. There's a minority political fringe in France that would prefer an independent foreign policy, but most Frenchmen who worry about national pride convince themselves France is doing fine on its own account.

French engineering is seen as less *grand* than British, but even the most chauvinistic Briton admits they come up with some clever ideas, and the irrigation systems they're driving into the North African deserts are certainly impressive. Meanwhile, the children of France's King Louis-Charles behave all too like the wild British Bloods. Paris is considered the most beautiful modern city in Europe; France has a stronger tradition of centralized urban planning than Britain, so the modern architecture there is more harmonious and less a patchwork of half-baked projects.

Germany

Germany divides into three zones: Hanover, a British client state that follows their lead in style as well as politics; the independent princedoms, which are mostly too small to do more than amble along in rustic backwardness (although there are a few "forward-thinking" nobles with grand plans to match those of any Blood); and Prussia, which is organized, centralized, and *determined*. Bismarck is more or less retired, but his grand vision is genuinely popular with the majority of the population. Technophiliac and militaristic, Prussia sees itself as the primary power among the German states, and it's hard for anyone to disagree, much as the neighbors might wish things otherwise. Still, most Britons think Prussia can be kept under control, and many have a sneaking regard for Prussian efficiency and focus.

Infinity's secret representatives on this timeline take a more jaundiced view; some analysts are seriously worried by Prussia, which they estimate can use the local military technology far better than other states. They suspect it's a natural focus for Centrum operations, assuming Centrum can suppress its bias for English speakers – and Centrum isn't entirely stupid that way.

Austria

As the ramshackle giant of central Europe, governed by an ancient aristocracy with no special love for speed or progress, Austria receives both more respect and more contempt than it deserves. Of late, its attempts to emulate more successful nations may have begun to pay off in small ways. Austrian pure science has achieved some breakthroughs, to the delight of a younger generation of aristocrats and petty princes who envy their British counterparts. Their contests may not be as impressive as those, but their steam-gigs and light aerostats look good, after an ornate fashion, and Vienna challenges Paris for the position of Europe's most cultured city. Its leading figures seem to be more politely sober more of the time than British or French aristocrats. Furthermore, with substantial resources and no actual defeats in war to wear it down, Austria commands a fair amount of strength in depth – assuming Prussia doesn't subvert it, morally or politically.

Russia

As on Homeline, 19th-century Russia on Britannica-6 is ruled by an aristocracy with great enthusiasm for European manners and modernity, but who draw their income from a primitive agricultural society. The result is a thin facade of sophistication and technology pasted over something much more archaic. A visitor to St. Petersburg sees the latest barouches and Paris fashions from just a couple of years ago; if the same visitor travels a few miles out into the countryside, the picture changes to something almost medieval. There have been attempts at industrialization, but they haven't spread far in the absence of an appropriate economic base; on the plus side, only the largest cities feature tenement slums. Some younger Russian aristocrats have nearly bankrupted themselves trying to live like British Bloods, shattering the axles of their expensive phaetons on the rutted local roads; others are a little wiser or a lot richer, and are able to sustain the lifestyle. Some have invested in the development of *legged* vehicle designs, and have achieved results that have caught the attention of even Infinity's engineering analysts.

Russia would like to be regarded as a problem on the international scene but hasn't been taken seriously except by some older diplomats and soldiers. British governors and agents in northwest India do worry about the occasional Russian plot, and their agents often seem to be up to something on the west coast of America. These operate largely on their own initiative, and it's possible Russian administrators in Alaska dream of carving out an autonomous Grand Duchy beyond the effective reach of the Tsar.

The Mediterranean and Middle East

The center of power in Britannica's Europe has shifted northward, as Spain slips into decline, Italy remains disunited, and the Ottoman Empire slumps into catastrophic collapse. Bizarre, advanced technologies emphasize that difference, but only a little; with individual princes and Italian city-states occasionally sponsoring flamboyant inventions of their own, the region can seem deceptively in tune with the spirit of the age.

Ottoman power in Europe is almost completely eliminated and control of Egypt has passed to a regime closely monitored by the British, who seek to protect their Suez Canal. Europe has ignored events in the Ottoman-controlled Middle East until recently, but the growing importance of oil to run modern engines and the realization that there may be a lot of it in that part of the world is shifting the focus. European governments claim to take an interest in the region because of the Ottoman mistreatment of their subject peoples, but they make sure to build up their own influence there; liberal attitudes are proving conveniently compatible with commercial interests. Alas, European freebooters are running ahead of the official agencies and expeditions, while Prussian influence with Turkey is suddenly very convenient for the Prussians. Infinity assesses this region as one of the most dangerous potential political flashpoints on Britannica-6.

The Americas

To the Bloods and Whig politicians of the British Empire, the New World looks gratifyingly well in hand. Oh, a part of it was lost a century ago, which was unfortunate, but the people there now seem either awestruck by the power of British ingenuity or sensibly keen to emulate it. From the politically useful northern reaches of Canada to the forests and jungles of the southern lands (full of useful drugs and compounds waiting to be discovered by bold pharmacist-explorers), the Americas are two whole continents of possibility!

Canada

The glittering ice crystal in the British crown, Canada is a significant component in the Empire, if only as a place for the royal family to exile each other. It's been arbitrarily subdivided into many provinces with little economic or geographic logic to them. It's also benefited from a fair amount of investment and immigration; New Englanders in search of a new life move to the Canadian West, feeling especially pleased if their advance is running ahead of that of the United States to the south. Fortunately, this rivalry rarely rises above the level of name-calling and bragging.

Much of the eastern part of the country is bilingual, with French-speaking Catholics living comfortably alongside English-speaking Protestants. The British government made concessions to keep the French-speakers loyal as far back as the 18th century, and the Whigs continued this tradition, giving away enough power over the years that Canada never suffered serious anti-government rebellions – although there was a certain amount of grumbling at times. The friendship between the two powers led to the idea the two language groups should work together to bring civilization to the world, and French financiers took to investing in eastern Canada, transforming the local Francophone community from peasant farmers to something more varied.

This situation has changed in recent years, growing less comfortable. Canadians increasingly see their country as a dumping-ground for drunken British aristocrats, while New England investment and immigration, encouraged by London, makes both language groups feel their country is no longer under their control at any level. The old *Parti Canadien* has seen a revival in its fortunes as it becomes a mouthpiece for dissent, and many English-speaking Canadian radicals have learned French as a symbol of defiance. Whether the exiled princes and dukes who supposedly run most of Canada can handle this problem remains to be seen.

Russian Alaska

The Russians moved into Alaska in the 18th century and, on Britannica-6, they've never been bought or chased out. They continue to send traders and trappers down the west coast, although this is some distance beyond their ability to project real influence or military power. Alaska itself remains an uncomfortable but moderately populous outpost of their empire – which makes the British, or their Canadian dominions, nervous. Well, it gives them an excuse to build countermeasures . . .

The New England Confederacy

On Britannica, "New England" consists of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and New York State (a few rural areas were handed over to the United States). This nation operates under a constitution based on that of the original United States, with an administrative capital in Providence, Rhode Island – selected to avoid giving an advantage to any of the larger cities. Its greatest commercial city is New York; Boston calls itself the cultural capital.

When the original country split under internal stress, the northeastern segment looked smaller, weaker, and more restricted. However, technological progress and large-scale European immigration to its cities have made it the most sophisticated and wealthiest part of the continent. Still, New Englanders like to think of themselves as straightforward,

Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself.

– John Adams

feet-on-the-ground folk – practical engineers, not as crazy for useless gimmicks as their British allies. (They may have a point.) A New York banker or Boston philosopher will dress in plain, even somber garb compared to a British aristocrat; if he wants to flaunt his wealth, he invests in a big, rugged motor-wagon or two. Younger New Englanders of all classes traditionally go abroad to make their fortunes, from working-class lads who hail from the coastal cities sailing the Seven Seas, to sons of wealthy industrialists building great hydroelectric projects in western Canada. Most eventually return home, at least if they've gotten rich, but the bright-eyed New Englander with big ideas is a recognized phenomenon around the globe.

The border with the United States is mostly peaceful – the two nations ignore each other as much as possible – but is nonetheless patrolled by New England's small but well-drilled, *very* high-tech armed forces. Motor-skiffs prowl the east side of the Delaware River and the waters of Lake Erie, and three regiments of war-barouches are based in Jamestown; they look intimidating when they aren't in the stables being enhanced or repaired yet again.

The Free Port of San Francisco

The San Francisco Bay area is at the furthest edge of Mexican control, on the border with other powers. After several abortive attempts to impose its authority, the Mexican government has made a virtue out of necessity, and semi-formally let it be known that San Francisco will suffer few taxes and small garrisons, so long as these freedoms are not too flagrantly abused.

Hence, this has become a bustling, cosmopolitan, and often dangerous community where Mexican soldiers and missionaries rub shoulders with Russian traders and trappers, American "Coloradan" pioneers and adventurers, and the sailors of a dozen nations (including, presumably, lots of British spies). Actually, "San Francisco" still doesn't exist as a city. The Mexican town of Yerba Buena dominates the bay, but rubs up against the independent Russian trading colony of Fort Ross, and the even more stridently independent Coloradan colony of Jacksontown (on the site of Homeline's Oakland, across the water).

The city has grown purely on the strength of maritime trade and pioneering farming efforts so far. There's nothing else to bring anyone there – though there are rumors of some kind of secret Russian mining operations in the mountains to the northeast (the Russians seem pleased with themselves). Some folks wonder if they've found gold or something, but that's crazy talk.

The United States

Distracted and weakened by the New England secession, the United States has been unable to expand westward as effectively as in our history, nor has it engaged in any great, victorious war to claim large parts of Mexico. American forces have fought a series of frontier actions to the south, rarely at the level of formally declared war. It has won most of these but Mexico had the support of European powers (and, on occasion, of various New Englanders – whose government has always disowned their actions), so the U.S. took a few prizes from these victories. California is a frontier zone, but the focus of development is in a number of territories, none of them yet granted statehood, in the regions of Colorado and Wyoming on Homeline.

Despite underdevelopment, the sheer size and natural resources of the continent can't help but make the United States wealthy even if it isn't invested energetically. Its armed forces may be technologically backward, with most of their officers being younger sons of wealthy southern families, but they have a tradition of wild courage that can compensate. They claim a small aerostat force, useful for patrolling the long, stark western frontiers. American aircraft at the limits of their range also monitor Canadian military exercises and technological experiments on the Great Lakes, where the two sides watch each other with a degree of animosity. There's disputed territory in those parts, albeit too far from reliable supply bases for either side to start an actual fight as yet.

Mexico

Since it acquired independence from Spain (in 1821, just like Homeline), Mexico finds itself on the front lines of the struggle between European Whig-aristocrat power politics and the resentful United States. It retains control of much of southwestern North America, including most of Texas and California. However, this is a remote and uncertain sort of control; these regions are full of settlers and adventurers who owe loyalty to anyone or no one. Further south the country is moderately prosperous, perhaps because the European powers on this timeline are inclined less to political meddling and more toward providing investments and aid.

The country as a whole is officially friendly with Britain, France, New England, and most of the nations of South America, and has mostly settled its differences with Spain. Its biggest concern is the three-way confrontation with the United States and Russia along the western seaboard.

Central and South America

Some Latin-American nations have been as fortunate as Mexico; others have suffered when European powers decided to flex their muscles for one reason or another. The Republic of Central America, consisting of what Homeline calls Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, is a significant regional power, although its democratic system is only held together by a great deal of coastal maritime traffic. Beyond that, development is patchy at best. It has therefore come to define itself as a sea-going power, and built a moderately impressive navy. There is no Panama Canal as yet, but the idea is frequently discussed.

The Empire of Brazil is the regional giant. Here as elsewhere, Whig liberalism has won out by establishing a "constitutional monarchy" that allows the royal family power in exchange for progressive policies like the abolition of slavery. Emperor Pedro IV is married to a German duchess, and some of his relatives live in London where they are great friends with the Bloods. Two of them have recently returned with ships full of modern inventions, which have been taken up the Amazon to closed estates in the interior. Pedro, distracted by border disputes and radical intellectual movements, may be treating them rather too indulgently.

Asia

Most Europeans on Britannica-6 still think in terms of old clichés when they consider Asia – and to be fair to them, much of the continent is developing slowly. European traders ply the coasts in steamships, while traditional Asian rulers seek to limit the impact of foreign ideas on their empires (in the fields, peasants continue to farm using the same low-tech methods their ancestors used for millennia). Changes happen sometimes, and the influence of the modern world is making itself felt in a thousand places.

The flamboyant fashions of Europe borrow periodically from Asia, so some of the peoples *are* viewed as modish, at least in a patronizing way by young, style-conscious Bloods. Indian fabrics and clothing styles are perennially popular, and generations of returning army officers have brought a taste for Indian food and other luxuries to Europe. Chinese and other Asian influences are intermittent, taking the form of small, elegant, decorative items such as porcelain, which at least gives Asian countries something to trade with European merchants.

India

India is a crucial element of the British Empire. It's closer to being an equal partner than it was at this time in our history – which is not to say its people are treated much better, but at least a substantial proportion of the rulers lording over them are themselves Indian. The old divisions into principalities, kingdoms, and so on are preserved but are much more than regional divisions: Even in 1887, there are a multitude of "princely states" whose local rulers make their own laws, run their own courts, and set their own taxes with light British oversight (loose enough that, for example, persuading some of them to abandon slavery has been a struggle). This was true on Homeline, but on Britannica some of the princes (such as the Maharani of Travancore and the Nizam of Hyderabad) are respected throughout the Empire, comparable in significance to many of the Bloods. A few of the more sophisticated Indian rulers have even invested in industrial development, hoping to make their realms wealthy in the long term. While India is not as industrialized as Britain or New England, this sort of project seems to work well.

Overall, however, the subcontinent is definitely ruled by Britain – specifically by the British East India Company. This is so integrated with the British government that the system of official regulation and corporate ownership is invisible to casual observers. The Company's private army regularly exchanges officers and tactical ideas with the "regulars" – though it helps that many regular army regiments are seen almost as the personal forces of various ultra-wealthy sponsors and factions.

Incidentally, one consequence of the hands-off nature of British rule in this India is an incomplete removal of the Thuggee cult. The British have campaigned against it effectively in many places, but groups are still periodically discovered in 1887.

China

Having preserved its independence from direct European control, China has to deal with indirect manipulations (mainly by foreigners who want to use it as a setting for proxy battles) and also a more overt profit-driven problem.

Since the 18th century, the East India Company has smuggled Indian-grown opium into China in large quantities so merchants could pay for Chinese goods; the Chinese attempted to stop this, and their initial, feeble efforts have gained vigor in the 19th century. On Homeline a similar process led to the Opium Wars, in which Britain forced China to tolerate the trade. On Britannica-6, the Whig government and their Company associates were less willing to commit forces to an obviously amoral cause, but the profit available from the trade was hard to ignore. Thus, smuggling exploded along the coasts and borders while British governors and military commanders looked the other way. Chinese forces were inadequate but did their best to stop this, enforcing increasingly draconian policies to the disapproval of the British authorities. The ruthless criminality, run by unstable alliances of renegade Westerners of every nationality and Chinese criminal gangs (including Triads, corrupted away from their original political function even faster on this timeline), causes high-minded Westerners to regard the situation with distaste. Popular stories tell of heroic, independent adventurers battling Chinese opium-smugglers and their depraved occidental

Asian Adventures

Asia on Britannica-6 is a natural setting for "colonial" adventures involving PCs who are native to the timeline – or for that matter I-Cops who are attempting to influence the local pattern of colonialism, or to prevent others from doing so. It's rich and urbanized enough to support many types of story, but diverse and underdeveloped enough for amoral freebooters to run amok. It's also the main location for "proxy conflicts" between European and North American powers; the coasts and courts of China are the obvious place for this, but the scope can include Kiplingesque espionage on the Northwest Frontier; tramp steamer meanderings around the South China Sea; or belated attempts to open Japan up for trade with whichever power can force the issue. The general flavor of such games may owe something to the pulp tradition.

PCs native to Britannica can be amoral but charming smugglers or high-minded forces for civilization (presumably commissioned and sponsored by some powerful faction, or a wealthy independent; a British aristocrat exiled for questioning the competitive games back home might be interesting). They could be national agents sent to advance a country's interests and foil its rivals. They might also be natives, annoyed by the colonial exploitation but willing to work with Westerners who demonstrate a genuine sense of justice.

Technology encountered in Asian scenarios is mostly old-fashioned (and cheap and reliable) TL5 equipment, but exceptions are always possible. Wealthy adventurers or government-sponsored military expeditions might command TL(5+2) gunboats or carry an array of personal gadgets, while Indian potentates could finance scientific-industrial "prestige" projects to astonish the neighbors – and one-off imported toys of all sorts are always possible. As the limited civilian airship industry expands into long-range passenger travel, the skies of the entire British Empire fill with these craft.

criminal associates (from a Western nation other than the storyteller's, of course); some of these are even true. The timeline's ethos of ruthless competitiveness runs strongly on both sides in China. There are rumors some British companies secretly research even more potent drugs for sale to the Chinese, to increase profits further.

Without Opium Wars, Britain and Portugal don't control Hong Kong or Macau; instead there is a string of small Western-run trading posts along the coast. Most see opium pass through, though a few legitimate traders struggle to suppress this for moral reasons and to keep on good terms with the less corrupt Chinese authorities (some governors and officials are in the pockets of the smugglers).

Internally, China is ruled by the ethnically Manchu Qing dynasty, although social stresses (including opium-financed corruption in the south) threaten to tear the state apart. Homeline's catastrophic "Taiping Rebellion" has been avoided; instead, China has suffered a series of smaller rebellions and civil wars, with leaders ranging from ambitious drug lords to sincere (but usually naïve) socialistic reformers. This killed fewer people but did even more damage to society. The chances of China achieving any kind of technological modernization in the near future are slim.

Agents of Western powers are insinuating themselves into this mess. Britain has been slow, leaving the development (and exploitation) of the East to the independent commercial enterprises that served so well in the past. Prussia and factions from other nations, including New England, have seen opportunities to catch up with British global influence through the Qing court or successful rebel factions. The British have finally noticed and are scrabbling to catch up, all while denouncing the immorality of the whole thing – but many Chinese officials don't trust them, for some incomprehensible reason. It seems "British" has come to mean "opium smuggler," despite a significant minority of Western smugglers being from other countries.

Japan

With the United States in disarray, Commodore Perry never forced the opening of Japan, and no other Western power has chosen to do so, either. The country remains introverted and underdeveloped, although it's gradually acknowledging the rest of the world by growing trade through Nagasaki and other treaty ports. Japanese styles are *not* often encountered in the West, and aren't likely to become fashionable there.

Africa

With the rapid advance of science and technology, the British developed long-range steamboats and completed the construction of a canal linking the Mediterranean and Red seas in the early 1850s. Their willingness to investigate interesting medical treatments and borrow from folk medicine on many occasions (Prince Leopold was noted for sponsoring this idea) meant quinine and other anti-malarial drugs came into widespread use faster than on Homeline. And thus, European powers in general and Britain in particular expanded their activities in tropical Africa by the middle of the century. The British navy, with its proud tradition of anti-slavery patrols, pushed for stations on the west coast, while the construction of the canal gave the East India Company an incentive to secure the east. The search for more interesting pharmaceutical compounds in the wild encouraged exploration of the interior, with missionaries joining the effort. In short, the "Scramble for Africa" started early, albeit initially driven more by rivalries between members of the British ruling elite than by national competition. Nowadays, rival governments scramble to join the race, looking for their own share of the loot – and everyone is using lots of airships.

Several different trading companies, each in the pocket of some prince or upper-class partnership, have spread up and down the coasts of the continent, their outposts interspersed with military bases and coaling stations. Military control is still seen as the primary concern, but trade is quite important – if one can get ahead of the Prussians and French, *and* make money doing so, that's a double victory! Really profitable trade has to wait on more extensive economic development throughout the continent, meaning farms and plantations if not industry – and so far, even with reliable medicine, few European settlers or investors have shown much interest in moving into tropical Africa.

The Cape

In the far south of the continent, Britain took over the previously Dutch-ruled Cape Colony in the early years of the century. The Whig regime soon came into conflict with the independent-minded, Calvinist, conservative Boers, and when the British rulers attempted to institute a rapid series of reforms and administrative changes – not least the abolition of slavery – they faced the first in a long series of revolts and resistance movements.

These never erupted into full-scale war, nor did any large group of Boers ever engage in anything as substantial as the "Great Trek" of Homeline history, as fewer British colonists ever came to this fractious, annoying region. But South Africa has long been a painful problem for Britannica's British Empire. When both the Boers and the British encountered first the powerful Ndebele and then the militaristic Zulus to their north, things became even more complicated and violent. The province didn't grow as large as Homeline's South Africa, and the Zulus haven't been subjugated (nor have many outlying Boer communities or Ndebele groups). The British even trade guns to the Ndebele, Zulus, and other Africans in exchange for support in military actions, making the Boers even less happy with British rule; a competent, charismatic Boer rebel leader could probably trigger a full-scale independence movement, but no such figure has appeared. Prussian agents are rumored to be active and well-received among the Boers, though.

The British colony in Cape Town has grown into something substantial. The Royal Navy has established a major coaling station with a strong defensive garrison, and in recent years this has come under the control of a formidable figure.

The Prince

Prince Augustus of Hanover-Saxe-Coburg (now known as "Prince Augustus of the Cape") is the uncle of the present King of Britain. For various reasons he joined the navy in his youth and found he liked this a great deal; he's definitely a militarist by nature. It wasn't his family position that allowed him to rise so rapidly in rank; he's a competent commander, albeit the sort who regards losing a few men in the course of a routine peacetime exercise as acceptable. He's by no means conservative; he likes motorized war machines on land as well as sea. However, despite his competitive nature, he dislikes the "childish" contests played out between the Bloods, considering them futile and undisciplined.

Giving him a command position in South Africa got him away from all the family gatherings he spoiled by his grumbling, but he doesn't really mind. Left to his own devices, he's turning Cape Town into a pocket military dictatorship and spending his generous budget – plus personal funds – on arming it far beyond its real needs. He regards the South African veldt as a wonderful testing ground for military vehicles, and permits various armaments manufacturers (and even some Bloods, if they're prepared to accept a bit of military-style discipline) to try out their new toys there. Live-fire exercises are *definitely* part of the deal.

Boers, Ndebele, and Zulus observe these wargames with startled interest. The wisest among them are also developing ideas about guerilla tactics.

AUSTRALIA

If the frozen north of Canada is a nice place for the British ruling classes to exile the losers in their contests, the baking outback of Australia seems almost as good – and it's even more distant. Then again, the more hospitable southern coastal reaches offer clear benefits to colonizers, and Australia is currently the Empire's primary source of bauxite, and hence of aluminum, the wonder-metal required by many of Britannica's most wondrous devices. The idea of using the outback for anything as routine as, say, sheep farming, hasn't occurred to many people.

Thanks no doubt to the general atmosphere of this timeline, the wild old idea of Australia as a prison colony has transformed to a place where competition is even less circumscribed than elsewhere, and where every class *loves* games of chance. The occasional gold rush is just the icing on the social cake. Describing a new business venture as "a big gamble" is regarded as a recommendation among Australians, and the streets of every town teem with wealthy success stories and ruined speculators whose projects didn't pay off. Society is still rustic, although a few businessmen have been clever enough to present industrial projects as interesting gambles, so a viable manufacturing base may develop in coming years. Most of the population is white, but some large ventures have attracted investment from India, which has led in turn to small communities of Indian expatriates appearing in the large cities. Some of the upper classes also employ Indian servants (and Indian mistresses), as a matter of fashion.

Australia is divided into three provinces within the Empire. The first is the sparsely populated New Holland on the northern coast, governed from the small and inappropriately named Jansz City, near to the southernmost point on the Gulf of Carpentaria. New South Wales on the east coast is far larger than the state of that name on Homeline, and is governed from Sydney. And Cookia, covering most of the western parts and governed from Port George, sits close to the site of Homeline's Perth. Over the last 20 years, all three governors have been permitted to expand their territories by commissioning official expeditions to explore, survey, and claim the regions beyond their current borders. (Some use giant motorized tractors, although these are more trouble than they're worth.) As the richest and most populous province, with the easiest access to fertile parts of the south, New South Wales has by far been the most successful, with solid claims to much of the southern coast. The other two may have larger areas, it's just that most of *their* claims involve unprofitable desert or rain forest. The occasional mineral strike changes the balance of perceived success from month to month. In any case, New South Wales has recently suffered some unexpected political troubles.

The Kelly Movement

Small frontier towns have been created in many places to reinforce the governors' claims, though these are often populated by the hopeful, the desperate, or the wildly eccentric and suffer severe failure rates. A few remote communities have been set up by social radicals who may not follow the usual risk-loving local ethos, and who may oppose much for which the Empire stands. So when a new, wild-sounding political movement sprang up in the outlying New South Wales claims, no one was terribly surprised. Their leader was a mysterious but charming fellow named Kelly, who apparently had the luck of the devil; after his party managed to acquire some local positions of influence, several of his friends and political supporters received mining licenses or concessions for sites that turned out to be spectacularly profitable.

Within a year, Kelly's "Free Hinterland" movement was a rising power across rural southern Australia and found support in the other two provinces. The governor was persuaded by someone who allegedly had information on Kelly that the man could be discredited, but this scheme backfired, humiliating the governor instead. When Kelly himself vanished shortly afterward, rumors spread that the government had done away with him. The governor was recalled to Britain in disgrace, and the "Hinterlanders" are going forth with the name of a martyr on their banner. Britain may have to grant autonomy and democratic rights to Australia or face outright revolt – and with the provincial government in turmoil, they're probably going to *have* to make large concessions.

Infinity have recognized all this as a swagman con game (see p. 35), but there's not much they can do about it. The perpetrators have moved on, and Infinity has little stomach for sabotaging democratic political movements just to restore the *status quo*.

"Popular instinct has found in Kelly a type of manliness much to be esteemed – to reiterate: courage, resolution, independence, sympathy with the under-dog . . ."

– Clive Turnbull, Australian journalist

Chapter Three
Outworld Operations

"So, Agent Walsh – I assume that you are here to investigate the message I dispatched yesterday."

Walsh sipped his local Turkish coffee, fidgeted with the stiff, synthetic-fabric collar of the weird jacket he'd been issued, and nodded. "You know this timeline as well as anybody, Mr. Jacobov, so if you think that something's up, we'll take a look."

The White Star man smiled. "I'm flattered. But I think you may understand what caught my attention well enough." He slid open the brass-and-oak cover on a local-style office desk and extracted some kind of newspaper. "I got hold of this yesterday morning – I'm afraid it's a couple of days older than that, but it's not the sort of thing anybody bothers bringing to London on a fast coach. Boring parochial stuff mostly, but do look at page five."

*Walsh took the paper from him, and glanced first at its name – **The Wessex Intelligencer** – and then at the indicated page, which was partly occupied by a picture – some kind of motor-yacht race . . .*

Then he almost spilled his coffee, and Jacobov smiled again. "I see that you recognize the gentleman. I, too, keep abreast of Patrol suspect alerts."

"It could just be a chance resemblance."

*"It **could.**" Jacobov extracted a notebook from his own pocket. "However, I thought it best to make some enquiries, and fortunately I'm well placed to do so, sometimes. It seems that Mr. Thorne has led a most interesting life these last couple of months – which is curious, because nobody had heard of him at all before that."*

Walsh groaned and put his cup down carefully. "Okay," he said, "tell me the worst."

Infinity only discovered Britannica-6 relatively recently, and so far as they can tell they're the first out-time faction to find it. However, the fact they've done so makes it likely others will follow – and there are many good reasons why other factions should want to set up operations here.

Britannica-6, 1887

(Following the reference format used in ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***.)

Current Affairs

The princes and aristocrats of a Regency-flavored British Empire amuse themselves with runaway technology, while politicians engage in high-minded gestures and rival nations seek to match the inspired pointlessness of the great British projects – or contemplate alternative routes to power.

Divergence Point

1817; Princess Charlotte survives childbirth and goes on to found a profuse and hyperactive Hanover-Saxe-Coburg dynasty.

Major Civilizations

Western (empire with rivals), Orthodox (empire with satellite states), Islamic (empire with rivals), Chinese (empire).

Great Powers

British Empire (oligarchy with democratic elements, CR2 for upper classes, CR3 for everyone else), French Empire (oligarchy, CR3), Prussia (dictatorship, CR5), Russia (dictatorship, CR5), China (dictatorship, CR5), *New England Confederacy (representative democracy with corporate state tendencies, CR2), United States (representative democracy with oligarchic tendencies, CR2 for whites, CR5 for non-whites)*.

Worldline Data

TL: 5+2 (for war machines and aristocrats' toys; large areas are still at 5, even in advanced nations)
Mana Level: none (may be small areas of low)
Quantum: 6
Infinity Class: R6
Centrum Zone: Orange

Infinity and Friends

From Infinity's point of view Britannica is still a new discovery, so operations are stretched even thinner than on most timelines. The Scout Survey Division handed off responsibility to Contact, who are wrapping up their final analysis. They should have been done by now, but Intelligence and Technical Analysis have been looking over their shoulders and demanding more details – the former with a slight air of paranoia, the latter with geeky enthusiasm.

The outstanding question is what Infinity's policy should be with regard to the local balance of power. Clearly the British Empire is the big fact that can't be ignored, and it's not the worst hegemony Infinity has ever had to consider. Admittedly it's a colonial empire run by and for its upper classes, many of whom are either crazy aristocrats or obsessive money-grubbers. But their vaunted Whig ideology is fairly egalitarian; the political system is nominally a constitutional monarchy and will probably grow into that role given time; and the local love of science and technology has its charms. However, its rulers adore their big flashy weapons, and lack any recent experience with industrialized warfare to knock the edges off their jingoistic enthusiasm. With Prussia on the rise, a rerun of World War I (with more airships) may well be on the cards in a few years. There's no clear way to stop that, and some analysts suggest the local version of Britain needs a counterbalance to save it from complacency and economic instability. Frankly, Prussia could be useful if Centrum gets its claws into the British – though if that's the concern, most I-Cops would rather attempt the delicate trick of keeping France independent-minded and non-hostile.

Another complication is the American situation. Britannica's United States has the same appeal to assorted romantics and bigots that makes the CSA such a nuisance over on Dixie-1, with the added issue that its name commands more respect from Homeline American patriots. Such people find the American schism distressing, and there's been some suggestion on the Interworld Council that reunification would give this world a desirable extra power to balance British arrogance. Even if this were true, there's too much bad blood between the two nations to make it a viable project, especially as local British diplomats could be expected to interfere and smooth things out even as they wrinkled.

Thus, Infinity currently classes Britannica as a Research world, but staff members are convinced it's *relatively* safe – local technology is exotic but this doesn't reflect wildly divergent physical laws, the science is nowhere near developing parachronics, and out-time incursions seem to be limited at worst. The Patrol already permits general access for researchers, and has licensed some trade. A change to Protectorate status is widely predicted for the near future, to be followed by an increase in commercial access once agents have a good handle on the local political situation.

White Star

Infinity's commercial partners moved promptly once information on Britannica-6 was declassified, realizing that it had potential. As soon as they completed a preliminary analysis of the initial reports they pulled strings to have the timeline opened up, which is one reason why the Access Rating has been dialed down to 6. Small-scale operations are all they've been permitted (or really been able to organize) so far, but the timeline is high on their list of interesting medium-term prospects.

The point is that it's exotic but not incomprehensible. The local technology incorporates some amusing ideas, most of it seems to work okay on other timelines, and the dominant culture is related to one of Homeline's more flamboyant historical periods, with a ready-made fan club. Furthermore, there are no inconvenient questions of royalties due to crosstime counterparts, and plenty of niches where agents can be inserted without difficulty. Operations have to be on a modest scale, at least at first – but White Star knows all about turning a worthwhile profit from high-value handicrafts and intellectual property.

> *It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it.*
>
> *– Charlotte Bronte,* ***Jane Eyre***

Cultural Artifacts

All artworks and fashions created on Britannica-6 since 1817 have been original, but most have some relationship to the popular Regency period, so White Star's publishing division is happily exploiting a growing collection of images, recordings, and texts. Their bestsellers are older works, such as novels by Charlotte Bronte (whose writing was significantly less gothic on this alternate), and music by Richard Wagner (who became obsessed with technology on Britannica-6, promoting through his operas the idea that Germany should unite as a kind of technocracy). Works from around 1850 onward have some value, but by then fashions and styles had begun to diverge significantly, and fewer of the creators from the later period have name recognition on Homeline.

White Star has tried shipping items from outside the realm of high art, such as fashionable clothes (see p. 34) and even one or two custom-modified vehicles, but most buyers on Homeline seem to find these garish and unappealing. The sales department does think it's identified a modest market for Britannica-made costume jewelry.

Gadgets, Weapons, and Medicines

On the other hand, White Star may have a significant market for some of the exotic and often bizarre weapons and other military equipment they can acquire – with some difficulty – on Britannica-6: the Infinity Patrol! Apart from the need for reference samples and engineering research materials, Infinity likes to hold a varied collection of gear in its armories – one never knows what might be reasonably appropriate and not too out of place for a mission to some new timeline. Britannica provides an amazing assortment of low-tech but ingenious, and sometimes well-made, sidearms. Local military air-gun designs (see p. 42) look especially interesting, given their ability to deliver sub-lethal rounds at reasonable ranges.

Acquiring this stock is a headache for White Star. Weapon control laws on Britannica are fairly light, but there are *some*, and anyone buying an assortment of guns and ammunition tends to attract casual attention at the least; they're still working to resolve the problem. Ensuring a sufficient supply of ammunition is a concern; they don't want to continually come back for reloads, but large orders draw notice. Fortunately, in a pinch, Homeline armourers can recreate what's needed.

Other gadgets are also of interest to both the Patrol (especially if they can be used as inconspicuous holdout gear by undercover agents) and civilian collectors with a taste for exotic ingenuity or unusual designs. Much of the time, White Star agents only acquire such things singly or in small numbers, at retail; they can still turn a decent profit, especially as limited supply pushes the prices up on Homeline. But this is often a short-term, self-limiting market, as Homeline engineers can copy and then mass-produce anything that looks set to become widely popular. The same applies to pharmaceuticals, and White Star chemists are beginning the huge task of assessing Britannica's vast library of medical texts, looking for interesting discoveries or compounds. Most of this stuff has been discovered or superceded on Homeline, but the tiny proportion that has been missed might include a few drugs and treatments that could make fortunes and save thousands. There's also the chance that Britannica has derived useful extracts from species that were driven to extinction on Homeline before they could be properly investigated.

White Star's London Base

As soon as they had clearance from Infinity, White Star dispatched a number of agents to the timeline with reasonable cover stories and non-traceable wealth, and one team, sent to Britannica's London, enjoyed a stroke of luck. They identified a warehouse available for long-term lease in the East End on a site corresponding to a combined Infinity/White Star conveyor station on Homeline (with another "support station" on a corresponding spot on an uninhabited Quantum 6 timeline). They snapped this up and set to work establishing a cover story that gave them a commercial outpost in the heart of the capital of the Empire, now managed by their factor, Abraham Jacobov (see p. 28). This is so convenient that Infinity frequently invokes an agreement with White Star that gives them use of it; this hasn't caused problems as yet, but if Infinity exploits it too far it may become a source of friction.

Jacobov presents himself as a merchant from eastern Europe, establishing himself in London as a buyer of high-value items – high-tech devices and occasional curios – for export to his "homeland." As eastern nations are well known to be behind Britain technologically, the idea that they might want to import such things sounds perfect sensible. (This means Jacobov has to perform quite a few such trades to preserve his cover story; he dispatches goods by ship to carefully cultivated associates in various Baltic ports, but his shipments to Homeline go direct by conveyor from his London warehouse.) He trades as "Jacobov and Partners," but his business notepaper and a sign over the warehouse door incorporate the giveaway white star symbol.

As a "dual outsider" – Jewish, in a rather overt and old-fashioned way, and foreign – Jacobov suffers a little prejudice, but has an excellent cover for any small mistakes or oddities in his behavior with the locals or flaws in his accent. (If he were a native, he'd probably have a Social Stigma, although overt anti-Semitism is rather unfashionable in this London. As his position here is technically temporary, and he's actually exploiting things in a calculated and efficient way, this doesn't appear on his character sheet.) He employs a series of assistants he presents as relatives and associates from "the old country" passing through while learning the ways of international business, but who are actually other White Star staff on short-term assignment. (No one is rude enough to suggest they might be checking up on the honesty of his activities.) There's usually at least one such on station along with Jacobov himself.

Time Tours, Ltd.

Infinity has let it be known they'll *consider* licensing tourism to Britannica-6 once they've completed their current survey ops; Time Tours is paying attention. The combination of Regency style (with automatic appeal to a vast market of romance novel readers) and wild technology used competitively (great fun for gadget buffs to watch, hopefully from a safe distance) suggests this could be a popular destination, especially as local medicine is good enough that customers won't be distressed by the sight of too many disease victims dying in the streets. However, there may be some issues left to resolve.

Abraham Jacobov (156 points)

White Star's trading factor in Britannica's London is American by birth, though he can hide it well. Abraham Jacobov's family was Reform Jewish, and he was brought up in the faith although he isn't very observant. He has always had a casual interest in the history of his people, and more recently he's worked out how to turn his knowledge to practical advantage.

Graduating with a degree in business studies, and having long thought that White Star looked like an interesting employer, he joined the company as a trainee. He worked his way up, eventually winning a series of field assignments in which he distinguished himself, earning promotion to junior management. When Britannica-6 was scheduled for development, he put together a proposal the board liked. Jacobov took crash courses in languages and history, made some preliminary visits to various northern European cities to help establish his cover story, and then settled down to running the new trade station. He quite likes the timeline, mostly because it's making him a good profit and a name in White Star.

Jacobov attends the synagogue regularly, and is well regarded in the local "old-style" Jewish community (he'd be called "Orthodox" on Homeline, but that division works differently on Britannica). He's also been fortunate that one of his neighbors in the East End street where he rents a small house is Sergeant Brown of the Bow Street Runners, a friendly, outgoing character who thoroughly enjoys trading tales with this odd but courteous foreigner over a cup of Jacobov's fine coffee. Brown is honest and straightforward, and doesn't say *much* that he strictly shouldn't, but sees no harm in mentioning a few exciting details about current cases that haven't reached the newspapers yet.

Jacobov thinks of himself as a businessman first, a Homeline citizen second, and Jewish a long way third; he only plays up his ethnicity on Britannica because the stereotype of the European Jewish trader, still prevalent here, sustains his cover. However, he knows his history well enough; any *hint* of a Reich-5 incursion would make him call for an immediate I-Cop response.

He is an innocuous-looking individual in his 30s, with the distinctive hair, beard, and clothing of an Orthodox-style Jew. His clothes are of Britannica-6 manufacture, made with a lot of synthetic fibers, which he finds slightly but persistently uncomfortable; on any return trips to Homeline, he changes immediately into a well-cut lightweight suit.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [-5]; Per 13 [0]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

Social Background

TL: 8 [0]

CF: Modern Western [0]; Britannica-6 Western [1].

Languages: Homeline English (Native) [0]; Britannica-6 English* (Native) [2]; Homeline German (Accented/Native) [5]; Homeline Modern Hebrew (Accented) [4]; Britannica-6 Polish (Accented) [4]; Britannica-6 Russian (Accented) [4]; Homeline Spanish (Broken) [2]; Homeline Yiddish (Native) [6]; Britannica-6 Yiddish* (Native) [2].

*Homeline languages give their Britannica-6 counterparts at one level lower (see ***Infinite Worlds***, p. 175).

Advantages

Business Acumen 1 [10]; Contact (Bow Street Runner; effective skill Streetwise-15; 12 or less; somewhat reliable) [4]; Contact Group (Local merchants; effective skill business skills, level-15; 9 or less; somewhat reliable) [10]; High Manual Dexterity +1 [5]; Reputation +2 (As a pleasant if slightly eccentric fellow, in the East End traditionalist Jewish community; all the time) [3]; Reputation +2 (As a fair dealer, in the London international trade community; 7 or less) [1]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15]; Secret (From another Earth) [-20].

Quirks: Ambitious regarding his career in White Star; Develops a stutter when he's scared; Slightly greedy – regards wealth as a way of "keeping score." [-3]

Skills

Accounting-14* (IQ) [4]; Acting-13 (IQ) [2]; Administration-14* (IQ) [2]; Area Knowledge (Britannica-6 Eastern Europe)-13 (IQ) [1]; Area Knowledge (Britannica-6 London)-13 (IQ) [1]; Carousing-11 (HT) [1]; Computer Operation/TL8-13 (IQ) [1]; Connoisseur (Literature)-13 (IQ) [2]; Current Affairs/TL(5+2) (Business)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Current Affairs/TL(5+2) (Headline News)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Current Affairs/TL8 (Business)-13 (IQ) [1]; Detect Lies-12 (Per-1) [2]; Economics-12* (IQ-2) [1]; Fast-Talk-13 (IQ) [2]; Forgery/TL(5+2)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Freight Handing/TL(5+1)-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Freight Handing/TL8-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Gambling-13* (IQ-1) [1]; History (19th century Jewish)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; History (Georgian Europe)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Housekeeping-13 (IQ) [1]; Karate Sport-9 (DX-2) [1]; Market Analysis-13* (IQ-1) [2]; Merchant-15* (IQ+1) [4]; Propaganda/TL8-13* (IQ-1) [1]; Religious Ritual (Orthodox Jewish)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-13 (IQ) [1].

* +1 from Business Acumen.

For one thing, there's the question of whether any hostile factions are active on the timeline. That's not an absolute bar – Time Tours has a standard service contract with a wonderful collection of waivers and exclusions in the small print – but the PR department wants a few firm statements before they write a new chapter for the brochure. For another, a new timeline means a new batch of guides to train up, which has to be done partly on site – and this one requires people who can manage a formal upper-class party *and* answer damn-fool technical questions about exceedingly damn-fool local contraptions and devices. And who's going to train the trainers? Plus there are safe houses to set up, local currency to acquire . . . all the things the company has managed countless times in the past, but all needing work. And neither Infinity nor White Star wants to help much.

The actual tours have to be sold with some no-guarantees policies. It may be possible to drop a group in just in time to watch a showdown between rival Bloods and their dueling aerostats, but if the aristocrats are so inconsiderate as to shake hands and make up the night before – well, provoking them into the challenge after all would be highly unethical, even if they were that easily manipulated. The London Season and the regular regimental balls in Delhi are more reliable, but cadging invitations for large groups of strangers is hard. (At least a lot of parties in Bath, Lyme, and Montreal are run on a convenient ticketing basis.) Anything involving radical experimental technology is inherently unpredictable. And if the local international situation ever goes WWI on everyone, the extraction process may be messy.

Still, that sort of situation is why Time Tours feels entitled to charge what it does.

Centrum

If there's one thing about a world that makes I-Cops *assume* they're going to have problems with Centrum there, it's a "Britannica" tag. Any timeline dominated by a hierarchical English-speaking empire with a taste for social orderliness is already partway to meeting Interworld's criteria for domination and absorption.

As a matter of rational pessimism, Infinity assumes that Centrum knows at least something about any alternate on Quantum 5 or higher unless they have good evidence to the contrary – and in the case of Britannica-6, their concerns are correct. The timeline's passing resemblance to Britannica-2, a known Centrum success story, adds to the red flags. However, things may not be as bad as the analysts fear.

Centrum found out about this particular world through agents on Homeline, who remain a major source of information on the topic. Infinity was simply lucky enough to find this set of coordinates first, and anyway, they have the positional advantage on Quantum 6; Interworld isn't so foolish as to assume it has any sort of edge here. Nevertheless, it sent a number of exploratory teams through, and ran a set of cliodynamic and geopolitical analyses while also analyzing Homeline's position and actions.

While it certainly won't be ignoring this timeline, Centrum isn't as sanguine about it as Infinity assumes. An English-speaking, technocratic potential world-empire is indeed nice, but the aristocratic hegemony and pointless rivalries remind Interworld all too much of their own history before the Final War. The crazy unwillingness to put any sort of brake on Progress and the obsession with dynamic competition makes the place look like Homeline at its most annoying. The decision-making committees are still deliberating, but given the Infinity home-turf advantage on Quantum 6, the most likely decision is to stick to cautious long-term infiltration while trying to get a handle on the local politics – and also to run the odd spoiler action against identified Infinity

operations, of course. In fact, *both* sides might take actions to prevent the timeline stumbling toward global war, and they may end up tripping over each other in the process.

Still, Centrum is often at its most dangerous when its agents are being slow and cautious. Once they have a proper grasp of the situation, or if some unusually brash, ambitious Grade 6 gets hold of the file, they may switch to an aggressive, systematic campaign of subversion and manipulation, backing some carefully selected aristocratic faction against all others. Well-placed technological "gifts" could quickly give such cat's-paws a radical advantage; how soon Infinity would spot the manipulation amidst all the weird local techno-politics may be largely a matter of luck. And yes, Centrum *might* just be clever enough to learn some German and start exploiting Prussia (see p. 9).

Centrum currently classifies Britannica-6 as a Zone Orange world. This may be reduced to Zone Yellow if analysts decide local physics isn't up to comprehending parachronic science, but the place does look rather weird and unstable, so the responsible analysts are currently inclined to err on the side of caution.

The Cabal

If Infinity slightly overestimates the threat from Centrum on this timeline, it significantly underestimates the potential for trouble caused by one of its other competitors – the Cabal.

Infinity has correctly assessed the local mana level on Britannica-6 as none, with just a few low-mana areas. That, they assume, gives it minimal interest in the eyes of a bunch of power-hungry wizards. What they don't appreciate is that Cabalists can work quite comfortably with low mana, exploiting their exceptional grasp of the technicalities of magic to accomplish useful, reliable results in those conditions. Indeed, many Cabalists *like* low-mana zones; there's less competition from sloppy, undisciplined local independent wizards or magical entities, and any who do show up can usually be briskly and ruthlessly suppressed. These zones aren't large on Britannica-6, but even that may be correctible.

While few of them would admit it, the Cabal, like Centrum, is paying attention to Britannica in the wake of reports of the Infinity discovery. They claim amongst themselves that they knew about it all along. What this actually means is some long-ago Wheel of Ptah researchers discovered one or two unstable nexus portals or dimensional highways leading to a whole slew of alternates including this one; mapped them according to some arcane personal theories of higher geometry; placed rambling papers in the Cabalist archives; and promptly forgot about them. No one could muster enough interest in those few useful spots of low mana, even if they were noticed.

But Cabalist cataloguing systems are surprisingly efficient sometimes. After some spies assigned to watch Infinity mentioned the discovery of Britannica-6, those papers were pulled out and dusted off within days, and passed to various people who decided to take another look. The Arcane Masters are damned if they're going to give a bunch of gun-toting mundane-minded buffoons totally free run of any realm that could be exploited for higher purposes – and once Homeline starts regular travel to this line, it should be easy to send the odd agent of influence along, avoiding more complicated routes.

So the Cabal is back on the case; the Wheel of Ptah has examined the subject, but mostly it's Amonis Albioni handling things. (It likes maps and focuses its actions on Britain. It's also skilled at infiltrating real demonic cults, which should make the play-actors of Britannica's Hellfire Clubs easy prey.) Several Cabalists are reviewing the mystical facts on the ground with interest, as some broadminded theoreticians admit any realm with bizarre local technology may have some kind of improperly comprehended magical potential.

They're also assessing the mundane politics of the world with a view to infiltration; they like to have a few hooks into any power structure, even if magic isn't involved. In this case, it helps that many Cabalist leaders have an easier understanding of elitist, aristocratic, and monarchical systems of government than they do of anything as "decadent and hollow" as democracy. Britannica still fits with these ideas pleasingly well, a few democratic forms notwithstanding. In short, the local high society should be eminently easy to infiltrate and manipulate, even without the chance for direct magical action.

Their first concern, though, is to gain control of low-mana sites. Unfortunately, some of these may coincide with nexus portals, which Infinity seeks to locate and wants to monitor closely. Conflict is inevitable. Some Cabalists look to employ techniques like sacred architecture to expand the areas of usable mana; the problem with this is that they're obliged to ask for help from the real experts – the Sons of Imhotep. And when the Sons become involved, things are bound to turn unpleasant.

Others

So far, Infinity doesn't know of any other out-time factions operating on Britannica-6, although they're always preparing for the possibility of something – anything – showing up. They're aware that by publicly announcing the discovery of a timeline, they draw other people's attention to it – but even setting that aside, a law of natural perversity seems to apply to their work. Some paradimensional physicists theorize that initial travel to a timeline somehow facilitates other access attempts, but most agents would rather not think routine conveyor use "weakens the walls between worlds"; they prefer to talk about the malice of the inanimate. And, come to that, of the animate.

Swagmen

Almost as soon as Britannica-6 was located, a crew of swagmen managed to get hold of the coordinates. (The story allegedly involves a poker game and a bottle of brandy from Napoleon's cellars in a backroom in Oxford, or maybe Boston.) The numbers were passed to some friends with pull in the University of Sydney's shiny new crosstime research department, who sent a conveyor through one night to take a look. The team came back with news of a timeline where gambling was practically a global obsession and much of the money was in the hands of a bunch of drunken upper-class Poms. It would, they declared, have been a crime to pass up the opportunity. A bigger team moved down to Australia, made the jump, and set up operations there even before Infinity had arrived on that side of the globe, while associates within White Star began setting up return arrangements in some of the company's subsidiary stations.

The group moved around the gold fields and regional capitals, skimming a little local cash as seed money, but something felt *wrong*. Oh yes, that was it – Australia was still run by the bloody Poms! The local Aussies surely just needed a kick in the right place to sort themselves out.

A large and complicated set of cons followed, subtle enough that Infinity took a long time to realize it was an out-time operation. In fact, if the front man hadn't succumbed to temptation and called himself "Edward Kelly," the cover might have held indefinitely. (The real Ned Kelly, being born in 1855, never existed on this alternate.) As it was, by the time they picked up enough data on the new political movement in the colonies, there was damn-all that Infinity could do to stop the game; they did manage to stir up trouble for the swagmen camps in the aftermath, shutting down the Sydney loophole.

In any case, swagmen are now dropping in and out of race meetings, parties, and mining camps on every continent on Britannica-6, and Infinity is still trailing (and yelling a lot at White Star's security team). Given that a typical swagman operation fits with the atmosphere of the timeline pretty closely, Infinity isn't sure this rates as a high priority – and they can't tell a swagman game from something entirely native to the timeline. They have closed down a couple of high-profile groups, and made it clear anything too out of place – or likely to endanger the Secret – will adjust their priorities. Patrol politics or an especially offended Homeliner with influence could also change things at any time.

Meanwhile, individual cons have attracted significant attention from local lawmen and the press, making things a little hot for the perpetrators. The swagmen are now split between those who want to take a maximum profit while they still have a relatively free hand, and those who want to play it safe and keep Britannica-6 hospitable for as long as possible.

Other Homeline Criminals

As the swagmen have demonstrated, Britannica-6 is a profitable place for a crook with the edge out-time origins provide; it's safe to assume other freelancers are going to jump in once they get the chance. Scavengers and looters are especially likely to prosper; local security technology is too good for thieves in search of easy pickings, and the prospects for timenappers are limited. Still, given the slightly disorganized state of Britannica-6 law enforcement, there are tempting targets for all kinds of criminal.

Out-timer organized crime lacks an obvious "handle" on Britannica, especially given the quantum level difference, but close inspection would find potential allies. The Triads have the best chance, if they can arrange reliable crosstime transport (perhaps using world-jumpers or a misappropriated Chinese government projector). Negotiations with their local counterparts would be complicated, given different histories, but a shared cultural background and the chance of fat profits would surely count for plenty. The lawlessness of parts of China on Britannica-6 could provide cover for almost anything.

One thing Infinity is already watching out for is the use of Britannica-6 as a source of new recreational drugs. The local pharmaceutical industry is dynamic and diverse, and laws are relaxed regarding use of its products. Both individual and organized criminals may find a way to exploit this situation.

Reich-5

The risk of a crosstime Nazi incursion should logically be low, given that Britannica is on Quantum 6 and Reich-5 is on Quantum 3, but the erratic weirdness of the travel methods used by Raven Division makes them dangerously unpredictable. For one thing, their techniques malfunction often enough that their agents can show up on *any* timeline by accident. For another, the Nazis actively investigate and exploit any hint of a functional nexus portal or dimensional highway – and those don't always respect quantum level differences.

Most likely, if Reich-5 agents did begin operating on Britannica, they'd look to ally with or influence Prussia, which shares their language and general cultural background. The Prussians would be interested enough in anything that gives them an edge over Britain that they might not look too closely at these new allies. (The mystical high-tech Nazis have ideas that would make even a 19th-century Prussian militarist blanch.) They might limit themselves to plundering local science and technology, and perhaps setting up exploitation operations in some colonial backwater, especially if their access to the alternate was limited. Local investigators would simply mistake such activities for a Prussian operation.

Chapter Four
Characters

It is commonly observed, among the Quality, that ladies of a certain age have a great soft spot for the army. Soldierly gallantry always passes well with those no longer able to provoke male attentions at a whim, and in any case, aging eyes settle happily on well-cut uniforms. But Lady Geraldine Dutroix was generally considered immune to this particular weakness of her sex, and Captain Alfred Jessop was not given to excesses of panache.

Nonetheless, on a certain evening in the July of 18__, in a reception at the French embassy in London, Lady Geraldine went to some trouble to attract the Captain's attention and to speak with him quietly. That the Captain paid her some close attention might be ascribed to his eccentricity, which had been the talk of several messes in the past.

"Freddy," said Lady Geraldine, "that young fellow over there, lurking by the pillar and not wanting to be noticed much. D'ye know much about him?"

"Not especially," said the Captain, not seeming to have looked at all. "New in town. Been serving in India, it's said. Not much in with any of the other Indian off'cers, now you mention it, but I think I've seen him a couple of times at the review parades. Pays a fair measure of attention to the aerostats and the new iron cavalry. No great sportsman, but rides passable."

"And to which regiment does his uniform belong?"

"D'ye know, I'd have to look that up? One of the Company up-country lot, I'd assume. It is a little odd, though, isn't it? Now you mention it. D'ye think I should be lookin' at him?"

"My dear Freddy, that's not for me to say. I'm just a foolish old widow, and you, I understand, are involved with maps and buoys, or something equally important."

"Hardly, dear lady. Bells, Charts, and Buoys is a Navy office. Still, if he's caught your curiosity, I'll see what might be learned 'bout the fellow . . ."

Games set entirely or partly on Britannica-6 require their own style of PCs, and probably the odd fully detailed NPC. This chapter looks at what this entails.

The World Conditions

Characters are defined partly in terms of the world in which they operate, so we start with some game-mechanical information about this timeline.

Tech Level

Britannica-6 is TL(5+2), reflecting runaway successes in scientific and technological development – but applied (with downright insane enthusiasm) on a fairly limited scale, and often accessible only by the rich or lucky. Hence, skills and devices from earlier TLs are commonplace, and less wealthy characters can easily have the Low TL disadvantage, especially if they come from backwoods areas.

Technological divergence occurred not long after the historical divergence, around 1820. In principle, that's mid-TL5, but significant TL5 developments appeared after that date on Homeline. Homeliners with TL5 technical skills may not find much opportunity to use what they know while visiting Britannica-6, or they may run across outdated but functional steam engines in poorer parts of the world. What's more common is use of TL5 skills for prosaic but widespread and socially important purposes such as farming or freight handling; even in wealthy, advanced areas, these may not have gone beyond TL(5+1).

Likewise, while some sciences and branches of engineering are progressive, less glamorous or prestigious subjects that don't attract aristocratic sponsorship lag behind; for example, Astronomy is still at TL(5+1). TL-based military skills have definitely advanced to TL(5+2) in Western nations, which happily pour money into spectacular, intimidating devices – but even some of their colonial and second-line forces still use a lot of older equipment, and many less advanced nations are still at TL5. This isn't necessarily a great disadvantage, given the cost and unreliability of much of the high-tech gear, but professional fighters may wish to train at a range of tech levels in case they're forced to use whatever comes to hand.

Cultural Familiarity

Following the rules on p. 173 of ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***, Britannica-6 has its own versions of a range of commonplace Cultural Familiarities. Western is the most widespread, Orthodox applies in Russia and various satellite states, and Islamic, Chinese, Japanese, and any number of minor local cultures all remain functional in appropriate geographic regions. There is a -1 unfamiliarity modifier for visitors who only know a culture from Homeline – they're going three tech levels back and then two forward down a different path, and the place frankly has a lot of strangeness in the detail. Infinity or White Star staff stationed here in the long term do well to purchase local Cultural Familiarities (i.e., to acquaint themselves with a long list of minor peculiarities), to avoid persistent minor problems.

Clothing Styles

Like Victorian garb in our own history, Western styles of dress on Britannica-6 have evolved from those of the Georgian-Napoleonic period and still bear recognizable points of similarity to those sources – but the exact paths developments have taken are often markedly different. On the one hand, local styles are closer to their Georgian roots than any 1880s fashions from our own past; on the other, advanced materials technologies and a society with a taste for flamboyance have produced some radical oddities.

The Georgian resemblance is perhaps most noticeable in male attire, which still tends to high-collared jackets, breeches, and cravats, albeit all looser than Regency dandies favored; any fashion for male tights was distinctly short-lived. A variety of hats are popular; fashionable gentlemen pay close attention to the precise style that's "in," and many of the forms these hats take look odd to Homeliners. The *divergence* from Homeline's 19th century is most noticeable in female garb, which would shock any respectable Homeline Victorian; not only have the crinoline and bustle never been invented, it's considered perfectly respectable for a woman to show some ankle and even calf. In fact, thanks to the influence of Indian styles, stylish or daring women may show a flash of midriff in warm weather. (Thus corsets are rare, though expensive female dress may be rigidly structured in other places.) High-fashion or showy dresses are asymmetric in some way; for example, a skirt may brush the ground on one side and rise almost to the knee on the other. Fashionable ladies wear amazing hats for big events, but most get by with a simple cap most of the time.

Both male and female clothes make full use of the synthetic fabrics and colorful dyes out of the timeline's advanced chemical industries. The results are certainly dramatic – the idea that respectable folk wear plain colors is long forgotten, "white tie and tails" never caught on, and jackets and coats may be outrageously patterned. Female evening wear can be downright painful on the eyes. The heavy use of basic synthetic fabrics makes many outfits sweaty and itchy by Homeline standards, but fashionable locals consider this a small price to pay for looking good and *modern*; indeed, "static cling" is actively encouraged as a way to show off the wearer's figure (much as daring Georgian ladies would dampen their chemises for revealing effect).

All of this primarily applies to rich fashion plates, of course, but a taste for showy dress spreads to every class because synthetic fabrics make it cheap, and the fashion industry is quite powerful on Britannica-6. Some old-fashioned people grumble at such things, but even they are probably dressed in crimson-dyed linen over bright yellow shirts or chemises, male hats no more than six inches high, and female skirts rising just above the ankle.

Social Status

Status remains very important in Britannica-6 Western culture; any claims about this being a more egalitarian society than its predecessors just mean that high Wealth and Rank *do* grant bonuses to Status, and even then, a European character is unlikely to qualify for Status above 2 without a knighthood, noble title, or high Rank. Status 4+ really demands a title (or, at a pinch, a ministerial role in government or high military command). In most of Europe and its empires, a sufficiently rich man who *wants* a title can usually acquire one, and high-ranking military officers receive at least a knighthood, on retirement if not before. "Bloods" are at least 5+; many people would say truly qualifying as a Blood (rather than as a poseur or hanger-on) requires Status 6. The King of Great Britain was declared "Emperor of the British Dominions and Colonies" some years ago, giving him a formal title to go with his undeniable *de facto* Status 8; deciding exactly which other monarchs qualify for the same Status in game terms might be an interesting exercise in hair-splitting and protocol.

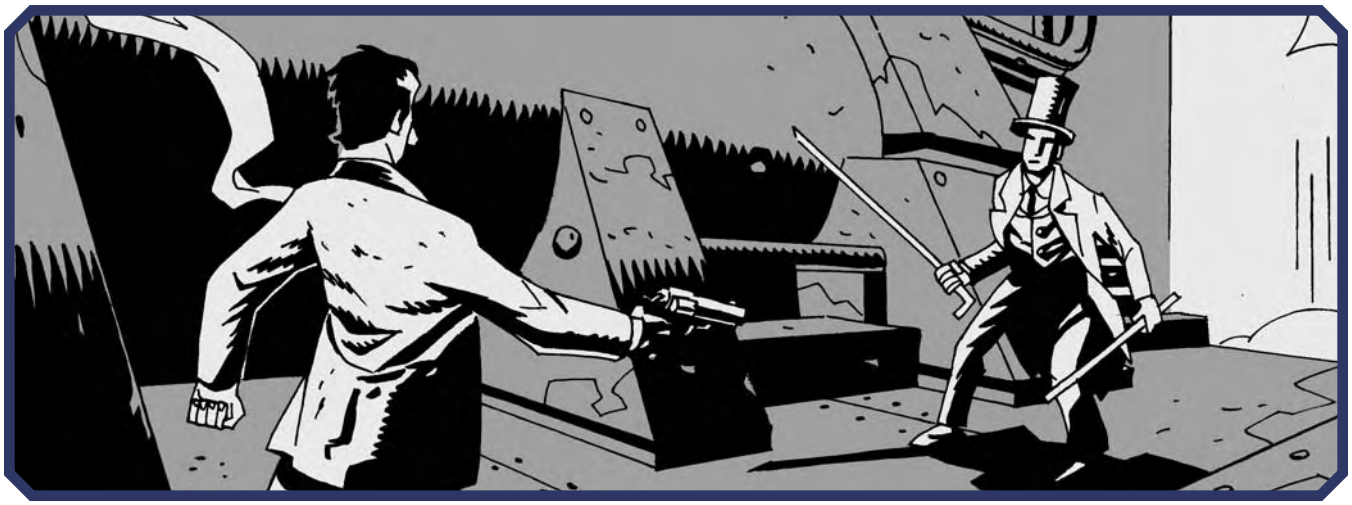
At the other end of the scale, it's worth noting there are many unskilled factory hands and farm laborers with negative Status. Even in wealthy countries they may outnumber those with Status 0, although increasing wealth levels are shifting the balance.

New England and the United States are closer to being classless meritocracies (p. B28). Titles aren't awarded or required (although a European visitor with a fancy title receives some gawping respect), and local characters can't buy more than two or three levels of Status directly, deriving any more from wealth and Rank. Most American citizens are Status 0; negative Status is limited to the distinctly indigent.

Typical Status levels are as follows:

Status	*Typical Position*
8	Emperor, pope
7	King, archduke
6	Royal family, duke, president of a major nation
5	Marquis, earl, prime minister, American state governor, archbishop
4	Viscount, baron, minister, senator, bishop
3	Knight, baronet, judge, member of parliament, congressman
2	Barrister, company owner, consultant surgeon, canon, town mayor
1	Professional (solicitor, doctor, priest), wealthy tradesman, large farmer
0	Small shopkeeper, independent peasant farmer, journeyman
-1	Unskilled laborer, Rank 0 soldier or sailor
-2	Beggar, rag-picker

Use the standard ***Basic Set*** rules for cost of living at each Status level (p. B265).



Control Ratings

A typical Control Rating in western Europe on Britannica-6 is 3, falling to 2 for those members of the upper classes who traditionally know the rules don't apply to them. Even at a grand society ball, though, only a serving soldier in uniform would get away with wearing even just a sword, and he'd be expected to put it aside somewhere safe for the evening. Personal duels are out of fashion unless they involve huge war machines, and impromptu duels are likely to get everyone involved arrested, at least until they calm down. Passions do run hot at times, and conflicts may be resolved by violent confrontation in some quiet spot; the upper classes may resort to pistols, while tough members of the lower orders are assumed to be quick with their fists. Conversely, in rigidly controlled or militaristic societies such as Prussia or Russia, the Control Rating can rise as high as 5, but swords and even pistols are accepted as integral to the ever-popular military uniforms, and dueling may still be tolerated and admired.

The United States and New England still have the atmosphere of armed frontier societies, making them CR2 unless one has the bad taste to be, say, non-white in the United States. Europeans pretty much expect Americans of both kinds to go armed even when they visit Europe, to the irritation of countless peaceable New Englander travelers. Still, with so many guns around in an aggressive, unsettled society, many a feud ends up being settled violently, especially out in the West. The "frontier principle" also applies in many provinces of the European empires, lowering the effective CR: A hunter or pioneer carrying a rifle or pistol barely attracts a second glance in remote towns in Canada or the Claim Stations of Australia, and while personal violence is officially frowned upon, it's hard for the authorities to hear about it from such places.

Equipment Legality

Equipment mostly has its standard listed Control Rating, and a new or unusual high-tech enhancement that makes a weapon deadlier tends to be regarded as stylish and interesting rather than making it less legal. For example, fully automatic personal firearms are rare, but if someone came up with a functional light SMG, it'd be classed like a pistol (LC3 rather than 2). Air guns are seen as military equipment, and treated as such by custom and law rather than being less controlled as in some settings.

Armed vehicles are definitely regarded as "interesting" rather than "scary" by most people, at least until they open fire; in any case, they're operated by the sort of high-Status people who can get away with going armed. Their weapons may have effective legality close to that of personal weapons, rather than being more heavily controlled.

Prejudices

The general atmosphere on Britannica-6 is quite broad-minded for a 19th-century timeline – but there are still a number of possible Social Stigmas for local characters, and many plausible targets for the Intolerance disadvantage.

Foreigners aren't automatically disliked, even if they are visibly members of a different race or religion – but quite a few people have pet hates for specific nationalities. For example, in Britain, Prussians are sometimes seen as dangerous, hostile militarists, and citizens of the United States may be regarded as slavers and long-standing antagonists to various high-minded causes. Exotically foreign male characters, especially members of non-white races, are occasionally assumed to have "too much" interest in European women (and one who lives up to this cliché can quickly get into difficulties). There are also a few marginal subcultures and groups who can qualify for Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) and low Status, including Romanies and Asian dock-laborer groups working in European ports, and the "peasants," "primitives," and urban gutter-rats who suffer from Social Stigma (Uneducated).

Within the dominant Western culture, individuals definitely suffer from Social Stigma (Minor) until age 16 or so, despite many being employed by then (and often for a couple more years if they look young; actually, they may not acquire full independence until they're 21). Women get a fair amount of leeway, but don't have the vote and are often patronized, so one who lacks assertiveness or suffers from overbearing male relatives could have Second-Class Citizen. Family bonds aren't tight enough for Disowned to work as a Stigma, but some members of the upper classes have negative Reputations that include this factor. Likewise, Criminal Record is a good basis for a Reputation, but it only counts as a Stigma if the character is universally notorious for some serious wrongdoing.

Outtime Visitors

Infinity and its associates and competitors have agents in place on Britannica-6, and others occasionally drop in. All groups involved know enough about the society to have some idea what characteristics are useful there, but even so, not everybody assigned there turns out to be perfectly suited to the timeline.

Useful Advantages and Skills

Along with the usual significant advantages for a crosstimer (such as Cultural Adaptability) and skills that are part of the standard training packages or useful to infiltrators (such as Acting), a few specific items can be worthwhile here. Social Chameleon is handy in a society with a keen sense of social position, especially since many aristocrats enjoy mixing with the "lower orders" but appreciate still receiving "proper respect" while doing so. High levels of Savoir-Faire or Diplomacy count for a lot – though, in this setting, Carousing or Gambling seem to achieve as much. TL and familiarity penalties means it still takes visitors with Current Affairs skills a little while to come up to speed upon arriving on any new timeline, though Infinity and White Star are building useful reference databases; it's knowledge worth acquiring, if only because many locals enjoy gossip. Even if anyone possessed it, Weird Science skill is only intermittently useful when analyzing local technology; the underlying theories are pretty straightforward, it's just the applications that get bizarre. However, the skill can help understand some of the theories generated by local natural philosophers.

Dangerous Problems

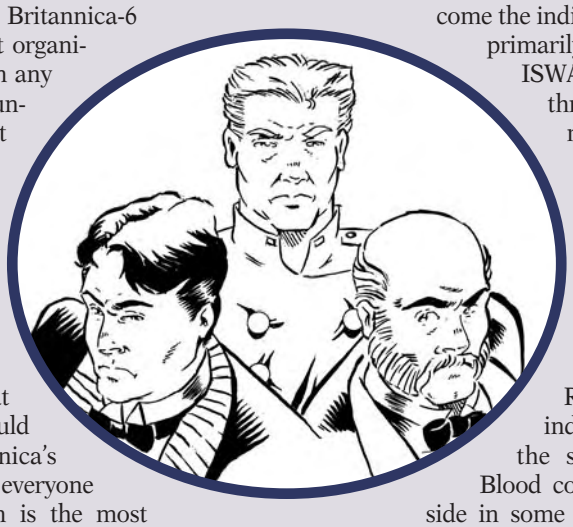
As a reasonably high-tech timeline with some competent medicine, this isn't the worst world on which to suffer from physical disadvantages. For example, someone with correctable Bad Sight can acquire serviceable replacement glasses within a few days in most towns, although contact lenses haven't been invented. The local glass-making industry can produce something tough, but it *is* still glass, nothing safer, which should worry anyone who gets into fights. The Infinity Patrol still won't accept field agents with anything *too* limiting for duties here.

Social disadvantages don't prevent serving Britannica duty either, so long as they're minor. They aren't any more likely to get someone killed here than on most timelines, but groups assigned to infiltrate high society, with its unpredictable taste for formality and keen awareness of reputation and relative position, should mind their manners. Any agent known for obnoxiousness is ruled out for such tasks.

Finally, addictive personalities have problems with postings to this timeline; anyone suffering from Alcoholism or Compulsive Gambling is presented with a *lot* of temptations – and the locals may take offence at someone who backs away from such offers!

ISWAT Recruitment

One possibility in games involving Homeline's elite, ultra-secret ISWAT teams, is that Britannica-6 natives might be recruited to that organization. That could in theory mean any highly competent individual encountered on the timeline – but most likely it's a professional adventurer whose skills and areas of interest derive from the world's nature.



It would mean someone flamboyant, with a taste for gadgets and at least a little talent for using them. The word "swashbuckling" would apply, but that doesn't mean the character would focus on swordplay; in Britannica's technologically-oriented society, everyone understands a skilled marksman is the most dangerous sort of fighter. Such an ISWAT recruit might have a background as a secret agent, freelance adventurer, or colonial soldier. Another strong possibility is some kind of adventurous gadgeteer-engineer, keen to apply his inventions and ingenuity to any problem he encounters.

Of course, any ISWAT recruitment pitch has to overcome the individual's former loyalties; he must primarily serve the interests of Homeline. ISWAT is concerned with suppressing threats to humanity or the whole multiverse, but all else aside, the recruit must be prepared to keep the Secret, even from old friends, loved ones, colleagues, and leaders – and the Infinity Council must believe he'll stick to this. Britannica-6 is a world in which patriotism and personal loyalty still mean a lot. Recruitment might work best with individuals who've been betrayed in the self-indulgent back-stabbing of Blood competition, or left on the losing side in some miniature colonial or civil war, making them cynical about the empire they once served or the land they loved and in need of a new, higher cause. They could be supreme idealists who see automatically, once they've been introduced to Infinity's reality, that there are causes beyond their single world.

Natives of Britannica-6

Native PCs can be a varied bunch, from a range of cultures, social levels, and occupations – and the idea of such a mixture working together isn't *too* implausible or outrageous by local standards. However, note that society is stratified and rigid enough that characters with higher Status are expected to take charge, and Europeans tend to lord it over anyone from other lands.

Adventuring Types

Many character types are possible in this setting, and quite a few are suitable as adventurers while others may just become entangled in events.

Engineers: The people who build the weird technology of Britannica-6 are more than backroom geeks. Combining the motivation to outdo each other with the persuasiveness to find sponsors, they embody the spirit of the age. In addition to a wide range of technical skills, they can use Current Affairs, Merchant, Savoir-Faire (High Society or Servant), and all too often, Fast-Talk.

Explorers: Many parts of the world are still being opened up to Western natural philosophy – and a mix of curiosity, daring for its own sake, research into naturally-occurring pharmaceuticals, and religious missionary impulses drive this movement hard. An explorer might have at least one crucial, motivating disadvantage, such as Curious or Fanaticism (Religion). The skills for this vocation include Area Knowledge, Guns, Navigation, and Survival; other options reflect motives (Clerical Investment; Cartography, Geography, Pharmacy), means of travel (Animal Handling, Hiking, Riding, vehicle skills), and other possibilities (Leadership, Naturalist, Public Speaking, Smuggling, Tracking).

Nobles: The old aristocracy are still at the top of society in this alternate, albeit filling out their numbers from the ranks of politics and business from time to time; what's important here is that they're expected to justify their position through demonstrations of daring, style, and innovation. In addition to Status and Wealth, the nobles have skills such as Carousing, Connoisseur, Gambling, Current Affairs, Leadership, and Riding; shrewd individuals may have Administration, Politics, and Tactics, enabling them to wield their money and station to best effect (though plenty of nobles don't). Eccentric personal hobbies are expected and even admired, so *any* skill can be justified (although a gentleman shouldn't be boring about his interests). Vices include Alcoholism, Compulsive Behavior, or Lecherousness. *Bloods* are a special case among the British upper classes – they're young rakes with royal lineage, high Status, and probably a wide network of Allies and Contacts, engaged in continuous prestige games with rule of the Empire at stake.

Philosophers: The term "science" isn't widely used on Britannica-6; the older "natural philosophy" remains the standard name for a field. Professionals, especially curious polymaths with a talent for getting sponsorship from the upper classes, are called simply "philosophers" and may turn up as consultants, researchers, and showpiece decorations for aristocratic houses. In addition to the obvious intellectual skills and disadvantages (such as Curious), a modest, positive Status, Teaching skill, and a professional Code of Honor are all likely.

Radicals: Not everyone on Britannica-6 believes the cozy Whig consensus goes far enough. A few hotheads say politicians throughout Europe have stolen dignified ideals of reform and liberty and twisted them into dubious slogans and hollow promises of change, thereby replacing old, stubborn autocracy with a bright new mechanized tyranny. The radical tradition is alive, from Luddites smashing new machines to decadent, fearless poets denouncing the enemies of freedom – and still frightening the rulers. Not all have Fanaticism, but many do! Radical adventurers might be rabble-rousers with Public Speaking, Streetwise, and probably Brawling and Tactics; ideologues, with skills such as Economics, Philosophy, Poetry, Propaganda, and Writing; or skilled politicians, working to reform the system from within using Politics, Public Speaking, and a network of connections and Favors.

Royal Agents: In a competitive society barely held together by convention, habit, and fragile laws, wherein both democratic politicians and hereditary aristocrats spend most of their time in fierce contests and never think about the greater good, a few stalwart individuals do what's necessary to keep the world turning. Some draw explicit support from (and owe a serious Duty to) the very highest levels of society. (Admittedly, those supporters are the people with the most to lose, whose idea of the public good may be a trifle selfish – but a loyal agent follows his judgment rather than his orders only in *extreme* cases.) In addition to high levels of Will and all-around good attributes, an effective agent of the Crown should combine combat skills, the ability to operate a range of vehicles and other advanced devices, and enough Intelligence Analysis, Observation, and Stealth to assess a situation in detail before he acts.

Servants: If action and adventure attracts the wealthy and the upper classes, somebody still has to do their washing and see off a lot of problems that are beneath the rich folks' notice. The function of a "stoker" (see p. 48) is especially important. Servants are probably employed by other, higher-Status PCs, and may owe them a Duty or Sense of Duty; games generally go smoothest if the "master" heroes grant the "servants" respect and some leeway to use their own skills, but a little intra-party squabbling may be amusing. With less need for Status, Wealth, and "prestige skills," servant characters can afford good attributes and a range of practical skills; some may be ex-soldiers, others may simply be tough and strong, and still others may be quick-witted and clever talkers.

Sir Adrian Carter-Sandlebury (150 points)

Sir Adrian, a minor land-owner, cousin of the Duchess of Kent, and all-around sporting fellow and good company, is a typical if fairly capable member of the Britannica-6 gentry, potentially suitable for use as a PC or as an NPC encounter. (The Ally advantage should be removed from his character sheet if he's used as an NPC.) His upbringing and personality reflect his class, although he's been lucky enough to acquire the services of a dedicated and exceptionally smart steward, who ensures his family estates in Sussex and various business investments bring a sufficient income to support his enthusiasms and bets. The GM may assume "country landowner" is his job. His Independent Income means he doesn't have to spend much time on this, and he's guaranteed a return from his estates even if he spends extended periods away from them – although in that case, it'll help if Peter Offstead remains behind to look after things.

Sir Adrian also has an old school friend, Alfred Jessop, who opted for a military career and is now involved in some vaguely defined area of military intelligence. Jessop sometimes stumbles across threats to the Crown that can't conveniently be handled by official means; on occasion, he calls upon Sir Adrian or other pals to lend a hand. Sir Adrian, having been brought up with an old-fashioned sense of patriotic enthusiasm, willingly pitches in, despite being under no formal obligation. He also has to fend off periodic attempts to discomfort him by some cads from Portsmouth whom he once outwitted, as well as the usual attempts by female relatives to find him a wife.

Sir Adrian's possessions include a wardrobe of fashionable clothes, good-quality hunting shotguns, a pair of pistols, an army-style rifle, and a speedy phaeton of the latest design (see p. 47).

ST 12 [20]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 6 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Parry 9 (Boxing); Dodge 9.

Social Background

TL: 5+2 [0]

CF: Britannica-6 Western [0].

Languages: Britannica-6 English (Native) [0]; Britannica-6 French (Broken/Accented) [3]; Classical Latin (Broken/None) [1].

Advantages

Ally (Peter Offstead, Steward; 75 points, 15 or less) [6]; Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Contact (Captain Alfred Jessop; Intelligence Analysis/TL(5+2)-18; 12 or less; Usually Reliable) [12]; Fearlessness 1 [2]; Fit [5]; Independent Income 4 [4]; Reputation +1 (As a good fellow, in London and southeast England high society; 10 or less) [1]; Status 3 (Baronet; 1 level free from Wealth) [10]; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

Perks: Can always assess the general quality of a motor-carriage correctly with a cursory inspection. [1]

Disadvantages

Chummy [-5]; Code of Honor (Gentleman's) [-10]; Compulsive Gambling (12) [-5]; Enemy (Portsmouth Hellfire Club; Small group of less powerful people, Rivals, 9 or less) [-5]; Impulsiveness (15) [-5]; Overconfidence (15) [-2]; Sense of Duty (King and Country) [-10].

Quirks: Mildly addicted to good German wines; Slightly superstitious – avoids the number 13; Somewhat lazy when King and Country aren't at stake; Strongly dislikes dromedaries; Sucker for redheads. [-5]

Skills

Area Knowledge (London)-11 (IQ) [1]; Boxing-12 (DX) [2]; Carousing-11 (HT) [1]; Connoisseur (Wine)-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Driving/TL(5+2) (Automobile)-13 (DX+1) [4]; Gambling-13 (IQ+2) [8]; Guns/TL(5+1) (Shotgun)-12 (DX) [1]; Guns/TL(5+2) (Pistol)-12 (DX) [1]; Leadership-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Riding (Horse)-11 (DX-1) [1]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-12 (IQ+1) [2].

Soldiers: Organized, high-tech violence is the business of the military on Britannica-6, although a surprising number of war machines are in private hands; still, if someone is wealthy enough to afford such a thing, his personal retinue can rate as a small private army in itself. Conversely, much of the Indian colonial army *technically* consists of mercenaries in the employ of a private company. The divide between colonial forces (who have to fight serious wars against low-tech opponents with older, proven equipment of their own) and the "British Regulars" (with access to the shiny, untested new gear, and the chance to associate with European society when off duty) is significant, but it can be crossed, and careers can encompass both. For an officer with less wealth or fewer connections, active service on the dusty frontier can earn promotions that in turn lead to a place in European society. Weapon skills, Leadership (for NCOs and above), Tactics, Savoir-Faire (Military), and of course Soldier define the character type (although Tactics may be distressingly low among some officers). Cavalry regiments add Riding or vehicle skills, and Mechanic in the junior ranks. Survivors of tough campaigns may know Camouflage, Observation, Stealth, and Survival. Courtesy Rank supports high Status without an accompanying title.

Sportsmen: With gambling so much a part of life in this world, the professional sportsman is the focus of countless hopes and much interest (and remember, the amateur ideal

counts for little in this context). Even if he comes from a humble background and has never mastered many social graces, a successful competitor may be treated well and provisionally accepted into grand households. He can also hope to travel the world, giving exhibitions and engaging in competitions against local champions. Good physical attributes and one or two relevant skills broadly define this character type; a good Appearance can gain one sportsman popularity over equally talented colleagues, while some events allow a little Performance to wring some extra cheers out of the crowd.

Thief-Takers: In the absence of centralized police forces, the tradition of the *thief-taker* has survived and expanded. Combining the roles of private detective, bounty-hunter, and occasionally bodyguard or security consultant, he can be a formidable, capable, versatile individual – although it's possible to make a living in the job with a little natural shrewdness, sharp eyes, and some Brawling skill. Other common skills in the profession include Broadsword (mostly for use with blunt instruments), Criminology, Interrogation, Intimidation, Shadowing, and Streetwise; sophisticated characters can add Forensics or Law, and some undercover specialists have Acting and Disguise. Incidentally, professional NPC thief-takers are likely to appear as occasional adversaries for outtimer agents on Britannica-6; they're a confusingly diverse bunch, and some are worryingly competent.

Wealth Levels

See p. 34 for a description of Status on this timeline. Base starting wealth is $7,500, better than normal for the standard TL5 conditions but lower than normal for TL6; although this timeline has a fair amount of TL7-equivalent technology, it isn't widespread enough to generate the sort of prosperity normally associated with high-TL worlds.

In fact, Wealth varies widely and in important ways on this timeline. As substantial parts of the world (including some rustic parts of Europe and the United States) are barely at TL5, many inhabitants are at Struggling or worse and can't support Status-0 lifestyles; such people are seen as low Status by Western standards. Even in such areas, city-dwellers may qualify for Average Wealth and Status 0. For the well-to-do, family members from leading royal families, highly-placed aristocrats, and wealthy industrialists may be very rich indeed; in fact, some multimillionaires have far more wealth than they need to support the formal Status they've acquired, and live in what's considered vulgar splendor. "Bloods," on the other hand, *usually* have enough money to support their flamboyant lifestyles – but some of them face problems. They and slightly less elevated aristocrats and gentry sometimes resort to traditional solutions such as marrying for money.

Advantages and Perks

Britannica-born player characters can justify most mundane advantages, but one or two merit special discussion.

Allies, Signature Gear: Among other things, either of these can be used to represent the unique vehicles and gadgets possessed by powerful individuals on Britannica-6 who've sponsored or otherwise acquired some singular invention. Using exotic advantages with gadget limitations isn't usually appropriate, but might work on occasion.

Gadgeteer: Although this timeline features a lot of inventive technology, the standard Gadgeteer advantage should only be available in "Vernean" or cinematic games, and Quick Gadgeteer should be limited to fully cinematic characters, if permitted at all.

Legal Enforcement Powers are available to watchmen, constables, Bow Street Runners, military officers assigned to public order duties in Prussia, and so on. Local watchmen are restricted to the 5-point version. A few professionals in the employ of high-ranking magistrates, governors, or the governments of authoritarian states, including U.S. and New England Marshals, have 10-point Powers. Enforcers' jurisdiction is usually geographically limited, so 15-point Powers are limited to special "agents of the Crown" in various nations.

Patrons: Britannica-6 society is old-fashioned in various respects; among other things, anyone of lower social class who seeks to make his way in the world is well advised to find some kind of patron or sponsor – though this isn't mandatory. The favor of powerful figures is sought by many people, so this is a fairly common advantage. As usual, it's likely to come with an associated Duty.

Disadvantages and Quirks

Again, some world-specific notes:

Addiction: The highly active pharmaceutical industry on Britannica-6 has identified a number of *interesting* substances, although few have been refined enough to make them totally or even highly addictive. Most are legal, and in many places; such habits are regarded as private vices rather than matters of broad social concern.

Alcoholism: This is tragically widespread, although the great age of gin addiction is past. Many people expect their fellows to demonstrate the ability to consume their share of liquor.

Bully: While this is despised as much here as elsewhere, it seems to be something of a favored hobby in the upper classes at times.

Compulsive Behavior: Carousing, Gambling, and Spending are almost matters of prestige in parts of Britannica-6 society.

Duty: Duties can be owed to patrons, armed forces, etc.; high-Status officers often manage to get out of tiresome, routine duties in peacetime (giving the disadvantage a low frequency of occurrence), although doing so in wartime would be noticed and lead to a bad Reputation.

Selfish: This defines many Bloods.

Social Disease: This is a class of problem even Britannica's TL(5+2) medicine can't always solve.

And finally, this setting-specific disadvantage occurs in a few forms (familiar and new):

Code of Honor

p. B127

Some gentlemen endeavor to live by the Gentleman's Code, which is all very respectable – but most of their contemporaries actually regard these individuals as stiff-necked and impractical. The Soldier's Code is much more common, but among military men, of course. Meanwhile, some rough and ready fellows among the gentry actually live by the Pirate's Code, as do some street ruffians and the like. And another variant is common in Britannica-6 high society, especially in Britain and France:

Code of Honor ("Plunger's"): Never break your sworn word to an equal or social superior. Gambling debts are a matter of high honor (although debts to mere tradesmen are trivial and unworthy of concern); you can request more time to pay, but someone who holds your note is entitled to enforce it as he chooses. Never ignore an insult to yourself, a female relative, or a lady to whom you have promised loyalty. You should respond to any foreigner's insult to your nation, crown, or flag. (Gossip about royalty and complaints about the government are a fellow's birthright, but only if one was born here!) Offenses from social inferiors can be dealt with by a whipping, usually administered by your servants. Insults from social equals can be wiped out by a duel, but that's tiresomely illegal these days, dangerous, and maybe even excessive, so you may choose an alternative: humiliating the offender in the most inventive way you can come up with, or otherwise getting your own back in a public, satisfying fashion. If you should be caught out in some matter of high integrity, such as cowardice; public bankruptcy while owing gambling debts; or embezzling regimental funds, you may have to wipe out the stain by disappearing forever from society. This may entail volunteering for suicidal duties in some sordid colonial war, or even actual suicide (the classic library, bottle of whisky, and pistol routine), so it's usually wisest not to indulge in such activities in the first place. *-5 points*.

Note that, although only a minority of high-Status characters actually have fully functioning Codes of Honor, such things are *supposed* to be the norm; a Reputation for lacking honor can easily be worth -3 or worse. Many high-Status people at least have "gentlemanly" behavior as a quirk.

Skills

Technological skills can be learned on Britannica up to TL(5+2). Keep in mind not everyone and not every device is that sophisticated; plenty of folks get by perfectly well with TL5 and TL(5+1) skills, and things like Farming/TL(5+2) is limited to a few eccentric aristocrat-landowners and their servants. (GMs should be careful about permitting PCs to take a lower personal TL as a disadvantage; in many campaigns, this won't be particularly limiting.) Scientific research does operate at or near TL(5+2), and most ***GURPS*** science skills are available in the setting in some form, so philosopher PCs *would* be crippled by this disadvantage – but note that "abstract" or "pure" science isn't really as advanced here as in Homeline's TL7. For example, nuclear physics is barely getting underway as a subject, the transistor hasn't been invented, and the understanding of genetics is mostly a matter of intuitive assessments and simple statistics; DNA remains undiscovered, but biologists have deduced that some such agent must be present in living things. Most local computers are limited to specialized electrical valve devices; the skills to build and use them are known by only a few engineers in specialist workshops, and "operation" mostly consists of throwing a switch or two and adjusting a dial. However, some more general-purpose machines may be under development. Weapon and vehicle skills are available for a wide range of TLs and specialties, and familiarity can be a problem as every leader and army seems to have not only a different idea what is good equipment, but also the budget to acquire new designs. If the adventurers are going to use whatever comes to hand, GMs may choose to apply unfamiliarity penalties relatively lightly.

Unarmed combat skills are mostly limited to Brawling, Boxing, and Wrestling among Westerners – there's never been any great interest in oriental unarmed styles – but a few hobbyists study old or exotic arts, including Judo or Karate techniques.

Wildcard Skills (p. B175) may be appropriate for local characters, especially in "Vernean" or cinematic modes (p. 11). Incredibly capable engineers and omnicompetent philosophers are part of the style, and the sheer range of weapons and vehicles available makes extreme versatility a desirable trait in local adventurers.

Magic and Psionics

Infinity has Britannica-6 provisionally classified as a no-mana world – with a certain sense of relief, as that's one less wildly unpredictable thing to worry about. However, its testing methods are severely limited, and it still hasn't surveyed this world in much detail; patrolmen may yet be in for some paranormal surprises. See the sample adventure, pp. 57-64 for more on this. Psionics and similar abilities are mostly regarded as myths, so agents who possess them have a definite edge, but they should be *very* careful about using them too flagrantly.

While some locals might respond to the sight of paranormal activity by assuming these are conjuring tricks, their senses are deceiving them, or they're going mad, some are broadminded to the point of eccentricity, and curious into the bargain. If they can't explain an incident, it might become the subject of fireside anecdotes, wild newspaper stories – or investigation by shrewd freelance natural philosophers. If they learn or suspect much, locals resort to terminology such as "mesmerism" or "animal magnetism," and formulate theories not so far from Homeline ideas about psionics; most educated natives of Britannica like to think of themselves as rationalists and materialists, and find words like "magic" annoying in this context. However, conventional religion remains influential; careless visiting psis aren't going to get themselves burned as witches, but there's a chance to find themselves being exorcised.

Chapter Five
Technology

"Quite a view up here, innit, guv'ner? You can see all o' London, if the bally fogs'd just lift. They say they can dock a dozen aerostats at a time, and telegraph signals can reach right darn to the docks at Portsmouth, wi' no relay towers needed."

"Yes. Very impressive." Samuel Culpepper's customer looked a little queasy as the tower rocked gently in the breeze, and Samuel risked a speculative glance at the fellow's face. He made it a principle never to ask too many questions, but he really wished that he could place this one's accent. The man tried to hide it, but he was – what? American, probably, but it'd be nice to be sure. Samuel was patriot enough to double his prices if he was selling to, say, a Prussian.

Ah well. Samuel glanced round to confirm that they were indeed alone – though the choice of meeting place made them quite safe, give the customer credit for cleverness there – and then produced the papers from his hidden pocket. "Here's the goods, guv. All the plans for 'is Grace's noo self-sinkin' boat. All shipshape, if you'll pardon the 'umor."

The man plucked the plans from Samuel's hands, gave them a brief glance, and frowned. "Ridiculous size," he muttered.

"What? Now look 'ere, guv, them plans is kosher . . ."

"Oh, don't worry." The man managed an odd smile, though the tower chose that moment to sway more than usual. "I'm sure that they're fine. It's His Grace's naval architects who I wouldn't trust."

Samuel shrugged off the comment, distracted by what he glimpsed in his customer's inner pocket as the fellow reached out a promisingly plump purse. A pistol grip, too small to suggest a really powerful weapon, but sleek and burnished and most conveniently easy to conceal. Samuel wondered if he'd been meant to see that; the customer did seem quite shrewd, for all his odd ways.

"Damn!"

The man's curse broke into Samuel's reverie, and he looked through the observation window to determine what had provoked it. Then he frowned. An approaching aerostat was nothing to remark upon, of course, but this one was coming in a little too high and a little too fast for a normal docking run – and it carried a certain ducal crest.

Coincidence, perhaps, but only a fool would rely on that possibility. Samuel and his customer both bolted for the elevator platform.

Britannica-6 is defined in ***GURPS*** terms as TL(5+2), meaning technology somewhat comparable to TL7 but diverging substantially from Homeline's development, starting at TL5. In truth, this advanced technology runs rather shallow – not surprising, given the speed with which it developed. Britannica jumped two levels in a period in which Homeline barely moved up one. The new stuff really hasn't had time to spread throughout society, and in any case a lot of it was invented for the amusement of the social elite. Even in Western Europe or New England, many creations considered new and impressive can be classed as TL(5+1) or even late TL5; many other areas are still scrambling up to TL5, and more advanced devices are one-off imports in the hands of the wealthy or their minions. In particular, less glamorous fields such as agriculture haven't progressed much faster than Homeline history. Also, a lot of TL(5+2) technology remains experimental and unreliable. Still, the most sophisticated developments sometimes spill over into unexpected areas, and many out-time visitors are interested in the most advanced items.

This advanced technology uses principles a Homeline scientist understands well enough; it doesn't seem to be exploiting any major variations or relaxations in physical laws on this timeline. This may not be entirely true if the setting is used for cinematic scenarios (see p. 11); gigantic vehicles and mesmeric powers need some strange physical laws in order to stand up.

Weapons and Armor

Britannica-6 is far from being a peaceful timeline, but the most advanced weaponry and military equipment on this world doesn't see much use. There's not much of it around and its main purpose is to look good on parade to impress and frighten the neighbors, whether that means neighboring aristocrats in the same country or adjacent states.

However, even the old-style technology used by remote border forces and in colonial wars can be extremely *diverse*. Every group with a need for weapons seems to have their own ideas about what works best, and can usually find a manufacturer somewhere willing to meet their specifications. This makes the job of quartermasters assigned to keep large forces fully supplied with the correct ammunition a perpetual nightmare. The lack of standardization also raises prices somewhat, though fierce commercial competition sometimes drives them down again.

In game terms, anything listed in the ***Basic Set*** or ***GURPS High-Tech*** as available at TL5 or early TL6 might be used in a Britannica-6 game with a different name and maybe some cosmetic alterations (like slightly different bore sizes); prices are much as listed. Counterparts to late TL6 and TL7 weapons and military equipment are also possible, although the GM should make sure they fit the timeline's general pattern of development (as discussed below), and anything very advanced should be expensive – three times listed cost is likely, and five times is entirely plausible. Completely new designs of comparable sophistication (with inflated prices) can and should also appear!

One benefit from the Infinity Patrol's point of view is that agents sent to Britannica can carry standard-issue Patrol weapons without many difficulties. If they have to use their sidearms, they can pass them off to curious locals as "rather fine little pieces – new designs – from a one-man gunsmith's shop out in the colonies." State-of-the-art Homeline weapons are too sophisticated and strange to pass a Britannica-6 expert who gets to examine them closely, *especially* if they incorporate electronics; agents are strongly discouraged from overusing standard-issue gear in front of career soldiers or gunsmiths!

Guns

All this primarily applies to guns. Advanced Britannica-6 designs can be sophisticated, but still look distinctly clunky to Homeline eyes – though they may be lighter than they appear. (Britannica-6 engineers do love aluminum alloys, while gunsmiths have developed a habit of sacrificing reliability to save weight.)

Britannica-6 armourers have a number of propellants more or less equivalent to Homeline smokeless powder; a few older weapons use black powder. Almost all rounds have conventional brass cases; most sidearm rounds are plain hard lead, with jacketed bullets just beginning to appear. The threat of light armored vehicles led to several experiments with hard-tipped armor-piercing bullets, and what Homeline calls semi-armor-piercing explosive and armor-piercing explosive technology; treat these as equivalent to TL6 quality. A few shooters use something akin to hollow-point ammunition, air guns may fire drug darts or other exotic shot, and one or two users have experimented with poison rounds.

The most common configuration for both pistols and rifles is some kind of revolver mechanism, but traditionalists prefer multi-barrel "pepperbox" pistols while experiments with various odd hopper feeds have led to the appearance of box magazines (and some variant drum types). Curiously, fully automatic weapons remain experimental and rare; purchasers on Britannica-6 seem to prefer one big bang to spraying lots of rounds. This may be partly because the lack of standardization leads many shooters to hand-load their ammunition, or tell a servant to do so, which is easier than trying to find the right stock in a local gunsmith's shop (hand-loading kits are as common, and as ornate, as snuffboxes); firing fewer, larger rounds makes for less work. Within that constraint, a huge range of variant mechanisms can be found; lever and pump-actions are common, and semi-automatic feed is regarded as state-of-the-art. Artillery pieces are single-shot breech loaders, but have sophisticated breech mechanisms. A few rapid-firing weapons have been fitted with liquid cooling systems.

The standard arm for infantry (and for "cavalry" when this effectively means mounted infantry of some kind) is a rifle with fittings for a bayonet; officers carry a huge variety of pistols, reflecting personal tastes, which may be eccentric. Some gunsmiths have come up with the "bullpup" configuration with pistol grip (here known as the "fore stock"), and have convinced a few regiments and minor nations to purchase their designs. Shotguns are seen as a sportsman's or farmer's

weapon, and tend to traditional designs. Some forward-thinking forces have taken to using "bomb guns" – hand-held grenade launchers, in Homeline terms – and even "personal rockets" (rocket-propelled grenades), primarily as anti-vehicle weapons. Both are erratic and unreliable, but they make satisfying explosions and give infantry an answer of sorts to armored vehicles. The result is the emergence of the 18th-century concept of the grenadier (sometimes termed the "rocketeer" on Britannica) – a strong, brave, possibly not intellectually brilliant elite infantryman carrying a heavy weapon. Vehicles carry big, slow-firing guns that do as much damage as possible with each shot; some mount rocket-propelled missiles.

One technology that *has* become distinctly sophisticated on Britannica-6 is air gun design, which continued to develop as a military arm from its occasional use in the Napoleonic period. Models typically use a hand-pumped reservoir of compressed air, and are at best functionally equivalent to TL8 Homeline weapons. Such guns are still unusual, but they do appear in the hands of some troops; with smoothbore barrels fitted, they're also useful for delivering drugged darts and other exotic projectiles.

Example Guns

These are some widespread or interesting local designs.

Crowhurst Desolation Number 2, 2" "bomb" (Great Britain, 1882)

A handheld, breech loading, smoothbore "bomb gun" known throughout British armies as "the mule" because of its horrendous kick, the Desolation is intended to deal with vehicles – as much by blasting away wheels or other vulnerable parts as by punching through heavy armor, though it finds other uses. It's a bulky, stubby shoulder arm with a wooden stock, a primitive but functional muzzle brake, and an ornate integral bipod; with its flimsy barrel and explosive ammunition, it demands a lot of careful maintenance. The values given on the table are for anti-vehicle ammunition, hard-cased rounds designed to penetrate at least light armor before exploding. One alternative is a high-explosive fragmentation shell; add a (0.5) armor multiplier to the initial kinetic damage, and replace the follow-up explosion with a linked 3d+2 cr explosion and [2d+2] fragmentation effect. Other experimental and specialist munitions exist for this weapon. The listed costs are 20% higher than a similar weapon might cost if made on Homeline, as this is a relatively advanced design.

O'Mally Ganges Model 1879, .40 O'Mally (Great Britain/India, 1879)

An excessively heavy long-barreled pistol that's fashionable among certain army officers and favored by U.S. marshals and thief-takers in the most lawless areas, this sidearm has serious stopping power, although it also requires regular maintenance. (Infinity agents who've seen the sample imported by White Star refer to it as the "Britannica Magnum.") A six-shot double-action revolver with alloy components (a futile attempt to keep the weight down), it takes a powerful jacketed bullet and is hard to conceal. The cost is 50% more than a similar firearm on Homeline, thanks to experimental design, unusual materials, and limited production quantities.

"Grey Maggie" Rifle, .50 British (Great Britain, 1868)

The standard issue for regular British army regiments whose colonels haven't been seduced by some pet theory or gunsmith's special offer. Also in use in France and other nations, similar designs are commonplace in America. It's infernally heavy with an appalling kick, and its double-action eight-shot revolver mechanism can be slow to reload – but British infantry preserve their tradition of making every shot count, and its half-inch caliber bullets have some heft. The rugged barrel and mechanism are steel, but the weapon has a number of brushed aluminum details and fittings.

Ranged Weapons Table

See pp. B268-271 for an explanation of the statistics. The first value in the cost column is the price of the weapon unloaded; the second is for a complete reload.

TL	*Weapon*	*Damage*	*Acc*	*Range*	*Weight*	*RoF*	*Shots*	*ST*	*Bulk*	*Rcl*	*Cost*	*LC*
GUNS (GRENADE LAUNCHER) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -4)												
5+2	Crowhurst Desolation Number 2	5d+1 pi++	2	315/2,600	15.9/1.11	1	1(3i)	13B†	-6	6	$450/$1.60	1
follow-up		4d cr ex										
GUNS (PISTOL) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -2)												
5+2	O'Mally Ganges 1879	3d+2 pi+	2	210/2,300	3.8/0.27	3	6(3i)	12	-4	4	$540/$5.85	3
GUNS (RIFLE) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -2)												
5+1	"Grey Maggie" Rifle	6d+1 pi+	3	750/4,700	11.6/1.2	3	8(3i)	11†	-5	5	$630/$10.85	3
5+2	Le Chevalier Cavalry Carbine	5d pi	5	770/3,200	7.2/0.84	3	12(3)	9†	-4	3	$1,570/$63	3
5+2	Meyrink Luftgewehr Modell 1881-bis	2d+1(0.5) pi++	4	50/200	15/0.5	2	15(3i)	9†	-5	1	$1,100/$25	3
follow-up		drug effect										
GUNNER (CANNON) (DX-4 or other Gunner at -4)												
5+2	Perry Vehicular Cannon	6d×8 pi++	5	4,300/12,000	1,030/430	3	20(5)	38	-16	3	$37,600/$5,530	1
follow-up		10d cr ex										

Le Chevalier Cavalry Carbine, 0.333 Anglo-French (Great Britain/France, 1885)

A light rifle in "fore-stock" configuration, used by various types of well-funded mounted and vehicle troops, the Chevalier incorporates a semi-automatic mechanism with detachable 12-shot aluminum box magazine for maximum ease of use. Its reliability is questionable, raising maintenance requirements, but that's what the good funding is for. The listed costs are about 50% higher than a comparable gun on Homeline thanks to advanced technology and low production numbers.

Meyrink Luftgewehr Modell 1881-bis, 15mm Meyrink (Austria, 1882)

Austrian air guns are widely regarded as the best in Europe, and Meyrink air rifles are used by a handful of specialist military units; they're heavy, but effective and nearly silent. This variant has a smoothbore barrel and lower power than some military models, enabling it to fire drugged rounds and other fragile, exotic ammunition. Infinity has a standing order for more of these from White Star; agents in the field usually load them with more sophisticated, less damaging TL8+ drugged darts (1d-2 pi-, $5 per shot) or something even more exotic. Rounds are loaded in a tubular magazine, integral to the gun, that can be fitted with an ingenious system of spacers to take special ammunition such as darts; it has (appropriately enough) a pump action feed. A pressurized cylinder of carbon dioxide, good for 30 shots (albeit -1 to damage on the last five), fits into the shoulder stock; a fresh cylinder weighs 0.25 lb. and costs $20, and recharging a used cylinder costs $5. The listed performance details are for a dart capable of injecting one dose of a drug, but the ammunition cost does *not* include the price of the drug itself. If the drugged rounds are replaced by simple lead slugs, the details change: Damage 2d+1 pi++, Range 80/550, Weight 16/2, Reload Cost $16.

Perry Vehicular Cannon, 2" Manchester (Great Britain, 1875)

Typical of the weapons used as the main armament on heavy war-barouches, and for anti-airship and anti-personnel purposes on numerous watercraft and air vehicles, the Perry incorporates a 20-round drum magazine and what Homeline would term a semi-automatic mechanism, giving it a respectable rate of sustained fire by local standards. Its standard ammunition is designed to explode after penetrating armor, giving it extra effectiveness against vehicles and making satisfying levels of noise on the trial range. Reload time is debatable; manhandling a 430-lb. drum on a cramped or moving vehicle is a task for multiple crewmembers!

Melee Weapons

The usual selection of melee weapons can be encountered on Britannica-6, but in civilized areas where the TL is 5 or higher they see only occasional or informal use; firearms are more effective, and the widespread love of technology means combatants see little dishonor in using guns. Among other things, the pistol has almost entirely replaced the sword as the weapon of choice in duels, where they're allowed at all; fencing has become a formalized hobby-sport. Still, there are "backward" areas where spears and axes rule, many military officers wear swords (at least with dress uniforms), and there are always back-alley knife fights, so any low-tech melee weapon from the ***Basic Set*** tables and the associated skills can be found somewhere on this Earth. A few inventors have tried producing electrified blades or have experimented with unusual materials, but these remain unproductive one-off experiments as yet.

Armor

Body armor isn't widespread here; the basic TL4-7 problem, that damage from guns runs way ahead of the protective ability of any materials light enough to wear for long periods, is as visible here as in other timelines. Armor is mostly limited to parade cuirasses worn by a few cavalry units. Because there hasn't been a major war involving two nations with heavy artillery at the local maximum TL, the problem of head injuries caused by shrapnel from bursting overhead shells hasn't demanded the development of protective helmets as happened at TL6 on Homeline. Steel military helmets of TL6 quality *can* be found, but this usually requires some searching or a special order, and at 50% greater cost.

None of this stops inventors from trying to come up with something useful in the way of body protection, and advances in chemistry and metallurgy offer some possibilities. Military forces aren't interested, but with assassination attempts an occasional danger for the rich and powerful, there's a market for lightweight armor. Anyone wearing such things is seen as eccentric.

Padded Synthetics: While the Britannica chemical industry hasn't come up with anything to match Homeline's TL7+ ballistic cloth, it can produce synthetic fibers that, combined with padding, provide some protection. A light protective vest, concealable under ordinary clothing or passed off as ordinary cold-weather wear, gives DR 2 flexible protection to the torso, weighs 5 lbs., and costs $300.

Britannica Brigandine: For better protection, these same synthetic fibers can be combined with steel or aluminum alloy plates in a style resembling Renaissance brigandine armor. Relatively light, concealable, torso-only protection gives DR 5, weighs 12 lbs, and costs $600. A heavier version, occasionally worn by paranoid European dukes and wealthy mercenary officers, is equal to a TL6 flak jacket (p. B284), but costs around $1,000. The most extensive thing on the market gives DR 7 to the body and arms, weighs 32 lbs., and costs $1,600, but is miserably cumbersome and restrictive (-1 or -2 to any DX-based task the GM feels should suffer).

Automation

Charles Babbage found some adequate funding for his early work on Britannica-6, and although he never achieved overwhelming success, mechanical Babbage engines found a number of specialized applications in the middle of the century. With the development of electrical technology, the basic principle – a programmable machine that performs a range of logical tasks – came into its own, and is widely used in 1887.

However, most electrical "controlling devices" and "analytic engines" are dedicated, built for specific purposes such as generating and printing tables of numerical data, controlling complex weaving looms as they make intricately patterned cloth, keeping vehicles on course, and even guiding air-to-surface glide bombs. They are programmable only insofar as they perform specific tasks according to instructions set up by their operators or are configured by specialist engineers at the factory. Still, the flexibility and versatility of automated systems is growing; large vehicles will probably be equipped with genuinely general-purpose computers within a few years.

In ***GURPS*** terms, few of these systems count as "computers"; the things that best qualify for that name are installed in factories and laboratories and maintained by groups of

specialists. (They're comparable to Homeline TL6 systems, although some are bigger than anything built at that TL.) However, some vehicles have crude electronic controls, and advanced machines have capabilities that demand complex automated supervision. For example, a few legged vehicles have been built – with intricate valve-electronic systems to manage the tricky task of moving the right leg at the correct time while remaining balanced. Most true TL(5+2) air and sea vehicles, and some large land vehicles, have TL6-equivalent basic autopilots, often linked to complicated, bulky, TL7-equivalent inertial navigation systems. Military designs with large guns may have semi-automated, TL6-equivalent fire direction systems.

Power Sources

All of this technology demands power, of course. Steam engines are slightly more advanced in some ways than at the same date in Homeline history, as the most advanced in daily use are quadruple-expansion systems (and some engineers are tinkering with sextuple expansion); however, steam turbines are still strictly workshop experiments. Steam is being superseded by TL6-quality diesel engines – known as "oil-piston" engines in this timeline, where Rudolph Diesel was never born. This type of internal combustion has almost completely taken over as the power source for aerostats, which demand the best possible power-to-weight ratio, and is effectively the universal standard for new road carriages, whose buyers demand ever greater performance. Steam carriages are treated as antiquated jokes. Fuel oil is becoming expensive on this timeline, where the extraction and refining industry is scrambling to catch up with demand. Many deposits remain undiscovered, so coal-fired steam is the power source of preference in countless utilitarian applications including rail travel, larger ships, and static power plants. Meanwhile, dedicated engineers push the best oil-piston motor designs toward parity with Homeline's TL7, and tinker with the types of supercharger that have sent Homeline engineers in search of a well-padded wall . . . but produce results close to our diesel turbocharger. Gasoline engines don't appear to have been invented, although Infinity agents are checking patent office files; they suspect this may have something to do with the quality of available fuels, but it may just be a weirdness of the timeline.

Most energy transmission is handled by straightforward mechanical linkages. Electrical power is known and fairly well understood, but it isn't yet seen as a viable option for many purposes; few cities have electrical distribution networks outside a handful of neighborhoods, and there are no national-level grids. This gives electricity the mystique of something new, exotic, expensive, and *scientific;* having one's house illuminated electrically is seen as the acme of sophistication. Most city-dwellers get by with coal gas for lighting; urban gas supplies are omnipresent in western towns and quite reliable. Even so, many homes are still *heated* by coal or wood fires.

Roads

Roads in even the wealthiest regions of Britannica-6 are almost all amazingly poor quality for such a high-tech world. The reason is, simply, that Brittanica-6 culture values local-level solutions and personal ingenuity above group or government action. When confronted with poor roads, the natural response of an engineer is to make his motor vehicle's suspension better, not to improve the surface. This is inefficient, but it produces some strikingly clever suspension engineering.

In game terms, the only roads that rate as Good terrain (p. B351) in any weather are in major towns and the estates of a few wealthy nobles. (Some dedicated racetracks also qualify). Many turn Bad in wet weather, but only minor roads turn Very Bad. Road-making technology *is* at high TL5 or better, and even Britannica motor-carriages can only handle so much, so there's enough political pressure to keep standards up to some minimum level. Anyone with the Motion Sickness disadvantage is going to hate travel on this timeline.

Transport

All this technology is at the service of a wide variety of vehicle designs, because they're useful and the ruling class likes acquiring new, interesting, and spectacular machines. Vehicles make good "prestige engineering" projects because their special abilities are highly visible and they can move around to show themselves off to people in different locations. Bloods and their imitators love speed, and the military loves power.

Vehicle-Design Rule Considerations

For the ***GURPS Vehicle Designer*** rules, this is a TL(5+2) setting, meaning technology and materials up to TL5 are freely available at the usual cost for their TL, sometimes for less; indeed, many cheap and non-prestigious machines are designed and built effectively at TL5. Where more advanced design features appear, they should be treated as if they're at their TL of first introduction, which isn't greater than 7 except in unusual cases. Features appearing at TL5 or below that improve with TL should be treated as being built to TL6 standards. At the GM's option they can be stuck at TL5, or at least be much cheaper in that form (preserving a certain amount of low-tech brass-and-rivets style), or be advanced to effective TL7 or even 8 when built by solitary genius engineers at vastly increased cost.

Many land vehicles as well as aircraft are built with fine lines even when it isn't really required, as Britannica designers and purchasers love elegant teardrop and cigar shapes. Few have better than fair streamlining; those shapes are more for show than for real effect, and aerodynamic science isn't very advanced.

Aluminum alloys are available for most purposes, especially frames and "armor" (meaning, in practice, the body shells of civilian vehicles; the military still uses TL6-grade steel when it wants serious protection). This costs 50-100% more than the TL6 prices given in ***Vehicle Designer***; aluminum extraction is still a developing industry. Any type of steam engine up to and including quadruple expansion are available at standard cost, along with TL6 diesel engines. Experimental designs may use sextuple-expansion steam, TL7-grade diesel, or diesel superchargers at the GM's whim, but with considerably increased costs. Steam turbines and gasoline engines are unavailable. Likewise, the jet engine remains to be invented and rockets are used only in unmanned weapons (and the occasional insane pilot-killing experiment). Electricity comes from lead-acid batteries or motor-driven generators.

Ground vehicles usually use wheels, but engineers have developed caterpillar tracks, halftracks, skitracks, wheelform propulsion, and even legged propulsion systems, although the last are highly experimental. TL6-quality aerial propellers are available, usually on aerostats. Experiments with ornithopter drivetrains have been unsuccessful so far, and attempts at rotor propulsion are too heavy to fly or too flimsy to survive.

Any vehicle may be fitted with turrets (usually for guns); gripper arms are another experimental possibility. TL6-quality radios can be installed, but these may be larger and less efficient than listed at the GM's option. Radar is a secret military experiment (see p. 52); sonar is unknown. Experimental electronics and mechanical ingenuity permit the construction of simple TL6-quality autopilots.

Armament

Heavy vehicle weapons on Britannica-6 look less exotic to Homeline eyes than the local personal weapons, although rotary cannon are more or less unknown (use something like the Perry Vehicular Cannon, p. 44, instead); the larger breech-loading rifled cannon designs would barely have attracted comment among Homeline dreadnought-era naval gunners. Britannica naval architects are under pressure to fit the biggest guns they can to any given design; on land, the lightest, fastest military vehicles carry small guns, while military aerostats concentrate on freefall and glide bombs with a few guns for close-quarters defense and for show.

Some military rockets are in use; chemists have come up with solid-fuel propellants that enable the construction of TL6-quality unguided subsonic and transonic weapons. Nothing

Motor-Carriage Terminology

The words for both personal and military motor vehicles on Britannica-6 are derived from the jargon for carriages in the Georgian period; there are several different terms with precise meanings. The "standard" four-seat, four-wheeled vehicle, equivalent to a Homeline sedan, is known as a *motor-chaise* or just a *chaise*, while a *motor-gig* is a two seat design, sometimes with just three wheels, used as a short-distance runabout. A *phaeton* is a small, fast, four-wheeled vehicle popular with wealthy young men and used for unofficial races, while a *landau* is a larger private vehicle analogous to a Homeline limousine.

There are also two common classes of military vehicle. A *war-gig* is a lightweight, open-topped skirmishing and scouting vehicle much loved by the light cavalry; armament is usually limited to small arms carried by the crew. A *war-barouche* is the mainstay of mechanized land warfare, a heavier armored car mounting respectable weaponry. These come in a range of sizes, from the equivalent of a Homeline very light scout car up to something capable of dominating the battlefield.

Lastly, terms like *cart* and *coach* are used for larger, utilitarian vehicles (for goods and passengers respectively). Also note that two-wheeled designs never caught on in Britannica; a gentleman likes to have space for his servant or a lady, or at least some luggage.

Typical Land Vehicles

These are current production models from Britannica-6, in the same format as pp. B463-465. (Note that, while the civilian designs here are marked as road-bound, they can handle the timeline's poor, heavily rutted roads!) All use diesel engines and steel frames; the civilian models have aluminum armor, while the military designs use steel. All are operated with Driving (Automobile) skill.

TL	*Vehicle*	*ST/HP*	*Hnd/SR*	*HT*	*Move*	*LWt.*	*Load*	*SM*	*Occ.*	*DR*	*Range*	*Cost*	*Locations*	*Notes*
(5+1)	Motor-Gig	40	-1/3	9f	2/38*	0.80	0.22	+2	1+1	3	200	$3.5K	O4W	
(5+2)	Phaeton	40	0/2	10f	4/52*	0.85	0.2	+2	1+1	3	300	$10K	O4W	
(5+1)	Chaise	46	0/4	10f	2/36*	1.3	0.5	+3	1+3	4	350	$16K	G4W	
(5+1)	Landau	55	0/4	10f	2/36*	1.9	0.65	+3	1+4	5	320	$22K	G4W	
(5+2)	War-Gig	40	0/3	10f	3/42	1.0	0.22	+2	2	18	350	$12K	O4W	
(5+2)	War-Barouche	65	+1/4	11f	2/35	3.8	0.5	+4	3	35	280	$50K	s4W	[1]

Notes

[1] Has a Perry Vehicular Cannon (p. 44) in a forward-facing mount in the body, with a limited arc of fire.

faster has been built. The only guidance systems use wire guidance on subsonic missiles, and that's experimental and unreliable (the wire often snaps). Maritime torpedoes exist but are strictly TL5 quality; the feeling is that they're ungentlemanly (and less fun) than really big guns. However, a secret Prussian research project is working on this technology.

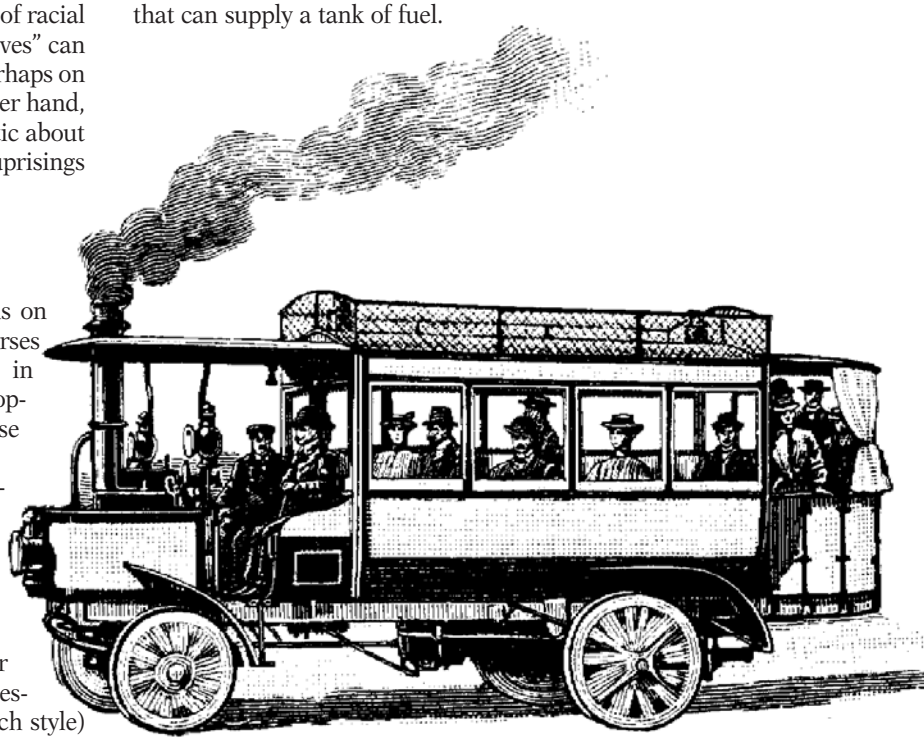
An even greater psychological disconnect involves the idea of chemical (and possibly biological) weapons. Britannica science is up to creating effective and vicious chemical munitions and there have been any number of research programs; armourers have certainly come up with appropriate shells and warheads. But these things aren't seen as *glamorous*, even in a world where they haven't been used much, so they haven't been generally adopted. If Britannica ever gets into a serious arms race or a global war, especially if it invents trench warfare, that could change quickly. A few chemical weapons have been used in colonial conflicts, but the stronger sense of racial equality on this timeline reduces the feeling that "natives" can be treated worse than "civilized" opponents (except perhaps on the western frontiers of the United States). On the other hand, reactionary members of the aristocracy are enthusiastic about using non-lethal chemical weapons against radical uprisings and other signs of lower-class dissent.

Motor-Carriages

As on many timelines, early motor-vehicle designs on Britannica-6 were horse-drawn carriages with the horses removed and an engine and transmission jammed in somewhere. However, decades of enthusiastic development have produced designs a long way from those primitive contraptions.

To start with, the quest for greater speed (and sometimes better control or even comfort) on roads that remain questionable in quality led to a steady increase in the size of vehicle wheels and the complexity of suspension systems. In 1887, wheels 4-5 feet in diameter are not unknown on modest vehicles, and the arrays of coil and leaf springs can appear bizarre. Issues of speed (and a desire to imitate the aesthetics of aerostat design, the quintessence of high-tech style) led designers to investigate aerodynamics and streamlining. Frankly, the results of this work are at least as much for show as for effect; engineers' grasp of the science is still a little patchy. The standard shape for a road vehicle body shell is an elongated teardrop, with the driver sitting well to the front behind a curved windshield. Most are fully enclosed, but have sliding windows and roof hatches for warm days (or whenever the passengers want to throw something at a passerby). These body shells are ideally made of thin aluminum; rigidity comes from a separate chassis (usually steel, but wood in some older models).

As noted above, power is usually provided by diesel engines, although some older steam-coaches are still on the road, and agricultural and commercial vehicles may use coal-fuelled steam. Fuel-oil distribution is sketchy, an occasional inconvenience to long-distance travelers, but most towns boast a garage that can supply a tank of fuel.



The Electrical Terror

Prince Basil of Aberdeen is respected among the Bloods, but he is not liked. Even in that elevated community, he is thought proud – too proud to show due respect for his rivals, it seems, let alone for his inferiors. And his love of competition seemingly has an edge of cruelty for the joy of cruelty.

However, he is prepared to pay the financial cost for his pleasures, and his gladness lies in matters befitting a Prince of the Blood: victory and progress. His love of all that is modern is greater than most. For one thing, electricity, he holds, is the light of the future. He has explained this on occasion when he thought he had found willing listeners, but they never seemed to him quite willing enough – so he has abandoned mere verbal description. He is going to make a demonstration, and the way to validate his beliefs most forcefully is through *terror* . . .

Prince Basil's masterpiece uses a diesel engine as its power source, which drives a generator that in turn powers a complex, electro-mechanical, six-legged drivetrain; the even-more-complex control systems that enable this to work; a pair of electrified pincer arms; and accessories like high-power searchlights. The result is impressive to see, and dangerous at close range.

The exact nature, or rather the *scale*, of the Electrical Terror, should be determined by the style of the campaign or approach to the setting (see p. 11). In a "realistic" world, it should be highly experimental, and only the size of a small truck – though Basil may have several such vehicles as the kernel of a small, high-tech private army. In a "Vernean" game, it's bigger – the size of a small building – and capable of engaging a lesser army single-handedly, though artillery could doubtless bring it down swiftly if the operator became careless. And in a "cinematic" treatment, it's the size of a palace or small town, appropriately hard to damage (except perhaps by internal sabotage), and likely to be used in some mad scheme of national conquest.

Any version can be used as the central feature of a scenario or a whole campaign, for I-Cops or local adventurers. Prince Basil may not be insane enough to try to conquer the Empire, some part of it, or another nation – but he'll certainly be quite mad with somebody who crosses him, and start using the machine for something more than merely amplifying his charisma. He's also monstrously elitist, even for a Blood, and paranoid about the "lower orders"; if he feels threatened by some Radical demonstration or a strike (Luddite-inspired, he's sure) at a factory he owns, the Terror may stride forth to remind the plebeians of their rightful place.

One odd holdover from the days of steam power are servants known as *stokers*. No gentleman would dream of venturing out for a long trip without his stoker in the seat beside him – even though he's using a diesel engine that requires no stoking! These folks are in fact employed as mechanics to keep these unreliable vehicles running, hopefully as fast as possible. A good stoker is also a competent driver, able to take the wheel if his boss wants to rest or hang out the window throwing wine bottles at passersby, though no self-respecting gentry would ever admit needing such support (except perhaps to drive lady guests home after a good dinner while he's enjoying a bottle of port). He's also a robust fellow, able to deal with ruffians and outraged pedestrians and to push the vehicle out of ditches from time to time. Sensible gentlemen appreciate a good stoker's skills and discretion, and may become almost friendly, tolerating the archetypal stoker's slightly rough ways and lower-class lack of social graces.

Lastly, the local taste in paintwork tends to the flamboyant, to put it mildly. A favorite design involves painting a mythological creature along the whole side of the vehicle; gryphons are popular for some reason, but dragons (European or Chinese in style), unicorns, stylized tigers, and almost anything else that looks good can be encountered on the road. Vehicles from the factory may have such paintings already in place, but wealthier owners like to commission something unique and personalized from an artist.

Air Travel

Aeronautical technology has advanced rapidly in the 19th century on Britannica-6, albeit bumping up against limits of materials technology, aerodynamic theory, available funding, and inventor mortality. Even on Homeline, early tests often killed the experimenters; here, with even more exuberant attitudes, the casualty rate among promising inventors has been truly appalling. Perhaps the only thing that's enabled matters to progress as fast as they have is that many wealthy folks have employed assorted coachmen and other hirelings as test pilots rather than taking the risks themselves. Of course, they've had to pay them well.

In any event, manned aviation still largely involves lighter-than-air vehicles. With compact, powerful engines available, these have developed from Georgian-era balloons to something more controllable (if still at the mercy of bad weather). Experiments in heavier-than-air flight continue, but in the absence of some necessary breakthroughs it remains a niche technology.

Aerostats

The standard manned aircraft on this timeline is a small airship – known locally as an *aerostat*. This has a flimsy metal frame with a fabric skin surrounding a number of gasbags filled with hydrogen, and high-power diesel engines driving its propellers. (Helium is known, and some engineers have experimented with it – but then discarded it. After all, it's not only expensive, it provides less lift than hydrogen, and that's all that matters.) The smallest are single-engined single-seaters, but most have reasonable, enclosed cabins for a small crew and several passengers. Some see commercial use, but mostly for high-price passenger services; carrying cargo isn't a viable option in most places.

The size has increased over time, although engineers are having problems building larger models strong enough; there have been a few annoying disasters. Many of the largest craft are bomb-carriers, which are made relatively robust because the buyers are prepared to accept the ensuing loss of speed, but the most common use for military aerostats is reconnaissance. That involves light, fast one- and two-man designs. Army vessels are also assigned to colonial frontiers in the hopes of awing rebellious natives, although this rarely seems to work as well as expected. Since only basic optical bombsights are available, ground attack accuracy isn't high. One or two giant passenger-carrying airships have recently entered service.

The most glamorous aerostats are racing models, built for speed above all, and anything else (including safety) is a distant second. Some are designed for long-haul racing, but the most popular events take place over short, closed courses so that sponsors and spectators can watch the whole event from fixed seats on the ground.

Gliders

Powered heavier-than-air flight is still a dream, but enough inventors have tinkered with wing designs to build up a modest body of engineering experience. Brave (or crazy) experimenters and hobbyists occasionally take to the skies in things akin to a TL8 hang glider (only heavier and much more dangerous), and some armed forces and espionage agencies deploy a few to insert individuals or small groups into hostile territory, launching them from aerostats. Many lack proper control surfaces, steered by warping the whole wing structure; the tail rudder has been invented, but isn't universal on gliders.

Sample Aerostats

See p. B463 for a key to the table abbreviations. The *Racing Aerostat* is a single-seater, designed for minimum weight and maximum performance above anything else; similar designs with more fuel are used by the military for reconnaissance or courier work. The *Excursion Flyer* is a short-range passenger design, useful for giving joyrides or ferrying a few passengers to some inaccessible spot. The *Scout Aerostat* is a light military design with a crew consisting of a pilot (the commander) and a gunner-spotter; the *Bomb Carrier* is typical of "workhorse" military designs, intended to provide tactical support to the army or navy and for colonial frontier actions (it carries a crew of eight). The *Strategic Aerostat* is an attempt at an air-dreadnought, the heaviest craft currently in military service (certain nobles and high-ranking officers are said to have commissioned even bigger designs, which may be successful in cinematic games); how effective they will be in warfare and how vulnerable to incendiary attacks remains to be determined. Test firings of the main guns induce worrying creaking noises in the structure, and so aren't often attempted.

All are operated with Piloting (Lighter-Than-Air) skill. Prices are for new aerostats; those encountered by PCs are well-used vehicles with much-reduced market value (and reliability).

Gliding-Shell

This is an unmanned weapon. It consists of a 5' "fuselage" with a vestigial tail, biplane wings with an 8' span, and a barbed nose-spike to lodge it in targets like enemy airships, ensuring when the explosive load detonates it does so at close quarters. (The warhead has an impact fuse, and can also be triggered by the operator.) The fuselage holds control systems and a bomb. The glider has a magnesium flare on its tail to enable the operator to track it onto the target; he "flies" it using simple remote controls with a -4 telepresence penalty.

The gliding-shell is launched at 10 yards/second (20 mph) and uses the rules for gliding flight (see p. B56 and p. B398), with a top speed of 35 yards/second (70 mph). It stalls at anything less than 6 yards/second (12 mph). The warhead is equivalent to a 155mm shell, and the standard high-explosive version detonates for 6d×7 cr ex and [8d] fragmentation; designers have experimented with a wide range of incendiary, chemical, and possibly even biological payloads.

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Locations	Notes
(5+2)	Racing Aerostat	20	-5/2	8f	1/40	1.4	0.1	+7	1	1	50	$500K	S	
(5+2)	Excursion Flyer	55	-4/3	10f	1/30	2.2	0.7	+9	1+5	1	150	$650K	S	
(5+2)	Scout Aerostat	50	-4/3	10f	1/33	2.0	0.3	+8	2	1	200	$750K	S	[1]
(5+2)	Bomb Carrier	120	-4/3	10f	1/30	18	4	+10	8A	2	550	$3.5M	SX	[2]
(5+2)	Strategic Aerostat	175	-3/4	10f	1/30	540	120	+13	35A	2	4,200	$150M	SX	[3]

Notes

[1] Has a single vehicular cannon (see p. 44) on a forward-facing omni-directional mount.

[2] Armed with three vehicular cannons each covering a 120 degree arc around the gondola, a fourth in a universal mount on top of the craft, and eight gliding shells (see below).

[3] Armed with a pair of 12" main guns on a universal turret below the gondola, four dual-mount vehicular cannon covering each 120 degree arc around the gondola, four more universal dual-mounts on top of the craft, and a total of 80 gliding shells (see below) with four launch racks on each side of the gondola and one more each fore and aft.

Some inventors have focused on the idea of short-range *unmanned* gliders, mostly as missiles. The problem is, of course, how to grant these any sort of accuracy. Various solutions have been attempted; the most popular is wire guidance, and the requisite spool mechanisms exist. Military aerostats carry "gliding-shells" (glide bombs) for use in ground attacks and aerial duels. In the event of the latter, the theory is the aerostat should gain as much height advantage over the opponent as possible, then launch gliding-shells from spring catapults on pivoting mounts along the underside or occasionally the top of the vessel. A gunner guides the missile to the target, using a flare on its tail to track it. Trials have been promising, though there are some problems to resolve with both the tactics and technology; experts eagerly await a chance to test things out in actual combat. Dashing aerostat officers can no doubt achieve wonderful results when fighting in defense of their country and honor.

Rail Travel

Train travel was developing in the history Homeline shares with Britannica before the divergence point, but it reached its glory days somewhat later on Homeline. Trains evolved in close parallel forms in the two histories, but the Britannica-6 attitude to rail travel is different.

Rail travel is seen as a second-best choice for passengers. Some people choose to go that way and there are advantages for transcontinental journeys, but at heart a gentleman prefers to drive himself in his own motor-carriage. Many see trains as something for the lower classes who can't afford anything better, and it's useful for freight. Locomotives tend to be stolid load-haulers rather than swift expresses; a few rail company owners show off by setting out to establish records, but these are as likely to be for total weight hauled as for speed. Track gauges aren't standardized, leading to further complications. Locos are still coal-burning steam engines, although diesels aren't entirely unknown, and a few forward-thinking city governments experiment with electrified urban passenger services, including things more like Homeline trams.

Water Travel

Steam and diesel engines are ideally suited for nautical use, as weight is less of an issue there while dependable power counts for a lot. Thus, the evolution of motor vessels on Britannica-6 echoed Homeline closely – but it has progressed faster. Sailing ships are seen as out of date, while swift and luxurious steam-powered liners ply the oceans. The wealthy keep their own yachts, while taking a motor-launch or rowing boat out on the river is a popular amusement, so water vehicles and the skills to operate them are widespread.

Sea Travel

The native style of this timeline emerges on the oceans in the sheer scale of many vessels. Liners are floating cities, with luxurious and ornate upper decks and substantial space for less wealthy passengers. Battleships are designed to impress by their size, and by the size of their guns, which are usually mounted in limited-rotation turrets; the idea of a good warship being able to deliver a proper broadside has never quite disappeared. The main limit on civilian vessel sizes is demand, given the lower levels of emigration from Europe to North America, although quite a few colonists ship out to South America or Australia. There are just a few giant ships in the 40-50,000 ton displacement range (a little bigger than Homeline's *Great Eastern*), some with mixed cargo and passenger facilities, quietly subsidized by imperial governments who see this traffic as binding together widely dispersed provinces. The only limits for military designs are sheer cost and engineering practicality, and neither of those are as respected as they should be. Some battleships are white elephants, which cost a lot, don't fit in many harbors, and might not be entirely safe in stormy seas.

Submarines have been invented, and engineers periodically come up with new designs. The military utility of a warship that can hide beneath the waves is obvious, and local technology produces something on par with World War II submersibles. However, submarines (known as "diving boats" or "submersion craft") have one clear drawback in Britannica-6 terms: They work best when they're hidden. The point of new technology on this timeline is to show off and impress the neighbors! (Their torpedo designs aren't impressive either; see p. 47.) Navies operate limited submarine forces, and those are mostly intended for reconnaissance and low-key patrol duties. Infinity Patrol analysts worry Prussia will recognize this

Britannica-6 Battleships

Despite the best efforts of the builders of warbarouches and military aerostats, the biggest and most formidable war machines on Britannica-6 are still, by far, the ones that float on the sea – and Britain's Royal Navy owns the most powerful battleships.

These look somewhat unsophisticated to out-timers – more like "pre-dreadnoughts" than the true dreadnoughts of Homeline history. (Curiously, the longstanding warship name "Dreadnought" has been applied by the Britannica-6 Royal Navy to one of its big battleships, and since it sounds impressive it's occasionally used as a generic term for "big battleship," much as on Homeline. Infinity believes this is accidental parallelism rather than true historical inertia.) They have secondary and tertiary batteries backing up their big guns, and because the steam turbine hasn't been invented they can be slow and cumbersome by Homeline TL6 standards. Some have ornate bow rams.

Their size may depend on the "style setting" of the campaign. For a "realistic" version, they should be similar to Homeline-historical pre-dreadnoughts, displacing 10-12,000 tons and mounting 12" main guns. For a "Vernean" take, they're 15,000-30,000 ton vessels mounting 18" main armaments. The fully cinematic version is a 50,000-ton monster bristling with 20" main guns and batteries of smaller weapons. Note that these ships only have 2-4 guns in their largest sizes and the barrels are relatively short, giving shorter ranges than was normal for Homeline TL6-7 battleship armament. Engagements tend to be fought at fairly short ranges, as torpedoes are still feeble on this timeline.

The Ice Dreadnought

The Duke-Governor of Greater Manitoba is a conscientious ruler, after his fashion; he thinks the condition of his province reflects on him, and he worries about threats to its security – perhaps too much. He regards the Russians and their colony in Alaska a potential menace, although they have never shown any real interest in expanding into British Canada (being, in truth, grossly stretched with regard to military logistics). He is a Blood, of a sort, and knows how such issues are best resolved: by a show of strength. Fortunately for him his vast province has turned out to be quite profitable with the last few mineral discoveries, so he has tax and concession revenues to spare.

But that on which they have been spent, His Majesty's Ice Ship *Earthshaker*, is a vehicle without a mission, inspired by late-night brandy fumes and built by sighing engineers. She is as heavily protected as a warship, mounting four 15" guns, eight 5" quick-firers, and substantial tertiary armament. (The Army workforce contributing to the project sketched out a design bristling with anti-personnel guns; the Navy types pointed out no sensible infantryman is ever going to get within range; the compromise chosen involved a number of 2" vehicular cannons, which are expected to be used against incautious aerostats.) She can traverse the vast distances and snowy wastes of northern Canada from her base on the shores of Hudson Bay.

The secret of her mobility is the largest ski-track system yet built (on any timeline, as far as Infinity knows); the main body of the ship sits on twelve massive track units, while ski-borne outriggers support the superstructure. In spite of her size, she has relatively little ground pressure, and can even float on calm water. While this is a serious war machine, her 15" shells are usually replaced with pyrotechnic loads – fireworks, really. All her weapons, even the 15" main guns, are in universal mounts with full stabilization; the builders don't know what she might have to fight, but they've taken no chances.

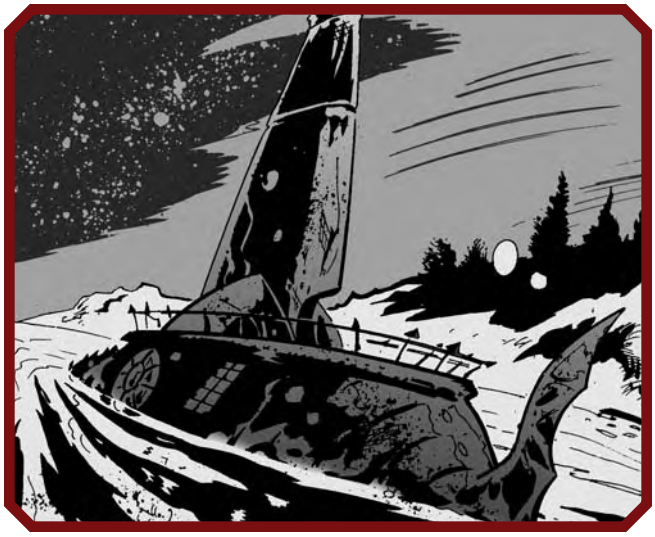
Earthshaker has seen action only against unruly Inuit (who have the sense to leave well before she arrives), but has proved useful for moving supplies and personnel to remote settlements during the Canadian winter. Pictures of this wonder are circulating throughout the Empire, raising the Duke-Governor's prestige to the point where he may make an extended journey to London and the court soon. Her crew has several names for her beside the official one, but are proud of her (or at least too proud to admit to their real opinions). In theory, her mass and huge size are dampers against vibration, but her long-term personnel are not as healthy as they ought to be.

She *has* impressed the rulers of Russia, who would love to build something similar, but it might bankrupt their nation if they tried. Russian espionage activities in Greater Manitoba have recently increased substantially.

technology is a possible solution to their naval inferiority and the Royal Navy's overwhelming dominance. A few peaceful-minded aristocrats may sponsor submarine engineering for purposes of scientific research, but they might be more interested in bathyspheres or the like.

Canals and Rivers

The early British Industrial Revolution was associated with an extensive canal network, and this survives on Britannica although it's not expanding; canal and river transport is mostly limited to high-volume, low-urgency goods. On the other hand, with the roads as bad as they are this is the most efficient way to move bulk loads. The Rhine and Danube rivers in mainland Europe and the Mississippi in the United States are major commercial highways.



Cargo boats use steam engines, though some modern designs have oil-piston power, and private launches can be contemporary in both style and decoration. Vessel size is limited by the depth of water in which they have to operate, leading to technological fixes like "trains" of towed barges.

Other Transport

The engineering diversity and social competitiveness of Britannica-6 means virtually any method of travel the local technology might support has at least been discussed and quite possibly tried. Tunneling machines are too slow for transport, but the snow and ice of Canada have inspired the creation of some interesting specialized personal transports and at least one military monster.

Some sponsors like the idea of "hybrid" vehicles, capable of operation in more than one environment, and some have even proved moderately successful. Amphibious motor-carriages are slow and ungainly in water, but military strategists adapted the idea to the problem of river crossings, and some aerostats have gondolas that are fully serviceable boats or motor-carriages when detached from their gasbags.

Communications

The invention of electronics, including some basic computer engineering, has triggered an accelerating revolution in information communications on Britannica-6, but vestiges of an older approach are slow to disappear. Napoleonic-era visual telegraphy, and news media built around newspapers, have been replaced – by electrical and radio telegraphs, and slightly larger-circulation newspapers. Infinity expects things will change as enterprising businessmen come up with alternative formats, but the poverty of much of the population makes this a slow process.

The Post

Old-fashioned messenger and courier systems have evolved into a fairly sophisticated international postal service, but few nations accept that this should involve any sort of monopoly at any level. The British Empire certainly doesn't, and sneers at the aristocratically-managed "official post" in Austria, for example. Getting a letter or package through anywhere is a matter of selecting the most reliable company or companies operating over the desired route, and hoping that their hard-driven motor-cart doesn't crash and burn this time.

Telegraphic Cables

The basic principle of the electrical telegraph was recognized and exploited quickly on Britannica, but users chafed against its limitations and a whole slew of researchers attempted to improve it. They created the voice telephone ("verbal telegraphy") and later, forms of image transmission. First they sent still images, and now moving pictures. The latter remain low-resolution, but they have entered public, commercial use. "Cable telegraphy" is used less for two-way communication – that's a high-priced luxury or emergency service – and more for one-way signal distribution. Concerts and readings are transmitted to different theatres in a single town, though audiences pay more for the stage performance. News and ideas travel quickly within European and New England cities, national-level networks are growing rapidly, and there are even cables under the English Channel and the North Sea. However, the timeline's tradition is one of strictly limited large-scale infrastructure development unless the work is dramatic, prestigious, or militarily essential; landowners actively resist having cables laid across their property, so the system can be patchy. Trans-Atlantic cables remain strictly hypothetical, waiting for some government or wealthy industrialist or aristocrat to find a reason to sponsor the idea.

Radio-Telegraphy Towers

Other advanced technologies are developing. Research into electricity in the mid-19th century stumbled upon the principle of radio waves (known on Britannica as "Faradayan waves"), and the possibilities of these for communication were quickly recognized. However, radio technology remains relatively crude and unreliable, working best over line-of-sight connections – so the growing "Faradayan telegraphy" system relies on a lot of relay towers, usually perched on hilltops.

Homeline engineers suspect Britannica's thinking is stuck in a Napoleonic rut in some places – and this is one of them. A half-decent radio network doesn't depend on line-of-sight beamed transmissions and multiple relays, and it takes a determined lack of innovation to muddle forward blindly long enough to develop so much infrastructure. Still, it works after a fashion; the hills of Europe and New England are dotted with radio masts, each manned by a small team of young men to keep the fragile valve radios and relay devices working continuously. Because they succeed, transmissions reach offices near the network from anywhere else in the same country within an hour, and can cross the continent within a day – if the sender is prepared to meet the significant cost. Optimistic Homeline observers wonder if Britannica is evolving toward a cell phone network by an unorthodox route, but while dedicated "logical machines" are linked to the telegraphs to keep the system running, anything like the Internet seems a long way off.

Primitive Radar

A few years ago, engineers working on Faradayan wave technology stumbled upon some previously unrecognized properties, and the idea of radar ("Faradayan location") arrived on the timeline. It came to the attention of various military engineering officers quickly, and they recognized its potential and managed to prevent it spreading much further, hiring most of the engineers who knew about it.

Thus radar is a little-known military technology on Britannica, and Infinity doesn't yet realize it's been developed. They may find out sooner rather than later – secrecy on such projects is weak, and on Britannica-6 people are accustomed to *boasting* about inventions. Hints have already appeared in some technical journals, if anyone knew where to look and how to interpret them.

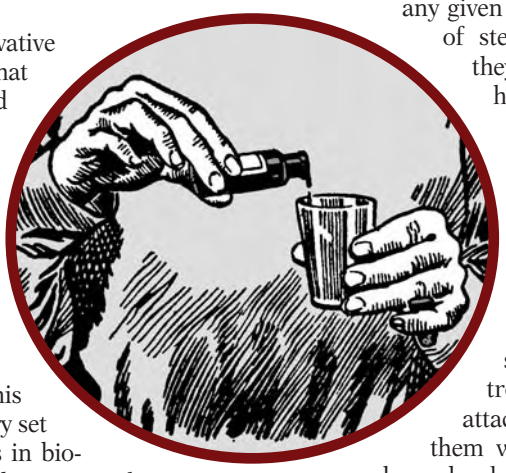
It's up to the GM exactly who is working on this: how many different groups are involved in the process, who has their own research programs, who's learned about the idea through espionage. It'll be useful to whoever gets it working, of course, but more at sea than in the air; slow-moving aerostat bombers can be seen long before they reach their targets, so issues of air defense are a little less fraught with peril here than they were in Homeline's 1930s.

Medicine

One thing that lifts Britannica's tech level rating to a full TL(5+2) is decent, if sometimes eccentric, medicine. If nothing else, it's a lot less dangerous to its patients now than before the divergence point (for one thing, deliberate bleeding went out of fashion earlier than on our world, for good historical reasons).

Pharmacology

This advanced medicine includes some innovative *ad hoc* pharmacology. One practical factor is that asking natives and folk-healers what herbs and concoctions are good for which purposes is considered *smart* rather than undignified. Penicillin was discovered years ago and other antibiotics followed, along with a range of poison treatments, and vaccination – already known in a basic form by 1800 – is a mature science. White Star pharmacologists are combing Britannica's medical references in search of tricks they may have missed.



They suspect they could sell a lot back into this timeline once they've got an adequate cover story set up. Britannica's pharmacology is hitting limits in biomedical theory. The distinction, say, between bacteria and viruses is understood, in the sense that the diseases they cause respond differently to different treatments. Only bacteria can be observed under available microscopes, but no one has a clue what a virus really *is*. (Researchers tend to refer to them as "virulent toxins.") Genetics is a science almost entirely of brilliant statistical deduction; some researchers have guessed DNA might somehow be involved, but local crystallography won't generate ideas about the structure any time soon. Meanwhile, enthusiastic use of antibiotics is producing resistant diseases. Infinity's medics think selling the timeline a few new theories would be a worthy humanitarian act.

Surgery

What makes surgery more effective on Britannica than in Homeline's 19th century is the development of crude but effective anesthesia. Fewer patients die from shock, and surgeons can work carefully rather than hurriedly, which in turn means they can learn from experience even if they fail in any given case. Also, although their grasp of sterile technique is inconsistent, they have *some* idea. They don't have X-rays or other imaging technologies yet so they usually go in blind, but they have a working understanding of blood pressure, some insight into blood types (another lifesaver in extended surgery), and even some ideas about electrocardiographs. Infinity suspects they'll invent electroshock treatments for heart attacks soon, and probably apply them with enthusiasm. Some doctors have also developed less invasive techniques, including a basic form of physiotherapy.

Effective TL

Not every treatment available on this timeline can be considered fully TL7-equivalent, but some of it isn't bad. As a general rule, treat local medicine as equivalent to TL6 with a good range of drugs and anesthetics. Exactly how good any individual doctor or surgeon proves to be is something of a lottery, as some are prone to strange theories or old-fashioned ideas; cruel GMs can decide this with a random die roll if they like.

Other Technologies

Many of the above technologies depend on something basic: good *chemistry*, along with associated sciences such as pharmacology and chemical engineering. This is what Homeline engineering historians find most impressive about Britannica-6. So for example, doctors have access to a wide range of drugs and medicines, while aerostat builders can get hold of aluminum for their frames and plentiful hydrogen for lift.

Other technologies are developing because of this. Photography is up to early TL7 levels, including various methods of color reproduction, although cameras do tend to be bulky and complex. It's advancing fast and there have been several experiments with moving pictures, which are mostly held back by engineers' persistent inability to agree on standards. Likewise, phonographic sound recording is advanced, but there are a dozen formats of cylinder and disc in use. Electrical technology is less sophisticated, and isn't used much in sound recording (as opposed to transmission); engineers tend to think of it as a way of handling *power* rather than information, although advances in telegraphy may change that.

But it's grand-scale technology that attracts the most interest on this timeline, and architects and civil engineers can claim their share of the glory since they throw bridges across wider gaps (the English Channel) or construct astonishing mooring towers for aerostats. The idea of the steel-framed building – the basic principle behind the skyscraper – has been understood for 20 years or so, but there isn't enough call for extra floor space in cities to drive the construction of great office or residential blocks. (Showy, slender towers, even outright follies, are another matter.) Where these are attached to palaces or castles, they may have weapons mounted somewhere near the top; after all, the military uses airships, so this looks like a sensible defensive measure . . .

Chapter Six

Adventures on Britannica-6

"Son of a . . ."

The timeline-inappropriate curse was cut off as the short-barreled weapon on the pursuing war-barouche barked into life. Jeremy Walsh ducked instinctively as his partner swerved left and right. One shot ricocheted audibly off the structure of their rented motor-gig, but fortunately the hit didn't seem to have found anything important.

***Yet**, thought Walsh. It wasn't the sort of luck on which he liked to depend.*

"Centrum?" The I-Cop driver risked a glance back at the pursuit and to make sure that Walsh was unhurt. She'd been waiting half a mile away while he essayed a little burglary; fortunately, she'd reacted quickly enough when he radioed a yell for extraction.

"Worse," Walsh groaned, as the gig took a corner on two wheels, and a passing farm-worker cheered amicably as he leapt clear, presumably not having heard the gunfire and assuming that this was a race between members of the gentry. "Local spooks. They're too damned sharp, if you ask me."

"Very sharp. They've got back-up, too, it seems."

Walsh groaned again as he saw what the driver had seen first. A slender aerostat was dipping toward them out of the sky, and he glimpsed a familiar ducal crest on its nose. He pulled an automatic rifle out from under the gig's back passenger seat, glanced at the telltale to confirm that it was loaded, and kicked open the door. Secrecy and subtlety were no longer options, and at least he had fair-sized targets. The big wheels on that war-barouche looked gratifyingly vulnerable, and then he could try to shred a gasbag or two. There might still be a chance for a clean escape.

Given the local obsession with competition, Britannica-6 is never short of opportunities for adventure. Its pattern of runaway technological development and general instances of slight weirdness means these adventures can be spectacular and unpredictable.

Infinity Missions

The Infinity Patrol and their allied organizations have a limited presence on this timeline – but then, they have a limited presence on most timelines. Overstretched and under-resourced, they improvise and juggle, adapting loose doctrines and organizational structures to the problems at hand.

The General Position

Britannica-6 is seen within the Patrol as a potentially vulnerable timeline but one with some promise, where a cautious defensive strategy should hopefully suffice to see off external threats and a little careful intervention may steer the local society away from various catastrophic mistakes matching Homeline history. It's also *interesting*, well worth investigating, protecting, and saving, with an admirable enthusiasm for progress that *may* not blow up the entire world in the end. Outtime trade has started and looks set to produce decent profits, and tourism can probably be permitted without more than the usual quota of headaches.

The minority-pessimist position, taken by some analysts if only in an attempt to avoid complacency, is that this is a timeline wide open to Centrum manipulation. It combines the worst elements of Georgian elitism, Victorian smugness, and technocratic carelessness, and if it doesn't suffer a WWI rerun in a few years it'll only be because the British Empire has disintegrated into aristocratic in-fighting.

But then again, Infinity's cliodynamicists really need timelines like this to keep them interested. For now they think that they can handle this one, and some of them are keen to get on with the job.

Justice Division

As ever, the Patrol's Justice Division believes that it's at the sharply practical end of many of these questions, and they're engaged in establishing an overview of Britannica-6 while slaving through the Scout Service report files in search of likely weak points. But they're already painfully aware that a bunch of swagmen beat them to the punch (see p. 32), and some Justice agents are working hard on that case hoping to deter the crosstime con artists from attempting too many repetitions of the coup. A small team is in place in Australia, monitoring the local political movements for signs of further swagman activity.

Other Justice Division members take a more pragmatic position, or at least suspect that the swagmen, having made their score, have moved on by now. Frankly, they say, a few subtle con games aren't the Patrol's biggest worry, even if they do stir up the politics of a minor British colony. Their greater concern is with the timeline's rampant militarism, the threat of war, and the love of flashy weapons. This will make Britannica all too appealing to arms smugglers, who can introduce new technologies under a thin disguise as amazing inventions and trade them for locally made weaponry to sell elsewhere. Division analysts have ordered every Britannica technological journal they can lay hands on, especially those dedicated to military affairs, and are trying to distinguish local ingenuity from outtime meddling – which isn't always easy.

As a more general concern, Justice Division fears that Britannica is the sort of timeline where individual Homeline renegades all too easily do all too well: working their way into aristocratic households and wealthy society, trading in new ideas, and enjoying the flamboyance and low-level corruption of the local ruling classes. Basically, all this is an issue of intelligence; Justice needs to get a handle on the world before more problems start, which means asking for assistance from other divisions.

Morale Division

Much the same goes for the propagandists and psychologists of Morale Division, albeit from a completely different angle. On current evidence, they agree that Britannica-6 is inherently politically unstable; the local politics are also subtly *weird*, so interventions are liable to be both necessary and difficult.

Right now, this means professional historians in Morale's Homeline offices are going over historical texts and newssheets coming out of Britannica, *trying* to comprehend this wacky political gestalt. They're also watching for Centrum propaganda ops, but happily not seeing any signs of those right now (though again it's hard to tell). Field missions – meaning propaganda interventions – are some way off in the future, and will doubtless involve a lot of collaboration with other divisions if they do happen. The Morale psychologists think the population on Britannica should be fairly susceptible to their manipulations, if necessary; they've not been "immunized" against the full range of high-tech propaganda techniques as yet, but they have decent communications to disseminate such things. On the other hand, this means that *other* outtime factions could *also* mess with things, as those swagmen have already demonstrated – and as Centrum presumably has realized.

Nexus Oversight

So far as the Scouts were able to tell, there aren't too many nexus portals opening onto Britannica-6, or dimensional highways running through, or banestorms blowing up. But Nexus Oversight doesn't earn its pay by being complacent or believing everything a Scout report tells them. A handful of analysts are combing news reports, anomalous myths and legends, and the arcane, near-paranormal mathematics of dimensional disruption, hoping they won't find anything.

(In fact, they're in line for some bad news. There aren't many tears in reality in these parts, but those that do exist give access to some pretty weird places. Nexus Oversight agents will doubtless get to play with some interesting Britannica-6 vehicles and hunting weapons sooner or later. Furthermore, the Cabal may stir things up for them over time.)

Security Division

Security Division regards timelines such as Britannica as questions in technological analysis. So long as they don't develop any sort of parachronic theory (or any paranormal techniques with the same results), and so long as Justice keeps Homeline renegades out of these timelines, Security shouldn't have to do anything except monitor the *status quo* without agents in place.

In practice, of course, things are *never* that simple, and Security is forever making incursions and "adjustments" to all sorts of timelines, especially those with complicated politics and lots of weird science. They're establishing offices, safe houses, and hopefully a few contacts across the planet while feeding information back to other divisions and building networks with Scout Communications agents. They've been given the job ahead of Scout Intelligence, if only because they're supposed to be more involved with such practicalities, and because anything that does blow up likely involves running around with guns, which is more their line.

According to Security's scientific section, for all its sophistication in areas such as practical engineering and pharmacology, Britannica-6 is nowhere near anything that would actually threaten Homeline. But the possibility can't ever be entirely discounted, either. Anyone with TL7-equivalent science and an excess of enthusiasm could turn into a problem at any moment, so Security shares those Britannica technical journals with Justice. More to the point, its field agents, the people most often assigned to preventing global wars, have a feeling they'll end up with a big job on their hands here in a few years; senior officers are preparing contingency plans.

Communications Division

When the initial Scout survey teams move out, the more specialized Communications Division teams move in. With Infinity still settling into this particular timeline, the shape of the required comms networks remains to be determined – but Communications can begin surveying a few possibilities.

In one sense, Britannica looks promising: It has fast communications, including telegraphy and radio, but they're crude enough that inserting a few encrypted messages and sending a few burst signals shouldn't attract too much attention, or be vulnerable to local cryptographic analysis. But the native scientists are worryingly smart and, more annoyingly, the telegraphic traffic is sparse enough that adding the content of a full Infinity communications system is certain to attract attention sooner or later. The Scouts are going to have to be smart themselves, and maybe resort to old-fashioned stuff like couriers. Well, at least they'll have some fun with the local transport.

Contact Division

In theory, when other divisions begin moving in, the need for Contact surveys should be over. In practice, at least in this case, things aren't that simple because lots of other Scouts and I-Cops keep demanding more details. Hence, Contact still has a small presence here, running additional surveys and refining analyses. These people are mostly away from the larger cities as the gaps that need filling are elsewhere, and the bulk of them are on the timeline for only a fraction of their schedule; many are dividing their efforts between this and other timelines where their expertise is applicable. PCs from other divisions may encounter these people as advisors or guides, or be sent to extract them if situations turn unexpectedly nasty. If the characters are Contact Division agents, they might be the lead members of an investigative group assigned to resolve some question that gets more complicated the longer anyone looks; they could escort any team sent into one of the thornier and under-documented areas of the world.

Intelligence Division

Intelligence Division, too, is still in survey mode on Britannica – and *they* expect to be here for years to come, or at least to continue filtering data that comes out of the timeline indefinitely. They don't have any sort of permanent presence, but they've sent more than one team in on short-term missions. They're working with Security, as ever, but there've been a few small disagreements as the I-Cops have tended to focus on Britannica technology while the Scouts find more to interest them in the complex local politics. At present, the Infinity higher-ups mostly agree with Intelligence about this, as Britannica looks like a low risk for direct threats to Homeline but a high risk for possible Centrum political manipulation. For that matter, someone with authority on Homeline might decide at any time that Britannica merits some kind of intervention in its political processes, to reduce the risk of war (or, perhaps worse, of British collapse and Prussian hegemony); Intelligence is building dossiers for use on that day.

Search and Rescue

So far, there have been no full-scale Search and Rescue missions on Britannica-6. As the Division is fully aware, though, the question for them is never "if" but "when." Right now, the risk only involves Infinity agents, sponsored academics, and a few White Star traders. All of them are supposed to know what they're doing and they're only present in limited numbers – but if the line is opened up for tourism, messes are *guaranteed* to follow. Search and Rescue is tapping the flow of reports from Intelligence and Technical Analysis, trying to ensure that some of their people understand a little about the timeline, its politics, and its technology when they need that knowledge.

Technical Analysis

At least someone is having fun. A divergent-tech timeline like this makes Tech Analysis work *much* more interesting than the usual workshop testing. It also makes it more complicated, and likely more dangerous, as hands-on and on-site investigation is generally required sooner or later. But the division has plenty of enthusiasts happy to accept that risk, and who frankly share the Britannica-6 love of flamboyant technology. Its pure scientists have concluded that there are no weird divergent physical laws to look at here, which means they can turn their attention elsewhere, but the engineers are still on the case.

At the moment, Tech Analysis activity in relation to Britannica is limited to a standing order with White Star for samples of anything interesting that comes on the market, and requests to other agents for similar stuff they might bring back from missions. This gear then goes in the long queue of items to be played with in the division's workshops. They'd really like a complete motor-carriage or two sometime, a justifiable need as field agents may require familiarization with standard Britannica-6 control layouts, so a mission may be authorized at some point – but then someone has to break it to the Tech Analysis geeks that there's barely any such thing as standardization on Britannica-6.

ISWAT

As for the Organization That Doesn't Exist – no ISWAT team has been sent to Britannica-6 yet. But any GM who wants to set up such a scenario should have no problem finding an excuse. A flashy Cabal manipulation gone wildly wrong, or a sudden need to deal with a junior royal turned mad world-conqueror with suspiciously too-exotic tech, are among the obvious possibilities.

Sample Mission: The Decorations on the Channel Bridge

This is an example of an Infinity Patrol mission to Britannica-6. It's a combination of investigation and (as it turns out) some action. Technically it would be assigned to Security or possibly Justice Division, but the initial situation is a little uncertain and requires immediate response, so any scratch team of "whichever good agents we have available" could be given the job plausibly enough. That happens a lot.

Gamers who expect to actually play through this scenario should stop reading here to avoid spoiling their fun!

Muster, Briefing, and Equipment

The PCs should start in or near Infinity's Homeline-London office, or a secure Infinity facility on the same geographical location on a Quantum 6 timeline. (The GM should find an excuse to set this up if necessary.) It's morning, and they receive a message telling them to attend a briefing first thing. They can grab a coffee or tea on the way in if they wish. If they haven't worked together before, give them just enough time for short introductions.

The briefing comes from Lieutenant Alexis Cheng, an American-born supervisor who was assigned to this office relatively recently and immediately earned a name for slightly supercilious treatment of long-term London-based agents. Still, the PCs should realize you don't reach his rank without knowing your job. (Actually, he's marginally workaholic, takes on a lot of work, and gets irritated with agents who don't immediately pick up their share of the load he passes on.) He starts without delay, speaking the words "Britannica-6" as he switches on a display screen and shows a series of images – Windsor Castle with new defensive towers, ornate airships, streamlined motor vehicles with oversized wheels, an ironclad on skis, people in complicated fancy costumes, and finally a black-and-white photograph of a large, incomplete, multi-span suspension bridge.

"And this is the Channel Bridge" he says. "It appears that the Duke of Kent – his name is Albert – is trying to increase his standing in the Hanover-Saxe-Coburg hierarchy, has established friendly relations with King Louis-Charles of France, and has persuaded a couple of Indian rajahs to help finance this scheme. Even if you aren't familiar with the timeline, you perhaps begin to see what matters are like over there."

He then gives a brisk, short summary of the divergence point and subsequent history and politics of the line. He'll take quick questions on the subject, but anything specific about the mission can wait until he's had a chance to explain it.

"Frankly, this is a weird enough line that we tread carefully there, and we're mostly still surveying it" he says. "But there's an obvious risk of Centrum incursion, so we pay attention to any oddities we spot. And one such oddity has just come up.

"White Star Trading's factor in London over there has established a connection with the Bow Street Runners, who've recently been called in to assist the Duke of Kent's Civic Guardians with some disappearances on the bridge project. The White Star man, named Abraham Jacobov, has just sent us a message. It seems one of the few clues that the local cops have turned up is, quote, '*two pages of a fantastical journal purportedly named the 'Daily Express,' foretelling events in the future.*' "

The PCs are fully aware the *Daily Express* is a real British newspaper, on Homeline and in many other timelines. However, Cheng raises an eyebrow. "There is no newspaper of that name on Britannica-6, and relatively little futuristic fiction. The idea of alternate histories is equally obscure over there – effectively unknown. So we have to assume that this represents an outtime incursion.

"Fortunately, White Star has managed to acquire a warehouse on a location corresponding to one of our projector stages in East London, so we can insert you as soon as you're ready and you can deploy from there. I'm sure that Jacobov will be able to assist. We'll scan for a return pickup 24 hours after deployment, and twelve-hourly thereafter. We can fit you out with whatever costumes you think appropriate; I suggest that you pass yourselves off as traveling gentry and their servants, from the Canadian provinces. Their British Empire is big and diverse, so you'll look very much like weird colonials, which usually covers a multitude of sins."

Cheng then confirms who is ranking agent on this mission and takes questions. However, he really can't say very much, and may turn witheringly sarcastic if any PCs seem to be wasting time. He knows a fair bit about Britannica-6 but he doesn't know everything, and he would rather that the PCs got on their way – they can consult the databases and reports that can be installed on their portable computers for most of this stuff.

The costume department downstairs from the briefing room can indeed fit the PCs as they desire; this is probably their first encounter with Britannica's taste for starched linen and stiff synthetics. It can also provide appropriate-looking large trunks and cases with spare clothes and well-hidden compartments for portable computers and assorted standard-issue sidearms. Unfortunately, no Britannica-made weapons are available; the travelers have to get by with standard Infinity issue, and avoid displays of the technology. The files say nominal weapon laws are quite light, but wearing guns in public in Britain attracts a lot of negative attention.

And then, it's on to the projector stage. If it's important, the on-site operator has a skill of 16 with parachronics, and the team leader has assessment files of his group's comparative ratings for their own skills.

Jacobov's Warehouse

Assuming they make the transfer safely (and the GM can handwave that if desired), the PCs find themselves in a large, mostly empty, slightly dusty chamber with no windows, an electric light that comes on automatically, and one door. Next to that is a pull cord and a note on the wall, under a glass cover:

Welcome to Britannica-6. If you weren't expected, please try the bell pull on the right; if I or my assistant are available, we'll be along in a moment. If we aren't, the door key is in the cabinet nearby – but please take care, this is an unusual timeline.

In fact, the bell indeed summons Jacobov (p. 28). His variant-Orthodox costume may bemuse the team, but he'll happily explain his cover story as an eastern European "dealer in inventions and curios." He's openly pleased to see the group – he can see there's some kind of problem here, but it's outside his field. He takes them up to his office over the warehouse, offers tea or coffee, and explains the problem – though he can't add much to what Cheng said. His contact in the Bow Street Runners passed on the story, but has no direct involvement with the case; trying to get any more out of him would achieve nothing and probably stress this useful relationship.

His idea is the investigators should head down to Dover, the starting point of the UK side of the bridge project and the scene of the excitement, perhaps in the guise of touring gentlefolk as Cheng suggested. The idea of interested amateurs lending a hand with public matters, even including detective work on criminal cases, still has a lot of credibility on this timeline. If the party puts up a reasonable act, and especially if they provide genuine aid, they should be accepted. It's morning here, and they have plenty of time to reach the place today.

Jacobov provides the PCs with some local funds – he can recover the cost from Infinity (so he needs a receipt), and his resources are actually pretty good. He happily helps them set up their cover story; among other things, he provides them with punched celluloid identity cards that can be read by various police devices. These aren't mandatory on this timeline, but they can simplify matters immensely; Jacobov has a machine concealed in his desk that creates these as required. (It was built using Homeline skills, and is illegal in local terms.) He'll discuss their return arrangements, and ask politely that they *not* draw any unwanted attention to his warehouse; he'll give them keys to a side door if anyone inquires, but they should lose any pursuit *before* coming back, please.

There are two or three obvious ways to reach Dover, which is about 70 miles from London. The party could travel by train, but trains here are mostly for freight and the lower orders, and aren't very luxurious. A motor-coach might be better, or they could hire a motor-carriage. There's an establishment just down the road from the warehouse that offers this, and the money can cover the deposit and rental. This is probably everyone's first encounter with Britannica's ornately painted, "streamlined," large-wheeled vehicles and their slightly eccentric controls; fortunately, "a visitor from the colonies" can claim that he's used to something different, but unfamiliarity penalties definitely apply. Remember: A gentleman can employ a driver or drive himself. In the latter case, he should have a servant assigned as his "stoker."

The Journey to Dover

Assuming they go by road, especially if they take a hired carriage, the first thing the PCs encounter once they leave London is the abysmal quality of the local roads, which at least explains the size of the carriage's wheels and the complexity of its suspension. Once they're (hopefully) used to the interesting ride, they may notice something in the sky behind them: a pair of aerostats, coming up fast from the direction of London. Examination suggests these are civilian designs, albeit each with a different aristocrat's symbols on the sides; after passing the heroes' transport, they begin circling the road. Characters who succeed with Hearing rolls note the sound of powerful, under-silenced diesel engines coming fast up the road behind them . . .

Exactly how much paranoia the GM wants to instill in the players at this point is a matter of taste, but it may be better if they don't pull out assault rifles and start shooting just yet. They should certainly be able to observe that the "pursuing" motor-carriages are again civilian types, and lightweight and flimsy at that. They are in fact a pair of phaetons, being driven dangerously fast but paying more attention to each other than to anything else (including the PCs).

The drivers are William "Mad Billy" Chasuble and Sir Adrian Carter-Sandlebury, a pair of enthusiastic and rather excitable gentlemen who have a sporting wager on this afternoon regarding the capabilities of their respective machines. Some of their friends are overhead, watching the contest. The team can get out of the way or carry on driving sedately (or, for that matter, join in if they choose). In any event, some skill rolls may be indicated, and their vehicle may end up in the ditch temporarily or even clip one or both of the racers, per-

Running the Scenario With Local PCs

This story could also employ "native" Britannica-6 characters, although they'll find it weird and confusing: Either they'll never understand what they've seen, or they'll somehow have to learn something about the nature of the multiverse by the end.

They could be law enforcers from Kent or London, adventurous gentlefolk "lending a hand," professionals employed by the engineering companies to look into the problem, or technology enthusiasts visiting this wonderful project who get caught up in events. They'll not recognize the gargoyles (although they may spot them as an anomaly sooner), so they may underestimate the danger at first. They'll need good weapons, or maybe well-armed support, to handle the threat, and the GM might reduce the number of creatures to keep things fair. They may have no way to recognize Costikyan as the cause of the problem, but if they encounter him, his eccentric and distracted behavior may hint at something. Of course, it'll be a big leap for them to identify him as a mystic architect attempting to use the great bridge as the key to an arcane gate.

haps affecting the results. The phaetons are faster than any hired chaise.

Details of Sir Adrian's abilities can be found on p. 38. "Mad Billy" has broadly similar abilities, except that he's only Status 2 and Wealthy; he isn't Chummy; his Code of Honor is the Plunger's type (p. 40); he suffers from Bad Temper (12); the self-control numbers on his Compulsive Gambling and Impulsiveness are both 9; and his quirks are low-level callousness, a capacity for bearing grudges, mild xenophobia, and a tendency to talk very loudly.

The race is set to end at an inn a few miles down the road, after which the aerostats return to London and the racers stop for a drink. If the PCs choose or are obliged to stop, they may have dealings with them. Both are typical hare-brained young gentry, but the irascible "Mad Billy" has the slightly slower phaeton and takes more foolish risks, and so probably loses the race (and possibly blames the team for getting in the way). The rather more laid-back Sir Adrian is likely to buy everyone a drink. (Drinking and driving is perfectly normal on this timeline.) The racers' stokers are both stolid hired professionals, but happy to chat to other servants. Sir Adrian may be worth cultivating as a temporary contact, but the party should avoid having him get too interested in them. The GM can reintroduce him later in the scenario for extra color, complications, or assistance.

That bit of excitement over, after calming down or performing any repairs, the PCs can drive on to Dover.

The Great Construction Site

When the PCs first come over the Downs and see Dover, they should be quite impressed. The bridge project is impossible to miss; new construction is reaching out from the shore a mile east of the town, and it's all *big*. The design uses great cantilevered supports extending from huge towers, spaced a mile or so apart, with intermediate lesser supports every few hundred yards. Out in the channel, giant steam dredges are busy creating artificial islands for further towers, while sightseeing aerostats circle overhead. As an engineering project, it's clearly ambitious and complicated.

Incidentally, a telescope or a good pair of eyes make out similar work going on over on the French side of things. Patriotic engineers with whom the party talks happily point out the British work is progressing faster.

The agents probably want to find accommodations, to act as a base of operations and a meeting point. They can find rooms at various hotels in Dover itself (if they were really organized, they could even have booked ahead by telegraph from London); several new establishments have opened just to support the tourist trade generated by the bridge project. The town is crawling with off-duty workmen, junior engineers, tourists, and people dedicated to taking money off other people. This last group may sell services of varying degrees of morality and legality to them, play cards with them, or possibly hit them over the head in dark alleys. It's all about as close to a boomtown as a genteel southern English seaport can get. The word "bustling" certainly fits. However clumsy their act, the heroes probably don't attract undue attention.

Their destination is far enough from town along a muddy road that the PCs will probably drive rather than walk. Security around the construction is frankly pathetic by modern Homeline standards – there's a fence of sorts, and anyone wandering up to important machinery gets challenged to prevent them injuring themselves – but a few cash tips and an air of entitlement go a long way. The problem agents encounter is that virtually everyone is far too busy to chat to a bunch of eccentric foreign dilettantes.

Mr. Dickens

At some point during their visit, though, the PCs encounter a native of the timeline who notices their interest and chats with them, or is pointed out to them as someone who isn't too busy working on the project to tell them all about the technicalities. He's an elderly but spry gentleman with a notebook, dressed in plain, practical garb that a keen eye sees is well-made tweed and linen. If they have an appropriate specialty of History, Connoisseur (Literature), or some other relevant skill, they might even get a roll to recognize his face. They need to succeed by a large margin to put a name to it rather than simply finding him vaguely familiar, as he's older than in any picture they've ever seen.

He's Charles Dickens (see p. 18), and if he introduces himself it may take a Will or Acting roll not to look startled. If they say they've heard of him, he assumes they've read his technological journalism – he'll be quite bemused if anyone claims to know of his fiction work. ("I've written a few stories but, well, there's no money in it.")

Dickens is mostly included in the plot for local color and fun, but he does know a lot about the bridge project and other engineering news, and talks about it to anyone. Infinity agents should be careful around him. He's bright and observant, and he's too well-known and socially respected to pump full of multiple doses of Eraser, let alone be casually vanished off to Coventry. Dickens knows he's too old and slow to charge into danger so he isn't too much trouble, and approached politely he's a fair amount of help. He heard about the disappearances and he's curious, but he has no theories on the subject. He had a passing acquaintance with some of the people investigating them, and can provide an initial introduction.

The Local Investigation

The disappearances are a problem and a worry, and the investigation is being led by Master Guardian Barnaby Valance, of the Duke of Kent's Civic Guardians. He has various constables assisting him, along with Sergeant of Constables Martin Smith of the Bow Street Runners, down from London to show these confused provincials some modern investigative work. (Incidentally, all of these people recognize the word "police," though it's not the term they apply to themselves. "Cop" or "copper," however, would puzzle them.) There's a bit of rivalry and friction going on, especially as everyone is confused at present, but Valance and Smith are fully on professional speaking terms. Newcomers have to tread carefully in all this but the Runners and Guardians are used to deferring to the gentry, and these two are honest enough to admit that sensible suggestions won't go amiss. Also, successful use of Savoir-Faire (Police) skill goes a long way, cultural unfamiliarity notwithstanding; these people aren't used to members of the gentry who seem to understand the nature and problems of their work!

The Disappearances

Eventually someone goes over the details of the matter so far, even if it's only a junior Guardian assigned to keep these colonial eccentrics away from anything important. The first disappearance was a night watchman named Herbert Rippon, about a week ago. No one is sure when he disappeared; he just wasn't around when expected and didn't come home. His superiors assumed he'd slipped away somewhere for personal reasons, but his family question this idea.

The second disappearance came two days later. A workman named John Jones vanished when he should have been coming off shift, and two days after that another workman, Bill Winters, disappeared shortly after starting work early in the morning. As the local investigators and others have realized, all of these disappearances happened in dark or fairly dark conditions near the end of the bridge (where most work is being done) when the men were alone; all three were considered capable, steady, and not heavy drinkers. The Guardians were called in when enough people decided Jones' disappearance was suspicious, but haven't gotten far since. The other workmen are now understandably nervous and difficult, which is delaying work on the bridge. This makes the managers irritable, one reason why London is helping with the investigation.

Smith considers the answer simple. It's no secret many sailors around these parts are unhappy about the bridge because it'll deprive them of work and make traffic in the channel harder, and some ship-owners agree with them. Obviously some dangerous hotheads have decided to sabotage the work, perhaps with backing and encouragement from their employers. They have the skill to slip down to the end of the incomplete bridge by sea, climb up the structure, and commit some manner of violence against these victims. The workforce unrest shows the plan is working, and Smith feels the Civic Guardians should be tracking down whoever's responsible by now. Valance, on the other hand, is annoyed by this suggestion – "There's no way that good Kent men would do such a thing. Oh, a lone hothead, perhaps – but such a conspiracy as would be needed for this, a gang of kidnappers or murderers – never!" He's being sentimental, perhaps, but he's got a point about the difficulty of the crime, and his informers in Dover haven't turned up any stories of such a gang.

The Anomaly

These investigators only discuss or produce the newspaper if specifically asked, and the PCs may have to engage in some fast-talking or studied vagueness when asked where they heard of it. Frankly, the local authorities regard it as a bizarre hoax and a red herring, and are a little bemused or disdainful of characters who show much interest in it. When they do produce it, though, it's clearly being kept in a locker or safe in the secure site office that was taken over as the on-site base of operations; they're professional enough not to be careless with anything that *might* be important evidence. They explain it was found lying around at the end of the bridge by one of the Guardians looking for Bill Winters, late on the morning he disappeared. It was damp enough from rain or sea-spray that it didn't blow away, but not wet enough to be destroyed.

It's a single sheet – the front and back pages – from a large-format newspaper; it's cheap newsprint stock, but despite signs of soaking and a few small tears it's pretty much "as new" for condition, and so fairly easy to handle. It is indeed a copy of the *Daily Express*, dated 1955, and any agent who skims it can tell it must come from an echo or close parallel timeline. It references minor events – this was evidently a slow news day – including criminal cases and domestic politics, but there are mentions of controversies over the Suez Canal and cinemas canceling showings of the movie *Rock Around the Clock* due to audience misbehavior. It's utterly incomprehensible to natives of Britannica-6, fortunately. Determining exactly which timeline it comes from – assuming that it's a known line – requires professional assessment back at HQ, but that's not immediately relevant. The logical deduction is that there's a careless crosstime traveler or an active portal around somewhere.

Identifying the Problem

It should be clear the local law enforcers have the obvious angles covered, but they lack the unique viewpoint I-Cops can bring to this situation. The agents can look over the site for themselves, and if they've failed to approach the local investigators properly this should be what they're doing anyway.

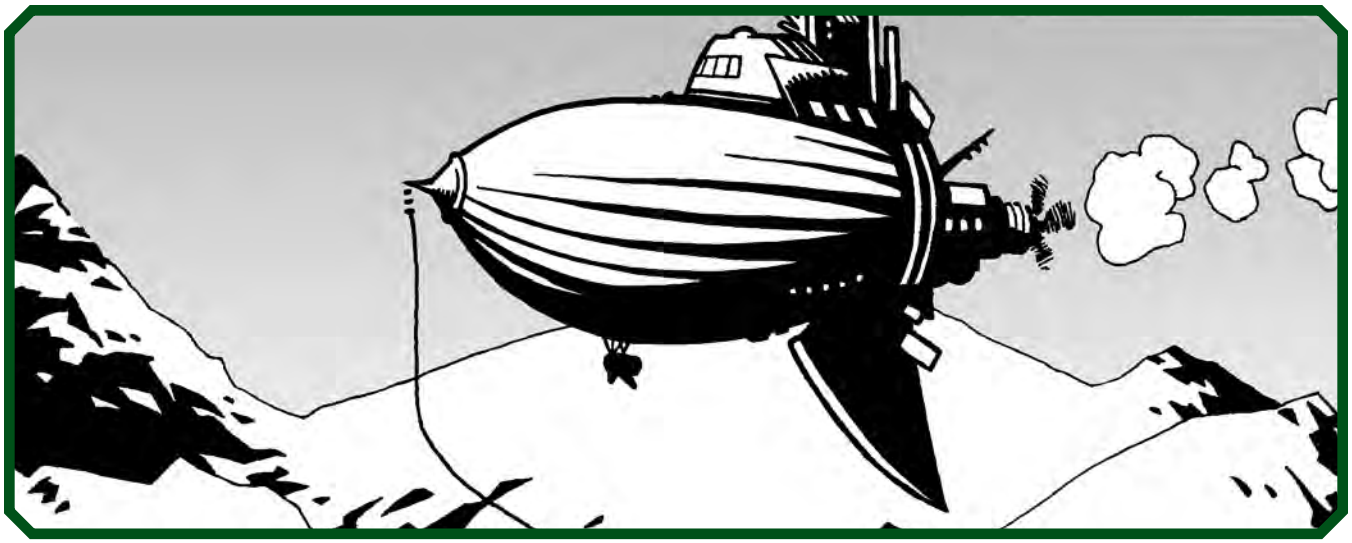
This means heading a few miles out into the English Channel along a bridge that is still under construction and not formally open to the public yet, so the PCs still have to cultivate the cooperation of various law enforcers and work supervisors; slip some local currency to workmen; or maybe just be stealthy. It's a long walk and they may be in a hurry at times, so they might be interested in the vehicles used to carry parties of workmen on and off shift – steam-powered trolleys, capable of traveling 10-16 mph (Move 5-8, perhaps a little more if the GM wants them to be misused in a fight scene). The skill to operate these is Driving (Automobile)/TL(5+1), with significant familiarity penalties, though they're designed to be idiot-proof. Someone attempting to "borrow" one after the operators have gone off-shift will be pleased to discover the boiler doesn't need more than a few seconds to warm up after being used all day.

In any event, gaining access to the location by daylight shouldn't be too hard; the builders are used to showing it off. (That's the point of its existence, really.) Doing so after dark is trickier as work shuts down then at the best of times, and definitely does so since the disappearances started. The people in charge are humane enough not to want to lose anyone else, even volunteers, and *really* don't want to lose, say, any visiting foreign gentlefolk. They may be forceful about this in a polite sort of way, and they have every right to point out the visitors may be trespassing. On the other hand, the project has any number of girders, beams, shadowy niches, and stacks of construction material; hiding out until everyone has gone shouldn't be hard.

Investigating from the Air

The PCs may decide to investigate the towers (or the whole site) from above, or they may need to reach the end of the incomplete bridge as soon as possible – or they might just want to play wealthy tourists to preserve their cover. The obvious place to go is a small field atop the cliffs near the site entrance where a handful of excursion fliers (see p. 49) are based, landing and taking off regularly throughout the day as they convey visitors for a look at the wonders of this great project.

If they hire such a craft, they end up with one operated by Captain Gerard Tully, "formerly of the Duke of York's Aerial Lancers" as he'll tell anyone he meets. Tully is a dashing but slightly down-on-his-luck figure who rose through the ranks to



aerostat pilot thanks to technical skill, but left the service when his lack of social position prevented him rising further and a certain independence of mind made him tire of continual formal maneuvers and parades. Nowadays he makes a living where he can, helped by his ownership of an excursion flyer. Fortunately he enjoys any job that allows him to fly. His manner (and his moustache) play up the "old soldier" style, but this is partly a matter of habit and partly a way to impress customers; he's primarily a technophile. His aerostat, the *Lucy*, is in better repair than it appears.

Tully has ST 11, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 10, Mechanic and Piloting skills for his aerostat at 14, and the advantages Daredevil, Handsome Appearance, and Courtesy Rank. Encounters with, say, winged monsters would rattle him a little, but he's no coward and he does his best to help anyone in trouble. He isn't terribly interested in the bridge or recent events – flying and aerostat maintenance occupy most of his attention – but he knows some basic facts about the project, which he'll rattle off to amuse passengers.

The Bridge and the Monsters

When they get a chance to poke around, the agents can see this is an amazing display of techno-romantic engineering folly; it'll be perfectly functional as a bridge, but the design is crazy (as is the whole idea, after all). The towers have a sweeping, grandiose style, elegant but maybe over-decorated.

The PCs should be encouraged to discuss this with locals in passing; for example, Charles Dickens will ask his new friends what they think of the thing. In the ensuing conversation they may remark on the somewhat incongruous inclusion of gargoyles in the architectural design. However, locals with knowledge of the project are fully aware the design does *not* call for such statuary, and any with an educated grasp of these matters, like Mr. Dickens, is startled and amused by any suggestion that these things might be featured. "Good heavens, that would be primitive *Gothicism* – grossly barbarous in style! Forgive me, but have you not read Ruskin? Mr. Costikyan would be guilty of no such savagery!"

The team can make IQ rolls at +2 to guess what the immediate problem is, followed by a Will or Acting roll to avoid saying something impolite.

The Facts

This entire incident is the product of carelessness on the part of a Cabal agent, Mr. Owen Costikyan, whose specialty is cross-dimensional uses of sacred architecture. Having infiltrated first this timeline and then the architectural profession here, Costikyan has swung himself a job embellishing the design of the Channel Bridge. (Having detailed knowledge of superlative architecture from a dozen parallel worlds and a certain flair for self-presentation makes one look like a very capable, original fellow.) As a huge, symbolically powerful structure built around intricate geometrical principles, the bridge can actually generate subtle mystical resonances that Costikyan knows how to use; he activates his effect by tweaking the fine details of the design.

It should be subtle, no more than a matter of generating a transient low-mana zone in key spots from time to time (perhaps aspected to travel-magic), or maybe even achieving a minor portal. This is something Costikyan can use to shift elsewhere, and any Cabalist can use it for subtle spellcasting from time to time. Unfortunately, the incomplete design creates effects that reverberate through the parallels and have attracted the attention of a small pack of gargoyles (see ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***, p. 73). Tearing the rent in reality a little wider, these creatures have started to pass through. They've been instinctively cautious, avoiding exposure while they get the feel of the place (they know humans are weak and squishy, but can turn nasty if roused, and sometimes carry dangerous weapons), but they have succumbed to temptation enough to grab a few lone humans as prey. Sitting around impersonating architectural features that don't belong is a mistake, though, based on long-standing habits; gargoyles aren't smart enough to grasp human construction aesthetics.

The crew has to track them down and kill them, or at least drive them off; aside from killing people, they're bound to be spotted by alert locals sooner or later, and this is the sort of radical anomaly that draws too much attention to the *wrong* subjects. They have an irritating habit of dipping out of sight any time the team tries to point them out in daylight, but they aren't going to stop their nighttime predations any time soon, and they may well turn increasingly active and vicious.

Mr. Owen Costikyan (282 points)

The villain of this piece, or at least the source of the problem, is actually a small player by the standards of his organization, the Cabal. He's operating at a disadvantage without real access to magic, thanks to the local lack of mana. On the other hand it's entirely possible the PCs will never even see him, so if Infinity unknowingly inflicts a setback to his plans he may end up in a position to carry on with a viable scheme – and that could eventually give him real standing in the organization. He's also better integrated with Britannica-6 society than the party, and might turn that advantage against them if they seem to threaten him.

He's primarily associated with the Wheel of Ptah lodge, but his studies in sacred architecture have drawn him into tentative but repeated collaborations with the Sons of Imhotep, from whom he seems to have acquired attitudes as well as knowledge. Like any competent Cabalist who wants to remain relatively safe, he associates himself with one of the Grand Masters – in his case, the great magical engineer Erasmus Rooke, to whom he sends occasional reports regarding his discoveries, and who may occasionally reward him with aid.

At heart, though, Costikyan is a loner. He's an expert on the subtleties of dimensional instabilities and the dynamics of fate, able to read a situation or a destiny with a glance, and to manipulate such things in subtle ways that require no formal magic. (Indeed, he has limited interest in "conventional" spellcasting, seeing it as too unreliable in the places where he operates; he doesn't care that other Cabalists might see him as a weak dabbler.) His *modus operandi* is to follow paths where they lead; subtly ransack the places he finds; and offer fellow Cabalists lore or magical loot to trade his way up the Cabal's hierarchies of knowledge and influence. As an Adept he's supposed to run his own lodge, but his mobile lifestyle makes that tricky so he merely points to a scattering of minions and dupes across a dozen worlds, if anyone asks. Britannica, though, strikes him as an understated, valuable find, worth a little more attention than most manifestations of the Material.

He *didn't* deliberately bring the gargoyles into this situation, and unlike some Cabalists, he has no way to control them. He might dream of such power, but just now these creatures are an inconvenience and a threat to his schemes. He's happy for the PCs to eliminate them.

Costikyan is in his late 30s, clean-shaven and of average appearance, and dresses in a deliberately unremarkable fashion that normally involves tweeds. On Britannica-6, "plain" clothing is a little more flamboyant, but his is still nothing spectacular. He may have a small pistol of local make somewhere on his person.

Note that Costikyan's upbringing was at TL7 (on a world as similar to Homeline as makes no difference), which rarely inconveniences him (or brings much advantage) in his activities. In some campaigns, though, he might qualify for High or Low TL.

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 12 [20].
Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 13 [3].
Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Parry 10 (staff); Dodge 8.

Continued on next page . . .

Resolution and Departure

The mission has turned into a monster hunt, but these monsters are tough (Body of Stone gives them DR 5), extremely sneaky, and capable of flight. Then again, they really can't resist jumping out at people, especially after dark, *especially* if there are outtime agents around – such visitors have the parachronic "scent" that seems to trigger their attack reflex. The PCs may not want to think of themselves as bait, but that's what they are. The number of gargoyles should reflect the size and strength of the group – one or two fewer than the number of agents is an interesting fight, depending on how much tactical sense each side displays.

The hunt may involve after-dark games of hide-and-seek around the construction site. Alternatively, the investigators may seek the gargoyles' hiding places high on the towers in daylight – but that involves a lot of arduous climbing up internal maintenance stairways, it may attract unwelcome attention from natives, and the gargoyles can easily fly away if they're losing a fight. Searching the little-visited platforms and beams high on the towers at least stands a good chance of confirming the fate of the three missing men; there's not a lot left to find, but tough I-Cops with forensics experience shouldn't suffer too many fright checks from this. An ambush by gargoyles might be another matter.

It's also possible to chase down the monsters from the air using Captain Tully's aerostat – which may also be the quickest way of reaching a colleague in difficulty at the end of the bridge. The agents might subsequently be chastised for involving a local pilot in their activities, but they can always use Eraser on Tully and no one is likely to believe his story anyway. The bigger issue is that the gargoyles not only cheerfully attack the craft, they're fully capable of ripping its gasbags to shreds with their claws. Still, crashing an airship into the Channel Bridge while fighting monsters is the kind of thing that makes for a good story in I-Cop bars.

Under the Bridge

If the player characters drive off some of the gargoyles without killing them, they see the survivors dive under the bridge – and not come out. This isn't typical gargoyle behavior; they prefer heights, and it merits attention.

There's a small zone of dimensional instability amidst the cross-beams and girders under the roadway where the monsters can shift easily to other dimensions of their choice. Anyone who investigates (probably by one of the many boats for hire in Dover harbor) has a nervous few minutes in the damp shadows under the structure, but if the gargoyles get driven back here they leave for good. The dimensional flaw's

Mr. Owen Costikyan (Continued)

Social Background

TL: 7 [0]

CF: Modern Western [0]; Britannica-6 Western [1]; Renaissance Western [1]; Ancient Egyptian [1].

Languages: Homeline English (Native) [0]; Ancient Egyptian (Accented) [4]; Britannica-6 English* (Native) [2]; Classical Greek (Broken) [2]; Homeline French (Accented) [4]; Homeline German (Broken) [2]; Medieval Latin (Native) [6].

*Homeline languages give their Britannica-6 counterparts at one level lower (see ***Infinite Worlds***, p. 175).

Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Cabalist Rank 3 [15]; Claim to Hospitality (Cabalists and personal minions) [5]; Contact (Sons of Imhotep Mage; effective skill Hidden Lore (Egyptian Cults)-15, available quite often, somewhat reliable) [4]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; Magery 2 [25]; Night Vision 1 [1]; Oracle [15]; Patron (Erasmus Rooke; extremely powerful, 6 or less, special abilities (unique magical abilities and contacts), minimal intervention) [12]; Reputation +2 (as a brilliantly innovative meteoric star, in the Britannica-6 architectural/civil engineering community) [3]; See Invisible (Quantum Flows) [15]; Status 1 [5]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Perks: Deep Sleeper [1].

Disadvantages

Callous [-5]; Code of Honor (Cabalist) [-5]; Curious (15) [-2]; Duty (The Cabal and his passers, 6 or less) [-2]; Secret (Ruthless Cabalist Outtime Manipulator) [-20].

Quirks: Dislikes crowds; Restless ambition – always looking for the next great arcane score; Uncongenial. [-3]

Skills

Architecture/TL4-13 (IQ) [2]; Area Knowledge (Astral Realm)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Artist (Drawing)-13 (IQ) [4]; Astronomy (Observational)/TL4-12 (IQ) [2]; Camouflage-13 (IQ) [1]; Cartography-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Connoisseur (Visual Arts)-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Dreaming-12 (Will-1) [2]; Fast-Talk-13 (IQ) [2]; Geography (Physical)/TL7-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Guns (Pistol)/TL5-12 (DX+1) [2]; Hidden Lore (Gates)-13 (IQ) [2]; Hiking-11 (HT-1) [1]; Holdout-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Knife-11 (DX) [1]; Mathematics (Surveying)/TL7-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Merchant-13 (IQ) [2]; Naturalist-13 (IQ) [4]; Navigation (Land)/TL5-15* (IQ-1) [1]; Occultism-14 (IQ+1) [4]; Public Speaking-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Research/TL6-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-13 (IQ) [1]; Savoir-Faire (Spirits)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Staff-10 (DX-1) [1]; Thaumatology-15† (IQ) [8]; Theology (Ancient Egyptian)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Tracking-12 (Per-1) [1]; Urban Survival-12 (Per-1) [1]; Weather Sense/TL4-13 (IQ) [2].

* Includes +3 from Absolute Direction.

† Includes +2 from Magery.

Spells

Itch-13 [1]; Spasm-13 [1]; Pain-13 [1]; Sense Foes-13 [1]; Seek Earth-13 [1]; Shape Earth-13 [1]; Ignite Fire-13 [1]; Create Fire-13 [1]; Shape Fire-13 [1]; Deflect Energy-13 [1]; Heat-13 [1]; Resist Cold-13 [1]; Detect Magic-14 [2]; Seeker-14 [2]; Identify Spell-13 [1]; Analyze Magic-13 [1]; Light-13 [1]; Counterspell-13 [1]; Dispel Magic-14 [2]; Death Vision-13 [1]; Sense Spirit-13 [1]; Seek Water-13 [1]; Purify Water-13 [1]; Create Water-13 [1].

All include +2 from Magery.

visible form is a slight shimmering glow around some of the metalwork, but it's easier to locate by the growths of pale, bizarre fungi not native to any "normal" Earth that have sprung up around it. Humans can't use this gate – it needs the gargoyles' innate powers to "open the way" – but it really needs to be closed.

Characters with technical knowledge know some kind of high-energy flux should do the job, at least temporarily. Explosives aren't really a good idea, but acquiring some large lead-acid batteries and rigging up something with capacitors and cables should serve (skill rolls at the GM's option). Infinity can send a follow-up team in a few days with more specialized kit just to make sure the damned thing stays closed.

If the agents simply kill all the gargoyles or drive them off and don't track them, Infinity sends in a follow-up team (possibly including the PCs) with even more specialized equipment that locates and disrupts dimensional anomalies. If the party didn't think about the possibility of some kind of portal, they may be subject to a little sarcasm from their supervisor – especially if they also failed to identify the reason the gargoyles turned up here and now, or where the newspaper fits into things.

The Newspaper

About which – diligent agents may wonder if they can eliminate that newspaper page before it causes any serious trouble; having done so would surely look good on the report when they get back. The difficulty of breaking into a locked and possibly guarded police office and a secure storage locker, and the attention attracted by anyone doing so just to get at a bizarre "prank item," would be worse than the small risks the thing itself generates. (Anything more destructive or radical, such as burning down that building, is even worse.) No one back at HQ thinks the worse of the PCs if they just walk away from that problem, though others may be assigned to monitor the matter or tidy up the loose end. These or other spin-off plots are good excuses to get the crew back to Britannica-6.

Owen Costikyan

This leaves the real cause of the problem. Owen Costikyan (see the boxes, pp. 62-63) may not be around the Bridge site during this scenario, but the heroes can definitely find out about the creative mind behind the decorative style of the structure. Mr. Dickens can be a fount of information on such

matters. Spotting Costikyan as an outtimer may be a matter of subtle detective work or one inspired guess; doing anything about him might involve a quick, efficient kidnapping or months of additional play within Britannica society. If the PCs get wise to him before they've dealt with the gargoyles and somehow force or persuade him to help, his supernatural awareness may help locate the creatures and the dimensional weakness they're exploiting.

His designs for the bridge incorporate subtle Egyptian styling (a fashion he's unintentionally promoting among architects on this timeline) and precisely calculated proportions. An expert examining the plans may spot these nuances – roll Occultism-3 or Thaumatology. If *he* becomes aware of the gargoyle infestation, he modifies the designs to reduce the threat in future, leaving various arcane relationships unresolved until the bridge is complete to prevent this headache recurring. It takes a while to persuade the engineers to make the changes he suggests, so it's just possible other problems develop (although the attentions of a specialized Infinity technical team should reduce this threat).

Departure

The team should eventually decide they've done as much as is feasible and retire to Abraham Jacobov's warehouse with whatever evidence and souvenirs they've managed to collect, and possibly Costikyan as their prisoner. (In the last case, they should blindfold him to avoid giving away the location of the Infinity/White Star station.) If they've stirred up undue trouble, they should take care to lose any pursuit and minimize the chances of being tracked later. Assuming they've done so, Jacobov will be cordial, interested in their story, and happy to offer them coffee and a place to wait for extraction. In a worse case, he has a good TL8/9 medical kit on the premises.

Local Adventurers and Informal Visitors

As Britannica-6 is a complete world, it's more than a place for I-Cops to visit. Whole campaigns can be set there featuring a purely local cast of PCs and no reference to the Infinite Worlds idea – or that might be introduced gradually as a source of mystery, weirdness, and deeply enigmatic NPCs. Outtime characters don't have to be I-Cops or Scouts on a specific mission; tourists and White Star factors slip into Britannica society and become involved in local events, too. They preserve enough detachment that their players can be excused a slightly disengaged view of the oddities of the setting and some moments of embarrassing ignorance about its details. Strictly speaking, visitors shouldn't become entangled with local politics (at least not without high-level Infinity clearance), but some minor involvement in events may be unavoidable and forgivable. And anyway, who's going to tell the Patrol?

The following are some possible themes for such a game.

International Intrigue

While this timeline is dominated by one large power, Britain faces a number of rivals and challengers, and of course there's plenty of conflict *within* the Empire. Hence, high adventure and intrigue are very much part of the setting. In brief, think swashbuckling secret agents with really cool gadgets. Those working for the crown may sometimes feel underappreciated, and even suspect their work is ultimately futile as the Empire seems determined to dismantle itself from within, while those working for individual Bloods or aristocrats may find themselves caught up in pointless games of one-upmanship. However, some of the ruling classes are better people (more dutiful, honorable, and concerned with genuine progress) than others, and everyone can find themselves fending off Prussian spies, Russian empire-builders, or villainous Italian bandit-princes from time to time. Plots needn't involve attempts to steal the plans for the latest super-weapon (although that should certainly be a staple of such games); arranging or preventing dynastic marriages or probing the defenses of rival powers' colonial holdings should all be possibilities. Fomenting or suppressing assorted revolts, at home or in the colonies, can be part of the heroes' business, too, especially as some extreme political Radicals may be influential and organized enough to become a genuine threat. As with any espionage game, this sort of thing can lead to moral quagmires when someone is instructed to suppress inconvenient but possibly justified opposition to the *status quo*.

Agents needn't actually be professionals; this is one aspect of the timeline in which the talented upper-class amateur still commands a lot of reflexive respect, and some such folk are almost as capable as they think they are. Players who want to take a different angle on such matters are welcome to portray Americans (from the Unites States or New England) who gape in yokel amazement while shooting anything that looks too decadent.

Imperial Exploration

Europe doesn't know everything about the world, let alone rule all of it. There's plenty of untamed jungle in Africa, South America, and southern Asia, as well as more civilized but ultimately more dangerous territory to explore in lands like China or Japan. Smart local rulers may be understandably cynical about the motives of Western guests and respond with brisk ruthlessness – despite the fact that some of the people they're reacting to may have genuinely high-minded ideals, or merely be seeking new drugs and medicines.

In games at the cinematic end of the scale this sort of thing can get distinctly pulpish, with lost cities, monstrous beasts, and uncanny forces; GMs who want to keep things consistent with the Infinite Worlds milieu can justify this by reference to dimensional portals, reality shards, or Cabal incursions. Adventures in Asia provide an excuse for kung fu action – the 19th century is a setting for many Hong Kong movies about

martial arts adepts fending off exploitative imperialists, and there's no reason why this sort of character shouldn't crop up in wilder Britannica-6 stories.

Gone for a Soldier

Military careers in this setting fall into two types: "European" service, consisting mostly of a lot of parades, exercises, and social events, combined with frequent requirements to become familiar with some new wonder-weapon; and colonial or "frontier" activities, involving older-fashioned equipment and a lot more live fire. Adventurous sorts can still find something to shoot at in Europe, what with all the foreign spies and suchlike who seek to undermine their nation's military strength or steal its secrets. It's not impossible to swap between the two – though fashionable regiments have an uncanny knack for avoiding tedious colonial postings. It's more likely that capable soldiers and sailors who've attracted notice (not all of it the good kind) through their adventures and demonstrations of skill find themselves given commissions-without-portfolio by the War Office, and are sent wherever their knack for stirring up and resolving trouble is needed. That may mean foiling spies in Whitehall, chasing down missing engineers on the proving grounds of the Yorkshire Moors, or identifying and negating Russian intriguers in northern India.

Not all adventures for military folk have to revolve around combat. There are plenty of regimental parties and ladies looking for profitable marriages with rising soldiers even in the most turbulent provinces, let alone London or Paris – and not all military PCs have to be stout heroes. The fictional hero-poltroon Harry Flashman may inspire some players. Those who signed up for the army in order to dress up in smart uniforms or fly the latest scout aerostats on parade over Hyde Park could find that, through misfortune or misbehavior, they've been sent into actual fighting – inconvenient at the very least, and possibly downright unnerving.

Lyme Regis Vice

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be, in truth, a dealer in illicit opiates of the most contemptible kind. Also, two Parish Constables, cast together by the vicissitudes of their employment, shall at first despise one the other, but shall eventually learn a warm mutual regard. And further, the Captain of Constables is invariably a Hindoo, who is most distressed by many of the necessary actions of the most capable of his Constables.

Crime-fighting adventures are another possibility in this setting, and can take their style from an unexpected source. Remember that the heroes – urban watchmen and independent thief-takers – are often under-supervised, semi-freelance law enforcers who carry oversized guns; drive big, garish, badly-designed motor vehicles much too fast; and fight ruthless and flamboyant villains who deal in exotic drugs. In other words, games can and *should* combine the sensibilities of a 1980s cop show with a mutated version of the aesthetics of a Regency romance. For additional effect, intrusive Bow Street Runners sent from London to interfere with local law enforcement can wear plain, smart suits and tinted glasses, and be Unfazeable. Getting the dialogue right is left as an exercise for the players.

Heroic Engineering

Heroism on Britannica isn't just defined in terms of warfare and fighting; indeed, much of the local technology was invented as a displacement activity for the competitive ruling classes, enabling them to show off and play status games without starting wars or killing each other too often. The protagonists could be the underappreciated geniuses who put this stuff together, struggling to make ever-bigger creations work despite the fact the aristocratic ambition is running far beyond the bleeding edge of technical feasibility. Players who want to engage in a little more action and a little less techie bafflegab can be the underpaid test pilots, sea captains, and drivers who take the finished products out to prove they work.

Scenarios can involve more than just a lot of design, construction, and piloting work, too. Rival aristocrats may spy on a project or even attempt to sabotage it, creating work for alert and combat-capable good guys – who can be sent on similar missions themselves if their patron isn't too fastidious. Nor are direct rivals the only threat. With all the bets on every contest of any sort on Britannica-6, bookmakers and high-stakes gamblers may attempt to influence the results, while anything with a military application attracts the attention of unfriendly foreign powers. Also, some ventures may extend into unexplored territory – new vehicles can be designed for reconnaissance work, or great road-building schemes can cross barely conquered provinces – producing an overlap with the frontier style of game.

A Life of Crime

Not everything on Britannica's Earth is grand projects of courtly politeness; there's an underworld with all the dark chaos of Homeline's 18th-century Gin Lane and the sordid energy of the Victorian East End put together. In a reality where competition is elevated above everything else, those at the bottom of the heap often feel they have no option but to fight dirty, clawing their way upward by any means that comes to hand. When the wonderful, unconstrained technology of the timeline trickles down to the social depths, it's adopted, adapted, and *used* – and high-powered weaponry and fast motor vehicles somehow prove very easy to *ab*use.

Assuming the players want something more than doomed and desperate ruffians, PCs in a "Britannica's alleys" campaign should have some twist of high-mindedness, or at least a basic sense of criminal honor. They might be extremist Radicals, seeking to tear down the world's corruption, or bounty-hunting thief-takers, preying on the most ruthless predators. Capable street-level characters with a shred of trustworthiness could even find themselves hired – on a secondhand, deniable sort of basis – by factions from the other end of society; when sabotage or espionage are required, the grandest of grandees realizes the streets produce the most effective lackeys. It's also possible to be upper-class criminals, gentleman-thieves who fill the difference between their income and the economic requirements of their Status by pursuing secret second lives . . . out-competing others of their class in a way that, tragically, can never be declared.

Political Activism

On Britannica-6, the personal is political in some very specific ways. While many countries are more or less democratic, the aristocracy and wealthy industrialists wield huge power – many political conflicts are defined in terms of personalities, and settled by personal contests of political will or social influence.

If the players are interested their roles can be those of political operators (or their agents and minions) involved in semi-corrupt elections, lobbying, influence peddling, diplomatic missions, and so on. This can get quite exciting, especially when a faction has to maintain its standing and promote its leader's personal renown by sponsoring dromedary races, putting on displays of the technology he financed, or protecting him against high-tech assassins or just dubious propaganda. A political figure may become the governor of a colonial province for a while, either to build a power base or because he lost some contest at home and was forced into exile; if its population is restive or has enemies on its borders, this can mean military campaigning or espionage. Heroes in such games have high Wealth and Status, but any politician might also employ a few less obvious enforcers with shady backgrounds and more physical skills.

At the other end of the scale, rebels against the system, whether wild-eyed Radicals in Britain, independence campaigners in imperial provinces, anti-authoritarian idealists on mainland Europe, or anti-slavery activists in the Unites States, are by definition outsiders with no particular wealth or influence required. Still, the fight can be just as personal for them,

with causes that seem nobler and a prize much more worthy. Such dissenters are in the business of fighting the cozy complacency of the world's leaders, turning their flashy technology and vaunted ideals back against them.

The Aristocratic Lifestyle

Of course, not all powerful figures on Britannica-6 are in the business of serious politics – though many have personal objectives and ideas that seem important to them. An "upper class for the sake of it" campaign can mix and match flavors and styles; Jane Austen meets Jules Verne, with maybe a large dash of Baroness Orczy. Family alliances and rivalries, private politics, fun with the newest motor carriages, and maybe some swashbuckling adventures can all feature, sometimes in the same scenario – sometimes at the same house party. Successful heroes may fly their aerostats through storms to bring their true loves home in time for the first ball of the season, despite the ironic comments of archrivals concerning the fuel-oil stains on their gloves.

With such diffuse and varied subject matters, these games need a certain amount of ingenuity and focus on the part of the GM. They may start with a specific theme, however loose: "marital politics in 1887 Lancashire," or "first class passengers on the Steam Ship *Theodosius*, meeting on the voyage to India, and their various reasons for going there." After that, hopefully enough comes up to keep everyone in the same picture. If things seem to be slipping apart, the GM can throw in something that affects everyone – a shipwreck, a murder mystery, a revolution, whatever – and oblige them to cooperate. This is, obviously, a soap-operatic sort of game, and GMs can draw on that genre for ideas about plotting.

Blood Games

For a really offbeat campaign, all of the PCs could be Bloods. These scions of the British monarchy or its European counterparts need appropriate Wealth and Status (and accordingly high point values) as they engage in status games involving gambling, sponsorship of bizarre inventions, and social interplay. Alternatively they could form the retinue of a Blood, providing the necessary technological ingenuity, piloting skills, project management ability, and underhanded espionage.

Such a game certainly has winners and losers – the losers being the ones who get exiled to ("sent to administer") New Aberdeen (the ambitious trade-colony project sited on a portion of Greenland recently purchased from Denmark). If each participant plays a different Blood and takes members of his retinue as secondary characters, it could be an unusually competitive campaign, probably with a limited duration. If everyone is part of the same faction, the point of the exercise is to avoid disaster and maybe scramble up the ladder a bit to a hopefully safer position.

"Moves" in this campaign mostly consist of contests of varying sorts – aerostat or dromedary races, high-stakes card games, pulling challenges between giant steam engines, attempts to claim the hand in marriage of some Italian princess – the stranger and more flamboyant the better. Bloods or retinue members with Politics skill may also engage in courtly intrigue; if the aristocrat himself participates, both the benefits of success and the penalties for failure are doubled. Between overt physical contests or political maneuvers, the active Bloods confront each other in duels of manners and wit; in ***GURPS*** terms, these can be handled as Quick Contests of Savoir-Faire skill, with reaction modifiers applying. Someone who recently scored a great victory or won a significant prize in an appropriate competition receives a bonus of up to +4 on the skill; even a minor triumph is worth at least +1. Offering a prize for some impressive objective can also garner a +1 or +2 bonus, but might be expensive. The GM can assign bonuses for especially clever or witty insults or tricks, or for the choice of time or subject-matter for the attack. Winning and losing such duels generates temporary positive and negative Reputations; when a Blood builds up too many losses, a "killing blow" using Politics skill can get him exiled for a year or two (indefinitely on a critical success). Smart folks who know their position is growing unsustainably weak might also *volunteer* for a provincial governorship in the hopes of getting a shorter and more comfortable posting, perhaps even somewhere that generates a comfortable income or opportunities for glory. This can permit a later return to the fray with enhanced wealth, reputation, or technological toys.

Formalizing the System

Groups who want to play this as even more of an abstract game may choose to gamble against each other or the GM with *character points* as currency. Accumulated points, positive or negative, can purchase Reputations within high society for the faction leader, who may also go into "point debt" by accepting a negative Reputation with some elements of the court. This builds up a reserve of points with which to bet, thereby acquiring a more positive position with other NPCs. This should be played out as much as possible – "I'll sneer at the Earl of Shrewsbury's new motor-launch and accept a -2 Reputation with his toadies; his chum Darroway is bound to challenge me to a golf match, and I'll bet the points on that, spending my winnings on positive standing with the sailboat faction down at Brighton." High society as a whole counts as a large class of people for Reputation assessment purposes; individual factions and retinues count as a small class.

Bonus character points can be used in this way or spent on other things; to keep things balanced, the GM may periodically award bonus points to major NPCs. Aristocrats who choose to improve their standing through hard work or quiet social networking might be permitted to adapt the standard "Improvement Through Study" rules (p. B292-293). This gains one point for every 200 hours spent, or for 800 hours of harmless effort on something obscure or irrelevant but broadly useful (analogous to "Learning on the Job"); the time expenditure can be divided between multiple characters within a faction.

Positive points may also be spent, on a 2-for-1 basis, to *reduce* opponents' Reputations (representing a lot of secret slander and backbiting). Anyone reduced to a net -4 Reputation with all of high society has 2d days to do something about it before he ends up counting seals in New Aberdeen.

Even if a campaign set on Britannica-6 isn't built around this idea, the GM should bear in mind that it represents the way that Bloods and their associates *think*. It guides and explains a lot of their behavior.

Bibliography

A lot of basic historical, cultural, and technological information relevant to the alternate history and divergent technology of Britannica-6 can be found in assorted places on the Internet. As usual with that source, readers hoping for complete reliability and accuracy shouldn't trust everything they read, but it's easy to find material that's good enough for a game set in a wild other reality. A number of websites are devoted to historical romances and more highbrow novels such as the works of Jane Austen; as many of these are set in the Regency period, and some of the modern novelists take reasonable care over their social details and period terminology, sites aimed at their readers can be useful.

As a more conventional, academic source the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is, as ever, invaluable.

Also referenced:

Churchill, Winston S. *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, Volume IV* (Cassell and Company, 1958). A handy popular history covering the relevant period.

Pool, Daniel. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* (Simon & Schuster, 1993). A useful introduction to the practicalities of 19th-century life. Much of the coverage is of Victorian rather than Georgian topics, of course, but careful reading easily identifies the parts that should apply to Britannica-6.

3rd Edition ***GURPS*** *Books*

GURPS Steampunk, by William H. Stoddard, is a comprehensive guide to running variant-technology, 19th-century-based games. Its companion, ***GURPS Steam-Tech***, compiled and edited by Stoddard, has many ideas for gadgets and devices, many of which might well fit on Britannica-6.

GURPS Age of Napoleon, by Nicholas Caldwell, is a sourcebook for the Napoleonic wars, including extensive information on Georgian-period living (especially military life), much of which is relevant to this alternate timeline. It's an invaluable guide to the period immediately before the divergence point.

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