

SCIENCE-FICTION
ADVENTURE IN
THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

Referee's Aid 2 : The Type-S Scout/Courier

TRAVELLER

REFEREE'S AID 2: THE TYPE-S SCOUT/COURIER

CREDITS

CLASSIC TRAVELLER

Marc Miller

Loren Wiseman, John Harshman, Frank Chadwick, Darryl Hany, Winston Hamilton, Tony Svajlenka, Scott Renner, Doug Poe, David MacDonald, Wayne Roth, Paul R. Banner.

MONGOOSE TRAVELLER

AUTHOR

Martin J. Dougherty

EDITOR

Matthew Sprange

LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

Will Chapman, Amy Perrett

INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
THE TYPE-S SCOUT/COURIER AND VARIANTS	4
THE STANDARD TYPE-S SCOUT/COURIER	6
SCOUT/COURIER ENCOUNTERS	9



Referee's Aid 2: The Type-S Scout/Courier ©2015 Mongoose Publishing. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this work by any means without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden. All significant characters, names, places, items, art and text herein are copyrighted by Mongoose Publishing.

This game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Game License, please go to www.mongoosepublishing.com.

This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United Kingdom and of the United States. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organisations, places or events is purely coincidental.

Traveller is a trademark of Far Future Enterprises and is used under licence. Printed in the USA.

INTRODUCTION

This book contains source material for Traveller. It follows the general style of the original 'Little Black Books' or LBBs published as part of the Classic Traveller product line. The source material in this book is intended for use with a science-fiction game setting that follows the general standards and assumptions of the Third Imperium, notably:

- Interstellar travel is by way of the jump drive
- No means of interstellar communication exists other than sending a ship via jump drive
- Interstellar travel is common enough that small starships can be owned and operated by individuals and small companies
- An interstellar society exists which contains mainly humans but also various alien races
- Local conditions, culture and society can vary considerably from one world to another
- Energy weapons are possible but rare; conventional and advanced firearms are the standard weapons in use
- There are no energy shields, tractor beams or teleportation devices available at the 'mainstream' technological level of the setting

The following data is provided for the benefit of the Referee. How much of it can be determined by the players, and with what degree of accuracy, is a matter for the Referee to decide. In many cases a simple search on the ship's computer or any library terminal will suffice to provide at least the bones of the information.

THE THIRD IMPERIUM

The Third Imperium is a human-dominated empire, subdivided into sectors and subsectors. It is not a vast, monolithic structure; that would be impossible given the time lag inherent in interstellar communications. Instead, the Imperium resembles a vast federation of worlds that agree to certain common practices, and allow the Emperor and his subordinates to deal with foreign policy, military affairs and similar multi-world considerations while maintaining control of their internal affairs.

As distance from the Imperial Core increases, so does the amount of autonomy enjoyed by world governments and Imperial representatives. However, this is uneven. There are hubs of trade and commerce as well as backwaters in many areas. The major worlds often maintain strong cultural and economic ties to the central region of the Imperium, though some have their own flavour entirely. These hub worlds influence local culture in the same way (but on a smaller scale) that the Imperial Core influences the worlds of the periphery.

Between these major hubs, most of which are high-tech, high-population industrialised worlds, run the main trade lanes of the Imperium. These are well patrolled by the Imperial Navy and even when they pass through backwater systems they tend to be fairly safe. Along these lanes move the huge bulk freighters of the major shipping corporations as well as smaller couriers and mail ships. Less affluent worlds off the main trade lanes are not capable of supporting the giant freighters, so are served by smaller vessels, with ever-smaller branches coming off the trade routes. True backwater systems cannot support any regular trade, and see only occasional tramp traders coming through on a speculative basis or on their way somewhere there is better money to be made.

Since there is no means of communication between worlds other than a starship, those systems that do not see many ships tend to be culturally isolated and often well behind the curve in terms of news, fashions and information in general. These systems often do not see more than the occasional navy patrol, and can be hazardous. These backwaters are by no means violent maelstroms of piracy and smuggling, but they offer those with a reason to hide from the law a place where they are unlikely to be disturbed unless the Navy sweeps in on a clean-up. That does not happen very often, but if a situation gets out of hand the authorities will respond. Most of the rest of the time, life goes on in the backwaters as it always has, and the Imperium is a distant thing.

THE IMPERIAL INTERSTELLAR SCOUT SERVICE (IISS)

More commonly just referred to as 'the Scouts', the IISS is responsible for three main areas of activity, each carried out by an arm of the service known as an office.

The Communications Office is responsible for routine official communications within the Imperium and from installations located outside of Imperial territory. Other organisations carry information and communications of course; the navy has its own fleet of couriers, as does the diplomatic service. Marchant traffic carries a lot of communications and mail as well as freight. However, it is the Scout Service that operates the Express Boat (Xboat) service which provides rapid transfer of information between major starports across the Imperium without regard to commercial viability. Thus once information from any point is fed into the Xboat system it will spread out at the speed of an Xboat (jump-4, or 4 parsecs per week) to reach distant places at a reliable rate.

The Xboat service links major ports, from which data is disseminated to local worlds that are not on the Xboat network. Much of this data is carried by local merchant traffic, but links are also provided by courier ships assigned to the communications office. Scout Service Couriers also carry messages wherever they are needed to various destinations on an as-necessary basis. Relays of courier vessels are sometimes used to bring information on a developing situation to a central point, or to ensure that messages from a distant outpost are rapidly conveyed. Less critical information can be relayed by a single vessel making a multi-jump transit.

The Exploration Office is responsible for exploration of new territory or areas that have not been properly mapped. Even centuries after the creation of the Third Imperium there are areas that are not fully mapped and worlds whose data files contain little more than an initial survey done long ago. The task of exploring every world, moon and planetoid field in Imperial space is a huge one, and of course expeditions are also launched beyond Imperial territory.

The exploration office is responsible for collecting a wide variety of data, including information on a planet's weather systems, its native life and any people who may live there. Contact with new groups (or entirely undiscovered species) is normally handled by the Contact & Liaison branch, which forms part of the Exploration Office. C&L also handles a lot of routine liaison tasks with minor races or groups that are apart and distinct from mainstream Imperial society.

The Survey Office is responsible for creating detailed maps and charts of pretty much everything in the Imperium and beyond it. Where the Exploration Office collects data and may make a basic map of a planet, Survey Branch will search for minerals, establish the thickness and stability of the planetary crust and chart the seabeds to turn that map into a detailed data source on the world in question.

However, the main mission of the Survey Office is to maintain and update navigational charts. This is a critical and very complex task, requiring that orbits be plotted not just for planets and moons but also for comets and other smaller bodies. 'Rock-plotting' is not a particularly exciting mission but a detailed chart of a planetoid field may one day be needed so the Survey Office will be tasked with compiling one. The Survey Office is often called by its original title, the Imperial Grand Survey.

These three offices make up the Field Command of the Scout Service. Other tasks are carried out by the Bureaucracy Command (often termed 'the Bureaucracy' in less than complimentary tones by field scouts), which handles administration, personnel-related matter such as recruitment and training, technical services and a number of additional tasks that make possible the work of the field scouts.

Unlike other services, Scouts do not retire or leave the service. Instead they join the Detached Duty office, which is part of the Bureaucracy. Scouts are often sent on detached duty for various reasons. For example, Scout Service personnel might be loaned to a private exploration or scientific mission in return for data from the expedition, or might be assigned to another service for a time. A Scout Service pilot with experience of operating in a tricky area might be 'borrowed' by a navy ship, for example. Temporary detachment of this kind is often referred to as 'active detachment' since the Scout is expected to return to normal duties at the end of it.

Scouts desiring a break from the service can also go on a form of Detached Duty, which is known as 'inactive detachment'. This basically means that the Scout is free to do whatever they like but will not get paid whilst on detachment, and is subject to reactivation at any time. Some Scouts use this option to take a break for whatever reason, and those no longer fit for duty or who want to go on to another career are also transferred to the Detached Duty roster. All are subject to the same reactivation clause in their personnel dossier. In theory, this means that elderly Scouts could be rounded up out of their rocking-chairs and sent off to explore the unknown, but in practice only those still fit for duty are reactivated.

Some Detached Scouts are given use of a Scout/Courier (or occasionally some other starship). They can more or less do as they please in this ship, but cannot sell it or otherwise make it unavailable to the Scout Service. This includes making radical modifications or otherwise rendering the ship incapable of carrying out its usual functions. Scouts given use of a ship are far more likely to be reactivated (often on a temporary basis to deliver a message or carry out a short-term mission) than those who do not have a ship. Support is provided in terms of fuel and other basic supplies whilst the ship is reactivated for service. The rest of the time, the user must meet its costs but can obtain annual maintenance at any Scout base provided he or she is willing to wait for a slot to open up in the maintenance schedule.

THE TYPE-S SCOUT/COURIER AND VARIANTS

The Type-S Scout/Courier fulfills one of the most basic requirements of any interstellar organisation – be it a government, commercial entity or military force. It is first and foremost a low-cost messenger ship, and although it does have some additional features its overall capabilities are limited by the need to provide an interstellar communications capability at as low a price as possible.

The Type-S is little more than a jump drive with fuel tanks plus controls and enough space for people to operate them. Its only ‘frills’ (if they can be considered to be such) are that the Type-S can make jump-2, and has a fairly comprehensive sensor fit. Many of its missions require only jump-1, and the military-grade sensors are not necessary for routine communications duty, but by incorporating these features in the basic concept the original designers created a craft that could carry out almost any messenger or utility-ship mission. Whilst this did increase unit cost somewhat, the sheer range of missions that can be carried out by this otherwise rather humble starship ensured its ubiquity whereas competing vessels with jump-1 and jump-2 variants are vastly less common.

The key to the Scout/Courier’s enormous success is its ability to provide jump-2 in a small package. Jump-2 is something of a magic number in starship design as it represents a huge leap in capability without a vast increase in cost. A jump-2 ship is more than twice as fast over interstellar distances than a jump-1 competitor, as the latter has to make a normal-space transit to and from a source of fuel after crossing one parsec. Once the ship itself is paid for, jump-2 is also more economical than two jump-1 transits as although the same amount of jump fuel would be used, there are powerplant fuel, life support and crew salary costs to be considered. Crew fatigue is another factor – working aboard a small ship is tiring and stressful after quite a short period, so naturally a vessel that can go farther before the crew need downtime is more efficient.

There is also the vitally important consideration that it is possible to go almost anywhere in the Imperium or beyond with a jump-2 drive. Jump-1 ships are restricted to the mains and clusters, where worlds are one parsec apart, or else must refuel in deep space. It is generally possible to plot a jump-2 route to almost any destination, although a few rift areas contain worlds that cannot be reached in this way. Thus the Type-S can get almost anywhere, can do it more than twice as fast as a jump-1 ship, and does it for a relatively low cost.

However, there is a tradeoff. The Type-S has very little cargo space and is not viable as a transport, trader or similar commercial vessel. It is also rather cramped, with very little space for the crew to do more than their jobs. If the vessel is undertaking work that takes it through ports where the crew can get out and about, or is on a mission where it is landed for a long period and the crew are working outside, then this is not much of a problem at all. However, on long missions, especially boring ones such as tracking and plotting planetoids for the Survey Office, a Scout/Courier can become a pressure-cooker for the crew.

The Scout/Courier is used more or less as standard by the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service and by a great many other operators. Numerous world governments and corporations also buy and use the Type-S for personnel transfers and routine courier work. Examples are also sometimes found in naval service (typically by smaller navies that do not have access to custom designs) as pickets or messengers, and may be carried aboard larger vessels for missions that require a jump-capable subordinate craft.

Some users heavily modify the standard Type-S, either to meet a custom requirement or into one of the standard variants. By far the most common of these is the Seeker, a mining/prospecting vessel, a conversion that does away with two of the crew cabins and the common area to make room for an ore bay and mining equipment. Another not-uncommon variant is to create a (very) light system patrol asset by stripping an old Scout/Courier of its jump drive (and usually selling any salvageable components or using them to patch up another ship) and installing weaponry if none was already fitted.

Other Scout/Couriers are pressed into service as jump-capable escorts and patrol ships. Whilst these are more of an ‘armed presence’ than a warship as such, they may be effective in deterring piracy and lawlessness by allowing a naval force to cover a larger area for the same budget than if proper warships were used. The Imperial Navy does not use scout ships in this capacity, though it does sometimes ‘borrow’ them with Scout Service crews to act as pickets and messengers for a force interdicting a Red Zoned world.

Overall, the Type-S is not a ship that can pay its way in normal commerce, but it is one that can enable the people aboard to get to where they can make money. Privately owned Scout/Couriers typically generate revenue by being paid to carry out missions such as scientific data gathering, mapping and the like or else act as transportation for their owners who make a living using whatever their personal skills and capabilities might be.

Some privately owned Scout/Couriers are involved in the so-called 'small package trade', which can be a euphemism for smuggling. However, some clients will pay a premium to have a person or small amount of cargo transported, especially by an armed ship, so it is quite possible to make a reasonable living without breaking any laws. This is particularly true of vessels receiving support from an outside source. For example, if a Scout/Courier crew is offered a fee plus expenses to visit a neighbouring world and deliver a large quantity of data in electronic form, then anything that can be carried in the small cargo hold is a bonus. Most owners are constantly on the lookout for ways to make a little money on the side.

Thus the Scout/Courier can be encountered on a wide variety of missions, including but not restricted to:

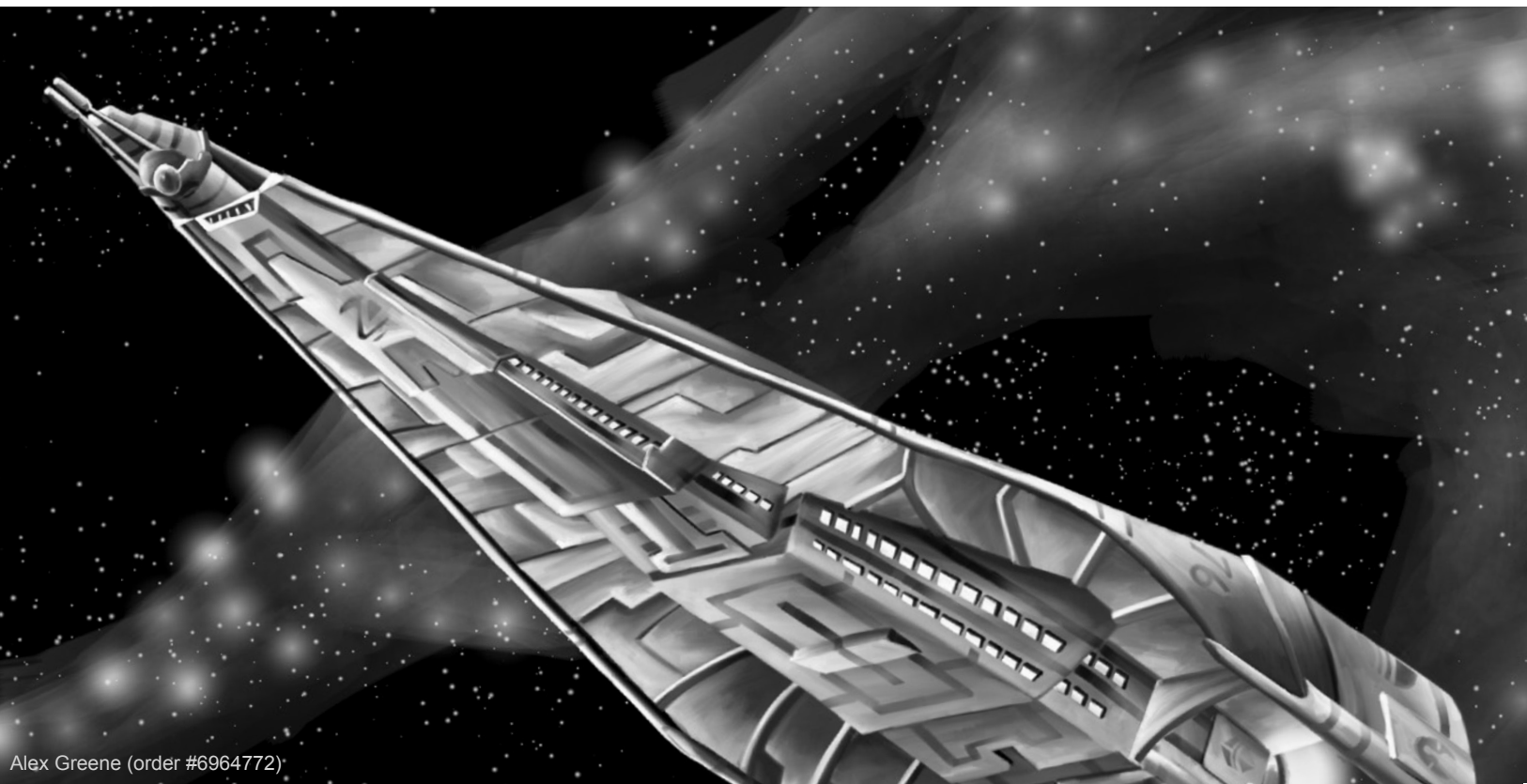
- Fixed-route communications duty carrying electronic communications
- Mapping or exploration work
- Scientific data gathering
- Personnel transportation
- Mail ship operations, delivering small quantities of physical items plus electronic communications on a set route
- General messenger work
- Light picket/escort duty
- Customs and policing duties
- Prospecting or salvage work
- Jump-capable subordinate craft for large vessels
- Supporting the Xboat network

A Type-S Scout/Courier can be operated in an emergency by just one person, but this is exhausting if complex operations are required and becomes dangerous in a crisis if the crewmember needs to be in two places at once. The official crew requirement

is two – a pilot/astrogator and an engineer. Most operators prefer to carry at least one additional crewmember (usually a multi-skilled technician or deck hand), and often a mission specialist is carried by Scout Service vessels. The latter may be a sensors expert on a survey operation or a space scientist on a system exploration mission.

For missions requiring landing and ground exploration, additional personnel are sometimes carried by doubling up some or all of the cabins. This makes it possible to carry up to eight personnel, but it is horribly cramped during the transit to the mission area. It is thus rare to find more than four to six personnel aboard a Scout/Courier, and then only for a short mission or one requiring the extra personnel. The Exploration Office generally does not use lone Scout/Couriers to conduct planetary exploration but when this is necessary the crew usually undertake the exploration themselves. Scouts are trained to be multi-skilled and adaptable, and many personnel are very glad to get out of the ship for a while. On the downside, this does mean that a casualty among the 'field team' can compromise the crew's ability to operate their vessel.

The commonest crew mix for a Scout/Courier is thus either three or four people including a pilot, an astrogator (both these may be combined into a single individual), an engineer and possibly one or two additional crewmembers. A gunner may be carried if weapons are fitted, but since gunners are only needed some of the time this crewmember usually spends most of his or her time assisting with sensor operations or routine technical tasks. The presence of an extra set of hands or two, even belonging to someone with no shipboard skills as such, can be highly useful in spreading out the workload. A pilot/astrogator who also has to make dinner is less efficient than one who has only two jobs to do at once.



THE STANDARD TYPE-S SCOUT/COURIER

Built on a streamlined wedge-shaped hull, the Type-S is a tough and reliable little ship capable of jump-2 and 2-g acceleration. In addition to 20 tons of jump fuel it carries 20 tons of powerplant fuel, giving an endurance of ten weeks with a jump or twenty weeks without. However, this is far beyond what most crews can stand aboard such a small vessel.

The Scout/Courier is a very easy vessel to operate, and as a class it is very reliable. Generations of use have thrown up almost every conceivable bug and glitch in the power, drive and flight systems, and these have been ironed out in countless refits or redesigns incorporating literally millions of hours of flight experience. For this reason, old Scouts are often used as training vessels; many spacers make their first takeoff or their first jump aboard a weary old Scout/Courier. The vessel's 2g thrust is easy to control courtesy of not particularly advanced but well optimised avionic systems, enabling even a rookie pilot to land in a tight space or undertake precision manoeuvres.

The wedge-shaped hull is streamlined and has good aerodynamic capabilities when under power in an atmosphere, making the Scout/Courier one of the safest vessels in which to undertake gas giant skimming for fuel. However, control does require power; the Type-S cannot glide. Its configuration is optimised for low drag when driving through an atmosphere and resistance to turbulence whilst under power. With no control surfaces and no stabilisers (e.g. fins) this vessel cannot guide itself through an atmosphere using airflow over the hull, and even if it could it would soon go out of control.

The vessel's shape causes it to (usually) go into a flat spin if drive control is lost. Recovery is impossible unless the drive and avionics are brought back online. However, there is an emergency system that uses residual power and feedback-recovery from the vessel's gravitic systems to give the pilot a few moments of powered control even if the main power system is completely dead, and the avionics will function in emergency mode for as long as there is any power available. Thus at least some of the pilots who claim to be able to dead-stick a Type-S in to a safe landing are telling the truth – they may not exercise control in the same manner as a conventional aircraft but the achievement is equally worthy.

The Type-S is constructed around a central corridor, with the hull broken into sections by transverse bulkheads pierced by iris valves that allow various parts of the ship to be isolated and evacuated, or to function as an emergency shelter if other parts are holed. These bulkheads are an essential part of the vessel's structure, so variants that remove part of them suffer from a weakened or at least less rigid hull.

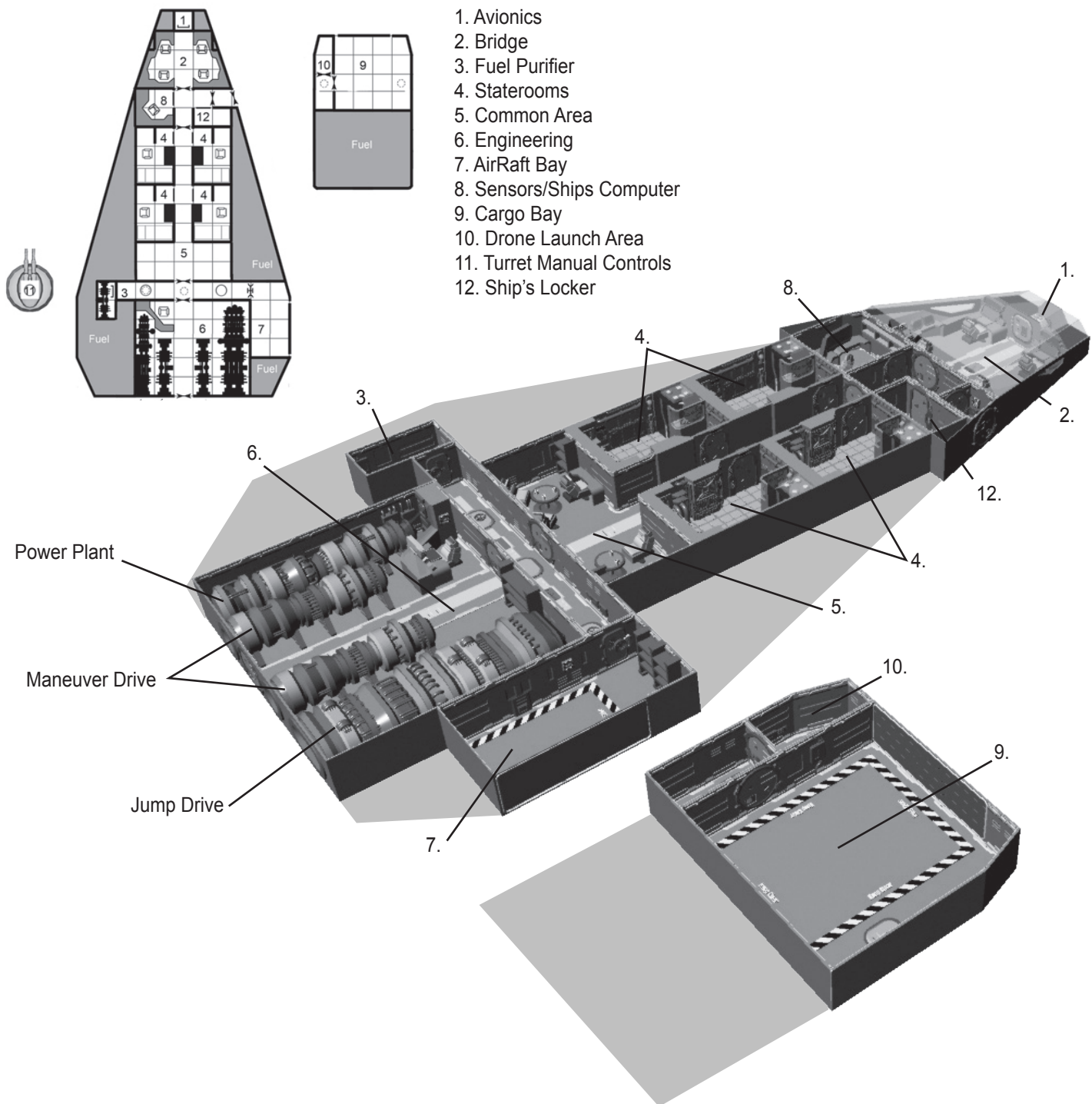
Entry to the vessel is possible from a variety of points. When landed the Scout/Courier rests on three large retractable feet which flank the lower-deck area. This is the (rather modest) cargo bay, accessed via a forward-facing retractable ramp. A pair of iris valves in the ceiling allow movement into the transverse corridor on the main deck. This corridor gives access to some of the ship's systems such as the fuel purification equipment and the dorsal turret if one is fitted. If there is no turret it is possible to climb out onto the upper hull through its access hatch.

At the starboard end of the transverse corridor is the air/raft bay. Whether or not this actually contains an air/raft depends on the owners of the ship. Many operators use the space for additional spares and stores, or as a space to install specialist equipment for whatever mission the vessel has undertaken. The external door of this space is sometimes welded shut on a permanent basis, or even plated over. If it is not, then this space can function as a large airlock, permitting the air/raft to be launched on an airless world or one with a toxic atmosphere.

Aft of the transverse corridor is the engineering space, which has the somewhat unusual feature of two (reduced to one on some variants) iris valves giving access to the exterior of the hull. New spacehands are often told lurid tales of how these valves can malfunction and vent the engineering space to vacuum, although there are no records of this ever happening aboard any ship. The valves are used when planetside to give access to the drive plates and other external components for maintenance. This could be done in space, but requires a fair number of safety cutouts to be over-ridden. The transverse bulkhead is quite capable of withstanding the pressure differential if the engineering space is vented, so at times it may be useful to be able to leave the ship (in a vacc suit) to have a look at the drives from the outside.

The aft valves are also used for dockside maintenance. The Scout/Courier is sufficiently common that many yards have one or more fast-access cradles specifically for ships of this type. Yard crews and robotic maintenance units can access the drives through the aft valves, swapping out frequent-replacement components or those that require removal for testing much more quickly than if they had to be carried out of the vessel via another entrance.

Forward of the transverse corridor is the common area, which is used for cooking, eating, crew meetings and almost every other purpose. Other than the cargo area, which may or may not be cluttered, this is the largest useable space in the ship – and it is anything but spacious. The common area has a fixed galley section and an eating/multipurpose area which can be cleared of its foldaway tables to make some space if necessary.



The common area does provide a measure of recreation and relief from tiny cabins and the cramped bridge, but it is insufficient to prevent the crew from becoming bored, frustrated and cranky on a long trip. It is certainly inadequate from the point of view of passenger care, which is one reason why Scout/Couriers find it difficult to obtain a license to carry paying passengers. The occasional passage in return for a fee is acceptable, but few Scout/Courier operators would even try to get away with charging Mid Passage rates as the vessel simply cannot provide the level of service required for a passenger license.

It is perhaps worth noting that this area is by far the most common site of crewmember-on-crewmember violence or murders. This statistic is partially skewed by the difficulty of fighting in some areas of the ship, but mainly it reflects the fact that crewmembers must spend almost all their downtime in a tiny cabin or this space. For those wearying of the delights of the common area, knowledge that there is nowhere else to go can become oppressive. Over time this can reach the point where some people cannot take it any more, with various unpleasant events often following.

Forward of the common area, through an iris valve, the main corridor runs past four identical cabins. Each has the usual features for a starship cabin – bed, folding desk and chair, fresher, a few shelves and lockers, and an emergency unit on the wall. This contains a rescue ball in case the ship is suddenly depressurised and, aboard a Scout/Courier equipped to Scout Service regulation levels, additional stores. These include a softsuit – a rather flimsy emergency vacc suit and an air bottle good for a couple of hours, a disposable filter mask, a pair of tough and corrosion/heat resistant elbow-length handling gloves, a very basic toolkit and a survival kit containing a few ration bars, water and some chemical lightsticks. These extra items are usually missing from vessels that have not been refitted to Scout Service standards in recent history, but the rescue balls are required if the ship is to pass space worthiness inspection, so are always present unless they have recently been used.

Forward of the crew accommodation, through an iris valve, is the ‘electronic systems workspace’, more commonly known as the computer room. Two multipurpose workstations are provided, of which one is normally configured for operations involving the vessel’s sensor systems and the other for more abstract tasks such as data processing or complex calculations. Another iris valve leads forward from here into the bridge.

Control of the vessel is from the forward-located bridge, though basic control can also be accomplished from the electronics workspace or the engineering room. The bridge has two workstations. One is a dedicated pilot’s position whilst the other can be used for piloting but is more commonly the astrogator’s position. It may also be used for other tasks such as sensor operations; for many routine tasks it is more useful to have the sensor operator on the bridge than in a different room. The vessel’s flight electronics systems (avionics) are located in a space directly forward of the bridge.

The Scout/Courier does not have a dedicated ‘ship’s locker’, unlike many larger vessels. The sort of items that are normally stored in such a locker are typically distributed throughout the ship, stowed wherever there is room. There is a gun locker on the bridge, which aboard many vessels contains no weapons but is instead used to stash any random objects that are found lying about. Officially, the bridge locker is supposed to contain ‘suitable weapons for the ship’s defence in an emergency’, which usually translates to an old revolver and a shotgun that rattles when it is knocked. Some ships are better equipped of course.

Décor aboard Scout/Couriers is utilitarian and drab for the most part. Grey, grayish-blue and beige seem to predominate in most ships, with an excessive amount of fake wood paneling of an unconvincing dark brown added to some cases. Corners tend to be chipped or flaked away, carpets are worn down to the backing aboard most ships, and the whole image is one of world-weariness and boredom. This is in keeping with the spirit of these ships, many of which have been in service for over a century.

Some operators try to improve matters with anything from high-quality tasteful décor to garish tartan and chintzy patterns in eye-busting colour schemes. Likewise, furnishings often vary from standard and might be ‘repurposed’ from other vessels without regard to how they match the other décor or fit in their assigned space. Non-standard components are almost a standard feature aboard older Scout/Couriers; at some point in its long career a ship will have had a replacement part substituted for the usual components, and may thus have odd sections of piping, or a shower that behaves like a fire hose at times then packs up for days on end.

These ‘features’ are part of the ‘Scout/Courier experience’ as it is known. Doors that cannot open fully or seats that no longer swivel because they are blocked by a retrofitted component seem like minor nuisances most of the time, but one a multi-week planetoid-charting mission they can be the final straw that sends a crewmember howling in rage down the main corridor... and back up it again, because there is nowhere else to go.

The one feature of the Scout/Courier that everyone knows about is the problem with its air scrubbers, which causes the ship to stink after a few days. This is actually only a problem on some examples; most vessels have a perfectly workable air system. Some crews can be less than scrupulous about cleaning themselves and their ship, and may blame any odd smells on the legendary defective air scrubbers, which has contributed to the legend of the ‘smelly scout ship’. Of those vessels afflicted by the inadequate air treatment system, most were put right in refits many years ago, or had replacement systems built by their owners out of whatever parts were available. Some do retain the old system, and can at times be identified by the faint pong emanating from them when the airlocks are open, or by the odour clinging to their crewmembers.

SCOUT/COURIER ENCOUNTERS

The following encounters are all with Scout/Couriers, but each has very different characteristics. These vessels and their crews might be encountered on the landing pad at a starport, or in passing as local colour. The characters might even travel aboard or interact directly with one of these ships.

SURVEY SCOUT LX-1404

‘LUCKY DOG’

Lucky Dog is the designation given by its current crew to the vessel more properly designated LX-1404. Originally built by Ling Standard products over sixty years ago, Lucky Dog has survived two fairly serious incidents, of which it shows scars. The first was a collision in which the ship was ‘pranged pretty good’ and had to be extensively rebuilt.

The work was done well enough that there are no significant structural problems thirty years after the rebuild, but there is something slightly misshapen about the craft and her handling in atmosphere is a little wayward. This has resulted in a handful of minor incidents (notably removing part of a starport comms antenna during takeoff in a high crosswind) which make Lucky Dog’s logbook interesting and faintly embarrassing reading.

The second incident occurred a few years ago, when the vessel was fired upon by a ‘suspect’ merchant ship whilst acting as an interdiction monitoring vessel in support of navy assets. The damage was not quite crippling, and LX-1404 returned to service a second time before transferring to the Survey Office.

Today, this vessel is assigned to routine chart-update and traffic-monitoring work, which generally means jumping into a star system and spending a few days on a fairly cursory long-range sensor sweep before proceeding to the starport for fuel and some downtime. The crew are tasked with recording data on how many ships of what type use the port while they are there, and also with reporting on the quality of service offered by the port. This includes monitoring things like the spares and stores levels retained by the portside maintenance facilities (if any) and commenting on the efficiency of support crews.

The fun part of the task involves visiting bars, restaurants and portside entertainment services to ‘test’ their facilities. This means that this crew currently has a mostly dull (but safe) job, which – according to their interpretation – includes a budget for getting blind drunk and being thrown out of classy portside restaurants. The ship’s nickname comes from this part of the job.

The crew of Lucky Dog is a typical three-person team. Andrea Kilvestenn is the leader and also the ship’s engineer. Scouts have no formal rank structure, forming teams with leaders and specialists as needed. Andrea is the oldest of the team, a veteran of around 50 with many years of service behind her, and naturally was selected to lead this mission. She is also (perhaps not coincidentally) the most given to roistering in port and can be found trying to pick up a date within minutes of going portside.

The ship’s pilot/astrogator is Dave Alix, a promising youngster on his first deployment. Dave is somewhat in awe of Andrea, and worries about disappointing her. As a result he plays up the tricky flight characteristics of Lucky Dog a bit more than necessary so that he has something to blame if he screws up. Dave tries to look the part of the ‘career Scout’; typically wearing rumpled grey Scout Service coveralls with a Hawaiian shirt over the top. This look is something of a cliché, but many more experienced Scouts carry it off. Dave has an air of being a bit over-eager instead.

The ship’s third crewmember is ‘Habb’, whose actual name is long and difficult to pronounce for humans. Habb is a Bwap, a race of reptilian humanoids slightly smaller than the typical human. Habb has his species’ usual gift for administration and general bean-counting, and really enjoys tasks like entering data on planetoid rates of rotation cross-referenced with orbital velocity. He rarely leaves the ship and seems quite content to wander around it stowing and cataloging any misplaced items while the others are in port. Lucky Dog is old and worn, but she is one of the tidiest Scout ships in Charted Space, with every nut, bolt and spare sock in its proper place.

THE CAT BOAT

The Scout-Courier referred to as The Cat Boat has an official designation, but everyone knows it by its nickname. It is a relatively new vessel; only about twenty years old, and from the outside seems to be in good shape. However, The Cat Boat was loaned to a Detached Duty Scout named Clive Mikraanii almost as soon as it came off the ways, and is now probably in such a condition that the Scout Service does not want it back.

Clive Mikraanii went Detached after a long career in exploration work, without filing a reason or an intended duration. Normally, Scouts who are unlikely to be reactivated due to age are not given a ship, but occasionally someone is sufficiently distinguished that the service feels it is appropriate to loan a ship as a mark of respect. So it was with this vessel. Clive Mikraanii was something of a legend in his day, an intrepid explorer and inveterate adventurer who went further, climbed higher and generally outperformed whole teams of experts. His reasons for going Detached are not known, but he seems to have no desire to return to the service. After twenty years he is probably permanently inactive – and intriguingly he has been passed over for reactivation even when few other qualified individuals were available. Again, the reasons for this treatment are not common knowledge.

Today, Clive wanders Charted Space in The Cat Boat, alone other than for his large number of cats. He is often thought to be crazy, though those that seek him out for advice find he is charming, lucid and full of helpful tips. It is not uncommon for spacers, Scouts and even the odd scientist to bring him complex problems and be given a simple and effective solution. He does not discuss how he came to be The Crazy Old Man In The Cat Boat, however.

The Cat Boat itself is a standard Scout/Courier with its controls set up to be run by one person. This leaves plenty of room for at least twenty-seven cats who live permanently aboard the vessel. There are regulations about letting offworld animals escape from a visiting starship, but Clive is more concerned that one of his friends might get out and get lost – and that, he declares to anyone who will listen, is the advantage of having airlocks!

As might be expected, the interior of Clive's ship is something of a mess. Everything that can be clawed has been, and despite Clive's best efforts at litter sanitation there is often a smell which has nothing to do with bad air filters. The general impression of chaos that greets anyone honoured enough to be invited aboard might confirm suspicions about Clive's sanity, but there is still an air of stone-cold competence about him that belies this impression. Those talking to Clive for any length of time come away with the distinct feeling that he knows something they do not; something very important. To date nobody has managed to get Clive to explain what it might be.

PATROL GUNSHIP LIGHT THREE

'Light Three' is a prosaically named converted Scout/Courier which now serves as a customs enforcement vessel. Her jump drive is gone, but the vessel is externally very similar to a standard Scout/Courier. A twin turret of non-standard design sits on the dorsal surface, and the air/raft bay has had its outer door replaced with an extendable docking tube, enabling the vessel to transfer personnel to almost any craft.

Light Three can function as a system defence boat at need, or can act as an armed presence to deter attacks on shipping, but its main role is (relatively) long-range law enforcement out from the mainworld. Compared to the facilities aboard a pinnacle or cutter, a former starship like a converted Scout/Courier offers greatly enhanced crew comfort and thus patrol endurance. This vessel typically undertakes in-system cruises of two to four weeks' duration, conducting inspections of vessels and their cargo or responding to alerts at ranges that small craft based at the mainworld could not.

Light Three is still a rather cramped environment for its seven-strong crew. The flight crew (captain/pilot, engineer and medic/gunner) remain aboard the vessel whilst the four-person 'inspection and enforcement' squad transfer across to the target vessel for customs or space worthiness inspections. Their vacc suits and other space gear are stowed in the former air/raft bay, and part of the electronics systems workspace has been converted into an arms and contraband/evidence locker. There are even cells in the space opened up by the removal of the jump drive, though these are rarely used.

The lower-deck cargo hold has been converted into an additional crew space, somewhat offsetting the fact that only the vessel's commander has a solo cabin. Everyone else is jammed into double-occupancy cabins, though since this is a vessel based out of a permanent installation, berths are only for the duration of a mission and thus the lack of space is not as oppressive as if the crew lived aboard the vessel full-time.

Light Three would pose little threat to a real warship, but it is not meant to. It is a patrol asset, serving mainly to remind local traffic that there are laws and regulations to be obeyed. Most missions involve nothing more than routine traffic monitoring, inspections of cargo aboard vessels bound for ports at the mainworld or elsewhere in the system, and eyeballing vessels to confirm they are what their transponder claims. Light Three has responded to far more mishaps and minor emergencies than potentially violent incidents, and has been generally successful in making space travel safer and more law-abiding in her vicinity.

TREBBON'S SHIP

'Trebbon's Ship' used to belong to Alexi Trebbon, a Belter who had made a number of decent strikes in his career. Alexi retired on the proceeds of selling the rights to these claims, and apparently passed his vessel on to someone else. It has since been owned, or at least operated – its registry papers are vastly out of date – by various prospectors, but the Trebbon name is still used. Perhaps it brings good luck, or maybe the users have not troubled themselves to come up with anything new.

Trebbon's Ship is a Seeker, a conversion of the standard Scout/Courier design. The main alteration made when converting a Scout/Courier to a Seeker is the deletion of the crew area and aft pair of cabins to create a pair of ore bays, which in turn necessitates moving some fuel tankage. This means that there is no common space for the crew unless they can find some way to have fun amid a pile of ore samples. There are also now only two cabins, reducing the maximum crew that can be carried to four under horrifically cramped conditions. Seekers are typically operated by one or two people, so this is not much of a problem in the short term.

One other fairly major alteration has been made in the case of this ship. This one is not standard for the Seeker, but may have been a response to the lack of space or perhaps damage incurred in the past. The bulkhead between the bridge and the electronics systems workspace has been cut away; one workstation has been removed from the bridge and one from

the electronics bay, creating an open space on the port side of the command area at the price of reduced structural integrity. This space currently contains equipment racks and a home-made but very well equipped vacc suit maintenance bay.

Similarly, the portside ore bay has been converted into an equipment maintenance area. The vessel can still conduct prospecting operations but cannot carry more than about ten tons of ore samples in its remaining bay. The cargo area can hold a little more but is typically filled with stores and spares needed for a prospecting mission.

As with many Seekers, the air/raft bay does not contain one, but is instead used as an excursion bay. It contains drilling equipment, small extraction robots and other prospecting equipment, and is the primary means of entry and egress when the Seeker is engaged in prospecting operations. This does mean that this is the most dinged and dented part of a very hard-used ship, but in recent years Trebbon's Ship has been engaged less in prospecting and more in support of other Belters' operations. The current operators make more money from maintaining and repairing equipment belonging to others than by their own efforts; sufficiently so that Trebbon's Ship is currently quite prosperous and has several newly replaced components which previously had been patched and jury-rigged far beyond their normal working lives.

Perhaps the name is lucky, after all.

