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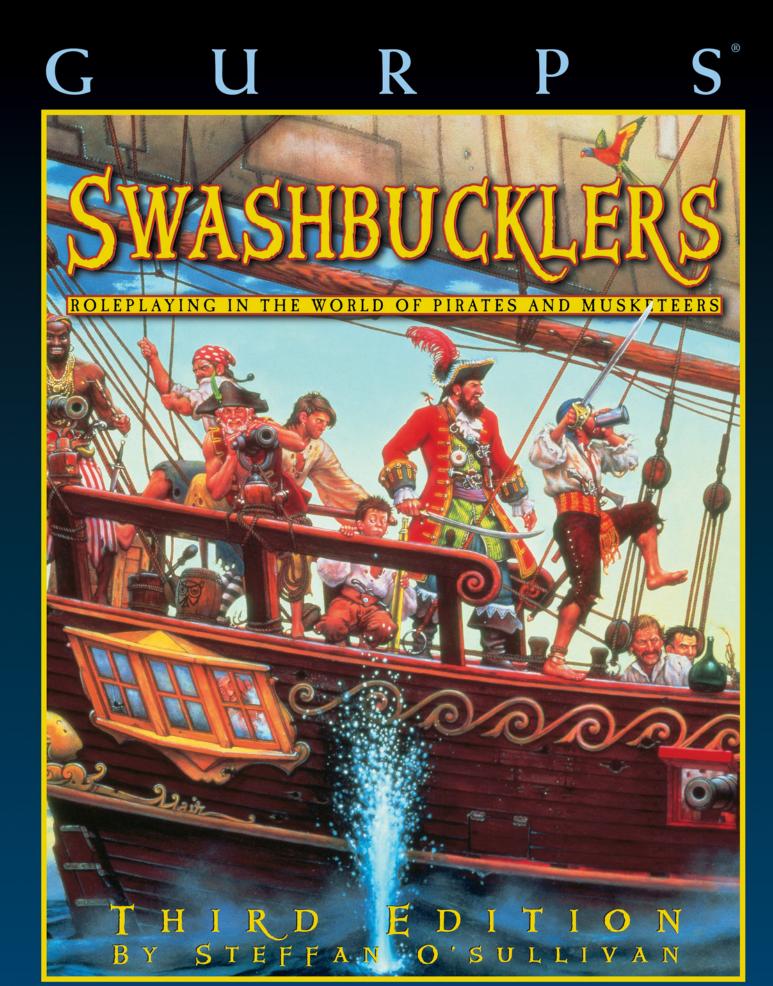
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ADVENTURE IN A TIME OF GALLANTRY AND GRACE

 \neg ome to the age of the Swashbuckler, when the world was wide and fortunes could be made in an afternoon of smoking cannons and bloody cutlasses!

Swing from a chandelier into the fray, with rapier in hand and dagger in teeth, and show the Cardinal's guards they can't insult the queen!

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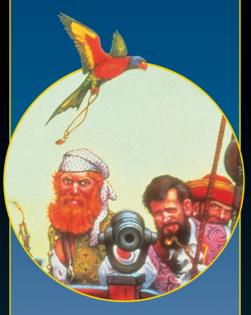
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- ⁸ Facts and fiction from the Golden Age of Piracy, from centers of piracy such as Port Royal in the Caribbean, to the "articles of agreement" that governed pirate society, to the famous pirates who still capture the imagination.
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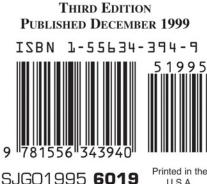


GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition *Revised* and *Compendium I*: Character Creation are required to use this supplement in a GURPS campaign; however, GURPS Swashbucklers can be used for *any* historical roleplaying campaign set in the Age of Sail.

EVIL STEVIE'S CREW:

Written by **STEFFAN O'SULLIVAN** Revised by **RUSSELL GODWIN** and BRYAN J. MALONEY Edited by **SEAN M. PUNCH** and JEREMY ZAUDER Cover by **DON MAITZ** Illustrated by **DONNA BARR**

Paris map by **ANN DUPUIS**



U.S.A.



SWASHBUCKLERS THIRD EDITION

ROLEPLAYING IN THE WORLD OF PIRATES AND MUSKETEERS

Written by STEFFAN O'SULLIVAN Revised by RUSSELL GODWIN and BRYAN MALONEY Third Edition Edited by SEAN M. PUNCH and JEREMY ZAUDER

Second Edition Edited by MICHAEL HURST and SHARLEEN LAMBARD Illustrated by DONNA BARR Cover art by DON MAITZ Paris map by ANN DUPUIS

GURPS System Design STEVE JACKSON Managing Editor ALAIN H. DAWSON GURPS Line Editor SEAN PUNCH Design and Typography ALAIN H. DAWSON Production JEREMY ZAUDER Production and Cover Design ALEX FERNANDEZ Print Buyer and Production Manager RUSSELL GODWIN Art Direction LOREN WISEMAN GURPS Errata Coordinator MICHAEL BOWMAN Sales Manager ROSS JEPSON



Playtesters and Help (Third Edition): David Ackermann, Peter Dell'Orto, James R. Dunson, Christopher M. Dicely, The Enigma, Amy Filiatreau, Vikki Godwin, Leonardo Holschuh, Bob Huss, Anthony Jackson, Hunter Johnson, Katzen, Rob Knop, Jonathan Lang, M.A. Lloyd, Berislav Lopac, John Macek, Phil Masters, Thomas Schoene, Debbie Schneekloth, Emily Smirle, David P. Summers, and Chad Underkoffler.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Playtesters (Second Edition): Angela Gast, Marc Janssen, John C. Monahan, Steven Pizikis, David L. Pulver, Michael Ryan, Bill Seurer, Brett Slocum, Stephanie Wardwell, The Wrecking Crew (Mark Houston, Eric Jerome, Dean Kenady, Dan Ormiston, Steve Shepperson, Mike Vragel, Bill Williams), and Mary Zawacki.

This book is fondly dedicated to my three favorite Swashbuckling authors, without whom this book would be sadly lacking in spirit: Alexandre Dumas, Rafael Sabatini, and Mike Hurst. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following people: Mark Evans for research on the job table; Dr. David Switzer of Plymouth State College, NH, for advice on everything relating to ships; Dean O'Sullivan for research, rental, and co-enjoyment of the movies; the staff of the Lamson Library, Plymouth State College, NH, for patience and competence in answering esoteric and sometimes inarticulate questions – especially Robert Fitzpatrick, who won the "Help me translate the money to modern dollars" contest; Xyquest, Inc., for a superb word processor (Xywrite); Dr. and Mrs. Donald Otto, Walter Milliken, the New Hamster Gamesters, and all my family and friends for general support. Thanks everybody! – *Steffan O'Sullivan*

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ISBN 1-55634-394-9

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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MASS COMBAT

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY A BRIEF HISTORY

PIRATE SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Swashbuckler. There's no other word in the English language that describes a certain type of character so concisely. Errol Flynn, Douglas Fairbanks (Senior or Junior), Basil Rathbone, D'Artagnan, Sir Francis Drake, Zorro – all these names and more come to mind.

The great era of the swashbuckler is the 17th century. It began earlier, in the Renaissance, and may never end - isn't Luke Skywalker a swashbuckler? But the 17th century saw the height of the deeds of derring-do that have come to define the word.

GURPS Swashbucklers is an attempt to recreate the 17th century, as it should have been, for gaming. Some new rules are introduced, some new situations are provided, and adventure ideas are included. But the heart of the book is background: the social, cultural, and political environment of a swashbuckler – both historical and fictional!

This book, coupled with the *GURPS Basic Set* and *Compendium I*, contains all you *need* to game in the 17th century. A bibliography is provided for those who want to do more historical research, or sample some of the enjoyable swashbuckling novels and movies available.

And so, friends, let us be off! The action awaits us!

About the Author

Steffan O'Sullivan is a storyteller, clown, *Commedia Dell'Arte* actor, performing arts teacher, and *GURPS* author. He has degrees in European history and Physical Theater, and lived in Europe for over two years. Gaming is his foremost hobby, not surprisingly, and has been since 1961. When not gaming, his hobbies include hiking, cross-country skiing, and reading. Steffan's favorite baseball player of all time is a Pirate, which he thinks qualifies him to write this book. He is also the author of *GURPS Bestiary*, *GURPS Bunnies & Burrows*, and *GURPS Fantasy Bestiary*.

About the Revisors

Russell Godwin is the Print Buyer and Production Manager for SJ Games and lives in Austin, TX. His wife Vikki and their two cats live in Indiana, while she finishes her Ph.D. program. Revising *Swashbucklers* is his first cover-worthy credit in the industry, but his name can be found on the title pages of over a dozen *GURPS* and *In Nomine* books. His other noteworthy credit is as one of the developers of the card game *Chez Geek*. While he loves pirate movies and can often be found buckling swashes in a roleplaying game, Russell has never (to our knowledge) plundered booty on the high seas.

Bryan J. Maloney began life in the capital of the world: Lafayette, Indiana. During those rare times he wasn't playing *GURPS*, he acquired a formal education in biology. Likewise, he studied Aikijutsu and Shorinji Kempo under Soke-Dai Thomas Burdine. This was also when he began his interest in 18th-century and Renaissance living history. After moving to New York, he encountered *Maitre d'Armes* Adam A. Crown – a Lakotah fencing master – who taught him the difference between a fencing foil and a rapier.

He currently lives as an ordinary Irish-American in Ithaca, with his wife Kirsten, his two sons Eoin and Bryan, two cats, two gerbils, and four fish. Were it not for the tireless aid of the aforementioned wife, Bryan would have accidentally done himself in long ago. He has only had fleas once.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for GURPS. It also covers the hobby's top games – Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Traveller, World of Darkness, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like In Nomine, INWO, Car Wars, Toon, Ogre Miniatures, and more. And Pyramid subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

New supplements and adventures. GURPS continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request. Or download them from the Web – see below.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at **www.sjgames.com** for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on Compuserve and AOL. **GURPS** has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of **GURPS** happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to **http://gurpsnet.sigames.com**/.

The **GURPS** Swashbucklers web page has updates, resources, errata, and links at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/swashbucklers.

PAGE REFERENCES

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set*, *Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, and MA to *Martial Arts*. See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Or find an up-to-date list online at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.



Rebels

A rebel is a warrior, clan lord, or city dissident who takes action against his oppressors. Rob Roy (p. 91) is a fine example. Rebel PCs often have Social Stigmas, gaining Reputations and Enemies as their fame increases. Many have Diplomacy, Leadership, Strategy, and Combat/Weapon skills. For more details, see *The Celtic Lands*, p. 88.

Smugglers

Smugglers are specialized merchants; they prefer to avoid violence and most smugglers are not thieves. They usually con-

sider themselves honest merchants who are circumventing unfair laws. Both England and Spain have strict trade regulations in the 17th century – only their own licensed ships are allowed to trade with their colonies. Smugglers prefer small, fast ships. They are welcomed by most colonists, as the regulated shipping rates are outrageously expensive. A good smuggler can sell selected merchan-



dise, honestly bought, for half what the licensed merchants charge, and still make 100%+ profit.

They should have skills similar to privateers and merchants. They are usually *not* pirates, though pirates often do a little smuggling themselves, on the side. See *The Smuggler Campaign* (p. 125) for more background.

Spies

Every country employs hundreds or thousands of spies. Some are soldiers, but more often they are privately contracted individuals. Milady de Winter in *The Three Musketeers* (see p. 49) is a prime example of a semi-successful spy. Richelieu, and later Cromwell, have the most efficient spy networks of the 17th century, but others aren't far behind.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Military spies might be required to have Military Rank. Useful advantages are Absolute Timing, Alertness, Charisma, Double-Jointed, Eidetic Memory, Empathy, Intuition, Language Talent, Literacy, Status, Strong Will, Voice and Wealth.

No disadvantages are required, except possibly Duty – though to which side should be a closely guarded secret! Other suitable disadvantages for spies include Fanaticism, Greed, Jealousy, Lecherousness, Overconfidence and Sense of Duty. Former spies might have remarkably circumscribed lives, reflected in unusual disadvantages. The Chevelier d'Eon, for

Swashbuckling Women

A few bold women outshone their expected roles to earn a place in history and fiction. Anne Bonney and Mary Read (p. 72) were well-known pirates. Moll Cutpurse was an active and successful thief. Aphra Behn spied on the Dutch for Charles II of England while writing abolitionist novels and bawdy plays. Queen Christina of Sweden (see sidebar, p. 90) abdicated her throne in order to live her life riding, hunting, fencing, and intriguing. Perhaps the greatest of the lady swashbucklers was Julie la Maupin (pp. 53-54), whose skill with the sword and outrageous exploits equal any fictional hero's. See *GURPS Who's Who 2* for details on two pirate queens: Grace O'Malley and Cheng Shih.

In the real 17th and 18th centuries, women were second-class citizens, and any realistic campaign should require that Social Stigma for female PCs. (Noble ladies are second-class citizens compared to noblemen but not compared to commoners.) If players want to play female characters that are different from the Lady de Winter mold, they can do so. They will need to work out one of two things, though: either a plausible background within a realistic world, or a fictional world background to operate in.

If the game is set in a realistic world, a female swashbuckler can expect strange reactions from many people she meets. Many NPCs will be hostile. Somebody who is rescued by a woman may be astonished, but probably won't complain too much. Reactions of friends will vary from pleas to give up her strange ways to hero worship from some youngsters. There will be no neutral reactions. Once she's proven herself, she'll be considered a friend – otherwise, a freak or worse. A secret identity would not be necessary. Oddly enough, many people would simply not believe a competent fighter to actually be a woman unless she proves otherwise.

In a fictional world, the player and the GM should discuss the expected reaction to a female swashbuckler. Encountering a woman with a sword may be rare (but not unheard of) or there may be nothing unusual in it at all.

example, was required to dress as a woman for the last few decades of his life.

Skills: Useful skills for spies include Acrobatics, Acting, Area Knowledge, Climbing, Dancing, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Fencing, Forgery, Knife, Languages, Lip-Reading, Lockpicking, Performance/Ritual (to infiltrate religious services), Poisons, Research, Riding, Savoir-Faire, Sex Appeal, Stealth, Shadowing, Streetwise, Surveying, Theology, etc.



CHARACTERS



STATUS

Status and Rank are not simple things in 17th-century France. This is a time of flux; there are different levels of society that effectively share the same Status, but are not at all the same.

The nobility includes all gentlemen. Even impoverished gentlemen are still of *some* status – and this is an era when many of the nobility are impoverished. D'Artagnan comes from a noble family; that is, he is a gentleman. He can read – that's a given – and he has the Gentleman's Code of Honor – also a given. But he has little money; in fact, he has the Struggling disadvantage. Any impoverished noble in *GURPS Swashbucklers* may have Status 1

or 2, but no higher or lower. The loss of wealth results in a loss of some status, though never all of it. The family may have been Status 4 or 5 a century earlier, but if the noble cannot support the lifestyle, his Status is less.

Any gentleman is expected to have a servant, or lackey as he is called in *The Three Musketeers*. It doesn't matter that he can't afford one; he *must* have a lackey. So we see the comic results of this in the book, in which the *very* down and out serve the merely down and out. Lackeys could be of Status 0 or -1, and are usually chastised if they presume to act like gentlemen.

The bourgeoisie have taken over the wealth that some of the nobles have lost. They are not "well-born," but they can afford all of the symbols of status: large houses, fine horses, lots of servants, carriages, libraries (even if they can't read!), fancy

clothes, etc. They can never manage the noble manner, though. The older bourgeois families (Status 2) come close; the *nouveau riche* (Status 1) are comic in their attempts. Any character with 20 points of wealth *may* buy Status 1 or Status 2 at the normal cost. Status 2 is *required* with 30+ points of wealth.

Status 1 or higher is a prerequisite to being a Musketeer, but a Status 1 *nouveau riche* character does not qualify. If the character's background is bourgeois, then Status 2, the Old Money, is required. Any Noble Status is sufficient, with or without money.

See p. 11 for a discussion of a Musketeer's rank.

Social Life of a Musketeer or Guard

These men have time on their hands. Their duties are actually fairly light – guarding the king's palace (the Louvre) every third day. They assemble at the captain's hôtel and gamble, drink, boast, practice their swordsmanship, and generally behave as adolescently as the king wishes he could (even the Cardinal's Guards do this, somewhat to Richelieu's chagrin). Their salaries are insufficient for their expenditures. They are expected to have outside sources of income; these range from inheri-



tances to mis-



tresses to gambling winnings to performing services for the wealthy bourgeoisie. These services often are no more than showing up at social dinners! The bourgeoisie have their own status symbols, one of which is the number of nobles and well-known people they are able to count as friends – or at least invite to dinner.

A mistress is almost required for a Musketeer. Only a very self-possessed man such as Athos could keep face without a mistress. French morality at that time is a little hypocritical. Married women are expected to take a lover; husbands are expected to have a mistress, though one must be discreet. Nonetheless, it is a fact of French life, and when Porthos was introduced to his mistress' husband as her cousin, no one was deceived. Jealousy is a common disadvantage; however, it is usually a matter of reputation, not feeling. As long as discretion is maintained, all is well.

There are many gambling houses in Paris at this time. They are all illegal. However, the city

watch is either very inefficient or very bribable, for there are few instances of raids and thousands of records of gambling. Gaming is a national pastime, whether for coppers or gold. Members of every stratum of society spend hours each night at the gaming tables. Fortunes are often lost, but rarely won that way. Most Musketeers gamble – even Athos, though he always loses.

MAJOR PERSONALITIES OF THE ERA

Here are some of the major figures likely to be encountered or at least gossiped about in a Parisian campaign. Complete stats are given only for the people of action. Fictional characters are marked with an asterisk (*). While the Musketeer saga is technically set before the beginning of the Transitional era, characters from these novels are given the skills of the Transitional French School (p. 30) since it fits the flavor of the books better than the more roughand-tumble Italian rapier school that actually dominated France until the 1640s.

46 THE PARIS CAMPAIGN



If a ship were to resist, however, that was a different story. The Jolly Roger (skull and crossbones flag) was a demand to surrender. If the prey did not, the Jolly Roger was hauled down and a solid red flag was raised – war with no quarter (unconditional surrender or a to-the-death fight). When the ship was boarded, the fighting was to the death, and often surrendering at that point was too late for mercy. Those that were spared the cutlass were held for ransom, cast adrift, marooned, tortured, or enslaved. Again, this was good policy – ships learned not to resist.

Pirates often *were* very cruel by most 20th-century standards, but not by contemporary standards. Prisoners that had resisted were often tortured to reveal the location of treasure (jewels are small, while a ship is large and sometimes sinking). Torture is hardly unique to pirates; all European countries, even religions, at this time used torture as a means of extracting information. Many of the pirates were escaped slaves and criminals who had been tortured themselves and copied techniques they knew first-hand to be effective. There may have been sadists among the pirates who enjoyed torture for its own sake, but no greater percentage than among the general population.

One type of punishment that was not seen very often in pirate crews was flogging. Flogging was the most common punishment in navies and merchant marines in those times, and most pirates had served on other ships before "going on the account." Sailors were flogged for very minor offenses in those days, and it was thoroughly hated. Consequently, the pirates would not flog their victims, with one exception: They would ask the surrendered crew if their captain was cruel. If the answer was yes, the pirates would flog him gleefully – and to the joy of the unfortunate captain's crew!

CENTERS OF PIRACY

There are various ports where pirates are welcome throughout this time and others where they are banned (or hanged, imprisoned, enslaved, blown out of the water, etc.). The ports' attitudes shift as the politics of the age shift. Throughout the entire era, only the bases of the Barbary pirates remain constant – although they suffer from periodic Christian attacks. They are not open to freelance Christian pirates; conversion and agreement to work for the local Bey are necessary prerequisites for safe harbor.

Otherwise, until 1720, pirates always have a safe port – but this might not be the same port they left from. Starting in the 1690s, pirate voyages begin to last longer, and by this time treaties and wars are growing shorter between nations. A pirate ship that leaves an English port to plunder the Spanish might find itself in trouble for attacking England's new ally when it returns! There is always somewhere to go, though.

Tortuga

Tortuga is a small island off Hispaniola. The Spanish claimed it, of course – they claimed *all* lands in the New World – but never occupied it. After they began to persecute the buccaneers in Hispaniola, Tortuga was used as a buccaneer base and was colonized by the French government. It is rocky and has a good, easily defensible harbor.

The first settler of influence was a man named La Vasseur, an engineer who helped defend La Rochelle from Richelieu's attacks. Utterly paranoid and eventually megalomaniacal, he directed the building of a huge fortress on top of the hill overlooking the harbor. He then proclaimed himself king and was promptly murdered by his subjects. The fortress was magnificent, though.

PIRATES IN THE American Colonies

Pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries have often been associated with the British colonies in North America. There is a good reason for this – they were encouraged by the colonials for many years. England passed the Navigation Act in 1662, which allowed only English ships to transport goods to or from England or its colonies. English ship-owners promptly jacked up their cargo rates and the colonials complained – to no end.

So when pirates showed up offering goods at a quarter of the cost, they were welcomed in most colonies (though, of course, not by everybody). Boston, New York, Newport, Philadelphia, New Burn, and other ports became "free ports" for pirates – places where they could walk the streets in utter safety, repair ships and buy supplies as if they were honest men.



Merchants and judges even offered financial backing to pirates, and many fortunes were made this way. There was no legal way to get one's money back, if the pirates didn't return. Yet, there are very few cases of people losing money on a pirate venture. Captain Kidd's voyage (wellfinanced by government officials and bankers) comes to mind as the only real money-loser.

The governors of these colonies in the 1690s were especially corrupt (except for Virginia, which was hostile to all pirates). Bribes were so common as to be handled in public, and honest citizens who complained were curtly shown to the door. Boston even went so far as to try to lure pirates from Newport, much as large cities today vie for factories and conventions!

It is true that Massachusetts was largely Puritan, and the famous minister Cotton Mather railed bitterly against the pirates. Boston itself had grown more cosmopolitan than the rest of Massachusetts by this time, however, and Cotton Mather railed against so many things that many people ignored him. Money talked louder and more clearly to most Bostonians and other colonists.

Continued on next page . . .

THE PIRATE CAMPAIGN 67

HEAVING THE LEAD

The lead line is an essential part of any ship's gear. It is named for the large piece of lead that is tied to the end of a rope or chain. There are markers, sometimes just knots, every fathom (two yards). It is used when negotiating unknown waters where there is the possibility of scraping the bottom. The leadsman (pronounced "ledsmun") is secured by ropes on the outside of the bow railings. He has both hands free for swinging the 10-pound lead over his head and tossing it as far forward as possible. In this manner, the line is nearly vertical by the time the ship comes over the weight. The leadsman reads off the distance, and casts the lead again.

The ship is usually moving as slowly as possible during this time -1 or 2 yards per second. This is done by taking in all but a small sail, or even turning some of the sails to actually push the ship backward. The front-pushing sails would barely outweigh the back-pushing sails, and sailors will be ready with ropes in hand to reverse them if the lead line shows the bottom suddenly sloping upward.

The lead line is usually 25 fathoms (50 yards) long, and is marked for 20 fathoms. It takes a strong man to toss it over and over again.

When negotiating a channel, the ship might have two or three boats out ahead, each with a lead line. In this way, a narrow, winding channel can be picked out of a generally broad, shallow strait.

HURRICANES

The hurricane season in the Caribbean is usually 12 weeks, from August to October. Hurricanes effectively prevented any but the most desperate voyages, and even careening wasn't done during most of this time. The heart of the hurricane area was north of a line drawn due west of Honduras, up to the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. This included Cuba, Hispaniola, and Tortuga. The Spanish Main was not usually affected directly by hurricanes, but winds were still high enough to daunt all but the bravest of crews.

A hurricane will do $(1d \times 10)\%$ damage to all of a ship's systems. The winds on the Spanish Main during these times do half that damage.

The Spanish galleons in the Elizabethan era usually had 28 guns: four 24pounders, four 18-pounders, ten 10-pounders and ten 7-pounders. This totals 338 pounds of cannonballs, for a Firepower Rating of 169. By the time of the Anglo-Dutch wars of the late 17th century (and the Golden Age of Piracy), the large warships were carrying over 50 guns, with a Firepower Rating of 400 or more. By the Napoleonic wars, the smaller warships (frigates) each had a firepower rating of 300+, and the larger ships-of-the-line had over 700!

Cost and Weight of Artillery

Naval bronze guns cost \$4,000 per ton. This includes the cost of carriage, tackle, and operating equipment. Naval gun carriages are heavier than those of land guns (they don't have to be hauled around by horses); a broadside gun weighs 200 times the weight of the shot. A 12-pounder weighs about 1.25 tons and costs \$5,000; a 24-pounder weighs about 2.5 tons and costs \$10,000. Swivel guns do not have wheeled carriages and are more lightly constructed. They weigh only 50 times the weight of the shot and cost \$3 a pound. The heaviest swivels are 3-pounders.

Ammunition uses half the weight of the shot in powder for each firing. A 12-pounder needs six pounds of powder; a 3-pounder needs 1.5 pounds. The normal price for ammunition is \$1 per pound for shot and \$2 per pound for powder. This is subject to change; the price may go up scandalously if the Spaniards are coming and you are known to be short.

CREW

The larger the vessel, the more sailors are needed. A fighting ship needs a much larger crew to man the guns, repair ship damage, and replace casualties.

Small sloops can be operated by as few as three people, though a minimum crew of six to ten is more common. A small sloop will hold as many as 40 people, though, and pirates often sailed at full capacity. Note that few cannon or provisions can be carried with so many men on board!

Large sloops need a minimum of six sailors; ten is less stressful. They can carry up to 100 people.

Brigs can be crewed by ten people, and rarely carry more than 30 if they are merchants. Use the tonnage rules, p. 103, to determine carrying capacity.

Merchant ships require 15 to 20 seamen, and rarely carry more than 50.

Warships carry many more men than the minimum needed to operate the ship. Not only are casualties to be expected, but men are needed to man the guns, operate the pumps, serve as marines (boarders and marksmen), act as messengers in the heat of battle, clear rubble, fight fires, repair damage, carry the wounded, become prize crew, etc. A small warship can operate with 20 men if it has to, but usually carries 100 to 200. Large warships can be run by 30 men in an emergency, but often carry over 400!

See *Jobs*, p. 16, for crew salaries. Crew expected to be paid and might mutiny if money is not forthcoming. Pirates might vote a captain out who didn't supply them with suitable prey. Make a reaction roll at -3 to determine an unpaid crew's reaction. Poor or worse reaction means mutiny. A small percentage of the salary, about 10%, might be paid before sailing, the rest due at the end of the voyage.



104 SAILING SHIPS





appears on the Swashbucklers web page (see sidebar, p. 3).

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