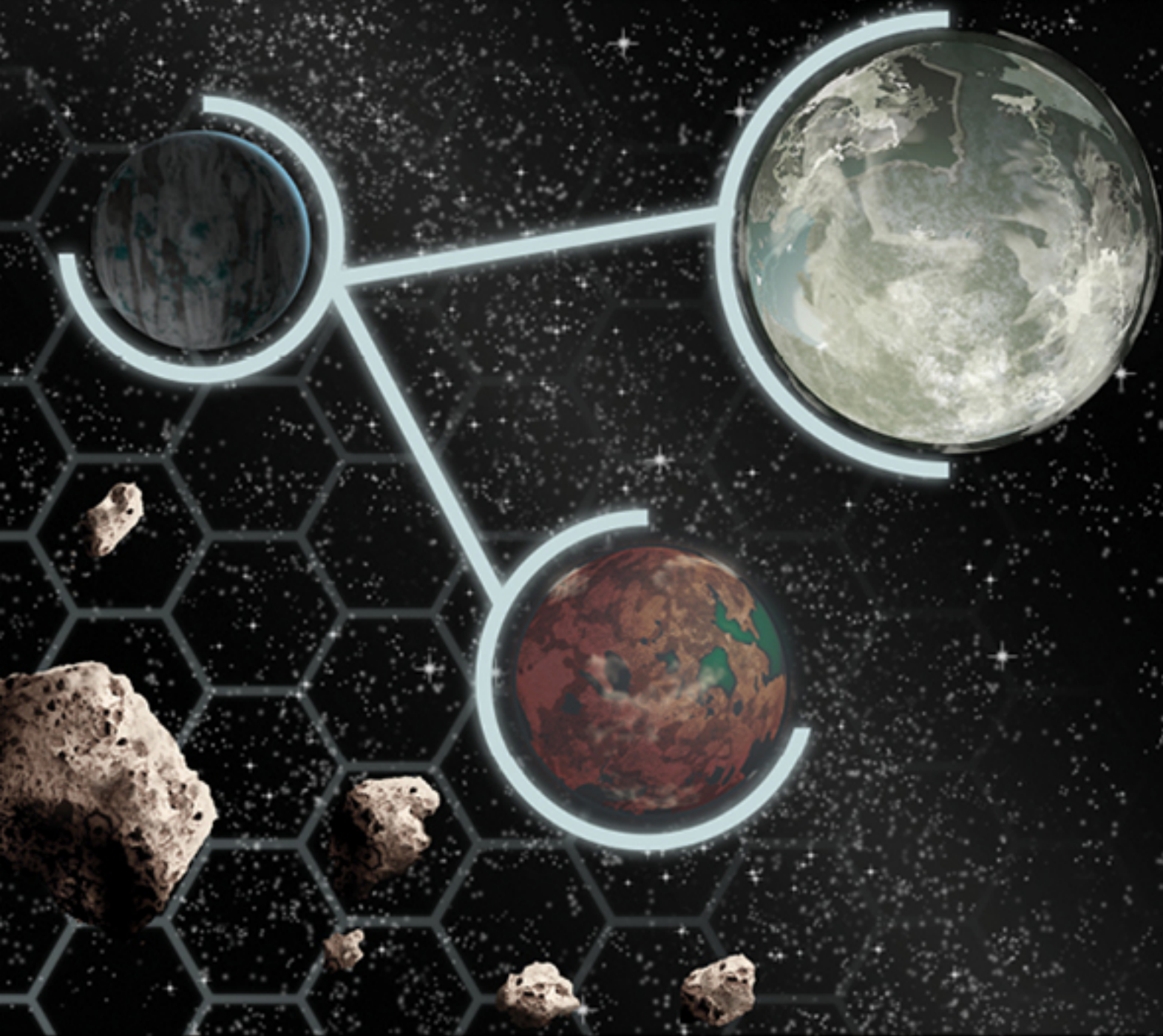


TRAVELLER

SPINWARDS MARCHES 1 : THE BOWMAN ARM



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

SPINWARDS MARCHES 1 : THE BOWMAN ARM

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T R A V E L L E R

INTRODUCTION

The Bowman Arm is a section of the Spinward Main running through District 268 of Spinward Marches sector. It lies beyond the Imperial border but links the outposts of Five Sisters subsector with the rest of the Imperium. The Bowman Arm is subject to cross-cutting agendas and the influence of several powers, making it a dangerous place and one where adventure is never far away.

The Spinward Marches Sector has relatively little significance in Imperial affairs, except that it is the Imperial border with the Zhodani Consulate and also with certain Vargr states. Lying fully 44 weeks' transit from Capital by Express Boat (a little less by Jump-6 courier, but not much), and separated from the Imperial core by the upper claw of the Great Rift, the region is considered to be a fairly unimportant backwater that serves as a convenient buffer against the Zhodani. However, the Spinward Marches were also the origin of Admiral Olav Hault-Plankwell's bid to become Emperor. The last thing Emperor Strephon wants is another Civil War, so the government of the Marches must be strong... but not too strong.

As a frontier, Spinward Marches sector is more troubled by piracy and raiding than other areas of the Imperium, and to this must be added the influence of foreign powers or their sympathisers. The Navy is doing all it can to maintain order on the spaceways but a recent upsurge in piracy, smuggling and general lawlessness has the available naval assets overtaxed. Some of the slack is being taken up with mercenary and even Scout Service vessels, but things are unsettled at best.

The most troubled regions lie of course along the Imperial-Zhodani border, where tensions still run high. The Sword Worlds subsector is also unstable at present... or more accurately 'as always'. Internal Sword Worlder politics sometimes spill over into conflict with the Imperium or its allies in the Darrian Confederation even when the Sword Worlders have not unified against their neighbours.

Relations with the Sword Worlders have improved somewhat lately, to the point where some Imperial investment has been permitted on the four 'Reserve Worlds' maintained by the Sword Worlds Confederation. These 'Metal Worlds', Steel, Mithril, Bronze and Iron, remain Sword Worlds territory but for the first time Imperial companies are being permitted to operate there. It is not obvious what the implications of this will be in the long term.

THE SPINWARD MAIN

The Spinward Main is a vast chain of star systems sprawling across the entire Spinward Marches sector. It provides a Jump-1 link to Deneb and Foreven sectors and links some of the most prominent worlds of the sector: Regina, Mora, Lunion and Glisten. Much of the Main is underdeveloped, but still large numbers of small merchant ships make their living freighting or engaging in speculative trade along the Main. By long tradition, heading in the direction of District 268 (broadly spinward-rimward) or along the Trin Arm (trailing-rimward) from Regina is 'Down the Main'; the opposite direction is 'Up'.

The Spinward Main forks in several places. An arm of the Main diverging at Biter in the Sword Worlds subsector allows access to the Sword Worlds and ultimately the territory of the Darrians, but this is not considered part of the Main by Imperial traders as it passes through the potentially dangerous territory of the Sword Worlds Confederation. Another divergence takes place at Caliburn. The Collace Arm leads rimward from there, diverging again at Talos. The Collace Arm proper winds onward through Collace and finally terminates at Froin in Five Sisters subsector. The Glisten Arm heads trailingward into Glisten subsector and contains more than half its worlds.

The Bowman Arm meanders to spinward, to the edge of Foreven sector. It links the handful of Imperial worlds in Five Sisters subsector with the rest of Imperial territory. This arm sees much less traffic than the more central parts of the main, though since the end of the Fourth Frontier War there are big plans to open up District 268. The Bowman Arm will be an important part of this expansion.



THE BOWMAN ARM

Traffic on the Spinward Main is varied. Small tramp freighters wander along it or ply a short section of it under contract. Many such are Subsidised Merchants, an ideal design for this kind of work. Larger vessels work segments of the Main, but these tend to be Jump-2 or higher vessels which can move quickly between the more lucrative ports of call on and off the Main. Most of the sector can be accessed by a jump-2 ship using the Spinward Main, so vessels belonging most of the larger shipping firms can be encountered somewhere on it.

It has long been suggested that, with suitable investment in ports and supporting infrastructure, the Spinward Main could help the Marches become an economic powerhouse with internal trade facilitated by a web of large and small shipping concerns centred on the Main. The money has never been available, and the need is not at this time perceived since the Marches are a backwater of no great importance in the wider Imperium.

DISTRICT 268

Although opened for Imperial expansion in 941 in a decree made by Empress Margaret II, District 268 has seen little investment in the years since. Imperial firms and traders are moderately active in the subsector, but the only real Imperial presence until recently was at Mille Falcs and the Scout base at Mertactor on the trailing edge of the subsector.

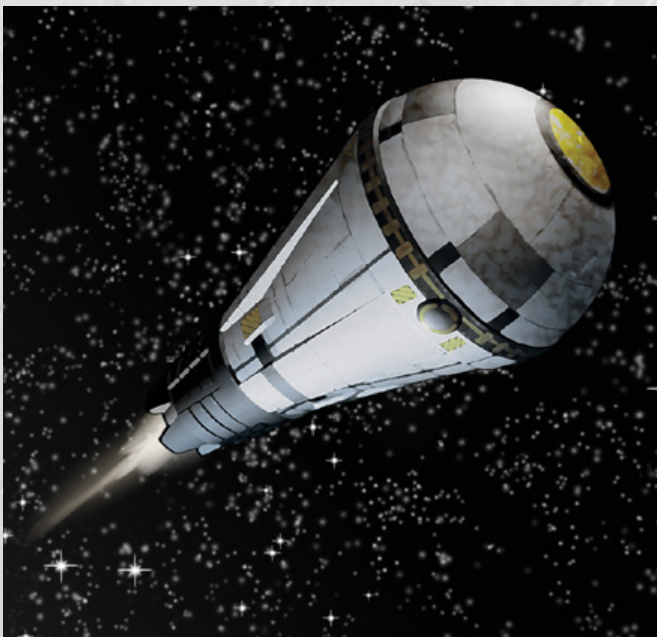
Since the end of the Fourth Frontier War the situation has changed a little. Some investment has been forthcoming and the apparent removal of the Sword Worlder threat to communications up the Spinward Main has encouraged more traders to enter the region. The development of the Metal Worlds in neighbouring Sword Worlds subsector is widely considered to be a prelude to Imperial economic conquest of the region.

The main power in the region is Collace, a pro-Imperial world which hosts an Imperial Scout base and has applied to join the Imperium. Other worlds are less keen to see the Imperials extend their influence into the subsector, and some are openly hostile. This has led to some unrest and acts of sabotage which, while difficult to pin on anyone, are obviously part of a conspiracy to slow down Imperial investment.

One major opponent to Imperial expansion (and to Collace) is the Trexalon Technical Consortium (TTC), which has long had links with the Sword Worlds. Wisely staying out of the Fourth Frontier War, Trexalon nevertheless profited from Imperial distraction and gained some ground in its 'cold war' with Collace. Trexalon wields a lot of influence among the worlds of the region; some of it due to friendship and economic ties and some of it of a more strongarm nature.

It is probably not coincidence that several merchant ships have been attacked in recent months. Some such attacks have the hallmarks of typical pirate activity, but others seem to be nothing more than senseless destruction – or else deliberate commerce raiding. The Imperial Navy is not in a position to make much of a response to the problem, which is gradually worsening as time goes by.

Despite the troubles, Imperial corporations and entrepreneurs are gradually filtering into the district. There are many opportunities to be exploited by those with the wit and the courage to do it. It seems likely that the near future will be turbulent in District 268.



NEIGHBOURING REGIONS

To spinward of District 268 lies Five Sisters subsector, which is mostly Imperial territory. Development of District 268 will eventually provide a more solid link between the Five Sisters and the rest of the sector, but for now the enclave is rather isolated. Two worlds within the subsector are of particular interest: Andor and Candory. These are Droyne worlds, and are under Red Zone interdiction by the Imperial Navy. Droyne ships are allowed in and out, but others are kept away unless they have a special permit which is said to be next to impossible to obtain. The reason for the blockade is not publicly known, but the Droyne use of psionics may be a factor.

To spinward-coreward lies Darrian subsector, home to the Daryen people, a human minor race. Long Imperial allies, the Daryens are constantly at odds with the Sword Worlders, and have generally fought against them alongside Imperial forces. The Daryens once possessed a very advanced technology, but have been in decline for many centuries.

Directly coreward is Sword Worlds subsector, home the Sword Worlds Confederation. The Sword Worlders have little love for the Imperium and have fought against it at times, but at present relations have thawed a little. It would not take much to reverse this position however, especially as power shifts in the internal politics of the Sword Worlds Confederation.

Union and Glisten subsectors, to trailing-coreward and directly trailing respectively, are entirely Imperial territory and contain several highly developed worlds, naval bases and major industrial centres. These subsectors are the jumping-off point for expeditions into District 268, and will be the main markets for its goods once investment is complete.

The region to rimward of District 268 (Menorial, Egryn and Pax Rulin subsectors) is sometimes termed the Outrim Void, or just the Outrim. It lies beyond the Imperium, other than a few outposts, though there are numerous Imperial client worlds and multiworld states in the region. Pushing further to rimward-trailing leads to the Great Rift, a wide region with few stars and therefore a natural barrier to interstellar travel. To spinward-rimward along the edge of the Rift lies a region of independent worlds and then territory belonging to Aslan who have crossed the Great Rift in search of new territories. Their traders and mercenary ships sometimes enter Imperial space through District 268.

WORLDS OF NOTE

The following worlds do not lie within the Bowman Arm, but do exert an influence upon events there. For that reason, they are discussed here. Worlds are denoted by their name followed by their subsector. All lie within Spinward Marches sector.

Flammarion/Sword Worlds

A623514-B	N,S	Ni Po	710	F8 V	(Imperial)
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Flammarion was developed specifically to facilitate Imperial operations in Five Sisters subsector. It is the site of a small naval base operating mainly patrol ships, and a much larger Scout Service Way Station serving the Xboat route. It seems likely that intelligence ships also operate out of the Flammarion naval base. The world itself is borderline habitable but is only economically viable as a support to the starport and bases; almost everything on Flammarion is owned by an Imperial service or megacorporation.

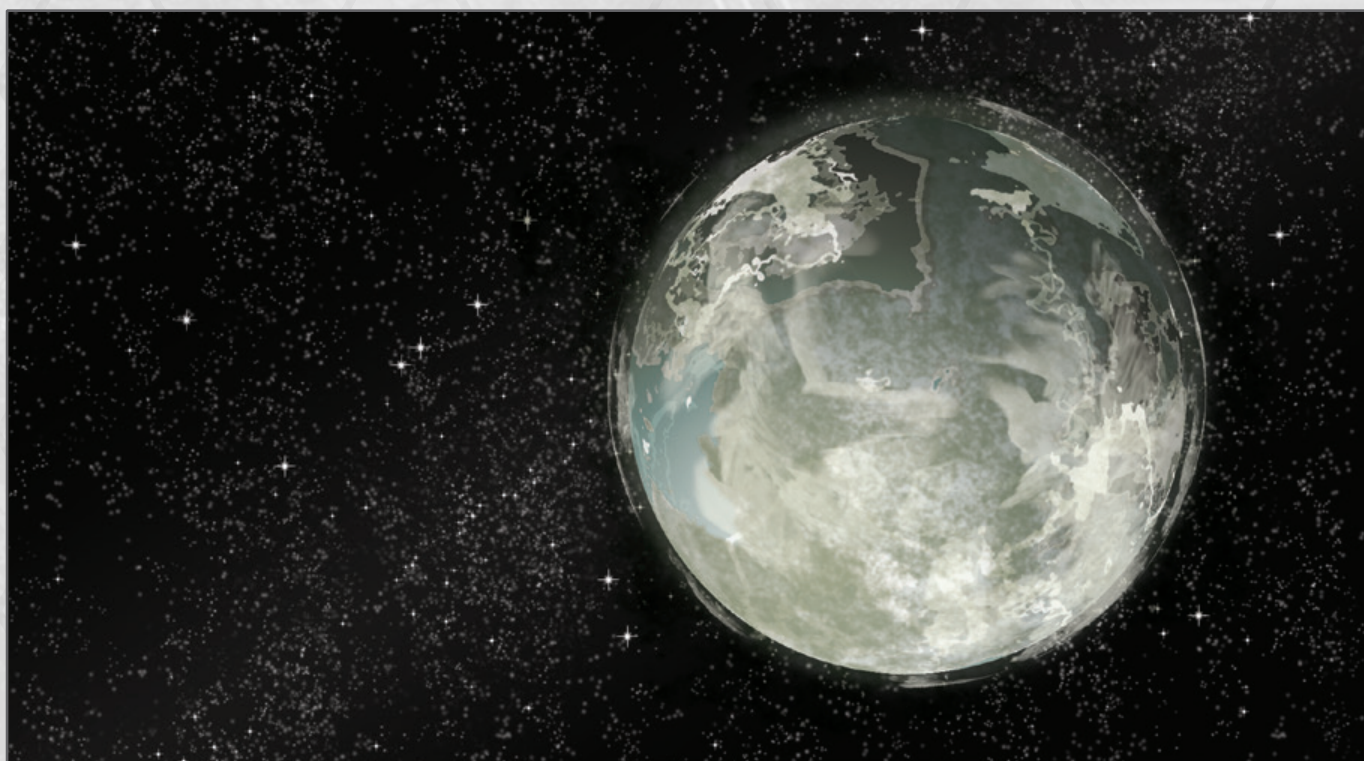
Flammarion Highport is a popular destination for ships plying the Spinward Main to obtain a refit. The port is large and well run, though most independent spacers call it 'soulless' and a variety of other, less pleasant names.

Caladbolg/Sword Worlds

B565776-A	S	In Ri	710	F7 V MO V M4 V	(Imperial)
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Caladbolg is an important Imperial world in the region. It is an Xboat link and has a small Scout Service base to serve the communications link into Five Sisters subsector. Naval vessels transiting to Spinward usually pass through the system, which has been Imperial territory for many decades.

The industrial might of Caladbolg is not particularly high-technology, but nevertheless the world's output forms an important part of the regional economy. Many of the firms participating in the expansion into District 268 obtain their supplies and spares from Caladbolg's factories, and money put up by the world's various states is being invested in all manner of ventures to rimward.



Caliburn/Sword Worlds

E000514-A	As	Ni Va	324	M2 V	(Imperial)
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Caliburn is in some ways the 'gateway to District 268', at least as far as Jump-1 traffic from further up the Main is concerned. Passing through the system is often considered to be a sort of initiation rite for ships coming in from up-Main. The system is populated mainly by scattered belter settlements mining its extensive asteroid and planetoid belts. It is de facto Imperial territory but has little importance in the grand scheme of things.

For this reason, the facilities in the Caliburn system are primitive in the extreme. The various settlements all have their own ports; there is no one central 'Caliburn Imperial Starport', so visitors must negotiate with whomever they can contact to obtain supplies and fuel. Most commercial traffic turns around at the Metal Worlds (further up the Main) and heads back, so only those with a real reason to pass through do so. Traffic volumes are picking up, but slowly.

It seems likely that if the District is to be properly opened up, a decent port at Caliburn will be a priority.

Elixabeth/District 268

B426467-8	N	Ni	201	M1 V M5 V	(Client State)
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A mid-tech world with a small population, Elixabeth is a colonial possession of the world of Dallia, which lies to rimward of the Bowman Arm. Investment has been modest but Elixabeth is growing in prosperity and importance, and is even seeing some immigration from other parts of the subsector. There is a move towards Imperial membership but this is opposed by the government of Dallia, as might be expected.

At the present time the only real industry on Elixabeth is the extensive Class B starport. This derives much of its revenue from a subsidy paid by the Imperial Navy, which uses part of the port as a base for local patrol assets. The port is part of a move to expand trade in the region, and Dallia hopes to benefit from this both directly in terms of port fees and similar revenue, and also from an increase in the trade into its own port down this segment of the Spinward Main.

Although the Imperial Navy has basing rights and some support infrastructure in place, the force assigned to the area is very small.

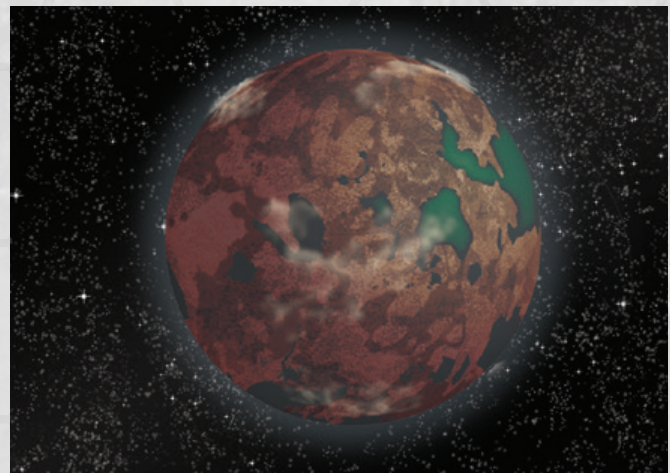
A handful of vessels are assigned to the Elixabeth base at the best of times, and at present the force has been stripped to the bone to cover needs elsewhere. Scout Service and mercenary ships have been co-opted in an effort to take up the slack, but there are not enough of these and they are no substitute for a proper naval force. Not surprisingly, the government of Dallia, which is an Imperial client state, is pushing for an expansion in this force. Nothing has yet come of this.

Forine/District 268

D3129B8-A	-	Hi Ic In Na	610	G9 V	(Non-Aligned)
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Forine is an industrial world which exports large amounts of electronic equipment and components across the region. Many of these components are 'black boxed' with interfaces to allow them to be used with Imperial, Sword Worlder and other standard fittings.

Forine Starport is a fairly basic facility; the world does not welcome visitors, especially from the Imperium. There is a private spaceport used only by vessels of the Forine Merchant Service and those favored with a license by the government. In recent years this has included many TTC vessels but no Imperial ones. The private port is of much higher quality to the commercial installation.



THE BOWMAN ARM

The segment of the Spinward Main that diverges at Caliburn in the direction of the Five Sisters subsector is normally known as the Bowman Arm (Sometimes misquoted as 'Bowman's Arm'). The Arm meanders onward into the next subsector but Flammarion and the worlds beyond are not considered to be part of it; the chain of systems leading to Mirriam, Jone and the surrounding region is normally referred to as the Sisters' Reach.

The underdeveloped nature of the 10 worlds of the Bowman Arm has long been a barrier to Jump-1 trade through into Five Sisters. This, and the fact that these frontier worlds are not Imperial members, makes it difficult at best and more often hazardous for Imperial traders to operate in the area. However, some do, and there are numerous non-Imperial vessels operating in the region.

SHIP ENCOUNTERS IN THE BOWMAN ARM

The most commonly encountered vessels in the arm are non-Imperial traders registered out of Collace, Trexalon, Flammarion or Elixabeth (but not necessarily owned by any interests on those worlds). Free and Far Traders are common, as are Subsidized Merchants. A handful of Subsidised Liners ply the Main from Collace or Trexalon all the way round to Mirriam, and some larger freighters are occasionally seen. However, more trade goes into the Imperium via Glisten Subsector than Sword Worlds, so big merchant vessels are quite uncommon.

Darrian merchant ships headed for Glisten subsector have always used the Arm to make their transit. This practice dropped off during the war but has begun to pick up again. Sword Worlder merchants have also been sighted, though not in any significant numbers. Independent belter ships of no fixed allegiance are fairly common. Most are small Seekers but larger mining or processing ships, ore tugs and so on may be encountered from time to time.

Few of the worlds in the region have any sort of interstellar navy, though some do maintain a system defense squadron of sorts. Thus the Main can be hazardous in District 268 in general, and along the

Bowman Arm in particular. Rescue for a distressed ship is a matter of pot luck, and law enforcement is patchy where it exists at all. There are a number of mercenary vessels and warships from Collace assigned to the Arm on a general patrol-and-protect brief, but there are not nearly enough of them.

The Imperial Navy was never strong in District 268, and since the Fourth Frontier War its presence has been further pared down by urgent requirements elsewhere. A handful of Patrol Cruisers and Close Escorts, backed up by a lone (and elderly) destroyer make up the available strength of the 'subsector fleet'. Requests for additional ships are on file with Sector Command but there are far higher priorities to be met first. The occasional foray by Sector Fleet escorts from naval bases in Lunion, Glisten and Five Sisters subsectors, and the promise of assistance from Scout Service ships in the region, is all the help that the overworked subsector fleet can hope for.

Non-human ships are not uncommon in the Arm. Aslan vessels can be encountered anywhere. These are mostly small traders, diplomatic couriers from one or another of the clans, or small patrol ships. Some of the latter are on retainer to various worlds as mercenary system defense vessels. There are rumors that others are acting as raiders.

Droyne vessels out of Andor and Candory sometimes make their way along the main. Like the Aslan ships these tend to be small, though most of them do not trade and seem to be in transit somewhere for purposes unknown. The Droyne rarely explain anything, and never in a way that actually makes sense, so their ships remain as much a mystery as any other facet of Droyne society.

There is always the possibility of encountering an oddity, such as a Misjumped vessel from very far away, a derelict or such like, and of course ships do sometimes fall foul of pirates, smugglers and renegade warships.

WORLDS OF THE BOWMAN ARM

The thumbnails presented here are simply that; an overview of the world and its place in the Bowman Arm's complex economic and political development. One of the worlds of the Arm – Walston – is presented in more detail below.

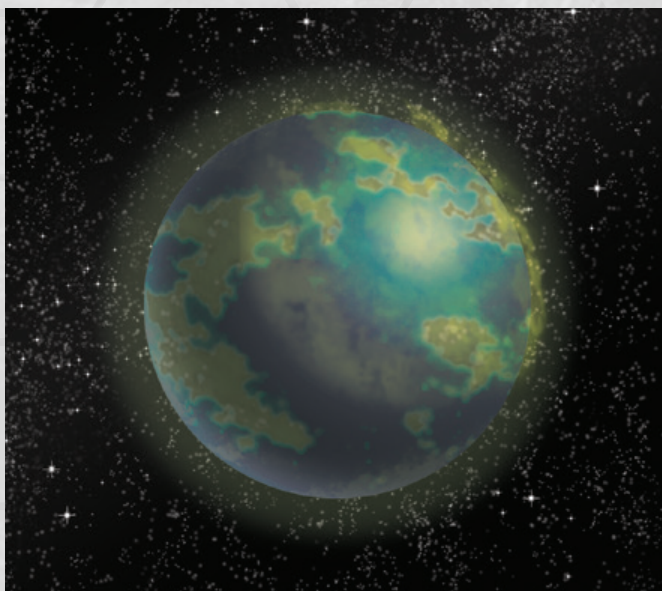
Asteltine/District 268

B7A7402-A	-	FI Ni	210	K7 V M3 V	(Non-Aligned)
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An average sized world with an exotic atmosphere unbreathable by humans, Asteltine is home to around 2000 people whose origins vary considerably. People tend to come to Asteltine to work rather than to live, so the population tends to be somewhat variable. Most of the residents are typical Imperial humans, but there are small numbers of Daryens, Sword Worlders and Aslan at any given time. There is some tension between these groups.

While Asteltine itself is a fairly unpleasant world, the system supports a fairly large Belting and mining community. This was sufficient to support the development of a decent starport which employs nearly all of the world's inhabitants. The port is also used by ships plying the Spinward Main in the direction of Five Sisters subsector.

For decades Asteltine's mining and processing industry has been a chaotic mess of small firms and entrepreneurial individuals. However, there are rumors that some of the larger corporations or even the Megacorps may want to move into the system now that access has become easier.



567-908/District 268

E532000-0	-	Ba Po	A610	M9 V M1 D	(Non-Aligned)
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567-908 is important only as a link between Astatine and Bowman. It is theoretically habitable, but has a very thin atmosphere which makes it a poor prospect for colonisation. This, combined with frequent and quite intense volcanic and tectonic activity, has ensured that the world remains a barely-explored backwater.

567-908 has two significant land masses, both of which are equally inviting. The main continent is almost entirely desert, and shows evidence of an enormous tectonic disturbance at some point. The other land mass consists of a huge mountain range surrounding a large ocean, and has very little useable land even in areas that are not threatened by active volcanoes.

Enos/Sword Worlds

E35059B-4	M	De Ni Po	710	M1 V	(Sword Worlds)
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Enos is something of an oddity, being a member of the Sword Worlds Confederation yet lying far from the Confederation's heartland. Even just reaching Enos from the Sword Worlds is something of an undertaking given the Sword Worlders' technology, and one that necessitated the use of deep-space refueling points or tanker support for vessels making the crossing. This would make sense if Enos was worth anything, but in truth it is not.

The world itself is thought to be a rogue body captured by its primary, Kaleshi, and is the only borderline-habitable world in a very empty star system. A population of some 700,000 or so individuals scrape a precarious living mining petrochemicals from the world's unusually large reserves. This is a hazardous undertaking, as seismic activity has weakened the rock trapping these deposits, causing occasional gas escapes which can be ignited by human activity or other causes.

Whilst still technically a loyal Sword Worlds Confederation member, Enos is now dependent upon Imperial trade ships for supplies and equipment. Its sustainable local tech base is very low and without support (which was withdrawn by the Confederation when they started losing the war) what is in effect a mining colony writ large could not survive.

The carcass of a Sword Worlder base is present on Enos. Most of its personnel were removed as part of the treaty that ended the Fourth Frontier War, with a skeleton staff remaining to maintain the demilitarised remains of the base in case it is taken over by unsavory characters.

Faldor/District 268

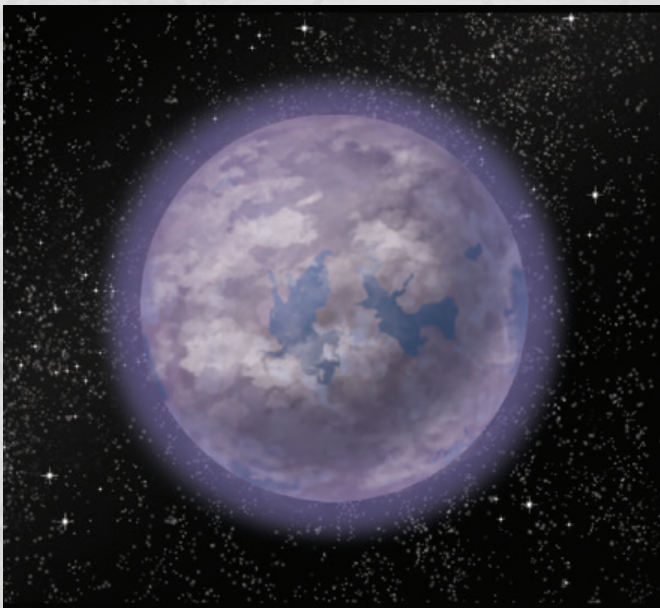
E5936A7-2	-	Ni	520	M7 V	(Non-Aligned)
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An unappealing world with a thick, soupy atmosphere, Faldor sees little in the way of offworld trade. Most ships passing along the Arm go via Bowman and bypass this backwater world. Indeed, Imperial databases contain only a surface map and the most cursory of entries.

Access to Faldor was, until recently, restricted as Imperial scientists were studying the recovery of the world's human population from a collapse into barbarism. This may or may not have been linked with climate change. Faldor is drying out, and is apparently headed for an ice age. Whether or not this has affected the human population, it is likely to be devastating to the indigenous minor race, the Otarri.

Otarri are amphibious, and require a wet environment to survive. They are also highly aggressive and will fight among themselves as well as with outsiders. Perhaps not surprisingly there are only a few thousand Otarri left. They may become extinct within the next few years, though there is little hard data. Study has been difficult due to the innate aggression of the Otarri and the remote location of their remaining homelands.

Sword Worlder vessels have been sighted in the Faldor system. These seem to be long-range patrol vessels as well as scouts, supported by a chain of auxiliaries. Such a deployment is expensive to maintain, suggesting that there is something in the system of interest, but no outsiders have any information on what it might be and the Sword Worlders reply to those inquiries that get any response with bland statements about 'routine patrol deployments' or 'training missions' and will not discuss the matter further.



Bowman/District 268

D000300-9	S	As Lo Va	801	M0 V	(Client State)
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The Bowman Belt is one of the wonders of the Spinward Marches. It is one of the most extensive planetoid belts ever discovered, occupying the equivalent of five planets' worth of orbits in one contiguous belt. The Bowman Belt is home to an unknown, but probably large, number of belter communities. There are also rumors of other inhabitants – pirates, renegade Sword Worlders and the like.

The only actual planet in the system is the gas giant Bowman Prime, whose moons are designated by Greek letters. Alpha is home to a tiny IISS base staffed by a dozen or so personnel, and Garrison Starport, the system's Class C port.

Ling Standard products moved into the Bowman system some time ago, and now have extensive operations in the Trojan asteroids. This has led to friction with the independent beltlers who work the system. There have already been incidents of violence and things look set to get worse.

Squallia/District 268

C438679-9	-	Ni	320	FO V	(Non-Aligned)
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Squallia is a Balkanised world which actually boasts several small Starports. Each has its own advantages and quirks since each serves a different state. Some of the nations of Squallia are pro-Imperial in outlook. Most are fairly neutral.

Not all the states on Squallia possess the TL of 9 listed in IISS charts. Some are TL 7 or 8. Exports are limited, mainly due to low production, but all the same the world serves as a convenient source of mid-tech spares and equipment for those working within the Arm. Ships from Bowman are fairly common, exchanging metal ores for spares and foodstuffs.

Flexos/District 268

E5A1422-8	-	FI Ni	610	M1 V M2 V	(non-Aligned)
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Flexos is a low-population backwater typical of the region. With only 60,000 people in its mid-tech communities, and further handicapped by having to contend with an exotic atmosphere, the world exports little and can afford few imports. Without substantial offworld investment Flexos will probably remain at the subsistence level forever.

Investment in such a marginal world tends to be cheap (though it is often not worth doing anyway). This may be one reason why a variety of survey teams and explorers have recently arrived on Flexos. There are rumors of chemical-extraction processes that may turn Flexos' fluid oceans into an economic asset, but no hard data is available.

Datrillian/District 268

E427633-8	-	Ni	801	M1 V	(Non-Aligned)
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Lying at the 'entry point' to the Bowman Arm, Datrillian is an obvious candidate for investment and development. This will however require winning over the ruling caste, who are opposed to expansion on the sensible grounds that they might lose control of their world.

At present, Starport facilities at Datrillian are extremely primitive, though work is underway to improve them for use as a base for the Royal Defense Corps' orbital combat assets. These at present consist of some very old PAD (Planetary Aerospace Defense) missiles and a pair of orbital interceptors purchased surplus from an Imperial mercenary squadron. The recent acquisition of a utility cutter and training of a crew suggests that Datrillian is about to begin conducting orbital customs checks rather than inspecting vessels on the ground as is current practice. The reason for this departure from current practice is unclear.

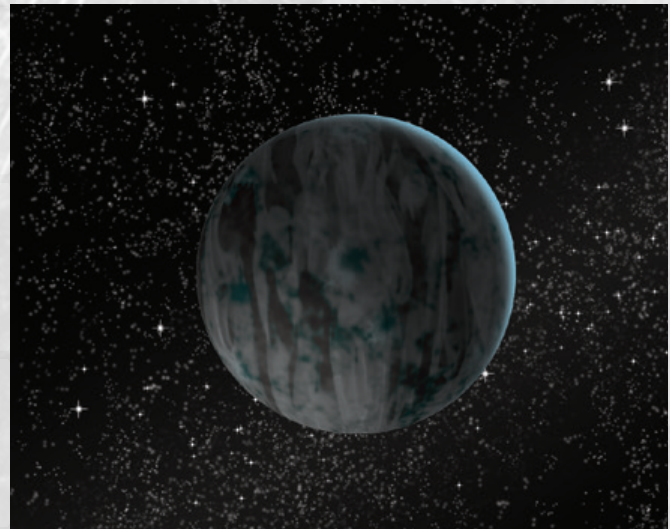
Nirton/District 268

X500000-0	-	Ba Va	R011	MO V	(Non-Aligned)
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Nirton is Red Zoned. The reasons for interdiction are not usually made public, and this case is no exception. The fact that a mid-sized world has no atmosphere, no water and no life on it is intriguing in itself; it seems likely that there is a connection between the state of the planet and its Red Zone status. The Red Zone is normally enforced by Navy ships, but these were withdrawn in 1102, leaving only a battery of automated satellites.

To facilitate passage through the system, a refueling station has been set up far from Nirton, in orbit around the gas giant Ditake. Originally little more than an orbital mooring station served by a pair of fuel-skimming shuttles, the fuelling facility has grown into a collection of stations and modules – some of them physically attached and some not – which is slowly becoming a freeport in its own right.

Navy couriers pass through the station once every couple of months, staying a few days to download the interdiction satellites' logs before moving on.



SYSTEM PROFILE: WALSTON

Walston lies on the most common route through the Bowman Arm, and possesses one of the best ports in the immediate area. This, and the broadly habitable nature of the world, makes it a popular stopover point on the route. Under the right circumstances Walston might become the economic center of the Arm.

Walston/District 268

C544338-8	S	Lo V:7	302	M2 V	(Client State)
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SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Walston orbits an M2 primary named Albin's Star for the captain of the first exploration ship into the system from the Imperium. The system contains two small gas giants named Insize and Greenish (the latter for its color, apparently) plus five rocky bodies in fairly standard orbits. There are no planetoid belts as such, but the system does have the usual comets and planetoid collections at the Trojan points of the gas giants. Walston itself lies on the outer fringe of the Life Zone, occupying the innermost orbit of Albin's Star.

In order out from the star, the system contains:

Orbit	Name	Type	UWP
0	Walston	Rocky, Habitable	C544338-8 Lo
1	Roberts	Large Rockball	X600000-0 Ba Va
2	-	(Empty Orbit)	
3	Greenish	Small Gas Giant	
4	-	(Empty Orbit)	
5	Victir	Iceball	X401000-0 Ba Ic Va
6	Temine	Iceball	E311000-0 Ba Ic
7	-	(Empty Orbit)	
8	Scales	Iceball	X9A0000-0 Ba
9	Insize	Small Gas Giant	

Roberts

Roberts was named for the astrogator of the first colony ship into the Walston system. It is a large (Size 7) rocky body with no satellites. It has an atmosphere of sorts, but it is too thin to breathe unaided. To date there have been only a handful of landings on Roberts, and little in the way of surveying. An expedition some years ago claimed to have found ruined structures on Roberts, but these have not been located again.

Greenish

Quite a small gas giant, Greenish is named for its sickly yellow-green coloration. Its atmosphere is very turbulent, making fuel skimming somewhat hazardous. Greenish has no less than seven significant moons, plus a picturesque ring system that contains few bodies larger than a tennis ball. There is nothing very unusual about the moons of Greenish; most have more or less 'textbook' orbits, though the empty orbits each side of Greenish suggest that the system was once somewhat more vigorous.

Belters from Bowman have at times explored the moons of Greenish and her Trojan planetoids. Only a handful of prospectors remain, suggesting that no big strikes were made.

Victir

Victir is a fairly typical outsystem iceball; airless and inhospitable. Like much of the system it has only been cursorily charted by official expeditions. It is possible that unofficial exploration has been undertaken, but the results of such a survey would not be available to the authorities, assuming it existed at all.

Temine

Another iceball world, Temine was the site of a (failed) mining operation in the 750s. Initial indications of high concentrations of rare earth metals (such as lanthanum) turned out to be inaccurate, but only after large sums were sunk into a surface mining installation and supporting town; over 2000 workers came to Temine, only to leave again in less than a decade. The Temine Bust put investors off sinking money into transborder exploitation projects for many years and remains an embarrassment to all those firms involved.

Scales

A large and forbidding rocky world with very low surface temperatures and a thick atmosphere of toxic gases, Scales has never been fully surveyed, let alone exploited.

Insive

Insive is located at the very outer edge of the Walston system. Less turbulent than Greenish, it lies too far out to be worthwhile skimming fuel at. Insive has a handful of small moons plus one very large one, named Insive Alpha. Alpha seems to be a captured body. One theory suggests that it was originally located in orbit 2 or 4 and was flung outward to be captured by Insive's gravity before it could leave the system.

WALSTON

Lying in the closest orbit to the system's primary, Walston is the only inhabited body in the system. That said, it is not the most inviting of worlds. It is rather dry, with temperatures being highly variable thanks to the thin atmosphere, which requires a filter mask to breathe safely. Lying on the outer edge of the Life Zone, Walston does not get excessively warm, even during the day, and at night temperatures plummet well below freezing in all regions.

Somewhat less than half the planetary surface is under water, though not all of this water is in liquid form. In polar regions the seas are constantly frozen to a considerable depth, and icebergs are common even close to the equator. Nightly freezing of fresh-water bodies and the surface of some seas is a fact of life. Rainfall tends to be minimal since there is little evaporation of frozen water. Walston has no satellites, so there are no tides to contend with.

There is little erosion on land, due to a combination of thin atmosphere and relative dryness. Walston has a number of fairly impressive mountain ranges which create windshadows and further deprive inland regions of rainfall. Thus the landscape tends towards being rugged and impressive, but inhospitable. Rocky badlands and dusty plains are common; though most coastal regions are better watered.

A number of major deep-sea thermal vents exist, giving rise to warm currents that make some areas much more habitable than others. Indeed, there are several obvious sites for settlement, though at present there is only one center of population. This lies on Settlement Island, off the western coast of the world's largest continent, Walston-Main.

Settlement Island is fairly large; some 200km from north to south and 350 from east to west. The sea between it and Walston-Main is shallow and dotted with small islands. A drop in sea level of just a few meters might create a land bridge, though this is not likely to happen. The island itself is not particularly high above sea level except in the southern extreme where a huge extinct volcano (Mount Salbarii) and its surrounding hills rise steeply from the coastal plain.

The island is washed by a warm current which creates a zone of higher than average rainfall and fertile seas; Mount Salbarii traps some of the rain over the island, feeding two great lakes which then spill over into northward-flowing rivers. These rivers not only make the island's interior the most habitable part of the planet, but they also serve as highways between the main and northern settlements.

Walston-Main is large, cold and uninviting. Mountain ranges (with the odd active volcano) are interspersed with dusty plains. A number of deep canyons run roughly east-northeast across the continent. These have never been explored. Erosion seems an unlikely explanation for their presence; tectonic activity or some ancient cataclysm may be the cause.

Walston-Main contains about 50% of the world's land mass. Most of the rest is split between the Main-Southeast Subcontinent, Walston-Antipodes, The Shallows and Varken's Continent. Main-Southeast is connected to Walston-Main by two narrow isthmuses. One is more or less impassable, consisting of a chain of volcanic mountains; the other is a frozen desert. Thus Main-Southeast is effectively a separate land mass.

Walston-Antipodes lies mostly in the Southern hemisphere and includes the great Antarctic ice shelf. It is not known how much land lies under the ice cap. The Shallows is a vast region of very shallow sea with many islands and mountain-tops protruding above the surface. The region would be extremely hazardous to seagoing navigation if any were undertaken. Much of the Shallows can be considered to be a vast saltwater swamp rather than an archipelago, land mass or sea area. In some areas it is possible to walk for hundreds of kilometers between islands, never encountering water deeper than a man's waist. Varken's Continent is a horrible place, with some of the worst terrain on the planet. Some small areas may be marginally habitable but these are surrounded by mountains and rocky deserts which effectively turns them into islands surrounded by an ocean of desolation and reachable only by air.

Countless small islands dot the surface of Walston's oceans. Most of these are either covered in ice or near-vertical; few offer any real prospects for habitation.

Plant and Animal Life

The seas of Walston are home to a variety of hardy life. Most of this is on a microscopic level, though a wide range of hardy fish species, seabed crawlers and free-floating invertebrates exists to feed upon them. Only two species of seagoing animals pose any real threat to humans.

The first is Alderson's Coastal Hunter, more usually known as 'Aldersons'. Aldersons are armored arthropods growing to 30-40 cm long, not counting a whip-like tail which is the same length as the body. The Alderson has a pair of puny lobster-like claws, but normally hunts by either surging from cover to grab small prey or entangling larger invertebrates with its tail. Aldersons can give a human a nasty bite and are very tenacious if they feel threatened enough to fight over territory or if they mistakenly entangle a human diver's limb with their tail. Their armor plates make them difficult to kill with a knife.

The other seagoing threat is more dangerous. It is known as the Deep-Water Brakarr for its similarity to a shallow-water dwelling beast encountered on some other worlds; in fact, they are not related. The Brakarr is a sinister-looking beast which looks like a fish with an armored head from just behind which several manipulative tentacles extend. When moving at speed these are swept back but on the attack they grab prey and haul it into the Brakarr's mouth. Brakarr over 1.5m long and massing as much as an adult human have been sighted in coastal waters. They are aggressive and can decimate farmed fish stocks if not driven off. They are also quite willing to take on a diver, and usually win. Fortunately, they seem to prefer much deeper and colder waters and are rarely sighted near Settlement Island.

Despite the harsh conditions there is a fair amount of life on land. Much of it is small; crawling insects and so forth. Terran creatures seem not to have gained much of a foothold on Walston, whose local fauna is fairly primitive. There are no major flying creatures, though several species of insect possess the ability to spread a 'wing' membrane and drift on the thin air currents. Some of these tiny flyers drift in swarms which can pose a hazard in inland areas. Prevailing winds keep the western side of Settlement Isle clear of them.

Most of the land-dwelling animals on Walston are fairly harmless egg-laying burrowers of one sort or another. Most species can hibernate for long periods to survive a drought, and most possess a coat of coarse hair to insulate them. There is nothing on land that can directly harm a human, though some of the burrowers can be a nuisance. Favorite tricks include climbing into awkward spaces on vehicles to enjoy the warmth from the power plant or burrowing under fences into a cultivated area, then engaging in a devastating feast.

One species of burrowers, known simply as Walstons, are kept as pets by many families on Walston. Sociable and loyal beasts the size of rabbits, Walstons are vegetarian and easy to care for, and seem to like living in the homes of humans and Vargr. They have absolutely no value as guard or working animals, being slow-witted and lazy when well-fed. They do, however, emit a pleasing humming sound when petted and will snuggle up to anyone in emotional distress –apparently to offer comfort.

WALSTON

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Walston	2	4 m
SKILLS	Athletics 0, Stealth 1, Survival 1	
ATTACKS	None	
TRAITS	Small (-2)	
BEHAVIOUR	Herbivore, Grazer	



ALDERSON'S COASTAL HUNTER

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Alderson	16	6 m
SKILLS	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Melee (bite) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2	
ATTACKS	Bite (2D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+3), Camouflaged, Small (-1)	
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Pouncer	

DEEP-WATER BRAKARR

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Brakarr	33	10 m
SKILLS	Athletics (endurance) 3, Melee (bite) 2, Recon 1, Survival 2	
ATTACKS	Bite (3D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+4)	
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Chaser	

Inhabitants

Walston is home to around 3,000 individuals. Of these, some 70% are Vargr, and are second-class citizens. The ruling elite of the world (which is a hereditary dictatorship) are humans who claim ancestry all the way back to the early settlement of the region during the Rule of Man. This claim is disputable, but certainly the ruling families have held Walston for many centuries.

The only inhabited region of the planet is Settlement Island, which has three major 'towns' of about 600 people each and a scattering of small hamlets in addition to the capital at Central Lake. Central, as the settlement is called, is home to 300 or so inhabitants. Expeditions occasionally visit Walston-Main for various reasons, prospecting being the most common, but until now there have been no attempts to create a permanent base on the mainland.

Law level is moderately high, but not excessive. It is true that Vargr are subject to more laws and regulations than their human neighbors, a fact that has caused concern among Imperial observers given the world's Client status. An IISS mission in 1101 concluded that while Vargr are subject to racist restrictions they are 'not unduly oppressed' and their status does not (quite) contravene any Imperial High Laws.

As noted, Walston is an Imperial Client world, and receives protection from the Imperial Navy. This is more notional than real at present given the lack of naval forces in the subsector. A small subsidy is paid to the world government to maintain and operate a Class C starport. This is located at Walston Startown, the northernmost of the settlements, rather than at the capital.

The planetary dictator is currently involved in negotiations with one or more Imperial corporations with a view to licensing mining and other economic installations in remote areas of the planet. There is absolutely no way for the people of Walston to exploit

these resources, or to stop any group that felt like it from simply moving in, but the dictator still insists upon stupidly high licensing fees, stalling the whole process to no-one's advantage. Meanwhile, offworld surveyors have begun to do their work. Perhaps the dictator wishes to hold out for a good deal when the surveyors find something that simply must be exploited. However, he runs the risk that a corporation may lose patience and simply move in without permission. With no ability to dislodge such an operation by force and too little money to make a challenge in the Imperial courts, there is a real risk that the dictator will provoke a fait accompli that cuts the world population out of any benefits of offworld investment.

The Vargr population of Walston are accepting of their status. They get little say in government and cannot hold certain posts, but on the whole they are left alone to live their lives as they will, other than paying lip service to the idea that humans are their social superiors. Since most of the people of Walston live comfortable, unambitious lives and get along well enough, this is not a problem. Offworld Vargr tend to become extremely offended at both the human 'overlords' and the contented Vargr 'peons' of Walston, which can lead to problems. While Walston has been a client world of the Imperium for many years there are no plans to apply for full membership. Change is unwelcome on Walston, and Imperial membership might upset the 'natural order' of things.

Walston has a mainly subsistence economy based on shallow-water seabed farming off Settlement Island's ice-free western coast and more conventional agriculture along the river valleys. What manufacturing there is operates as effectively cottage industries in the three main settlements. A mature TL8 industrial base is quite sufficient to provide a high standard of living and to meet the needs of the undersea farming industry. Virtually everything is craftsman-made to order, and even utilitarian equipment tends to be of a high standard.

The Starport employs a few dozen people and brings in a modest income from passing vessels, crews stopping over and so forth. Ships come through fairly regularly – sometimes two or more in a single day – and the part-time port brokerage even turns a profit on speculative cargoes from time to time. Walston imports little and exports even less; the port is purely an external commercial installation.

Walston cannot be said to possess a military force of any kind. The dictator maintains a security formation equipped with TL8 smallarms and vehicles, which acts as a law-enforcement agency, fire/rescue department and starport security force in addition to protecting the ruling elite. Other than a couple of support weapons at Central, the security force has nothing more potent than an assault rifle at its disposal.

There is no offworld defense capability whatsoever. Even the starport's single utility boat is unarmed and serves only as a transport for maintenance personnel servicing the orbital mooring beacon. Walston does not even possess a ground-to-orbit missile battery.

Similarly, there is no way to project force beyond the coastal waters of Settlement Island, and no real force to project. While a militia could be raised and deployed aboard the utility boat or seagoing craft such as coastal fanning submarines, it unlikely that much could be achieved. Walston has no history of conflict and no real warrior traditions amongst its people.

Living and Working on Walston

Daily life on Walston is slow and, for the most part, comfortable. Filter masks and thick clothing are needed when venturing outside, but otherwise there are no serious hazards. Dwellings are kept at an uncomfortably warm temperature (as far as offworld visitors are concerned) by humans; less so by Vargr.

Within the three towns and Central, buildings are blocky with rounded corners, and sunk into the ground rather than built upwards. Thus very few buildings have more than one story aboveground, but larger ones may have two or even three levels below the entry floor. Within a settlement, structures are grouped close together and connected by semi-sunken tunnels at the entry floor level. Most clusters have only a couple of ground-level entrances for personnel and a common vehicle garage. Outlying hamlets are mostly a single structure, though some have three or more independent buildings if the settlement has expanded since it was constructed.

Indoor clothing on Walston tends to be light. A kilt and a light shirt/tunic is the commonest dress for both sexes, with light sandals or bare feet. Vargr tend to wear bright colors, with human favoring soberer outfits in gray, white, black, blue or dark red. This makes humans look like a somber lot compared to the Vargr, but in truth both groups are easy-going and friendly.

Although the Vargr are disenfranchised and must defer to humans in many situations, they do not seem to be unhappy with this situation. There are few decisions to make anyway and everyone has a high standard of living. People of both races tend to be unambitious and find many offworlders to be more than a little bit manic with their go-getter attitudes. Asking most Walston citizens why they don't go offworld to seek their fortune, or set off into the wilderness to find mineral riches, results in a blank look and the oft-repeated phrase 'but it's nice here!'

Most of the population work in farms close to the settlements, with smaller numbers employed as divers or submarine crews in the coastal seabed farms. A small percentage work at the starport (usually part-time alongside a craftsman or farming job) or are employed in the world's tiny bureaucracy and security force. Vargr work in all these industries and can hold fairly high positions, but humans are always given precedence.

Vargr are not required to be obsequious to humans; merely to acknowledge that they hold a higher place in Walston's social structure. This idea has become ingrained to the point where it is thought of as the natural order of things. The locals are quite comfortable with the idea that offworld Vargr might have different values, but here humans are superior. Offworld Vargr find this idea more than a little creepy.

The people of Walston are not good at reacting to problems, and are nervous about their responses until they are approved by whoever is perceived as being in charge. A few individuals are quite dynamic, such as the security managers at the underwater farms. These people deal with divers in trouble and other crises on a fairly regular basis and are comfortable with thinking on their feet. Most individuals prefer to get together with friends and neighbours and have a good talk about the issue. Hopefully one of the more usual troubleshooters will deal with the problem in the meantime. Thus if confronted with a minor disaster (e.g. a wastebin fire) the average Walston local will deal with it well enough. However, all the time he or she will be looking around for someone to defer to, and will not be comfortable until someone takes charge of the situation and approves whatever action was taken.

ADVENTURES ON WALSTON

The following adventure seeds can be used to set up quick adventures in the Walston system.

WALSTON MAIN

The Travellers are requested to carry out a comprehensive survey of a region on the Walston-Main continent. They must determine not only the presence of mineral wealth or other exploitable resources but also the practicality of setting up a mining operation in the area. Weather conditions, availability of water and tectonic stability are all important factors in such an undertaking. The client is an offworld investment group hoping to convince the planetary dictator to grant them a license to exploit an area of the continent. Solid data will allow a better estimate of what to offer, or whether it is worth just going ahead in defiance of the dictator's stonewalling.

It transpires that several other groups have been hired to undertake similar surveys, some of them by rival concerns. While the continent is huge, there are not all that many prime sites for a mining outpost, so fairly soon the travellers will begin to encounter other surveyors. Some of them may be friendly, others distinctly stand-offish.

There is no law in the outback of Walston, so any clash with other prospectors will be regulated only by the willingness of the parties involved to negotiate or compromise. The situation could turn into a bloody range war between rival groups of prospectors, or (depending upon the Travellers) be something more complex. It might be possible to hammer out a compromise between the various groups and to even help one another out. The efforts of a loose alliance of legitimate prospectors to fend off a gun-happy band of thugs could spawn several interesting encounters.

There are other possibilities of course. Walston-Main has never been fully explored. There may be evidence of ruined settlements hidden in the rugged valleys of the outback; perhaps someone is still living there!

The great canyons of Walston-Main have never been explored. This would present numerous challenges and might be exploration for exploration's sake. Alternatively, there might be a sinister secret lurking at the bottom of the canyons...

THE SHALLOWS

The Shallows presents a number of challenges to explorers. A vast region of tiny islands, half-frozen inlets and shallow channels, it is virtually impossible to traverse by all-terrain vehicle or boat, and presents a number of problems to starships or grav vehicles since safe landing areas are not immediately obvious.

The ecosystem of the Shallows is unique, making it home to a variety of unusual sea and beach creatures. Little or nothing is known about the local flora and fauna, which might have pharmaceutical or other marketable properties. Similarly, mineral and other resources may be exploitable. For this reason, various groups have attempted to survey and chart the region; sometimes successfully and more often not. Some groups (always offworlders) have attempted record-setting expeditions such as crossing the Shallows using only man-portable equipment. Such endeavors are viewed with puzzlement on planet but may make the news as far away as Mora. Were a Shallows expedition to get into trouble, no rescue would be available using on-planet resources. A group with a starship or air/raft might be able to render assistance.

Exploring the Shallows might lead to a discovery. Centuries ago, the water level on Walston was slightly lower than it is now. In those ancient days the Darrians built an outpost on an island in the region. When the disaster known as the Maghiz swept over the region, this outpost was used as a safe haven from the surge of electromagnetic disturbance that accompanied it. This surge severely disrupted electronic equipment in the area and damaged the outpost's systems rather badly, but the survivors who fled here were able to at least survive. Their ships, however, were rendered inoperative. Those in the system eventually crashed or drifted into deep space over the years. Some may still be drifting slowly outward; the craters of others might be found if anyone thinks to search.

It is possible that one or more inert Darrian ships lie on the seabed of the Shallows. Badly decayed but still of interest to Imperial and Daryen scientists. The outpost itself might be located too, submerged when the sea level rose. By that time the refugees would most likely have died out.

RESCUE SUB

The submarines used by Walston's coastal farmers are craftsman-built and very reliable. They do, however, suffer serious malfunctions from time to time. When that happens, the rescue sub is launched to recover the distressed vessel, or at least its crew. However, this time there is an additional problem.

A farming sub equipped to support four divers and with a crew of two has suffered a severe control malfunction and run out of control, heading for deep water off the coast. The crew have managed to shut down the propulsion system, but the craft is now caught in a current that is likely to carry it past the northern end of the island and eventually onto the coast of Walston-Main. The sub is sinking slowly despite the best efforts of the crew to maintain buoyancy or blow the tanks and surface. It is not known yet whether it will fall into a trough between the island and mainland and pass crush depth (the farming subs are not deep-submergence vessels) or be washed onto the coastal shelf. Neither outcome is particularly favorable.

The distressed crew is already beyond the reach of the rescue sub. There are 3 divers on board – one was outside when the drive went haywire and was able to raise the alarm. The farming sub can support 5 people for at least another day or two, but by then it will be too late; the hull will either be crushed by water pressure or smashed on coastal rocks.

The rescue sub can go much deeper than a farming vessel, but is not fast enough to catch the drifting sub in time. Rescue by a starship is not possible. Unless specially adapted for deep water as some System Defense Boats are, starships cannot function underwater beyond a depth of a few metres. The distressed vessel is already quite deep; escaping in diving equipment remains a possibility but even if the crew were picked up very quickly after reaching the surface (say by a hovering spacecraft), the pressure change might be fatal.

The only solution seems to be the rescue sub. It might be possible to increase its speed with jury-rigged extra propulsion systems, or to transport it to the rescue area in a starship's cargo hold, then somehow get it into the sea. The latter can be accomplished by landing in the water and submerging the starship a little (all starships can stand immersion to a few meters' depth) to allow it to float out through the cargo doors. After the crew are taken off the rescue sub must then get home. This means fighting the current all the way; the rescue sub can do this but it cannot tow the farming vessel while doing so. It will have to be abandoned unless something ingenious is thought up, such as attaching a cable to a starship and making a low-level flight home.

Matters may be complicated by rocks, entangling seaweed or hostile fauna if the referee desires.

MAIN SOUTHWEST

The Main-Southwest Subcontinent is virtually a separate land mass and is very far from Settlement Island. Offworlders have been covertly landing there for some time. Among them are contractors of the Imperial megacorporation Sternmetal Horizons. These individuals have been conducting more-or-less legal mineral surveys with a view to starting extraction operations as soon as the planetary dictator gets around to granting a license – or Sternmetal loses patience and goes ahead anyway.

Operating out of semi-concealed camps the surveyors have been ranging all over the Main-Southwest Subcontinent. Additional personnel come in occasionally aboard supply ships, but the number of prospectors is deliberately small to avoid notice. The latest supply vessel discovered that the numbers were even lower than expected – some of the prospectors had disappeared.

The travellers might get involved in this situation in a variety of ways. Sternmetal might hire them to investigate the disappearances, or the planetary dictator may ask them to check on rumored offworlder activity in the region. The Imperial authorities (most likely the IISS) might also approach them. Depending upon why they became involved, the Travellers might be suspected of playing a part in the disappearances by the remaining Sternmetal people – assuming they can be found.

It is not advisable to go hopping around the region in a starship. It would be spotted sooner or later. Thus the Travellers will either be dropped off by a ship or land theirs and camouflage it before using other means of transport. Their investigation will turn up signs that prospecting is taking place – bore holes and discarded equipment at likely mine sites, for example. After some searching, the Travellers will start to find the bodies.

If the referee likes horror movies, the reason might be quite sinister. Perhaps a hidden research base has created some kind of bioengineered monster and accidentally let it loose. Perhaps there is an unsuspected land-dwelling predator after all...

Alternatively, the deaths and disappearances might be the work of rivals. A pirate or smuggling ring operating out of the Main-Southwest Subcontinent and trying to remain undiscovered might be killing off the prospectors. It is also possible that Imperial enemies may have a base there. This might be renegade Sword Worlders determined to carry on the war, or it might be forces from the Trexalon Technical Consortium (TTC)

intent on disrupting Imperial expansion in the region by any means necessary. Any clash with such groups is likely to be bloody.

RAIDERS

Planetary Raiders are a problem in District 268 and the surrounding region. Using starships (usually cargo vessels converted to carry extra ground troops) the raiders choose weakly defended worlds as their target, and usually attack relatively minor settlements rather than important installations. Because their ships do not need to be able to defeat others in open combat, and ship-to-ship combat damage is unlikely, the overheads of such a group are lower than those of true pirates. The methods are quite similar.

The usual approach is to land close to a town or city and shoot up any defense installations with shipboard weapons while ground troops overrun the defenders. Goals vary from wanton destruction through slave-raiding to capture of industrial goods and produce. Some of the more daring groups have actually tried to seize control of a frontier starport in the hope of netting a starship or two. Others use simple extortion, threatening to flatten the town unless tribute is handed over. The normal duration of a planetary raid is hours at most, preventing much in the way of a response from being made.

Obviously, worlds with a good aerospace defence force or system squadron can prevent such raids, but many systems in District 268 are wide open. One obvious target is Walston. In fact, the only real reason the system has not been raided before is the lack of concentrated industry that can be robbed; raiders like high-value, low-bulk goods that can be quickly gathered and loaded.

Despite the chicken-stealing nature of raiding Walston, one group has decided to launch an attack. Their goal is to take the starport and seize its stocks of starship spares (minor as these may be, they are still valuable) along with anything else that might be grabbed. The profit margin can be pushed up by taking captives for ransom or to be sold as slaves. Slave-trading is of course aggressively targeted by the Imperial Navy but in these difficult times there is little chance of being caught anywhere outside the Imperial border.

The raiders are using a 400-ton Subsidised Merchant as their transport. It is armed with two dual laser turrets and carries a 20t launch. The latter mounts a missile rack which is normally used for ground-fire suppression. Some 22 ground fighters are aboard, equipped with a

variety of weapons. The most common loadout is an assault rifle or submachinegun, flak jacket and helmet. Some individuals have full Cloth or even Combat Armor, and access to heavier weapons (mainly ACRs).

The raiders have vehicles at their disposal including two air/rafts armed with a pintle-mounted light machinegun, a couple of wheeled bulk-loaders for rapid stowage of loot, and a TL7 light tank armed with a 75mm cannon. Their plan is to approach the port acting like a legitimate merchant ship, land where they are told then launch their attack from the ground. The launch will lift off from its piggyback mount and suppress any ground-based heavy weapons (there are none) or batter any ships at the port, while the Subbie itself engages any ships with its lasers from point-blank range.

Meanwhile, the tank and 'rafts will advance rapidly, followed by ground fighters, to secure the port. The raiders will round up everyone they want as quickly as possible and begin loading whatever loot they can get – cargo, spares or stockpiles from the port workshops. They expect to be on-planet for just a few hours. Since Walston is such a soft target the raiders expect to get away scot-free and even take a little time to enjoy themselves. They are not a disciplined fighting force and are quite capable of committing terrible atrocities.

The port defenders are stunned. Individuals might fight back but will quickly be overwhelmed by firepower. There is nothing on-site that can bring down a 'raft or stop a tank, let alone engage a starship. The militia armory contains carbines and light machineguns, plus a handful of disposable anti-tank rocket launchers. The militia have virtually no experience with the latter, and will be scattered and scared at the beginning of the raid. If some of them can be rallied and the armory reached, perhaps a defense can be mounted and maybe some of the captives rescued. However, the only people likely to lead such a defense were in the front line when the raiders landed. They are dead, wounded or captive by now.

Note that there are very few weapons in the locals' homes as this is illegal. The only chance is to reach the armory, but there are troops and even a tank to deal with, plus the air/rafts deployed to keep the locals' heads down.

The raiders are undisciplined but aggressive. They are used to dealing with the feeble resistance of mid-tech victims, and are willing to take the odd casualty so long as they think they are winning. Once the tables start to turn, self-preservation is the order of the day. A determined counterattack might be enough to scare off the raiders without having to defeat them all in a stand-up fight.

ADVENTURING IN THE BOWMAN ARM

The Bowman Arm is an underdeveloped backwater. While ships have plied the spacelanes of the Arm for many years there is a great deal that is not commonly known about the systems linking Flammarion to Caliburn. As plans to develop the region progress the volume of traffic will go up, but this is not likely to happen for some time. Thus the Arm remains little trafficked and even more rarely patrolled. All manner of covert activity could be taking place in the outsystems or even on the mainworlds of the Arm. Examples include illegal research bases, pirate havens or corporate mining installations quietly set up to exploit the region ahead of the expected land rush.

Some ideas for adventures in the Bowman Arm follow.

THE FLAMMARION RUN

Adventurers with access to a starship might be chartered to carry a cargo right through the Arm and into port at Flammarion. A small ship might be asked to carry a message or an important passenger. Many charters include a provision that the ship may engage in speculative trade along the way so long as it does not interfere with the charter mission. Such a charter would be a good way to visit many of the worlds of the Arm, and to gain an appreciation of what life is like there. A slightly different take on this mission is for a group without a starship to have to reach the other end of the Arm by taking passage on a variety of ships, perhaps compiling a survey of worlds and ports encountered along the way.

It may be that there are groups who do not want the charter or mission to be completed. Such interference might take the form of petty harassment at various points along the way (starport regulations are often used against rivals), or may be more direct. The most likely opponents in this case are Trexalon Technical Consortium (TTC) agents or a pirate/raider band. The Travellers might be given their mission as bait to draw out the enemy so that Imperial authorities can deal with them.

SELF HELP

The Bowman Arm is something of a lawless area. Piracy and conflict of other kinds is on the rise, especially since the Imperial Navy presence has been reduced. There is a real need for increased patrols and perhaps even attacks on raider strongholds if they are found. However, there is simply no force available to carry out such a mission.

A group of merchant captains, starport officials and traders have come up with a solution: The Bowman Arm Joint Security Initiative, normally referred to as JSI. The plan is in its infancy but involves cobbling together a token patrol force out of whatever assets are available. The cheapest way to do this is to obtain surplus small craft and outfit them as gunships, and carry them aboard a converted merchant ship. Such a vessel (termed an Expedient Carrier in Naval circles) would be wholly useless in a war situation but could provide a useful armed presence on the spacelanes; this might be enough to deter some of the predators.

THE BOWMAN ARM



JOINT SECURITY INITIATIVE

Setting up the JSI is quite a challenge. Everything must be done on a shoestring, and at each stage it is necessary to show everyone involved that the project so far has been a success. Crews need to be found, suitable craft obtained and converted, weapons and systems sourced. It is possible that a sufficiently organised opponent might try to scotch the project by attacking the conversion crews.

If the JSI's ramshackle navy is actually put together, there may be combat operations to be carried out. Certainly there will be patrols and training exercises to run, which will keep everyone concerned very busy for a while.

CHART & SURVEY

The data on file about the Bowman Arm is fragmentary and in some cases obsolete. Now that Imperial attention is beginning to focus on the region, the IISS is seeking to update its charts and data files. Unfortunately, there are not enough Scout vessels to complete this work, so the Scout Service is seeking to hire freelancers. Most of the mainworlds of the Arm are adequately mapped, though data on planetary populations, culture, government etc may be somewhat outdated. However, the other worlds, belts and planetoid clusters of most systems have never been properly surveyed.

A charting expedition will normally be given a specific target (more often, several targets) such as surface-mapping the moons of a particular gas giant, or charting the main planetoids in a given cluster. In most cases this is dull and routine work, but sometimes a charting expedition will find something unexpected. Potential finds range from derelict spacecraft to hidden bases, and might lead to further adventures across the subsector and beyond.



TRADE SCOUTS

District 268 is an unexploited market for Imperial companies. However, large trading corporations do not like plunging into the unknown. One way to determine the nature of the market is to send out trade scouts; small merchant vessels loaded with speculative cargoes. Instead of sending their own ships, some Imperial trade firms prefer to make a deal with independent traders. The essence of the deal is that the patron will provide funds for a cargo and meet some expenses in return for an assessment of the marketplace. For the small merchant this kind of deal offers the chance to make a good profit on speculative trading, and if the venture fails then no capital has been sunk into of it.

Trade scouting missions can be precise or very vague. Some patrons will simply provide money and suggest that the freelancer tries to make a profit with it (!) while others may have a more detailed brief, such as attempting to sell electronics spares on a particular world and processed ores on another. In either case the independents have a lot of leeway about what else they can carry and trade, so such deals are normally mutually beneficial.

Trade-scouting is a good way to get a group of Travellers into the Bowman Arm, and to keep them moving along the path the referee has in mind without being too restrictive. There are plenty of opportunities for side trips, misadventures and chance encounters along the way.

DIPLOMACY

A group of Travellers might be sent to the Bowman Arm to play diplomat. This could be an official Imperial delegation of nobles and bodyguards aboard a shiny armed yacht, or it might be a corporate negotiating team. At the other end of the scale, the Travellers might simply become involved in a dispute (say between the Planetary Dictator of Walston and Sternmetal Horizons) and find that they have the ability to broker a deal acceptable to all.

There are many possibilities for alliances and deals within the Bowman Arm. The Impending Imperial expansion is rocking the boat in several areas and new relationships need to be established. Rising tensions need to be defused. For example, the belter population of Bowman is deeply suspicious of Imperial Megacorporate intentions in their home system. Establishing good relations will be a diplomatic challenge, but first the beltlers' trust will have to be won or they will not talk at all. The typical boardroom hotshot would be incapable of establishing such a relationship, which requires a certain amount of hands-on work.

MERCENARIES

There is a general move in the Bowman Arm towards securing the future through military capability. This generally involves acquiring weapons of some kind and learning to use them. There is thus a lot of work for lone mercenaries as well as larger groups. If training local militias and planetary defense forces does not appeal, there are more direct contracts to consider. Already some groups have been dislodged from their holdings, and want them back. Force of arms may be the only way. On the flip side, a mercenary group might be hired to dislodge one of these recently-trained militias.

Conflict in the Arm is relatively low-key at present, so in most cases the requirement is for company-sized or smaller forces. Special capabilities (such as hostile environment skills) are in demand at present. Even if they are not mercenaries themselves, the travellers might be hired to recruit a force, or to transport it. Or they may be in the vicinity when an operation takes place and have to deal with the results...

COVERT OPERATIONS

Given the number of conflicting interests in the Arm, it should be no surprise that large numbers of agents, spies and other operatives are active in the region. Covert operations possibilities range from simple bounty hunting – the region has been a destination for numerous Imperial fugitives – to highly complex industrial espionage or economic sabotage missions.

There is a shadowy war being fought across the subsector by agents of the TTC and imperial-backed Collace. In addition, individual worlds may have their own agents working for or against Imperial interests, and of course the Imperial intelligence services are active. On top of all that, the corporations have their own agendas and may have agents in place.

There are real possibilities for cross-agency foul-ups and incidents between unassociated but non-hostile groups such as Imperial Naval Intelligence and the corporate intelligence service of Ling Standard products.

EXPLORERS

There are whole new worlds to explore in the Arm, and new challenges to meet. Adventurous individuals want to be the first to climb the highest mountain on a given world, the first to photograph (or shoot) a dangerous animal, or the first to achieve some other noteworthy goal. Travellers might join an expedition, transport it, or rescue its survivors.

For example, the vast canyons on Walston's main continent are unexplored. They lie hundreds of kilometers from the world's only settlements, and no backup whatsoever is available for an expedition that gets into trouble. But who knows what lies in the canyon bottoms? Ruined cities? Evidence of ancient and extinct creatures? Vast mineral wealth? Or perhaps just the remains of the last bunch of idiots to try exploring the area...

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Many of the worlds and groups in the region like things as they are and do not want the Imperium to expand into the region. Resistance may ultimately be doomed... but then again it may not. The Imperium is driven by economics and if expansion in a region is going to be too expensive then it will not be undertaken unless there is some other need, such as to secure an astrographic choke point.

The various opposition groups are scattered across the district and are at present incapable of any sort of coherent action. If a joint plan could be 'sold' to all involved, then a decent resistance could be put up. Open warfare is not an option, though a little sneaky commerce raiding against Imperial-registered ships might be possible.

In order to curtail Imperial expansion, it would be necessary to fight a multi-level campaign in the courts and boardrooms as well as in the hearts and minds of local people. Every Imperial move must be challenged, delayed, harassed or best of all, forced to withdraw. Yet all this must be done without provoking a military response from the Imperium. Deniability is essential.

Perhaps such a conspiracy already exists. Funding comes from Sword Worlders determined to carry on the war by any possible means, and from Trexalon. A group of travellers adventuring in the region will eventually piece together the nature of the conspiracy and may end up joining or fighting it – or both, trying to play both ends off against the middle for their own gain.

THINGS BETTER LEFT UNDISTURBED

There are a number of distinctly strange places in the Spinward Marches. Almost all of them are thought to be a legacy of the Ancients, and most actually are. Many of these sites have lain undisturbed for millennia, but with new expansion into the region comes the possibility that someone will stumble over something that would have been better left alone.

At its most basic, this adventure seed might be the driving force for an adventuring group. Rumors of an Ancients site or other alien relics tend to draw adventurers, who would be willing to undertake a lengthy search in order to find something suitably valuable.

On a more complex level, this theme can be built into any of the other adventure seeds presented here. For example, a covert-operations team might be sent to find out what is happening on a remote moon, only to find that a corporate research facility has been set up to carry out semi-legal research. Later, the team hears that the facility has suffered some kind of disaster and returns to investigate, only to discover that something far more sinister was taking place there.

If the referee wishes, a large-scale 'alien conspiracy' storyline could provide a backdrop to other events in the region, or rumors of such could be a red herring to divert attention from a more mundane political maneuver. It is a good idea not to use Weird Alien Threats too often, but the occasional hint of something disturbing adds an element of mystery to a Traveller game and keeps Travellers from becoming too comfortable with their world-view.

THE NEAR FUTURE IN THE BOWMAN ARM

The Imperial expansion into District 268 is in its early days, but it is going to happen. A little further up the Spinward Main, the Metal Worlds are being settled and exploited. Improved starports will lead to an increase in trade further along the Main, making access to District 268 easier. The expansion will be led by trade scouts for the big corporations and entrepreneurial individuals, though in some cases larger firms will attempt to gain a solid foothold early on, and may be willing to undertake quite risky ventures to gain a good position.

Ling Standard Products already has holdings in the Bowman system and Sternmetal Horizons is also interested in setting up mining facilities in the region. Neither corporation is above placing an installation in a remote area of a sparsely-populated world and bringing in mercenaries to protect it, securing a foothold whether the world government likes it or not. This kind of corporate squatting causes a great deal of resentment, so negotiation and licensing deals are normally pursued first.

The 'corporate scramble' for District 268 could become quite heated; there is a real possibility of a Trade War between Sternmetal and LSP. However, another conflict is brewing. The Trexalon Technical Consortium (TTC) is very aware that this is their last chance to stave off Imperial expansion into their backyard. Once losses from the Fourth Frontier War are made good, Imperial strength in the region will grow beyond the ability of TTC forces to counter.

Thus the TTC is about to up the stakes in its cold war with pro-Imperial Collace, and begin more active opposition to Imperial operations in the region. This opposition cannot take the form of an open naval campaign, of course, since that would trigger the intervention of the Imperial Navy. The blockade squadron from Andor alone could shatter the TTC navy with firepower to spare. Open war must be avoided. Thus the TTC is using different methods.

Covert operatives are active throughout the subsector, spreading anti-Imperial propaganda and trying to persuade worlds to resist Imperial business proposals. Although TTC resources are very limited, some support in the form of investment and advice is being provided to worlds willing to side with Trexalon. This is not on the scale that the Imperium can offer but it is presented as a modest benefit from a worthy alliance, rather than a lucrative pact with the (Imperial) Devil.

More direct opposition is also being prepared. Third-party factors and agents are currently obtaining weapons and mercenary advisors (some of them from within the Imperium) and supplying them to anyone willing to resist the Imperial advance. Trexalon has not yet reached the point of handing a gun to every crazy who is willing to shoot at Imperials, but it is getting that way. Trexalon hopes that the Imperials will misconstrue the intentions of local self-defense organisations and attack them, creating anti-Imperial feeling throughout the region.



Other pawns in the TTC game are dispossessed Sword Worlders looking to carry on the war by whatever means, and Aslan Ihatei. The latter, landless second sons seeking places to settle and claim territory, are being actively assisted in finding suitable sites in the Bowman Arm. The result will be several colonies of well-armed warrior people determined to hold what they consider theirs and whose viewpoint has been manipulated to make it strongly anti-Imperial.

The TTC is also beginning a very risky policy of supporting piracy against the Imperials. Rather than executing or imprisoning pirates, Trexalon has begun releasing them subject to an agreement to operate more coreward – i.e. towards Imperial space. TTC money has been spent on creating freeports here and there in the region where ships can be repaired and re-armed, no questions asked.

If the Imperium can prove that the TTC is sponsoring this kind of activity, serious consequences will result. It is thus a dangerous, high-stakes game that Trexalon is playing but there is no other way to slow down the Imperial encroachment.

The Imperial/TTC conflict is more likely to simmer in the background than erupt into open violence. If the cold war becomes hot, it will be very short indeed. However, neither side wants open war (for different reasons) so there is almost a mutual agreement to try to keep the lid on the situation and to play within certain rules which may change over time but are unlikely to be entirely ignored.