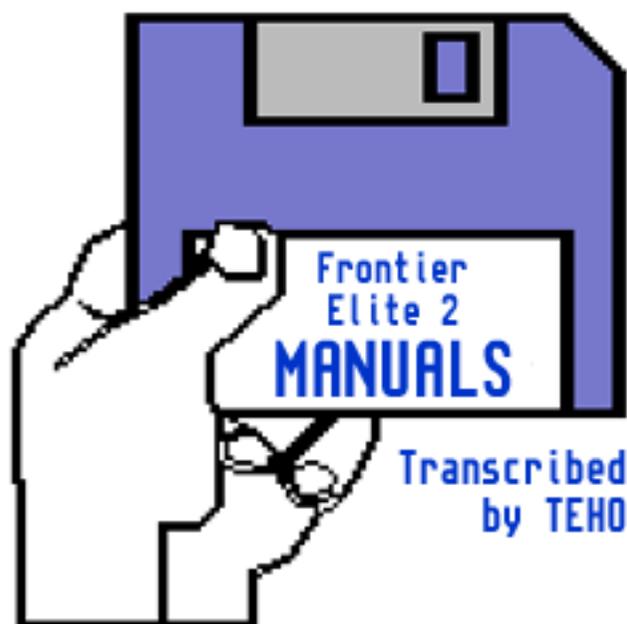


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The Gazetteer

Introduction

This gazetteer of selected worlds has been compiled for Falcon De Lacey by Darlitz, the makers of the well known pocket holiday guides. The principle contributor was our correspondent David Massey whose tireless travelling made it possible for so many planets to be described. Such was the tight schedule for writing this gazetteer his three assistants; Kathy Dickinson, David Braben and Ian Bell were called upon to contribute some of its contents. It serves as a brief introduction for the avid traveller or a source of dreams for the sedentary explorer. The Sol System is described first because of its historical importance along with the Achenar. Both have headquarters of the two main players in the competition for galactic rule, the Federation and the Empire. To aid the reader, we have included a brief history of the early part of mankind's quest.

A BRIEF HISTORY

- 1950s First man in space, controlled nuclear fission, transistor, start of first nuclear arms race
- 1960s First man on Moon, commercial fission power, integrated circuits, computers
- 1970s Probes in Solar system
- 1980s End of first nuclear arms race
- 1990s First serious environmental problems on Earth, controlled nuclear fusion
- 2000s First (minor) armed conflict between a nation and a “multi-national” corporation
- 2010s First serious population problems on Earth
- 2020s First international environmental protection agency, first commercial space station
- 2030s Major energy crisis, fossil fuel restrictions, religious unrest, first baby born off Earth
- 2040s World War III. Huge technological advancements, huge loss of life, dreadful environmental damage.
- 2050s War gradually abandoned due to popular rebellions. Commercial fusion power
- 2060s Rebuilding. Dominance of corporations increased.
- 2070s First man on Mars, first permanent Moon base
- 2080s Manned exploration of solar system, orbital cities around Earth, first interstellar probes launched.
- 2090s First permanent Mars base, heavy industry on the Moon.
- 2100s Discovery of fossils on Mars, “hyperspace” discovered, humans throughout solar system.
- 2110s Arrival of message from first interstellar probe to Alpha Centauri system. First pictures taken of an extra-solar planet in the Lagrange point of the two main stars.
- 2120s Presence of life on Tau Ceti 3 detected, first armed conflict in space over rights in the asteroid belt.
- 2130s Hyperspace capable probes sent to all nearby systems.
- 2140s Manned spacecraft sent to Tau Ceti.
- 2150s Colony established on Tau Ceti 3. Major corporations sending first private colony ships.
- 2160s The race for the stars. Enormous production effort to produce colony ships, and mass exodus started.
- 2170s First attempt to terra-form Mars started.
- 2180s Life on Delta Pavonis discovered and made extinct in same year due to bacteriological infection.
- 2190s Discovery of life on Beta Hydri 4, Altair 5. Human colonials spreading out of control.
- 2200s Earth environmental recovery program started, terraforming of Mars abandoned.
- 2220s Extinctions on Tau Ceti 3 increasing. Earth threatens to send a police force if nothing is done about it
- 2230s Ultimatum sent to Tau Ceti 3 ignored
- 2240s First interstellar battle, formation of the Federation, founder members: Earth, Tau Ceti, Delta Pavonis, Altair, Beta Hydri.
- 2260s Spread of Federation influence.
- 2270s Second attempt to terra-form Mars started.
- 2280s Discovery of first non-human relic in space. Origin still unknown in 3200.
- 2290s First man “outside” on Mars (ie breathing unaided) on completion of terraforming.
- 2300s Remaining indigenous life on Tau Ceti 3 preserved in special enclosures.
- 2310s News of elimination of a reputedly sentient race on Achenar 6d by private colonists causes outrage in the Federation. Achenar refuses to join Federation, many terra-forming projects started.

- 2320s Federation sends war fleet to Achenar. Resulting enormous space battle won by Achenar.
- 2330s Spread of Empire from Achenar to surrounding worlds. War between Empire and Federation.
- 2340s Continuing battles between Federation and Empire.
- 2350s Sirius corporation founded, and grew rich supplying the war fleets.
- 2360s
- 2370s
- 2380s Treaty signed between Empire and Federation.

SOL

(0,0)

Earth

Steeped in history, the Earth has suffered many adversities before becoming the resort that it is today. Humanity began here and documented accounts tell of three planet-bound wars, the last one in 2040 almost bringing extinction due to the loss of life and environmental damage. For these reasons the landscape has changed beyond all recognition since then, mainly due to the devastation and depopulation of nearly all the cities and towns. The final insult was a viral pandemic, for which no cure was found and many perished who were not resistant to it.

As the world was rebuilt corporations became more influential and the balance of power went in their favour. After the war, fierce competition between them made it possible for space to be conquered whereas previously, that was seen as unimportant and exploration budgets were cut.

As extra-terrestrial settlements were established industry was moved off the Earth along with many people. An intensive environmental rescue program saved the planet and it again became the beautiful place it once was. It became both a very up-market tourist destination and the Federation capital with only the extremely rich being able to live there. Many native extra-terrestrials aspire to visit their roots and save up for many years just to be able to say they have been to their ancestors' birthplace.

K.D.

Mars

In 2290 Mars became the first planet to be terraformed successfully but not before several aborted attempts. Major corporations based their administration centres here when land was very cheap in the early days and Mars seemed like the Garden of Eden compared to the ravaged Earth. The two major cities are Quenisset and Olympus Village, both are very cosmopolitan and manicured in appearance. There are many bijou bars and restaurants designed for businessmen to impress and to strike deals in privacy. All sorts of service and entertainment industry thrive as they pander to the needs of the over indulged. The environment is tailored to be tasteful, even the animal life looks like an attractive accessory, so whilst it is Earth-like, Mars has a very sterile feel about it.

K.D.

The Moon

Heavy industry was moved here in the early days and it is based around the only starport, Apollonius city. This is another must for the tourist being the first city to be built on an airless surface. The majority of the settlement is subterranean and the vast halls like chasms are quite breathtaking. Many beat a path to the famous Museum of Humanity which has many rare exhibits from early space exploration, you will wonder how we managed to get where we are today!

K.D.

Space stations Columbus and Titan City

Columbus orbits Io around Jupiter and Titan City orbits Titan around Saturn. Both are of historical interest only in that they used to be fabulous holiday resorts when they were the most distant settlements. Unfortunately with easier travel they changed from very pleasant venues to the vacation destination of the masses. The quiet atmosphere has been shattered by loud music intended to convince you that a good time is being had by all. It blares forth from gift boutiques selling such items as a bottle of Genuine Red Spot Gas and Saturn Ring Rock jewellery.

K.D.

Achenar

(1,-4)

This system consists of ten major bodies only one of which, Achenar 6, has habitated planets in its vicinity. It is one of the only systems with three worlds with a breathable atmosphere, although two are terraformed. The most notable feature of this system is that it is the base of the Empire and Emperor Hesketh Duval whose seat is on the natural world Achenar 6d (known as Capitol to locals). The Emperor is of the Duval dynasty descended from Marlin Duval. She was a wealthy woman, disenchanted with the Earth administration and authorities, who set off with her own colonizing fleet to Achenar 6d because it was so far from Earth. Her leadership ended when her brother, Henson oversaw a flying 'accident' in which she perished. The democratic government changed abruptly to one of strict Imperial rule, and from then on the family assumed leadership. Female children in the family are prevented with genetic techniques such is the vehement hatred of Marlin Duval's principles and vision of a world living in peace.

In the past the Federation has tried to get various emperors to agree to join them but this has been met with derision. The population growth necessitated the terraformation of Achenar 6b and Henson oversaw the eradication of a reputedly sentient race on Achenar 6d and began to influence other systems, enraging the Federation. This led to the first large-scale space war, from which Achenar emerged victorious and, swelled with success the Empire spread to other worlds. Sporadic battles were fought for many years until finally, leaders of the Empire and the Federation signed a treaty pledging to stay on amicable terms. It was not worded so tightly that hostilities could not continue in the outer reaches of territories while leaders displayed solidarity in public.

Tourists, once they have amassed the documents required to visit the Achenar system, flock to see the Emperor's palace on Capitol (6d). The building is a vast structure of a pink glass-like material which shimmers in the sun and glows as it re-emits the energy at night. Foreign visitors are welcomed by palace staff who use subtle pro-Empire propaganda in an attempt to undermine the Federation. This greeting is not extended outside the palace grounds, where a person with a Federation accent is met with scorn unless money can be made out of them. The accent of the Empire has evolved out of Achenarians trying to mock the standard Federation diction by accentuating certain vowels. To the foreigner their speech sounds rather like a whine.

Such is the capitalist way of life, there are not many items that are illegal to buy or sell, quite why the line is drawn at radioactives and nerve gas is a mystery – perhaps they could pose the most significant threat to the emperor, should anyone feel ambitious?

K.D.

Ackwada

(-5,-3)

The official discovery of this system and its habitable planets is nowadays accredited to Augustus Brenquith, although the Rockforth Corporation claim the land deeds and development rights to the system. Thirty nine years after the Corporation declared the system its own, an ancient message capsule was recovered from outside the orbit of Jupiter in the Sol system, tumbling in an uncontrolled fashion. It is now believed that the capsule suffered a power failure immediately after returning to Sol by hyperspace and had been orbiting Jupiter for an untold length of time.

The discovery aroused considerable interest amongst archeologists on Earth at the time and while the capsule was in transit to New Delhi University there was a heated debate as to whether the artifact should be opened or not. When the capsule was studied, the seal was seen to be broken, so the matter was resolved. Inside the capsule was a message crystal with the log of the second five years of Augustus Brenquith's solitary search for new worlds, his 'glittering legacy', included in the list of planetary systems he had stumbled upon was that of Ackwada.

Ackwada is a benign world, with a gravity very closely matched to that of Old Earth and a pleasant climate. Many visitors and industrialists attending Corporation Functions are struck by the similarity to the home world. Locals tend to be bitter about this comparison, pointing out that Earth has seen fit to launch four separate invasions on the planet in the past. In many ways Thompson's planet is one of the disputed zone, roughly equally spaced between the heart of Federation and Empire. Rockforth Corporation managed to preserve the colony's independence during the early years, and this trend has continued, even though the Corporation holding rights to the planet has changed several times since the founding.

Rush's Camp is a heavily industrialized city, and raw materials are transformed into the machines and tools needed by the developing system. The outspill of pollutants and wastes is unrestricted, because of early Corporation law, and the environment in the region of Rush's Camp is unhealthy except in protective wear. The local life forms have mostly fallen prey to heavy metal poisoning and carcinomas from effluents of different plants. The air near Rush's Camp is not safe to breathe for long periods without a respirator or sophisticated filter system.

Most people turn to Yorkville for relaxation. The Corporations owning the World provide regular free shuttles between the two major cities and as the local saying goes; 'Rush to work, Rush for pay, York you live, York you play'. The entertainment sectors of Yorkville are Corporation sponsored and this has led to allegations amongst some neighbouring star systems that organized crime has set up at Ackwada. This charge is vigorously denied by all senior executives of the Corporations and legal actions are in progress in several colonies in this regard. The Corporations have found the threat of punitive legal damages and costly trials is an effective deterrent for all but the most vociferous of their opponents.

?

Ackanphi

(-4,-4)

At about the same time as the Ackwada system was being colonised by the Rockforth Corporation, a consortium of smaller industrial groups laid claim to the Ackanphi system. There were five principle shareholders in the venture, Nagoshima, Grendell-Hooper, Shan-Boorman, Memoryvista, and G'greenventure. Unlike many joint corporation ventures, after initial establishment of planetary bases the groups did not fall to squabbling over exploitation rights. The five corporations consolidated their positions and grouped together as a single trading entity to deal with outsiders.

The world of Biggs is only about half the mass of Earth, but has correspondingly smaller radius, so that surface gravity is almost Earth normal. Introduction of terrestrial flora and fauna proceeded in an orderly fashion, thanks largely to the influence of Rebecca Swaan-Schiffman of G'greenventure. The environmental control policies introduced by the Big G corporation (as it became known) have made Biggs an ecological show-case for planetary management. Cynics point out that because of the lack of large predators on the planet, there were no native species needing control, but a quick scan through the colony records quickly dispels that peaceful illusion.

Early in the colony's history, there were a series of dangerous plagues and diseases, which nearly ended the colony. The Shan-Boorman Corporation imported a team of research biochemists to tackle the problem and Grendell-Hooper financed the building of a suite of laboratories. These eventually grew into the Shan-Hooper Institute, one of the most prestigious science academies of the known worlds. The plague was defeated after three years of intense work and now all visitors are routinely inoculated against fast disease and filigree on arrival at any starport. (The two diseases are still endemic to the World of Biggs and quarantine law are strictly enforced).

The Institute was not disbanded after solving the initial acclimatisation diseases, but remained and was expanded to encompass other fields of study. Early in the history of the colony it was visited by Munkhouse Brewer, a famous singer-songwriter of the time and a friend of Siobhan Young the poet. Munkhouse composed a fairly trite popular song declaiming the 'fiery skies and demons' eyes' of Biggs, but managed to convey to Siobhan the haunting beauty of the Ackanphi system.

Young, and her artist companion Taylor Arkwright came to view the marvels first hand, and stayed to capture the sights for themselves. The cycle poem 'Blazed by glory, insipid flesh' created a place for Young amongst the very best and secured her the chair of the newly formed faculty of Arts at Schneider university. Taylor Arkwright shunned all publicity and instead made a new colony on the third planet, funding a small dome base by selling most of his early works. For forty years he worked in complete obscurity, refusing contact with outsiders, painting and drawing the scenes he beheld.

Arkwright's anonymity came to an end when a persistent young artist, Dieter Blemmring from Achenar, sought him out after seeing The third leaf in Facece Central Museum. Impressed by Arkwright's early work, Blemmring sought out the master and persuaded the painter to let him visit Taylor's Claim. Thus began the artists colony on Taylor's Claim, which has become a refuge for painting, sculpting and all forms of representational art. Many of the most famous works in known space are kept in the refuge, and it is the ambition of all Empire artists to view the collection at least once in their lives.

With science and the written arts established in the Ackanphi system, it was not long before other faculties, for performing arts, humanities and philosophy were developed in Biggs. This has developed into a cultural and aesthetic centre for the region. For some reason the local pirate raiders have kept clear of the universities, museums and galleries of Biggs and the planet and its Corporations are rightly proud of the high reputation it holds amongst the cultured people of the Empire.

D.M.

Alioth

(0,4)

Alioth presents a star system of enormous potential, yet to be fully exploited by its colonists. It has had a chequered history in terms of political dominance, and both Empire and Federation forces have fought over the rights to control the system. The only period when both Empire and Federation forces have acted together towards Alioth was the Quateron revolution of 2617 when the people of Gordonworld attempted to wrest freedom from both major powers. Quentin Devisises led a coup to try and establish Gordonworld (then known as 'Fruitcake*') as a local capital of free traders, but was ruthlessly suppressed by a rare combined naval action of Federation and Empire navies.

New California was terraformed shortly thereafter, using an experimental accelerated program of genetic modifications. The Empire initiated the methods which met with mixed success in this trial planet. In later years the approach has become more reliable, but the native colonists of New California occasionally exhibit unusual traits which are carry overs from the mutagenic past. This is partly responsible for the favour show towards the Federation by New Californians. If carried out to the letter the Empire's attitude to racial purity would call for a repopulation of the colony and removal of the affected inhabitants. To prevent this, there is a permanent petition for recognition as a Federation protectorate from the population of New California.

The experimental origins of the planet of New California in no way detract from its beauty and the mutagens buried in the environment are of no danger to tourists. (NOTE: Anyone planning to stay longer than 300 standard days should ensure they receive the appropriate vaccination and chemical therapies after 200 days and at regular intervals thereafter.) The system as a whole presents a stunning visual appearance, with an abundance of gas giants orbiting the giant central star. It has been compared in its compelling beauty to the sextuple sun systems of Andbephi or Ioaray. The star inspired the flash-rock group Jjagged Bbanner's first quad platinum recording 'Sungrazing' which led to their enormous rise to popularity.

The enormous hydrocarbon resources made available by the large number of gas giants, as well as the primary star of the system have led to a huge plastics industry based at this system. The scientists of Nesbitt Landing introduced the quinker process and led to a revolution in robot production techniques. They still lead the Federation in many aspects of design and production of automata, especially androids. These products are highly sought after amongst the Empire worlds.

D.M.

Altair – Biggs Colony

(-2,1)

Out of the twenty bodies of this system this is one of two notable planets, for their extreme conditions. Biggs Colony is a jungle world with high humidity and very interesting wildlife, which makes it a popular holiday destination for those who like an adventure. Hotels abound and cater for all tastes, even providing conditions for those who normally live in very different environments, in case they need a break while on holiday. For example natives of Stevenson in the Phiagre system can rest in refrigerated apartments. Outside hotels, humans need to wear an environment suit such are the extremes of heat and humidity on these sort of planets. When tourists arrive on Biggs Colony they must sign a disclaimer in case they are injured by any of the wildlife (unless they are on hotel property, such as the animal free areas). All sorts of life abound, and visitors not used to this tend to go wandering unprotected, enchanted by the sights and sounds. Jungle Search is a thriving business which offers to search the jungle for parts of lost friends or relatives of lost tourists, when they go missing, for burial purposes.

Many vaccinations are required if you intend to go on jungle treks, as the diseases are as varied as the wildlife. When you leave a hotel you are issued an environment suit, a stun gun, a large swat big enough to down an Oort fly (you would need body armour to protect yourself fully from this beast). If you pale at the thought of close contact with nature, you can take a trip on a Landcrawler which transports you through the jungle protected by a Securifield.

The second planet, Darkes Hollow is very hot and not pleasantly so – The average temperature is 226 degrees centigrade. The reason it is populated at all is the ore available for mining is very rich in metals. Miners' families live there in small underground communities and the mining corporation subsidises two holidays on Biggs Colony per year. Robots have to do most of the surface work as the temperatures and radiation there are too great for humans. Power is derived from massive arrays of solar panels which run the very powerful air conditioning units for the settlements below, and also drive the vast smelting operation. Reputedly, enormous danger money is paid to miners when they need to venture on to the surface in their powered armour, in order to do some urgent repair or other. There have even been stories of disenchanting workers arranging for robots to be unavailable when a need arises, just so they can receive the one-off payment and leave the hated place forever.

K.D.

Andceeth

(-5,2)

Andceeth boasts a bustling starport in the city of Diamond, and travellers from a host of worlds come to stay in the splendour and luxury of its hotels. These date back to the early days of the Federation, when Diamond was the major centre for commercial transactions between planetary governments. Before the days of the Universal Bulletin Board and guaranteed transfer, the worlds of Andceeth were the banking centre for the Federation.

The mineral reserves for the largest companies of the Federation and many planetary governments were stored in an enormous vault built on Trouble, Andceeth two. The violent surface storms, constant electric discharges and corrosive atmosphere were intended to deter would be raiders. The actual banking and commercial centres were established on the more congenial world of Capitol (not to be confused with the heart of the Empire).

Despite the harsh conditions of Trouble, there were several recorded attempts to raid the vault and make off with the biggest haul in the history of crime. None of the raids ever succeeded, although Hari van Dryuver managed to penetrate all of the outer defences before dying of a heart attack brought on, so it is said, by the sight of so much wealth in one spot. Even if Hari had managed to leave the planet, it is still doubtful that he would have escaped the enormous police presence maintained at the time.

The most audacious attempt on the Federation reserves was launched by Colonel Maximillian Wrekcht, one-time commander of the Empire's fifth fleet. Embittered by a series of defeats at the hand of the Federation he attempted to destroy the vault by means of an asteroid bombardment, from an orbit just outside that of the sixth planet. He entered the system with a modified and heavily stealthed cruiser and managed to deflect three planetoids towards Trouble before he was detected. The Federation were able to destroy two of the missiles and shunt the last into the sun. Maximillian was subject to court martial in his absence, but most people believe he died trying to ram the vault with his own ship in a final defiant gesture at the Federation.

When the system of guaranteed transaction and Universal Bulletin Board trading was introduced, the commercial heart of Andceeth was destroyed. There followed a very turbulent period and fortunes were made and lost in minutes in the chaos surrounding the change. The world suddenly plunged from being the banking capital of the explored worlds to relatively anonymous dot in most computer star banks.

Capitol now preserved a jealously guarded independence of both Federation and Empire, relying on agriculture and mineral exploitation to support its inhabitants. The vault on Trouble was seized by the planetary government two months after the conversion to guaranteed transfer, and although much depleted from its initial state, the mineral wealth contained there has been enough to finance the colony towards complete self sufficiency. The colony now runs on a democratic system and is a popular trading stop for the communities of the surrounding star systems.

D.M.

Anlave

(0,3)

Anlave is a small, compact system, with a long and distinguished history in the records of the Federation navy. It was originally colonised by a team of experimental horticulturalists, eager to try and develop new citrus crops in a different stellar system than Old Earth. In this regard, the colony was a failure and the three new strains developed in the early years, the plum-lemon, ground-fruit and the mugwach were engineering disasters. Vast tracts of land had been given over to the new crops and when the market failed to materialise, the colonists sought new income.

Luckily, at the same time, the emerging Federation navy were looking for cheap land to establish dockyards and supply depots and accepted the offer made by the colonists of Anderton. One continent was sold to the military for their sole use. This was sufficient to provide the scientists with capital to fund their next series of crops – the potato-grape, haricot-marrow, carrot-banana and lentil-quince. These new arrivals also failed to excite the gourmet palates of the Federation, and the scientific entrepreneurs left Anderton, run out by irate farmers. Ironically, thirty four years later the potato-grape was revived, when it was found to provide a perfect feed for the newly discovered Verrix beast of Phiagre.

The Anlave system was a focus for the third birthright wars, and many of the early settlements were destroyed by bombardment. The Federation navy took great losses during the surprise attack, but rallied round the flagship of Admiral Ghenkis B'nami and in a flourish of innovative surprise manoeuvres, recaptured the planet and drove the invaders away. After the raid, the defences of the naval base were strengthened and additional bases were established on Anderton's mine and Denver. Military influence on the re-established farming community on Anderton remains strong.

With three planets having substantial military presence and a wide variety of environments to hand, Anlave was a natural choice for the first military training academy outside the Sol system. It is also conveniently situated at the heart of a moderately dense group of stars, and has several times been a local administrative centre. This pivotal role in local space has led it to being the focus of attention for nearby wars. The population of the planet has varied considerably during its history, and the number of settlements has in the past been far greater than at present. Although the academy has now moved to the custom world of Navy Central in the nearby Eta Cassiopeia system, most of the naval administration remains, including some of the naval repair facilities.

Fraser is an interesting city to visit, but the bustle of constant naval activity, coupled with the taciturn nature of the native farmers and miners means that it can be hard to get to know the people of the colony. The museums of the planet are very well laid out, especially the Memory of Gildur building in honour of the planets only truly great musician. A more depressing, but equally impressive display is the Folly of mankind exhibition, which graphically displays the desolation suffered in the wars for the planet.

D.M.

Arcturus

(-2,0)

The main settlement is on Discovery, a planet with an oxygen atmosphere and, like others of this type is used for agriculture to feed the rest of the galaxy. For those unaccustomed to living under a red giant, the red light of day is rather unsettling, particularly during the summer when there is permanent daylight, such is the inclination of the planet. Some find it disturbing and locals regularly see newcomers in a state of hysteria as they try to get passage home prematurely. 'Red people' as they are known are said to be strange and this is attributed to the colour of the light.

When the first settlers arrived, life was at an early stage of evolution, so was easily replaced by the species introduced. Despite the knowledge in the field of ecology, humans still manage to end up with an imbalance due to the complexity of building a system from scratch. Evolution still does it best, but then it does have time on its side.

Due to the orbital period, seasons last for around seven Earth years. This is quite a daunting thought when that can mean seven years of almost complete darkness or daylight. For this reason, those who can afford it have two homes, one in the southern and one in the northern hemisphere. If they are very fortunate, a person may have a residence in another system. Those who are less so, make do with artificial lighting to provide the wavelengths

essential for human survival. Even so, the suicide rate is always high in the winter years. People born in different seasons have distinct personalities, due to their formative years spent in one extreme or the other.

The inhabitants of the Arcturus system ignore the warnings from the Stellar Monitoring Service, that the sun is not stable. Reports suggest that it is likely to collapse into a white dwarf in the next few thousand years, but some studies say that it could be in the next hundred. Collapse would produce massive doses of radiation which would be received by all orbiting bodies, killing all life. Still, the locals insist on staying. Any change in the sun's state will be announced by the S.M.S. so visitors should not be put off.

K.D.

Arexack

(-1,-5)

Peter's Eden is a small mined-out world resettled by followers Church of Kumbyar, an obscure sect which believes in an afterlife made progressively less awful by successive years of virtuous living. For 100 Arexack-years after the founding of the colony (65 Earth-years of prayer, head-shaving, flagellation, and life-extending drugs) there was little trade with Peter's Eden since the settlers lived austere lives eating locally grown roots and vegetables raw.

But then Galactic Play Boy Zack Blackbeam spent some ten million Credits on HoloProjectors and meteorological control devices to stage a fake Coming of Kumbyar on Peter's Eden. The settlers, being religious and extremely gullible, were totally taken in and so devastated to hear that their ascendance to the Highest Level of Paradise was prevented only by the "displeasing shave" of their leader His Magnificence the Right Holy Ssord Rettu III.

65 sin-free years were promptly tarnished by the lynching of Rettu III and 74 years of bloody holy war that continues to this day. The Church is violently divided over the interpretation of the phrase "displeasing shave". The traditionalists believed that Kumbyar had found them wanting on grounds of insufficient baldness and now remove every follicle of hair from the body using micro-laser surgery. The other side feel that shaven skin is Offensive In His Sight and, with the aid of imported hormonal treatments, attempt to grow verdant hair over every part of their bodies. This war has brought Arexack back into Galactic Trade, importing firearms, defolliculation kits, and hair creams; exporting root crops and pelts.

I.B.

Ayethi

(-3,-1)

Topaz has rich indigenous life, but little has progressed from the seas to the land. For this reason most star catalogues class the world as a water world. It would be more appropriate to describe it as one enormous paddling pool, with an occasional large hill. The world possesses no really deep oceans, instead it has a thin covering of mineral rich water, rarely deeper than 300m. The water is at an almost uniform temperature, making swimming a very pleasant experience, since it is almost impossible for a human to sink in the dense liquid.

Life forms on Ayethi have adapted to the rich mineral broth of the seas and they out-compete introduced life forms from the Federation and even bio-engineered empire technology is no better than the native species. The colonists of this world therefore farm the local fauna and flora, exporting large quantities of protein rich plankton and krill-like animals. Mining of the mineral rich seas is conducted both directly, on land and underwater, and indirectly by harvesting modified animals which filter and concentrate desired salts from the water.

The planet orbits an M red flare star, and most colonists have flare shelters beneath the protective water of Topaz. The starports are all situated on land and have provision for shelter for all visitors. It is mandatory for all visitors to sign flare disclaimers and prove they have adequate insurance cover before they are allowed on the world.

Flares are a spectacular sight and stellar seismologists normally provide good warning of impending events. If you are present on Topaz when a flare is publicized, it is worth delaying your leaving until after the event. A local law on Topaz, followed in Simpsontown and Lomas (but less so at Fortress Sheehan) is that a

hotel resident can extend a booking indefinitely during a flare – this is very useful for the visitor since when a flare is declared, hotel charges for new visitors have been known to increase seven fold or more over the resident price.

Topaz may be well known amongst amateur astronomers and star gazers for its flares, but what makes it truly famous was the creation of Quitolline. It is amazing that until the Topaz life forms were studied for pharmaceuticals, over 80% of all space travellers were subjected to hyperspace sickness. This is a tremendously debilitating syndrome which is now almost unrecognised. Only the very few people who suffer from allergic reactions to Quitolline need endure the disorientation of hyper-jump sickness. (And most such people really prefer to stay at home and do their stellar travelling second hand by way of *sensa-vid*). Quitolline is the most effective anti-h-sickness drug ever discovered and its synthesis from naturally occurring forms on Topaz is a closely guarded secret. It forms one of the major exports for the planet and system.

D.M.

Aymiay

(1,4)

Cooperworld is a hot and steamy jungle planet, of the sort often depicted in the more ridiculous ‘high adventure’ yarns of the popular *vid-media*. It teems with native life and the raucous cries of the native fauna which fill the night-time can be unsettling to newcomers. The grail bat imitates the sounds of a screaming human with uncanny accuracy and can be very off-putting for the unwary. It is regrettable that the native colonists seem to have developed a habit for playing practical jokes on new arrivals, so any visitors had best be prepared for some sleepless nights.

The jungle provides a fascinating and lively environment for tourists and the world has a wide range of indigenous life. This has been allowed to remain since the plant and animal life can all be assimilated by the human digestive system. This means that colonisation of the world has been relatively cheap to carry out compared to terraforming, but the humid conditions of the world have limited industrial development. Most income for the world comes from organised hunting and exploration parties.

Lomasport forms the centre for the Revised Catholic Mission and has three universities, each with a very high reputation amongst the Federation worlds. The Grahamhurst theological college has produced some of the most incisive philosophers and radical thinkers of modern times, as well as a constant stream of missionaries to the outer systems and worlds of the Empire.

Goldstein starport maintains ship repair facilities which are universally acclaimed, and it is a major centre for used ship exchanges in this region of the explored worlds. The world is proud of its allegiance to the Federation and adheres strictly to the legal code of Old Earth. Visitors from the Empire should be aware of the restrictions on the introduction of slaves to the world. Any man or woman resident on the planet for a period of more than thirty days is automatically decreed a free person and laws of the Empire are not binding. This information is clearly stated in all new immigration documents, but has caused diplomatic incidents in the past.

D.M.

Bedaho

(-4,-2)

Bedaho is famous throughout the known worlds as the home of the goldskins. There are very few worlds which do not leave some marks upon the human population, but few are as obvious as that of Bedaho. While many humans go to some lengths to hide any effects their home planet might produce, the population of Home delight in showing off their differences.

Any form of life which grows on Home is infected by a native life form, at the sub-cellular level. It is entirely benign and some people believe that it confers resistance to some viral infections. The only side effect of infection is to turn the host creature a radiant golden colour. A visit to Home is like taking a trip into King Midas’ court, the world glows with gold from one horizon to the other. Every living creature on the planet shimmers with life and glisters in golden hues. The crops are gold, the trees are gold, the animals are gold and the people are golden. The only other colours are pigments, produced in vast quantities by the local chemical plants and used at every opportunity to break up the landscape. People from Home are probably unique in the

known worlds for preferring granite jewellery and jade ornaments to those of gold. There is little demand on Home for the metal gold, except for electronics and robotics, but other precious metals and luxury goods are always welcome. There is a ready market on Home for off-world animal pelts, any shape, pattern or shade makes a welcome change to the locals who regard their planet's life forms as being monotonously dull, despite the richness of the colours involved.

There is a corresponding trade from Home to the rest of the known worlds for goldskin leather. Astrogator Corporation signed an exclusive deal with the planetary government of Home early this century giving it sole rights to commercial use of goldskin leather in its ships and yachts. It is the quality and colour of the leatherwork which marks an Astrogator spacecraft as distinctive, quite apart from the other luxury features which it might enjoy. Several other companies use goldskin fabrics to give themselves an edge in the luxury markets as well. At one stage the uncontrolled slaughter and imported animals threatened to turn the colony into an anarchy, but intervention by the Imperial Navy restored order. In modern times the culling of local animals is strictly controlled by the government, and poaching carries a very heavy sentence and fine.

The exact nature of the organism which causes the goldskin effect is not completely determined yet, though its effects are well understood. A creature born on the planet, or remaining there for a prolonged time (longer than 30 days) will become infected by the organism and then acquires the distinctive pigmentation within a few weeks. The colour is permanent and goldskins who leave the planet remain golden. The colour is not passed on by any form of contact. Empire technicians trying to get the goldskin effect to appear in laboratory animals have so far failed to duplicate the conditions necessary for the organism to survive.

D.M.

Beta Hydri

(0,-2)

Conveniently situated approximately halfway between the centres of both Federation and Empire it is one of the founding members of the Federation, following the first interstellar war. This large system maintains a thriving civilization and trade. The main World of Homeland has established itself as a major centre for trading in luxury goods and the downtown regions of Dickens and Hooper are renowned for precious metal work and jewellery. The authorities on the planet have attempted to control the spread of industrial technology, craftsmen and women provide high quality finished work, for a price. Tourism is a major source of income for the system, though several major corporations maintain large offices here, because of the convenient location.

The terraformed world of New Caledonia was settled originally by two families of mega-millionaires of Scottish descent, from Capitol (before it became the centre of Empire administration). They financed the conversion of the world, and placed major constraints on its development. As was the wish of the founding families, the world is devoted to game hunting and fishing, with large areas of the planet given over to moors, fens and forests despite the relatively high population. The planet lives by tourism and sporting events. The planet also has a reputation for good stables and has held the interstellar equestrian finals more often than any other planet.

New Caledonia also has a reputation for producing the finest liquor in civilised space, with several distilleries vying for the highest accolades. Many believe that the ultimate prize must be held for Fujiyama Old Gold, or Glen Halyconia whiskeys.

D.M.

Cemiess

(-2,-2)

A curious system, thought to have lost its outer planets many millennia ago due to a close encounter with another star system. The lack of gas giants in the system delayed any major settlement until 3055, despite the inner planet, Maxwell Rock being quite mineral rich (named after the ancient explorer Pol Maxwell, now widely known from the popular dream sequence "Maxwell Returns"). The early miners found the cost of bringing in their own fuel outweighed the potential gain. It seems hard to believe now, with the Core so thoroughly populated, that a known 'mineral rich' would be left alone for so long, but in those days planets were plentiful

and people thinly spread. The Core then was much like the Outer Rim today. It was also before the invention of the shield generator, so scooping fuel from a star was out of the question.

The Empire began terraforming Cemiess 2 in 3080, partly to satisfy the enormous demand for outdoor space by its exploding population, and partly as a political snub to the Federation. The Federation had previously claimed the world, but the decision to start the terraforming process was still tied up in bureaucracy – the Federal Senate had already postponed the scheme three times in order to keep within budget on the New Worlds project. This was largely due to Governor Santorini of Tau Ceti (nicknamed ‘Proxmire’ by the press from some obscure historical reference) whose cost cutting exercises are now seen as having been very destructive to Federal progress in the long term. Nevertheless his tax cutting policies were popular at the time, and he is still the longest serving governor there – 76 years up to his assassination in 3098. Emerald was first settled by Imperial colonists in 3101, shortly followed by a heavily armed group from the Federation led by Admiral O’Brien. He personally supervised the building of a major fortification in only three days (seen in the gung-ho propaganda film “O’Brien’s War”), but all there died a week later from a mysterious plague. Both sides fought intermittently over Emerald for the next thirty years ending when Imperial Clone Troops were sent in, and the Imperial XV Fleet were stationed there. A diplomatic solution was finally found in 3136 in the Emerald Treaty, which narrowly avoided an assault by an enormous Federal task force, and brought about the uneasy peace we have today. It is also why Cemiess is the only Imperial system in which slavery is illegal. This was to satisfy Federal demands, but there is reputed to be a thriving black market in them.

D.B.

Enaness

(-5,1)

The colonists of this system established a rigorous communist hierarchy on the only oxygen atmosphere planet of the system. The regime has prospered and the body politic dominate the other worlds’ starports. The population of the worlds are booming and increasing in prosperity. All mining and industrial interests are state owned and largely automated. Slavery is strictly forbidden and freedom is assured to anyone arriving in the territory regardless of race. Religious ceremonies of any form are illegal and commitments made in such circumstances are regarded as void under Enaness law.

All inhabitants of the system have a birthright guaranteed by the state, which is a single journey ticket to either Earth or Capitol, no other property is acknowledged. Political indoctrination begins early on in childhood, but anyone declaring a desire to leave is free to do so. There is no return permitted, however. Immigration to the worlds is strictly controlled and all goods are turned over to the state on arrival. Traders and visitors sometimes find the attitude of the inhabitants to material goods disconcerting.

The academy of Rymhananman is justly famous for its theoretical physics and chemistry departments. It also boasts the foundation established by Wyksyrndra Baranha to explore and exploit Enaness 4. Wyksyrndra is famous for his conjecture that the fourth planet of Enaness was the homeworld of a civilized alien race, who later terraformed Charles Colony when they rendered their own world uninhabitable by excessive pollution. The evidence for this theory is hotly disputed by many eminent archeologists, but they are at a loss to explain the peculiar mineral deposits of Enaness 4 and the absence of ancient fossils on Enaness 5. The abrupt appearance of life ‘sprung full grown in all its glory’ suggests, to Baranha, tentative evidence of the works of an ancient spacefaring civilization.

If this theory is correct, there is no doubt that the alien species, and all tangible artifacts have disappeared during the intervening millennia. Part of the work of the foundation is to analyse the native species of other alien worlds and see if there are any anomalous similarities across worlds. The task is monumental and no conclusive results are expected for at least a century. The foundation is supported by voluntary contributions from a number of trusts and charities. For information about donations, consult your local library database.

D.M.

Epsilon Eridani

(1,0)

This system has nine planets, three of which are home to humans. The most notable, is the inner planet New California, terraformed by the Cisco Corporation in 2958. This large conglomerate made a fortune with a patented terraforming method and now they have interests in innumerable fields. It is a beautiful world with stunning panoramas everywhere; flowers, exotic trees, rivers and mountains have been carefully placed to be aesthetic. In fact it is so consistently picturesque that some people become distressed. When they are used to worlds with pockets of scenic beauty scattered amongst jungles of the urban type, it all gets a bit too much on New California where there isn't so much as a discarded vidicube wrapper in the verdant garden.

Most come here for the Cisco Theme Park which was set up with no expense spared, and costs a fortune to visit. It is well worth it though, because you can live in a world of almost any fantasy you wish, even murder (slaves are very useful). If you want a break from the lushness outside, you can elect to stay for a day at the Ancient London Earth World of 1995. Every effort has been made to make it as authentic as possible, it even has the stench of pollution.

Every fantasy theme has its own complex which is self contained, with actors to help tourists play a part in adventures and feel that it is real. You can pay a little extra and have a personal android servant that looks exactly like the personality of your choice, for when you are relaxing in the hotel section. The most frequently attended is the Erotic Pleasures of the Galaxy Centre which is not for the prudish or the faint hearted. Amongst the customers there are always a number of private detectives doing 'research' for angry clients who think their partner is up to no good having found receipts from Cisco Theme Park.

There are more wholesome themes on offer and it is not worth describing more because one man's fantasy may be the every day drudgery of another. Remember there are always psychiatrists on hand to help you prepare for reality when you have to return home.

K.D.

Eta Cassiopeia

(0,2)

A very unusual system, which went unexplored for a long time after a small error in the Comprehensive Star Survey of 2153 logged the system as a binary with no planets. It is the only system known (so far!) with habitable worlds in the Trojan points of a large planetary body, with all three bodies moving in exactly the same orbital path, separated by 60 degrees.

Both these worlds (Trojan and Feynman) have indigenous life and examination of their biological structure shows them to be based on the same DNA-like genetic mechanism as each other. Current theories suggest that particles spread along the orbital path following an asteroidal impact with Trojan, on which life was just emerging, and reached the atmosphere of Feynman relatively intact. Though there is evidence for a major glancing impact on Trojan in its early history (thought by some to have helped form its moon), this is highly contested by some scientists. The Federal Navy terraformed the only moon of the gas giant Between in the 2970s to give an ideal training ground for planetary assault troops, and now that the Naval Academy has been moved here, it is the foremost naval training centre. There are no surface settlements for civilian visitors, they must disembark at the orbital station "Morgue's Mortuary". The station was named (at first it was only a nickname) after a tyrannical naval training sergeant Maximillian Morgue. He was found guilty of abusing his position and was executed, following a mutiny after twenty of his recruits died in a single horrific incident.

Both Trojan and Feynman are largely agricultural worlds. Trojan is the more heavily populated, and was the first to be settled. It is also where most of the light service industries which supply the Navy are based. The Navy import most of their heavy equipment from other nearby systems (especially from Camp Powell in AC+79 3888) since the joint government here highly discourage the polluting heavy industry this would require. Feynman (named after an ancient physicist) is almost entirely agricultural, and is joked about within the navy as being the most boring place for shore leave. The well known saying "getting leave on Hicksville" was started here.

D.B.

Exbeur

(-3,4)

The planet Sheehanworld was initially overlooked in the exploitation of this region of space, the Federation gained a very firm grip on the planets and nearby star systems and relied on mainly automatic mining ships to develop the region. Because of this human population of the stars was relatively slow. There were further set-backs for the first colonists on the planet, with the first two settlements being wiped out by mysterious plagues.

The natural life on this cold planet were naturally hardy and many intrepid explorers fell victim to local parasites which managed to find comfortable hosts amongst the humans. The planet is not an ice world, although it has large glaciated regions. There are fertile areas close to the equator and most humans choose to live there. The life on Sheehanworld is no longer harsh, Federation cultivators and harvesting machines have cleared large tracts of all native species and Earth basic stock has been imported to take over the cleared land.

The most successful animals imported to the planet have come from the antipodes of Earth, with kangaroos, duck-billed platypuses and wombats providing a peculiar set of creatures to exploit a foreign ecology. The success of the duck-billed platypuses is especially remarkable considering its own precarious existence on Earth itself, where the animal is mainly confined to zoos and breeding laboratories. An ironic turn-about is provided by the rabbit, which wreaked such havoc when it was introduced to Australia on Earth; it completely failed to find a foothold on Sheehanworld. In fact, the Sheehanworld parasite which killed most of the rabbits introduced is now used on Earth to control the population back in Australia.

The planets of Exbeur are not known for the commercial crops grown there, but rather as the centre of operations for the Federations largest mining fleets, and repair facilities for automated mining equipment can be found here, for Federation owned machines. Some Corporation vessels have service contracts here, but these are rarely leased to individual traders.

The miners of the Federation are renowned as rough and ready types, and strangers wandering into any of the planetary bars or saloons may be surprised at the frequency of fist-fights. The experience of a real life Exbeur miner, Douglas Mounthilbert form the basis of one of the most popular vid-series Times of Splendour back at the Federation heart. Although the series has glamorised the events considerably, historians such as Aldwaith Rumbart are quick to disclaim the series as popular trash, but have to agree that in many matters of detail it accurately portrays the early development of the Exbeur system and establishment of Camp Biggs and Nakamichi Depot.

There is a museum in Nakamichi Depot to the memory of Mounthilbert, containing some of the most remarkable footage ever captured on vid. A restored version of the vid can be enjoyed by anyone visiting. It records how Douglas managed to defend on of the local farmers from attack by a leopard hawk, one of the local predators. The 'hawks were a bane of the early colonists, once the plagues were overcome, and Mounthilbert's battle is the only recorded incident where a man bested one of the creatures with his bare hands. As well as being the storyline for many plays and an episode of Times... the event captured the imagination Jjagged Bbanner who dedicated their recording Death and Dishonour to the memory of Douglas. (The Mounthilbert estate found the title offensive and tried to sue the band, but were unsuccessful).

D.M.

Exioce

(-1,-3)

O'Rourke Colony is not a particularly hospitable world, since the surface temperature of the World never goes above the freezing point of water. It became of interest to the scientific community when the rest of the system was explored. The third planet shows evidence of being terraformed in the very distant past, although the corrosive suggests a very different life form than humankind was responsible. This discovery led to massive research investment by both Federation and Empire in the system. Thatcher Starport grew out of a group of industrial chemists investigating the origins of the Exioce III 'biosphere'. It is now a centre for the fabrication of super conductors and related products.

Experiment was terraformed by the Empire and this world is now the heart of the system. Being so much nearer to the star, it maintains a far more clement climate, with a year half as long as that of O'Rourke. From its early beginnings as a research station, to monitor closely the terraforming process, de Gaul Depot has become

the centre of administration in the system. There are abundant mineral resources amongst the worlds of the system and it is a major production centre for computers and robotics.

Attempts to introduce livestock onto Experiment have been largely unsuccessful, and O'Rourke colony has a polar climate, severely restricting the animals able to survive there. Polar bears and seals have adapted well, competing on equal terms with the indigenous life forms, but no other Earth animals have adapted to the conditions. A fierce native predator has been christened the Yeti, after a mythical creature from antiquity, and has been responsible for the deaths of over two hundred research staff during the history of the colony. This, in turn, has made the system attractive to big game hunters.

D.M.

Extila

(-4,-1)

The farmers of Carter's World are justly proud of their reputation for producing some of the richest harvests of the Empire. Food exported from the World find their way to Achenar, Facece and even Earth, where the ground tree is a favourite delicacy amongst the high society and luxury catering industry. The cross bred grain varieties of Carter's World are reputed to make the finest bread in the known worlds and the Revised Catholic Mission of Aymiay insists that all their holy wafers be made with pure Carter wheat.

The populace of Carter's World are a racially mixed group, with several waves of settlers with different backgrounds landing and making a fresh start under the harsh light of Extila. The planet has an 'open door' policy for immigration and the relatively simple and disorganised feudal ruling system suits an agricultural life style. Despite the variety of racial backgrounds, the inhabitants of Carter's World have a very uniform appearance to off-worlders. The harsh sunlight and the high gravity have bred a distinctive bulky dark-skinned race with a marked disdain for any kind of pretension.

The indigenous life forms of Carter's World are tolerated, but not pampered, a local hexapod is used as draught animal by most farmers, but with typical Carter bluntness it is called beast and has no more formal name. The local fauna compete fairly even with imported Achenar and Earth stock, but the native plant life is not compatible with human digestive tracts and so imported varieties are farmed. A few verrix can be found hauling loads for the most prosperous farm communities. The imported verrix are highly prized and more than one local war has broken out over disputes about land use with the animals. These wars are highly localised affairs and tradition forbids the use of military or heavy weapons. Disputes are usually between neighbouring villages and rarely escalate further.

Visitors to Carter's World are made welcome and the local hospitality is freely extended to one and all. Most visitors find the 2.8 standard gravities a bit daunting, but booster shots can temporarily overcome this. Unless a traveller has grown up in high gravity environments, strenuous exercise should be avoided. There are organised tourist visits of all the famous planetary features of Carter's World and tourists are advised to keep with the registered tours.

D.M.

Facece

(0,-4)

Known as the second capital of the Empire, this system is the home of one of the major Empire fleets. The commercial and industrial heart of the system is the oxygen atmosphere planet of Topaz, famed for its spectacular rift valleys and tremendous waterfalls. Mineral exploitation development of Topaz is confined to deep mines and the planet supports a thriving tourist industry in addition to the vital administrative support it provides the Empire. Many of the Empire's most prominent politicians and officers have their second homes on the lake shores of Topaz.

The eighth planet, Peter's Wreck has been taken over by the military, and training bases have been established there. For this reason the planet is interdicted and no casual visitors is allowed. It corresponds closely to the military worlds of the Federation such as Navy Central on Eta Cassiopeia. The military industrial complexes of the Facece system are self supporting, with military fuel synthesis using the abundant power of the

system. If your credit is sufficient, there are no better facilities in the Empire than those available here for equipping a vessel.

The proximity of so much Empire force means that the traveller in this area has little to fear from pirate raiders, though adherence to Empire law is of prime importance. For a visitor from the Federation, Topaz seems like a condensation of all things Empire, and in many ways the regime is enforced more strictly than on Capitol. Tourists must be absolutely sure that all papers are in order and always keep their identity disks to hand.

The planet of Topaz has been colonised for almost as long as Capitol, and bears the marks of some of the early excesses of the Empire, particularly with regard to the race laws and early eugenics program. The native life forms have been rigorously suppressed and Earth forms have taken control completely. The Quagga was introduced early on in the colonisation program and vast herds now roam parts of the planet. Topaz is almost unique of the known planets since an attempt to introduce rabbits to exterminate native herbivores failed completely early in the colony's history.

D.M.

Fawaol

(2,-3)

The Fawaol system was originally explored by scouts from the Darius Foundation, in an attempt to find a planet which could be used as a base for genetic engineering research. The first colony was established two years after discovery of the planet and a wide variety of animal life was imported from all the oxygen atmosphere worlds of explored space. The Foundation intended to exploit the different forms and experiments were undertaken to cross breed and genetically combine strains from entirely different evolutionary groups.

The work was undertaken in strict secrecy, since the manipulations being conducted were of highly dangerous and illegal nature. No-one is likely to know of the results of the work, however, since the early experimental records and 'creations' were destroyed in a series of raids by extreme eco-terrorists on the principal laboratories of the Foundation. Documents related to the experiments had been leaked to concerned organisations, and their contents were so horrifying to the general public that although one hundred and seventy four terrorists were arrested by planetary authorities, all were acquitted on technicalities.

The Empire sent armed forces to finish the work of the terrorists and the Darius Foundation was destroyed forever. There remained the question of what to do with the enormous range of animals left after the laboratories were dismantled. Quentin Cholmondley presented a proposal to convert large tracts of the world, (renamed Tracy after the commander of the Empire fleet) into game reserves and zoological gardens. The intention was to provide micro-environments tailored to each group of species and establish the largest series of free range habitats in space, where animals from all planets could be seen in conditions as close as possible to the wild.

After the success and popular acclaim for the ecological fighters the idea of confining the creatures through artificial barriers was dismissed, and alternative methods of separating the widely different animal species were sought. In addition to the use of geological features and artificial earthworks, several biological methods are employed in the game parks of Tracy. These range from the poisonous and repellant gemini worms of Ackandso to the genetically enhanced tigers of Achenar, which are used to confine large herd animals to their prescribed lands.

Tracy has a twelve hour day and though the change of day length does not affect many of the imported species, few purely nocturnal hunters manage to flourish and have to be assisted by the zoo staff instead. The zoos are staffed on a permanent basis by teams of rangers and scientists who perform all necessary culling in a controlled and systematic fashion. The Empire retains a police force to deter poachers and game hunters and unlicensed killing of any creature on the world is illegal and carries stiff penalties and fines.

D.M.

Laedla

(-4,1)

Mansfield Colony began as a Federation re-supply depot for deep space exploration. The initial colony was provided with workshops and hyperdrive repair facilities and automated Federation mining equipment was brought to provide the necessary raw materials. The local ecology of the main continent suffered terribly due to the unenlightened attitudes of the commanders of the Federation nave at the time. In retrospect, the damage that was done to the planetary environment seems terrible, but at the time the single idea uppermost in the minds responsible for space exploration was 'expand'.

At the time Laedla was explored and developed, there was serious concern amongst humanity in general that there was a belligerent extra-terrestrial race waging war on new planets. Many ships were disappearing near Zelada, Ququve and Aymia and the Federation was keen to expand in a different region in case the fears of non-human encounters were verified.

To this day, the loss of thirteen exploration vessels within a single sector in three months remains unexplained, but similar bursts of losses have occurred on different occasions, at the edges of expanding human space. The threat of alien invasion or warfare has diminished however, since no active encounter has ever been recorded and no trace of non-human civilisation has been reliably confirmed on any planet.

Mansfield Colony was put together in a frenzy of panic, when the Federation anticipated a war which never emerged. The colony was equipped with a mass of sophisticated robotic equipment and machine shops, but few colonists. The second stage of colonisation set out to reverse this trend, immigration by the thousands of peasant farmers from worlds bordering the Empire. As the population changed from military dominated mining and refurbishing to a more agricultural base, the Federation navy presence was reduced.

The Empire invaded Mansfield Colony in force on Lightning Thursday, and the Federation forces were overwhelmed within two hours. It was the greatest set-back the Ghurka regiment of the Federation has ever suffered and it confirmed the Empire's Clone troopers as their elite forces. The Empire ensured that the Federation could not reclaim the world by establishing strong fortifications at Maxwell City and Suzuki Town and tow naval bases off planet.

Once the Empire had taken control of the population, they lost no time in re-establishing an industrial economic base for the planet. The world and the outer planets are all donated by Empire mining concerns, and Mansfield Colony is a net importer of food in some years. (This is due to Empire reliance on single strain crops which can be very vulnerable to epidemics, when the entire world crop of a particular type may be destroyed.)

D.M.

Lave

(-3,-6)

The trading centre for this region of unusual systems. Through some unexplained quirk of nature all systems have just one inhabited world orbiting a single star. These systems are often known as "The Old Worlds" as they were amongst the first to be settled, despite their lack of gas giants. They were also renowned for their lawlessness as only the corporate states in the region had any police force to speak about.

"Lave is most famous for its vast rain forests and the Lavian tree grub" as the main planet used to be described in the now outdated Data on Systems publication from the Elite Federation of Pilots. Much of the rain forest has now been cut down by irresponsible locals, wishing to raise cattle, and the famous tree grub is on the verge of extinction in its natural habitat. Unfortunately it is very sensitive to its environment, and all attempts to breed them in captivity have so far failed. The ecological demonstrations (made up almost entirely by off-worlders) here are almost continuous; so much so that many come here regularly on their vacations in order to protest. Indeed, ironically the dictator Dr. Walden once referred to the protesters on a vid interview as "Our thriving tourist industry" and also said "The system's economy depends on them so much so that we cannot afford to stop cutting down the forests!".

D.B.

Liaedin

(4,3)

The hot white star of Liaedin sears the surface of Schneider Colony with a bright actinic glare. The inhabitants have come to learn that hiding from the light, especially in the midday hours is vitally necessary to avoid dangerous skin cancers. In local slang, a trip out in the midday sun is to invoke 'death from above'. The locals have a very sanguine attitude to life and death, since in the past few hundred years they have been subject to far more 'death from above' than just the sunlight.

Schneider Colony has had numerous starports established in the past and New Cousens is only the latest in a long line of local capitals. The remains of some of the others dot the landscape here and there, scattered amongst radioactive craters and pock-marks from other debris of the almost continual skirmishing over the planet between the Federation and Empire. The planet is catalogued in most libraries as being 'disputed' but the true situation is that the population are in an almost continual state of civil war, and neither the Federation nor Empire seem very keen to end the situation.

The burning surface of New Cousens supports a very vigorous form of native life, which have a very rapid growth cycle. Some plants sprout from nothing to full growth, reproduce and then decay within a single day, since they are killed by the midday light. Earth crops have not adapted well to the harsh environment and most colonists survive on hydroponic crops grown in filtered light in sheltered darkhouses. There are few large animals native to the world; the largest so far discovered is a burrowing worm 20 metres long which inhabit the tropical deserts which lie in two bands just South and North of the planetary poles.

The presence of the giant worms in the deserts of Schneider Colony was revealed by the peculiar metal rich patterns detected in the initial orbital survey of the world, conducted by Theodore Schneider. He believed the intricate patterns to be the work of native intelligences eager to give messages to visiting astronauts. When it was discovered that they were merely the waste products of a native worm with less intelligence than the average dog, Schneider relinquished claim on the world and flew off in search of true extra terrestrial intelligence.

Theodore Schneider left the colony in the hands of two families, the Blossoms and the Faveols. The Blossom family contracted a group of planetary engineers to pursue the exploitation of the seas, which are very mineral rich. The Faveols imported Empire technology and bred a hybrid worm which burrowed deeper into the deserts and actively sought out mineral rich earth. The Faveols leave a trail of enriched ores as they move through the ground, which can be easily harvested with cheap mechanical devices. The secrets of the sea mines and the hunting worms have been protected diligently and handed down from one generation to the next and are undoubtedly the best kept secrets on the planet.

It has become traditional to call for assistance from either the Empire (for the descendants of the Faveols) or the Federation (for the Blossoms) at the slightest infringement of the convoluted territorial laws on Schneider's Colony, or if mineral rich quotas are exceeded by either family. The Federation and Empire both seem content to continue the dispute, perhaps viewing it as a good testing ground for new military hardware, without wishing to start conflict in more prosperous areas.

The Federation maintain a small permanent force at Wilson Base, on Ulrich's Rock, while the Empire has taken over Moore's World and the small starport of Smith Town. Visitors to any of these worlds should be aware of the constant tension which prevails and the delicate politics which prevent full scale war from breaking out here. Be very careful to ensure that all documents are up to date and accurate before venturing into this system.

D.M.

Liaququ

(2,-2)

The water world of New California is famous for the wide range of medicines which the abundant ocean life provide. The World is devoid of advanced life forms, with no natural vertebrate forms. Evolution appears to have pursued a similar route as on Earth, with plants and simple life developing in the oceans, but the most advanced species are equivalent to the terrestrial echinoderms. Despite the unsophisticated anatomy of the animals, the ocean teems with life and it yields an abundant harvest for the farming communities which now inhabit the world.

The life forms of New California may lack sophistication, but a huge variety of developments have occurred in the benign environment of the hot ocean. On Earth, some of the most potent poisons known to mankind are found in the jellyfish, and this is true of Liaququ's planet as well. Early settlers fell easy prey to the local creammis floaters and flying drevis froms with their potent nerve toxins. Even nowadays, the fish farmers have to beware of the swarming migration patterns of whip slimes.

The deadly venom of many of the species of New California have spawned a thriving pharmaceutical trade. The factory and laboratory ships of major interstellar drug companies keep track of the ocean currents and harvest a rich variety of natural drugs and medications. They also serve to notify the resident fisheries of unexpected concentrations of dangerous fauna.

Many varieties of aquatic life from Earth and other worlds have been introduced to the oceans of New California. Local environmental lobbies have made no progress at limiting the import of foreign life forms. In many cases the introductions have been unsuccessful and several ambitious commercial farming ventures have come to nothing. The dolphins and killer whales of Earth, and the barabous and inqoqo of Cemiess have done particularly well, but are not commercially exploited due to their recognised intelligence levels. The most successful commercial fish crop is the stinger of Facece which is the local staple food and a valuable export.

The largest predator on New California is a species of eleven limbed starfish known as Godzilla, a historical reference of uncertain origin. The naturalist and environmental lobbyist M'harma Dennet has captured on film the remarkable fight between a godzilla and a sperm whale following the battle in an aircraft and finally diving into the ocean to catch the final moments as the godzilla dispatched the giant mammal. The film has won several awards, including the prestigious DIGMA bronze star.

D.M.

Phekda

(2,5)

The Phekda system was opened up by three major corporations simultaneously. Kamawachi, Bell-Traket and Inter-market. A brief spell of mutual cooperation soon degenerated into fierce corporate warring, resulting in the destruction of most of the original bases. Several small pressure groups converged on the planet of New California and set up independent operations, using military hardware from a nearby war to enforce their independence. In the uncontrolled warring, much of the indigenous life was destroyed by bacterial warfare and radioactive fall-out. Many parts of the World are still contaminated. The entire system now operates as an anarchic state and visitors must be prepared to deal with each individual entirely on their own merits.

It is a dangerous system to visit, especially on a casual basis, since there is no law enforcement in the system. Every once in a while the Federation attempts to impose order, but the fiercely independent colonists resort to guerilla tactics to maintain their 'freedom'. Any traveller visiting the system during such a sortie can expect to be treated in a very undignified fashion and may even have to stand trial as a spy. The system is also a haven for escaped convicts and bounty hunters.

All in all a highly uncivilised region and well worth missing by any law abiding citizen.

D.M.

Phiagre

(1,-3)

Stevenson is a cold world orbiting an isolated star of this ternary system. It is a Corporate planet, but runs along the lines of the Empire rather than the Federation, and visitors and tourists must be sure to have all papers and identification readily to hand if they land at either Fortress Birmingham or Nakamichi's Camp. Despite the martial sounding name, Fortress Birmingham has never been the focus of military action and the history of the planet has been quite peaceful. The civil war which established the planet as an independent, Corporate run World occurred within a decade of first landing and the governmental structure has all the merits and deficiencies of a long established bureaucracy.

There was a great movement toward eco-awareness at the time of the colony's foundation, and pledges to conserve the native forms were forced on the Corporations from the outset. This proved to the companies'

advantage when the native flora and fauna were later exploited commercially. The low mean temperature of the world has produced some extremely hardy plants and animals, of great interest to scientists and with huge commercial spin-offs. There is geological evidence that the planet has had a much warmer climate in the past, and this may in part explain how the life forms of this world have proved so adaptable to other worlds.

Few companies or individuals with an interest in terraforming and planetary modification will be unfamiliar with grana-root. This had become one of the major planet-breakers for terraforming operations. It can out-compete many simpler plants and directly consume tailored bacteria (strains IGH\Cfi\ag I, IV and V), breaking up earth and soil to provide fertile land for grain crops. At the same time, the spread of grana-root is controlled by appilex, a burrowing worm also derived from one of the creatures of Stevenson.

For many, though, the most familiar of the animals of this world will be the verrix, which is probably to be found on more worlds than any other single species, except mankind itself. The giant creature, with its enormous musclepower and placid nature, is standard equipment for many new colony ships. Transported as fertilised ova, it has replaced mechanical tractors on many emerging worlds, especially those of the Empire and bio-engineering oriented Corporations. Records indicate that the verrix can grow to approximately three times the size of the Earth elephant. It is an omnivore and can adapt to digest most feeds, though the potato-grape of Anlave is known to be the ideal feed for the animal. Finally, many colonies have found that the versatile hair and hides of the creatures have reduced the need for expensive import of materials from off-planet during early years of colonial development.

Verrix for export are genetically pure strains, genetically modified to be sterile after three generations. This is a Corporation device, to ensure a continuing market for their animals. The strict quarantine laws and heavy penalties for import or export of any live animals are designed to maintain the Corporations strangle-hold on the verrix market. Visitors to the verrix farming regions are welcome. The sight of herds of the enormous creatures trampling the plains, herded by enhanced polar-bears from Exioce is quite amazing. As one poetically inclined visitor stated 'the polar bears seem to dance around the verrix as if they were stoats herding cows on Earth'.

The O'Hanlon orbital station has excellent repair facilities and boasts a number of first class hotels. The sight from the station of the planet and ternary system are quite spectacular. Phiagre is an interesting stopover between the Federation and Empire and well worth a visit by even a casual tourist.

D.M.

Quince

(-1,-5)

The second planet of this system, New America was claimed early in the life of the Empire and has stayed loyal from the very beginning. The population are fiercely bound to the Empire and many of the most fanatical of the Empire's regiments have a core of Quincet soldiers. The Empire's tolerance for genetic manipulation has found a ready hold in the people of Quince and here more than anywhere else in the worlds the principles of directed development have been pursued.

The most deadly insult which can be delivered to a native Quincet is to stare too long or too hard. This can be difficult for someone brought up in the sheltered words of the Federation. It is quite possible to meet engineered humans with very heavily adapted physiques to enable them to operate effectively under the seas, or high in the mountains of New America and even the occasional attempt at growing extra limbs can be glimpsed now and then. Since duelling is permitted in Empire law, and choice of approach is left to natives, visitors should be careful when wandering the streets of any of the major starports not to gawp too openly.

The principles of directed development mean that most births on the planet are planned, indeed designed, but the inhabitants are also masters of genetic grafting and implant surgery, so a person's form is very flexible. If you make friends with a native during one visit, you may be surprised at their appearance when you next meet them. The enhancement possible by the best of Empire technology is frowned on by Federation law, but is available at a price to anyone who wants it, in the laboratories of Simpson Town.

D.M.

Quphieth

(-3,0)

An independent world in which feudal land barons are propped up with 'aid' from the Empire, to avoid this world and its interesting biology being consumed by the Federation.

The Quphieth system was first visited by Augustus Brenquith, a rich eccentric from Old Earth who spent the latter half of his life exploring and opening up new stellar systems. He was one of the great early explorers, and left Earth in a highly modified Griffon class freighter. His ship was extensively altered, to enable it to make very long jumps (for the time) and most of the cargo space was converted to life support and message capsules. He left Earth just after the third algae war and vowed never to return. His aim was to explore the surrounding stellar systems and provide a legacy of inhabitable planets for the people of Earth.

For a period of 35 years, message capsules from Brenquith returned to the Sol system, bearing news of new worlds or hazardous planets which he had encountered. Each new arrival spurred a wave of colonists out from the home planet to the new World. His descriptions of the planets he visited were often poetically tinged, and after so long without human company became rather unreliable, but were always great media sensations.

His initial description of Quphieth centred mainly on the rich and diverse life of the main continent, and he wrongly concluded from his initial aerial survey that there was no large animal life present, only a rich variety of plants and insects. The world is now famous for the peculiar biology which has produced the most successful non-standard (i.e. neither plant, animal or fungoid) life form so far encountered. All the creatures of Quphieth combine features which lead to classification as plant and animal, according to Earth standards and they continue to surprise and amaze scientific surveys to this day.

The system is now famous for the so called 'whispering palms', which produce sounds and mimic the cries of local flying creatures. These plants form huge forests and the din created when the planimals echo the sounds of a violent thunder storm have to be heard to be believed. Visitors to the system are restricted, and export of the local species has been strictly controlled ever since the Doleveria incident. It is unusual for permission to be granted for individual trips to any of the islands, where scientists are still attempting to catalogue the local life forms.

D.M.

Ququve

(1,4)

This thinly populated Federation world is home to the great Funkenstromer Works, a giant industrial chemical conglomerate which furnishes the fittings and equipment for 30% of all Federation ships. The conglomerate favours undeveloped worlds for its industrial bases, since there is less danger of law suits from ecological activists. The Federation law enables the company to establish single owner sites and prevent access by casual investigators. Funkenstromer also build very efficient security systems and all their plants are very well guarded.

New America was named with a good deal of sarcasm by the first colonists. They found a grim forbidding world and the original choice of name was 'Inferno', but too few visitors caught the reference to Dante's outermost hell and the name was changed by common vote. Life on New America was confined to the seas before the arrival of mankind, and the giant ice floes and continental shelf were effectively sterile. The world was therefore ripe for plundering by the conglomerates which started work with a huge investment in robot task forces.

The charter of planetary development drawn up by Federation beurocrats or New America set firm limits on the emissions of effluents and toxic wastes. These are restricted and controlled so that the seas do not become polluted by industrial effluent. The emissions of greenhouse gases is strictly controlled and minimum levels of emission for each type of industry were established and agreed with the conglomerate. Any site not meeting the emission requirement must supplement its own waste gasses with additional quantities generated deliberately to bring the levels above the minimum.

Company meteorologists are monitoring the condition of the world carefully and new guide-lines for gas levels will be presented as soon as the target heating of the planet has been achieved. It is hoped that the warming of the world can be conducted in a controlled fashion so that the native life is disturbed only

marginally, but the surface of the planet will be made far more accessible. So far the development is proceeding pretty much to plan, according to the spokeswoman for the conglomerate. The sudden bloom of weltsers leaf in tow of the planetary seas and the consequent extermination of the bottom grazing wirromin skate are put down to freak environmental accidents.

Until the surface of New America warms considerably, or the industrial development exceeds reasonable limits, New America supplements its industrial output by operating as a winter sports centre. The facilities available at Scott, the major starport, are second to none in the Federation. There is a thriving market amongst the wealthy visitors for all manner of luxury goods and provisions.

D.M.

Riedquat

(-3,-6)

Like Lave, this is one of the Old World systems, with just a single planet and a star. It has now been in a state of anarchy or civil war for some five hundred years and it seems very unlikely that a stable government will ever be successfully established, since the anarchic attitude is so ingrained in the planet's culture. Social stability depends on large family groups or clans, and minor wars between them are continually breaking out, keeping the thriving arms importers busy. There have been attempts in the past to start up local weapon manufacture, but typically family rivalries tend to end up with the factories being destroyed. Indeed there is no heavy industry to speak of because the investment required to build a factory is far greater than that to destroy it.

Slavery here is rife, as captured members of rival families are either used as slaves on their vast farms, or sold on the open market to generate foreign currency to buy arms. The major battles tend to be seasonal, mainly since most of a family's income is spent on weaponry, and much of their income comes from the grain harvest, once every 131 days (a local year). Each family tries to get its harvest out as soon as possible, so it can wipe out its hated rivals before they get their order of weapons. Quite often a hard pressed family will be almost out of ammunition immediately before harvest, so this is a good time for a rival to attack. It has been known for families to cooperate, especially distant families in different hemispheres (since the seasons occur there at different times) but these agreements rarely last more than a few seasons.

The harmless Riedquatan mouse is much prized for its delicate meat and extremely soft fur, used to make the much treasured 'mousemat' coats, sold throughout the known worlds. Many families farm them, and there is still a thriving population in the wild. A wild mouse is particularly treasured if found scavenging on a battlefield, as the flesh is supposed to be especially succulent.

D.B.

Ross 128

(0,0)

Travellers do not flock to Ross 128 or to its only inhabited planet, Grant's Claim. When Maurice Grant claimed it, it was through an over ambitious desire to build an independent colony that he could rule without question. His early surveys suggested that the planet was mineral rich and promised an exciting future amassing wealth from mining. Unfortunately, he discovered that in every body of people there are always a few who ask questions, and awkward ones at that, then don't settle for a feeble answer. Whilst answering a few of these at his Citizens' Clinic he was assassinated. Grant's analyses proved to be erroneous as minerals were only to be found in small pockets here and there – the mines were soon abandoned. The remaining would be leaders realised that it was not an easy job to govern a population driven mainly by greed and the resulting economic collapse was devastating. The Federation stepped in and 'rescued' the colony on the condition that it came under their control. The populace greeted them with open arms and promptly found that their home was to become a prison colony.

The prison, nicknamed The Warren, is a vast underground complex of cells accommodating miscreants of every kind. The security is very tight and few have seen beyond the visitors' hall without being an inmate. For this reason rumours are rife, and include tales of genetic experiments, prostitution and corruption. It is true that the prisoners experience great hardship due to the manual mining at minus four degrees centigrade. It is no holiday for the warders either and there are reports of some of the narcotics intended for use in prisoner

obedience programmes being diverted to the staff. Nobody outside really complains because they are glad someone else is willing to do the job.

Don't forget, if you ever have a loved one serving a sentence, you need a permit to see them.

K.D.

Ross 154

(-1,0)

A very small system with little to attract any interest. The only reason it is mentioned here is the curious ecosystem on the ice world Merlin. All the indigenous life is beneath the ice of the vast salt-water ocean, which covers the entire world. It exists in large pockets of gas, trapped beneath the permanent stable ice sheet, and in the oceans themselves.

It wasn't until 2775 when Burt Hackrington-Smythe made the series of documentaries "Heaven Under The Ice" that it was understood how such a world managed to sustain the large shoals of merlin fish found here. The ecosystem is based on a lichen which grows on the walls of air-filled chambers under the ice, living off the weak red light which filters through from above. The lichens produce oxygen to give a mixture surprisingly breathable by humans, and they form an insulating layer. Typically the temperature inside can be as high as 20 degrees Centigrade, heated by the thick layer of rotting vegetation which floats on the surface of the sea below. A whole host of other species graze on the lichen, lighting the cavity with their various glowing body parts, and species such as the Merlin Plesiosaur with its fierce red glowing eyes (much valued for its silky hide) travel between these oases, eating a few of the grazing creatures at each stop.

The life cycles of these cavities is tens of Earth years. They start as little high-pressure bubbles deep under the ice, and can grow up to five kilometres across, giving the truly beautiful panoramas depicted by Hackrington-Smythe. The cavities slowly migrate to the surface as the ice above them melts, and their eventual death can be quite spectacular, when suddenly a crack forms in the ice above the cavity and the pressure is released. There is a long rumble as water floods the cavity, then rushes up through the hole formed, forming a giant moss laden geyser on the surface above. The shoals of merlin fish rush to the sound of rumbling, to feed on the debris which falls into the sea below, and it is for this reason that the fishing industry on Merlin was so easy to establish. No fishing fleets are needed – each factory simply releases an explosive charge into a man-made cavity below the reprocessing plant, and an hour later it is full of fish! Strict controls are enforced to prevent overfishing, since the early private fisheries almost wiped out the stocks in only four years.

The only surface settlement is the windswept Sirocco Starport. It is built directly on the ice sheet, and is used to supply the numerous fish processing plants built under the ice. It is also through here that the huge tonnage of fish is exported to the surrounding worlds. The seedy starport diner, The Ecstatic Gourmet, serves an excellent dish called Merlunch which is a pie made with pickled merlin fish. It sounds off-putting but regular travellers to this area make a point of visiting the diner just for this, rarely risking the other fare.

D.B.

Sirius

(1,0)

Most visitors to the Sirius system are disappointed at how little there is to see, given its importance in human history. It has numerous firsts to its name, in addition to being the brightest star in the sky of ancient earthbound humans. Doubtless the guides in the Sirius Museum Complex on Lucifer will tell you, this was the first entirely corporate system, and the location of the first commercial production of anti-matter based fuels.

Most historians now tell a different story, however, about how Sirius became rich during the First Interstellar War. The Sirius Corporation was set up by a group of rich industrialists from earth, in order to exploit the discovery of a way to store a stable atom of anti-matter within a complex molecule and use it as a fuel. Sirius first started production in 2350, supplying the Federation war fleet, whose ships had been adapted to use the new fuel. This caused a major swing in the Federation's fortunes, but only a few years later Imperial ships were similarly equipped, cancelling the advantage. It is now known that Sirius supplied both sides, engineering convenient shortages whenever one side was winning, thus greatly prolonging the war (and increasing their own income). Though it is not denied by Sirius today, it is blamed on a few unscrupulous individuals, who are now

long dead. This Gazetteer does not wish to suggest in any way that the Sirius Corporation today would do any such thing.

Lucifer itself is an interesting planet. It orbits Sirius B very closely indeed, hence the enormous power the corporation can extract using the coils wrapped around the planet, and from their solar collector panels. Visitors should beware of the high radiation levels mainly from Sirius B, but also from the fuel plant. The numerous volcanoes are quite a sight, and small craft can be hired to go on a slingshot path close to the fearsomely dense white dwarf. This is supposed to be the “ride of a lifetime,” though be warned – there have been many fatal accidents.

D.B.

Tau Ceti

(0,0)

This system is remarkable in that it was the first on which life was discovered off Earth. The first intrepid pioneers led by John Taylor set up a settlement and named it Taylor Colony. They were very successful and used the fertile land for agriculture, which was fully automated. The population grew rapidly and revenue was earned from hunting which more or less wiped out the indigenous life. When word got back to the Authority for Ecological Control they became concerned and issued guide-line for conservation, which were duly ignored. The hunting of wildlife and destruction of habitats continued until Earth threatened to send a police force. John Taylor was a particularly hot headed individual and started to insist that independence from Earth was granted to the Tau Ceti system. Trade embargos failed and finally a military force was sent out by Earth believing that Tau Ceti would not have the resolve to resist. A battle followed which resulted in an impasse – surprising the authorities. Eventually after much diplomacy the deadlock was broken by forming the Federation including Tau Ceti and Earth amongst others as founder members. The unfortunate creatures that fuelled the whole debacle which led to this extremely powerful alliance, virtually died out. Today they remain in small numbers in enclosures and sanctuaries.

K.D.

Tiliala

(-4,-1)

Valhalla is a small, hot world, comprising equal parts of tropical jungle and desert. Water covers only one third of its surface, but they team with native life. The seafood of Valhalla is a gourmet’s dream, complicated only by the dangers involved in fishing on the planet, which is subject to violent storms throughout the year. The Valhalla serpent is incorrectly named, since it is anatomically related to the mammal like animals of the world. It grows to lengths in excess of thirty metres in the deep ocean regions of the planet and careful control of hunting of the creatures maintains the population at a sustainable level. The serpent is the source of cabitol oil and greaver, used in pharmaceuticals and beauty products throughout human space, and its brilliantly patterned hides adorn the most wealthy of the Federation.

Similarly striking animals inhabit the jungles of Valhalla, perhaps the best known being the Rajah Sphinx, now unfortunately extinct in its native habitat, but preserved in zoos throughout the galaxy. The Trupin Sphinx remains in the wild, however and safari tours to see it in situ are arranged on an ad hoc basis. Valhalla is a relatively light world, with few accessible mineral deposits, so competition for land has been slight and the ecological management of the planet has proceeded in an exemplary fashion.

The sister world of Democracy has been terraformed and is the site for most mining and industrial activity in the system. The world is dense and mineral rich, and is heavily exploited. The combination of a naturally fertile ‘organic’ world and a heavily industrialised and mineralised artificial world is very successful and many of the wealthiest of the Federation call the system home.

D.M.

Wolf 630

(-2,-1)

This is an amazing system in fact a combination of co-orbital systems, including Wolf 629 and the white dwarf VB8 (named after Van Beisbrock in ancient times). The sky provides a stunning spectacle as six different bodies are visible together. The scene from Landfall has been made famous by the painting, Six Sisters by Dee Kosmala.

Landfall, the only planet is home to the Second Founding Fathers, a rich group of individuals who wanted to set up an ideal world. They named their capital Mayflower City and set up an agricultural community which has grown to enable a major export industry to flourish. The inhabitants are an insular lot because they do not have any other planets in their system and view foreigners with suspicion so a reduced gene pool has resulted in much inbreeding.

Landfall orbits a brown dwarf named McCarthy, a spectacular sight. It was named after an ancient astronomer who was not taken seriously when he discovered it. The inhabitants of Landfall like to think it was the first brown dwarf known to Man but those of other systems dispute this.

The indigenous life had to be very hardy as it had to withstand the high levels of radiation from the white dwarf as it cooled and from McCarthy. Thus the very irresponsibly introduced life from Earth did not cause too much of an ecological problem because most of it died out.

K.D.

Zeaex

(3,-2)

The territorial rights over the Zeaex system has been disputed between the Empire and Federation for over two centuries. The mineral rich inner planets, together with a diverse range of gas giants make this an economic centre for the region. The presence of a habitable world greatly increases the system's strategic importance. The inhabitants of the worlds of this system try to balance the need for trade with a desire to be left well alone. Tourists are welcome, but many are viewed with deep suspicion by the residents. Both Federation and Empire have naval bases within the system, which limits the efforts of pirates, but puts pressures on legitimate traders.

Heavy metals are mined on the innermost world of Cambridge's Hole, named after the miner Grambourne Cambridge who was first to stake claim to the world. He invested heavily in mining machinery and obtained the exploitation rights to the system from the Federation. Erronsa Ashfield followed Grambourne to the system ten years later with permission to mine granted by the Empire. Ashfield, with her husband Francis established a base on the second planet, having failed to force Cambridge from the innermost world. The Ashfield's made an early fortune exporting rare gems to the Empire, while the Federation provided a ready market for Cambridge.

A bitter rivalry developed between the two camps and naval vessels of both sides once threatened to escalate the conflict into open warfare. The confrontation was averted by the majority of colonists on Democracy, petitioning both Earth and Capitol to have the mineral rights to the rest of the system given to the settlement of Newtown. In the ensuing legal battle, the armed forces were called to other areas and the situation settled into a more peaceful state. The mining families on the inner planets retain only ten percent shares in the profitable mineral trade.

As with many worlds in the so called 'disputed zone', neither Empire nor Federation have dominance. Travellers from the Federation may find the presence of so many slaves distressing, but visitors from the Empire will be equally disturbed by the lack of imposed discipline and positive discrimination for racial and minority groups. The worlds and colonies of the disputed zone are a mixing ground for two very different cultures and this can be experienced in full at this world.

D.M.

Zearla

(-5,1)

The Zearla system is home base for the vast majority of the miners who work the nearby worlds and systems in this sector of space. The city of Jeffries on Fraser houses the head office of Wreaken Construction and Mining, the most prosperous of the independent mining and development companies which work at the edge of the Federation. Employing over a quarter of a million full time staff and owning sole mineral rights to some forty nine planets, the Wreaken company can be found throughout most of the frontier and Federation worlds.

With such a concentration of mining interests on Fraser it is not surprising that there are a large number of starports, all offering excellent repair facilities to miners and traders alike. Whatever facilities are not provided at one of the Fraser bases can almost certainly be acquired at nearby Andceeth. The Earth like world of Charles Colony, orbiting Enaness is also nearby, but its rigorous communist principles deter many casual visitors.

The Zearla system is well developed, from the smelting planet of Jameson's Wreck; named after the unfortunate Naomi Jameson who crashed while chasing a metal rich comet towards the star but survived for three days before being rescued, to Leetown, on Cooperworld, the seventh planet. The only solid world between Jameson's Wreck and Cooperworld not to boast a permanent settlement of any type is Zearla 2, locally known as Nemesis, which has no mineral wealth to speak of and whose crust contains sizable fractions of volatiles.

The surface of Nemesis is unstable and six attempts to establish bases on the planet have ended in disaster. The number of lives lost trying to populate this inhospitable world is over on hundred, despite the best efforts of standby rescue teams. The local miners use the planets name as a powerful curse and the more superstitious will even climb out of its orbital plane to avoid the taint of its path!

D.M.

Zeessze

(0,3)

The first thing to strike a person casually browsing through a planetary catalogue is the remarkable similarity between the systems of Sol and Zeessze. This superficial similarity led to very high hopes amongst the initial settlers, who christened their world 'Paradise'. This hopeful start was soon dispelled when the colonists arrived at their destination. The first bases were established on the minor planet Gonzalez's Grave, named after the unfortunate shuttle pilot whose crash-landing was to be symptomatic of the initial set-backs the colonists experienced.

The starport of Oliver, on Gonzalez's Grave was built to schedule, and probes to the third planet were sent out. They reported back a very different picture to that given by the Earth bureau of colonisation. (Recall that this was in the second wave of emigration, when Earth was suffering severe population pressures and almost any measure was regarded as fair to rid the planet of excess). The planet was verdant and new life forms were abundant, but it is smaller and denser than Earth, giving rise to very high surface gravity.

The initial colonisation of the world was hampered because humans were unable to work for more than a couple of hours at a time before needing to rest. In these early days of exploration and exploitation, transport costs for machinery was prohibitive between systems, so most early colonisation work was performed by human labour. (some historians suggest that this is the origin of the Empire's slave culture). Quite apart from the high gravity, the world was far hotter than the colonists, originally from Lappland and the Siberian pan-conurbation were accustomed, and many immigrants died of heat exhaustion before a second wave of colonists introduced a more sensible work regime.

The world was re-christened New America after a botanist showed the similarities between the climate of the world and of the ancient South American forests of Earth. This provided the first clue to conquering the planets indigenous life forms. At first, and for several generations, the local flora and fauna successfully resisted the attempts of Earth phenotypes to take over. Earth crops could only be grown in restricted areas and local carnivores and raptors made the world a dangerous place to explore.

Qui Luk Soo introduced a number of slightly modified strangler vines from Earth stocks, and this small start led eventually to the taming of large parts of the jungle planet for human use. The problem of labour was partly solved by the introduction of genetically 'improved' gorilla stock, which could be trained to perform simple clearing and construction work. A brief but extremely violent assault on the colony by a war band of eco-

revolutionists destroyed all the facilities for the gorillas, who 'escaped' into the wild. Some were able to find their way back to the community, but to this day there are some feral gorilla tribes in the heartland of the jungles. These are the subject of intense study by the anthropologists and are covered by Federal interdict from all further tampering by mankind.

With the passing generations, the human stock of the system have adapted to the strong gravity of their planet, becoming heavily built and muscular. It is sometimes hard for visitors to distinguish men and women of the planet, but given their violent tempers and general impatience, it is important to get it right if you are a tourist. New Americans do not suffer fools gladly. The jungle of the world is still inhabited by a number of very dangerous native predators, including the Quivol and Nii-worm, which claim a respectable annual toll of lives. If your interest in visiting the planet is hunting, do not expect to find native guides cheap to hire, nor eager to venture into the relatively unexplored Southern continents.

New America is home of the modern Ghurka assault regiment, which saw action in all the major wars against the Empire. In the past century, the fighting men and women of the regiment have seen action in several disputed systems and even the Empire clone troops hold them in high regard. They are normally planet fighters, preferring and training for ground action rather than space warfare, so they play little part in current naval actions against pirates. Occasionally they are used as 'shock troops' in recovering Frontier worlds where organised crime has established too strong a hold and threatens the economic stability of the Federation.

D.M.

Zelada

(1,4)

The Zelada system was colonised at roughly the same time as Ququve, but by a fundamentalist religious sect, looking for a world to conduct a penance for humanity. The conditions they found on New Africa suited their requirements to a remarkable degree. The life was tough, uncompromising and harsh. The arrivals on New Africa had to cope with a bitter climate, coupling torrential sleet and electrical storms with hurricane strength winds and fast moving glaciers. The first three settlements were overrun by these natural forces and all of the initial equipment they brought from Quphieth was lost within the first decade.

Modern archeological and palaeontological surveys of the planet reveal that at one time the temperature of New Africa was much more benign than at present. The world is going through a very prolonged ice age, but before the current cold cycle there was the opportunity for life to colonise the land. The animals which are native to the land of New Africa are fierce hunters and can survive in the harsh climate which will freeze a man to the bone in seconds. The early colonists had to re-learn primitive hunting skills and abilities in order to survive and their descent into primitivism was swift.

The strict conditions the early settlers had placed concerning interference with the colony from the outside meant that no contact was established with the groups for three generations. The early religious settlers had emphatically stated that no outside communications would be accepted and supplies would be destroyed. It was entirely by accident that the Birchwood New Spirit of the Lord Woodwind Ensemble, en-route for Aymiy for a concert performance, was precipitated out of hyper space near the Zelada system. The crew of the ship were able to reach orbit around New Africa and put down an emergency shuttle. The tiny settlement thus formed was later to grow into Rush Depot, the planet's largest starport.

While the musicians tried to eke out an existence at Rush Depot, the ship crew searched for the original colonists. No evidence of the original camps was found, but the primitive society of the final remnants of the religious order was encountered, living a nomadic life hunting the local omnivores and harvesting wild grasses and roots. Instead of making contact, the ship Captain decided to leave the remnants of humanity in peace and instead sent an emergency rescue message to the Federation, describing the plight of both groups.

New Africa was recolonised by an assorted group of wanderers, to no set plan. The initial colony had failed and a sort of planetary squatter's rights became the norm in establishing rules on New Africa. This trend continues today, and the planet suffers under an anarchy with no clear constitution nor allegiance. Zelada system has become synonymous with banditry and hi-jacking, but the mineral rich outer worlds still attract a lot of miners and hopefuls. Traders visit the system despite the high incidence of piracy, and freelance bounty hunters find the bulletin boards of Zelada a useful hunting ground for information.

D.M.

Teho's comments

Though I have tried to stay as true to the original work as possible, I have made certain small changes.

First: The introduction mentions that because of their historical importance, Sol and Achenar are described first. This wasn't true however. In the original work, Sol was described last in the book. I have moved it to the beginning since that was probably where it was meant to be.

Second: The original work did not include the sector coordinates of the systems described in it. I remember when I first read it that it was very annoying, since I very much wanted to visit several of these systems, but they were so hard to find. Well, I have searched and found the coordinates for each and every one of them, and included them here for you.

You're welcome.

And on a final note, you may have noticed that the description of Ackwada was missing the author's initials. They were gone from the original work too, so I have no idea who actually wrote it. Though it is a good bet that it was probably David Massey, as he's the one who has contributed the most to this book. Where the initials should have been, I have put a ? instead, just to tell you that I did not forget to put them there.