

AIRSHIPS

MORE OPTIONS FOR MAGICAL MAYHEM AND DESTRUCTION!

OPENING WORDS

Jou may be wondering why in the Nine Hells did I write this thing. Actually, let me join you in your musings, because I have no discernible idea; I got the inspiration from an old campaign of mine, a few pieces of Eberron art and lore and the ruleset I wrote for the Eternal Warden did the rest.

So, well.. what is this supplement?

For starters, is a possible way to expand on the topic of "technoarcana" and bring a bit of the more science-fiction-oriented stuff to your games for that extra kick of "wow effect".

Secondly, as the characters gain power and wealth, there can come a point where they have so much money that they find nothing so expensive to spend it on; it looks paradoxical, but it can happen, so buying an airship or otherwise dealing with this fantastic and perils-fraught universe is a nice way for GM's to remind their players the value of money, favours and currency.

And, of course, life and ale.

Also, there is swag and bragging rights.

By now, you should know that I am a huge 40k fan, with all of its pointlessly exaggerated cathedral-voidships, sky-reaching architectures and the like, so investing in such airships can be appealing to the more swagger-oriented characters.

I mean, flying about in a 30-meters long, falcon-shaped flying ship that trails multy-hued flames and is home to a small village!

With magic guns... lots of magic guns and boarding ropes to teach those pesky dragon cultists their place in the pecking order!

Well, childish giggles aside, I simply wrote this thing for the sake of it... almost. It looked fun to give GM's and players a bit of light-hearted but backside-smashing options and so I did!

And, no, I have totally, absolutely no intentions to use it on my players... nope... not even an itty, bitty bit. (Yes, I know, nobody believes me... and they are absolutely right in that!)

I hope you will have as much fun with these sky-soaring contraptions of monetary doom and logistical destruction as I did putting them together and, as always,

Ave atque valete!

Federico Lorenzo Gavioli

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following are files and supplements tha I found useful for writing this one, thematically linked or even just very well done!

If you happen to download them, do it because they are very well written!

[Aerial Combat](#) by **pwines14** because, when dealing with dazzling heights, you always need a way to determine how fast a dead weight can plummet to its smashed pumpkin-like doom, right? (and, more importantly, with how much force!)

[Fiefdom: Manors, Ruling manorial fiefs](#) by **Andrew Pavlides** that I also referenced for the [reflections on massed combat](#), because it really is an astonishing work! It can come in very handy when deciding prices and development times for the "building of a sky-soaring contraption of monetary doom and logistical destruction" part of the bargain.

[Guildhall - A guide to build your base](#) by **David Dias**, because airships can also make for pretty decent character settlements and his stuff is very easy and straightforward to use.

[The Cannonier class](#) by **Josh Mercieca**, 'cause you can never have enough guns, right? Especially if they are big, loud and smoky!

OVERVIEW



castle-shaped, high-walled stone construct the size of a small village soars through the skies, heralded by the creaking of rock and wood, trailing a red hued distortion in its wake.

A twin-hulled, wedge-shaped machine large enough to fit an individual humanoid pilot darts between the multiple horizontal sails of a much larger vessel as firebolts shoot from hidden compartments in each of the smaller craft's hulls, incinerating wood and melting metal.

Pacifically sailing through a cloud bank, a construct vaguely reminiscent of a wooden dragonfly slowly pushes on, huge racks of crates and pallets clamped to its reinforced thorax, as smaller, faster and more maneuverable crafts swarm around it controlled by a synod of elven magi inside the larger vessel.

A flying ship, also known as **airship** or, somewhat more rarely, **sky-sail** is more than an ordinary, seafaring vessel that has been given enchantments to fly in the air, although it is a practice not unheard of amongst the less favoured or wealthy.

A true flying ship is a vessel that was specifically built around a compound of highly complex and delicate spells which not only allow it to fly, to consider the air as its own domain the same way its seafaring counterpart calls the seas, but to thrive in it, to live up to its many and totally different challenges.

A true flying ship is born that way, taking a form apter to dealing with aerodynamics, and most probably will never be able to touch water again or even has never been able to do it in the first place.

Running an airship is a work of precise calculations made out of extremely imprecise and unreliable data, requiring a captain and crew not only to completely re-learn how they will be affected by weather phenomena, but also to deal with gigantic airborne predators, like dragons, or migrating flocks of any shapes and kinds and the always-present and looming risk of remaining bereft of lift when tens of thousands of feet from the ground because a rune in some dark nook of the ship was cut off the vessel's main power source.

AIRSHIPS IN ECONOMY

Building an airship is by itself an **extremely expensive endeavour**, both because it is a large construct of specialist materials and because it requires a vast amount of magic reagents and spell components for its many magicks, much the same way an Eternal Warden does.

However, a flying ship can repay many times its costs on the local economy because it presents the almost unique opportunity to haul goods virtually everywhere in a swift and controlled way, as long as it has enough fueling crystals for its complex forge-core.

In fact, commercial freighters are even employed to move cargo between planes, thanks to specifically-crafted on-board teleportation or planeshifting circles that greatly empower the skills of their wizards.

Flying allows to cut travel time and avoid many land-based and water-based dangers and obstacles, such as mountains, bandits and the vast majority of pirates, although it is not completely safe from danger.

To cater to its need for protection, then, military development was heavily pushed, heading to the birth of all sorts of other, fighting-oriented vessels: from armored and heavily-armed freighters, capable of repelling most predators and wyvern riders by themselves, to remotely-controlled flying small golems, cheap enough to factor in a commercial guild's strictest spending policies but still provide cutting-edge security.

Of course, each sky-faring culture came up with its own solutions, but the constant is that, of a fleet, roughly half is cargo vessels as they are truly small gold mines if wisely managed.

AIRSHIPS IN BATTLE

As war is the other natural evolution of the airship concept, as happened with every other tool invented by the civilized races, the military evolution of flying vessels, though of comparable importance to their commercial use, is much more varied.

During the existence of such a weapon, the civilized races furthered their understanding of how three dimensional fighting functions, a process started with the taming of the first winged creature and then culminated with the invention of the floating fortress, which high stone walls and fearsome arrays of weapons are a concern even for the great dragons.

Many cultures brought to the skies their traditional ways of land-based warfare, but many more chose to completely reimagine their methods of bringing battle to their foes and countless kinds of vessels and tactics were brought into being after decades or centuries of practice and study both on and off the battlefield.

Some constants, however, have been noted by warfare historians: whenever and wherever one looks, they can find smaller, **single-person vessels** that operate in wings and squadrons, **larger, multipurpose ships** employed generally for fire support, carrying duties and piquet security, **heavily armed and armored vessels** tasked with absorbing fire and trading blows with the enemy fleet's larger ships and then the **capital ones**.

Ships so large and complex that can accommodate enough people and secondary systems to control and direct the other vessels at their disposal or even man a fort.

What varies, however, is the almost endless amount of possible customization between each broad "class" of ships.

Armored carriers that can unleash wave after wave of griffin-mounted knights? Done.

Ships built around a giant Disintegrator array? Done that too.

Nimble, closed and armored chariots used to deploy troops to board enemy vessels after blasting its hull open with focussed elemental magic? It has been attempted with a good degree of success... more or less.

Of course, how airships are armed depends on the individual culture that produced them, but whenever possible the tendency is to prefer magical means of offense to bulky siege engines for **two main reasons** and a host of minor, logistical ones.

The **first** is fairly simple: there already is a system in place that provides power to the whole ship; the **second** one is cargo space and weight limits: siege engines like catapults and ballistae are bulky and heavy, while offensive spells can be traced directly on the ship's flanks or on catalyst crafted out of lighter but magically conductive materials, such as hedra.

The downside of that, however, is that forge-cores for warships have to be extra powerful and slaving one more set of complex spells to the already massive network of spells and flowing magical energies exponentially multiplies the chances of malfunctionings and, alas, explosions.

A CIVILIAN AIRSHIP

Usually, airships are used in everyday life only in those society where magic is heavily present or when moving otherwise in impossible, such the case of nomadic sky-soarers.

Even in such cases, the nature of vessels employed by the common populace varies, but it does not stray far from **transportation**, either personal or bulk.

However, it is not unheard of of magically powerful individuals to craft their own version of a flying transportation construct and surely many an adventuring group managed to either secure an airship to use as mobile abode and base of operations or even order the construction of one tailor-made to suit their extravagant needs.

To store their treasures and make sure they are not stolen by their many enemies, that is...

As unusual as that may seem, there is also the interesting trend of **racing vessels** that developed almost at the same time as the military produced forge-cores and motive spells to propel larger and heavier capital ships or nimbler and faster fighter crafts.

Although it is considered a leisure only for the wealthy and crazy, there are places where an exceedingly fast airship can be of great value... even if only "for the lols".

AIRSHIPS AND EXPLORATION

The use of airships for exploration is somewhat rarer than the commercial or military one, but with the passing of time it has carved its own niche out in the vessels' industry, with many passionate enthusiasts constantly working to keep up the name of exploration vessels against that of the great warships.

There is a kind of rivalry, as explorers feel like they embody the true nature of an airship, a blend of all its diverse natures, because discovering new worlds truly needs every asset a flying vessel can be armed with.

Weapons and armor to defend itself from the myriad unknown dangers it will face when out in the wild, speed and maneuverability not to take centuries in travel, scryers precise and powerful enough to notice minute phaenomena as well as large continents and, indeed, enough cargo space for both personnel and supplies for extended periods of time far from any form of civilization.

The exploration industry produces and puts to the test new and custom systems and spells at an extremely high rate, constantly striving to achieve always neater and more efficient results, and it is well known of their rivalry with military arcana-engineers as the former take great pride in achieving similar results to the latter's but with a fraction of the funds and manpower at their disposal.

Because of the drive of such an enthusiastic community, a few dockyards and guilds rose to prominence as leaders in both the development and production of systems and whole vessels dedicated to exploration, cartography and survival, sometimes even rivalling with crown-backed investments in size and economic importance.

MOST FREQUENT HULLS

Although hull variety is as ample as the number of cultures employing airships is high, what follows is a series of recurrent themes or styles that have been observed multiple times and in multiple places in the history of the flying ship.

NOTES ON CLASS AND STANDARDISATION

The idea of standardising a ship design into a class, a set of given characteristics linked to a certain name to distinguish it from other sets, is something that usually manifests in an organized context where the object of the classification process is heavily present in the common, local culture.

What does that mean? In short, that if many instances of something are commonly seen, the people exposed to them must find ways to efficiently tell them apart and be able to swiftly understand which combinations their interlocutor is talking about.

It happens when the context has had time to get used to the thing being standardised, therefore having enough time to get to understand it and experiment with it.

As a consequence, the cultures and contexts **most likely** to make use of airship classes are the kingdoms and empires that have a bureaucratic structure, a long tradition of using airships and the resources not only to maintain more than a few vessels but also build and keep updated different kinds of them, for different purposes, while their strengths and weaknesses are constantly tested out in the field.

THE CASE-BY-CASE APPROACH

Of course, the opposite way of dealing with airships is considering each vessel a class of its own; as building even an individual airship is a great and expensive effort, the trend is to treat them as more than a flying collection of wood, metals and arcane components, but something with its own identity and life.

Such approach is **more frequent** in more nomad-minded contexts, where the cultural and social structures are less structured and many things happen without the need of even being made officially known and named, but instead just happens and everyone accepts them.

Usually, this kind of situation entails a more personal connection and approach to the vessel, since it is likely to be the only airship in many, many miles and have a crucial, sometimes almost religious, role in the local culture life.

SMALL HULLS

Ranging from just a somewhat larger armor with the barest of systems to hippocriff- or small dragon-sized constructs, small hulls are characterized by high speed and acceleration, wide variety of customization options but a frail hull that often forces them to rely on superior maneuverability more than brute armor.

The vast majority of small hulls, sometimes referred to as 'fliers', 'fighters' or simply 'smalls', features either a single operator or two, with a small but surprisingly effective minority of remote-controlled crafts. Hence, smalls make for a good option for personal transportation.

They are fast, have good response times, can be customized with enough weapons to take on same- or slightly larger-sized enemies and can have decent autonomy in terms of fueling crystals; however, not only their armor is not suited to take larger vessels headout without making the craft exceedingly heavy, but also internal cargo space is limited to roughly a bit more than the individual person can carry with itself excluding the internal reservoir of fueling crystals.

Of course, as they are the least expensive airships to obtain, they can be perfect for individual explorers, wanderers or, why not, racers.

However, their diminutive size can become very useful when organizing escorts for other vessels as they fit in small-roomed holds.

SUITS OF ARMOR

The idea of making suits of armor fly is not a novelty, as many great scholars, wizards and wise people have tried to come up with a tangible and not deadly (not for its user, at least) way of combining the best of two worlds.

However, only with the introduction of forge-cores have techno-arcanists been able to design and test projects of flying personal armor with enough chances of success not to be rejected on sight.

As such, they effectively bridge the gap between a flying ship and the individual who pilots it, having less resistance, cargo space and heavy armaments of a small, but more powerful scryers, flying capacities, firepower and lifting power than the average adventurer.

They tend to be more expensive than smalls, because they require to be tailored to the needs and specifics of their user, but can be even more agile and less noticeable than a full blown small hull and have been favoured by many solo adventurers who found the extra armor for land-based perils and motion potential very much useful.

MEDIUM HULLS

Medium hulls range from carriage- or wagon-sized crafts to vessels that rival longships in length and tonnage, effectively making them the first real option for those who have to haul cargo from one place to another.

Overall, mediums are the generalist type by definition, as they are a mix of all of the characteristics the 'ideal' airship should have; durability, autonomy, armaments, cargo space and scryers, but never really by default excelling in one aspect in particular.

However, this being "jack of all trades, masters of none" throughout time was received with favour by their various users, as it offered them the chance to customize their vessel to a deeper point to suit their needs.

As a consequence, mediums have been used as "mundane" freighter vessels, boarding crafts, air-to-ground firepower support, quick and surprise landers, medium-ranged exploration vessels and even carriers, fliers-hunters, flank-wardens, spotters and piket ships for larger fleets, and in the various combinations inbetween.

As a rule of thumb for GM's and players alike, whatever role they can conceive for an airship is covered by at least a medium hull and then the specialist hull, designed just for that.

However, such versatiliy comes with, litteraly, a heavy price as converting a medium from its dockyard configuration to a more personalized one, or from one custom pattern to another, requires hefty amounts of money and time in drydock under the expert hands of many arcana-engineers, making such category of hulls the largest a wealthy individual or small group is likely to come by within the span of a human lifetime.

They are also frequently used by pirates, roamers and nomad fleets as logistic and tactical support for fliers and smalls when organizing smaller groups, as they can quickly be turned into supplies-carriers, mobile command posts and so on.

HEAVY HULLS

From roughly the size of a galley to a galleon, heavy hulls are multi-decked juggernauts bristling with weapons, armor plating, shield-emitting spells and, when needed, complements of soldiers trained to fight in closed spaces to defend the ship from boarding attempts.

The first sign of a heavy hull is, yes, its sheer bulk, firmly set at the hundreds, if not thousands, of tonnes, but also its crew; to be operated and to stay in combat-ready conditions, heavies require large amounts of specially-trained people to use and maintain its various systems and tens of sub-systems, making such sky-faring leviathans extremely labour-intensive.

Such downside, alongside their almost total dedication to warfare, makes heavy hulls all but unobtainable by who does not benefit from the support of a vast and clockwork-precise backup infrastructure that deals with rearming and refuelling such mighty beasts of the heavens.

To put it in other terms: whoever is able to get one without having a nation's economy to back it up is either the best thief in recent history or the most fearsome of pirates.

About pirates, only the most influent and dreaded can afford to own even one of these vessels, often to use it as their flagship.

In battle, a heavy hull's role has been proven to be the linekeeper, the vessel which, alongside other of its kind, forms a wall of metal and shields to absorb enemy projectiles while exchanging broadsides to eliminate the other side's heavies and distract them from targeting weaker targets that would not stand a chance if directly shot at.

However, heavies have been also used on the offensive, pushing through the enemy fleet line to break it for smaller ships to wreak havoc on the enemy vulnerable targets before rapidly falling back to the safety of their own fleet.

Whatever they are tasked with, they are team-workers, requiring cooperation with the other fleet's elements to both survive and thrive.

As a consequence, they are way less versatile than mediums or smalls because of their almost purely military role.

Ramming is also a very effective tactic employed by heavies, one where their colossal weight can be turned into a fearsome, albeit crude, weapon of both destruction and terror which, in time, resulted in the tradition of arming such great vessels with reinforced prows to better shatter their opponents.

CAPITAL HULLS

A capital is all that a heavy is, and then plentiful.

They are larger, longer, heavier, with stronger armor, weapons, shields and troops, boasting complements of smaller crafts powerful enough to level a city by themselves, all in a pack that more or less costs said city to be produced, used and maintained.

However, their extreme rarity called for a more versatile vessel than just a flying mountain with more firepower than an arcane college combined, since the sheer amount of systems that could be installed aboard such a spacious platform are, in fact, countless for all intents and purpose.

For this, ship designers of all races and eras managed to put all sorts of capabilities into the capital vessels they were tasked with outfitting: scryers capable of sensing on multiple planes, technomachines capable of calculating probabilities with near-perfect precisions, teleportation devices covering a wide area **around** the vessel itself, dragon-killing magical lances, extensive banks for the remote control of entire swarms of wasp-crafts, forges for great and powerful magical items, facilities for the docking, rearming and refuelling of ally vessels and communication and tactical analysis arrays strong enough to coordinate without effort tens of ships with peerless precision.

All of this, and more, has been tried at least once and each capital hull is a venerable relic in of itself, proof of a bygone age that managed to survive through all sorts of perils and travails, taking to the skies of battle once more for king and country.

Of course, many are the legends of fabled vessels, as large as cities, lost to the skies or the planes and many are those who attempted to recover them... sometimes to no avail.

HOW TO GET AN AIRSHIP

Getting to employ the services of an airship can be very complex or extremely easy, depending on the area the group is.

However, it is going to be **extremely costly** either way.

CHARTING ITS SERVICES

Usually, where there is an airship captain, there is also the possibility to charter their ship, for the right price of course.

As airships are very expensive to keep in running conditions, even when they do not have a crew to feed, quarter and keep satisfied, their captains who are not affiliated to official organizations, like navies and guilds, tend to be always on the lookout for new jobs.

Of course, the kinds of contracts that the captain might be willing to take and the prices they are going to ask for them vary from ship to ship as no two vessels are the same.

There is one constant, however: **price**.

Charting an airship is very expensive. No matter the task or the kind of ship, they are going to ask a heavy price not only because of the intrinsic expenses of the airship itself but also for the potential dangers that it might face in flight.

Note for GM's: at least, price for an airship ride should clock around a few hundreds gold pieces per day of travel, vessel and people aboard; of course, depending on the party's wealth, even the most basic travel might be out of their reach for many levels, but that is part of the point.

As always, it is an indicative amount to give both GM's and players a perspective on what "tier" of play the idea of airships is intended for, but it should not prevent GM's from lowering or increasing it as per the needs of the campaign!

For example, in a setting where airships are very frequent, using them as ordinary transportation might be the norm and not expensive at all, much like taking a bus.

ORDERING ONE BUILT

This, however, is completely another matter entirely.

To have an airship built, the group must first contract the services of a dockyard with the right equipment and skills to do so.

Although it might seem obvious that every dockyard capable of **repairing** a flying vessel should be also able to **build** it, it is not because this kind of endeavour requires not only huge expanses of space, but also commercial connections prosperous enough to provide for the vast amount of needed raw materials and fine magical components.

Although telling precisely how much money is needed to order an airship is nigh impossible because of the wildly varying economics that go into it, it is a safe bet to assume that even the smallest, single-seat small hull with the most basic of spell-systems has a price in the order of the hundreds of platinum pieces.

The larger and more complex a vessel is, the more exponentially its price grows, then, until it can rival literally the value of a small city.

THE HULL



The hull of a flying ship is many things to its crew. It is their home, a place where they are likely to spend much of their time when traveling, an armoured shelter to protect them from the hardships of sky-bound travel, be they pirates, storms, predators, and both and benign and cruel master at the same time.

A vessel's hull is a complex structure made up of three different kinds of components.

The **first** one is the keel, the inner structure that forms the ship's skeleton and sets the amount of inner space available to the vessel's designers to fill.

The **second** is the actual internal vessel's components: the crew quarters, the cargo hold, the command deck and so on.

The **last** and simplest one is the outer plating, the armor that protects the whole ship from direct harm like impacts, projectiles, magical and physical attacks.

What follows is the breakdown of a vessel's sheet, with all the necessary informations about the ship itself, while example ships can be found at the end of the supplement.

VESSEL SHEET

NAME

The name the vessel was christened as.

Naming policies and traditions are as varied as the people who employ such marvel of technomagic, as each culture tends to have its own.

CLASS

As noted before, not every ship belongs to a class as not every society either feels the need for or conceives the idea of a bureaucratic system devoted only to keeping the track of how many and which ships are available.

CHRISTENING DOCK

For a vessel, its "homedock" is very important not only for sentimental value, since it can wane as the crews change with the passing of time, but also for a very practical reason: probably it is only there that is preserved the knowledge to fully and truly repair and refit the ship in case of damage.

With time, there have been dockyards specialized in gathering such knowledge for other vessels, but have been destroyed or have sold such information to ensure their survival.

CAPTAIN

As lord or lady of the ship, the captain's name is usually the first to appear on official documents such as paychecks, dock ledgers and the like.

CREW

Usually it is only listed as the number of people who keep the vessel up and running, as often they are too many to list individually or they change too fast to keep actual track of each and every one, but there are exceptions.

Some captains take great pains in chronicling each crewmember for the most diverse of reasons: respect, desire to control or paranoia being among the most frequent.

HULL

The hull is the shell that envelops the ship's innards and internal system, providing at the same time an aerodynamic shape with which better soar the skies, an armour against enemy attacks and a place to call home, where the hearth is always lit and tales are exchanged.

TONNAGE

How much does the ship weights when at full cargo capacity.

In some cases, it is alternatively defined as the total mass limit at which the ship is too heavy to take off.

Whichever way, it is a strong factor in determining the vessel's cargo space, though potential chartist captains should keep in mind that a ship might have room for less actual crates, barrels and pallets than its motive system can physically lift, which is not that a bad of a problem.

When the opposite happens, however...

SPEED

How fast can the ship travel.

Though it is usually a factor decided by the quality and quantity of the motive spells woven into its propelling system, the ship's own tonnage is a crucial factor.

HULL POINTS

The innate toughness and physical characteristics of the hull's material.

Hull Points are reduced by the damage the hull takes and, when down to 0, make the vessel collapse on itself, as its structural integrity is too compromised to keep flying.

When that happens, usually, all hell is quite literally going to break loose.

RESISTANCES

The physical characteristics of the material with which the hull is built mean that often flying ships are particularly resistant to non magical trauma.

However, it is not unheard of vessels plated with special materials such as elementally-charged metals to fend off storms or even rune-encrusted stones to absorb spells flung at the hull.

SYSTEMS AND SPELLS

What truly sets flying ships apart from ordinary, seafaring vessels: the magicks that allow them to fly and operate in mid air.

Each flying ship is a marvel of technological and magical engineering, a careful blend of mechanical components and spells, where even the smallest mistake can cause an enormous loss, both in lives and money, if not addressed properly.

However different may them be, though, all flying vessels share at least the following vital components, yet it is almost impossible to find one with just them and nothing else.

FORGE-CORE

The most important, and usually dangerous, part of a ship, the source of the raw, unrefined power that is fed to the myriad of other spells to work.

No matter the culture, it is usually the most protected and most carefully controlled place of the vessel, as the slightest temperament in its flow can be of explosive consequences.

MOTIVE SPELLS

The collection of various spells, regulatory enchantments and control runes that allow a vessel to fly, climb, descend, accelerate, decelerate and turn.

Usually, it is one of the first targets of attacking vessels, as it is the quickest way to ensure that a ship crashes to its doom; however, being so delicately balanced, attacking the motive spells can cause unwanted or excessive results, so beware!

SCRYING SPELLS

What allows a ship to hear and see when in the sky, as it soars through cloud banks, sleet storms, hurricanes and snowy gales, even over long distances.

Though the most simple Scrying spell used on an airship traces its origin to the humble one used by adventurers and wizards all over the world, when pitted against the challenges it has to face when in the middle of nowhere it needs a whole host of other enchantments to process the true mountain of information it daily deals with.

Being literally the eyes and ears of a ship, it is one the most important pieces aboard.

SHIELD SPELLS

When it comes to fighting pirates or really heavy sleet, a vessel can mount specially-charged crystals which project magical barriers to stop, absorb or deflect incoming projectiles.

Being a feature used predominantly in battle, not every ship has it and even those that do tend not to activate it unless it is necessary, as raising shields is a major drain in terms of Core energy output.

WEAPONS SPELLS

As with all tools and means of transportations invented by the civilized races, flying ships too have been at some point or other repurposed for war.

Since these vessels have an abundance of magic reserves but tend to lack room for complex siege engines, the most-opted solution is to slave harmful spells to the bridge's controls, so that the ship's captain has access to the whole range of offensive capabilities of their vessel without having to worry about munitions, reciprocating masses and all the like.

Although not all ships mount weapons, those that do draw from the more easily available spells, from the classic *Firebolt* of smaller, one man vessels, to the more esoteric *Disintegrate* found on cruiser-sized ones.

OTHER SYSTEMS

This part covers whatever specialist equipment or systems the individual vessel is kitted with.

Be it a suite that allows for planar travel, an amplifying choir for mass destruction or sets of clamps for the manipulation of cargo, it falls in this category.

THE FORGE-CORE



It has been amply explained so far, the forge-core is the most vital component of the whole vessel, the one giving the necessary power for the hundreds of spells inscribed into the hull and inner structure to work and keep the ship not only aloft, but also working as intended.

ARCANE CHARGES

In game terms, the forge-core provides each game turn a **constant output** of Arcane Charges that is indicated in its description in the Vessel Sheet and in the example ship at the end of the supplement.

As it is the abstract representation of a huge and complex engine, opposite to the more compact one of an Eternal Warden, keeping track of every single iota of power would not only be a pointless effort, but also a needless demonstration of accounting skill, therefore the only preoccupation for a captain is to make sure the output of their forge-core is positive.

EXAMPLE

The *Gwyn-Galath*, a sleek, gryphon-poled vessel armed by Lord Kar Trana to lead the exploration of the newly-discovered Frostridge regions, has been equipped by the court mage with a *Forge-core of the Skyhammer*, that outputs 7 Arcane Charges per round.

Each round, then, if nothing else is active or idle bar the forge-core, the *Gwyn-Galath* has 7 Arcane Charges at its disposal to spend.

FUEL

A forge-core runs on crystals made of condensed raw arcane power that are either produced by the vessel's wizards and arcane casters or, if the crew has none, bought at each dockyard where the ship stops for refuelling and repairs.

CREATING FUEL-CRYSTALS

An arcane caster can, through a ritual that lasts 10 minutes per slot level, condense a spell slot into a crystal that will feed the forge-core for an amount of time proportionate to both the crystal's level and the hull's size.

Small vessels: a fueling crystal lasts 1 day per slot level.

Medium vessels: a fueling crystal lasts half a day per slot level.

Large vessels: a fueling crystal lasts 1 hour per slot level.

CONSUMING ARCANE CHARGES

Each system of the vessel, when kept idle or actively used, constantly draws some of the Arcane Charges, reducing the total output of the forge-core for the following turns until it is either disabled or turned off.

Of course, is it always possible to turn off each and every system aboard, although making it without a few like movement and scryers can be quite the difficult task.

However, should the **forge-core's output reach below 0**, the shipwrights who build airships have come with a series of failsafes and countermeasures that turn off enough non-fundamental systems so that the energy balance becomes again positive without the risk of precipitating to a bloody and pulp-ridden doom.

Most notably, battle vessels have the largest need for such countermeasures as exiting from a skirmish with a leaking forge-core is more frequent than one could think because of stray shots, strain and even boarding attempts.

When too many systems are active and the forge-core's output reaches 0 or below, then, the vessel automatically starts shutting them down following the **Priority List**.

PRIORITY LIST

Until the forge-core's power output is higher than 0 again, the ship's internal spirits shut down one system per turn following this list.

Weapons: when a vessel needs energy, the weapons are the first to be shut down.

Although it might seem a stupid move, when an airship finds itself in such a need most probably is because it took enough damage not to be able to fight an opponent headlong.

When that happens, a captain must usually rely more on speed and maneuverability than brute force to survive the battle by not taking any more hits.

Other: this part may vary much, because of its vastity: often times, when the systems categorized as "other" do not pertain the structural integrity of the hulls they are switched off either before or just after the weapons.

Scryers: mostly for the same reason as the weapons.

When this happens, usually the lack of special vision and perception philters is offset by the sheer proximity with the enemy as the majority of these cases happens in the front of very close engagements, where the chance of taking massive amounts of damage in very short time is higher but also the enemy is in direct visual contact.

Shields: if a vessel has lost enough energy to be forced to turn off the shields, it is a dire evenience indeed, as its helmsmaster and steermen will be put to their utmost test.

KEEPING SYSTEMS ACTIVE

Most systems consume energy in one of two possible ways.

The **first** is the idle condition: they are ready to be used, but still waiting for the captain's order.

A prime example are the weapon banks: when the order to power them is given, they are put through their shooting sequence but actually fired only when the captain says so.

An idle system consumes less energy than when fully operative and has shorter response times than one that has to be completely awakened.

The **second** is the actual usage: a shot from a weapon, a focused sweep from a scryer or the raising of a shield.

When a system is used, its energy consumption increases for the remainder of the turn and a captain must make sure their forge-core can take the additional stress.

EXAMPLE

The *Gwyn-Galath* has encountered a murder of hypogriffs on the hunt and has to defend itself!

The vessel's captain, Lord Kar Trana himself, orders his crew to maintain speed, draining 1 Arcane Charge, shoot a volley of Firebolt Repeaters, the ship's main armament, at the cost of 2 Arcane Charges and activate the shields but keep them idle, for 1 more Arcane Charge, as he waits for further developments.

For that turn, then, the *Forge-core of the Skyhammer*'s output of Arcane Charges is 7, its base value, minus the consumption of the vessel's motive spells, the **idle** consumption of the shields and the **active** consumption of its Firebolt Repeaters.

The result, then, is 7 - 1 - 1 - 2. Having still a positive output of 3 Arcane Charges for the round, it does not suffer any consequences.

Next turn, if Lord Kar Trana does not order to shoot again, the net output is going to be 7 - 1 - 1 - 1, 4, as the Firebolt Repeaters were kept on idle instead of being used.

OVERLOADING A FORGE-CORE

There are times, however, when a captain needs that bit of extra power to pull a particularly complex maneuver off or gain the upper hand in a tight situation.

To answer to such a necessity, many shipwrights have developed a function that allows the captain to temporarily overload the vessel's forge-core, although at the risk of adding even more strain to the system.

A forge-core can be overloaded for additional Charges, but each turn it must pass an **Intelligence (Arcana) check** or gain a Core Exhaustion level.

The **Overload table** lists the different amounts by which a captain can choose to overload their forge-core and their check DC.

OVERLOAD

Level	Bonus Charges	Check DC
First	d4	10
Second	d6	15
Third	d8	20

OVERLOAD EXAMPLE

Lord Kar Trana has discovered that the murder of hypogriffs that attacked the *Gwyn-Galath* carries a band of marauding sky-pirates instead, who started slinging spells at his beloved vessel's hull!

To counter this new threat, then, he orders his crew to raise the ship's shields to mitigate the fireball's effects, draining an additional Arcane Charge from the forge-core's output, shoot another volley of Firebolt Repeaters, run a precision scry on the pirates' ranks looking for more potential surprises on their behalf and, lastly, he personally steers the vessel into a complex evasive maneuver.

The *Forge-core of the Skyhammer*'s output, then, would be 7 minus 2 for the shields activation, another 2 for the Firebolt volley, 2 more for the evasive maneuver and 1 for the focused augury, for a net 0 total.

Not wanting to find himself with a negative output when he needs his vessel the most, then, before issuing his orders Lord Kar Trana had the ship's forge-core on first-grade overload; the player controlling him, then, rolls a d4 for the extra Arcane Charges the *Gwyn-Galath* has at its disposal until its next turn.

Then the group's wizard, tasked with dealing with the forge-core, rolls a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) representing her attempt to squeeze the extra power out without causing damage to the whole vessel, managing to avoid negative balance.

CORE EXHAUSTION

When a forge-core has suffered too much strain, it gains exhaustion levels that can have nefarious effects not only on the core itself, but also on the whole ship.

When the **Intelligence (Arcana) check** is failed, the forge-core gains a level of Exhaustion, suffering direct damage and its output is reduced until it is repaired.

Exhaustion Level	Core Damage	Charges Loss
First	d4	d8
Second	d6	d10
Third	d8	turns off

EXAMPLE

Had the group's wizard failed her check, the *Forge-core of the Skyhammer* would have gained its First level of Exhaustion.

The DM, then, would have rolled the d4 direct Core damage and the d8 permanent Arcane Charges output reduction.

Upon reaching the third level of Core Exhaustion, the forge-core takes its d8 damage and then simply shuts down to prevent either an explosion or a catastrophic meltdown.

When at a dockyard, the forge-core can be repaired by teams of skilled techno-wizards and enchanters to remove all penalties, at the adequate price.

Depending on the damage, however, repair time will vary.

CORE DAMAGE

Listed in its Vessel Sheet entry, the forge-core of a ship has a certain amount of hit points that, when reaching 0, cause it to explode in a hazy gale of arcane energies powerful enough to tear a small rift in the planar fabric itself.

Whenever an airship suffers a critical hit, its crewmen manning the forge-core must roll an **Intelligence (Arcana) check** as if it was rolling the result of its current Core Exhaustion level and then applies its effects.

However, when rolling Exhaustion from a hit instead of Overload, it only takes forge-core damage and reduces its output without gaining additional Exhaustion levels as the projectiles disrupt the various and delicate rune and glyph patterns, altering the magical calibrations that keep the whole vessel fuelled.

If the vessel is critically hit when it has no Exhaustion level, it suffers d3 core damage and loses d4 Charges. The lost Arcane Charges, however, return at its next turn as the forge-core still operates at peak efficiency.

EXAMPLE

During the battle with the hyppogriff-riding pirates, the *Gwyn-Galath* is critically hit with a thunderous magical warhammer by the marauders' captain.

The GM, then, rolls weapon damage as usual to the vessel's hull, applying resistances and immunities, but then he has the group wizard roll another DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

If she fails, since the *Gwyn-Galath*'s already had First level Exhaustion, the DM rolls another d4 direct core damage and d8 Charges output reduction.

THE SYSTEMS!



This part covers the profile and characteristics of the various categories of systems that an airship employs and how are the energy mechanics applied to each and every one of them.

Of course, this is only an abstraction of the myriad different systems that are present on even one individual ship, with the distinct possibility that knowing them all is in fact an impossible task.

If the GM, or the players for that matter, want to come up with their own systems, they are more than welcome! Airships are so different one from another that, as long as they find a plausible way to do it, they sure can.

GM's could make things even more interesting by thinking about a couple of unique pieces or spells that each dock the gorup visits might be willing to sell or provide, one way or the other.

REDIRECTING ENERGY

Captains have the option to feed more power to specific systems of their vessel, so that they gain additional qualities or increase their already present ones.

How this feature works is explained system by system as they not always function the same way.

Of course, GM's should always feel free to tamper with and adjust these rules to their group and setting... or to create rare and powerful systems and enemies, why not!

THE FORGE-CORE

Aside from what was covered in the last chapter, the forge-core's profile lists its amount of **hit points**.

When its count reaches 0, it explodes and tears the whole vessel asunder.

THE MOTIVE SPELLS

By default, being always active, each set of Motive Spells has **two power settings**.

The speeds listed here are the ones relevant to a combat situation, as it is taken as granted that a competent helmsmaster with enough time to plot their maneuvering can overcome almost any obstacle.

APPROACHING SPEED

When in combat, this is the speed at which the vessel can answer to a broader range of different situations, usually set when in a potentially hostile evenience.

For all intent and purpose, this is the airship's equivalent of a player character's Speed value.

In the vessel's sheet, it is also listed its Arcane Charges consumption.

COMBAT SPEED

The speed at which a vessel can be used at its best to survive a combat situation.

As such, it tends to be higher than the ship's Approaching Speed. It draws more Charges from the forge-core than the Apporaching Speed, as listed in the vessel's sheet.

GM's tip: for particularly fast or maneuverable fighting vessels, Combat Speed could actually provide an Armor Class bonus, as much as the Dexterity modifier is applied the a player character's Armor Class value.

In addition to that, it might be useful to keep things narrative, instead of busting out minis and such, when dealing with high speed chases.

FULL SPEED AHEAD!

Giving the Full Speed Ahead order, a captain orders more Arcane Charges fed into the vessel's motive spells, increasing the vessel's speed by 20 feet per Charge and reducing the forge-core's output by that same amount.

As long as the extra Charges are available from the forge-core and the orders is not revoked, then, the bonus lasts.

THE SCRYING SPELLS

When activated, scryers can be either kept on idle mode, keeping a low but constant vigil when their contribution is not vital, or focussed on a specific region within their range.

In addition, each scryer spells set has the following characteristics.

Spectrum: how the vessel's scryers actually perceive the world around them.

It can be sight, hearing, heat or magical emanations; during the long and dense life of the airship concept, all cultures came up with always cleverer ways of scrying the world, or even other Planes, around them.

Rarer and more complex scryers can work on multiple spectra at the same time.

Range: the range within which scrying spells are effective. Outside of that, the ship is blind, deaf and so on.

IDLE SCRTERS

When kept on idle, the vessel's scryers draw the amount of Arcane Charges listed in their "idle" consumption bar, applying a **Passive Perception** score of 12 plus the Perception modifier of the crewmember(s) assigned to them.

The application of the crew's Perception modifier represents the act of analyzing the scryers' results and making sense of them.

Said Passive Perception score is applied to the spells' Spectrum and Range characteristics.

Activating the scryers and then leaving them on idle takes a bonus action from their crew.

FOCUSSED SCRYING

Consuming the relative amount of Arcane Charges for the turn, the vessel effectively attempts a **Perception check** on the spectra available to its scryers, adding the Perception modifiers of the crewmember(s) manning it.

If the scryers are activated and then immediately used for a Focussed Scrying, it takes their crew's full turn.

OVERLOAD THE SCRYERS!

When on overload, the Scryers extend their range by 20 feet per Arcane Charge, as long as they are continuously fed from the forge-core, reducing its output accordingly.

THE SHIELD SPELLS

A vessel's shields provide an additional layer of protection to the hull's natural toughness in the form a second pool of hit points, listed in their profile, that are depleted when the vessel is hit by specific damage types before allocating it to the hull.

When their pool is depleted, it recovers a portion each inactive turn.

Larger vessels can have multiple shield spells, perhaps overlapping or even localized, as GM's should always keep in mind that cruiser- or capital-sized ships can rival small fortresses in **both** size and structural complexity.

IDLE SHIELD SPELLS

When kept only on idle, the shields provide only half their pool and can be turned on from inactive status as a bonus action.

ACTIVE SHIELD SPELLS

When fully activated, as a bonus action if idle or as a full turn if inactive, they provide their full pool and consume their full Consumption value for each turn they are kept on.

FULL POWER TO THE SHIELDS!

Each extra Arcane Charge funneled into the Shield Spells temporarily increases the pool by an amount that depends from shield to shield and is listed in their entry on the vessel's sheet.

GM's tip: as usual, nothing prevents GM's from expanding the concept, like making so more damage types drain from the shield pool instead of the hull points.

Very rare and ancient shield spells might even impose a saving throw on the actual attack and, on a fail, have it miss its target, reduce incoming damage by default or greatly increase the vessel's Armor Class value.

THE WEAPON SPELLS

A vessel's weapons are usually spells normally available to casters, both arcane and, in some cases, divine, that have been enchanted into the ship's hull with a controlling magic that slaves them to the commands of its handler.

Damage: in its profile, an airship's weapon lists its damage dice and type.

Range: this indicates the optimal range for the weapon.

IDLE WEAPONS

When kept on idle, a weapon can be fired as a bonus action with disadvantage on the attack roll, at reduced Arcane Charges costs.

SHOOTING

When shot at its running efficiency, instead, its Arcane Charges cost increases for the turn and the crew manning it makes its full attack roll and damage roll.

INTENSIFY FORWARD FIREPOWER!

When pouring more Arcane Charges into the weapons, the captain can choose to either increase the weapon's damage dice by 1 per each three Charges or its range by 15 feet per Arcane Charge.

OTHER SYSTEMS

As they can be so different from one another, giving precise rules for this category of systems is almost impossible because what can work for a set of remotely-controlled clamps perhaps cannot for a planar teleportation circle or an on board magically-fuelled furnace with which the dwarven smith forges incredibly rare items.

However, as a guiding line of sorts, GM's should always keep on mind how much the individual system depends on magic to work and then its priority level in the whole of the ship's systems, because these two factors combined have a very important impact on the designing process that either gave the system multiple operation modes or not.

First example: the aforementioned remotely-operated clamps, in a cargo vessel, are very important if it cannot land to load or unload cargo, therefore the ship's designers probably made sure to give its operator the ampest range of control options they could.

If they had not, then the vessel's profits would suffer in some way or another and its owner would be less satisfied of its purchase.

Second example: on the other hand, if the same clamp was to be placed on a warship, its importance would be determined in function on how much it makes loading and unloading military materiel more efficient than without, not to mention that it would probably be required to specialize in moving a certain type of cargo.

Be it smaller fighter ships, ammunition crates or food barrels, since a warship is a very complex and internally-varied environment, probably this clamp would end up moving only that particular kind of things, being actually useful only in a very specific situation.

In that case, then, the vessel's designer, who might have devoted less time to that aspect, might have just put the barest minimum complexity in its control engrams, resulting in perhaps only one, more specialized, operation mode.

EXAMPLE

THE FLAMING FALCON

Produced by the Nimbus Consortium in limited examples under commission by the late human King Argus the Fourth, the Flaming Falcon is a small-hulled craft intended as a seek-and-destroy escort for the Royal Barge to be deployed from its large ventral bays with the task of hunting and annihilating everything that violates the royal vessel's air space.

For this purpose, the Nimbus aether-mages and arcana-engineers designed in barely 2 years a craft which shape resembles the one of a falcon with spreaded, swooping wings, a laquered, wooden keel reinforced by an outer elven steel hull painted with the royal colors to lighten the whole ship and at the same time make it better withstand the average perils that their role usually levels at them.

The pilot, titled Falcon Rider and a member of the King's Griffeguard, sits in the falcon's head, protected by an iron-crystal canopy, along with the engrams and crystals that control the various on board systems, while the Falcon's Breath, the vessel's forge-core, si located in the craeture's body and the few cargo the rider can bring with himself is stored in sealed wing compartments.

Its most valid protection, however, is enough speed and maneuverability to avoid harm during dogfights, outrun counter-craft fire from enemy larger vessels and be able to rapidly respond to the ever-shifting situations of a battlefield.

However, Nimbus not only created a weapon of war, but also a weapon of fear and awe, as per royal mandate, since the Flaming Falcon was intended to represent the might and eve-reaching grasp of the royal family.

To achieve such a goal, Nimbus arcana-engineers inscribed the craft's motive spells, the Flametrails, directly in the vessel's flanks, tail and on the back edge of the wings so that it seems to glide on a curtain of fire which burns brighter the faster it is going.

At the same time, they made so that the vessel's weapons group, a twin-linked Firebolter enchanted with the Fire Bolt cantrip, is located in the Falcon's beack shooting from its nostrils so that it looks like the craft is actually snarling flames and the distance that its control engrams have to cover from the forge-core is shorter, maximizing efficiency.

When landing, the falcon's claws extend from its undercarriage, usually docking on a small roost with all the necessary components for its refuelling and rearming process aboard the Royal Barge.

Small hull, superiority craft

Dock of Christening: Aldenbrook
Captain: Falcon Rider Camden Firewind

Armor Class: 14 (18 in Combat Speed)
Tonnage: 1.5 tons empty, 2 tons fully loaded
Hull Points: 12(d4+2)
Damage Resistances: bludgeoning and slashing

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Systems

Falcon's Breath: forge-core. 15 hit points, 4 Arcane Charges per turn.

Flametrails: motive spells. 50 ft. Combat Speed, 2 Arcane Charges per turn, as long as the Flaming Falcon moves at Combat Speed it gains +4 AC; 25 feet. Approaching Speed, 0 Arcane Charge per turn.

Avian Sight: scryers; 1 Arcane Charge on idle, 2 Arcane Charges for a focussed scrying. Avian Sight scryers have 500 ft range, advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks relying on sight and can allow the Falcon Rider to see on the heat spectrum.

Actions

Beack-mounted Firebolter: +6 to hit, 1d10 + 2 fire damage, 120 ft. 1 Arcane Charge on idle; 2 when shooting the weapon.

PARTING WORDS

 If this would have looked like rotten goblin poop, a simple Libreoffice file brimming with half-scribbled notes and horrendous tab-markings, had I not stumbled upon the fantastically looking (did I mention flippin' useful?) format made at the [Homebrewery](#) that resembles closely the selfsame format the hallowed Player Hand Book uses!

I have heard he even has a [patreon](#) to keep up the good stuff, so go give him a look and a tip for beer and coffee!

Also, special thanks to Voice Actor, GM and overall awesome person Matthew Mercer, GM for the Critical Role show on Geek and Sundry, as I got watching him and the show the spur to finally put on a decent format what was a series of half discarded notes in some dusty copy book of mine.

ROLLS OF HONOUR

If you want to try it, you surely can! Just send me a message or leave a comment on any impressions you have, it is going to be greatly appreciated, and, of course, you are going to be added to the Playtesters' Rolls of Honour.

LEGAL STUFF

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast. ©2016 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.