

Creating your own Company in IHMN

Introduction

One of the coolest things about these rules is the freedom they give to you, the players, to create your own companies. Unlike many rule-sets you are not bound to use just the teams provided in the rules and supplements. Given the huge number of Victorian and Steampunk miniatures available to you, and the sheer breadth of the historical period and associated fiction, there is no way we could cover every option even if we wanted to.

So in the rulebook we have provided the entire points system as well as a wide range of technology, talents and powers to play with. We actually encourage you to experiment with this and to develop new technology, new talents and new powers.

Note: The key principle must be that whatever you create you agree with your fellow players.

In this article we are going to give you an idea of how we created the ten companies in the rulebook. It is worth pointing out that in the brainstorming stage we put together a list of over a hundred - and we never even got to Mars and Venus.

What follows is an outline, not a set of rules in themselves. It is simply guidance and should be taken as that. There are several steps we advise you to consider as you create your new company.

At each step we will include examples from a brand new Company being created as we write this: The Outrageous Lady Helen Quatermain and her Privateers.

1. Core design principles

Whatever you create it should be fun to play with and, just as importantly, against. Anyone can create an unbeatable killer force but the fun there will be limited to you alone for one game, then your opponents will just walk away.

Keep It Short & Simple (KISS). A twelve page list is almost certainly a bloated monster. Look at the ones in the book; few are more than a single page and most of that is fluff. The Company itself is a table with a list of optional extras.

So wherever possible use the options already available to you in the rules, or make simple adaptations of them.

For example, some of you might like to create a weapon that shoots out super-heated steam. This seems particularly apt for the genre/period. So first look at the effect you want to achieve: you want a weapon that can hit multiple foes, effectively ignores their armour and cooks them alive. Well this weapon is already in the rules, it is called a Flamethrower. So you can simply change the name of the weapon to Steam-thrower, or perhaps Jenkins' Patent Man-broiler or some such, but use the existing rules for the flamethrower.

2. The Theme

Every one of the companies we created began with a theme plucked from the period and literature. In some cases it was a fairly simple lift, in others we extrapolated from the real towards the fantastic. After all there never was an Ape Howdah in history - but it seemed such a fun way to get about.

So have a read, look at what was really available and what was created by the writers of the time and those who have mined it since. Most of the writings of H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs are available for free on the net. There are numerous Wikipedia articles on the fantastic technology proposed by such geniuses as Nikola Tesla and Thomas Edison, as well as on the British Empire of the period and its numerous foes.

Once you have a theme, flesh it out. Give it a little life.

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So, onto our example. I was interested in creating a heavily-armed band of Art and Antiquities thieves. I had already written some short fiction involving this gang (Two Tickets for an Exhibition, and The French Connection) so decided to use the core character from them for this.

3. Leaders and Heroes

Every force needs a leader, so who are you going to choose? It could be a historical or fictional character, or a typical leader of the time. For example the Prince of Wales Extraordinary Company can be led by a generic Captain or by the dashing Captain Napier.

By having a named character or two, and then created some generic equivalents, you give other players the chance to create their own leaders for the Company.

Remember that this is not one of those games populated by supermen who wander about the battlefield like Apache Gunships. Creating a mega-powered leader is all well and good, but he will cost so much that he will probably be outnumbered and killed by the end of turn three. He will also be very dull to play against.

One of things I do when designing a leader for a company is to write three or four short sentences they might speak to their allies or their enemies. It brings them to life and often then guides their design.

Lady Helen Quatermain - Captain of the Morning Star

Niece of Sir Allan, ward of Sir Gerald Carstairs and third cousin to Her Majesty the Queen.

Lady Helen grew up on her father's Irish estate in County Donegal. Her mother died in childbirth and her father was frequently away in his position as the Secretary to the First Sea Lord. So she became a wild child who spent more time out with the gamekeepers than with her tutors. She went through Governesses at a rate of roughly three a year.

She hated her father and worshipped her uncle who visited the estate at least once a year and regaled her with his tales of Africa.

When she was fifteen her father was murdered by Prussian spies and, in the absence of her Uncle (presumed lost in an expedition to find King Solomon's Mines), she was made the ward of the renowned Antiquary Sir Gerald Carstairs, who was an old friend of her mother's. She was appalled, but his first action was to take her with him to Palestine then onto Mesopotamia where he joined an Anglo-French dig into ancient Uruk. For a young girl who had never been outside Ireland this was a truly magical trip that changed her life forever.

By seventeen she was the mistress of the French explorer and treasure hunter Francois Deveraux. She then disappeared for five years travelling with Francois until he was shot dead in a card game in the Yucatan.

When she returned to London she was no longer a misty-eyed romantic, but a woman hardened by years of close scrapes with death. She was also captain of a small steamer which she had renamed 'The Morning Star' and had crewed by as disreputable a gang of cut-throats as you might never wish to meet. They are all utterly devoted to their young leader and she loves them in return.

Now she carries out occasional missions for her guardian and the British Museum, especially those where subtlety is not a prerequisite. She has also fought alongside Lord Curr during the Camden Lock Incursion and continues to hunt for clues to the identity of her father's murderers. She is particularly interested in the Society of Thule and its Grandmaster, Count Friedrich von Ströheim.

OK, I have gone a bit overboard with Lady Helen's background (this is about half of it actually), but I am a writer and a bit of a romantic so sue me ☺.

So what shall we give her? For a start I want her to be Inspirational, how else does she hold her band of thieves and cut-throats together? She isn't fearsome or especially strong, so the Inspirational Talent is a must.

I also give her Leadership +2, a must for the leader of most companies.

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Now let's look at her background. Her Uncle is the legendary adventurer and big game hunter Sir Allan Quatermain, so memorably played by Sean Connery in The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. He would have taught her to shoot straight, so I add both the Hunter and Marksman talents.

For her Attributes we make her very brave, but not heroically so [Pluck 3+], no great hand-to-hand fighter [FV +1], a deadly shot [SV +4] and light on her feet [Speed +1].

Her basic equipment will be a Magneto-static waistcoat which she can wear under her tunic, and I'll arm her with a C96 Mauser Machine Pistol (a carbine) and a Belaying Pin (a club) – very nautical. As an option we allow her to replace her Mauser with a Hunting Rifle.

Up close and personal she is not overly powerful, but with a Hunting Rifle at 36" she is a real pain to deal with.

Type	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Talents & Powers	Basic Equipment
Lady Helen	3+	+1	+4	+1	Leadership +2, Inspirational, Hunter, Marksman	Magneto-static Waistcoat, Carbine, Club

Now every company should have a second in command, another figure with a lesser Leadership Talent, usually +1. They should have a range of capabilities that either complement the primary leader or relate to the troops they must lead.

So if your primary leader bites the bullet your troops are not immediately leaderless.

In the case of Lady Helen's crew this is her First Mate, Bull Rogers. He is a two-fisted, all-American hero, though not clever enough to lead the crew on his own (something he readily admits).

I wanted to have a leader in the crew who could lead the men into the fray, so I chose Bull. He is a real hero so I give him the Fearless and Tough talents alongside his Leadership +1. The only things that Bull fears are his unrequited love (for Lady Helen), the road not taken and clowns.

Like his Captain Bull is brave [Pluck 3+], a ferocious brawler [FV +4], not a shabby shot [SV+2] but not as light on his feet [Speed +0].

I wanted to arm him for close combat so Brigandine Armour, a Pistol and a Cutlass seemed appropriate. The Cutlass is a nautical theme I shall carry on through the crew.

Type	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Talents & Powers	Basic Equipment
First Mate	3+	+4	+2	+0	Leadership +1, Fearless, Tough	Brigandine, Pistol, Cutlass (Sword)

So we have two leaders then, one armed for close combat and one for ranged, a nice balance, though balance isn't always everything.

4. The Poor Bloody Infantry

The rank and file, the men at your back, those brave chaps who fight and die for your leader and his or her missions. It can be hard to balance these so we recommend that you take the standard British Rifleman in The British Rifle Company list as your benchmark:

Type	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Basic Equipment
Riflemen	5+	+2	+2	+0	20	Brigandine, Military Rifle, Bayonet

The Rifleman is well-trained and disciplined and fairly well-armed. Remember that the Rifleman can also buy the Marksman and/or Bayonet Drill Talents.

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Look at the ordinary foot sloggers in your list and consider would they be better than, equal to or less capable than a British Rifleman.

Although fairly simple the four basic attributes of Pluck, Fighting, Shooting and Speed give you a pretty wide range of possibilities. Then, with the addition of armour and weapons, you can have everything from a nervous fishmonger with a sharp knife to a professional soldier from an elite regiment in heavy armour and carrying arc weaponry.

To be effective you will need at least three infantry in the average 250 point Company, though a good balance is two men to each leader or specialist.

Note: 250 points is merely a recommendation; you should play games at a points level to suit yourself and your friends.

Lady Helen's troops are her Privateers. These are a motley band of crewman and cut-throats including a fair number of Chinese and Americans.

In the case of the Privateers the theme was a heavily-armed band of Art and Antiquities thieves. So I'm thinking good armour but mostly short-ranged weaponry. As thieves they are not especially heroic [Pluck 5+] though if they are close to their Inspirational Captain this will improve to 4+. They are fairly good in a fight and a match for a British Rifleman [FV+2] but not great shots [SV+1]. Like their First Mate they are not as light on their feet as their lithe Captain [Speed +0].

They each wear Brigandine Armour as standard and carry Shotguns and Cutlasses. You really don't want these guys to close with you.

Type	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Talents & Powers	Basic Equipment
Privateer	5+	+2	+1	+0	None...	Brigandine, Shotgun, Cutlass

Of course your basic troops don't have to as dull as ditch water and that is where the Options list comes in handy. This is a short list of perhaps four or five extras that you can buy to give your troops a little variety and tactical range.

As mentioned above you can buy a number of extras for your British Rifleman. The Marksman talent makes him an able long range asset, picking off the enemy with his dangerous Lee-Metford Rifle even if they take cover. The Bayonet Drill Talent makes them much more effective in close combat. Note how these two talents support the theme of the historical British Infantryman, the Thin Red Line so feared across the Empire.

Additionally they can take optional equipment. A Breath Preserver for when they expect to face an enemy that uses poison gas and the new-fangled Vickers Machine Gun. This latter option converts two Riflemen into a heavy weapons crew, one firer, one loader.

It is always tempting to open the armoury, scoop it all out and dump it into your troops' backpacks. After all your men might actually need a military rifle, a bayonet, an Arc pistol, six grenades, a patent Kelly Suit with Vulcan Coat, Arc Generator and a Vertical Spring Translocator. However they will never be able to carry it all, even if you could find or convert a figure to suit. Besides the points cost would be excruciating (it's 134 points by the way, not including the figure itself).

The key here, as always, is to keep to your theme. So for the Privateers here is the list of options:

- Any Chinese Privateer can take the Martial Arts Talent.
- Up to two Privateers can have Patent Kelly Suits (very good for robbing banks...).
- Any member of the company can have a Vulcan Coat or a Faraday Coat.
- Any American Privateer can swap his Shotgun for a Carbine and/or take the Marksman Talent.

So we have given the different nationalities some specialities and reinforced the fact that the company can deploy as smash & grab artists.

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5. Specialists

Any good company needs the ability to face a broad range of challenges. This is where the specialists come in. These are the troops who carry the special weapons or equipment, or have extraordinary talents or powers, but are not leaders.

In the British Rifle company this is the Sapper. In his basic form he is equipped with a Congreve Rocket Gun. However, if you take the option presented in the Royal Engineers' sub-list he can also form part of a Flamethrower team or even become the Steersman for an armoured mechanical walker.

Specialists don't have to be weapon technicians though. You can create something that fits your theme but goes in a completely different direction.

In Lady Helen's Privateers that different direction is Cajun Kate. She's a Louisiana-born woman, descended from slaves, who was rescued by Lady Helen in an earlier mission. Kate is a skilled healer and has been blessed with mystical powers by the Loa (Voodoo Spirits). In the years since she joined the crew she has saved the lives of many of the men and often kept Lady Helen one step ahead of her enemies.

Cajun Kate is fairly brave, after all she does speak to the dead on a daily basis, so she can have a Pluck of 4+. She is no fighter, though Bull has spent a lot of time on the long ocean voyages teaching to shoot passably well, so that's an FV of +0 and SV of +1. Like her captain she is fairly lithe so she has a Speed of +1.

She is first and foremost the Ship's Doctor so she has to have the Medic Talent. Then to represent her otherworldly powers we give her 15 points to spend on them. You may have noted from the rules that most of the figures that have Mystical Powers get a points budget rather than specific powers. This gives the player some tactical flexibility and stops these figures becoming one-trick ponies.

Her equipment is very basic, some light armour, a pistol and a knife. After all her main abilities lie elsewhere.

Type	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Talents & Powers	Basic Equipment
Cajun Kate	4+	+0	+1	+1	Medic, and up to 15 points of Mystical Powers	Lined Coat, Pistol, Knife

6. Unique equipment

There is always a temptation to get very creative and begin churning out heaps of fabulous and utterly unique equipment for your companies. Beware, for down that road lies Steampunk and madness. ☺

Seriously though, when you come up with that good idea take a minute and look down the list of equipment that already exists. Is there something in them that actually produces the same effect?

Here's an actual example from the development of IHMN.

I love the iconic C96 Mauser Machine Pistol, also known as the 'Broom-handled' Mauser because of its distinctive hand grip. It was the first real automatic pistol. I had all these clever ideas for making it semi-automatic, and capable of being wielded both as a pistol and as a short-ranged rifle because of its folding stock option. It got complicated.

Then Charles picked up a hefty volume of Jane's Daft Military Weapons (1978) and gave me a sharp crack across the cranium. He reminded me of the KISS principle and told me to just make it a carbine. We made it a carbine because honestly, that is what it is (though I still list it as a C96 in the company lists).

In the case of Lady Helen's Privateers I did come across a possibly unique weapon that didn't replicate anything yet found in the rules but did fit the nautical theme – the Flare Pistol. How many

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films have you seen where the hero, usually in desperation, grabs this piece of signalling equipment and shoots the villain with it?

So I set about trying to design one:

- Firstly it is a pistol and although it can fire a flare several hundred feet in the air it's effective (i.e. accurate) range should be the same, i.e. 9".
- Secondly it fires an incendiary charge that then explodes pretty spectacularly and stays on fire for up to a minute. So it has a much better pluck penalty than a pistol and, counts as a flame attack (5.2.3).
- Thirdly, it is a heavy and unwieldy item that was never made to be shot with any accuracy. After all it only has to hit the sky. Thus we can give it a penalty to Shooting.

So here are the stats:

Flare Pistol Range 9" SV -1 Pluck -2; flame attack.

The new weapon is unique in that it does not do something already covered. It has its advantages and disadvantages and so has a bit of balance to it. It will not win the game on its own but will give you something interesting to play with.

7. Balancing it all out

At the end of the creative process you want to have a company that you will enjoy playing and that others will enjoy pitting their forces against. The infamous 'death-star' list has no real place in IHMN and will not earn you any friends (it may even cost you some).

The best way to check if you have a reasonably balanced force is to write up four 250 point lists.

Make the first leader heavy, the second troop heavy, the third specialist heavy and the last as balanced as you can. Do these lists work? Do they make sense based on your theme?

A balanced force has a primary leader, and perhaps a second in command in case the leader falls. Then there are four to six troops and up to a couple of specialists.

Some lists cannot be balanced like this because they rely on a mass of cheap troops led by a charismatic leader, or perhaps because they are an elite commando-style force. These still have their place.

8. Costing

This is the only brain-taxing bit.

Section 8.1 on page 34 of the rules shows you how to calculate the costs for any given figure, arms and armour.

On page 33 of section 7.0 is a table to assist you in costing your own Mystical Powers.

However, there is no similar table for determining the cost of Talents. These are often very hard to quantify. So where we could not determine a direct numerical effect on the game we split Talents down into minor and major. This is not objective but it does seem to work quite well.

Essentially use common sense and agree anything out of the ordinary with your regular opponents. If you are having trouble with this please feel free to ask for our assistance either on the Lead Adventure/TMP fora or on the IHMN blog.

I'll run just one example of costing a figure; anymore and this article would be a few pages heavier.

In section 8.1 the following formula for costing a figure is shown:

Figure cost = Pluck cost + FV cost + SV cost + Speed bonus (max +2) + Armour cost + Weapon cost(s) + Talent cost(s) + Mystical Power cost(s).

Lady Helen Quatermain has a Pluck of 3+ [9 points], a FV of +1 [1 point], a SV of +4 [9 points] and a Speed of +1 [1 point]. Thus when naked she costs 20 points (and a slap in the face).

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Her Talents include Leadership +2 [6 points], Inspirational [10 points], Hunter [5 points] and Marksman [5 points] for a total of 26 points. She has no Mystical Powers.

To this we add her Magneto-static Waistcoat [2 points], Carbine (5 points) and a Club [2 points] for 9 points for a total kit cost of 9 points.

So altogether she is 45 points.

One of our collaborators is currently creating an online Company generator which will focus on the existing companies.

Charles and I are using a spread sheet system that, once perfected, we will probably release so that you can all use it also. It is very manual at the moment and if any of you is an advanced Excel user and wants to lend a hand please give us a shout.

9. Lady Helen Quatermain's Privateers

So here we bring it altogether as a fully costed list for the first time:

The Privateers are a heavily armed band of art and antiques thieves. They are led by the charismatic Lady Helen Quatermain.

Figure	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Talents/Powers	Equipment
Lady Helen Quatermain	3+	+1	+4	+1	45	Leadership +2, Inspirational, Hunter, Marksman	Magneto-static Waistcoat, C96 Mauser (Carbine), Belaying Pin (Club)
First Mate Bull Rogers	3+	+4	+2	+0	44	Leadership +1, Fearless, Tough	Brigandine, Pistol, Cutlass (Sword)
Privateer	5+	+2	+1	+0	21	Tough	Brigandine, Shotgun, Cutlass (Sword)
Cajun Kate	4+	+0	+1	+1	13 + powers	Medic, Up to 15 points of Mystical Powers	Lined Coat, Pistol, Knife

Options

Lady Helen can swap her C96 Mauser for a Hunting Rifle (+11 points).

Any Chinese Privateer can take the Martial Arts Talent (+3 points each).

Up to two Privateers can have Patent Kelly Suits (+49 points each).

Any member of the company (except Lady Helen) can have a Vulcan Coat (+2 points each) or a Faraday Coat (+5 points each).

Any American Privateer can swap his Shotgun for a Carbine (same points cost) and can also take the Marksman Talent (+5 points each).

Up to two Privateers can have Flare Pistols (+6 points each).

Flare Pistol Range 9" SV -1 Pluck -2; flame attack.