

The Order of the Lion

“I feel the horror drenching every timber of this vessel. The crew were not merely killed, they were consumed. The devil has returned!”

Commander Dame Bess Balfour
aboard the Demeter in Whitby harbour

In the mid-1500s, Queen Elizabeth experienced an uncomfortably close brush with the powers of darkness. Exactly what this entailed was expunged from the records of the day but it resulted in her creating a small, specialist order of knighthood – the Order of the Lion – to counter the dark threat to her throne and her people. There are rumours that the Order was in fact based on a much older group, possibly dating back to pre-Roman times, but if there is any evidence of this then it is almost certainly locked away in the Order’s Archive.

Over the centuries, the Order has evolved to face new challenges while also maintaining some of its most ancient roots. It has fallen in and out of favour with various rulers – it was suppressed by the Stuarts and restored by the Hanoverians – but has always continued to work in the best interests of England, the Monarch and, the Empire. Though not necessarily in that order, depending on the Monarch at the time.

Under Queen-Empress Victoria the Order of the Lion is at the height of its power and influence; she understands, better than many previous English Monarchs, the threat posed by the dark powers. The Order reports to her and acts with her direct authority, which has occasionally caused friction with the government of the day.

The Order is led by the Three Lions, the most senior being Master Lion. The current incumbent of this post is Sir George Hammerton, a very fit and able man despite being in his sixth decade, who has led the Order for nearly twenty years. His role is secret, in much the same way that the identity of a masonic lodge master is secret – i.e. every establishment figure of note knows about it. Sir George was schooled alongside many senior government figures and has huge influence which he exercises with great skill on behalf of the Order.

Under Master Lion are two equal ranking deputies: Commander Sir Richard Vokes and Commander Dame Elizabeth Balfour.

Sir Richard is a tall, muscular, chisel-jawed man in his thirties with jet black hair and blue eyes. Women have been known to swoon over him – which is a pity because he has no interest in them. He is instead totally devoted to his work for the Order, being the nearest modern equivalent to a paladin. Although a capable shot, his true skill lies in fighting with sword and shield. He is also a master of military tactics, though he usually prefers to lead from the front once a satisfactory plan has been formed. His particular responsibilities include overseeing the martial training of developing Order members.

Dame Elizabeth, more usually known as Bess, is tall and lean with flaming red hair and piercing green eyes that seem to dance with fire. In her early forties, she is the widow of a wealthy nobleman who fell under the influence of a vampire. She earned the title of Dame for herself by killing both the vampire and, her fallen husband. She was able to achieve this because of her Celtic heritage; she is the Order’s foremost wielder of Mystical Powers. She is responsible for identifying Order members with the potential to develop Mystical Powers and then ensuring that they are appropriately trained. She is also the keeper of the Order’s Archive. Access to this valuable resource is strictly controlled and few outside the Order are even aware of its existence – though Professor

Abraham van Helsing is a regular visitor (and contributor) and the Consulting Detective has gained occasional access in exchange for favours for the Order.

The core of the Order is its cadre of Knights. Female Knights, who make up about a fifth of the Order, carry the title of Dame but have the same rank, privileges, equipment options and training opportunities as the men. To become a Knight or Dame, you must first demonstrate unswerving loyalty to the ideals of the Order. You must also personally defeat some significant dark threat. These criteria can be met while serving the Order as a Squire – but it is also possible to be brought directly into the Order as a Knight at the personal discretion of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress. All Knights and Dames are trained to a very high standard with both traditional and modern weapons. A few Knights and Dames hold the rank of Captain and will occasionally lead small Order companies, though it is more usual for them to deputise for one of the Three Lions. It is extremely rare for more than one of the Lions to appear on the same battlefield.

Supporting the Knights and Dames are the Squires; again, about a fifth of these are female. Each Knight and Dame has their own personal Squire, who will always deploy into battle with them, and there is also a pool of unassigned Squires who carry out general logistical and administrative work for the Order. This means that an Order company will always contain at least as many Squires as it does Knights, potentially more.

The Order has access to a very wide range of modern technology and also to some ancient artefacts which other companies would very much like to acquire.

The Order's headquarters lies somewhere under the city of London, though they have Knights and Squires in key locations throughout the British Isles. A small squadron of fast dirigibles enables full companies to concentrate wherever they are needed. The Order operates mostly within the Home Countries but will occasionally deploy to other Imperial territories to counter a dark power before it has chance to threaten the seat of the Empire.

Figure	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Talents/Powers	Equipment
Sir George Hammerton (Master)	2+	+3	+3	+0	78	Leadership +3, Fearless, Lightning Draw (fighting)	SRC breastplate, pistol, sword (blessed)
Sir Richard Vokes (Commander)	2+	+4	+3	+0	99	Leadership +2, Duellist (sword), Iron Will, Slayer	SRC breastplate, Faraday shield, pistol, sword (terrible)
Dame Bess Balfour (Commander)	2+	+3	+3	+1	66+	Leadership +2, Fireproof Up to 25 points of Mystical Powers	SRC breastplate, two-handed sword (silver, flaming)
Captain	3+	+3	+2	+0	34	Leadership +1	Breastplate, pistol, sword
Knight / Dame	4+	+3	+2	+0	26		Breastplate, pistol, sword
Squire	5+	+2	+1	+0	16		Chain shirt, pistol, quarterstaff

Options

- Any of the Three Lions, and any Captain, may carry a single relic, reliquary or ward (points cost depends on Ward type). They may also have their armour sanctified (+3 points).
- Any Captain, Knight or Dame may also have one or more of the following Talents: Engineer (+5 points), Fanatic (+5 points), Grenadier (+3 points), Iron Will (+5 points), Marksman (+5 points), Medic (+5 points), Skirmisher (+3 points), Strongman (+5 points), Tough (+5 points).
- Any Captain, Knight or Dame may exchange their pistol for an Arc pistol (+3 points). They may also add one of the following weapons: shotgun (+5 points), carbine (+5 points), military rifle (+9 points), Arc rifle (+8 points).
- Any Captain, Knight or Dame may have their sword silvered (+5 points). They may also add a shield (+7 points) or a Faraday shield (+11 points) to their armour or exchange their sword for a two-handed sword (+2 points).
- Any Captain, Knight or Dame may have up to 15 points of Mystical Powers.
- Any Squire may have up to two of the following Talents: Engineer (+5 points), Fanatic (+5 points), Grenadier (+3 points), Medic (+5 points), Skirmisher (+3 points), Strongman (+5 points).
- A Squire may upgrade their pistol to one of the following weapons: shotgun (+2 points), carbine (+2 points), military rifle (+6 points).
- Any Squire may upgrade their quarterstaff to one of the following weapons: axe (no change in points), halberd (+2 points), spear (+1 point), sword (no change in points).
- Any Squire may have up to 5 points of Mystical Powers.
- Any member of the Order may take a Breath Preserver (+2 points), a carbide lamp (+3 points), a single vial of Holy Water (+2 points) and/or a single Darkbane grenade (+5 points).
- Any member of the Order with the Engineer Talent may exercise one of the following options:
 - Take any number of any type of grenade (points cost depends on grenade type).
 - Take a Congreve rocket launcher (+7 points) plus any number of rocket grenades (points cost depends on grenade type).
 - Carry an Arc generator (+20 points).
- Any member of the Order with the Strongman Talent who has not taken any weapons beyond the basic equipment in the table may have one of the following:
 - A flamethrower (+11 points),
 - A van Koppler Projector (+7 points).
 - A machine gun (+26 points).
- Any member of the Order may have silver ammunition for their Shooting weapons (+5 points per weapon).
- Any member of the Order may be mounted on a cavalry horse (+9 points). This horse may have barding but this can be of no better type as the rider's armour (points cost varies).
- Any Order company may include allies from the following company lists: Scotland Yard, the Prince of Wales's Extraordinary Company, Professor Abraham van Helsing.