

The Secret Service Bureau - Grey Section

Introduction

Publically the British Government denies the use of secret intelligence, calling spying "the acts of desperate and dishonourable men". However, behind the oaken doors of the Foreign Office wiser heads prevail. In the face of the creation and expansion of foreign intelligence services and secret police forces, the heads of the War, Foreign and Home offices met in 1881 and formed the Secret Service Bureau.

Only a chosen few in the government and the senior civil service know of the existence of the Bureau and in conversation they refer to it as 'The Whitehall Hunt'. Each Prime Minister is briefed on it, but is not informed of its actual activities so he never has to lie to Parliament or the Queen.

From its underground base in Battersea the Bureau monitors correspondence and signals between foreign embassies and their governments. The British advantage is their advanced Babbage Decryption Devices or 'Betties' as they call them. Home agents seduce or blackmail foreign diplomats and businessmen into giving them vital information. Agents placed in major hotels, railway termini and ports provide feedback on the movements of suspected foreign nationals.

This work is supplemented by the even more secretive Active Intelligence Division known internally as The Whitehall Hounds. This is responsible for counter-espionage and has the best technology and people Britain can offer at its disposal.

Never a large organisation, the Whitehall Hounds supplement their numbers with 'contractors' when they need to deploy in numbers. These include many known and violent criminals who work for the Hounds either out of a surprising patriotism or in return for lighter sentences and even pardons.

One thing that does set the Hounds apart from other arms of government is the number of women in active or even command positions. Ahead of its time, the Hounds recruit people based solely on their capabilities.

The leader of the Active Intelligence Division is called the Master of the Hounds, or 'M' for short. Beneath him are seven section heads. Five cover the various Great Powers (France, Austro-Hungary/Germany, Russia, America and China/Japan), one is the Quartermaster (also called the Kennel Man or 'K' for short'), and the last is the Grey Section.

Named after Admiral Lord Grey, its first active commander, the latter is the small cadre of men and women who commission and often carry out those acts which are considered necessary yet distasteful. Members of the Grey Section are never seen in Battersea, their identities are not recorded, and all evidence of their existence is kept in the heads of the six veteran 'Watch Commanders', one for each of the Great Powers and one for Britain and its Empire.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Grey Section is currently led by a woman. The daughter of an Edinburgh Tea Merchant, Emily Austen graduated with a First from Cambridge in Politics and Philosophy and went on to earn her Doctorate only two years later. She ostensibly tutors bright children from her home in Grosvenor Square. Below stairs her entire serving staff are actually the Grey Section support unit.

Seven Quartermaster Sergeants, all scientists and engineers, currently serve Miss Austen. They work out of a Railway Arch workshop near Waterloo Station. They are highly innovative and not one of them is yet thirty. The Workshop goes under the name of 'Imperial Tea Imports'.

Admiral Lord Grey called the Grey Hounds "*stone-hearted killers*". He also called them "*the most important men in the Empire for they dare to do what most only dream of*". Many of them are ex-military and bear the scars of their brushes with death. At least three of them have spent time in asylums diagnosed as 'dangerous to society'. Miss Austen has that rare gift of being able to reach into their hearts and remind them that their country needs them. Grey Hounds' real names are never used, instead they are referred to by colours and a suitable title. Miss Austen is referred to as 'Lady Grey' or occasionally 'Aunty'.

The oldest Grey Hound currently in service by at least ten years is 'Colonel Plum'. There are rumours in the service that he is in fact Colonel Creighton, a veteran of the great game on the North-west Frontier in India. His file is marked 'Missing-in-action' while defending the Such-zen monastery in the western Himalayas. He is also said to be the only man that both Lord Curr and Count von Ströheim fear.

The Grey Section often employs individuals who they refer to as Hard Contractors. These are an assortment of ex-soldiers, criminals and other men for whom ending a life is not a problem. They all have their reasons for aiding the service but the one reason you would expect, money, is never offered. As Miss Austen is fond of saying that "*If a man can be bought by you, he can also be bought by others*".

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A recent innovation by Miss Austen, and one yet not completely approved of by the Master of Hounds, is the recruitment of Soft Contractors - men and women with 'unusual gifts'. Her reason for this is that as her enemies use them so must she.

No Contractor ever visits Grosvenor Square, the Arches or any of the service's safe houses. They are usually recruited and gather in public houses, gentleman's clubs or other public and inconspicuous locations by the Grey Hounds.

Figure	Pluck	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Talents/Powers	Basic Equipment
Lady Grey	2+	+2	+4	+1	81	Leadership +2, Meticulous Planning, Intuitive, Duellist (Pistol), Martial Arts	Magneto-static Bodice, Magneto-static Umbrella, Pistol, Monocular Targeting Array
Watch Commander	3+	+4	+4	+1	73	Leadership +2, Marksman, Martial Arts, Stealthy, Mesmerism*	Magneto-static Waistcoat, Arc Pistol
Quartermaster Sergeant	4+	+1	+2	+0	27	Leadership +1, Engineer	Magneto-static Waistcoat, Arc Pistol,
Colonel Plum	2+	+4	+4	+0	82	Duellist (Pistol), Stealthy, Marksman (pistol), Gunslinger	SRC Breastplate, two pistols, Edison Arc Truncheon
Grey Hound	4+	+3	+3	+1	50	Duellist (Choose a weapon), Stealthy, Martial Arts, Tough	Chain Shirt, Arc Pistol
Contractor, Hard	5+	+2	+2	+0	18	Tough	Lined Coat, Pistol, Knife
Contractor, Soft	5+	+0	+1	+1	8	Up to 15 points of mystical powers	Lined Coat, Pistol

* This is not actually 'mesmerism', but the effect in the game is pretty much the same. The Bureau often has a hold on the most surprising people. During a battle the Watch Commander can use this to force enemy figures (that do not have a Leadership value) to carry out acts that might seem like betrayal to their comrades.

Options

- A Quartermaster Sergeant may take one item from the Weird Science list and any one item from the Personal Transportation list (though they tend to avoid armoured vehicles as these are a bit overt).
- Grey Hounds can buy any type of grenade (+6 points each) and/or a Congreve Rocket Gun (+7 points) and rocket grenades (+7 points each).
- A Grey Hound can choose not to have an Arc Pistol but take either a Pistol (-4 points) or Carbine (-2 points) instead. If they do, they may also take the Marksman Talent with the new weapon (+5 points).
- A single Grey Hound can take the Hunter Talent (+5 points) and buy a Hunting Rifle (+16 points). He may also take the Marksman Talent with this weapon (+5 points).
- Hard Contractors can be also be armed with Shotguns (+5 points), Carbines (+5 points) or Military Rifles (+9 points).
- Any non-Contractor can take an Edison Arc Truncheon (+6 points).
- Any member of the Bureau can take a Faraday Coat (variable points cost) or a Vulcan Coat (variable points cost).
- Any member of the Bureau can take a Breath Preserver (+2 points).