

ANCASTER



A Setting for Detectives & Duty

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ANCASTER is a fictional city in a non-specific kingdom, large and prosperous, designed as a setting for the Detectives & Duty system. It is Anglo-Breton in theme, modern in culture and sensibilities, and medieval in its design and level of technology.

This document contains a map and brief description of the city of Ancaster, and hints at the world around it. Also included are the guidelines I give my players for character creation in this setting. Finally, it contains a few sample cases, set in this same city.



I would like to share a few of my thoughts on settings in this system, in order to explain some choices I made here, and provide suggestions for anyone who wants to write their own setting.

When writing settings, there is sometimes an impulse to be utopian. While not every mystery has to feature a murder, murder provides the bread and butter of the genre. Murder is the result of a messed-up system – healthy societies do not tend to have very many murders. So I made Ancaster a messed-up place. Hatred based on species, race, and ethnicity is as bad here as it has been anywhere. Homosexuality and other forms of “deviancy” are still considered dark, unnatural, and detestable, even criminal. Class disparity is deep, and class mobility is very limited. Having children outside of wedlock can still lead to a scandal, disrepute, or even an honor killing. It’s hard for many to make a living, so crime and smuggling are a way of life in the poorer parts of the city. What this means is that there are many reasons for people to murder one another.

The one exception I made, compared to our own history, is the equality of the sexes. For the most part, men and women in Ancaster have similar opportunities in life, at least within the same social class. I wanted my players to have the opportunity to play as detectives of any gender, and wanted to be able to write female characters in many roles across society.

Why do people kill? It’s an important question when creating a setting for murder mysteries. In Ancaster, people kill to cover their smuggling, or their extramarital affairs. People kill to protect their interests in illegal goods – alchemical tools, necromantic tomes, or human slaves. Merchants kill their business partners and their business rivals. Nobles kill their parents and cousins for inheritance, and their underlings for acting above their station. People kill because they hate those of other races, or for honor, or for a quick buck. People kill to hide the shame that comes when outed as gay in their society. There are plenty of murders to solve.

Magic offers some interesting challenges and opportunities; I elected to include it, and I think that the complexity it adds is worthwhile. Ancaster is a low-magic setting, however, with relatively few spellcasters. I wanted my players to be able to use their common sense, and not worry at every turn that a criminal might be a shapeshifter or have access to *fly*. Still, a high-magic setting would be an interesting challenge, and I would certainly be excited to see it attempted.



Ancaster City Map

THE CITY

ANCASTER is the largest city in the kingdom. It is an enormous metropolis of over 280,000 souls across its total of 14 districts. This is about the size of modern-day Orlando, but is smaller than Sherlock Holmes' London, which was between 4 and 5 million persons. It is more similar to London in the year 1600, which had around 200,000 people.

About two thirds of those live in the city proper, which is composed of five districts: **Old Ancaster, Blackmoor Gate, Langhaven Market, Harport, and Porthcawl**. The remainder of the city is composed of the nine outer districts: **Southton Mill, Orctown, Chapel Cross, Upper Heyford, Nether Heyford, Barbrook, Marsley Bridge, Upton Pyne, and Thornhurst Head**.

Despite its size, Ancaster is not the capital. The king and his court are elsewhere.

Ancaster will be familiar in some ways and unfamiliar in others. It is much like our own history, but there are clear differences. There is no gunpowder, but they have a modern sense of individual rights, with a rather modern police force. There is almost no discrimination on the basis of sex, but issues of class, nationality, sexuality, and race are as bitter here as they ever were in our own world.

Notable People & Organizations

City officials work in **Causennis**, the original castle of the city. It is old, but large enough to accommodate the Mayor's office, the hall of records, the court system, and several more minor government organizations. If you need an archival document, warrant, or other government assistance, you go to Causennis.

Lord Mayor - Lord Robert Bathurst was appointed by the King. He is sixty-eight, but of quite sound mind and body. He has a laissez-

faire approach to the city. As long as the status quo is maintained, he does not care about crime in the poorer parts of the city.

Penfell Court Police

Penfell Court, in Blackmoor Gate, is the home of the Ancaster Police. While each district has its own force of regulars, more extreme crimes – especially murder – are the purview of the Specialist Crime division.

Police Secretary - Sir Richard Temple is the head of the city police. He is a competent leader, drawn from the minor gentry, but he is not known for his reforms or programs. The force runs smoothly under his command, but no more.

Specialist Crime Head - Rosemary Wedge comes from a minor mercantile family and made her way up through the ranks to detective. She made a poor detective, but she turned out to be an excellent administrator and was promoted to the Head of Specialist Crime. She is the players' direct superior.

Coroner - Lawrence Fleming is a doctor and son of doctors. He enjoys a good puzzle, and is therefore an excellent coroner.

Police Chaplain - Father Dean Wilsford is an 8th level cleric and Head Police Chaplain. His domain is Life. At his level, he has access to *Divination* and *Locate Creature*, as well as many useful lower-level spells. Unfortunately, he is not high enough level for any resurrection spells – though even if he were, the 500gp diamond requirement would usually prevent him from using it.

Lab Wizard - Dr. Peregrine Thrift is a 9th level wizard and head of the police lab. She can cast one 5th level wizard spell per day, which allows the police access to *Geas*, *Passwall*, *Rary's Telepathic Bond*, and *Scrying*. She is one of the most powerful wizards in the

city – though admittedly, there are not many. Her specialty is divination.

Order of the Elorn

The Order of the Elorn is an ancient order of Knights. They report directly to the King but are effectively their own branch of government, as their power does not officially come from the crown, but rather from the Gods. The Order is technically non-denominational, though they are all devout in one way or another. In general, they are paladins.

Much like modern America's FBI, their duties differ from the police in that their scope is larger. They deal with threats to the kingdom and laws of a similarly high domain, such as treason, and with crimes they deem to be especially unholy or impure. They usually stay out of civil affairs, but what constitutes "impure" behavior is open to some interpretation.

They also differ in their priorities. Unlike the police they do not answer to the mayor or people of the city, and as a result have fewer limitations on their use of power – most notably, they do not consider questions surrounding the use of force, and often seriously injure or kill suspects they pursue. They do not have to hand over captured suspects to the civil authorities, though they usually do. Even in this case, their methods often make a trial and conviction difficult or impossible. It has been said that the Elorn is Good and Penfell is Lawful, and that has some truth to it.

In Ancaster, their headquarters is Kastell-Paol in the Old Ancaster District.

Head of the Ancaster Chapter - Clara van Keppel is a somewhat mysterious figure. She is a high-level paladin of unknown origins, though her accent suggests she is from the eastern reaches of the kingdom, possibly even of foreign descent.

Notable Clergy

Bishop of St. Kemper's - Bishop Michael Hall, high priest.

Head of Greenwood Chapel - Revered Sister Maria Dale, cleric.

Magic

Ancaster and the world around it are decidedly low-magic, but everyone is aware of its existence.

The most common primary spellcasters in Ancaster are Wizards, as they can be trained at the university, and it can be a lucrative career if you have both the intelligence and the money for tuition. While Ancaster has plenty of clergy, only a few have levels in Cleric. Sorcerers are a rarity; most people have never met one, and they are poorly understood. Druids and Rangers are all but unheard of. Paladins in Ancaster belong exclusively to the Elorn or to other knightly orders. Other classes might gain magical archetypes (e.g. Arcane Trickster) by a few years of study at the university.

Warlocks are seen as monsters, hunted by all. They are by definition guilty of high treason, since they have sworn themselves to a power other than the king. As a result, they are doggedly pursued by the Elorn.

Equally feared and hated are those who practice Necromancy. The creation of undead is extremely illegal, as is the possession and trade of necromantic goods. The school of magic itself is permitted, though always distrusted. Every civilized nation in the world holds these same views on Necromancy.

Alchemy is permitted, though it too is regarded with suspicion. Many alchemical goods are illegal or regulated, such as Alchemist's Fire. Unlike Necromancy, some kingdoms allow free practice of all sorts of Alchemy.

Districts

In game terms, moving between locations takes an hour, plus one additional hour every time you move between districts. Horses or carriages cut this time in half (minimum 1 hour). Hiring a carriage is 1 GP per trip, but detectives can share a carriage.

When not otherwise mentioned, inhabitants are human – Ancaster is a part of a largely human kingdom.

City Proper

Old Ancaster - OA

The remnants of the original city of Ancaster, nestled around the river Chelt. Old Ancaster as a district is defined by the old medieval wall. Most of the buildings are well over 200 years old, and the oldest are easily 600.

Old Ancaster is a largely administrative district, along with some fine artisans and ancient residences.

Places of Interest:

Causennis – The original castle of Ancaster, now the seat of government.

Kastell-Paol – A larger and more recent fortification, once used for defense but now the home of the Order of the Elorn in Ancaster.

Rhedon Bridge – The northern bridge over the Chelt, it is only 150 years or so old, having replaced an older bridge. It is more artful but less historic.

St. Malo Bridge – The southern, and original, bridge over the Chelt, it is as old as any other structure in the city.

Blackmoor Gate - BG

At the northern gate of the old wall, Blackmoor Gate is a poorer, but largely safe neighborhood. The buildings are old and generally of stone. Langhaven Market is an older district and more populous, but its structures are smaller and less permanent.

Places of Interest:

Penfell Court – Police headquarters for the entire city and surrounding areas, composed of three large stone buildings.

St. Martin's Hospital – A 300-year-old hospital, one of the oldest structures in the city.

Harlowe Bridge – A small bridge over the Chelt connecting Blackmoor and Harport.

Langhaven Market - LM

The most populous of the districts, Langhaven is full of middle-class residences, the shops of artisans and tradesmen, and market stalls. It was the original village outside of Ancaster.

Places of Interest:

Langhaven Market – The market responsible for the district's name, it is the largest commercial center in the city, located at the six-way intersection in the north of the district.

St. Kemper's Cathedral – The tallest structure in the city, not far from the market itself.

Samnian Hills – An area in the south of the district, largely occupied by wealthy Umbrian merchants (foreigners).

Harport - H

Harport is the poorest part of the city proper. It is one of the worst and most dangerous parts of the city.

The biggest player in Harport is the Folville Gang, run by Eustace Folville and his brothers, Robert and Walter. They are descended from a Gentry family some generations ago, and are now the most powerful criminal organization in Ancaster.

Places of Interest:

Harport Wharf – A small set of docks, and more prone to illegal activity than those of Porthcawl.

Chelt Marshes – Several marshy areas in the north of the district, off of the Chelt.

Porthcawl - P

Porthcawl is almost entirely dedicated to shipping and warehouses, with the associated offices and bureaucratic officials.

The few residential areas tend to be for foreign traders and citizens of foreign descent, especially those of other races.

The docks are always crowded with Ancasterian ships, as well as vessels from Meath and far-away Umbria, both trading kingdoms from across the sea.

Places of Interest:

Little Sambar – The local gnomish community. Located in the western part of the district.

Midean Docks – An area of the docks occupied by traders from Meath, a nearby kingdom.

Outer Districts

Southton Mill - SM

The city is not especially industrial, but the manufacturing of the city occurs here. The residences in this district are few, and filled by the poor, but they tend to be nicer and safer than Harport. Families with factory jobs, which allow them a slightly higher standard of living, usually occupy these residences.

Places of Interest:

Southton Dump – The main dump/scrapyard /landfill for the city.

Orcetown - O

A truly dilapidated section of the city, Orcetown is the home to most of the city's orcish and half-orcish residents, as well as the truly poor of other species. The dangers of Orcetown are not so much from crime as from a lack of infrastructure. It might better be described as a tent village or shantytown than a slum.

Chapel Cross - CC

Once a small farming town outside of the city, Chapel Cross is the slums of the city. Only the poorest live in this district, but the residents are still mostly human. Even Chapel Cross is considered too high-class for anyone with Orc blood.

Places of Interest:

Greenwood Chapel – A chapel in the town hall off the main intersection of the district, this chapel gave the district its name.

Upper Heyford - UH

Somewhat removed from the city itself, Heyford Town is the home of the oldest of Ancaster's gentle and noble families, who

shun the more mercantile tendencies of the rest of the upper class.

Nether Heyford - NH

Half suburb and half farmland, Nether Heyford is a residential district for craftsmen, upper-class servants, doctors, lawyers, and less successful merchants.

Places of Interest:

Ashe University – Just on the border with Blackmoor, this institution of higher learning trains lawyers, priests, alchemists, and wizards. Doctors are mostly trained at the hospital.

Barbrook - B

Largely farmlands, Barbrook is considered a district only because its lands make up the estates and plantations of the rich, as opposed to the smaller, independent farms from the rest of the surrounding countryside.

Marsley Bridge - MB

This is the district for the upper middle class. Marsley Bridge is almost entirely populated by rich merchants and their associated amenities. Doctors, Lawyers, and the like prefer to live in more refined areas of the city.

Places of Interest:

Marsley Bridge – The main bridge crossing the Aber Garo, it connects the city to Thornhurst Head.

Upton Pyne - UP

The richest of the districts, occupied by the gentry, younger noble houses, and mercantile "new money".

Thornhurst Head - TH

Primarily independent farms and farmland, Thornhurst contains a small town, some estates, and parks. Some gentry prefer to live here.

"The Head" juts out into the bay, under the Aber Garo (the river), and once contained many forts to watch the harbor, now long abandoned.



Character Creation

Welcome to the Specialist Crime division of the Ancaster Police Force, Detective. You've reached **4th level** and have just recently advanced to your current rank.

1. RACE

You can be any race you'd like, but consider the following.

You are strongly encouraged to be Human. Most of Ancaster is Human, and they make up the majority of the police force.

Gnomes are present in the city, but they are foreign traders, very unlikely to join the police force.

Orcs and Half-Orcs live in part of the city's slums, but they are explicitly second-class citizens, and unlikely to be allowed to join the police.

There is no set role for Dwarves, Elves, Dragonborn, Tieflings, or Halflings in the city. Your DM can work these races into the mix if they agree to, but there's no "canonical" reason for them to be there.

2. CLASS

You can be any class you wish, with two exceptions. First, you cannot be a Paladin. Paladins are effectively the FBI of this world, and would never be part of a police force – they always belong to holy orders.

You also should not be a Warlock. Recall from the "Magic" section above that Warlocks are, by definition, guilty of high treason (Though you might secretly be a Warlock if your DM agrees).

All other classes are fine, but keep in mind the sort of people and skills recruited by a police force. You need to build a good **team**, so you are encouraged as a group to take a diverse set of skills, talents, and classes.

The police employ an 8th level Cleric and a 9th level Wizard, so you have spell support for

cases if you need it. Yet you may find it better to have easy access to spells, as many are useful on a regular basis at a crime scene.

3. SCORES

Roll 4d6, drop the lowest die.

4. DESCRIPTION

Detectives have been with the police force for several years by the time they are promoted, and are likely to be natives of the city. A detective's history and upbringing will



Detective Mike Brazier: BARD COP

strongly influence their knowledge of different parts of the city, and their ability to interact with different sorts of people. Consider your background carefully, as it can be as important as any other skill or attribute.

It is recommended that, for this system, detectives not be evil.

5. EQUIPMENT

This is a game about detection, so your personal finances will normally be of little importance. You each start with 30 GP, for the few cases where money comes up – e.g. bribes and carriage rides.

You are issued armor and/or a shield up to 100gp in value, a billy club (1d6 nonlethal), and a melee or ranged weapon of your choice.

Police training makes you proficient in Light armor if you are not already, and in three weapons of your choice. Note that in 5e you **can** cast spells in armor with which you're proficient.

You also each have a pair of manacles OR a length of rope. It's quite possible to escape from either, so don't trust them too much.

6. OTHER

Perception, Investigation, Insight, and Persuasion will all be very important, and the group should have all of these skills. Combat will be less important, but make sure you can still apprehend criminals.

Observant is a great feat, but this system requires few passive skill checks. The +5 passive bonus is replaced with a +2 general bonus. All players should seriously consider this modified feat.

7. MAGIC & THE POLICE

Many spells have a special relationship with the law, and their use is restricted. The DM should use good judgment about the legal system in this world when considering how to interpret the legitimacy of the use of a spell.

Spells such as *Arcane Eye*, *Teleportation*, and *Astral Projection* are allowed, but laws of unreasonable search still apply.

All harmful spells are bound by restrictions on use of force. Charm-type spells (*Calm Emotions*, *Charm Person*) are authorized only when nonlethal force can be used, but they are preferred to damaging spells. This is the

SPECIAL CASE: **Speak with Dead**

Speak with Dead has many limitations, but it is still incredibly useful.

After some consideration, it was decided that Ancaster follows the old rule that a person on trial has the right to face their accuser. Since *Speak with Dead* is limited in such a way to make cross-examination impossible, any testimony by the dead is considered **hearsay**, and is therefore **inadmissible in court**. Even if a corpse can identify their killer, this is not enough to secure a conviction.

"The Confrontation Clause of the Constitution requires that a defendant be able to face her accuser. Witnesses for the prosecution are considered accusers for these purposes. An absent witness – be they fled or be they dead – cannot be faced. As a result their testimony is hearsay, and thus, inadmissible."

Murderers in Ancaster are still wary of the spell. Since removing the tongue or jaw of a victim easily foils the spell, many crime scenes include this grisly detail.

DMs and players should also remember that corpses can lie and deceive, or choose to omit information. Ancaster's legal system doubts this sort of testimony, and so should they.

magical equivalent of tear gas or rubber bullets. *Sleep* in particular is an amazing nonlethal spell for a quick and easy arrest.

Illegal:

Many of the spells below are permissible with special dispensation, but almost never for the police.

Any spell that expressly kills, e.g. *Disintegrate*, is also "illegal", but is allowed when police can apply deadly force.

- Animate Dead
- Create Undead
- Detect Thoughts
- Finger of Death
- Magic Jar
- Modify Memory

Forbidden by Police Procedure:

- Confusion
- Crown of Madness
- Dream (illegal in some cases)
- Planar Ally

- Planar Binding
- Speak with Plants (unacceptable surveillance)

Requires a Warrant:

Some of these spells can be used for personal reasons, but any evidence they gather is *never* admissible without either a warrant or express permission of the parties involved.

- Commune
- Contact other Plane
- Divination
- Geas
- Knock (for entry)
- Locate Creature
- Locate Object
- Imprisonment
- Raise Dead / Reincarnate / Resurrection / True Resurrection (a warrant and/or familial permission)
- Scrying
- Zone of Truth (Though a suspect can't be forced to incriminate themselves)

