

Laundry Files Handbook 2025 Edition

A Techo-Occult Action Horror LARP series presented by the UK Laser Tag Alliance

Version: 2025-JAN-29 — We encourage feedback about any aspects of this handbook you think can be improved.

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Acknowledgements

This edition of the Laundry Files Handbook is by David Dorward and James Clokey.

It is based on the previous edition by Alex Clark and his notes on changes he had in mind to make.

Our goals in updating it have been to bring it in line with the general changes to the way games have been run by the UKLTA in recent years, to streamline the system a little, and to make every option valuable. Anything wrong with it is our fault.

Introduction

UKLTA, Laser Tag and LARP

We expect that most people reading this document will already be aware of all three of those things, but there is always the possibility that this will be an entry point for someone new to our hobby. If that is you: Welcome!

Live Action Roleplaying (LARP) is a hobby that involves taking on the role of a character and acting as them while following a set of rules. It comes in many forms, but generally they involve walking around and interacting with other players. In many ways it is like a table-top roleplaying game such as Dungeons & Dragons but mostly instead of *saying* that your character will do something, you just do it.

Not everything characters do is practical to do in real life so some actions are replaced with randomisation elements (to determine if a magical attack succeeds in D&D you roll dice, in this game you use playing cards) or something that simulates that activity (we use laser tag to represent gun combat; players carry prop guns which send an infrared signal, just like a television remote control, to a sensor band worn around other players' heads).

The UKLTA is an organisation which runs a wide selection ofLARPs, mostly focused on modern day and science-fiction settings as they work well with the laser tag system we use, in the UK. We welcome new members and invite you to get in touch with us and come along to one of our events. We have a supply of equipment we can loan so you don't need anything more than sturdy outdoor clothing and a willingness to read the game briefing before you come.

You can find our website here: <http://www.firefight.org.uk/>

The Laundry Files

If the world contains things that (as Pratchett puts it somewhere) even the dark is afraid of, then you can bet that there'll be a secret government agency covering them up for our own good.

– *'The Atrocity Archive'* by Charles Stross

The right computations can produce effects which defy what were previously believed to be the laws of physics. The development of the microprocessor has dramatically increased the speed and accuracy at which people can perform computations and, as a side effect, increased the frequency at which people stumble across this fact: Mathematics is magic, literally.

The Laundry is the nickname given to the branch of the UK Civil Service responsible for dealing with magical incidents. It emerged from a branch of the WWII SOE and is still active today. Everybody who knows about it is required to sign, in blood, the Official Secrets Act including section 3. Knowing that the third section exists without signing it is treason which is why you haven't heard of it until now.

This is a world inspired (primarily) by that of Charles Stross' Laundry Files novels but with which we are taking a number of liberties. In particular, the apocalypse is nowhere near as advanced as it currently is in the novel series.

The Setting

Magic, real magic, isn't just the stuff of stories and legends. It is mathematics — admittedly a pretty esoteric branch of mathematics — and it intersects with dimensions populated by creatures that exist somewhere on the spectrum between “strange” and “looking upon them would break the sanity of any human”. Many of them would like to feed on us. Some of them would like to rule and control us (in addition to the feeding). Magic draws their attention. Some magic directly grants them access to our world. Magic is *dangerous*.

In the last years of the twentieth century the world population crossed five thousand million, that's a lot of food. It's also when the computing revolution really took off contributing a great deal to the ability of humans to perform complex mathematics.

Today the world population is over eight thousand million and computers have become more powerful than ever before. The apocalypse is coming, in some form or another. It is only a matter of time.

Inevitable though it might be, humanity can fight back against it. It may only be a delaying action, but it is the best hope we have. In the United Kingdom, this task falls to the Special Occult Counterintelligence and Countermeasures Executive; better known as The Laundry after the location of their first office during WWII.

The Laundry

Originally part of the Special Operations Executive, it has avoided the typical fates of civil service departments and has not been merged, renamed, taken over, or dramatically downsized in the course of the last eight decades. It hasn't avoided such innovations as matrix management.

This might have something to do with the highly diverse skill sets of its personnel who, aside from the usual paper pushers, include physicists, chemists, sorcerers, psychics, cat burglars, network intrusion specialists, combinations of these and more. It also includes the usual array of middle management, HR, support staff, etc, as well as a disproportionate number of mathematicians, computer programmers, and other sorts who have stumbled upon the true nature of reality and were consequently recruited to keep them in a controlled environment, for the safety of themselves and the world in general.

They operate a number of offices in various parts of the UK. The central London office is the department's headquarters. Dunwich village, on the Norfolk coast, is a large facility with various purposes including training and trauma care. There is another training facility in Manchester, and so on. This guide will focus on the Borchester branch, a relatively quiet spot located about 13 miles from the small town.

Borchester Laundry handles almost as much casework as HQ, with a focus on issues affecting parts of the UK that aren't The South. It also houses a large collection of artefacts collected over the years and placed in safekeeping against future need or the risks of simply destroying them.

The offices are showing their age and a new state-of-the-art facility is being built nearby. The vault schematics have the security team practically dancing with anticipation (well, at least those members of the security team who are still, in the technical sense, alive).

Borsetshire Light Infantry

Not all problems can be solved by small groups of agents, sometimes it is necessary to call in firepower. This has traditionally been the role of the SAS 21st Battalion Territorial Army, but after the incident in [REDACTED] involving [REDACTED] which exposed most of 2nd Battalion, Borsetshire Light Infantry to the existence of The Laundry and the forces that it works to oppose, they were added to the roster and provided with additional specialist training.

Core Rules & Mechanics

In addition to the usual UKLTA game mechanics, Laundry Files games use some additional mechanics to represent the supernatural elements of the game.

Occult Defences

All players will be dealt a random playing card at the start of the game and should keep it somewhere easily accessible, such as a shirt pocket. When you encounter a mystical attack (such as a spell being cast at you) a GM will draw a card and call out a property of it (suit, colour, court card, etc). If the card you have matches then you resist the effect otherwise you must react as instructed.

For example: Alice opens a door behind which is a portal to a hell-dimension. The screaming and psychic emanations assault the senses and all the nearby players (Alice, Bob and Chuck) must succeed on a challenge or fall unconscious for five minutes or until receiving medical attention. The GM calls a time freeze and explains the situation. They have determined this to be a medium challenge to face, so draws a card (the 3 of Spades) and calls out the suit. Alice has the Ace of Spades and is fine. Bob has the 10 of Hearts and falls unconscious. Chuck has the 3 of Clubs and also falls unconscious.

Marbles

Players will be issued a number of marbles at the start of the game. These represent their character's *stability*, a catchall term for their ability to handle the situation they are in. They may be lost through a variety of means such as exposure to stressful situations and the use of magic.

When a GM or game rule requires you to discard or spend a marble, please keep track of the fact (e.g. by moving the marble to a different pocket). If you run out of marbles and have not had a game-specific briefing as to what to do, then please consult a GM.

We will not be role playing mental illnesses. While this has been the norm in many games, including internationally renowned tabletop games, this is hard to do respectfully.

Responsibility for Fun

LARP is a social activity where the goal is for everyone to have a fun time. It is important that we look out for each other to make sure that everyone is in a position to enjoy the game. This section includes some guidelines to help ensure that happens.

These should be considered recommendations and not a replacement for the UKLTA's code of conduct.

We can't fix what we don't know about

If someone or something is causing you to have "not fun" (be that a minigame that you just can't beat or a player who just don't stop making a joke at your expense) and you can't resolve it yourself, then please *tell a GM* and make it clear that you would like them to do something about it. If we don't hear about a problem until after a game then we can't do anything to fix it.

Keep an eye out for other players

Does the player next to you look unhappy? Ask them if they are OK! They might be roleplaying or they might need some help.

Are they pale, shivering or looking unwell? Check in with them. Ask if they've been drinking enough water on a hot day or are warm enough on a cold night. Help them to a first aider if needed.

With great power etc.

A lot of UKLTA games include a large degree of mil-sim. Remember that this is a game and that fun should trump simulation.

The Borsetshire Light Infantry has a fairly clear chain of command, and civil servants will usually operate with a clear leader. When you have the power to give orders to another player character you also have greater than normal power to impose "not fun" on them.

Take care not to do that.

If you are given Not Fun orders then you should feel free to remind the person giving them to you of this rule.

A couple of key examples are:

Guard Duty

If an area of the game needs a player presence, don't assign a single player. Always assign at least two so they have someone to talk to. Swap them out for different players periodically.

Also consider asking the GM if there is any point in having players physically present. The GM might tell you that there is no fun to be had for them there and everyone will be better off if they stick with the main player group.

Team A & Team B

Splitting a military force into two groups and having one scout ahead while the other acts as a rear guard is a common tactic. Since the scouting group is more likely to encounter opposition (and thus "the game") they are usually going to have more fun. Don't send Team A to scout every time. Alternate!

Characters

Characters in Laundry Files games are made up of *Identity* and *Abilities*. When designing your character you can determine them in either order or jump back and forth between them allowing each to suggest additions or changes to the other.

Characters are subject to GM approval so that we can try to make the game fun for everyone (e.g. doesn't include offensive characters, or six characters who all have the exact same obscure specialism).

Identity

Your character's identity is made up of their name and life history.

We think that having a character with an identity distinct from your real-life one adds to the role-playing aspects of the game and encourage you to come up with one.

A name, or at least a nickname, is important as other players will need to call you by it. Please remain within the bounds of good taste and PG rated films.

A new character's life history shouldn't be very long, there's no need to give yourself and the GMs several pages of fictional autobiography to memorise! A couple of paragraphs is plenty.

Laundry Files games tend to be driven primarily by external plot. We may work elements of backgrounds into games, but they will rarely be the focus on one.

The events of the games your character takes part in will add to their life history. You may wish to keep a record of this to refer back to.

Archetypes & Abilities

Abilities include learned skills, supernatural abilities, and the effects of physical training. Each has an associated cost which varies depending on which *Archetype* you select.

Archetypes

These are broad categories of character which help narrow your choices of abilities.

Combat

Almost all Combat characters will be members of the BLI. There may be the occasional civilian specialist such as an internal security operative, but they are rare as most Laundry security is handled by Residual Resources. Do not call them Zombies unless you want to be sent on a remedial diversity awareness training course.

Abilities that increase the range of guns and number of ability hit points are cheaper for Combat characters.

Technical

These characters have studied for their abilities. Most characters of this archetype will be scientists, doctors or computer experts.

Abilities that come easily to characters of this archetype include medicine, science, and computational magic.

Occult

Some characters just have a natural talent for magic. They could be from a long line of sorcerers, a chance talent, or on rare occasions (consult a GM about your idea before spending too much time on it) something more esoteric, perhaps not even human.

They are able to carry out rituals, such as summoning or banishments, without the aid of modern occult technology. They are also more likely to have paranormal abilities such as precognition or telepathy.

Abilities

You have 4 points to spend on your character's abilities.

| | Combat | Technical | Occult |
|----------------------------|--------|-----------|--------|
| Weapon Skills | | | |
| Assault Weapon | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Handgun | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Shotgun | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Sniper | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Support & Heavy Weapons | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Tool Skills | | | |
| Demolitions | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Escape Artist | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Pick Lock | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Resilience Skills | | | |
| Armour Training | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Basic Armour Training | - | 1 | 1 |
| Magic Resistance | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Toughness | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Willpower | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Medical Skills | | | |
| First Aid | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Medic (Requires First Aid) | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Surgeon (Requires Medic) | 2 | 1 | 2 |

| Knowledge Skills | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| English | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Second Modern Language | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ancient Language | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Modern Language Group | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Science | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Weird Science | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Occult Lore | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Basic Computing | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Advanced Computing (Requires Basic Computing) | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Magic & Psychic Skills | | | |
| Sorcery | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Computational Demonology | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Psychic Talent | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Ritual Magic | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Warrant Card | * | * | * |

Weapon Skills

Handgun¹: This allows the use of pistol weapons.

Assault Weapon: This skill allows the use of assault rifles, submachine guns and machine pistols.

Sniper: This skill is required to use a sniper rifle.

Support & Heavy Weapons²: Heavy machine guns, mortars, RPG's and shoulder-launched missiles all fall into this category. Field guns and missile batteries do not.

Shotgun: This skill allows the use of shotguns which are defined as short range weapons with a wide spread.

¹ The handgun skill is costed at 0 for all characters. The use of lasertag is the unique selling point of this style of LARP so a design decision has been made to make the decision to take it or not one that is purely about roleplaying and not a tradeoff against another skill.

² Heavy weapons are not routinely used in games and the game is designed on the assumption that will continue to be the case going forward. Consequently the skill to use this type of weapon is costed cheaply as it will typically be used to say something about a character background more than have practical use in a game. That said, if people do take it, then games are likely to be written where they will have an opportunity to use it.

| | Handgun | Assault Weapon | Sniper | Shotgun | Support & Heavy Weapons |
|------------------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|-------------------------|
| Hands | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | Special |
| Max Damage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | |
| Burst Fire | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | |
| Fully Automatic | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | |
| Shots per reload | ∞ | ≤ 30 | 1 | ≤ 2 | |
| Iron Sight | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | |
| Red-dot sight | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | |
| Magnifying sight | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | |

Tool Skills

Demolitions. Enables a character to set a demolition charge, provided they have the materials to hand. The skill also allows the disarming of a simple explosive device.

Pick Lock. A simple lock can be picked in a couple of minutes with a hairpin. More complex locks will require more time and specialised equipment.

Escape Artist. A character who has been tied up or handcuffed can escape with 5 minutes of obvious role-playing.

Resilience Skills

Armour Training: With a SIAB reports a Yellow or Red injury on a body part protected by armour (must be physrepped; full leg/arm armour required, knee/elbow pads are insufficient) treat the damage as one level lower for the purposes of ongoing injury (healing time is unchanged).

Basic Armour Training: As above, but you are limited to chest armour and a helmet.

Toughness: +2 hit point maximum

Willpower: +2 marble maximum

Magic Resistance: Draw 2 cards at the start of the game and pick one each challenge

Medical Skills

First Aid. A first-aider can stabilise a wounded character and slow the rate at which they bleed out. They cannot restore any lost hits.

Medic. (Requires First Aid). A medic can treat combat wounds and restore hit points in the field, but cannot cure persistent effects, such as broken limbs.

Surgeon. (Requires Medic). This adds the ability to remove persistent effects given a suitable work space. Disease and symptoms of poisoning can also be recognised.

Knowledge Skills

Ancient Languages: A lot of information about the occult is written in ancient languages, and many unearthly creatures have these as their native tongues. Many are used during the casting of spells and other forms of magic. Each time you select this skill select two languages from this list: Babylonian, Ancient Egyptian, Olmec and Old Enochian.

Without this skill, sorcerers will know just enough to cast spells, and may find their translations of written spells more error prone than a linguist's. They will not be skilled enough to hold a conversation in such a language.

English: All characters can speak English.

Second Modern Language: Optionally, any character may take a second modern language (e.g. French) for free.

Modern Languages: This skill represents above average training in different modern languages. Each time you select this skill pick one of the following: Central America, Eastern Asia (including China), Eastern Europe (including Russia), Northern Africa, Northern America (including Greenland), Oceania (including Australia), South America, Southern Africa, Southern Asia (including Southeast Asia), Western Asia (including the Middle East), Western Europe³.

Science. This is knowledge of conventional sciences, i.e. chemistry, physics, biology, earth sciences, mathematics. Choose a broad field of study and a couple of specialisations within it.

Weird Science. This is science as we don't know it. It will include xenobiology, xenolinguistics, parapsychology, non-human technology, hyperdimensional mathematics and such like.

Occult Lore: This provides you with a basic level of knowledge about a broad range of esoteric subjects. Example uses include the identification of cryptozoological creatures, determining the weaknesses of supernatural entities, recognising ancient languages, and knowing the characteristics of other realms.

Basic Computing⁴: This provides enough skill with computers to be able to perform office work

Advanced Computing: (Requires Basic Computing) This skill enables a broad range of activities using a computer including:

- Writing software for a variety of platforms
- By-passing computer security protocols
- Breaking encryption
- Implanting computer viruses

³ We know language groups don't work like this in real life. We also acknowledge that we've taken this list from Spycraft Second Edition.

⁴ The basic computing skill is costed at 0 for all characters. It exists primarily to draw a distinction between basic computer skills and the capabilities of the advanced computing skill. For roleplaying reasons, some players may choose not to take basic computing.

Magic & Psychic Skills

There are three skills which provide access to spellcasting (a list of spells is provided later in this guide). Grouped with them is Ritual Magic, which is related but doesn't use the spell list.

Sorcery: This skill enables the preparation and use of computations with esoteric effects (colloquially known as spells) directly in the mind of the caster (with the aid of ritual objects to focus that mind).

These computations attract extra-dimensional entities known as 'feeders' which munch away at the caster's grey matter. The use of this skill requires the expenditure of marbles.

When taking this skill, select 5 spells that you can cast. Additionally, take Detect Thaumic Field for free.


Computational Demonology: This skill enables the preparation and use of computations with esoteric effects (colloquially known as spells) via a computer. Field work typically uses a smartphone.

Feeders will munch down on silicone as happily as human brains so devices have their own "marbles" stat which, when expended, renders the device useless.

Before each game (and during games when you have downtime, in a safe place, with Internet access (check with a GM)) select up to 3 spells to load onto the device. Additionally, take Detect Thaumic Field for free.

Psychic Talent: Most sorcerers undergo extensive training in order to cast spells. Some people have a natural talent which allows them to cast a single spell almost by instinct.

When taking this skill, select 1 spell that you can cast.

 *The core differences between these three skills are that Sorcery is very flexible, Computational Demonology is relatively safe, and Psychic Talents cost fewer skill points and tend to be less obvious when used.*

Ritual Magic: Perform the right actions and say the right words, in the right order, with the right protection and BINGO! magic happens. Anyone can do it. Getting it *wrong* can have dire consequences. The chances of getting it wrong go down when you have a natural (psychic) talent for the arcane or are trained in Sorcery, Computational Demonology and/or Occult Lore. The chances of getting it wrong go down a lot more if you are following a guide (there are a surprisingly large number of ancient tablets and tomes out there) and have a good understanding of the Ancient Language it uses.

None of their specific beliefs matter. What matters is that if a cell or coven or parish or whatever get their hands on a genuine summoning ritual, the things at the other end of the occult courtesy phone aren't fussy about what they're called as long as the message is 'chow time.'

— The Fuller Memorandum, Charles Stross

Warrant Card

Cost: Special: Free for all Laundry personnel. Not available to BLI personnel or personnel on attachment from other organisations.

One of the things you learn fairly fast in the Laundry is that most people in the British civil service and armed forces don't know you exist. You - your organisation, your job, the field you work in - are classified so deeply that the mere knowledge that such a classification level exists is itself a state secret. So, to help me do my job, I carry something that we laughably call a 'warrant card.' It's a form of identification. It comes with certain Powers attached. When you present your warrant card for inspection, in the course of

official business, the recipients tend to believe you are who and what you say you are, for the duration of that business. Not only that: you can bind them to silence. Of course, trying to use your card outside official business tends to attract the attention of the Auditors. And having attracted their attention once or twice, I've never been too keen on finding out what happens next...

— *The Fuller Memorandum, Charles Stross*

The warrant card operates much like the psychic paper that is a staple of modern Doctor Who. Players with one should bring a phys-rep. It is an effective way of handling civilian personnel who have stumbled across Laundry business. It may fail to work on the strong willed, those under psychic-influence, and non-humans.

Spells

The sorcerer is able to carry out summonings and banishments, open and close Gates, and set and neutralise Wards. A hacker manipulates sorcery through his technology, whereas a sorcerer needs a few ritual objects and the power of his will. Costs marbles to use, number depending on level of spell. Whatever way a character achieves one of these supernatural effects, the effect ultimately interacts with dimensions inhabited by unknowable eldritch entities. This can result in things going spectacularly awry if the spell is cast incorrectly (and sometimes even if it is not!)

Necromancy. Traditionally this is the art of foretelling the future by consulting the dead. In practice it allows a necromancer to speak to the soul of someone recently departed. (Requires referee and costs 1 marble per question to use).

Raise Corpse: This technique summons an extra-dimensional entity and allows it to take up residence in a corpse after which it can use said corpse to walk and talk in our world. The consequences for such an entity getting loose can be dire. The practice of necromancy is banned under international occult conventions. Access to corpse raising software requires the authorisation of someone of SEO level or above⁵. Unauthorised corpse raising is a criminal offence subject to a penalty of up to life imprisonment. Costs 2 marbles and periodic additional marbles to maintain control of the entity.

Precognition. This psychic ability gives a hazy glimpse of the future. The visions are nearly always ambiguous and can only be invoked 3 times in a 24 hour period. (Requires referee and costs 1 marble to use)

Telepathy. A psychic ability which allows the telepath to read another's thoughts. The telepath needs to be within easy conversational distance from the target. The ability is quite exhausting to use so can only be done 3 times in a 24 hour period. Contact with non-human minds can have unpredictable results but it is often traumatising. Use on other telepaths has a strong chance of detection. Costs 1 marble to use.

Divination. Objects retain psychic echoes of their history and of those who have possessed them for a long time. The diviner can get a sense of this history by holding the object and concentrating on it. Costs 1 marble to use

Create Ward: This turns a focus (such as a crucifix⁶ or ritual circle) into a barrier impassable by the target entity. Costs 1 marble to activate and then a periodic cost (variable dependent on entity and scale) to keep it running.

⁵ <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/grade-structures-civil-service>

⁶ The classic defence against vampires; but it only works if you channel real power. When using computational demonology to create this kind of ward, it is traditional to render an image of the cross on the smartphone's screen.

Deconstruct Ward: Carefully remove a ward (e.g. to unblock a path or release whatever is contained within). This is akin to picking a lock. Costs 1 marble, some time (depending on the complexity), and may require a challenge.

Break Ward: Quickly remove a ward. This is akin to applying demolition charges to a locked door. Costs 1 marble, may require a challenge, and risks harming anyone nearby.

Detect Thaumic Field: Determine if there is any kind of magical activity nearby. Costs no marbles, but does require active use.

Guidance⁷: Provides a vision of a course of action that leads towards a desired goal. The lead may not be the safest or most direct, but it will advance the plot. Costs 1 marble. This spell allows you to ask the GM for a hint as to what you should do next.

⁷ This spell is designed so that if the game has slowed down and you don't know what to do next, you can get some advice from the GM in order to inject some interest back into the day.