

ADVENTURE PROBE

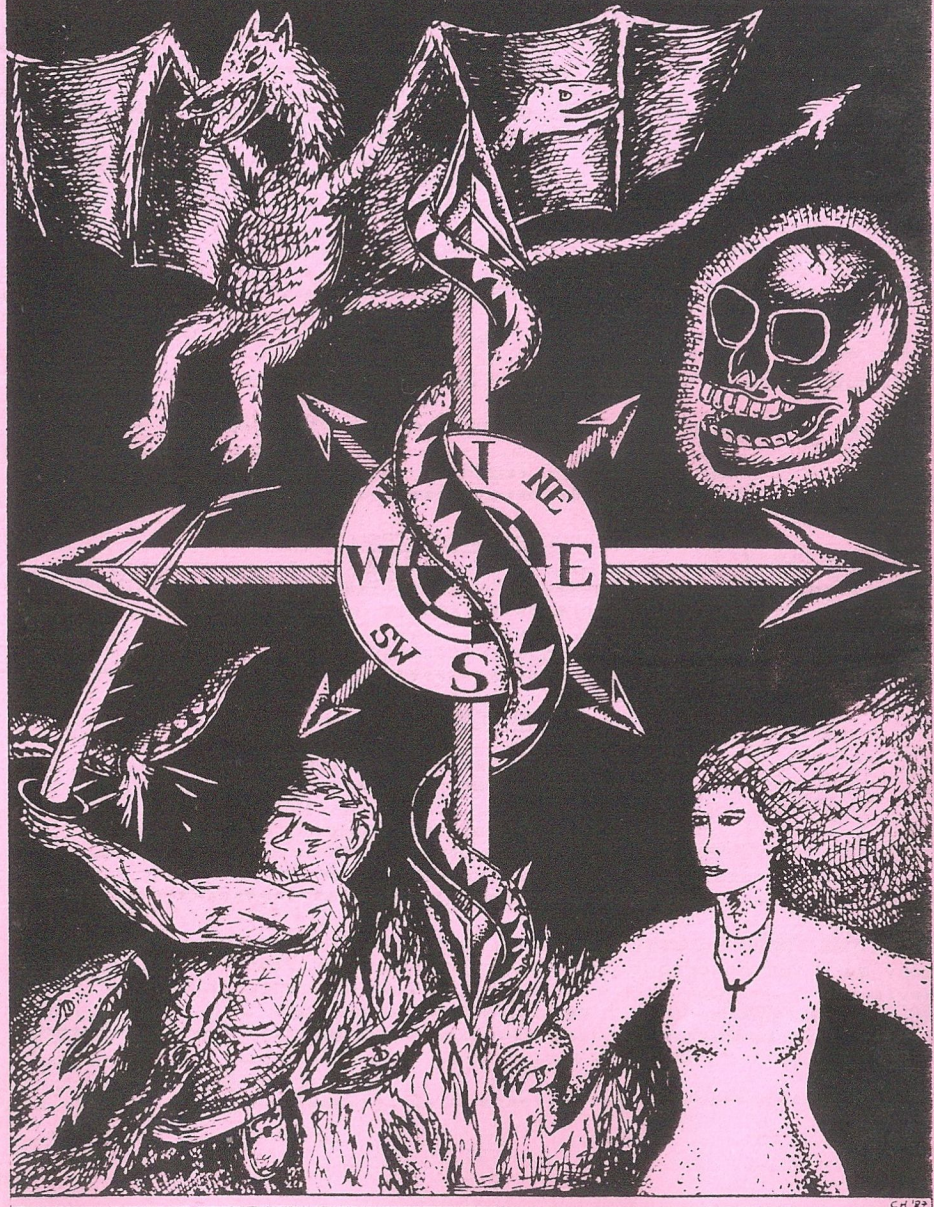
EDITOR: SANDRA SHARKEY ©ADVENTURE PROBE, 78 MERTON ROAD, WIGAN, WN3 6AT

£1-25

VOLUME II

ISSUE 3

MARCH 1988



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Copies can be ordered month by month if you wish, or you can order up to SIX copies in advance. Prices as shown below:-

United Kingdom	£1.25 per copy
Europe (incl. S. Ireland)	£1.75 per copy
Rest of World (Surface Mail)	£1.75 per copy
Rest of World (Air Mail)	£2.00 per copy

All back copies are still available commencing with Issue 1 June 1986.

Issues 1, 2 and 3 at 50p each (75p Europe, £1 R.O.W.)

Issues 4 to 19 inclusive at £1 each (£1.50 Europe, £2 R.O.W.)

VOLUME II Issue 1 onwards at £1.25 each (£1.75 Europe, £2 R.O.W.)

(Higher Prices from 1st January 1988)

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Private advertisements in the In-Touch section of Probe are free to subscribers. Trade prices are as follows:-

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ADVENTURE PROBE is distributed on the 1st to 3rd of each month. Copy date for contributions, advertisements etc. 14th of each month. Reviews are welcome from readers but please check first to make sure nobody else has sent in a review of the same game.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to Volume II Issue 3 of 'Probe'.

Those of you who also receive 'Soothsayer' will have read my preaching editorial in the February issue. I make no apologies for what was written. For those of you who don't also get 'Soothsayer' I shall give you a short summary.

I was very annoyed that no-one had bothered to order Tom Frost's new game after the excellent review it had received in the last issue of Probe. I had played the game myself and found it to be very different and very enjoyable. Some of the homegrown software written by our readers is of a very high standard but if the people for whom it has been written don't buy it then adventuring will be the worse for this. After all someone has to produce adventures that are 'bug free' because the big software houses don't seem to be bothering.

Please give the smaller software houses your support, you'll be amazed at the quality of the games and, at the ridiculously low prices they charge, you'll be able to make your money go further.

The results of the Christmas Competition will be given in the next issue of 'Probe' due to some last minute entries. Thank you to everyone who entered, you came up with some good captions and I'll be publishing most of them.

I'm afraid I have some tragic news to report. Ian Martin, one of our readers, was killed last month in a motoring accident. Our sympathies to his relatives. Ian will be sadly missed.

See you all next month.

Sandra

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HALL OF FAME

Thanks to the following readers for sending in contributions over the last month.

John Barnsley, Alf Baldwin, Doreen Bardon, Paul Brunyee, Graham Collier, Pete Gerrard, Barbara Gibb, Jim O'Keeffe, Lorna Paterson, Mandy Rodrigues, Neil Shipman, Pete Simpson, Robert Shirley, Pat Winstanley, Linda Wright.

SOFTWARE REVIEWS

PLUNDERED HEARTS - Infocom - Price varies from £24.99 to £29.99.
Available for CBM 64/128, IBM PC, APPLE III, ATARI ST and AMIGA.

The door creaks slightley as a tall form bends through its smashed remains. "You sem to have this situation well in hand," timbres a well-bred voice. You catch a glimpse of the hard masculinity of his broad shoulders, the implied power in the scar that etches the stranger's jaw, and feel tremours course through your veins. Then you realise how ragged are his shirt, patched breeches and high boots. Intuitively, you understand - he is the dreaded Falcon, scourge of the sea!

Alas your fate is sealed. Resigned, you meet his sea-blue eyes.

Jamison carries an aura of powr unusual in men so slim and tall, the strength of a willow in his hard seaworn body, straight shouldered and resilient. Chestnut hair, tousled by the wind, frames the tanned oval of his face. A jagged scar etches one cheek, harsh against the warmth of his limpid blue eyes.

To your surprise, the stranger bows. "Well met, my lady." His accent is cultured, his smile vibrant. "I am Captain Nicholas Jamison, known in these waters as 'The Falcon'. Your father has sent me." He chuckles at your glare of distrust. "Yes, you are like your sire. You needn't believe me untried - I carry this." He hands you a missive.

.....

The above is a description of the first meeting between the hero and heroine of the adventure 'Plundered Hearts'. An adventure which is a first of its kind, in that romance, love and passion intermingle with a well thought out plot in which the player takes on the role of a damsel in distress who must somehow rescue her beloved father from the clutches of the evil Lafond. Lafond is the self proclaimed King of St. Sinistra, an island in the East Indies.

Gentlemen may be forgiven for thinking that the adventure is "sloppy stuff" and not for them, but I think that the added twist of taking on the role of a damsel in distress an unusual experience. Male adventurers could easily plunge into this adventure and happily ignore the romantic moments - breaking hearts as they bound along trying to solve the problems. But, you will forgive me, as a woman if I say that I found the romantic moments almost irresistible and quite happily melted into the arms of The Falcon at every opportunity. So for the lady adventurers who may wish to know just how romantic some of those moments are, here is a short account of my meeting with my hero in the Folly in the garden of the mansion on the island of St. Sinistra.

Captain Jamison enters the folly, stooping to avoid the flowers dangling over the door. "I thought I heard someone. What the devil are you doing here! Lafond is a dangerous man to play with!" Jamison sighs. "What an astounding girl you are, my dear. And so ingeniously dressed." He plucks a flower from the tangle above the door, and sets it in your hair. "The beauty of this blossom is nothing to yours."

Catching his breath, Jamison pulls you against him, his hands circling your waist, crushing the flower between you. "Darling," he whispers, leaning over you, "Oh, my angel..." You lean into his arms, face lifted. "My lovely," Jamison says huskily. His eyes burn intently, their blue like the sea on a summer day. A shiver of warmth flows through you, and you tremble at his touch. The pirate's hands, warm and exciting, caress you, searing through the thin linen of your chemise. His lips near yours, his breath softly scented. "May I kiss you?"

Apart from the romance, and there is tons of that, you must somehow battle your way through being attacked by pirates at sea, saving Captain Jamison's ship from being plunged onto the reef and broken up. Somehow stop the ship from being blown up and evading the wicked pirates who have designs on your beautiful self. And all this must be done before you can even leave the ship and get to the island where the action really takes place. And if you fail you will not be surprised to find that you, indeed, suffer a fate worse than death!

This adventure is not too difficult and I completed it in about eight hours but I did enjoy it very very much. The problems are different to the usual and the solutions are not always obvious. I would think that a male player might just find it rather more difficult than a lady, because in many situations your reactions to the people about you have a direct bearing on the eventual outcome. It might be going against the grain for a man to melt into the arms of the evil villain but this is essential at times. It is no good trying to battle your way through some of the obstacles as would be your first reaction. You must find more devious means such as using drugs and smelling salts and various other items you have popped into your reticule on your travels. Indeed, when you try to grab weapons you are bluntly told that either they are too high for you to reach or that a lady wouldn't know how to use one of those anyway.

All in all, I found this adventure a most enjoyable romp. The long detailed descriptions are just what we have come to expect from Infocom and the attention to detail shows. The level of difficulty I would place at 6/10, but the enjoyable experience does make up for that. I did however come across two bugs which I find rather unusual for Infocom. If you hang anything (apart from the hat) on the knob in the Library, you are told it isn't there even though examining the knob will tell you that the object is hanging from it. So any other item on the knob is lost for good. The other bug is that, in the Library if you say 'Open door', the response is 'You cannot open a portrait', which immediately gives away the fact that the secret passage leads from the portrait. Most helpful, I admit, but nevertheless, I consider this to be a bug.

My conclusions are that if you are looking for an adventure in the same class as 'Spellbreaker' or 'Lurking Horror' for difficulty and value for money then this is not it. But if you wish to try something different from the norm and you enjoy a good read and would like to bring a romantic novel to life with you as the heroine, then I would heartily recommend it.

Reviewer - MANDY RODRIGUES - Commodore

Returning home from York one night, your car mysteriously comes to a stop on a lonely Yorkshire moor. A storm has arisen and thunder and lightning abound in the sky. Your companion, Jenny, takes the initiative and decides to search for a house and call the recovery services.

Two hours later, when Jenny has still not returned, you decide to take action yourself, and thus you enter the scenario of this PAW'd adventure.

With little hesitation, you enter the house at the end of the drive and are mostly free to wander wherever you choose. Of course, the two hundred year old cook won't be at all pleased with you messing about in her pantry, and the gardener becomes somewhat aggressive when you visit his lodge, and the heavy breathing sound in the hollow may at first be best avoided, and so the problems continue.

In the study, you will find a diary which goes a step further than the earlier instructions in describing your quest. I discovered that the master of the house, a certain Professor Quinn, is rather keen on contacting the Netherworld to seek the freedom of a certain Danrath. I pieced this information together with the actual title of the adventure as presented on the credits screen, 'The Calling of the Demon', and shuddered. I went on to read that Quinn needs just one more component to complete this 'calling' business - a suitable female. Aargh! He wants to use Jenny!

Soon after entering the house you will probably encounter the butler. He 'hobbles' around several of the locations and can be interacted with to a certain level. When talked to, the butler responds in a rather intelligent manner, and can offer information covering a variety of subjects. You quiz the butler by entering such commands as 'SAY "TELL ME ABOUT THE <noun>" TO BUTLER' to which the butler may offer some information or, for example, tell you that he can not add to what you already know. The cook is another odd character, but doesn't have much to say. Instead she is present for another purpose.

The descriptions for each location are adequate, containing no superfluous material, and convey just enough detail for you to interact with. Although billed as a graphical adventure, the graphics within The Calling accompany only a handful of locations which, to my mind, is a most satisfactory method of keeping the graphical adventure advocates and the text adventure purists both happy. The graphics are well detailed and quickly drawn, and also may be toggled on and off with the use of the PICS ON/OFF command.

Many different word types are supported by The Calling's interpreter, including adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions. The solving of certain puzzles requires that some of these are actually used, and once I discovered this, I solved a couple of puzzles in the same manner. Although the interpreter handles these word types, I was surprised to find that the quantity of verbs does not seem at all extensive, although this does not matter so much with the PAWs ability to parse complex sentence input. The vocabulary does, however, include the rather useful RAMSAVE and RAMLOAD commands.

The problems encountered in The Calling are quite logical and mostly fall into place as you progress through the adventure. The mystery surrounding the house and it's contents is well maintained throughout. A 128k version is included on the reverse of the tape which apparently includes more graphics, more objects to manipulate, and more text in the descriptions.

To conclude, The Calling is an extremely well presented and enjoyable adventure that had me returning to it for 'just one more try' several times, and each time I usually discovered something I hadn't already found, or I solved a further puzzle. And at this price, I must recommend it!

Atmosphere - 6/10 Playability - 8/10 Difficulty - 6/10
Value for money - 9/10 Overall enjoyment - 8/10
Reviewer - Paul Brunyee - Spectrum

Visual Dimensions may be contacted at: 59 Nunnery Lane, York. YO2 1AH

.....

DEFINITION OF ADVENTURING AGONY

When your friend 'phones and says "I'm finished" and you're totally stuck at the very last problem!

Lorna Paterson

.....

HINTS

ACHETON - Lorna Paterson - Amstrad

Don't ignore the ice floe, it melts quickly. Persevere when using the scissors, even when you think you've succeeded. Don't be afraid to go to Hades. Timing is important when trying to avoid large creatures who stumble into you, but be curious about their surroundings. Pay attention to any voices you may hear, they're trying to tell you something. Do as much as you can before your lamp gets dim, to avoid paying the toll, but you may be rewarded for being generous.

Don't waste time - playing the horn, playing chess, praying, wandering in a sandstorm. Don't be afraid to speak in the dark. All objects you find are of some value, either as a treasure, a useful implement or both.

.....

KNIGHT'S QUEST - Robert Shirley - Spectrum

At cleft in rock valley "Squeeze through cleft" with no objects held.

In place of trees "Lever Grating", (need bar).

.....

Walking along a lonely country lane one day you notice a strange object lying by the side of the road - the Wheel of Fortune! Inscribed on it are the words "Spin me and I'll tell you true, what the future holds for you". Of course, you can't resist spinning it whereupon you feel dizzy and collapse. When you come round you find yourself amidst strange surroundings in a magical world. The wheel has gone and you can see an old beggar running away in the distance. This is where the adventure starts. Can you find the Wheel of Fortune and return to civilisation with enormous riches?

Described as "a full scale graphical adventure through a fantasy world of magic and mystery", this is Epic's fourth adventure and was first released in 1984. After loading the main program (to an arrangement of Mendelssohn's Fingal's Cave) you quickly see that the graphics are, in fact, simply Mode 7 block graphics which take up the top third of the screen. Every one of the 250 locations is illustrated although the same pictures are often used in different places. Multiple use is also made of the text descriptions; for example, "You are standing on the bank of the canal. There is no obvious way of crossing it here" appears no less than 9 times. As with Epic's earlier offerings multi-coloured text is employed throughout, but the brief, often one line, repetitive descriptions mean that the adventure lacks atmosphere.

The multiple command, full sentence parser is very sophisticated and can handle commands which are much more complicated than you'd ever dream of typing in - but it also deals sensibly with abbreviated inputs. The ability to continue in a certain direction by just typing C is particularly useful and makes it possible for you to whizz through locations whose quickly updated illustrations then give a feeling of movement.

But the most interesting aspect of this adventure is that there are a number of independent characters who move around in real time and with whom you must interact. You can talk to some of them and enlist their help on your quest - but watch out for the policeman with his cries of "Hello, hello, hello! What's all this then?" or you might land up in jail from which there is no escape. Your lamp also runs down in real time and there are some instances where slow reactions to certain nasties will result in your demise - but don't worry, you don't have to act with lightning speed!

The Wheel of Fortune is a well programmed adventure but it's a bit long in the tooth now and suffers from a rather thin storyline - basically "pick up all the treasures and find a safe place to store them" - and not very many problems to solve apart from the character interactions. However, if you're looking for something a bit different to play you could do worse than try it.

This is a two part graphic adventure written using Incentive's GAC utility. Upon loading each part, you are given a brief introduction as to what is going on and what you are expected to do. Like this ...

"You have been told about a terrible spell which has been cast on a neighbouring village called Craldons Creek. What you must do in Part One is successfully complete The Journey into Craldons Creek. You will be faced with many hazards such as monsters, and traps set by these monsters who are very hungry, as there isn't much food about. With careful plotting you should find it not too hard to complete the mighty quest. Remember all along that you are the only hope left, so you must do the job successfully. First however, prepare to enter The Journey before you think of breaking the spell. Good luck adventurer."

"Well done adventurer, you have completed The Journey into Craldons Creek. You must now go out and defeat the Witch of Craldon and her many allies. Good luck adventurer, and be careful."

Unfortunately, as the adventure progresses, the grammar doesn't get any better than this ... and the spelling gets one hell of a lot worse!

On the plus side, the game features a few simple graphics which are fairly quick to draw and, even if they're not awe-inspiring, at least they don't interfere with play. The character set has been neatly redesigned, and an effective contrast is provided by having inputs displayed in lower case letters, and responses in upper case. That's just about all the good news, 'though.

The game has very little atmospheric text ... and what there is of it is usually spoiled by grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. There are a large number of instant death locations which are pretty much a total waste of space. For instance, the author goes to great pains to repeatedly warn the player to "beware of The Screedle". However, the first the player knows about the whereabouts of The Screedle is when he enters that creatures location in the course of his explorations ... and the first thing The Screedle does when you enter his location is kill you! How to overcome this problem? Simply don't enter The Screedle's location! And other instant death locations can usually be avoided without any ill effects being incurred also ... so what's the point of having them?? There seem to be very few objects or puzzles in the game ... and what there are seem to be quite illogical in nature. For instance, the very first obstacle to overcome is a magical force which prevents you going South. This is done by simply dropping the Rotten Apple in the location containing the magical force, and the force is then dissipated. Why? I don't know. The game gives you no idea as to why dropping an apple should have this effect on your surroundings ... it simply does!

I didn't like this game at all. I had to virtually force myself to continue playing it. It seems to have been very poorly conceived and even more poorly executed. A great deal more work is required on both text and problems in order to improve the atmosphere and increase player involvement. It could also do with a lot more playtesting ... if it has already been playtested, the playtester should be ashamed of himself ... if it hasn't been playtested, the author should be ashamed of himself!! I can't think of a single reason why anyone would want to buy this in its present state. It's awful!

Reviewer - Jim O'Keeffe - Spectrum

ERIC STEWART, 18 Vatisker Back, Isle Of Lewis, PA86 OJS.

INTERACTIVE FACTION
by Pete Gerrard

Recently I have been going through my collection of Isaac Asimov science fiction novels (again!), and the last two that I re-read were 'The Gods Themselves' and 'The Currents of Space'. Perhaps a better description of these two particular books would be science *faction*, as both take a plausible, or at least extremely well hypothesised, piece of scientific knowledge and weave around it an exciting tale of interstellar and intergalactic skullduggery, with just a little bit of romance thrown in for good measure.

It has often struck me that the science fiction world of adventure games is sadly lacking, although Infocom come to our rescue as usual with such gems as 'Planetfall' and 'Stationfall', both featuring the truly wonderful robotic creation known as Floyd. Some positronic brains do 'ave 'em, although I can't see Floyd ever taking the lead role in 'The Phantom of the Opera' somehow.

The point linking these two paragraphs is this; why don't more adventure writers take their example from dear old Isaac's methods, and concoct an exciting adventure based in some way on scientific fact, or something that has been repeatedly proposed as scientific fact. Remember, no-one has for certain found a black hole yet, no-one has for certain proved that quarks and gluons exist, but everybody tends to accept them as being essential to proving various theories.

Thus we arrive at a paraphrasing of Infocom's usual term: Interactive Faction. Adventures that start off with a sound basing in fact, or proposed fact, and which take those facts as the basis for an interesting, possibly humorous, certainly different, type of adventure game.

With all the lofty eminence of a degree in astronomy from University College London (albeit from years ago ... ageing hippy, Sandra, I know!), in no particular order we'll wander through and around one or two science fiction 'stories' that could easily be used as the basis for an adventure game, starting with something very close to the plot behind the aforementioned Asimov classic 'The Gods Themselves'.

In my first year at university we all had to write a report on any 'unusual' aspect of astronomy that interested us, and we all went scurrying to the library (well, bar first, library later) in search of information and inspiration. It was there that I first read all about black holes, worm holes, and white holes. What? Virtually everyone has heard of black holes, but the others? They have been proposed in several different scientific journals, by a variety of different authors.

The theory is simple. If we take the postulate that a black hole exists, then what happens to all that energy that's being sucked into the things? It can't just vanish, that would be breaking several laws

of physics, and apart from anything else it would leave us with a universe that was gradually running out of energy. So, the theory is that it all travels along a worm hole until it re-emerges via a white hole into another universe. However, if this is the case, then other universes must also have black holes which are sending energy to us via worm holes and white holes, in order to maintain stability. Why has nobody detected any white holes? Nobody has detected any black holes yet, although there is a strong case for one in the constellation of Cygnus the Swan. A beautifully constructed theory that really explains nothing, but which opens up the path to other universes.

Parallel universes, alternate universes, call them what you will, but an adventure that starts of with our explorer vanishing down a black hole and emerging into another universe, then desperately trying to get back to his own place and time, would be an interesting one.

I briefly looked at some of Carl Sagen's more outrageous writings on the subject of life on other planets, and in particular the planet Jupiter. No-one will be able to prove his theories right or wrong for many years, perhaps centuries, because Jupiter is a difficult place to explore to say the least. However, an adventurer could go there, and meet all the strange, weird and wonderful animals that Sagen puts forward as possibly existing in the thick Jovian atmosphere.

What I eventually concentrated on was the search for the tenth planet. Arthur C. Clarke, another superb science fiction author, reputedly makes mention of a tenth planet called Persephone, but what he intends it to be is uncertain, as it appears to have no purpose other than dating a story of his as some way off in the future after this tenth planet has been found. According to all the scientific papers I read, there is a stronger case for arguing that the Sun is part of a binary system, with its partner being way, way beyond the orbits of Pluto and Neptune. This 'star' is supposed to be visible in the infrared, is supposed to have run out of steam long ago, and could explain some slight perturbations still to be found in the orbits of the outer planets.

Send an adventurer there, that's what I say, and let him explore this companion star of our Sun. Perhaps it's not a part of nature at all, but some ancient artefact put there by explorers long ago. Not very scientifically plausible, but in the world of adventures anything goes. Nobody, incidentally, has yet proved that there isn't another star out there in some sort of linked orbit with our Sun; there's a stronger case for its existence than there is for its non-existence.

In my final year at university those of us who had survived the years of student life and overdrafts were required to write a ten thousand word report on a topic within the astronomical field. We were supposed to be serious students by now, and were not allowed such a free rein with our choice of subject matter. A carefully prepared list was presented, and we chose from that. I selected a curious group of stars known as Wolf-Rayet stars (in honour of their discoverers), which are way down at one end of the stellar life cycle, but which for some peculiar reason are giving off more energy than they should. Are they nearer than we thought and giving off

normal amounts of energy, in which case the standard way of estimating the distances to the stars is proved wrong, or are they really far away, in which case our theories of stellar evolution could do with a spot of revising. Are they artificial beacons in space, manned by beings from other planets? A kind of super-duper Radio One, presumably not playing the same banal drivel that usually occupies our airwaves. Again, send an adventurer there and let him have an explore.

This brings us to the last thing I want to mention in this little article-ette: the question of life on other planets. Three people in the space of seven days have asked me for my views on this, and personally (and I stress personally) I think that sheer numbers force me to admit that there must be life, if not intelligent life, elsewhere in our galaxy. Why haven't they visited us, you might ask. Well, we haven't visited them, have we, and we're supposed to be intelligent.

When you look up on a clear night and see the two or three thousand stars that are visible to the naked eye, then when you look through a telescope or a powerful pair of binoculars and see the countless millions more, who can doubt that there are planets orbiting just some of those stars? There are many stars in the same spectral class as our Sun, and presumably they have planets with oxygen-rich atmospheres like ours at a suitable orbit from them, so over the aeons during which our galaxy has existed I would doubt very much that life hasn't appeared somewhere else.

Just one adventure, exploring just one star, and finding just one new race of intelligent beings, could be the start of something big. Look how long 'Star Trek' has been a universal (!) favourite. Go for it, adventure writers, hit the libraries, and let's see some intelligent interactive fiction appearing on our shelves.

ADVENTURES FOR COMMODORE AND SPECTRUM

Spectrum 48K

- Tape 1. The Challenge & Davy Jones Locker.
- Tape 2. Witch Hunt & The Cup.
- Tape 3. The Hammer of Grimmold & Mutant.
- Tape 4. Realm of Darkness & Matchmaker.
- Tape 5. The Jade Necklace & Lifeboat.

Commodore 64

- Tape 1. The Hammer of Grimmold & Lifeboat.
- Tape 2. Realm of Darkness & Mutant.
- Tape 3. The Jade Necklace & Matchmaker.
- Tape 4. Witch Hunt & The Cup.

- Disc 1. The Hammer of Grimmold - Matchmaker - Mutant.
- Disc 2. Lifeboat - The Challenge - The Jade Necklace.
- Disc 3. Realm of Darkness - The Cup - Witch Hunt.

Each tape costs £2.50 and each disc £6.00. The adventures on disc load in 15 seconds. Cheques/PO's to:

J. A. LOCKERBY, 44 Hyde Place, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent. CT3 3AL

LETTERS

Dear readers,

The Lost Phirious saga has again made news. You may remember the letter in October 87 regarding the possible release time of TLP 4 from yours truly. Well, I'm sad to say there is more bad news on the way, followed by some goodish news (depending on how you look at it).

I mentioned in the last letter that the probable release time for TLP would be around Feb/March. It is now that time and it isn't ready, and nor will it be for a good time yet. I shall endeavour to explain all.

Since October my work load has increased, some computer work and some work not computer related at all. All this work pays well and there lies the problem. To finish part 4 of TLP I need at least 2 months solid work and another month testing. Unfortunately the The Lost Phirious saga does not earn me much money, I certainly break even but I've yet to reach 3 figures in profit. In the 3 months it would take to finish part 4 I could earn up to £1200. Certain government bodies are looking over my shoulder (the EAS to be precise) making sure I'm earning some money and if I spend my time writing TLP just to break even they are not going to be happy. Therefore I have decided to postpone TLP 4 until such a date I can spend a reasonable amount of time on it.

I could release TLP 4 next month but it would not reach the quality standards of parts 1, 2 and 3. I wouldn't be happy releasing it and nor would the customer (ie. you lot out there!). Forking out £2.50 and getting a poor ending to a 4 part adventure would not go down well.

What's the solution? I've been pondering over this question for some time. I've got to do something about part 4 and pretty soon. I can't leave it alone until, say, the autumn of this year, that would make people unhappy as well. The only solution I can come up with is to write a story for TLP 4 and Sandra has agreed to publish it in Probe.

This solution to the problem doesn't mean there won't be a part 4, that depends on what happens in the following six months, but if TLP 4 does not get released at least players will know what the ending is.

One last thing before the story begins, I mentioned the possibility of there being a PC version of TLP. There would have been but for the fact that the programmer disappeared with it! If PC owners out there come across a PD or Shareware adventure that sounds remarkably like TLP then please get in touch with me. I'd love to trace the bugger!

Neil Scrimgeour, 125 Occupation Road, Corby, Northants.

(Thanks for letting us know the facts behind the delay. Regular readers will know that I rate the TLP adventures amongst my favourites. I can't wait to find out what happens in part 4. The TLP Story will begin in the April issue of Probe...Sandra)

Dear Sandra and fellow Probe readers,

I think it is about time that I stirred my stumps and wrote a word or two in the letters pages. First of all, thank you June for the nice things you said in the February 'Probe' and thanks too to Mark for his very good point about the pictures redrawing themselves when entering a new location in a maze. I hope that more readers will write in with their ideas because I for one find them extremely helpful.

I am pleased to see Pat's (Other) Patch and I found Jim's 'Chatting with the Warlocks' very interesting. The poor man had all my sympathy with his poor head! Pete's stories and the reviews are marvellous. I too think that 'Probe' is smashing. My family only have one complaint. If the postman delivers it too early in the morning and I get my hands on it before getting out of bed then it means that someone else will have to get breakfast and do the chores because my nose will be firmly stuck in 'Probe' until the very last page.

Before I go back and get lost in another adventure. I hope Sandra will allow me to send out a few messages to various readers. Firstly to Jim. You are the best friend anyone could have and there is so much I have to thank you for that I don't know where to begin. Next to John B. Thank you also you are a gem, very best wishes and lots of luck. Now for Paul - CONGRATULATIONS! You did it at last! Thanks to all who rang on the helpline for cheering up my days. Thanks to Pete for all his help and fascinating letters. Finally thanks to Sandra for all her hard work, her friendship and encouragement, for sorting out the spelling and for working so very hard to make 'Probe' so smashing. Last but not least - thanks to all readers who I think are the friendliest and nicest people I have ever come across.

With very best wishes and many thanks.

MANDY RODRIGUES, 24 Maes y Cwm, Llandudno, Gwynedd. LL30 1JE

I want to say that I enjoy 'Probe' very much. It really is most gratifying to find a publication such as yours physically produced so well and even more to find the spelling and grammar correct. No modern truncated 'in' words such as 'fab' and 'brill' and the correct use of 'there' and 'their', 'your' and 'you're'. Some productions I could name (but won't) make me wince and are hard reading. So, once again, my congratulations.

Turning to 'adventuring' - I find myself somewhat at a disadvantage compared to your readers with C64's and Spectrums (or should it be Spectra!), as I have a Sony MSX, an excellent machine but one hardly supported in adventures, apart from those of Level 9. I have all of theirs and have set myself the task of completing them all before the Queen (or Charles) sends me a telegram on my 100th birthday! Not strictly true, of course, but it may become so if my rate of progress (5 3/4 completed so far) doesn't improve!

Incidentally, does Infogrammes 'The Inheritance' qualify as an adventure and if so, can any of your readers tell me how to progress at the airport, where I am completely 'grounded'?

So, having occupied too much of your valuable time reading this, I'll end with "Keep up the good work".

TONY BEVAN, Alveston, 11 Hernbrook Drive, Horsham. RH13 6EW

At the recent adventure convention I was talking to Brian Kerslake from Topologika and he has sent me a copy of 'Countdown to Doom'.

'Countdown to Doom', 'Philosopher's Quest', 'Acheton' and 'Kingdom of Hamil' have all been converted to run on various Amstrads as well as the BBC machines.

Although based on the original Acorn adventures, they have been revised and enhanced with many more problems to solve. I have not got too far into the adventure so far, but first impressions are that, even if you have completed the original 'Doom' there are enough differences about this one to make it worth considering.

The route through the adventure has been changed and now takes quite some thought to work out. I have sorted out some of the obstacles, but have still not finally solved them in the correct order.

My only slight quibble is that you need to press the Break Key once you have finished a session. As this will help to wear out the computer, I would have preferred the program to have reset the machine, something which I am sure is not too difficult to manage. I have also found that the program 'hangs' if a wrong filename is typed when restoring a save from disc. I would have preferred to have been given another chance of getting the name right, or of being returned to the adventure.

All the adventures from Topologika come with some hints on the disc. There is also a booklet which you need to refer to to find the hint number. I like this approach, although I can see that there is a greater temptation to 'peek' at the hints as they are so easily accessible.

In conclusion I can certainly recommend this adventure if you want many sleepless nights sorting out the problems.

JULIAN GREGORY, 27 Wentworth Drive, Broadstone, Dorset. BH18 8EJ

(There have been different reactions amongst 'Probe' readers about the Topologika games. Either you love them or hate them it seems. I was disappointed that the games do not understand the verb 'EXAMINE' as I am the sort of adventurer who enjoys examining absolutely everything. I also thought that the parser was very unfriendly. Maybe I should have persevered with them.....Sandra)

I hoped you could put a little 'thank you' in your next issue of 'Probe', because I'd like to thank John Moore, for he's loaned me a lot of adventures I read about in Adventure Probe and it's much fun to have a new 'adventure-pal' living so nearby (half an hour drive).

He's visited me a few times already and well, it's great! (I'm afraid that's the only word I know in English to express the Dutch "Te Gek!"

I am now going to sit back in a nice chair and read my new 'Probes'. It's raining; cosy!

SILVIA JANSSEN, Wilhlmnastr 604g, Af Herten, Holland.

I thought I would let you know that after writing to you, I decided to contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau at Staines and was told they would write to 'Bargain Software' on my behalf after I had told them the full story.

I recieved a cheque for £3.99 from 'Bargain Software' within 18 days. Although I have no confirmation I believe the C.A.B. did the trick. Enclosed with the cheque was their latest list of Software. I do not need to tell you the fate of this catalogue!!

DR. BATHAM, The Whisperings, Sandhills Lane, Virginia Water. GU25 4BW

(I am so pleased that you got your money back, and I'm sure that it was the letter from the Citizen's Advice Bureau that did the trick. So, if anyone else is having trouble getting money back for goods they haven't received, go the Citizen's Advice Bureau!...Sandra)

Although I seem to have little time for adventure playing these days - a demanding job, a demanding child, a correspondence course - I still look forward to reading 'Probe' every month, it's great for "sampling" adventures by proxy, thanks to Jim O'Keefe's in depth reviews, which have often encouraged me to purchase home-grown games by Mail Order.

While on the sensitive subject of Mail Order, may I comment on Dr. Batham's letter regarding 'Bargain Software' of London. Unfortunately there are a few rogue firms about, as my wife once found out when she sent a cheque to the same outfit, though that was only for £1.99. May I offer the following guidelines to any readers thinking of ordering cut price software from any of the numerous firms advertising in the computer press.

- 1) Don't send any money to any firm that doesn't offer Credit Card facilities. They probably don't have any trading experience either, and 9 times out of 10 will take the money and run.
- 2) Study the field, see which ones advertise most regularly. If they only appear once or twice a year, you might be able to smell a rat .

3) Send in as small an order as possible to test the reliability of the company. If you get a good service then you know that they will look after larger orders equally well, if not better.

4) Listen to your friends' recommendations. Sandra has often mentioned Aird Services. I also find Castle Computers to be very good, with a fast, reliable service.

Back to 'Probe' again, if I may (sorry to jump about so, but it's such a long time since I've dropped more than a line your way.) Nice to see Pat back in the fold, since 'Adventure Contact' became a different animal altogether; without Pat's editorial touch, it wasn't the same magazine. And so I was pleased when Pat's Patch (the rehto one!) materialised in ACE magazine. And even more pleased when you allotted her another Patch in 'Probe'. So, welcome back, Pat!

Semi-finally, I enjoyed reading the series of interviews by your intrepid roving reporter Jim O'Keeffe (again!) with the smaller adventure software houses. It's fascinating to see the background that gives fruition to so many enjoyable games, but it would be nice to hear reader feedback on what Mark Davies, of The Essential Myth for instance, has to say about the current state of the adventure genre. I agree to a great extent with what he has to say. The potential for adventures as interactive literature, also excites me deeply, but few people are prepared to push the boundaries especially when any financial support for real innovation is so lacking.

It is one thing to write a brilliant, bold and original novel, for if it is striking enough it will find an enterprising publisher (and, hopefully, readers). But to write an interactive novel that isn't based on a well known book, or myth, or cliché is just sheer commercial suicide, and will continue to be so until one software publisher can see market potential in "Art-Software", i.e. a more elevated form of entertainment for the more thoughtful game player.

And, finally, could 'Probe' include another questionnaire in the near future, to probe readers' opinion on adventures. It would be nice to have, say, a chart of top ten favourite games (or even two charts - one concerning games from the large software houses, the other covering "underground" games (no I don't mean the Goblin's Dungoen in the Hobbit!). Also what they like/dislike in games:- worked out as a percentage, covering topics such as mazes, random elements, sudden deaths, character interaction, screen layout, limited time factors, words or pictures and so on.

NEIL TALBOT, 31 Chadcote Way, Catshill, Bromsgrove, Worcs. B61 0JU

(Well, you've certainly brought up some interesting points in your letter Neil. I'm afraid as far as the questionnaire goes it has to be 'no go' for now. I'm struggling to keep up with the administration side of 'Probe' at the moment, because of a lot of extra 'paid' work that has come my way recently. And with a large family I'm not really in a position to refuse the offer of extra income. I shall consider sending out another questionnaire as soon as I catch up with my work.....Sandra

IN-TOUCH

Due to sale of Arnold (sob!sob!), the following Amstrad tapes are up for grabs:

Mordon's Quest: only £2! - Top Secret/Mountains of Ket: a mere £3.50 for this Double Gold Adventure! - Dungeons, Amethysts, Alchemists 'n' everythin': a miserly £1! - GAC: Just £8 for this tremendous writing utility, all documentation included.

All above are original (Tel: 0272 856605) send cheques/PO's to:

LINDA WRIGHT, 19 Briar Close, Nailsea, Bristol. BS19 1QG

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I would like to advertise lots of goodies for sale as I must clear away now unused machines and software before I can spend any more on my Atari, (her indoors you know!), so I have on offer the following:

A Dragon 32 in perfect order plus a cassette recorder plus a Spectrum 48K with D'Ktronics keyboard. These are available for any reasonable offer individually or together.

Software

For Dragon. Scott Adams Adventures numbers 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, plus Secret Mission, Escape from Pulsar 7, Wizard of Akyrz, Ring of Darkness, Return of the Ring, The Ket Trilogy, The Crystal Chalice, The Vortex Factor, Treasures of Barsoom, Mansion Adventure1, Calixto Island, Quest, Trekboer, Claymorgue Castle, Juxtaposition (Barons of Ceti 5), Franklin's Tomb (two copies), Lost in Space, Fishy Business, Madness and the Minotaur, Williamsburg Adventure 3, Keys of the Wizard, Castle Adventure, Danger Island, The Cricklewood Incident, Transylvanian Tower, Demon Knight, Conquering Everest, White Barrows, Cells and Serpents, El Diablero, Hulk, Mansion of Doom, Champions by Peaksoft, Pettigrews Diary AND Arcade games like Frogger, SAS etc.

All these adventures can be had for £2 each or if some bold person wants the lot plus the Dragon then £100 will secure the full package.

Spectrum Software. Jewels of Darkness Trilogy £5, Dracula £4, Eureka £2, Erik the Viking £2, Lords of Midnight £2, Vera Cruz, Dodgy Geezers, Snow Queen all at £2.50. Seabase Delta, Book of the Dead, Return to Ithaca, Castle Blackstar, The Island (Crystal), Message from Andromeda all at £1 each. There are more adventures but they are on loan to one of our members in Holland. "HELLO, SYLVIA JANSSEN!"

730 Sgt. John Moore, c/o Sgts. Mess, RAF Wildenrath, BFPO 42

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Has anyone got an original Spectrum GAC for sale? Please contact:

DICON PEEKE, Tyn Lon, Llanfairynghornwy, Anglesey, North Wales.

Tel: 0407 730881

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IN-TOUCH

I am willing to purchase Amstrad adventures either on tape or disc (464 or 6128). Please write to me with your list of adventures only that you wish to dispose of, plus price required. Originals only.

R. A. ADAMS, 81 Uplands, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 7EH

.....

I've got a couple of Amstrad discs for sale:
Jewels of Darkness - £7, Mini Office II - £7. Please write to:

Pete Simpson, 9 Wardell Close, Leven Park, Yarm, Cleveland. TS15 9UZ

Or tel: 0642 781837 to check availability.

.....

I have a large number of BBC and Electron adventures for sale. Please send SAE for list to:

NEIL SHIPMAN, 1 Heath Gardens, Coalpit Heath, Bristol. BS17 2TQ

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HELP WANTED

I've nearly finished Curse of the Seven Faces 235/245 only 10 more points and 1 treasure to find, but where can I find it, I don't know, any help?

DOREEN BARDON, Lendal Cottage, High Street, Slingsby, York. YO6 7AE

.....

Help! I am stuck on Venom, by Mastertronic. Please tell me how to open the Taproom door in this stinker of a game. The door has a bolt, but even when it is pulled back, the door still will not open. Nobody in the adventure will talk to me, except the barman, and he's completely useless. So far, I have got some berries, a sword, a thong, some food and 3 pieces of gold. This adventure is ruining my attempts at revising for my mocks - I keep going back to try to burn the Inn down, or eat the table in the hope that it will get me somewhere.

Emma Heggie, 16 Riverbourne Rd., Milford, Salisbury, Wilts. SP1 1NS

.....

I would like some help with "Mystery of Arkham Manor" if anyone can oblige.

Paul Sawyer, 57 Everard Street, Barry, South Glamorgan. CF6 6PX

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PAT'S (other) PATCH

Last month I left you with some problems to think about. Thanks June Rowe for taking the trouble to write in.... what happened to the rest of you?

June suggested two chains of events, both based on a Robin Hood theme, one serious and one a spoof. Both contained ideas which we'll use later but for now let's get the rough structure of the game and its initial puzzles set up. If Sandra's got things together there should be a map in here somewhere with 16 'rooms' on it and some notations. These notations are rough descriptions of the puzzles in the game and a quick count will show that there is roughly one puzzle to two rooms. In other words most of the rooms either have a puzzle to solve, an object to find and sometimes both.

For starters let's enter details of all the rooms using our utility. As I said before, I'll be using GAC but I'll try to keep everything as easily convertible as possible and show Quill/PAW routines where they differ significantly from GAC.

Load GAC and then load the quickstart file into it. The Quickstart file is intended to save you typing the most common vocabulary, conditions and messages every time you start a new game. As you become more experienced you can modify the file to suit your own style, save it and use it over and over again.

Next step is to select "R" from the main menu. You will be asked for a room number and you may as well start with room 1 (the cell). For each of the sixteen rooms in the game, enter the room description which can be as simply or flowery as you like. Simply typing "cell" or "hall" is enough to begin with.... you can always go back later and add more or change things.

After the description you are asked for connections. These are simply a list of directions each followed the number of the room you should get to if you go in that direction from the room we are in. They should be entered as:

1. Direction verb followed by a space
2. Number of room reached in that direction followed by a space
3. Next direction verb etc.

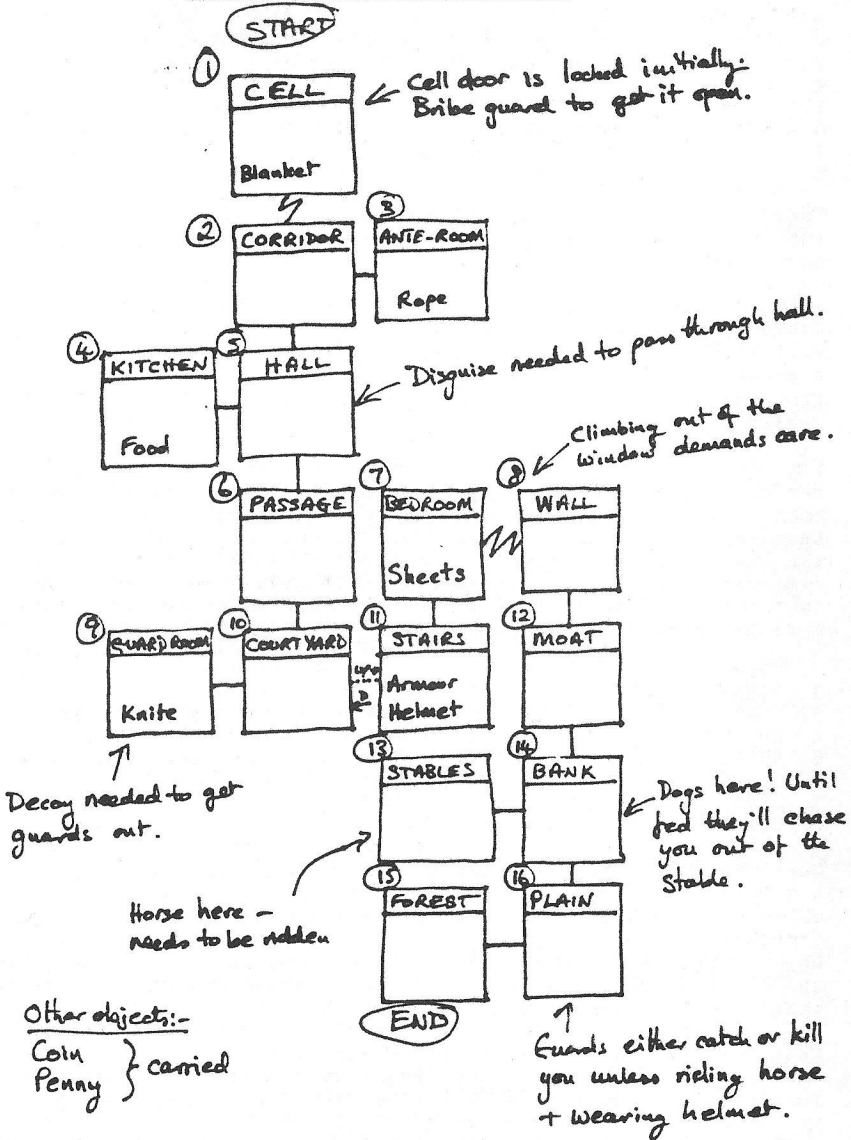
You can put as many different directions as you like one after the other.

Ignore the possibility of pictures for the moment, just press enter to leave it as it is. Once all the rooms and connections (directions) are in you should test the game so far. If you start in room one you won't be able to go anywhere yet as there should be no connection from that room yet. To move to a different part of the game simply change the number on the "B" submenu to the room where you want to start.

There should be no connection either way between rooms 1 & 2 or rooms 7 & 8. Connections between rooms 10 & 11 should be 'up' from 10 to 11 and 'down' from 11 to 10.

Done that? Right... lets put some objects in the game! The following is a full list of the moveable objects in the game. Anything else

THE MAP



(like dogs and horses) will be dealt with using messages and room descriptions).

Object No.	Description	Starts	Weighs
1	a coin	300	1
2	a penny	300	1
3	some food	4	1
4	a knife	9	1
5	some sheets	7	1
6	a blanket	1	1
7	a suit of amour	11	1
8	a helmet	11	1

(Note that the coin and the penny start at room 300. Define a room of that number and call it LIMBO as objects put in room 0 can't be retrieved later!)

Although the numbering of the objects might seem random there is actually a system to it. Objects 5 to 8 are capable of being worn (or will be when we set up a routine for wearing things) and when you have a group of objects like that with similar properties it makes programming easier and neater (and more sparing of memory) if they are lumped together.

The next step is to enter some nouns so that the player can refer to the objects in the game. Again, programming is eased if we number the nouns logically. You may have noticed a keyword "NO1" in the manual. This keyword can be used as a variable during programming as it holds the number of the first noun typed by the player. (Any keyword which 'returns' a number can be used in this way). What we will do is number the nouns so that an object and the noun which refers to it both have the same number. So the nouns are;

1. COIN
2. PENNY
3. FOOD
4. KNIFE
5. SHEETS
6. BLANKET
7. ARMOUR
8. HELMET

Quill and PAW users will use a slightly different system as they have a table which they can use to list the nouns referring to different objects. If you are using one of these the numbering of the nouns is irrelevant in our simple game, but you should copy the nouns into the Object Word Table. PAW users will also have to put an underline or null character to signify that any adjective is allowed and ensure that nouns are numbered greater than 50.

That's all we have room for this time. If you feel adventurous you can have a shot at setting up Low priority conditions (Event table entries for Quill or Response table entries for PAW). Don't worry if you have problems - many of the queries I receive are about conditions - as I'll go into detail next month.

Byee!

CHATting WITH THE WARLOCKS!

A short series of interviews with some of the
best of the small adventure software houses.

No. 4 in a set of 4: TONY COLLINS 50/50 CLUB SOFTWARE.

TONY COLLINS is 24 years old and an ex-security guard. Long standing subscribers to PROBE will remember that he wrote a P.B.M. column for the mag in its early days. He stopped doing that in order to concentrate all his efforts on making a success of the 50/50 Club.

PROBE: For the benefit of those who don't yet know ... could you explain just exactly what the 50/50 Club actually is?

TONY: Sure! The overall concept of the Club had its birth in all those complaining letters you see published in computer magazines ... they usually bemoan the state of present day software and make claims like "I could do better than that ... if I only knew how to program" or "I could do better than that ... but I can't get the Quill/GAC/etc to do this/that/the other".

Well, I read all these letters and, after a while, I began to realise that if the guy had a good idea but couldn't program ... I could do the programming for him! Likewise, if he was having trouble getting his utility to do something specific, I could put my knowledge and experience at his disposal ... between us we might crack the problem! So, I developed the Club around this basis.

A lot of people seem to think that the Club is only for people who have absolutely no idea about how to go about the process of writing an adventure game ... and I'd like to make it quite clear that this is not the case. We see ourselves as providing a service to both the novice and the expert equally ... the nature of the service will, probably, be different in each case however!

The novice may want us to completely program a whole game for him ... the more expert writer may require a special routine to perform a specific function to be added to a game he is already writing himself ... or, perhaps, the addition of a loading screen, or complete set of graphics, to an otherwise completely finished game! We can fill either, or both, function!

Whoever you are ... whatever your idea or problem ... we can help you make it WORK!

PROBE: So, how does somebody go about joining the 50/50 Club?

TONY: Simply write to me enclosing details of your idea/problem/requirements, and include as much additional information as possible. For instance, if you wished the Club to program a game for you, I would like to see ... a written copy of the plot, containing as much detail as you can put in ... a map of the game world if possible (but not essential) ... a list of location/room descriptions ... a list of objects to be found/manipulated in the game ... and some ideas for puzzles and problems to be encountered in the game with solutions as to how the player will be expected to overcome them! In short, as much as you can possibly tell me about your game and how you want it to look.

I can then consider the ideas presented, come up with some suggestions for improvements, and correspond with the writer until we've finalised a format for the game which we are both happy with. I can then start in on the actual programming.

PROBE: When it comes to the programming, which utility do you prefer to use?

TONY: The QUILL's main advantage is its simplicity to use. It uses normal English for its command structure, and is therefore easy to understand. On the other hand, you can't manipulate the QUILL flags in the manner you may wish to ... your use of them is fairly restricted.

The GAC is almost the complete opposite. It is not as easy to get to grips with immediately, but the way in which you can manipulate its flags is second to none. This is important since, when writing an adventure, the use of the flags is probably the most important factor ... they control the whole structure of the game. It makes the writers life much easier if they can mould the flags to do whatever they want!

In this, the PAW must be the absolute best of the available utilities. It combines the simplicity of the QUILL with the power of the GAC ... and then adds a host of even more powerful features! I am very impressed with it ... all my new games are being developed on the PAW ... and I honestly can't see myself ever using another utility now.

You see, one of the main gripes voiced against QUILLED and GACed games, is that they all look the same ... but PAWed games can incorporate a user-defined style of presentation which will give a touch of individuality to each game written with it!

But, in my view, the very best thing about PAW is the EXTERN command. This allows you to leave the PAW system, and call up your own BASIC or machine code routines. This means that there is virtually nothing which you can't do with PAW ... because, if a certain feature isn't included in the main PAW package, you can write it yourself and incorporate it anyway using EXTERN!! The potential use of this command is truly staggering!

I've used it myself to create a combat routine similar to the one used in "Dungeons and Dragons"-type role playing games. I intend to incorporate this into my future games ... and I couldn't have even considered such a thing if it hadn't been for the EXTERN command!

I think that the combination of the powerful PAW utility and the disc storage of the Spectrum +3, is going to radically change the adventuring front ... games are going to be bigger and better than anything we have yet seen!

PROBE: You think the +3 machine will be a seller then?

TONY: Yes I do. The Commodore machines have been blessed with a whole range of adventures which are available on disc only. The +3 will make it possible to bring this mass of software to a whole new user base. The INFOCOM games are the most obvious examples of this, but there are lots of others.

One of the main uses for the extra available storage could be an increased use of high quality graphics. I'm developing a game which will be in two 128k parts, and will have graphics on the +3 version that load in from disc when needed. I've developed this routine which allows me to use graphics drawn with utilities like THE ARTIST or ART STUDIO ... it simply calls the picture from disc as a SCREEN\$ when needed! I can also squeeze about 16 pictures, all highly detailed, onto the Ramdisc in the 128k Spectrum.

As a player, I do enjoy graphics in games ... but, as a writer, the memory required for them can be a problem. A disc-based machine obviously makes it easier to have the best of both worlds!

PROBE: You seem to be fairly bubbling with enthusiasm and new ideas ... which is very refreshing to see ... I wonder if the consumer has shared your eagerness? How successful have you been in marketing your games?

TONY: Well, to be perfectly honest, I don't think I've tried very hard up to now to sell either the Club or its products. I sent copies of NYTHYHEL and THESEUS to all the major computer magazines ... and they were reviewed in AMTIX! (getting 84% and 82% respectively overall), which was a great boost! Both Mike Gerrard and Keith Campbell wrote back to me saying how much they enjoyed the games, and that they would review them when I sent them details of prices, availability, etc. So far, I haven't done this, so they haven't reviewed them! Of the rest, an incomplete version of THESEUS was previewed in AMSTRAD ACTION ... and that's it! However, I'm quite pleased with most of the reactions that I've received from the commercial computer press.

Then, of course, there has been the occasional advert in PROBE. Response to these has been very good ... I would say that about a quarter of my sales have stemmed from adverts placed in PROBE ... and I think that it is well worthwhile using the specialist fanzines like PROBE ... they allow you to bring your games to the attention of some really enthusiastic players, which can only be good!

Apart from these instances, most of the information about the Club seems to have been spread by word of mouth, mainly from people who have bought our games and been pleased by what they've seen.

PROBE: Two of your games are to be marketed by a commercial software house. Can you tell us how this came about?

TONY: Yes. NYTHYHEL and THESEUS are going to be published by Interceptor Micro's on their new, mid-price Automata label. I sent copies of the original Amstrad versions of these games to Interceptor, along with print-outs, solutions, maps, and some ideas for the inlays. I heard nothing for over three months, then I got a letter, almost out of the blue, asking me to contact their Software Manager, Mr Albert Knight as they were interested in marketing the games! By then I had the Spectrum versions ready, and they were delighted to take those on as well!

PROBE: An encouraging tale! And you say you don't feel you've really tried hard yet ... one wonders what you may accomplish when you do start trying!!!

- *****
THE 50/50 RANGE

1. Files of The Occult (P.I.): NYTHYHEL
 Spectrum 48k/128k and Amstrad 464/6128
 Automata label £3.99
 A two part graphic adventure in which you play a Paranormal Investigator delving into the causes behind the brutal murder of a friend by un-natural forces.
 2. THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR
 Spectrum 48k/128k
 Automata label £3.99
 A two part graphic adventure retelling the adventures of Theseus in ancient Greece, the Underworld Of Hades, and Crete itself.
 3. MIAMI MICE/THE HERMITAGE
 Amstrad 464/6128
 50/50 Club label £1.99
 Two text only adventures which allow you to play a mouse-detective hot on the heels of a cheese smuggling ring, and Brother Ambrose a medieval monk torn between his faith and his feelings.
 4. THE HERMITAGE
 Spectrum 48k/128k
 50/50 Club label £1.99
 This version is written using the PAW and includes added graphics.
 5. TEACHER TROUBLE
 Amstrad 464/6128 and Spectrum 48k/128k
 50/50 Club label £1.99
 Guide Ernie and Dillon around Wenton Comprehensive, as they do battle with the alien invaders threatening the school.
- *****

TONY: Ah, well, I suppose I've been fortunate in some respects, but I think that good games will always sell ... no matter what! It's difficult for the small producer because, on the one hand, he has complete freedom to do what he wants, as and when he wants. This allows him to be as imaginative and innovative as he wishes to be. On the other hand, he lacks the financial clout to properly promote his product, and must therefore hope to gain the support of one of the larger software labels ... which may limit his freedom to do as he wishes! It's a bit of a Catch 22 situation.

PROBE: How did you ever get involved in this wonderfully crazy world of adventure gaming anyway?

TONY: I got my first computer in April 1984 ... a 48k Spectrum. At first, I relied heavily on listings in magazines for my software as commercial games were pretty expensive. Then, I stumbled on this shop which was selling programs and games for as little as 99 pence! So, I bought a few ... and one of them was an adventure ... MAGIC MOUNTAIN by Phipps Associates!
At first, I paid little attention to it. It was my Mum and brother who got into it first ... they enjoyed MAGIC MOUNTAIN immensely, and thus started buying more adventures, until about 90% of the software we owned were adventures. Somewhere along the way, I got drawn into the net ... and it's all been downhill ever since! Even now, I retain a fondness for the Phipps games ... I don't think that they ever produced a really bad title. It's a pity that they're no longer in business. I'd say that their version of COLDITZ was probably my favourite adventure of all time. It had everything an adventure should have ... logical puzzles ... good graphics (which were a novelty in those days) ... plenty of locations ... a logical maze (not too hard, but not too easy either!) ... and a good solid verb/noun parser. Other titles I've particularly enjoyed are EUREKA from Domark, and PROJECT X - THE MICROMAN by Compass Software.

I enjoyed playing very much in the early days, but I'm not so keen on it now because I always tend to look at the game from the programmers point of view rather than the players!!

PROBE: Seeing as how you've brought up programmers ... are there any adventure writers whom you particularly admire?

TONY: Oh, several! I've already mentioned Phipps ... I don't know who did their writing, but I always liked the games. Then, there's Fergus McNeill ... a lovely sense of humour, although I wasn't too keen on the BOGGIT. Level 9 produce excellent adventure systems which they are always improving. As far as their games are concerned, I actually played the more recent releases before I played the early games, and I do tend to prefer the older ones! They also come in for a fair bit of criticism about their graphics, but I think, considering the number of locations they manage to cram in, the graphics aren't really all that bad! But, it's their system that I really admire ... as a programmer, it fills me with envy!!

Rod Pike is an excellent atmospheric writer. I can see him developing into a major force in adventuring in the future.

Of the other small producers which I've seen, Tartan Software have released some very good games ... as has David Oya ... FLOOK 1 & 2 were very funny!

PROBE: On the negative side, what would you say have been the worst adventures you've ever played?

TONY: Well, I've played a fair few "donkeys" in my time. Surprisingly enough, most of them have been quite recently. THE CODE is probably the worst of all. It is totally illogical, has instant death locations everywhere, and has an incredibly minute vocabulary! It is truly awful! THE MURAL and GALAXIAS on the FOURMOST compilation were others which ran close for the "worst ever" title. The ones I've

played recently which I would recommend to avoid at all costs include NECRIS DOME, LIFE TERM and STAR WRECK! All boringly short and illogical!!

PROBE: What are your plans for the future of 50/50 Club Software?

TONY: Well, I've got a lot of conversions to complete. NYTHYHEL, THESEUS and THE HERITAGE are all available in PAWEd versions now ... and the PAWEd TEACHER TROUBLE should be finished any day now! Then, as soon as the PAW becomes available for the Amstrad and Commodore 64 machines, I shall be making the games available in those formats.

I've got plenty of brand new work on the go at present also ... "KELEFUE" is a three part fantasy adventure written by Keith Anderson. Part One is already finished, and the rest should be completed before Christmas. "THE GAMES" is a three part sci-fi adventure based on a hostile, artificially created, planet where you must compete against six alien lifeforms in a deadly contest. "CORYA-WARRIOR SAGE 1: THE TRIAL" is a huge fantasy-based game which will come in two 128k parts. You play the part of Corya, a contestant in the "Trial". Placed in a labyrinth of dungeons and passageway ... the winner is the first to get out alive!

Then, there's "STARSHIP COMMAND", a series of sci-fi adventures based on the exploits of a starship crew. I hope to have a four game compilation available under this heading by February 1988. "HERLOCK SHOLMES INVESTIGATES" is a two part spoof game, of which one part is finished, and the other may be completed by Christmas. I am also researching information for "THE WOODEN BOX" which will be "The Files of The Occult (P.I.) 2" ... the follow up to NYTHYHEL ... and also for "FEDERATION OF SPACE", a disc-based sci-fi series.

I'd really like to do some tie-in titles ... I have a whole host of ideas for games based on films and books ... but, I doubt if I'll ever be able to afford to purchase the game rights to any of them ... which is a pity!

I could also do with recruiting someone who has a knowledge of machine code to help me with my games. I program in BASIC (I tried to learn machine code once, but I just don't have the patience for it) and I've written some routines to be called by the PAW when required. However, I fear that they are a bit slow in execution. I therefore need a machine code programmer who can convert these routines for me, and also help me with the development of new routines to help improve the playability and individuality of my games.

If anybody reading this is interested, please get in touch. I'd love to hear from you!

PROBE: Errrr ... well ... yes! "Situations Vacant" isn't a regular feature in our magazine ... but we're willing to try anything once!!!

Tony, what can I say? Many thanks for all your time ... it is most appreciated. Good luck with all your plans ... we look forward to playing some of the games you've mentioned. Thanks again.

Jim O'Keefe

50/50 CLUB SOFTWARE, 17 Larch House, 37 Shawdale Road, Bromford, Birmingham, B36 8DG.

.....
POOLING RESOURCES
by Pete Gerrard
.....

Strombrigner the Grey and Dimli Gloing both peered after the taxi as it made its way back, presumably into the centre of Wigan from whence it came. There it would no doubt join one of the many taxi ranks which, almost on a weekly basis, changed their location, much to the never-ending confusion of the population of this northern town. Of these matters, the wizard and the dwarf knew nothing.

"I wonder why he wouldn't accept any money?" asked the wizard of no-one in particular. "I was prepared to pay his tariff."

"Axe," grunted the dwarf, as if that settled everything. It probably did.

"Come on," I said, "I'm not standing out here in the rain all day."

I walked towards the pub, and Strombrigner and Dimli followed on behind. Dimli, I knew, would not be the first to the bar, despite his ferocious thirst. There was the matter of paying for the drink, and if the dwarf's arms were short then his pockets were very deep. The wizard would, on occasion, offer to pay, but those occasions were few and far between.

Once inside the pub, I steeled myself for the inevitable suspicion which would greet the two new arrivals. It always happened whenever we entered a pub that had not seen them before, and I was grateful for the fact that I, at least, had been served here several times in the past. We were in 'The Venture', a pub some way outside the main town of Wigan, but it was notable for something other than its geographical location and the fact that it contained a pool table. It was the pub favoured by Sandra Sharkey, and as the wizard had requested at our last meeting, I had arranged for him to meet the editor of the magazine that published the tales of his exploits. Strombrigner, however, knew nothing of this. He only knew that he was being stared at with disbelief by the barmaid, and removed his battered wimple in an olde-worlde gesture of courtesy.

"Good morrow fair maiden," he began, carefully replacing his hat, "your eyes are like a gilded rose that greets the dawn with -"

"What do you want?" she snapped.

"Er, three pints of bitter please," stammered the wizard, in some confusion. He turned to me for an explanation of the barmaid's behaviour, which I would have thought was fairly obvious. It's not every day that a wizard and a dwarf walk into a pub and ask for service. The drinks arrived, and much to my amazement Strombrigner paid.

"Where did you get the money from?" I whispered.

"A horse called 'Rhyme 'n' Reason; 3 o'clock Sandown, yesterday."

I hadn't reckoned on the wizard being a gambling man, but accepted his story nevertheless. We took the drinks and sat down at a table fairly close to the bar. Dimli was not one for travelling unnecessary distances where drink was concerned. After offering the wizard a cigarette, which he proceeded to smoke through his pipe with his usual dignity and aplomb, calmly depositing three linked smoke rings over the dart board in the process, we relaxed.

"Well, Master Peter, what brings us to this establishment?" Strombrigner asked.

"Wait and see," I replied, tapping the side of my nose with my index finger, "wait and see. We're meeting someone."

"A Balrog!" Strombrigner suspected a trap, Dimli gripped the handle of his axe with exaggerated anger, but I soon calmed them down.

"Someone you've wanted to meet," I said to the wizard. "Someone, in fact, that you asked me to arrange a meeting with. That person will be here shortly."

Strombrigner contemplated the information. "Harry the Fence?" he queried.

"No, not Harry the - ah, here she is." I waved towards the entrance to the bar, causing wizard and dwarf to look in that direction. There, looking around to see who was in, stood Sandra Sharkey. Seeing me, she smiled and walked over. A muttered "aark!" escaped from the wizard's lips, but beyond that he said nothing. I decided to perform the introductions.

"Strombrigner, Dimli, this is Sandra Sharkey. Sandra, meet a wizard and a dwarf, Strombrigner the Grey and Dimli Gloing respectively."

At this Strombrigner stood up, then bowed low. "Honoured, ma'am," he said, offering his hand. Sandra shook it, and the wizard sat down again. Then it was Dimli's turn. He also stood up, bowed, causing his beard to scrape the floor and said, "Dimli Gloing at your service," before sitting down once more.

"Strombrigner got the drinks in," I said, causing the wizard to cast a quick look of annoyance at me. However, he got up and politely asked Sandra what she wanted to drink. "Coke, please, ice and lemon." Wearing a perplexed frown the wizard bought the drink. It must have been a long time since he had ordered anything non-alcoholic. He returned, handed the drink to Sandra, and when everyone was seated again he glanced at the small case that she was carrying.

"What is that?"

"Pool cue," replied Sandra, opening it to reveal a two-piece cue. "Just thought someone might like a game," she continued, smiling broadly.

At the sight of the cue Strombrigner grew very interested. "What sort of tree does it come from?"

"Tree?" It was Sandra's turn to look perplexed. "I don't know. Why?"

"Just wondering. May I?" The wizard held out a hand, and Sandra passed the case over to him. He screwed the two halves of the cue together and walked over to the nearby table, where someone had left three red balls after presumably losing a game. With all the air of a seasoned professional he chalked the tip of the cue, placed the white ball on the table, and expertly pocketed the three reds before returning to our little group.

"Where did you learn to play like that?" I asked him.

He was smiling modestly. "Oh, I play every now and again, when the occasion arises. Nice cue," he said, returning it to Sandra. After his little display of pool playing he was in a good mood. "Master Peter tells me that you are the one who publishes our tales. Would you like another for your archives?"

"Oooh yes," said Sandra, eyes wide open in anticipation. "What've you been doing? Was it dangerous? How did you get there? Who was --"

"My dear lady," chortled the wizard, "one question at a time please. And, I think, more ale. Your turn I believe, Master Peter." He drained his glass and handed it to me, Dimli did likewise, and after discovering that Sandra wasn't yet ready for another drink I purchased three more pints of bitter. The barmaid was a lot friendlier this time, perhaps seeing Sandra talking to the two newcomers had made her think that they might be all right after all, and I was served cheerfully and efficiently. I carried the drinks back to the table, and after a careful sip Strombrigner leant back and assumed an air that I had seen several times before. There was a tale in the offing.

"It was a long time ago," he began, glancing at the dwarf, who was studying an ancient golf club on the wall as if weighing up its potential as a weapon, "long before you were born. We of the wizards' guild had recently discovered a spell of some importance that had long been thought lost. A powerful spell, and consequently the scroll containing that power is well guarded in the land where wizards lurk. It is, you see, a time travelling spell."

At that Sandra's eyes opened even wider. "Oh! I love time travel!" she exclaimed, "who found the scroll?"

The wizard had been momentarily disturbed by the interruption, but at the question he coughed delicately and attempted to look modest, but failed. "I did," he said, "it was a great honour. Where was I?"

"Time travel, a story of long ago," I prompted him.

"Ah yes." A smile arrived on Strombrigner's face as he continued his narrative. Dimli glanced once or twice at the wizard as the tale continued, but otherwise added little to the story. It was, however,

one in which he featured with some degree of prominence.

Long ago (continued Strombrigner), there had been tales of a great dwarf uprising in the area around what we now know to be South Cadbury Castle, in the region that ancient legend regards as Camelot.

"Chocalot!" interjected Sandra. The wizard looked at her with a keen eye, but decided against a retort and carried on with the story.

Strombrigner had, in fact, been to Camelot, and promised to tell us all about it one day, although the story would apparently be long in the telling. He got on with the matter in hand.

This revolt amongst the dwarves was led by one of Dimli's multi-great ancestors, one Feebli Gloing, and it was something of a shock for Dimli to be confronted with one of his own ancestors. Feebli, however, took it in his stride and laughed heartily at the sight of his yet-to-be-conceived descendant. "Aye, once a Gloing always a Gloing," he chuckled, looking at Dimli keenly. "Come to help us out lad? Could do with a wizard's help round here."

At this Strombrigner announced his presence to the mighty dwarf, and promised to help in any way that he could. Feebli was plainly delighted, and welcomed the wizard into their fold. He began to explain their predicament.

One of the local villagers, a certain Frank N. Stein, had been studying developments at Stonehenge and had decided that he was going to build a model of it in one of the nearby fields. To save on wear and tear, and due to a lack of large blocks of stone in the surrounding countryside, he would build his model out of wood and call it Woodhenge. Sheep would graze in the centre of it to keep the grass cropped. For many months Frank had laboured away on the development of this mighty artefact, enlisting the help of the dwarves, and once it had finished they had all been present at the unveiling ceremony.

Frank had described it thus: "a monument to our times, the first wooden observatory and com-pu-ter (he had pronounced the word slowly) combined. With this superb example of modern architecture we will be able to predict the rising of the sun, follow the progress of the stars, and greatly enhance the stature of the village."

For some time all had gone according to plan, but of late, trees used in the manufacture of Woodhenge were producing incorrect results, the wooden computer's bark was plainly worse than its byte, and the dwarves were up in arms about this. They wouldn't have minded if it had worked, but now! They planned to tear the whole thing down, but G Frank enlisted the help of villagers from miles around in order to protect what he fondly regarded as his property. The dwarves were outnumbered, they summoned up hordes and hordes of dwarves from other regions, and the last great battle was about to commence. In order to ensure victory, and to see the wooden folly reduced to so much ash and charcoal, they had called on one of the local wizards to help. He in turn had sent a signal echoing down through time, and with the mighty scroll to help them Strombrigner and Dimli had come to answer

the call.

Feebli concluded his tale, and ended with a warning to the wizard. "That scroll must not fall into the hands of the villagers. A niche in time shall not save Stein." With those words echoing in his ears, Strombrigner had consulted Dimli as to what they might do in order to destroy Woodhenge, whilst at the same time preventing much unnecessary bloodshed and ill-feeling between the villagers and the dwarves. It was a delicate moment in history.

So delicate, in fact, that Strombrigner interrupted his own tale in order to call for a round of drinks to be purchased. I was about to go to the bar, in the sure knowledge that Dimli would not be paying, when Sandra pre-empted me and offered to buy the drinks herself. "What a story!" she exclaimed, heading off towards the bar.

"Are you making all this up?" I hissed at the wizard.

"Not at all, Master Peter, not at all," he assured me, although the twinkle that had appeared in his eyes left me with just the teensiest sense of doubt.

Sandra returned with the drinks, those of us who smoked did so, and Strombrigner returned to his tale.

It was (he said) an awkward decision to have to make.

His heart told him to side with the dwarves, after all, Dimli was one of his staunchest friends and loyal supporters, and Feebli was an ancestor of his. On the other hand, his head told him that the villagers were probably in the right, and that they were making strenuous efforts to make the village a better and more prosperous place to live in. It was, he repeated, an awkward decision.

"What did you do?" whispered Sandra, awe written all over her face.

There was only one thing that could possibly be done, continued the wizard, and that was to see fair play on both sides. If the dwarves could be made to appreciate that Woodhenge, when functioning properly, did have a useful purpose to fulfill, then they would leave it alone. If the villagers could be made to appreciate that the dwarves had a point in only wanting a Woodhenge that worked correctly, then they would leave the dwarves alone.

Thus it remained for Strombrigner and Dimli to find out what was wrong with Woodhenge, the first computer built of trees, and correct it before battle could commence. That would be several hours away and Strombrigner had, needless to say, developed a rather cunning plan for achieving both aims at once.

"This involved great study of the area," said Strombrigner, "we had to examine every branch and fork most carefully, the ground underneath the main trees was pored over in the most minute detail, we poked around everywhere, and then I found the solution to the problem. It was obvious what was wrong, and so Dimli and I had to go about correcting matters in the two hours that remained to us."

"And what precisely did you do?" I asked, with as much patience as I could muster, while the wizard paused to draw on his pipe. Sandra leant forward, so as not to miss a word of the saga.

Eventually Strombrigner was ready, and concluded his tale. "We consulted with a nearby farmer, and with great aid from Dimli we cleared away an extra area at the back of the trees, a kind of paddock I suppose, and fenced it in. An expansion area for the computer, you might call it."

"And then what?" breathed Sandra, agog with excitement.

"We filled it full of sheep, of course!" exclaimed the wizard, as if it were the perfectly logical and obvious thing to do.

"But why?" I protested, "Why more sheep? I thought it already had some."

"My dear fellow," said Strombrigner, smiling in my general direction, "don't you see? Too many female sheep, and we had to get the computer working in order to placate the dwarves and the villagers. I thought I'd explained all that."

"No, no, why build something at the back of this computer built out of trees, and then fill it full of sheep?"

"A stroke of genius, Master Peter, a veritable stroke of genius. We filled it full of sheep because it was obvious what was required to get the computer working properly. It needed more rams!"

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SERIALISED SOLUTIONS

KARYSSIA - Alf Baldwin - Spectrum

Part 2.

Enter the passcode XAOR and you find you are on the road out of Sutrinan after having been thrown out of the town by the guards. Go N, E, E, N, N, N, N, and you come to a Guardhouse. You hear one of the guards say "My brother in Sutrinan sent me a Silver Falcon Amulet". Go W into the guardhouse and you see the amulet. GET AMULET and EXAMINE AMULET to see if it is the one stolen from you. It bears the words "Ornithia Ostrania" so you know that it is the same one.

Go E, S, S, S, S, W, W, N, W, N, to a clearing in the forest. A large hawk attacks you and you are badly injured. Use the spell on the amulet and say HAWK ORNITHIA OSTRANIA. The hawk stops attacking and settles in a nearby tree. There is a large tree in the clearing which stands out from the others. EXAMINE TREE and you make out the outline of a door.

OPEN DOOR, and ENTER TREE and you find yourself on a winding staircase inside the hollow tree. Go D, N, and you are in a large room where a hermit is sitting at a table. Say HERMIT HELLO, he has not had a visitor for many moons and is delighted to see you. He gives you a present of a Golden Skull charm. Go S, U, U, back to the clearing, then S, E, N, N, W. You see a fallen log and when you EXAMINE LOG you find a small crystal. As you take it, your body trembles and you suddenly feel more able and alert.

Go E, N, W, to a wide pleasant glade and you meet Falcassia, the mistress of woods and birds. She says, "I know all about you warrior. You intend to kill the Queen, and may you succeed for she is evil. But, be careful, if you are caught, you will be executed beyond a doubt. This may help you." She casts a spell and you feel much more skillful. She observes that you have a golden skull charm and says "It may prove useful to make a sacrifice of that, the place of sacrifice is not far from here. Go E, S, S, E, and you come to a cluster of willow trees. You see a Pentacle on a large slab of stone. DROP CHARM ONTO PENTACLE and there is a blinding flash. The charm has vanished and you are now carrying a pair of doubleswords.

Go W, W, W, E, E, N, N, N, N, E to the Merchant's Trading Post. KILL MERCHANT, he puts up a good fight but you gain the upper hand and he flees in terror. GET FRIENDSHIP SPELL and GET AMETHYST, and return W, S, S, S, S, W, W, N, N, N, N, W to the glade. GIVE AMULET to Falcassia. She is delighted to get the silver falcon back and says, "I will help you in return. My best eagle will take you to the mountains in Arduarin. This will save you days of travel." As she speaks, you are lifted by powerful talons and taken to the edge of Firken Forest in Arduarin. The Altivian mountains are to the north and among them you can see a large castle.

Go N, W and you come to a small cottage. A sign says "Trespassers will be sawn up", but go W, into the cottage anyway. Trast, the owner is there, and it is clear from the sign that he is unfriendly. CAST FRIENDSHIP SPELL, and he becomes eager to help you. He takes you downstairs to an underground river.

You climb into a boat and Trast takes you downstream to a huge castle. He then sails down the moat and back along the river. The drawbridge is guarded so go S, to a mountain track, where you see the entrance to a cave. A guard is here so KILL GUARD, then EXAMINE GUARD and you find a Darksight spell. CAST DARKSIGHT SPELL and you can now see in the dark. Go E, E, N, through the caves and tunnel to a small wood, then W, to a rock face. The Amethyst of Truesight enables you to see an opening to the west. Go W, and you find yourself in a tunnel leading north. A portcullis falls behind you and the amethyst crumbles into dust.

Go N, N, W and you fall into a sunken room, with the exit now 15 feet above your head. EXAMINE DRAWINGS, they tell of Arduarin's first King, Darenon, and you make out the words "Doracin Recaya". GET BOW, GET ARROW, GET DIAMOND and GET SCROLL. As you read the scroll, it breaks up and you are transported up and out of the room.

Go E, D, to a large low room. Here a Fire Sprite breathes fire at you, the flames miss you by inches and set light to the torch arrow you are carrying. SHOOT SPRITE, the burning arrow pierces its flesh and it explodes in a blinding burst of flame. Go N, N, W, W, S, W, to a cell, where you see a prisoner chained to the wall. Say PRISONER HELP, and he says "Help? Well, all I can remember is that the altar will open if you hold the right charm, but I can't remember what you are supposed to say."

Go E, N, E, N, E, S, W, to a small alcove and GET RUBY, then E, S, to the edge of a pit. This pit is not booby-trapped so JUMP ACROSS PIT and go E, E, N, W, to the Room of Confusion. GET WISHBONE and return W, S, W, W, to the pit. JUMP ACROSS PIT, and go N, N, W, S, W, W, to a Disused Sanctum where you see an Altar. Remembering what the prisoner said, and the words in the drawing, say ALTAR DORACIN RECAPA. There is a blinding flash, the altar opens and you see a sapphire. GET SAPPHIRE and go E, E, N, N, W, S, to a Mysterious room. EXAMINE GARBOYLE and you find an emerald in its left hand.

Go N, E, S, E, E, to an alcove where you see a pentagram on the ground. EXAMINE PENTAGRAM and you see the words "Astara Ordania" in the centre. Remember this spell, you will need it when you finally meet up with Karyssia.

Go W, N, to a junction, you are attacked by an Orc but you defeat him easily, then E, to the Orc's home. GET TOPAZ and go W, W, N, to a Mystical Room, once an Alchemist's study. A portcullis smashes down behind you and you are trapped, for there are no other exits.

You see five golden chalices on a boulder, each tinted a different colour. EXAMINE CHALICES and you see that they are arranged from left to right in the order, red, green, yellow, blue and white. These are the colours of the gems you are carrying, so PUT RUBY IN RED CHALICE, PUT EMERALD IN GREEN CHALICE, PUT TOPAZ IN YELLOW CHALICE, PUT SAPPHIRE IN BLUE CHALICE, PUT DIAMOND IN WHITE CHALICE. The gems vanish as you put them into the chalices, and as you put the last one in, the floor collapses and you fall through into another room. Go U, the stairway. As you reach the top, you feel a blow on your head and you black out.

You awake to find yourself chained to the wall in a dungeon. Karyssia, Sindowa and the gaoler stand before you. Sindowa, the court wizard, had used a spell to read your mind, and they had been waiting for you. Karyssia tells you that you will be executed tomorrow.

This is the end of Part 2. The passcode to Part 3 is LOXA.

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PLUNDERED HEARTS - Commodore - Mandy Rodrigues

Part 1.

It looked as if there was no-one I could trust. Captain Davis had seemed so charming right up until the pirate attack on our vessel. Then suddenly he had shown his true colours. He fully intened to use me as a diversion for the pirates while he made his own escape. He had dragged me into his cabin and thrown me onto the bed. "There you will stay for the rest of your short life." He grinned, "Your beautiful body will keep the pirates busy for quite a while whilst I get away!"

I was so shocked and horrified that I could only lie there frozen with terror as he left me, locking the door behind him.

After a moment I was galvanised into action. I wouldn't just lie on the bed whilst the sounds of the battle raged above me and wait for what might happen! I got out of the bed and looked around for some sort of weapon to use in my defence. The cabin was almost bare but, upon looking under the bed, I discovered a coffer and dragged it out. It was small but heavy and I clutched it to my bosom thankfully. It was firmly locked so I couldn't open it to see what lay inside.

After a while the sounds from the decks above seemed to indicate that the pirates were gaining the upper hand and I trembled to think of my fate.

Suddenly the door splintered and flew open to admit an evil looking pirate! He reached out for me with his filthy bloodstained hands. I was terrified for a moment as he staggered towards me then, from goodness knows where, I found some courage. I raised the coffer and brought it down with all my might upon his head. It took two blows to knock him unconscious and I was just about to turn and run when another form filled the doorway.

A tall pirate gazed at the crumpled form on the floor and at myself clutching the coffer with my breast heaving with the effort. To my amazement he gave a low bow and introduced himself. He told me that he was Captain Jamison otherwise known as The Falcon and that he had been sent by my father to rescue me! I couldn't believe it! But he handed me a missive from my father to prove it. I read the missive and then gazed up at Jamison. He was so handsome that I felt weak at the knees as I looked into his smiling face.

"Will you entrust yourself into my care My Lady?" he asked gently. I don't know why but in that moment I knew that I could trust this man with my life and without hesitation I nodded.....(to be continued)

CURSE OF THE 7 FACES - Spectrum - Doreen Bardon
GET NOTE - READ NOTE - DROP NOTE - GET CAN - SAY SLAB - S - MOVE SLAB
- D - SE - GET PILLS - GET KEYS - NW - U - N - SAY SLAB - E - S - S -
E - NE - S - SW - NW - SW - E - NE - GET TORCH - S - N - LOOK IN
MIRROR - S - SE - EXAMINE HOLE - GET SPADE - SW - DIG - GET WAND -
WAVE WAND - N - NE - GET POLE - SW - W - SW - GET STONES - S - THROW
STONES - GET KNIFE - W - NE - E - INSERT POLE - TURN POLE - SW - NW -
CUT SHEET - GET DISC - N - SE - S - W - INSERT DISC - GET CROWN - E -
TURN POLE - N - GIVE CROWN

.....

ACHETON - Amstrad - Lorna Paterson
NORTH, GET ALL (LAMP, KEYS, CAN AND BOTTLE), NORTHWEST, LIGHT LAMP,
GET AXE, SOUTHEAST, EXTINGUISH LAMP (off), SOUTH, EAST, EATS,
CLIMBTREE (You'll be asked 'which tree?' - Answer SOUTH), DOWN, DOWN,
EAST EAST, LIGHT LAMP (on), EAST, GET CASKET, WEST, WEST, OFF, NORTH,
OPEN CASKET, GET COAT, SOUTH, EAST, ON, SOUTH, FILL BOTTLE, SOUTH
(You are now in the Slab Room which is the central point of the game)
DROP ALL BUT LAMP AND KEYS, SOUTH, SOUTHWEST, OPEN MANACLES, GET
MANACLES, DROP KEYS, SOUTHWEST, SOUTH, DIG, THROW MANACLES,
SOUTHWEST, UP, WEST, DROP LAMP, JUMP, GET VIOLIN, JUMP, GET LAMP AND
MACE, SOUTH, GET MATCHES, DOWN, EAST, EAST, GET STATUE, WEST, SOUTH,
GET PILLOW, NORTH, NORTHWEST, GET PEARLS AND DAGGER, NORTH,
NORTHEAST, NORTH, DROP ALL BUT LAMP, SOUTH, GET KEYS, NORTH

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.....

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SANDRA'S CHATLINE

If you have any queries about your subscriptions or you fancy a chat then give me a ring on 0942 217044 between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on a Saturday morning or 7 p.m and 9 p.m. on a Sunday evening.

I'm sorry but this is not a helpline. If you need help in an adventure then please ring one of our volunteers listed below.

TELEPHONE HELPLINE

(Spectrum)

ALF BALDWIN Tel: 0452 500512 - Monday to Saturday - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
MIKE WADE Tel: 0642 763793 - Monday to Friday - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.
JACK HIGHAM Tel: 0925 819631 Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon. - 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.
WALTER POOLEY Tel: 051 933 1342 - calls at any reasonable time.
DOREEN BARDON Tel: 065 382 509 - calls at any reasonable time.

(BBC)

BARBARA BASSINGTHWAIGHTE Tel: 0935 26174 - Any day - 10a.m. to 10p.m.

(Commodore)

MANDY RODRIGUES Tel: 0492 77305 - Mon. to Sun. up to 10.30 p.m.

(Spectrum and Amstrad)

GRAHAM WHEELER Tel: Bath 0225 26919 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. any day.
SUE BURKE Tel: 061 653 0005 - Monday to Sunday - 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

(Amstrad)

DOUG YOUNG Tel: 01 681 5068 - Evenings Mon to Fri anytime weekends.
ISLA DONALDSON Tel: 041 954 0602 - Any day - 12 a.m. to 12 p.m.
JOAN PANCOTT Tel: 0305 784155 - Any day - Noon to 10 p.m.
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