

ADVENTURE PROBE

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Adventure Probe is distributed during the first week of the month. COPY DATE for contributions, advertisements etc is 14th of the previous month.

CONTRIBUTIONS

All contributors sending in material between 14th of the previous month and up to copy date will have their names entered in the Hall of Fame for the subsequent month. CONTRIBUTIONS are always needed and ALL readers are invited to send in items for every section. Anything from a single hint or tip to a full blown article are all very welcome. Reviews of the adventures you have played are especially welcome. Please check first to see if a review has already appeared. Don't worry if you cannot send in typed material as handwritten is just as welcome. If you send in contributions for more than one section please use different sheets and make sure you include your name and computer. If you do send in items ready typed then please use A4 with a nice margin all round with text being approx 70 chars across and 60 lines per page. Items can be sent in on disc (all discs will be returned). The Editor is able to print out from Amstrad CPC6128 (Tasword or Protex), CG4/128 on (Easyscript or Mini Office II) or Atari ST (First Word Plus). Sorry no printer for the Spectrum. If you send in items for the IN-TOUCH section please clearly mark which are adventures, utilities, arcade etc.

POSTAL ADDRESS

Please send all correspondence, subscriptions etc to the Editor: MANDY RODRIGUES, ADVENTURE PROBE, 67 LLOYD STREET, LLANDUDNO, GWYNEDD, LL30 2YP. If writing from overseas please add UNITED KINGDOM.



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HALL OF FAME



My sincere thanks to all the following readers who took the time and trouble to send in contributions during the past month:

Lol Gakes, June Kove, Jim Struthers, Robin Matthews, Pat Winstanley, Tony Browne, Ron Rainbird, Martin Leverton, Maureen Barton, Ian Brown, Jay Honosutomo, Hugh Walker, Nic Rumsey, Tony Melville, Paul Rigby, The Wayfarer, Barbara Bassingthwaighte, Bob Adams, Doreen Bardun, Sue Roseblade, Phil Glover, David Guest, The Grue! Anonymum, Mark Eltringham, Neil Shipman, Ted Bugler, Vicky Jackson, Keith Burnard, Steve McLaren and Alan Davis.

Special thanks to Barbara Bassingthwaighte for this months lovely cover picture.

EDITORIAL



Welcome to Volume 4, issue 11 of Adventure Probe.

I had a visitor again this month. Grue came to spend the day with us, and I survived the experience! He was not wearing his cap either, but I am not going to tell you whether he is bald or not, I'll leave you guessing. He brought a video with him showing a programme about Infocom and showing their headquarters in Boston. All I can say is that my flabber has never been so gashed at the size of the huge building and the amount of equipment they had there. I also had the opportunity of seeing one of the Infocomics on the Commodore. We had a great time. This month I also had the opportunity of playing an adventure, LOOM by Lucasfilm. I must say that, despite the poor reviews that I have seen of this game, I enjoyed it very much. I will write a review of this for the next issue. I have also had the opportunity of playtesting a new adventure by our very own Bob Adams! I won't tell you much about this yet, as it wouldn't be fair, but I will tell you that I couldn't playtest it properly the first time around because I was laughing so much. I had to calm down and re-do it a second time. It really is hilariously funny.

The helpline has been very busy this month too. This has caused some hilarious moments, during the half-term holidays the children were reduced to tears of laughter when they heard me say, in response to a query about The Boggit, "Hold on a minute and I'll go and find out exactly what to do with the marmalade sandwich." My apologies to the caller for the sounds of unseemly hilarity at my end of the phone. Apart from calls for help, I do get other enquiries. I have calls for help when equipment goes wrong, enquiries about programming and I even had someone ring me to tell me they had bought a fridge and asking what setting they should use on the thermostat and I even get the occasional call asking for help on a crossword and people wanting answers to enter for competitions! There is never a dull moment.

This issue of Probe is another bumper issue with 52 pages (that's 12 more than there should be), to make up for the amount of advertisements and to ensure that you miss any of your favourite sections. The letters pages, as you probably expected, are very lively following the letter by Paul Rigby in the last issue. I was inundated with replies to that and unfortunately couldn't fit them all in, so my apologies to anyone whose letter didn't appear this issue. The debate on what an interactive character really is, following June Rowe's letter, begins this issue too with an article by Alan Davis. I know I may seem a bit premature, but remember that I work one month in advance, but I would like to remind you that the next issue will be the Christmas issue, so I would be very grateful if you could all start thinking up some nice Christmassy contributions so we can have a nice festive issue.

My apologies to anyone who has had to wait to receive back issues, solutions or adventures from me this month. I have had a couple of weeks laid low by a nasty infection which, although not serious, made me feel that work was just beyond me for a time. I am catching up now though and hope to be up to date within a few days.

Well, I have waffled on as usual and run out of space again, I hope you enjoy this issue and I'll see you all again next month.

Mandy.

REVIEWS



A DARK SKY OVER PARADISE

From Interactive Technology, PO Box 146, Sheffield, S13 7TY
For Atari ST at £7.95, Commodore 64 and Spectrum on cassette £4.99.

Reviewer - TONY BROWNE played on Atari ST

This is a mainly text only adventure, there are two pictures showing the shuttle taking off and landing. The story starts with you on the Space Shuttle on the way to the Moonbase. How did you get here? Well, in the year 2045 the worlds population is out of control and ever expanding. The Fournation (the USA, the USSR, the European Community and China) scientists and free thinkers have come up with a plan to save the world from impending disaster.

The plan is to colonise Mars as an overspill of the Earth and a haven for an Earth without any future. The plan rolled into operation. Many factories producing products with a percentage going to the Fournation, but this was short-lived as things had to be re-appraised but this lowered the Earth into deeper economic recession and threatened to destroy the Plan and put the Earth back into despair. This is where you come into the story.

The month is January and the year is 2062. You are summoned to the Moon which is in crisis, rocked by bombings and intrigue that casts a Dark Sky Over Paradise. The only indication for your being on the Moonbase is a telegram allocating you a living space unit in Accommodation 5 and reporting for clerical duty the following afternoon in Clerical Office 5.

After a full description of how you got to this point you flash back to the shuttle, being quizzed by the Shuttle Hostess. She asks you if you have been to the moon before. If your answer is "yes", after a ramsave and you are heading in any direction the whole game may crash and put you back to the start (a minor bug?). If you answered "no" an ID card comes down and you can alter the information on the card to your own details, which is a nice touch. In fact there are a few nice touches throughout the whole game. Once the shuttle Hostess is satisfied that everything is OK you are back on Moonbase.

At the start of the game the time in the corner of the screen is 8.38pm and each move advances you by one minute, usually, but time moves faster in the dream sequence. The game is very addictive, there is a nice feel to it that makes you want to keep going back for more. The atmosphere is good and keeps you interested.

There is another very nice touch with the Help question. You get a drop down menu of the type of question that you might be stuck on and the answers are in a screen full of possible problems that you might encounter. There are 8 sets of questions with a total of 27 questions in all. You can only ask one question at a time and then you have to go back to the main screen again. This is the first time I have seen this type of help done before.

There is a curfew at 10pm and you have to be in your room by then. I

have yet to discover why my ID card flashes different colours at different times of the day. Once in your room and before you have much time to do anything there you find yourself asleep and in a dream sequence which should enable you to gain 40 points. (I only manage to gain 10 so far). You only have four moves to solve this problem so it is a good place to save to go back to!! The clock on the top also starts off at 9.32am and with the next move it goes to 0/160 DAWN. Strange... The end sequence of this first dream bit gives you a quote from the bible... very strange.

All in all a very good text game. Well written descriptions and a good atmosphere to go with it. I haven't managed to get very far into the game as I would have wanted to but I can't wait to get back for more. I've played games that after a few moves you just don't want to see them again let alone play them again, not so in this case.

The only gripe I have is the size of the print. On my old TV I found it rather tiresome trying to read it. It is only a small point but worth mentioning.

So my friends, I'm off back to the Moonbase to see if I can get any further with this game. I might be some time as it's cold out there and the last time I wrote the last sentence I did get a bit further so I WILL stop and send this review to Mandy so that all you others out there have something in the next Probe!

=====

CAPTAIN KOOK

From Paul Cardin, 3 Lonsdale Villas, Wallasey, Merseyside, L45 4PG.
Available for the Spectrum. Price £3.50 (cassette).

Reviewer - JUNE ROWE played on Spectrum

What would you do, if you were an alien on an exploratory voyage, many years in the future, and you awoke from a cryogenic sleep to find that your space-craft was on fire? What is worse, the abrupt awakening by the alarm systems, has caused the cryogenic systems to retain part of your memory, so you can't even remember how to run the ship.

Your first problem is, of course, discovering how to put out the fire. This isn't too difficult, but it causes another problem - your ship lurches and veers off course. You can discover, by examining the energy conversion plant, that "supply" has fed in enough transmuted saturnium for your present mission, but where will you land now?

Forgetting that for the moment, if you wander down to the auto-navigation room, you will find that the main gyroscope has lost its equilibrium - if you can't fix that, chop-chop, your ship will eventually break up and you are dead!

Mind you, you have a perfectly adequate 60 moves to find out what to do, but if you do get killed, for instance by trying to use the teleport too soon, you will still be able to smile at the verse which comes up on the screen...

The pad erupts in a ball of flame -
With a blood-curdling squeal, you do the same.
A kindly explosion then kills all feeling -
But who's going to scrape you off the ceiling?

Talking about verses, there is a two-page poem which comes with the game. This poem is well worth reading - I found it very thought provoking.

The introduction to the game, which comes up on the screen after it is loaded, is a work of art in itself.

It sets the scene in a most atmospheric manner, and please note... It also gives you some information which should be written down for future reference.

I found this game very addictive - even though I repeatedly became suddenly dead, I just had to go back to it to keep trying to find out how not to be killed. RAMSAVE helps a lot with this, and the abbreviation X for EXAMINE is also a welcome part of the program.

Part One all takes place on the space-ship, and there is a lot of SF jargon in the game, but people who don't generally like SF games (myself included) should not be put off by this - all the "technical" words are understandable. If you can't immediately understand a word, a little thought soon explains it.

For instance, I found a videorb - I never heard of one of those, but as I had already discovered a V-D Drome, with a large screen all round the walls and a shallow round cavity in the centre of the room, it wasn't difficult to figure out that if I used the videorb correctly, some information would come up on the screen.

Don't let what you have read so far encourage you to think that this is an easy game! It definitely is not! If you get stuck and type in HELP, you will get a response that tells you there is no help until you can work the radio.

And where IS the blessed radio? Ah, that would be telling!

I have only played part one of this game, having been sent a solution for the purpose of writing this review.

What is in part two? Well, I know that you have to land on Easter Island, but I put that part of the solution in a sealed envelope without reading it - I want to play it myself! However, I have every confidence that it will be just as addictive as the first part.

I nearly forgot to mention that there is a 150 prize for the first person to decipher a morse code message in part one - but let me warn you, this adventure is a real brain-buster!

I would bet an imaginary fiver (can't afford a real one!) that even a genius adventurer like Tom Frost (who I have admired ever since he won the prize for completing THE KET TRILOGY!) could not solve this one unaided.

So if you want a game which is a real challenge, send a cheque for £3.50 to Paul Cardin, 3 Lonsdale Villas, Wallasey, Merseyside, L45 4PG.

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CRISPIN CRUNCHY

Written by M and J Trehwella. Price £2. Available for Amstrad CPC464/6128 on cassette. Cheques etc payable to J G Pancott and sent to 78 Radipole Lane, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9RS.

Reviewer - JIM STRUTHERS played on Amstrad CPC464

When I first saw this game I thought "Oh! I don't fancy that, what a strange title!". Please ignore the title if, like me, it puts you off, because beneath it there is a very enjoyable game! Written using GAC it has the usual graphics, shall we say they are suitable. The story goes like this.

You are Crispin Crunchy, secret agent. The mad scientist Doctor Harvey Hinson has developed a Glutron Missile on a small island somewhere in the South Seas. He plans to threaten the World with this deadly weapon. You were sent to the island to steal the firing mechanism for the missile. The plan was then to contact a British submarine waiting off-shore and return with the mechanism. Unfortunately on landing you were captured by patrolling guards and placed in a small cell. This is where the adventure begins.

Can you escape and go on to complete the mission? Well, I thought, I'll have a go! Straight away I was faced with the problem of escaping from the cell and what an enjoyable little puzzle it was too, quite humorous in fact. So I decided this one was going to be a spoof/funny game. However, it was not to be so, there is a touch of humour here and there to give the game a light break. Just what is needed.

The puzzles turned out to be very logical and there is much to solve. When, for instance, I found a pair of knickers I typed in wear knickers, the response was "Don't be kinky!" When I typed in drop knickers, I then got "Alright Cheeky!" It is little touches like this that give the desired "I must finish this game" action.

There is plenty of good original points to like regarding the objects, such as the piece of paper puzzle, the stick the albatron has, the lever in the room, to mention just a few. I won't give any help to readers regarding these puzzles as I think buying the game is a must, and you wouldn't like me to spoil it for you now would you?

Personally I haven't heard of the authors, but Joan Pancott has once again been involved with this and I must mention Lorna Paterson who does a lot of very hard work behind the scenes. They are to be congratulated along with the author for bringing this adventure to Amstraders.

This is the kind of adventure that we crave for. It's a pity that everyone who had an Amstrad didn't make such efforts, myself included. So lucky for us there are two more games on the way by the same team (to be reviewed soon). To this team I say "Keep up the good work". To the rest of us, do yourself a favour.

For £2 this game is highly enjoyable and a must for anyones collection. Look out for others in Joan's list advertised in the last Probe. Buy them up! Simply Magic!

THE BLAG ST

Available from Arresting Software for Atari ST/STE at £7.99 + 50p p&p.
Orders to: G. Atkinson, 60 The Green, Rowlands Castle, Hants. PO9 6AB.

.....1430.HOURS.....ROBBERY.....BARROWS.BANK.....HIGH.
STREET.....WOOLENDON.....

The news came as a breath of fresh air. True enough, I had a posting to a police station now that I'd completed the detective training course, but it was hard to hide my disappointment at being transferred to Woolendon. Although quite a peaceful town, Woolendon is widely known as a quiet place where nothing ever happens out of the ordinary, and because I wanted to prove my worth, this didn't seem like the best opportunity for me - far from it! When the telex spluttered into life, I sighed, thinking this could be a turning point.....

The Blag follows a routine police investigation of a crime with you as Detective Adrian Blunder controlling the investigations. The Blag operates as a conventional adventure (is there such a thing?) with compass directions for movement, having to solve puzzles to gain access to further parts of the adventure and so on; until you come to the inhabitants of Woolendon who go about their business as you would expect. The adventure then takes on an investigative aspect as you converse with each person in a very user friendly way of entering questions in plain English. Piece by piece, the events of the crime come together such that when you have uncovered enough evidence you can go to court and watch the trial unfold.

Starting at Woolendon police station, the desk sergeant is quite unhelpful - and won't even tell you where the night shift hid the ignition key for the station's only police car. Once the key has been found you can DRIVE TO any location, providing that the location is ordinarily accessible, and you will be taken there immediately. This operates in the same manner as the 'GO TO location' found in certain other adventures.

A directory, thoughtfully left next to a telephone, provides a couple of numbers which can be dialled to contact other departments, such as the Dog Handlers and Warrant Office. Dialogue using the telephone is similar to how you question people - interaction in plain English.

When you enter 'ASK person' you are prompted to insert the second disk which causes a different section of code and graphics to be loaded which allow the person-to-person interviewing. No longer are you restricted to one or two variations on 'SAY TO SERGEANT "DROP KEY"'. Instead, dialogues such as the following are quite feasible:

-Where do you live?

"Finchley Lodge, Woolendon."

-What is your date of birth?

"11th November 1942."

-Where were you at 1430?

"I was at home writing letters. In fact one was to your Supt."

-Tell me about Finchley Lodge

"It's my home."

-Do you know Danny Cooper?

"I'm sorry I don't."

As you can see, a high degree of pseudo-intelligence has been written into the conversational aspect of the Blag. For example, without actually meeting a character, you can build a picture of the person by asking others to describe him/her and tell you what they know about them.

A section in the game manual covers the questioning aspect very well, listing most of the words understood by the adventure. A rough count reveals that well over 160 words are available to you.

Accompanying all locations are high quality digitised pictures which are of actual places or buildings (some of them are repeated, though) which fit into the adventure very well. The graphics occupy the central portion of the upper half of the screen while the text scrolls only within the lower half. Graphics are also used when questioning people when you will see a digitised picture of the character's face effectively replacing the location graphic. A footnote in the game manual offers thanks to friends and colleagues of the authors who allowed their photographs to be used in this way - and very effective it is too!

Not only are you spoiled with high quality graphics throughout the locations and questioning scenarios, once you consider that you have collected enough evidence and the suspects have been arrested, you can initiate the closing sequence with the COURT command whereby (after another disk swap) the suspects are put on trial for the robbery. The court room saga is fought out as you watch, with many digitised graphics accompanying the legal proceedings. Depending on the amount of evidence you have collected, you may find several characters being summoned as witnesses to recount what they told you earlier in the adventure - again with the text interspersed with high quality digitised images of the prosecuting and defending barristers following through the legal processes. Eventually the judge sums up and the jury is called upon to deliver verdicts against the suspects. The result is clearly dependent on how strong the prosecution evidence is and additionally gives you the chance of winning a software prize for the first full solution to be sent to the authors - further details are included in the package. If you fail to get a conviction, then the suspects are freed and you must search even harder for more conclusive evidence about the robbery.

However, even with these impressive features, there are one or two rough edges that I was surprised to find. The text has a curious tendency to scroll a location description off the screen before displaying any items present which makes for reading the description a two stage process, although this quirk is removed by changing the text sizes. There are also a couple of spelling errors, including one in the game manual ("there faces" instead of "their faces").

The Blag contains around 800k of code and graphics and was written with the STAC by two serving police officers. The adventure was sent for review on two disks which calls for a disk swap every time you question someone, although I now understand that the adventure may be ordered on one double sided disk for machines with a lmb drive. The majority of the graphics have been digitised with the Rombo Vidi-ST while Degas Elite provides the additional graphic material. As a detective type adventure, the Blag deserves to be a winner (even more so with the pen included in the package - 'I've played the Blag. Have you?'). Very enjoyable.

Reviewed by Paul Brunyee.

FIVE ON A TREASURE ISLAND.

Sam Coupe 256k/512k only.
(Other formats planned for January 1991)
Reviewed by Phil Glover.

At last the Sam Coupe has had an adventure specifically written for it, much to my delight! The story is based firmly on Enid Blyton's first Famous Five book of the same title, and the game (available on disk or tape) is accompanied by a copy of the book to set the scene. I loaded the game after only a quick glance at the instruction sheet. After the loading screen which shows off the Coupe's graphics well, (no Spectrum attribute problems), the first picture is almost instantly drawn with descriptions of other people present, objects present and so on.

I thought the screen layout and slowish input was familiar, and, by reading the instructions more thoroughly, I found that the game had been written by Colin Jordan. Many Spectrum owners may be familiar with Colin's earlier games of Inspector Flukeit or The Great Peepingham Train Robbery, written using his WORLDSCAPE adventure system. The input for this system does seem a bit sluggish, but you soon get used to it, and the positive aspects of WORLDSCAPE soon become apparent. The main strength of the system is the ability to easily swap characters to help you solve problems.

Progress seems quite easy at first, and you can soon visit several locations and see some well-drawn scenes in Sam's wide range of colours. Before long, though, you'll have to swap characters and maybe give or take items off each other, or use a certain person's strength or powers of observation. The book will give you ample clues. Swapping characters may seem daunting but it is very easy to do. It's probably worth trying to play the game with other people, one in each role, so everyone can enjoy the game. I'm sure it'd make a great family game as the problems are fairly straightforward to solve.

The game accepts all the standard inputs, and Sam's function keys have been re-defined as principal directions and keywords, which saves plenty of typing. Ramload and Ramsave are supported, but I found it strange that the Save/Load option was for tape only, not disk. If you have a 256k Sam, you'll need to leave the disk in during the game, as it's about 300k long.

I find that "Five on a Treasure Island" is a pleasure to play, and, after reading the book secretly on the bus to work I think the style and look of the game is in keeping with Enid Blyton's creation. I entered the spirit of the game so much, I didn't even try typing any swear words, even if the characters do say "Ouch" and "Yummy" on occasion! It's hoped that the game will be released on other formats early next year. I hope it is, as us Sam owners are few and far between, and the game deserves a wider market.

Five on a Treasure Island available from:
Enigma Variations, 13 North Park Road, Harrogate, HG1 5PD.
£11.99 on cassette or £14.99 on 3.5" disk



NEWS



A SAD FAREWELL TO THE BONZO BULLETIN

I was saddened to receive the October issue of the Bonzo News and to see that it was the very last issue. Colin Page of Nemesis who has published this lively newsletter for 6 years is moving on to pastures new - namely Canada. Amstrad Meddlers everywhere will be very sad to see him go. Colin, we wish you all the very best for the future. But all is not lost for meddlers! Rescue comes in the form of Carl Surry with his PLAY MATES newsletter which already includes reviews, hints and tips, pokes for infinite lives etc and Carl will include the Bonzo Bulletin within his newsletter in future. If you want to know more about PLAY MATES, subscription rates etc then contact CARL SURRY, 37 Fairfield Way, Barnet, Hertfordshire.

BUGS & AMUSING RESPONSES

BOG OF BRIT

By JIM STRUTHERS played on Spectrum

Input: HELP

Response: VT: To lend strength. To aid. Your Gods are apathetic and a general pain. Makes you think about their function in things. STOP
 PRESS: Try Searching!

ASK GRUE!

Dear Grue!

I am currently playing Infidel. The problem is that I have got my camel to the edge of the water at the oasis but it just won't drink. I have tried pushing its head under and pumping its tail but to no avail. I also have noticed that my camel seems to have three humps. Am I sitting on it the right way round or is it upside down?

Signed Lawrence.

Dear Loz,

This is a typical problem with Infidel. Yes, you're right, the camel does have three humps. All you have to do to talk to a character in the game is to use a comma after his/her/its name. So you would type HUMPHREY, DRINK WATER FROM OASIS and press return. If I were you I would have a drink of water also and stay out of the sun for a bit... What camel?!... What Oasis?!...

Signed GRUE!

(Despite appearances, these questions are genuine ones sent in to Grue so if you have a problem and would like to ask our resident Agony Uncle then you can either write care of Probe or directly to Grue whose address can be found on the telephone helpline page on the inside back cover.....Handy)

INTERACTIVE CHARACTERS - WHAT ARE THEY?

by Alan Davis



"Is the woman who gives you a warm cloak if you mend her leaky roof an interactive character? Is the snake which ignores you after you play a tune to it an interactive character? Is the vicar who unlocks a door for you after you have found his bible an interactive character?" So asks June Rowe in the October issue of Probe, who goes on to comment that she finds this sort of thing in many adventures, but never thinks of them as interactive characters. Er - good question, June!! Here's an attempt at a reply, though not, I'm sure, a complete one.

I think we can get the most obvious and simple response to this question out of the way without further ado. Insofar as any characters occurring in an adventure can offer any kind of interaction with the player, then of course they must be, in some sense, "interactive characters". So, since there's SOME degree of interaction, however small, between the player and June's woman, snake, or vicar, then they must, obviously, be interactive characters. But clearly this isn't what I was really talking about in my article in the September issue. On the contrary, I used there a situation similar to those mentioned by June to point out that this sort of minimal interaction is highly unconvincing in the majority of cases, if the player tries to see beyond the mere "puzzle" aspects of his encounters.

There are a few circumstances in which even very minimal interaction can be pretty convincing, however. A good example which comes to mind is the tooth fairy in "Lords of Time". The interaction here is minimal indeed: the fairy exists merely to offer a puzzle: how to obtain a tooth in order to get the coin, and yet this, in its context, is fine. This - and this only - is exactly what tooth fairies are for "in real life". You don't expect more interaction than this with a tooth fairy. (Actually, you get a bit more than you expect in this game, as you discover if you try to pick up the coin illicitly!)

But let's be honest - such instances are rare. Frankly, I expect more from a vicar than a mere favour in return for his lost bible. He should, at the least, be capable of some sort of conversation. He should at least be aware - or seem to be aware - of changes in the situation around him. He should, in short, seem to have some vitality within the context of the game.

This, then, is the real heart of the question, for me - and here perhaps lies the main difference between June's approach to adventures and my own. June says that she wants "just me playing - I don't want other characters wandering around making a nuisance of themselves." And this is fine. But by contrast, what I want is the illusion of a world which (I might imagine) existed before I switched on my computer, in which characters go about their business whether I'm there or not, and in which any vicars found there will generally behave in a reasonably vicar-like way. Here's the crunch, then: I think that in general I'm more interested in meeting the vicar (assuming he isn't a bore) than solving the puzzle.

How do you make a character seem "alive" in some limited

but convincing sense in an adventure? I think there's more than one approach. One of the most astounding approaches, in my view, was the one taken by Phillip Mitchell in "Sherlock". Now we all know that "Sherlock" had a crippling collection of bugs - but the concept underlying the practical imperfections were simply awe-inspiring in my view. What was so striking was the sense of purpose exhibited by some of the characters, and the sheer depth of interaction, not only with the player, but also between each other. Some of the independent character behaviour was simply breathtaking, producing a most convincing illusion that they knew what they were about and where they were going. Remember those hectic cab rides, chasing Major Ffoulkes? Remember how you could hang around outside Basil Phipps's window, waiting to dash in and rescue the burning note from oblivion? No sense of mere puzzle solving here: he really had left the room, and you had to dive in double quick! Remember Lestrade's purposeful striding around the place, conducting his inquiries? Wonderful, wonderful stuff, tragically ruined by the bugs: indeed, Lestrade failed to be a convincing character because of them.

My own approach to interactive characters has always been rather different - partly through necessity, since games like "Runestone" are based on a completely different concept to Sherlock, in which puzzle-solving plays little part. In such games the challenge lies in exploring the game world, meeting its inhabitants, and coming to terms with the problems (not puzzles) that are encountered on the way. It seems to me that successful interactive characters must seem to show some degree of intelligence in responding to events and circumstances. For example, it should not only be possible for the player to talk to characters, but also the characters themselves should be able to initiate conversation - not only with the player, but also among themselves. These conversations should reflect what is going on at the time: they might refer to their possessions, for instance - or to the player's possessions. They might pick up objects lying about, or pass them among each other for comment. They may have different strengths and weaknesses: in "Runestone" for instance any character could use a bow and arrow, but only one was really good at it; another character had better eyesight than the others - and so on. In such a way, with the right balance, the illusion of a collection of individuals can be created in the player's mind.

There's just one further essential ingredient: the player's willingness to go along with the illusion. This is crucial to the whole thing. What is needed is that willing "suspension of disbelief" which we all employ when we watch a play, or movie. If the player persists in demanding too much, the illusion will fail, naturally. There's no point in looking at a black and white photograph, for instance, and complaining that it isn't coloured: to do so is to miss what it does have to offer, within its limitations. So, in an adventure game, the characters have to be given the benefit of the doubt, initially. In a bad game, they won't convince; in a good one, given that "suspension of disbelief" in the player, they will. It seems there's no cut-and-dried answer to the question "What is an interactive character?" It's more a question of what is believable and what isn't, for a given player. What do others think? June? Anyone?

PC LEISURE SOFTWARE - A VIEW

By ROBIN MATTHEWS

Having recently re-catalogued the various PC products I have been able to assemble it has been interesting to reflect on the "PC Leisure" market. Although my introduction to the PC has been by no means typical, it may provide some interest (and help) to those entering the minefield of PC games software.

The PC is probably the fastest growing machine in the computer games market. With the advent of better and quicker hardware, software companies are at long last being able to compete on an equal footing with 8 bit and other 16 bit formats. In my experience PC users are from a very wide range of backgrounds and expertise, and this short article may be of interest more to the novice user than the battle-hardened games player. The latter tend to have had experience on other formats, or at least have access to a wide range of products on a "sock-it and see" basis from friends. The PC user often has very little computer experience and finds the task of negotiating the minefield of expensive products, shrouded in hyped advertising, a frustrating experience. It seems that more "Turkeys" are purchased by PC users than any other group of users - and of course PC turkeys tend to be more expensive than other turkeys.

My first contact with a PC was a purchase of an Amstrad 1512 mono. This was initially bought to allow the use of Word Processing software. Then an acquaintance gave me a Public Domain version of COLLOSAL CAVE, and at this stage my life was never to be the same. Up until this time my long-suffering wife had only had to contend with the problems of International Rugby, golf, the pub quiz league etc. I have tried to establish whether it is possible to be both a golf-widow and a computer-widow at the same time! From Collosal Cave I came into contact with ROGUE, and then my first "commercial" program, the Rainbird trilogy JEWELS OF DARKNESS. Although I accept that these products are now out-dated and primitive I cannot look back without affection. Life was so simple in those days - Black and White only, no graphics to speak of, programs you could run without reading a manual about the same size as War and Peace first.

But progress - if that is the correct word, followed. The seduction of CGA graphics was the next stage with a trade-in for the original mono screen. Now the late nights started - how could people use mono screens, the cyan and magenta of the second machine took us into another dimension! Other rapid purchases followed and then the first product to cause the all-night sessions, the "I'm just going to spend 5 minutes on the computer", the first "I'll just have one more try...". This was the discovery of Infocom, and in particular HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY.

There are probably only a dozen or so products that I would class as "PC Plus once described as "Games that change your life". HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY is without doubt within this category. Infocom is the equivalent of the British Car Industry and the Austin Mini. Infocom had a profound effect on the software market. Their product was years ahead of its time and a world breaker. Certainly in the UK it was never marketed to its full potential, and is now much lamented. Their attempts to properly capitalise on what they could have achieved was too little, too late. Finally the inventiveness and originality behind those products appear to have been lost in a series of merged and corporate restructuring. Of great

interest is the news from Dave Bishop, one of the guiding lights of rejuvenated Virgin Games, that they hope to be rereleasing certain of Infocom's products. Good one Virgin - they have my total support. More on this company and some exciting releases in a later article.

At this time CGA graphics were more than adequate, being the "standard", EGA being available only at a much heavier cost. Various Public Domain software then came to light and I still remember my amazement at what a superb system P.D. is. I sincerely hope people continue to support rather than abuse this excellent service. With regard to P.D., it is a sign of how much software has advanced to note that the current crop of P.D. Games Software, whether adventures, flight simulators or shoot-em-ups are of a better standard than the commercial software of three years ago. The real advantage of P.D. is giving the novice user access to a massive library of software, both games and applications - enabling someone to get a feel of a type of game or software application at a fraction of the cost of a full-blown commercial program. Even at this stage my level of computer literacy was virtually non-existent, I think I still had to refer to the Amstrad DOS Manual to obtain the correct syntax for format b:!. By the way, did you realise that Amstrad (in common with many other hardware companies) enlisted the help of the author John Le Carre to write their manual. If you re-read the manual knowing this piece of information it becomes obvious!

The next development was the acquisition of the Sierra product KINGS QUEST I. Sierra have over the years produced a quality range of products which has taken full advantage of the hardware available at that time. They have remained at the forefront of the PC Leisure Market, incorporating the use of joysticks, mouse support, EGA, VGA sound cards and now it seems CD Roms. Other than the excellent KINGS QUEST, SPACE QUEST and LEISURE SUIT LARRY series, single titles such as COLONELS BEQUEST are particularly highly voted. I do have a level of concern with regard to the ability to maintain the level of playability, and perhaps their recent decision to re-vamp KINGS QUEST I in VGA and Sound Board reflects their own concern.

It was probably the Sierra range that prompted the next hardware upgrade - that being to a hard-disk machine. Having made the psychological decision to upgrade (again!) I decided not just to upgrade the hard disk but also to upgrade the graphics to EGA. I accordingly part-exchanged this time for an Amstrad 1640 ECD with 20 mb harddisk. I must stress at this time I had had no problem of any nature with the various Amstrad machines. However, the 1640 proved to be a different story. The short version of this story is of the PC being replaced twice due to a faulty disk and a faulty disk controller. After a series of battles which Lord British himself would have been proud, the third 1640 eventually arrived and has now given two years of sterling service. The 1640 has certain "bells and buttons" such as extended memory, a joystick card and joystick and an Ad Lib Sound Card. I can thoroughly recommend this machine especially with the above configuration as an admirable games machine - in my prejudiced view as good as all other formats. The only reservation would be the speed of graphics for the very demanding type of program, but I cannot justify the probable upgrade cost of some £400 for these graphics. If buying a new machine, subject to price difference VGA graphics are definitely worth considering, but then if you are having VGA you should probably have at least an 80286 machine! The argument goes on and on....

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THE MULTIVERSE OF FANTASY FICTION

REMINISCENCES OF AN EXPERIENCED (I.E. AGEING) BOOK TRAVELLER, Y-CLEFT
RON RAINBIRD

Articles devoted entirely to Fantasy Novels appear to be rarely touched upon in Adventure magazines, at least in my experience, which seems a rather sorry omission when the strong affinity between the plots of adventures (magical) in computer games and those of the printed word is considered.

Fantasy (and SF) books engender a particular "band of brothers and sisters" because, in my estimation, it takes a special sort of outlook to become a fantasy "freak", which is how I have often been regarded by that large group of mundanians who dismiss such works of imagination as complete rubbish. However, in the years that I have browsed in bookshops I have been very pleased to see the expansion of many Fantasy/Scifi sections and, in Manchester and London at least, the opening of specialist shops devoted entirely to such books. I began reading Fantasy and SF stories during what some people (critics, mainly) refer to as The Golden Age of Science Fiction, although I feel that today's output is just as golden and, in some cases, even more so. I cannot remember the actual title of the first such yarn I read, but circa 1936, I remember obtaining an American pulp magazine titled WEIRD TALES and virtually wolfing it down in one sitting - a new, dreadful (but wonderful) world had be revealed to me. The price of the magazine, when it could be found, was 6d (2.5p for the post-decimalisation ones among you) and regular contributors were writers such as P.H.Lovecraft, Robert E.Howard, Robert Block and many more whose names were later to become legendary in the Fantasy and Horror Fields. I made a point of buying every issue of WEIRD TALES, ASTOUNDING STORIES, THRILLING WONDER STORIES and the fantasy magazine "par excellence", UNKNOWN, which contained some of the best Fantasy stories I have ever read - or so I thought at the time.

In the 1940's, there seemed to be a dearth of Fantasy stories - in my experience, anyway - it was the era of Chandler and Fleming. During that time I did manage somehow to get a few American paperbacks (the pulps had disappeared) and those that spring to mind are THE STAR KINGS, which I found un-put-downable, by Edmond Hamilton, WHAT HAD UNIVERSE by Frederic Brown which is a "must" in anybody's language and the classic SLAN by A.E.Van Vogt. About that time, I found TIGER, TIGER by Alfred Bester, which I still rank among the top ten of all the books, Fantasy or otherwise, which I have read. Subsequent readings of this book merely confirm my original reaction and both my sons endorse my view, although I am very wary usually of recommending books (or films for that matter) as tastes vary so much, even in specialised spheres. Then came the publication which in my estimation lifted the Fantasy field out of the doldrums - LORD OF THE RINGS and within a few months, would-be Tolkiens were unleashing the forces of Chaos and, although a lot of it was not worth the effort of reading, nevertheless a few American authors emerged with original ideas, to be followed by some brilliant British authors such as Michael Moorcock and it seems as though Fantasy has solidified with many new titles appearing monthly. In fact, according to "Locus", THE American

SF/Fantasy news magazine, 340 titles have been published in the first half of this year! Since Fantasy came into prominence - well, more than it had been - I do not dare to calculate how much I have spent on paperbacks and there are very few Fantasy authors I haven't at least tried. If I had held onto every title I purchased, my home would look more like a library than a library. Many of the books have been passed to both of my sons, who are similar addicts, so from various attics and such-like hiding/storing places, we could between us muster a truly formidable collection of Spelldroppers and Curselifters.

Of relatively modern, and therefore available authors, I have been giving some thought as to which ones I will retain in my own collection next time I have a sort-out prior to passing more titles on to my family and I think that on my list of such writers I would place Piers Anthony for his XANTH books (why hasn't an enterprising software house commissioned an Adventure in that wonderful land?), Michael Moorcock, whose wide imagination made his ELRIC and COKUM books so addictive. Then there would be Roger Zelazny if only for the AMBER series, the THIEVES WORLD series with the spin-offs taking the characters to and beyond Wizardwall and, of course, Fritz Lieber. His books about Ffard and the Gray Mouser are wonderful adventures, probably his best being SWORDS OF LANKHMAR. Andre Norton and her WITCH WORLD books would be included in my list, whilst the must of "austs" surely would be Terry Pratchett of whose "Discworld" novels I have a complete set which have been read and re-read and which I seem to enjoy even more with familiarity. However, before I close, insofar as my list is concerned, anyway, I must refer to an author whose books, when they do get published in Britain, I feel sure could soar to No.1 of the book lists (I'm probably too optimistic), but the trilogy by Elizabeth Moon concerning the Sheep-farmer's daughter, Paksarrion, is as good as this genre can possibly produce. (Actually, the heroine's name is Paksenarrion, Paks for short). The details of the fighting are as real as it is possible to get, mainly because the author was in the US Marine Corps and according to the blurb, reached the rank of 1st Lieutenant during active duty. These books have to be read to be believed, the only trouble being insofar as I am concerned, is that they have spoiled me for any similar books. They will in future be the level by which I will judge this sort of story. I stress, this sort of story, because they are nothing like, for example the books of David Eddings, who is in a class of Olympian heights. In conclusion, for anyone who enjoys playing Adventures (and you surely would not be reading this magazine if you did not) but has not dipped into a Fantasy book, may I recommend any of the following:

The three volumes of the DRAGONLANCE Chronicles by Margaret Weiss and Tracy Hickman. Start with DRAGONS OF AUTUMN TWILIGHT - if you don't like it, forget the rest. A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON by Piers Anthony, the first of the Xanth novels - again, forget the rest if it doesn't appeal. CONON THE CONQUEROR by Robert E Howard. Actually written by the Master and not by one of his many imitators who have tried but failed to capture the magic spark that was his. WITCH WORLD by Andre Norton. Several more follow that title if you like it. STORMBRINGER by Michael Moorcock.

I must curb my enthusiasm and say "halt, desist, whoa, stop", otherwise I'll be listing another fifty titles. So I will just conclude with the hope that if this somewhat rambling reminiscence has encouraged just one reader of this magazine to become a reader of Fantasy novels, then my rambling has not been in vain.

THE ALTERNATIVE ADVENTURE PROBE CONVENTION REPORT

Our intrepid reporter reports the bits that Mandy left out.

You have already heard how everybody was greeted at the front door by the wonderful Vicky Jackson and presented with their personal "visitors" badge's. I however, was given my badge in the car park and asked to use the side entrance. Having emptied my car of half of Larry Horsfield's house and carried it into the hotel. I then took a look around. As this was just after 10am. I was amazed at how many people were already present. Not only present but happily chatting away and drinking coffee as if they had known each other for years.

Joan Pancott was in conversation with a table full of people but as she saw me approach, she warned those present "be careful what you say in front of him. You never know what he might write about us". The table fell silent. Me Joan? As if I would...

Larry was talking non-stop. This was quite surprising as he had been doing so, ever since leaving London at just after 7am. Next person I met was Vicky, who was most indignant that she hadn't personally pinned my badge on me. Blame Larry! She also assured me that she had broken the habit of a life-time and actually bought a ticket and not gate crashed this time. I then spotted Nic Rumsey who was after all, hard to miss because of his size and unusual attire. He has always taken great delight in warning us that he was all of 6' 4" and at 5' 9", there was no way I was going to ask him if he had just attended a meeting of the Birmingham Free-masons? Still, we had a little surprise waiting for him later on, didn't we?

A quick look around the room noted that the computers were now coming to life and also a noisy printer in the corner was working away at break-neck speed. A rather scruffy person seemed to be in charge of it, so I assumed he was a member of the hotel staff, printing out menu's or something. Lorna Paterson was the next badge I met. I must mention this badge business here in greater detail, because it actually created two wonderful pieces of un-intentional humour. I think most of you realise that I love things that make me laugh. Especially when they're not supposed to be funny, but because of events, turn out to be so! I couldn't help noticing that as I introduced myself, my eyes immediately travelled to the other person's badge. The conversation went along the lines of, "Hello, I'm Bob, pleased to meet you er, er, er, does that say DYEKON?" "No, it's Dicon with a soft "ic" actually." I then realised that everybody else was doing the same. All over the room, people were staring at each other's chests, as they spoke. This came to a climax after a while, when a certain well endowed lady, suddenly turned around and thrust her chest towards my face as I said "Hi, I'm..." Exit one Aester to the foyer with an almighty fit of the giggles.

Sorry Lorna, that last bit wasn't about you, but your husband DID provide us with the other source of amusement, again unintentionally! Danny, bless him, had accompanied Lorna to the convention even though he hasn't the slightest bit of interest in adventures. For this reason (I think) he decided not to wear a name badge. Suddenly, curiosity was aroused amongst those attending! Who was the mystery man without a badge? As word of this reached me and the other comedians, we hatched a plan. The mystery man would become whoever the enquirer most feared it would be! So for some, they were told it was John Wilson, for others it was Jim O'Keefe or Mike Gerrard and so on. As the real people arrived we had to keep changing the name until we ran out of ideas. Great fun, but apologies to Danny

in case he wondered why some people were giving him a wide berth!

I noticed that Larry was still talking. Debbie Howard was on a crusade. She has just launched an adventure PD library and could be seen, roaming all the stands and seizing any piece of software without a label on it, and yelling "Is this PD?" Unfortunately, I understand that her exuberance ran away with her to a certain extent and the last I heard she was trying to remove a well and truly stuck 3.5" disc from her Amstrad 3" disc drive! I tried to attract Larry's attention but he was still talking.

Just outside the room we were using, the hotel had thoughtfully provided a coffee and sandwich bar. I quickly discovered how to dispense a cup of coffee from the infernal jug. I then learnt that a young lady was employed by the hotel to do it for us. The only trouble with this arrangement was that she expected to be paid 50p every time she performed this service. I also learnt that at every half past the hour she went to the loo and I could help myself to a free cup of coffee. I still had to pay 11.75 for two slices of plastic bread and half a boiled egg though. Chickens must be scarce in Birmingham!

A tour of the stalls revealed some interesting facts. Mandy has already mentioned the number of, and interest in the Amstrad CPC's. Most heartening to yours truly. Dave Havard had brought his entire collection of Infocom's along. This provided Martin Leverton and I with the opportunity to load them all and then inform Dave that his versions were duff, as they were not configured for the CPC screen. Exit two "experts" leaving a bewildered Dave to try and figure out if we were pulling his leg or not! Sorry Dave. Stuart Whyte was using a CPC to program his adventure. Is it ready yet Stuart? He was also wearing a Level 9 t-shirt but kept his jacket on all day and hoped that nobody noticed. The Amiga running "So You Want To Be A Hero" drew a large crowd. This was not as Mandy thought, because it was so brilliant. It was because you had to wait 30 seconds for any sort of response, which was invariably, "You can't". The large crowd was necessary to try to guess the correct input! Is this what they mean by progress? I wandered too close to Paul Brunyee who immediately grabbed me and offered me a demonstration of Dungeon Master. Fortunately just at that moment the Wayfairy arrived and bellowed "Bob, you've been immortalised!" With these words I was propelled across the room by Nic to where John Rodrigues was doing a brisk trade at the Atlas bric-a-brac stall. He also dis-proved earlier reports that he hasn't got a sense of humour. He most definitely has - just ask British Rail! The reason for Nic's excitement was a collection of badges, of which one said "I love Adams Amsters." I waited all day for somebody to buy it, but at the end of the day it was given to me by Mandy.

The raffle was indeed a marathon. I had to draw 995 winning tickets until enough Spectrum owners had been found to claim the prizes. The awards ceremony has already been covered in great detail but there were a couple of items missed out. The wacky wheel-chair race caused great excitement. Joan and Neil performed marvellously through the obstacle course and it was neck and neck until the home straight. Then the superior power of the Maurice turbo took over and gave Joan the fastest time to reach the podium. We'll have to make the course even harder next year. Well done on your two awards, and to all the award winners and nominee's by the way.

Amidst great dismay, the hotel bar shut at 2.30 and would not open

again until 5.30. Tom Frost then demonstrated his "canny" skills by producing a bottle of whisky. He was suddenly surrounded by "friends", myself included. Jack Higham told Tom how to finish his game!

The day sadly came to an end but for a few of us, the fun continued into the night and onto Sunday am. The Middlesex cricket team arrived. Two young ladies from Essex went weak at the knees at the sight of Mike Gatting. I stood next to him at the reception desk but being the true pro he is, he pretended not to recognise me. I was handing in Phil Glovers brief-case at the time. I hope you got it back okay Phil?

The more select members of the "over-nighters" dined at the hotel on first class cuisine accompanied by a huge platter of chips. The rest of us rabble went wherever we could get served. Dicon Peake demonstrated his knowledge of Indian food by ordering a feast large enough to feed us all but that was just for him. Two ladies ordered a rare dish called "prawn cock-tail and chips" and the waiter had to wait 10 minutes whilst Larry explained to him how to program his menu in P.A.W.

Everybody met up again in the hotel bar and th party continued until Jill Carter had drunk everybody, except Tom, under the table. A female voice was heard at 2am singing Welsh songs in the bath.

Quote of the day has to go to Mrs Grue. Unfortunately it is also unprintable. All I'll say is she let her guard drop for on moment and called Grue by a different name. The look on Grue's face was fantastic. If only I had had a camera!

See you all again next year folks?

BOB ADAMS

.....

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Living mostly in virtual seclusion somewhere in Somerset on a small inherited income, he spent his time engaged in various obscure research projects whose nature was kept secret ... even from his nephew John. Questions on the subject were always evaded, and indeed John had never been invited to Somerset. Visits between them had only ever been one-way.

Despite these idiosyncracies, John had a warm affection for his uncle, built up over many years of happy, if sporadic, companionship. And so the sudden news, received some weeks ago, that his uncle was "Missing, presumed dead" came as a severe shock from which John is still attempting to recover.

Picture him then at his desk, lost amongst his thoughts, as the sun sets over sleepy Gringleton Ford. Another day gone, with nothing achieved. He lays down his pen, tired and depressed, and retires to bed. Tomorrow, perhaps, something will happen that will change this dreary routine

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NOTES ... A most enjoyable game, written with an 'early' version the 'QUILL' and one that ZENOBI SOFTWARE feel is too good to languish at the back of some dusty drawer.

This game will accept all the standard commands such as EXAMINE, SAY, GET and READ as well as some more unusual commands such as BUY, TURN, TIE and CUT. This game will not support the 'RAM SAVE' options to store a game to memory, so please use the standard SAVE and LOAD to store a game on tape.

HINTS ... It may be necessary to enter the river, so do not be afraid to get your feet wet and remember that one part of a sandy beach looks much like any other, so if you do not appear to be getting anywhere just try again.



"THE HOUSE ON THE TOR"

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SPELLBREAKER is Probe's "brother" magazine and they are both produced to complement each other. SPELLBREAKER! is packed full of maps, solutions, part solutions, hints and tips, coded hints, mazes and all sorts of adventure help. SPELLBREAKER! is produced in the middle of every month and costs just £1.50 per issue and is available from:

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For those of you who attended the brilliant first PROBE Convention in Birmingham, I can promise you that THIS adventure will not be the subject of a NON-STARTER AWARD as the author CAN finish this one! (Honest, TARTAN TAN told me!)

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What is the meaning of the monolith in the huge luminescent cavern, and where exactly *does* the white rabbit disappear to? How do you climb a stair in which several of the treads are missing, and where is the mysterious occupant of Toad Hall, the state of whose bathroom leaves a

lot to be desired and who seems to have such a fascination for childish toys? The answers to these questions, and others, may or may not be discovered in the course of your mission, but in the process of finding out, prepare to be entertained in a way you have probably never before experienced.

The Mission is now available for those fortunate enough to own a *one megabyte* AMIGA, but it is intended in the near future to produce a version for the ATARI ST.

Your copy of this super game may be obtained for the quite ridiculously-low bargain price of seven pounds fifty pence from

Jim MacBrayne, 27 Paidmyre Crescent, Newton Mearns, Glasgow G77 5AQ. A cheque or postal order for 7.50 should be included to cover cost and postage. Please also ensure that you include your name and address, both legibly written.

Version 3.00

III

5.26PM Wednesday, September 15th,
1941

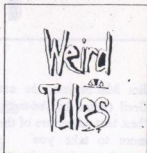
Office

A window behind my desk blinked
a neon message for a moment,
then dulled, the office pausing
in darkness only to reappear
like a rabbit pulled out of a
magicians top hat as the neon
blinked again.

Rain battered at the windows
noisily.

...
...
...

Spectrum Screen Shown



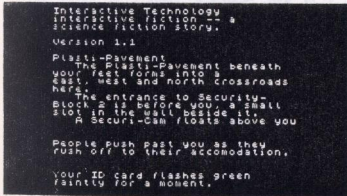
(Top) The world
of Marlowe
comes to life in
Dead End.

(Bottom) The
acclaimed
story *Dead End*

DEAD END

A Nightmare waits for Philip Marlowe.
Is Miles Dunbar's death the suicide
the police believe it is? How much
does his widow really know? One thing's for
sure; if he doesn't enter the storm that grips
Los Angeles - he'll never find out! Though
if he does, he'd better be sure of himself - or
he'll be dead!

"... the game has all the atmosphere of an old
private eye movie..." C+VG.



Spectrum Screen Shown



(Top) Enter
a frightening
science
fiction world.

(Bottom) A
story of
intrigue. Buy
it now!

A DARK SKY OVER PARADISE

What a way to enter MoonBase! You've
travelled from Earth at a moments
notice for some unspecified task, and
now here you are, being interrogated in one
of the Security Blocks! But it seems there's a
good reason; the bombings have the author-
ities worried - they're looking for the leaders
of the terrorists. You'd better get on with your
work, and keep out of trouble! But can you?
"... the plot... is fascinating. The story keeps you
guessing and bewildered at times..." The Games
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establishing it as the fin-
its kind.

Now you can experien-
that made the legend in-
ing text-based games ev-
laimed author of *Dead E-*
Paradise.

In the first, you'll e-
world of Joe Slater. Can
ing in a psychopathic in-
origins of his burning v-
can you yourself remain

In the second, you'll
psychic detective, Jule
attempt to unravel the m-
coffin. In a story that s-

you'll have to solve the
enging - and hugely en-
and questioning the ma-
**Weird Tales* is an adapta-

stories from a legendary
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Mysteries, you'll love *W-*
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mapping and Zen, a ne-
*Your *Weird Tales* packa-
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captain kook

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.... When you had first started out on your paper-round the evening air had been warm and friendly but as the hours passed and the sun began to lower itself into the soft dark clouds of twilight, you had begun to notice a slight chill in air and wished now that you had taken your Mum's advice and worn your jacket after all.

With a backward glance over your shoulder to the grey-haired old man who ran the local shop, you slung the empty bag over your left arm and mounted your trusty bicycle. Swerving to avoid Mrs Jone's black tabby, you quickly sped off in the direction of home and a plate of steaming hot chips and peas your favourite!

Some moments later as you were about to pass the residence of the infamous Basil Hodgkins, a scientist of no ill-repute and local big-wig, a large grey object hurtled over the fence and lodged itself in the front spokes of your trusty bike. There was a loud 'CLANG', followed by a screech of tires and just before you found yourself hurtling over the high metal gate that was the only way into HODGKINS' MANOR, you caught sight of a large crow-bar sticking between the spokes of the front wheel of your cycle.

For a second or two all was peaceful, then what had been a steady upwards movement turned into a rapid downwards one and the hard ground surrounding the house loomed up before your very eyes these you quickly closed!

As your head cleared and the first pangs of pain began to course through your body, you realised that you had landed and glancing around you saw that you were now on the 'inside' of the gate and spread all around you were the gardens of HODGKINS' MANOR.

Can you escape from the confines of the manor or will you be doomed to be the ONLY paper-boy in captivity?

ESCAPE

NOTES

This game will accept all the standard commands such as EXAMINE, GET, DROP, IN, OUT, and WAIT along with the following abbreviations ... Z=WAIT, X=EXAMINE, G=GET and DR=DROP.

The game will also accept such commands as RAM SAVE and RAM LOAD. Use these to store a game-position to memory but always use the more normal SAVE and LOAD to store a more permanent record onto tape.

HINTS

It will help to get the assistance of some of the other characters that you may encounter during the game. Also make sure that you check everything and make good use of the EXAMINE command.

Spectrum 48K/128K+2.

ADVENTURE



LETTERS



FUR AND FEATHERS FLYING

Wow! I certainly seem to have joined Probe at an interesting time, what with the fur and feathers flying everywhere! To clear up one small point at the beginning, Dave Clegg of 17-Bit and myself remain on perfectly good terms. I offered them the opportunity of distributing THE MISSION, he made his suggestion about adding graphics and sound, and I declined - it's as simple as that. Their attitude was based on their perception of the possible market for a text-only game, and as the risk would be theirs and not mine, I could hardly argue with their analysis and conclusions.

I must vociferously disagree with Paul Rigby about whether or not I *should* have accepted their offer. In spite of what others may have written in these pages, I write adventure games, not because they might earn me some money, but because I *enjoy* doing so. I am of the opinion, that the addition of graphics and sound actually *detracts* from the atmosphere of an adventure and there is no way I am going to allow my efforts to be prostituted by the addition of same to any of my games, even if this would mean greater financial reward. This is obviously very much a personal thing, but for any who would take the opposite view I would draw the analogy of a good novel as compared with a comic book, and ask which gives more enjoyment and leaves the more lasting impression.

I must go on record as sympathising with the authors who have been disappointed with the financial return from their games. While I can understand the point Paul Rigby is trying to make, equally, I know from personal experience what exactly is going through their minds. Alan Davis' article in last month's Probe has just about got it spot on. My own game writing goes back to around 1981 and has always, been motivated by the satisfaction gained in several ways. Firstly there is the glow obtained from setting yourself a target and achieving it. Secondly there is the knowledge that you have joined a fraternity closed to the majority, other members of which include such names as Dave Lebling and Brian Moriarty. Thirdly there is the pleasure of feedback from the mere mortals who are sweating their uncomfortable way, through your carefully engineered scenarios and fiendishly-contrived traps and puzzles, and finally there is the egotistical thrill of seeing your game receive glowing reviews in the computer press. Ever since I played my first Infocom I have been an unashamed worshipper at their altar and openly admit to emulating their style as far as it is within my capability so to do. I considered that life had given all it had to offer, and I had reached Nirvana, the day that someone told me he thought my games were *better* than Infocom's.

This feeling of elation lasts a considerable time (nearly ten years in my case), but there comes a point where you've "done it all", the real *challenges* no longer exist, and the whole exercise becomes a matter of sheer routine. You've spent vast sums on hardware and squandered many hours hunched over your keyboard. You look in the glossy magazines and see pages of adverts for games which you *know* are inferior to your own and which are selling for enormously inflated prices. Small wonder you want a piece of the action.

On the bottom line, like it or not, text-only games seem to be a vanishing breed. While there's no chance of myself giving up within the foreseeable future, this obviously doesn't apply to the individuals who have expressed their disenchantment with the status quo in these illustrious pages. Obviously there is still a hard core demand for the

genre, but unless this is backed up with hard cash there is every likelihood that the authors will vanish into the sunset, swords, lamps and ropes in hand, leaving us all with the outpourings of Magnetic Scrolls - superlative programming and lots of pretty pictures, but totally bereft of that elusive "spark" and with damn all in the way of a convincing or coherent storyline. In any case, THE MISSION has now been released, and is available from myself (morals intact, Paul) for the sum of £7.50. If it sells well, then so much the better. If it doesn't then, as I've said, I'll continue writing, though with perhaps a little less enthusiasm than before.

JIM MACBRAYNE, Newton Hearn, Glasgow.

=====

AMAZED, BEWILDERED AND TOTALLY DISBELIEVING

Regarding Paul Rigby's letter in the last issue of Probe. I read it in amazement, then again in bewilderment and finally in total disbelief. As judge, prosecuting council and jury he has, in my mind, virtually ended the adventure writing careers of Simon Maren and Ian Brown by blasting his views onto paper without, seemingly, a moments thought on what he was writing about. The essence of adventure writing is the thought in the authors mind that someone out there is playing and hopefully enjoying the stiff tasks and puzzles being set and eventually, when the game is solved the buyer will return and purchase his next release, his creation, his baby, made and produced on his very own computer. If this baby is stuck inside a tiny C15 cassette lost on his shelf in his bedroom for no-one to see then the hobby becomes unjustifiable so where for goodness sake does money come into it? I may be wrong here but where, in Ian Brown's letter, does it say the reason why he's retiring from writing is because he hasn't made any money out of it? I'm at a total loss to see any comparison between sticking together bits of plastic to make model planes and writing adventures for the computer, because there isn't. When you manufacture the adhesive, the plastic, the decals and the tiny pots of paint to decorate your model planes then there's a similarity but only then, and what would Paul's feelings be like if only, say, half a dozen people bought his kits - the same kits that for the last year he'd been producing to show off to the rest of the world. The thought that a couple of hundred people will really appreciate the time and trouble you've gone to makes it all seem worthwhile not the thought of making a shed full of money. A better comparison would have been a Chef in the kitchen creating wonderful meals for everyone to eat and then finds his restaurant empty of custom.

An adventure starts off as a tiny spark in someones imagination, someone like Ian or Simon for example. Then it grows and lives for all the world to see if wanted; Paul, you can't really believe that they're under any illusion of making a fortune out of their hobby because if they are I apologise unreservedly, withdraw from adventuring and return to my quest of reversing gravity on earth, which may be just as well because for sure you seem to have come from a different planet than the one I was born on.

MARK ELTRINGHAM, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich.

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LETTER CERTAINLY WOKE ME UP

Before I go any further I'd like to send best wishes to every single person that I met at the Probe Convention, and to thank all those involved in organising the event. I think that it was successful beyond all reasonable expectations, and I can't wait for the next one! Paul Rigby's letter certainly woke me up. I read back to discover exactly what Ian, Simon and Grue had actually written, in order to see what had provoked such a stream of dirision. Although their letters were a little on the embittered side, I think that I can sympathise

with their feelings. I'm not sure that money plays such a large part in the matter as it would at first appear, rather I would imagine that it's more a case of lack of interest and recognition after all those months of work. Anyone who has tried to write an adventure, with or without a utility, will know that it takes a very long time and a great deal of hard work. At the end of all this the author is bound to be very proud of his product and would like to see as many people as possible playing it. He will also be quite justified in expecting to make enough money to cover his costs at least. I don't think anyone is daft enough to expect to make a living out of adventure writing. Having said that, the adventure market is very small indeed, and with such a lot of borrowing, swapping and second-hand buying going on it's not really very surprising that few new copies actually get bought. I am married to a fisherman, and I can assure everyone that although they don't expect to catch enough to pay for their outlay, they do come home extremely miffed, not to say dispondent, when they've spent all day dangling their tackle into some mucky river only to be rewarded with a couple of minute gudgeon!

John Wilson's letter on the subject was also very interesting for different reasons. Zenobi appears to be an excellent example of how to run a successful business, and I hope it continues to thrive. However, it will be a shame if everyone sells their games via Zenobi, because it would be most boring if it became a complete monopoly. What really set me wondering was the influence (or lack of it) that reviews have on sales. Do they really have such little effect? Does a bad review have more effect than a good one? People seem to like reading reviews, so why do they read them if they're not trying to form an opinion on the game? Perhaps it's so that they can decide which ones to borrow etc. at a future date. Maybe we should create an unwritten law amongst adventurers that a new game must not be passed around in any manner until a year after its release date! Then we might really see what it is that affects sales, and who's right about what. Having given you all something to think about, I'd like to direct a final thought at Paul Rigby. Does he expect to be paid for his contributions to Your Commodore and all those other magazines, or does he do it all out of love?

SUE ROSEBLADE, St Neots, Cambs.

AN ADVENTURE AUTHOR GIVES HIS VIEW

This month's letters (October) were the most interesting and varied for some time, bringing forth a number of issues worth replying to. As an adventure author myself, the contrasting views on the "retirement" of Ian Brown and Simon Maren were thought-provoking, to say the least. I thought Paul Rigby went a bit too far in his condemnation of them, maybe some more encouraging words would have been better, such as those from John Wilson. To offer my own experiences to Probe readers, I must say I was pleasantly surprised by the number of sales my own game THE CASE OF THE BEHEADED SMUGGLER notched up, especially after good reviews in Your Sinclair and Probe itself. When I first set about selling my game myself I thought sales somewhere just into double figures and maybe one favourable review would be enough to add a little bit extra to the actual pleasure of having completed a full adventure itself. Sales went quite well, managing about seventy in a few months. By then I could just about cope with the orders, so I decided to see if Zenobi Software would be interested in selling my game for me. Luckily they were and after a few bug fixes I was free to concentrate on an ST conversion and a storyline for a new adventure. The end result? The satisfaction of seeing a good review in a magazine and a new printer!

Another letter I'd like to comment on, is the one by June Rowe, who.

raised some interesting points about interactive characters. I think the need for these depends on the type of adventure. If it is a detective adventure, my favourite type, then interactive characters are essential, to provide clues from questioning, general character formation and traits. A classic example of this is SUSPECT by Infocom (R.I.P.). Characters and interaction are used more here than the more usual tasks of moving around and picking things up. Every character will offer a response to your questions, sometimes these then change in the course of the game. In the more traditional adventures, only a limited interaction is needed if trying to converse with a goblin for instance.

PATRICK WALSH, Slough, Berkshire.

FOR THE RECORD

Paul Rigby is correct. Computer adventuring for most is a hobby, one that I have enjoyed for many years. He is also right that hobbies invariably involve differing amounts of time and effort. More often than not, it costs the individual money. The important factor, in my opinion, is not financial but the level of satisfaction and pleasure one achieves by ones efforts. For the record, I got immense satisfaction from my hours of perseverance with my two games and don't consider a minutes time wasted. Sadly though, over the past couple of years I have made some assumptions and decisions that have proved erraneous. Because I enjoyed creating THE MENAGERIE, I assumed that perhaps many others might enjoy playing it. Based on that assumption, I made the following questionable decisions.

I paid someone, due to my lack of ability, to do the graphics because everyone knows that budget software houses insist on them. They chose not to release it because they did not see a future in adventures... or profit. Their words, not mine. It was suggested that I release it mail-order. Blank cassettes, stickers, jiffy bags, inlays etc were purchased and the finished game, hopefully well presented, was sent to various people to review it. Based on the pre-publication copies of the review or correspondence with the individual, I assumed that my game would meet with a favourable response. WRONG!

If people were likely to be ordering my game, I felt it important to despatch them promptly rather than waiting weeks to ascertain the exact quantity of copies required. After consultation with some other adventure writers, I estimated my possible sales, went on the side of caution and ordered further blank cassettes, stickers etc. The sales of my game were not what I expected. In the meantime I tried to promote my game in Probe. There was some response but not what was expected from the successor to the Adventurers Club. While this is happening, I continued with my hobby and commenced BOG OF BRIT. By now I knew that graphics were an unnecessary extra but hoped that the game would be played by more people that THE MENAGERIE. WRONG! Again copies were sent out and blank cassettes etc were ordered purely by instinct. My instinct stank. I was wrong yet again. I wrote a letter to Probe informing people that I won't be doing any more games and Mr Rigby thought that the main, if not the only, reason why was financial. WRONG! I wrote that letter at a time when I was saddened that my love of a hobby that had occupied me for a period of time was not shared by others. When you devote a lot of time to something, it is nice to have favourable things said about it in a review of people playing it.

Mr Rigby, when you have completed your construction kit, possibly mounting it in a presentation case in the middle of an appropriate diorama, like I used to do, do you put it in the back of your cupboard or somewhere slightly more visible where people can comment about it and show their appreciation. Writing an adventure costs very little on

the assumption that you have a computer, in my case the P.A.W., and a few blank cassettes. Where the costs can easily mount is when you try to bring it to the attention of others, and then try to predict potential sales in a market where there is conflicting opinions regarding its current state.

Therefore I felt that I could either write another game purely for my own pleasure and then put it somewhere and let it gather dust or again release it mail order with similar possible sales and expenses or to call it a day and just play other peoples games. At that stage I had not received Mr Wilson's letter.

Again Mr Rigby is right when he states that I haven't got a God given right to sell anything to anyone, nor to complain when Probe readers don't buy my games. The decisions I made were wrong, but they were mine, they are my mistakes and I am wise enough to be able to live with them. I now know that favourable reviews do not always equate with favourable sales and it is perhaps unwise to have high expectations of the latter. What I do think though is that I should be able to decide whether I write any more adventures and if so, if I will market them. Mr Rigby feels that money is an important consideration. To a degree, he is right. Under the current economic climate with mortgages at their current levels etc I am not prepared to spend my money without careful forethought, because my actions affect directly that of my wife and three children. Would you, Mr Rigby, put £1 into a building society, even if you enjoyed filling out the slip, if you were only going to get 50p back later. Alan Davis' comments regarding being ignored or not valued, on the other hand were much more accurate although I prefer the term "demoralising".

IAN BROWN, Glen Parva, Leicester.

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LETTER MADE A LOT OF SENSE

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Paul Rigby's letter made a lot of sense. If a game fails to sell well then the lesson to be learnt is to write a better game next time, or find out what the public really want, not to have a go at them for not having the decency to throw their money at you regardless. I can't say that I'm surprised that BUG OF BRIT is struggling - it sounds more like an everyday tale of a skinhead football fans throwing up in a public loo than a tasteful adventure - I certainly wouldn't risk my money finding out! A classic case of duff marketing. However good a game is, it won't sell if it's not presented properly. Sadly the converse is also true - how many naff games have we all been conned into buying because it looked great on the box?!

Jim MacBrayne's games deserve wider appreciation, and I agree wholeheartedly with the Grue's favourable review of THE MISSION, although I do feel he should have disclosed his interest as a playtester, which I also now do! I wish Jim well with his conversion to the ST and with his sales generally, and respect his decision to "go it alone".

I was fascinated by the questionnaire results, especially by the overwhelming rejection of coverage for role-playing games. I wonder if this is a reflection on the Spectrum and other 8-bit domination of the membership, for whom role-playing is rather a sick joke. For 16-biters, however, there are some excellent RPGs around at a time when adventures are thin on the ground, and it would be a shame not to give these adequate coverage.

Which leads me onto my final point - the demise of the 8-bit machines! Now there's a non-contentious subject! Sadly, because I still have great affection for the Spectrum which introduced me to adventuring and the C64 which introduced me to Intocom, I really do think we have to recognise that the smaller-memory machines really are on their last legs. A few home-grown adventures of largely doubtful quality (who

said I was never provocative!) scarcely constitutes a software support that is viable to the producers or worthwhile to the public. If adventurers want to play games that are more substantial in size and quality then they will have to upgrade, however difficult this may be financially. TED BUGLER, Farnborough, Hants.

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THE REAL NEED IS FOR COMPROMISE AND RANGE

I'm intrigued by the recent letters concerning 17-Bit/Jim MacBrayne etc. since presumably the references to ACE are regarding issue 32 which carried a review of THE GOLDEN FLEECE and an editorial comment pointing out that fancy packaging and special effects don't justify high prices, particularly if there is no game underneath. In the case of The Fleece review I actually suggested the game was worth £15 - £20 instead of the measly £5 Jim asks as a shareware contribution. I wonder if 17-Bit read Probe (or ACE), and if so would like to comment. When playing a game I rarely take note of graphics, sound, user interface etc. unless they either take my breath away by adding another dimension to an already good game, or drive me round the bend by getting in the way. I certainly don't bemoan their absence. Text adventures take more patience and concentration to play than graphical ones, simply because in the latter case graphics tend to provide a short cut for the imagination. A good picture IS worth an awful lot of words IF it shows ALL the detail and atmosphere which would otherwise be generated by a text description. I wonder whether software houses which refuse text only offerings are simply trying to compromise to maximise sales. A game which can boast fancy graphics and stunning sound in its blurb is likely to appeal to lukewarm adventurers who like their challenge dished up on a plate rather than having to exercise their imagination to both create the setting and discover the puzzles. Now that the graphic capabilities of the 16 bit machines are better known there is less incentive for adventure writers to pepper their work with stunning graphics as a convert slideshow. Three cheers for writers like Jim, who have so much trouble fitting their text into half a Meg that impoverished reviewers like me are forced to shell out for extra memory (Grue - I'm sure you know what I mean). Incidentally, sound need never bother adventurers (unless it is vital to the game) - ever heard of volume control? Graphics, on the other hand, should be turn-offable from within the game (eg. the ability to either scroll them out of the way, or switch them off altogether) to allow full screen text windows. I hate having to cope with two or three measly lines at the bottom of the screen. I am concentrating on 16 bit games since the potential is so much greater for flexibility. Jim's games lose nothing by lacking sound and graphics, and cater well for players who want reams of text. Games like Dungeon Master simply wouldn't work as text only adventures since the graphics are an integral part of the game design. The real need is for compromise and range - graphic only adventures at one end of the spectrum, text-only at the other. I for one will be very sad if text-only games vanish for ever... but I still like pretty pictures when they enhance the game and make for a more relaxed challenge as light relief! On the subject of adventure writers "giving up"; if you want to write adventures, write them. You'll never make much money but your hobby might be just about self-financing if you hit lucky. If nobody wants to buy your games, why not release them into PD. That way you'll achieve widespread distribution. If your work is good enough, those who have played your games for free will then be more likely to purchase future offerings. The biggest selling point of any product is the reputation of its producer and building a reputation costs time and effort, not money.

PAT WINSTANLEY, Wigan, Lancs.

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PROBLEMS OF PLAYTESTING

The letters pages of Probe are becoming utterly incredible. We now have self-styled adventure-writers telling us that we are to blame for shattering their illusions and unjustly crushing their erstwhile indomitable egos. How we have perpetuated this heinous infaamy upon their poor beings? It seems that we have failed to fulfill our apparent obligation to buy each and every game which is mentioned in Probe. Oh woe! O me miserum. How could we let them down like this, after they have spent, possibly, whole days slaving away on our behalf?! Over the years, I have played a game or two, done some helping, a bit of reviewing, a spot of commenting on the state of adventure and the occasional bit of play-testing; but it is the latter which has been the most rewarding and the most frustrating. I get very little in the way of testing these days, which I think has more to do with my refusal to call a spade a *neat little single edged soil lifting device* than any particular incompetence on my part. Some people have been delightful to work for; Jack Lockerby springs to mind as an example of a complete gentleman whom I used to work for but from whom I have not heard for some time. He was prepared to listen, repair faults, and even consider some of my suggestions for alternative game development, implementing some and rejecting others - it is HIS game after all! Under these circumstances, I feel dreadful when I hear that I have missed any bugs in his games. This usually happened when testing one of his upgrades so that I knew what to do and, inevitably, didn't try enough *silly things to do*. Other authors are less cooperative and I still shudder about one game which went to market not only complete with a few bugs that I had missed but more that I HAD reported and even a sprinkling, for good measure, of additional bugs which hadn't even been thought of in the last test version which I received. In a case like this I feel no guilt as I was wasting my time from the start! I tend to get very cross when the author tells me that a reported bug isn't *important enough* to bother about. If I hadn't thought it was important then I wouldn't have reported it in the first place. Sometimes, I received a game which was an insult! On occasions I have even loaded the database into my PAW and, having translated them into English, rewritten the location descriptions and messages which I then LPRINTed and returned, suggesting that the author write a game to go with them as I had failed to find one. This usually did the trick... I never heard from them again! Alternatively, I may receive such a game for assessment from a prospective publisher. I may support my summary with a few notes but essentially that summary may be read as *Bargepole job!* I suppose that my main failure has been that I have never managed to appreciate that the play-testers main purpose in life is to reply along the lines of, "*Core strength, guv! This is the best game wot I have ever seen wrote. Don't change a thing*". In my opinion the play-tester is under an obligation to protect the reputation of the author whilst passing comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the game, offering where possible solutions to the latter. The author may choose to reject my suggestions but one thing which really makes my blood boil is when that author, having ignored my advice, sends out copies of the game saying that it has been tested by me, implying that I have given it some sort of seal of approval. It might be pertinent to point out to your aggrieved correspondents that in order to be recognised as an artist, be it literary, musical, painting or whatever, one needs to combine talent with determination, and sufficient confidence in one's exposition within the chosen medium to sustain oneself against the inevitable criticism which will be levelled at the newcomer. Of course, for recognition as a TRULY GREAT ARTIST, it helps enormously if one can arrange to be dead as well! Under the present

circumstances, the only thing that I think of to say in order to assuage the deep sense of guilt and shame under which I am apparently destined to labour is: WELCOME TO PLANET EARTH!

HUGH WALKER, Burgham, Guildford.

(My apologies if your letter on this subject hasn't appeared in this issue. Following Paul Rigby's letter last month I was inundated with letters. I have selected the foregoing as a selection of the varied views expressed. It certainly is a lively debate.....Mandy)

YOU ARE CONTRADICTING YOURSELVES!

When I look at Adventure Probe I see adventures and no computers. In fact, if I was new to the scene and looked at the magazine I may be mistaken to think that an adventure game is something that can be played by itself without the use of a computer. The point I am trying to get at is that the computer industry is a very fast moving business and adventurers seem to want to stay in the same place while the computer world has left them behind. Lets face it, 8-bit machines are going to become extinct and there is nothing that anybody can do about it. What then, will happen when the common home computer is a 32 bit transputer running at 20 mhz with six million colours and a resolution that puts an average television to shame. Will we complain and stamp our foot when the software houses refuse a text only adventure with about 100 locations? Magnetic Scrolls' new game WONDERLAND is the perfect example of computer progress. Their game may look utterly different from other adventures because it is made only for the newer home micro's. If it was made for the 8-bit micro's then it would probably look just like any other adventure, it would still be the same game but it would be less advanced due to the machine being less advanced. To me the word adventure is a category of game. To me it is a game that is a story, contains problems and also contains puzzles. The games that come under this category are mainly interactive fiction, animated fiction and RPG's. If a text adventure has illustrations and sampled sound then to me it is still the same text adventure because the game is still text oriented and still requires the player to use text as an input method. It's like saying a book with a couple of illustrations is no longer a story. I am also confused with some other aspects of adventuring. Readers definitely didn't want an RPG section in the magazine, and I have come to the conclusion that they did not want this because RPG's have too much graphics and sound for the average liking. Then why out of all the RPG's was DUNGEON MASTER the favourite, and why was CHAOS STRIKES BACK rated best RPG of the year? These two games are also well liked by me, but they are totally oriented around graphics and sound effects and also contain more fighting than the others. I would have thought that the ULTIMA series would win due to it being adventure oriented and having simplistic table-top graphics and fighting techniques. In other words, you are completely contradicting yourselves! There is even reviews and tips for DRAGON'S BREATH which is an arcade/strategy game and not an adventure by any stretch of the imagination. Why not go all the way and have some maps to GAUNTLET. In this letter I'm not trying to say throw out the old and make way for the new. I'm just trying to say that adventures have to advance with the computer world or they really will become extinct. We must not hurl abuse at people who come up with new concepts in computer adventuring but should welcome these new ideas, we should be making adventures more advanced not trying to keep them at the same level, this is the reason why they are not surviving in the 16 bit market. Remember, an adventure is an adventure and should be enjoyed as a whole.

DYLAN THOMAS, Glynneath, West Glamorgan.

(I am not at all sure that I would agree with your assumption that the dislike of RPG's is because of sound and graphics, Dylan. In many cases the dislike stems from the aversion to building up character traits, selection and recruitment of a party of adventurers and the emphasis on fighting rather than problem solving. Many adventurers do not consider that RPG has anything to do with adventure at all, although some, like DUNGEON MASTER and BEYOND ZORK are sufficiently close to an adventure to become acceptable. I sometimes think that if the unique aspects of RPG's were explained fully, in an article perhaps, then many adventurers would consider trying an RPG to see what they really think about them. But, like many adventurers, I do consider the RPG to be a totally different, but no less interesting, type of game.....Mandy)

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HI! TO ALL OF YOU

I know you've received many letters about the Convention, but I just have to say how much I enjoyed it. Not only did I meet all the people I write to (hi! to all of you) but many more besides. There was so much to do and so many people to talk to - I actually had a chance to play a couple of the much acclaimed Infocoms and got quite into WITNESS and although I didn't get to enter the competition, I did have a little go at RUN, BRONWYN, RUN, before Larry packed his "gear" away (it certainly whet my appetite - come on Larry, hurry up and release it!).

I was extremely glad that my sister and I had decided to stay overnight, it made it all last so much longer - Poor Larry with that pickle, I thought his head was going to explode. Finally, could I please say thank you to Sue Roseblade for the printer; to Angie Cobbold for the help on PROJECT X; to Bob Adams for trying to explain Modems to a "thickie" and most of all to Larry Horsfield for organising a great event. I can't wait for the next one, but in the meantime keep up the good work Mandy. Oh, by the way, if there is anyone out there who would like a "pen-pal" I'm always interested in writing to more adventurers.

SHARON HARWOOD, 9 Brighton Ave, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS1 2QN

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I DON'T AGREE WITH TOTAL EXCLUSION

I read the report on the readers survey with much interest and a little concern. I would agree wholeheartedly with many of your conclusions where this does not involve exclusion of a particular item, merely an adjustment in quantity, but in some cases the decision is "total excusion" eg. for the Role Playing and Play By Mail games. Now, I do not take part in either of these, nor do I have much interest in them, but take another look at the figures. Despite a majority being against, 11 and 14% of readers expressed an interest in these aspects of adventuring and, assuming that the total readership is about 400, this means that up to 56 readers will see this side of their interest neglected by Probe. That is the lion trap that the glossies fell into. Their surveys showed a massive majority with an interest in arcade games and only a minority with an interest in other aspects of the computer hobby, including adventuring. Result, out goes programming, out go articles on serious applications, out go strategy and wargames, out goes the adventure column and down goes the circulation, and so the cycle continues. What the glossies have forgotten is that many readers take into account the broad sweep of a magazine's coverage when they decide to subscribe. Remember how adventurers feel when a magazine drops its adventure column! So, although I do not have any interest in P.B.M. and R.P.G.s, I would not like to see them totally excluded from Probe and hope that you can find room for the occasional article. On another aspect, I cannot

remember whether I was the single reader who suggested inclusion of Strategy and War games. If not, I would like to second the proposal. War games are the 1st cousin of adventure games and although they are generally tied quite closely to some real historical event there is sufficient room for problem solving and decision making to draw the interest of more traditional adventure players. If War games are the 1st cousin of adventure then Strategy games are the 2nd cousin. They range from arcade-strategy (which has no place in Probe) to simulation-strategy games which involve simulation of some real life activity, eg running a company. Although this involves rather more manipulation of figures eg. share prices, than occurs in a typical adventure there are, again, sufficient problems to be solved and decisions to be taken to provide such interest. At present, the only magazine which I can think of that gives such coverage of strategy and war games, is OFFICIAL SECRETS but because it is angled towards 16 bit computers there is not much for Spectrum owners. So, although Probe should remain loyal to its title, there might be a case for the occasional article on other aspects of "mind games".

BOB BATES, Burton Joyce, Nottingham.

(You raise some very interesting points, Bob. I wonder if any other readers would care to write in and tell us what they think about this. Are there many of you who are interested in Strategy/ War game articles?.....Mandy)

COMPUTER FRIEND NEEDED

I write in the hope that there is someone in my area who is of like mind and we can get together and cooperate. I have a Spectrum 128K with lots of RPG's, lots of time and I also have the Quill and PAW as I would like to write an adventure game myself. Unfortunately, I'm not very mobile or young, my grandson used to come and help me with the Quill etc, but he has now gone to college so I've got no one who knows anything about computers. I am appealing to you please, if you know a little about computers and live near here get in touch so that we could perhaps help each other in any way. I can write the stories okay and do most of the input, but get stuck on some of it which my grandson used to work out, however now I seem to be getting a lot of bugs, so help is needed and the company would be welcome too.

MARY McNICOL, 22 Whitwell Place, Frome, Somerset, BA11 4EB

HELP WITH A BUG

I was interested to read in the "Bugs and Amusing Responses" section of the September issue about the C64 version of ARROW OF DEATH 2. I had exactly the same problem trying to kill the creature and wrote to Probe asking for help. The solution I was given was that you must type KILL THE ANIMAL (the word THE is important and this is the only place in the game where three words are required).

DOROTHY MILLARD, Croydon, Australia.

IS THERE SUFFICIENT INTEREST?

I currently have three adventures for sale. They are PANIC BENEATH THE SEA and CITY FOR RANSOM written with GAC and the worlds first Adian adventure called PROJECT ANNIHILATION. The reason I am writing is to find out if there are any Amstrad PCW readers out there who would like the games to be available on their machines. If there are, then could you please write to me. If there is sufficient interest shown I shall then endeavour to transfer them to PAW format so that they are then available for these machines.

JOHN PACKHAM, 60 Hightown Towers, Warburton Rd, Southampton, Hants, SO2 6HH



HELP WANTED



"Please can anyone, anywhere, provide me with the solution to Global Software's THE MAGICIANS BALL. After five years trying to complete the game, I am at a complete loss what to do with it."

IAN DOWDALL, 48 Arvon Green, South Ockendon, Essex, RM15 5QJ

"Please could someone help me as I am having trouble with KINGS QUEST IV - I've got all but one of the riddles that block my way to Glastonbury Tor and the last is driving me potty - help!

When I am full I can point the way

When I am empty nothing moves me

I have two skins - one within and one without

What am I?"

SANDRA VOGEL, 45 Ravensbury Ct, Ravensbury Grove, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 4DW

"I have recently been playing an adventure called THE EXPERIENCE by Players, in the game I have managed to get through the wardrobe door. I am stuck at this point because I can't go in any direction and can't examine anything. I'd be very grateful if someone could help me out. Thanks."

N. RAVAT, 4 Broxburn Close, Leicester, LE4 7PS.

"This is a plea to all Probe readers - not for help (as I've actually finished the game), but for enlightenment! The game is HEAVY ON THE MAGIK and my query concerns the exit to Paradise on Level 2 and how to obtain the correct password to open the door. I know the word required is "LONG" (I saw it in a magazine) - what I want to know is how this is obtained! The clue given by the guards is "AN EYE FOR AN EYE TO ENTER PARADISE" - which is obviously a reference to the character AI in the kitchen; but I've tried everything I can think of to make this ***** part with the information - all to no avail! I've tried all variations on the word "EYE" (AI EYE; AI AI; AI I; AI AYE; and everything connected with EYES), but he just sits there shaking his head! "AI DOOR" or "AI PARADISE" elicits the response "LAZA TO THE DOOR" - which is the password given by the phoenix to another door! Call me a perfectionist if you like, but I not only like to finish a game - I like to KNOW how all the clues have been worked out! So if any reader knows the correct input to make this skeletal pain in the neck speak, let me know - PLEASE!!!"

TERRY TAYLOR, 20 Lee Rd, Bacup, Lancashire, OL13 0EA.

Tel: 0706 873965

"Please can I ask for help with a number of games? In ROBIN OF SHERLOCK, I can't get out of part 3 to go back into part 2. I complete the circuit of toilet/forest/Hurns Shed, collect the empty packet, talk to Hurn, go back to the toilet and out, but then cannot go E, N, W. I just go round again. Also in this game there is supposed to be a "Mystery Bonus Program" which I cannot find. Perhaps this comes when the game is solved? In SOULS OF DARKON, I've progressed fairly well but keep being killed by Kraytor (I have the star) so what am I doing wrong? In HUNCHBACK, I can't seem to get out of the church. I cannot make any progress either on MYSTERY OF ARKHAM MANOR, I just seem to be going round in circles and not progressing in any noticeable way. I would also appreciate some help with FLASHBACK as here too I don't seem to be able to make any progress."

VIOLET TOWNSEND, 20 Beverington Close, Eastbourne, E Sussex, BN21 2SB



IN-TOUCH



AMSTRAD adventures for sale: Disc: PCW only: FISH, CORRUPTION, GUILD OF THIEVES, JINXTER, THE PAWN at £8 each including postage from: MARTIN LEVERTON, Manor Farm, Little Gidding, Nr Huntingdon, Cambs, PE17 5RJ. Tel: 06323 393.

AMSTRAD adventures for sale or exchange: Tape: NECRIS DOME, MYSTERY OF THE INDUS VALLEY, FOOTBALL FRENZY at £1.50 each from: KEN DEAN, 16 Swonnells Court, Maltsters Way, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 3PY. Tel: 0502 566538.

AMSTRAD CPC adventures for sale: PANIC BENEATH THE SEA £1.99 tape or £4.50 disc. CITY FOR RANSOM £1.99 tape or £4.50 disc. PROJECT ANNIHILATION £2.50 tape or £4.50 disc. Order 2 for £3 tape or £6 disc. Order 3 for £4.50 tape or £9 disc from: JOHN PACKHAM, 60 Hightown Towers, Warburton Rd, Southampton, Hants, SO2 6HH.

MAGAZINES for sale: Complete set of the defunct MICRO ADVENTURER magazine, (13 issues). Will sell cheaply to a good home. Offers to DAVID GUEST, 537 Davidson Rd, Croydon, CR0 6DT.

SPECTRUM adventures for sale: All originals at £1 each. ASHKERON, KENTILLA, SPYTREK ADVENTURE, THE DEEDS OF GLENGARRY HALL, QUEST FOR THE POORLY SNAIL, MAJIK, VENOM, NECRIS DOME, THE SERF'S TALE, REDHAWK, A TICKET TO RIDE, HACKER, LIFE-TERM, WEREWOLF SIMULATOR, WIZ-BIZ, MATT LUCAS, CRICKET CRAZY, JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF EDDIE SMITH'S HEAD, SHREWSBURY KEY, MORON, ROBIN OF SHERWOOD (The Touchstones of Rhiannon), LOADS OF MIDNIGHT, LORDS OF MIDNIGHT. Also the following compilations at £2 each: COMPUTER HITS VOLUMES 2, 3 & 4, FIVE STAR VOLUME 3, NOW GAMES 3, and at 50p: COSTA CAPERS. Write to GEOFF WALLIS, 51c Elder Avenue, Crouch End, London N8 6PS.

INFOCOM SWOP 'N' BUY: This month we have DAVE MANNING of 62 Burrage Place, London SE18 7BE, Tel: 081 854 2526. Dave is looking for HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY and any other similar games for the PCV8512.



KINGS AND QUEENS



SUE ROSEBLADE, 79 Ridgeway, Eynesbury, St. Neots, Cambs, PE19 2RA can help with the following updated list of adventures: Played on BBC: IT'S MAGIC, STREET PATROLLER, LAST DAYS OF DOON, ISLAND OF XAAN, THE SEVENTH STAR. Played on Spectrum: JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF EDDIE SMITH'S HEAD, THE MENAGERIE, THE REALM, THE GORDELLO INCIDENT, THE AXE OF KOLT, MUTANT, HAMMER OF GRIMMILD, THE MISER, BUG OF BRIT, PRIDE OF THE FEDERATION, GREAT PEEPINGHAM TRAIN ROBBERY, DOUBLE AGENT, DIABLO.

DON'T FORGET TO ENCLOSE S.A.E WHEN WRITING FOR HELP!

LATEST SOLUTIONS RECEIVED

30p each.

ANDROMEDA 3, ASSIGNMENT EAST BERLIN, BEAUTIFUL DREAMER, CROWN, DUDU & DAMN, KEEPER, MALICE IN BLUNDERLAND, MIDNIGHT THIEF, MISSION, RINGS OF MERLIN, TALES OF MATHEMATICA, TRAIL, TALISMAN OF FOWER.

OBJECTS AND THEIR USES

THE BEAST OF TORRACK MOOR

OBJECTS AND USES - BY ALF BALDWIN

1. LETTER From Miss Myrtle reporting rumours of the beast. Show it to your editor.
2. ELECTRICITY BILL Take it with you, has your address on it.
3. TIMETABLE Bus leaves for Puddlecombe at 9.48.
4. ANORAK Cold wind outside.
5. MONEY Essential purchases - film, can of beans, cup of tea, raffle ticket. Just enough left to buy torch and a beer but not essential.
6. STURDY SHOES For walking on Moor. Vicar will give them to you if you fetch books for him.
7. PAN Warm the beans in it. (Not essential, you can just warm the tin).
8. GLOVES Protect your hands when reaching through window of shack.
9. NEWSPAPER Use it to light a fire.
10. CARRIER BAG Temporary container until you get the rucksack which will hold unlimited number of items.
11. LIBRARY TICKET Show pass and electricity bill to librarian, to get it, then borrow local map.
12. LOCAL MAP You will get lost on the Moor if you are not carrying it.
13. KAGOULE Show your pass to the barman, he will give it to you as you leave.
14. MATCHES On stool in pub. Use them to light a fuse and a fire.
15. LEAFLET In Ranger's house. Essential items when visiting Moor.
16. KEY TO IVY COTTAGE Estate Agent will give it to you if you express an interest in buying.
17. RUCKSACK Will hold unlimited number of items.
18. TROWEL Dig a hole under the tree for the gunpowder.
19. TORTOISE Take it to the Vet.
20. LADDER Lay it over the stairs.
21. CANDLE The wick makes a good fuse.
22. TIN OPENER To open the tin of beans.
23. BRICK Break window of shack with it.
24. POUCH Contains gunpowder to blow up tree.
25. HAMMER Claw end will open jammed drawer in cottage.
26. PEBBLES Throw them to attract Doctor's attention.
27. RAFFLE TICKET Wins a rug to keep you warm in Shepherds hut.
28. TWITCHER He's broken his leg, go for the doctor.

HINTS AND TIPS



SPIDERMAN

By JIM STRUTHERS played on Spectrum
Pull the painting to find a torn paper.
Lower the thermostat from 71 to 31.
CAST WEB at fan, then CAST WEB "at button".
Look in Aquarium.
Talk to Madame.

Start computer, then "type start" to print the newspaper.
Get the newspaper and open it to find a gem.
CAST WEB "at bio" to get the bio-gem.

THE EXTRICATOR

By VICKY JACKSON played on Spectrum
Examine the Scarecrow to find th shovel.
Use your hat to carry water.
Fill plastic tube with water.
Insert tape into computer and press play.
Give bug to plant for the yellow pass.
Hold your breath after pulling the plug.
Replace the new chip with the old one.
Reflect laser with the mirror.



SPACE QUEST I

By STEVE McLAREN played on Amiga
At the start of the game go west three times to find a dead body.
SEARCH MAN, GET KEYCARD, go east twice and wait around until the professor enters and read carefully what he says. You should be able to work out the password to get the cartridge from the data archive.
To pass the units emitting a beam just inputt USE GLASS.

BLOOD OF THE MUTINEER

By BARBARA BASSINGTHWAIGHTE played on BBC
Rub the candle on the pulley to prevent it squeaking.
When sailing boat: bail boat with boot. Bail after every three moves.

LOCKS OF LUCK

By BARBARA BASSINGTHWAIGHTE played on BBC
When knee deep in mud, dig for turnip. Exam turnip to find hair spring. Need halo fish off jetty? - stick pin in worm. Tie cord to rod and line, cast line. The teddy bear is your light. Drop sand-bag in quicksand to get it. Sprinkle it on slowsand in the hot tunnel.

BOUNTY HUNTER

By LOL OAKES played on Spectrum
To enter the city: Plant seedling in crack in wall, leave then return.
Use the mat to repair the roof of the dwelling.
To get the gillworm - pour salt in pool (carry salt in pot).
To get rid of bats - drop baby web weaver.
Peel the yellow pod - it's a banana! Banana skins make creatures slip.

THE CASE OF THE MAD MUMMY

By DOROTHY MILLARD played on Commodore 64
The wardrobe must be unlocked from the outside but can only be opened from the inside then you must GO DOOR.

ONCE UPON A LILY PAD

By JUNE ROWE played on Spectrum
Soak the carrot in the chalice:
Horse will eat it with great joy -
Board the cart, get off at the palace,
To find your saviour - Boy oh boy!
The princess you meet is a BIG disappointment...
Mildred's face needs beauty ointment!
But worry not - there's hope for you;
A pretty maid comes into view.

Ample in bust and small in waist -
Lovely Jenny's much more to your taste.
Though just a skivvy, for her you fall,
And find her a ticket to go to the ball.
Alas! Alas! She's not high born,
But when a pretty dress is worn,
A prince will crown her with a kiss -
Your hopes are dashed... what game is this?

Prince Thrust (a great big ugly brute)
Kicks you with the toe of his boot.
That does it! Jenny's by your side,
And kisses you to heal your pride.
So Frog turned prince, you've had your fun -
Just one more move and all is done.

CASTLE OF MYDOR

By GEORGE KERSEY played on Spectrum
Light the wood in the cottage fireplace to discover the magic word
needed to open the castle door. Find a spanner on the shelf there.
Move the rock, in front of the castle, to find a key.

IMAGINATION

By GEORGE KERSEY played on Spectrum
Initially get and insert the disc. Examine the screen and the numbers
are the adventures you must visit. Type the numbers in words only. The
correct order for visiting the adventures are ONE, TWO, FOUR, THREE,
TWO, THREE, TWO, THREE, ONE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, FOUR, TWO, THREE AND
BACK TO ONE. To return to the computer PINCH ARM.

MAGNETIC MOON PART 2

By ALF BALDWIN played on Spectrum
Press the button to open the cabin door, go into the corridor, pick
the lock on the door to the storage room with the wire. Go in and
close the door and wait until the pirates have passed by.
Search the metal bin in the changing room to find some overalls. Wear
them to cover your uniform.
Enter the shaft at the circular hallway to get to the other levels of
the complex. There are time limits set for the things you have to do
so it is vital that you visit the levels in the correct sequence and
act within the time allowed.
Go to the cleaners store on level 3 and get the box of cleaning
materials. Go to the air recycling plant on level 5, empty the box and
leave it here. Search the table and get the wrench.
Return to the cleaners store and wait until the scientist and the
pirate arrive. When the pirate leaves to fetch the scientists
notebook, go immediately to level 4, creep up on the medic and hit him
with the wrench. Get his key and dictaphone.

.....

GETTING YOU STARTED

THE AXE OF KOLT

By KEITH BURNARD

Go to the Inn and wait, buy some ale, go to the market and buy a fur coat, buy a shirt of chainmail, buy an axe (note the response), buy an oil lamp and examine lamp, buy a tinderbox, buy oil for the lamp (note the response). There is nothing at the church!.....

JOURNEY CENTRE OF EDDIE SMITHS HEAD

By JIM STRUTHERS

GET COAT, WEAR COAT (something has dropped out of your pocket), LOOK, GET IGNITION KEY, N, W, W, W, W, N, ENTER VAN, INSERT IGNITION KEY, DRIVE NORTH, EXIT VAN, N, E, GET TORCH, W, UP, E, HIT PANEL, E, GET BIG KEY, W, W, D, UNLOCK DOOR, D, DROP BIG KEY, GET WINE (drink wine when told you are thirsty), UP, S, ENTER VAN, DRIVE SOUTH, EXIT VAN, W, N, N.....

NEVER ENDING STORY

By JIM DONALDSON

NE, E, GET AURYAN, SW, GET STONE, S, GET HORN, W, N, GET BRANCH, S, E, N, NE, W, SW, LIGHT BRANCH, NE, E, E, E, E, E, LIGHT BUSH, D, GET BUX, UP.....

CUDDLES

By JIM DONALDSON

EXAM RED (D), GET FOOD, DROP FOOD (Nanny will pick you up), GET BROOCH, THROW BROOCH, N, N, EXAM PURPLE (N), N, EXAM MURAL, EXAM GREEN (B).....

SHIP OF DOOM

By VICKY JACKSON

S, TURN HANDLE, YES, S, S, S, GET ROD, N, W, GET GUN, W, W, GET COIN, N, GET GLASSES, E, E, E, E, WEAR GLASSES, R, GET BATTERY, DROP GLASSES, INSERT BATTERY, S, S, GET TORCH, W, GET HOOK, E, N, N, W, W, W, W, S, S, S, POINT SONIC, GET KEY.....

THE GOLDEN MASK

By JIM STRUTHERS

E, EXAM STATUE, READ SYMBOLD, SAY MECLA, GET TORCH, GET WISE, GET TELEPORT, EXAM TELEPORT, W, W, EXAM BODY, GET HOOD, WEAR HOOD, GET BOTTLE, SMASH BOTTLE, GET CORK, E, SE, UP, UP, CLIMB TREE, EXAM BRANCHES, EXAM HOLE, IN, SE, GET FLINT, S, W, S, EXAM BOAT, FIX BOAT WITH CORK, ENTER BOAT, CROSS LAKE, LEAVE BUAT, W, NW, E, E, PULL CROSS, OPEN DOOR, ENTER DOOR, GET KEY, GET SAPPHIRE (don't examine the body!), EXAM SAPPHIRE, OUT, W, W, UNLOCK DOOR, DROP KEY, OPEN DOOR, ENTER TOWER, N, GET KNIFE, S, UP, UP, UP, E, GET RUF, W, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN, S, SE, E, ENTER BOAT, CROSS LAKE.....

LOOM

By MANDY

From the start: Click on leaf on the tree, go directly to the tent village and enter the tent on the left of the screen. Keep walking through the screens to the right, examine the tapestries on the way until you come to the Loom. Here the game will take over and give you the story of what is happening (watch this the first time but

subsequent times just press ESC key to move on to the action). When Mother Hetchel has been turned into an egg and the Elders have turned into swans and flown away move to the discarded distaff and get it. Move to the egg and examine it (you will hear the OPEN draft). Cast the OPEN draft. The game will take over for a while once more. When you are back in control, leave the tent and make your way into the forest via the path leading to the top of the screen and walking to the far left at the middle of the screen. Once in the forest examine all the holes to find one owl is missing. Go to the graveyard to the left and examine the thorns. A rabbit will run out and wake up the sleeping own. Return to the forest screen and examine the hole that was empty. You will now receive the NIGHT VISION draft. Return to the village and go to the dark tent (with the pile of gold near the entrance). Walk into the dark until a pair of eyes appear and cast NIGHT VISION draft. Examine the spinning wheel to receive the STRAW INTO GOLD draft. Turn the pile of straw into gold. Go to the dying tent and examine the dye pot and the flask of liquid to receive the DYING draft and the EMPTY draft. Experiment for a while dying the wools and examine the book on the table. Go to the landing stage and examine the gull to get the OPEN draft once more and cast this spell on the clam. Go back to the very start location by the tree and examine the sky. Cast OPEN at the sky and the tree will be struck by lightning. The log will fall down into the sea and drift to the landing stage. Make your way there and jump into the water to board the log, you can now leave the island.....

DUSK OVER ELFINGTON

By JIM STRUTHERS

W, READ SIGN, D, N, N, GET NUGGETS, D, S, GET SWORD, N, N, E, GET FINT, E, S, E, S, UP, GYPSY HELP, D, N, E, N, N, KNOCK TWICE, N, W, W, W, W, N, E, N, E, E, E, CUT ROPE, GET ROPE, W, W, W, TIE ROPE, D, EXAM LEAVES, GET COINS, UP, S, IN, REPAIR SWORD, GIVE NUGGETS.....

INTO THE MYSTIC

By PHIL GLOVER

Can't go north from the start position because of the orcs? Go and examine the door in the keep (south). Rip smock to obtain a piece of cloth, which you can dip in the oil floating on the moat. Go and oil the door. Leave it open and return to the start position. Shout at Orcs and without any delay nip back into the keep and quickly shut the door. Wait and watch what happens. After you have disposed of the Orc problem, examine EVERYTHING in the courtyard and try MOVING things to make two useful discoveries. Light the torch in the embers of the fire then wait for the fire to cool and shift ashes to discover something which will need close examination. Trouble with the robbers? Find the leper colony site near monastery and search grass. Make a noise frequently with what you find to keep the robbers at a distance.....

ICHOR

By MARK ELTRINGHAM

OPEN DOOR, N, E, E, S, W, S, S, E, UP (in house), E, S, EXAM PICTURE, TAKE PICTURE, S, TAKE CARROTS, N, E, N, OPEN DOOR, E, N, MOVE RUBBISH, EXAM BOX, OPEN BOX, LOOK IN BOX, TAKE KEY, S, W, S, W, N, W, DOWN, S, W, W, S, E, EAT CARROTS DONKEY, SHOW PICTURE TO DONKEY, GIVE DONKEY THE PICTURE, W, EXAM TREE, TAKE BRANCHES.....

(CONTRIBUTIONS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED FOR THIS SECTION PLEASE)

SOLUTION OF THE MONTH MYTH

A solution to the puzzles by SANDRA SHARKEY

KILLING THE HYDRA

In the Tranquil Garden you find a foxglove, a flat stone and a small stone. Get the leaves from the foxglove and, using the small stone, grind them to a liquid on the flat stone. Dip the trident in the liquid. Go to the Hydra and throw the poisoned trident at the ninth head. When the Hydra collapses cut off the ninth head with the trident. Get the head as you will need it for another puzzle later in the game. You can now open the gates and pass through them.

CATCHING THE LAMB

Climb the tree in the garden and wait until the lamb is directly beneath you then jump down. You land on the lamb and break its neck. Put the lamb on the altar to receive some help from the gods later.

TRAVELLING THROUGH THE SWAMP

This is unnecessary once you have opened the gates. There is a reed in the garden which you can put in your mouth to enable you to breathe in the deepest part of the swamp.

GETTING THE IMPORT LICENCE

If you have put the dead lamb on the altar then you can try to take a coin from one of the souls. The gods interfere and reincarnate the soul and give you a bag of obols that you can use as your stake in a game of Blackjack with Charon and Death.

HOW TO WIN AT CARDS

Cheat!! Hang your shield on the nail in the hut and sit on the wooden chair. Charon conveniently sits on the broken chair with his back to the shield. YOU can then see his cards and adjust your betting accordingly. I had to win 1471 obols before I broke Charon and forced him to settle the gambling debt with an Import Licence. Don't forget to retrieve the shield as you will need it again.

GETTING THE KEYS ACROSS THE RIVER

Take the large gold key and the small gold key and go on to the ferry. Drop the large gold key on the ferry and leave it there. Wait until you reach the other side of the river then leave the ferry and drop the small gold key. Back on the ferry and wait. Leave the ferry and get the large silver key. Back on the ferry and wait. Leave the ferry and drop the large silver key. Back on the ferry and wait. Leave the ferry and get the small silver key. Back to the other side and drop the silver key. Board the ferry again and travel back. Leave the ferry and get the large bronze key. Take it to the other side and drop it. Return for the small bronze key. Board the ferry and get the large gold key, wait then leave the ferry and collect the other keys.

ENTERING THE PALACE OF HADES

West of the palace is a rope hanging from a slot. Tie the Hydra's ninth head to the rope (note the scavenging birds overhead!) Go east, one of the birds makes a grab for the head and conveniently opens the portcullis, go north and you have entered the palace.

SEEING IN THE DARK INSIDE THE PALACE

Open the large bronze door and go through. Open the large silver door and go through, open the large gold door and go through. Here you will find a mirror. Break it into two pieces and go back through the gold door. Put the small piece of mirror on the pillar, it reflects a shaft of light. Go back through the gold door again and put the shield on the pillar. Open small bronze door, go through and put the large piece of mirror on the pillar. Open the small silver door and go through. Open the small gold door and go through. Here you will find the helmet you have been seeking. TAKE HELMET to complete the game.

SERIALISED SOLUTIONS

AVON - A Shakespearean tragedy of our time.

Played by NEIL SHIPMAN on BBC.

Continued from earlier issue.....

INV shows there's blood on your hands, GET ALL, NE, E, E, E, N, N, NW to Mystic Wood where an ass's head is put on you. Then SE, E, GET SKULL, EAT GRASS, E to Chapel and GET PEARL (215 pts). W, W, W, S, S, E, S to Bosworth Field where King takes head and leaves crown, GET CROWN (219 pts). OPEN BASKET, YES, CROWN, YES, PEARL, YES, GOBLET, NO, NO, GET BASKET (249 pts). N, N, E, E to Capitol and note name of Orator (differs every time) e.g. "Bilegonius", GET SCROLL (252 pts).

W, W, S, W, W, W, N to Blasted Heath, answer YES, GET WOOL, GET TONGUE. Then S, S, SW, S, SE to Undiscovered Country. READ SCROLL and go in direction mentioned (this can include directions like back and nww). Repeat until you find Imogen, then GET BRACELET (265 pts). READ SCROLL and go in direction mentioned to get to Waterfall, DROP SCROLL, WASH HANDS, DROP TONGUE.

N, NE, N, W, NW, W to Lady's Boudoir, OPEN SILVER casket (or whichever came 1st in name) then answer LEAD (or whichever came 2nd) and GET STOCKINGS (269 pts). You'll soon be getting warm, so E, SE, E, S, SW to River Bank and WASH. NE, N, W, NW, W, N to Dining Hall, SIT, then follow ghost NE to Birnham Wood. This is a maze which can be mapped by dropping objects, but is the same in every game.

E, NE, N, NW to milestone and WAIT for trees to part. SW, W, SW, SE to post and WAIT for trees to part. Then NE, N, E, WAIT for path to appear and go SW to Centre of Wood (283 pts). S to Dunsinnin and GET SCEPTRE (287 pts), U, S and JUMP to return to Stage. DROP WOOL, GET SHIELD, E, E, E, N, E, E, SE to Town Centre, DROP SHIELD, S, E to Shop, and GET VASE (291 pts). Then W, S, answer YES to get ducats from Moneylender (295 pts), S to Barge, EMPTY VASE then U (296 pts).

SW, GET CAGE, NE, SE, then WAIT until large chest bobs at your feet, OPEN CHEST and GET SPICES (300 pts) then WAIT until small chest is washed up, GET CHEST. If starling hasn't yet said "Mortimer" then wait until it does. Then OPEN CAGE, NW, S, D to Hold and GET SHREW (307 pts). OPEN BASKET, YES, CAGE, YES, SPICES, YES, DUCATS, YES, VASE, YES, SCEPTRE, YES, BRACELET, NO, NO, GET BASKET (358 pts). Then U, U, N (Moneylender takes pie), N, GET SHIELD, E to Eastern Fringe of Town, DROP SHIELD, GET ARROW.

N to Forest of Arden, the path through which is marked by "Rosalind" signs. Go in any direction and if this takes you to another sign make a note of it and move again. If you get lost then move at random until you return to the Eastern Fringe. Then retrace your successful route to where you got lost and try a different direction. Carry on like this until you eventually reach the Clearing, then say MORTIMER to wake man (368 pts). Remember the name he tells you (differs every time) e.g. "Scoop" and move at random until you return to the Eastern Fringe (373 pts).

E into Drooping Fog then move in any direction to be led to top of cliff, JUMP and GET BOW (380 pts). E, answer XXXX (which can be any name you like), SHOOT ARROW, DROP BOW, S, GET PORPENTINE, N, E into Tavern, say SCROOP (or whatever name Mortimer told you) to have chest opened and get sapphire (384 pts).

E, GET BLADDER, E (Portia sees ring) to Outside Palace (391 pts). N, NW, N, NE through Network of Streets and GET CHAIN (395 pts). BURST BLADDER to distract Goldsmith (400 pts), then SE, S, SW, S and THROW PORPENTINE at Watchman to enter Palace, receive congratulations and return to 20th Century (450 pts).

----- THE END -----



HELPLINE

ALF BALDWIN	0452 500512	MON TO SAT 10AM TO 5PM	Spectrum.
JACK HIGHAM	0925 819631	FRI TO MON 7PM TO 10PM	Spectrum.
WALTER POOLEY	051 9331342	ANY REASONABLE TIME	Various.
DOREEN BARDON	0853 628509	MON TO FRI 6PM TO 10PM	Spectrum. WEEKENDS ANY REASONABLE TIME
MIKE BRAILSFORD	0592 757788	SUN TO SAT 10AM TO 10PM	Various.
MERC	0424 434214	ANY REASONABLE TIME	Atari ST.
JASON DEANE	0492 622750	ANY REASONABLE TIME	Amiga.
JOAN PANCOTT	0305 784155	SUN TO SAT 1.PM TO 10PM	Amstrad.
ISLA DONALDSON	041 9540602	SUN TO SAT NOON TO 12PM	Amstrad.
NIC RUMSEY	03212 2737	MON TO FRI 6PM TO 9PM	Various.
BARBARA BASSINGTHWAIGHTE	0935 26174	SUN TO SAT 10AM TO 10PM	BBC.
BARBARA GIBB	051 7226731	ANY EVENING FROM 7PM	BBC.
DAVE BARKER	071 7321513	MON TO FRI 7PM TO 10PM	Various.
STUART WHYTE	061 9804645	ANY REASONABLE TIME	Amstrad.
ROBIN MATTHEWS	0222 569115 OR 0642 781073	EVENINGS AND WEEKENDS	IBM PC

*** THE ULTIMATE INFOCOM HELPLINE ***

If you need help with an Infocom adventure then who better to help you than A GRUE! Ring GRUE on 0695 573141 between 7:30pm to 9pm Mon to Fri. Or write to 64 COUNTY ROAD, ORMSKIRK, WEST LANCs, L39 1QH.

ADVENTURE PROBE

If you need to contact Probe please telephone 0492 77305. I will be available at all reasonable times any day apart from Sunday, and Monday afternoon, but please try to telephone between 10am and 10pm. If you are telephoning for help on an adventure then daytime only please! But please try the helplineers for help first as above.

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU ONLY
RING AT THE TIMES SHOWN



Zenobi Software

ADVENTURES

A small blue lizard scampered across the top of the nearby rough timber counter, leaving tiny paw-prints in the puddles of split beer that littered the surface of the roughly constructed bar. Reaching forward you pick up your glass, swirl the solitary ice-cube around in the half-inch of amber coloured fluid at the bottom of the glass and quickly swig down the fluid. As the cool liquid reaches the back of your throat you smile slowly to yourself and then spit the ice-cube in the direction of the fast disappearing lizard. To your annoyance the ice-cube misses its target and skids sharply off the counter to shatter against the left-hand wall.

Some minutes later the greasy excuse for a bartender slides yet another glass of amber fluid and ice in your direction and growls "This is the last one, from now on you are gonna have to pay for any more!"

You ease your bum off the hard cane stool and amble towards the window and then with a flick of the wrist you shove back the shutters and gaze out on the bleak outside world.....somewhere out there it was, somewhere out there amidst the dense green vegetation and swarming insects! Memories come flooding back and you recall the nights spent in deep conversation and of the tales of the 'LOST TEMPLE' and its fabulous wealth and you decide there and then to make one final effort to discover its place of hiding

CAN YOU solve the mysteries that surround the legendary 'LOST TEMPLE' and can YOU brave the elements and the creatures in order to negotiate the 'green hell' that surrounds the temple and all it contains?

THE LOST TEMPLE

NOTES ... This game will accept all the standard commands such as EXAMINE, HELP, UNLOCK, MOVE, NORTH and INVENTORY as well as some more unusual ones such as STRIKE, OIL, SQUEEZE and JOIN.

You may use RAM SAVE and RAM LOAD to store your present 'game-position' to memory, however always use the standard SAVE and LOAD to operate the more normal tape routines and in order to make a more permanent record of your game.

HINTS ... Don't forget that most good chemists sell stuff to repel insects and that even the most stalwart adventurers need protection from the elements now and again. Also not every item you come across will be useful but some are so handy that you will not be able to complete the game without them ... hint! hint!



Spectrum 48K/128K+2

ADVENTURE