

ADVENTURE PROBE

MARCH 1994 £2.00
VOLUME 8 ISSUE 3



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

ADVENTURE PROBE

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LETTERS

If you write in it will be assumed that the letter is for publication in Probe unless it is clearly marked NOT FOR PUBLICATION, or obviously just a covering note for your subscription, contribution etc. If an interesting point is raised, and you probably didn't intend it to be published, I will always seek your permission before publishing.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Copies can be ordered monthly or in multiples up to 12 issues: sorry no discount for quantity. Prices per issue: UK £2.00, Europe & Eire £2.50, Rest of World (Surface) £2.50 (Airmail) £3.00. All payments in pounds sterling please. Cheques/Crossed Postal Orders or International Giro payable to **ADVENTURE PROBE**. Please do **not** send cash.

BACK ISSUES

All back issues are available, at the above prices. Volume 1 comprises 19 issues (June 1986 - Dec 1987), subsequent volumes are 12 issues Jan - Dec.

ADVERTISING RATES

Short, private advertisements in the In-Touch section are free to subscribers. Trade prices are: FULL PAGE £5.00, HALF PAGE £3.00 but one page per issue free (subject to available space) for regular subscribers i.e. 3 issues or more in advance.

DISTRIBUTION

Adventure Probe is distributed during the first week of the month (but will be a little erratic until I get back on schedule). Copy date for contributions and advertisements is 14th of the previous month.

CONTRIBUTIONS

All contributions are gratefully accepted. Please keep me well supplied with computer and adventure-related material. It doesn't matter how brief the entry is. It may be the very information someone has been waiting for. It will be **very** helpful if items for different **sections** are on separate pieces of paper. It doesn't have to be printed or typed but best handwriting will be appreciated, as I am not familiar with every detail. When you submit an entry for the IN-TOUCH section please mark which are adventures, utilities, arcades, etc.

POSTAL ADDRESS

Please send all correspondence, subscriptions, etc. to:-

Barbara Gibb - Editor, Adventure Probe
52 Burford Road, Liverpool, L16 6AQ
England, UK.

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HALL OF FAME

Many thanks to the following readers who have sent in contributions since the last issue :

Dorothy Millard, Simon Avery, Ellen Mahon, Terry Taylor, James Judge,
 Neil Shipman, Ron Rainbird, Damian Steele, Mary Scott-Parker,
 Martin Freemantle, Walter Pooley, Lon Houlston, Ron Guest,
 Frank Fridd, Lorna Paterson, June Rowe, Wynne Snowdon,
 Hilary Walton, Jenny Perry, Clive Wilson, Steve Clay,
 Phil Reynolds, Jean Childs, John Schofield,
 Jason Mackenzie, Dennis Northam

Special thanks to :

Dream World Adventures, Binary Zone PD and Frank Fridd for software,
 Diane Rice for the front cover picture, and
 Geoff Lynas for a great printing job.

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers.

I should have realized that you wouldn't let me down. Almost as soon as I had sent the February magazine to the printer, subscriptions rolled in, and since then I have had to order another 15 and then another 6, bringing the total to its January level. This number includes some new readers to whom I extend a warm welcome. It is great to know that there's still a lot of interest in adventuring, long may you be Probers. As one newish reader remarked "I've already made a couple more friends, all due to Probe."

I haven't heard of any more trouble on the helpline, and I hope it is now over. Lon Houliston has suggested that maybe I could print a different code word every month on the helpline page. Anyone ringing would have to quote the latest code before being assisted. If abusive calls resume, I may have to consider it. I think it would cut my own calls by half because I suspect many are from players who have bought only one issue of Probe, and they play only adventures that have been on covertapes. Further to Jonathan Scott's letter in February's issue, and my query about the spelling of Ceaucescan - I completely failed to make the Romanian connection!

Someone, who usually wishes to remain anonymous, has asked if I could explain about playtesting. I was mulling this over when chance brought me an excellent article which I am pleased to publish in this issue. I hope it is the first of a series by different authors (no, not SOMA, that is well organized for the moment), and that writers, programmers, publishers and playtesters will feel like presenting their side of things.

My euphoria over Commodore Force having a four page adventure column in the February issue was short-lived as it was quickly followed by the news that Bash the Barbarian had been sacked. Despite the March column giving Probe a great write-up and saying that it would be business as usual next month, I got the sad news that the Impact Magazine side of Future Publishing has gone into liquidation, so no more CF, and presumably no Amiga Force and other magazines in the group. Only Amstrad Action (and Debby's adventure column) and Commodore Format (no adventure column, yet) remain as 8-bit glossies, long may they reign. Someone has heard a rumour that Sinclair User may be re-launched, but nothing definite. Has anyone else heard anything?

I now have a full set of Bare Bones/Goblin Gazette, and with Les Mitchell's approval given a few issues ago, I can offer reprints. However, they will only be done to order, and cost between £1.50 and £2 per copy. If you wish to complete your set, please let me know. To end on a cheerful note, the weather is getting warmer, (at least where I live), first class adventures are still being written, standards are rising, the Probe bookmarks/notices seem to be bringing in new readers (many thanks to everyone who has worked so hard in distributing them) and I've got some goodies lined up for the April and May issues.

Happy adventuring.

Barbara

A.F.I.O. Hon. Member

LETTERS



From Simon Avery of Chudleigh

Dear Probers, It's been pointed out to me by several people that the Spectrum and Commodore versions of some of my games are bugged. I don't think any of them are so badly bugged that they cannot be completed, but they are annoying in any case. As I have heard, the C64 versions were the most badly bugged, and although I had nothing to do with the programming or playtesting of those games, I feel I have some responsibility to players who feel they may have been let down. I'm in no position to offer free bug-fixed copies, as this lies with the companies that originally converted and distributed (yes, I'm sad to say that this was mainly due to Tony Collins' "The Guild" and it's rush to get games out as quick as possible without checking them for errors. I'm not deliberately 'putting the boot in' on Tony, along with everyone else, but if he won't answer my letters, I can't do much about it other than disclaim my part in the programming of the versions in question.) The Spectrum versions will probably now be distributed by Adventure Workshop under Phil Reynolds and before they are re-released, I have asked for them to be playtested properly so hopefully, they will be 'bug-free'. As for the Commodore versions, they are currently being sold by The Guild, under Jason MacKenzie - bugs included, unfortunately, though Adventure Workshop has offered to take these on as well when it spread in the C64 market, and these will also be playtested first. The original Amstrad versions, thanks to the efforts of Lorna Paterson and Joan Pancott, are, to the best of my knowledge, bug-free. I can only apologise to those who have been vexed by the bugs, and even though all but one of them are not accountable by me, I still feel, in part, responsible. The only bug which was down to me was in DAAW2: You could wash the clothes anywhere, not just at the beach. The Amstrad version of this game was changed within about a fortnight of it being released, and I asked Tony Collins to do the same for the other versions. I do not know if he did or not.

Naturally, I feel let down by Tony, I was and still am grateful for the work he put into the conversions, and he offered where no one else had and without him, the games would probably still be confined to the Amstrad market. However, in retrospect, I would have liked more feedback from Tony as to how the conversions were going; half the time I never knew what was converted, how it was doing, or if it had been playtested (most weren't).

Below are listed the bugs I have been informed about. Thanks to the players who took the time to let me know that the programming was less than perfect. Some of these bugs may have been fixed, or confined to a single version.

DAAW - You have to "CLIMB UT" of the Inn's window after you have thrown the stool through it.

DAAW2 - You could wash the clothes anywhere.

Dances With Bunny Rabbits - The "EXAMINE SIGN" message next to the chute near the end was missing, along with all the other "EXAMINE" messages in that location. It should read: "Insert H2O solution for untold riches. The "You see nothing interesting." message. Sic.

I believe there are more bugs and/or spelling mistakes. If anyone has found more of the same, please let me know so I can warn future players.

Again, I apologise on behalf of The Guild and hope that you won't blame me for what weren't my mistakes.

From Phil Reynolds of The Adventure Workshop

Barbara kindly sent me an advance copy of the above letter as she knew that I had done most of the Spectrum conversions of Simon's games for Tony Collins, and I would like to clarify some of the points raised above.

The Adventure Workshop did all the Spectrum versions except for DAAW which Tony did himself, and the only bugs that I am aware of in the Spectrum versions are the one quoted in DAAW2 and one in Magician's Apprentice, where if you go into the empty bedroom in the 5 star hotel you cannot leave it again. I was informed of this bug shortly after the game was released and informed Tony so that he could correct it, whether he did so, I do not know.

At the time I converted the games, I only played through them to make sure that they could be completed and when I sent them to Tony I told him that they needed to be playtested as there would probably be some spelling mistakes and typo errors. Again I do not know if Tony had the games tested before he released them. The Adventure Workshop now markets all Simon's games for the Spectrum and all the games have now been tested and the bugs/spelling/typo errors have been eradicated.

From Lilian Brand of Newcastle

I hope you don't mind me writing to you, but I don't know who else to ask for help.

I subscribe (and have done for about a year) to Spectrum Software, which is a hire company for Spectrum games. You hire games for a week at a time. Anyway, with my latest tapes from them I received March's Newsletter, and in it is an advert for The Guild.

I have written a letter to enclose with the tapes when I return them, just stating that as far as I know The Guild is no longer in business. I wrote to Tony Collins some time ago asking for his latest games list, had my letter eventually returned by the post office, and just assumed that he had stopped trading.

At about the same time I received my latest Probe I also received my Newsdesk/What Now? from Alec Carswell. Probe contained the letter from Simon Avery (my hero for writing "Gerblil Riot of '67"), and Newsdesk contain similar information.

The fact that Spectrum Software is still advertising for The Guild made me wonder how many other software companies or magazines still think Tony is trading, and how many customers are sending cheques with orders which maybe go astray in the post, or are causing problems because there is a delay in them being returned by the post office.

Maybe someone like yourself could get in touch with the likes of ZAT, FORMAT, RED HERRING, etc. and request that they stop running ads. for The Guild.

Before ending this letter, I must state that, while I wholeheartedly agree with Simon Avery that Tony should not have sold games that were not PD (I for one would be prepared to give Mr. Avery any monies that I owe him for "Gerblil Riot" and Prison Blues" - the two game I bought from Tony). In fact, after my first order (2nd, 3rd, etc..) Tony sent the games I requested by return, without waiting for my cheques to clear: so I had the games before he had the money for them.

★

As promised, I have written to ZAT, FORMAT and SOFTSELL (Spectrum Software), advising them of events since last August. My latest copy of ZAT still mentioned The Guild, and I suspect FORMAT likewise. Marion of Red Herring is already fully aware of the situation, so I didn't write to her. If anyone has come across any more cases of The Guild still being advertised, please send me full details and I will gladly send them a similar letter. I've heard of quite a few readers having their letters returned, usually if a cheque was enclosed, has anyone had a postal order returned?

Without actually going to 760 Tyburn Road, Birmingham, and knocking on the door I can't be sure, but I suspect that Tony's mother (Glenda Collins to whom the cheques/postal orders were made payable) has moved, and the new occupants are forwarding mail addressed to The Guild to the post office for "return to sender".

This is a very sad affair that is, unfortunately, likely to continue for some time. (Barbara)

From Clive Wilson of Glenrothes

I would like to comment on the open letter from Simon Avery in the latest issue of Probe. Like Simon I would like to state that the opinion expressed in this letter is entirely my own and not that of Adventure Probe.

I felt that Simon's letter could well have been written by myself. Like Simon, I am owed royalties by the apparently invisible Tony Collins. Apart from any royalties from sales of my games, he also owes me in respect of a Commodore Force Cover Tape of my program Venom. He received a not inconsiderable sum from the publishers of Commodore Force of which I should have been sent 60%. Needless to say this has not been forthcoming.

Like Simon, I too received a letter and cheque from Dorothy Millard in Australia for royalties on my games. This was the first I had heard of any such deal and I certainly did not authorise Tony to do this. (Thanks Dorothy for your honesty in this matter, I would never have known otherwise.) I wonder how many other such deals Tony has struck that we haven't heard about.

My contracts are also similar to Simon's in that they state that I have granted "The Guild the right to manufacture and distribute" my games.

I attempted to contact Tony Collins twice by post but you will probably not be surprised to hear that he has not responded.

Like Simon, I am considering what advice to take on this matter. I have been in this business for many years and until today I have been very happy with the way Mastertronic, Zenobi and The Adventure Workshop have treated me. It is a shame that my memories of the adventure business have to be tainted by contact with such an unscrupulous person.

If you are reading this Tony and having a good laugh up your sleeve then remember this - what we sow so shall we reap. I don't expect you will ever honour your obligation to us but why not prove us wrong? It is still not too late to prove to the world that you can be trusted. And if you maintain your silence then don't be surprised if life holds little joy for you in the years to come.

✱

If you hear anything, Clive, please let me know. As I have said at the end of Lillian's letter, this affair looks like running for some time yet. (Barbara)

From Ron Rainbird of Holmes Chapel

A few days ago I bought AMBERSTAR (re-mastered version) and have since been trying to load it successfully. It is a lengthy process involving the transfer onto 3 disks, via a special facility, after which you should be able to play the game from the newly processed disks - but I can't.

I have had several telephone conversations with a (seemingly) helpful lady at Thallon in Birmingham who informed me that they have had a lot of trouble in this direction, but that she thought everything had been ironed out with the "re-mastered" version. The suppliers in Germany have not been helpful to her, emphasizing that the game runs alright on the Amiga in their country. She has promised to send me another set of disks but does not think I will get any different results. At least she is very sympathetic and I suspect she has received similar complaints from other sources. I thought I would tell you this so that other prospective buyers may be warned!

It has put me off from getting the sequel AMBERMOON which is due for release on March 10th.

*

I know it is a naive question, but why isn't the game supplied on three disks ready for use in this country? What did the reviewers in the glossy magazines play it on, that is if they *did* play it? Please let us know how you got on with the replacement disks. (Barbara)

From Frank Fridd of Whitstable

I would like to draw the attention of Probe readers to a new Amstrad adventure PD library. As they are just starting up they are desperate for adventure games to place in their catalogue. Anyone submitting an adventure will get 178K of free adventures.

If the dealings that I have had with them is anything to go by I think they will be fast and efficient. Now that Debby Howard's Adventure PD is with Dartsma that will be no bad deal.

I feel that anyone who is prepared to spend time setting up and running a library deserves all the support that can be given to make a success of it. How about giving you support all you adventure writers out there? The name and address of the library is

Moonshine PD
19A Kenyon Avenue
Garden Village
Wrexham
Clwyd LL11 2SP

*

In the same post as Frank's letter I received a letter from Martin Greenhalgh of Moonshine PD telling me all about his new concern. He is looking for previously unreleased software, and hopes to also offer a playtesting service. If you are interested, send an SAE for an information pack, to the above address. I'm sure Martin will be pleased to hear from you. (Barbara)

From Diane Rice of Weymouth

I read Damian Steele's article "What Do You Believe" in February's Probe and while I would agree that, in many cases the carrying allowance could be greater (I particularly hate games that say "You can't do that" when you're trying to pick up something when you could if you weren't carrying your limit but they don't tell you that) personally I find it jarring to be able to, to use his example, enter a taxi while carrying a step ladder unless it has been made clear that it is a small ladder, or a large taxi, or the taxi has a roof rack or ... well you get my drift.

I do try to practice what I preach. In my second game I had to make sure that the player couldn't enter a building while leading a carthorse. I suppose it would be possible but you would expect a publican, for instance, to pass some comment if you did so. (Unless he'd just met Steve Clay's barbarian) I suppose it boils down to personal taste but for me even fantasy has to have some logic otherwise it becomes farce.

I have just bought a second-hand Amiga 1200 so I am looking forward to lots of articles by Steve Clay. His most recent one on AMOS was very interesting and I was wondering if he knew how it compares with BLITZ BASIC2 or indeed any other adventure writing utility. Almost as soon as I got my machine I sent it off to have a hard drive fitted but before it went I thought I'd better make sure it worked and loaded up a demo disc of BENEATH A STEEL SKY that the previous owner had kindly included. Well I ran my little pointer round the screen and got my character to go through a door then everything froze, strange whirrings happened, then another location screen appeared, this happened every time my character changed locations and I had this feeling of *deja vu*. What could have caused it? Then I knew. It was just like playing LORD OF THE RINGS, all those years ago, and waiting for Merry, Pippin and Sam to catch up with Frodo. Isn't progress wonderful!

While I'm on the subject does ISHAR 2 consist of any more than eat, sleep, obtain weapons and kill people, not necessarily in that order?

*

Disk drive activity is something you may have to learn to live with, Diane.

Check out the next episode of Ishar 2 at the back of the magazine - It seems to be more of the same to me, but I know many readers are playing or have played it. When typing up the details of these strategy/roleplaying games, they sound so interesting, until I try to play them. Having to spend so long in preparation before allowed to begin, and then getting wiped out in the first battle really depressed me, and I soon returned to my beloved text adventures. (Barbara)

From Jean Childs of Bagshot

I have been reading the article in last month's Probe "What Do You Believe" by Damian Steele, which refers to an article on "believability" by James Johnston. I too had read James' article and appreciated it. Many times, while trying to write a game, this "thing" has jumped out of my computer, hit me and cried "You can't let the player do that!". At least I now have a name for it. Believability!

As to Damian's example of carrying a ladder in a taxi, providing the text accounted for it by way of "You struggle into the taxi and sit with the ladder poking out of the window" then I would accept it. If not, then I think the writer is possibly standing on the very edge of believability, unless the whole context of that particular game was based on outlandish ideas.

I think the point that James was trying to get across in his article, was that a game that was fundamentally "real life" could be spoiled by a breakdown in believability.

I'm not saying that games should be 100% in the real world, but that the writer should be able to differentiate between poetic license and un-believability.

Damian also goes on to say that he hates carry limits. Well I've just been playing a game that had no carrying limit, but towards the end of the game I found it difficult to keep track of what I had as my inventory kept scrolling off the top of the screen. If you decide to print this letter, I hope Damian doesn't take it personally as I am just expressing my view. I think he's a great guy and I enjoy reading his letters and articles. I just didn't agree 100% with this one.

*

Of course I have published your letter, Jean. This is a very interesting subject, and I hope a few more readers will let us know their views. Don't worry, I don't think Damian is the type of person to take offence.

Certainly an unlimited carrying capacity can make a game easier, just as a strict allowance of, say 4 items, as in a lot of early adventures, tends to make a game very annoying and tedious to play.

Striking a balance and the strategic placing of objects may put an author a couple of rungs higher on that portable ladder than those who are meanies. I sometimes feel as if I must have a Mary Poppin's-style carpet bag when I am playing some adventures, but it has never spoiled my enjoyment of the game. (Barbara)

From Ron Guest of Gunthorpe

Re query last month about an Amiga-C64 Emulator, I recently purchased a P.D. two-disc 64 Emulator. First you needed to use these two discs to make a special Workbench disc, this seemed to involve a thousand disc swaps and continually came up as "error in fonts" (could possibly be due to incompatibility with the 600) although I did eventually get 64 Mode it was not much use, the punctuation marks didn't work and I could see no way of loading 3.5" discs.

Secondly you are invited to send about £50 to an American address with another \$24 if you want a lead to connect a 5.25" disc drive. I already have a 64 with 1541 drive and only wanted to load 64 adventures on 3.5" discs onto my Amiga 600. I would appreciate any hints on a simpler way of doing so with a simpler emulator.

Incidentally I have often purchased a P.D. disc to find out later it is only a sample level or asking you to send various sums of money for the instructions or full game. If it is shareware or a demo surely it should be plainly stated, along with likely final costs before purchase, as although I can understand the author asking for a donation if you think a P.D. disc merits it I think it a bit of a con to buy a P.D. disc and find it is little more than a sample or an advert.

*

These Public Domain emulators seem to be very expensive, as I hinted in the February Issue. Readers thoughts on P.D. discs to either Steve Clay (Amiga News) or myself please. (Barbara)

From Roger Dowdall of South Ockendon

I enclose a list of PD titles from Amiga Format in response to Lee Morrall's query regarding a C64 emulator. I have circled the item concerned. Hope it is of some help.

I have dealt with PD Soft myself and have found them to be very reliable, by sending out orders by return post.

*

Thank you for a very prompt reply, Roger. I forwarded the full-page advertisement to Lee the day I received it from you. Just as I was typing this up I received the following letter. (Barbara)

From Dennis Northam of Warminster

Ref. your Feb. '94 issue of Probe, and with regard to the letter from Lee Morrall of Cornwall, I don't know much about emulators but I have recently purchased from York Electronic Research an interface called "AMIGA-64-LINK". This interface is advertised in all the big glossy magazines and costs either £23 or £35.

From my experience of using this interface I would recommend it to anyone who has purchased an Amiga but still wants to use the C64 peripherals. To quote from the advertisement "It connects C64 printers to the Amiga and transfers C64 disk files to the Amiga" and you don't even need a C64. This interface consists of a disk with the program on and a dongle which plugs into the Amiga parallel port and into the Commodore 1541 disk drive.

I hope this information is of some use to Lee Morrall and any other Probe reader who may be interested.

*

Thank you for your letter, Dennis. I've already passed on your advice to Lee. I don't know if this and the one offered by PD Soft are the same, but the prices are certainly different. £54.99 plus £1 p&p as opposed to £23 or £35. Maybe it will pay to shop around before buying, and to get some written information first so that you can compare claims. (Barbara)

From Wynne Snowdon of Consett, Co. Durham

I noticed that adventurers in the North East were given a mention. I know that Probe readers in the South and across the border in Scotland get together now and then socially to keep in touch and discuss adventuring. This led me to wonder whether those in this area would like to do the same, perhaps in Newcastle or Durham?

If so, I would be happy to put together a list of those interested if they care to telephone 0207 507966 any evening between 6pm and 10pm or almost any time at the weekend. If anyone else has already thought of this and meetings are already held, I would like to add my name to their list.

*

What a great idea, Wynne. There are quite a few readers who live in your area, and I hope they contact you. When you have arranged your first meeting let me know so that I can mention it in the magazine; it may encourage a few more readers to come along. (Barbara)

From Ron Guest of Gunthorpe

I have had Venturesoft's Vol.1 PD collection for months and it is indeed a bargain at £1. After following with very little interest the much ado about nothing in the last two issues I should say in answer to Alec Carswell's comments on "something to talk or write about" that we should stick to the really important issues like killing dragons and paying trolls. I await with bated breath to see if the promise of the free No.2 collection reaches me. Vol. 1 is well worth buying for Colossal Cave alone, to anyone who has not yet played it. Four of the other games are reasonable and fairly straightforward but The Guardian, as mentioned in your review, starts off in a small but difficult maze. Although I am quite partial to mazes myself many adventurers find them boring, and starting in an identical nine-location void is not the best way to arouse initial interest. Through the maze you quickly come to a flight of steps, but reading the inscription get me no further. I travelled up and down the steps a hundred times but after several months I was forced to consult the Oracle who despatched one of her imps [my daughter, Heather ... Barbara] for the relevant reference tablet, then told me to CLIMB SIX STEPS. As I had already tried to CLIMB ONE STEP and this still took me to the top of the step it had seemed pointless trying other numbers. I doubt if I would have got any further without this clue, thanks again Barbara.

Although I can very often miss something fairly simple, such as looking up for the antidote berries in STRANDED which effectively blocked my progress, most of my difficulties seem to arise from the more devious, sometimes obtuse and often incomprehensible solutions. The "climb SIX steps" in The Guardian is one example. The colours of the flag in HOLIDAY TO REMEMBER seems logical enough in hindsight, but travelling back through seventy locations looking for "three initial codes" without any hint towards the flag is pretty tedious. I have written previously about the disparities in input for the answers to riddles. This brings me to the point of my letter. I have had some useful clues and tips from the Hints & Tips and Getting You Started sections of Probe but most of the entries are simple straightforward accounts of the easy parts. What I would like to see is more short clues to the more difficult problems, they could be in simple code EKIM style so we need not read the answers until we really need to.

I have noticed that Barbara has written seven of the last months hints herself and I am already flinching for the rap on the knuckles pointing out I have not sent any clues. My problems with this is, there does not seem much point in me sending hints for problems which seem easy, but so send in hints to the more difficult problems, which I have found out from solution sheets or other people might be frowned on as poaching, although it would seem logical that if I had to seek help with a particular problem then others have been having the same difficulty and would welcome a tip to get past it.

*

The puzzles cited in The Guardian and Holiday to Remember, are, in my opinion very difficult, although I note that you twigged 6 as one third of Satan's number, as the inscription very vaguely hinted. Adventurers are a very varied collection of players, and someone will get stuck in one place while someone else will sail passed the same problem. If you want short hints printed backwards I will do my best to oblige, but not for all games, please. It will be a real headache to proof read. By coincidence I had already decided to publish in this issue Diane Rice's Objects And Their Uses for Pendant of Logryn, with the uses in EKIM language. I'd like to know what the readers think. (Barbara)

REVIEWS

MERLIN'S GOLDEN TROVE. MERLIN'S MAGIC FOREST AND SON OF ALI BABA

Written by John Olsen

Dwarfed by Grimwold on a PC

I've chosen to review all three of these adventures together, as although they are separate games in their own right, they can only be registered as a package.

Merlin's Magic Forest:

"There's a loud clap of thunder, a cloud of yellow smoke, and you find yourself transported back to ancient England." Not the most verbose scenario, is it? Still, the aim of the game (I hesitate to use the word 'plot' - that would suggest some depth of play) is revealed to you when you find Merlin's body in his hut. Nearby is a parchment telling you to find a dead bat, poison mushroom, grave mold (sic), spider web and rats blood, mix them up in a convenient cauldron and say the magician's name. The locations are short with little in the way of descriptive text, and the puzzles are fairly easy, with most of the objects lying around, and hints being given sometimes more than once. There are little in the way of spelling mistakes, and the Americanisms have thankfully been muted to fit in with the time period (when America itself still belonged to the Indians). The game follows the basic "get-objects, solve the odd puzzle and win" formula, which works quite well, but has too many sudden deaths, which I abhor.

Merlin's Golden Trove:

The aim in this game is to find Merlin's lost treasure (He seems to like the old magician, this author) and place it at the start, where typing score will give you an indication of your progress. Most of the objects are lying about the castle nearby and can simply be picked up and returned. There are more puzzles in this game, though none of them are illogical or even downright hard. There also, in proportion, more mistakes. Not so much in the spelling or grammar (though "catecombs" is one example), but in the programming. There is a large area of darkness in the cellars which can be accessed by either of the two entrances. There is a torch nearby which can be lit using some flint and some iron, but if you go into the cellars through one entrance, everything is light, and you don't need a torch. It seems that the author only checked for the torch at one of the entrances, which is a bit silly as all the location descriptions down there mention the 'flickering light of your torch'. There are also a few sudden deaths in this game.

Son of Ali Baba:

Aha! No Merlin! As you can guess, you are the son of that most revered Sultan, Ali Baba. This is the hardest of the three games, and has its share of sudden deaths, one example of which are the two pools. One of which contains poison and the other an elixer. The only way to find out which is which is to drink the water of each. I wasn't as impressed with this game as much as the others, though it isn't nearly as bad as some other adventures I've played.

All three games are written by John Olsen who is, as you will probably have guessed, another American. I'm not known for liking our colonial friends. I've never forgiven them for ruining a perfectly decent language, but occasionally one or two of them actually writes something that's half decent. Is this to say that I like these games? Well, I'm not totally sure. I like them as far as they go, their style is nice, and the system used brings back memories of 8-bit adventures written with Quill. I assume this system is the author's own, and is quite satisfactory, almost identical to Quill, but with one or two extras. It can handle more than two words, though it still only scans for the first four letters of each.

If you've just upgraded to a PC and miss the feel of the old 8-bit games, then these might be worth checking out. They have a certain appealing simplicity that is like a breath of fresh air after all these monster-sized AGT games where the author has gone overboard with the text. The actual size of each game is only 30K - 40K, which is amazing considering the game area compared to a TADS or AGT game. But then, the 8-bit games managed very well with only 40K memory for years...

The registration fee (for these are shareware) is \$20 for all three, which considering the size and instability of these games, is too much. Add to this the trouble of registering abroad, the fact that the games aren't crippled in any way and I have my doubts that all but the most admiring will 'forget' to register.

Grimwold's ratings: Graphics - N/A Sound - N/A Puzzles - 5/10 Atmosphere - 7/10 'Grabability' - 8/10 VFM - 3/10 Overall - 6/10

COMPILATION OF FIVE P.D. ADVENTURES FOR THE COMMODORE 64

All reviewed by Damian Steele

THE STONE OF TELNYR (written by Peter Boothman)

The basic idea seems to be to recover the lost Stone of Telnyr although this is never actually stated. The player controls a man-shaped icon via a mix of joystick and keyboard inputs and has to direct it around a 2D map digging up treasure and fighting various randomly appearing enemies.

There are a number of locations that can be "entered" such as the Inn, the Library and the General Stores. At each location a different menu bar appears listing the available options. These range from buying a more powerful weapon to obtaining food. Purchases are paid for with gold coins which can be dug up, found at random times and places or recovered from vanquished foes. The game itself is slow and often quite frustrating. (More than once I discovered my first opponent/s and was killed straight away.) The presentation is poor and the multi-load disk access annoying. Take a look if you are an RPG fan but otherwise I wouldn't bother.

TELNYR 2 : THE GOLDEN CHALICE (written by Peter Boothman)

In contrast to Telnyr 1, this game is of a much higher standard and the author has obviously improved his programming skills since writing it. The control method remains the same - both keyboard and joystick - but now the player moves a 3D figure around the 2D world. The graphics have been improved dramatically and the game runs as fast as its BASIC programming will allow. Mr. Boothman seems to have put much more thought into this game than T1. It now reminds me of the early Ultima games - Ultima 3 in particular. There are a

number of locations which must be visited in order before success can be achieved. These vary from a number of different dungeon areas to two different sets of island locations. As progress is made the opponents - which still appear randomly - become harder to kill but once dead, better bonuses can be found.

Weapons can be upgraded to do more damage and both spells and magic potions can be purchased to aid you in your quest. The spells include Teleport, Strength and Heal - perhaps the most useful. The potions have random effects as none are labelled. Drinking one could turn you into a giant or restore up to 80 hit points. My favourite tells me that I have turned "invisible". There is much more to this game than is first apparent and to complete it you'll need to set aside at least two hours. In my opinion it is definitely worth a look.

LAND OF THE GIANTS (written by Dorothy Millard, for her children)

Obviously designed as a game for the younger generation and/or first time adventure game players, Land of the Giants is a simple game based on the Jack and the Beanstalk story, written in 1989 using the Qull. The player must first find and plant the magic bean to create the beanstalk before entering the world of the giant to rescue the children which the "mean giant" has captured. As well as this, the golden egg has to be found and both it and the children should be returned to mum.

Although an easy game, it does require the use of a number of different basic adventuring skills: logical thought and common sense to name but two. The relatively short length along with the clear instructions given at the start of the game make this one a suitable starting point for any budding adventure game player.

DRACULA 2 (written by Mario Moeller)

This adventure seems to be based loosely on CRL's Dracula but has none of the humour, style or quality. After waiting for the loading routine to finally come to an end, the player is given the option of playing part one or two. These must be played in order as part two is password accessed and, of course, you won't know the password unless you've played through part one.

The game is frustration itself. Badly drawn graphics accompany poorly described locations which encompass so called puzzles of the "well, that's the way it is and if you don't like it: tough!" variety. An example of this can be seen when trying to go south, away from the town, down a road. The message I saw was roughly: "You've fallen down a pit that you didn't see. You're dead. Do you want to play again?" My immediate answer was NO! I'm sorry to say that if this is a typical example of Mr. Moeller's work, I won't be purchasing any of his games in future.

CONFLICT 2

The last game on the disk is more of a war-game simulation. It is controlled using a joystick in port 1 and offers the player a variety of possible actions with the results shown on a 2D map. Although there is an instruction file on the disk - along with a program to view the appropriate sequential file - I found myself unable (and unwilling) to understand the intricacies of this game. If, like me, you aren't a war-games fan, avoid this one too.

Available on one double-sided disk from Binary Zone PD, 34 Portland Road, Droitwich, Worcs. WR9 7QW Price - £2 (Cat. No. BZG010)

DEATH OR GLORY

(Part Two of the Dragon Slayer Trilogy)

Written by Martin Freemantle



Reviewed by June Rowe on an Amstrad

If anyone had asked how I got on with DRAGON SLAYER, the first part of this trilogy, which I bought and played on the Spectrum, I would have said that I didn't get very far with it. In fact, I only scored 60 from a possible 250 and then got stuck. It's an entirely different kettle of fish with DEATH OR GLORY, but why, I'm not quite sure. Maybe there are more clues in this story.

Anyway, I only had to cheat and look at the solution twice - once in Part One and once in Part Two. During the rest of play hints abounded and gave me the incentive to keep playing until I had solved both parts.

For instance, if you arrive at a brick wall which has mysterious symbols on it, and later find a book with a section on goblin symbols, it's plain that you must return to the wall to see what the symbols say.

In one place you will find a meerkat; if you watch nature programmes on TV and saw the one where young meerkats were learning how to cope with certain poisonous insects, you will know how to acquire the rope safely. (After you've found it, that is!)

Don't let this give you the impression that this is an easy game for novices - far from it. You might have to LOOK IN/UNDER/BEHIND something, or EXAMINE and SEARCH in a location to find something useful in the shape of an object or a clue and some items are very well hidden.

For playability, I would give this game top marks - whatever that indefinable "something" is that makes a game so addictive, this game has it.

As it is the middle part of a trilogy, although it is a complete game in itself, you don't achieve your aim of returning the medallion stolen from you in DRAGON SLAYER - you don't even find it, but you are travelling in the direction of the Goblin Kingdom, sorting out numerous puzzles and destroying various baddies on the way.

I must confess to feeling a little let down at the end, not having even seen the medallion, but over all the game left me eager to play the final part of the trilogy, which is called THE FINAL BATTLE.

Amstrad version available from : The Adventure Workshop, 36 Grasmere Road, Royton, Oldham, Lancs. OL2 6SR Price : £6 on disc only, requires CP/M+ or CP/M2.2 Cheque/p.o payable to P.M. Reynolds.

Spectrum version available from : Dream World Adventures, 10 Medhurst Crescent, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 4HL Price : £2.50 on tape or 3.5" +D disk, £2 (if you supply your own +3 disk), Cheque/p.o. payable to M Freemantle.

Amiga version (with free emulator) available from Dream World Adventures, address as above, £2.50, or the complete trilogy for £5.

THE FISHER KING

Written by Dennis Francombe

Reviewed by Wynne Snowdon on a Spectrum

It was Pentecost. Arthur the King gave a great feast for all the nobles and knights of the Round Table. As they feasted, the Loathly Damsel entered. She was the ugliest woman in the land so, when she pleaded for help to reach Anfortas, none came forward. The king, however, ordered that help would be given. Fate decreed that I was chosen. Me! Percival! A lowly scullion. Nevertheless, to the merriment of the group and the disdain of the damsel, I was quickly dubbed the newest knight in the land and sent forth with the damsel.

I almost fell at the first hurdle but, with the help of the damsel, I managed to overcome a very rude knight. I relieved him of his armour, weapons and horse and sent him packing. It was here the damsel decided to leave. She gave advice to help in my quest and promised to meet me at the castle of Anfortas - if I made it that far.

I was helped by a hermit, who gave me a life-saving hint, and travelled on toward a village. Here I had my first taste of magic which was almost my undoing and also my salvation. Travelling on, I noticed the barren lands and the starving populace. I eventually reached a bridge spanning a wide river. Across the river was the castle of Anfortas, the Fisher King, who was grievously wounded. It was here that I learned what my quest would be - to find the bleeding lance and the sangrael. Only with their help could the king's life be saved and the land restored to prosperity.

The following morning I left the castle and met the Loathly Damsel who gave further advice and Morganna's sword before, once again, leaving me to my travels. I arrived at Chateau Mervelleux where I met Clarissant. She would help only if I would catch a royal stag and bring it, with her dog, to her castle. I followed the dog from the castle and entered the forest. Here ended the first part of my adventure.

The second part found me still following the dog through a maze of woodland. I managed to catch and secure the stag but the dog was stolen by Riseult the mischievous sister of Clarissant. Unable to return without both stag and dog, I followed Riseult. She proved very dangerous on more than one occasion. I also met Morganna, another sister, who gave me a magic ring in exchange for her sword. Without this ring my quest would have ended here.

Eventually, I turned the tables on Riseult and, with the help of Morganna and the dog, returned to collect the stag. The animals quickly led me to Chateau Mervelleux where Clarissant kept her promise of help. She led me to a fairy barge moored on a lake. In the boat was the Loathly Damsel who, with the help of something I brought, turned into the most beautiful of the four sisters.

She carried the bleeding lance and took me to a chapel which housed the sangrael which only she could carry. Eventually we returned to the castle of Anfortas, the Fisher King and his wound was healed. The land returned to prosperity and the people were again happy. I was now an experienced knight and was well rewarded. So ended my adventure.

If you enjoy tales of magic and der-ing-do you can do no better than try this adventure. It has everything - lots of locations, lots of characters and lots of magic. It is extremely well written with a great deal of information in the text and some very clever problems.

Amazingly, however, there are not many objects to be found. I did the usual searching in each location but found so little that I wondered if I was missing something. The things located, however, are of vital importance and generally used more than once.

My advice is to save frequently because often you cannot return to a previous part of the adventure. So, if you've missed something or get into an impossible situation, you'll have to start again.

I enjoyed Fisher King and would recommend it to all levels of adventurers. Well worth the time and money.

Available from: Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancs. OL12 7NX
Price : Spectrum - £2.49 (tape or 3.5" +D Disc). £3.49 (+3 disc). also with 3 other adventures on Not Another Big Disc £4.99. Amiga - £2.49 (with free emulator) Please add 25p per game to cover all packing and postage.

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BALROG?

Written by MARLON



Reviewed by Barbara Gibb on an Amstrad

You are Rod Lawton, editor of the local rag and noted for being "Mr. Nice Guy". Rod (that's you) is lying in bed one night clutching a mug of cocoa and reading the latest Amstrad Action, when a wizard appears. He asks, nay challenges, you to rescue Princess Cathy who has been captured by the Balrog.

The opening sequence of puzzles is one of the best I have ever played, and it took me as long to get into the Balrog's lair as it did to solve the rest of the game. Once inside, I met someone called Anjo Cantpot who I'm sure you all recognize as the mentor of Amstrad adventuring, Joan Pancott. However our chat was interrupted by the horrid Balrog demanding that if I wanted to stay alive I was to make him a meat and potato pie.

Hmm. The potatoes were on the other side of a squared floor; stand on the wrong square and you are thrown violently backwards; an excellent puzzle which wouldn't have been out of place in a "Taxman" adventure. The snakes (meat for the pie) gave me a little trouble, as did, to be perfectly truthful, most of the other ingredients. This is truly an adventure to get the brain working. The text is descriptive and written with a nice sense of humour. The puzzles are well balanced, not something that can be said for most adventures.

As many readers will already know MARLON is actually Margaret Crewdson and Lorna Paterson, and their excellent text adventure not only won the Amstrad Action GAC Competition, but they were voted equal first in the Best New Author category in the 1993 Adventurers' Convention Awards, both very well deserved. I understand Margaret and Lorna are writing a sequel. I hope so, it wouldn't be fair to leave Princess Cathy not much better off after all your trouble to get her out of the trench.

I'd heard so much about this game that I went to the trouble of borrowing an Amstrad just to play it. It lived up to everything I expected.

Available from WoW Software, 78 Radpole Lane, Weymouth, Dorset,
DT4 9RS. Price : £2 (tape) £4 (disc) Cheque/p.o. payable to
J.G.Pancott



JOURNEY

Published by Infocom

Reviewed by Mary Scott-Parker on an Amiga

Journey is truly a feast, a huge, satisfying, 3 course meal of a game, but with only half the calories. For Starters, there's masses of entertaining and detailed Text that is guaranteed to satisfy the most voracious text-addict's appetite. Add to that a tasty Main course of delicious graphics that are not only easy on the eye, but add enormously to the flavour of the game. Desert is the extremely friendly, almost cuddly (actually bordering on the intimate, if you want the truth) and versatile interface, combining ease of use with playability, and eliminating the unpalatable, not the mention downright annoying Idiosyncrasies of syntax, that we have got annoyed with, jumped up and down on and thrown things at in the past. Yes, a thoroughly well balanced diet you can really get your teeth into [just remember to take them out of the glass first] and you don't even need to consult your doctor to start it.

First the crops begin to fail and then the water becomes foul tasting and disease-ridden. After 5 years the viliagers, desperate for a solution to their problems decide to seek out Astrix, the last in a long line of powerful wizards of old. There are still local wizards, who have learned magic from the ancient texts and understand the essence of many things; enough to start a fire or rainstorm, cause earth tremors or winds to blow, but much of the old magic is forgotten or lost.

Garlimon, the Elder Blacksmith is chosen to lead a party of four to go in search of Astrix and seek his help, but the party is never seen again. As Winter approaches once more, another group is formed, with the same hopes, this time Bergon the Carpenter is chosen to lead the party. He chooses Praxix, the local Wizard, Esher, a Doctor, and Tag, Apprentice Foodsmith, who watches food supplies and keeps a diary of events, and through whose eyes the story unfolds.

The Journey begins when the party arrives at the outpost of Lavos, where the Inn and Store provide vital aid for the trip. Not long after leaving Lavos, the party finds the grizzly remains of three of Garlimon's party and a little later, Garlimon himself is found, alive but completely mad. All along the way, magical essences can be found in various places and they represent the four elemental substances: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Wizards have long understood the nature of essences and how two could be combined to produce magical effects.

When the party reaches Astrix, he tells them about the Seven Stones, created long ago and containing the strength and essence of the world. Four were given to the races who could use them best: The Green Elf Stone, The Brown Dwarf Stone, The Blue Nymph Stone and The Red Wizard Stone. Now that the Dread Lord is emerging once more, the four stones must be brought together to point the way to the Two, which in turn will pinpoint the One, known in Olden days as the Anvil.

On the way the party will encounter Orcs, Mudwargs, Bandits, Waterfalls and many other problems. The puzzles range in difficulty from "fairly easy" to "Ask Grue" and even he admitted to scratching his head a couple of times over the pit and dial problem, which I would never have solved in a million years. Fortunately, Grue is a generous fellow adventurer and most of the problems are solvable with a bit of thought.

This is a thoroughly enjoyable game with masses of atmosphere and playability. When the party falls, as it will many times before it finally succeeds, there's a lovely little section called musings, entries from Tag's diary, in which he tries to guess in a subtle way as to where the party might have gone wrong. I never thought I would be so enthusiastic about what is basically a text adventure, after becoming so hooked on R.P.G.'s, but I would definitely recommend this great little game to everyone.

(I cannot find this adventure in any of the catalogues I have, so if anyone has any information on its availability and formats please let me know. Thank you Barbara)

HOUSE SITTER

Written by Frank Fridd

Reviewed by Barbara Gibb on an Amstrad



Your friends, who have recently moved into a new house, have gone on holiday and you have offered to "house sit" for them. After waving goodbye, you decide to have a good look around. Not surprisingly, you find a spare bedroom transformed into a well-equipped computer room, a modern kitchen with lot of cupboards to open, and *leave open*, an interesting back garden that needs the lawn mowed, and both an upstairs and downstairs bathroom - something my family keep saying we need.

Just as you're enjoying your tour of inspection the telephone rings. It is your wife to say your daughter has to be collection from Dover but as your own car is out of action, you will have to use your friend's car. This is easier said than done. Your friend is a do-it-yourself boffin and the car's engine parts are scattered around the house and garden. As they don't appear until you answer the phone, you have only three hours to collect and then fit them into the car in the correct order. You won't find a manual, so unless you know all about car engines, you'll have to use trial and error but don't worry as you're told if it isn't the correct part.

House Sitter is not intended to be difficult, just a lot of fun. Most of the objects are visible once the phone has been answered, but one vital item and a piece of information have to be sought, making the time limit seem more than adequate, until you are told your daughter had to take a taxi home because you didn't get there in time; or another message, the details of which I won't tell you because it will spoil the surprise.

Written in BASIC (I think) the screen layout is neat; the top half displays the location text. The full text is given for the initial visit, the shorter version for subsequent visits unless otherwise requested by typing LONG. The lower half contains responses which appear instantly and scroll underneath the location text as the screen fills up.

When Frank sent this adventure to me he said he didn't think it was good enough to sell so he has put it in Public Domain. I quickly included it in the Adventure Probe Software catalogue, my first Amstrad game. I can only supply it on tape but I'm sure other PD libraries will soon snap it up.

The perfect game for an evening's entertainment.

Available from : Adventure Probe Software,
52 Burford Road, Liverpool L16 6AQ £1.50 (tape
only). Cheque/p.o. payable to Adventure Probe.



LEOPOLD THE MINSTREL

Written by Jamie Murphy

Reviewed by Terry Taylor on a Spectrum (128K only)



For as long as he could remember, Leopold's one and only ambition in life was to become a minstrel - to entertain others with the tunes, and the stories they told, which had been handed down through generations.

His apprenticeship with Old Sam, the oldest and finest minstrel of them all, was going reasonably well, until one day disaster struck. No one knows how it happened, but Old Sam's lute was broken. This would usually be no problem; but this was no ordinary lute, as it was made of magical materials, and, as such, was beyond normal repair.

Being ill, Old Sam was unfit to undertake the task; so, if Leopold did not wish his apprenticeship to come to an abrupt end - to him, a fate worse than death - he would have to get the lute repaired himself.

And so it came about that, "armed" with only the broken Lute of Lyranth and an empty purse, Leopold set out for the nearby town of High-Blidom.

The inn, just outside the town, looked quite inviting. Inside, Leopold found he could purchase a meal for 1 crown (if he had one); in the smoke-filled back room a card game was in progress, but it would cost 10 crowns to join in; in the kitchen, a dwarf, who was having trouble reaching things off the high shelves, was slaving over the carcass of a pig. Leopold could get no sense from this character, as he was unable to speak the dwarvish language.

It soon became obvious that, if any progress was to be made, Leopold would soon have to acquire some money. Remembering who he was, he put his natural talents to use in the right places, and soon his purse was overflowing.

Whilst satisfying the inner man, he learnt from the serving wench that she had some helpful information to impart - but he would have to dispose of the troublesome drunk at the bar first! During his search for the items necessary to do this, Leopold met another quaint character - Filgo Brumbleson, a gnome, who promptly hitched a ride on Leopold's shoulder. On the way back to the inn, Filgo told Leopold how his brother, Fafy, had been captured by the pygmies, and asked Leopold if he would rescue him. Already Leopold's tasks were mounting.

Once the drunk had been ejected, the maid told Leopold of a relative, living in High-Blidom, who owned the music shop, and who could probably help. Unfortunately, as it turned out, this person could not help directly - but he knew a man who could!! His partner, by name Douglas the Fixer, was skilled in mending magical instruments - regrettably, however, Douglas's present whereabouts were unknown. He was last seen with the old witch in the forest. A visit to the witch elicited that she had transformed Douglas into another creature - a punishment for calling her names - and she would not provide the antidote unless Leopold returned something which belonged to her; a task which proved harder than Leopold expected!

Once he had succeeded in delivering the antidote to Douglas, Leopold, at long last, learnt what he would need to mend the lute - some Golden Horse Hair, Oldine Wood, Hoskill Water and Dragon Breath. Now his quest could begin in earnest.

Little did he know, however, that before this quest was ended, he would have to travel to the miniature world of the gnomes; learn how to speak "dwarf", traverse the wall of flames in the Burnt Forest, and there face the fierce Gurgie; and infiltrate the seediest quarters of High-Bildom's criminal underworld - only then could the lute be restored to its former glory!

LEOPOLD is, as you may have gathered, a large and convoluted game. From the outset, the player is free to wander through most of the locations; and, in doing so, whilst undertaking one quest, will invariably stumble on further "sub-plots", and even "sub-sub-plots". The trick, then, is to decide in which order they should be completed. Finding the correct order is vital - do some things when you shouldn't, and you've blown it! For example, High-Bildom is full of shady characters, all seemingly waiting for different passwords - give the right password to the wrong person, and he will melt into the shadows, never to be seen again; and along with him goes any information he might have had! Be sure of someone's identity before you whisper passwords willy-nilly!

Character interaction plays a great part in the game, and the various dialogues are well-written. One character you will meet is Caldwin, the local thief, whose talents will be invaluable at one point. He is also a pain in the **** - every now and then, he also takes a fancy to your possessions, and you will find yourself lighter by one object! In High-Bildom, it's dog eat dog: forget your morals - you will have to lie, cheat and steal to survive.

Is there a down-side to the game? Well, yes. In one or two instances, the game is very "picky" in the inputs it will accept. On occasions, I knew what I had to do, but because I didn't get the exact input, I lost the chance to do it - thank God for Ramsave.

There is also one particularly "naughty" bit whereby, if a certain character is not with you to overhear a certain conversation, an object needed MUCH later in the game will never be obtained! There is nothing to indicate that this character needs to be present, and, I admit, I had to cheat to find out how to get the object I needed. By that stage, however, I had saved position well into the game - way past where the object should have been created; and I had no option but to start from scratch!

Its great points, however, far outweigh the bad - it's well thought out, well-written and well presented; and throughout there is a fine sense of humour. I, personally, prefer "convoluted" games, which deliberately send you off on tangents, to the "linear" games which keep you stuck in one location until you solve a particular problem. LEOPOLD certainly succeeds in "diverting" you - and, by the time you finally reach the maximum 250 score, you actually feel like you've achieved something.

I found it enjoyable and fun to play, and can thoroughly recommend it to anyone.

Available from : Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops,
Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancs. OL12 7NX

Spectrum - £2.49 (tape and 3.5" + D disc), £3.49 (+3 disc).

Together with "Lycanthropy" on "Whoops! Another Big Disk" £3.99.

PC - £2.99 (with free emulator)

Please add 25p to cover packing and postage.



MELTDOWN

Written by Laurence Creighton

Reviewed by Terry Taylor on a Spectrum



It was just another routine flight, transporting waste material for re-processing - routine, that is, until the plane crashed! For the waste material consisted of "used" plutonium rods - and these rods had gone "critical" upon impact. It was now only a matter of time before their temperature rose to the point where MELTDOWN would occur, and cause an explosion which would make Chernobyl seem like a fire-cracker! Many thousands would be killed; and the entire area would be contaminated, possibly for centuries.

You are transported to the area. Your task - to search out the crash site; find the missing rods; and render them harmless (easy if you say it quickly!) The village where you are deposited appears to have been evacuated - there's no sign of life in the buildings around the village square. The Doctor's office is empty, except for an X-ray machine and a roll of bandage; and the deserted shop contains a "*Monstera Deliciosa*" (which hides more than one secret), a locked freezer, and the ubiquitous wall safe, for which you will need the correct combination. In a nearby field lies a body, with a knife embedded in its back - ominous!

North of the village, the path through the wood is blocked by a fallen tree. A return visit to the village will soon overcome this obstacle; but the route is again soon blocked by some roadworks. Stuck in the molten tar is a key (ah yes, the locked freezer!); and the workman's hut close by holds a couple of useful tools. Several trips back to the village will be necessary before you work out the "order of play", and the way to pass the molten tar.

Thereafter, a trip on a funicular railway leads you to the plateau overlooking the village, where you encounter the first signs of "authority" guarding the approach to the actual crash site. You will need to be an "accredited" adventurer to get through. A ferocious dog (as usual) guards the entrance to a track-side cave; and a couple of (seemingly) empty cottages stand close to your next obstacle - the "unjumbleable" chasm. Finding the means to cross is not difficult; but, when you do so, your make-shift bridge collapses into the chasm, and there's no way back. Here, then, is a crucial point to save your position - because I'd bet guineas to gooseberries that you'll leave behind at least ONE Item, which you will need later (I did)!

You are now at the crash site. Finding the plutonium rods is easy (deliberately so); but beware, any attempt to "tamper" with them results in their activation - and MELTDOWN is then only a few moves away!! Several journeys between the nearby tunnel and the cave adjoining the beach will be required, before you can even consider approaching the rods. I must admit, I destroyed this particular piece of Mother Earth many times before I got it right.

As with all of Laurence's games, MELTDOWN is written with the Quill, and contains the, by now, familiar Patched effects. It is also full of the usual L.C. "trademarks" - much to-ing and fro-ing between locations; objects having more than one use (one Item is used three times), so don't discard them thinking they've served their purpose. For this game Laurence has also coined a new word - LIN/LINS, meaning LOOK IN (something); useful IF you remember it - but I tend to forget its existence and my inputs of EXAMine, SEARCH and LOOK IN consequently got no response!

Even our beloved editor makes a guest appearance!

When I was first presented with MELTDOWN, I was informed that Laurence himself thought the game was easy (by his standards), and that it was aimed more at beginners to adventuring - having played it, I'm not sure I'd agree. Many of the problems ARE familiar and straightforward; others are rather tricky. However, Laurence has many followers and, whether beginners or not, they won't be disappointed with MELTDOWN.

Available from : Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancs. OL12 7NX
Price : Spectrum - £2.49 (tape and 3.5" + D disc), £3.49 (+3 disc), Amiga - £2.49 (with free emulator) Please add 25p per game to cover package and postage.

Unnkulia One-Half: The Salesman Triumphant

Written by A Leary / Adventions - SynTax PD 541

Review by Neil Shipman on a PC



With his first "Unventure", Unnkulian Underworld, Dave Leary succeeded in creating an original and very funny whole new gameworld. Fellow author Dave Baggett followed this with the second one, The Secret of Acme, and I felt sure that Unnkulian Unventures were set to become a series which every discerning text adventurer would delight in.

Since then the two Daves have teamed up to form Adventions and have been bringing more of their ideas to life using the latest version of TADS. Having demonstrated his writing ability and sense of humour, not to mention his programming expertise, Leary now works back from the first two titles to Unnkulia Zero, a large, complex and difficult game, via Unnkulia One-Half: The Salesman Triumphant.

In this adventure you do not, for once, play the part of the valley warrior fighting against the dread demons of Unnkulia; you actually get to experience things from the point of view of an Acme salesman, one Jay-Bob Tuckbucker.

Since your childhood you had admired the spiffy mauve suits and orange ties worn by Acme reps and you'd always wanted to be a salesman. But you hadn't expected to be sent to ply your trade in such a backwater as the Forest of Radeekal, near the border with the Valley King's Underworld.

When the game begins you are sitting in the Golden Dragon Inn bemoaning the fact that you have just had to give a warrior his money back because his can of Acme Snayk Rheapellant didn't work; indeed, you are becoming more and more disillusioned with your job as you realise that none of Acme's products seems to work; and to cap it all the bartender has disappeared so you can't even get a drink.

Off you set to look for him and, would you believe it, when you find the drunken old sot he says he will sell you the Inn for the princely sum of 18 valmids! Now that's too good an offer to refuse and the ensuing quest for a number of valuable items worth this amount will take you on an exploration of the caverns and passages below the Inn as well as a few locations above ground.

You will be faced with puzzles like how can you safely get a crown and a key which are sitting on a ledge in a chimney? Can you beat gambler Les Vayghas on the flip of a coin? What do the Valley Patrol want and what on earth are you supposed to do with a cheezdom? (No, you can't wear it!)

Location descriptions are a good length as are responses to your actions - and many of these will have you laughing. Numerous footnotes (which aren't necessary to the plot) raise the chuckle factor still further. Though restricted by both number and weight of items, your inventory is large and you have little difficulty carrying nearly everything you need - and that's just about every object you come across as there is only one which serves little purpose.

The various characters are brought to life by their humorous comments and reactions towards you. These differ according to what you are wearing as well as to what you say to them. Do try interacting with them in different ways because the author has provided many witty responses.

As players of the previous Unnkulan Unventures will know, many Acme products are described with phonetic spelling. Items in The Salesman Triumphant are no exception and you will come across things like a Soopur-Sopht Downee Pllough, a Slysor-Dysor Kookeke Khutoor, and the skeleton of someone who, fortunately for you, didn't have Acme Dam Eckspensif Lyfe lhnshoorants - otherwise you might have had to pay out!

TADS has been almost completely re-written and, in its latest incarnation (version 2), it is a much more powerful adventure-programming tool. Players, however, will probably only notice features like highlighted text and the multiple UNDO feature present in this game.

Adventions have used The Salesman Triumphant as a proving ground and a way of becoming familiar with the new version. Although not a very big adventure it fits in well with the gameworld which ardent Unnkulia fans are already familiar with and whets one's appetite for Unnkulia Zero. It achieves all these objectives as well as demonstrating Leary's off-the-wall sense of humour to players coming new to this great series.

So confident are they that it will meet with approval that they don't want paying for it and it's not even shareware. In fact it's totally FREE. And, on the same disk, you get a playable demo of Unnkulia Zero. What more could you ask for?

If you've got any time at all for text adventuring then you can't possibly resist taking a look at Unnkulia One-Half: The Salesman Triumphant. With a difficulty rating of "Trivial (2/10)" it shouldn't take you long to complete. I guarantee you won't be disappointed and I would honestly be surprised if you are not tempted to play the other Unventures.

Finally, I hear that Dave Baggett has just got married so his work on these TADS adventures will be taking a back seat for a while. But Dave Leary's latest adventure, The Horror Of Rylvania, is already available and, later in the year, we can look forward to Adventions' next title in the Unventures series - Ulien: In Space No One Can Smell The Cheez!

MORE COMPUTER SPEAK by Jenny Perry

Spectrum - the colours of the rainbow as seen on my loading screen

GAC - my son's first attempt at cooking

Commodore - high ranking naval officer

PAW - what my hungry cat wakes me up with at 3am.

Quill - the type of pen that adventure writers use

Amiga - I can't wait to start my new adventure

Wizards Tower

Written by Chris Lloyd

Reviewed by James Judge on an STE



Who would be a magician's apprentice, eh? You see your master conjuring all manner of things while what are you doing? Copying boring transcripts and keeping the masters bedroom tidy, cooking the dinner and doing the hoovering, looking after all the monsters that the master conjures up and getting his dinner and generally being a nice, helpful under dog. Aaah, the good life (ahem).

So, what to do? Go on strike? Nope, doesn't work - he just makes you do it with a couple of incantations. Walk out? Where would you go? No, the best option is to sneak out and visit Marek's tower where a great mystical book is kept and. If you can get your hands on it you can be the greatest and have your master spray Mr Muscle around the cobble stones for once and Mr Sheen on the 100000 foot high windows just using a levitation spell. Now, that IS a good idea.

So, off you toddle, toting nothing but a dagger. You really are a good planner, aren't you? Going into a tower infested with wicked traps, monsters and other such things and what are you carrying, a dagger. I see you were in the scouts...

You start the adventure outside of the dreaded tower and the only direction is in. You then have to progress up the tower using your adventuring skills, magical skills and luck.

This game lacks a lot. True, it has got a few good puzzles but I stress only a FEW good puzzles. The rest of the game is taken up by fighting monsters (a completely pointless task in most cases) and casting spells to find objects and instant death traps.

The monsters and spells are, in my opinion, just a cover-up to make the game seem more involved than it really is. There are no clues as to where to cast <LOCATE> spells (which locate hidden objects otherwise unretrievable) so you end up going through every room in the game casting a series of spells which is both boring and not in the true vein of adventuring.

As it is programmed in STAC there are a few graphics that are quite good - moody and dark, but nothing that really makes you go 'cor, wish I could draw like that'. Also it lacks sound which is very easy to incorporate into STAC and would have made a nice cosmetic touch if you had different sounds for different spells that you cast.

In the end this game is boring and not really worth the disk it comes on (if you buy it from the ST Club you do get another STAC game with it, but it really isn't worth it even for that - see my review of that other game (Invasion) in a later issue of Probe).

It is repetitive and offers no real stimulation. I honestly can't be bothered to complete it.

Sad, very sad. There are plenty of better and more interesting games available from SynTax and other such PDLs' so invest your money on them - or even buy the full version of Obscure Naturalist or one or both of Jean Child's adventures for a little more and get 100000% more enjoyment.

WYSIWYG

Written by Jean Childs



Reviewed by Barbara Gibb on an Atari STe

Looking for somewhere to park in town, and being wary of the traffic warden, you decide to use the "Park and Ride" facility. This means parking out of town and travelling by bus, at least a bus is what you expected. Instead you found only an interesting circular carpet with a sign saying "Please take your seat". Unable to resist the invitation, you sit cross-legged and to your horror the carpet rises and spins, making you close your eyes. Eventually it stops and descends; as it lands you are tossed to one side. You land on your feet and open your eyes to see that you are inside a house.

With nothing else to do but explore, you discover that there is a house on the other side of a very prickly hedge, a railway station to the south and a shopping centre to the south-west. The cards on the post office notice-board are very interesting, and hold clues as to why you may have been brought to this fantasy land. When questioned, the friendly shoppers will tell you about a nasty wizard who has taken away all the colour from the castle, and transported it to another location. Your task is to collect six different coloured objects and restore the castle to its former colourful glory, when you find it.

I'm sure you know that WYSIWYG stands for What You See is What You Get, an apt title for an adventure that doesn't have any location text. Instead, each of the fifty-seven locations has an illustration with a letter in the top left corner stating in which direction you are looking, and the bottom left corner giving exits. Inputs are via the keyboard, and responses will be as text. You can't actually pick up any of the objects seen in the pictures, but you can examine, look in, and even look under them to discover items that you *can* take. In fact, as Jean says, you would spoil the picture if you took anything from it.

Interaction with the many characters is important, from the mums with their children, Hugh and Harry the two stationmasters of very different temperament, and Mary and George who live in a cottage in the wood. Most of them have information if asked the right question, some with very subtle clues, one of which I completely missed.

This adventure has a freshness that had me using my Atari for something other than word processing. The graphics are very well-drawn and tastefully coloured - nothing garish; perhaps the only one that didn't quite come up to standard was the deck of the ship. It looked a little too sparse.

The puzzles are all logical despite the "fantasy" setting. There are some that may seem obvious, but don't be surprised if you are proved wrong. Also, perhaps I should mention the cave maze. I hate mazes, but Jean has found a new twist that had even me chuckling at how she had managed to turn the tables after all my hard work at mapping it. To my great surprise this adventure held my attention from the very start, a huge admission from someone who is a dedicated text adventurer. It was very satisfying to see the colours return, one by one, to the final picture. It makes me wonder why, if Jean and Peter (Hague) can use STAC to such good effect, how come no one else seems to have mastered this utility? If you know of any other authors, I shall be pleased to hear about them.

Available from: Jean Childs, 24 Waverley Road, Bagshot, Surrey, GU19 5JL Price: £3 or £5 if you also order "Excuse Me - Do You Have The Time?" Cheque/postal order payable to Jean Childs.

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Ice Station Zero	8th Day	The Snow Queen	St.Brides
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For Pete's Sake	Jonathan Scott	Theme Park USA	Jack Lockerby
Perseus	D.F.Francombe	Deek's Deeds	Jason McHale
Labours Of Hercules	Terry Taylor	Fisher King	D.F.Francombe
Murder Hunt II '92	Craig Davis	Murder Hunt '92	Craig Davies
The Asulet Of Darath	Masoft	The Mapper	Karl Bunyan
Shard Of Inovar	Clive Wilson	Kobyashi Ag'Kwo	Clive Wilson
Ronnie Goes To Hollywood	8th Day	Lost In Time	L.Creighton
One Of Our Wombats	M.Gerrard	Lightmare	Scott Johnston
Wizard Quest	Sean Vennard	Venom	Clive Wilson
Arnold The Adventurer	Scott Denyer	Urban	Jason McHale
In Search Of Angels	8th Day	Arnold II	Scott Denyer
A Serpentine Tale	Diane Rice	A Harvesting Moon	8th Day
White Feather Cloak	St.Brides	Arnold III	Scott Denyer
Four Minutes To Midnight	8th Day	Silver-Wolf	St.Brides
Weaver Of Her Dreams	8th Day	House On The Tor	Alan Davies
Treasure Island	Jack Lockerby	The Dogboy	St.Brides
Gods Of War	Mark Cantrell	The House	Jack Lockerby
Quann Tulla	8th Day	Jester Quest	Mark Cantrell

As usual these titles will come supplied with a FREE copy of the latest 'emulator' and will 'save' their games-positions to an AMIGA formatted disk in the normal manner.

*** CONVERSION SERVICE ***

If you own an AMIGA machine and long to play any of your favourite adventures/games on your machine then help is at hand. ZENOBI SOFTWARE are proud to announce that they will be starting a 'conversion-service' whereby they will convert the game of your choice to the necessary format to allow you to do just that. All you have to do is to forward the game and the sum of FIVE POUNDS (£5) to them and in return they will send you back the original game, along with a disk containing not only the converted version but also a FREE copy of the emulator with which to play it on your AMIGA.

In the interests of 'legality' it will be necessary to either provide an 'original' of the game you wish converted or else a copy of the game accompanied by proof of ownership of the original (the inlay will suffice in most cases). Regretfully 'handed-down' copies cannot be accepted for conversion!

The game in question will be converted - wherever possible (some games cannot be done owing to their use of certain op-codes) - and returned to you within seven days of their receipt.

Please note that this service applies to SPECTROM adventures/games only ... at this time !!

TYPE OF COMPUTER	AMIGA 500	[]	AMIGA 500+	[]	AMIGA 600	[]	AMIGA 1200	[]
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EXTERNAL DRIVES	NONE	[]	ONE	[]	TWO	[]	MORE	[]

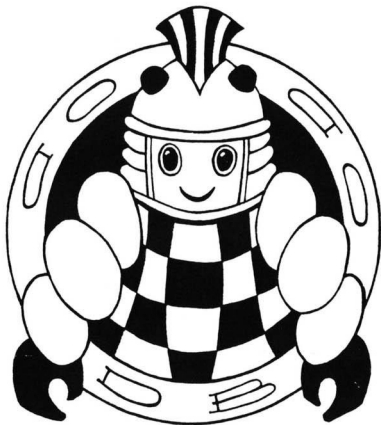
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by Jamie Murphy

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by Clive Wilson

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Coming soon - Desperate Journey by Dennis Francombe

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SYRACUSE NEWS

Hello again. Well another couple of months has gone by which means '*Acorn Computing*' have published another '*Mad Hatter*' column. I won't waste your time by analysing it yet again. Suffice it to say, it was not a-typical. The timewarp persists.

Last year it was the second biggest Acorn event of the year. This year it is being heralded as the **BIGGEST** - its the Acorn User Spring Show '94 which is being staged at Harrogate. Lots of new products will be launched and if it anything like last year lots of upgrades will be given away if you look pathetic and penniless enough at the appropriate stands. The show is held at Harrogate International centre and runs from Friday 22nd April to Sunday 24th April and will set you back £5 unless you are under 16 then you get in half price. Family tickets could save you a few bob as well if you have two or more offspring. Its open from 10am to 5pm daily. Its my birthday on April 26th so if I play my cards right I may get a little something from the show in advance. There are one or two new versions of programs that I already have which look attractive.

I'm not convinced about the sanity of upgrading. *Impression II*, which is a 'document processor' - glorified combination of word processor and DTP package - cost me **£125** plus vat originally. The latest version will cost me **£37** to upgrade to. And what do I get? Basically the attraction is that the new version does not have as many irritating shortcomings as the original or rather the irritating shortcomings of the original have now been fixed! You can't help feeling a bit of a mug. I expect I'll still buy it.

Now the upgrade for *Genesis* - the multimedia tool - is going to cost me **£60**. Not bad? When I bought the **A3000** it came with the Learning Curve package which included *Genesis*. This looked useful but on examining the Acorn press i discovered that *Genesis II* was available **AND WAS MUCH BETTER**. So I upgraded for about **£50** (the original cost **£99** when bought separately). Again the main justification for this new version is to iron out the inadequacies of the previous upgrade. I always fancied using *Genesis* to write an adventure game for the Archimedes (as an alternative to using the excellent *ALPS*) but having spent such a long time working on '*The Survivor*' for such little response I can't see it happening. Its a shame.

I am going along to the show on both the Friday and the Sunday as '*Archimedes World*' (in the person of Diane Farnham - the Advertising Manager) is selling or rather attempting to sell some of my fantasy art disks from their stand. This is rather a last ditch effort as I am teetering on the brink of going **MAC!!!!** I'll let you know next time how it all went.

Steve - I read your column (I even have an Amiga) but I haven't got a clue what the solution to your poser is!

Issue 2 of *Threads* is available now (£1.95:32 Irvin Ave., Saltburn, Cleveland. TS12 1QH) and is of a higher technical standard than issue 1 but not as good as issue 3 will be. The stories are superior - particularly '*Adaptogenic*' by Neal Asher - and the artwork (which now includes piccies by Darren Blackburn) top notch. Don't miss it or issue 1 which is still available. Sorry, couldn't resist a plug for the mag.

SOMA - part 6 written by Seymour Storey

(continued from December 1993)

The Traveller's head ached intolerably as he struggled into consciousness and tried to open his eyes. He groaned. This was definitely the last time he would ever drink Moran Brandy, he was getting too old for this kind of thing. He tried to focus his thoughts and remember the occasion. It must have been one hell of a bash. Easing himself into a sitting position, he opened his eyes and found himself staring at a lizard. A very large lizard.

His memory returned in a flash. Of course the alien spaceship. They'd been taken prisoner. Stars flashed, as he looked round for Oda. She was sitting beside him, her face pale and her eyes dark. She was watching him anxiously.

"Are you all right?" she asked with obvious relief. "I've been so worried about you."

"I'm okay", he said smiling ruefully, hoping he looked better than he felt. "Where are we?"

"Inside that monster you said was a factory ship."

The Traveller looked apprehensively at the grotesque reptilian face, not far from them. Another dozen or so lizards stood in motionless rows behind the first one.

"They're asleep. They haven't moved since we were put in here."

"They're just de-activated for the time being, but I think if we were to try to escape, they would become mobile again. No doubt the room is under surveillance."

He looked around for a tell-tale camera eye and saw a small protruding lens set into the wall, high above him.

"Get up, Oda, and walk slowly round the room" the Traveller whispered.

"Why?"

"Just do it, pretend to be stretching your legs."

Oda got to her feet, watching the lizard men apprehensively. Their glassy eyes stared straight ahead and their huge mouths gaped open, to reveal rows of razor-sharp teeth. She shuddered involuntarily and started to walk slowly round the room, which apart from the robots, was completely featureless, containing neither window, door nor furniture of any kind.

The Traveller watched the eye, high up on the wall. Sure enough it moved slightly and followed Oda round the room. At least he still had his pendant. He felt its comforting presence inside his tunic and breathed a sigh of relief. He knew it had not been discovered, because it was still translating Oda's strange language into one that he was familiar with. Thankfully, the lizards must have assumed, as had many before them, that it was simply a harmless piece of jewellery. His back-pack, of course, was missing.

Oda returned and sat down beside him. "Why are we here? Why did they not just feed us into their machine and turn us into robots?" she asked quietly.

"I've been wondering that too", said the Traveller. "we must have something they want."

"What could they possibly want from us?" asked Oda in a puzzled voice. "UnlessOh no!" she gasped and looked in horror at the Traveller. "The Lirium!"

"That's it," said the Traveller quietly, "I think they'll want you to lead them to the mines."

"Never," said Oda. "I won't." She looked around at the grotesque lizards with their rows of sharp teeth and her courage failed. "What will they do to me if I won't?" "Let's try not to think about such possibilities for now", said the Traveller. "The important thing is to try to get out of here. Can you remember where the door is?"

Oda looked at the uniform grey walls and shook her head. The Traveller stood up and walked to the first lizard man. Pretending to massage his aching neck muscles, his hand closed over the malachite pendant and he pressed one of its tiny buttons. An inaudible signal was at once transmitted to the robots. Now, hopefully, it would be impossible to activate them without major surgery.

Suddenly, an invisible panel in the wall of the room slid open with a loud "Shushhh". Two lizard men stepped into the room, and by the easy way they moved, the Traveller guessed that this time they were not robots, but the real thing.

The first lizard man pressed a button on his wide belt and then spoke. "I am Gor. Welcome aboard the Andara." His voice was a soft, yet obscene, throaty hiss and he spoke slowly, as if savouring every syllable. "You have saved us a great deal of trouble my friends. We were just coming to look for you."

"Glad to have been of service," answered the traveller dryly, all the while eyeing the doorway and wondering what were the chances of overpowering the two lizards. They were solid and well muscled, but he had come up against their kind before. While they possessed tremendous strength, they were slow and clumsy in combat. If he could just temporarily put them out of action, perhaps he and Oda could make a run for it. He would have to act quickly and take them by surprise.

Pretending to bend down and fasten his sandal, he lurched into the first lizard, catching him in the soft underbelly with his head. He heard a loud hiss of exhaled air as the lizard doubled up and fell over. The Traveller then lunged with his fist at the second lizard, aiming instinctively at one of the reptile's fragile and sensitive ears. At the severe blow to the most vulnerable part of the head, the creature raised its short thick arms in pained surprise.

"Run Oda"

The Traveller grabbed Oda by the arm and propelled her towards the still open door. Gor struggled clumsily to his feet and crossed the room to the row of robot lizards. Positioning himself in front of them and pressing a button on his belt, he hissed angrily "After them!"

To his amazement and annoyance, nothing happened. The robots continued to stare straight ahead, with glassy, unseeing eyes. He turned in a rage, just in time to see Oda and the Traveller disappearing through the open door.

"Secure the outer hatch", he hissed to the watching camera. "They must not escape."

In the passage, the Traveller looked to left and to right. Two long, identical corridors stretched in both directions. Which way now?

(to be continued)

Dear Programmer from a Playtester

Once you have finished writing your adventure it is a good idea to have someone playtest it for you before you put it on the market. If you have a friend who is willing to do this for you then by all means let them play your game and give you their comments but you should also consider asking an experienced playtester who knows the type of faults which can occur in writing adventures.

When you are absolutely sure that your game is ready for playtesting please take the time to play it from start to finish to ensure that it is possible to do so! You will presumably have made some alterations to your original ideas and may have used some programmer's tricks when testing each part. It has been known for a playtester to receive a game which started in the middle! This is also a good time to read everything carefully and try to spot any spelling mistakes or typing errors which you may have made.

Most playtesters do not expect payment for their work. Playtesting is an extension of their love of playing adventures but please enclose, at the very least, a stamp for the return of your tape or disc and make sure that it will cover the extra weight of the playtest report. Also ensure that the jiffy bag you use is large enough to include the report which may be quite bulky! If the playtester is giving a lot of their time for nothing it's unfair to expect them to be out of pocket as well due to the cost of stationery and postage.

Please send some hints for your trickiest puzzles - and maybe even for what you consider to be the easy ones - since a playtester with a full workload cannot spend the same amount of time trying to solve problems as they would if they were just playing a game. If they have to write or telephone for help every time they are stuck in an adventure then precious time is wasted. A good playtester will not play the game from a solution, anyone can do that, but will tackle it in the same way as one of your future customers. This way they will probably approach problems at a different angle from you and will try things you've never even thought of. Some would appreciate a map and others will prefer to make their own as they are playing.

Not all playtesters like mazes so please make sure that you include the correct route in your hints.

After posting your package you will have to exercise some patience until you get your report. Experience has shown that jiffy bags have a tendency to accumulate in the post and arrive six at a time. If you'd like to have an acknowledgement of receipt then follow one author's habit of sending a small stamped addressed envelope so the playtester can let him know that the game has arrived and roughly how long it might be before he gets his report.

When this elusive report does finally reach you don't despair if it's a lot thicker than you'd expected and seems to be full of criticism. That is what you've asked for after all. Hopefully it will be constructive criticism and will enable you to improve on any weak points in your game, provided you've left yourself some spare memory.

Don't be embarrassed if you aren't very good at spelling. Most playtesters will agree that correcting spelling mistakes is the largest part of their work but do try to learn from your mistakes. It can be a bit tedious correcting the same mistakes adventure after adventure.

If you have any timed routines in your game then please allow your playtester some extra moves in the first version to enable them to playtest properly. Playtesting is not just solving the adventure. Everything has to be done at least twice, pulled, pushed, examined, picked up, dropped, eaten etc. and sometimes it is not possible to complete a routine while trying all these so the playtester has to keep reloading a saved position and starting again which can become quite tedious. The timing can easily be reduced for subsequent versions.

You always have the last say as to what should be altered in your game but bear in mind that if a playtester says a certain routine is too easy, too difficult, boring, illogical, etc. then other players may well feel the same. It's sometimes difficult for an author to assess a particular puzzle since they know the correct solution.

After doing all the necessary corrections to your datafiles you should now repeat the process of playing the game again from start to finish since altering one section can lead to errors elsewhere. If you expect the playtester to play it several times it's not unreasonable for you to do the same. Keep sending the improved versions of your adventure to allow the playtester to check the alterations made until you are both sure that you are satisfied that you can do no more to improve the game. There's nothing worse than playtesting an adventure, typing a report, sending it off and then hearing nothing. It's also a nice gesture to send a finished version of the game by way of thanks.

If you are writing a multi-part game it might be a good idea to ask the playtester whether they would prefer to receive the game one part at a time. It is sometimes easier to fit in a single part into a busy schedule and saves other authors having to wait a longer time. If you do decide to use this method it is a nice touch to include a saved position on your disc for ease of entry into the second and subsequent parts.

If the playtester has a copy of the adventure writing utility which you use you might like to send the datafile of your adventure so that a check can be made of all the messages in case there are responses to obscure inputs which may have been missed. Playtesters are only human and can't be expected to think of everything. That's why you'll never find a playtester guaranteeing that a game is bug free. They know how difficult it can be to track them down. Even although you think you've tried everything there are many different ways of tackling problems and no two adventurers will think alike in their approach to a puzzle.

If you have written a storyline to accompany your adventure send a copy of it with your game and your playtester will gladly proof read it for you.

Now is the time to advertise your adventure. Please don't put extra pressure on your playtester by advertising the game in advance in the hope that it will be ready by the time your chosen magazine is published. You never know what delays may occur either on your part or the playtester's. If three different authors are all asking for priority then someone is going to be disappointed.

*

From time to time I am asked "What are the duties of a playtester?". Since I took over the editorship of Probe my own activity in this area has been much reduced but I still enjoy the occasional foray.

The above article is a wonderful insight into how one playtester works. I hope it is the first of a series, so I am appealing for anyone who writes, programs, or playtests to submit their thoughts and experiences. (Barbara)

AMIGA NEWS by Steve Clay

Although things are starting to go quiet on the software front, as is the way at this time of year, there is a steady trickle of adventures and adventure-related software on full price and budget release. A game that first saw the light of day on the CD ROM for the PC, is now available for the CD32, that is The Labyrinth Of Time. This game was slated by the PC reviewers but depending on where you look the Amiga press either love it or hate it. The plot is traditional adventure stuff. You have been dragged through time into the labyrinth of King Minos by Daedalus the chappy responsible for the building of the said labyrinth. Daedalus is not happy with Minos who appears to have designs on the world etc. You have to thwart the plans of King Minos. This could well be a "play before you buy" job as the graphics are likely to ensnare the unwary as easily as one of Daedalus's traps! (Around £39.99 from Electronic Arts)

Innocent Until Caught is a tale from the future in which you play a naughty man who has gotten on the wrong side of the Income Tax people. In the future, it seems, you can either pay your debt within a given period or become a fugitive and face the highly likely risk of being shot on sight! So weighing up the pros and cons you decide to try and raise the cash and there we have the aim of the game. I.U.C. looks very similar to BAT and bears a passing resemblance to Beneath a Steel Sky. Comes supplied on a mere 10 disks! (Psygnosis £35-ish)

Maxis are on the verge of releasing Sim City 2000. The original was one of those games that change the software industry forever and the number of data disks and other Sim games points towards just how popular these games are. Sim City 2000 includes all the usual options combined with 3D cities and a disaster menu which allows anything from riots to alien invaders!

The 8-bit classic Laser Squad and its fantasy-based stablemate Lords of Chaos are now available on budget for £9.99. These pair are strategy games with ropey graphics but the gameplay is superb thanks mainly to a simple but clever hidden move routine that means you only see what is in your player's eyeline. Don't judge these by the graphics, judge them by the top notch gameplay.

In the recent PD special I mentioned SHYMER (CLG 27). I recently bought this for the kids and took a look at it having played the 8-bit version. The basic storyline is that something is wrong in the land of Nursree and you have to put things back in order which means you find an object and give it to someone who then gives you something else in return. Apart from hi-res graphics for every location there is very little difference between the old and the new. The text seems almost identical and the parser, while doing its job, is nothing to write home about ...

Dear Mum, I'm writing home about this new parser I've found ...

A game aimed at youngsters or beginners it is recommended because referring to nursery rhymes will more often than not solve your problem and progress is swift.

FMV has just appeared for the CD32. FMV being Full Motion Video which means the CD32 is now able to play CD films which are expected to supersede VHS videos. You'll get a penny change out of £200 so it is hardly a bargain but apparently this is as high tech as you can get. So there!

Right. In an attempt to find out if there is anybody reading this garbage I am offering a PD adventure for the person drawn out of the hat who can solve the puzzle below. You can choose between the Holy Grail (1 meg) a Jim McBrayne text adventure or 4 Pack, a disk with four (Oh! What a surprise!) adventures on, namely: The Attic, Rescue, Street and Raytown.

The puzzle: The following phrase is written in the rare BOTCHER script. Translate the message, given that T=3 and F=10, send your answer and what disk you'd like and if possible the name of a game you'd recommend and one you'd miss at all costs!

6,11,11,4,5,12,18,20,8,17,9,18,6,8,20

All entries to: Steve Clay, 17 Stanlaw road, Ellesmere Port, South Wirral, L65 0EY.

Next month I hope to be looking at a PD disk, Black Dawn, that has gone down quite well in the glossies. This and all the other usual stuff next month only in Probe!

NEWSDESK

London Convention for Adventurers

The next meeting will be held on Saturday 9th April at Hamilton Halls (a sort of wine bar upstairs at Liverpool St. station) from noon onwards. All are welcome, just wave your copy of Probe to attract the attention of a fellow adventurer!

New Release from WoW Software

FOR PETE'S SAKE is now available for Amstrad owners. This is a two-part adventure by Stephen Boyd (no Jonathan Scott?) available on disc only for the PCW and 6128. Please see WoW's advert. in the centre of this issue for full details of this and other titles.

Commodore PD titles from Binary Zone

Jason Mackenzie has re-organized the Public Domain Pick 'n' Mix, putting the better titles onto 2 tapes. The first one (Guild PD Adventures 1, Cat. No. BZT017) has 41 titles from "Adventure In Atlantis" to "Iceland Adventure", the second tape (Guild PD Adventures 2, Cat. No. BZT018) also has 41 titles from "Island Adventure" to "Willie the Wisp". They cost £6 *per tape* and there should be something for everyone on them. (I understand Trap Springer by Damian Steele on the second tape is very entertaining.) Available from Binary Zone PD, 34 Portland Road, Droitwich, Worcs. WR9 7QW Cheque/p.o. payable to Binary Zone PD.

Graphic Adventure Creator

I have received quite a few enquires about where this utility can be bought. Both Mandy and myself have talked to Ian Andrews of Incentive™ but the outcome is that unless sales can be guaranteed for 500-1000 copies, it isn't worth their while having it published again. They don't have any stock, and due to quite a few people being entitled to royalties, they can't put it into the Public Domain. It seems the only way the GAC can now be obtained is through second-hand outlets such as computer shops, car boots sales, and magazines with something similar to Probe's In Touch section.

One point, if you are buying, check that the package also includes the manual. If anyone has a spare copy of the GAC for any computer and doesn't need it, they could forward it to me and I will hold it until someone asks for it, unless they have all lost interest by now.

SAM Adventures

Phil Glover has told me that he has converted CURSE OF THE SERPENT'S EYE to run on the SAM. It is exactly the same as the Spectrum tape version but saves/loads to SAM disk instead of Spectrum tape. It also has a choice of nearly 2 dozen fonts and any of the SAM 128 colours can be swapped for the Spectrum ones. If sales are good, he is thinking of covering "Golden Figures of Death". Available from Dream World Adventures, 10 Medhurst Crescent, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5SZ Price £2.50 Cheque/p.o. payable to M. Freemantle.

David Haire has a new adventure out - TRUEFAITH, priced £5. Not sure where you can buy it from but now doubt SAM owners will know. If someone lets me know I will mention it next month.

Dragon Magazine

Debby is working hard on the second issue - see advert. In this issue. so if you have any particular sales or wants get in touch with her quick.

DARTSMA Rediscovered

Thanks to Phil Reynolds I now know why I haven't received a reply to my letter. It seems DARTSMA have moved and now reside at 49 Heavitree Road, Plumstead, London, SE18 7QX Tel. 081 855 7790.

Spectrum Magazine

Jack Lockerby has kindly forwarded a monthly magazine called SPECTRUM UK which he has recently received. It is nicely presented in A5 format and includes tips, adverts., type-in programs, letters, advice on programming, etc. It also has an adventure column (although I have never heard of the two adventures that are reviewed.) If you are interested, it is only £1 per issue from Spectrum U.K. 28 Rockingham Drive, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE13 0LQ Cheque/p.o. payable to Miss J. McQuillan

ADDITIONAL SOLUTIONS

The following solutions are now on file. I'll only supply them for older games (released for 6 months or more) but will gladly give help with the new releases by post (enclose an SAE) or telephone. Cost: one 29p stamp per solution plus a first or second class stamp for return postage.

ATOMIC ISLE. CONVENTION BLUES. FAERIE. FIRST PAST THE POST. HOUSE SITTER. LARRY THE LEMMING'S URGE FOR EXTINCTION. LEOPOLD THE MINSTREL. MINES OF SATURN. MOONSHARDS OF SACRIMORE. RETURN TO ZORK. SO LITTLE TIME (Spec). SO LITTLE TIME (C64). THE SPORE. WYSIWYG.

PERSONAL

- To Zebedee Like, okay man. Like, you're col-an-der shots, man From Dylan
- To Jean Childs Dragons DON'T (and can't) exist James
- To East Anglican Admirer Is this a first, a rumour that's actually true? (Keep an eye on your letterbox!) Uncle Horace
- To Grimwold Rudi's in the doghouse. So am I, HELP!! Uncle Horace
- To Damian Good stuff this steele wood, bit scratchy though Uncle Horace
- To Damian Sorry, Horace found the Biro ! Ellen
- To Peter love the mummy (and daddy) Idea Ellen
- To Mr. Avery ... When can we have an adventure starring Grimwold? From your No.1 fan

IN TOUCH

FOR SALE - PC Software : Altered Destiny (5.25") £6, Tennis Cup 2 (3.5") £2, Curse of Enchantia (3.5") £3. Take the lot (£11 separate) for just £8. Prices include postage and packing. Contact Nell Shipman, 1 Heath Gardens, Coalpit Heath, Bristol, BS17 2TQ. Tel : 0454-773169

FOR SALE - Amiga Software : Hook (£5.50), Dark Queen of Krynn (£5.50) (RPG) and King's Quest 2 (£5.50) (Graphic Adventure). Contact Steve Clay, 17 Stanlaw Road, Ellesmere Port, South Wirral, L65 0EY (cheque/p.o. to S.J.Clay)

FOR SALE - C64 Software on tape and disk : Too many to list but they include, on tape, The Quill, The GAC, a couple of Level 9s, mainly £1 to £1.50 each; and on disk, some Level 9 and Infocom games, boxed £4 to £8, plus many more. For full list send an SAE to Ken Chambers, 84 Dolverton Avenue, Coundon, Coventry, CV5 8HE or telephone 0203 715387 (after 5.30).

HELP WANTED

From Ron Rainbird, 62 Coniston Drive, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire CW4 7LB
Does anyone have any detailed maps for ISHAR 1 - LEGEND OF THE FORTRESS for the AMIGA version as it appears to vary from the Atari version. Any maps not taken from magazines will be useful.

From Tony Kingsmill, 202 Park Street Lane, Park Street, St. Albans, Herts.
AL2 2AQ

I am writing a new graphic adventure on the Amiga and looking for an experienced (or maybe just a *!!!!* experience?) adventurer to test it for me before it goes out.

GETTING YOU STARTED

THE APPRENTICE played by June Rowe on a Spectrum (128K only)/PC

Start in large hall. S (well-furnished room). X FURNITURE. X TABLE and TAKE PENDANT. WEAR IT. N. W (common room). N (ok if wearing pendant). Now in high-ranking Wizards' common room. SEARCH EQUIPMENT (now have a tool bag). LOOK UNDER BOARDS (find a coil of rope). TAKE ROPE. X FURNITURE (many tables etc.). X TABLES (see large pile of books). SEARCH BOOKS (find book of spells). X BOOK (of spells - see bookmark). X BOOKMARK (actually a folded piece of paper). TAKE PAPER. UNFOLD IT. READ IT (instructions for a healing potion - note items required). DROP BOOK. S (ok if wearing the pendant). E. E (kitchen). SEARCH CUPBOARD (now have bottle of cooking oil). X SINK. SEARCH SINK (now have a dirty plate). E (servants' quarters). SEARCH FLOOR (now have a pail). X BEDS (see rickety bed). MOVE BED (find trapdoor). X TRAPDOOR (closed and locked). LOOK IN BAG and TAKE SCREWDRIVER FROM BAG. POUR OIL ON HINGES (need bottle of oil). DROP BOTTLE. UNSCREW HINGES WITH SCREWDRIVER. OPEN TRAPDOOR. D (wine cellar). SEARCH RACK (now have bottle of champagne). SEARCH CELLAR (now have a small key). X PUMP. PUT PAIL UNDER SPOUT. PULL LEVER (of pump). TAKE PAIL. WASH PLATE IN PAIL. DROP PAIL. X PLATE (see number on back)

.....

DARK GLADIATOR played by Ted Goring on a Spectrum (128K only)

Start in car-park to the west of a hotel. I (carrying key and credit card). TAKE RUCKSACK. WEAR RUCKSACK. E (hotel's main door). X MAT. [WIPE FEET if you wish]. LIFT MAT (you now have a tiny key). N (foyer). TALK TO RECEPTIONIST and SIGN REGISTER (now have a room key). X ROOM KEY (number 1). U (top of stairs). W (now in your hotel room - need key). W (bathroom). OPEN CABINET. SEARCH CABINET (now have a bottle of pills). X PILLS (powerful laxatives). X SINK. TAKE SOAP. E. E. D. E (lounge). SIT (by old man who talks to you). BUY WINE. PUT PILLS IN WINE. DROP BOTTLE. W (foyer, receptionist still present). GIVE WINE TO RECEPTIONIST (she rushes away). LOOK BEHIND DESK (see master key). PRESS MASTER KEY INTO SOAP. E. LOOK UNDER TABLE (see stool). TAKE STOOL. W. U. E (corridor). LOOK UP (see trapdoor)

THE FINAL BATTLE played by Vicky Jackson on a Spectrum

SW. S. E. E. S. S. CLIMB BIRCH. JUMP. X BIRCH. SHAKE BIRCH. GET LAMP. X LAMP. RUB LAMP. X OAK. KNOCK ON DOOR. KNOCK ON DOOR. KNOCK ON DOOR. GET SOCK. W. GET Mallet. N. N. W. W. RUB LAMP. SEARCH CREEPERS. W. S. SEARCH SHACK. GET VASE. SAY HELLO. GET CHALK. RUB VASE WITH CHALK. X PATTERN. LOOK IN JAR. READ PARCHMENT. S. SEARCH SUNFLOWERS. GET NAIL. E. E. E. S. S. E. HAMMER NAIL INTO OAK

STAR FLAWS played by Jo Wood on an Amstrad (also Spectrum)

Start in a secret hiding place. X CRATES. GET CROWBAR. PRISE HATCH. UP (small corridor). W (mess). X FOOD WRAPPERS. GET SANDWICH. S (weapons room). S (boring corridor). W (cockpit). X PANEL. GET BATTERY. E. E (end of corridor). S (rest room). X TOILET. X CISTERN. GET GUN. X GUN. PUT BATTERY IN GUN. N. N (boarding ramp). DROP SANDWICH (it slides down ramp). DOWN. You are now in Deaf Star main docking bay.

FIRST PAST THE POST played on a Spectrum/Amstrad

Start in your untidy bedroom. I (nothing). SEARCH JUNK (find sticky tape, leave it here for the moment). SEARCH JUNK. TAKE SCISSORS. S. NE (parent's bedroom). TAKE DRESS. WEAR DRESS. SEARCH CUPBOARD. TAKE SHOES. SEARCH TABLE. TAKE MAKEUP. WEAR MAKEUP. SEARCH TABLE. TAKE NAILFILE. SW. D (hall). X MAT. CUT MAT (need scissors). TAKE [fluffy] MATERIAL. W. W (back garden). X GNOME. TAKE HAT. WEAR MATERIAL (wig) and immediately WEAR HAT before wig falls off. PULL NOSE (of gnome, mough opens). X MOUTH. TAKE KEY. W (ok if carrying key - now in shed). X WALLS (see onions in a pair of tights). TAKE TIGHTS. TAKE ONIONS (out of tights). DROP ONIONS. WEAR TIGHTS. WEAR SHOES (found earlier)

THE OBSCURE NATURALIST played by Lon Houlston on an STE

STAND UP. GET AND OPEN RUCKSACK. LOOK IN RUCKSACK. GET AND EXAM CAMERA (note lens is detachable and glitters in the sun). EXAM SELF. EXAM POCKET (contains coin and notebook and pencil). EXAM COIN (note that when rubbed it converts to a compass if required). N. W (stone bridge). N. NW (mausoleum). SW. S (Morley Dam). E. E. E (clearing/picnic place). READ SIGN (quiet please). EXAM BOX (It's a machine). EXAM MACHINE. REMOVE STICKER (to reveal slot). PUT COIN IN SLOT. GET PACKET OF EARL GREY TEA. EXAM TEA (find cigarette card picturing a salmon). You will be able to recover the coin on your next visit to Morley Dam. W. W. W (Morley Dam). EXAM WATER. GET COIN (but mind you don't drop your binoculars). N. NE (mausoleum). SE. S (stone bridge). GIVE CARD TO BOY. SAY FETCH A BOTTLE. GET AND EXAM BOTTLE (seems to be a quantity of frogsbrawn - yes, correct spelling!). GET LENS (from camera). REFLECT SUNLIGHT WITH LENS. E. S. SE (wooden bridge). EXAM UNDER BRIDGE. GET NET. S. GET LEAVES (note the soothing dockleaf if you need it). W. WEAR NET

KIDNAPPED (P.D.) played by Dorothy Millard on a C64

Start in a hallway on Floor 9. N (office). READ NOTE (do not pick it up but note what it says). GET CHAIR. N (closet). GET [long] BROOM. S. S. W. N ((office). WATCH TV ("power goes off at midnight"). READ CLOCK (now 5.00 p.m.) S. S (restroom). READ GRAFFITI (says "watch out for live ones"). N. E. S (office - don't go onto the ledge as it will break). GET KEY (using long broom). N. E. S (maintenance room). OPEN CABINET. GET FLASHLIGHT. GET [electrical] TAPE. N. N (in elevator). DROP CHAIR (power failure and it's dark). LIGHT FLASHLIGHT. OPEN TRAPDOOR (you step on chair and find yourself in a crawlspace atop the elevator where there are two "live" wires). TAPE WIRES (note power must be off before you do this). D (elevator). PUSH BUTTON (elevator goes down to the next floor and you drop everything)

LEOPOLD THE MINSTREL played by John Schofield on Spectrum (128Konly)

I (The lute of Lyranth and purse [worn]). X LUTE (in ruins). X PURSE (0 crowns). N. X BARMAN (has a dirty rag). TAKE RAG ((from barman). X RAG. SING (4 crowns now in purse). N. X DWARF (has trouble reaching things). TALK TO DWARF. S. E. SIT. X MENU (meal for 1 crown). BUY MEAL. WAIT. WAIT (the maid returns with the meal). X MAID (tired). X MEAL. SAY TO MAID "SIT". [She will help you with the lute if you can get rid of a drunk who has just entered.] EAT MEAL (not essential). STAND. X DRUNK. TALK TO DRUNK. KNOCK ON DOOR (to a dark room). X FIGURES (you notice Caldwell the thief). SIT. GAMBLE (you need 10 crowns - you are shown out). W. S. W (squeaking in tree). U. X NEST. X BIRD (crows attacking an eagle). D. S (a talking-singing Pillar)

OBJECTS AND THEIR USES

PENDANT OF LOGRYN

Compiled by Diane Rice

A lamp edih ot tnaw uoy sselnu krad ni esU / ti laetS
Some sticky metal ti naelC / dlhc ot faol eviG
A bow drib toohS / yrnopaew morf yuB
A pair of boots egdel etaltogen ot raeW / nni ni
A backpack snoissessop ruoy sdloH / ti laetS
A small gem nogard ta worhT / eert egral ni
An arrow drib toohS / ti teg ot pmi ksA
A rat's skull namow dio ot evig / cro daed hcræS
Some rope msahc ssorca teksab evom ot dna eert egral bmlc ot desU
/ egdlrb epor morf ti tuC
A small ring draugyaW ta buR / namseias morf yuB
A wand lerahK ot eviG / reduob evom ot nirahK ksA
A blue vial ergO taefed ot knrD / cro yb dedrauG
A black box pmi esaeler ot kcolnU / evocla ni
The pendant nyrgoL liac dna noltacel trats ot ekaT / llorcs daeR. maeb
pots ot lerahK dna nirahK lieT
A shield nogard gnicaF nehW raeW / dnuom eht ni eloh eht ot og ot pmi ksA
A purse dlog erom rof nepO / nni ta remotsuc edur tiH
A bottle of wine crO to eviG / nni ta yuB
A loaf of bread dlhc ot evig / evots ni
Some jam tarts Tae / moorerots ni
A triangular prism ffats gnidraug smaeb thgil ffo snruT / strat maj ni
A chest relleweJ ot lieS / moor s'nam taf ni reward ni
A brown staff nirahK ot evig / ergo yb dedraug siennut ni
A red crystal nam taf ot eviG / nogard yb dedrauG
A red jar pmi ot eviG / evac s'nllbog ni
A gold knife egdlrb morf epor tuC / namselas morf yuB
An armring draugyaW ot eviG / llafretaw dniheB
A sword crO dna ergO llik ot desU / trats ta neviG
Some fancy clothes ytlc ni raew / nni tA
A gold horn evocla ni wolb / tsim ni selddir rewsnA
A large hat ytlc ni raeW / nni tA
A sapphire relleweJ ot lieS / maerts hcræS
A ruby relleweJ ot lieS / elbbur hcræS
Magical glasses llorcs daeR / pons cigam ni yuB
A potion thgis evorpmi ot knrD / pohs cigam ni yuB
A scroll tnadnep teg ot daeR / drib toohS
A Beggar nioc eviG / ytlc ni
Extra gold coins ssarg gnol hcræS



HINTS AND TIPS

DRAGON SLAYER (Dream World) played by Barbara Gibb on a Spectrum

You won't be able to enter the cabin via the door. Look for another entrance a little later in the game.

Break the bone to find a map which is your guarantee of a safe journey through the Valley of Eternal Wandering.

In the small valley, clear the rocks with the spade to reveal an exit SW.

Wait at the sacred grounds until lightning strikes the tree. Pick up the branch before you leave.

Examine the boulder to see a crack. Provided you have the lamp when you X CRACK you will see a passage. Lever the boulder with the branch to make the entrance large enough to enter.

Don't forget to pick up the remains of the branch which, when lit, can be used to keep the wolves at bay.

Use the spade to dig in the cavern to find a telescopic ladder which you can open and close before and after use.

Check out the boards on the spiral stair to reveal a secret chamber.

You'll need the pouch as a container for the gold dust.

The cobwebs are concealing a trapdoor. You'll need the lead key to open the chest.

Examine the green goblin then say hello and ask him about his crossbow.

Study the picture of the menorah and remember this when you meet the seven-headed serpent. Cut off one of its heads using the sword.

Search the small crack in the hard-baked mud to find a bolt for your crossbow.

You'll need the sword to release the wood-elf from the pit. Ask him about the shadow serpent.

Look in the pit to find something to help you cross the swamp and protect you from the leeches.



THE KHANGRIN PLANS played on a Spectrum (128K only)/Amstrad/PC

When you land on the planet the first thing to do is find your contact. He should be on the street corner.. but first you will have to pay the dwarf to let you pass. SAY TO MAN "SORGON" to be told where the plans are and what you need.

You can buy a torch from the vending machine. It will cost you one credit.

Break the plastic pistol to find a charge. To prevent this being confiscated when you are thrown into jail hide it in your wrist pouch.

You'll need the brass key from the prison office before you can release another prisoner. This man gives you some useful information when the two of you are safely outside the prison.

Buy Svetsva in the bar.

You will need a lot of credits to buy the grenade case, so steal it from the Blue Sun Bar.



HARBORO played by the author. Dorothy Millard, on a C64

Steal the plant in the Hardware store to repair the bridge.
Get the credit card then get a haircut in order to be let into the Manor House.
Give the letter to the lady.
At the bank give the note and credit card to the teller in order to obtain some money.
Give the bread to the beggar.
Examine the flowers in the park then wear the badge to enter the city offices.
To enter the industrial estate insert a disc.
Buy a drink in the Queen's Arms.



OKLIB'S REVENGE played by Barbara Gibb on an ST/STe/Amiga/PC

Wear the hood of the cloak when you go into the Chief Giant's study so he will mistake you for his son. **WAIT** around until he goes away for a nap, then light your torch from the embers of the fire before visiting the sleeping giant and stealing his axe.

To open the door to the armoury you have to put the six marbles in the hole in the panel in a strict order - red, blue, black, brown, purple and green.

Find the kitchen and take the hourglass.

In the "brown study" room take the pen then replace it to open the cupboard. This is your means of escaping from the Chief Giant.

Find a bottle of blue potion, then hack your way through the brambles with the axe.

Wait at the raised drawbridge for the knights to call insults at you, then wear the armour - the drawbridge will now lower.

Push the bust in the corridor to open the door to the music room.

You have to take the instruments off the harpsicord before you can open it to find an ornate key.

Use the plank as a bridge across the stream to get to the island.



LOST IN THE AMAZON played by the author. Dorothy Millard, on a C64

Shoot the tiger, but make sure you have loaded the gun first. Climb the tree to get the axe then climb another tree, but leave those eggs alone! Don't forget to fill the canteen at the river.

In the native village examine a table to get the knife then get the fruit, but don't eat it. Examine the roof of the hut in disrepair.

Clean the stone to have a shining stone, but don't take it until you are ready to leave the native village.

Watch the mud, if you pass too frequently you will get stuck.

At the Tribal Meeting Place, look at the natives and note what they are doing for later.



MOONSHARDS OF SACRIMORE played by John Schofield on a Spectrum (128K only)

Visit Flaklim in his hut for information and a map of the Boglands.

The only thing you need from the Wayfarer is his bean, which can be "aged" quickly into a flower for the faery.

Smash the Beaver's Dam to move the Millwheel.

Tell Crulin you knew Flaklim. His key unlocks the Tower door.

Cover your ears to examine the Megalith.

Wear some gauntlets or the glove to pick up the fungus. Carrying the fungus solves the Dragon problem.

The anchor and twine help you through the hatch.

Examine the trunk closely before you attempt to open it. You'll find a spell for the trap.

Retreat back across the rope-bridge and cut it with something sharp to get rid of the wolves. You need a steady foot to cross now.

Wear the helm to understand the parchment.



ST.JIVES played by the author, Dorothy Millard, on a C64

Examine the fountain in the village square for some money then go to the pub and buy the man a drink.

Use the ladder to climb the wall into the fields then dig.

Ring the doorbell to enter the impressive house. Examine the walls carefully. In the secret room examine the cobwebs. The gold key unlocks the cupboard and the jemmy opens the wardrobe.

Get a book to reveal a secret tunnel.

THE HOUSE played by Barbara Gibb on a Spectrum (also for the Amiga)

The alarm keeps sounding - gnivael dna gniretne retfa rood eht esolC

Is the hearth in the library important? - nottub sserp, eceplietnam leef, elit dekcarc eht no dnatS. aeY

Where is the light source? - riats eht rednu leefF The Ice machine trapped me - tlem lliw ti dna tiaW

How do I open the door to the vault room - htgnelevaw emas ot laid rood nrut dna oldar no laid enimaxE

Where is the screwdriver? - moor ytsud eht ni tsud eht wolB

How do I clean the plug? - diuom naeic neht htoic no diulf gnaeic ruoP

How do I open the cupboard in the closet? - rood koolnu, elohyek otlni revirdwercc hsup, elohyek ni kool

Where do I use the vacuum cleaner? - moordeb retsam eht dna moor-gnind eht In

Nothing happens when I go into the hut - llorcc eht daer evah uoy lltnu t'now ti

THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR Pt1 played on a C64/Spectrum

Give the lamb to Delphian for some important advice.

Don't lie on the bed of Procrustes, instead kill him with the spear. When you kill Phaia with the axe, a shield will appear.

Wear the shield before you wash the feet of Sciron, then fight him.

Wear the helmet then fight Periphetes with the axe.

Kill the lion with the club and then pick up the carcass. [note: use whatever spelling of "carcass" is used in the game text].

Ignore Sinis - he will only bother you if you give him the chance.

Wrestle Cercyon to get passed him.

When approaching Athens ensure you have clean hands and wearing sandals.

Examine the palace statues to find a coin to pay the ferryman.

In the alchemy examine the shelves to find a bottle of poison.

To make a syringe, insert the reed into the tube.

The guard at the Acropolis will allow you to go NW to the River Styx but needs something before letting you go into the guard house which leads to the harbour.

Give the drugged carcass to the dog at the entrance to the maze of tunnels. There are two important objects plus Pirithous [sic] to be found.

Use the bag of gold to pay the captain of the galley.



TOTAL REALITY DELUSION played by Ellen Mahon on an Amstrad

Think safety first before using the chainsaw.

The bucket won't hold water, wear it instead.

The occupant of the one-roomed shed will make short work of the wooden door.

Don't drop the empty bottle after drinking the beer - you'll need it later on.

Be greedy at the money tree!

ROUGE MIDGET played by Damian Steele on an Amstrad (also on the Spectrum)

The broken scupper is a locker-opening model. Show respect to Rimmer before examining him. Feed the Cat to get his "Fang you".

A fashion statement can hide something violent.

Kryten is only a rouge kipper. Watch a film for another hint.

Throw lager at mutant pizzas. Kick a drinks machine to get booze.

Scupper attachments are required.

Wear a good luck charm to leave. Use the trailer to carry items.

DEATH KNIGHTS OF KRYNN played by Ann Castelov on a C64

High Clerist's Tower - Tunnels

When you enter the tunnels you meet the Red Dragon, he mocks you about his freedom and introduces you to the man who made it possible. It is Sir Garren! He carries the sword he picked up after Sir Karl dropped some weapons, evil now has control of him. The Dragon picks up a boulder and throws it at the tunnel above you, using the subsequent confusion to disappear. The cave-in has blocked the passage, there is no way back!

Throughout this tunnel system you find 13 locations where Giant Zombies are digging away at the Tower foundations. They must be destroyed before you continue or the structure will be undermined and may collapse. The 13 locations are (in order of being fought) : (2,10), (4,4), (6,4), (12,6), (6,0), (12,4), (12,9), (15,15), (13,15), (8,15), (10,9), (0,12) & (1,15).

(3,7) - The Dragon disappears into the distance, Zombie Giants and Skel Warriors turn to fight and slow you down.

(9,5) - Closing in on the Dragon, another force of Wights and Skel Warriors stop to fight. The Dragon turns the corner of the Tunnel.

(12,1) - The Dragon orders Sir Garren to travel on ahead with the bodies, and turns to do battle with you. When you have killed him Sir Durfey hurries you on ahead. You must get to Sir Garren before he reaches Lord Soth, he seems to be under an enchantment.

(14,7) - Giant Zombies and Skel Warriors attack you here, Sir Garren makes off into the gloom with the pallets containing the Knights' corpses. Defeat the monsters and you receive a Staff Sling +3 and a Short Sword +4.

(12,12) - As you close in on the enemy, Wights and Skel Warriors try to slow you down. Win this fight and you get a Hoopak +3.

(7,11) - Here you catch up with Sir Garren and the corpses. Skel Warriors attack you and after you have killed them you are faced with Sir Garren himself. REASON with the Knight and as he leaps toward you, DISARM HIM. You are able to overpower him and pull the sword he is carrying away from him. The Party gains XP! Sir Garren is back to normal, without the sword to control him, but this has given the undead time to remove the pallets. Lord Soth appears, angry at being thwarted with Sir Garren, and fires a bolt of energy towards the Knight. Choose one of your characters to LEAP IN FRONT of the bolt (again a Paladin is acceptable), and he will take the blast instead, thus saving Sir Garren. Lord Soth gets away!

(6,15) - The tunnel leads out into the countryside, some of the pallets are attached to Nightmares and flown away, but there are still some remaining. ATTACK and Lord Soth will step forward and ask if you will challenge him. Say YES and you will fight. If you defeat him the Party gains XP.

As you take back the remaining pallets, Lord Soth stands up and brushes himself off (he was just pretending to be beaten), taunts you about the futility of resisting him, mounts his Nightmare and leaves.

Your Party automatically leaves the tunnels and enters the wilderness. You now have to make your way back to Sebas at Vingaard Keep.



ISHAR 2 - Pt. 4 played by James Judge on an Atari ST

OK, now you are at the dock on Zach's island and you are waiting to head back to the first island that you started on - Irvan's island. Your party needs rest and food, so you'd better get a move on. When you reach the island nip up to the village that you first came across (it's in the north west of the island. Head directly north from leaving the boat and you should reach it without too much of a problem) and sleep and eat.

Once you have done that head to the far east of the island. If you were with me on the first part of this guide you should know where to find the wandering wizard. If you don't know where he is head to the far south east corner of the island and follow the coast northwards. Just before you get halfway up the island you should meet him.

Talk to the man and then give him 10000 gold coins. He will then cast a spell on your eagle which you must then let free. Wait a while and it will return, carrying the next part of the map.

Now head back to the village and, if you need to, sleep and eat to build up strength. Also, if you aren't using the cheat for food, make sure you have got plenty of food with you.

Go to the west coast and walk south until you come across a piece of land that juts out from the main island, to the west. Walk along it and you should find a standing stone with a box in front of it. Prepare for a battle and pick up the box and quickly pocket it.

The rock in front of you will turn into a stone Golem which will try to kill you. It is impervious to all the magic I could throw at it, so it is best just to slog it out. When the thing crumbles and dies swing around quickly and fight another Golem which will appear very quickly. This fight may take a few goes to save any of your characters dying.

Once finished with these two opponents you really will need to sleep and eat so go and do it - no wenching though, please, you've got an adventure to complete.

Righty-oh. Go to your boat and then set sail for the dock on the south of the new island - Jon's island.

The official guide says that this has some of the most spectacular graphics in the game, but don't believe everything you see is what I say.

Now, when you dock you need to quickly swap your armour for the fur coats that you invested in - it saves your party from freezing to death. Also to stop another instant death attach the ropes that you bought back in the city to each of your party members. This stops them plummeting off cliffs when you don't want them to.

Head along the east path and search the path carefully - you should find a cauldron in which you can mix some potions.

INTERESTING FACT: Did you know that cauldrons got their name because witches used to boil cauls in them (the protective film that covers a baby and holds in all the fluids before it is born). Very nice.

Head back to the west and walk into the mountains when the path bends that way. Soon you should come across a woolly rhino. He isn't too difficult to kill, just takes a while, that is all. When he does cop it, though, he'll leave his horn behind, how considerate. Pick it up and then head back to your boat.

If you are in need of rest and relaxation, go and rest. Once ready head to the north west dock on the same island.

Once on the island head east and when a path leads to the west take it and get ready for a fight. Two giants will try and clobber you. They are quite difficult to kill as they follow you right back to the dock so the best way to deal with them is to just stand your ground and hack at them and throw a few fireballs.

Here the island becomes more like a maze which is easily conquered. There are two things to look out for. The first is a natural hollow that is in a large canyon. In the hollow you should see a sword embedded into the ice - take it, it's a damn good weapon. The other thing is a priest that is floating in mid-air. If you get too close he will transport you a few paces away, so don't worry if you overstep the mark and don't see him.

When you see the priest cast the Humbolg potion and give it to the priest. He'll give you the next part of the map.

Well done, that's this month's lesson finished with. If I were you I'd take my party to Zach's island and have a good old rest and nosh up. The next place you will come across will be very difficult, so be prepared.

Goody bye for now, mon petits poulets!

SIMON THE SORCERER played by Ron Rainbird on an Amiga (1 meg)

The box outside the Village Shop will transport you to the cellar of the Goblin's Castle.

Find a specimen jar and fill it with stew in the Swampling's abode. However, you will first have to eat a dishful of the obnoxious brew.

Search for a rope in the Smithy.

You can get a sticky substance by using the Beekeeper's Clothing, a Smoke Bomb and Matches, at the Beehive.

Below Repulser's Bedroom there is a Tomb. Open it and grab hold of the loose bandage on the Mummy. You can then get the Staff of Power required by the Wizards.

Climb down the Vines by the Waterfall to meet Golum. Give him the bottle of Stew. Fish for a Ring.

To get the Sousaphone, throw a melon at the instrument.

Indy Jones requires a fossil. In the snowy wastes there is a Rock which will provide one if taken to the Blacksmith.

Move the chest in the Swampling's House to reveal a trapdoor. This leads to a Jetty, but to repair the loose board you need a Hammer and a Nail.

In the cellar of the Goblin's Castle you are locked in. Look in the crate for a Spellbook and get a loose sheet of paper from it. Use this with the ratbone to poke the key from the lock and open your way to further danger.

JOKE OF THE MONTH sent in by Ellen Mahon

Balrog - "Sorry Grue, I seem to have trodden on your feet."

Grue - "Don't worry Balrog, I sometimes walk on them myself!"

SERIALIZED SOLUTION

JESTER'S JAUNT - a walkthrough by Jack Lockerby

(A Spectrum & Amiga (under emulation) adventure,
designed by June Rowe, programmed by Paul Cardin.
Available from Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops,
Cutgate, Rochdale, OL12 7NX)

PART FIVE

From the top of some steps you saw a guard hold a large dog. The pair were there to see that no armed person entered who could be a danger to their mistress. With this in mind you quickly dropped your sword. It was too large and would soon be spotted. Well, you still had the glass dagger, but how to get it passed the guard? Nearby you found a bucket and soon had it filled with water from a well. You put the dagger in the bucket and it was barely visible.

So you took a deep breath and went down the steps. You had no trouble entering the castle and soon met up with Vilana. You took the glass dagger and dealt her a mortal blow! Beyond you found the prince and a little mouse that he had befriended.

Moving around the castle you found a large black cat barring your way through one door. On a table in the room was a saucer. You filled the saucer with the milk, the cat jumped up to drink it, leaving you and the prince free to enter the kitchen. Here you found an irate cook bemoaning his fate in having to peel and chip a large quantity of potatoes for the guards. He was soon in high spirits when you gave him the box that peeled and chipped in record time. He opened his private door and you left the castle only to be confronted by that old owl again. You dropped the mouse. It scooted away and the owl, ever watchful, swooped down after it. The prince then sighed and wished that Beauty was here. You took the model out of the basket and called the winged horse. It appeared, the prince leapt on and soared into the air. As he left he turned and told you to use the coin at the archway.



This you did and soon found yourself back with your brothers and the prince and princess. Mission accomplished!! THE END

A.F.I.O. SUGGESTIONS by Damian Steele

- Aardvarks Find Idiots Objectionable**
- All Floods Incur Ojections**
- Always Forget Idiotic Obligations**
- Arthur's Facility Is Obsolete**
- Andrew Forges Incredible Objects**
- Armies Find Ignorance Offensive**
- Army Fights Imaginary Opponents**

SOLUTION OF THE MONTH

LARRY THE LEMMING'S URGE FOR EXTINCTION

Written by Scott Denyer and Richard Ng

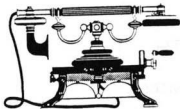
Solution by Barbara Gibb on a Spectrum

Start on a beach. I (wearing an inflatable rubber ring and a parachute), X RING, REMOVE RING (too tight). REMOVE PARACHUTE (padlocked). W (rocks). SEARCH ROCKS and TAKE CRAB. E. E. X HOLIDAY-MAKERS, X HAMPER. PUT CRAB IN HAMPER (the holiday-makers move away, leaving behind a bucket and spade). SEARCH SAND (find bottle of champagne). TAKE ALL (bucket, spade and bottle). E (bottom of cliff). U (path blocked by boulder). SHAKE BOTTLE. OPEN BOTTLE (cork shoots out, hitting the boulder which explodes). X BUSHES (see tunnel to east). EXAM BUSHES (covered in thorns). BREAK off THORN. BURST RING (with thorn). PICK LOCK WITH THORN. DROP THORN. REMOVE PARACHUTE. DROP PARACHUTE. TAKE CORK. D. W. W. W (rocks). FILL BOTTLE WITH WATER. PUT CORK IN BOTTLE. E. E. FILL BUCKET WITH SAND. E. U. E (small tunnel, ok if not wearing rubber ring). U (edge of large hole). EMPTY BUCKET (of sand into hole so water rises). D. W. D. W. FILL BUCKET WITH SAND. E. U. E. U. EMPTY BUCKET (so water level is high). E (across hole). N (see rat sitting on boulder). GIVE BOTTLE (of sea water - if it is corked it goes off to find a corkscrew). DROP BUCKET. LEVER BOULDER WITH SPADE (rolls to the west). Before you go that way, return S. W. D. W. then U and U to cliff and DIG (need spade). DROP SPADE. TAKE WORM, and return D. D. E. U. E. N. then W (to where boulder rolled). CLIMB ON BOULDER. U (top of cliff). W (edge of cliff note the seagulls). If you try to jump now one of the seagulls will swoop down, making you retreat into the hole, so THROW WORM to distract it, then JUMP (mission complete)



A.F.I.O. EXPLAINED by Simon Avery

Following Jenny Perry's suggestions of the meaning of AFIO, I think it's about time I gave a few details about what AFIO is. It stands for "Association of Fools, Idiots and Others" and has been awarded to around twenty adventurers over the last few years. It's not something that can be bought (though you're welcome to send me money if you think that will have any influence), but is awarded to a person I think has done a great deal to adventuring as a whole. This doesn't mean that everyone who has done a lot is awarded one, just a select few who I have had personal contact with over the years. Apart from a small acknowledgment for the work done over the years for the cause, AFIO means absolutely nothing at all. It's just a fun thing, which arouses great curiosity from people who don't know what it means. Who knows. If you've done a lot for the adventuring scene over the years, then you might just receive a certificate through the post granting you permission to add the letters: "AFIO" after your name. Cheaper than a degree, anyway.



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