

ADVENTURE PROBE

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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If you write in it will be assumed that the letter is for publication in Probe unless it is clearly marked NOT FOR PUBLICATION, or obviously just a covering note for your subscription, contribution etc.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, but small amounts (i.e. up to £4) may be in the form of 19p, 25p, or 29p stamps to save on poundage/bank charges.

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 third week of the month. Copy date for contributions and advertisements is 23rd 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:-

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HALL OF FAME

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

Kenneth Pedersen, Jenny Wheeler, Dorothy Millard, Ellen Mahon, Lee Morrall,
Edwina Brown, Kieran O'Loughlin, Karen Tyers, Janet and Brian Sefton,
Martin Bela, Bev Truter, David Hebblethwaite, Christopher Heppinstall,
Angela Cook, Jim Johnston, Doreen Bardon, Mark McDermott,
Phil Glover, Paul Hardy and George Rawson.

Special thanks to :

Paul Hardy for software.

EDITORIAL

Yes, Probe is up and running again, albeit a little slower than I would have liked.

As some of you are already aware, after a terrible start to the year, fate once again took a hand. In March my daughter became very ill and required a couple of emergency operations and three weeks in intensive care. She is now home and making good progress, although it will be a while before we can be sure she is strong enough to resist infections. My usual routine has been severely disrupted, and I am extremely grateful for your patience and understanding.

I am trying to get another issue of Probe out very soon, so keep those contributions coming in. Also there are some excellent adventures almost ready for release by Adventure Probe Software, and I hope to have at least three of them ready for release next month.

Many thanks for all your prayers, cards and best wishes – they are much appreciated, and have given me the inspiration to get back on the computer and finish the January issue, which was already about two-thirds done when the emergency occurred.

That's all until next month,

All the best,

Barbara



LETTERS

From Martin Bela of Alivaston.....

Sorry about the missing "can't" in my last letter, it must've fell off the disk in the post; er, well, actually I was just seeing who would be the first person to spot it (Ahem!). Anyway, here's a few more snippets of trivia about the Prisoner T.V. series; with no missing words this time! (..probably..)

Filming of The Prisoner began in September 1966, and continued right up to the end of 1967; in fact, post-production on the last few episodes was still in progress after the first episode was transmitted, in October 1967.

A major factor in ending the series earlier than planned was the cost; the budget stretching to around a million pounds (Patrick McGoohan's 2000 pounds-per-week salary was a fair old wage in those days!).

The original idea of an agent or spy deserting from his "side" and being abducted by the "other side" soon fell by the wayside as McGoohan's unique style of script writing began to show through. His aide, script editor George Markstein, left the project after a dozen episodes. In the case of the two-part finale (episode 17, Fall Out), McGoohan took charge of the writing as well as directing.

One of the most memorable objects from The Prisoner is the huge white sphere – Rover. This is the guardian of the Village, striking fear into the heart of any would-be escaper. Rover was a prop that needed frequent replacement during filming, being merely an inflated weather balloon (of which, it was said, 3000 had been borrowed and used from a nearby meteorological station).

A more durable prop was the penny farthing bicycle which was wheeled (but never ridden) in the grounds of the Village. The penny farthing is the symbol of the Village; being depicted on everything from flags to soda syphons to lapel badges, even down to the symbol being placed on a packet of sewing needles!

The script was often improvised, with delivered lines being entirely ad-libbed. In some episodes, the written scripts left blank lines to enable the actors to invent their own lines, thereby adding to the humourous or dramatic impact of some scenes.

Patrick McGoohan disallowed portrayal of extreme violence, particularly with weapons, and also forbade any suggestion of sex. Nevertheless, one episode (episode 14, Living In Harmony) was banned in America, and some scenes were to be found "missing" from the U.K. screenings. A lynching, and a brutal murder (in Living In Harmony) as well as a savage beating up of No.6 (in episode 4, Free For All) were excluded during some repeat transmissions in the late seventies.

Thirty years ago, McGoohan said of his series, that its object was "to create a feeling of unrest about life today. It was an abstract impression of the world we are living in and a warning of what would happen to us when gadgetry and gimmickry take over from creative people."

What I want to know is, did No.6 finally escape?

*

Episode 14, "Living in Harmony", is a Western, complete with bar room brawls, gunfights, and, as already mentioned, a lynching. Episode 18 would have begun with shots of the finish of the Tokyo Olympic Marathon, with The Kid on the finish line and Angelo watching over him. I understand the second series would have shown the main characters remaining free, but constantly persued by the "nameless exterminators".

I read recently that Patrick McGoohan was hoping to make a feature film based on The Prisoner, but as the backers want him to make so many changes it is unlikely to be made.

More trivia, early in his career Patrick McGoohan was in a play called The Prisoner, broadcast by the BBC. The "View from a Villa" episode of Danger Man contains shots of Portmeirion.

I notice that a group of The Prisoner fans have their own programme on BBC2 on Friday, 15th May, at 7.15pm. (Barbara)

From Karen Tyers of Aine, N. Yorkshire

It was with a great sense of relief that I picked up the December issue of Probe from the doormat. At last! My monthly fix – I didn't realise how addicted I was until I started getting withdrawal symptoms. Reading Barbara's editorial gave me much food for thought, so I felt I had to put pen to paper.

Probe is the only magazine left to those of us without PC's, and if it went under what would we do? Barbara needs our support more than ever now, so come on people, write a few lines, even if it's only a letter to say 'Hi, this is me, and this is what I'm playing at the moment'. You never know, someone out there might just be playing the same adventure, and could be stuck in a different place to you. A quick phone call could solve their (or your) current problem, and bingo! You've made a new friend to boot.

A prime example is me the other day. I spent a day with an adventuring friend and we were comparing old notes and maps of games we'd played years ago, and never finished. It inspired me to dig out my old copy of Eye of Bain, and I finished it. Been stuck since 1985!!!

My number is on the back of the magazine for Golden Oldies, but I'm stuck in as many as I've finished. Give me a ring if you're still playing some of them. You might be able to help me. Even if not, ring for a chat – I can talk adventures anytime.

Come on folks – support your magazine – Barbara needs YOU!

*

As I may have mentioned in my editorial, I had expected Geoff to publish the December magazine. However, due to him relinquishing control of the photocopier, he had to return the masters. So, sooner than I had planning, I had to find someone who could do the job at a price I could afford and to a reasonable standard. That problem solved, and barring any more nasty obstacles, I can now get on with giving you very loyal and patient readers what you crave – Probes! I have no intention of closing Probe, and will do my best to distribute it more frequently until I have it back on schedule. With the help of Karen and others mentioned in the Hall of Fame, I am extremely confident I will succeed.

Many readers have formed lasting friendships via the helplines, and I know how enjoyable it can be to play a game, or to just discuss adventures in general, with someone else. (Barbara)

From Christopher Heppinstall of Didcot, Oxfordshire

As a fairly new subscriber to Probe, I thought I would introduce myself a little – as far as my adventuring goes.

My first attempt at adventuring was on the (sadly now deceased) Commodore 16, on a games that was called – if my memory serves me correctly – “Impossible Mission” or “Mission Impossible”, where you were to stop a saboteur from blowing up a nuclear Power Station. Our whole family could get up to – what seemed – the penultimate room but couldn’t quite get past it, to stop the bomb.

Then the Commodore 64 came along and I played many adventures, but my all time favourite has to be “The Case of the Mixed-up Shymer” by Sandra Sharkey. This was the first ever adventure game I completed, and started me sitting for hours in front of put-to-one-side-for-later adventures. Maps filled the desk, along with notes about objects and character’s speech. Adventure games became my favourite genre of game.

Then we got the PC and the C64 was sadly put into the loft. There seemed to be a huge lack in text adventure games – until I was connected to the Internet where there was an adventurer’s treasure chest of games. After seeing what people such as Graham Cluley (of “Humbug” and “Jacaranda Jim” fame) could do, I wanted to make my own adventures. Thanks to the availability of such authoring systems like TADS and INFORM, I have begun to make my own – although only as a novice.

In answer to Ray Clayton’s letter, I myself have tried to “spread the word” about Probe through newsgroups. There are two newsgroups devoted purely to interactive fiction. Anyone who has access to the Internet try:

alt.rec.int-fiction for discussion concerning the creating of text adventure games.

alt.games.int-fiction for discussion about the gaming side of text adventures.

A couple of people from the rec.int-fiction newsgroup had heard of Probe from its days of being edited by Mandy Rodrigues. They seemed very surprised that it was still going but showed an interest, so maybe that brought in one or two new subscribers.

I haven’t played many adventure games on the PC (shame on me) since I got it December ‘96, but I intend to rectify this by buying Broken Sword 2 – thanks to Phil Glover’s review – and Monkey Island 3, both point-and-click style adventures.

I hope to get back into the text-adventuring scene as much as I was on the C64, by possibly buying “Trinity” and “The Four Symbols” by Grue (Borphee Computers), and bring the C64 back down.

*

Sandra Sharkey is a co-founder of Probe, and I’m sure she (like those in the newsgroup) would be surprised to know Probe is still being published. (Barbara)

From Kieran O'Loughlin of Ennis, Ireland

I have just recently received the latest issue of Adventure Probe. It is definitely a brilliant magazine but I feel that it may be lacking something. I have come up with a few suggestions to make the magazine more attractive.

1. A Problem Page

This may consist of 1 or 2 pages of readers true life problems or dilemmas that us, the readers, can give advice on. I realize that you may receive a poor response, but it may build into the magazine.

2. A Pen-Pal Page

A simple idea, yet an ideal way of commuting to fellow readers. I have 2 pen-pals and it is quite enjoyable writing to them.

3. Quizzes

I realize that there are some quizzes already in the magazine but I would like some quizzes about sport, TV, films. etc.

I'm sure that this would interest all the readers. Don't get me wrong, I live the magazine. I just decided to add some alternatives for you to think about.

I have just one more question for you. I enjoy playing simple "type-in" text games. I can recall a Commodore 64 magazine giving a tape on how to make such adventure games. Have you heard of such a tape? If so, how can I obtain a copy of it? I would love to try and make my own adventure game.

*

An suggestions on how to improve the magazine are welcome, and I know I am sometimes reluctant to get too far way from our main interest, adventuring.

The Letters pages are always available for readers to air their ideas/problems, and occasionally these have been highly unusual and entertaining. If anyone has something they would like published in the Problem Page(s), please send it in, clearly marked accordingly. It hasn't been necessary to have a pen-pal section as such, as the regular exchange of letters between readers can just happen, usually when someone writes to the Helpline, but I certainly don't mind including a Pen-Pal section in the magazine.

Readers are better at sending me Quizzes (on all subjects) than Hints & Tips, and my family look forward to me receiving them as I give them a copy to try out prior to publication. To be honest I thought I was on the verge of over-doing the publishing of quizzes during the last few years, although an exception is always made in the December issue on the premise that readers have to put their computers away for the festive season but still wish to have something to keep the old grey cells ticking over. I could compile a quiz based on TV programmes, but it couldn't be a prize quiz as not all readers get a chance to see the same channels/programmes.

As always, I will try to give readers what they want, so please write in with your views.

I seem to remember one of the Commodore magazines gave away the Graphic Adventure Creator on a cover tape. In my opinion The Quill is a better utility, and if you are interested, I can check to see if I have either or both in the stock of software for sale. (Barbara)

From George Rawson of South Norwood, London

Thank you for the December journal, I am sorry you are having some problems, I only wish I could offer some help.

Anyway I am writing referring to your News from Weird Science re Final Odyssey, and thought you might like to know I have got this strange game and so far have had little or no success with it.

One thing they don't tell you in their blurb is that you need a joystick to play it, luckily I still have one which works OK but my hands do not like it very much with my arthritis! However I manage, but of course to kill all the nasties you have to be quick and I have not got out of level 1 yet and lose all my energy before I get anywhere.

The game instructions are rather vague and you are left wondering which baddies are which (there are three types and I have not yet identified which is which, but then I may be dumb!) There are 6 weapons; you start off with a crossbow which has unlimited arrows, but the other five can be very soon used up, even if you pick the right one for the occasion.

I phoned Vulcan to see what help they could give, but they say they are still working on a help sheet for levels one and two and would send it me when it is ready; so far I have not received it!

One other strange thing I have noticed; when I get a gold key, it goes into the box at the bottom of the screen, I lose all my energy, restart and the key is still in the box even though I no longer have it and it is back in the place where I picked it up from.

Yes, it is a strange game, and I have been somewhat disappointed with it. I feel they have made it just that bit too difficult to give the pleasure it warrants – the story seems to be good but to get out of level 1 is the very devil – it is true that when you close one door another opens or a switch appears or disappears willy nilly, so you have to keep going back and forth doing and undoing things you have done – very frustrating as the baddies keep coming at you from all directions while you go back and forth, losing more and more energy and then you get the message, "Game Over".

If there is anyone else out there who has had more success than me, then I would be glad to hear from them.

Hope this gives you a bit more to add to your articles – I hope you can keep the magazine going as it is very interesting.

Incidentally I have just ordered a Modem so will be on the Internet in a week or so, and once I have mastered it I will let you have my E-Mail address. Keep up the good work!

*

I suppose it could have been called Strange Odyssey if someone hadn't already used that title. The "gold key" problem sounds like a bug and surely should have been picked up by the playtesters. I'm afraid expert joystick dexterity is usually needed when tackling this type of game, although I agree that the early levels should be accessible to *all* players.

I hope there are no more problems this year and that I can now concentrate on getting the magazine on schedule and lots of adventures ready for you to play.

The list of E-Mail addresses at the back of the magazine is getting longer each month, and I will be delighted to add George, and anyone else, to the list. (Barbara)

REVIEWS

JESTER'S JAUNT

Written by June Rowe, programmed by Paul Cardin

Reviewed by Karen Tyers on a Spectrum

This game was designed by the sadly missed June Rowe in 1991 and programmed by Paul Cardin. You are told that you are the youngest of seven brothers, who are named after the letters of the Greek alphabet. After some blurb about how you came to be called Early instead of Eta, it also transpires that you only know your brothers by their nicknames. You are the court jester and you and your brothers serve your beloved princess and her husband Prince Yandor.

The Princess is heartbroken it seems, as the wicked witch Vilana has kidnapped Prince Yandor by magic and holds him prisoner in her castle. None of your brothers can be spared from their duties, so it is up to you to effect some sort of rescue. Before you can depart on this somewhat dubious quest (you are only a jester after all!), you must take your leave of the Princess and your brothers by calling them by name, one after the other, whereupon they will provide you with gifts which could assist in your mission.

So it is that you start in the entrance hall of the palace, with no-one in sight. As you wander around the palace you will need to find a means of learning the Greek alphabet in order to help you name the Princess and your brothers. When you have learnt the necessary, you must find a way to summon them. Their gifts appear to be a motley collection, but once you have worked out what each one is, they will come in very useful. You will also need to scour the palace grounds as one or two essential items are to be found there as well. Once outside the palace gates, the pony you have been riding decides to unseat you and run off, leaving you stranded near a crossroads. Exploring further will bring you to Witchwood, where you will find an old crone who has injured her leg. Although dubious about her, you will need to help her to return to her caravan where she will help you with another gift.....

You can also find an old builder's hut, and an elf schoolroom, both of which need to be looked round as there are a couple of items tucked away. Eventually you will find yourself in Ogre's forest, and I hope you know how to deal with large, hungry ogres, otherwise you will find yourself on the menu! Once you have dealt with him and managed to find the pony again, you finish part one.

Part two finds you on a grassy plain where, within the first few locations, you will have to find the means of dealing with an aggressive tiger, a dying elephant, and a sword that keeps moving out of your reach. You will also have to find the means of getting to an island in the middle of a lake. There is a boat, but unfortunately for you, it is moored up on the island, and the lake is full of piranhas, so no chance of swimming! That done, you should be able to appease a Shaman in a cave, who will allow you to use a secret exit into Vilana's domain.

Here, you must help a centipede with chilblains, and get past an eagle eyed owl (twice. Once on the way in, and once on the way out - if you live that long!), then past a guard, who owns a Dobermann who can spot (or should that be smell) a weapon a mile off. Finding a way to fool him, you can then enter the castle itself. You bump into Vilana almost immediately, but might I suggest that you have your escape route worked out before you try to deal with her.....

Having managed to kill her off, you can find the Prince quite easily, and provided you paid attention to what the Princess told you at the beginning, you will be able to provide a means to get him home. Not so yourself, unfortunately. Another way must be found....

I had a couple of little niggles about the game. In part one, when you want to leave the palace grounds, two items must be carried, i.e. not in the container you have found. There is no reason for this, and I understand this was put in without June's knowledge. I am sure she would not have approved. At another location in part two, when trying to get the sword, the input needed is certainly not one I would have ever thought of. Gripes aside, I quite enjoyed playing this one and I think it would be quite suitable for a beginner.

Available from Zenobi Software. Spectrum (tape and +D), Atari(e), Amiga(e), PC(e) and MAC(e) versions £2.99, Spectrum +3 (3" disc) version £3.99.

PERILS OF DARKEST AFRICA

Written by John Olsen

Reviewed by Doreen Bardon on a PC

Find King Solomon's treasure, which consists of rubies, sapphires and diamonds. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Wrong.

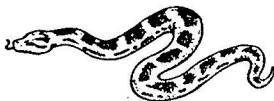
This is a small adventure with only 31 locations, which is just as well because the first thing you will have to overcome is dying of thirst, but having obtained a suitable container and filling it with water at the trough you will be able to travel through Africa knowing the water will sustain you (for a while). There are several places where you can get water, so returning to the trough is not always necessary.

Being Africa, there are the usual wild animals to deal with. You may have a revolver, but where are the bullets? The game does give you hints, like digging without a shovel. You have to plan your solutions to the puzzles carefully, as you are limited to carrying only 4 items, so lots of toing and froing. There are a couple of items you will have to construct, and returning to two specific locations will involve cutting and getting. (clue - dry grass, make fuse). The local inhabitants are friendly enough if you carry a certain object, and once you have obtained various animal parts they can be traded for some more useful items.

Once you have found the treasure, it seems a doddle to get it back, but no, it took me several attempts to work this out, what with bright lights, darkness, feeling thirsty, sore eyes, jumping chasms, emptying bag, filling bag, but at last you manage to get the treasure back to the trading post and the crowd cheer you.

The puzzles are logical, not too difficult but you must plan everything out in advance. The experienced adventurer will soon crack it but a newcomer could find it more difficult.

C64 version available on Compilation No. 5 from Adventure Probe Software - price £1.50 (tape or disc)



MEAN STREET

Reviewed by Kenneth Pedersen on a C64 and Amiga 500

"Your name is Tex Murphy, a private investigator in San Francisco. The year is 2033 and you have just been hired by a beautiful young lady named Sylvia to investigate the death of her father, Dr. Carl Linsky."

This is the introduction but if you play this game, I'm sure you will be amazed by the depth of the plot. At the start you are given 5 leads. These leads are navigation-codes to 5 places. Navigation-codes? Yes, in the year 2033 we will all be flying around in small flying-cars called speeders. By entering a navigation-code the autopilot will automatically transport you to your destination. The five navigation-codes lead to the following places: the apartment of the newly-deceased Carl Linsky, Sylvia Linsky, John Richards (the medical examiner), Delores Lightbody (Linsky's fiancée) and Steve Clements who is the police detective in charge of this case.

You will quickly find out that the police aren't so fond of your big interest in the death of Carl Linsky, and that their theory, that Carl should have JUMPED off that bridge, is just a cover-up of a big horrifying conspiracy.

"Mean Street" is a mixture of many different game types. You start the game outside your speeder, which can be manually controlled but I prefer to use the autopilot. From the speeder you can also contact two women. One of them will do all she can to help you track down information, but unfortunately it is the other woman who has got the most interesting information and you have to pay her to tell you anything.

Most of the time you will be talking to people who give you names and navigation-codes to other people and slowly you will be dragged deeper and deeper into the plot. Sometimes you have to visit people who live in parts of the city where the law doesn't exist. Unless you have selected "action-sequences off" at the start of the game, you will be thrown into a sequence where you are walking from right to left while shooting criminals and ducking down behind crates and the like. It is in these sequences you can find ammo and money, but with a little thought you will have more than enough money, even with these action-sequences turned off.

Sometimes you will be given a navigation-code to a place where there is no one. The first of these places is Carl Linsky's apartment. If you visit such a place you will be thrown into a Maniac Mansion-like gamepart. Here you control Tex with the joystick trying to find clues in a room. For instance, if you walk to a desk and push the fire button you will be able to select one of the many options at the bottom of the screen. It is just like a little text adventure, the only difference is that you choose the verbs and nouns with the joystick. In this type of room there are lots of puzzles to solve, but if you accidentally set off the burglar alarm you have only a little amount of time to switch it off again. This can be quite thrilling because if you don't manage to find the off switch before the timer in the right corner reaches zero you will be arrested for burglary and it's GAME OVER.

While talking to people you can ASK, BRIBE and THREATEN them, and each character has their own personality. At times it can be dangerous to threaten a person.

I really love this game and I hope a lot of people will come to love it just as much. It is easy to get into but the plot will get more and more complicated..... and horrifying, because the plot becomes more and more realistic as our technology develops.

I won't reveal any more of the plot, as it would ruin the excitement while playing. Though the game is horrifying and realistic(?) it is also filled with humour.

The game runs perfectly on the Amiga, but the C64 loads quite a bit slower as the programmers wouldn't compromise with the graphics. Still, I think it is worth the wait. The C64 version comes on two double-sided disks but like most American games it is possible to copy it to a hard drive or a 3.5" if you should be the lucky owner of some of these C64 devices from CMD.

The game was originally released in 1989 by U.S.Gold. I think it is also available on PC and Atari ST.

MYST

Reviewed by Jenny Wheeler on a Pentium 166 MMX PC with 32Mb RAM with iiyama Vision Master Pro 17" monitor

Mandy's review of "Riven" in the November '97 Probe has prompted me to do this review of "Myst" for you. I haven't see a review of it since resubscribing to Probe, so my apologies if it has been done before.

I must say initially that reading the first two Myst books of the Trilogy – Myst Book of Atrus and Myst Book of Tiana really does help with understanding the background and structure of the game, part three due out soon hopefully.

The game plot is not taken directly from the books but the main characters feature as the story unfolds. As, apparently, with "Riven", you start with virtually no idea of your task other than your starring role as "Master Explorer and Super Sleuth".

The sound effects, music, speech and graphics are superb, my only wish would be for a larger viewing area on screen – the pictures are incredibly detailed and I found that tiny buttons etc. are VERY easy to overlook unless played in a darkish room.

On arrival in the game you are on a dockside with gently lapping waves and have a whole island to explore – a good visual memory for route and locations is a necessity – fairly easy on Myst Island itself but quite tricky to say the least in some of the "Ages" you visit – when you have discovered how to reach them! My friend and I play this game together and we were delighted recently to discover an area solvable by good old-fashioned pen and paper N, S, E and W plotting, although there was an easier way if you have a good ear for sound!

One great satisfaction for me is the knowledge that you cannot be killed – some otherwise great old games I played on my C64 ended up abandoned or frustratingly ploughed through because of the pointless "sudden death" syndrome often following something as innocent as taking an offered exit. So bearing that in mind I freely roamed the island pushing buttons, switches, handles and pulling levers etc. to my heart's content. So far we have solved one of the four Ages to be visited and are working on two of the others – the last so far eludes me but I'll get there. The problems have generally been neatly logical, requiring thought and experimentation rather than lateral leaps of faith.

I won't give away the initial gameplay plot as the fun lies in discovering it for yourself, all I will say is that a lot of reading is involved at one point! If/when I ever finish it I'll definitely be treating myself to "Riven".

NOT A PENNY MORE, NOT A PENNY LESS

(Based on the book by Jeffrey Archer)

Published by Domark

Reviewed by Dorothy Millard on a PC under Amstrad emulation

Before you read this review, please be aware that I may have given some clues away, but because of the type of game I feel it doesn't matter.

You are Stephen Bradley, an American academic working at Oxford University. You have discovered that you have been swindled out of \$250,000. You bought shares in an oil company which then failed, leaving you with worthless shares. Harvey Metcalf, the villain whose shares you bought at an artificially boosted price, is laughing all the way to his Swiss bank. The police regret that they will be unable to nail him or recover your money. You are determined to get your money back, by fair means or foul, but you need help.

You are told that from the moment you start the game a tally will be kept of all your financial losses and gains, however small. Playing under Amstrad emulation there was a dreadful flicker but fortunately the GRAPHICS OFF command switched them off. "Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less" (NAPM) consists of two parts and a code word is required to enter the second. The first part consists mainly of collecting information on your fellow victims and on Harvey himself. The second part is the actual "sting" that you and your three partners play on Harvey. In this part you must also control the other characters as some things can only be done by a particular person, e.g. only Robin can perform the operation.

Information obtained in part one is contained in a dossier which is kept in your room at Magdalen College in Oxford. As you gain each piece of information it is added to the dossier, enabling you to keep track of details. When there are no empty lines left you know that all the relevant information has been obtained. Additionally during part one it is necessary to collect a variety of objects which will be needed in the second part. I found the help command to be helpful on a couple of occasions but most of the time it just gave a useless boring message. There is no inventory and items once taken cannot be dropped. It is therefore not possible to refresh your memory on exactly what you are carrying, so it is a good idea to note what you pick up as you go along.

The game commences with you in your room in Magdalen College, Oxford, where books line the walls and there is a television which can safely be ignored. This is where your dossier is kept so opening the folder you discover a list of useful telephone numbers. A camera can be found in a nearby cupboard but of course it has no film. Reading the magazine from the cupboard you discover that Harvey is due to make a tour of Europe and his itinerary is listed. Contacting your stockbroker you discover the names of the three other victims of the swindle - Robin Oakley (doctor), Jean-Pierre Lamanns (art dealer) and James, Viscount Brigsley. You visit Robin's Harley Street surgery to discover a key which is important in part two, followed by Jean-Pierre's Gallery in New Bond Street, London. From there you follow Jean-Pierre to the RAC Club in Pall Mall but the doorman refuses you entry. Some film is available in a nearby shop, as is a suit. Visiting the Bodleian Library you learn about Viscount James Brigsley and obtain a medical book on general medicine and anaesthesia. A visit to Paddington Station is next where you find a newspaper and read an item about Dr. Wiley Barker, the U.S. President's personal surgeon.

There is lots of information to be gained at the newspaper office about Harvey and it is essential that you don't miss any. Questioning the reporters you learn that Harvey is after an honorary degree at Harvard University, grows rare orchids, has a mistress in New York, is desperate for a Van Gogh painting and owns a racehorse, Rosalie, which he expects to win at Ascot. Returning via Paddington Station to Oxford you must assemble the team and there ends part one.

Part two commences in a train carriage containing yourself, the Vicar and a beautiful woman. Your objective here is to seduce the beautiful woman, but the vicar is cramping your style! Visiting Jean-Pierre's Gallery in New Bond Street, London, you open the safe before doing some shopping for walkie-talkies and a disguise. Returning to the Gallery you see the fake Van Gogh and must set up a private auction for Harvey. A visit to Wimbledon Tennis Tournament follows to ensure that he receives the invitation. At the auction you must bid against Harvey, ensuring that eventually his bid is accepted for the fake painting.

Now for some romance in your life and a visit to a restaurant where you propose to Anne who accepts.... the rest of that night is left to your imagination and the game continues in Robin's Office where you order some drugs for the next scam. A visit to St. Thomas' Hospital is next, to obtain a gallstone, then onto Monte Carlo where you visit the casino to play blackjack. Drugging Harvey's coffee to make him collapse you organise for him to be taken to hospital where a fake operation is carried out and he pays an exorbitant sum for the operation.

A visit to Ascot follows where you impersonate Professor Porter who won a Nobel Prize for Chemistry to impress Harvey, followed by a visit to Oxford where Harvey makes a donation for an honorary degree. Finally, you are introduced to Anne's parents who turn out to be none other than Harvey himself (Anne was just a working name for Rosalie Metcalf). He doesn't recognize James and gives him \$250,000 as a wedding gift. Finding himself in an aeroplane, the sting is over and the three of you are flying home.... you are trying to work out what you have lost or gained, but you are constantly interrupted by a stewardess collecting for charity. You have made too much money so you must give some away. And so the game concludes.

NAPM is a very difficult game to play and it is definitely helpful if you can read the book. I found it very hard on occasions to find the correct words, especially as often in the location description words are hyphenated but when you type them they must not be, for example the electronics shop is hyphenated in the location description but if you type the hyphen the game doesn't understand. There are several spelling mistakes and grammatical errors which I didn't expect. It is necessary to examine people to get to see them and you are automatically taken to the next location. Moving around in the game it is necessary to put "go" before any directions you wish to take. This wasn't really a problem though as mostly movement is automatic.

The story in NAPM is great but it is a pity the parser is so fussy, thus making the game extremely difficult to play. It has taken me three years to complete, not so much because I didn't know what to do but more a case of not knowing the correct wording. Even with a hint sheet I had difficulty playing NAPM. I started playing this game on the C64 but was frustrated because it would not play from a disk copy and had to be loaded in each time from the original tape in order to load data into the second part. This was extremely slow. Additionally the game is extremely unforgiving and it is extremely easy to go the wrong way, forget something or get killed and have to restart.

The parser only understands the exact wording wanted which makes it difficult when long sentences are required. I eventually completed it playing an Amstrad version under emulation on the PC. There appears to be no significant differences between the C64 and Amstrad versions. Not recommended unless you have a) read the book and b) have some help readily available.

P.S. I have written a step by step walk through (with help from a hint sheet written by Richard Naylor and information from Donald Hay), which is available from the Probe office.

(If anyone is interested, I have a copy of the Amstrad disc version complete with novel, courtesy of Maurice Pancott, which readers may borrow, then return when no longer required. The leaflet states it is also available on BBC, C64, Spectrum and Atari ST.....Barbara)

THE LAST BELIEVER

Written by Paul Lucas

Reviewed by Karen Tyers on a Spectrum

I dug this one out from my 'had for ages but not tried' pile. The scenario is as follows:

A mysterious stranger in your locale is arrested and imprisoned for poaching. In his anger, he curses the village. Your people no longer believe in magic and so laugh at him. Even when famine and plague strike, no-one connects it with this stranger. However, when your own brother falls ill, you (as the Last Believer), decide to journey and find the legendary city of magic and obtain a cure for the curse.

In wandering round the first few locations, you will find a clue to a magic word you will need to enter a seemingly sealed stone building, where you will learn what items you will need to lift the curse, and off you go to find them. There is a lot of trekking around to do, and you will need to find some way of crossing a lake when there isn't a boat in sight (with or without a hole!) and you obviously can't swim.

The things you gather in your travels seem a motley lot – I mean what would you do with some gloves, a pot full of holes, a magic candle and some thorns? The mind boggles. During the aforementioned travels you will have to contend with a fire demon, some unpleasant man-eating flowers, a great ice plain, a snow statue and a wild beast to name a few. However, beware, don't rush to do things too soon or you will end up as I did, reloading a lot!

Overall the game was not too difficult, although there were one or two obscure commands (how would you word the instruction for making a blowpipe – answers on a postcard please, to the personals section, addressed to Pigpen, and keep them clean!!!) I won't tell you the actual command, it would spoil the fun of pulling your hair out.

I think a fair amount of the locations were used for padding, where more puzzles could have been included, but this one is definitely ok for a fun evening or two.

**Available from the Adventure Workshop. Spectrum (tape) £2.00,
Spectrum (+3 disc) £4.00.**

POWER2PLAY (PC Utility)

Reviewed by Phil Glover

One of the most frustrating things about buying a PC is the inability they sometimes have in running old DOS-based games. Even if you have a high speed Pentium processor with MMX, loads of RAM and cache and a whacking great hard disk, you will still encounter that weird report "INSUFFICIENT MEMORY". An overwhelming urge to use physical force on your PC can sometimes follow. Never fear, help may be at hand.

A handy utility called POWER2PLAY has been available for some time. It comes on a CD containing versions for Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, with a small manual. The program is easily installed onto your hard disk and can be added to your main collection of Windows shortcuts. Once installed, you can put the CD in a safe place as it won't be needed to run the program.

Once POWER2PLAY is installed, drop out of Windows into DOS and install two or three old DOS games, from either floppy disk or CD, according to the game's instructions. Note down the system requirements needed for these games, such as mouse/joystick, sound, amount of RAM needed, etc. Now run Windows and load POWER2PLAY. Reading the manual, or on-screen help, will talk you through using the utility. You will be prompted to enter a name for any game you wish to run and will be asked to tell POWER2PLAY what each game's requirements are in turn. Before long, you'll have a neat list of your games ready to run at the click of a mouse.

To run a games, select its name in the POWER2PLAY game menu and click on the RUN icon. If all goes well, your PC should find a way of loading it. This is often by shutting down Windows and rebooting itself using a temporary boot configuration that will allow your game to run. When you quit the game, POWER2PLAY will automatically reboot your PC with all its original settings unchanged. If the game didn't run according to plan, check the POWER2PLAY information, as your game settings may not have been correct. Once you're happy with all the games, POWER2PLAY will store the settings for each particular game's needs. In future you will only need to start POWER2PLAY, click on the name of the game you want to play and click RUN and all should be well.

I know there are other methods to alter the settings of your PC to run such DOS-based software, but I hate meddling with the start-up files for my computer. POWER2PLAY removes the danger of any accidental mistakes, and makes running some very tricky games very easy indeed.

POWER2PLAY costs about £19.95, but I've seen it sold for £6 at computer fairs, where I can often be discovered delving into piles of software boxes stack on tables.

You may be able to find out more about POWER2PLAY by contacting the following:

**21st Century Entertainment Ltd., Westbrook Street, Blewbury, OXON,
OX11 9QB**

Tel: 01235 851533 Fax: 01235 851472

E-mail: TWENTY_FIRST@CIX.COMPU.LINK.CO.UK

Website: WWW.21STCENT.COM

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DARE YOU ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE?

IT'S A MYSTERY – AN EXPLANATION

by EDWINA BROWN

How I see it is this:

Anne had gone to her room, but not to bed. Maybe she sat for a while reading, or playing an adventure on her computer. Now she was extremely upset over the breakup of her parents' marriage. This particular evening it had been preying on her mind to such an extent that she now felt tense and unable to sleep. It was probably this which brought on an attack of vertigo.

Feeling really wretched she got up to find her pills and in doing so inadvertently knocked her watch (which had been lying nearby) onto the floor and then trod on it. She picked it up and absent-mindedly strapped it on her wrist, not noticing that it had smashed and all that was left was the back casing.

Anne saw a pill bottle on her bedside cabinet. Dizzily reaching for it she knocked the ornaments flying onto the floor. Looking in the bottle she then realized that it was empty.

Now earlier that day she had gone for a row on the lake. As her handbag was missing, and she never went anywhere without her vertigo pills, she guessed what she had done. "Oh sugar!" (or words to that effect) she muttered to herself, "I must have left the full bottle in the boathouse, I'll have to go and get it".

In case, while she was gone, the maid popped in to see if she needed anything, she wrote the word BOATHOUSE on the mirror. "She will know where I am then, and not worry" she thought. A handy lipstick was, of course, the best thing to use.

Still feeling dizzy and faint she managed to stagger her way to the boathouse. Groping about in its gloomy interior she managed to locate her handbag. Sure enough, the pills were there, so she took one and sat for a while waiting for her head to clear. She thought about the events of the day and of her parents. If only I could bring them together again she thought. Then she had an idea! If I went missing that might do the trick. She imagined them crying on each other's shoulders, forgetting their differences and vowing to mend their marriage for her sake. Then she would run home and they would live happily ever after!

She decided to give it a try. "I'll row out to the island and hide up there for a few days. There's plenty of food in the little cabin" she thought.

Well, you've heard of 'the best laid schemes', this was one of them. She jumped up and went out to the landing-stage, but still not fully recovered and feeling excited at what she was about to do, she missed her footing while trying to get into the boat, fell in the lake and was drowned. (Cue violins!)

Now back to the other clues. There was no burglary so therefore no break-in, and Anne would have had no need for a ladder. Anyway it would have had to be a very long ladder to reach Anne's bedroom in the attic!

To conclude, I think that Anne is, right now, sitting on a fluffy little cloud and chuckling at all the Adventure Probe readers who are trying to work out what happened!

(Please see November '97 issue of Probe for details of conditions set. If you have a different explanation, and/or can devise a new situation, please send it in.....Barbara)

NEW YEAR'S AT THE BRIEFS' by JON SCOTT

The setting for this PFT (post-festive tale) is No. 13 Bognor Hill, Upper Kissing, Tyneside - not far from Newcastle and across the road from the Dazzler family home. Susan Brief lay on the armchair beside the blazing log fire, or rather the electric "ornamental log" heater she'd purchased from Dixon's for 99.99 a few years before. She'd ended up paying a full one hundred quid for it, telling the shop assistant that he could, "Keep the change." It was not long since Upper Kissing had gone 'smokeless', well apart from the voluminous billowing pollutants from the Zikov factories. Her son, Fred, had fallen into a world of slumber on the sofa. He had been studying for his GCSEs all day, despite the fact that he'd not be sitting them until June 2000 (but, as his Aunt Nora had forewarned, "Be prepared"). Rosie, Fred's little sister who was named after Susan's favourite author (Rosamund Pilcher), played aimlessly on the floor, unchecked by tiredness. Sadly absent from this New Year's Eve scene was Fred's estranged dad, Del Fell, who was seeking marriage guidance counselling for the fifteenth time. His present spouse, Margery, was Del's fourth wife, but he hadn't quite reached Henry VIII proportions yet. But by 2010, who knows.

The doorbell rang and Susan stumbled out into the hallway, for who else would do it? She peeled Fred's Man United poster from the front door, so she could peer through the peephole, and a look of pleasure crossed her visage. Carefully, and reverently, she replaced the poster, removed all three chains, withdrew four bolts and unlocked the door. An adventure in itself.

"Well, Mum," said Susan as the wrinkled and venerable old lady entered the vestibule. Phoebe Brevropolis had emigrated from Athens with her husband, Nicolai, forty years before this date. They had changed their surname by deedpoll to Brief, because it was easier to pronounce and too many people were taking the mickey out of the because 'polis' sounded too much like 'police'.

"Heelo, Susan," replied Phoebe. "I wanted to breeng your feether's friends, Aristotle Popodopolis ze Theerd, but he couldn't feend hees ear-trumpeet."

"Oh, that's too bad," whimpered Susan deceitfully. She knew too well that Popodopolis had the worst dose of flatulence she'd ever experienced.

"Peter and Julia weel be along lateer on."

"Great, and how's Dad?"

Phoebe grimaced. "He steel has ze multipeel personalitees, ever since we changed our name to Brief."

"At least it's not O'Shaughnessy or something."

"Believe me, that circeemstance would neever have arisen."

"I know," said Susan cheerily. "Come on in."

Phoebe was taken aback. "But I am een already, my dear."

"Yes, I know. Come on into my parlour . . ."

". . . said the speeder to the flee!" interrupted her mother.

Susan burst into a fit of infectious laughter, which somehow prompted the 'sleeping' Fred, his sister and a drunkard who was staggering down the street also to laugh. "Really, Mother, you sound awfully like Crabtree out of 'Allo 'Allo. Why haven't you perfected English yet?"

"You tree leeving een Greece for 25 years, then moveeng to ceentral Newcastle. I don't want a Geerdie accent."

"Why ever not?"

Phoebe kept mum, but then one could hardly expect her to keep Dad, brother or Great-Uncle Tobias, could one? Once the front door was 'secured' – barricaded, more like – Phoebe and her daughter entered the living-room. Phoebe opened her shopping-bag and placed New Year presents on the table. As if by intuition (boy's intuition, of course, not men's), Fred woke up and Rosie approached the gifts with her nose as pointy as a bloodhound's. These were the Christmas pressies they hadn't received until now.

"Sorree, I forgot," explained Phoebe. "It was yeer Grandfeether's fault. We were seearching for hees false teeth all week."

"Beware of Greeks bearing gifts," said Fred as he vigorously rubbed his eyes.

Phoebe exploded. No, not in that way: there were no blood or guts over the living-room floor. "Don't forget for a second that you are Greek, Frederick Apollo Brief!"

Rosie was enchanted. "Mummy, Granny called Freddie a, 'geek'."

"No, she didn't, Rosie. She said he's Greek," responded Susan.

"Greek!?" exclaimed Rosie. "What, like that man Zorba!?"

"Erm, yes."

Phoebe's hair was standing on end, as if electrified (perhaps she had inserted her fingers into the socket?). "Susan, heeve you not told your cheildren zat we are Greek? Are you ashamed of your Heelleenic heeritage?"

Susan was speechless.

Fred, however, was not. "Granny, your Greek and Mum's Anglo-Greek. My Dad's a Geordie, for goodness' sake, but that doesn't make me and Rosie Anglo-Anglo-Greek. We're English."

"Engleesh?" expostulated Phoebe. "That's yeer fault, Susan, and you had to turn Proteestant too. You couldn't steek to yeer Orthodox roots."

Susan was still speechless and she could take no more, so she stumbled (something she was doing a lot of) into the kitchen to make some coffee for her mother, diet Coke for the kids and a large Jack Daniels for herself.

* * * *

Some time later, after the hostilities – if that is not an understatement – had ended, the doorbell rang once more. I will spare you the details of the bolts, chains and so forth, and of the greetings which ensued. Suffice to say, Julia Brief and her husband, Pete, had arrived with the youngster (Kevin).

"Well, how are you all?" said Pete as he entered the living-room, bottles of alcohol clinking in the 'carry-out bags' he was lugging after himself. "I understand there's a few other blokes coming round." Pete sank into what had been Susan's armchair and lit a cigarette.

"Yes, Del is bringing a few mates around," replied Susan who had no thought of reconciliation with her polygamous misogynist ex (what a paradox).

Pete smirked. "I've provided the bevvies. Joe McElpful's bringing a deck of cards."

Kevin presented a 'Teletubby' to his idol and hero, Fred, who was a far better footballer than Stan Collymore. But who isn't? "This is Tinky-Winky," said Kevin.

"Yes, I know," replied the teenager, whose GCSE French Book was now acting as a doorstop (keeping the door closed, would you believe). "Rosie's got Itsy-Bitsy. And I've got the CD. I'll put it on."

Susan was miffed. "Oh, not the Teletubbies song! Err . . . I think it's in my car . . . um . . . which is in the garage for repairs." Susan didn't have the heart to tell her son that she had broken it into a thousand pieces with the rolling-pin.

"It wouldn't be so if us blokes weren't outnumbered her by the women," Fred remarked to Kevin.

The toddler merely shrugged his shoulders.

Meanwhile, Pete was drinking a liberal swig of Greek liquor, which Phoebe eyed thirstily. Soon Phoebe and Julia had large glasses of the vitulent stuff.

"Bottoms up!" said Phoebe as she sank the glassful and demanded a refill from her son.

Julia, on the other hand, had gone into a fit of coughing.

"You can teel she's Engleesh, Pete," commented Phoebe.

"Susan, how about a drachm . . . or rather, a drachma?" cried Pete, whose eyes were becoming more bloodshot and whose general appearance more haggard as he drank each subsequent swig. "Get it – a drachma?"

"No chance, Pete!" retorted Susan. "Somebody has to stay sober, not to mention conscious, when there are three kids to be minded."

Fred threw the Teletubby aside and frowned. "Mum, I'm not a kid! I'm nearly fifteen!"

"Yes, Fred, if you call nine months 'nearly'! You would be older now if the whole village hadn't been frozen by Basil Hodgkins when that old chap was running about with a placard with 'The End is Nigh' pasted on it."

"So would you, Mum!"

Susan shuddered. "My goodness – I'd be forty now, rather than thirty-nine!"

"Are you that young, Mum?" said a startled Rosie. "I thought you were about sixty."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" cried Phoebe, but before Susan could make a vicious reply, she discovered that she was not the source of her mother's amusement. It was Pete. He had put his Benson & Hedges fag the wrong way in his mouth, and he was eagerly – and with great futility – trying to light the filter. He uttered many expletives, such as, "Drat!", "Blow!" and, "Heck!"

* * * *

The reader will hardly be amazed by the fact that the doorbell rang again, and the same sequence of bolts, chains etc occurred. However, on this occasion it was not be 'third time lucky', because the procession of people that came through the (open) door forced Susan to bring into her living-room all the kitchen chairs, several deck-chairs and a variety of stools. Del had brought with him a "few" mates - Georgie Snooper, Albert Richards, Patrick Plantagenet, Mr. Pickerty, Arnie Gallagher, Joe McElpful, D.J. Fatz, Dr. Percival Hodgkins, Small Daniels (now a sorcerer) and Frank Hawkins - effectively the players from the Upper Kissing football team that had been beaten 17-0 a few days before by the mixed under 14's of Kissing College (Fred's scored 7 and his girlfriend, Abigail, scored 5). It was a good thing they hadn't brought the reserves. They all started imbibing large quantities of alcohol, as the New Year's party got into full swing.

"Bloomin' heck!" said Phoebe. "Now us womeen are outnumbered! Happee days! Good theeng me husband eesn't heere"

Susan was mingling just like all good hosts do. She approached Patrick, by far the only sane member of the team. "Well, I'm sure you'll not be looking forward to going back to work next week?"

Patrick cringed. "Those bleedin' kids in Form 6 do me head in, but the rest of them are all right."

"Must be fun being a teacher sometimes, Paddy."

"I'm not looking forward to going back. The team I trained wiped the floor with us - and they're only children. Shees."

Fred, who was sipping a glass of Coke, interposed, "No, we're not children!"

"Oh, here we go again," muttered Susan as she abandoned Patrick to the wrath of her son. Few people have survived his anger.

Albert Richards emerged from the kitchen, attired in a dress and his wife's wig and with his face coated in lipstick. "I'm a diva!" (s)he bellowed, emitting several falsettos and bursting into full soprano, with a few lines of 'The Ring of Niebelung'.

"Who's that looker?" said Percival who had just too many glasses of port. "Fancy a dance, love?"

"He's not that mad," explained D.J. Fatz. "He only likes dressing up as his wife."

Julia and Phoebe approached a group of men, who sniggered and leered at them. "Eeven these leechers are beetter than Pete singing 'Three Lions'," Phoebe reassured her daughter-in-law.

"I haven't been at as great a wingding as this since the one at Matilda's Mansion a few years ago," Julia said in her best - if disastrous - attempt at small-talk.

"IT'S YOU!" ejaculated Arnie Gallagher, as he pointed his giant hand at Julia. "You were there - you stole my dancing partner."

Phoebe collapsed to the ground, ably caught by Frank Hawkins. She was convinced Julia had been unfaithful.

"Don't worry. I've got you," said the elderly Hawkins. "You're in my hands now."

"That's what she was afraid of," responded Joe McElpful. "Whatever would your wife (Turnip) say!"

Small Daniels, meanwhile, was casting a spell and his captive audience – Kevin and Rosie – were transfixed. “Er . . . Susan . . . I think the hypnosis has gone wrong.”

“Aaaarrrrggggghhhh!” shouted Susan. “They’re entranced!”

At that moment Georgie Snooper dropped to the ground paralytic.

Julia was impressed. “Crikey, I could never keep ‘em that quiet. Maybe I should have married you after all, Small!”

“Floosie . . . Trollope . . . Tart . . .” muttered Phoebe as she drifted from consciousness back to unconsciousness. How many fancy-men did Julia have? she wondered.

“Hmm,” said Del Fell, between mouthfuls of tequila. “I’ve head of Trollope what wrote ‘Barchester Towers’, but who the ‘eck is Floosie, never mind Tart?” Only then did Del realise the magnitude of the situation. “Oi, Small . . . what you done to those nippers?”

All of a sudden, the two infants simultaneously jumped into their relieved mothers’ arms, with a resounding chorus of, “Fooled you!” Their parents’ replies can be left to the imagination.

* * * *

“If this isn’t cryogenic suspension, I don’t know what is,” pondered Susan as the first rays of sunlight of January 1st pierced through the chink in her curtains. She flung the curtains wide open and turned round to survey the scene that lay before her. Two women, eleven men and one boy lay on various chairs or on the floor, either gaping-mouthed or with their heads in their laps, all unconscious. There was a stench of alcohol in the air, and the numerous bottles and beer-cans that were strewn over the floor confirmed this. The two infants had been tucked up in bed at twelve midnight and Susan had gone to bed about 3 a.m. when the wingding had been in full-swing, shortly after Fred (she thought). By about five or six o’clock, they had surely all dropped like flies, she surmised. Susan could see some comical sights in the room. Phoebe was lying on her back, snoring heavily, with a wine-glass raised high in the air as a sign of victory. Albert’s blonde wig had slipped over his face, making him look like a furball. Pete had a cigarette butt in his mouth and another in his hand. The look of astonishment on Joe McElpful’s face matched the Royal Flush on the cards in his hands, but he evidently never got a chance to play them. Julia was in her underwear and, come to think of it, everyone else who had cards had a few items of clothing missing. Arnie Gallagher was no where to be seen, so maybe it was he that had passed out in the downstairs toilet.

Susan shook Fred who was huddled up beside his father. “Ooh, Mum! What time is it, anyway?”

“I thought you went to bed, kiddo,” enquired an irate Susan.

“Oh, I couldn’t sleep so I got up. They were playing strip poker.”

“Well, it’s a good thing none of them went nudie. We could have had the police onto us.”

Fred blushed. “Er, Joe was going to ask Auntie Julia to take her bra off, but he fell asleep.”

“How much did you have to drink?”

“Not a drop,” Fred answered his mum. “I’m a teetotaller, you know I am. Especially with Dad being an alcoholic and the way your marriage broke up.”

Susan knew that Fred was telling the truth. She could see it in his eyes. If only that were the case with Del. “I see your Dad’s had two bottles of whisky tonight.”

"Yes. I couldn't get him to calm down. He just kept firing 'em back."

"I know what he's like. Now hit the shower, kid. Remember we're going over to see your grandad today."

Fred tramped up the stairs, while his mother brewed some very strong coffee and put her Boo Radleys CD in the hi-fi. She switched it on and there was a 120-decibel chorus of, "Wake up, it's a beautiful morning . . ."

An hour later all the guests except Phoebe, Del and Arnie had left the house. Susan turned to Phoebe: "I'm afraid I'll have to send for a locksmith to get that twit Arnie out of the bog."

"It's a good thing you've got French toilets, Susie," remarked Del. "Y'know, two loos - Toulouse?"

"You are steel as unfunny as when you made yeer weeding speech!" snarled Phoebe.

Del exploded (not literally, either). "Then I'll kick the bl**dy door down!" So Del stormed to the lav and flattened the door. The window lay open and outside, in the yard, lay Arnie.

"Teheel!" murmured A. Gallagher in glee.

Susan appeared. "Get that idiot out of my yard!"

"He's not an idiot," Del assured her. "He's got a Ph.D in Astrophysics."

"Theen he ees an eediot," Phoebe assured her son-in-law. "Jeest leek you!"

And do the tit-for-tat continued until Del left Susan, Phoebe, Fred and Rosie at the Acropolis Cottage where Nicolai stood in the garden admiring a statue of Aphrodite. He began speaking to his wife in his native tongue, as Fred produced his Collins Greek-English dictionary from his leather jacket. His mother smirked at him. Nicolai asked his wife if it had been a quiet night, and she replied to the affirmative. If he only knew!

PETS YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO KEEP

by LEE MORRALL

The following is in response to No. 3 in David Hebblethwaite's "Ten Subjects for a List of Ten" published in the November '97 issue of Probe. Anyone like to have a go at one or more of the other 9 suggestions?.....Barbara

1. A Vulture (if you were a Coroner)
2. A Magpie (if you were a Jeweller)
3. A Ferret (if you were a Window Cleaner)
4. A Woodworm (if you were a Pirate)
5. A Bull (if you were a Ceramic Dealer)
6. A Skunk (if you were an Aromatherapist)
7. A Goat (if you were a Flower Arranger)
8. A Pit-bull (if you were a Nudist)
9. A Whale (if you were Homeless)
10. Freddie Star (if you were a Hamster)
11. A Mynah Bird (if you were a Bank Robber)
12. A Flea Circus (if you were a Hairdresser)

ADVENTURE PROBE '97 by DAVID HEBBLETHWAITE

Following on from last year's ADVENTURE PROBE '96 quiz, here are 24 questions based on the twelve issues of Probe from January to December 1997. There are two questions from each issue (I've given the relevant month after each). All answers can be found in the issues.

Before you start, just a quick reminder that there were two issue in '97 marked FEBRUARY. The green one with the (were)wolf on it is actually the March issue.

Good luck, and enjoy yourself.

1. What guards the portal to the sacred, icy forest of Gwan? (January)
2. What tune plays at the end of *HRH*? (January)
3. What do you call a group of bakers? (February)
4. What does VESA stand for? (February)
5. Why did Bob B Dazzler come out of the spare bedroom? (March)
6. Name the "coarsest Orcan oath" Dotran knows? (March)
7. Who kidnaps Princess Zondralyn? (April)
8. "Jimi Hendrix's modem was a Purple Hayes!" is an example of a....what? (April)
9. What satellite channel can you still see Count Duckula on? (May)
10. Who wouldn't extend credit for Brian's grandad's funeral? (May)
11. How much would seven Pearls of Wisdom cost? (June)
12. What did Ron Guest combine with marriage and Chinese good luck symbols? (June)
13. Who was Redhorn a blood relative of? (July)
14. Where could you buy *Feet of Clay* in hardback for £3.99? (July)
15. Why did boys say girls couldn't ride bikes? (August)
16. Who has taken the rich heiress Penlope prisoner? (August)
17. Which car company are apparently going to replace their shock absorbers with bungies? (September)
18. What distance couldn't the Cavaliers hit their target from? (September)
19. What is the name of Vana's sister? (October)
20. Who would have won the "Most ST Adventures Bought in One Day" award at the convention? (October)
21. Which programme's last episode was called "Fall Out"? (November)

22. What is the most dangerous sport in the Granny field? (November)
23. Where did Mycroft Holmes ask to meet his brother Sherlock and Dr. Watson? (December)
24. Who is the ugliest, fattest boy in class 2W? (December)
- (The answers will be published in a future issue)

FADD ON FOOD

(continued from last month)

FISH – Fish are of two kinds, fresh and salt – and the salt is seldom fresh, neither is the other. Fish can be boiled, baked, fried or filleted. What's left over is made into fish cakes for tomorrow. In the average plaice the cheapest fish are herrings (usually eaten by actors) and it's no cod either. (Thank you. Gentleman has been on the stage). Fish is obtained from any fishmonger, or is sometimes brought home by a man who has been fishing. In the latter case it is as well for the fisherman's wife to call and tell the fishmonger what to give him on the way home. An oyster is a fish, but it is seldom found in oyster sauce. Smelt is a nice fish, and so are many others. Nobody has yet discovered what is a sardine, but a Dover sole nowadays is 4/6d and very small at that.

ENTREE – A fancy dish, but one I don't fancy. I always think it's made out of something a customer didn't finish yesterday. I prefer:–

JOINTS – FIRST of all the joints comes Bull's body, commonly known as beef. There are many kinds of beef, Chine, Sirloin, Aitchbone, Rump, Briskit, Riskit (that's tinned beef), Ribs and Uppercut. Then there's mutton, which is elderly lamb. Lamb is really mutton, only it's 6d a plate more. there are other kinds of mutton, such as Haricot mutton, mutton chops (still worn by stage Solicitors and Church-Wardens) also the cutlets worn by the newest knuts, and last Sunday's mutton, which gives a farewell performance on Friday. In choosing meat one should be acquainted with the different joints etc., I mean such terms as "neck", "sirloin", "fag end" er – "scrag end", fillet and so on; one looks silly going into a shop and asking for a fillet of kidney or some brain chops. Pork is a favourite meat. It is seldom found in sausages or pork pies.

[The above has been taken, word for word, letter for letter, from a little book sent to me by a reader. I think it is quite funny, and may give someone an idea for a contribution. Next month – HAM. GAME, HARE, etc.Barbara]

ONE MAN'S COMPUTER ADVENTURING

by JIM JOHNSTON

1. My Introduction to Computers.

In the late sixties I was given an induction course on "The Use of Computers in Industry". This was held at the National Coal Board's Computer Centre at Sitehill, Edinburgh. I was duly impressed. The computer was housed in a 'dust free' atmosphere with air-lock type doors and filter fans and the attendant staff wore white coats and white canvas overshoes. The ladies were distinguished by their white dust caps. We, the unclean, were not permitted into the computer shrine but watched from the viewing gallery, through the glass walls, which surrounded the computer.

The computer, sited in the middle of the floor, was about 20 feet long, 8 feet wide and 4/5 feet in height. Although there were hundreds of little coloured lights blinking on and off to catch your attention, there was no video screen display. Around the walls stood banks of 12 inch magnetic tapes whirling back and forth as the computer wrote data to and read from them, however the only way for the operator to communicate with it was by using one of the many free standing printers or by punched tape reader.

In another large room was a group of typists busily preparing punched cards, with the various data required for pay-slips, income tax, accounting etc. These cards, in turn, were being fed to a machine which read the data and produced a punched tape to be used as an input to the computer and then used by it to prepare or alter its magnetic tapes.

Very impressive – but what has that got to do with adventuring???

Nothing – but it fixes the computer size / date. It also produced one or two fixed ideas in my head about computer personnel. The exclusion zone and the white coats reminded me of the ancient priests who kept certain knowledge secret to their class and thus had power over various sections of the ignorant and I felt conned.

This feeling increased when we were given a six inch piece of punched tape, a used punched card (artefacts which had been touched by the God computer), and a plastic flow chart stencil (His symbolic language) as souvenirs of our visit to these hallowed halls. What do you really do with a six inch piece of punched tape, a used punched card???

The white coated Guru who lectured us spoke in mystic mumbo-jumbo about ALGOL, FORTRAN and COBAL, the secret languages that the high priests had to know in order to converse with their God. Oops! I mean languages that the technicians used to input instructions to the computer. However, he did inform us that they were too complicated to be understood by ordinary people. It was about then that I switched off and the main things I remember of that lovely sunny afternoon was the very funny but obscene cartoon drawings the chap next to me kept drawing and discovering the fact that you can sleep sitting upright, provided someone shakes you when you snore (The afternoon nap being part of pit life where the day started at 5.00 a.m. and finished around 2 p.m.).

2. Aren't People Funny

My first experience of actual computer adventuring was in the late seventies and by now the computer was at the colliery and was tiny compared with the main N.C.B. computer. A small room (10ft. by 12ft.) was able to hold it and its input printer with a disc storage rack on one wall. While the computer was used for production control and environmental monitoring, via suitable monitors and 10 inch floppy discs, there was a small pilot monitor and keyboard attached to it for testing the system and making any necessary alterations to the main program running.

Hidden within this testing system were two games. Othello, in black and white naturally, and Star Trek, a strategy type game to exterminate Klingon ships. There was also a large cave adventure available, but it could not output to the monitor (insufficient memory), but had to be played on the big freestanding printer direct from the system disc. This was a version of the Crowther/Woods famous "Adventures" (subsequently known as Colossal Cave Adventure), although I did not know that at the time, and it was in this way that I learned to 'computer adventure'. Unfortunately there was no save function in the game and, since playing was restricted to lunch time etc., it was very common to see various personnel studying computer printouts - not to solve any business problem - but to compare results and achievements in the cave adventure. Nor could you assume that the bundle of printout paper under someone's arm was anything to do with work.

It was around that time that I confirmed that elitism was being practised by those involved in computing. Firstly no instruction book was ever produced in public. Secondly no one other than electrical personnel were allowed to interfere with any part of the system. Now the main unit was housed in the Control Room and each Senior Official had a terminal screen with a touch pad installed, in his office, for his personal use. The operation was limited to touching four or five marked squares, which then displayed the updated version of the particular function (Tonnes produced today/week so far, power consumption etc.). The remaining squares were blank and NOT TO BE TOUCHED. So I pressed each and every square that was blank. It produced a further mass of information but not directly linked to production, however on pressing the bottom corner key the screen cleared and "PRINTING DATA" now appeared on the screen. There was an explosion of vocal noises from the Control Room as every printer in the place sprang to life and proceeded to print out all the data I had requested with my key pressing.

They solved the problem of this unwarranted, unqualified 'misuse' of THEIR computer in their own intelligent fashion. While I was out of my office, under the cover of maintenance, they bolted a thin metal sheet over the touch pad leaving only those spaces to allow operation exactly to their dictates. So - no outstation wordprocessor, no print facility, no data gathering facility (in fact almost all the computer facilities were disabled). Of course, if you requested a printout of any of these functions, hard copy was available from the electrical department. However so that I would not feel ostracised, they fitted the plates to all the other outstations, effectively disabling around 90% of the computer functions available.

Then in the eighties came the ZX81 from Sinclair and along with it there was a multitude of games including text adventures. Playing these, or any game, on the ZX81, where the screen blanked out while it updated each input took some getting used to (I think we developed an automatic blink whenever the screen blanked so we never saw it). In 82/83 came the ZX Spectrum with "sound and colour"!! There were, of course, many other computers on the market at that time including Vic 20, BBC A, BBC B, Commodore 64, Dragon 32, etc. but to me the Spectrum was the natural follow on from the ZX81.

During one of the Safety Campaigns I decided to use a monitor I had, for running looped safety videos, to run a safety program on the Spectrum. It consisted mainly, as I remember, of lots of self producing barcharts and piecharts on accident statistics relating to the colliery with various safety messages in between. There was a screen which appeared randomly showing a pair of bloodshot eyes with the words 'Oh No! not another safety slogan' on it. It had flashing screens and sound effects (thanks to 16/48 tape magazine) and even typed in tunes where appropriate.

Needless to say, because it was novel, it proved very effective but the side effect was more novel and strange. I had changed my computer status. No longer was I one of the unwashed – suddenly I was ONE OF THEM, to be asked politely for my opinion on major computing matters. To stand in the sacred circle and replace the used data disc. Even, on one occasion, to re-boot the failed system using the set of instructions hidden in the locked computer room – such power is dangerous!!!

As time passed the quality of the games improved, and from the Velnor's Lair type text adventure, still graphics were added to give improved atmosphere, as in The Hobbit. The dungeons and dragons type games like 'The Valley' were replaced by full graphic adventures in the form of Lords of Midnight. Even arcade adventures of the 'Tir Na Nog' type appeared regularly. From then on, like Topsy, it just grew and grew.

3. Aren't People Nice

So as time went on my collection of adventures increased (most unfinished) and as they did, I began to collect help sheets, solutions and maps. The result of this was that I came into contact with people at the sharp end of adventure writing. One I met through buying his adventure in my local microshop. His address was on the cassette and I wrote to him for help in "The Dunshalt Donut. The main reason was to meet the man behind the loading screen. The screen showed an eye peeping through a curtain and suddenly the eye swivelled. My first animated screen!! How had he done the impossible? Since he stayed near me (when not at university) we met and he explained the machine code routine to switch the eye. We discussed the adventure in detail and we walked the village of Dunshalt where the real streets, houses, farms and post office had been accurately transferred to the adventure map.

Ross Harris was in the process of writing his own version of Crowther and Wood's Adventures (now known as Colossal Cave etc). While I personally felt that we had enough copies of that particular adventure I was very impressed by his loading screen which seemed, for me, to create the atmosphere I had felt when I first played this adventure and agreed to playtest it. Ross had by this time written out the next adventure scenario in detail and asked me to proof read it. I thus became Watson to a young Sherlock. I was permitted to see the making, on the G.A.C., of the Spectrum version and then encouraged to modify it and produce it on the Amstrad. The name we issued the adventure under was "Cursed Be The City" by Incantation. Although the copies sent to the main software houses were returned with letters praising the adventure, we found no backers and so it was decided that I would handle the production and my wife would handle the distribution. Needless to say, without capital for advertising etc., we did not do very well financially but had great fun at all the stages.

The adventure went into limbo as my vocation caught up with me and Ross went first to England (as a computer graphics artist) and then to America in the same line. Retirement and a computer change rekindled my interest in adventures and as I recontacted old friends, I discovered that The Guild (Tony Collins) had our adventure up and running not only on the Spectrum and Amstrad but also on the Commodore 64. When I spoke to him he informed me that he had rescued the adventure from the collapse of Recreation Re-claimation who had requested permission for a re-issue. What a thrill to find that "Cursed " was still alive and kicking! Thank you, Tony.

4. Believe It Or Not

As a child, I remember reading a book titled "BELIEVE IT OR NOT". This book was filled with many wonderfully strange stories and very tall tales, and as the title suggested, you could believe them or not. This sprang to mind as I prepared this section, for having set the scene I wanted to move straight to adventuring but now realised that I must point out one or two facts of life. People 'BELIEVE' that a computer has a mind of its own and can think, cheat, put you down, sulk, etc. They will spend hours, days, even weeks "proving" their claim, faithfully recording the exact number of times the computer has cheated etc. You will never convince them that they are mistaken and this is particularly true of the computer adventurer. He will never accept that the computer is just a machine. He wants to interact with his computer, as human to human and this is where most of his frustrations come from.

When playing Dungeons and Dragons as a board game, the 'Dungeon Master' is in charge. As a human he can interact with the players so that messages do not have to follow a strict vocabulary. So take, get, remove, lift, etc would be understood as taking an object into your possession. The computer, on the other hand, has a very limited vocabulary of verbs, nouns and adjectives (in some cases abbreviated), with little bias or alternative. When you input a phrase, it will compare the verb and noun with its vocabulary, and if it finds a match it will take the action designated to that verb and noun. If it cannot make a match then it will be programmed to give one of these frustrating replies - "I do not know how to 'pick'" or "I do not understand". Now if we all used the same language (computer vocabulary) there would be little frustration but every author can program the verbs and nouns he wants so there is a tendency for your adventuring to become bogged down, in trying to find the right word rather than play the adventure.

Adventuring on the computer was meant to be bound by logic, but time without number you will get bogged down by a problem/puzzle, in which you have tried all the logical ways of solving it, and without assistance you will probably never solve it and will give up, not only that adventure, but may also stop playing adventures altogether, due to the frustration. To demonstrate this point, one adventure I played required you to 'FIRE LASER twice then DANCE' in front of a force field to get past it. There you are in a sci-fi adventure, dressed in full space gear, on a strange planet with a unknown force field barring your way. You immediately scratch your space helmet and say "Aah, I will now fire my gun twice then do a tango and the force field will be immediately switched off!" The mind boggles.

Finally, I accept that there are computer adventurers who want to conquer all adventurers unaided and all joy to them, but I feel that they belong to that class of people who have to climb mountains "because they are there!" or put another way you can, if you so desire, row single handed across the Atlantic and the Pacific too, but don't attempt to tell me that I must do the same. Any crossing I make will be in a luxury liner or even Concorde. My computer adventuring takes the same form.

Any adventure I play is played with the maximum amount of information and assistance that I have available, IF REQUIRED. This includes hint/help sheets and, where available, full solutions and maps.

Is the adventure not spoiled by having all that information available? No!! No more than reading R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is spoiled by knowing that the baddies must lose, the goodies will win, and Jim will get his share of the treasure. The information is there to remove the frustration of being stuck and increase the pleasure of playing. It will not be used if no insurmountable problem is met with.

Specially for people who abhor help in adventure and look down on people who wish to play for PLEASURE, I have written an adventure which consists of one well described and atmospheric location. Available exits lead back to the room. There are many articles for examination and collection but none help to find an exit and some cause death after a random number of moves. There is no help given since there is no possible solution. This will provide them with all the challenge they wish to have for the rest of their lives and leave the rest of us to get on with enjoying our adventuring.

5. Adventuring We Will Go

When I am asked for the name of the first adventure I played, I normally say 'cowboys and indians' – and you will not find it on any computer. These first 'Role Playing' games were real to all who took part. Who wanted to be a poor indian, who only had a piece of stick to defend himself, when you could be a cowboy with a six-shooter. Indians were thin on the ground (we sometimes had to use girls if none of the boys could be threatened into being indians!!!). What about the big shoot outs? – magic – and if it was your turn to be 'Gunned Down' the death throes were pure character acting – the hero always blew the smoke from his six shooter before returning it to his holster (a bit of wood stuck in his trouser top). This was true adventuring – and don't say that it was not 'REAL'. I can't play cowboys and indians now – at 60 most people are inclined to think that I am too old but I don't think so. However you won't see me running about, with my raincoat held on my shoulders by the top catch at the neck, as Captain Marvel (as I did in days of yore), but you will find sitting at my computer playing computer adventures. This has its own benefits since I have no wish to repeat my tripping on the loose coat whilst climbing the house stairs and falling forwards onto my hands, carrying two bottles of lemonade. The result of that playacting was a cut right wrist and finger.

Now just as we had to understand the ground rules for play – no one was shot where there were nettles – no one drew a ray gun while chasing indians – when you were surrounded by indians you could not use a rocket pack to escape, etc. So with adventuring, both the author and the player must follow the same rule if enjoyment is to be the result. The player must get a rational reaction to his action or, like the force field (already discussed), the illogicality of the action will destroy the game's playability.

As I said, I had the privilege of sharing in the making of an adventure and although my contribution was offering suggestions during the development of the Spectrum version, playtesting the final adventure, then converting it for the Amstrad, I was deeply involved in the plot and tried very hard to avoid the pit fall I have mentioned. To illustrate what I have in mind, I will use the opening from 'Cursed Be The City' (the adventure mentioned). The scene is set in the wine cellar of your own castle, now converted to a torture chamber.

You, Prince Asher, have been defeated by the followers of The Raven after a long siege and almost all of the city have been put to the sword. Your fate is to be tortured to death, by the torturer 'Sudo' and are now bound to the rack, while he, fortifying himself with wine, taunts you with his proposals for your slow and very painful death. That sets the scene. Now you have to figure how to get out. If you try to bribe or threaten 'Sudo', you will make him start your torture all the sooner and you will die. Vengeance is what you seek, not the peace of death. Struggling, straining at you bonds and all the other attempts to escape are equally futile – What are you to do ?

Now think about it logically – If you were really strapped to a rack with a mad drunken torturer just finishing his wine before starting on you – what would do ? You would 'scream' or 'shout' for help, at the top of your voice. Hopeless though this may seem and fortunately, for you, another survivor hears your screams. He opens the door and throws a knife which kills 'Sudo', he then cuts you free and leaves, to carry out what personal plan he has for escape or revenge, and so the adventure begins. Now the scene may not be to your particular liking but the logic is sound. I would thus expect that, in an adventure, if I was in an air lock, kitted out with a space suit and the description indicated that there was a wheel present, on turning the wheel the air lock would open. I would not expect to be told that a merry tune was playing because the wheel was connected to an antique barrel-organ.

6. Down To The Nitty Gritty

Now when I am planning a real journey, I make certain arrangements to make the journey as pleasurable as possible. If journeying by car, I make sure I have my gazetteer, my motorway map and I may even have a route plan. I will check the car is roadworthy and cover tyres, brakes, lights etc. When I am satisfied, I will put in the car the articles mentioned, AA key, mobile phone and any equipment required during or at the end of the journey. I do not regard these preparations as trivial or positively against good motoring.

Should I due to some mishap become 'lost' on my journey, I can then refer to my route plan, motorway map or gazetteer to find where I went wrong and rectify it with the minimum delay. Should all else fail I can use the phone to contact 'a man who knows' who will set me once more on the correct road. I do not wish to spend the next six weeks (months, years) sitting by the side of the motorway waiting for inspiration on how I should proceed next. Nor do I intend to drive round in ever decreasing circles without a clue where I am or where I am going. Nor do I regard the fact that I have all that information and assistance available a waste of time, if I do not use or require it for this trip. I regard it as sensible pre-planning. So it is with my adventuring. In particular, I have built up my own vocabulary of obscure words and phrase inputs which tend to be used in specific adventures which I resort to if the obvious entry is rejected. Should these fail then I look for the phrase in the solution or phone for help and use it (marking it in the location sheet, the map and my vocabulary database).

When I have gathered together all the information I can (including emergency telephone numbers) I then proceed to prepare a location sheet (Fig.1). This allows me to enter the location I am in and to indicate the result of travelling in the various directions indicated. The objects found are entered in the margin. Thus a picture is built up to allow you to map the adventure in such a way that you don't have to finish up on the next page without intending to.

Fig. 1

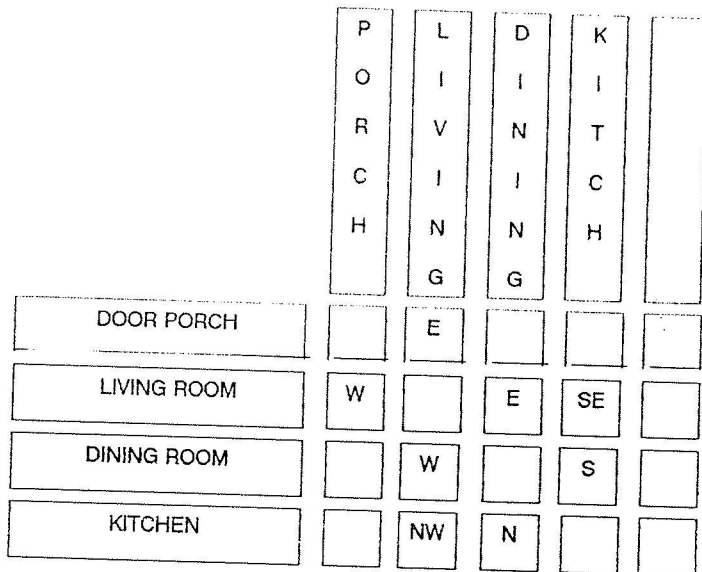
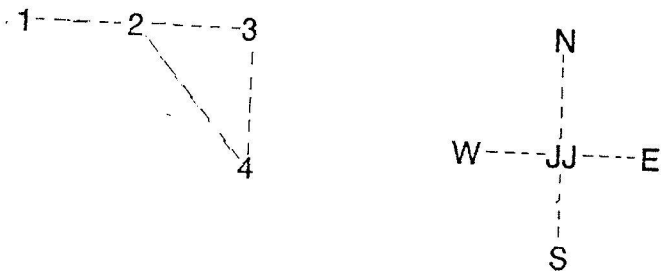


Fig. 2.



1. Door Porch (KEY)
2. Living Room (BOOK, BOTTLE)
3. Dining Room (GLASS)
4. Kitchen (Table, (drawer (KNIFE))

Using this method the entire adventure is covered and all the routes explored. When Tim Gilbert (Quill & PAW) wrote a small demo adventure for a Quill review in 16/48 tape, he included almost all the functions possible. Playing it normally I found the objects and escaped with them. Playing the adventure again, using the method above, I discovered the size of the catacombs, a secret entrance to/exit from the catacombs and three different and correct combinations of objects to complete the adventure. I must say that the second play gave more pleasure than just solving the adventure. It was also the source of my first phrase for my vocabulary 'CLIMB TAPESTRY' was required to reach the Minstrel's Gallery and find the key (a simple DOWN) served to return).

To this day I can see nothing logical in climbing a tapestry to a Minstrel's Gallery since, to entertain, the Minstrel would regularly have to use the same route, thus damaging what must have been a costly and beautiful item and, worse, damaging the believability of the adventure.

Now here is something that I cannot understand. I have a good enough memory. I could at one time memorise sufficient data to pass with some credit all the required exams laid down for qualification as a Mining Engineer (Mine Management).

I can still (as Secretary of the local club of one of my other hobbies) remember the transactions of meetings from a page of scribbled notes and produce full minutes to the satisfaction of the members. I cannot however remember the rest of the solution I looked at. Some people claim that if they 'just glance' at a solution, it is locked in their mind and spoils the adventure (the "I just could not stop myself reading on" brigade). Yet if I were to place a page of the telephone directory in front of them for 'one of their glances' then remove it and ask them to tell me the address and telephone number of the subscriber at the bottom right (or any other random position) they cannot tell me. I wonder why?

But you've seen it. How can you prepare these solution sheets and not know what they contain? My adventure database holds, at present, help/solutions/maps for some 1400 adventures. These consist of my own efforts, but mainly others which were supplied on request, bought, traded etc.

Of the many I have produced by my own efforts, I can only remember the particular ones which were illogical (Dance in front of a forcefield); bugged (Here you see a match – take/get/pick up match – you can't etc); or just plain stupid (turn wheel in airlock and music is played by barrel organ) and caused upset and frustration.

The rest of my adventures, like good books, are to be played and replayed at suitable intervals to give greater and added pleasure. Not as some feel, conquered like so many mountain peaks and discarded. Who wants to climb a second time – let's have a new challenge – that's old hat now!

The adventure I am stuck in at present has been completed by me quite a few times in the past but I am persevering with it just a little longer as I know the solution is logical. Please don't feel sorry for me since the adventure is "Cursed Be The City" by Incantation (R.Harris & Jim Johnston) and at least I can ask the author for help.

(This article was originally published in SynTax (issue 25, July '93, ed. Sue Medley). My thanks to Sue and Jim for their permission to reproduce it in Probe.....Barbara)



PERSONAL MESSAGES

To Steve C – HPPOCRTTIOTEHNEONTEFZRKMAISI baseoct111(bin)x100(bin) (Martin B)

To Doreen – Did you enjoy your day out at the zoo? (The Zookeeper)

To Jon – It's STILL ticking – any suggestions? (Pigpen)

To Hamilton Halls Gang – It was great seeing you all again. Roll on July. (Old Bidy)

To Karen – Thanks for the Day (Doreen Bardon)

To Walter – Thank you. (Doreen Bardon)

To M. Polo – Nope, I mean those horrible creatures that hide under rickety bridges, just waiting for some poor hapless (wonder what a “hap” is – any ideas?) adventurer to come along. Quite like the ones in “Toy ‘R’Us” – specially those with orange hair. (Ellen)

To Pigpen – Yup, think I can handle that, they can come and put their snouts into my trough anytime. As long as their “squeaks” are worse than their bites, that is. (Ellen)

To Pigpen – You’d have got lost for sure, if I’d have been there. The last time Wynne and I went to Brum, thanks to my “spectacular” navigating skills, we used all possible routes – before (finally) arriving at the hotel via the route that the Southerners used. (Ellen)

To Jon – Maybe I *should* try posting some bills – the box that I last used certainly “ate” my “Personals” for last month – noprobs though, I” just reprint ‘em. (Ellen)

To Jon – Not a very good idea – the arm’s free, but with my sense of direction, heaven knows where they’d end up. (Ellen)

To Jon – Nah, and I don’t think I’m missing much, either. (Gilly)

To Jon – Nope, they don’t talk about me behind my back – they just laugh at me, and plan their next “wind up”, boo hoo. (Gilly)

To Jon – I’ve been trying to convert Fudge – but he’s a soya’d me he’s not about to give up his port sausage for anyone – not even Pigpen! (Dusty)

To Jon – Don’t think so, I’ve never been any good at taking away, I’m afraid. Maybe you could do it for me? (Fudge)

To Jon – *Anytime*, my dear, anytime. (Snow White)

To M. Polo – Why the silence? Have you gone off me or something? (Snow White)

To Matt – Hope it’s better by now. Same thing happened to someone I know. she split her head open when she banged it on a plank of wood. The plank’s not been the same since. (Loobiloo)

To M. Polo – Hope you’d plenty of the “Andrex” handy. Economical now, as it’s “thicker, so you need less...” and a nice soft seat on the “throne”. (Loobiloo)

To Belladonna – Can we move in with you? We’re suffering from a “Spring Clean” here at the moment – courtesy of you-know-who, and she’s driving us crazy....(Dusty, Fudge and Buttons)

NEWSDESK

LAURENCE CREIGHTON – AMENDMENT TO POSTAL ADDRESS

The post office has subdivided the Cape Town area. The city part retains the code 8001, and Green Point (where Laurence lives) is now 8005 *without* the "Cape Town".

ZENOBI CD OFFER

John says he has had so many requests to be included in the offer that he has finally bowed to pressure and decided to make the CD available to everybody, previously only offered to customers who had bought 100 or more Zenobi games. In order to do this he has had to increase the price to £30 and the extra will be paid to the various authors accordingly.

The CD is the bargain of a lifetime as it includes over 250 titles in the Zenobi Software catalogue. The files are in SNA (48K) or Z80 (128K) format so you will need an appropriate emulator. In the unlikely event that you don't have them, John says he can supply them on floppy disc.

So if you have a CDROM on your Amiga or PC, send off today to 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancs. OL12 7NX, where The Balrog is patiently awaiting your order and will despatch it by return of post.

"Own a slice of history ... buy the CDROM today. It will make an old man very, very happy and will be your contribution to Cat's 'sly-tipple' fund...."

WIBBLE – A NEW PC MAGAZINE

The magazine is intended for new (and future) owners of a PC. It will explain the complexities of computing in plain language by people who "know what they're talking about (allegedly)". The first issue is out now and is 2 double-sided A4 pages, but subsequent issues will expand when contributions such as letters, advertisements and articles are received. The editor, Angela Cook has assembled a team of experts, and they welcome anything computer-related.

You can obtain a free sample of the first issue by sending an A5 stamped addresses envelope to Wibble, Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 3NQ. Tel/fax. 01903 206739 (7pm-9pm), E-Mail: wibble_it@mcmail.com

The next two issues will be £1 each, but subsequent issues may be slightly more expensive if the number of pages has increased. Issue 2 is due out at the end of May.

IN TOUCH

FOR SALE – I have THE LOST TREASURES OF INFOCOM consisting of six disks covering about 20 games, together with Manual, Hint Book and all relevant Maps in its original box. I have no further use for it and it is available for £12 including p&p.

Please contact George Rawson, 9 Tudor Road, WOODSIDE, South Norwood, London SE25 4RH. Tel. 0181 656 9070.

HELP WANTED

WING COMMANDER IV (Playstation) – Can anyone help me with scene 12, with the mission to drop MIPs containing “Vagabond” and “Sosa” on the Confed Comm Station and destroy the Radar Buoy?

Whether I complete the mission or not, upon my return to the “Intrepid” the cruiser is destroyed by a Confed fighter before I can retaliate and the game consequently ends. How can I complete the mission and save the “Intrepid” too?

Please write to Paul Hardy, 33 Fir Tree Drive, Wales, Sheffield, S26 5LZ.

★

KQUEST (PC) – How do I finish off KQUEST? I have 10 treasures stored in the bank and a score of 950.

Please contact Doreen Bardon, Rivendell, 24 Sycamore Close, Slingsby, Yorks.
Tel. 01653 628509.

BUGS

KQUEST played by Doreen Bardon on a PC

When in the mine, if you exam car, you see a lever which is the handbrake. Don't OFF HANDBRAKE or TAKE OFF BRAKE or OFF HAND – the game crashes. PULL HANDLE is okay.

PRECISION CORNER

ZORK NEMESIS

Alchemist – Planet – Metal – Element

MALVEAX / SATURNAX / LEAD / FIRE

SOPHIA / VENUSNV / COPPER / WATER

KAINE / MURZ / IRON / EARTH

SARTORIUS / JUPERON / TIN / AIR

Maps – screens

1st – move LEFT

2nd – move RIGHT

3rd – move RIGHT

4th – move LEFT

OBJECTS AND THEIR USES

JACARANDA JIM played by David Heppinstall on a PC

Some items need to be placed in a specific room to turn them into new objects, and you will need to find a set of buttons to do the changing. Press the button corresponding to the colour of the object to change it. The items requiring this action are in *italics*.

- Aqualunguse to swim in the lake.
- Axeuse to chop down the door at the bottom of the well.
- Basketallows you to carry more items.
- Beach Ball*burst it using needle to scare termites; drop it in shop's toilet to change it into an axe.
- Blueberry*drop it in library to change it into a credit card.
- Bombdrop from halfway up the silver staircase to blow open the safe.
- Bootswear them to let you climb the rocks on the beach.
- Carnation*drop in the church to change it into an oilcan.
- Carrotallows you to see in the dark when you can't use the torch.
- Champagnedrink it, then spit - to get some seeds.
- China Piggive this to the thief when he mugs you.
- Cow Bellring it to get Mavis the cow to follow you.
- Credit Carduse it in the transit cubicle to buy an aqualung.
- Crowbaruse to open manhole.
- Cucumber*drop it in canteen to change it into a gold key.
- Deckchairtake away from Ernie.
- Ear-muffswear to prevent hypnotic effects of music.
- Flag*drop it in the town hall to change it into a spoon.
- Gloveswear to prevent electric shock from buttons.
- Gold Keyuse to unlock gold door.
- Gristleuse it to lure buzzards down.
- Medicinegive to the wolf to cure him.
- Milk Bottledrop in boxing ring to slip the boxer up.
- Mirrorwave it in the tunnel leading off from the well to kill robot.
- Moneyuse to buy a cucumber.
- Mouldy Cheeseto scare off rat.
- Needleuse to pop beach ball, to scare off termites.
- Oilcanuse it to oil the ancient lever.
- Papersread them to get postman's name.
- Police Uniformwear it to get into the police station.
- Postman's Bodybury in priest hole before you get arrested.
- Roller-skatesgive to Ernie.
- Seedplant them
- SpadeDIG: slippery walled cave, pirate's cave, and deckchair beach.
- Spoonuse it to fuse the forcefield.
- Tapegive to pirate.
- Telegramgive to Ernie.
- Ticketgive to thief.
- Torchallows you to see in dark places.
- Wandwave it when in the prison cell.

GETTING YOU STARTED

BLACK FOUNTAIN available on Amstrad and PC(e)

Start in Throne Room of the High Courageous. INV (scroll), EXAM SCROLL (gives you the status of the Court Official), W, S, W (armoury), TAKE AXE, E, E (music room), TAKE LYRE, W, SW (study), EXAM DESK, OPEN DESK (you discover a parchment), TAKE PARCHMENT, EXAM PARCHMENT, NE, S, E (bedroom - see a chest), OPEN CHEST, TAKE FLASK, TAKE TINDERBOX, W, S (kitchen - chef points to the dirty dishes), WASH DISHES, INV (chef has given you a dead bird as a reward), W (garden), TAKE FLOWERS, E, E (party), TAKE HERBS, W, N, N, N, N, N (gatehouse), GARROS "OPEN GATE", S, W (through gate, which is locked behind you so you can't return if you have forgotten anything), W (town square of Loesp)
.....

CASE OF THE MIXED-UP SHYMER played by Edwina Brown on a Spectrum - also available for Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Atari plus others

E, E, SE, EXAM COUNTER, GET PIE, NW, W, NE, EXAM JACK, GIVE PIE, GET SCISSORS, SW, W, N, EXAM LUCY, TALK TO LUCY, CUT POCKET, S, W, N, N, EXAM KITTY, TALK TO KITTY, GIVE POCKET

CAVES OF DYNATY played by Dorothy Millard on a PC

Start in hallway. EXAMINE PLAQUE, READ PLAQUE, N, E (storage room), GET laser BLASTER, EXAMINE BLASTER, OPEN CABINET, EXAMINE CABINET, GET REMOTE CONTROL, W, N (meet defence robot), EXAMINE ROBOT, EXAMINE REMOTE CONTROL (has a button with a picture of a robot above), PUSH BUTTON (triggers robot self-destruct mechanism), N (large room), SW, W (dining area), GET CROWBAR, EXAMINE CROWBAR, EXAMINE FOOD SERVER, W (library)

JACARANDA JIM played by Christopher Heppinstall on a PC

N, U, N, EXAMINE TORCH, GET TORCH, S, D, S, EXAMINE TAPE, GET TAPE, PULL CHAIN, LOOK, EXAMINE CARNATION, GET CARNATION, S, W, EXAMINE COW, MILK COW, EXAMINE BOTTLE, GET BOTTLE, N, N, IN, DROP CARNATION, EXAMINE WAND, GET WAND, E, IN, IN, EXAMINE BOXER, DROP BOTTLE, EXAMINE GLOVES, GET GLOVES
.....

JERRICK BONESNAPPER I : THE DUNGEON OF DOOM played by Paul Hardy on an Amiga

Start at the dungeon entrance. GET SWORD, GET SHIELD, EXAMINE SWORD, EXAMINE SHIELD, WEAR SHIELD, LISTEN, EXAMINE SHIELD, N, LISTEN, N, W, READ SIGN, LISTEN, BUY ARMBAND, TALK DWARF, TALK DWARF, BUY POTION, EXAMINE ARMBAND, WEAR ARMBAND, EXAMINE POTION, E, READ WRITING, E, E (under waterfall), SHOVE DOOR, N, N
.....

LIGHTHOUSE played by Dorothy Millard on a C64

Start on a gently sloping beach. I (you are carrying a walkie-talkie which crackles to life and you are told supplies are on the way), N (you hear an approaching helicopter), S (a large box arrives by parachute), EXAMINE BOX (it breaks open at your touch and several pieces of equipment fall out), R (you see a parachute, an empty air tank, an inflatable raft, a wet suit and a pair of swim fins), GET empty air TANK, W, W, N (to garage), FILL TANK (using the air compressor here), S (don't hang around or you'll get caught by the owner), E, E (back to beach), GET RAFT, INFLATE RAFT, GET SUIT, WEAR SUIT, GET FINS, WEAR FINS, GET MASK, WEAR MASK, WEAR air TANK, E (you're paddling the raft), E (you're midway between shore and Rock Island - if you continue east you'll be caught)

NOT A PENNY MORE, NOT A PENNY LESS played by Dorothy Millard on an Amstrad - also available for other computers

The game starts in your room in Magdalen College, Oxford. EXAMINE FOLDER (contains a list of telephone numbers), EXAMINE TELEPHONE NUMBERS (note them), OPEN CUPBOARD (see some drink, a polaroid camera, some magazines and a photo album), GET CAMERA (has no film), READ MAGAZINE (Harvey is due to make a tour of Europe and his itinerary is listed), RING 015639911 (your Stockbroker comes up with the names of three other victims of the swindle - Robin Oakley, Doctor, Jean-Pierre Lamanns, Art Dealer and James, Viscount Brigsley), EXAMINE ROBIN (before you can do anything there is a knock on the door), CLOSE FOLDER, OPEN DOOR (a policeman enters for a further interview about Harvey's fraud.... eventually he leaves), RING ROBIN

OPEN DOOR played by Edwina Brown on a Spectrum

W, GET WAND, E, E, THROW WAND, GET ROPE, W, TIE ROPE, D, W, GET ROCK, E, E, SWIM, GET WAND, DROP ROCK, U, LEAVE POOL, W, N, WAVE WAND

RADIOMANIA played by Barbara Gibb on a Spectrum - also available on Atari(e), Amiga(e), MAC(e), PC(e) and CDROM

Start in your garden. I (nothing), E, E, TAKE LEVER, W, W, S (inside shed), EXAM TABLE (see torch and drawer), TAKE TORCH, OPEN DRAWER (find a duster), TAKE DUSTER, N, EXAM GARDEN (see spade and footprints), TAKE SPADE, EXAM FOOTPRINTS (made by tiny feet), FOLLOW FOOTPRINTS (now by hedge), EXAM HEDGE (see shears and a gap), EXAM GAP (not very wide), TAKE SHEARS, CUT GAP (with shears), N (through enlarged gap), CUT GRASS (need shears), EXAM GRASS, LOOK, TAKE CROSS, EXAM GRASS (see trail), FOLLOW TRAIL

VOLCANO OF RAKA-TUA played by Derek Shaw on a C64

LOOK STATUE, GO JAIL, LOOK DESK, GET TAPE, LOOK DOOR, W, N, READ SIGN, GO HUT, LOOK PIANO, MOVE PIANO, GET PEN, LOOK SHELVES, GET MATCHES, E, S, GO HOTEL, READ SIGN, MOVE SOFA, GO COUNTER, LOOK BOOK, SIGN BOOK, DROP PEN, LOOK REGISTER

HINTS AND TIPS

ACHETON played by John Schofield on a Spectrum +3 also available for BBC, Amstrad, PC and Atari

Just type ON and OFF to use the Lamp. Whilst mapping the game, take note which locations are LIGHT or DARK as the lamp eventually needs recharging. Recharging is done simply by being in the TIMELESS Room – be careful because overcharging can “blow” the bulb!

Eight objects is the normal maximum load for you, except that all ten weapons can be carried into the end game from the SAFE. These weapons are the Sword, Crucifix, Stake, Cane, Dagger, Mace, Vial, Spear, Axe and Keg (of gunpowder).

The mine can never be entered safely. You must find and WAVE ROD to dry out the well (under the grate).

To open up the game, go east into the enchanted forest, CLIMB TREE (you are asked in which direction), SOUTH, DOWN to a hole in the ground. To return is similar except that NORTH should take you somewhere familiar near the start (random).

ALIEN ABDUCTION? played by Barbara Gibb on an Atari

Asylum/Mad?

When one arm is free, X HEAD and then PULL WIRE to wake up in the clearing.

X HEAD (wires no longer there), X ARM (bruises still there), TAKE PICTURES (show nothing alien).

BEGINNING OF THE END played by Barbara Gibb on a Spectrum – also available on Amstrad, Atari(e), Amiga(e), PC(e) and MAC(e)

Open the window with the pole, which isn't needed again.

Before climbing out of the window, make sure you are carrying a certain important container.

The workman on the ledge knows something about the clock – he will also descend that dodgy ladder if you tell him to, the result of which you have to speed up to provide a “safe” landing for yourself.

Find an important item and store it safely before “leaving” the pool.

PUSH TRAMPOLINE W until it is underneath the trapdoor and JUMP on it to enter the Wizard's Grotto. To leave the Grotto, go D and then WAIT until you have stopped bouncing.

When you ask the Wizard about the potions, he will give them to you. Both of them are needed to enable you to pay him your debt.

The Potion of Strength lasts for only 2 moves.

Revive the dead fish, then increase your strength so that you can pick it up.

The secret of getting the harpoon and stone involves using the two potions and helping the fish (in 4 moves).

Ensure the lever is in the same position as the number of valves (in the Decompression Room). When you push the button you will be sucked south through the appropriate door.

DARK CITADEL played by Barbara Gibb on an Amiga

Level 2

Lift the corners of the rugs to find keys. Use the shield to cover the holes in the maze.

Fill the bag with stones, and then put it and the purple ball on the scales to open the door to the north.

Eat the honey so that you can fill the jar with water from the fountain.

At the entrance to the Labyrinth – examine the marks on the stone to the left of the door. Very carefully examination (I had to slightly adjust my monitor) and picking up on the hint given in the Spell of Enlightenment, you can see a vague outline of something around the words. USE the Spell of Enlightenment to make it clearer. You should now know the correct position of the levers to open the door leading to the Labyrinth.

GREAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RACE played by Bev Truter on a PC

The scoring system hasn't been enabled so your score remains zero throughout the game. Ignore the status line and concentrate on returning to civilization with all the treasures, and forget about amassing points.

Office / Airport / Hareda

Open the drawer of your desk and get the report. When the phone rings "answer phone", then go to Perry's office and give him the report. He gives you an airline ticket and explains your mission. Before leaving the Museum get the bottle from the cabinet in the Bathroom.

Enter the black sedan waiting in the driveway.

At the Airport open suitcase and get electric blanket. Read the brochure the religious fanatic gives you, and show ticket to Gilbert. Go North to the Lounge, examine ashtray and get the matchbook, give ticket to Shirley and go east to board the plane which takes you to the village of Hareda.

HELP INC played by Barbara Gibb on an Amstrad

Inside the shed – Close the door. The lamp and boomerang are red herrings.

River – Examine the stick to see it doesn't have a hook on the end of the line, so tie the bent nail to it.

Drawbridge / Guard – Red is the answer to the raising and lowering problem.

Catapult something in the directions of the guard. Now follow it up to the turret.

LEGEND OF THE SWORD played by Barbara Gibb on an Atari

If you WAIT just north of the 3-way junction you will encounter more humanoids, but this time you should have an axe; then give your weapons (knife and axe) to Pagan and arm yourself with the spear that nearly killed you. The dead humanoids are worth checking out before leaving the location.

Believe it or not you can TALK TO the WHITE STAG. Drop the snare before following the stag, then use the map to find your way back to it when you lose sight of the stag. It can't grant wishes, but does give you a hint and a magic wand, and drops the bottle of antidote which Daville picks up.

MISER (J.Lockerby) played by Barbara Gibb on a C64 – also available on Spectrum, Amstrad, Atari(e), Amiga(e), PC(e) and MAC(e)

The old lady needs coal but can't pay for it. If you WAIT the coal cart will go past without stopping, but the bump in the road proves useful.

In the Past

Visit the classroom. Examining the blackboard and book is informative. Remembering a date causes someone to appear.

When outside the house west of Market Square, LISTEN twice.

When inside your own house examine the room to find a sheet of music. Remembering your sweetheart "reveals" a coin.

In the warehouse – remember Sir Roger.

Present Day

Give the book to Martha. Give the fiddle to Belinda. Give the guinea to the man in the exchange.

MONSTERS OF MURDAC played by Barbara Gibb on an Atari – also available on Spectrum +3, BBC, Amstrad and PC

The fair maiden (Wizard's daughter) in the cell will give you a ribbon in exchange for the staff. Take this to the Wizard (top of hill) and he will give you a scroll.

You can enter the cell a second time if you look different from the first "visitor". Give the maiden the scroll to rescue her.

MURDER MYSTERY WEEKEND played by David Hebblethwaite on a Spectrum 128K – also available on Amiga(e) and PC(e)

There's an invisible man outside the hotel entrance; throw the flour to reveal him.

Something sticky might remove the chef's moustache.

In TGI Friday's, you need three items connected with Ireland to place on the toilet.

Wave a copy of Probe in the lounge. Carry your case on the luggage trolley.

Tell the women on the phones about Martin's hair.

Use the acid to open the cupboard in the kitchen.

TODDLER TROUBLE played by Barbara Gibb on an Atari(e), also available on Spectrum, Amiga(e), PC(e) and MAC(e)

Part Two

If cured of hayfever, you can stay in the Botanic Garden. You can't pick the orchid, but you can TAKE CELLS if you have the Petri dish. Take them to the secret laboratory, insert the dish into the cloning device, and press the button to take an exact copy of the original orchid. Give the orchid to the hermit who will permit you to get the gold paint.

Blow the whistle to obtain a knob of butter.

RHYME CRYME played by Barbara Gibb on a Spectrum (128K only), also available on Amiga(e) and PC(e)

SAY HELLO to everyone you meet and make careful note of their responses.
Don't forget to look *through, in, under,* etc. Looking *behind* things is particularly rewarding.
Search the plants outside Jack Horner's cottage for a useful tool.
Cut the rope around the crate in the store room, then search them.
Pull the chain in the unisex toilets, then search the rubble.
Find a way over Humpty Dumpty's wall *before* you mend him.
Do *not* take a cat into the workshop, otherwise you can't give the pie to Jack.
Cut the tall weeds to find a crowbar.
Mend the bucket in the workshop (need lit blowtorch)
Clean the windows (inside and outside) of the hut – need bucket of water and rag.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST played by Edwina Brown on a Spectrum – also available on PC(e)

Examine frozen pond in cave then break it to get a stone.
Pull rusty lever in magic wall. Drop stone in moat to freeze it.
PUNCH the orc because if you *kill* it, later on the raven will kill *you*.
Examine Zombi and after casting smoke unlock his chain.
You must have Wise with you because when the stairs crumble he will help you.
When Drakon confronts you, cast fire at him three times, then go down rope. Drakon will follow, so cast fire at rope.
Go back to the magic wall and pull lever to complete adventure.

WITCH'S CAULDRON played by Ray Clayton on a C64

Trapper? A mouse will assist. Six three times will answer a riddle. Glass is brittle.
The lamb has an important spell ingredient. A dying word helps with travelling.
Hazel's hat dispels smoke. The lion isn't afraid of the dragon. Ghosts have a vital word.

ZORK NEMESIS

Near the start, the sign on the door is a hint. To open it, drag the hot spot on the moon-shaped knocker upwards towards the sun.
Read all the books found in the Library and note the details.
For important information concerning planets, elements and metals, read the scroll found on the work table in the Laboratory.
Check out each of the lower close-ups of the 4 Crypts.
If you have collected enough information you should be able to work out the relationship between Alchemist, Planet, Metal and Element (see Precision Corner is still baffled).

SERIALIZED SOLUTION

DUNGEON MASTER 2 – THE LEGEND OF SKULLKEEP

Played by Mary Scott-Parker on a PC

PART SIX

Once back in the Boiler room open the second door with the square, yellow key. Beyond are two more blue portals and a ladder down. The ladder is one-way and leads to the Imp fireball maze which, fortunately, is optional and definitely not worth the effort [unless you're a masochist] as it only yields some Tech armour – IF you ever get that far! Instead, head South to the alcove with the Scout map. Stepping on the plate beyond activates a cavalcade of Zo spells, which make the pit ahead open and shut very quickly. Activate the Scout map and click on Dain to see that the alcove ahead is the source of the spells. Send a Scout eyeball into the alcove to block the spells while the pit is closed. Move the eyeball out and back again if the pit is frozen open. A lever beyond the pit will keep it permanently closed.

Climb the ladder opposite the alcove, and head North to a pillar, then West to a door which needs a vacuum fuse to open it – theres one in the flying chest should you have forgotten to buy one. Dodge the dangerous Archer Guards, who fire Slayer arrows – unless you get to them first. Inside the little room is the Master key and an unreachable ladder, which needs the Cross key to lower it. Take the key and head back West, to find the second locked door in the pillar room. This door needs a large gear [theres one in an alcove in the room to the South, if you dont have one] and the Master key – which should be removed after use and taken.

The levers in the corridor beyond all need to be in the up position to open the doors. If any are already up, toggle them a couple of times then leave them up. Follow the corridor, smashing the barrels [one contains a vacuum fuse] along the way. Open the locked door beyond the sink with the Master key, once again taking it with you. Collect the Cross key from the alcove, put the vacuum fuse in the gap and lower the ladder to the boiler room by pressing the lever round the corner. The two other levers activate the pumps, which look like giant cotton reels. Go back along the corridor to the big room with the pillars and Archer Guards and head West and North again to the little room with the ladder. Use the Cross key to lower the ladder and climb it.

Upstairs, chop the tables and move into the Ram/pit area. SAVE THE GAME. Make sure that the party members are not carrying too much weight and cast ACCELERATE, in the faint hope that it will help. Avoiding the Rams is a frustrating struggle with no easy option, but it can be done with patience. Save the game after each Rams head is negotiated and just restart after a descent into a pit – and there will be many!. A minimum of 6 Rams heads need to be passed before a corridor leading East is gained.

At the end of the passage are two moving teleporters, which are also bad news. Wait inside the passage, monitoring the teleporters, until a path along the left wall clears – then run North to the entrance to the Reflector room. Open the door in the West wall with the Master key, and flick the lever beyond, to lower the ladder round the corner, opening up a route to the boiler room teleporter.

(to be continued)

SOLUTIONS OF THE MONTH

LABOUR PAINS

Written by Jonathan Scott and Stephen Boyd

Solution based on the authors' own solution

Available on Amstrad, Spectrum, Atari(e), Amiga(e), PC(e) and MAC(e)

Note : Important information is contained in the leaflet supplied with the game, so read it carefully (Barbara Gibb)

PART ONE – HORS D'OEUVRES

The first thing to note about this part is, as hinted in the introduction, you will have to find and store *three* items which are necessary for your stay in hospital. These must be put into the suitcase. Without them you will not be able to progress past the first ten or so locations. The items required are hairbrush, dressing-gown and "hers" towel.

*

Start in bedroom of your cosy home. X DRESSER (you find a hairbrush), S, E, E (bathroom), X TOWEL RACK (you find some towels), S (kitchen), X FISH BOWL (there's a piranha and a smoke gun in it), TAKE BOWL, N, X SINK, PUT PLUG IN SINK, POUR WATER IN SINK (smoke gun remains in the bowl), TAKE GUN, S, DROP BOWL (this means that you don't have to carry it around with you for the rest of game, something which could be disastrous at the bitter end), N, W, W (spare room), X WARDROBE, OPEN WARDROBE (someone's holding it shut), TALK TO PETE ("I ain't in here" says your husband), INSERT SMOKE GUN IN KEYHOLE, PRESS TRIGGER (Pete, who was holding the door shut, runs out; he lights up a cigarette and you chuck him out of the house), DROP GUN, X WARDROBE (inside it is a coat and a suitcase), TAKE ALL.

E, NE (beside porch), TAKE {dressing} GOWN, OPEN SUITCASE, PUT HAIRBRUSH IN SUITCASE, PUT GOWN IN SUITCASE, PUT TOWELS IN SUITCASE, CLOSE SUITCASE, WEAR COAT, N (you can't get through the DIY patio door), SW, X PHONE (it is disconnected), RECONNECT PHONE, PICK UP RECEIVER (you hear part of a conversation), SHOUT DOWN PHONE (your neighbour comes round and smashes the patio door in revenge), NE (via smashed door).

N (outside your home), X BLOKE (it's your neighbour, Del Fell, stoning the crows), WATCH DEL FELL (until a stone flies off to the east), E, TAKE STONE, W, W, S (Matilda is here, launching stones at Chips Ahoy), X STONE (it's very sharp), PUT STONE IN BOX (Matilda rips her tights with the stone and chases you off to the north), W, ENTER TAXI (its driver won't let you), TALK TO DRIVER (he mentions your chum, Aphrodite Tumip), E, E, E, S, S (if Matilda was still launching missiles, the policeman would have prevented you from entering Chip Ahoy), ASK APHRODITE ABOUT DRIVER (she admits she had a fling with him), N, N, W, W, W, TELL DRIVER ABOUT APHRODITE (he gives you a free ride).

E (site of your old flat), TALK TO SCULPTOR (he tells you that he dropped the deeds down a crack, and will help you if you can extract them), NE (Ms. A Wonder-Land's home), TAKE ALL (box and bottle), X BOX ("eat me"), X BOTTLE ("drink me"), W, W (restaurant kitchen), X ARTICHOKE (this will kill the sculptor if you wish to!), X COOKER, X EXTRACTOR FAN (you find a pair of tweezers), N, E, E, NE, W (Dr. Thrust sorts out any important problems and leaves).

E, X SECRETARY, USE PHOTOCOPIER (the secretary tells you that you can't until you fix his/her shredder), TALK TO SECRETARY (he/she tells you that there's no fuse in its plug), SW, W, W, S, E, E, SW, EXTRACT DEEDS (need tweezers - the sculptor takes the deeds and says that he'll sculpt a person of your choice - you need planning permission, so will have to return later), DROP TWEEZERS, NE, X BERLIN WALL, LISTEN (you hear a conversation, one of the words being a password), W, W, N, E, E, TAKE NET, W, W, NE (youth club, X YOBOS, SMASH MACHINE (a 50p coin lands in the net if carried), TAKE COIN, DROP NET, SW, X STALL, BUY POLISH (need 50p coin), S, E, E, SW, E (fortune-teller's caravan), TALK TO MAYOR (the ex-mayor, now a fortune teller, is missing his crystal ball), E, X POND, SQUIRT POLISH IN POND, X POND (you can now see the crystal ball at the bottom and have 3 moves before it becomes polluted again), TAKE BALL, W, GIVE BALL TO MAYOR (he takes it and gives you his seal), W, NE, W, W, N, E, E, E (planning office), TYPE FUEHRER (you receive planning permission), PLACE SEAL ON PLANNING PERMISSION, PUSH PLANNING PERMISSION BACK (you can now build a statue), W, W, W, S, E, E, SW (site of old flat), SAY TO SCULPTOR "LIONEL FLARE" (he builds a statue of Lionel), NE, W (town centre - should see statue of Lionel Flare), WAIT (for Lionel, unless he's already here), X LIONEL, ASK LIONEL FOR FUSE, W, N, E, E, NE (doctor's reception), PUT FUSE INTO PLUG, W, X FILING CABINET, SEARCH CABINET (you now have your medical records), E, PHOTOCOPY RECORDS, W, REPLACE RECORDS, E, SW, W (on bridge), X BRIDGE (you notice a keystone and the fairly unstable abutments), TAKE KEYSTONE, W (the bridge collapses), NE (youth club), X MOUSEHOLE (tiny!), DRINK FROM BOTTLE (you shrink immediately and find yourself surrounded by giants), X MOUSEHOLE (it's now big enough to crawl through), W (tunnel), EAT BISCUIT (from the box - it makes you grow bigger), READ NOTICE, X TRAPDOOR, SMASH TRAPDOOR WITH KEYSTONE, DROP ALL (the game's in-built mechanisms will stop you from dropping the suitcase and the photocopies), D (you find yourself wandering the Chips Ahoy Catacombs). In no time meet a Grue who gives you the password for Part Two. This is dependent on whether you have the photocopies or not, as the case may be. You feel a sharp blow to the back of you head and load Part Two to see! (250/250)

PART TWO - THE MAIN COURSE

Section One : The Geriatric Ward

First you must enter the relevant *password* then OPEN EYES (Dr. Touch is staring at you - he's pinched your coat), X BED (you find a pillock, er, a pillow), E, TALK TO PATIENT (he has forgotten what he was hit by), TELL PATIENT "WATER MELON" (he chucks a glass eye to the west), W, CATCH GLASS EYE WITH PILLOW, INSERT EYE IN SOCKET (now Dr. Touch can see), SHOW RECORDS (he'll let you pass), W, TALK TO MATRON (a big Diz O'Donner fan), RIP PILLOW (you now have a feather), N, X BODIES (one has a newspaper clipping clutched firmly in its grasp), X BODY (it's that of Del Fell, who was "much afflicted by the tickles"), TICKLE DEL (he releases the newspaper clipping and, once he realizes he isn't really dead, rushes off), DROP FEATHER, TAKE CLIPPING, X CLIPPING ("clerk wanted"), N (Mrs. T Turnip is moping), TALK TO TURNIP (unintelligible), SEARCH DRAWERS (you find a blowtorch), X BLOWTORCH.

E (toilet cubicle), X CORNER (you find a walking-stick), E (Frank Hawkins' room), TALK TO FRANK (he's famous with the "kiddies upstairs"), S (canteen), SEARCH MASONRY (you find Pete's forgery notebook), X NOTEBOOK, W (larder), X CHEESE, LIFT CHEESE WITH STICK (you find an enchanting record beneath), DROP STICK, X RECORD (hypnotic chants), E, N, N, W (filing office), TALK TO CLERK (he hates his job), SHOW CLIPPING (he rushes off with a cry of "Liberte", leaving you free to do what you wish), TAKE HANKY, E, S, W, W (Mrs. Turnip's room), GIVE HANKY, TALK TO TURNIP (she says she's being taken to the psychiatric ward and can't get married to Frank), E, E (Frank Hawkins' room), X CASE (it contains numerous items including Brazilian swamp water), FILL BLOWTORCH WITH SWAMP WATER, X WALLCLOCK (not yet 12 o'clock), N, W (filing office), OPEN CABINET, X CABINET (lots of sanity tests are stored alphabetically, by surname, within), FIND TURNIP, X TEST, FORGE RESULTS (with the aid of the notebook), DROP NOTEBOOK, CLOSE CABINET, E, S, W, W (Mrs. Turnip's room), WAIT (the men in white coats arrive). As the records show she's sane, they rush off. She asks you to tell Frank. E, E, TELL FRANK ABOUT TURNIP (he's delighted, but is still enraged at the kids), TAKE PLUNGER (from his head), W, REMOVE POSTER WITH PLUNGER, DROP PLUNGER, W, S, S (matron's office - she grabs the poster and runs off), TAKE GRAMOPHONE (the table collapses), N, N, E, E (Frank Hawkins' room), PLAY RECORD (Frank is hypnotized), WAIT (until 12 noon). The wedding takes place, however Matilda objects), FIRE BLOWTORCH (she rushes off, her rear end on fire). Now Turnip and Frank go off on their "honeymoon". DROP BLOWTORCH, N, W, W, U (staircase).

Section Two : The Childrens Ward

U (you can't as the staircase has been demolished further up), S (main children's ward), ASK BOYS ABOUT FRED (they tell you that he's off to see his sister), X DOLLS HOUSE (it has a door, windows and a welcome mat), LOOK UNDER MAT (you find your favourite women's magazine), READ MAGAZINE (there's an interesting article on defusing nuclear warheads), LOOK IN WINDOW (you see a polaroid camera), TALK TO GIRL (she wants her picture returned), S, S, E (outside lift), TAKE SPADE, W, N, E (Munchies cafe), TAKE PICTURE (it's too high for you to reach), TALK TO NURSE (she is afraid that the kiddies will jag her in the derriere), NE, N (kiddies sandpit), DIG (with spade, find a key), DROP SPADE, W (corridor), TAKE CASE, X CASE (it's locked), E, S, W (playroom where Turnip and Frank have stopped for a quick snog), OPEN HANDBAG (she doesn't notice), SEARCH HANDBAG, TAKE NAILFILE, E, X MAYPOLE (it's covered in tacks), REMOVE TACK WITH NAILFILE, DROP NAILFILE, SW, JAG NURSE (with tack, she jumps up, pulls the picture down and storms off in a huff), TAKE PICTURE, W, N, GIVE PICTURE (to the little girl who opens the doll's house for you), TAKE CAMERA, S, S (sister's office).

TAKE PHOTOGRAPH OF SISTER (she is now dazed but act quickly as she will remain so for only 15 moves), TAKE CHAIN, N, E, NE (by maypole), STICK PHOTOGRAPH ON DOOR (need tack, so that the kids don't enter and catch Frank and Turnip canoodling), S, DEFUSE WARHEAD (okay if read magazine), UNTIE TEACHER (she runs away), UNLOCK CASE (the kiddies, on seeing the lollies, come up to you), N (the kiddies follow you), SW, W, S (as the sister is still entranced she will not chase the kiddies away), E (the kiddies pull the elastic, which supports the lift doors, and the doors shoot open), DROP CASE (to stop the kiddies from following you), E (inside lift), X PULLEY, CONNECT CHAIN TO PULLEY, PULL CHAIN (the lift rises). When the lift stops something drops to the floor, it's a spider.

Section Three : The Maternity Ward

X SPIDER (you're scared of it), DROP ALL, W, N (nursery), X FRED, TALK TO FRED (he's looking for his sister), ASK FRED ABOUT SISTER, E (it's dark, but there's something about the ceiling), X CEILING (you can just about make out a light fitting), X FITTING (no bulb), N, N (cafe), X BOLLARDS (note response), W, X MASCARA (the colour of the mascara, red, green or blue, corresponds to the colour of bulb you should choose from Georgie), W, S (featureless passage), TALK TO VICKY (someone has pinched the tickets she had printed for a certain Convention), E (Georgie offers you a bulb, thinking you are a nurse), TAKE <colour> BULB (he quickly secretes the other bulbs), W, N (opted-out room), WAIT (for Nora McNamara, your mother), TALK TO NORA (she tells you that she's lost Georgie), ASK NORA ABOUT GEORGIE (she says that he has arachnophobia), E, E, S, S (dark room), INSERT BULB (the room is illuminated and the consultant runs away, sulking), W, S (reception), TALK TO CONSULTANT (she murmurs something about Theseus having dumped her), N, E, N, X THESEUS (he's dressed as a yodler, and has a flower in his hat), X OUTFIT (he's adopted a Swiss role!), ASK THESEUS ABOUT CONSULTANT (he claims she stole some tickets {which he'd earlier stolen} while they were snogging), TAKE FLOWER (from his hat – he says that she's got hayfever too, and leaves), S, W, S (reception), GIVE FLOWER (the consultant absent-mindedly inhales the flower's pollen and runs off in a fit of sneezing, the tickets flying from her cleavage), TAKE TICKETS, N, E, N, W, W, S (featureless passage). Vicky takes the tickets and identifies Fred's sister. You're now at the nursery, and Fred is engaged in a burst of affection for his new-born sister. WAIT (until Fred eventually decides to follow you), S, E (inside lift), SAY TO FRED "TAKE SPIDER", W, N, E, N, N, W, W, S, E (operating theatre – Georgie is shocked at the sight of the spider and runs west), W (he runs north), N (he cowers in a corner), R (until Nora arrives). She treads on the spider and drags Georgie away by the earlobe. Fred is saddened. S (Fred's no longer following you), E, SW (see Pete), TALK TO PETE, X PETE, SCREAM. He looks up and, realizing it's you, tries to fob you off with excuses for not noticing you ... needless to say, they are pathetic excuses ... and, after a brief row with Pete, you head into the delivery room. A healthy baby boy is born and, well, that's the end of the game. However, Julia contemplates that she will need your help in the future, when no doubt she will be having a bit of "TODDLER TROUBLE".

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