

ADVENTURE PROBE

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VOLUME 15 ISSUE 1



WELCOME TO THE NEW MILLENNIUM
MAY YOU ALL LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

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BACK ISSUES

Back issues may be ordered at the current price. Most issues are in stock, but some may have to be reprinted. Volume 1 comprise 19 issues (June 1986 to December 1987), subsequent volumes are 12 issues, January to December .

ADVERTISING RATES

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DISTRIBUTION

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CONTRIBUTIONS

All contributions are gratefully accepted. Please keep me well supplied with computer and adventure-related material. It doesn't matter how brief it is - it may be exactly the information someone needs. 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. Contributions can also be submitted on disc, which will save me a lot of typing.

POSTAL ADDRESS

Please send all correspondence, subscriptions, and of course, contributions, to:

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HALL OF FAME

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

Roger Staff, Mary Scott-Parker, Alex Darracott, Chris Heppinstall,
Dorothy Millard, Frank Fridd, Phil Richmond, Bev Truter,
Julian Spragg, Edwina Brown and Colin Steele

Special thanks to:

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Third Millennium, and yet another issue of Probe - number 176. Some of you have also reached landmarks. Congratulations to Jack Lockerby, and everyone else who became an octogenarian during the past year.

The Pop Quiz seems to have been very popular, and the answers should be enclosed with this issue. If anyone would like to have a go at making up a similar quiz, please send it in.

Bev Truter sent me an interesting email, unfortunately I didn't have enough space to publish it in the letters section, so here it is (my editorial is the always the last page to be completed).

"While reading through some old 1996 Probes, I came across an interesting plea for playtesters (January issue) from a David Haire, I think it was, of Elyzium Software. He apparently intended putting out 2 or 3 games, and wanted playtesters for TRUEFAITH and SMUGGLERS' HAUNT, which would be available for the Spectrum or Spectrum(e). He also mentioned a 2nd game in a trilogy he was currently writing called HEART OF GLASS. Have you any idea what happened? Did he find playtesters? Did he ever release the games? I'm curious to find out if any of the above projects were ever completed, as all had interesting titles, and I don't think I've seen any of them available as either Speccy or Speccy(e) games."

Is anyone in contact with David as he hasn't subscribed to Probe for the last two months, and the email address I have on file no long works. I have written to him at the last known postal address but so far I haven't received a reply. If I do I will publish it in the magazine.

Now for an apology. There has been some confusion between "Ice Station Zero" and "A Spell of Christmas Ice". It seems the solution published last month was indeed for "Ice Station Zero" so please amend your copy accordingly. To help clear up the confusion, Bev has sent me reviews for both games, and Dorothy has sent me the correct solution for "A Spell of Christmas Ice" - all of which will be in the February issue.

Also in the next issue will be an article by Roger Staff entitled Confessions of a Faint-hearted Adventurer, and the second half of Alex Darracott's article, plus, I hope, some more Personality Quizzes.

All the best for 2001,

Barbara

LETTERS

From Bev Truter of Carnegie, Australia

Just finished (well, almost finished) Phil Richmond's new CAT version of Piggery Jokery for the PC; and what a delight it was! I got through to 80% all on my own, no hints! No solution! But then got bogged down with a problem ferret near the end - just couldn't stop the ferret from stealing an earphone I'm trying to give to a bat. I had to peek at a solution, but the solution made no mention of the ferret, so I was wondering if this was a "new" character Phil had added to PIGGY? I don't want to pester him for help (so I've pestered you and Dorothy instead!). Perhaps the ferret only becomes a problem if you leave getting and giving the earphone until you've helped all the other animals?

*

As you know by now, Bev, the ferret is a new feature in Piggery Jokery, and I agree with you about the game - it is my favourite of all Phil's adventures. (Barbara)

From Colin Steele of London

Here is an answer to a question in one of the computer mags, about a PC that was bought without a floppy drive. Nobody at Hamilton Hall this Saturday had heard about it, so maybe you could put it into Probe so that other PC users, everyone, would know.

"Deplorable as it may sound, the floppy disk is finally coming to the end of its long life. Intel and Microsoft recently put their heads together and came up with a new plan called Easy PC. With so many computers being bought these days and more than half a billion users world-wide, the two companies produced a list of ideas that would ultimately increase user-friendliness. One of these was to phase out the floppy disk.

Most computer software now comes on CD-ROM and most small files can be downloaded from the internet, relieving the need for the dated floppy disk."

I hope it was of interest. The moral seems to be, stock up with floppies as one day they'll be like the dodo, dead.

From Frank Fridd of Margate

I was interested in your remarks at the end of the review about not finding any reference to Discworld II Missing Presumed on the internet. If you go to Mr Bill's Adventure Game Website on <http://userdata.acd.net/mrbill/> or through Philip Richmond's website there is a short review of the game under the title, Discworld II Mortality Bytes. Unfortunately Mr Bill does know of anywhere the game can be obtained.

*

*I'm sure those lucky enough to have a copy will find the website useful.
(Barbara)*

From Chris Heppinstall of Didcot

Like Bev Truter, I found Laurence Creighton's way of planning and making his games interesting". The many times I have tried to create an adventure, I have done it in much the same way: simply coming up with a few locations before hand, and then adding things as they come to me - no real plan as such. However, despite my many attempts at coming up with a great game, I tend to lose track very quickly and promptly give up. So, this time around, I have drawn up a little map and am going to go through each methodically and with a plan of how everything will work. Wish me luck!

A few days ago, whilst jumping around links from the if-archive to various sites, I came across a site called "Adventureland", which is attempting to list every single adventure game (presumably only commercial ones... at the moment). It is located at: www.if-legends.org/~adventure/ You can also visit just the root site (www.if-legends.org) and have a little look around. The most interesting section is the 'Hosted Sites' area, which has 8 sites dedicated to adventures of some kind - including a couple of shops for buying/swapping Infocom games, and memorial sites to 'Magnetic Scrolls' and 'Level 9'.

I also regained a copy of WinFrotz - the Inform interpreter and grabbed a few random games. One of which was Curses - Graham Nelson's game which shows off much of Inform's capabilities. I've had a good play on that - and, without exploring it deeply and making the important map - I am finding it very enjoyable, but quite taxing (or maybe I'm just not thinking right). If I get really stuck, I have the Objects and their Uses from sometime last year to help me out. But I would be happy for any more subtle hints and tips to help me along should I require them.

*

Hints for Curses can be found in Volume 12, Issues 10, 11 and 12 - can anyone help with some more? (Barbara)

REVIEWS

6th ANNUAL INTERACTIVE FICTION COMPETITION GAMES 2000

Reviewed by Dorothy Millard on a PC

Some general impressions. I am sure many people will disagree with me but I do find games written in Z Code all look the same. There is no individuality and nothing to grab my attention. I know this is the most popular format and that it is portable between machines, but the games are so boring to look at – they all look the same. I know you can easily change the colour scheme, font, etc. but it's not the same as loading a game and knowing immediately how much effort the author has put into the appearance. HTML Tads gets around this problem by allowing colour and graphics but only two games were written with it. All the rest, and by far the majority, looked the same when first loaded. I remember when using the C64 I could usually tell what sort of game to expect by the colour scheme. If it was the standard blue on blue most likely the game was not going to be anything special, also if it has all the colours of the rainbow! I know that for text games or interactive fiction, as it is now called, the power lies in the text, but I really find some visual clues helpful. I would be interested to know what other people think. I find the WinTads interpreter easier on the eye, maybe it is the colour scheme.

Another thing I noticed while playing the competition games is that in a lot of the games you are not given any indication of your quest, you are just thrown straight into the game. I don't like this, I really like to have some idea of what I am doing. This is not the "memory loss" type game where it is an integral part.

I did consider listing the games in winning order but resisted as I often disagreed with where they are placed. I found that, for the most part, a game needs to be written in Z Code or Tads for it to do well in the IF Competition. It will also do a lot better if it leans towards being a literary piece rather than puzzle-oriented. Therefore, sometimes, although not doing well in the IF competition games are of the type (puzzle-oriented and traditional) enjoyed by text adventure enthusiasts rather than interactive fiction enthusiasts.

Please write in and let me know what you think. Do you agree or disagree with my comments above? Whereabouts would you have placed some of the games? Do you agree or disagree with my comments? I look forward to hearing what other people think.

1-2-3... by Chris Mudd (Z Code) – 42nd

I didn't really know what to make of 1-2-3 at first. It is a crime story, and, for the most part, is puzzleless Interactive Fiction. You just have to input a few directions and ask relevant questions. I played it from the solution as I had no incentive to try to find out the correct questions to ask, but in a weird sort of way I liked it and found it to be a compelling story.

Ad Verbum by Nick Montfort (Z Code) – 4th

Ad Verbum, as the name suggests, involves wordplay like Nord & Bert. With the cantankerous Wizard of Wordplay evicted from his mansion, the worthless plot can now be redeveloped. The city regulations declare, however, that the rip-down job can't proceed until all the items within have been removed. Entire room descriptions begin with the same letter, for example, in one room you can only use words that begin with "s," however the only way to leave is to the north but you can only use "s" words. Other rooms begin with "n" or "e" etc. This game took some getting used to!

Aftermath by Graham Somerville (Tads) – 37th

At the commencement of the game you awake to the cold sensation of dead flesh all around you. You struggle to breathe, trapped beneath bodies of the dead soldiers who once fought beside you. You must get out – but how? This game is somewhat gory so if you don't like references to blood forget it. Aftermath didn't get very good reviews following the competition, mainly because people were stuck at the beginning, but I disagree, as despite the gore I found it interesting.

There was a little wordplay at the start trying to find the correct words to get out of the pit, but having played many Quilled games where it was often necessary to find the correct words to use, it didn't worry me. I found the game to be well-written and fascinating, although there are some misspellings, and would have liked an introduction - a goal for my actions.

And the Waves Choke the Wind by Gunther Schmidl (Z Code) – 16th

This is described as an interactive horror. Retching and choking, you wake up with a terrible headache, to find yourself bound and gagged in a lifeboat. This is a prelude to a much larger game which, presumably, the author plans to release after the competition. It is a H. P. Lovecraft-style horror and the story is told in flashback style. I didn't get very far in this game as I couldn't work out what to do and the hints were disabled!

Asendent by Sourdoh Farenheit & Kelvin Flatbred – 51st

This is described as an interactive hallucintory. Everything is misspelt on purpose (including the title!) I gave up very quickly on this one when I died for no apparent reason on entering the "boredroom" and was "fired to a sinder" by an angry red dragon. I couldn't work out what I was supposed to

be doing, there was no help or hints, and I couldn't stand the misspelling, even if it was meant to be that way. I still don't know, nor care, what it is about.

At Wit's End by Mike J. Sousa (Tads) – 17th

At Wit's End started off on a baseball field, One false step renders the game unwinnable. It appears to be well-programmed although very hard in places and nigh-on impossible to solve without frequent use of the save/restore/undo feature. I "failed to be a hero" on more than one occasion. With no knowledge of, nor interest in, baseball and finding the hints unhelpful, so I had no idea what to do and no real incentive to find out, I gave up and moved on to the next game.

Being Andrew Plotkin by J. Robinson Wheeler (Z Code) – 3rd

Speech in Being Andrew Plotkin is handled by giving you a choice of things to say, ie 1, 2 or 3. I must admit that I like this as it takes a lot of guesswork out of choosing what to say, which usually frustrates me. The game opens up once you are past the introduction and arrive "in Zarf's head." Being Andrew Plotkin is meant to be a humorous game but I failed to appreciate it or to understand most of what it was about. Although it rated well it did nothing to hold my interest and I gave up half-way though.

Best Man, The by Rob Menke (Z Code) – 15th

You are attending your best friend's wedding in San Diego but, of course, something goes horribly wrong. The problems start when coffee is spilt on your jacket, but if you are too slow you are "accidentally" shot by a group of armed terrorists. The atmosphere is good and this game is worth persevering with, although the timer can be a nuisance and some of the situations were of the "guess-the-verb" variety.

Big Mama, The by Brendan Barnwell (Z Code) – 20th

In The Big Mamma you play a guy who's "bummin'" on the beach after getting dumped by his girlfriend. You wander around, talk to people, and things happen. It has a menu-based conversation system which largely controls how the storyline progresses. There are lots of little games, some of which can be won in more than three or four moves, but I didn't feel that this worked.

Breaking the Code by Anonymous aka Gunther Schmidl (Z Code) – 53rd

Well, I got the two pieces of paper – now what! I couldn't make head or tail of Breaking the Code. It left me bewildered. No wonder it came 53rd, no-one knew what to do! It was revealed post-Comp that it contains code to make your own DVD player – I wonder why?

Castle Amnos by John Evans (Z Code) – 30th

Castle Amnos commences with you in the wizard's workshop with true text adventure type objects just waiting to be picked up, a bronze key, a small cage, a ring and a chalice, but you can't quite reach them. It is an open-ended fantasy game which gives you the opportunity to take multiple paths to find multiple endings.

Clock, The by Cleopatra Kozlowski (Tads) – 38th

Kitty called you up last night at some inhuman time, and implored you to come over to her house at the edge of town. You've known Kitty for many years, but still can't quite make her out. The only sure thing is that she never fails to get you into some sort of trouble. But you've finally agreed to stay at her strange house for a few nights, while she's away on some "extremely important business." When you arrive, already in the middle of the night, you find Kitty in a state of turmoil. Still, she lets you in, and before you know it, she is gone. Strangely, you don't hear her open or close the door - in fact, the door leading outside has been left locked, and you haven't got the key. So it seems you are trapped here until Kitty returns. You walk around the house a bit, and find that it is no ordinary house. It is a small clock tower, so that when the Clock strikes, the sound resounds through the whole house. You try to get some sleep on Kitty's bed, but the clock keeps waking you up every hour. However, eventually you manage to doze off.....

Thus, the game begins. It is nice to have the scene set before playing the game. The Clock is a traditional type of game (probably why it got such a poor rating) and you do "mundane things" like read note and examine book to elicit information, I noticed some spelling and grammatical errors but nothing too serious. It isn't "literary" in the way that many of the other games in the IF competition are, but if it's puzzles you're looking for then you'll enjoy this one.

Comp00ter Game by Austin Thorvald (Z Code) – 49th

This game is a weird joke, but I didn't find it funny. I still don't know what it was about, I just couldn't be bothered reading any more of the text. It has appalling spelling and grammar but this is intended. Had I voted my score would have been zero. Play it at your peril!

Crimson Spring by Robb Sherwin (Hugo) – Joint 23rd

In 2015 a costumed superhero named Red Cloud left her apartment and was brutally murdered sometime between one and three in the morning. As it states in the game you control the actions of a masked vigilante, the Holy Avenger, and decide how to proceed with the investigation, interpret his moral code and treat the other characters in the game. The game itself owes more towards the "fiction" side of IF and is really meant to be played

straight through. I played the updated version of this game distributed following the competition, with additional pictures. After playing all the Z Code games which all look alike, this was a pleasant change – a different layout and with sound too, although after a while I had had enough and was reaching for the volume control.

There is a simple menu system to interact with NPC's and the author has eliminated the need to open and close doors, simple IN or OUT suffices – wonderful! There is a lot of well-written text to read and it has been professionally put together. I haven't got far into the game yet but it definitely looks interesting.

Desert Heat by Papillon (Tads) – 28th

You are warned at the start that Desert Heat is intended for mature readers and may contain explicit sexual scenes and/or questionable consensuality. The game starts with you as a high-born Arab woman, alone in your room pondering, and it branches from there. There are dozens of endings to be found and several major branches to follow. It is well written and filled with well developed characters, including yourself. Play is choose-your-own-adventure style.

Djinni Chronicles, The by J. D. Berry (DOS Prompt or Z Code) – 14th

You are a djinni, discovered and summoned by various masters, whose wishes you strive to grant. The nature of your existence is such that you can't stray far from your "container," the vessel where you reside. The past-tense takes some getting used to and picking up on the rules takes a while. The limitations of the character are a little frustrating, hence it took me some time to work out what to do. Djinni Chronicles is quite linear but the puzzles are integrated into the plot. I had to resort to the hints to get anywhere. This is an unusual but not uninteresting game.

Dinner with Andre by Liza Daly – 18th

Commencing in a restaurant, Dinner with Andre is a well written original game about a date from hell. It starts out as a story-based game but then poses increasingly difficult obstacles in your path. I was "publicly humiliated" for getting it wrong on more than one occasion! Once past the main puzzles there are some interesting plot twists.

End Means Escape, The by Stephen Kodat (Tads) – 21st

In The End Means Escape you are thrown into the deep end with no idea of your challenge. I examined a number of items, read the book and through persistence eventually persuaded the door to open to receive the following response "Fine," it whimpers "You want to see what's on the other side? Then look..." "My highest purpose, my greatest goal, is to be a void that travellers pass through..." I checked the hints file and was told that I need

to leave the room, but when I typed OUT I received the message "The walls insist, "You shouldn't leave like this." When I tried to EXIT DOOR I was told that my thoughts become muddled. I thought the response to EXAMINE SCISSORS was interesting "Gleaming chrome twists and folds upon itself, quivering like mercury." I would never have likened scissors to mercury!

With muddled thoughts, doors and walls talking to me, and text that didn't really make much sense, I was none the wiser as to what this game is about and quickly lost interest. Maybe it is too "deep and meaningful" for me! I was glad to escape to another game!

Enlisted by G. F. Berry (Z Code) – Joint 23rd

Enlisted is a modern Trek style space game in which you enlist in a routine spacefaring mission only to find yourself and your crew in deep trouble. There is a lot of text to read, but it is well written and interesting. There are no objects to manipulate and for the most part you are "led" through the first part of the game. Later on I died a few times. I found it necessary to follow the walk through when it came to the space walk as I got completely lost. This is a difficult game and is longer than most competition games.

Escape from Crulistan by Alan Smithee (Windows) – 43rd

Crulistan, a country lying somewhere between Iraq and a hard place, has **seen** a lot of unrest over the years. As a reporter for a foreign newspaper, you have been stranded in the capital during a particularly dangerous time where the situation has reached crisis proportions. In other countries, martial law would have been imposed at that point, but not in Crulistan, where martial law has already been in place for decades. Presently under the iron rule of Sheikh Rottan as-Salami and his Holy Guard units, the regime is rather hostile to foreigners and sure enough, you have been thrown into jail and sentenced to death as a spy. Now you must escape. I would have liked a few more synonyms as I had a bit of trouble finding the right words to use and the NPC's wouldn't talk to me. It has a limited vocabulary which is a pity as it made the game frustrating to play. Worth a look though.

Futz Mutz by Tim Simmons (HTML Tads) – 25th

Played with HTML Tads you must have an updated interpreter before the game will load. Described as an interactive romp, Futz Mutz, is pleasant change. When you load Futz Mutz you are greeted by a colourful opening screen and music which immediately gave it bonus points for me! Eventually the music gets a little annoying but don't be tempted to turn it off or you miss sound effects and other things later in the game.

You are a dog and the game commences with you in a cage in a pet shop. I though the writing was quite humorous, especially the description of the

pet shop owner who is “calorically challenged.” I must remember that one! I loved it when you type bark and you actually hear it. The author thanked his dog for providing the sound effect. I liked this game – a bit of light humour, although be prepared for some mature language later on. It even has a nice closing screen when you type quit. I don’t know what happens if you win as I haven’t got that far yet.

Got ID? by Marc Valhara (Z Code) – 29th

A good old-fashioned puzzle-filled game, Got ID? is the story of your quest to endear yourself to the in-crowd by bringing a case of beer to their party, but there is a complication in that you are underage. This is one of the larger competition games with lots of locations to explore which need careful mapping. It has an inventory limit of five items and terse location descriptions, but on the whole the game is worth a look.

Guess the Verb! by Leonard Richardson (Z Code) 11th

This year (finally) your parents have decided that you’re old enough to wander the midway of the Avogadro County Fair without adult supervision. You are drawn to a brightly lit carnival booth that invites you to “Guess the Verb!” Here you meet Lalrry, the natural language parser with a heart of gold. He’ll take your guess and spin the wheel. Guess correctly and you’ll take home a stuffed frog. Guess incorrectly and suddenly you’ll embark on adventures with much higher stakes - including your life! You must explore, plunder and stay alive - all while avoiding the most terrible of fates, being reunited with your parents. I enjoyed this game.

Happy Ever After by Robert M. Camisa (Z Code) – 34th

Having been dumped by a lady, you receive a letter from your Uncle Steve offering you the job of looking after his hotel/museum while he goes on vacation. It was lonely and isolated and seemed the perfect place to heal a broken heart. Happy Ever After is a modern fairy tale with a dash of science fiction thrown in. The storyline is original and the game has some good puzzles, especially Merlin’s alchemy machine, although I found the doors a bit of a mystery. You unlock a gold door which vanishes in the traditional puff of smoke only to be replaced by a brass door, so you unlock that one and it is replaced in the same way by an iron door. On the whole though this game has lots of puzzles to mull over and is worth playing.

Infil-traitor by Anonymous aka Chris Charla (BASIC) – 48th

You are Drake Cartright, master spy for the CIA. The situation in Vladistan is tense. Both the East and the West use Vladistan as a crossroads for their international efforts to spread their ideology across the globe. You fight for freedom and against tyranny, and now your fight has led you here, to Vladstoka.

Make sure you read the readme file that comes with this game as it has rather interesting background information. A living artefact of adventure games past. I quote from the text "Considering that this was to be released at the same time as Zork II, it's pretty primitive, but I think the game is surprisingly fun to play. (It's also super easy. I beat it in an hour). It's also cool to play a new game from way back when, especially if you're in the mood for some nostalgia." Infil-traitor has the typical two word parser of that era.

I was pleasantly surprised at finding this piece of nostalgia so far down the list of games. Don't be put off by it's poor rating in the competition, this is a must play for text adventure enthusiasts.

Jarod's Journey by Tim Emmerich (HTML Tads) – 47th

Written with HTML Tads Jarod's Journey is enhanced with special formatting, interface improvements and graphics and therefore needs the latest interpreter to run. It tells the story of a boy who learns about Jesus and expects the player to follow along and learn with him. Although reasonably well written this is Interactive Fiction only in the very loosest sense of the word.

Kaged by Ian Finley (Tads) – 1st

The opening paragraph of Kaged sets the scene so well that I have copied it out below:

"The madness started a week ago. The entire Citadel of Justice is on razor edge. It began in the Department of Enforcing when a patrolman shot his partner. He begged to be locked away, claiming to see devils. Two days later they found Henrik from the Office of Filing in the courtyard, dozens of dead starlings at his feet and his naked body smeared with blood. They carted him off to hospital on the next train. And then, yesterday, Geta your superior in the Office of Documentation, found her way to the thirtieth story of this great building and leapt to her death. Some say it's the brutal heat wave over the city, some say the air, some whisper about... other things. The Citadel trembles with quiet, bureaucratic panic, but you force calm into your body. Now is not the time. You have an interview with the High Inquisitor himself today. You must not appear afraid."

Kaged is original, well-written story with a rich vocabulary, but I couldn't figure out exactly who was on which side sometimes, which caused some confusion and spoil the atmosphere.

[The rest of the reviews will be published next month Barbara]

ORB OF LIGHT

Published by Wilson Software

**Reviewed by Dorothy Millard on a PC under C64
emulation**

The opening screen describes Orb of Light as a source of great power. For many years it was the treasure of King Elrad, but Zalam, his neighbour and enemy, desired the orb and declared war on Elrad. After many years of fighting Elrad was killed and the orb was taken. Zalam, not wishing to give up the orb, took refuge in the caves. Many warriors and travellers have set out to find the orb and to bring it back to its rightful place, but all have failed. Thus your quest begins to find the Orb of Light.

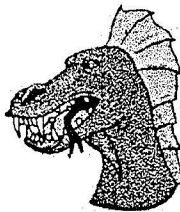
This game is great for the ego. It is a nice easy romp which most adventurers will be able to complete easily without the need for hints. I enjoyed playing it, however you will need to overlook a number of spelling errors, ie. hey instead of hay.

Starting in the chamber of light in the palace of King Elrad II I picked up a conveniently placed sword (all objects are just lying around waiting to be picked up), and headed towards the river. After crossing the river I meet with a troll who was easily pleased with some food allowing me to enter the small hut. The dragon blocking the cave exit was soon despatched but a strange magical force prevented me from entering the cave. Along the way I met a snake, barlog (whatever that is) and cyclops.

Once past the guard I entered King Zalam's palace to a great hall where I met the king himself guarding a crystal cage containing the orb of my quest. I despatched the king only to find his spirit preventing me from taking the orb. Once obtained I returned to the chamber of light with the orb to gain my reward and be escorted to my own palace to complete the game.

To summaries, it is a nice short romp which is good for the ego.

[Dorothy has sent me a copy of the disk image. If you would like a copy, please let me know; it also requires a C64 emulator.... Barbara]



TIME QUEST

Written by P L Robinson

Reviewed by Bev Truter on a PC under Spectrum emulation

The title TIME QUEST is a bit misleading, as this game has almost nothing to do with travels in or through time, it's more your average run-of-the-mill treasure hunt. The very short on-screen introduction describes T-Q as follows:

'Due to a quirk of nature you find yourself cast back in time to a strange land. Here you are befriended by a kind but very poor people. Their king promises to reward you if you search the lands outside his kingdom and return with the Seven Fabulous Treasures.'

Well, after that rather vague, illogical and unsatisfying beginning I wasn't going to hold my breath while waiting for T-Q to turn into a magnificent game, but it certainly turned out more interesting to play than you'd expect from the somewhat dull introduction. T-Q is surprisingly large for an elderly Spectrum (QUILL) text adventure, roaming over 65 locations. But then most of the room descriptions are fairly short, only 2 or 3 lines per location, and nearly all the puzzles are pretty basic and simple to solve, avoiding complicated programming altogether. Given the plot of T-Q (the old hunt-the-treasures theme), its simplicity and its age (mid-eighties, I'd guess), I was pleasantly surprised to find this still an enjoyable game to play. The geography of T-Q is interesting, despite decidedly short room descriptions, and there's enough atmosphere generated to keep one intrigued in progressing through the game and solving various problems. Dogged determination to find all seven treasures kept me glued to the computer for an entire afternoon and a good part of the evening.

Spelling and grammar seemed generally OK, although I found one annoying error with the spelling of "prise" (as in "lever"). At one point in the game you have to prise the lid off an object, and the command won't work unless you mis-spell it as PRIZE LID. Most of the puzzles in T-Q relate to moving objects about to discover hidden items, eg. PULL W, PUSH X, MOVE Y, ROLL Z. The 7 treasures you must find for the king are all standard treasure items, like the ubiquitous diamond ring, golden crown, etc.

In a few places it was difficult to guess the required input, due to parser limitations and lack of synonyms for verbs. For instance, you can't read some writing on a wall, you must examine it; and in another part of the game the verb needed to move a crate is quite unexpected and hard to

guess. At other times you might have the right input, but the command won't work if you aren't carrying the 'correct' item to deal with a particular object, and there is no hint in the game's response to your various efforts, other than the standard "you can't".

T-Q is a complete one-part game, but there are 4 different sections, or areas, within it. Each section is accessed by a magic word, so to progress through the whole game you'll have to discover 3 magic words, the last of which deposits you back home in your own living room in front of the fire.

Despite a few reservations, I'd recommend TIME QUEST as a reasonably interesting game to spend a few hours playing, if only to compare how much text adventures have improved over the years, especially more recent Spectrum text games written with the PAW or QUILL.

TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY (TKV)

Published by Bug Byte

Reviewed by Julian Spragg on a PC under Spectrum

Emulation (ZX Emulator V2.00.04.04 Beta by Vaggelis

Kapartzianis which emulates all Spectrums (48K and 128K) and is freeware)

Well, this really is a nostalgia trip for me. I first remember playing this game on my trusty BBC Micro way back in 1984 and was hooked on it even back then. I remember looking on in awe at the excellent (by 1984 standards) graphics which really did add to the atmosphere of the game. Up until then, I had spent most of my time playing (and being stuck in) Acomsoft Games such as Castle of Riddles and Philosophers Quest and had wondered why graphics seemed never destined to make an appearance in BBC games (such as those of the Hobbit on the Spectrum). So imagine my delight when the game loaded and I first saw that dusty valley road in all its graphical glory. Now this game was groundbreaking in a number of ways. It boasted 180 locations (150 illustrated) and at the time of release of the Spectrum version, claimed that more locations were in it than any other game. I know that the number of locations is by no means an indication of the quality of the game, but I do remember in the 80's there was a bit of a battle to see which software house could cram the most locations into a game. I believe that Level 9 won the crown with Snowball which claimed a vast number (into the 1000's I think). Anyway, imagine my delight when one Sunday afternoon I was surfing and came across the Z80 snapshot file on one of my favourite Internet sites. I quickly downloaded it and once again, that dusty valley road appeared awaiting my next instruction.

Right, on with the plot. TKV is set in one of many valleys surrounding the vast lake of Watersmeet. This lake has magical properties as a result of the countless potions that have been spilt into the lake over many years by the witches and wizards living upstream by its many tributaries. It is also rumoured that a wise man may look upon the Secret of Life which is located nearby. TKV is ruled over by two kings who hate each other. You have rented a small hut from the innkeeper of the Sword Inn where you can safely stash any treasure you find. Outside this hut by a road junction is where you start the game.

The first thing I did was to go north into the hut where several useful objects were lying around. I picked these up and went south back to the junction. After wandering around a mountain range, a moor and finding my way into the Sword Inn where an elf and an innkeeper were sitting I thought it was time to start the game in earnest. I headed back to the hut and west along the road and came to a disused flint quarry where a small flint stone was waiting to be picked up. I went east back onto the road and then north into the forest where I chanced on a locked brass grate. Having already picked up the brass key I unlocked the grate and thought I may as well have a look around above ground while I was here. I carried on north on the forest path and followed a stream which became a river leading to a waterfall. It was here that I thought I may as well fill up the jug I was carrying with fresh water as you never know when this may come in handy. I followed a winding footpath west along a cliff top and carried on north descending into a canyon. I carried on west into the canyon and met an elf who carried nothing and didn't attack me, which was a bonus. Ignoring him and continuing west, I went through a narrow fissure and seemed to be getting nearer a large lake HOWEVER the elf appeared again, this time carrying an axe (not so good). I ignored him and carried on west, ending up at Watersmeet. Hmmm, I wonder if a swim is the order of the day. Only one thing for it, here goes.....

That it where I shall leave it. Although the location descriptions are brief the game does have plenty of atmosphere and contains some intriguing puzzles. There are plenty of locations, so for those who enjoy mapping it is quite a challenge. One thing about it though, it doesn't seem to support any load / save options in the game itself, however under emulation this is not a problem as I use the emulator load / save menu options to snapshot the game at different points. I have only just scratched the surface of this game and will certainly keep plugging away until the secret of life is revealed. Indeed, I haven't even descended into the unlocked grate yet. If anything, this game allows you to wander around for quite a while without anything significant happening, but to me this adds to its non-linear feel.

I recommend this game as although it doesn't rank up there with the true greats, it is a nice game and what is more, it is free. I have sent the snapshot file together with the solution as a text file to Barbara.

One final question I have; Does anyone out there use a Spectrum Emulator on their PC which will let you load and save from within the adventure game to your PC's hard disk ? I ask this as several multi-part games require a saved position to go from one part to the next, and the emulator I use does not do this. If so, could you let me know which Emulator will do this ? Many thanks.

Available from Adventure Probe and from the Internet Site

<http://www.void.jump.org/textadv/t.html>

[Bev Truter wrote an article "Playing Multiple-part Spectrum Games on the PC Under Emulation" which was published in Probe, July 1998, Vol.12 Issue 7. If anyone would like a copy of the article, please let me know....Barbara]

IN OTHER WORDS ... sent in by Jack Lockerby

A Washington Post competition invited readers to invent new meanings for existing words. Here are some of the best.

ABDICATE (*v*) to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach.

ESPLANADE (*v*) to attempt an explanation while drunk.

WILLY-NILLY (*adj*) impotent.

LYMPH (*v*) to walk with a lisp.

FLABBERGASTED (*adj*) appalled over how much weight you have gained.

COFFEE (*n*) a person who is coughed upon.

BALDERDASH (*n*) a rapidly receding hairline.

TESTICLE (*n*) a humorous question on an exam.

CIRCUMVENT (*n*) the opening in the front of boxer shorts.

More at

<http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/style/columns/styleinvitational/>

GUIDE TO PLAYING TEXT ADVENTURES - PART ONE

'The Structure of Text Adventure Games'

by Alex Darracott

HELLOS AND INTRODUCTION

Hello readers and welcome to the first in a two part series of 'Guide to playing Text Adventures'. In this series, I'll take you on a journey of education and advice on how to play text adventures how to overcome some of the most common types of problems and delving into the technical world of the structure of text adventure games. So pull up a comfy sofa, a glass of your favourite drink (or even a whole bottle if you prefer), and enjoy this first part of what I hope will be an informative, entertaining read.

The first part of the series (the very one you are reading right now) will cover the technical aspects of adventure games in the most 'plain English' way possible.

This part will be split into two sections; section 1 will contain the basics of the command structure, explaining how to use commands effectively as well as an explanation on how the parser works. In section 2 I will be discussing the communication structure of text adventures; delving deeper into the parser and explaining its role in communications, as well as discussing the effective use of messages and other sections referring to communications.

SECTION 1 'The Adventure Basics'

On every location that you enter you see the 'Command Prompt', which is your means of communicating with the game. A command prompt commonly looks something like this:

>

or

WHAT NEXT?

You communicate with the game by using what is known as 'Commands' and these tell the game what action you wish to carry out. Back in the old days of adventure games these actions comprised of the famous 'Verb/ Noun' system (examples: GET BOOK, PULL LEVER, OPEN DOOR). But as time progressed and technology matured so did the intelligence of adventure games, reflected by the inclusion of more word classifications and a better understanding from the parser (in some cases anyway). I will discuss this further in section 2.

After entering your command the game will then communicate in response to your command by giving you two possible replies. These replies are known as messages and tell you whether or not the game understands your command or not. The commands that the game understands depend on the words that the parser understands. I will cover the parser in further detail later on, but for now I will just say that the parser is the tool that processes all the commands that you enter, creating the messages. In other words, the parser is in charge with how the game relates to all of the commands that you enter.

COMMANDS

As I mentioned earlier you communicate with the game by using commands; a set of instructions telling the game what action you wish to carry out.

The most basic form of command is the 'VERB/NOUN' action, prevalent in the old days of adventuring. This did change later on, but the basic idea behind text adventure games, and all these other flashy adventure games on the Playstation and PC, are still the same; using objects to your advantage in order to progress further in the game.

There are several different categories that these commands come under:

* CHARACTER HANDLING COMMANDS

This is where you use an assortment of commands to interact with any characters in the game – either talking to them to gain advice or clues as to what to do, or to find out about a particular event or person. Or to get them to carry out jobs for you whilst you deal with other tasks that need to be done. Because I could discuss the features of this for ages, I will produce an article for this in the future.

* OBJECT HANDLING COMMANDS

This category deals with using and manipulating objects to your own advantage, either by using them in different ways, giving them to someone, or whatever. As with the Character Handling commands, I will be producing another article covering the features of this category in the future.

* DIRECTIONAL COMMANDS

These commands allow you to actually 'walk' through the game in the direction that you specified. The commands are 'North', 'South', 'East', and 'West'. Or they can be abbreviated to 'N', 'S', 'E', 'W'. In addition, there's also the 'In' and 'Out' or 'Exit'. The possible exits from a location are specified on screen, though there are some games that do not do this, and I find this rather annoying.

There are short cuts that skip the use of having from location to location, by way of using special, high level commands.

1. 'GOTO'

This special command allows you to travel, location by location, to a destination that you specify. Very useful when you need to get somewhere but you can't remember or don't know where it is.

A word of warning: although you automatically travel to your specified destination location by location, the path taken to get there is determined by the game therefore there is a chance that the path could actually take you to your doom. I have heard the 'Guild of Thieves' is a good example of this.

2. 'RUNTO'

This is similar to the 'GOTO' command, but this command immediately takes you to the specified destination without having to tediously go through each location to get there.

3. 'FOLLOW'

This command enables you to follow something that you specify, whether it is a fellow in game character or anything else. An excellent example of this command is used prevalently in Level 9's classic gem Gnome Ranger for the Spectrum, Commodore and Amstrad (better mention the Amstrad for my Dad!!!!!!)

* EXPLORATION COMMANDS

The two primary searching commands are the 'EXAMINE' and 'SEARCH', and there is a significant difference between the two.

The 'EXAMINE' command gives you the ability to simply look at an object from a certain distance. You generally get the bare essentials of the object, like a description of it that usually contains clues as to where to use it.

The 'SEARCH' command is a lot more in-depth as it allows you to look at the object more closely and carefully than the 'examine' command. To compare and explain more clearly, the 'examine' command only lets you look at the object from a distance – you don't have any sort of physical interaction with it. The 'search' command allows you to 'feel' around the object, which has the renowned and profound effect of revealing other objects concealed within.

I'll give a practical example on how these two can be use will a seeming simple box.

>EXAMINE BOX

The box is quite small, wooden, quite plain looking. It looks like the box is made of oak.

>SEARCH BOX

You search the box carefully and from within you find a key, a box of matches and a map.

The above example illustrates the primary difference between the two exploration commands – the examine command only lets you look at an object from a distance, but the search command allows you interact with objects in a way that may cause the revelation of hidden objects. I 'd certainly recommend that you try out both commands in all adventure games that you play, as you never know what you will discover.

THE GREAT DEBATE

After reading through old issues of Amstrad Action and Adventure I came across something of a debate with the examine aspect of adventure games. Gamers on one side of the argument felt that the examine aspect should be omitted, saying that it serves no real purpose to the gameplay. However, gamers on the other side stated that the ability to explore and investigate the game's environment added a lot to the imagination, general atmosphere and gives gamers a great feeling of involvement and interaction with the game. After listing to both sides of the argument I have drawn my own conclusions on the topic.

Having the ability to explore the environment within the game gives me a great feeling of in-game involvement and interaction. I feel that without this ability, adventure games would have a feeling of emptiness.

In addition, the ability to examine and search enhances a game's atmosphere: an object with a ghostly, supernatural description adds a lot to the atmosphere of a horror style adventure game, leaving you with chills running up and down your spine!

Not only does this command make a game more interactive, it can also play a valuable part in solving a puzzle by giving you clues in the description without actually telling you exactly what it is for and where to use it, if you see what I mean.

For me, the reason why the examine and searching commands should be implemented in all games is quite simple: *Homo Sapiens* (that's us) have the natural desire to explore and examine the world around us, especially

areas and places that we have never been to. I go out on plenty of walks where I live down here in Padstow, Cornwall, and when I come across a part of a footpath that is new to me or an old building that I haven't seen before, I have an instant desire to explore that area or building. The same principle applies to adventure games – I have a desire to explore and examine everything and anything.

SECTION 2: THE COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE

Communicating with a game is much like communicating with a human being - if someone possesses great communication skills then he/she would immediately attract people's attention and could keep hold of it for a long period of time. The listeners would become hooked and would listen to every word that the speaker was saying.

More or less the same principles can be applied to the communication system of an adventure game – if a game possesses a great level of communication then it would immediately attract gamers' attention and maintain their interest for a very long time.

Adventure games can't talk to you like humans can, obviously, so how do they communicate with you? By using what is known as 'Messages'.

MESSAGES

Messages appear after you have ordered a game to carry out an action (as described in the first section). The content of the message is the key to distinguish between the two primary types of messages – the 'Positive' message and the 'Negative' message.

NEGATIVE MESSAGES (aka Error Message)

Probably the most dreaded aspect of adventure after the sudden death scenes, error messages state to you that something has gone wrong with the command that you entered. The problems are varied, but the ones I am going to deal with for the purpose of this article are problems with its dealings with words.

The purpose of the error message is to tell you which word it may be having difficulty with so that you can try out another word. There are two kinds of Error Messaging: 'Constructive error message', and 'Non-Constructive error message'.

CONSTRUCTIVE ERROR MESSAGE

A constructive error message tells you on screen exactly what word it is having difficulties with. Let's take a look at an example:

```
>GET BOTTLE          (Your command)
I don't understand 'GET'.  (The constructive error message)
```

Here we see that the game has a problem with the verb 'GET'. The reason why it is constructive is because it helps you to understand the game's vocabulary (more on this later) by stating what words the game does not understand. You could use this information to construct a table of paper of the words that a game does and does not understand.

NON-CONSTRUCTIVE ERROR MESSAGES

Non-constructive error message are completely the opposite, as they completely ignore the errors in the command, therefore ignoring any words it does not understand, and takes you back to the command prompt.

Thankfully this type of error messaging is not all the proliferate, and never has been, but when it does occur it is annoying as you would have no idea as to what word it is having trouble with. Therefore, problems take longer to solve than they should do.

POSITIVE ERROR MESSAGES.

Positive error messages indicate the command that you have entered has been fully understood and the action has been carried out successfully. On screen, it would look like the following example:

```
>GET BOOK          (your command)
OK                 (the positive error message)
```

So when does the game know when to give a positive or negative message? How does the game know when the wrong words are used? How on Earth can a game know what is right or wrong? What aspect of adventuring is assigned to the job of processing all the commands and producing the messages? What is the true meaning of life? Will humans have the technology in the future to leave Earth to search for a habitable planet before the Sun swallows up our planet in roughly 4.5 billion years time?

The answer to, well, some of these questions can be found in next month's Probe.

THE SORRY SAGA OF UNMETERED INTERNET ACCESS

*(Or Much ado about something which
doesn't yet exist)*

by John Ferris

All quotes in italics are taken from Mark Jackson's series of Unmetered articles on ISPReview (www.ispreview.co.uk), with his permission and my thanks. As such they are his opinions and not necessarily mine. The ISPReview site is recommended, even if it is just by me, for anyone who wants to keep up with Internet access in general.

I've read the recent letters from George Rawson and Kez Gray regarding their problems with Freeserve's Time Unlimited option. Like a lot of ISP's, Freeserve have begun to provide what is called "unmetered" Internet access, for a flat rate monthly fee. However, there's no such thing as unmetered for anyone using the local loop (the bit of wire that goes from the house to the telegraph pole to the local exchange.)

BT own this local loop, any call using this local loop incurs a charge from BT. Cable customers are a different case as they don't use this loop, they connect direct to the cable network via the underground cable.

What is Unmetered then?

Unmetered simply means you paying a pre-charge for an allotted amount of time, in the case of most ISPs that comes out as a monthly fee. Between these times there should be no additional charges, hence the term unmetered. The problem is that consumers are being offered a technology, which nobody has actually produced yet.

Every single package or system from 0800 No.'s to BTSurftime and FRIACO has an underlying charge. Every minute you spend online with a BTSurftime or FRIACO package costs the ISP or Telco provider (if not BT) a per-minute charge. Details on these charges are not widely publicised and as such we can't be sure what they are, although standard 0800's are the most expensive.

A big problem with the marketing of these alleged unmetered packages is that what the ISP thought they were selling and what we thought we were buying were two different things.

We thought we were buying an unlimited surfing time package, that for a set fee we can use the Internet as much as we want and in the case of the 24/7 packages, whenever we want, using a free phone 0800 number. This sounded very much like the legendary free lunch.

The ISP thought they were selling something more like a prepaid mobile phone package. They assumed that the average surfer used the Internet for x hours a day and priced the offer accordingly. For some reason they believed that usage would not change when their offer hit the streets. So when everyone started to use the service for 5x hours because it was free lunch time, they were hit very bad. But perhaps they weren't exactly honest with what they were selling.

Looking at a possible cost model for the cheapest FRIACO option (don't worry if you don't follow this, just look at Mark's sums):

- *Port Costs (£430PA for one 64Kbps port [Est. £35 per month]).*
- *Network costs (varies depending on ISP - includes backbone and services [webspace etc.]).*
- *Metered call costs.*

Per user the network costs would probably come to around £5 per month and port costs would be turned into profit by using ratios. A standard/good unmetered ISP ratio (barring in mind usage is higher on unmetered) might be 1:5, which means one modem/terminal to five users (customers).

So we now end up with a monthly charge of around £7 per user for a port (35 / 5 = 7), thus making a current total of £12 .inc. VAT. Then lets take into account the cost of (0800) calls, which could incur a per-minute charge of 0.3pence per minute (actual charge not 100% known). That makes for 18pence an hour, so if we say 30Days = 1Month then look at how it effects just the lowest usage of 2 and 3 hours.

2 - 3Hours = £10.80 / £16.20 (Call Costs)

So if we assume somebody surfs under FRIACO for 2Hours a day and continues to do so for 30Days on our ISP model then for just the 2 hour option that looks like this:

Hours per day for 30Days = £10.80 + £5 + £7 = £22.80 Per Month .inc. VAT

Now if we compare this to a standard 0845 ISP whose network costs are £5, doesn't have any real port costs (not huge anyway) and is surfing off-peak at around 0.9pence per minute. That works out as 54pence an hour, or £1.08 for two hours, thus:

2Hours per day for 30Days = £32.40 + £5 = £37.40 Per Month .inc. VAT

Thus you have a saving of £14.60 per month, so it's by no means perfect, but does give you a unique viewpoint. Please also remember to add an extra £2 onto both for the ISPs commission, although they usually take more if possible.

From the above you should easily be able to see the problem ISPs face, now imagine if you surfed for 12 Hours each day for 30Days. That'd work out as £2.16 per day; it may seem fine but just look at it over 30days:

12Hours per day for 30Days = £64.80 + £5 + £7 = £76.80 (360 Hours per month)

[This means the ISP loses £52 per user each month at that usage rate]

Think that's bad? Well then, take a look at how it'd appear under the aforementioned off-peak local call rate:

12Hours per day for 30Days = £194.40 + £5 = £199.40 Per Month

In this case, as in most others, the free lunch is just a mirage and vanishes into thin air, leaving the ISP with huge bills to face. But that's not our problem, is it? Actually it is, since we are causing it by trying to use the system as it was sold to us. So what does the ISP do to avoid bankruptcy?

- ***Use a higher ratio so you have less modems and more users - only works with smaller ISPs (big ones - Freeserve - get into serious troubles).*** [This is where engaged tones come into it.]
- *Increase the monthly price (would be fine if the market hadn't become so competitive as to screw each other out of using higher prices).*
- *Decrease the overall network speed and thus cost (works, but not enough to make any difference).*
- ***Kick all those who use more than you'd like them to do (common and very efficient way of doing things - a result of their own false advertising though).***

The first point is what Kez and George and everyone else is suffering at the moment. Believe it or not, the cut-off (be it 1, 2 or 3 hours) is supposed to be a self-defence mechanism to stop people "abusing" the system by trying to use it continuously. This is annoying but I can live with it. When my connection turns off after 2 hours I know I've been on too long.

I'm concerned also with Kez reporting that her connection cuts out if no web pages have been turned. I know most unmetered ISP's have an idle cut out, in that the connection closes if there has been no data traffic down the line for more than 10/20 minutes. Again I actually appreciate this (mostly), I use it when downloading big files, I know that the connection will close by itself and I can leave the PC with the monitor off and go for a walk, or watch TV or whatever.

But to cut out whilst the line is busy with a download like that and just to count web page visits is, in my opinion, very, very poor. A possible reason for doing it that way is to combat "pinging." This is where the user has a program which sends a signal down the line every five minutes, to keep the line open even if the user is down the pub. Most ISP's see this rightly as abuse. Shout at Freeserve louder, Kez. Or consider leaving and going elsewhere.

Now here's the fun part, pickup the phone and ask your ISP just how long they'd like people to stay online. Most BT Surftime ISPs offering the standard £25 per month 24/7 style option will say around 90Hours (3Hours a day) and no more, FRIACO ISPs will say closer to 130Hours (4.3Hours a day). You'll usually notice that the FRIACO options are closer to the £20 mark for more, that's better then the £30 for less with Surftime.

Suddenly the pieces should fit together, people are expecting so much from unmetered ISPs because they are advertising the impossible and not showing the true limits of what is being offered. This is why so many people get kicked for heavy usage and why ISPs are in turmoil.

Now that first paragraph sounds strangely familiar. Ah, I remember a certain AOL in the good old days used to cost something like £15 a month, with 3 hours online time included (excepting phone charges.) Extra time cost pennies per minute (plus call charges) charged to your credit card. What unmetered ISP's are offering is not so far removed, for a set monthly fee they expect (some hope) a set usage time. The only way they are going to get this is if, like AOL of old, they monitor users online time (which they can and do) and then enforce it. But they won't be able to sell it as unmetered, will they? At best it's a cheap calls package.

This saga will run and run.

There is, of course, the "broadband" option for those who really want to have 24/7 access to the web with no cuts at all. At a painfully slow and often confused pace, BT (and others) are rolling out ADSL to the masses.

To put it simply, you get a very fast connection (much superior to the current 56k modems) which is live (connected) 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And you can still use your phone (I think because it uses another line, not the phone line.) It's also touted as new technology. For this country, that's true. In the USA, they've had it for quite a while.

The only limits I can see are:

- A very few (or just one) ISP's limit the amount of data sent/received (bandwidth use) to 510MB a day. But that's a lot of surfing.
- A high "contention rate" at peak times. BT quote up to 50:1 (50 users sharing the same amount of capacity) This means at non-peak times speeds will be at maximum, like the M1 at 2 am. At peak times, if everyone is downloading big files at the same time, speed might simulate the M1 at 8 am.

Currently this will cost £150 installation and around £55 a month to use, depending on who you go with. Sounds expensive, doesn't it? But when you look closer it's actually very cheap for what you get. Look back to those sums and for a 12 hour a day "unmetered" user, the best estimate cost is £76.80. For 24 hours a day connection this is over £150 a month, for an inferior speed and service.

But then again, £55 is still a lot of money and I'm sure most users do not need such a service as yet.

I hope this article might explain some of the background causes for the problems everyone is facing at the moment, although it doesn't offer any simple solutions. For the full set of articles visit www.ispreview.co.uk and look for the unmetered articles.

*

John sent the following as an interesting addition to the above (Barbara)

Following on from the article I sent you last night, I read the following on the ISPreview site. The terms and conditions do not mention usage limits for the Unlimited Freeserve Time. But the FAQ section has the following statement:

Q. What conditions apply to my use of Unlimited Freeserve Time?

A. Your use of the Service is subject to the terms of use at the time you register and as subsequently amended. In particular, we would draw your attention to the fact that the Service is provided for residential, not business use, and that limitations on network capacity may mean that your use of the Service is restricted, or in extreme cases terminated if in our reasonable opinion such use makes abnormal demands on the network which could materially affect the quality of the Service. (By way of illustration, use in the excess of 11 hours per day comes within that category).

ISPR comments as follows:

Does that mean if you go over 11hours on one single day then you'll find yourself getting the boot? It's still not completely clear. Either way they have at least been honest with the limit, although perhaps half a year too late.

This doesn't help those like George and Kez who can't actually get online in the first place. Then the 2 hour and the "inactivity" cut offs effectively mean you need to try really hard to get enough time online to get kicked out of Freeserve. Personally, I think the 11hour figure is just, as it says, an illustration and not a fixed limit. I would expect to get warning notices well before that figure!

The following is also being sent to Freeserve users - what it doesn't say makes the situation even more confusing. (Barbara)

Sent: Saturday, December 16, 2000 4:30 PM

Please read this email carefully as it contains important pricing information about Unlimited Freeserve Time. Freeserve have announced the launch of Freeserve AnyTime from mid January 2001. This new service will offer free Internet calls day or night for £(pounds)12.99 per month. However, all our existing Freeserve Unlimited customers will exclusively be able to transfer to Freeserve AnyTime and only pay £(pounds)9.99 for the first six months from transfer subject to transferring by the end of April 2001.

Freeserve AnyTime will operate on a new improved network with Freeserve directly billing our members and also operating the customer support. This will enable us to maintain a higher quality service level than that possible with Freeserve Unlimited Time.

If you pre-register for Freeserve AnyTime we will email you in January to inform you how to transfer to Freeserve AnyTime and how to take up this special offer.

More information about Freeserve AnyTime is available at www.freeserve.com/time.

If you have any questions about this email, please either email us at anymtimereply@freeserve.com or call our customer support team on 0870 872 0099 (Monday to Saturday - 8am to 8pm) (calls charged at national rate).

Thank you for your continued support for Freeserve.
Kind regards
Victoria Robertshaw
Customer Services Director

[I have been unable to access my Freeserve email account for ages, even via the "backdoor" using Twigger, so please, always use my cableinet address in future ...Barbara]



MY PERSONALITY QUIZ by Edwina Brown

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS?

One husband (Frank), two cats (Coco and Zukie)..

WHAT BOOK ARE YOU READING NOW?

The Freewood Years by Mary Denyer

WHAT'S ON YOUR MOUSE PAD?

A fluffy cat, wearing sunglasses.

FAVOURITE MAGAZINE?

Adventure Probe, Take A Break.

FAVOURITE SMELLS?

Newly bathed babies, sea air, new mown grass and bread baking.

FAVOURITE SOUNDS?

The door opening, and someone calling out 'Mum!' (or Grandma, Nan etc.), Frank saying 'Are you alright dear' as he often does.

WORST FEELING IN THE WORLD?

Worry.

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN THE MORNING?

Is Frank OK.

ROLLER COASTER, SCARY OR EXCITING?

Scary

HOW MANY RINGS BEFORE YOU ANSWER THE PHONE?

It depends how far away I am.

FUTURE DAUGHTER'S NAME?

Future daughter? It'd be a miracle!!

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN LIFE?

My husband, my children. my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. (When I say children and grandchildren, this automatically includes their wives and husbands.)

FAVOURITE FOODS?

Sunday roast, fish and chips, cream cakes, strawberry icecream and fruit..

CHOCOLATE OR VANILLA?

It depends. If its cakes, chocolate,. If it's icecream, vanilla.

DO YOU LIKE TO DRIVE FAST?

No

DO YOU SLEEP WITH A STUFFED ANIMAL?

There's no room.

STORMS - COOL OR SCARY?

Mostly cool.

WHAT TYPE WAS YOUR FIRST CAR?

Don't drive.

IF YOU COULD MEET ONE PERSON DEAD OR ALIVE?

Dead, Jesus. Alive, any one of my friends from abroad.

FAVOURITE ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

None, prefer fruit juices or water.

WHAT IS YOUR ZODIAC SIGN?

Capricorn.

DO YOU EAT THE STEMS OF BROCCOLI?

Yes

IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY JOB YOU WANTED WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A housewife and mum.

IF YOU COULD DYE YOUR HAIR ANY COLOUR?

Auburn.

EVER BEEN IN LOVE?

Yes with Frank, for the last forty nine years.

IS THE GLASS HALF EMPTY OR HALF FULL?

If something goes in it's half full, if something is taken out it's half empty

FAVOURITE MOVIES:

Sound of Music, South Pacific and Oklahoma

DO YOU TYPE WITH YOUR FINGERS ON THE RIGHT KEYS?

Yes, how else is there?

WHAT'S UNDER YOUR BED?

Four drawers, containing knitting wool, household and bed linen.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE NUMBER?

8

FAVOURITE SPORT TO WATCH?

Swimming and tennis.

SAY ONE NICE THING ABOUT THE PERSON WHO SENT THIS?

They are all wonderful and I am lucky to have them as friends,

PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO RESPOND?

Colin Steele

PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO WHO IS LEAST LIKELY TO RESPOND?

Anyone who sent it to me in the first place, it would not be necessary to send it again..

MY PERSONALITY QUIZ

by Frank Fridd

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS?

One wife, daughter's cat and three computers.

WHAT BOOK ARE YOU READING NOW?

Cover Story by Colin Forbes.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MOUSE PAD?

The computer maker's logo.

FAVOURITE MAGAZINE?

I'll read anything.

FAVOURITE SMELLS?

Countryside fragrances of all kinds.

FAVOURITE SOUNDS?

Birds singing their hearts out and fast water over stones.

WORST FEELING IN THE WORLD?

Being in a small room full of people.

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN THE MORNING?

What time is it?

ROLLER COASTER, SCARY OR EXCITING?

Scary

HOW MANY RINGS BEFORE YOU ANSWER THE PHONE?

I let Joyce answer it.

FUTURE DAUGHTER'S NAME?

Future daughter? I'm too old to think of having any more children.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN LIFE?

My wife, my children (including my daughter's husband) and my grandchild.

FAVOURITE FOODS?

Sunday roast, fish and chips and cream cakes.

CHOCOLATE OR VANILLA?

Like both, depending on what the food is.

DO YOU LIKE TO DRIVE FAST?

Not particularly.

DO YOU SLEEP WITH A STUFFED ANIMAL?

Nope.

STORMS - COOL OR SCARY?

Mostly cool.

WHAT TYPE WAS YOUR FIRST CAR?

A pre-war Ford Popular.

IF YOU COULD MEET ONE PERSON DEAD OR ALIVE?

If I am dead, I couldn't, but as I am alive I would like to meet more of my distant relations.

FAVOURITE ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

Beer, occasionally.

WHAT IS YOUR ZODIAC SIGN?

Taurus.

DO YOU EAT THE STEMS OF BROCCOLI?

No.

IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY JOB YOU WANTED WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Now that I have retired, none.

IF YOU COULD DYE YOUR HAIR ANY COLOUR?

I prefer my hair as it is.

EVER BEEN IN LOVE?

Yes, once (for over forty years so far).

IS THE GLASS HALF EMPTY OR HALF FULL?

Half full

FAVOURITE MOVIES

Any with a good story.

DO YOU TYPE WITH YOUR FINGERS ON THE RIGHT KEYS?

Yes, slowly.

WHAT'S UNDER YOUR BED?

Four drawers, containing household and bed linen.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE NUMBER?

9

FAVOURITE SPORT TO WATCH?

Snooker and tennis.

SAY ONE NICE THING ABOUT THE PERSON WHO SENT THIS?

She has written some very good adventures.

PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO RESPOND

Pass

PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO WHO IS LEAST LIKELY TO RESPOND

Probably the one who sent it in the first place. Wouldn't be necessary to send it again.

[Would anyone else like to "tell all"? I have some replies from readers who haven't given permission for publication - let me know if I can include yours in future issues.

You could send me an amended version - changing the questions and/or your answers, if you wish.... Barbara]

REAL Qs AND As IN COURT sent in by Laurence Creighton

These are things people actually said in court, word for word, taken down and now published by court reporters who had the torment of staying calm while these exchanges were actually taking place:

Q: Sir, what is your IQ?

A: Well, I can see pretty well, I think.

Q: Did you blow your horn or anything?

A: After the accident?

Q: Before the accident.

A: Sure, I played for ten years. I even went to school for it.

ADVENTURE PROBE SOFTWARE

A TEXT ADVENTURE FOR THE PC

STILL LAUGHING AT MY CARDIGAN

by Bev Truter

(based on the original AGT game "Space Aliens Laughed At My Cardigan"
by Andre M. Boyle, **but radically transformed**)

Once again Bev has rewritten a mediocre game and come up with a superb adventure.

You are sitting in the garden on the swinging seat, on your birthday, reflecting on all the presents from your relatives when out of the blue (literally!) a spaceship landed in your back garden and two small green aliens emerged. They pointed towards you, and made odd snorting noises of mirth while slapping each other on the back with undisguised hilarity. Apparently your brand-new cardigan was the source of all this merriment; and one of the aliens finally pulled out a miniature laser gun, aimed it at the offending garment, and FIZZBRTZZZ; a beam of concentrated light caused the entire cardigan to fade away, leaving not a trace behind. Horror of horrors! How will you explain this to your mum?

You don't personally mind the loss of the cardigan, but your mother bought it for you, and you foresee much anguish and wringing of hands ahead if you don't find a replacement for the vaporized cardigan. You explain this to the aliens, with some difficulty, adding that you need another cardigan, or incur your mum's everlasting wrath. They smile contritely and confer with each other in a whisper. A brilliant beam of light suddenly hurtles from the spaceship, dazzling you completely. When you rub your eyes a few seconds later and gaze around, you realize that you are somewhere else Can you find a new cardigan?

Buy a copy of "Still Laughing At My Cardigan" and get "Aliens Laughed At My Cardigan" free. Only **£2.00** from

Adventure Probe
52 Burford Road
Liverpool L16 6AQ

BEV HAS KINDLY DONATED ALL PROCEEDS TO THE PROBE FUND

ADVENTURE PROBE SOFTWARE

A TEXT ADVENTURE FOR THE PC

TO CATCH A RAINBOW ...or an Aussie Bushwalk. by Lyn

It is a fine Saturday morning and you have decided to ride your bike to the nearby bush forest to observe the wildlife. Dismounting from your bike, you lean it against a notice by the bush track. Picking up a sturdy stick lying close by, you head along the track into the bush, when you hear a yell. It comes from the car park; you run back to see what all the commotion is about and find a small, dark-skinned man sitting on a log under the banksia trees, looking miserable as he rubs his ankle. He asks for your help, and then tells you a story.

"I was given a task to do for Mother Nature, but alas, I sprained my ankle and I can't continue. The Rainbow Bunyip has turned against us small people, and is destroying the rainbow, scattering all its colours around the countryside. If I don't find all the colours and put them back into the great crystal prism before the next shower, we will never see another rainbow again, please find them." He puts some stones into his dillybag and hands it to you, adding "You will need these."

You take the bag and sling it over your shoulder. "Here, take my stick," you reply, as you hand the sturdy stick to the little man." He says, "My name is Narkoor, It means 'gum tree' in my native language. What is yours?" "Oh mine," you reply, "it's Gillian. I don't think it means anything." You both laugh. Narkoor stands up. "Ouch, ow! I think I will get back if I take it slowly. Good luck, Gillian." He turns and hobbles slowly away along the track, out of the car park.....

Can you, as Gillian, find the seven colours and restore the rainbow?

Only **£2.00** from

Adventure Probe
52 Burford Road
Liverpool L16 6AQ

LYN HAS KINDLY DONATED ALL PROCEEDS TO THE PROBE FUND

NEWSDESK

"NEW" CAT ADVENTURE

Phil has re-written PIGGERY JOKERY for the PC (it was originally written for the Amiga adventure, also using CAT) and it is available for download from the CAT website:

<http://www.richmond62.freemove.co.uk/index.htm>

Piggery Jokery is a superb adventure in which you play a pig, and have to help many animals. One of my favourite top ten adventures.

LATEST RELEASE FROM ZENOBI SOFTWARE

The CD contains a demo of ICEWIND DALE. When installed even the demo takes up a fraction short of 450Mb.

I hadn't heard of this game so I looked for a website -

www.interplay.com/icewind

for more information. It is an RPG and before you can start you have to create a party, so I lost interest. However, the website has a lot of screenshots and portraits (downloadable) I could see what the graphics are like - quite good in my opinion. The site also mentions an expansion disc and patch(es?). Check out the site, and buy the demo as it is an excellent way to the playability of a game before spending £30-40.

Only £2.99 from Zenobi Software - please see inside back page for address.

TREASURE CHEST

HAUNTED ABBEY played by Dorothy Millard on a PC under BBC emulation

1. Platinum Collar
2. Ruby Ring
3. Orb of Destiny
4. Jewelled Encrusted Scarab
5. Silver Cross
6. Gold Tiara
7. Jewelled Necklace
8. The Deed
9. Phibe's Book of Incantations

OBJECTS AND THEIR USES

CRYSTAL OF KINGS Pt.1

Played by Doreen Bardon on a PC under Spectrum emulation

Knapsack (start location)	To carry crystals only
Scroll (in table drawer)	Read for clues
Crumbs (in bowl)	Throw to a bird
Key (under leaves)	To open trapdoor
Flute (in brambles)	Give to shepherd
Spade (among leaves)	For digging, hitting, rowing
Reed (sand dunes)	Part of an arrow
Arrow head (hidden in bones)	Part of an arrow
Feather (falls from a bird)	Part of an arrow
Rope (in a cart)	Tie to tree
Toad (stone circle)	You need protection
Flint (on a wall)	To burn brambles
Dynamite (in a chest)	To blow up dam wall
Lever (to open chest)	In sand dunes
Priests (stone circle)	Wash them away
Barrel (stone circle)	To carry salt
Gauntlet (sand dunes)	Wear for protection
Blue crystal (in a hole stone circle)	Your objective
Rod (hidden in river rushes)	For fishing
Goldfish (river)	For payment
Bow (make it from rod)	See Arrow & Bow
Coffin (in church)	Use as a boat
Maggot (from a dead body)	Bait hook
Armour (from a dead body)	Wear it
Mask (from an orc face)	Wear it
Wet clay (river bank)	Make mask from orc face
Spike (orc camp)	To chip ice
Bottle of potion (in hut)	Drink it
Red crystal (in pool)	Your objective
Arrow & Bow (made by you)	To shoot a goat
Toadstools (forest)	R.H.
Egg (in a nest)	Pick it up
Yellow crystal (in ice)	Your objective
Green crystal (in nest)	Your objective
Slug (on slabs)	Pour salt
Sheepskin (given as a gift)	Wear it

[Part 2 next month]

GETTING YOU STARTED

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND played on a PC

You gain control of our mighty pirate hero only to find yourself all tied up. Spin around and locate the brazier of hot coals. Kick it over and pick up one of the hot coals and toss it toward the cannon to the right to ignite the fuse.

After you reach dry land you are alerted to "some trouble" at the Governor's Mansion by Timmy, the hyperactive monkey. Head off toward the mansion (which happens to be YOUR house too) and survey the situation. A man is operating a catapult firing huge rocks at your house. You can speak with him between shots to learn that your wife (the governor) was presumed dead and he has orders to knock down the mansion. Elaine takes off for town to clear up the obvious misunderstanding leaving you in charge of stopping the catapult operator and getting legal advice from the family lawyers on Lucre Island. With no obvious solution to the immediate puzzle, head into town and locate the SCUMM bar. Enter and talk with the guys throwing darts and the bartender. The drunken pirate in the back has a bowl of kudu jerky pretzel but he doesn't want to share. Look at the birthday balloon then go talk to the dart throwers and use dialog 1-2-4-5 to get him to throw the dart at the balloon and pop it. The helium combined with the grog knocks the pirate out and you can take his pretzels. Another pirate sits at a nearby table. This is I. Cheese, the new owner of the SCUMM bar. Talk to him about joining your crew and use dialog 1-3-?-1-2-?-1-1 (=?pick any dialog choice you want). You will have to Insult Arm Wrestle this guy if you want him to join your crew. This is very similar to the Insult Sword Fighting in previous Monkey Island games where you trade insults

ORB OF LIGHT played by Dorothy Millard on a PC under C64 emulation

(Start in the chamber of light in the palace of King Elrad II), E (large hall), GET SWORD, E (small room), GET SCROLL, READ SCROLL (says that entry is easy but the obvious is sometimes overlooked), DROP SCROLL, S (wine cellar), GET WINE, N, SW (entrance hall), S (palace gates), W (plain of Halam), S (northwestern bank of river), GET FISH, SWIM RIVER (to southeastern bank), NE (hill), GET FLUTE, S (rock clearing where you see a troll blocking the eastern exit), GIVE FISH (the troll swallows it in one gulp and wanders off singing), E (small hut), GET CROSSBOW, W, S (in front of cave where you see a dragon blocking the exit), USE SWORD (you have killed the dragon), DROP SWORD, SE (a strange force stops you from entering the cave... a voice says remember the scroll)

EYE OF ZOLTON played by Barbara Gibb on a BBC and PC(e)

Start in a woodcutter's hut, and can see a box which you can't open at the moment. INVENTORY (nothing), S, S, E, READ SIGN (warning not to stray from the path), E (castle wall), HELP, SAY PASSWORD (transported inside castle).

U, N, E, E, N, N (kitchen), E (store-room), TAKE SHOVEL, W, N (cupboard), TAKE TORCH, S, S, S, S, E (wizard's library), TAKE BOOK, LOOK (see a secret passage), DROP BOOK (for later), GO PASSAGE, N (opposite direction to arrow), E, S, TAKE rusty KEYS, S, W (library), W, UNLOCK DOOR (need rusty keys), W (wizard's bedroom), TAKE EYE, RUB EYE, TAKE MATCHES, LIGHT TORCH, DROP MATCHES, E, N, W, W, S, S, D, S, W (door locked), UNLOCK DOOR (need rusty keys), DROP KEYS, W (armoury), E, D, S (open chamber), DIG (need shovel), LOOK (see magic ring), TAKE RING, RUB RING (genie appears and drops something), LOOK (see a scroll), TAKE SCROLL, READ SCROLL, DROP SCROLL, N, U, W, TAKE EXCALIBUR, E, N, U, N, N, E, E, D, E (dusty room), READ SIGN, W, U, S, E (library), GO PASSAGE, N, E, S, E, E, READ PLAQUE (need lit torch), DROP TORCH, SAY

TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY - available for most computers

N, GET LAMP, GET KEY, GET JUG, S, W, W, GET FLINT, E, N, OPEN GRATE, N, N, N, FILL JUG, W, W, N, N, W, W, W, W, W, SWIM, DRINK, E, LIGHT LAMP, N, N, GET HOLDALL, S, S, FILL HOLDALL, GET DIAMOND, FILL HOLDALL.

E, E, S, GET KEY, N, W, W, S, OFF LAMP, E, E, E, E, S, LIGHT LAMP, S, W, GIVE DIAMOND TO GUARD, FILL HOLDALL, N, OFF LAMP, E, E, S, S, W, E, N, LIGHT LAMP, D, D, GET BALL, N, W, GET ROD, D, S, S, S, E, S, S, GIVE BALL TO WITCH, E, E, S, S, S, U, U, E, N, OFF LAMP, N, W, W, W, W, FILL HOLDALL, LIGHT LAMP, N, E, N, E, E, OPEN DOOR, N, E, DROP AMULET, GET AMULET, OPEN DOOR, W, N, OPEN DOOR, N, S, WAIT, W, WAIT, S, WAIT, W, WAIT, W, WAIT, W, WAIT, S, OFF LAMP, W, SWIM, E, N, LIGHT LAMP, E, E, E, N, N, U, NW, U, W, W, W, U, OFF LAMP, E, N, W, FILL LAMP.

S, E, LIGHT LAMP, D, E, E, E, D, SE, D, W, S, S, S, S, U, U, W, FILL HOLDALL, E, OPEN DOOR, E, E, OPEN DOOR, E, D, D, GET BAG, U, U, W, W, W, FILL HOLDALL, D, D, N, N, N, N, N, N, N, N, DRINK

HINTS AND TIPS

AURA-SCOPE (aka HORRORSCOPE) played on a Spectrum (128K) and PC(e)

CAPRICORN (goatskin) continued from last month

On board the Argos, from slipway go S, E, S, JUMP OFF ARGOS, S, W and U to visit the artist in his garret. Give him the canvas in return for a brush and paint. Return to the ship.

Sail N, E, SE and S to another harbour. Pick up the Golden Fleece from the tree on the island.

Return to the River Eridanus and go E (to Hydra). PAINT ARGOS ON SHIP (need brush and paint) to go NE passed the serpent.

When in Narrow Part of River, go W to Small Port. Go N to Times Square then west to the City Park. Chase the vandals away and pick up the chisel. Return to the Argos and go back to the Studio in the Artist's Quarters. Give him the chisel and in return he will fit a figurehead to the Argos.

Resume your voyage, going northwards from the Bend in the River, landing at the Wharf. Go to the hills (E, S, SE and E from Roadside Cafe). Drink the potion (obtained from Mercury) to outrun the Hare to the "oil drum" location. Get oil before returning to Argos.

When Neptune appears in the Eastern Sea, POUR OIL to calm the sea - given a net. You can now continue your journey, so find the island where Orion will give you a goatskin in exchange for the fleece - your objective.

If you return to the Artist's Quarters, you can go E along the Dry Road to the Well, then NE, N, N, W, NW and NW to Busy Junction. You can also return to the slipway and work your way back to the Hall of Nub.

CONFESSOR'S SAPPHIRE played by Barbara Gibb on an Amstrad

The Well Tower location has a hidden exit - need spade and to have seen an old map to find it.

You need the broom to open a second trapdoor.

HEIST by Barbara Gibb played on a PC - also available on Amiga

STUDENT'S PHOTOGRAPH - kissing this transports you to an Abandoned Toy Factory.

Supervisor's Office

You need to find the pornographic poster, gas cylinder and interface terminal.

Production Line

The idea is to get the cylinder on the raised platform in the Packing Dept. by putting it in the input tray and setting the two sliders (range of 1 to 5 each) and pressing the button until the conveyor belt is the correct speed for the grabbing arm. (4 and 1 worked for me).

Packing Room/Booth

If the cylinder is in position, when you enter the booth, a mechanical arm appears with a hollow can attached to the end. You have to get the cylinder in the can. Compass directions move the arm/can forward, back, left and right, jump raises it, crawl lowers it, and spin puts it into the can when it is directly above the cylinder. X ARM to discover the position of the can, and when successful the output tray should contain an aerosol spray.

Store-room

Obtain the doll, white cotton and plastic throwing ring. X DOLL doesn't give much of a clue but if you PULL HEAD off the doll you have a very useful spike. Find the manhole cover and lever it open with the spike.

Sewers

The pornographic poster is of a NUDE and reads "from SWEDEN with love" - so your route through the sewers is the letters printed here in capitals.

Car Park

When a car is driven up and parked, PUT SPIKE UNDER CAR. When the owner goes off in disgust at the blown tyre, lower the window (need throwing ring), then get the ID and key. X MIRROR to see your own reflection and note the colour of your eyes and hair before returning to End of Tunnel.

End of Tunnel

X ID **now** and note the colour and shape, e.g. blue square. Find a plug socket and plug the terminal into it. Press the switch on the terminal to be transported to the "Information Superhighway".

ICE PRINCESS (PD version) played by Bev Truter on a PC - also available on Amiga

Return to the Castle Garden and enter the moat. Wear the skates and you will be able to reach the crank without slipping and falling. NW, turn crank, SE, GET OUT to return to the garden. Hmm...now to explore the castle. N-N-U-W to the Gaming Room, and how do you play the game laid out on the table? You'll have to register Ice Princess if you want to proceed to the end, but in the meantime, go E-D-S-E to the Banquet Hall, and X the pictures hanging here..... So far, if you've tobogganed down the hill, you should have 50/130 points. I believe the Amiga PD version cuts out near the woodcutter.

JACK OF HARTZ by Bev Truter on a PC

After taking off from ledge swim S to the beach. X trees. Hope you brought something to help you search the sand and water. In the cave SMELL - must have looked at the tulip fields from the hill...

Back in the realm of Hartz: You should be able to get something out of the tree branches now; also do something with those plants in the undergrowth.

X all items of jewellery for a clue about what to do with the plant stems. As for the leaves, now would be an ideal time for a smoke break.

THE LONGEST JOURNEY played by Terry Taylor on a PC

CHAPTER 2

How to get the key

Leave the Border House and go to the East Venice subway platform.

Examine the sparks by the rail – there's something stuck between the high voltage cables – it appears to be a large iron key.

Try to get the key – April can't, she'd have to go down onto the electrified rails.

In the Inventory – **use the clothes line on the clamp.**

Try to use the improvised "fishing line" on the key – the jaws of the clamp are closed – April needs to open them.

In Inventory – **blow up the rubber ducky** (be quick, now, it's leaking), and **use the blown up duck on the clamp/clothes line**. This opens the jaws of the clamp.

Now **use the complete "fishing line" on the key** to get it.

How to enter the Mercury Theatre

Try to open the fuse box for a close up view – it has a lock.

Use the large metal key on the lock.

In the Inventory, **use the Band Aid on the rubber glove** to cover the hole; then **use the rubber glove on the sparks in the fuse box**.

This has the effect of shutting down the marquee lights altogether. Freddie tries his brush on the marquee, but this time a tap will not work. He needs to get some tools to fix it; so he unlocks the alley door and goes to get them. Enter the alley

Open the trashcan and examine it – it is filled with dry rags, newspaper and a half-empty oil can – "a real fire hazard" says April (large hint if ever there was one!)

Examine the shadow on the rear wall – it reminds April of something, and she feels the urge to raise her hands. The shadow is being cast by the pile of garbage.

Put the hat on top of the pile of garbage – now what does the shadow look like?

Put the toy monkey by the side of the garbage pile – it starts talking and singing.

Use the matchbook on the open trashcan – this starts a fire and sets off the fire alarm.

Freddie Melon comes out of the door, sees the shadow and hears the monkey saying "Put your hands up", and thinks it is the detective who he chased earlier. Freddie begins dancing to the monkey's tune. Whilst he is distracted, enter the theatre.

ODYSSEY (Cryo Interactive) played on a PC

How do I select and use an item from inventory?

1. Press F1 to access the inventory menu.
2. Use the Arrow Keys to scroll through the inventory items.
3. When the inventory item you wish to select is in the middle of the menu, press the Space Bar to select this item.
4. Press F1 again to close the inventory menu.
5. When you are in game play and wish to use the inventory item, press the Enter key to perform the action with this inventory item.

Troy - The Camp

Your adventure begins as Heriseus steps onto the dock. Walk forward along the dock and onto the shore. Take a few steps further, turn right, and continue walking forward towards the camera until you reach the two men guarding the entrance to the encampment. If you speak to the guards at this point, you will learn that you require a pass to get by them. Turn towards the mound of goods lying beside the shore. Watch as the merchant picks up a rug and goes into the encampment unhindered. Pick up a rug and follow him up the stairs through the gates. Keep walking forward until Heriseus moves over to the left and places the rug on the ground. Walk towards the thatched roof building, further along the pathway on Heriseus' right. Stand in front of the doorway and press the action key to open the door. Go inside. Heriseus speaks to the man inside the door and asks to see Nathos. The guard leads Heriseus to an adjoining room. Speak to the man in a blue tunic. He is Merops, newly arrived from Ithaca. Merops tells Heriseus that he is certain Ulysses is dead. He also suggests that Heriseus leave so he can finish his business with Nathos. Speak to Nathos (the man dressed in an iron green-colored tunic). He tells you to come back later. Leave the house and circle the building. You must give Merops time to leave. Go back inside. Nathos apologizes for his earlier behaviour. Speak to him on all subjects. Nathos is concerned that Heriseus is the only one that believes Ulysses is still alive. Nathos gives Heriseus a pass so that he may move freely around the camp. Speak to him on all topics. Nathos warns Heriseus about the dangerous Trojan rebel bands that are still active, ten years later. As you leave the room, Nathos offers that a man named Mikis may be able to help. Darkness has fallen outside. Move forward towards the camera until Heriseus encounters a stone wall. Turn to Heriseus' right and walk forward. Begin by hugging the wall, and then continue straight ahead until a guard shouts, "Halt! No one enters without a pass!" (Depending on the angle you take, the guard will either be to your right or left.) Speak to the guard. If you get too close to the guard without identifying yourself, you will be killed! Heriseus will automatically show him the pass. Go through the gate to enter the ruins of the City of Troy.

WORLD (version 1.06) played by Bev Truter on PC

INDOORS - INSIDE THE BUILDING (1)

WARNING! Do NOT put the film cassette into the machine in the darkroom - you won't be able to retrieve it, and you first have to X-ray it before processing it. The key unlocks two doors in this complex. Collect interesting specimens (for points) and anything edible (for food). The following is a list of objects/problems in alphabetical order:

BEES - wear the DEET (it only lasts 6 moves) to repel them.

BOX, MAGNESIUM - put on enlarger in Darkroom.

BUTTON, SQUARE - switches on the lights in the complex.

BUTTON, ROUND - instant destruction!

BUTTON, HEXAGONAL - DO NOT PUSH until you've had a look at the world of ponds, east of central greenhouse. Then push it, and look again at the world of ponds.

BUTTON, TRIANGULAR - DO NOT PUSH until the rumbling noise stops altogether. Then push it and return to where the pond world was.

CABLE - used to repair the antenna at the Hill, but don't fix it yet until you discover what the dish is for.

CACTI - "touch cactus" once during daytime, and again at night.

CAT - fill bucket with latex from tree in jungle. Go to the centre of the roof in the Aviary, and pour latex on pole so you can climb down it to get the cat. Take cat to Storage Room where you heard the rodents - cat jumps down and you find Terran cartridge.

FILM CASSETTE - put in rack in Darkroom.

GRAVEL/SCREE - after touching cactus twice, type "tell cactus, freeze gravel".

ROBOT - put Terran cartridge in the computer in Control Room, so robot can understand commands in English. Direct robot to the chlorine world (west of greenhouse) and order it to take the insect. Command robot by typing "tell robot, s" or "ask robot, what is xxx". Find out what the two chemicals east of the Darkroom are by asking the robot about them.

SUNFLOWERS - wear the tan pants to reflect their deadly rays, get the seed. Be careful about dropping the seed.

VINES - find the bucket and fill it with water from the sink in the darkroom, then use it to kill the vines.

You should have the violet crystal, flytrap, orchid; and you'll need the seed, wire and something edible for later.

Next month - The Martian World

SOLUTION OF THE MONTH

ATALAN - available on C64, Amstrad and PC(e)

Written by Mandy Rodrigues

Solution by Walter Pooley on a C64

You start the adventure clinging to a broken mast, on an island beach.

From the start go N, TAKE SPADE, W, S (west end of beach), DIG (discover a length of rope), TAKE ROPE, E, E (east end of beach), DIG (this time you find an anchor), TIE ROPE TO ANCHOR, I (have anchor with rope tied to it), W, N (foot of cliff), THROW ANCHOR (catches on cliff top), U (top of cliff).

W, W (west end of rope bridge), TAKE LAMP, E, E, E, E, N (north/south path leading through some ruins - ignore the bow, it is a red herring), N, N, W (mound of earth blocks the path), DIG (to clear path), LOOK (see you have uncovered a sword), TAKE SWORD, W, TAKE MATCHES, E, E, E, LIGHT LAMP, DROP MATCHES, N (into hut), TAKE NAILS, S, E, S (into hut), TAKE ARROW, N, E, N (to village meeting place), TAKE MASK, WEAR MASK (which scares the spear-carrying natives away), S, W, W, W, S, S, S, W, W, W, W, N, W (by campfire), X FIRE (see some roast boar), TAKE BOAR, X FIRE (this time you see a smoking brand), TAKE BRAND, W (valley where there is an abundance of fruit trees), TAKE FRUIT, W (into a shelter), TAKE SPEAR, E, S, E, S, E, E (back to cliff top).

TAKE MUSKET, E, E, N, N, E, E (into gold mine), TAKE HAMMER, E (into blocked shaft), TAKE AXE, TAKE NUGGET, W, W, W, S, S, CUT BAMBOO (need axe), TAKE BAMBOO, N, N, W (east bank of river), MAKE RAFT (need bamboo, hammer, nails), W (across river), TAKE ROD (it is a rod and line), TAKE RING, E, E, N, W, W, W (small bay), DIG (find a shell), TAKE SHELL, X SHELL (it's an oyster shell), W, SE (to an elephants' graveyard), TAKE TUSK, E (shore of lake), EAT FRUIT (discover a worm in it), TAKE WORM, BAIT LINE, X LAKE (full of fish), CATCH FISH, I (you have a golden fish), DROP ROD, W, NW, SW, S (glittering grotto where a dwarf is sitting on a rock), X DWARF (he is looking at you expectantly), GIVE BOAR, I (dwarf gave you a large iron key).

N, NE, E, E, E, E, S, S, S, W, W, D, W, N, W, W, N (to a junction), TAKE FLUTE, W (into crypt), MOVE SKELETON (discover a talisman), TAKE TALISMAN, N, S, SE (into cave where you see a stone altar), X ALTAR, TAKE DAGGER, OPEN SHELL (need dagger - find a pearl), TAKE PEARL,

GUT FISH (find a sapphire), NW, E, E, S, E, U, E, N (into jungle, there is a snake here), PLAY FLUTE, W (into clearing where there is a tall tree), CHOP TREE (you automatically trim off the branches, leaving a log), DROP AXE, TAKE LOG, E (see bees and hive), X HIVE (see a honeycomb), TAKE HONEYCOMB (must be carrying smoking brand), DROP BRAND, W, S, S, W, N (north/south trail where there is a tiger), KILL TIGER (must be carrying spear), SKIN TIGER (need dagger), TAKE SKIN, N (by chasm), DROP LOG (to bridge chasm), N (clearing), TAKE NECKLACE.

S, S, S, E, E, N, E (door of temple is locked), UNLOCK DOOR (need key from dwarf), DROP KEY, E, E, N (into room containing stone throne), X THRONE (see a golden crown), TAKE CROWN, S, W, TAKE GOBLET, W, W, S, SE (top of high cliff), D (to cove), DIG (discover a small chest), DROP SPADE, BREAK CHEST (need hammer - see a piece of paper), TAKE PAPER (which is in fact a map), READ MAP (map of island showing a strange rock with a shadow pointing west), DROP HAMMER, N, E, U, W, W, W, S, W, W, D, W, N, W, W, SE (back in cave with stone altar), X ALTAR (this time you see a hollow recess on which offerings to strange gods were placed), OFFER HONEYCOMB (a strange being appears, waves his hands, then disappears), LOOK (see a diamond), TAKE DIAMOND, NW, N, E (rock cavern with strange carvings), PRESS CARVING (an opening appears in the east wall), E (into ancient shrine), PRAY (Neptune appears and throws something at your feet), LOOK (see a trident), TAKE TRIDENT.

W, W, S, E, E, S, E, U, E, E, N, N, N, W, W, W, W (to location with strange rock mentioned on the map), X ROCK (shadow pointing west), W, W (to huge cave), TAKE RUBY. If you have all the treasures a boat will come and take you off the island.

THE END

Treasures:

Sword,	Arrow,	Spear,	Musket,	Nugget,
Ring,	Tusk,	Flute,	Talisman,	Dagger,
Pearl,	Sapphire,	Golden Fish,	Tiger skin,	Necklace,
Crown,	Goblet,	Diamond,	Trident,	Ruby.

SERIALIZED SOLUTION

SCAPEGHOST

**Written by Sandra Sharkey, Pete Gerrard & Pete Austin
1989 (Level 9)**

**Walk Through by Dorothy Millard on a C64 Version also
available for most other computers including PC**

Scenario

A policeman, killed by criminals, returns from beyond the grave as a ghost, who has to overcome the troubles of ghostdom, together with his ghost friends, in order to revenge his own death.

PART 1 - NOVEMBER GRAVEYARD

Notes

1. To be strong you must get the following objects in order: Thistledown, petal, leaf, matchbox, pebble, white card, yellow card, fishbone, twig, bell and gnomon.
2. You must recruit the following ghosts: Joe Danby, Edna Wilmot, Bert Wilmot, Edith Dean, David Ridge, Colonel Rycroft, Alex Pym and Violet Conway.
3. At the start you can FOLLOW DETECTIVE OR MOURNERS OR SUPERVISOR to learn a lot of things.

(Start in the graveyard at your funeral), EXAMINE DETECTIVE (Severian - he's carrying a matchbook and a newspaper), INVENTORY (you have nothing), WAIT (until the detective leaves), FOLLOW DETECTIVE (as you do he talks to himself and you realise he's the crook who set you up), FOLLOW DETECTIVE (as he walks past the vault he says "Who'd think of looking in there"), EXAMINE VAULT (you see white plastic bags through a crack), W, EXAMINE BAGS (they contain narcotics).

WAIT (until the spotlight comes on and you find yourself back at your own grave), WAIT (until the street lights come on and you see a ghostly figure coming towards you), WAIT (the ghostly figure is Joe Danby who invites you to follow him and he'll introduce you to some of the other ghosts), FOLLOW JOE (he will introduce you to all the other ghosts: David Ridge, The Wilmots, Colonel Rycroft, Violet Conway and Edith Dean... when you stop just WAIT and the tour will continue... the tour is finished when Joe says it is concluded).

RUN TO THISTLEDOWN, EXAMINE THISTLEDOWN AND GET IT (you feel slightly stronger), RUN TO PETAL, EXAMINE PETAL AND GET IT (your strength is increasing), RUN TO LEAF, EXAMINE LEAF AND GET IT (you feel a little more solid), RUN TO MATCHBOOK, EXAMINE MATCHBOOK AND GET IT (your psionic control is improving), E, EXAMINE PEBBLE AND GET IT (you feel much stronger), EXAMINE WREATH, GET WHITE CARD AND EXAMINE IT, FIND DOG, EXAMINE DOG (a fishbone is lodged in it's throat), FOLLOW DOG, PAT DOG, PAT DOG, PAT DOG (it becomes friendly), GET FISHBONE (the dog runs off but will return later), RUN TO DAVID, EXAMINE SARCOPHAGUS (see an urn), PUSH URN (David's impressed and offers to help), SCORE (70/300).

RUN TO FADED WREATH, EXAMINE HEAP (of branches - you see the faded wreath), EXAMINE WREATH (see a yellow card), GET YELLOW CARD THEN EXAMINE IT (Edna Wilmot's), RUN TO MY GRAVE, EXAMINE NEW WREATH, PUT YELLOW CARD ON NEW WREATH, WAIT (until the dog is present), GET NEW WREATH (you can't but the dog gets it for you), RUN TO EDNA, WAIT (until the dog arrives with the new wreath - Edna says "Somebody has messed up the cards but it's okay... they stop arguing and will now help you), SCORE (120/300).

(You now need four ghosts and the dog to help you get into the shed), EDNA, FOLLOW ME, BERT, FOLLOW ME, RUN TO DAVID, DAVID, FOLLOW ME, RUN TO SHED, EXAMINE LOCK (you see the barrel, a short lever, a medium lever and a long lever), WAIT (until everyone is assembled, ie. Edna, Bert, Joe, David and the dog), JOE, WAIT 3 THEN PUSH LONG LEVER, BERT, WAIT 2 THEN PUSH MEDIUM LEVER, EDNA, WAIT THEN PUSH SHORT LEVER, DAVID, TURN BARREL (the door unlocks), PULL ROPE HANDLE (you're not strong enough but the dog does it for you... you hear a bell jingle inside... the door opens and the dog runs in, grabs the workman's lunch and disappears), IN, GET BELL, SCORE (135/300).

RUN TO VIOLET, PUT BELL ON BUSH (it makes a noise so she won't get lost and she can now leave her grave), SCORE (160/300), RUN TO SHED, IN, JOE, WAIT THEN PUSH BUTTON, PUSH BUTTON (the button switches off the spotlight... a lout below says "Now even the bulb's dead"), PUSH SWITCH (the shed light comes on and you return to your grave... you hear the vandals flee thinking somebody is in the shed... the colonel will also now follow you), RUN TO SHED, IN, PUSH SWITCH (turns the light off), GET WATCH, OUT, RUN TO EDITH (she says she's lonely waiting for the end of time), PUT WATCH IN VASE (it falls to the bottom and smashes... Edith sighs with relief "That's the end of time"), EDITH, FOLLOW ME, SCORE (235/300),

RUN TO SUNDIAL, EXAMINE SUNDIAL (its gnomon casts a faint shadow over it), JOE, WAIT THEN PUSH SUNDIAL, PUSH SUNDIAL (it falls and breaks), GET GNOMON (your strength has reached it's peak), SCORE (240/300).

RUN TO ELDER BUSHES, EXAMINE BUSHES (there's something inside them), SEARCH BUSHES (see a magazine), EXAMINE MAGAZINE, RUN TO COLONEL, COLONEL, FOLLOW ME, RUN TO STONEWORK, EXAMINE STONEWORK (you see a plinth and carvings), EXAMINE CARVINGS, EXAMINE PLINTH (see a statue), EXAMINE STATUE (of a sleeping man), WAKE STATUE (it's Alex Pym), SCORE (265/300), ALEX, FOLLOW ME, RUN TO VIOLET, VIOLET, FOLLOW ME, RUN TO WALL (make sure all the ghosts are present, ie. you, Joe Danby, Bert Wilmot, Edna Wilmot, David Ridge, Alex Pym, Colonel Rycroft, Edith Dean and Violet Conway), PUSH WALL (it collapses and buries the vault... it traps the drugs haul within it and the gangsters are delayed while you track down their hideout), SCORE (300/300).

Next month: PART 2 - HAUNTED HOUSE

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Remember the frogs, lizards and ferret in the Budweiser advertisements? They were much more entertaining than the current Budweiser advertisements.

If you go to

<http://www.budweiser.com/fun/index.html>

and click on Downloads

one of the selections is the "Frank and Louie in the Swamp" screensaver. It is a biggie at 3875K, but worth it.

You can click on various parts of the picture, e.g. Frank's and Louie's eyes to make them roll, and their lips to make them talk. As time goes by the three frogs, the ferret, and an airship will appear and you can click on them for responses from the adverts. Responses seem to be random.

[Have you found an interesting website? If so, please let me know, with brief comments Barbara]

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BORPHEE COMPUTERS - 64 County Road, Ormskirk, Lancs. L39 1QH

LAURENCE CREIGHTON - 603 Hillside Heights, Wessels Road, Green Point, 8005, South Africa

SYNTAX - 9 Warwick Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6JL

ZENOBI SOFTWARE - 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancs. OL12 7NX

WEBSITES

Adventurers Convention - www.adventureconvention.fsnet.co.uk

FSF - www.fsf-adventures.ic24.net

Creative Adventure Toolkit - www.richmond62.freemove.co.uk

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DOREEN BARDON (Spectrum)	01653 628509	Mon - Fri 1.00pm - 10.00pm Sat - Sun Any reasonable time
BARBARA BASSINGTHWAIGHTE (Spectrum and BBC)	01935 426174	Sun - Sat 10am - 10pm
STEVE CLAY (PAW and AMOS)	0151 2005861	Mon - Fri after 7pm Sun - any reasonable time
ISLA DONALDSON (Amstrad)	0141 9540602	Sun - Sat Noon -12pm
BARBARA GIBB (Various)	0151 280 5616	Afternoon and Evening
PHIL GLOVER (Sam Coupe)	0121 7777324	Mon - Thurs 6pm - 10pm Sun 11am - 5pm
SUE MEDLEY (Various - especially PC)	0181 302 6598	Any day 9am - 9pm
MANDY RODRIGUES (Various) (Mobile)	01492 877305 07776 413293	Mon - Fri 10am - 9pm
KAREN TYERS (Golden Oldies)	01347 838667	Mon - Fri 6pm - 11pm Sat - Sun Any reasonable time

THE ULTIMATE INFOCOM HELPLINE

If you need help with an Infocom adventure then who better to help you than A GRUE!

Call GRUE 01695 573141 - 7.30pm - 9pm Mon - Friday
or write to
64 County Road, Ormskirk, Lancs. L39 1QH

**MAKE SURE YOU TELEPHONE ONLY AT THE TIMES STATED
PLEASE ENCLOSE AN S.A.E WHEN WRITING FOR HELP**

Some helpers also have an e-mail address -
please check the previous page for details.