

Issue 114, June / July '05

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# FLAGSHIP

THE MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS



*General gaming news, views and reviews ...*

*Turn-Based Games, Boardgames, Roleplaying,  
Wargames, Conventions and more!*

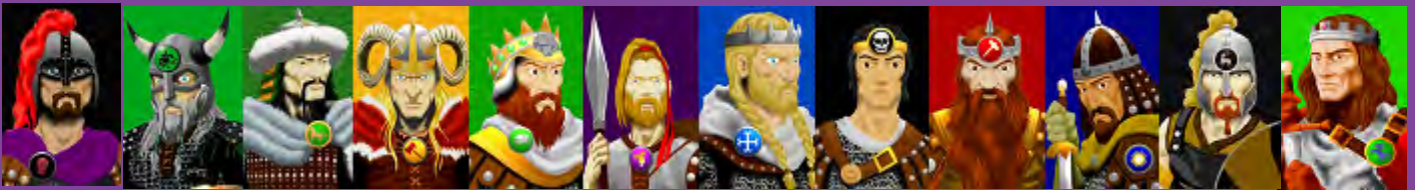
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# FLAGSHIP

#114, June / July '05



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[www.flagshipmagazine.com](http://www.flagshipmagazine.com)

## REPORT FROM THE BRIDGE

WE PROUDLY present *Flagship* #114, an issue which we hope you will find both informative and entertaining.

Really good news for you all is that we've plenty of *Special Offers* in this issue. They come from a variety of games, too, so each of you should all find something of interest among them. Check *Newsdesk* for further details, but we'll mention here that *Incubus Designs* are making a generous offer to readers who haven't played their version of the fantasy wargame *Serim Ral* before, for places in their latest game. *Spellbinder Games* are

offering a free place in their October face-to-face play of their football management game *Kickabout*, for anyone who'll write it up for *Flagship*. The moderators of the fantasy adventure game *Heldenwelt* ask us to remind you that it's possible for readers to play a special quest in the game. Along with these offers to *Flagship* readers, we also carry news of not one, but two free games which allow you to try out *Enlightened Age Entertainment's* historical wargame *Fall of Rome*. And that's not to mention the offers included in advertisements! You may well be able to look forward to a lively time, playing games that you've not tried before, but have always thought tempting.

As usual, the articles that we're running also cover a wide range of games. Two players give their first impressions of *Kosumi*, the new fantasy wargame with a Japanese setting and intriguing artwork. Pevans tells us about *Louis XIV* and other boardgames, while Colin Forbes introduces

three more games in his *Turning Digital*. We're also looking at some older favourites, *Middle-Earth PBM* and *La Gloire du Roi*, in a way that'll ease the paths of new players. The three-part guide to *StarFleet Warlord* ends in this issue, summing up the strategy advice of one of its long-term players: essential reading for fans of science fiction games. We've also an article introducing MUDs, and another that looks at the part that H G Wells played in the development of wargaming. There are also the contributions of our regular columnists, both enthusiastic and knowledgeable. We've masses of news, too, and finally there's the part that everyone can - and does - play in forming *Flagship*: your *Feedback* and *Rumours* comments.

Carol

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

WE'RE DELIGHTED to present you with this copy of issue #114, hot from the press, and we hope that you'll enjoy it. Along with this issue's varied news and reviews, we've the results of the Reader Survey that we sent out with issue #113. It's always fascinating to hear what you, our readers, think. Indeed, we've always very much relied on what you have to say, as the intelligent, enthusiastic people who enjoy playing games.

Many thanks to everyone who's contributed to this issue. Our reviewers and columnists are popular because they are independent as well as informative. Of course we don't all share the same opinions and tastes when we enjoy the fun of games, so *Flagship* will always express the variety of your opinions as well as their liveliness.

It's not easy to try to please everybody, of course, so if there's anything game-related that we're missing out regularly, be sure to let us know. We can't include every aspect of gaming in every issue, but we'll always make an effort to reflect what's old-and-satisfying as well as what's new-and-exciting. Playing games, designing them and keeping them exciting is a creative activity.

Whatever the responsibilities of editing *Flagship*, my guiding principle is that it's fun to play games, and I shall always aim to reflect this element of fun in our pages. I've heard that the real world out there is a pretty grim place, and believe that it's in games that we can most easily enjoy the fun of working things out, of anticipating strange discoveries, of interacting with other players and of celebrating success. Even when we lose a game, there's no harm done. It's all fun stuff.

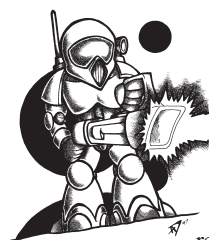
But what is 'fun'? I'd define it as 'harmless amusement' and was fascinated to discover recently that 'fun' is a word that seems unknown before the late 17th century. According to my huge *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'fun' first appears as a slang word meaning 'trick' or 'hoax'. My hero Dr Johnson describes it as 'a low, cant word' (ie thieves' slang) in 1753, and many of the early examples do seem to describe amusement that's boisterous rather than harmless. However, people obviously found the word useful - perhaps as their opportunities for amusement increased? - and it soon became common until, with time and constant use, it's lost its negative element. I reckon that we're heaps better for discovering 'fun' as a word!

But my *OED* isn't quite sure where the word actually comes from: it tentatively suggests an origin that strikes me as pretty implausible. I'm romantic enough to favour a Celtic, Romany or Yiddish derivation for it, myself, but since there's no real evidence for this, here's an obvious solution inspired by the recent film of Douglas Adams' novel: how's about attributing 'fun' to an early visit by Zaphod Beeblebrox? Now here's a character who knows what fun means, and how aptly his Infinite Improbability Drive applies for us when we enter the realities of a game world.

Above all, let's just be thankful for the concept. Here at *Flagship*, it's fun that keeps us going!

Carol

# NEWSDESK TURN BASED



## SCI-FI

KJC Games report that their redesigned version of the classic *Beyond the Stellar Empire*, which they retitled **Phoenix**, 'is going incredibly well.' As evidence, KJC's Mica Goldstone offers this description of the very latest action in the game just before we go to press, on 17th May: 'A major inter-system war kicked off yesterday. The Detinus Republic is being assaulted by multiple factions (they have been betrayed by two of their allies). The whole operation has taken months to organize and a great many players have been involved without word being leaked to the enemy - no mean feat.'

'Today there is a space battle involving over 500 ships! Note that ships are free to run, so it is not a wallet war - I don't think that there is even another commercial game that can deal with this number of individual positions in a single combat! Three powerful starbases are also being assaulted and there are ten other major battle sites! What is most amazing is

that there are no emails or phonecalls about the whole affair - players are getting on and playing the game and thoroughly enjoying it.'

Good news! It's splendid to hear that this massive space opera is running smoothly, that players still find surprise assaults fun to plan and resist, and that the moderators clearly enjoy watching the players' strategies unfold.

[www.kjcgames.com](http://www.kjcgames.com)

## FANTASY WAR



We've two news items about the fantasy wargame set in mythical Japan, **Kosumi**, which you'll find articles about in this issue. First, the designers plan to have a first draft of their tutorial system ready to go in June. This will let players play a game of Kosumi by themselves, so you can try out all the different orders and experiment with what happens.

This will be evolving into a full-blown tutorial system that teaches folks how to play the

game.

Secondly, also in June, they'll probably announce their first cash prize tournament. It'll be a two-round tournament for the first 225 subscribers to Kosumi. Winners in the first round advance to the second round, and the winner of the second round gets \$5,000! The tournament will begin as soon as they have enough players.

[www.kosumi.com](http://www.kosumi.com)

*Harlequin Games* have sent us some good news about their fantasy wargame **Legends**.

The *Legends* rulebook has been completely re-written with, they say, 'an eye to both clarity and accuracy. New contents and bookmarks allow players to find information quickly. The rulebook is available in .doc and .pdf format from our website.'

They've also brought out a new version of the player Front End software *LPE*, designed for maximum stability on 32bit Windows systems such as Windows XP. To celebrate the new software, they're now offering *LPE* for free to all players!

Harlequin are still accepting setups for *North Island Campaign 29*, a 14 day turnaround game with an experimental ban on



# NEWSDESK TURN BASED



Character Rolling Thunder. The game will be starting just after Flagship comes out and will continue to accept setups for a couple of months following.

Positions for Druids and Trolls are full, with Saurians filling up. This means that there's still plenty of room to play either the merciless 'Roman' invading Elves, with their potent army adventures and Stormhaven powerbase; the chivalrous Knights of Alvera equipped with the awesome Alveran weapons and prestige adventures; the conniving Solarans, with free Marks and a huge popbase to influence. 'And of course,' Harlequin add, 'there are many places for Dragon Riders who want to try and compete to be the best basher of the game - not just in terms of battle stats, but also in capturing and taming Dragons... or even becoming one! This is a good choice if you're heavily involved in another game and want a lighter-commitment position in this game.'

[www.harlequingames.com](http://www.harlequingames.com)

Incubus Designs filled their new game of **Serim Ral** (#26 - *Ancient Realms*) in just three days, wow!, and you can see some of these players' comments about it in this issue's *Rumours from the Front*.

Incubus are now accepting start-ups for their next game, SR27, which is also an Ancient Realms scenario, but with a faster seven-day turn around. They report that it's half full already, before they've even had a chance to announce it officially, so if you're interested it's worth applying as soon as possible.

Ancient Realms is set on a map of ancient Earth, 'with Romans pitting their wits against Greeks, Gauls and many more for world domination.' Incubus add that 'Many of our existing players have hailed AR as the best game we've ever created. There are also positions going spare in many of our existing games, from the classic fantasy *Renaissance*, *Deep Dominions* and *Ocean Lords* to the excellent Celtic Mythos based *Keltica*.'

And there's more! Incubus are making a *Special Offer* to *Flagship* readers who have never played an Incubus Designs version of *Serim Ral*: 'we'll throw in ten free turns to anyone quoting FS101 with their start-up'.

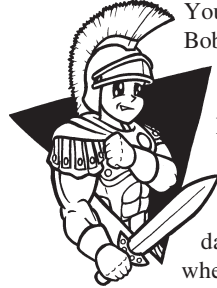
There's full information about their games on their website:

[www.incubusdesigns.com](http://www.incubusdesigns.com)

Justin Bunnell, the new owner of **Total Conquest**, reports that the new site is almost ready and the upgrade to the client is completed. It's good to hear of progress with these improvements. For further information, keep an eye on the website:

[www.totalconquest.com](http://www.totalconquest.com)

## HISTORICAL WAR



You may remember that Bob McLain thought highly of *Enlightened Age Entertainment's Fall of Rome* in his review of it last issue, and that it's a turn-based online strategy game set at the dawn of the Dark Ages, where the twelve players have 24 turns to establish a mastery over Europe. Well, we've not one, but two items of good news about it this issue.

The first news is that it's now possible to try out the game in a free 30-day trial. To learn about this, visit:

[www.fallofromegame.com](http://www.fallofromegame.com)

Secondly, just before we go to press we've learnt that a free demo game called **Centurion** has been released by *Enlightened Age Entertainment*. You can play this through without even needing a credit card. All you need to do is to verify your email address, and you can start playing it immediately.

Centurion is intended as an introduction to *Fall of Rome*, stressing the military side of the game. It can take up to five players and last for nine turns, with a turn every nine minutes or sooner: a complete game of *Centurion* will therefore take no more than an hour and a half.

Its creator, Rick McDowell, says that 'Through this experience you will learn how to wage war, choose tactics and execute battles, move your legions in all the ways *Fall of Rome* provides, recruit mercenary brigades, and recover powerful artifacts from the mythology of Celt, Norse, and Greco-Roman cultures. In less time than it takes to watch a movie, you will conquer villages, towns and cities, eliminate the legions of your foes, and defeat powerful guardians of important artifacts in hopes of emerging triumphant!'

This sounds like an excellent way of

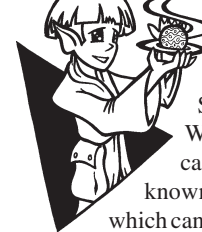
introducing the enjoyment of turn-based play to newcomers, especially since it's possible to communicate with your fellow players first: 'After confirming your email address and choosing your in-game name, you will find yourself in the new *Centurion* Lobby. Chat with friends and foes a bit, and then click ready when you are set for action.'

*Centurion* is a simpler game than *Fall of Rome*, of course, which 'will challenge your thinking and strategy on political, covert, economic and diplomatic fronts that *Centurion* does not.' But we all enjoy a session of speedy decision-making and immediate results from time to time. Do try this out: it sounds exciting!

[www.fallofromegame.com/centurion.asp](http://www.fallofromegame.com/centurion.asp)

## ADVENTURE

The Austrian firm *SSV Klappf-Bachler OEG* proudly announce many improvements to their fantasy adventure game **Heldenwelt**.



They've added new advanced character classes like Dreamlord, Scout, Assassin, Druid, Weapon Merchant, which can be developed both in known areas and in a new area which can be entered by completing a Quest. The new area also contains new places, monsters, NPCs and Quests. Poisons, recipes for making them and new skills for using them have been added to the game for the Assassin's benefit, along with a 'create antidote' skill for other classes. They've been working on Quests, too, with new Quest series for the base classes as well as for the advanced classes, and characters of an advanced class can also select an Epic item Quest now, to gain a special artefact with powers that will increase during the game. New skills, monsters, spells, items, alchemy, recipes, crafts, enchantments and rites have added to *Heldenwelt* as part of these new Quests.

The moderators have also released an improved version of the *Heldenwelt* Position Editor for their players. This includes the ability to use the additions like poisons and antidotes, and also has some improvements in direction scripting when using strategic spells on the whole party.

The game can be played in English as well as German, and readers who've tried *Heldenwelt* report that they've been readily given help with anything unfamiliar when getting started.

'Last but not least,' the moderators remind

### Serim Ral offer



Incubus are making a *Special Offer* to *Flagship* readers who have never played an Incubus Designs version of *Serim Ral*: 'we'll throw in ten free turns to anyone quoting FS101 with their start-up'.

There's full information about their games on their website:

[www.incubusdesigns.com](http://www.incubusdesigns.com)

# NEWSDESK TURN BASED



us, 'when filling the set up form don't forget to mention that you are coming from *Flagship* to get your special *Flagship Quest* series.'

[www.heldenwelt.com](http://www.heldenwelt.com)

Hugh Bayer of *Entertainment Plus More Games* reports that he's been doing some serious remodelling to **Deathsgate**, the arena-only portion of **Adventurers Guild**. Not only is the game 'new and improved', but EPM are 'taking Deathsgate public... with fights from each turn and a message board used by the Deathsgate characters open for anyone to view through the website':

[www.epmgames.com/DGIntro.html](http://www.epmgames.com/DGIntro.html)

Lurkers will be welcome, and EPM remind us of their long-running policy of a free trial turn to new players. The turn fee for Deathsgate is \$4.75.

[www.epmgames.com](http://www.epmgames.com)

**KJC Games** have been extending **Monster Island**, so that players can add more locations of their own to the game. Using the Strange Places form on the website, you can select various features you want to encounter and also give descriptions of the strange place. KJC's game moderator will check through this information, perhaps tidying it up or modifying it to suit the game and add it to Monster Island as a new location. Quite where it's placed will depend on how well explored the area around your monster is, but whether it's located nearby or some distance away, your Strange Place will remain in the game forever, with your monster's name associated with it.

Also arriving soon will be Shiny Fings, and Odd Beasts to guard them.

[www.kjcgames.com](http://www.kjcgames.com)

## TRIBAL



Peter Rzechorzek has been running **Tribe Net** for around eight years. Set in the late Iron Age, the game has some 90 players at present, so Peter certainly knows how to handle an open-ended game.

He's now starting a new game of **Pelagoria**, which he describes as 'a free game of exploration, advancement, trade, politics and conquest set in the richly detailed Tribe Net world spanning five continents!'

The game has a two-week turnaround, and Peter says that it requires 'players skilled in the arts of strategy, diplomacy and politics...

If you have played civilisation-type or diplomacy-style games, you will have something of the idea of **Pelagoria**. It has a very stable player base (few drop having started) and a high degree of reliability. It enables the player to think in terms of both short term and long term strategies, and enables you to feel confident that the game will still be there when you want it to be.'

Interested? Contact Peter at:  
[tribenet@netspace.net.au](mailto:tribenet@netspace.net.au)

It's sadder news that **Spellbinder Games** are closing their long-running tribal game **Bledian Diary**, to concentrate on their football management game **Kickabout**. Developed from **The Keys of Bled**, the whole Bledian world was one of PBM's earliest creations in the UK.

[Chris.spelbinder@btinternet.com](mailto:Chris.spelbinder@btinternet.com)

## WEB GAMES



Last issue, we ran an article by Mike Dean about his games webzine, **Psychopath**.

So it's good to be able to report that we've just heard about a similar site, managed by Dave Challoner as the **Canterbury Gamers News** website. The seven games currently running on this site sound interestingly varied, and are:

An **En Garde!** game called **The Paris Tribune** (which is set in Paris of course) and has currently reached the year 1623.

**The Chronicles of Rokugan**, a turn-based game set in the world of *Legend of the Five Rings*, which is now on turn 28.

**Tournee**, which Dave describes as 'a game based on the ideas presented in the movie *A Knight's Tale*.'

Two three-league games of **Rollerball**, 'a management game based on the film *Rollerball*: both games are currently full, but the GMs both hold waiting lists.'

**Inferno**, 'a game of mystery and adventure set in Victorian times.'

**Buccaneer**, 'a pirate turn-based game: some of the setting is based on 7th Sea, some of it is real world! This is still in the playtest stage.'

Dave adds that 'although it is called **Canterbury Gamers News**, we are not solely set up for gamers in Canterbury: in fact, since the beginning we've had a regular player in Bristol. We now have players from the Canary Isles and California! All our games are free to join in and play, unless people wish to receive

## FREE PLACE AT FACE-TO-FACE FOOTBALL GAME

A good offer for sports fans! In October,

**Spellbinder Games** will be holding their next annual face-to-face

**Kickabout** meet in Margate, Kent, UK.

**Spellbinder's** Chris Dempsey has

made the generous offer of a free place at this to any football fan who'll write it up for *Flagship*. You'll have to book and pay for your own accommodation, of course, but that won't be difficult in a seaside resort like Margate. Contact *Flagship's* editor if you want to take this offer up, but meanwhile you can see what **Kickabout** is all about by contacting: [chris.spelbinder.users@btopenworld.com](mailto:chris.spelbinder.users@btopenworld.com)

a printed version of the turn through the post, in which case it is costed at 4p/page plus postage at cost.'

[www.canterburygamersnews.tk](http://www.canterburygamersnews.tk)

**Terry Crook**, from another **En Garde!** game, **Briny En Garde**, informs us that this game 'has a healthy 29 players now, with a mass of players joining lately.' This should make for a lively environment to play in, and the number of players hasn't been restricted yet, so it's still possible to join.

Terry adds that 'We also have the **En Garde** webbing active again which has all the EG players criss crossing each other.'

[www.brinyengarde.co.uk](http://www.brinyengarde.co.uk)

**Undying King Games** have been playtesting another free play-by-Web one-turn-a-day game, **Spore Wars**, which is now available on their site. In **Spore Wars** you are an alien who must decide which of a variety of (mostly) human hosts you wish to infest with your spores. If you choose hosts who are also 'favoured' by other aliens, your spores will breed and multiply fruitfully - otherwise, they will die.

UKG's Mo Holkar explains that it's 'another very simple bit of applied game-theory, to go alongside the three existing similarly-structured games (**The Gods Decide**, **Mighty Oaks** and **How Low Can You Go?**).

[www.ukg.co.uk](http://www.ukg.co.uk)



# Newsdesk Misc



## Online Games



Its imminent launch earned it a slot on the BBC's *Culture Show*: congratulations to whoever arranged the publicity. So

what is **Perplex City** about? Described as a 'mixed reality game', its basic idea is that players help the citizens of Perplex to recover a vital artefact, the Receda Cube, which has been stolen from them and hidden somewhere on Earth. It's possible to read about the theft and gain some idea of Perplex City's society from the game's nicely presented newsletter, *Sentinel*. Yes, it's a puzzle game and there's a reward promised for the person who finds the Cube. The cost to players seems fairly high, however, as you will need to buy some of the 'hundreds of puzzle cards' (at £2.50/\$5 for six) which will help you to discover the location of the cube.

These cards will be on sale from June at various shops worldwide, or online from *Firebox*. If it works, this could be an addictive game that appeals to novice gamers as much as to experienced gamers. We're not altogether convinced of its playability yet, but look forward to learning more as Perplex City gets under way.

[www.perplexcity.com](http://www.perplexcity.com)

## Personal News



As we reported last issue, on April 2nd our columnist **Eric Ridley** (playing as 'Eric Canyon') wrestled for the NWA Scottish Heavyweight Championship inside the confines of a steel cage. After two years of aiming for the belt he was finally

victorious by climbing out and escaping the cage. After reaching the top of the mountain, Eric has achieved something he has fought so long for, and now he has the chance to prove himself by retaining against the opponent of his choosing. But of course, he also risks the chance of losing his title in his first defence, on June 25th at the Sir Matt Busby Sports Complex, Bellshill, Glasgow.

[www.swa.t2u.com](http://www.swa.t2u.com)

## Magazines



Issue #20 of **Games International**

arrived in April after a delay caused by outsourcing its printing. As usual, this issue is full of enthusiastic material about boardgames. Among those covered in it are *Antiquity* (their game of the month), *City & Guilds*, *Return of the Heroes*, a clutch of games with a piratical theme, *The First World War* and many others. An excellent read for boardgame enthusiasts.

[www.gamesinternational.biz](http://www.gamesinternational.biz)

In the June issue of the *Independent Roleplaying* magazine, **IRM**, we're promised that there will be plenty of interesting articles, including a D&D scenario called 'Potholes of Peril', coverage of Vampire:



*The Requiem* and material for the *Cursed Empire* system, along with lots of news and comments. At the same website, *Stealth Brothers* also offer an online shop stocked with roleplaying items:

[www.stealthbrothers.com](http://www.stealthbrothers.com)

Issue #3 of **Polyancer**, the Canadian RPG magazine, is out now. Included in this issue are an article about the things that make PBM fun, another about balancing real and imaginary history when creating swashbucklers, a discussion of the problems that companies have found with d20, an article about online gaming and ideas for creating new languages in a game. There's also a description of a vast, mysterious, artificial satellite found orbiting a gas giant, suitable for inclusion in an RPG space opera.

[www.polyancerstudios.com](http://www.polyancerstudios.com)

**Harbinger** is a magazine which concentrates on miniatures, and issue #18 of it includes material drawn from a wide range of settings, including science fiction, fantasy and WWII, along with suggestions about painting the models:

[www.harbingermagazine.com](http://www.harbingermagazine.com)

The May issue of **White Dwarf** concentrates on Games Workshop's materials for the Lustria realm of *Warhammer*, together with tips and

scenarios for *The Lord of the Rings*. This issue also includes a free, detailed, double-sided map for *The War of the Ring*:

<http://uk.games-workshop.com/whitedwarf/>

The two long-running D&D magazines from **Piazo Publishing**, **Dragon** and **Dungeon**, are out in issues #331 and #124 respectively. Among *Dragon*'s articles are



discussions of pole arms, alchemical charms, new vehicles and new ways to use old equipment and new. *Dungeon* carries ideas for new scenarios, which include *Diamond Lake*, the *Temple of the Scorpion God* and the *Chambers of Antiquities*. <http://paizo.com>

Just as we go to press, we've received a copy of **Worlds of Cthulhu**, the biannual Cthulhu magazine. Published by *Pegasus Press*, this looks well produced and gripping reading. We'll review it in more detail next issue.

[www.worldsofcthulhu.com](http://www.worldsofcthulhu.com)

## Hall of Fame

[An irregular feature giving the chance to announce winners of gaming events.]

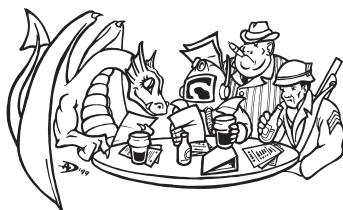
**Serim Ral 17 - Renaissance:** *Incubus Designs* congratulate the following players, who achieved a Lvl 2 'Ultimate Alliance Victory' on Turn 103 of SR17: **Laura Bonn** (Hak-Yak-Korak, 10.25% World Power) and **Steve Ellwood** (Raized, 25.52% World Power)

**Serim Ral 22 - Ocean Lords:** *Incubus* also offer congratulations to the following, who won a Lvl 4 'Alliance Victory' on Turn 70: **Kevin Shuttlewood** (Jealous The Legendary Ghoulis Superheroine, 11.13% World Power); **Douglas Rice** (Clausewitz The Legendary Skaven Superhero, 9.60% WP); **John Lusty** (Salamandras The Demigod King, 9.14% WP); **Alain Hoffmann** (Elvira The Demigod Queen, 8.08%); **Graeme Foster** (Burlywood The Lesser God, 5.06% WP); **Davidle Vin** (Io The Legendary Orcish Heroine, 4.59% WP); and last but not least, (as long as you don't count WP), **Phillip Draper** (Danlo The Demigod King, 0.99% WP). Full details on winners and games at:

[www.incubusdesigns.com](http://www.incubusdesigns.com)

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# NEWSDESK BOARD / RPG



## BOARDGAMES



Pevans reports that:

US Mensa has announced the winners of its 2005 *Mind Games Competition*. They are: **Da Vinci's Challenge** from Briarpatch; **Ingenious** from Fantasy Flight Games - this is the Reiner Knizia-designed game that is also published as **Einfach Genial** (by Kosmos in Germany) and **Mensa Connections** (the UK version from Sophisticated Games); **Loot**, a piratical card game from Gamewright; the entertaining **Niagara** from Rio Grande Games (and Zoch in Germany) and **Zendo**, a deductive logic game from Looney Labs.

Meanwhile, in Germany, the *Spiel des Jahres* (Game of the Year) jury has announced its shortlist for the 2005 prize. They are: **Himalaya**, designed by Régis Bonnessée and published by Tilsit Editions; **In 80 Tagen um die Welt**, designed by Michael Rieneck and published by Kosmos (and by Rio Grande, as **Around the World in 80 Days**); **Jambo**, a two-player card game by R diger Dorn, published by Kosmos (and Rio Grande); **Niagara**, designed by Thomas Liesching and published by Zoch (and Rio Grande) and **Verflixt!**, a quick, dice-rolling game designed by Wolfgang Kramer and Michael Kiesling and published by Ravensburger. I have to say that I haven't played all of these games, but I'll back Around the World in 80 Days to get the prize.

*SpielChamps UK*, The UK Board and Card Games Championship, took place as part of Maycon in Nottingham on Sunday, 1st May. This is a tournament for teams of four, whose members play four games against the other teams. This year's four games were: **Age of Steam** (using an unpublished map provided by Warfrog and Winsome Games), the recent **City and Guilds**, the classic **Modern Art** and last year's hit, **Ticket to Ride**. The number of teams may have been down on previous years, but the standard of play was very high. The winners were the Nil Nominatus team: James Faulkner, Timothy Luffingham, Geoff Simons and James Wood. Our congratulations to them. And also to Russell Harris (of The Uninspired), who was the highest scoring individual. While Nil Nominatus take the title of UK Champions, the top three teams have the opportunity to represent the UK in the European Championships (*EuropeMasters*) at Spiel in October. And my own team? Well, To Win Just Once lived up to its name. Just one of our players won one of his games and we were left

in last place (a disappointment after coming fourth last year). Still, at least we got a bottle of champagne out of it - this traditionally goes to the lowest scoring team that doesn't include the last-placed player. Ah well, roll on next year!

Hangman Games has published an extra Event Card for its board game, **Dry Gulch**. This resolves a typo in the game's rules saying there are 39 Event cards in the game when there were only 38. Anyone in the UK who has the game can get the extra card by e-mailing [Games@pevans.co.uk](mailto:Games@pevans.co.uk) (or by writing to Games from Pevans, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF).

Dry Gulch, and other Hangman Games, are available in UK shops: Gamers (St Neots, Cambs), Leisure Games (Finchley, London), Not Just Stamps (High Wycombe, Bucks), Spirit Games (Burton-on-Trent, Staffs) and online from Games from Pevans

[www.pevans.co.uk/Game](http://www.pevans.co.uk/Game)

## ROLEPLAYING



Let's start this time with Wizards of the Coast's **Dungeon Master's Guide II**, which costs \$39.95 and is, of course, a sequel to the previous volume. It aims to help any D&D Dungeon Master who's short of time, with advice about

designing adventures, running a game, building and using prestige classes and creating campaign settings. Also included for the Dungeon Master's use are instant traps, locations, treasures and a fully detailed town.

Also from Wizards of the Coast comes **Weapons of Legacy** at \$34.95, which covers those magical weapons and armour which possess their own mythical background, along with a few other magical items like rings and staves.

For their Eberron game world, they have produced the **Five Nations** sourcebook at \$29.95, with chapters about the culture, geography, guilds, factions, new prestige classes, equipment, creatures, spells, magic items and adventure sites for each of the Five Nations.

There's also a **Deluxe Eberron Dungeon Master's Screen** at \$14.95, which modifies the existing D&D Deluxe Screen to make it suitable - even essential - for campaigning in Eberron.

Moving on from Eberron to Forgotten Realms, **City of Splendors: Waterdeep** costs

\$29.95 and presents the history of Waterdeep, a who's who of its NonPlayer Characters, information about its laws, its arcane schools, its military, its guilds and its nobility, along with rules for running and playing in a campaign there.

Let's end this section appropriately, with Wizards of the Coast's **Apocalypse**. Costing \$19.95, this supplement in the d20 Modern series contains rules for running campaigns in a range of post-apocalyptic settings like nuclear war, environmental disaster or an alien invasion. The new rules cover those for barter, scavenging, equipment, mutations and robots. Also included are three ready-to-play scenarios.

Moving back to the 1920s to find an equally menacing setting, we come upon Chaosium's **Secrets of New York** at \$23.95. The title alone wouldn't sound particularly deadly, if weren't that this is a Gotham sourcebook for Call of Cthulhu. The sinister secrets above and beneath the New York's streets are revealed here, but possibly too late for any chance of escape! as well as the detailed history and the maps, three scenarios are included.

Escaping the clutches of Cthulhu to take refuge in high fantasy, Mongoose Publishing's **Dawn of Destruction** joins their Lone Wolf series. Here, the player characters in the world of Magnamund are intended to come from all classes and work together as 'Kai Lords, Knights of Sommerlund and Brothers of the Crystal Star', to become the heroes of epic adventures. At \$14.95, this high fantasy campaign includes advice for players and their moderator before starting the adventure set in a mighty city threatened by the approach of the Dark Lords.

Finally, switching from fantasy to possible futures, there's Mongoose Publishing's **Free Mars**, which belongs to their Babylon 5 series and costs \$24.95. Set in the 23rd century, this deals with the efforts of the human colonists of Mars to break away from Earth's domination and survive in freedom on their own harsh planet. There are, of course, plenty of obstacles to face in this setting.

## CORRECTION

Your editor suffered from a Senior Moment while putting issue #113 together. The author of the review of **DragonWars**

was, of course, not a Bill Morris but the very genuine **Bill Moore**. Apologies, Bill!



# Middle Earth PBM

## Surviving from the Start

*ROB GAUL advises new players on getting their strategy right ...*

SO YOU'VE decided to take on your first game of **MiddleEarthPBM**, and visit the thrashing on the enemy that they so richly deserve. But hang on, what is that 124-page monstrosity with all too few trendy pictures in it? A rulebook? Arrgh! Maybe it won't be so easy after all?

No one can decide the hows and whats for you to survive and win your first game: however, the following is a treatise on elements of the game that will help you survive that most confusing of openings, the game startup. For this is the moment where you customize your nation to fulfil the goals you have for the length of the game. Get it wrong and you will waste valuable time and resources in replacing characters etc to fit your purposes (if indeed you can do it at all).

### Growing an economy

First, a little should be said about the operation of your economy. If in any given turn you cannot meet your maintenance bills, *and* a computer-enforced tax rise of up to 100% can't cover your turn's debts, *then you are eliminated* (or in less technical terms - your nation is terminated, your allies weep, and your enemies put on a barby and a slab down by the beach). Each turn in your turn report there is a section that bears your expected revenue for next turn. This is what you need to cover. However an added consideration is that if you lose a population centre to combat, or production is halted by siege, this happens before maintenance and so must be taken into account by you in your final figures. Changes in the game season also will affect the gold produced in your populations depending on the time of year. If you haven't met your maintenance bill for the turn, the computer will automatically upgrade your tax rate accordingly: however, the loyalty penalty to all of your populations will be greater if the change is enforced as opposed to a planned tax change.

Small economic nations such as most Dark Servant nations have very little latitude with enforced changes. The larger Free People economies have a lot more latitude with enforced tax rises if necessary - either way, you must keep a track of your maintenance bills two turns ahead of the current turn.

Maintenance comes before combat, but after you have the option of selling your stores to the market. Thus, if you are meeting your own expenses, you can do so from turn to turn. However, remember that there are limits on selling stores to the market. Only so many sales will be accepted before the market refuses further sales of a store type.

If you are requiring aid to meet your maintenance, your economic game needs to be two turns ahead of the military one. If you get your results, then realise you need to disband your armies in order to survive the coming turn, you are already dead. Also if you leave your requests for gold from your allies till the turn you need it, it is too late and you will be dead because transfers come after maintenance.

Getting the turn sequence straight in your head is vital. I have played in several 'Experts' Games and witnessed several of the players eliminated in exactly this manner. They simply didn't ask for help until the turn they needed the gold in their treasury (if they asked at all).

In most cases startup nations possess only very basic economies, and therefore have to be worked at in order to be able to afford greater forces in both military and character pools. The Emissary is the chief tool in camp placement; commanders can also be used, but at a much greater cost.

Unless your nation has a super economy at startup, I would suggest two 30 point emissaries as a good start. If your nation doesn't have emissaries of this standard at game start then it's advisable to pay the 10,000 gold to get one.

There are two basic types of camps to place: economic and strategic. Strategic camps are camps whose placement are vital to your nation's security interests. Such places where a camp with a tower are useful are areas where the enemy's army movement can be broken up, eg astride roads, in mountain passes etc. Strategically placed camps also include those placed in a specific area, intended for later upgrade and use as a recruiting base. You also need to consider where you intend to be fighting in the next ten turns, and where you will be in the next 20 turns. Those without a plan will be left behind. Economic camps are those that are intended to provide stores for use/sale or for upgrading to provide gold. They're usually situated in 'safe' areas. Camps placed in mountains will normally produce gold in the form of stores. Camps in hills/rough also have a reasonable chance of producing gold. Gold producing hexes in other hex types are uncommon but not unknown.

### Taxes and loyalty

Your tax rate starts off at 40%. Changing tax rates will raise or lower the loyalties of all populations owned according to the size of the rate change. For example, a rise of 13% will cause loyalty losses of 0-13 loyalty points. It is preferable to alter your tax rate to the highest desired rate as soon as possible after game start, in order to minimize loyalty damage to your vulnerable soon-to-be-placed camps. Some players opt for a 79% tax rate on turn 1 before placing camps and subsequently lowering the tax rate to 60% giving all their camps a loyalty rise. I have tried this and was not too successful. Tax rates can have a positive or negative effect on all your population loyalties from turn to turn, with 60% being the highest tax rate possible to enjoy neutral loyalty penalties/bonuses, and therefore the most popular for most nations with an economic capability. Many of the DS nations opt for 39% tax as this gives a good loyalty bonus each turn, and having a 100% tax would not really improve their income significantly due to their poor population base.

Your new camp receives a loyalty rank half of the skill ranks of the Emissary (or commander) rounded down. So a 30 point Emissary will create a 15 loyalty camp. If an unfortified population's loyalty reaches lower than 16, it is almost certain that the population will degrade one level/turn if it is greater than a camp, and a strong chance it will disband if it is a camp (having a character present will stop this effect).

Loyalty can be adversely affected by some events. For example, the loss of a town or major town to combat will cause a reduction in loyalty across all your other population centres.

### Population upgrades

Eventually you will want to upgrade your populations for whatever reason. Only one level can be upgraded per turn at any individual population centre. The order is of average difficulty, therefore an E50 or

### *Middle Earth PBM at a glance*

A team-based fantasy wargame from *ME Games* set in Tolkien's world, which is played by email. There are several scenarios, with 'Battle of the Five Armies' recommended for beginners, where a full 10-turn game is offered for £10. Otherwise, the standard charge for new players is £10 for startup + 2 turns, with subsequent turns at £4.50.

[www.middleearthgames.com](http://www.middleearthgames.com)



better has a fair chance of successfully passing the order's difficulty level. The combined sum of the population's loyalty and the Emissary's skill-ranks will also affect the order's chances of success.

The larger the population, the more troops you can recruit. Recruiting at two cities gives you the same troop-raising capacity as recruiting at five villages. You can relieve much of the strain on your character pool by building a good strong recruiting base.

Given that, at the very best, your character limit will be 21, it is obvious that some work needs to be put into your population centres to streamline your operation to best take advantage of your character assets.

### Further considerations

After turn #5 the dragons will start to appear in the Misty Mountains hexes. Any dragons in your camps will appear in your population reports on your turn results. If there are no camps there, you won't know where they are. Dragons give a huge combat strength bonus to your armies (they kill several thousand enemy heavy infantry at a go) and go a long way to evening the disparity between Dark Servant and Free People army strengths. So care should be taken at game start to make sure camps are placed in recruiting hexes.

The Dark Servant agents will start becoming powerful from about turn 10 onwards (and vile from about turn 18). So it is a good point to have your recruiting base off Dark Servant maps as soon as possible after that to avoid losing your vulnerable recruiting commanders. Setting up a good recruiting base just outside the range of enemy visibility is always a good strategic move. It will allow you access to the front, whilst also affording you some protection from the DS cut-throats.

### Diplomacy and relations

Initially all members of the two allegiances start with 'Tolerated' relations to all their allies, and 'Disliked' relations to all opposition nations. This effectively means the nation can attack any enemy nation's armies and population centres, and may pass through a hex containing an allied army or fortified population, but cannot draw supply from an allied population, or form a company of characters with their allies.

The situation with regards to Neutral Nations is entirely different, and a matter of concern for all allegiance nations as well as the neutrals themselves. Relations for neutrals to *all* other nations is 'Neutral' and vice versa. This means that they cannot attack nor be attacked by any other nation until such time as the respective relations are downgraded to 'Disliked' by the attacking party.

A favourite trick of the Neutral nations is to entreat with their intended victims, holding out the hope of allegiance while all the time downgrading their relations and preparing for war. They then execute a surprise attack against their target hoping he hasn't downgraded the relations and often managing to cripple their target while he races to downgrade relations and

reduce the damage (as if it's not enough trying to counter his armies, only to find your armies can't do anything but watch them burn you to the ground).

What this means in game terms is that the Neutral nation having 'Disliked' relations to his enemy may attack, whilst the target nation having 'Neutral' relations to the aggressor can't do anything until he downgrades his own relations. The Neutral's armies can be halted a turn in their movement if they encounter an army or fortified population of their victim, but nothing else. So the Neutral may move from under the opposing force without recourse to combat (subject to Stand and Defend orders), instead saving his strength to conquer the enemy's populations. At best for the victim, the attacker will get a turn of surprise action before he can react and downgrade. This can be enough to destroy a nation if carefully executed, however. It can be worse if the victim needs to return commanders to his capital or fails the order.

As a counter to this, the Neutral nation is also vulnerable to the victim's allies in exactly the same way and to a greater extent. If the Neutral has not had the chance to downgrade relations with all opposition nations prior to his aggressive moves, then every one of those nations has the

ability to inflict the same damage as indicated above. A prime example of this is a Dark Servant Rhudaur. He has six Free People nations with direct access to his realm, with all six able to conduct the same manoeuvres as described above, regardless (and in fact totally heedless) of any defending armies.

Nations intending to work closely with an allied game start/Neutral should also upgrade relations and vice versa to allow freedom of movement through each other's armies and fortified territories or risk continual movement disruptions.

Remember you will be halted in movement when encountering an army or population fortification if that army/fortification's controlling nation and your nation don't have tolerated or friendly relations towards each other.

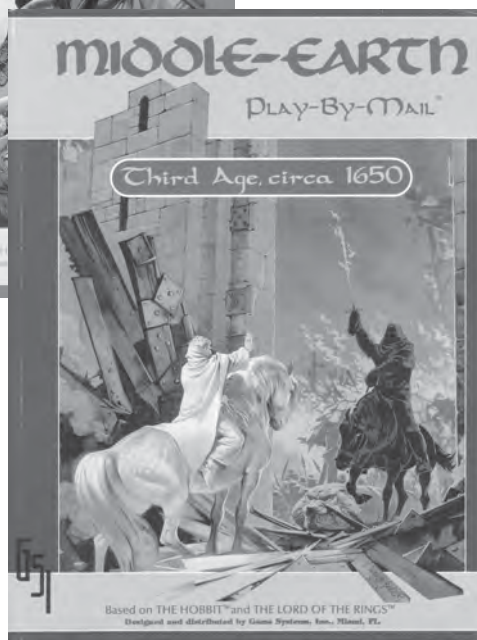
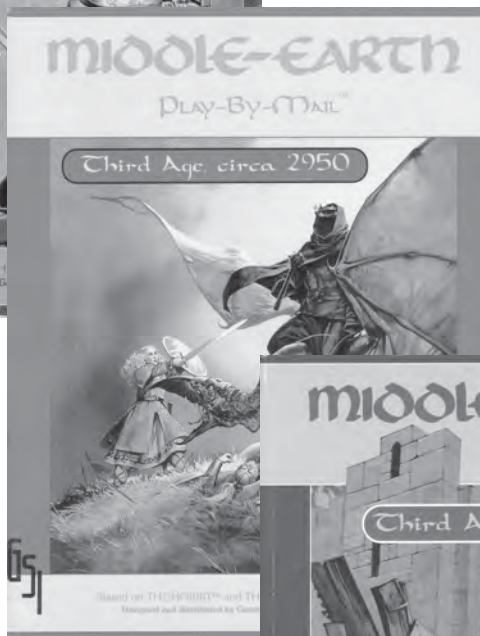
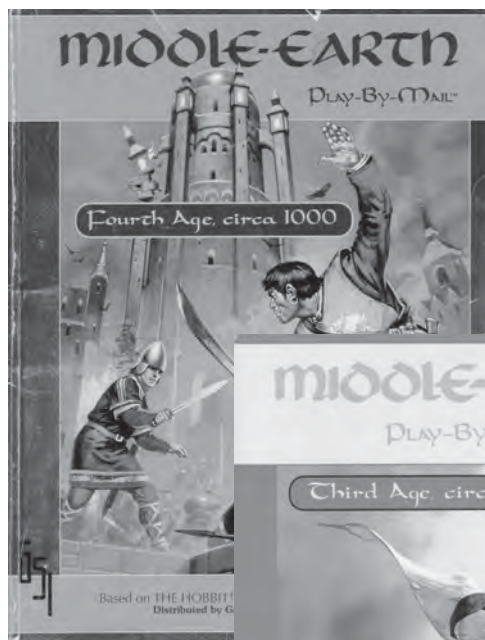
Of course, it isn't always possible to effect these relations changes, particularly since the game start is when most opposing nations are at their weakest. But care should be taken by the Neutral nation to downgrade its enemies at earliest opportunity. Beware, though: downgrading relations

can be detected by your victim if he has a 'Divine Relations' spell ruining your surprise and perhaps leaving you open to one of his own.

I won't go into the details of a downgrade to 'Hated' relations with your enemies. Suffice it to say that many orders such as assassinations are affected by the relations experienced between the nations. Combat stats are also affected by the relations. If you have the spare command orders it's worth doing, but not in preference to tax changes, naming characters or most activities. It's not vital to your survival, just a helpful advantage.

### Characters

Your choice of new characters is the single most important decision you have to make in the early turns. From here you have to decide what type of game you wish to play. The choices of characters made here can be vital



to your survival. For instance, if you are playing a front line nation vulnerable to enemy assault and you choose to name characters other than commanders in substantial numbers, you could find yourself losing swiftly in the field and unable to recruit effectively. I myself am an unrepentant wargamer, whereas many other MEPBM players are character-orientated in their gaming. Temper your own play to match your individual preference.

### Character classes

There are four types of character, each having its own strength. To ignore any of the classes is to cut off an important piece of your arsenal. However, some are more important to your play than others and so should have a greater representation in your character pool. I won't go into any great detail here as to the uses of the individual classes, instead I'll concentrate on some of the idiosyncrasies of the game that should be taken into account when deciding what is needed.

Commanders are your military leaders. No other class can recruit or lead your armies. When your last commander has died, your nation is eliminated. So in effect this is the most important of the character classes because you can live without any of the others. A commander in a pinch can use the 725 NamChar order to name a character of any of the other classes. However no other class can issue this order.

Your Emissary is at a basic level, a banker/politician. Your emissary places camps in vacant hexes (hexes with no pre-existing population) or ruins. You then receive production from that population. Emissaries can influence away other nation's population centres.

In the early stages of the game, Agents are used for stealing the enemy's gold. The Dark Servants are economically weak and therefore rely on Free People gold to survive. The Free Peoples often attempt to make life hard for the Dark Servants by stealing it back (cheeky swine) or making themselves broke (vicious swine). A level 40 agent will usually be successful against a camp/village. I like to use A50s against the larger populations, A60s versus national capitals at the very least.

I've seen many Free People teams use their agents to guard. This is successful at game start, but soon the enemy super agents start killing your characters regardless of the guards, and injuring/killing those as well. Assassination is a difficult order. As such it is not advisable to try with less than an A70 unless you are desperate (or derive some kind of pleasure from killing your own characters).

### All round character/military game

This is the game I would advise for most players. It gives you a fair blend of all the character types. Your military will be fulsome without being awesome, but you will also have a good support base in the emissary and agent fields. Given the lack of support from your allies that you will come to know and love, this gives you character options as well.

The Free People nations are particularly vulnerable to the loss of their commanders to the Dark Servant assassins. Therefore you need a good strong commander pool. Each nation will often be active on several fronts. You need to decide how many and which populations you wish to be recruiting at, how many offensive armies you wish to field, then consider having replacement characters on hand.

This is particularly heavy in relation to the limit on character numbers, so what I find to be a good plan is to name two commanders at game start and remove two of your startup multi-class commanders from the front if necessary. Naming multi-class commanders allows you to use them as

commanders in an emergency, but to employ them in another primary skill at other times. Thus it is easier on your character limits.

I consider the following to be a good formula for the 21-character limit for the Free Peoples: 3 Emissaries (2 at game start), 3 Agents, 2 Mages, 13 Commanders (including multi-class commanders able to operate as other classes).

You of course will need to assess what your own needs are. Some nations such as Northern Gondor with their huge military capacities are more suited to an almost exclusive commander presence. Some such as the Noldo, who are well insulated in the North-West, can concentrate on their character game leaving the command of armies to their allies. Your character types should fit the circumstances.

### Assess your strengths

If in doubt as to what best suits your nation, have a careful look at your nation sheet. See how many enemy nations are on your doorstep: if that doesn't look too bad, then see what your bonuses are. Normal characters start with a skill rank of 30. If your sheet indicates a rank of 40 or other such bonus then you are well advised to cater to that bonus as far as you are able, because the bonuses make your characters and armies superior in their fields

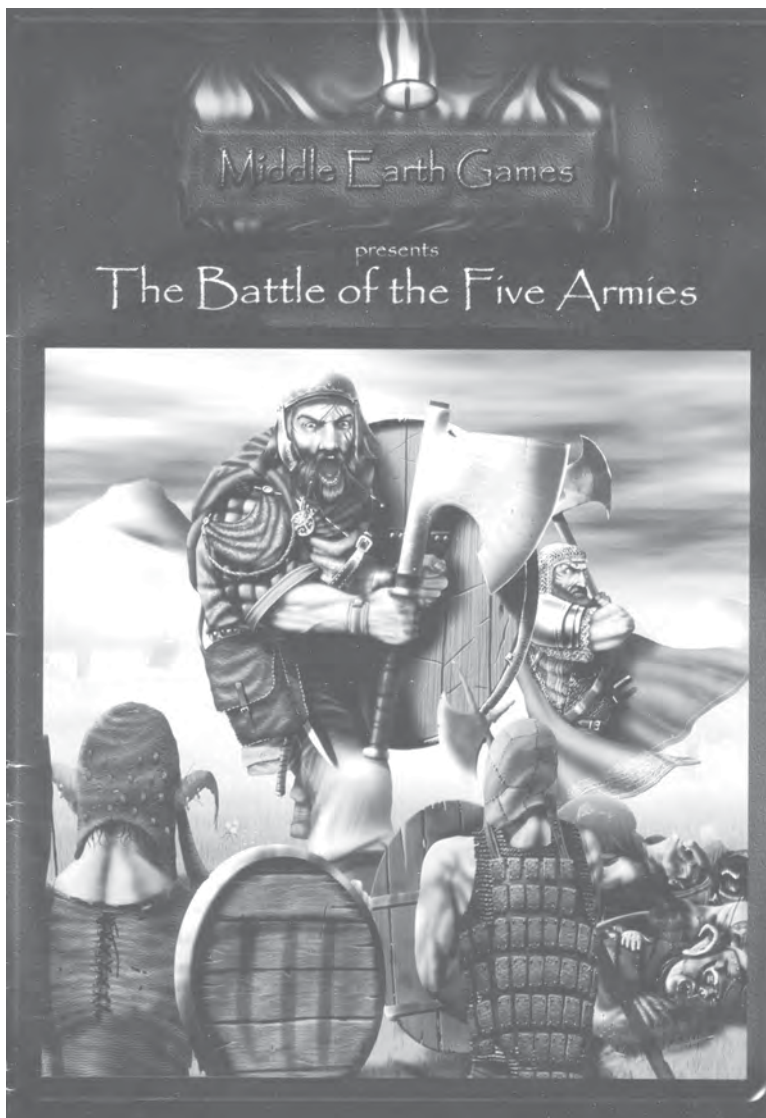
to the average national attribute. If you intend to name a 40-skill character, you need to do it with another 40-skill character of the class or else the new character will have the skill rank of the naming character. eg a multi skilled C10/A40 of a nation capable of naming C40s will only name a C10.

### More, much more!

There is far more to the game than has been explained above. Tactics and strategies are something you will have to develop (or persevere against) yourself. This merely a basic guide on how to set up your nation so as to better your chances of survival. So saying, I wish you all the best in your future games. Take what is offered here as you will, use what you like, disregard the rest. Feel free to improve upon any of the ideas and when you're ready - come back to kick my butt.

See you on the field (probably spread thin and jammy).

*[There's a more detailed version of this article on both the Flagship and Middle Earth Games websites.]*





# Forbidden Relics

## Cthulhu CCG Expansion

*ERIC RIDLEY rushed to try out this latest expansion ...*

CALL OF CTHULHU first came to my attention through games conventions. I had never heard of H P Lovecraft, or his works, but I had heard fervent gamers talk of his creations in reverential tones during conventions (usually the LARPerS, I should add). As such, the myth of Cthulhu slowly drew me in. I had half-conceived ideas about what the Ancient Ones were and how they operated. I had even acted in a short film at college about the Lovecraftian horror, without really knowing what it was all about, so discovering the game brought all the pieces of the jigsaw together.

Perhaps it was most appropriate, then, that I should find out about the new **Call of Cthulhu CCG** during last year's *GenCon* convention, surrounded by LARPerS of all sorts (usually large). I bought two starter decks and about nine boosters. I loved it, and, without wishing to sound conceited, it loved me back. Since then I have been an avid player and deck builder. When the new **Forbidden Relics** set came out I was so excited I had to take a break from kicking the crap out of a midget I found trying to steal biscuits from me, and order a few boxes from the States.

Relics marks the game's third set, after *Arkham Edition* and *Unspeakable Tales*, and also signals the end of the Arkham block. The set introduces a few new mechanics to spice up play, the most important being 'overpay': some cards have an effect that if you overpay for them when they come into play; ie you've paid for a card costing three resources from a domain that had four attached, then you will get an extra bonus from playing the card. Much like paying an extra 30p in McDonalds to go large.

In keeping with the namesake of the set, *Forbidden Relics* includes a lot of artefacts and cards that play off artefacts. 'Lower the cost to play Ancient One characters by one for each artefact you control' etc. While these are useful, it all felt a little too **Magic the Gathering** for me at this point. One of the best things about the CoC card game is its originality: I'm probably being a little unfair here, but this seemed to erode the notion, plus *Magic* makes my bile rise (stupid, hairy Magic players).

Some stand-out cards include *Spawn of Cthulhu*, *Mi-Go Brain Case* and the power gameresque *Worlds Torn Asunder*, whereby if you control any two of the four main Ancient Ones in the game you can put five success

tokens on a story card. Relics is the first set not to include any versions of the four 'big ones', Cthulhu, Hastur, Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth (making the above card useless if you don't have any of the previous sets). Stupid, hairy card game designer. It would seem that the creators of the game really are trying to keep it balanced, not wanting to fall foul of the 'arms race' that often is inspired by new sets for CCGs. Certainly if you read the blog on the CoC website, this would appear to be the intent. Let's hope they can keep this going for the rest of the releases.

My main gripe with this set is with distribution. I bought a full box of cards (the set consists

of 145 cards) yet got many duplicate rares from the same box. Specifically, I got four copies of the 'Neighbourhood Gin Joint' card: three too many for my liking. While this may not seem like such a big problem, especially if you are more concerned with building winning decks than collecting a full set, for me it marked a backward step. I didn't even get a full set of uncommons from a whole box. Back when Decipher had the Star Wars licence (ah, them were the days) they introduced a well-publicised idea that

you would never get the same two rares in a booster box. To me this sounded great. There was however, a backlash from stockists, as once somebody had got the Vader card from a booster, it was then known that there would be no more of the Sith Lord in that box. Thus, nobody bought any more cards. I don't know if this is the case with CoC, but it would certainly seem a possibility. I had bought five other booster boxes of the previous two sets and didn't get a single 'doubler' rare from a box, then all of a sudden I pull four of the same card from a Relics box: I'm just so angry, where has that midget gone?

The art, as always, is superb. The Cthulhu CCG has the best artists on its books bar none, but the Relics set seems to have a few duff cards in terms of illustration. Tyler Walpole and Eric Wilkerson's work both do nothing for me and detract from the overall feel of the set in my eyes. If only they could convince John Avon to do some stuff, life would be great.

If you are getting into this game, may I suggest that you keep your packaging for all you buy. Fantasy Flight games are running a very nice redemption offer for various different evil goods in return for your booster wrappers (they must be friends of the earth or something): check the website for details.

I'm afraid that *Forbidden Relics* is the weakest set so far, but the first two were stellar. The distribution really lets it down and some of the new art doesn't seem in keeping with the imagery of the last two sets. It is certainly not a bad set, but the other two are so much more satisfying.



### *Forbidden Relics at a glance*

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games

Set size: 145 cards

Price: £2.50 per booster

# Louis XIV

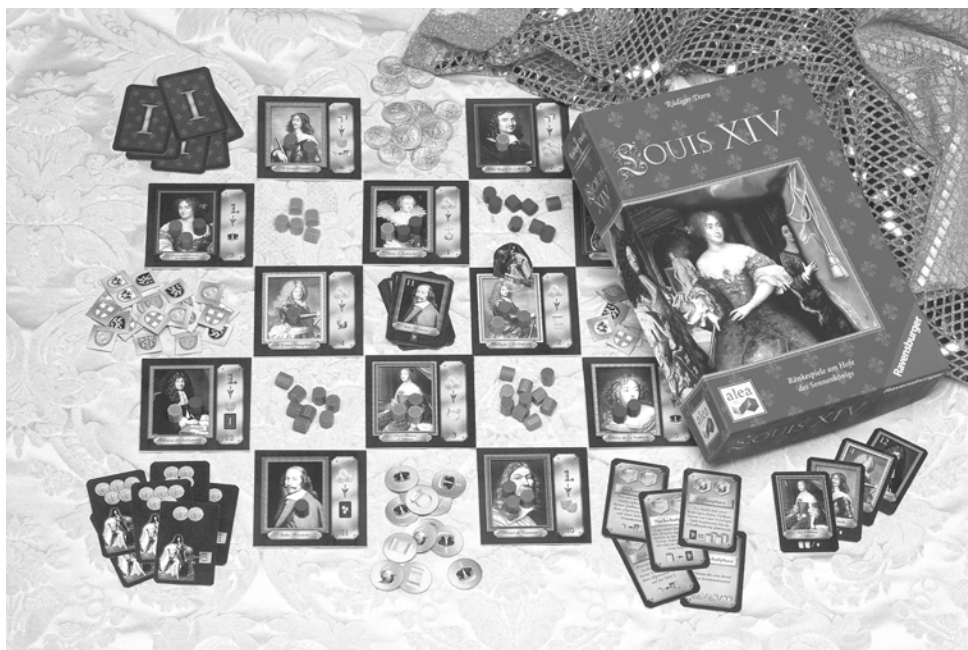
*Intrigue at Court: PEVANS considers a game of tactical challenges ...*

THE FIRST publication from *alea* this year is sub-titled 'Intrigue in the Court of the Sun-King' - or at least, that's how it's given on the English language edition of **Louis XIV** from *Rio Grande Games*. This is presented as one of *alea*'s smaller box range, but it's as complex a game as many of its larger companions. Louis XIV was designed by Rudiger Dorn, the designer of **Traders of Genoa** and **Goa**, amongst others.

Inside the box are a dozen square boards, representing major characters at court, a set of wooden pieces for each player, several sets of cards and lots of cardboard counters. The character boards form the core of the game's intricate structure. They all correspond to historical individuals: the King's mother, brother, wives, son, mistresses and courtiers including, of course, the Cardinal (Mazarin in this case). Players play their pieces to gain influence over characters, thus allowing them to get specific counters. These are used to complete 'Mission' cards, which are the major source of Victory Points and give players special abilities or actions.

The set-up starts with laying out the boards in order. They form two concentric circles, touching only at corners, with the inner circle made up of the people closest to the King. Players have some of their pieces in front of them - a stock from which they can place pieces on characters - while others are in a 'reserve' in the playing area. In general, pieces in reserve have to be moved to the stock before they can be played - you can begin to see some of the detail of the game-play here. Players also start with some missions and choose these from the easy, difficult or medium sets.

Each turn, players get a hand of influence cards, each of which corresponds to one of the 12 characters. These constrain where players can



place their pieces that turn, playing one card at a time. It's not as restrictive as it sounds, since a player puts up to three pieces (from stock) on a character's board. From there, they can trail pieces to a row of boards. Wild cards provide some options and cards can also be used to bring pieces from reserve to stock. Another clever feature is that players will have one card that isn't played, which gives more options. What's clear is that you need to do some planning at the start of the turn. How best can you use the cards you have to gain the abilities of the characters and use them to fulfil your missions? Ooh, this is my kind of game!

As the turn goes on, players must react to what their opponents are doing. This makes it very useful to be able to keep options open until later in the turn. So players will often move pieces from reserve to stock early in the turn. Conversely, a pre-emptive move - getting lots of pieces onto a character quickly - is another tactical option. One of the characters gives players an additional card for the next turn. This means they have an extra card to play and can thus ensure they go last - a useful tactical advantage. All of the characters provide useful benefits like this, so there is always some advantage to be gained by getting influence on a character. There are several different ways influence is used with a character. For many of them, any player with influence on the character can spend money to gain the ability or item that character provides. However, the player with most influence gets it free. But their pieces go into reserve, while the other players get theirs back into stock. This kind of balancing mechanism is one of the features of the game and another factor to be weighed up when planning your turn. Other characters may provide their service to anyone with enough pieces on them and so on. It doesn't stop there, though. Depending on the circumstances, a character is often flipped over each turn. The other side gives a slightly different way of getting the character's ability. The alternative to paying for it, for example, is that only the player with the most pieces gets the use of the character's ability.

At the heart of the game is the inner circle of characters. Each of these provides a different item (scroll, helmet, ring or orb - though this consistently described as a 'scepter' in the Rio Grande edition). A cut-out figure representing the King will be with one of these four each turn. For this character there is an extra reward for the player with the most influence: a crown, which is a wild item. Crowns can also be gained from a couple of





the outer characters. The items are used to play Mission cards. The easy Missions require one specific item and any other; to play the difficult ones, players will need a pair of the same item. Getting a couple of Crowns is thus a great opportunity to get a difficult Mission into play. And it follows that it's something you shouldn't let other players get.

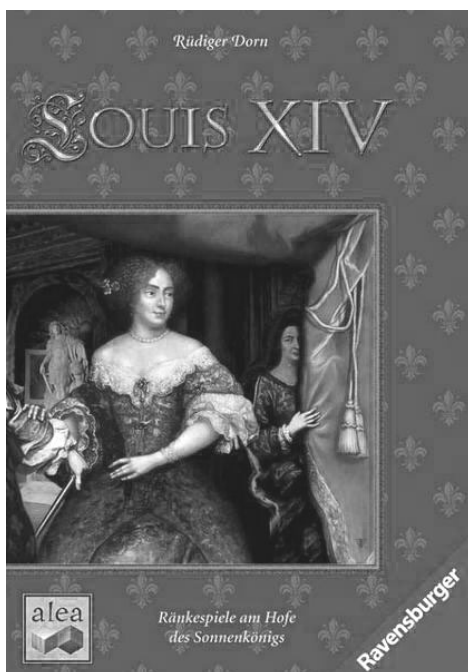
Game turns are played in a strict sequence of phases. It starts with identifying how much gold players get and just where the King is going to be this turn. Players also get a fresh hand of cards. Then it's the meat of the turn when players play their cards to get influence (pieces) onto the character boards. Once all of this has been done, the influence on each character is evaluated - in numerical order - to see which players gain what. The sequence is important, as, for example, one of them allows players to place more influence on a character. This can be for later in the turn or an early move for the next turn - more tactical options. Finally, players have the opportunity to play their Missions. Once in play, the Missions provide their owners with advantages, which are usually tied in to a specific phase of the turn.

Louis XIV is played over four turns - which is not much time. (The limited and structured play reminds me rather of **Princes of Florence**.)

At the end of this, players' Victory Points are assessed. Played Mission cards count for five points each. But players will also have accumulated 'Shield' counters during the game. These can be acquired in many different ways: from characters, from Missions, from card play. They are also given

for things left over at the end of the game: unused cards and items, for example. There are several different shields, but they're dished out at random. At the end of the game, there's a small bonus for whoever has the most of each type of shield. This seems a little odd to me, as it's just a bonus point or two paid out at random. Okay, it gives an incentive to collect more shields to be more likely to get bonuses, but players may just get lucky. In fact, there's quite a lot of randomness in this game. The amount of money given to players each turn, which cards players get, which Missions players get and so on are all random elements. The game is thus almost entirely tactical. The only strategy element I can see is within a turn, when you can plan how to get the items you need to complete the Missions you hold. Even then, players draw a replacement Mission for a played Mission before they play any second Mission and can thus trust to luck (it also allows a player with two Crowns to pick up a difficult Mission that they know they can play).

I think Rudiger Dorn has come up with a winner here. Louis XIV is a superb tactical game. I like the challenge of maximising what I can get from each turn - and I like not having to plan several turns ahead (this is why I don't play much **Chess**!). I like the challenge of out-thinking my opponents each turn, too. I think the complexity and intricate nature of the game will repay skilled play and that this will more than outweigh the randomness of the cards. Though I haven't played the game enough to be certain of this. At the moment, Louis XIV is at the top of my list of games from 2005.



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# Turning Digital

## Campaign of Nyctea, Parallel Universe 2 and Shadowmere

*COLIN FORBES explores further promising turn-based games on the web ...*

'DO YOU THINK you can find some more turn-based games on the web?' asks our intrepid editor. Is there more water in the ocean? But that's the problem you see, there are simply so many games out there, that it's difficult to cover more than a few in each issue. What I'd really like to do is somehow find the time to play all of these games and review them properly, but there are only so many hours in each day. This time I've limited myself to three games, and delved into them in greater depth than usual. I've not had time to play any of them properly, so my views are necessarily first impressions, plus information gleaned from message boards and contacts with players. I'm sure Flagship would welcome more thoughtful and in-depth reviews of any of these games - so if you try them out (and why not, when two of them are free?) perhaps you would consider putting pen to paper or finger to keyboard.

### Campaign of Nyctea

*'The realm of Nyctea is wondrous and majestic. Its lands are as varied as they are beautiful. A journeyman will encounter high mountaintops, wet rain forests, chilling tundra, rolling hills, and fertile plains. Explore the realm, and see the possibilities.'* Excerpt from the *Annals of Nyctea*, by Lord Gemynd

The Nyctean Campaign is an open-ended, turn-based, computer-moderated, play-by-web game. It is set in the realm of Nyctea, a fantasy medieval world alive with activity. Merchants ply their trade, warriors battle horrid beasts, and maligned mystics practice dark arts. Being open-ended, there are no winning scenarios, no victory conditions which conclude the game. The game goes on, even when heroes pass on, or empires collapse. The Nyctean Campaign was designed to be a rich and fully functional role-playing world, one which exists despite the characters within it.

Turns are sent in on a weekly basis and span one month of game time (40 days total - there are eight days in the Nyctean week). You send in turns (a list of orders to carry out) for each realm character you control, as well as any dominion orders you need processed. Turns can include, but are not limited to, movement around the vast realm of Nyctea, trade agreements, combat preparations, craft work, guard duty, skill study, spell research, training, and much more. Between turns, you are free to communicate with any other player in the game. In addition, the contents of many pages within the website may change to accommodate the results of the last turn (take special note of the city screens, as the information in them will always change from one turn to the next).

The general premise behind the Campaign of Nyctea is to create a massive, fully functional role-playing realm. For this reason, you will never have a lack of things to do. Exploration alone allows you to search through ancient ruins of empires long gone, forage through dungeons of foul denizens, sail over tens of thousands of miles of ocean, and roam through more than 30 detailed cities. In addition to exploration, you can improve your realm characters by training in their skills and abilities. There are more

then 100 skills that can be learned, and almost all of them can be improved with additional training.

Eventually, your characters may build strongholds, both within the confines of the existing cities and out on the open land itself, earning taxes from the local nomads as you work to found your own city! Structures can be built from within these strongholds. Each adds unique benefits for your dominion: administer a code of laws, train military personnel, found an industrial pursuit, expand your own methods of advancement, etc.

[www.gemynd.com/Nyctea/Campaign/default.asp](http://www.gemynd.com/Nyctea/Campaign/default.asp)

Software: Free

Subscription: \$25 yearly

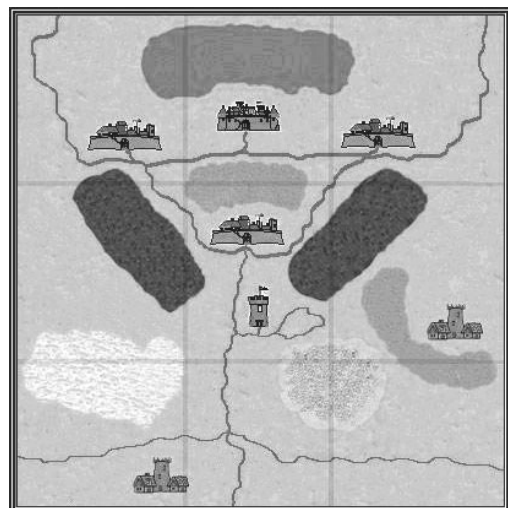
### Parallel Universe 2

A fantasy RPG browser-based multiplayer game. Join a guild and help them to rise up the ladder of power to become Kings of Parallel Universe by conquering the other guilds. Or set up your guild and leading your own guild to glory. This is one of those games that doesn't give you a hell of a lot of information about how to play, at least to start with. However, the browser interface is easy to use.

Your aim is simple, namely to have your Guild come on top of the continuing struggle for power within the Guild Wars. But all that is in the future when you start the game - to

begin with you need to play the adventure side of the game and so gain power to become a valuable Guild member. The world seems reasonably detailed, with nice maps (see above) giving information about quests your character can complete in order to gain power. I get the impression too that there are some over-arching story lines. Naturally, enemies will bar your way and but as you develop new abilities, additional areas of the world will open up for more exploration.

The classes, races and so forth seem fairly standard adventure fare: depending on what you prefer you can pick magic or good old fashioned hack and slash as the way to progress. There are an ever-increasing range of weapons and other equipment (magical and mundane) so there's quite





a bit of variation possible between characters. Apparently the market system has also been upgraded fairly recently, making it easier to trade with other players.

Once you have a powerful character, your character will be needed in the Guild Wars. Every guild has a Castle, and the object is to conquer the other guild's Castles. Depending on your class, you can contribute this in various ways, from building siege engines to manning the Castle and setting up Regiments of fellow guild members to raid other players Castles. I've not much of an idea how this part of the game works yet, so maybe I'll come back to Parallel Universe 2 in a future article.

[http://pu.hypermutt.com/pu2\\_site/pu2\\_frames.html](http://pu.hypermutt.com/pu2_site/pu2_frames.html)

Software: Free

Subscription: Free, optional paid accounts available.

### Shadowmere

A turn-based strategy game, based in a fantasy world. Your job is to lead a kingdom to success and prosperity, or whatever you desire, by using your turns wisely to manage your resources and interact with other kingdoms, whether by peace and trade or by war and conflict.

A quick word here on the definition of a 'turn'. A single turn represents a unit in time. You will get a new turn every 30 minutes. This does not mean you have to play every hour of the day. If you don't login and play, turns build up until they reach 200 (about four days). New turns are only calculated once you login to play.

The game is open ended, and thus has a good deal of roleplaying on top of the underlying strategy. It requires a certain amount of imagination and you will always be searching for a new way to either pull something off, get the high score, perfect that perfect army or, yes, even to have fun. Most of the players are a friendly lot, and there's a busy diplomatic side to the game.

The essence of Shadowmere is strategy. But before you can begin taking turns and carving your path to glory, you need to understand the various concepts that Shadowmere uses. When you create a kingdom, your userid is secret, and will only appear to other players if you use Shadowmere chat. The kingdom name is the name that will appear to others in the game. Choose well. What race you choose will have a significant effect on how you play Shadowmere. Some races are very good at making war, such as Ogres, but are poor at study and so have difficulty using magic. Others have special abilities, such as Leprechauns, which can teleport themselves out of danger.

Once you're logged in, the Status Screen will show you a quick overview of how your kingdom is doing, as well as informing you if you have any mail, if any of your Open Market Trades have been purchased or whether you have had an encounter with another kingdom, such as War or Trade. Mail and Open Market messages will disappear once you view another page.

Your kingdom begins with 100 turns and every half hour, receives one more. Most actions you can take in Shadowmere cost a turn. For example,

if you want to Explore for Land, to find more space to expand into, it will cost you a turn to do so. Launching an attack on another kingdom will also cost a turn. There are a few things you can do that don't need turns, namely hiring and firing troops, destroying buildings, trading on the open market, creating an alliance and changing your tax rate. We'll look at these in more detail shortly. You can also send and receive Mail, edit your kingdom's History and change your Options without spending turns. Your score gives you an indication of how well you are doing in the game. It's value depends on a number of factors, such as your current population, the size and strength of your armies, how much land you have and how much knowledge you have gained through study.

Land is essential if your kingdom is going to grow. You need it to build upon and the buildings themselves influence all aspects of your kingdom. Land can be gained

either by exploring for it or by taking it from someone else through warfare. Meanwhile your population figure tells you how many people live in your kingdom. This figure does not include your armies. Population effects your kingdom in many ways, such as how much gold you earn and how many troops you can hire; the amount of food you produce each turn

- your farms need people to work on them - if you have too few your farms will be unused. The gaining of

Mana, the raw ingredient of magic, also depends on your population.

Your population will need support, in terms of providing them with food and housing. Of course, both our population and troops need to be fed. The effects of starvation can be devastating to your kingdom, perhaps wiping out your entire army. Food can be gained from a number of

sources; producing it yourself with your farms, having your rangers go hunting (explore for food), using the spell Create Food or purchasing it from the Open Market. Some races, such as Vampires, gain food from attacking other kingdoms, feasting on the bodies of those that died in battle.

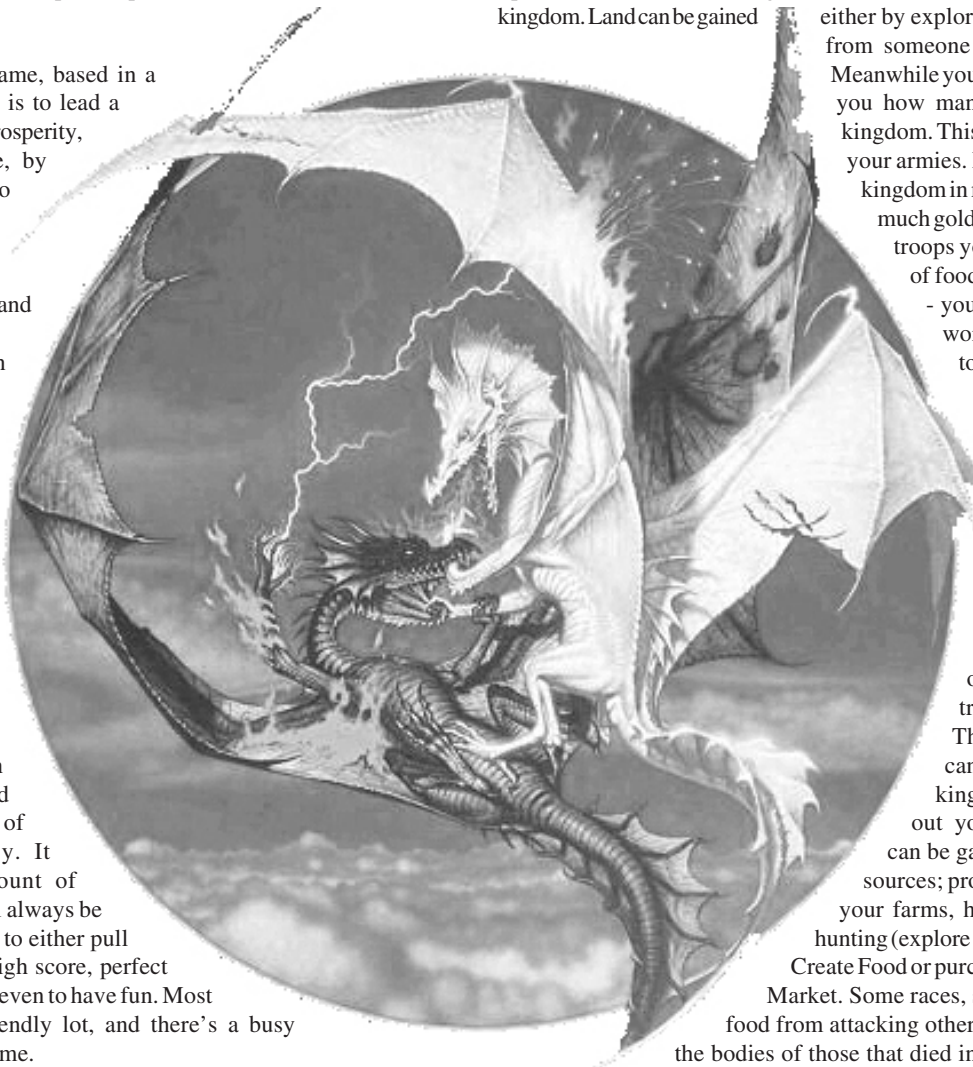
If you want your kingdom to achieve glory, you will have to pay for it. Your main source of income is from taxing your people and each turn you will receive your dues. But gold can also be obtained from trading on the Open Market, stealing from other kingdoms, receiving charity from your friends or even with magic spells such as Create Gold. There are many items on the long shopping list necessary to keep your empire in motion, such as troops and buildings. Being a miser in Shadowmere is unlikely to attract anything but halflings.

Every time you submit orders, you will receive a message telling you what has changed. This will include the change in population, gold earned, maintenance costs (the price of your army), food produced by your farms, the food needed to support your people and soldiers and whether there has been any food wasted (are your granaries overflowing?). There's a lot to do, and like any good game, not quite enough orders available to do everything.

[www.shadowmere.co.uk/](http://www.shadowmere.co.uk/)

Software: Free

Subscription: Free



# Star Fleet Warlord

*MIKE LAY plots the course that leads to victory ...*

[This article concludes the advice to players which Mike started in issue #100 and continued in issue #113. All back issues are available from the address on p3 for £2 each to UK readers or £2 each + postage to overseas readers.]

## Today is a good day for someone else to die...

The combat system in **Star Fleet Warlord** is quite simple, but has surprising underlying depth.

Warships have four fundamental statistics: attack factor (AF), defence factor (DF), shields and hit points. Shields represent a ship's ability to take non damaging hits, and shield points are restored at the start of each turn. Shields are lost first in any combat. Hit points represent your ship's ability to take damage. However, losing hit points degrades the ship's combat abilities. Attack and defence points are used to cause damage to the other side, depending on whether you are attacking or defending. The combination of the four statistics means that different ships have different characteristics. Klingons have a high AF since their ships are built with offence in mind, but low DF. They are good on the offensive, but less effective on defence. Hydrans, with their banks of short range Gatling phasers are good on the defence, but have trouble on offence. Some ships are chunky but with relatively thin shields. They can take a lot of damage but their combat punch declines early on in the battle. Other ships have huge shields, but very few internals. These egg shell ships are great in a short fight, but tend to die very rapidly in a prolonged engagement.

The first thing in any combat is that the computer tallies up the attacker's AF and the defender's DF. If the attacking ships don't think they have the required punch, they break off before a shot is fired. Once past this hurdle, however, the combat is to the death. Only one side's ships will walk, or limp, from the field of battle. The combat is then run in series of rounds. The attacker's total AF is split evenly over the defender's ships and the computer then rolls electronic dice to get the actual damage. At the same time the defender's total DF is split over the attacking ships. This damage is applied to the target ship's shields and then internals. Destroyed ships are removed from the calculations and the process is repeated until one side has no ships left.

The first point to note is that the damage is spread evenly over the available ships. This means that a flock of small ships takes less damage per ship than a few large ships. Of course, the smaller ships are less able to absorb the damage. However, an often used tactic is to escort your expensive fleet carriers, with their highly trained crews and superb officers, with a number of small, cheap ships that you don't mind losing providing the carriers survive to fight another day.

To complicate matters a little further, ships can carry additional weapons. Most carry transporter bombs - small mines. Carriers carry fighters. Some ships carry commandos which can perform hit and run raids on enemy ships or damage ground installations. However, all of these additional supplies can be used up, or destroyed on board ship if the ship takes heavy battle damage. Carriers are often referred to as 'top heavy': they have a massive punch thanks to the additional fighters, but can take relatively little damage for their offensive punch. This can lead to them

getting lured into a battle because their AF is very high compared to their enemies, but not being able to take the damage as well as their opponents.

There are a number of ways to improve the combat odds in your favour. Well-trained crews are more effective in combat. Upgraded ships are tougher and better armed. Legendary officers such as weapons officers or pilots can improve your chances. Terrain is also a feature: there are some terrains that cause additional damage to ships once their shields are down, which makes 'egg shell' ships a good choice. Even if you are expecting to fight in open space, your ships will suffer if you have plunged through several shield-punishing meteor showers to get to the battle. It's important to keep your ships well supplied with munitions. Ships automatically restock with munitions any time they pass a base, providing that you have a supply of the right munitions in the first place. It's also important to keep your ships in good repair. Pre-existing light damage to a ship costs it 33% of its combat potential as well as meaning that the ship is easier to kill.

## Defences are irrelevant...

Star Fleet Warlord is not a game that favours defensive play. You can station a large fleet in one location to defend it, but this generally means that your opponents will simply take over the other, undefended, sites. As the old saying goes, 'offence is the best form of defence'. Making your opponent defend his territory will pin his forces. Aiming to retake sites promptly limits your losses; this can often be as simple as choosing to move your forces through sites you already own, just in case.

'What about fortifications?' I hear you mutter. Fortifications are expensive, but can become very powerful. This means that they can't sensibly be deployed at every site you own, but, well placed, they are invaluable. Not only do they defend against attack (and you can deploy fighters and fast patrol ships to bolster their combat abilities), but they routinely scan the sector they are in for enemy ships. As they get larger, they acquire the resources to perform 'starbase orders' which can be very useful information-gathering tools. They also act to ward off 'raid' orders. They supply your ships, as well as supplying training, refitting, upgrading and repair facilities. Where you place the base is also important. Keeping it away from 'risky' sector borders is a good idea; otherwise it may be taken out by a surprise attack across the border. Placing it in 'tough' terrain such as old minefields can be a huge plus, since attacking ships have to deal with this obstacle one way or another.

## Today is not a good day to die...

The one exception to the theory that defences are irrelevant is your homeworld. Your homeworld is different from other sites in that, if you lose it, you're out of the game. This makes homeworld defence a must. Early on in the game, having ships deployed twiddling their thumbs is a waste of good warships. However, it's easy to get lulled into a false sense of security. The faster warships in your enemy's fleet can be refitted to speed six which means they can cross an entire sector in three turns; this doesn't give you much time to get defences in place, so a slow build up of forces is generally a good idea.

The first part of your defence strategy should be a decent base to provide you with a running commentary on what ships are in the area. The base can be outfitted with fighters or fast patrol ships, but it's usually not a good idea to pack the base to the gunwales. The reason is that, as the base takes damage, you are presumed to be losing fighters as well. However, you only lose fighters if the base's capacity to house fighters is reduced below the actual number assigned to the base, and the base's capacity is directly related to how many points of fortifications there are left. You should also give thought to assigning some of your small pool of legendary officers to the base. Weapons officers and Marine Majors are the most common deployments, but an 'ace' pilot can also be a huge boost if you've sited a

## *StarFleet Warlord at a glance*

Winnable science fiction PBM of medium complexity from Pagoda Games. Startup costs £5, with further turns at £3.  
[www.pagodagames.co.uk](http://www.pagodagames.co.uk)



The aim of any Star Fleet Warlord game is to win. The victory conditions are usually predicated on control of sites or sectors. The sectors victory condition often looks easier, but is far easier to upset since loss of any one of the eight or ten sites in a sector loses the owner control of that sector. One thing to remember is that the game computer will warn the other players when a player approaches the victory conditions. Any successful commander must be prepared to make a break for the winning line before his enemies (and allies!) can react, and this can involve holding off taking a few sites and then making a break for the victory conditions.

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# La Gloire, c'est la Vie!

## The Glory of Kings

*ALEX McLELLAN takes a fresh look at this long-running game ...*

THE GLORY of Kings (formerly called **La Gloire du Roi**) is generally held to be *Agema Publications'* signature game. It is a multi-aspected PBM simulation game set in the period 1700 - 1750 and covers the full range of military, political, economic and even social elements. The game has no fixed goal or aim, such things being the choice of the individual player. The game has received many accolades over the years and has been reviewed in *Flagship* twice before.

Now, a touch of history about the game itself and how it has changed over the years. The first game of LGDR began in 1989 and was primarily a European-based wargame with an economic element. However, players being players they soon wanted to build new infrastructure, change the tax system and include a great range of other activities the game had not originally covered. Another player-driven development was the expansion of colonies and military imperialism in foreign parts. These pressures have led over the years to the current version of the game, fifth edition, which has player positions ranging from African tribal chiefdoms to the Shogun of Japan to the King of France and a very wide range of possible activities in every field of endeavour.

The current rules are in the form of a staple-bound booklet with light card covers. They contain all the basic information that a player needs to play the game and are vastly more informative and clearer than previous versions of the rules. A short section entitled 'Starting the Game' is well worth reading for a new player as it sets out the basics of your first turn quite clearly. Other sections cover military orders and units, economics, taxation, infrastructure, diplomacy, assorted helpful advice and the honour system.

So, apart from the rules what would a starting player get? Well, since there are no new games being advertised you would join an existing game. This would have been running for anywhere from four to 30+ years of game time. Given the very sketchy and nation-specific outline of the situation that *Agema* will give you I must advise a few turns of fact-finding before taking any serious action. A history book would give a fair idea of the 'big picture' in game 5 (currently in 1704) but very little about game 1 (early 1730s). The best way to find out the situation is reading the game newspaper and via diplomatic letters to other players. Obviously this takes a little time, but even a player intent on swift military expansion should appreciate that organising your forces and gaining intelligence on your intended target is vital.

### What a turn includes

For your first turn and on every April turn (the budget turn), there is a list of general information covering who has embassies in your country, government running costs, poor relief, detail of any government schools or extra bureaucracy, spies, loans and bond issues, trade or other missions, military bases, mineral deposits, inventions and laws. This is where you will learn a bit about your government, perhaps that any tax changes you make need to be ratified by parliament or some other restriction. You should

also get some idea of what sort of rulers there have been in the past from any new laws listed here.

Every turn, including your first, will have a general situation report. This tells you who your persona is (eg the King of Ruritania) and possibly something about him or her. It then details Infrastructure (Roads and Canals) on a scale of A = great to E = none and advises of any grain surpluses or shortfalls. After this are listed government ministers, ambassadors, commanders and other notables, hopefully with a little bit of information about them. Other details such as bodyguards, advisory committees and other trivia will be listed here. Finally, the situation report is where you will be advised of anything that is not public knowledge, such as the results of a spying operation.

Attached to the situation report is an armed forces list which says where your troops are, what each unit is armed with (unless they have the standard flintlocks), their drill status, their readiness and where your fortresses and other defences are. At the end of this would be any standing orders or regulations issued to the army: eg 'Horse use close order, charge at gallop. Attack with sword only.' This gives a good military grasp of your position although not necessarily how it compares with others.

Every turn also includes a treasury sheet which lets you know how much, or how little, money is in your treasury. It also lists available recruits and whether foreign recruiting is banned or not. Finally it has your honour score and your economic health score, both very important numbers.

The last part of your turn is the game newspaper which covers events across the world, gives vague weather forecasts, has a gazetteer section and a list of which nations have the top ten honour scores. Players are free to place articles or announcements in the newspaper and doing so makes the game more interesting. Sadly, at least in game 5 at present, few players seem inclined to write anything entertaining and the bulk of player material comprises the regular full page output of the Swiss and Russian 'newspapers': hopefully, mentioning it here will encourage more activity.

### What this all means

Issuing military orders is a simple matter as they are fully covered in the rules, up to and including how an army will deploy in battle if you don't specify otherwise. Other orders are also simple 'invest in maritime trade' or 'construct a grand palace in the Ruritanian capital': more complex orders can be given free form and at length. However, exactly how to achieve your aims can be far from simple or obvious, particularly when it comes to economic matters.

Economics are an important part of the game since even a great military leader needs money to fund his ventures. The economic health value mentioned above ranges supposedly from 1 to 10, although I have never achieved anything higher than 9 (one turn, once ever, in about 30 game years of play in various positions!) and nothing higher than 7 in my last two positions. Historic trading nations and colonial powers find it easiest to build their economies rapidly, as do very populous nations such as Russia or the various large Eastern states. However, in the case of the latter they will be forced to take unpopular or inappropriate decisions, so a strong economy will tend to be balanced by a poor honour score. Medium or small nations without colonies will find economic development a longer slow process requiring the construction of canals, roads and serious investment in men and money.

Which is where it gets difficult: if you are running a modestly sized nation you may only get about 15,000 recruits a year. After assigning 2,000 to an improvement of the tax system, 1000 to man fortress artillery, 1,400

### *Glory of Kings at a glance*

Historical simulation from *Agema Publications*, playable by mail or email. Rules are £5 and Turns are £6.

[go.to/agema](http://go.to/agema)



for a new guards regiment, 500 to act as a town watch and so forth you are left with perhaps 7,000 and this presumes only modest military efforts. Add to this the fact that a successful economy further reduces your recruits pool and you will see that running the economy of a modestly sized nation of three million people successfully is a balancing act. Small nations of about a million people like Tuscany or Scotland are even worse.

In addition, economic health also has a hidden or underlying value which changes more slowly and is far less volatile than the one on the treasury sheet. If left to its own devices, your EH will tend to gravitate towards this underlying value which is almost certainly in the range of 4 to 6.

Usually, the underlying value is altered by significant changes like building an expensive canal network, massively upgrading the roads, radically redesigning the tax regime, re-minting your currency or other very serious efforts. Continuous minor efforts may shift it but this is far from certain. All in all, wrestling with your economy and trying to improve it can be one of the game's most difficult challenges and even more so during a war.

The other important thing to keep an eye on is honour. At the very start of a game in 1699 this is almost always 5; when joining a game that is running it could be anywhere from 1 upwards. Since at 1 you are in danger of revolts, revolution and your troops disobeying your orders, it's best to avoid this at all costs.

High honour, on the other hand, rewards you in a variety of ways. First it generates a small income each turn: £1,000 per point when a 700-man battalion of infantry costs £10,000 per year to upkeep, meaning honour 5 equals the free upkeep of 6 infantry battalions and the not at all impossible honour 30 supplies the free upkeep of a small army! Next, it allows you to command a large army more effectively as generally only 10 units per point of honour will operate at full efficiency in battle. Would-be Charles XII's should note that since an army of 40,000 men has about 90 units and a large army might have more like 200 units, an honour of 5 to 10 is probably going to be a military annoyance. Honour also has a number of minor benefits depending on position: for example, if you were ruling England then high honour appears to make it more likely that parliament will agree to your requests and support new laws or taxes. Finally, if your score is high enough you will appear on the honour list in the newspaper. The last point seems important to some players, I suppose as a way of keeping score.

How do you get honour since it's such useful stuff? Well, the answer is tricky but comes down to playing in period style, making speeches, putting stuff in the newspaper, making grand gestures and conspicuous consumption.

Military victories and being spoken well of by others also help considerably. As a result, the top nations on the honour list should usually be major nations (ie not obscure African tribal Federations or the Swiss), because they have the power and money to be there or possibly one of the pirate players who get honour for being vile and piratical instead of the normal route. A quick glance at the current game 5 honour list confirms this as there are only a couple of exceptions to my rule of thumb.

Diplomacy, as seems standard in Agema games, is important and handled via the usual anonymous system: all mail being filtered via the referee. So although I did eventually discover that the friendly King of France in game 5 is the same player who was the hostile ruler of Russia in game 4, I haven't a clue as to his real identity! This anonymous system seems to be well thought of by players and I feel it helps to keep a certain period character as well as allowing mail to go missing, be delayed or tampered with by spies.

Given the importance of trade treaties in building up your economy and trade as well as the vital importance of alliances and non-aggression treaties in securing allies or making your borders safer, it's clear that you won't get far without some diplomatic effort. Most games contain powerful alliances formed between various of the major nations and even a powerful nation will need to use some diplomacy to avoid trouble. However, those who have played before should note a vital change between fourth edition and fifth here. At one time treaties were backed up by the game system itself directly and those breaking them could expect all sorts of terrible troubles, but no longer. Now treaties are a matter of honour and breaking them simply loses you honour in a slow steady drain until you make recompense, resolve the situation some other way or run out of honour and disaster strikes. Treaties can also be designed to include guarantors who stand to lose honour if the treaty is violated and are thus likely to feel obliged to force the signatories to comply.

This makes for a realistic feel to treaties. It also leads to greater uncertainty while making diplomacy more important and more challenging. I can personally attest to the fact that treaty negotiations are now very different from the old style where both sides submitted their demands to the referee, who would return a treaty or adjudication. Indeed, after the better part of two game years spent trying to mediate an Anglo-French peace agreement I now wonder why I didn't just let

them have a war after all: it would have been so much easier!

How much diplomacy you indulge in seems to vary with rumours and a previous reviewer suggesting that entire evenings can be spent writing diplomatic mail. Personally I make sure never to write more than half a dozen letters per turn but end up spending ages writing material for the newspaper. You could easily get away with writing only to a few neighbouring nations without causing yourself any problems. So, although fun and important, don't think that it would need excessive effort on your part.

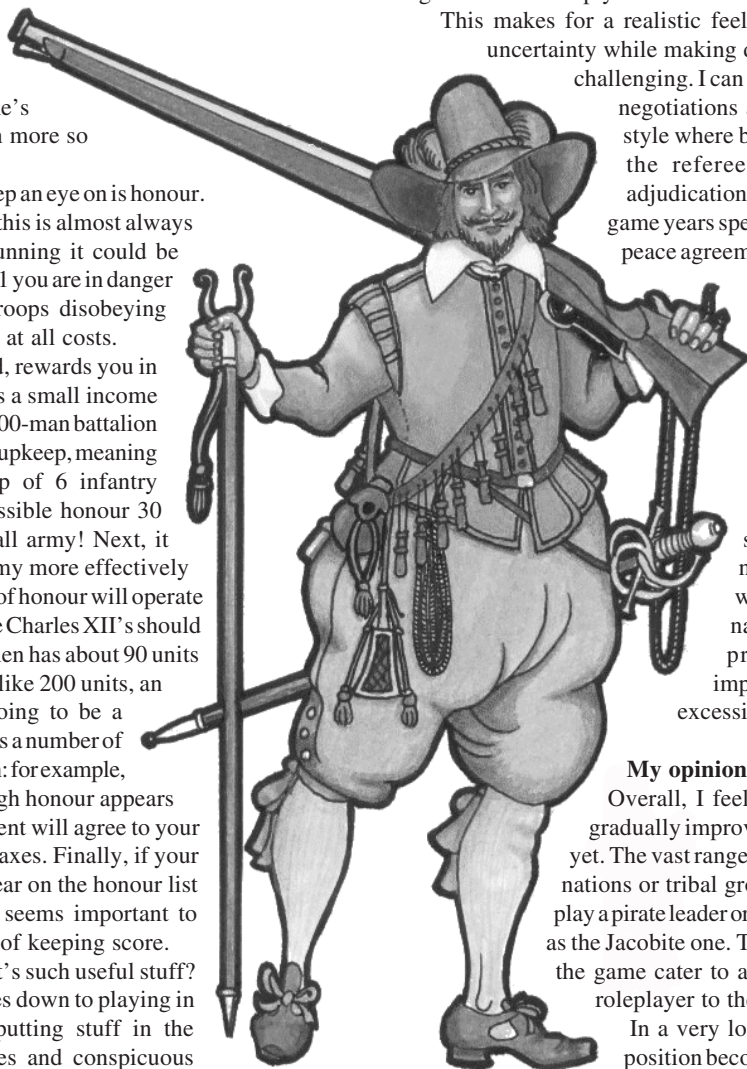
### My opinion of La Gloire

Overall, I feel that the changes to the game have gradually improved it and the current rules are the best yet. The vast range of player positions allows you to rule nations or tribal groups across the world: you can even play a pirate leader or the head of a government in exile such as the Jacobite one. The new rules and improvements help the game cater to a wide range of play styles from the roleplayer to the powergamer.

In a very long running game you can find your position becoming stale or tiresome, but the simple solution is to move to another position in a different game. If you were the King of an overly successful European state in game 3, then try moving to a ramshackle Eastern state in game 2. As players who have previously dropped out keep returning to the game again and again, it clearly has that certain something.

In my opinion, it is certainly the best game of its period and the best historical simulation game currently running. Not perfect, but the best by far. I would heartily recommend it to anyone who thinks it might appeal to them. At £6 per turn and £5 for the rules it isn't the cheapest game available, but I think that you do get value for money, even more so if you put some effort into the game yourself.

Sadly, I seem to have run out of space and so cannot include all the examples and the story that I had intended. Still, perhaps I will return to these pages shortly with an LGDR tale about an odd meeting between the governing council of Geneva and the Speaker of the Swiss Confederation which involves lots of guns being used in an unfortunate manner ...



# Approaching Kosumi

*First, DAVE PANCHYK leaps enthusiastically into what he thinks is a tea-ceremony simulator, and finds himself in a strategy game set in a mythical feudal Japan...*

HONESTLY, it's as if somebody wanted war to break out.

The green and pleasant land of **Kosumi** has ten provinces. It also has 15 clans vying for control of those provinces. Even I could do that much math: conflict was inevitable. Feelings - perhaps more - were going to be hurt.

Truth be told, the art - the thing that first attracted me to the game - clearly suggested that things were not totally peaceful in that realm. Faced with the colorful, expressionistic mural wrapping around the cover of *Flagship* #109, I made up a little story to explain what I saw: 'Oh please, noble bureaucrats, come back with your game of **Go**! We turtle-people have fallen in love with it!' It was only later I noticed on the back cover a group of turtle-folk attacking one of the bureaucrats and clearly trying to eat him. This very nearly dispelled my theory that the cover depicted a prototypical gaming convention.

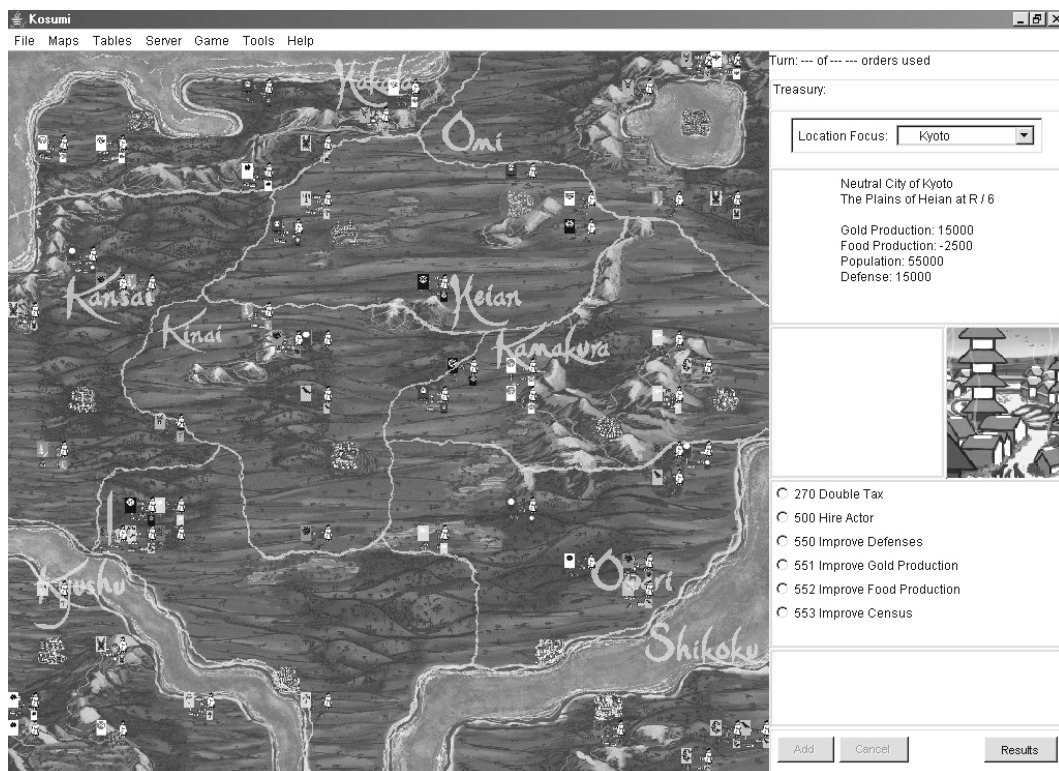
Still and all, I went to the game's website and got the skinny on the different clans. Turns out the turtle-people are the Kappa of Japanese myth, comprising one of several non-human clans. All the clans strike a different balance between magic, diplomacy, and military might. Each clan has a unique advantage as well.

One of the diplomatic clans was the Cursed Jesuits, missionaries who had been turned evil by magicians and now roamed the countryside spreading the Bad Word. Their special power was Conversion, which allows them to take over another clan's Actors, such as their diplomats or ninjas. The Jesuits sounded fearsome, unpopular, and a group of devious, sneaky gits.

I had found my clan.

## Can't we all just get along?

My starting position as the Cursed Jesuit clan was typical: a town capital and a small number of other holdings in my 'power base' province, in which the people's reaction to my clan was relatively favourable. I had a town or village in two other provinces, each with less positive attitudes toward my clan, and which were strongholds of one or more other clans. Even in my 'best' province, I had competition in the form of the Ninja capitol and holdings by at least one other clan.



It's not an option to just sit in your initial, scattered smattering of Population Centers (PCs) and scheme. PCs are the key to victory; as Wayne Yeadon pointed out in last issue's *Rumours*, the early turns of *Kosumi* are a desperate land-grab. PCs mean food and gold, the two resources in the game. It's imperative to hit the ground running, something I didn't think to do or feel comfortable doing. I took some time getting used to things.

Other, more strategic minded folks, like the Fujiwara winner of Game 2, were able to see immediately the possibilities that I always seem blind to: the ability to merge armies, gauge their strength versus similar armies, spend resources training mages and moving them outside of armies. They see the uses of the spells that can coordinate with army actions, like *Dome PC*.

I can see this game becoming like what some games written about in *Flagship* seem to have become: a routine exercise that has primarily the same circle of combatants/players, each with well-established strategies and intimate knowledge of the game, who explode into action as soon as a new game begins. New players are at a bit of a disadvantage as a result of their lack of in-depth knowledge. If they happen also to be a half-wit - like me - it spells certain doom.

My lack of broad experience with strategy PBMs was the main detriment to me. Game 2's winner is a dedicated **Alamaze** player, and the objectives he pursued in that (capture PCs diplomatically or militarily to gain resources, thus making possible further conquests) translated pretty much directly into *Kosumi*. Obviously, there are significant differences. A player has to get used to his clan's special ability and learn to use it to best effect. For this, *Kosumi* has some 'getting started with plan' help files that provide the bulk of the very limited documentation. Some of these suggestions opened my thinking beyond my very tiny box, such as playing

## *Kosumi at a glance*

Still in playtest, this fantasy wargame with a mythical Japanese setting. Free trial games are available, with the commercial version costing \$19.95 per month for up to three games.

[www.kosumi.com](http://www.kosumi.com)



mercenary and offering the use of your spells or special ability to another clan in exchange for gold or like services.

I'm eager to try that, really I am, and as Fujiwara in game 8, I worked with Dragon to try to stem the Tengu tide (those filthy man-crows were depicted on a recent *Flagship* cover, no doubt colluding with the equally-despicable Geisha). As Colin Forbes observed in last issue's *Rumours*, though, there wasn't a whole lot of diplomacy goin' on. I sent e-mails with read receipts to ten players; only two registered as being alive. I think we're looking at a two-pronged issue here: one is the standard drop-rate for a free PBM, and the other is the nature of the Internet. Kosumi is a hybrid creature, a PBM whose graphical client (Java-based, which means it'll run on non-super duper machines, whether Windows, Mac or linux) was built into it from the beginning. Its relative ease of use and turn-based nature make it much like the 'electronic boardgame' that some feel will be a large part of Internet gaming revenue in years to come. However, you have the slowly-fading Internet ethos that stuff should be free of cost, and if something started free it should stay free.

With Kosumi, the monthly \$19.95 plan seems a lot, but that's in relation to MMORPGs and other Internet subscription games. Even if I continued to play just the game type I'm in, with two turns weekly, that comes out to \$2.50 per turn - not bad at all for a PBM. For those steeped in the Internet, though, it'll continue to be an obstacle, and James is working on alternative pay schemes.

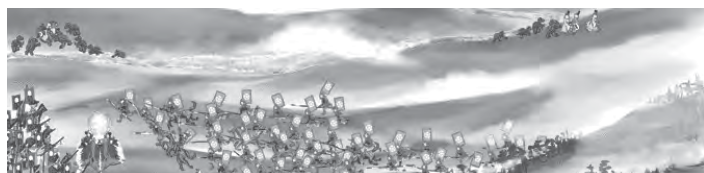
#### Doing the Lord's Work

Eventually I sent my missionaries forth to win (or twist, destroy, or dominate) hearts and minds, each accompanied by a ninja bodyguard disguised as an itinerant book-burner. As my holdings grew, I had to wrap my mind around the concept that there was no, no, no 'territory': you had the PCs, and those were your often-scattered domain. Armies could go anywhere over land (although they required ships to cross water), and Actors could just zip from PC to PC. So you had this guerilla-war kind of map, and it seemed counter-intuitive to just have these PCs sitting unguarded, but that's just what you have to do in order to claim the next PC. When it comes time to defending them, you find yourself playing Whack-a-Mole as Actors or armies appear at one of your holdings.

Logistics are pretty straightforward: just the management of food and gold, the former important if you have large armies. Armies, at this point, may be the sticky wicket of game balance: large armies with a lot of strength behind them (trained troops, skilled samurai leaders) seem able to grind out any opposition and neutralize several Actors at once in the worst case. If it continues to be a problem in games with their full complement of players, I feel confident James will get it fixed.

Kosumi has a lot to offer. It's neither overly complex nor simple-minded, the perfect balance for someone looking for something to which he or she can devote some thought but not an excessive amount of time, relaxing by trying to conquer the visually-appealing game map. This is for me not just a fun game but also an interesting experiment: if Kosumi can capture some non-PBM players, it could in an aikido-like reversal draw some Internet-based customers into other turn-based games that are represented on the Web or played by e-mail.

Note that as of the time of writing, there hasn't yet been a full game of paying players, which is expected to present a different play experience than the free games. As soon as such a game is complete, I'll report back.



## While for a second viewpoint, COLIN FORBES tries a different role and describes the process of starting up in a game ...

WHAT I LIKE about games is that I invariably have more money in-game than I do in real life. So you can imagine how eagerly I jump at the chance of playing a free game - and what better game than **Kosumi**, a 'JapaneseFantasy' whose glorious artwork had been featured prominently in *Flagship* for a few issues. This short article will describe the initial choices open to me, the game set-up procedure and my first thoughts on the game. Next time, I'll continue the diary of the Yamanba, the mountain witches, of game 13.

#### Getting started

I am often left feeling somewhat daunted by the prospect of getting started in any new game, and I was more than a little concerned that Kosumi did not appear to have any form of rulebook - and the instructions on the website for starting the game seemed rather spartan. Nevertheless, downloading the Java client and installing it on my machine proved easy enough, even for a non-geek such as myself.

I had previously looked at the adverts in *Flagship*, and decided that I wanted to play one of two or three clans - ending up with the Yamanba mountain witches. Opening up the game software from a button on my desktop proved to automatically download software updates and the all-important game start-up. So, what now?

#### The user interface

I was pleasantly surprised that the user interface proved to be quite intuitive, I spent about ten minutes clicking around and found I got the hang of it all fairly easily. You can

click anywhere on the pretty map and a little blue circle will appear, along with information on that location. As each Town or Village is selected, you'll see a portrait of it on the right side of the screen. To the left of the portrait are descriptions of the Actors (characters) there. Above the portrait area is a description of the population centre: its name, what province it's in, how much food and gold is produced there. All reassuringly standard stuff. Armies and Actors are similarly easy to explore.

Figuring out what to do your first turn in any game can be very intimidating. This is made somewhat worse by the lack of a Kosumi rulebook. However I was delighted to find a very useful series of strategy guides for each nation built into the user interface. A few minutes' reading later - followed by extensive use of my printer (I find the task of absorbing information much easier on good old-fashioned paper) - I had more of an idea of the sort of things the Yamanba should be doing in the first few turns.

#### A good start

Kosumi has a lot to recommend it in terms of game play, and I shall certainly be playing in more than one paying game. However, more work needs to be done to help new players, as I suspect a large percentage of players up until now have not progressed beyond the instructions to download the game program. More information is needed on the website, as well as in the user interface itself. However, throughout the couple of months that I have played Kosumi, several additions have been made to the interface, so the game designer seems to be well aware of what is needed. I particularly liked the addition of little icons showing you where your characters are, and nice bold lines to indicate the movement of armies and characters on the order input screen. It's always nice to see GMs striving to improve their game.

Next time, I'll tell you how the Yamanba started out on their road to ultimate glory.



*The cursed Jesuits missionaries and the evil Yamanba mountain witches.*

# Creating a New Age

## Can long-running games attract new players?

*We asked SAM ROADS about the way forwards in MIDDLE EARTH PBM ...*

[WE CAN ALL appreciate that a firm must work both to attract new players and to keep existing players coming back for more. However good the game design is, it only can only exist in play. Sam's answer is so readable that we've printed it with few changes...]

ONE SYSTEM that we've used at *Harlequin Games* is to run Face to Face events.

Three times a year, twenty gamers gather in a large house in Cardiff, Chicago or Copenhagen\*. For no more than an hour everyone is smiles and How-are-yous, then the team lists are declared and glasnost is suspended for the rest of the weekend.

The Free Peoples ascend the stairs to their light-filled strategy room, where comfortable chairs surround a laminated map of Middle-earth. All the Free People have brought pens.

Downstairs, in dismal half-light, the Dark Servants plot sinister schemes on scraps of paper, surrounded by swiftly growing piles of pizza cartons and non-diet drink cans.

For the next two days, every time eighty minutes passes on Earth, the world of Middle-earth will step forwards two weeks. Free People armies will muster on the plains of Rohan, Noldo emissaries will entreat and implore, Nazgul assassins will kidnap unwary agents, and questing companies will seek out the lost artefacts of previous ages.

As the deadline approaches, discussions will become more frenetic. Subtle plans will have to be shelved in favour of whatever gets the job done.

As the final turn is submitted, both teams enter the waiting period - those few quiet minutes in between giving orders and finding out how they have been executed and what has happened.

Did the huge Gondor army get blocked by the Ice King? Did Khamul manage to convince that Dragon to join his forces? What of the plan to corner the market in ---? Where are the nine rings of mortal man?

As the results start to trickle in, both teams let out whoops and cheers as they discover a successful coup, but are strangely silent when they need to report the loss of a vital character.

This is a Face to Face game of **Middle-earth PBM**.

Since its creation in 1991, MEPBM has been consistently popular with strategy wargamers. In some way this is because of the depth and scope of Tolkien's world, but it is also because the game has been constantly updated and adapted with innovations to suit the changing desires of gamers. The Face to Face meetings are just one of them.

### The Gunboat Variant

We've also introduced some variants of the standard game. Rarely has a game variant been as popular, or as badly named as this one. Standard games of MEPBM involve tightly knit coordination between team members, either in huddles at Face to Face events, or more commonly through email lists and late night phone calls.

Gunboat variant does not permit any communication between players, returning the game to a pre-internet feel. With less coordination between team mates the pace of the game is slower. Long term plans can unfold slowly, subtle choices can have repercussions months later.

In a standard game, one of the most important skills is the ability to predict your opponents' moves, but in Gunboat it's even more important to predict your allies'!

And why would Elven shipwright Cirdan be building Gunboats? The name comes from a no-diplomacy variant of the boardgame **Diplomacy** called Gunboat Diplomacy. It also reminds me British of the good old days when we had bigger boats than anyone else.

### Tech Upgrades

We've also worked steadily at a range of upgrades. Back in the early nineties, when everything was black and white, so were MEPBM turns. Since the near destruction of the world by the millennium bug, people have begun to see in colour, so the game now sports coloured turns.

In the same modernist theme, two Front Ends\*\* have been developed to create a dynamic game map based on your turns. Icons show the presence of armies, characters and artefacts and allow you to spend your precious time plotting great victories instead of compiling data.

One is called Palantir, because, like Feanor's ancient artefacts, it allows the user to view events that have occurred elsewhere in Middle-earth. The other is called Archon because that's quite a good name for a program.

Two further player aids are called AutoMagic and AutoMinister. One assists in the creation of orders for your nation, preventing impossible moves and illegal choices. The other gives a broad set of economic tools, an inventory of artefact knowledge thus far in the game, and logistics on known enemy character movements.

Another recent improvement to the MEPBM system is a webmail turn server. This does away with the pesky Internet, allowing you to submit your vital orders without the risk of internet traffic slowing or even corrupting your email.

### Three New Scenarios

PBM is unusual. Really unusual. Many hardcore strategy wargamers haven't tried PBM because 'I probably wouldn't like it.'





What they need is a stripped down version of MEPBM to play, a game which focuses on core game mechanics, introduces new rules as the game progresses and which costs very little whilst they try out the depth and subtlety of PBM.

The new *Battle of the Five Armies* scenario does this. It's like the gaming equivalent of *The Hobbit* compared to *The Lord of the Rings*.

£10 gets the entire ten-turn game, which is going to last a lot longer than an equivalent spend on curry. The action is immediate, fast and deadly. Whilst the game is designed for PBM virgins, it's proven surprisingly popular with experienced players too.

The second is a reworking of the popular *4th Age* variant, set after Frodo has cast the ring into Mount Doom.\*\*\*

The costs of nation abilities and characters have been extensively rebalanced, but also the players use their in-game finances to bid for predetermined map locations, buy King and Prince characters and may purchase extra towns and cities if they forego impregnable mountain holds for more strategic fortresses on the plains and rivers of Middle-earth.

The last scenario has yet to come. Set in the 3rd Age time of Kin-Strife, it features a new map, nations, artefacts, characters, riddles, encounters and special abilities. Development has been ongoing for six months and our plans are for it to reach completion in time for Christmas 2005. But we all know about the best laid plans of men...

It will be the most significant new development in MEPBM since its creation. And I promise that *Flagship* will get the exclusive!

\* No-one knows why these events only occur in cities beginning with the letter C. Its one of those mysteries, like what happens if you strap buttered toast to the back of a cat, drop the angry-feline/bread-product, and see



which way up it lands.

\*\* 'Front Ends' sounds better than 'GUIs', doesn't it?

\*\*\* OK, it was Smeagol. And he didn't exactly cast it. But it was Mount Doom.

[Thanks, Sam. And thanks for the explanatory footnotes! We'd welcome comments from other GMs and players about how long-running games can stay alive. Does everyone agree with such developments, in any case? Let us know what you think!]

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# Kosumi

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**DRAGON**  
MYTHICAL CREATURES



**FUJIWARA**  
CRAFTY COURTIER



**GEISHA**  
MYSTICAL COURTESANS



**HONINBO**  
MAGICAL GO MASTERS



**IKKO-IKKI**  
WARRIOR MONKS



**IMPERIAL FAMILY**  
DESCENDED FROM GODS



**JESUITS**  
CURSED MISSIONARIES



**KAPPA**  
VAMPIRE TURTLES



**MINAMOTO**  
EASTERN WARRIORS



**NINJA**  
FEARED ASSASSINS



**ODA**  
CONQUERORS OF JAPAN



**ONI**  
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Sign up for a free-trial game today at  
[www.kosumi.com](http://www.kosumi.com).



# On Screen

## Five Strategy Games for 2005

*GLOBETROTTER looks at the forthcoming releases ...*

THE STRATEGY genre has always been popular amongst gamers of all sorts, and computer gamers are just like the rest of you. Last year alone computer game fans rejoiced with high profile releases as such with **The Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-Earth** and (my own favourite) **Rome: Total War**. But beyond those two releases, there was still quality to be found within games such as **Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War**, **Kohan 2: Kings of War**, **Spellforce: The Order of Dawn** and even the expansion pack **Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots**. The strategy genre is still clearly among the best genres on the PC. In 2005, it will be no different for the strategy genre on the PC, as five major releases are set to either make their debut or return with a sequel. I've surfed around and, in some cases, had a sneak preview of these games. Read on to see what your future may hold...

### Star Wars: Empire at War

Publisher: *LucasArts*

Release Date: Fall 2005

Star Wars: Empire at War is going to be a hit. You heard it here first. The licence alone is intriguing enough, and I am guaranteeing that with the end of prequel trilogy, fans will gobble this up for any type of Star Wars action they can get. Not to mention that several of the 'Command & Conquer' development team have moved onto this project. It's easy to get excited about Empire at War, especially if you're a child who was reared on the original Star Wars trilogy. I've seen some screenshots and a tiny demo, and it feels right. You can't help note just how darn mighty those AT-ATs look, nor can you deny how impressive the aura of sinister majesty that surrounds a fleet of Star Destroyers flying in formation can be. It's clear that Empire at War is being created by people who care as much about Star Wars as I do. Of course, we've yet to see how compelling both the space and land combat systems will prove to be, but given the developer's pedigree, things look pretty good. The multiplayer elements are just as exciting: the campaign mode can be played competitively by two players, and there will be a host of skirmish maps available, for competitors preferring a more conventional RTS experience.



*Screenshot from .... Star Wars: Empire at War*

### Age of Empires 3

Publisher: *Microsoft*

Release Date: Fall 2005

The Age of Empires series has always been one of my favourites. The first title in the series, released in 1997, was a nice change of pace for the genre. A wide variety of civilizations and a historical setting did much to make the game stand out from its contemporaries. A subsequent sequel, Age of Kings, advanced the action into the Middle Ages and offered further proof that the franchise could stand alongside releases from Blizzard and other established publishers. Back in 2002 the franchise took an unexpected but welcome departure from history with the stellar Age of Mythology. Now Ensemble is back on the historical track with the announcement of Age of Empires III. Having rather had my fill of orcs and Nazis recently, I am really looking forward to this game. AoE3 will cover a period from the end of Age of Kings until the industrial age. The idea seems to be you take the European power that you governed in Age of Kings and send it across the sea to struggle for control of the New World. A little bird also tells me that the multiplayer mode is being revamped, and will feature the ability to take your own persistent Home City online and battle with it.



*Screenshot from .... Age of Empires 3*

### Rise & Fall: Civilizations at War

Publisher: *Midway*

Release Date: Winter 2005

Stainless Steel Studios has previously worked on sprawling real-time strategy games that have covered much of human history. The company's latest game isn't quite so sprawling, but it's perhaps even more ambitious. Rise & Fall: Civilizations at War is set in the ancient world, and you'll assume the role of some of the greatest leaders in history as you attempt to carve out an empire. Rise & Fall is by no means a traditional real-time strategy game, and it will introduce several innovative new features to the



genre. The screenshots of the game are graphically stunning. Rise & Fall: Civilizations at War may look like it's trying to take the best attributes of many other series, but it's among the best looking RTS I have seen lately. You are able to control heroes in third-person view to take lead of your troops and swing the battle in your favour. Co-operative multiplayer is being included while also 80 units are going to be supported between the four nations you are allowed to use. Oh yeah, and did I forget to mention that it looks gorgeous?

#### Sid Meier's Civilization IV

Publisher: 2k Games

Release Date: Winter 2005

Civilization 3 is among my favourite strategy games of all time. It not only had so much diversity, but it had an excellent system installed for its turn-based action. This time around, Sid Meier has moved Civilization 4 and Firaxis under the publisher wing of 2k games. Debuting this time around include a new 3D engine that should excite those hardcore Civ fans. Not only that but modding (using the industry standard xml and Python scripts) will be even easier this time around and people should have fun making their own games and maps. Multiplayer is getting revamped with being playable through e-mail or a Continual-Turn-based server.

#### Dragonshard

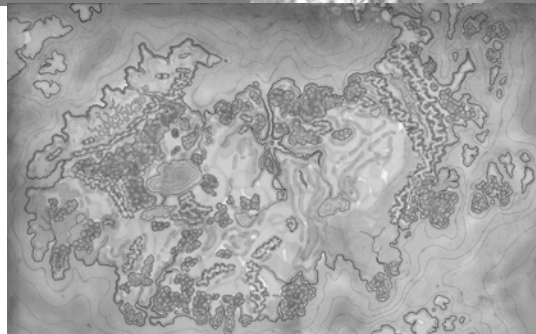
Publisher: Atari

Release Date: Winter 2005

If your idea of Dungeons & Dragons is a party of six or eight adventurers travelling down the same boring underground tombs and fighting the same orcs and trolls we've all seen a thousand times before, you're about to get a surprise. And if your idea of an RTS is plunking down a couple of buildings, cranking out some disposable units and watching them slaughter an opposing army, you're about to get an even bigger surprise. Dungeons & Dragons has a brand new look. It's called the campaign world of Eberron and while it holds many of the same creatures and spells from classic D&D worlds like the Forgotten Realms, they've been twisted around in fascinating new ways. Even better, Atari, the holder of the D&D videogame licence, has approached Liquid Entertainment to turn the RTS on its head in exactly the same way - and the result is called Dragonshard. Dragonshard will resemble more of a RPG/RTS hybrid based within the D&D universe, being set to change a lot of real-time strategy rules with quests and random events that will occur while playing throughout missions. That alone should a lot of interest from D&D fans. It has the look of a great action game while also

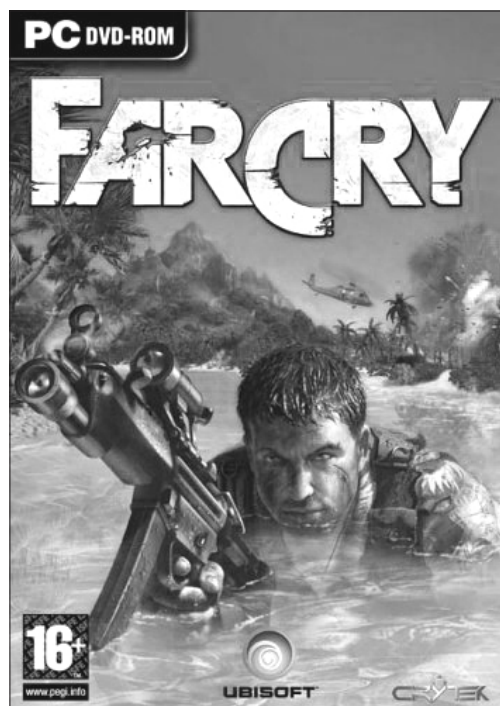


*Dragonshard:  
set in the  
award-  
winning  
D&D world  
of Eberron*



maintaining many key features that strategic players love. Judging by the screenshots, the 3D Engine is pretty cool and should have no trouble providing some excellent graphics. Multiplayer will feature head-to-head and team-based modes that focus more on choke points that you'll need to capture and maintain. With very few RTS based on the D&D licence, look for fans to queue for this title.

These five look to tear up the charts and have fanatics in awe when they are released this year. If these offerings didn't catch your eye and you are looking for something more traditional, you may want to look out for **Imperial Glory**, or one of three mouth-watering sequels: **Empire Earth 2**, **Stronghold 2**, or **Cossacks 2**. The strategy genre release schedule is looking busy this year, so there will be a wide variety that you will be able to play. If you want straight up RTS action, Age of Empires 3 could be your cure. If you are a turn-based freak, Civilization IV might be what you are looking for. If you love Star Wars, then Star Wars: Empire at War can fix your addiction to the series. Me? Well, I always wanted to be Darth Vader, but I can't wait to see more of Rise and Fall - the graphics really are mouth-watering!



#### Globetrotter's Game of the Month FAR CRY

Who needs Doom 3 or Half-Life 2? Far Cry is one of the best shooters ever made. If someone had told me that the best action game of the last five-odd years was going to come from a previously unknown company located in Germany, I would've laughed, mocked the person endlessly, and returned to whatever I was doing. Well, stone me for being so prejudiced, because Far Cry offers utterly sensational visuals and jaw-dropping gameplay. Though it's typical shooter fare, Far Cry's story keeps you sufficiently interested in what's going on.

You're Jack Carver, a charter-boat captain hired to take photojournalist Valerie Constantine to some islands in the South Pacific. But wouldn't you know it, Valerie isn't really a photojournalist. Oh no, in fact, she's a ... But no! Any more would spoil the plot. You'll have to play the game to find out for yourselves. The game never feels old, and a strategy that worked in one section of the game is probably going to be useless in another. You're forced to be creative and to probe each new level intelligently.

Without a doubt, Far Cry is the kind of game that reminds us all why we love this hobby so much. It's a superlative experience and a mind-blowing opening salvo in the coming shooter wars. Valve and id had better be paying attention. Make no mistake, Far Cry is a stunning achievement and deserving of both your time and your money. Go buy it right now.

Genre: First person shooter  
Platform: PC

From: Ubisoft  
Price: £34.99 (available at £12.97 from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

# The Fordham Folio

## So you want to be a Freelance Game Designer or Writer?

*LISA FORDHAM offers practical advice to the creatively inspired ...*

WORKING as a freelance game designer in the adventure gaming industry is a job like no other. You're essentially your own boss, although you're often at the mercy of those who hire you. You get to create new and amazing things from whole cloth, but you usually have to write to someone else's outline. You get to work your own hours, which can sometimes turn into all-nighters in those final days before a deadline. In short, it's a hard and sometimes thankless job that most people—including, often, your friends and family—aren't likely to understand well. But I love it, and you might too.

### The basics

A freelance game designer is someone who creates material for adventure games under contract to a publisher. Most of the time, the freelancer is hired on to work on a concept the publisher has already developed. When this happens, the freelancer usually signs a work-for-hire agreement with the publisher that states that the publisher owns all rights to the freelancer's work on that project. If you come up with the basic idea for a project and manage to convince a publisher to bring it to market, you might be able to retain the basic rights to the game or at least arrange for a nice royalty for yourself. The trick, of course, is that most publishers already have plenty of ideas of their own and aren't looking for any from outside their company. They might want people to help them flesh out their own ideas, though, and that's where the freelancer typically comes in.

As a freelancer, you're expected to be able to write or design to your editor or developer's exact specifications. If the company wants a card game that teaches colours to children by means of a cast of licensed characters, then that's what you give them, not your favourite house variant on chess. Most freelance work in the adventure game industry comes from the roleplaying category, and that's mostly what this article is concerned with. However, many of the ideas here can be applied broadly to other categories too. If you're a solid game designer with a good grasp of details like balance, player interactivity and elegance in design, you can find jobs working with all sorts of different games: miniatures battle games, card games, board games, collectible card games, collectible miniatures games, wargames, and even roleplaying games. Don't turn your nose up at any of them. Work is work, and the more good work you do, the better your chances of getting more, better work in the future.

### Breaking in

If you want to become a freelance game designer so you can bring your magnum opus to market via the one lucky publisher who manages to finally recognize the brilliance of your work your first time out, you're going to end up more disappointed than when you found Santa's presents sitting in your parents' closet. If no one's ever heard of you, chances are that no publisher is going to want to take a risk on you. Even 'name' designers sometimes have trouble finding outlets for their personal designs, and those are the people you're competing against.

To overcome this obstacle, then, the best thing to do is earn yourself a name. There are a lot of ways to do this. Probably the most common advice is to start out by writing some magazine articles and then work your way up into bit pieces for larger books until an editor hands you your first full book to write. That's a load of hokey.

If you're trying to get published in a magazine, you're probably one of dozens - even thousands - of different aspirants hoping for the same

thing. You need to stand out from the crowd somehow, and posting your e-mails to an editor in pink-and-purple HTML isn't going to cut it. There are two proper ways to break in.

First, you can self-publish. This is also known as doing things the hard way. Publishing requires both a wide array of skills and some amount of cash. If you don't have these, developing them just so you can impress another publisher is silly. If you have the skills to pull this sort of thing off, you might be better off trying to become a real publisher, but that's fodder for a whole different article. Of course, the web has changed things. It's possible now to publish small pieces either on a web page or as a PDF that can garner you some attention. Assuming you have a computer and a connection to the internet already, the only thing you're risking here is your time. It's a valuable commodity, true, but blowing a couple weeks or months on getting your PDF adventure done properly isn't nearly as painful as losing several thousand dollars in printing and warehousing fees on top of that. The second and best way is to know someone in the industry. The old saw about who you know being vital is just as true in adventure games as it is anywhere else. If you don't know anyone outside of your own gaming group, this can present a problem. However, the adventure gaming industry is small. It's not that hard to meet people, and if you make a good impression you have that foot in the door you need. Figure out everything you can about the company (or companies, if you're serious about freelancing) you want to write for. Hit their websites. Haunt their message boards. Read and play their products. Learn. Most game companies are always hunting for volunteers to demonstrate their games at conventions. Offer to do this, especially if it means a chance to meet the company's owners or editors. Once you spend a weekend running games for a beleaguered company president, he or she is sure to remember who you are when you call or e-mail later about work. Once a person can connect a face with your name, you're instantly ahead of the pack. From there, it's up to you to let your talent, dedication, and professionalism snag that juicy assignment you've been dreaming about.

### Tools of the trade

If you're going to be a freelancer in the adventure games industry, there are some things you'll need. First, either own or have full access to a computer with an internet connection. Few publishers are willing to deal with a writer who can't submit work electronically. The hassles with having to get the text from a typewritten page into a desktop publishing program are far too many to have to bother with, no matter how brilliant that text might be. Also, most publishers prefer to handle much of their communications by e-mail these days. If you don't have an e-mail address of your own, get one. It's not unusual for a publisher never to speak with an author unless they happen to meet at a convention. E-mails shot back and forth are usually good enough. Use a proper word processing program. The default is Microsoft Word, although most publishers accept RTF (Rich Text Format) files too. Use a spellchecker. Editors might forgive the occasional typo in your work, but not using a simple backup like a spellchecker to help clean up your text is nearly unforgivable. It displays a lack of effort to polish your work, and it makes the editor's job harder if he or she has to constantly be cleaning up after you. The editor is the person who hands out assignments and approves your work so you can get paid for it. You want to do everything you can to make the editor's life as easy as possible. With that in mind, use a spellchecker on your e-mails too. Many people



consider it a waste of time to polish a quick note like an e-mail, but when you're trying to sell yourself as a writer you should take every chance you get to look like a good one. Have a good dictionary and thesaurus at hand at all times. There are fine online versions you can use in a pinch. You should also select a style guide and stick to it religiously. Many publishers have a style guide they prefer, and if you can figure out what it is (asking often works here) grab a copy and study it thoroughly. As a default, pick up Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. It's short, cheap, and the basis of most larger guides.

Some publishers also have writers' guidelines posted on their website. Download these, read them, and follow them to the letter. This is your chance to show that you can follow directions well. If you can't be bothered to give proper consideration to a company's stated guidelines, you shouldn't expect them to bother giving you an assignment. Despite the fact that computers continue to threaten to kill off the printed page, get yourself a printer too. It's hard to proof text on a computer screen, and if you're just starting out you shouldn't even try. If possible, print your material out, let it sit for a day or two, and then read the hard copy. You'll be amazed at how many errors will leap off the page at you. If you can wrangle a friend or two to proof your material for you before you send it in, do it. Be prepared to take whatever criticism they offer, and use it constructively to improve your work. A harried editor is more likely simply to reject a poor submission than to give you some idea for how it could be better. Take a dress rehearsal or two before parading your stuff out in front of a paying audience.

### The work

The number of full-time freelance designers in the adventure game industry is extremely small, especially if you only consider those who have been at it for two years or more. It's a rare person who actually succeeds at it. If you don't feel like jumping in with both feet, consider setting aside some of your spare time instead. Find deadlines far enough off that you can still hit them with room to spare. Work your way into it slowly, and if it seems like the right thing, you can make the big jump when you're ready.

Or you can just jump right in and see if you sink or swim. Be sure you have enough savings to keep yourself paddling for a while first. The phrase 'starving artist' only sounds romantic when it's not your belly that's empty.

Once you have an assignment, take it seriously and do your best work. As a rule, freelancers who produce solid work on time always get more work. Those who turn in crap or who flake on their deadlines get the opposite. Many freelancers seem to think that it's better to get an article exactly right and turn it in late than to turn in something less than the best on time. They are wrong.

A publishing company functions on cash flow. It has a schedule of products that it has promised to deliver, and if you don't turn your material in on time you jeopardize those promises. That means that the company either has to break its promises because of you or that the editor has to work long hours to make up for the time you ran over your deadline. Neither of these situations makes the company happy with you. No design is ever perfect. Game designers are tinkerers by nature, always coming back to a design-whether it's theirs or belongs to someone else - and playing with



it until it's better. Given an unlimited amount of time, this process might never end. That's why there are deadlines.

When you get a deadline, plan for it accordingly. Do your best to finish the work early. This gives you time to polish your work to a shiny finish. It also prevents you from shooting past the deadline if something unpredictable happens in your life. You might be jumping for joy when you get your first gig, but there are going to be days between then and the deadline when you just don't want to work on it. It's work. If it was easy, no one would be willing to pay you to do it. Even on those days when sitting in front of the keyboard is the last thing you want to do, do it anyhow. It gets easier with practice. Freelancing can be a lonely life. You often spend your work hours alone at home, tapping away on a keyboard or playing both sides of a game by yourself while everyone else (it seems) is chatting away with their friends in a cushy office job with a steady paycheck and nice benefits.

If you love the work, though, it's enough to sustain you through all those moments of thinking the grass might be greener in a corporate cubicle. If you're good at it and treat it like a real job - by giving each assignment the respect it deserves - you can even make a decent living at it, at doing something you love. Then there is no greener grass.

# Introducing ... MUDs

*HANS JØRGEN ECK assures us that they're not to be confused with dirt ...*

MUD is an abbreviation for Multi-User Dungeon. A MUD is a text-based environment where players can adventure and socialize with others. MUDs are more or less a cross between the old text adventure games and roleplaying games. For the younger generation, imagine any of the Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games, like **Everquest**, **Asheron's Call**, **City of Heroes**, remove all the graphics and you are close to what a MUD is. You log in to a MUD using a standard telnet client or with an advanced telnet client tailored for MUDs like *Zmud*. See the end of the article for links.

## Me Tarzan, you Jane!

Communication is a big part of all MUDs. There are usually chat channels that you have or can get access to, where you can communicate with other players or administrators on a MUD. Most MUDs have a newbie channel where you can ask for help and a shout or gossip channel for more general chatting. *HELP CHANNELS* or *HELP COMMUNICATION* will probably give you the info you need on this topic. Some MUDs will also allow you to communicate directly with others using the *TELL* command.

Commands are what you type to do things on a MUD. Commands allow you to see a list of players connected to a MUD, give you a list of the items you are carrying, talk to someone or attack someone. If I were to say something to the others standing next to me on the MUD, I would use the command *SAY*, followed by what I want to say. For example: *say Hello there my good man!* If I wanted to attack someone I would use commands like *ATTACK* or *KILL* followed by the name of whom I wanted dead.

## Moving around

If you have ever played a text-based adventure game you will be somewhat familiar with moving around on a MUD. That is, assuming you are old enough to have seen a text-based game. Ah, the good old days of C64.

When you log in to a MUD you appear in a room. A room in MUD terms is an area of the world you are in that might contain objects, characters and suchlike. You will see text describing what you see around you, other players if any are present and visible, and items lying around. What

directions you might move in will most likely be visible as well. The most common way of moving is by using compass directions. If you are in an area where you can leave westward, enter the syntax *WEST* or *GO WEST*. Any MUD with self respect will have a help file explaining this in depth. Try typing *HELP MOVEMENT*.

## Who are you?

When you log in to a mud for the first time you have to create a character you want to play. The character generation will vary from MUD to MUD but there are often a lot of similarities, like name, gender, race, class, etc. Distributing or rolling for stats on your character is also quite common. Strength, agility, wisdom and such are often-used stats. You should see information about how to enter this information in the form of syntax help. A common syntax is to use the command *HELP* followed by the word you need help on. In example *HELP RACES* would give you a list of available races and perhaps some info about each race on a lot of MUDs.

The first thing you should find out when you log in to a MUD is what kind of theme it has. Maybe the name of the MUD gives it away, but sometimes MUDs have original themes. The next thing you should find out is what style the MUD has. Is it a roleplaying MUD or is it more of a hack and slash mud? If it is a roleplaying MUD you might be required to stay in character at all times. By staying 'in character' I mean communicating with other characters as if you are the character you are playing. No talking about real life things. A hack and slash MUD is usually more about killing things, gaining experience and money, and less about giving your character a background and a history. Most MUDs will clearly inform you if you are required to roleplay or not through the help systems.




A big part of most MUDs, besides what race, class, and stats you have, are skills. Skills define what your character is able to do in the world he/she is playing. An example skill would be 'daggers proficiency', giving you the option to attack a monster or player while wielding a dagger. There are many different skill systems around. Some MUDs connect classes with skills and some use more open-ended systems. Say you are playing a rogue in a MUD. As a rogue you would get skills like pick-pocketing, stealth and perhaps dagger usage. Another MUD might not use classes, though, and what skills you can learn would be based on finding teachers from whom to learn new skills. Typing *HELP SKILLS* will usually give you the info you need about how you learn skills on any given mud.

## An example of a first time in a MUD

Once I have found a MUD I would like to try I would add it to my list in my MUD client and connect to it. Once connected, I will be asked for a name. If I have a character on the MUD already, I will enter the character's name and password, if not I will enter a new character's name. First, I will be asked if I want to play a male or female. Next I will be asked to select a race from a list of races possible on the MUD. Let's say it is a *Star Wars* theme and I will choose to play a Noghri, a deadly and stealthy race. Next I will be asked to choose what kind of class or profession my character will play. I would like to play a bounty hunter, so I choose the bounty hunter class.

A character's stats are usually either distributed from a pool or by rolling for random numbers. In this case, I have a base amount of points for each of my stats and then I have 25 points to distribute among the five stats I have (strength, dexterity, mechanical, technical and force). When I'm done tweaking my stats, I will be ready for my first steps into the world.

I am presented with a newbie school that guides me through all the important elements of this MUD. Each room you walk into will cover topics like communication, combat, movement and skills so that you will be ready to face the 'real world'. Once I've finished moving through the

RANK	Top MUD Sites
1	 <b>Aardwolf MUD</b> <a href="#">info</a> Established in 1996, Aardwolf has become one of the most popular MUDs around with over 500 players at peak times. Huge world to explore, countless features and a friendly atmosphere. Roleplaying is optional, having fun is mandatory! Free!
2	 <b>Achaia, Dreams of Divine Lands</b> <a href="#">info</a> "It's a very real world and very fascinating." - G4/TechTV. "Simply put, Achaia is one of the best MUDs on the internet." - TimeWastersGuide.com. Come find out why. Free to play! From Iron Realms Entertainment.
3▲	 <b>Threshold RPG</b> <a href="#">info</a> Role playing is not an option, it is a requirement! Immerse yourself in this richly designed world with player run clans, guilds, legal system, economy, religions, and more. With a UUnet T1 and superb hardware, you also need not worry about stability.
4	<b>The Carrion Fields</b> <a href="#">info</a> Adventure, politics and war await you in this life of swords, sorcery, deception, and honor. With 16 diverse, balanced classes, 200+ unique areas, deep RP, limited items, and xp-based PK, we've expanded, adapted, and improved for 10+ years. 100% free!
5▲	<b>Discworld mud</b> <a href="#">info</a> Discworld is a totally free MUD that combines the humour and richness of Terry Pratchett's work with a top quality game. Under constant development since 1991 Discworld is huge, deep and complex yet still accessible to novice gamers.

Current popular MUDs - from [www.topmudsites.com](http://www.topmudsites.com)



newbie school, I will read through some of the help files that are available to me. I start out by seeing if there is a help file called simply, newbie. So I type *help newbie* and I get told about most of the typical things someone new to this MUD will need to know. This help file points me out to other help files I should read as well.

After reading all the recommended files I still find myself with unanswered questions, so I turn to the newbie channel available to me. I type *newbie Hello, is there anyone around who could answer a few questions for me, please?* With some luck, someone will answer my questions.

This was a fairly generic example of how your first MUD experience could be and there are of course many variations to how MUDs have been coded. The picture below shows a typical window from the client, Zmud, that I use.

### The good, the bad and the indifferent

There are thousands of MUDs around, with almost any theme you could imagine. Some are good, some are bad and finding the good ones is not always easy. I have been a MUD'er since around '94 and even though I don't play much any more, I still log in and chat with my old friends on the MUD where I started out. If you have questions this article doesn't answer about MUDing, you can always log in to [www.swmud.org](http://www.swmud.org) on port 6666 and see if I'm around (Hanse). I'll answer any question you may have to my best knowledge.

### Useful resources:

Zmud client [www.zuggsoft.com](http://www.zuggsoft.com)  
 MUD database [www.mudconnector.com](http://www.mudconnector.com)  
 Top mud sites [www.topmudsites.com](http://www.topmudsites.com)

This paragraph is what's called a 'room' on a mud

Here you can see the room's exits

These are the players in the same room as me

This is the mud prompt where the commands you enter are shown. Here I have entered 'swho' to list the players on the mud.

This is a list of players and immortals currently logged in. I can see myself in the list as Hanse on the left column.

This is where you would enter the syntax you want to send to the mud. You can see that I sent 'swho'.

```

MUD zMUD 7.05
File Edit View Settings Actions Layout Windows Help Plugins
Chars Settings Classes Aliases Variables Paths Triggers Maps
Quit

swmud.org : 6666
1117/1117 > 1

You are standing in a rather large building just south of a dock that many
beings are entering from. You hear the hum of thrusters as a ship takes off and
another lands, depositing more people on the dock. They enter from the north
and make their way past you. There is a large sign that has something written
in many different languages on it. You locate one that you can understand, and
it reads: 'Imperial City Customs'. There is a hallway
to the Information Center and the Simulation Center.
is the door that will take you to the streets of Imper

There is also a map that you can look at in most areas
you know where you are going. Just <look map> to

If you are new, you should go south then west to the Information Center to read
up on information about the mud.

The only notable exits is south.

Javelin_finally got his truck running!
Skip the Expert Chameleon
Sighfigh [136] has finished Mercedes Lackey's "The Forest"
and is now reading "Prison of Souls", has 1 jedi slot.
Escob the Diplomatic Administrator
Scorch {Goober}
Zilion the Lethal Killer

SWmud main Board is here.

1117/1117 > swho

      Star Wars Mud
=====
[Secretary] Morbius
=====
[HM] Hanse           [26] Cord           [11] Luck
[HM] Neeja (9m)      [24] Skip (11m)      [11] Trev (3m)
[HM] Scorch (25m)    [22] Duan           [ 9] Thirada (5m)
[HM] Sighfigh (20m)  [18] Escob the      [ 8] Zilion the
[HM] Javelin (40m)   [18] Windam
[40] Hermsell (11m)  [19] Matellinc (13m)
[36] Abimelech       [10] Eluxal (33m)
[35] Tantrum (37m)   [18] Abs
[27] Lintu           [12] Kosh

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# The Ridley Files

## Raiders of the Game Cupboard 3

*Risking editorial wrath for your sake, ERIC RIDLEY tries out TCGs and miniatures ...*

### Star Wars Attacktix

With the almost pant-wetting excitement of the *Revenge of the Sith* movie being out right now (I hope you have all gone to see it at least three times), Hasbro is once again trying to squeeze more money from our already bleeding wallets in the form of this new miniatures game. Much like a girlfriend with the notion of going to see something at the theatre, Hasbro just won't let up till they own your house.

**Attacktix** is a game aimed very much at younger players, as seems to be the case with maybe too many games nowadays. It is like a dumbed-down version of **Mage Knight**, which itself was a dumbed-down version of other table top minis games. So what we have here is a game with an IQ of the Glasgow Brain Donors Association. Having savaged the game in a kind of pit-bull-with-a-baby's-arm type way, I want to balance my comments by telling you that the game is full of strategic nuances. I want to, but can't.

Each figure is a three inch tall representation of a character from the film. Each one is equipped with a firing weapon of some kind. Most figures have rocket launchers that fire little plastic missiles, others have lightsabres that swing from the waist in a He-Man punch kind of way. The idea of the game is to knock over your opponent's troops: once a figure has fallen, he is out of the game (usually). The winner: last player standing.

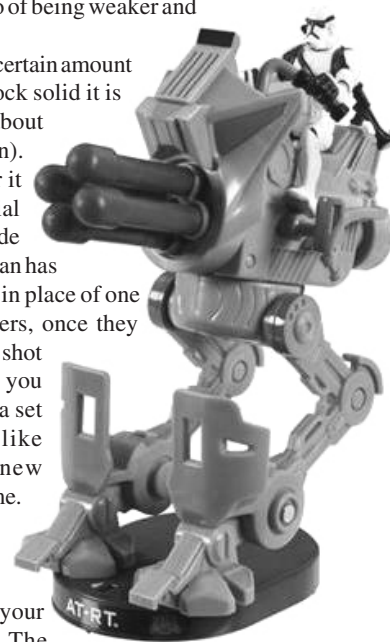
In the starter set you receive a Darth Vader and an Obi-Wan mini along with a selection of other troops. You also get a rule booklet / check list and an instructional DVD. The rules are extremely simple and well explained in the rule booklet, so the DVD was mainly used as some kind of futuristic magic to show to the denizens of said brain donors association.

Each turn you may move as many figures as you like. Each figure has a wheel on the underside of its base, and a number printed as its move value. You roll the figure forward on the wheel and listen to the amount of 'tix' you hear. Then you may attack (see, the name is starting to make sense now isn't it?) with two figures. Attacking is solely based on your skill with toy missile launchers, I am pretty good, but it can vary wildly. The most dangerous thing about attack is the probability of firing your projectile down the back of some un-reachable area behind a radiator. There are no spares given. The lightsabres are deadly but you have to get very close to use them, much like a real life halitosis-breath weapon. Missiles have the

benefit of being ranged but also of being weaker and prone to comedy misfires.

Each figure is designated a certain amount of points depending on how rock solid it is and its special ability (more about that later, oh all right, now then). Once a figure is knocked over it has a chance to use the special ability printed on the underside of its base. For instance, Obi Wan has the ability to come back to life in place of one of your troopers; clone troopers, once they are dead, allow you to get a free shot from a friendly model. Thus, you can make up a team based on a set point amount and battle like Newcastle chavs over a new tracksuit, till the cows come home.

The great thing about this game is the ease of play. It is fun, lots of fun, laugh-out-loud fun. But it will not challenge your grey matter even slightly. The sculpts for the figures range from fair to happy-meal level. The latter of which really make you resent the *huge* price tag on these things. £6 for three figures is a bit much. The starter represents good value; the boosters are really over the top. If you have the money burning a hole in your Jedi pants, then shoo, go and buy it, but otherwise it is just too expensive.



### Pokemon Emerald

**Ex Emerald** is the newest expansion for the ever-popular **Pokemon** Trading Card Game. It is so new, in fact, that the deadline for this article is the day of its release. So in order to serve you, the lovely readership, better, I have decided to fly in the face of popular convention and ignore my editor (Carol) and hand in this review late; I'm sure you will notice the upshot of this decision when in issue 115 I have about four lines worth of contribution and I talk in abstract terms about how I lost my house. But that's all in the future; right now you have a great capsule review to read. So, as I was saying...

Emerald is a new 107 card set and is based (loosely) on the new Emerald edition Pokemon game soon to be hitting our shores on the GameBoy Advance. The card set contains many Pokemon that we have seen several times before. Torchic, Treeko and Mudkip, along with their evolutions are all there despite having been seen in about four previous sets. Manectric (the crazy electro-punk hound) makes his fifth return as well. I am not opposed to seeing cards a few times, but I am a little sick of looking at bench fillers Spoink and Vulpix. They have had their time and there are plenty of other Pokemon out there that don't get the card time they deserve. Darkness and Metal Energy also make returns in rare slots, which is a little annoying. They are in every second set and after opening a box I got six rare energies that I had multiple copies of from previous sets. Bah, humbug! The distribution is the same as always (one reverse holo in every pack and a one in three chance of getting a proper foil), but this time Pokemon USA have added new Holo Energy cards to the mix. They are normal energy cards in the six standard types, but have a really cool background and holographic sheen. They take up a reverse holo spot in your pack and are listed as rare (but sssh, they aren't really): you have a one in three chance of getting one

### At a glance ...

Star Wars Attacktix

**Publisher:** Hasbro

**Players:** 2 (or more)

**Price:** Starter 9.99, Boosters 5.99

**Playing time:** About 20 mins

Pokemon Emerald

**Publisher:** Pokemon USA

**Price:** Boosters 2.50 each, Starters 6.99 each

**Set size:** 107 cards

Yu Yu Hakusho

**Publisher:** Score Entertainment

**Configuration:** 50 card starters, 10 card boosters

**Playing time:** 20 mins



in a pack.

The new Pokemon Ex, which seem to be the focus of the sets recently, are fairly decent. Camerupt Ex is great and Registeel makes his Ex return; unfortunately, Raichu is in there as well. The new trainer cards seem to be getting more and more powerful: even with the Supporter sub-type (you can only play one supporter card per turn), some of them seem way more powerful than they used to be. But for once you won't hear me complaining about the 'Arms Race', as the new cards seem to be designed to speed up play and help you get what you want quicker.

The new holographic cards include an awesome Exploud with huge abilities at every step of the way, a new Groudon and Kyogre and Rayquaza is in there as well, rocking the rare spot. Each of the holo rares deserve their position, except maybe Manectric, and there should be no cries of 'foul' as there is with a holo Pidgeot. The set is solid: some cards are weaker than previous versions, some are stronger than Paul Orndorff, but it is a nice balance. As per usual, the set is a perfect jumping-in point if you haven't really got any other Pokemon cards (a pox on your house), but also keeps the hardcore fans alive with the new rare cards. The art is crisp and clean, and while not computer-generated like some of the last few sets, it has a charm and appeal unique to Pokemon.

### Yu Yu Hakusho

'Another day, another TCG based on a crazy Japanese cartoon about guys with big hair knocking seven bells out of each other.' That's what my mother always used to say, and I can't disagree with her. Today is indeed another day, and I have with me the **Yu Yu Hakusho** card game. Based on the cartoon of the same name, the TCG sees you go head to head with your opponent in a series of fights to determine who is the hardest. This takes place not on the streets of Manchester outside the local kebab establishment as you may expect, but rather... actually the rule book doesn't give any indication of the back story, so let's presume it is out side said convenience food outlet after all.

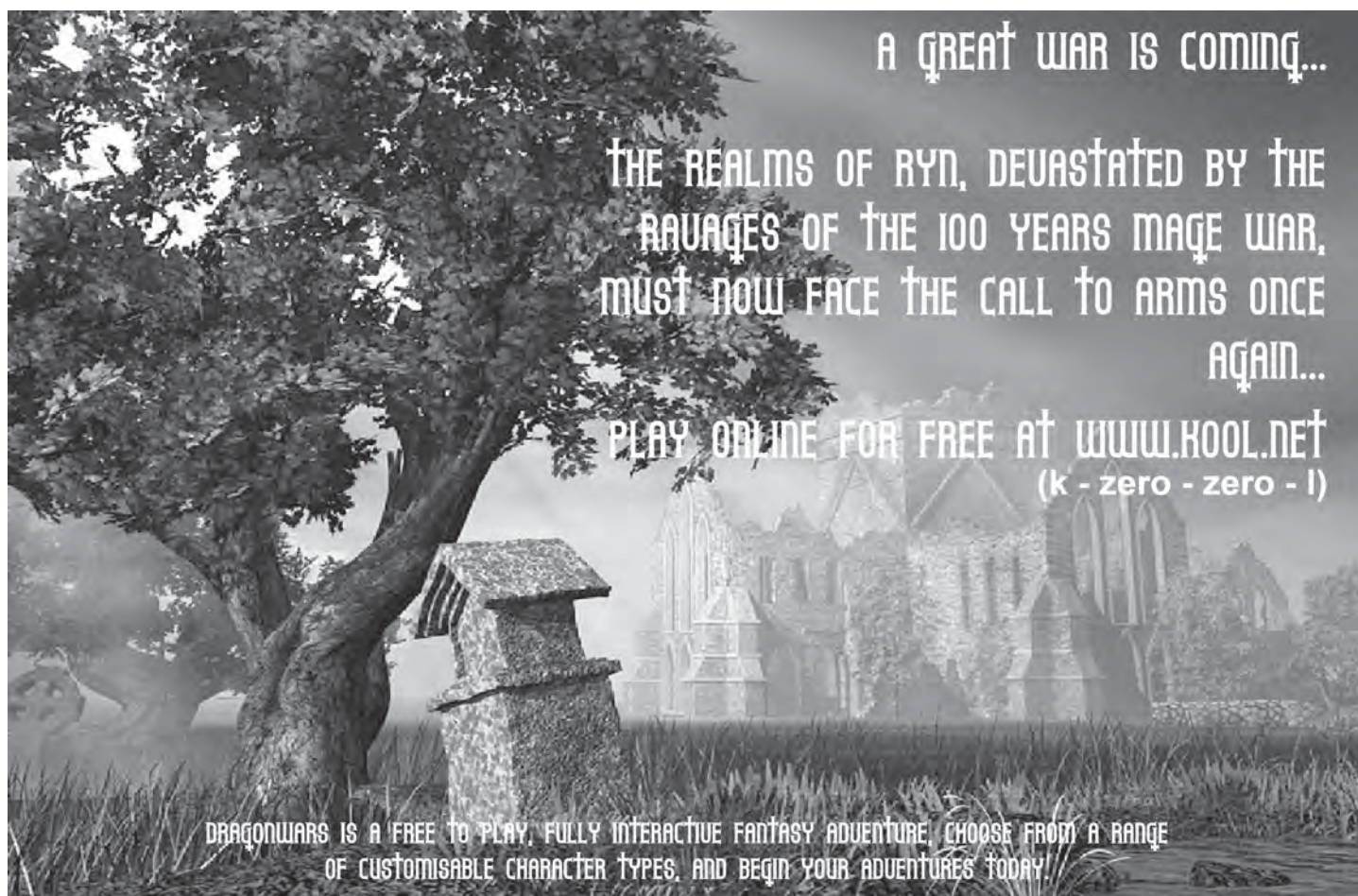
The game is aimed at younger, players, as so many of these licensed games are. But wait, don't skip this section yet (I get paid in proportion to the amount of words you read), there are a few games out there that are

aimed at kids but still are entertaining experiences for the hairier among us. You start the game with a team of four fighters. You and your opponent fight it out in a series of one on one matches. Each turn you draw two cards and gain two spirit energy. Spirit energy is used to pay for particularly powerful cards, and is quite a good system of doing so. In your Main Phase you may attach techniques (new forms of attacks) or items (such as a knife) to your fighters. These give you bonuses to your fighting skill, or replace them all together. If you are feeling a little fruity, you can also play event cards: as per usual, these represent one-shot deals which are quite powerful, such as making your opponent discard cards, or boosting your strength for one turn.

Once the main phase is over, it's time for the Kung-Fu style of death Phase (actually, I think they call it something non-descript, like the 'attack step', wieners): it is here that you are allowed to whomp your opponent with the various goodies you have collected. Each attack has a cost: this must be paid by discarding an equal amount of cards from your hand. If you hit your opponent hard enough, as in, your attack is higher than his defence, you will do damage. Each fighter can take four points of damage before he is left as a broken shell at his opponent's feet. First to win three rounds takes the game.

It's all very straightforward and easy to learn. The problem is that once each fight is won, a whole new battle begins. Both of the original fighters leave the table. This makes it a little sterile. The likelihood is that whoever starts the round will win it. It is not always the case, there are plenty of things that can change the outcome, it's just that you seem to be desperately fighting against the inevitable. It is this to and fro which makes the game slightly sticky for me.

The card art, being mainly screen captures, is good for what it is; the card design is good and gets better in later expansions. The rulebook is clear and the play mat is quite nice. Everything about this game is average, I would say. Except the price: it will love you long time for cheap, if you can find it. If you like the property it is based on, then there is nothing to hate about this game and you will no doubt be quite pleased. If you have never heard of Japan, or have no idea what a TCG is, then I would stay away (and read a geography book or something).



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# Pevans' Perspective

*PEVANS looks at the new games of 2005 ...*

THIS YEAR's new games are beginning to come through, so I thought I'd let you have some notes on what I've played so far. The list is in alphabetical order of the games' titles.

**Around the World in 80 Days** is not a new title for a game. And the game isn't brand new as it's one of those I missed at Spiel last year. Designed by Michael Rieneck, *Around the World in 80 Days* is published by *Kosmos* and *Rio Grande*. The theme is, as you'd expect, Jules Verne's novel of the same name. Players follow the itinerary of Phileas Fogg and Passepartout, crossing continents and oceans by various forms of transport. While progress along this route is shown on the board, the number of days taken by players is shown by the track around the edges. Standing still for a turn doesn't (usually) hurt a player as s/he doesn't expend any days and may pick up cards to travel faster. But get too far behind and you will be penalised. Again, this is more of a family game than a gamers' game, but it is great fun.

**Australia** is a Michael Kiesling and Wolfgang Kramer design published by *Ravensburger*. It is rather lighter than most of this duo's games, but that's no surprise for a Ravensburger family game. *Australia* is a very abstract game, though played on a board that shows Australia and the surrounding sea. There are some nice playing pieces - model 'Rangers' and a little biplane for each player - cards that provide and limit players' options and tokens for money. Gameplay is about playing your cards and moving your plane to place your Rangers where they can score the most points. The game lasts long enough that re-deploying your limited supply is an issue. There are several clever tactical twists and the game provides some challenges. I enjoyed it and would happily play it again, but it's not on the same level as **Maharaja**.

Good fun is **Diamant** (Diamond), designed by Bruno Faidutti and Alan Moon and published by *Schmidt*. This is a **Pass the Pigs**-style game with a mining theme. Each turn, players have to decide whether to stay in (and go deeper into the mine) or pull out with their takings so far. Get out safely and you can 'bank' what you've got. Get caught by a hazard and you lose what you have in hand. There's no depth to this; it's just fun. And the more, the merrier: it takes up to eight players.

Franz-Benno Delonge has designed the two-player **Fjorde** from *Hans im Glück* (Fjords is the English language edition from *Rio Grande*). This is a kind of cross between **Go** and **Carcassonne**. Players lay tiles to build up a playing area of grassland, water and mountains. Along the way they get to place four wooden 'huts' on grassland areas. Once all the tiles are



*'Around the World in 80 Days' in play*

down, they start filling in the grassland by spreading out from their huts with wooden discs. The disputed areas between players get filled in first, then each player claims the territory they've managed to block off. Whoever plays the most chips (or has fewest left), wins. This is a neat tactical game where the luck element (who draws which tile when) counterbalances the thinking. But it's not my kind of game.

At first sight, I thought the people I saw playing **Heckmeck am Bratwurmeck** were playing **Mah Jongg**. However, the ivory-like tiles are the trophies players are bidding for in what is a dice game. Think **Shut-the-Box** or **Can't Stop** and you'll get the basic idea: how far can you continue to roll the dice without going bust? In this case, you're trying to achieve the numbers shown on the tiles. Each success reduces the options available - though you can pinch them off other players. This is a neat little game, designed by Reiner Knizia and published by *Zoch* and *Rio Grande*.

**In the Shadow of the Emperor** is the English language edition from *Rio Grande* of another game I missed at Spiel (**Im Schatten des Kaisers** from *Hans im Glück*). Ralf Burkert is the designer of a game that reminds me a bit of **Goa**. The setting is the medieval German States where players represent various noble families trying to become Emperor (of the Holy Roman variety, I assume). This is done by getting control of enough Electors to vote oneself in. In turn, this means using your limited actions to best effect. As always, there are several ways of achieving this. The game provides a decent challenge once you've mastered the elaborate mechanics, but I found it too dry.

Stefan Dorra is the designer behind **Kreta** (Crete) from *Goldsieber*. At first glance it reminded me of Reiner Knizia's **Samurai**. It has a long, narrow island map with oddly-shaped playing pieces on it. There the resemblance stops. The island of Crete is divided into provinces, some of which will be scored during the game. Players can see the next two to be scored and thus try to get their pieces into those provinces to grab some points. To place the pieces, the appropriate character must be played from the player's set of cards. But you only get your cards back when someone triggers a scoring. Then the next-but-one province to score is revealed and the players head for that. This is a clever game that isn't too complicated (though there's more to it than I've suggested here) and can be played quite briskly. I liked it.

Previewed at Spiel last year, **Louis XIV** is the latest from *alea* (and from *Rio Grande* in English). As you'd expect, this is much more a gamers' game



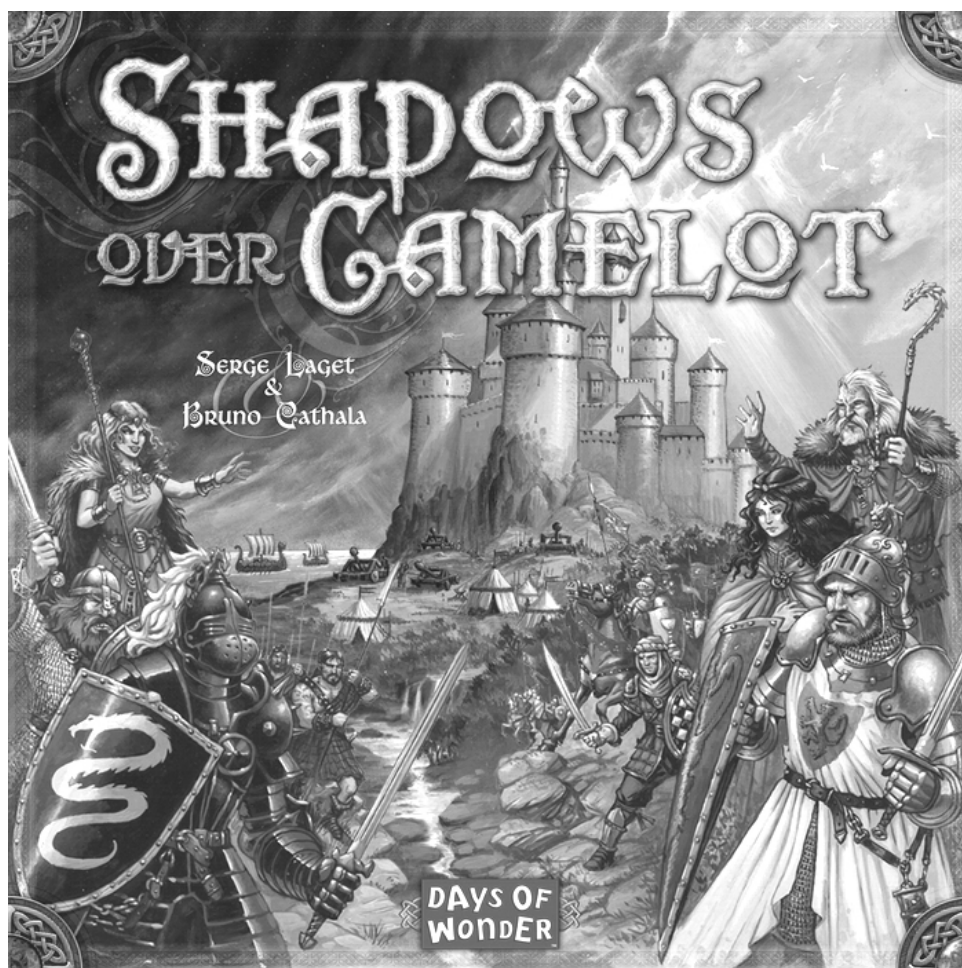
*'Kreta' in play*



and is reviewed in full elsewhere in this issue.

I have to mention **Shadows over Camelot** even though I haven't had a chance to play it. The pre-production version looks very cool. This is a co-operative game - along the lines of Reiner Knizia's **Lord of the Rings** game. Given the title, you won't be surprised that the players are Knights of the Round Table, who must work together to defeat the various threats facing Camelot. Except that one of the Knights is actually a traitor and is working for the dark side. (My money's on Mordred, but that's probably just typecasting.) Designed by Bruno Cathala and Serge Laget, *Shadows over Camelot* is due for publication (by *Days of Wonder*) in June. I can't wait.

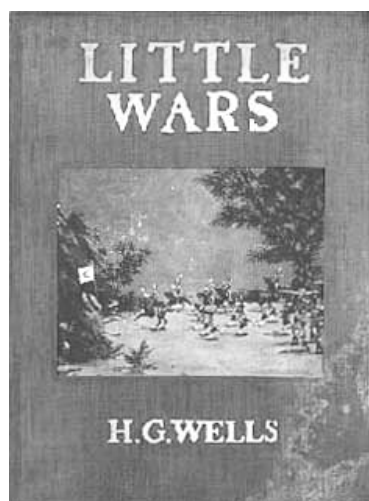
Another of Reiner Knizia's clever scoring systems is to be found in **Tower of Babel** (*Rio Grande* - or **Der Turmbau zu Babel** from *Hans im Glück*). The board depicts the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World plus the eponymous tower. Players have a hand of cards in several suits, representing different elements that go into the construction of the Wonders - each will require several to complete. One player puts up an element of a building and all the players offer to participate. The first player chooses who will be involved and they get various rewards. Players who offered to participate but were tuned down also get some reward. So the trick is to optimise your points across all the various ways of scoring. It's a neat game, but not one of Knizia's best - and it's very dry.



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# War Gaming in Search of H G Wells

*STUART ASQUITH recreates the famous author's Little Wars...*



IN THE LATE 1960s, my interest in toy soldiers, dormant since my boyhood of the late 1940s/early 1950s, resurfaced as I began to learn about this new-fangled hobby of war gaming, which had rules to govern fights between toy figures. I began to build armies, but my early experiments with 'proper' playing with toy soldiers came to a halt when I was sternly advised that 20mm figures were the size to use for war games. This state of affairs lasted a good many years, during which time I amassed many 15/20/25mm armies in several periods, wrote

25mm figures and 'proper' war gaming I did nothing and the book went on the shelf.

If you have not seen a copy *Little Wars*, it is difficult to describe the book's immediate appeal, but the very dated photographs, the toy soldier look of the game and the suggested rules (two sets) are, for me, inspirational. There have been numerous reproductions of the book: I urge you to try and obtain sight of a copy. In about 1990 a friend lent me his copy of *Floor Games* by HG Wells, published in 1911, ie two years before *Little Wars*. This is not purely a war game book, but once again contains some great ideas, such as **The Game of the Wonderful Islands**, and photographs. I also had the opportunity to study *War Games for Boy Scouts*, a rare, undated pamphlet that may well have been published before *Little Wars*. The upshot of all this was that *Little Wars* was taken off the shelf, dusted, read and re-read. I was hooked. I knew that I wanted to re-create **The Battle of Hook's Farm** - the centrepiece of the book - to use the rules, the figures and the terrain. What can only be described as my search for HG Wells' 'grail' began. All my thousands of war game figures were gradually sold, along with the corresponding kit such as terrain, leaving the field (table?) clear for their toy soldier comrades. In truth this was neither as dramatic nor reactionary as it may seem, as my games had already been exclusively toy soldier for some time.

some books on the hobby and became the editor of *Practical Wargamer* magazine.

It was a good time, I made many friends in the hobby, friendships that have stood the test of time, and I liked to think I publicised the hobby among non-war gamers by staging numerous demonstration games at non-wargaming conventions such as the annual Napoleonic Fair and the Model Engineer Exhibition in London. My high spot came when I was invited to the 1998 Fall In! convention in America where I met some war gamers on the other side of the Atlantic. Actually, that really was a great trip, as a good friend of mine from Michigan came to the convention and afterwards we toured Gettysburg and the 1812-1814 battlefields - Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, Stony Creek, Fort George etc. Wonderful.

While all this was going on, in 1973 Britains Limited introduced their first metal 54mm figures for some years. Other companies, mainly 'cottage industries' making metal toy soldiers came into being - suddenly I was back in the 1950s and possibilities loomed large. For some years my two interests moved happily in parallel, war games were played with hundreds of 15, 20, 25, 30 and 40mm figures, while 54mm metal toy soldiers were collected and displayed. Slowly, but inexorably the toy soldiers took an increasing amount of my time, interest and money and I began to war game with the 54mm figures, greatly increasing my collection to accommodate 'fighting' figures. By 1990 my wife and I were living in a fairly large house in London, which enabled me to have my own war game room with a permanent 8'x5' table and from then on, most of my games were fought using 54mm metal and plastic figures. The other members of my local club were kind enough to let me inflict my views upon them and we subsequently staged on a number of 54mm games at war game conventions and military fairs. Our games caused great interest among some war gamers, and a rather sniffy 'not proper war gaming' attitude from others. This was fun, but still I had an 'itch'.

## Enter HG Wells

Set against this background was the fact that while I had read HG Wells while at school, I knew nothing of his *Little Wars*, published in 1913, until *Arms & Armour Press* published a facsimile edition in 1970. I was really taken with the concepts, scenery and photographs, but surrounded by

## The terrain

HG Wells writes that he played his games on either the cork tiled nursery floor or out in the garden. Even though there are photographs of people playing an outdoor war game in *Little Wars*, early experiments made me call into question HG Wells' claim that figures will stand quite well on a carefully mown lawn. Whilst my wife appreciated my sudden interest in gardening, I just could not get the figures to stand and then there's hay fever and always the thought of the neighbours watching. Playing on the floor was also a no-no. Apart from the universal presence of fitted carpets throughout the house (apart from the kitchen - let's not even suggest that one!) and the lack of a nursery (been there, done that), when one gets to a certain age, kneeling on the floor loses its appeal after about half a minute as knees and ankles cramp up. For me, the painted fibreboard surface of my war games table made an ideal playing area. Yes, but HG Wells played his games on either the floor or the lawn... Here I was faced with the first of several compromises, but being able to sit indoors, refreshments to hand, on a comfortable stool, to a purpose built table, is far better for concentration than crawling around on all fours. Case proven. HG Wells writes that he used a selection of wooden planks, boards and bricks to make his war games terrain or 'the country' as he termed it, visually more interesting. His hills were thus all 'stepped' with no attempt at smooth slopes. These items ranged from planks 36"x36" down to boards 9"x4 " and a box of bricks rounded off the list.

The planks and boards were something of a problem; 36" square solid wood items no longer exist at anything like reasonable prices. The best answer I have come up with thus far is to use kitchen chopping boards, purchased fairly cheaply at DIY stores, supermarkets etc. These come in a number of useful sizes such as 13"x9" and 18"x10". The wood is left plain, neither painted nor decorated, so any purchases are straight from store to tabletop. Surprisingly, the wooden bricks were fairly difficult to find, as I wanted plain, unpainted wood bricks, not today's 'safe' garish plastic. Eventually, after a long, lowkey, but enjoyable search, my long-suffering



wife spotted a box of 100 plain wooden bricks of various interesting and useful shapes by Brio in a lovely old fashioned toy shop.

Initially I had tried modelling the required smaller buildings from card, covering them in the brick or stone-printed paper (HG Wells used wall paper) intended for dolls' houses. These looked pretty much like those in the book and once I acquired the Brio building bricks, I was also able to create the larger buildings seen in the photographs in *Little Wars*. After many experiments, I was able to lay out the boards in a very passable re-creation of the Hook's Farm terrain on my war game table. For trees, HG Wells used cuttings from trees and bushes in his garden - jasmine, pear and more exotic varieties are mentioned. I experimented along these lines, but the cuttings drooped pretty quickly. During a trip to a garden centre (never object to making such trips with the domestic management, it keeps her happy and you never know what you'll turn up) I came across small cuttings from a privet hedge that had been sprayed dark green and which were intended to complement displays of dry flowers. I bought all I could find. (This transaction engendered a long conversation on flower arranging by the 'helpful' garden centre assistant and was I interested in joining the local society? My wife decently concealed her merriment; I mumbled my excuses and left...) Now, HG Wells drilled holes in his planks and boards to accept the cuttings he used, so I decided to do the same. Holes were bored into some of the chopping boards and, gentle reader, into the actual surface of my war games table. The privet cuttings, trimmed to suitable sizes were then planted into the holes and the result was just what I wanted. Pedantically another compromise, I guess, but one that looked really good. Really good.

There are no road/ivers in *The Battle of Hook's Farm*, but when HG played on the nursery floor, roads and rivers were simply chalked in. My solution was to paint them on my table with matt emulsion paint, in sand and mid blue respectively - my table top was already a mid green colour - using 'match pots', small samples of a particular colour intended for (normal) people to try out a particular colour at home. Once I tired of a particular road/river layout I simply painted it out and replaced it with another.

### The figures

Wells and his two sons used hollow cast toy soldiers for their games. From the photographs in the book, the figures seem to be predominantly those made by Britains Limited.

Interestingly, HG Wells never talks about units in his games. His men seem to have just been grouped together in appropriate armies/forces. For example *The Battle of Hook's Farm* was fought between two armies each consisting of three 4.7" land carriage mounted naval guns, 48 infantry of different types and 25 cavalry, also varying in type. I already had sufficient figures, albeit mostly solids as opposed to hollow cast, several times over, but I wanted to have exactly the same troop types as shown in the photographs in *Little Wars* and so new figures had to be added to the collection in preparation. There is no 'group basing' of the figures; they are all individually standing, gloss painted traditional toy soldiers.

### Playing the game

Having organised my two forces (three guns, 48 infantry and 25 cavalry a side) and created a passable terrain, the next step was to set about using the same rules by which HG Wells conducted his games. A coin is needed to decide who goes first or who has the initial choice of 'ends' in a 'country' and, as an offshoot, I had great fun wandering around antique stalls for a penny coin that HG Wells could have had in his pocket. I finally settled on one dated 1889 that cost me £2 I think. Two lengths of string were needed for measuring, one of which was two feet long, the other six inches long. A couple of six sided dice are also needed to arrange a slight imbalance between initially equal forces; 12 infantrymen are left out and the two players roll the two dice to see how many they can take back into the ranks. A clock with a second hand times the moves (one minute is allowed for moving 30 men and a minute for each gun) and the intervals between the moves.

One problem with HG Wells' rules is that only the guns fire, the infantry and cavalry are melee troops. HG and his sons actually fired their model artillery pieces during their games and so there are no specific firing



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rules in the text. It was a question of aim, fire and if you hit and the men fell over, they were dead. My Britains 4.7 inch naval guns can actually fire home-made lead projectiles, but I had several problems with this, including safety - to be hit in the face with a metal 'shell' can spoil your concentration, not to mention your good looks - scrabbling around on the floor to retrieve fired 'shells' was tedious and undignified and I didn't much relish lead 'shells' smacking into expensive toy soldiers that don't actually fall over anyway as they are solid cast. Thus another compromise reared its head: I had to resort to rolling dice to simulate artillery fire. A blow, but inevitable. I will not trouble the reader with a full breakdown of the rules in *Little Wars*, it may well infringe some copyright somewhere, but essentially there are two sets, those in the main body of the book by HG himself and those contained in the appendix by a Colonel Mark Sykes, that follow a more kriegsspiel style of play. I have used both sets for *Hook's Farm*, but I think that of the two, I tend to lean towards the Sykes set as being more detailed and allowing for such aspects as fording, transport and supply, destruction and construction.

### So...

So, a brief outline of my 'quest' to re-create HG Wells' style of gaming, through terrain, figures and rules - in essence perhaps, bringing his book to life. Some readers may well regard the whole enterprise as pointless: HG Wells only used the figures and terrain items that he did because they were all his sons' nursery and his time provided; if he had had today's more sophisticated kit, then he would have used it. Fair comment, but to actually work through such a famous war gaming book was an enthralling exercise and more importantly perhaps, it was fun!

*[The full text (and illustrations) of Little Wars is freely available online as part of the Project Gutenberg eBook project.*

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If you would like to get in at the beginning of an entirely new game of this system - a rare occurrence - please complete the slip to the right, and post back to us at AGEMA, 120 Carmel Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6LZ.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: What is The Glory of Kings?**

**A:** A Play by Mail game set in the historic 18th century.

**Q: What is a Play by Mail game?**

**A:** Players take part by posting to us their orders, and receiving back game turns. The turns include a newspaper written in the manner of the time, personal details for their own position, an order sheet to fill in, and letters from other players writing in character.

**Q: What kind of commitment would I be taking on?**

**A:** One game turn is played every two to three weeks. How long a game turn takes to complete really depends on how you choose to play the game. It can be done quickly, or you can spend hours on it. The choice is yours. Financially, each turn costs £6. The system is intended to be flexible to cope with all styles of play.

**Q: How do I take part?**

**A:** Just complete the slip on the right, and return to us with your payment by cheque or postal order made out to AGEMA. We will then be in touch to confirm your choice of position. If your first choice cannot be accommodated because it has already been taken, we will give you another one as similar as possible to your original choice.



- Ideal for commuters
- A fulfilling, quality product
- Latest version
- Award winning design
- Recreates the real world as it was
- Ideal tool for learning about the past
- Game turns make for a good read
- Not a number crunching exercise - reflects real life decision making
- Seriously fun entertainment!
- Not as complicated as it sounds

#### TICK

- ☐ Kingdom of England
- ☐ Kingdom of Scotland
- ☐ Kingdom of France
- ☐ Kingdom of Spain
- ☐ Kingdom of Prussia
- ☐ Kingdom of Sweden
- ☐ Kingdom of Denmark
- ☐ Kingdom of Portugal
- ☐ Kingdom of Scotland
- ☐ Tsardom of Russia
- ☐ Ottoman Sultanate (Anatolia)
- ☐ Ottoman Rumelia (Europe)
- ☐ Moghul empire of India
- ☐ Shahdom of Persia
- ☐ Shogunate of Japan
- ☐ A Polish prince
- ☐ A German prince
- ☐ An Italian prince
- ☐ An Ottoman lord
- ☐ An Indian prince
- ☐ An African chief
- ☐ A far eastern king or prince
- ☐ A famous pirate
- ☐ A rebel faction (e.g. Jacobites)
- ☐ A famous financier

Your Name:

Your Address:

Payment enclosed:

- ☐ £6 - to reserve a position.
- ☐ £11 - to reserve a position and buy the rules (necessary if you haven't got them!).
- ☐ £5 - purchase the rules only.





Being  
RULES  
by which a persuaded  
gentleman or lady  
can PURSUE a  
career of daring  
ESCAPADES  
to their heart's  
content



*Memoirs* ♣ works on the very simple basis that those taking part have only a limited time to play, but want to be involved. It is structured to require minimum effort, in return for which you get a fair amount of reading material and take part in a richly detailed game.

This is not a standalone game; *Memoirs* ♣ takes place *within* games of The Glory of Kings V. If you find that statement confusing, it really doesn't matter. All you need to know is that the princes, leading pirates and other heads of state in the game are played by real people - other players not involved in *Memoirs* ♣, but who take part in another game (The Glory of Kings).

During your adventure you can bump into other players in this game, and can have contact with players in Kings V by writing to them. For example, if you want to gain a commission in the King of France's Gardes Francaises, one of his infantry guard regiments, you would need to write a letter to the King. Hopefully he will reply, and more hopefully still he will grant your request.

So, if you are ready to embark on this period adventure, please strike a suitably dashing pose and send £3 for the rules!

## *Memoirs* ♣

- A swashbuckling roleplaying game set in the real world of the 18th century:

Rules cost £3 post free - game turns are £3.50 each, with one every two or three weeks.

To take part please send £3 to AGEMA, 120 Carmel Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6LZ



*Memoirs* ♣ - the postal roleplaying game



# THE MIGHTY PEN

## Games Workshop at 30

Your writer seems to inhabit a world totally different to that known by the rest of us if he truly believes that there would be virtually no gaming hobby as we know it were it not for Messrs Gygax, Garfield, Jackson and Livingstone. In his rather poor attempt to deify this quartet he has totally ignored the important and significant contributions that many other designers and entrepreneurs have made to games over the years.

Whilst it cannot be denied that D&D, Warhammer and Magic the Gathering were important stepping stones in the development of games, they are by no means the only ones and the above gentlemen cannot even lay claim to designing all of the material for those games - many other good designers, writers, artists and marketing people were involved at all levels.

As a matter of fact, your writer, aside from looking at life through rose-tinted spectacles, has also got his facts wrong. Jackson and Livingstone had already launched a very successful Games Workshop retail and distribution business by the time they started writing the Fighting Fantasy series of books, many of which were actually ghost written in their names.

I'm not trying to belittle their achievements as they did make a big contribution to gaming by providing a framework whereby kids could play properly with what had hitherto simply been 'toy soldiers'. However, let's keep a sense of perspective here and if you are going to get someone to comment on personalities and events within this business, please at least make sure they get their facts right and don't get carried away by some romantic pipe dream.

**Colin Wheeler** ('Gamers' shop)

[We offered **Eric Ridley** a right of reply]:

I am well aware of the process that Games Workshop went through when it was starting up. I am also aware of the fact that it was already started before the Fighting Fantasy books came out (although bearing almost no resemblance to GW today), and that a lot of the FF books were ghost written (I have *all* the books). GW actually started with Ian Livingstone, Steve Jackson and a man called John Peake selling RPGs from their flat, John later left etc, but the information seemed superfluous to the article. Jackson and Livingstone didn't even write Warhammer (Rick Priestley, Jervis Johnson, Nigel Stillman among many others), but I still feel it's fair to say that without them the game would not be as it is today.

To suggest that any game was created in a vacuum is stupid; all ideas are fed by other ideas. In relation to D&D for instance, I didn't credit Dave Arneson as one of the men who shaped the gaming industry because people don't identify the product with the name. He co-wrote the system, but it is Gygax who is almost a cultural icon: did Arneson have guest spots on Futurama? Was he the executive producer on almost all the D&D cartoons? The answer is no, I am not playing down this man's achievements, or any other designer that didn't appear in my article, but for the sake of space, brevity and coherence I omitted some names.

I do have to disagree though over the aspect of these men's work being important stepping stones. They were more than that: they lay the solid foundations of what we know today as an industry. Today there are hundreds (if not more) RPGs on the market, but without the first RPG there would be none to follow it. Kevin Siembieda has undoubtedly shaped his corner of the RPG world, but he started by playing D&D just like everyone else. Let us also thank Charles Darrow (the probable inventor of Monopoly)

for the work he did in making games a mainstream, adult, concern.

There are lots of other things I could write and qualify myself by saying, but this letters section is quickly being over whelmed by my huge spiel. I would love to write a whole magazine's worth (as is becoming evident) on this interesting topic, but I had one page to fill.

I am unsure what our reader means by 'pipe dream' and 'rose-tinted spectacles'. Does everyone not look back at their childhood and formative years with a sense of fondness about the things that shaped who we are? The article was designed to do many things, angering readers not among them. To jointly reminisce on the games we all used to play, to recognise some of the hard work that was put in by people 30 years ago so we could all have a bit of a hobby, and to make us think that all game companies are doing good things by bringing new blood into the pastime.

Whatever the thoughts on my article, it has sparked some lively debate, and that is always a good and refreshing thing. Hmmm, let's see what people make of my upcoming article on shrimp farming being the reason we all like to play board games.

## Programming a PBM game?

I'm writing because I've an idea for a PBM, but I'm not sure which programming language I'd need (as there are seven), and nowhere has any PBM programming info.

Is there one language that everyone uses, or is it a personal preference? Any information would be appreciated.

**T Tempesta**

*[We think that C and/or its variants are the favoured software now. Can anyone add to this suggestion? There's been a discussion about this on the pbmdesign@yahoo.com discussion forum, which may be of interest.]*

## Suggested for inclusion

Is there such a thing as a job guide for vacancies at PBM firms (programmers, GMs, etc)?

**Terry Crook** (*Briny En Garde!*)

*[We'll happily print calls for new employees, though established firms probably look first at their existing player base.]*





# Reader Survey

**CAROL MULHOLLAND** reports on your reactions to games and to *FLAGSHIP* ...

MANY THANKS to all of you who answered the questions which we sent out as a survey last issue. *Flagship* isn't some vast corporate concern, and it's readers' views - your views - that justify our existence. I'm always interested in what you have to say, and do try to base our overall policy on your opinions. This sort of survey keeps us on our toes.

Question 1 asked how long you've been reading *Flagship*. No-one who had just picked a copy up for the first time sent in an answer, so we're not sure what new readers make of us, but the majority who replied have been reading for at least two years. A substantial 21% said they've been reading since issue #1, and 14% for just one year.

Question 2 asked how often you play games. For 61.5%, playing games is an important part of life and something that they do regularly, while 22% would play more if they had more spare time. A smaller proportion, 5.5%, would play more if they had more money, so it's clearly lack of time that's the main discouragement rather than cost. Oh, and 11% replied that they mainly play games as a group activity, when they can get their friends or family together.

Question 3 asked what sort of games you enjoy playing. The number of boxes that were ticked per reader ranged from one to six, with most of you choosing four and upwards. Everyone picked turn-based (PBM) games, but apart from this it was quite surprising to see how varied your tastes are. Boardgames are popular, with RPGs following closely behind. Computergames and wargames tie for fourth place, then trading card games come some way behind these front-runners, then online games and then there were also a few votes for LARPs. **Antony Dunks** added, 'What I enjoy and what I actually get round to playing are different matters.' This is probably true enough for plenty of us, even when we don't live on a small island, like Antony does.

We reckoned that for Question 4 it was worth asking what games you enjoy reading about. The overall results added up in a similar way, but the answer sheets weren't identical. As expected, most of you like reading about turn-based PBM games, and again boardgames came close behind, followed by RPGs and - this time - wargames. Online games took the fourth place, with computer games close behind. More of you are happy to read about LARPs rather than play them, but not many of you are interested in reading about trading card games. **Roy Ashdown** comments that we all, 'Need to know what's out there, and other people's views of such.'

Question 5 asked about where to place *Galactic View*. All of the options got some votes. Interestingly, the same number voted in favour of printing it every issue as voted for putting it on the website, while issuing it annually as a paper supplement and issuing it on request had similar but smaller numbers of supporters. Issuing it only to new readers was the least favoured option. **Bill Moore** thought that putting it on the website 'is probably best if it's going to get much bigger than two pages. To be fair to the web-phobes, though, perhaps an annual supplement should be available on request.' **Mike Lay** agrees that, 'Not everyone has web access, but putting the web-based stuff only on the website might make sense.'

Question 6 asked whether there is anything game-related which we don't cover and which you'd like us to include. **Mark Alexander** made what strikes me as a good general point: 'I'd like to read about trading card games, in a more general style than the TCG magazines, which assume everyone's an expert on everything. This doesn't encourage people to try new games, or make for an easy, informative read.' **Jim Botten** regrets that there are 'Not many RPG player-experience articles of late.' **Terry Crook** suggests 'Forum games' and **Chris Geggus**, 'Replays.'

Question 6 asked whether there's anything that you would like us to discontinue. Most replies were a straight 'No', but of course some of you think differently, as is your right! 'I just don't care about Feedback,' says **Chris Geggus**. **Gordon Walker** picks the Austerlitz series: 'Although interesting when first included many issues ago, I feel it is now only of

interest to those who play or are about to play the game.' Some of you dislike coverage of console games: 'They have a multi-million global industry to back them up and countless magazines,' protests **Mark Alexander**. 'That must be a very limited interest subject. Certainly has no appeal for me. Obviously, the hardware to start with makes a difference!' says **Roy Ashdown**. (Aw, but I find the rivalry between *Microsoft* and *Sony* entertaining, especially since neither the Sony Playstation 3 nor *Microsoft's* Xbox 360 is actually out yet! Watch your newspapers, folks, and applaud this clash of Titans.) **Terry Crook** thinks that the coverage of *Fall of Rome* 'Is a bit much. Yes, it may be a good game, but there are others!' We'll always aim to cover new games in depth, but welcome suggestions about other games to include as well.

Question 7 asked whether we should continue paper publication, and an overwhelming majority of you chose being able to hold what you're reading. No-one voted for option (c), that the web is the way forwards. 'I just can't concentrate that well on reading long articles off a screen,' says **Bill Moore**.

Question 8 asked you to rate issue #113, and the average vote was 7.35. 'Not fully radiant, but better than any other general games magazine,' said **Mark Alexander**, with an 8. (Yes, we did have lower marks, but none with a comment.)

Question 9 asked which articles you most enjoyed, and why. As usual, *Rumours from the Front* was the most popular piece, with the *Fall of Rome* review by Bob McLain coming second. 'He's just a kick to read' said **Sven Bauer**; 'His enthusiasm spills over onto the pages to be mopped up by eagerly awaiting readers,' agrees **Roy Ashdown**. *Newsdesk* came third, 'especially the boardgame section,' **Sven Bauer** adds, 'I'm depending more and more on board and card game reviews to make my decision whether to buy or not.' The *StarFleet Warlord* strategy guide came next: 'A game I have often thought about playing and like to hear about,' said **Antony Dunks**. *A Peer at the Past* was also popular: 'If only because I kept trying to work out the names of the games referred to therein,' says **Bill Moore**, while **Terry Crook** simply gasps 'Memories!' The review of *DragonWars* followed, tying with *Turning Digital*. 'It's good to see this back!' applauds **Mark Harris**. **Mike Lay** linked *Turning Digital* with *Running a Game Website*, 'both well-written and interesting to me.' *Games Workshop* at 30 has aroused some controversy, but was also praised: 'Nostalgia! I was a 1980s teenager,' remembers **Mark Alexander**, who also joins those who praise *Lisa Fordham's* columns, 'Lisa Fordham really knows about games. It makes me feel connected to the wider gaming community.' The *Austerlitz* series has its fans: 'I have a soft spot for strategy games,' says **Richard Devereux**.

Question 10 asked which articles bored you, and why. 34.5% found nothing boring at all. Several readers cheerfully point out that they avoid boredom by only skimming articles they're not interested in. I've already mentioned some negative reaction to the *Austerlitz* series and the review of *Nintendo DS*. A couple of you disliked the game design article, *Prisms from Another Galaxy*: 'It's the game itself that's important, not the mechanics,' says **Roy Ashdown**, and the article about *Running a Game Website* met some opposition from those of you who are either not interested in the subject or unable to access the web. **Gordon Walker** makes a useful point about game design articles in general, 'I sometimes am interested in the GM's side of the business, but many of the articles are really only aimed at current GMs or the few who may consider becoming one.'

Many thanks to all of you who sent back replies. We appreciate supportive comment, like 'What you have done is, I think, essential to *Flagship's* survival,' from **Alan Greenaway**, but it's also good for us to be kept on our toes. We'll ponder over your suggestions, and will continue to do our best to please you.



## RUMOURS FROM THE FRONT

*[This column attempts to simulate a crowded bar full of PBmers swapping experiences. It contains readers' uncensored comments, with no attempt to maintain fairness and balance; editing is only done for grammar, clarity, brevity and (occasionally) libel avoidance! In general, it's unwise to put too much weight on a single report, whether rave or curse. Readers are asked only to comment on games of which they have recent personal experience and to mention specifically if they are only giving a first impression. Unattributed comments, usually in [], are by the editor.]*

### Comments received after April 15th

Roy Ashdown, Sven Bauer, Jim Botten, Dan Brown, Andrew Chadwick, Terry Crook, Ryan Delaney, Richard Devereux, Neil Edge, Tim Eller, Colin Forbes, Patrick Gleeson, Mike Grant, Jon Hughes, Mike Lay, Bill Moore, Carol Mulholland, Bill Schmitt

## TURN-BASED GAMES

### Aspects Of Might (SilverDreamer)

**Mike Grant** - 'The tender mercies of the Sisters of the Star tended my many wounds, leaving barely a scar. Would that the humiliating removal of poisoned thorns had left me as un-scarred emotionally! That shrivelled old witch will pay dearly for this. With my mind filled with thoughts of revenge I have stocked up on sling stones and healing herbs and returned to do battle with the hag... Malachai Sicklemoon - Male Wodemis of the Moon.'

### Chaos Trail (Simon Williams)

**Carol Mulholland** - 'Early days yet, but I've just bought a startup in this roleplaying game. Simon has sent me a choice of seven different starting scenarios, to choose from. They're all well-written, and each is ominous in its own way: this game's fantasy world is not a comfortably familiar one! I feel drawn towards the one where a heap of garbage in the night street seems to come alive. Yucky, but hey, I remember the days before disposable nappies. Now to create my character...'

### DragonWars (Extreme Web Games)

**Bill Moore** - 'My time in this game (review last issue) has come to an unfortunate end due to hardware issues. Not being a computer person, despite the GM's help I wasn't able to get reconnected so have had to leave for now. Just when I was getting into it too. The game still seems to work fine on other machines (such as my parents' iMac), so I'm pretty sure it's just a problem with my PC though.'

*[We seem to be able to load it OK, though haven't tried playing it yet.]*

### Dungeonworld (Madhouse)

**Bill Moore** - 'The rationalisation of guilds mentioned in the previous issue has obviously reduced some of them to desperate measures, as one has asked me to become a deputy leader! Struggling to find a rationale as to why one of my relatively low-skilled characters would be made a leader and noting said character was of the female persuasion, I've gone for the obvious reason why the character would have a career break and have become a working mother (no laughing, Carol!). Said work being introducing goblins to the pointy end of a long sword, of course. Guild members should expect future newsletter articles on children's pyjama sizes and the lack of adequate creche facilities in contemporary Berenian dungeons.'

**Mike Grant** - 'Can't believe another Giant Ant has bitten through the usually trusty full-plate mail! I'm sure my armour came with a guarantee against such incidents. Attempts to explain this to the monster swarm only resulted in a series of random-seeming clicks which sounded strangely like mocking laughter (or maybe I've just been down here alone for too long!). This soon ignited my Berserker spirit so I've been wading through them ever since. Generally heading northwest down a roughly hewn tunnel with absolutely no

idea where it leads to if anywhere. Strength remains stuck on a weedy 11 despite many attempts to improve it. Wonder if that's why the Clan booted me out... Grishnak Axehand - Male Dwarven Warrior.'

**Mike Lay** - '“The Reaper” has appeared, and the Regent himself has joined the fight! The only thing certain is a great deal of violence!'

**Jon Hughes** - 'Brokenlands: I'm thoroughly enjoying this game, my first with madhouse. A very simple online entry format allows your character to wander around exploring long-forgotten dungeons, without spending hours working out the orders. If you want a quick, online adventure game to fit in with a very busy lifestyle, then I heartily recommend this.'

**Mike Grant** - 'BrokenLands: Without a formidable foe like an Elemental for us to unify against the Slythian Fellowship has scattered to all four corners of the Halls of Stone & Iron. But at least there are some lesser monsters around for everyone to battle. Soon we'll all meet up on the next lower level, where we have an intriguing boat-summoning riddle to solve... Jai of the Dragon - Male Human Monk.'

**Mike Grant** - 'Frontier: Most of the Giant Tomb Leeches have been repelled by a volley of missile fire and fire magiks. Fellow wanderers arrived in the nick of time, I think, including an Enchantress whose Fire Sprite spell is proving very effective against the Leeches' tough rubbery hide. Our passing seems to have stirred up many types of undead including Grave Dust Whisperers, Skeletons and Tomb Guardians. Fortunately the number of adventurers within the Tomb of King Dolcae is increasing so the risk and action can be shared.

I shall be pushing on to the treasure room to assist some old travelling companions. (Well, someone needs to keep an eye on Chunthalaka who still doesn't sound or look right despite his words.) Many foes line the way so who knows what may happen -Anakine Oakhart - Female Human Ranger.'

**Mike Grant** - 'Kyr: Sad news do I bear this day. I accompanied my old sparring partner Tigris, seeking news of his old friend Al-Qatil. It has been naught but a tale of death and sorrow so far. We were warned of the relentless dangers in the deep desert and yet we felt our battle skills would be enough to see us safely through. How naive we were. The beheaded remains and broken sword of Al-Qatil were soon discovered just a few days travel west of Riiasad. My friend, mad with grief, sped off into the sand storm before I could stop him. Since then I have searched for him in vain. Last evening my sleep was disturbed with dreams of Tigris cruelly slain by a lizard-like creature with razor-sharp fangs. Abruptly awakened, I believe it was a true dream and now my search for him continues, though without hope of a joyful reunion. Panthera, Dark Aslani Warrior.'

### Einstein's Lot (Ulaiddh Games)

**Carol Mulholland** - 'Alison has managed to track down the wino who picked her pocket, but should she ask her vampire friend to regain her stolen ankhs forcefully or try a more gentle form of persuasion, herself? Well, she's a peaceful student, so she'll pick the latter course, but the chemist's shop-girl has said that the wino has been around and drinking heavily for as long as she can remember: so can he be altogether human, to withstand such a heavy assault on his liver? Indeed, when Alison approaches him, his speech is scots, but doesn't seem to be quite of the present-day. He asks for money at first, and then any form of alcohol: but what's a bit eerie is his references to the old ballad of Tam Lin. Alison knows that the heroine had to embrace her lover to save him from being paid as a tithe to hell by the fairies: and that as he's being held, the Fairy Queen changes Tam Lin into things like a serpent and a burning brand to make her let go. Eek, Alison doesn't want to have to embrace such a filthy, smelly old drunk - revolting!'

### En Garde! (Briny En Garde!)

**Bill Schmitt** - 'I would like to add my thoughts on this fine RPG run by three very congenial players. Briny En Garde! is a fine adaption of a Naval RPG using the format of En Garde! - a Board and Role Play Game of the Life and Times of a Gentleman Adventurer. The Moderator can set the era - 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th centuries.

These fellows, using this En Garde! format, introduced their version of the Royal Navy of England in 1791, to make a very fine addition to the En Garde! series of RPGs.'

### European Empires (Software Simulations)

**Roy Ashdown** - 'Has more than my fair share of time at present. Playing in three games, looking to win one presently and hanging on by my teeth in another, with third shaping up nicely. Set in the napoleonic period, one plays against the other emerging states, balancing persuasion against cost. Some diplomacy, but not essential, although always worth doing. Highly recommend.'



**Exile (Harlequin Games)**

**Jim Botten** - 'My only game at the moment is Exile, which has gone from strength to strength since I stopped being the GM! Marcus Taylor and a bunch of sparkling and energetic players, plus an excellent interactive website communion, make for a game that never stops, even when outside factors slow the turn rate down.'

**Fall of Rome (Enlightened Age Entertainment Inc.)**

**Ryan Delaney** - 'The developers have taken the time to craft a great story for each battle that plays out. Every battle unfolds in story form and these read like the best battle scenes you'd find in any fantasy novel. With the lack of in-game graphics, this is exactly what is needed to keep players immersed in the game. I wish there was more of this type of story telling in today's games and I hope that some of the bigger developers sit up and take notice of this and incorporate it into their own games. This game is *not* Warcraft, C&C, War of The Ring, or any other 3D graphical masterpiece. This is a 2D game, with sprites and minimal graphics. But I must say, for what is there, it is all done well. Characters are slightly pixelated but colorful and easy to recognize. The graphics for structures and terrain are the best looking art in the game. They look like they were done with oil paints and have more detail than I thought I'd see in this game, which was a very pleasant surprise. The character portraits are also well done and, again, look like something done by a classic artist using oils rather than typical Photoshop-colored digital art. Kudos to the developer for adding some attractive graphics to a game that will be judged solely on its gameplay. The game makes use of *Java* and because of this it is very stable. I never had any problems with stability, something that can't be said for some of the more popular multiplayer games on the market today. All in all, Fall of Rome is a game for the consummate gamer, the one who wants deep gameplay, a good story, and a great community. This game is not for those simple-minded players who only care about how big the breasts are on the female characters and if they "jiggle" with the correct physics, or if the latest texture-mapping technology was used to create ultra-realistic looking models to make up for shallow gameplay and story. I highly recommend this game to any old school tabletop gamers, and strategy game lovers who enjoy an engaging story to go along with their game.'

**Gameplan (Software Simulations/Danny McConnell)**

**Andrew Chadwick** - 'I play in one league. I have mixed feelings about this. It is very difficult to work out a winning strategy; it lacks "personality" (ie your squad are just a bunch of numbers, unlike PAFL where you really start to think of them as "people") and recent changes made to weaken squads really irritate me, having badly upset my development plans.'

**Gunboat (Agema Publications)**

**Terry Crook** - 'Just rejoined this, and it's ticking along nicely. Seems more stable and structural. Regular turns and newsletters, similar to *La Gloire du Roi*, but Chinese!'

**Kosumi (www.kosumi.com)**

**Bill Moore** - 'Cannot get this to work on my PC (work or home), which is kind of annoying as the theme has a lot of appeal to me. Downloads are the bane of my existence now - I can never seem to get them to work properly. Wish I was more computer literate.'

[We've been able to reach this on our own machines.]

**Lands of Androhil (www.androhil.ws)**

**Bill Moore** - 'This is a simple single person RPG with weekly turnaround and free to play. GM is Dutch but fluent in English, apparently. The graphics certainly look nice. Characters have skills they can develop over time. It got recommended to me by someone playing in another game, although I haven't tried it myself yet.'

**Middle-Earth: War of the Ring (Harlequin Games)**

**Richard Devereux** - '2950 variant designed by myself, and happily it seems to be enjoyed by enough players to keep it running.'

**Napoleonic Battles (Agema Publications)**

**Andrew Chadwick** - 'I enjoy Napoleonic Battles. I have played 45 (yes, 45!) games of this. Although turns only take a few minutes to do and it is quite pricey at £3.50 per turn, it is pretty compulsive stuff that keeps me coming back for more.'

**PAFL (Cleopatra Games)**

**Andrew Chadwick** - 'My clear favourite. Despite the ups and downs of turnaround over the last couple of years, leagues 1 and 2 are now running reliably and it is an excellent game.'

**Quest Game 31 (KJC Games)**

**Mike Grant** - 'Two of my groups are through to the second round of the Nalaria Tournament. Sadly, they've been drawn against each other. Which is a bit disappointing as I was looking forward to testing them against some of the other competitors. On the plus side, at least I'm guaranteed a place in the third round no matter what happens. It is easy to believe that once your group is nearing the maxed-out stat stage that they'll have a shortage of worthy foes to battle but this is most definitely not the case. There are mighty monsters out there to test even the toughest group of adventurers. Like the huge creatures with their infamous swallow attacks which can permanently destroy a character along with all their equipment. Trios of Giants can still prove difficult as can some types of Dragons, Godly Servants and many others. Quite a few new alliances have formed over the past few months. *The Consortium* (129) is a merchant guild alliance based in Elkhart (10):

[http://uk.geocities.com/mike\\_batrum/MercantaM.htm](http://uk.geocities.com/mike_batrum/MercantaM.htm)

*The Crux Anasta* (134) is an alliance devoted to the peaceful healing God Baldor and works from Calimahr (13):

<http://cruxansata.dajc.net/>

*The Nephilim* (137) work for the Magic Circle and are located in Raviksholm (1). Believed to be specialised in fire magic.

*The Union of Shadows* is formed from recent refugees from another game world and is based in Linden Glade (18). Very little else is known about them at this point.

*The Snake Eyes* is also formed from recent refugees from another game world and has settled in Athabaska (14). Commerce seems to be one of their interests, though they may have others.'

**Serim Ral (Incubus Games)**

**Jon Hughes** - '*SR 26 Ancient Realms*: An interesting variant on the old favourite. I've played in many Serim Rals before, but this has been the most unusual. I've had a slow start to this game, mainly because you can't build new castles and hence expand quickly, but overall a good game and Incubus are to be congratulated on their excellent website and online forum. Right - a bid for war-elephants, anyone?'

**Bill Moore** - '*SR 26 Ancient Realms*: Things are moving along nicely in this game, although currently (turn 8) I've still to engage another player in combat. Like most of the other players, I suppose, I'm currently in the process of conquering the independent cities in my area before looking further afar. The independents in this game are uncharacteristically tough and require you to significantly concentrate your forces.

One thing to note is that errors and omissions in giving the correct orders in AE have a high price. I lost almost all of one army to starvation because I forgot to tell my high priest where exactly to send food aid in time. Another lot was lost because I tried to transfer "light infantrymen" back to a city garrison rather than the light cavalymen I actually had. The light cavalry then starved because there wasn't enough food on that character for them. The fact that the character was actually in a city chock full of food at the time didn't matter!'

**Star Fleet Warlord (Pagoda Games)**

**Mike Lay** - 'Game E18 came down as a two-way fight between my "Elemental Shipyards" and Robin Orman's "Corelli's Cleaning". Fortunately my fleets were slightly better placed than Robin's.'

**WWII - Open Warfare (David Clay)**

**Terry Crook** - 'Another good game. Playing as the ITGC with my friend Simon as the ITPL, and we are doing great. Get ready North Africa, here we come!'

**ROLEPLAYING GAMES****Harn (Columbia Games)**

**Sven Bauer** - 'My Harn campaign demands the most time. I have two groups of PCs in different parts of the world. In between games we're playing *Hansa*, *Bang!* and *Axis & Allies*, the new edition.'

## ONLINE GAMES & WEB GAMES

### SeordCast ([www.seordcast.com](http://www.seordcast.com))

**Colin Forbes** - 'This turn-based web game is set in the days of yore. You know the sort of thing: swords and sorcery, armies, wars, glory - and, of course, heroes wielding big magical swords. This isn't the most attractive web page, but with a little clicking you can find a decent amount of information. To get started in the game, you need to go to one of the servers, and declare your Lordship in the realm. There are several server types to choose from, including solo play, tournament play, guild play and hybrids. However, although nominally a turn-based game, the turns are very fast - a matter of minutes in fact. As a result this game is probably the sort of thing you would run in the background while doing something else (such as writing an article for Flagship). There's a useful strategy guide for new players, and a forum for player discussion of the game.'

### World of Warcraft (*Blizzard*)

**Tim Eller** - 'Amidst all that is good and right with WoW, there are two things that have tarnishing the good name of Blizzard and its MMO efforts: stability and availability. Online games are never easy to put together and Blizzard miscalculated the level of interest in their game by a wide margin. The deluge of roughly 600,000 players plowing into the game within the first month or so caught Blizzard by surprise and completely overwhelmed their capacity. The initial 40 servers were increased to over 80, and they're still trying to iron out a myriad of basic server stability issues, leaving no time to pay attention to the game bugs that desperately need to be fixed. Credit should be given to Blizzard for pouring their all into the resolution of these problems, but it doesn't alleviate player frustrations. Those frustrations, though scathingly sincere and intense, are a true sign of how much people anticipate logging on and playing. To call World of Warcraft a disappointment would undermine the work that's gone into creating such an immersive and addictive game. When players find themselves devoting so much time and energy to connecting with other players, organizing a raid, pinpointing a profession path, or playing the market by selling items at the auction house, there's no point in being bitter about the shortcomings. Blizzard's penchant for expansions and the impending release of Battlegrounds, a designated PvP arena with RTS sensibilities, insure that there is quite a bit to look forward to. Eventually the bugs will get worked out, and in the meantime, those who are playing it are involved in an MMO with a satisfying character development structure, beautiful environments, and plenty of inherent Warcraft personality.'

## BOARDGAMES

### Around the World in 80 Days (*Rio Grande Games*)

**Dan Brown** - 'The perfect game to add to your collection if you want a board game that plays well with five or six players. The game plays smoothly, and quickly. On the downside the box is almost completely empty with very few bits. I feel this game is way over priced for what you get inside the box. But now that I own it, I'll be bringing it out on those six-player gaming sessions.'

**Neil Edge** - 'This is a wonderful family and gateway game, perhaps a bit too simple for dedicated gamers. The rules are not complex but there are elements of Euro design added to a fairly basic race game. The idea is that each player is racing from destination to destination to get round the world in the quickest time. To move, players have to play cards that match the symbols on the map between destinations (ie Train/Boat or combination) The cards have numbers on them (lower the better) which equates to how many days are used when playing that card. Each turn players must choose the card they want to take from a row - the catch is that each card is linked to an additional beneficial event. So whilst you may want a ship card with a low number you also really want to move the detective and the card against that action in a train. So do you pick the card you want or pick the card above the event you want? My seven-year-old picked this game up very quickly and enjoyed playing it with the family. My five-year-old needs a bit of help but is happy to join in. Overall this is a very good family game and one I recommend.'

### Bootleggers (*Eagle Games*)

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'I love the mobster theme that this game brings out. You're sure to have a great time making deals and blackmailing your friends (sometimes in accents that have nothing to do with the Mob. One of the players was talking in an Irish accent!) It is fairly simple and straightforward to learn, but it lacks the final *je ne sais quoi* that would have turned this into a perfect game. I think some of the mechanics are a little unbalanced and there is not enough change of control of the bars. The supply chain side of things is pretty cool but again, I don't think the mechanics were balanced to the degree that I expect from my favorite games. All in all, this game is a lot of fun and well worth having in your games cupboard.'

### Diamant (*Schmidt Spiele*)

**Neil Edge** - 'I like bidding games, and this one is perfect for a quick play without complicated rules. The theme, vaguely reminiscent of *Indiana Jones*, makes it a game people will want to play right away when they see it. The rules are easy to learn, and while the strategy is thin, you do have to decide when to opt out of the bidding, much like the dice game **Can't Stop**. Players choose an explorer that's used only for a fist-bid when they want to claim their jewels. The player collecting the most jewels in five rounds of play wins. What's interesting about the game is the decision on when to claim your jewels. A card is played with either a number (1-17) representing jewels discovered or a hazard (poison gas, explosion, snake, scorpion, rock slide). Players bid simultaneously on staying in for another card turn or to opt out and claim the jewels. Example: When a 12 card is played and there are 4 players, each player receives 3 jewels. In situations where there are excess jewels after equal disbursement - a common occurrence - the remainder go on the card. After several rounds of play, the remaining jewels sitting on cards can add up to quite a stash, further enticement to stay in the bidding as the hazard cards pile up. When a second similar hazard card is drawn, people still bidding lose everything. Fairly often you have situations where the hazard cards come out to start play and it's obvious that you will continue bidding, so you have to go through the motion of making a fist bid anyway. The playing pieces are nicely done.'

### In the Shadow of the Emperor (*Rio Grande Games*)

**Neil Edge** - 'Germany in the late middle ages! It is a time of flourishing cities, influential bishops, the powerful popes, and a pompous aristocracy. In such a volatile climate, no dynasty can remain in power for long. Several aristocratic families seek to acquire the crown of the emperor. But this decision lies in the hands of the seven electors. Two-four emperor candidates use their knights and cities, arrange marriages for their barons, and work to influence the electors. But all efforts are useless if the candidate is not elected to be emperor. But, in the shadow of the properly elected emperor, are always those who want to displace him and become the new emperor. I'll be honest - I've only just got hold of this game and haven't had time to play it yet. However, the artwork is wonderful and the materials are of the good quality one has come to expect from manufacturers *Hans im Gluck* and *Rio Grande Games*.'

### Memoir 44 (*Days of Wonder*)

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'If you like light, tactical games with a World War II theme and quick gameplay, buy this game right now. It is awesome. This is not a wargame in the classic sense of traditional hex and counter games like **Squad Leader**, **Panzer Leader**, etc. It is much shorter and lighter than those types of games. But it feels more like a traditional wargame than **Risk** and **Axis & Allies** do, for example. The command cards do add quite a bit of randomness, at first glance. ("I can only attack with my left-hand units this turn?") But this forces you to make do and adapt to the situation, just like any general must do. Plus, you get to re-enact D-Day and play with army men and little plastic tanks. What's better than that? I've played this three times so far, and each time when it was over I immediately wanted to start another game. It's great fun.'

### Pirateer (*Reveal Entertainment*)

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'After seeing the prominent MENSA sticker on the exterior of the box I decided to give it a try. All I can say is that either I'm just not bright enough to see it or MENSA has lowered its standards. This is a simple back and forth game where each side has three ships that move along a grid. Every player rolls two six sided dice and each of the two dice rolls correlates to one of their ship's movement... Thus, that's the strategy: figuring out what to do with your two movement dice. Now, with three ships that means 12 possible moves per die and then do it again with the other die and yes, I recognize that you also get to choose the order of your moves for even more movement possibilities. In play, however, the focus was either on achieving the objective (to recover the treasure), eliminating an enemy ship, or preventing your opponent from doing the same, so typically we worked backwards in figuring out what to do with our moves. Any game with this much dice rolling means luck is a heavy factor. I can see kids enjoying this for a brief period of time, and kudos to the guy that said this was like pirate backgammon... good analogy that I'd agree is dead on!'



# Games Shops

*We provide these listings as a service to readers - boxed entries stock copies of Flagship!  
If you know of any games shop we don't list, please contact us and we'll be delighted to include them.*

## Bishop Games

32 City Arcade, Coventry,  
Warwickshire, CV1 3HW.  
024 76634999  
sales@bishopgames.co.uk  
www.bishopgames.co.uk

## Cardiff Games

Duke Street Arcade, Cardiff, CV1  
029 2034 3818

## Funagain Games

www.funagain.com

## Gamers

34 St. Mary's Street, Eynesbury  
St. Neots, PE19 2TA  
01480 217443  
www.gamers.uk.net

## Gamezone Models

32 Rolle Street, Exmouth, Devon  
01395-267733

## Leisure Games

100 Ballards Lane, Finchley,  
London, N3 2DN  
020-8346-2327  
shop@leisuregames.com  
www.leisuregames.com

## Orcs Nest

6 Earlam Street, London, WC2H 9RY  
0207-379-4254  
www.orcsnest.com

## Spirit Games

98+114 Station Street, Burton on Trent.  
Staffs, DE14 1BT  
01283 511293  
salnphil@spiritgames.co.uk  
www.spiritgames.co.uk

## White Knight Games

8 Cheapside, Reading, RG1 7AG  
0118 950 7337

## Wayland's Forge

Unit 2, Fletchers Walk, Paradise Circus,  
Birmingham, B3 3HJ  
0121-6830075  
games@waylandsforge.co.uk  
www.waylandsforge.co.uk

**Bookstop**, Mail-Order Secondhand Games &  
RPGs, 11A Mayfield Grove, Harrogate, North  
Yorkshire, HG1 5HD.  
bookstopuk@aol.com

**Dream Dealers**, 94b Barker Butts Lane,  
Coventry, Warwickshire.

**FanBoy3**, 17 Newton Street,  
Manchester, M1 1FZ  
0161 2477735  
enquiries@fanboy3.co.uk  
www.fanboy3.co.uk

**Games & Puzzles**, 6 Green Street, Cambridge,  
Cambridgeshire, CB2 3JU

**Gameskeeper**, 105 Cowley Road, Oxford,  
OX4 1HU  
01865-721348  
shop@gameskeeper.co.uk  
www.gameskeeper.co.uk

**Games Legion**, Ashlar House, 15 Mason  
Close, Great Sutton, Cheshire, L66 2GU

**The Games Store**, The Manor House, Eagle,  
Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN6 9DG

**The Games Player**,  
7 Plough Court  
Roskrow, Cornwall  
TR10 9AP  
01326 379329  
www.thegamesplayer.com

**Gaming Crypt**,  
50 Castleton Road, Great  
Barr, Birmingham, B42  
2RR

**The Hidden Fortress**,  
51 East Street,  
Southampton, SO14 3HX  
02380-710550  
www.hidden-fortress.com

**Krackers Games Shop**,  
1-5 The Fore Street  
Centre, Fore Street,  
Exeter, Devon

**Krackers Games Shop**,  
5 Bath Place, Taunton,  
Somerset, TA1 4ER

**Northumbria Games**,  
10 Houndgate Mews,  
Blackwellgate Arcade,  
Darlington  
01325 366250  
www.northumbriagames.co.uk

**Not Just Stamps**,  
17 Crendon Street, High Wycombe,  
Buckinghamshire, HP13 6LJ

**Ottakar's**, 102 Curzon Mall, Queensmere  
Centre, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 1DQ

**Playin' Games**, 33 Museum Street, London,  
WC1A 1LH

**Play Me**, Bismarckring 7, D-65183 Wiesbaden,  
Germany  
www.PlayMe.de

**Roaring Ogre Games**, 53 Staple Hill Road,  
Fishponds, Bristol, Avon, BS16 5AB

**Wassail Games**, 27 Catherine Hill, Frome,  
Somerset, BA11 1BY  
01373 469946  
www.wassailgames.com

**Westgate Games**, 20 The Borough,  
Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2DR  
01227-457257  
andrew@westgategames.fsnet.co.uk

## THE LANDS OF ELVARIA



Do you yearn for the good old days of table top roleplaying but have no one to play with? Well think again because you could be playing with someone anywhere in the World. The Lands of Elvaria is a long established contemporary

fantasy roleplaying Play By Mail covering a multitude of genres with humour and parody featuring quite strongly. You take on the role of an adventurer exploring the expansive game world.

Start Up Pack (Printed or MS Word PC CD) and 3 Turns is £10.00 with further turns £4.50 each.

\* Costs based for UK players, unless playing by email players in Mainland Europe and Overseas should consult me for prices to allow for additional postage costs.

### For more details or for a start up package:

Please make all cheques or postal orders payable to MARK PINDER and send to:

Mark Pinder, 139 Nelson Way, Laceby Acres, Grimsby, DN34 5UJ.

Email: Wilecoyoteuk@aol.com.

Website: Http://groups.msn.com/elvaria

# Meets & Conventions

We realise that many of you like to book in advance, so please visit the Flagship website for a more complete listing of conventions throughout the coming year. If you have news of any convention or games-related meeting, please post details on our website or email us! The website also contains details of many regular games meetings around the country. As a rule we do not cover North American conventions in the magazine, but we will list them on the website.

[www.flagshipmagazine.com](http://www.flagshipmagazine.com)

## JUNE

**VATICON XI:** 11th-12th June at the *Leinster - Belfield, UCD Student Centre, Dublin*. UCD's Annual Gaming Convention, offering a variety of card games, board games, RPGs, LARPS, and other events. Contact Dave O'Brien by post at Box 22, Games Society, Student Centre, UCD, Belfield, Dublin 4, or at:

[vaticon@gmail.com](mailto:vaticon@gmail.com)

**Q-CON XII:** 24th-26th June, at *Queen's University Belfast's Whitla Hall*. Anime screen, board games, card games, console games, roleplay games, wargames and more... Full weekend ticket £8, accommodation £11.20 student/£13.80 non-student per night.

[www.q-con.co.uk](http://www.q-con.co.uk)

**ORIGINS:** June 30th to July 3rd, at the *Greater Columbus Convention Center, in Columbus, Ohio, USA*. The premier game-playing consumer convention in North America, which includes the annual Origins Awards (PBM amongst them).

[www.originsgames.com](http://www.originsgames.com)

## JULY

**SUMMER STABCON:** 8th-10th July, at the *University of Manchester's Woolton Hall, on the Fallowfield Campus*. Another in a very long-running series of friendly, small-scale general games conventions, always featuring a good number of RPGs. Membership is £12.50 for the weekend at the time of writing; this will increase a bit later, and one-day rates will also be available. As games will be played in the bar and adjoining areas, the con has a minimum age limit of 18.

Accommodation will be provided in single study bedrooms at the Hall, costing £19 a night, or £25 a night including a full English breakfast. (A limited number of twin rooms can also be arranged for couples wishing to share.) Questions can be addressed to, STABCON, 17 Davenport Park Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 6JU, or 0161 483 9131.

[bookings@stabcon.org.uk](mailto:bookings@stabcon.org.uk)

**MANORCON XXIII:** Friday 15th - Monday 18th July, at *Shackleton Hall, Birmingham University*. ManorCon is a large board games convention that has been running since 1983. The 200-250 attendees each year stay and play in a large, modern University Hall of Residence with bar and canteen facilities and ample room for both tournament and open gaming. There is free car parking available and the site is also within easy reach of public transport and the city centre of Birmingham with its pubs, restaurants and nightlife.

<http://devel.diplom.org/manorcon/pr1.htm>

**EXACLIBUR:** Thursday 28th July - Monday 1st August, at *Barton Hall, Torquay, Devon*. Major roleplaying convention in an attractive setting, run by Horsemen Events who also organise GenCon.. Details of games running, bookings and prices from:

[www.consupport.com/index.asp?Con=32](http://www.consupport.com/index.asp?Con=32)

## AUGUST

**MADHOUSE SUMMER MINICON:** 13th-14th August, *Black Barn House B&B, Wisbech*. There'll be a Medieval Madhouse Banquet on the Saturday night, all in-character as if it were taking place in the DungeonWorld land of Bereny, so 'action, excitement, murder and mystery' are guaranteed. Saturday and Sunday are the main days, but it's possible to stay for four nights, Thursday to Sunday, if preferred. Madhouse recommend booking the accommodation in plenty of time.

[www.madcentral.com](http://www.madcentral.com)

**CONSTERNATION:** 12th-14th August, at *New Hall, Cambridge*. The latest in the long-running series of 'British Roleplaying Society' conventions. Guest of Honour: Allen Varney. UK Guest: Marcus L. Rowland. A convention focussed purely on RPGs, with tabletop and LARP events, panels, an auction, and more. Membership is £24 until Easter 2005, when it will increase to £27. (The price on the door will be increased again.) A range of accommodation will be available in the college. For more details, including a PDF copy of the flyer, with membership form, and information as to how to join, see the web site.

[www.consternation.org.uk](http://www.consternation.org.uk)

## SEPTEMBER

**CASTLECON:** 23rd-30th September and 30th September-7th October, at *Roch Castle, Roch, Pembrokeshire*. Castlecon is a self-catering gaming holiday for up to 16 games-players per week. There will be plenty of chances to play your favourite games, and there will also be opportunities to get out and see the surrounding countryside in a very pleasant part of Wales. The approximate cost per person per week will be in the region of £130. For more information, contact Steve Jones at 59 Sudeley Walk, Putnoe, Bedford, MK41 8JH, or on 01234-405878.

## OCTOBER

**AGSCON:** 1st October, at the *University of Kent campus, Canterbury, Kent*. A one-day convention of Roleplaying, Wargames & Collectible Card Games. Doors open 9:30, games start 10 am, closes 7 pm. Entry £2 in advance, £3 on the door - free to AGS members. For more details, go to [www.canterburygamersnews.tk](http://www.canterburygamersnews.tk) and follow the link on the top right to AGSCON, or e-mail [agscon@aol.com](mailto:agscon@aol.com) for more info, maps, and to book your place.

**PSYCHOCON 2005:** Friday 21st October (starts 2pm) to Sunday 23rd October. *The Crown Hotel, Harrogate*. A boardgaming convention, with several tournaments including a FLAGSHIP-sponsored *Acquire* tournament. Details and a downloadable booking form available from:

[www.psychozine.co.uk/psychocon/](http://www.psychozine.co.uk/psychocon/)

**ESSEN SPIEL FAIR:** October 13-18, 2005 in *Essen, Germany*. With 150,000 visitors and 612 exhibitors from 21 nations, showing all kind of games - from family, adult, children and parlour games to strategy, mail, adventure, fantasy and science fiction games, an increasing number of CD-ROMs and electronic games and a wide range of classic board games - on 38,750 square meters of exhibition space, last year's SPIEL with COMIC ACTION confirmed once more its uniqueness in the game exhibition scene.

## NOVEMBER

**UK GENCON:** Thursday November 3rd through to Sunday 6th at *Butlins Holiday Camp, Bognor Regis, West Sussex*. More information can be found at the event organisers website: [www.horsemenevents.com](http://www.horsemenevents.com)



# Galactic View

GV is a list of firms known by FLAGSHIP to be running turn-based games at the time this issue was published. There is no cost to GfMs for this listing, which we publish as a service to our readers. GfMs listed below are cross-indexed by a code to the game register on the following pages. GfMs to whom payment should be made by name are listed by name rather than firm.

<b>UK, EUROPEAN &amp; WEB-BASED GfMs</b>	
<b>Ab Initio Games</b> , PO Box 605, Bromley, Kent BR2 0YQ	McC
WEB: <a href="http://www.pbmports.com">www.pbmports.com</a>	
<b>Advanced Gaming Enterprises</b> , POB 214949, Sacramento, CA 95821, USA	AGE
WEB: <a href="http://www.ageforfun.com">www.ageforfun.com</a>	
<b>Agema Publications</b> , 120 Carmel Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 6LZ	AGM
WEB: <a href="http://go.to/agema">go.to/agema</a>	
<b>Ancient Guardian Enterprises</b>	AGG
WEB: <a href="http://www.agegames.com">www.agegames.com</a>	
<b>Andrews, Colin</b> , 26 Brown Edge Road, Hollis, Oldham, OL4 5QG	AND
<b>Arnott, Steven</b>	ARN
WEB: <a href="http://www.sjasytems.co.uk/">www.sjasytems.co.uk/</a>	
<b>Austerlitz: PB&amp;M</b>	AUS
WEB: <a href="http://www.austerlitz.biz">www.austerlitz.biz</a>	
<b>Baird, Phil</b> , 930 NE 63rd Ave, Portland, OR 97213, USA	BAI
WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/lords/foe11/index.html">www.throneworld.com/lords/foe11/index.html</a>	
<b>Briny 'E' Gardel (Terry Crook)</b> , 11 Laurel Close, Burniston, Scarborough YO13 0JQ	BRI
WEB: <a href="http://www.brinygardel.co.uk">www.brinygardel.co.uk</a>	
<b>Burrows, Pete. Buzzwack PBM</b> , 8 Magnolia Court, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 3LG	BUR
WEB: <a href="http://www.buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk">www.buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk</a>	
<b>Chaos Trail</b> , 8 Osier Close, Ely, Cambs., CB7 4AY	WIL
WEB: <a href="http://www.chaostrail.com">www.chaostrail.com</a>	
<b>Clay, David</b> , 20 Malden Close, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 6AY	CLA
WEB: <a href="http://www.warriorpenwar.co.uk">www.warriorpenwar.co.uk</a>	
<b>Crasiworld</b> , 4, Barleyfield, Clayton-le-Woods, Preston, Lancs., PR5 8JQ	CRA
WEB: <a href="http://www.crasworld.com">www.crasworld.com</a>	
<b>CSPSP</b> , Alfred-Bucherstr. 63, 53115 Bonn, Germany	CSP
WEB: <a href="http://www.the-ashes-of-empire.de (German)">www.the-ashes-of-empire.de (German)</a>	
<b>Dark Wolf Games</b> , t-online.de/home/ashes_of_empire/ashes2.htm (English)	DWG
WEB: <a href="http://www.darkwolf.de">www.darkwolf.de</a>	
<b>Dracs Games</b> , 21 Chipperfield Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4DP	DRC
WEB: <a href="http://www.dracsgames.co.uk">www.dracsgames.co.uk</a>	
<b>Dreamworld Games</b>	DRE
WEB: <a href="http://www.dreamworldgames.co.uk">www.dreamworldgames.co.uk</a>	
<b>Dunks, Antony</b> , Far Horizon, Sark, Guernsey, GY9 0SE	DUN
WEB: <a href="http://www.sark.net/~xott">www.sark.net/~xott</a>	
<b>EM GEMG</b>	EAE
WEB: <a href="http://members.shaw.ca/emg_pbm/emg.htm">http://members.shaw.ca/emg_pbm/emg.htm</a>	
<b>Enlightened Age Entertainment</b>	EPM
WEB: <a href="http://www.fallofthefamegame.com">www.fallofthefamegame.com</a>	
<b>Entertainment Plus More Games</b> , PO Box 2578, Appleton, WI 54912, USA	EVA
WEB: <a href="http://www.epmgames.com">www.epmgames.com</a>	
<b>Evans, Paul</b> , 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF	EXT
WEB: <a href="http://www.pevans.co.uk">www.pevans.co.uk</a>	
<b>Extreme Web Games</b>	FAR
WEB: <a href="http://extremewebgames.com/">http://extremewebgames.com/</a>	
<b>Faraway Games</b> , 3 Maslem Rd, St Albans, Herts AL4 0GS	FBI
WEB: <a href="http://www.faraway.co.uk/">www.faraway.co.uk/</a>	
<b>Flying Buffalo</b>	GBM
WEB: <a href="http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/">www.flyingbuffalo.com/</a>	
<b>Games by Mail</b> , Bridge Street, Neston, S Wirral CH64 9UJ	GLO
WEB: <a href="http://GamesByMail.co.uk">GamesByMail.co.uk</a>	
<b>Glover, Adrian</b> , 4 Stevamar Court, Lessness Park, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5BG	HAR
<b>Harlan, Thomas</b> , 3210 East 23rd Street, Tuscon, AR 85713, USA	HAQ
WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/lords">www.throneworld.com/lords</a>	
<b>Harlequin Games</b> , 340 North Road, Cardiff CF14 3BP	HAY
WEB: <a href="http://www.harlequingames.com">www.harlequingames.com</a> AND <a href="http://www.middleearthgames.com">www.middleearthgames.com</a>	
<b>Haynes, Nic</b> , 33 Chatsworth Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 7XD	INC
EM: <a href="mailto:oinkyfatty@btinternet.com">oinkyfatty@btinternet.com</a>	
<b>Incubus Designs</b> , POB 263, Loughborough LE11 1ZG	JAD
WEB: <a href="http://www.incubusdesigns.co.uk">www.incubusdesigns.co.uk</a>	
<b>Jade Enterprises</b> , 127 Queen Adelaide Court, Penge, London, SE20 7EB	KJC
EM: <a href="mailto:jade.ent@ntlworld.com">jade.ent@ntlworld.com</a>	
<b>KJC Games</b> , FREEPOST, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 3UL	KOS
WEB: <a href="http://www.kjcgames.com">www.kjcgames.com</a>	
<b>Kosumi</b>	LLQ
WEB: <a href="http://www.kosumi.com">www.kosumi.com</a>	
<b>Lloyd, Rich</b> , 79 Farmersville Road, Califfon, NJ 07830, USA	MAD
EM: <a href="mailto:lords4@throneworld.com">lords4@throneworld.com</a>	
<b>Madhouse</b> , 6 Alexandra Road, Wisbech, PE13 1HQ	MIN
WEB: <a href="http://www.madcentral.com">www.madcentral.com</a>	
<b>Mindless Games</b> , 5 Basford Road, Nottingham, NG6 0JP	NEU
WEB: <a href="http://www.mindlessworld.net">www.mindlessworld.net</a>	
<b>Neutral Zone</b> , 33 Rockall Close, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LU	OAT
WEB: <a href="http://www.neutral-zone-football-pbm.co.uk">www.neutral-zone-football-pbm.co.uk</a>	
<b>Oates, Jason</b> , 6 St Georges Rd, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1PA	

WEB: <a href="http://uk.geocities.com/jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com">http://uk.geocities.com/jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com</a>	OLY
<b>Olympia Games</b> , 6 Sandy Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3GS	PAG
WEB: <a href="http://www.olympiapbm.co.uk">www.olympiapbm.co.uk</a>	
<b>Pagoda Games</b> , PO Box 5155, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4QQ	PAL
WEB: <a href="http://www.pagodagames.co.uk">www.pagodagames.co.uk</a>	
<b>Mark Palin</b> , Clansmen, 5 Burtord, Brookside, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 1LO	PIN
EM: <a href="mailto:mp00408903@blueyonder.co.uk">mp00408903@blueyonder.co.uk</a>	
<b>Pinder, Mark</b> , 139 Nelson Way, Lacey Acres, Grimsby, S. Humberside DN34 5UJ	PEG
WEB: <a href="http://groups.msn.com/elvaria">http://groups.msn.com/elvaria</a>	
<b>Play-by-Electron Games</b>	QIR
WEB: <a href="http://www.pbegames.com">www.pbegames.com</a>	
<b>Quixel Games</b> , Quixel Games Gbr, Am Pannofen 7, 47608 Geldern, Germany	REB
WEB: <a href="http://www.quixelgames.de">www.quixelgames.de</a>	
<b>Rebus Games</b> , 70 Greenfield Crescent, Brighton, BN1 8HJ	RCW
EM: <a href="mailto:dominicm@zoom.co.uk">dominicm@zoom.co.uk</a>	
<b>Received Wisdom</b> , 9 Oundle Road, Alwalton, Peterborough PE7 3UP	ROL
WEB: <a href="http://www.receivedwisdom.org">www.receivedwisdom.org</a>	
<b>Rolling Thunder Games Inc.</b> , PO Box 310, Eastlake, CO 80614-0310, USA	RZE
WEB: <a href="http://www.rollingthunder.com">www.rollingthunder.com</a>	
<b>Rzechorzek, Peter</b>	SSV
WEB: <a href="http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/2187/tribenet.htm">www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/2187/tribenet.htm</a>	
<b>SSV Klapp-Bachler OEG</b> , Josefsgasse 41, A-8020, Graz, Austria	SCR
WEB: <a href="http://www.heldenwelt.com">www.heldenwelt.com</a>	
<b>Scriven, David</b> , 15 Alandale Grove, Garforth, Leeds, LS25, 1DJ	SIL
<b>Silver Dreamer</b> , 174 Charles St, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent DA9 9AJ	
WEB: <a href="http://www.silverdreamer.com">www.silverdreamer.com</a>	SOF
<b>Software Simulations</b> , PO Box 2758, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2XH	
WEB: <a href="http://www.pbmports.com">www.pbmports.com</a>	SPE
<b>Spellbinder Games</b> , 51 Athelstan Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE	SPN
EM: <a href="mailto:Chris.spelbinder@btinternet.com">Chris.spelbinder@btinternet.com</a>	
<b>Spencer, Jerry</b> , 51 Elm Vale, Liverpool L6 8NY	SPO
EM: <a href="mailto:italia@griffon33.fsnet.co.uk">italia@griffon33.fsnet.co.uk</a>	
<b>Sporting Dreams</b> , PO Box 5423, Derby, DE21 2ZB	SUP
WEB: <a href="http://www.sportingdreams.com">www.sportingdreams.com</a>	
<b>Supersonic Games</b> , PO Box 1812, Galston, KA4 8WA	
WEB: <a href="http://www.austerlitzpbm.com">www.austerlitzpbm.com</a>	TFT
<b>Tempus Fugit PBM Productions</b> , 96 Bishopwood Road, Tadley, Hants RG26 4HG	TDJ
WEB: <a href="http://tempusfugitpbm.co.uk">http://tempusfugitpbm.co.uk</a>	
<b>Terre de Jeux</b> , 88 Avenue de Jussieu, 91600 Savigny sur Orge, France	TOT
EM: <a href="mailto:lsasol@club-internet.fr">lsasol@club-internet.fr</a>	
<b>Total Conquest</b>	ULA
WEB: <a href="http://www.total-conquest.com">www.total-conquest.com</a>	
<b>Ulaidh Games</b> , 62 Beechgrove Avenue, Belfast BT6 0NF	UGK
EM: <a href="mailto:christian.morris@virgin.net">christian.morris@virgin.net</a>	
<b>Undying King Games</b> , 35 Kings Avenue, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 1NT	WHS
WEB: <a href="http://www.ukg.co.uk">www.ukg.co.uk</a>	
<b>White, Stephen</b> , 14 Wilshire Avenue, Burnley, Lancs., BB12 6AD	WWG
<b>WOW Games</b>	XAN
WEB: <a href="http://www.wow.pbemgame.com">www.wow.pbemgame.com</a>	
<b>Xanthus, Constantine</b> , 7080 NW 75th Street, Pompano Beach, Florida 33067, USA	
EM: <a href="mailto:cjken@yahoo.com">cjken@yahoo.com</a>	

## Zine Listings

This list only contains details of Zines and Zine Editors who have been in contact with Flagship.

<b>Abyssinian Prince</b> , Jim Burgess, 664 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02908-4327, USA (Email: <a href="mailto:burgess@world.std.com">burgess@world.std.com</a> )	
<b>Carnel</b> , Robert Rees, 10a Eldon Grove, London, NW3 5PT EM: <a href="mailto:carnel@talk21.com">carnel@talk21.com</a> ( <a href="http://www.geocities.com/shudderfx/carnel">www.geocities.com/shudderfx/carnel</a> )	
<b>Devolution</b> , Tony Robbins, Lincoln House, Creation Rd, Hollowell, Northants, NN6 8RP (Email: <a href="mailto:tony@hollowell.plus.com">tony@hollowell.plus.com</a> )	
<b>Diplomacy 2000</b> , <a href="http://www.lancedai.demon.co.uk/dip2000/">www.lancedai.demon.co.uk/dip2000/</a>	
<b>Fights of Fancy</b> , Philip Honeybone, Email: <a href="mailto:phillemelly98.freemove.co.uk">phillemelly98.freemove.co.uk</a>	
<b>For Whom The Die Rolls</b> , 14 Stepnells, Marsworth, Nr. Tring, Herts., HP23 4NQ (Email: <a href="mailto:Keith@Thomassons.com">Keith@Thomassons.com</a> )	
<b>Mission From God</b> , John Harrington, 1 Churchbury Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3UW ( <a href="http://www.fbgames.co.uk">www.fbgames.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:mfg@fbgames.co.uk">mfg@fbgames.co.uk</a> )	
<b>Ode</b> , John Marsden, 91 Westwood Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9RS (Email: <a href="mailto:John@ode-online.net">John@ode-online.net</a> )	
<b>off-the-shelf</b> , Tom Howell, 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363, USA (Email: <a href="mailto:off-the-shelf@olympus.net">off-the-shelf@olympus.net</a> )	
<b>Psychopath</b> , <a href="http://www.psychozine.co.uk">www.psychozine.co.uk</a> (Web publication only.)	
<b>Rhein-Neckar-Zine</b> , (German language), Lukas Kautzsch, An der Rosswald 18a, 76229 Karlsruhe, Germany, (Email: <a href="mailto:lukas@oberfoul.de">lukas@oberfoul.de</a> )	
<b>S.O.B.</b> , Chris Hassler, 2000 S. Armour Ct., La Habra, CA 90631 USA (Email: <a href="mailto:chassler@adelphia.net">chassler@adelphia.net</a> )	
<b>Serendipity</b> , John Webley, Topferrheie 4, 38259 Salzgitter, Germany (Email: <a href="mailto:jwebley@aol.com">jwebley@aol.com</a> )	
<b>Strangitude</b> , Paul Sands, Flat 2, 432 Birmingham Rd, Wyde Green, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1YJ (Email: <a href="mailto:strangitude@lincsone.net">strangitude@lincsone.net</a> )	
<b>To Win Just Once</b> , Paul Evans, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge, UB10 8UF (Email: <a href="mailto:twjo@pevans.co.uk">twjo@pevans.co.uk</a> )	
<b>Variable Pig</b> , Jim Reader, Vredelanstraat 20, 3633 EC, Vreeland, NETHERLANDS (Email: <a href="mailto:cj.reader@wanadoo.nl">cj.reader@wanadoo.nl</a> )	

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## HOW TO READ THE GALACTIC VIEW TABLES

**Process** shows if the game is run by computer (C), human (H) or mixed (M). The **Duration** of the game is shown by O (Open-ended) or F (Finite).

**GM** is the GM's code shown in our listing of European & Web-based firms.

**Medium** shows whether a game is available via email (**e**), paper (**p**) or web-based play (**w**). Language is also indicated here where a game is offered other than in English. (**G**) German,

**Start-up** shows how much you will pay to begin playing the game. \* indicates deposit returnable if you play to the end of the game, or prepayment discounts available (see moderator for details).

**Free Turns** - many GMs will give you a number of free turns at the start of the game

**Turn Fee** - how much each turn costs. \* means that return postage is paid by the GM each turn. **S** means you need to send an SSAE or at least pay for the GM's postage.

**Other Fees** - the following footnotes apply: **(a)** more for larger positions or later turns in the game, **(b)** more for battle reports, **(c)** more for extended orders/longer reports, **(d)** more for several possible extras, **(e)** lower cost if you join the club \$ indicates no credit refunds available, **(f)** higher start-up fee for paper rules, **(g)** free but, donations welcome

**Flagship Ref.** shows the issue of Flagship where you can find an article describing the game. ● indicates a 'Euro-friendly' game: deadlines at least two weeks apart and prices for Continental players not more than 30% above those listed here.

**Note** – occasional optional extras like a newsletter are not included in the prices unless we judge that they are fairly frequent and essential for enjoyment of the game. Some GMs give discounts if you pay for a batch of turns in advance. Some offer reduced fees for email play.

All prices are generally for the UK and are given in £'s except where noted. Non-UK European players should note that rates are often about 25% higher than for UK players. If in doubt, contact the GMs.

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagged
Absolute Fantasy	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	E15.00	2	E15.00	(b)	-
Absolute Power 2	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	E20.00	2	E5.00	(b)	98
Adventurer Kings	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	E5.00	0	E2.50	-	35, 72-74, 88
Adventures Guild	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	E15.00	1	E3.50	-	71, 80
Ancient Battles	M-F	Wargame: Historical	AGM	p	E6.00	0	E3.50	-	58
Antient Empires	M-F	Power: Historical	OAT	e, p	E4.00	0	E3.25	E1 month	-
Aspects of Might	M-O	Adventure	SIL	e	E2.50	0	E2.50	-	90
Assyria's End II	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	p	E5.00	0	E6.00	(d)	90
Asterix & Obelix	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SUP	p	E10.00*	0	E3.75	(d)	96, 103-117
Austerlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SSV	e, p	Free	7	E6 Euro	(b)	(96)
Battle Plan	C-O	Wargame: Historical	SOF	e, p	E5.00	3	E2.50	-	-
Beyond the Dale A	M-O	Adventure	FBI	e, p	\$5	0	E3.50	(a)	19
Championship League	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	SUP	p	E7.50	2	E1.95	(a)	80a, 81-84, 86
Chess Trail	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WIL	e, p	E1.75 S	0	E1.75 S	-	86, 110
Civil War	M-O	Tribal	PAL	e, p	E10.00	2	E5.00	-	104
Classman	M-O	Wargame	OAT	e, p	E12.00	2	E3.50 + E1.50/month	-	-
Company Commander	M-F	Economic	AGE	e	E25 per game	0	n/a	-	-
Cover Operations	M-F	War: Adventure	AGE	e	E25 per game	0	n/a	-	-
CT2187	M-F	Arms	AGE	e	E20	0	E7	-	96
Crusades: The	M-F	Wargame: Historical	AGE	p	E5.00	0	E6.00	-	-
Daleks	M-F	Power: Sci-Fi	AGE	p	E15.00	5	E5.95	for 3	51
Dark Lands	M-O	Adventure	DRC	e, p	E25.00	0	E2.50	(a)	51
Day at the Races	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	GRA	e, p	Free	0	Free	(a)	-
Deathgaze Arena	C-O	Adventure: Arena	FWB	e	E4.75	1	E4.75	-	-
Desert I	C-O	Sci Fi	MAD	e, p	E10.00	4	E3.50	(a)	see zine listings
Dragonheim	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	ULA	e, p	E4.50	1	E3.50	-	79
Dragonslayer	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	AGG	e, p	E22.00	0	E2.50	(d)	-
Dragonsword	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	AGG	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
Dragonworld	C-F	Adventure: Fantasy	EXT	w	Free	2	Free	-	113
Dragonwings	H-O	Adventure: Fantasy	BAD	e, p	E5.00	2	E2.00	(d)	92, 94
EG1: Dangerous Liaisons	M-O	RPG: Historical (EGI)	SPN	p	E3.00	5	E0.80	-	93
EG2: Dangerous Liaisons	M-O	RPG: Historical (EGI)	EVA	e, p	E0.50	0	E0.50	-	34, 93
Electric Blue	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	HEG	e	E4.00	2	E2.50	-	74a, 91
Election Year	C-F	Misc: Political	FBI	e	E25 per game	0	-	-	-
Empires	C-O	Wargame: Historical	SOF	e, p	E5.00	2	E3.00	(d)	-
Empire of the Middle Sea	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	DWG	e, p	E10.00	2	E2.00	-	63
Epoch of Might	H-O	War: Historical	SOF	e, p	E5.00	3	E2.00	-	53
European Empires	C-F	War: Historical	SOF	e, p	Free	1	E2.00	-	53
Extra Time	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KIC/CRA	e	Free	0	E2.00	-	-
Fail of Rome	M-F	War: Historical	EAE	e	E6.47	0	-	-	-
Fall of the Roman Empire	M-F	Wargame: Historical	OAT	e, p	E3.00	0	E1.50	-	110, 111, 113
Fantasy Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KIC	e, p	Free	0	E1.50	(a)	-
Fellowship	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	GRA	e, p	E25.00	5	E5.95	-	53
Flood Plains	C-F	Wargame: Historical	LWG	e	E5	0	E3.50	-	108
Fudral-Lords	C-F	Sport: Soccer	SSV	e	?	7	E0.75 Euro	-	-
Galactic Conflict	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	E\$	0	E3.50	-	-
Galaxy Invasion 3	C-F	Sci-Fi	REB	e, p	Free	6	E1.50	-	-
Gamelan	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOF/McC	p	E5.00	0	E11.00 for 4	-	945
Gamelan Baseball	C-O	Sport: Baseball	SOF/McC	p	E5.00	0	E9.00 for 4	-	20
Gamelan Boxing	C-O	Sport: Boxing	MCC	p	E5.00	5	-	-	-
Gamelplan: Advanced	C-O	Sport: American football	SOF/McC	p	E5.00	0	E13.00 for 4	-	-
Godfather: The	C-F	Misc: Crime	PAG	p	E10.00	2	E2.50	-	-
Goat Herds: The	C-F	Misc: Misc	ARG	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Great White Hunter	C-F	Misc	ARN	e	Free	-		-	-
Grybound Trainer	C-O	Sport: American Football	SPO	w	-	-	E1.00	-	-
Imperial Satists	M-O	Power: Sci-Fi	AGE	p	E5.00	5	E6.00	(d)	-
Gunboat	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	E5.00	0	E6.00	(d)	110-111
Haunted Manor	C-F	Adventure	MAD	w	Free	0	Free	-	97
Heroes: Fantasy	C-O	Adventure	FBI	e only	E5	0	E3	Euro/month	-
High Seas	M-O	RPG: Pirate	GRA	e	E25.00	5	E5.95	-	98
Imperial Expansion	C-F	RPG: Basketball	S2P	p	E10.00	0	E3.00	-	106
Imperial Courses: Enigm	C-F	Sport: Horse-Racing	EMG	e	Free	0	Free	(g)	-
Imperial Expansion	C-F	Sofi	EMG	e	Free	0	Free	(g)	-
It's a Grmel	C-F	Misc: Fantasy	KCG	p	Free	2	E1.85	-	-
Kickabout	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SPE	e, p	E2.25	2	E7.50	-	18a, 34a, 89a
Knights of Steel	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	KDS	e	E6.00	0	-	-	13, 114
La Glorie du Roi	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	E5.00	0	E6.00	(d)	76, 86-89
Lands of Evarla	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	PIN	e	E10.00	3	E4.50	(c)	59, 93, 101
Legends	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	SSV	e	E20.00	7	E5 Euro+	(b)	96, 90-93, 94
Logical Soccer	M-O	Sport: Football	DRE	p	Free	0	E1.75	-	97
Logical Soccer	M-O	Power: Historical	HOA	e	E1.00	7	E1.00	-	97, 105, 106, 108

**Process** shows if the process is (Finite).

**GM** is the GM's code

**Medium** shows what is offered other than

**Start-up** shows how prepayment discount

**Free Turns - many**

**Turn Fee** - how much the company will at least pay for the G

**Other Fees** - the fee for extended order is available. **(f)** higher

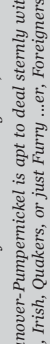
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**Note** - occasional for enjoyment of the

All prices are generally 25% higher than for

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# Briny En Garde



**The** year is 1791, and there's trouble afoot...! Not in England, where Good King George III of the House of Hanover-Pumpnickel is apt to deal sternly with troublemakers, be they Whigs, Irish, Quakers, or just Furry ...er. Foreigners. But it's a different kettle of fish in France, on the other side of the Channel, where the political situation has deteriorated into a public free-for-all, no holds barred! "La Revolution mange ses enfants!" Nobody is safe any more. Emigrants arrive in London in ever increasing numbers, stating that declarations of war are expected monthly from Berlin, Vienna, Madrid, Moscow, and Lisbon. They also complain that taxes are higher than ever and the cost of nearly everything has doubled. And they shake their grizzled heads (powder being very expensive nowadays) at the unheard-of idea of raising armies by conscription, the brainchild of a certain young Corsican artillery officer about to enter French politics. Nevertheless, they all agree that the great shippards of Toulon, Brest, and Cherbourg have never been buster - beeves ain't in it, they say. France is obviously marshalling its forces. And the French Navy seems to have plans of its own...!

To play Brinyen Garde simply visit our website at <http://www.brinyengarde.co.uk/> and get the rules and then contact us to play and receive your character. The game is free and is played by email only.

**As usual, silly names are a must!**



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