

# Flagship

THE POSTAL AND EMAIL GAMING MAGAZINE

Crack of Doom - Exile - Legends -  
Serim Ral - Star Quest

Austerlitz

Beer Mogul

Company Commander

Conclave

En Garde!

Kings of Karadon

Middle Earth

Tough at the Top

*plus ...*

All the Sports News

Paul Evans on Board Games

John Harrington's Zine Scene

The Lost Gold of Stronnmark

*... and much more!*

A Complete Map of the  
North Island  
(In ancient times known as the Isle of Hlasundral)  
from the great charts of the Royal University  
in East Stronnmark.  
Depicted by Sanna the Elder  
by order of Admiral Sezzurn.  
In the eleventh year of the Crimson Dragon.

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# Report from the Bridge

## A Touch of the Sun

WELCOME to issue 96, which we're putting together just as there's a hint of spring in the air. But perhaps the customary uncertainties of the British climate exist to keep us indoors, playing games and reading *Flagship*? As evidence for this, after several months of rain we've actually sold right out of copies of last issue! It's set to become a rarity, so if you received a copy hang onto it. We've increased our order at the printers for this 'un.

There's an experimental approach in our lead article and the inside cover ads are in colour as well as the cover itself. Let us know what you think: we run try to *Flagship* democratically, so what you tell us really matters. It's good, for instance, to know that you like the columnists who've started to write for us. They're busy people, so can't always supply material, but we prioritise it when they do. We've good news for wargamers this issue, with articles covering Austerlitz and Company Commander. Games we've not reviewed before include Beer Mogul, Conclave and Tough at the Top, plus Spokesmen reports several other new games in the pipeline.

There's lots here, then, in issue 96: wargaming, sports, roleplaying, science fiction, fantasy, zines and new boardgames are all included, and from all view-points.

One area where we plan to extend our coverage in future is that of web-based gaming. Yes, we mention those PBeM and web games that we hear about, but there's a whole lot more out there and the number is growing, with lots of new and attractive games. We don't intend to write about the games that are played continuously - these aren't really our field - but anything that's remotely turn-based seems to fall within our remit. We'd like to find a columnist who'd be able to write them up each issue: let us know if the idea appeals to you.

It's a worry to hear of problems with the British Post Office, which has served our hobby so well over the years. Will prices go up? However it's a good idea to drop such a feeble name as *Consignia* and return to Royal Mail, let's hope this doesn't cost them too much money!

Even a *Flagship* editor needs the occasional break. Don't be too alarmed if you try to contact me and find that I'm away for an occasional week over the summer: the call of newsprint will lure me back in time, oh yes ...

*Carol*

# Flagship

Issue N° 96

April / May 2002

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## WORLD GAMES

Spellbinder Games are planning to move some established **Bledian Diary** clans from the GM Chris Dempsey's hands into player-controlled ones. Chris offers the start, rules and £20 of free credit to anybody who'd like to take one over and give the game a try. Bledian Diary is a long-established and well-detailed game, though note that Spellbinder expect you to use up all payments in play, and don't issue refunds.

Gosh, you do make your GMs work for their money! In the most recent month of **Crack of Doom**, the GM John Davis has not only had to describe the inevitable bloodshed, warring and general sneakiness from the goblins, but also a wedding and an engagement and - as a first for both the game and the GM - the birth of a child ('though the mother insists it will back to battles as normal before the month is out'). War, goblins and, ulp, child-birth? - now, that's expertise.

## ECONOMIC GAMES

Here's a new online game that will appeal those of you who like your booze: just about everyone who plays games, right? It's **BeerMogul**, from the Australian firm RedMohawk Games. You start off with a million of the game currency, BeerBucks, which you use to buy your own pub, bar or brewery together with a choice of features to help it run efficiently, and then you stock your cellar if you own a pub or bar, or brew your first beer if you own a brewery. Of course, you compete with the other players in advertising and pricing, to try to sell the most booze at the rates that'll suit you best. Cheers!

Yes, it's a simple idea, but the game is fun to play, with vivid graphics and the chance to trade with other players. It's free, too.

Turns are daily, but you don't have to play so often to maintain a valid position. The website is:

<http://www.beermogul.com/>

## FANTASY WARGAMES



newcomer.

Ocean Lords is set on and around a host of small islands in the Endless Ocean, with players starting in control of a base that could grow into a mighty empire. You've a castle, several explorers, a range of monsters and some useful longships, with which to explore and trade and establish your own dominance. The game is played to a two-week turnaround by either email or post, at £3.50 for email turns and £4 for postal ones.

Incubus are also planning a new game of *Serim Ral Keltica*, which is based on Celtic mythology, and are able to accept startups for this now.

Details from: [www.incubusdesigns.co.uk](http://www.incubusdesigns.co.uk)

Harlequin Games have been exploring and testing ways to make it easier for you to enter your orders for **Middle Earth PBM**. They're now releasing Automagic, an Excel-based program which allows you to write your orders, helps to validate them and check for mistakes

Incubus Games have launched a new game of **Serim Ral**, *Serim Ral Ocean Lords*. It started on March 8th, but still has a few places available now and it hasn't progressed so far that you'd find life difficult as a

and then sends them back by email to MEPBM Games. Should be pretty darn useful.

If you don't want to use Excel, be patient. They're also working on another program, the Middle Earth Order Writer (MEOW), which will be a stand alone product and which they expect to release in the summer.

Is Wayne Morris (Titan PBM) still processing turns in **War of the Dark God**? We ask because he's not replied to emails and letters from us, re his cheque for his ad in issue 93, which bounced. Given this worrying silence and lack of payment, we advise players who want to try the very excellent War of the Dark God to apply to its designer, Morten Larsen, who runs games of WotDG from Denmark.

[info@pbem.dk](mailto:info@pbem.dk)

We reviewed Play by Electron Games' fantasy PBeM **Eldritch** last issue, and here's an update on new game starts.

First, if you're a total novice it's advisable to start with one of their free introductory games. *G102 - Clash of Blades* can be joined at any time and runs with weekly turns. You take up the standard starting position and can do with it as you like for ten turns altogether. Information from:

<http://www.pbegames.com/signup/#G102>

## SCIENCE FICTION GAMES



Good news for those of you who like an open-ended science fiction game is that Geoff Squibb is poised to start a new game of his much-praised **Star Empires III**. Especially good news for those of you who haven't tried the game before is that Geoff will offer you the startup and four turns for a mere £5. (And if you use our *Flagship* discount coupon as well, that's six turns!)

The game can be played by both postal and email players. Note that this is a game of Star Empires III, not Star Empires IV.

<http://www.gorlos.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk>

Harlequin Games' new **Star Quest** module is up and running, and, with the last few remaining bugs now firmly squashed in the new turn editor program, they are putting together a player list for the next game. The new module is limited to 20 players a game which should reduce the waiting time between games. So if you're interested in playing, get in touch:

[www.harlequin.games.com](http://www.harlequin.games.com)

Madhouse report that the playtest of their exciting new space opera, **Destiny** is going well now that it's been under way for several months.

The game has just over 150 active players, but there's still room for more so you still can join in without being at a disadvantage. They're charging £30 for a playtest period lasting 20 turns.

There's also a separate sci-fi game called **Magnitude** on the drawing board. Early days yet, so there's not much information about it that's public, but we've heard that this is seen as an expansion power game, quite different from Destiny.

Leif Stensson is about to start a new game of his **StarCluster**. This is a mainly computer-moderated PBeM science fiction game, occasionally with some manual intervention for rumour reports and special events. Turns are usually twice a week, although there have sometimes been campaigns that were updated one or three times a week. It's a finite, strategy game which ends when some player or alliance reaches the winning position, or on turn 99 if this hasn't happened yet. Games usually end by turn seventy-something. Oh, and it's free!

More information is available on the game's home page,

<http://www.lysator.liu.se/pbm/starcluster>

Also, Play by Electron announce that they're currently working on an sf game, **Conquest of the Stars**. This'll be a hybrid web

There are also three standard games of Eldritch that are starting now. These include *G202 - War of the Dark Kingdom*, which is a finite victory-point game with an interesting twist: this time, you play an Orcish warlord who's determined to defeat the hated Elves, Dwarves and Humans. It'll be a high-conflict game, oh yes, and GM Mark Thomas says that the game features numerous new player races and special magic items. Details from:

<http://www.pbegames.com/signup/#G202>

There's also *G400 - Broken Realms*, which is a standard open-ended game of Eldritch set in a fairly large world, which will give you room to explore and expand. Turns are weekly and this game runs with the latest version of the game engine. Check:

<http://www.pbegames.com/signup/#G400>

The third game is *G401 - Mountains of Chaos*, which again is a standard open-ended game of Eldritch, but this one is set in a very crowded environment. New factions join the game in the heart of the Four Kingdoms and you will have to become involved in negotiations with existing factions right away to get successfully established. Turns run every other week, and you'll find all you need to know at: <http://www.pbegames.com/signup/#G401>

and email game, with the game world updated several times a day. As a player, you can choose to view your faction's status via the web or by receiving periodic, customizable reports via email.

<http://www.pbegames.com/conquest>

Finally, those of you who enjoy playing computer games - most of us, sometimes, right? - may be interested in a new game based on *Laser Squad*. Spurred on by an enthusiastic report in this issue's Rumours, we've checked it out. **Laser Squad Nemesis** is a squad level tactical combat game for two players, who transfer data by email, and you gain a league ranking according to your success or failure. There are three different races to choose from, a variety of scenario types and a large number of maps. It's well-presented, and worth a try.

Details from: [www.lasersquadenesis.com](http://www.lasersquadenesis.com)

## ROLEPLAYING GAMES

Antony Dunks, moderator of the roleplaying games **Xott** and **Xott Solo**, has decided to drop the *xott.net* domain. He had great plans for it, but never had the time to do anything towards implementing them. This means that he has reverted to his old email and website addresses, which are:

[xott@sark.net](mailto:xott@sark.net) and [www.sark.net/~xott](http://www.sark.net/~xott)

## What is Play By Mail?

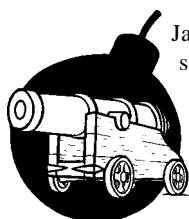
THE PROCESS is simple. Players send their orders for each turn in the game to a central moderator (or GM), who works out the results and sends them back. This simple process allows hundreds of players to enter game worlds of great depth, to contact each other between turns for discussion and negotiation and to play at a time that suits them.

In most games everybody's orders are processed together for each turn, simultaneously, but the results that are sent back are the individual ones for your own

position. The other players won't know what you're planning unless you choose to tell them, which offers many possibilities for joint and covert action. There are all sorts of games, with all sorts of settings: roleplaying, wargaming, adventuring, empire-building, sports games and plenty more! Some are simple, some are complex, but they will all take skill and planning to play them well.

If you've never tried Play By Mail, give it a go. It will be unlike any other kind of gaming that you've played.

## NON-FANTASY WARGAMES



Jason Oates has a few places still going in his highly detailed modern wargame **Company Commander 8**, which started in February. This particular game is set in a north eastern area of

South America resembling Venezuela, where players can control units of five or ten men with individual vehicles, naval units and aircraft. Economics and diplomacy matter, but the main thrust of the game is towards military victory.

Jason has been running games of **Company Commander** since 1994, so is well experienced with its detailed system. He reports that **Company Commander 8** has been totally rewritten for its players' benefit, to give playability in a fixed price structure. There are also standby positions available in games 7 and 5. <http://freespace.virgin.net/jason.oates>

The next game of Spellbinder Games' **LTWars** will be starting soon, and Spellbinder are making a tempting *special offer* of the rules, start-up and first five turns for free.

**LTWars** is a futuristic wargame set in the London underground, after the world above has been rendered uninhabitable and your only chance is to lead your gang from one of the stations to take over the whole system. No simple task, when you've the automatic cleaning machinery, a few remaining trains, oh, and the other teams to deal with.

KJC Games are looking for new players for their classic crime game, **It's a Crime**. There's normally a free setup and two free turns, which is a pretty good offer, but if you're a total novice and check out their email news, you'll find that they're offering three free turns there. **IaC** was deliberately designed for newcomers: easy to learn, but not so easy to win.

[news@kjcgames.com](mailto:news@kjcgames.com)

Time Patterns' **Crisis!** is now running again, after the delay caused by Ken Mulholland's death. Priority has been given to the four existing games, but applications are invited to

start the next new game, **Crisis! 28**.

John Stoker ran **Global Supremacy II** for many years, but sadly he has been forced to give this up because of a problem with his eyesight. He says that he's prepared to pass the game on to any firm seriously interested in running it, but warns that it probably seems rather old-fashioned after so many years. We've taken him out of *Galactic View*, but can supply his address on application. We wish John well at this difficult time.

Those of you who aren't too keen on fantasy games may be interested to hear that Play by Electron also run **Iron Kings**, which is a game of medieval conflict based on the Eldritch engine but with marching legions rather than spell casters.

Again, there's a free introductory game of **Iron Kings**, called *G103 - Fields of War*. As with the Eldritch introductory game, you're given a standard starting position and have turns of play. New players can join at any time and turns run weekly. Contact details are at:

<http://www.pbegames.com/signup/#G103>

There's also a standard **Iron Kings** game starting soon, *G302 - Homelands*. With this scenario, you begin the game controlling one city and a significant military force, with the chance of winning the game by gaining control of the ancient capital of Talimon. Turns will be weekly and further information can be found at:

<http://www.pbegames.com/signup/#G302>

## POLITICAL GAMES

A nice-looking historical email-based roleplaying game that's new to us is **The Great Game: 1820 AD**. You're assigned a nation or a political faction among the great nations of 1820, and have to survive and succeed throughout the 19th century. The game is free, with weekly turns, and if you'd like to join in contact the moderator at:

[Horrique@hotmail.com](mailto:Horrique@hotmail.com) or go to [www.geocities.com/epochelipse/](http://www.geocities.com/epochelipse/)

## FIRMS



Not PBM at all, but something that might interest you from the lively Undying King Games. They are now offering a range of downloadable murder mystery party games on their website. This springs from a new business interest of their Mo Holkar, who is a partner in Freeform Games LLP (the LLP stands for Limited Liability Partnership, the new type of business which is inbetween a traditional partnership and a limited company) which publishes such games. Their site is at:

<http://www.freeformgames.com>

while Undying King are at:

<http://www.ukg.co.uk>

Forgotten Front run free email *Star Trek* style games. These aren't really turn based, so we won't include them in *GV* in future, but they're worth a mention here. The games are based on the adventures of a single ship in the *Star Trek* universe, with the emphasis on roleplaying as a member of the crew.

The two games currently running are the USS Elite and the USS Nemesis, both list server Play By e-Mail (PBeM) games. Want to boldly go? Check:

[www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Castle/6834/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Castle/6834/index.html)

Congratulation to Tina and Mike Absolom, on the birth of their baby boy. James Arthur Absolom was born on 28th December 2001. Mike runs the Southern area of **Saturnalia**, and this life-enhancing but time-consuming event is the main reason why he's now switched to free processing and pseudo-amateur status.

KJC Games are becoming a limited company after years as a Sole Trader firm in the name of their founder Kevin Cropper. As PBM players you won't actually notice this change because they'll still be using the name KJC Games, with its established reputation, for all their gaming work, so this is only a technical change.

It's an interesting one, all the same. KJC's reason for becoming a limited company is that this will make their work easier now that Kevin himself has less of a hands-on role and KJC is primarily under the control of Mica Goldstone. KJC did already own a company name - Adventures By Mail (Europe) Ltd - so they are using this for the new company. The name was set up some years ago when there was the prospect of expanding alongside the US firm, Adventures By Mail: it doesn't mean that KJC have fallen out with ABM or that they've been taken over!

Hunky Monkey and Timewyrm have decided to rearrange the games they run, so that Hunky Monkey will specialise in the computer-moderated games while Timewyrm will run the

hand- and mixed-moderated games.

This seems a sensible division to make. It means that Hunky Monkey will be running **Prometheus** and (in due time) **Far Horizons**, **Celestial Empires**, **Judgment Day** and any **Karadon**-style games that arise using only a computer-moderated system. Do you notice some unfamiliar titles in this list? We'll be including updates about these new games in future issues. Hunky Monkey's games will run to fast and regular turnarounds.

Timewyrm will now be running **Heroes of Olynthus** and two **Kings of Karadon** games, *The Great Winter* (game 1) and *Return of the Ancients* (game 2). Because the Timewyrm games are hand- and mixed-moderated, and because their GM suffers from ill-health, these are likely to have variable turnaround.

*Spellbinder Games* are still interested in selling their wargame set in the London underground, **LTWars**: if you're interested, their contact

details are listed in *Galactic View*.

They've already sold **Heavens Above**, **Golden Realms** and **Draum's Revenge** (an updated version of their **Hand of Demon**) to Jeremy Wasden of *Fuel PBM*. **Horses For Courses** has been sold to *Dave Scriven*; we don't have contact details for him yet, but apparently he's busy changing the game and adding things to it, so we'll hear from him in due course. Their version of **Galaxy** has been sold to Dominic Miller of *Rebus Games*.

Roberto Flaibani of the Italian firm *PBM Locomotive* has decided to close Locomotive down because it's started to make a loss. We're sorry to hear this, as Roberto has been an enthusiastic and caring GM, with good games.

However, two of the Locomotive's moderators - Gianvito DiTuri and Andrea Riello - are planning to run games of **Adventurer Kings** and **Godfather**, as *DR Games* and on an amateur basis. They're starting with an 'all Evil' scenario of AK, lasting no more than 20 turns and costing only 50 euros for the whole game, then they hope to launch a game of Godfather. Their contact email address is:

[dr.games@katamail.com](mailto:dr.games@katamail.com)

Of course, Adventurer Kings and many of the other games that Locomotive ran are still available from *Pagoda Games* here in Britain, and Roland Danard runs AK in France. Their addresses are in *Galactic View*. Give AK a try if you're interested in fantasy wargames: ground-breaking when it first appeared, it is still one of the best.

*Ulaidh Games* were affected by a postal strike in Belfast in January. A lot of their personal post went astray, so they're concerned that the same thing may have happened to player post as well. If you are expecting a turn back which hasn't arrived as promptly as usual, you should let them know.

Do you suspect that your GMs may have other, even more exciting lives when they're not busy with your PBM turns? It's true enough at *Harlequin Games*, where Sam Roads and John Davis are both busy with Sound Barrier, a Progressive Rock project based in Cardiff, which 'focuses on driving jazz rhythms in an electric rock sound-world'. For Sound Barrier, Sam works on composition and plays bass, while John plays woodwind. Sam has a degree in Classical Music Composition, and has played in Glyn Powell's New Jazz Inc and Crystal Eyes, with several appearances on Welsh Television and Radio. John met Sam shortly after completing a Performance Music Degree on the oboe. He specialises in Folk and Baroque playing and is a founder member of Windblown.

Gives a whole new meaning to playing together, eh?

## MEETS



## GAMES GAMES GAMES DAYS:

Held on the second Saturday of each month, a day of games hosted by SFC Press at *The Duke of York*, 35 New Cavendish St, London W1 from 12.30 onwards. Admission is free. Contact SFC Press Old Dover Road, London SE3 8SJ; email [events@sfcpress.co.uk](mailto:events@sfcpress.co.uk)

**PFINGST-TREFFEN (WHIT MEETING):** 8th-12th May 2002, at *Straelen*, which is near the German/Dutch border. This games-playing weekend run by a group of gaming friends will include *Settlers*, *Civilisation*, *Bonanza*, *Age of Renaissance* and plenty more. Details in German from: [www.eds-verein.de](http://www.eds-verein.de)

Or contact Detlef Kraegenbrink if you'd like details in English: [DKraegenbrink@t-online.de](mailto:DKraegenbrink@t-online.de)

**HARLEQUIN GAMES:** A roleplaying weekend on 13-15th September, in *Yorkshire*. Although primarily intended for players in Harlequin's hand-moderated games, **Exile** and **Crack of Doom**, anyone else who is interested in coming along will be welcome: just get in touch with Harlequin at the address in *Galactic View*. Plans are to combine a pubmeet, a face to face role-playing session, boardgames and 'well, more meeting in the pub.'

## WORLDS APART, FACE TO FACE!

Colin Andrews will be running a further session of his OTT game set in the same background as his PBM game, **Worlds Apart**. London, June/July. We'll be running a report of an earlier meeting in a future issue.

## ADVENTURE GAMES



Madhouse have announced that they're continuing to provide more options for the players of **DungeonWorld**.

In module 5, the main game, Halls have appeared in Dungeon Courtyards, as new addition which can be investigated when you've enough experience and wealth.

There are also advanced character class options, which give new powers and abilities to all the standard classes. These are aimed at providing larger goals specifically for the long-term players, so they'll need a lot of in-game gold and experience. Your character doesn't have to take one of these 'paths', but they are an interesting and diverse course which some of you may enjoy following.

Madhouse add that their free DungeonWorld module, *Broken Lands*, is proving highly popular. Recent mailshots have numbered in the thousands, and have resulted in a very positive signup rate. Broken Lands can be enjoyed on its own, and it's also a way to attract novice players to the commercial game.

Not one, but two Adventure style new games from Madhouse! Both have been designed specifically for email play. It's good to see that working on **DungeonWorld** and **Destiny** aren't taking up all of Madhouse's famous creative energy.

**Chaos & Disorder** is free at present, during its playtest, and it'll still only be £10 for a full game of up to 30 turns when the playtest is over. C&D features colour interactive turns in HTML format, which are readable using your Internet Explorer web browser, and its deadlines are every two days. It's cheerfully violent, with players each controlling a single Chaos Soldier, whose simple aim is to wipe out everybody else: 'It's all about killing stuff, blowing stuff up, shooting stuff, burning stuff and seriously making a mess with big evil looking weapons, sharp nasty looking weapons, and noisy explosive weapons.' Seems like harmless fun, right?

Madhouse's second new game is **Haunted Manor**. This one is a play-by-web game, which is run automatically by their website server with no need for GM intervention at all. You control a single character, who explores the eponymous Haunted Manor hoping to become the richest treasure-hunter. Yes, there's treasure to be found, but there's also a chance of encountering monsters and ghosts, while whether you work with the other player characters or oppose them is up to you. This game has a daily turnaround: appropriately enough, it's run every midnight, ooh, er...

Details from: [www.madcentral.com/hauntedmanor](http://www.madcentral.com/hauntedmanor)

## PLAYTESTS

An epic fantasy pbem game called **Mysticora** is just starting its beta test, with free places offered to anyone who's prepared to put a real effort into playtesting it. Mysticora is an open-ended game, which 'features a large and detailed game world with many cultures'.

The finished game will allow roleplaying and strategic play, but note that at present only the roleplaying aspect is available; also, that not all of the magic system is complete yet. Once the game is launched commercially, however, turns will cost around \$5 each, so the chance to test it out for free seems a pretty good one.

If you're interested, contact Channing Jones of CJ Games at:

[cjones@cjgames.com](mailto:cjones@cjgames.com)

Sven Bauer has responded to the mention of his approaching playtest for **On Stellar Seas** in last issue's Rumours by offering setups in it to any readers who would like to take an active part. Everything is free. If you're interested in space strategy (and who could resist such a gorgeous game name?), check out the rules at:

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

Undying King Games are currently beta-testing a new free play-by-web game called **The Gods Decide**, which they see as a very simple, fun strategy game with a daily turnaround. This is the first in a series of small free games with which they plan to make their website a bit more of a community rather than just an shopfront / archive as at present. Details of the game are on the site, and people are welcome to come along and join in the beta test, with the chance to have an impact on the final version of the game.

It sounds a fun idea. You play one of the gods, amusing yourself by tampering with the fates of human beings. As befits a god of the ancient Greeks, it's the human heroes who arouse your interest. Zeus isn't inclined to make things easy for you, and has laid down a few restrictions about what you can do. Each turn, you must Favour one of these heroes, but Stake part of your Reputation on another one, and the hero whom you Favour mustn't be the one who's currently leading the ratings. Your god gains in Reputation if the hero you've Staked moves up the hero ranking table, but diminishes in Reputation if he moves down it.

Turns run every weekday, at 8am. Details from:

<http://www.ukg.co.uk>

## CONVENTIONS

**BRIGHTCON 2002:**

Sunday 21st April  
from 11am-7pm at  
the National  
Association of Railway

Clubs, 4 Belmont, Brighton BN1 3TF. Big Settlers tournament.

[www.brighton-boardgames.org.uk](http://www.brighton-boardgames.org.uk)

**FLYING BUFFALO's 30th ANNUAL CONVENTION:**

July 26-28th 2002 in Scottsdale, Arizona. Congratulations to FBI for their long and honourable record in PBM. This weekend is an opportunity to play the FBI games face to face, with help offered for novices. More details from:

<http://www.flyingbuffalo.com>

**DICECON:** A boardgames convention, to be held on 25th August 2002 in the *Central Hotel, Glasgow*. Tournaments with prizes for Settlers of Catan and Irvanhoe, along with lots of games that you can play and leave as you wish, including United, Grand Slam and Grand National. There's plenty of free space for boardgaming at the venue.

The organisers emphasise that they're going to make sure that 'novices (including family groups) get a gentle introduction and have something to do rather than wander round looking at lots of other people enjoying themselves.'

Check their website for the latest details:

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

**DRAGON\*CON 2002:** August 30 - September 2, 2002 at the *Hyatt Regency Atlanta and the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, Atlanta USA*. A big fan convention featuring comics, artwork, videos and seminars as well as plenty of games. Information from:

[dragoncon@dragoncon.org](mailto:dragoncon@dragoncon.org)

**MIDCON 2002:** 1-3 November. A long weekend board games convention featuring the National Diplomacy Championships in Birmingham. MidCon is a general board games convention held annually since 1980 in Birmingham during a November weekend. It is a group of 120-160 people who like playing board games getting together to do that for a weekend. Because it hosts the National Diplomacy Championships (NDC), many of the people attending Midcon are part of the UK postal Diplomacy hobby.

There are also several competitions of varying formality including the Midcon Quiz and a Pop Quiz. The times of all events are listed in the Programme. Registration costs £15 (£18 after 1 September 2002 and £20 after 1 October 2002) book online at

[http://www.sfcp.co.uk/Events/Midcon/Midcon\\_booking.htm](http://www.sfcp.co.uk/Events/Midcon/Midcon_booking.htm)

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# Harlequin's 'Other' Games

## Crack of Doom, Exile, Legends, StarQuest

THIS FEATURE is something of an experiment. We're looking for ways to cover games that we've not reviewed for some time, but which have stood the test of time. It seems a bright idea to offer you an overview of the games run by Harlequin/MEPBM apart from **Middle Earth**. If you approve (do let us know!), we'll try a similar approach with different types of game. We've asked the moderators for a description of each game, then invited players to comment ...

### CRACK OF DOOM - the GM's description

'Centuries of fighting, culminating in a battle where even the gods themselves feared for their very souls, has left the land of Lorasias decimated. The previous Lords of the land, all dead in the final battle. Their mighty armies, destroyed. The once sprawling cities, mere ruins. This is a new age, a new time. A time when any man, woman, ogre or vampire with strength and the will to succeed might raise up a new empire. The time of the gods is over. Now is a time for heroes.

But even heroes have to begin somewhere. Starting with a handful of men and a headful of dreams and ideas, work to develop your empire. This is the chance to build an empire from the ground upwards, literally. Teach your craftsmen how to chop down trees, how to make weapons, boats, houses, cities. Show your archers how to shoot from horseback, your scouts semaphore, your army new formations with which to surprise your enemies. Take over existing towns and settlements, else found your own as a base for your expanding empire. Trade with others for information and goods, or, if that fails, throw your best warriors at them on the battlefield.

It is said that mixed-moderated games are the future of pbm. This may or may not be true, but **Crack of Doom** combines the best of number-based wargames with the personal touch of hand-moderation. Even as your thousand-strong army threatens your opponent's major city, your lone assassin might be working his way through the underground network in an attempt to open the gates to the city, thus preventing unnecessary bloodshed.

There is no artificial distinction between Hero or Empire positions. Instead, it is up to you whether to form a large army with which to smash your opponents, or perhaps develop a group of scouts able to penetrate the most heavily guarded enemy fortress. Whether to create an empire with which to wage war on your enemies, or instead to roam the land, seeking the remnants of ancient civilisations, where fabulous treasures and artifacts can be found. Or, perhaps, try them all with the aim of making your Empire the most glorious in Lorasias.

Adventures and quests are linked together in a complex overall plot, a backdrop against which nations vie for power. Adventure for fame, adventure for power, developing the most mighty of Empires, or adventure just for the sheer pleasure of crushing the bones of your enemies, but make sure you adventure in Crack of Doom.'

### CRACK OF DOOM - a Player's Voice

**Carl Nicholas:** 'I first got into gaming with first edition *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* back in 1984. Many a weekend was passed around my dining room table with my cronies, liquid refreshment and munchies to hand. I became an avid gamer and GM and played constantly up to about 1987.

During this time there was a flood of different role playing games into the market such as *Call of Cuthulu* and *Warhammer* and with this variation, a lot of people, including my 'playmates' spent less and less

time on AD&D. Eventually our role-playing came to an end when the second edition rules for AD&D came out.

Along came family commitments and children, for me and for others of my group and all of a sudden there was no time to play and no one to play with. My books and character sheets went into boxes and were put in the attic and are still there to this day.

Recently and quite by chance, I came across Marcus, my work colleague, working through one of his turn sheets. He gave me a brief outline of the game and the mechanics involved and I contacted Harlequin for a starter pack. Once I had set up my initial army and character, it did not take me long to get fully immersed into the game with its plots and intrigues.

I find I get a fully immersive gaming experience, with John, our GM at Harlequin, giving a detailed and atmospheric feel in response to my turns sheets, loaded with his own special brand of humour. Many the time I have read his responses and chuckled quietly (obviously not quietly enough by the look on my wife's face).

I have all the benefits of the gaming experience, but can conduct turns in my own time whenever I have five minutes to myself. Had it not been for PBM and Harlequin games, I might never have played another RPG in my life.'

*[Crack of Doom was reviewed in Flagship 77. Charges are £10 for startup + 1 turn, then £4.50 per turn plus some optional extras. More comments in Rumours from the Front!]*

### EXILE - the GM's description

'**Exile** is a purely hand-moderated game set in the legendary world of **Saturnalia**, the "daddy" of all fantasy-role-playing play-by-mail games. Although in many ways the game is true to its original roots, and indeed the Saturnalia world is well represented in other games, such as the Serpent Isles and North-West Erythria, the flavour of Exile has its own unique elements.

This is largely due to the excellent work done by the previous GMs, Sam Roads, John Davis and Jim Botten, from whom I inherited the game after racking up over 200 turns under Jim's tenure! The various players of the game have also been instrumental in shaping the flavour and feeling of the world in which they live.

In many ways, Exile has a slightly 'modern horror' feel to it rather than an authentic medieval atmosphere, so it provides a contrast with many other fantasy areas. Magic in Exile is rare but very powerful (think Lord of the Rings), but the staples of many fantasy games like orcs, elves and dwarves are nowhere to be seen. The Isles are inhabited instead by stranger beings, like mermen, cat-like beings called Sylvans, and blood-sucking vampires, as well as other strange creatures as yet undiscovered by the human populace at large.

The emphasis is on rich, descriptive prose, and the pace of the game is slightly slower than other versions of Saturnalia, with emphasis largely placed upon character interaction and development. It is an ideal environment for sleuthing, swashbuckling, machiavellian politics and intrigue, although there are many who frequently indulge in more action-based turns and martial heroics!

Although it is true that I do not allow 'evil' characters in the game, I have worked to make the area less of a 'good verses evil' environment, and more 'shades of grey'. Beneath the veneer of an affluent, liberated society lurks all manner of corruption and intrigue, with secrets and mysteries aplenty. In this ambiguous society, where all gods are freely



worshipped, few people can ever be certain where their loyalties lie, or who their friends really are. Very few things in Exile are what they appear to be...

The game is further enriched by a wide variety of players, ranging from neophytes to true veterans of the Saturnalia experience. Because characters are not usually in competition with one another, there is ample room for personal goals and development. And as most of the game occurs in one city, there are frequent opportunities to encounter other players and interact with them also.

Exile is also served by a 'virtual tavern' message board, which both the players and myself can freely write rumours, insults, or anything else they desire, which helps to stimulate play and the gets the rumours circulating... All players are encouraged to join in, and immerse themselves in the experience, whether it is contributing to the quarterly newsletter, voting for the new Governor or competing in the in-game Tournament.

Above all, Exile is a varied environment, where most tastes can be catered for. I always think of it not as one game, but several different types of game in one!

*[Note that there is a waiting list for this game, but places do become available with time. Charges are £10 for startup plus 2 turns, then £4 per turn. Playable by email as well as post.]*

### LEGENDS - a Player's Voice

**Phill Austin:** *'Legends - A Treatise on Global Hegemonic Imperialism in a Pseudoscientific Mediaeval Society.'*

The **Legends** world is big, really big. You may think it's a long way down the road to the corner shop, but that's nothing compared to the size of Legends! (Thanks go out to the late Mr D Adams.)

It's not just the 130 by 80 provinces of the main world you have to consider. Even the elusive Astral Planes are but minor complexities compared to the shell within shell within shell

Why, just the other day my favourite Seeress failed to properly locate an ally's captured army commander. But her 'vision' held enough detail to recognise the City he was being held in (breaking through the first shell), though could not tell whether he was in the Federal Dungeon, a City Guild cell, or a Private Prison (quite common in this part of the world)! Enough detail though to please the 'covert' sent on the find-and-rescue mission. I expect a successful resolution within 28 days. So within two months the old fool should be back at duty!

This last point leads on from the big to the really big part of Legends. Time! A typical game lasts three years, though I've been into a fourth year myself. The first year is one of exploration and consolidation. Find your feet, build up your resources (characters, towns, troops) from raids or influence, and join or start a Faction. The second year is one of major conquest. Armies originally formed from troops in their hundreds now wander the land in their thousands. All the fabled Cities of the Old World, marked individually on the full-colour glossy wallmap, start to fall. Alliances are reaffirmed or dashed aside in a splatter of blood as

competition for the gems of the world heats up! The third year normally leads to the End-Game phase. Where pre-defined Factional Victory Conditions are chased. This again shows the beauty, complexity and depth of the game in that a lone Hero who's found and mastered the Sword of Man is as important as the Field General of 10,000 Blessed Knights of the Rose!

To win, all are needed. From Assassins to capture the Head of opposing Faction Leaders, and powerful Wizards to move Astral Cities, and Engineers to build Legendary Castles or organise Siege tactics, plus Merchants, Spies, Druids, Rangers, Enchanters, etc, all the way to the Berserker Knight Axemaster who has the 'Axe of Hewing' and the decapitated Head of the biggest Platinum Dragon in the Universe!

So, in summary, we have provinces, that can have multiple field forces and locations in each, maybe containing several GuildHouses, and all can hold individual Characters, generic troops, and miscellaneous items. You can lead a band of hard-nosed Adventurers to the nearest Dragon Lair, or run a small Fiefdom and train and lead Troops to subjugate your neighbours. The paths to power are many and varied. Just one warning: do not try to manage large population bases in the first year unless you have a degree in microeconomics!

*[Legends is a complex fantasy game that's run in several different scenarios. There was a very helpful beginners' guide in Flagship 90. Oh, and there's more in this issue's Rumours. Charges are £20 for startup and 1 turn, then £3.50 or more for larger positions. Playable by email as well as post.]*

### SERIM RAL - a New Player Speaks

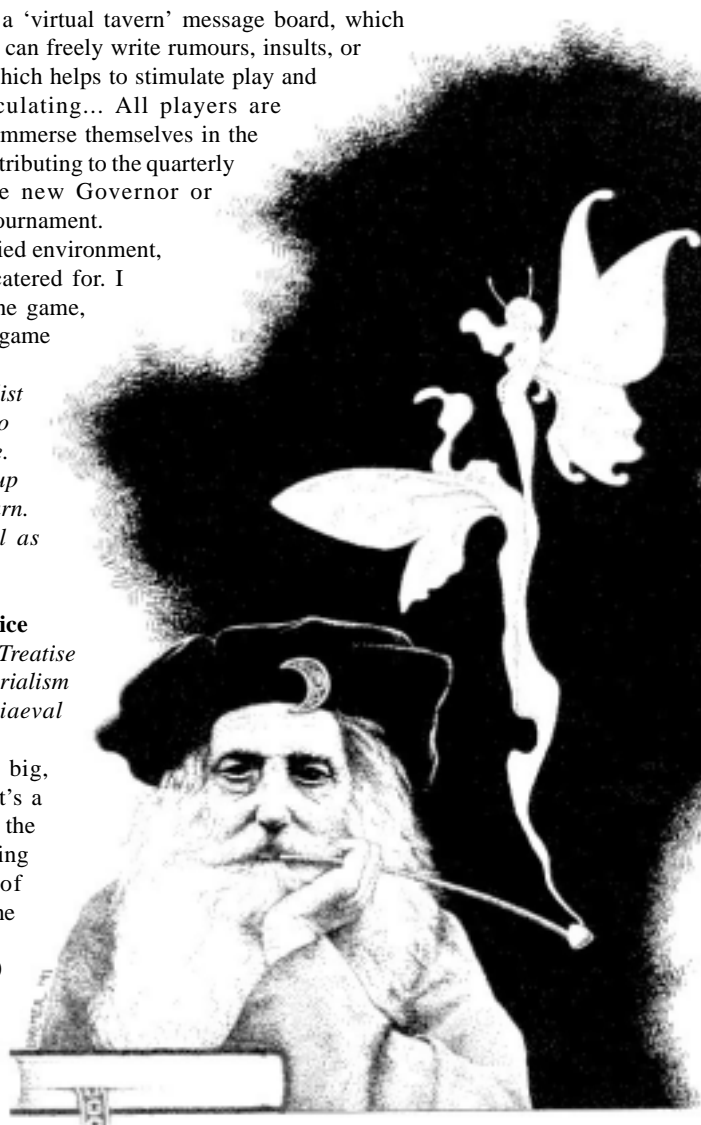
**Paul Stewart:** 'Now I've got to admit that I'm pretty much brand new to this game, but I guess that puts me in as good a position as anyone to let other potential new players know what to expect.

I've talked to a few of the other more experienced players to try and get an idea of what you need to do to have a good game. They say things like "Castles are good" or "Try to gain as much experience on your main leaders as possible" or put even more simply "Expand, expand, expand". Perhaps they don't remember how complicated things seem when you look at a new rulebook.

I've started up with characters from every class so I can see what they all do and how things interact - maybe not perfect as a setup but I guess I'll figure that out later on, at least I'll have a better idea when I join my next game.

The game I've started in is **Serim Ral 52** which is set in the underdark (which in game terms means that loads of the map is blocked by impassable rock) so simple moving-in-a-straight-line stuff which you see in many games is right out the window: it's all winding narrow tunnels and occasional larger caverns.

A big side effect of this is that you don't get all the usual rattling around (wondering where your nearest neighbours are) that you get in some games. My nearest rival could be attacking one of my castles at the



end of the first turn, and there are another three players who are just another turn away. I guess if my neighbour comes for me then the guy who is next on down the tunnel gets an easy time attacking him, so things should all balance out - at least, as long as I can trade enough information with my enemies' enemies.

The main thing I've learnt in other games is to 'max out' on something - it doesn't matter what (although experienced players will no doubt argue about which is best) - and then push the advantage that you have in that field to the limit. Serim Ral seems to have almost too many possibilities, I've spent too long deciding between population expansion, castle building, troop training, character experience, spell casting and innumerable other possibilities.

Deciding which tactic to use in the game has caused me *the* biggest headache: actually figuring out how to implement it was easy afterwards. Except for the normal logistical problems (and my rusty arithmetic): every castle could do with some more gold and every leader needs more time (orders take time, so each leader can do lots of quick/simple things or only one or two larger more complicated things), and I think I need another 20 or so orders to do everything I want (the number of orders you can issue each turn depends on how many characters and castles you have - one of the reasons castles are good). At least spells can summon the gold and (I'm told at higher levels) the time I need, although using up wood or iron as spell components makes everything a trade off. There's a lot to Serim Ral, so I guess it'll be at least my second or even third game before I'm really in the running. Better stop writing this so I can get on with writing my next setup ...

*[Separate games of Serim Ral are run by three firms - Harlequin, Incubus and Mindless Games - and we've published several articles about it. Harlequin charge £10 for startup plus one turn, then £4.50 per turn.]*

#### STAR QUEST - The GM's report

'Develop and run an Empire in space. Be responsible for the decisions that make or break that empire, from how much food to send to a beleaguered planet to how many of your warships you should risk in the war against your neighbour. Orbit huge terraformers over alien worlds and shape them to your needs. So there was an indigenous population? Well they knew the risks when they became innocent bystanders....



Negotiate space lanes to safeguard your trading runs, whilst patrolling your perimeters for pirates and attack fleets. Carry the battle down to the surface by dropshipping Space Marines backed up by mighty siege tanks.

But you'll have to be careful in your dealings with the Overlords - the ancient rulers of the galaxy who demand a high tribute simply for your continued existence. Perhaps one day a time will come when you have developed your tech matrices sufficiently to give your ships firepower enough to rebel openly...

**Star Quest** is huge in complexity and scale, set against the backdrop of our own galaxy, with strict formal alliances that encourage team-play. This is a truly epic game of star-spanning empires. If you enjoy the challenge of running a galactic empire, making political and economic decisions that range from transferring extra technology to some small moon base, to declaring war on a star-spanning alliance, then this is for you. Play is entirely by computer, the game coming with a free computer software package which helps not only to view turns, but write orders and maintain a database of information on both your empire and those of your enemies. Also now featuring a new mapping program. A new module features reduced playing area for greater player interaction. And for interaction, read battling for economic and martial control. This is not a game for the faint-hearted, but **Star Quest's** scale and level of complexity make this a truly epic game.'

#### STAR QUEST - the Reviewer's Verdict

*[Gosh, it's a long time since we reviewed Star Quest: issue 46 in November 1993, when it had just come out. Here's how our reviewer started ...]*

**Robert S Stock** - 'Star Quest is a PBM game of space exploration and conquest. Fully computer-moderated, it ranks with the legendary US megagame *Empyrean Challenge* in complexity and depth. The player is in complete control of all aspects of his empire, making the decisions on everything from when to resupply units, to colonization, to alien conquest, trading and diplomacy. An interesting feature is that the play area is the actual stars around our own Sol. Each game can have up to 100 empires with each player running either one or two of them ...'

*[And here's how he concludes ...]*

'In overview, **Star Quest** is a very good game with a depth and complexity rating near the top of the scale. When compared to other high depth games, I must say that the amount of data to be handled in even an average **Star Quest** game is greater by far; while the *Ships and Colonies* are not the most complex around, the number of Ships, Units and Worlds you must keep track of and keep supplied in **Star Quest** is many times larger.

The research system in **Star Quest** is easily the best I have ever encountered. It relies on the player's actual research for the proper matrix values. Much better than the arbitrary manufacture and spending of Research Points or simple purchase of new Technology found in other games. The turn results used to be horridly disorganised, but nowadays the reports separate mining, trading, colonization and general movement into easily-handled separate sections ...'

*[Robert went on to mention some problems which needed sorting out: the rulebook required work, and secret multiple positions were allowed in the first American game, a bad mistake which warped it and was sorted by the first European GM. He continues ...]*

'... All in all I highly recommend the game to anyone wanting a real challenge. But it is definitely *not* a game for the beginner. Anyone wanting to play should have a fair amount of experience in other PBM games involving high levels of PBM diplomacy and tracking large amounts of data.'

*[Do current players agree with Robert? Send comments in for next issue's Rumours from the Front. Charges for Star Quest are £10 for startup plus 1 turn, then £3.50 per turn. Playable by email as well as post.]*

If you like this article, we're thinking of using the same system for overviews of World Games, Adventure Games, Space Operas and possibly other companies in future issues.

## EINSTEIN'S LOT

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# Austerlitz

## Down Portugal Way

*DOMINIC COOK plays the kingdom of Portugal in game 134 ...*

### Background

THIS IS a stage by stage report into how I am playing Portugal in game 134 of **Austerlitz**. It is not intended to be a definitive 'How to Play', but shows the kind of thought processes I personally go through with each turn - hopefully it will be entertaining, particularly for the newer players of the game. Obviously I do not know how long it will continue, that depends on how well I do! However, I propose to delay each month's diary a little so that my opponents don't have too much insight into what I am planning. I also may censor a few bits, otherwise no one will ever talk to me! Hope you find it interesting...

### January 1808

Here we go again. A quiet day at work (don't usually have those) and a rash decision to ask TBA what empires are free, and here I am playing Portugal in a new game.

I haven't played Portugal much before, but it suits my style of play - at best you can only play a supporting role in everything, but you have considerable potential if given a chance to prosper and play reasonably well. You also have a chance to expand in both India and the Caribbean.

The first thing I do when I get the turn is to check through who else is playing the game - there is only one name I think I remember from old - that of the Moroccan player. Can't remember where from, though, so maybe if I get the chance I will look back through a few old turns.

The next thing to look for is potential pre-game alliances. Sure enough TBA has done their normal thing and we have two brothers playing Russia and Warsaw. This annoys me no end - if they must take pre-game alliances, why can't they split them up a bit? - I am pleased I am across the other side of Europe. Proximity of addresses also suggests a possible link between Spain and Great Britain (drat); Morocco and Naples (also drat); and we have three US players who may be allied playing France, Prussia and Sweden.

If Spain and Britain are together that could cause me all kinds of trouble. Spain can take the Caribbean and Britain India, which doesn't tend to leave much for the rest of us small colonial players. I will ring them both, but put most of my effort into France as he is a natural buffer to them and he will not want to see his colonies go without a fight.

### Turn Planning

Portugal is limited to only 39 European squares, so production sites are at a premium. Therefore I am determined to expand from Europe into North Africa. Swapping a few battalions around to leave only Line troops in one formation, I then move this and a commander down to 6/43 to load onto a small fleet which will meet them there. The reason for this is simple. If you have to move out of Lisbon with the fleet once the brigade is loaded, you use up one of the vital direction orders. This way, I am nearer to where I am going, but only need to order a 4 followed by a 5-direction order to be in the heart of the Med with only another 4 order to bring me down to the coast. I am not sure where to land yet, but my

favoured location is to the east of Naples' lands, which is often the last to be exploited by other powers. But at least having a commander and brigade loaded, I can review the situation and exploit lack of movement by other players.

For builds I am going the expensive option - two brigades of 2 Colonial Troops (Kt) and 3 Line Troops (Ln). You start in both India and Carib with a brigade with 3 Kt, so to get two more to them will allow two square conquest. Also, if you don't get them together, they can still take one square each.

Other builds are three brigades each of 1 Grenadiers (Gr), 2 Cacadores (Portuguese light infantry: Cz), and 2 Ln; and one brigade of 2 Militia (Mi) and 3 Light Artillery (La). The artillery will be swapped into the line brigade leaving the two militia alone for conquest duties, or to sacrifice against an invading army.

I also plan to load my only other European commander onto a warship for duties in India. You only start with three, two in Europe and one in Caribbean, but no one can go to war with anyone in Europe for a couple of turns, so you should be able to get another European commander by then. Later in the game Beresford can probably return home anyway and be replaced by a lowly Colonel in India.

### Colonies

Colonies are relatively simple. In India I am making a play for at least one of the northern gold mines - if GB and Spain are together, they will come for me anyway, but if they play it badly or are open to treaties, the mine is vital. My other brigade will await the arrival of Beresford to allow more land to be taken.

In the Caribbean I cut down the colonial brigade with only 3 Colonial Auxiliaries (Ca) in it to just cavalry, as its 40 MPs are vital in the Amazon. One Ca is swapped to the Kt brigade, but the other two are disbanded and the brigade federated with the commander out at 40/96. They should be able to move along the Amazon forest eastwards from my limited holdings and hopefully cut off Holland's hope of expansion southwards. My other brigade with 3 Kt will forcemarch southwest to secure the nearest mine to me. Other than that, I federate all the colonial fleets and move them back to Europe. They can pick up the new Kt brigades next turn with luck and return quickly.

### Production

Relatively straightforward here. Just built the ore mine, two factories, two weaving mills, four sheep farms and a quarry. Normally you wouldn't build a quarry on turn one, but Portugal's stone production is terrible with only two mountain squares, so I think you are better getting them working quickly! I also build four baggage trains in Lisbon and limit my population growth to just 24,000 - citizens and stone are at a premium, so better to be light on the growth but still continue to grow!

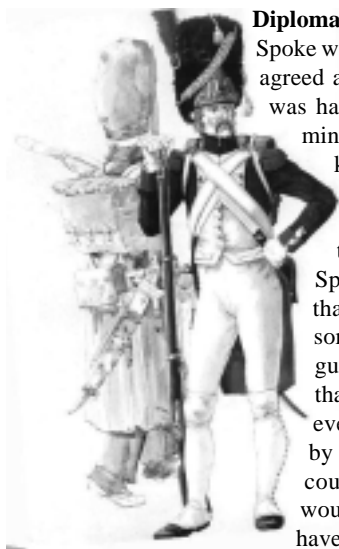
### Trade

I got a little lucky here. Both Madrid and Lisbon were at 6. One baggage train started in Madrid, so I sold the zinc and wool it holds and headed north to exploit the profit. I also transferred my starting European zinc - 11 units - to a baggage train and sold along with my 64 starting gold. Hopefully if everything goes OK with the colonies, I will be able to ship more zinc and gold home for refining and minting, but the money will be useful.

### *Austerlitz at a glance*

Long-running historical wargame from Supersonic Games, previously TBA Games. Startup is £10 and subsequent turns are £3.75-£4.50, depending on the size of the country taken.





### Diplomacy

Spoke with Great Britain on the telephone, and agreed an alliance and split of India which I was happy with. I get one of the two gold mines, which is fair, and enough land to keep my fledgling empire going strong. He is allying with Spain, but maintains they are not friends, although they are talking: my next priority is to secure Spanish alliance then. He also suggests that France is renowned as a 'dropper' - someone who drops countries early - so I guess that he and Spain are playing for that to happen. I will also prepare for that eventuality. Really I had nothing to lose by securing an alliance with Britain - he could shut me down colonially, which would have been grim, but I would not have given up without a hard fight! Still, he sounds a nice guy, although living in

Scotland my phone bill is likely to climb!

Things are getting better. A series of emails from France confirms friendly relationships for the future, although I must say I resist an alliance as I want to keep some aggressive options open and I *hate* breaking alliances. Doesn't sound like a dropper to me, but time will tell.

Finally, get in touch with Spain and secure an alliance - he only has his work number on the sheet and I cannot call during the day, but luckily he rings. Maybe GB is right and they are not friends - certainly they cover it well if they are. However, most importantly, Spain declares he wants colonies not European war - yet - so that is what I want to hear.

A letter arrives from Morocco in response to my own letter. Yes we did play together in 88 - he was Prussia and I was Sweden. We agree an alliance and he is happy for me to land in North Africa as long as it is the eastern end, which suits me fine.

### February 1808

Everything seemed to go OK - only two movement errors and that was because I couldn't be bothered to work out exactly how far my federations could move! Holland looks to be competently handled, which is a shame - he will get to the zinc mine in South America before me. Other than that nothing surprising happened, except that Denmark and Austria didn't put down any production sites at all ...

### Turn Planning

My fleet loaded with one brigade and a commander is at 6/44 and has 35 movement points, not enough for me to land next turn but I will be in the area. Depending on what Naples does, I may land my brigade at 45/64: that way I can cut off Naples and move towards Cairo.

My two colonial fleets are back in Europe, so I will move them to Lisbon to load up the two new colonial brigades and return whence they came.

### Military

Train up everything - that is, the six new brigades I built. I also will transfer the 3 La out of the militia brigade to leave just 2 Mi. This turn I will build five more brigades: 3 of 1 Gr, 2 Cz, 2 Ln; 1 of 2 Mi, 3 La; and 1 of 6 Cz. Again the La will be transferred out to the land brigades leaving the militia.

### Production

The economy looks OK. I will build another quarry (stone stock is down to 910!), two sheep farms, four lumbercamps, a horse breeding farm, and two estates, one in each colony. Estates are not worth building in Europe in the winter, but are not such a problem in the colonies and it won't be long before I have built everything I want in Europe anyway! I can only afford enough stone to raise one population square from two to three. Better than nothing.

### Trade

I made 1,584,956 selling my starting gold and zinc into Lisbon - that is profit after the cost of buying it all back when the trade rate is at 2. Always buy it back, as you can then resell when the rate goes back up! I find it best to leave the money to buy back in the baggage trains - otherwise I would spend it.

My baggage train in Madrid made about 1 million selling the zinc and wool it started with and is now off to Paris to see which way the trade rates go.

I built four new baggage trains in Lisbon last turn and send two of them on their way into Europe with 750,000 louisdore each. Trade is vital in this game and I want to get out there as soon as possible. The money I made from the first turn trade is ideal for bankrolling these new baggage trains. I also now have three trains in Lisbon to continue my home trading.

### Diplomacy

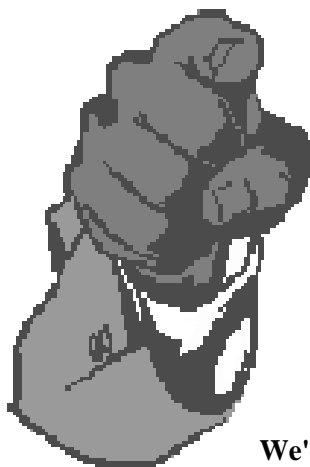
I bash off letters to Italy, Austria, Warsaw, Rhineland and Prussia, offering to buy their fleets if they are not using them. I am unlikely to be in a position to build any myself - lack of wood and textiles - but if anyone wants the instant cash I could get lucky.

I get a call from Britain. He suggests that we should not go allied just yet. He wants it to be a secret - not sure I like that, but still have nothing to lose! He and Spain have hatched a sneaky plan to keep other players off the scent. They have agreed a short colonial war so Spain can secure part of GB's colonies and vice versa, when they have in actual fact come to an agreement. I call Spain, and both he and Britain seem to be waiting for France to drop to exploit that position. Britain tells me Morocco and Naples are going to fight over Tunis area - good for me, but predictable. Also it appears Denmark missed the deadline - sloppy.

I get emails from France. We agree to ally - again I have nothing to lose. If he does drop I am only likely to get some of his colonies and it is just as easy to drop relationships from 4-2 as it is from 3-1. He is annoyed that people call him a dropper and says he is in it for the long haul.

Austria calls me to say his fleet is not for sale. He missed his turn by messing up two separate games! Never mind. Interestingly, though, he says that Sweden, Austria and the Ottoman have formed a defensive alliance against the brothers Russia and Warsaw. At least that means they won't all fold easily, then. He also says he plans to land in the Cairo area for foreign lands, and suggests that Naples is preparing for war with Morocco, which is interesting. I also bang off a note to Sweden who's a player in the USA. I would love one of his Islands so that I can establish a trade base there, to hit St Petersburg, Karlskrona and Kopenhagen for trade ...

## Flagship needs YOU!



### Web Games Editor

*There are a LOT of web based games out there - would you like to play and write about them? If so, contact the Flagship office as we're looking for someone to join Flagship's editorial staff as Web Games Editor.*

**We're waiting to hear from you!**

# En Garde!

## A Close Look at Three Games

**PATRICK GLEESON, PAUL VERNON LYDIATE and RON HEINTZ** invite you to step into a world of swashbuckling adventure and intrigue! ...

ONE OF THE best adventure genres in the history of literature was that created by Alexandre Dumas in his famous 'D'Artagnan' trilogy. What little boy hasn't at some time pretended to be one of the Three Musketeers? Beyond the swashbuckling in Dumas' books, however, was a brilliant political world of soldiers, ladies-in-waiting, clergy, and of course the famous Musketeers and Cardinal's Guard. The intrigue is almost more fun for an adult reader than the swordplay!

It is this multi-layered, romantic world that one encounters in **En Garde!** There are many versions of this game currently running all over the world. *En Garde!* was published in the late 1970's by Game Designer's Workshop and, although it was never a popular RPG, *En Garde!* has found a new following through postal and internet games in recent years, partly because it is such an unusual hybrid of turn-based strategy and roleplaying. *Flagship 93* saw an overview of some of the games you can play: here are some mini-reviews of three excellent *En Garde!* games.

### Time of Honor

Each player portrays a young man in Paris at the beginning of the 17th century seeking his fame and fortune. Players communicate with each other via email and through an email distribution group, which represents the press and the rumour mill around Paris. Then, at regulated times, players submit turns listing their actions for the following month, which are processed by a game referee. The results are posted on a common website, listing each player's social standing and accomplishments.

Since *Time of Honor* (ToH) is a free web-based game, it operates using a website and a mail list server, upon which the players can interact in role-plays. This occurs between turn deadlines, as ToH is a turn-moderated game. Turns represent one month of game time. The real-time between processed terms is usually about two and a half to four weeks. As ToH is a free game, turnaround depends on the amount of time that the moderator has to devote to it, but thus far, the long life and success of the game attest to the effort that has been put into it. By the turn deadline, players will have made announcements for actions to which in-game political or social influence can be applied. This influence can be obtained through appointments, social standing, from mistresses and so forth. Although both male and female players participate, the game has a historically accurate bias towards the portrayal of male characters, in the spirit of the *Three Musketeers*.

As is the case with most people who have moderated *En Garde!* games on the web, Quincy (the GM) has modified the rules, usually in consultation with his players, but always with game balance in mind. Most of these modifications are designed to allow the players varied career paths for their characters, and a variety of options for their turn orders, while still keeping the game competitive. *Time of Honor* features as many or more possible choices for character development as any of the free EG! games on the web, and more than many of those which charge a turn

fee. The rules allow for multiple career paths, for skullduggery and for fencing matches between players.

In addition to the usual Army/Government careers offered in the original *En Garde!*, *Time of Honor* allows characters to pursue careers in the Arts & Sciences, the Church, the Royal Court, the Navy, as Royal / Ecclesiastical Guards, Equestrian Owner (with Races), Teacher or Espionage Agent. Characters start with a number of extra skills to facilitate this, all of which can be improved (at a cost of both time and cash). Most characters begin being good at *something*, which offers an alternative route to those weak characters unsuited to the rough and tumble of military or naval life. Artistic and Musical skill (which can be improved by study at the university) allow characters to create pictorial or musical works of art (for which they, and their patrons if they have them, can gain status points). The latter also allows character to earn cash by performing at the balls/parties of more prestigious characters. Another artistic career open to characters (and which needs no special abilities) is that of playwright - this Paris has an active theatre.

Medical Skill allows character to practice as a doctor (either privately or via a medical route in the military). There is also a Royal Society (closed to members of the Church or military) for those with a scientific bent, and a number of appointments that are open only to members.

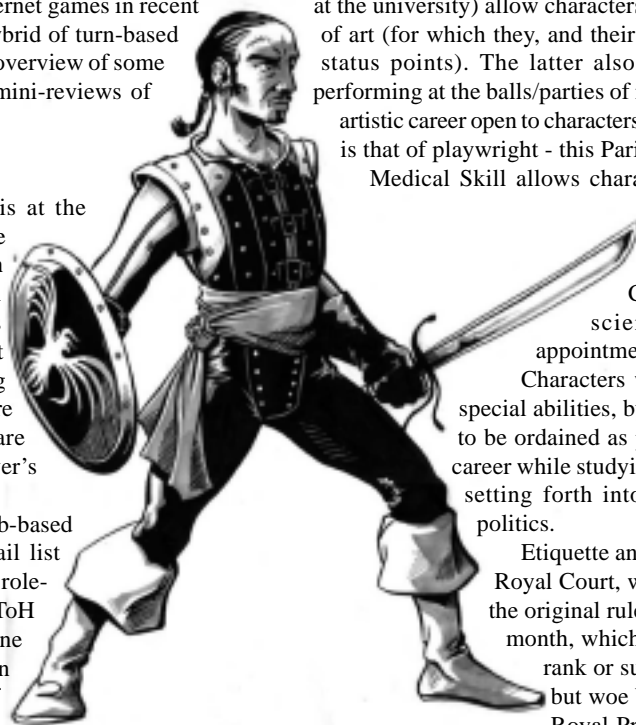
Characters wishing to join the Church need no special abilities, but must spend time studying in order to be ordained as priests. They can pursue some other career while studying for the church if they wish, before setting forth into the stormy seas of ecclesiastical politics.

Etiquette and Dancing are primarily of use at the Royal Court, which is greatly expanded upon from the original rules. The King has a full program each month, which characters with the sufficient noble rank or suitable appointments can partake in - but woe betide those guilty of faux pas in the Royal Presence. The Guards companies now

have a primarily Court function, though they are still required to fight if the King decides to visit the frontier.

Administrative skill is used in generating returns from noble estates and as a modifier to obtain some of the Administrative appointments, but thieving skill (in addition to allowing characters to steal from others) is most useful in the field of espionage. Although all EG! games capture the swashbuckling aspect of 'The Three Musketeers' et al, the element of intrigue is largely missing. *Time of Honor* has the most comprehensive set of espionage rules to be found anywhere, with a view to addressing this lack. Espionage is an 'additional career' which is open to any character to run alongside his main occupation (though it is easier for those not in the Army, Navy or Church to become successful spies).

Turn orders are broken up into premonthly actions, such as applications for military regimental positions or places in men's clubs. A player may also submit four weekly actions, which might include wooing a fair lady, carousing at a club, writing a scientific thesis, premiering a play at the Theatre Royal, or teaching at the University of Paris, depending



upon one's qualifications and career path. The game has a very active press, which can be viewed at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Time\\_of\\_Honor](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Time_of_Honor) (NB it is necessary to take a yahoo email address in order to join the mailing list for this). In between order deadlines and turn resolutions, roleplaying occurs on the list. One may roleplay a great deal or very little, though some communication will be almost inevitable, if the character is to prosper. In addition, players are invited to write sections of the game report if they wish - one of the reasons underlying the quick turnaround.

Off list, behind the scenes negotiations are also possible, but these are still done in character as much as possible, and with copies to the moderator. The actual writing of the above orders is done via a web page, by filling in various boxes then transmitting to the GM - see <http://timeofhonor.com/>. At the deadline, the GM runs the turn, provides the various writers with the bare bones for the pieces required from them and, when these are received back, compiles the web page.

*[Prospective players of ToH should note that the number of email messages can be exceptionally high].*



### Banana EG!

Banana is probably the longest running free pbem En Garde! game in existence, the 'Granddaddy of them all'. Set in the Paris of Louis XIV it has around 100 players and, thanks to the length of time which has been running, player characters with the highest social levels found anywhere. As a result, all the important government and military appointments are usually held by PCs rather than NPCs. The Player Character currently at the top of the 'Greasy Pole' is Social Level 33, but there seems to be an unwritten law that players retire their characters when they reach this level and begin again with a new one.

Apart from the addition of Fencing Schools and a couple of further Ministerial positions, Banana is run according to the original published rules set. There are none of the extra careers found in other games - the army (and later, governmental) route is the only one open to characters. What really makes Banana stand out, however, is the excellent duelling system used. Players can submit an unlimited number of conditional orders for when their characters are involved in duels, which means that weak characters run by careful players can more than hold their own against beefy characters run by the less circumspect.

Despite the large number of players, the turnaround is quite rapid - around six weeks for a normal turn. Because the vast majority of player characters are invariably at the front over the Summer Campaign (thanks to characters with large investments in arms ensuring that all brigades go so as to maximise their profits) the three Summer turns are run on a much faster turnaround. The end result is that each game year corresponds pretty well to one year real time.

The fast turnaround is achieved thanks to a dedicated GM (Gregory Rick, who can be contacted on [Gregory\\_Rick\\_Chadbourn@lotus.com](mailto:Gregory_Rick_Chadbourn@lotus.com) by those wishing to join the game) and the fact that players submit their orders by email in a machine-readable format which allows the turn to be run largely by computer. Details of the required format for orders are included in the House Rules which can be found on the game's webpage: <http://www.planetunreal.com/kh/engarde/>. The most commonly used orders can also be constructed with the easy to use Order Constructor Program which Greg has written. Once constructed, the orders can be copied (using <Ctrl> C) and pasted into an email message.

Once a turn has been run, players receive four email messages:

- 1) The Greasy Pole, giving details of current Player Character standings,

Mistresses, the Army Structure, Regimental tables, current holders of the various appointment, vacant appointments and who appoints them, and the month's military campaign results.

- 2) A Monthly Actions sheet for their character, detailing the various results of their individual orders.
- 3) A Character Sheet giving details of their character's current Social Level, cash, rank, appointment etc.
- 4) An All Character Listing, giving details of the positions held by all PCs and named NPCs in the game. (One of the basic premises of Banana is that NPCs are treated in exactly the same way as Player Characters are).

Players also get a list of current players, together with their characters and email addresses occasionally. Something which seems to have fallen by the wayside (unfortunately) is a turn report giving details of who was seen with whom etc that month. The press makes up for this to some extent, players being given the choice to receive each press item either individually or in digest form.

Banana is very much a 'no frills' kind of game and thus

an excellent choice for the beginner. A really nice touch are the Maps and Guides of Paris (also available from the web page) which are useful for adding 'chrome' to the press releases of the players.

### Horseguards EG!

Horseguards En Garde! currently has around 30 active players - the most prestigious character currently being Social Level 16 - and some very attractive web pages accessible from <http://www.horseguards.org/en%20garde.html>. These include portraits of the Ladies of Paris and biographies/portraits of many of the characters.

Set in the early years of the reign of Louis XIII (and having some extensive and interesting background notes), Horseguards is GMed as a free game by Trevor Gillard ([trevor.gillard@horseguards.org](mailto:trevor.gillard@horseguards.org)) who manages a monthly turnaround. The game has an active press which can be viewed at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HorseGuardsEnGarde>. Additions to the standard rules set include rules for Residences & Carriages, Capture at the Front, the Royal Court, Commerce and Horse Racing. Until recently, the military was the only career open to new characters, but the unique Commerce rules have just given rise to the new career of Merchant Venturer and a recent poll demonstrated support for some further career additions which may see the light of day soon.

Orders are submitted via the Order Form on the web page. When the turn is run, the GM updates the Players web page and compiles the En Parade web page which gives details of the most recent happenings in Paris and at the front. (Some sections of this newsletter are written by the players too). Each player then receives an individual email giving current details for their character and the results of their most recent orders. Players also receive a spreadsheet containing current character information which is very useful indeed for planning a character's subsequent turns

### D'Accord!

All three of these games are highly enjoyable, with reliable GMs and regular turnarounds. I'd recommend all to both beginner & veteran En Garde! players. En Garde! is an amazingly rich and varied game which is both easy to play, yet can provoke long hours of thought and planning. Fame, infamy, glory, death, promotion, disgrace, plunder and, especially, defending one's honor and throwing a glove into the face of a rival: all these await you in En Garde!

# Sports News

**DAVID BLAIR** brings us news of games not previously reviewed ...

THANKS FOR some good feedback on last month's maiden Sports News - could be the majority of you did not like it, but thanks again for not telling me. I have spent a while touting this last issue round my friends and neighbours, citing this as my job now I am in early retirement. Now I have to do it all again.

I noted Ben Williams' comment in the last issue about the large percentage of games having had no reviews at all, so I checked off the sports ones for myself. I sent off to six companies to see whether I could join existing games for a while (offering to pay) to be able to action a review in a future issue. Have had good feedback from a few but even with SAEs a couple still not returned my queries. Could be the reason for their omission in the first place! Fortunately I counted only around a dozen games untouched and they can be split into about eight firms at the most, but I will get round them all at some time or another. I also found reviews on a few were done way back in issues that indicated they were between seven and nine years old, so I feel some are due an update.

Would any firm wishing a review done on their sports game just contact me - it will save time and get the review done more quickly than waiting for me to approach you.

Anyhow on to business, and with Supersonic Games (nee TBA Games Ltd) now owning the games they have been operating for years, changes and improvements should soon start to filter through in their highly successful **Championship League** game. Elsewhere in the magazine is an in depth article on **Tough at the Top** and with an article on soccer fanzines coming up, sports fans seem to be well covered.

Trying to get round a assortment of sports, I came up with an ice hockey simulation run by Fabio Ferreira called **New Sanctuary Hockey League** (NSHL for short). I was in at the start when he asked for volunteers and he would be the first to admit there were some teething problems with the software. Not sure if the financial part of the game has been fully sorted, but nobody was disadvantaged because of it. However, the remainder of the sim works pretty well, with at present 18 teams from the NHL complete with authentic rosters, stadium details etc split into two Conferences and six smaller divisions. This is the first season, and after around six pre season games, the season is in full swing - likely to be a shorter one than would be normally, but the intention is to use the full complement of NHL teams once managers can be found. You would be responsible for sending players onto the ice, promoting from the reserves, keeping an eye on your youth and your farm squads, and operate trades etc. Basically Championship Manager on ice. No knowledge of the game is required (although helpful) as the program won't let you put wrong formations in without a prompt, and of course Fabio is on the end of an e mail address to assist. Games are two a week and cost is free. Interested? Then check out the web site at [www.geocities.com/nshleague](http://www.geocities.com/nshleague) and apply via [fabioferreira@lycos.com](mailto:fabioferreira@lycos.com). There will be vacancies and Fabio would be pleased to hear from you.

Neil Murdoch (good Scots name that) wrote in to *Flagship* and asked for a review of his football game - **Floodlit Soccer** - as it had been in abeyance for some time now and he had been making changes to it before its recommencement. The game is now up and running and features one League of 16 Scottish Clubs. It is a traditional style of game with a few differences to make it that bit out of the ordinary. For example, the ten positions allowed do not include wingers, wing backs or sweepers - just goalkeepers, right, left and centre defenders, the same for midfield, and the same again for attackers. This does not detract from the game at all, but keeps it simple for understanding.

The tactics you employ, whether you go for Normal, Defence, Attack, Midfield Dominance, All out Defence or All out Attack, all affect your skill ratings. For example, playing All out Defence to hold a narrow lead (or to stop a real drubbing) costs you -15% on all your attackers' shooting skills, but you get a +15% on your Tackling skills in defence, whilst Midfield dominance will give you +10% on your players' Passing skills but -5% on the Shooting ones - you

pays your money ...! The usual training commands are there, again basic but completely adequate, with Keeping, Tackling, Passing and Shooting the attributes you want to increase. With options to purchase new players, trade players in and out of your club and to renew contracts or cut players you have all the hallmarks of a typical football PBeM. It is easy to get into, the rules are simplistic and the actions are enough to make a difference to your team's performance.

Everything a manager needs is here, with even a option that says if you fail to submit a turn sheet on time you will not find the computer in a good mood happy to put in last week's line up. Instead, your opponent will be credited with

a 3-0 scoreline, an unusual way to get round the problem but something other games might care to copy. It rewards those who take time and trouble to put their turns in on time, only to be beaten by the computer generated line up. Can't be a bad game when Rangers are beaten 4-0 by St Mirren on opening day and Hibs win 3-1 at Hearts! Want to know more? Go on to the web site at [www.geocities.com/floodlitsoccer/home.html](http://www.geocities.com/floodlitsoccer/home.html) or contact Neil on [floodlitsoccer@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:floodlitsoccer@blueyonder.co.uk). Cost is free and seasons involve 30 league matches and cup competitions at a game a week.

Whereas SESL in the last issue used the Olmec system to run its game, Floodlit Soccer uses FSL, and FS gives links to other games using the same set up.

Chris of Spellbinder Games has sold off **Horses for Courses** to Dave Scriven, who is running it under the new name of **Epsom**. At present he has just about a full complement of owners for the 25 stables he operates in the current game, but intention is to open up a second game in the future if enough interested parties come along. More details on this management sim based on horse racing can be got from Dave on [d.scriven@btinternet.com](mailto:d.scriven@btinternet.com).

Last issue a request went out for playtesters for a new football game called **Soccer Sensation** and I have just sent in my sheets to the GM Kevin Johns ([Kevin\\_pbem@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Kevin_pbem@yahoo.co.uk)) - why don't some of you do the same? This game boasts a design-your-own-team - no hangovers from previous manager - and basically equips you with the money to buy the





coaches and scouts you want (more money spent obviously means the better calibre of person you get - bit like modern day business, really) and the skill points to build and name your own team squad. Do you give high skill levels to a few 'stars' or spread them round to get a little consistency? Your money can be used to build up the stadium (naming it as well, and it seems Kevin is keen to avoid real life names for these). One or two of the players in each team will have some hidden talents (if there are any of these players at Everton, they have certainly kept them hidden!). Now how many more testers Kevin still needs I don't know, why not ask him and let him get started?

**Miisl** (Major Internet Indoor Soccer League) asked me to join them when they were looking for expansion teams to replace teams that had folded. This is a 6-a-side indoor league run by Sandro from the States. It boasts of three divisions of 16 teams each and as you might expect from a US-based game, stats are the order of the day. As an expansion team you get access to three different rounds of drafting to start up your team, subject to a salary cap designed to give the higher divisions better paid players. The beauty of this, as I found out, is that some of these superteams can't afford all their high price stars, so they loan them out to smaller fry teams like my Edinburgh lads. All the team names have to be close to the manager's actual location, and seeing team names like Victoria, Gibraltar, Baltimore, Auckland, Nantes, Bermuda and Nanaimo (not a clue to this one!) gives a real flair for the nationalities of the participants. To be honest I thought the drafting was a little tedious, but as I crafted the squad with my bare hands, and added a couple of top players from Montreux Express, I felt an achievement was made. Another game where the new lad does not have to take the previous owner's indiscretions over, he gets to start from the beginning. Edinburgh are certainly not a poor team for that: in fact, I am looking for promotion especially after winning the Tartan Bowl 5-4 on aggregate against a first division team. I know he has beaten me 6-1 since, but dreams are made of such moments, so don't spoil it. There are opportunities to join competitions set up by some players, like the North Sea Cup, and the Ides of March Cup where, just by entering, your squad can build up their skills and endurance levels before the actual League starts. I played 16 matches at a pace of around four a week - no problems here so long as you don't have injuries, as your last team will be put back in for the next match. Only six players take the field (your squad is likely between 12 and 16 players depending upon the salary limit), with you naming subs for each position to help endurance. It is actually an easy league to play in, with games all around you. For example, last Sunday Edinburgh won their opening match 12-1 (unusual but tactics were correct and 0-0s do happen!), on Tuesday I play my Open Cup first match (of five), Thursday an Ides of March first match (of three), and on Friday my 2nd League fixture. The other two Ides of March games are on Saturday and Sunday, then it quietsens down to 2twoleague and one cup tie per week. All competitions are based on round robin, no straight KO games here, so opportunities to qualify in first or second places are there for winning. It is not a resource management game. Once you have your team you can trade or pick from the pool of players but basically that's it. Up front football, and plenty of it. The League is full at present, but last league matches are on June 7, and this is the 10th season, so it is not a new league by any means. Whilst League matches total 30 per club, it is possible an active manager with an average team will complete around double that amount. Web page gives you previous seasons' highlights and results, basically the game is email only. Check out the former at [www.geocities.com/\\_adidas6/\\_miisl.html](http://www.geocities.com/_adidas6/_miisl.html), - Sandro's email address for checking on future positions is [chiavuzzo@knickerbockers.ch](mailto:chiavuzzo@knickerbockers.ch).

Cristiano Crispetti is currently looking to expand his Italian football PBeM game (based on the lines of SESL, which was reviewed last month) by starting up an English-speaking version called **Strangerland**. He has around eight managers so far but could do with filling up the other 12 vacancies. It will be free and Cristiano will make you welcome - web site is [www.pbmland.net](http://www.pbmland.net) and you can apply from there.

Next issue I expect to be reviewing games in Baseball, Rugby League, Football and perhaps American Football. Now if only someone involved in Boxing or Wrestling was to discover my address?



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# Kings of Karadon

## The Ancients' Return

**DUNCAN CHISHOLM** explains the background to *Kings of Karadon*, game 2.  
Additional material by **COLIN FORBES** and **ANDY KENDALL** ...

AFTER MY Beginner's Guide to **Kings of Karadon** (issue 94) I originally intended to present the diaries of King Kothkhan of Reichmar, a position in game 2: *The Ancients' Return*. Having written the first part of this diary, I gave it to a friend to read, who pointed out that none of it made sense, since there was no indication of world history, background or what had led up to the events I was describing. So, may I therefore present a brief history of time as King Kothkhan knows it. My thanks both to the GM for use of background material and also Andy Kendall whose synopsis of events (sent to new players in his role as High King) I have used extensively. The diary proper will commence in the next issue ...

### History

'When the Ancients first came forth from the Void to trouble the lands of Karadon they found only the Elves to have developed any degree of civilisation. Issuing forth from the Void in the mountains of the Riftlands, the Ancients terrorised the barbaric tribes of Men, Orcs and other creatures that inhabited those mountains.

Akin to the present-day Dwarves in appearance, the Ancients were vastly superior to all the races of Karadon, though they were but few in number, for they wielded magical powers the like of which have not been seen in the lands since the Ancients went to their long rest in the Halls of Silence. So it was that the Ancients spread across the lands making themselves at home according to their various natures. Some chose to appear to tribes as angels, guiding their charges towards enlightenment and civilisation, whilst others enslaved whole tribes and bent them to their will. Their realms established the Ancients made war upon each other using both magic and might of arms. Thus were the lands of Karadon shattered beyond all recognition, seas rose and fell and new mountain ranges reared up where once there had been broad grasslands.

This might have continued indefinitely had not Liriath, the Mother of All, sent forth her twelve children to do battle with the Ancients. Once again war ravaged the lands, but in this war the Children of Liriath vanquished the Ancients utterly and confined them in the Halls of Silence that lie apart from the world, to sleep for the rest of eternity. The Children of Liriath remained in the world, in time being worshipped as Gods.

In the centuries after the Ancients were banished from the world, the peoples of Karadon grew in numbers once more, though each race developed along different lines. This was to be the cause of many troubles in the ages to come, for the Ancients had changed the backward races they had found in the land to suit their own needs. Around the islands of the south-west strange lizard-like creatures now dwelt and the fearsome races of the Ograin and Taurim now troubled the coasts of the world. Great was the enmity between many of these peoples and for many years therefore Karadon remained in a state of anarchy and war, with each race living in secluded clans that roamed the lands making war not only upon one another but especially with the races that had more developed societies.

### *Kings of Karadon at a glance*

In depth, open-ended, fantasy empire-building game now from Timewyrm. Mixed moderated. Start-up is normally £5 (See ad in this issue), further turns cost £5.00 Reduction in fee for early orders.

Scattered around Karadon lie the legacies of the Ancients, sites of great power and dread where few have the courage to tread. Many of these hold only memories of those who once dwelt within them and other lesser creatures have made their abode in the caves and towers. Scattered in the more remote regions however are places where the memory of the Ancients is still preserved in the form of artifacts of great power or in the form of immortal servants of the Ancients who now wander the world seeking ever to hide their heritage, for to be revealed would mean certain death even in these later days.

Centuries passed and wars raged across Karadon, realms rose and fell until the world lay exhausted. At this time there ruled in the city of Miradon a Shafik Queen named Bethsana. At the end of the latest war between the Shafik and the Horans, the Queen resolved in her heart that the wars would continue no longer, so it was that she summoned the Wise from across the lands to meet in Miradon and discuss ways of bringing order into the world. Backed by the might of the Magi of all Nine Elemental Circles, the Wise eventually prevailed upon most of the petty kingdoms to cease their warring for a time at least - woe betide any who stood against them, for the united power of the Magi was awesome, as the Horans of Tarisk found out when they took arms and dared to march on Miradon itself. Their lands now form the wasteland of J'Tarith. The Magi offered Bethsana the Crown of the Ancients, an artifact thought to imbue the wearer with god-like powers. The Queen however refused and prophesied that another would come a thousand years hence who would claim the Crown. For some while afterwards this peace endured, but alas, as time went on the consensus amongst the Magi failed and, without a leader, the High Council lost much of its authority.

Some two hundred years ago a plague broke out amongst the peoples of the Riftlands, before long spreading to all corners of the world killing countless thousands. In the aftermath the rule of law collapsed in all but a few towns, centres of that civilisation which remained. Since then the kingdoms have begun to rebuild, though as yet few kings have set out to retake the lands beyond their city walls. Yet all dream of the day when they will lead their conquering armies across the face of the world, forcing the High Council to offer them the Crown of the Ancients.'

### Nowadays

Such is the history of Karadon as told by the Wise - but much has happened in the more recent history: events which very much constrain and direct my policies as King of Reichmar. The realms of Karadon are very different, but one development would appear to threaten all of us. Most nations, Reichmar included, worship the Blessed Children of Liriath, gods if you will, though they are but the servants of much greater beings.

The great enemy of the Liriath's Children long ago were, as you will have read in the histories, the Ancients. These beings seek pawns to spread their evil and blight. Alas! Many realms have, in recent times, fallen under their sway. Alkanis to the East, Krakonis to the South West, Varos in the North East, Hinchu Cho in the heartlands of Karadon and Zinkuru, an island off the southern coast of the continent. After an attack on Alkanis, the capital of the Vikjarl realm of Jarlhorst was destroyed by an ice storm, deemed by sages to be the work of Ancient-inspired magics. The result is that some nations have sworn the destruction of the Ancient followers. Varos has only recently become known as a devotee of evil, but has the capability of summoning troops over great distances. Krakonis is small

and relatively weak, and has done little. Hinchu Cho on the other hand is powerful, and (if others are to be believed) deceived many of Karadon's rulers for years. Empress Matsura of Hinchu Cho has sworn to unite the ancient Chin Empire and ascend the Jade Throne, itself an artefact made by the Ancients.

Finally, Zinkuru has developed a strange type of reptilian creature, and is swarming up the coast. Lokoja has fallen and only this year the realms of Drost and N'Toro. My advisors have suggested that Miradon itself may be the target, but I am not so sure. The evil-doers of Zinkuru are now putting a great deal of pressure on the Aramon Sea Alliance, drawing their firepower away from Varos and Alkanis. There is an evil strategy behind these events ... Worse still, Zinkuru is under the control of the head Ancient himself, Droviath. Some elementals are creatures of Ancients, whilst others (such as the Fire Elementals of Busaris) are not.



### A world divided

The disparate realms of Karadon are far from united. There is a titular High King of Karadon - currently Steinbart, originally from Skaris, a powerful realm in the frozen north. The High King was granted the Crown of the Ancients (an old symbol of the office) by Miradon's Council of Elders from a international, 'competition'. This is actually a poor term, but it was based on a number of criteria, including wealth, military power, technological level, population happiness, and quite a lot of other things besides. The High King wields a certain amount of moral authority and appears to have some mystical powers, the limit to which no-one seems to know - but if truth be known, the High King has little real authority of the sort needed to bind the free nations of Karadon into an alliance which might defeat the Ancients and their worshippers.

*The North East:* Jarlhorst controls the island of Torkeld. My realm of Reichmar holds much of the main land mass, with occasional border skirmishes against the powerful Aramon Sea Alliance and some recent trouble with Trolls. Jarlhorst and her allies are sworn to cleanse Alkanis, whilst Jarrowton has marched against the Ancient-worshipping Svarts in the marches of Varos. Pryanor is a druidic realm about which little is known.

*The South East:* Pharaoh Rameses of Busaris controls a huge area of land, having found the lost city of Tarisk in the desert. N'Toro I believe holds a large territory in the south, though with the goblin nation in the mountains being all but destroyed and the recent capture of Lokoja and N'Toro by Zinkuru, this whole region is far from stable.

*The West:* This looks likely to be something of a war zone for some time to come. Although there is a fairly strong Liriath-based alliance on the sub continent of Ringmar, Krakonis is a definite threat, as is Zinkuru. On the mainland the Orcs of Zuruk Zor seem at eternal war with the Dwarves of Dun Eyrie in the area as well as Andalor further south. All are threatened by Hinchu Cho! The Taurim (sort of Minotaurs) island of Kranak was recently hit by a huge eruption, destroying the capital. However a number of nations, led by Skaris, rallied round and the Taurim seem well on the way to recovering. Apparently a large fleet of Taurim has also arrived from a homeland to the far west, off the territory charted on the maps held in Reichmar's library. The Dwarven realm of Daragond is currently held by Skaris, though I have heard reports of an uprising,

which may or may not be connected with the recent establishment of a Dwarven League. The politics of Karadon are complicated, to say the least!

*The North West:* Grazil's former Wolfen ruler went mad and attacked a High Council protectorate at Frost Holm. As an Ice Dwarf town, it had been agreed by a High Council Treaty that the Ice Dwarf realm of Frost Holm should be part of the mainly Ice Dwarven land of Skaris. A brief war followed, but things seem to have settled down now. The new ruler has agreed to a peace offered through the Council, though Frost Holm itself is still under Wolfen rule. The Drow realm of Dras Dornen has recently attacked its own ally Derekdwelf and subjugated it (walked in under an alliance, and then reversed the alliance). This has caused a lot of diplomatic ripples - and such things have a way of growing bigger with time. I can only hope that the Lord of Dras Dornen does not get drowned when the ripples become a tidal wave.

*The Central Heartlands:* Hinchu Cho controls most of the Varatim Grasslands as far north as the Forest of Iranorn. The mighty Tengriz of Anyakhoram are reputedly at war with Hinchu Cho, though I have no proof of this. The Tengriz are sort of cousins to the Koth of Reichmar, though they are more skilled with horses, whereas we are renowned for riding bears into battle. The Elven realm of Udomiel is allied with Lindros, the Shafik land of Karst has subjugated Elven Irias and the Centaur lands (although Karst have subsequently set Irias up as a puppet state). Khanvane has joined the Dwarven League. Only Miradon in the south remains a force for stability in this part of the world.

### Problems, problems ...

Politically the international situation is a nightmare. The Aramon Sea Alliance more or less controls the High Council, whilst attempts to organise the various High Priests into some kind of co-ordinated resistance against the Ancient worshipping nations seems unlikely to succeed, there are simply too many different agenda vying for position and influence.

Yet all this is as nothing to my problems on the domestic front. Economic collapse is looming, many of my courtiers are demanding a rise in wages, bandits are raiding trade caravans and strange things are going on in the Marsh of Krilst. Then there's the Trolls. Angorn give me patience to deal with them ...

May the Children of Liriath look well on you until we meet again.

# Conclave

## Will Magic Save or Destroy this World?

*DAVID AMES tries out two very different characters ...*

*'...You sit down, take a moment to focus your mind on the strange object in the case before you and say the words of Divination. Your vision blurs then clears. You see a woman, human by the look of it, with short dark hair, standing before the wings. She wears an amulet around her neck. As you watch, she reaches into the case, lifts out the wings and straps them onto her arms. Her fingers curl once. And, at once, the wings expand, extra plates sliding out until they are four times as wide as they were before, and long enough to meet behind her back. With a quick backwards movement of her arms she locks the wings together, forming a single sheet of metal, bright as silver. The library melts away, a wind ruffles your hair and the woman leaps into the air. The wind carries her up until she is out of sight. You blink. The crystal case stands, untouched, before you. "What did you see?" Sokanon asks.'*

THIS IS a turn extract penned by the GM, Claire, for the wandering minstrel Caldicot as he travels through the lands of **Conclave**. You will hear more of Caldicot and his travels in a moment; first I will get some facts about the game out into the open. At the risk of categorising it too much, Conclave is a closed ended, free format, play by email, fantasy role-playing game. The game itself is run by Undying King Games and is email only at the present time. Email it may be, free it is not; turns are processed monthly and cost a total of £4.50 a turn. So, not much per month perhaps compared to some (in fact now I come to think of it, all) of my other vices. However when you consider that this is a free format game I think the game is slightly under-priced considering the amount of human input, skill and time it must take to moderate the game and write individual turn reports.

### Background

Coming back to the game itself, it is set in a traditional medieval fantasy land which is well described and detailed in the rulebook. Magic is possible and indeed, reading through the various problems besetting the land, is likely to become a vital feature of it. The particular Sword of Damocles hanging over the world is that it is about to end and this simple fact has a way of galvanising and polarising opinion as you can perhaps imagine. However as an ironic twist, most believe that the use of Magic is destabilising the world and so they blame the use of Magic by Mages as bringing on this crisis. This means that most players are Mages desperately trying to find out what is causing the end of their world as well as trying to avoid being lynched by the very population they are trying to save! With Religious leaders inciting violence and retribution against the Mages as they too follow their own ends, we have a stage set for almost constant struggle.

### Start-up

The start-up procedure is simple: all you need to do is send Claire a simple outline of the life of the character up until this point and their rough objectives if known. After this you rank the ten different starting

attributes in the order in which they are most important to you, a variant which has much merit over the 'expend points on attributes' start-up. In these rankings a Mage character would tend to have a high Potence (Magical Ability), a strong Body and a good Mind. A Political leader would rank these low, instead choosing the different skills of Following, Holdings and Responsibility as high-ranking attributes. It is obvious then that great Mages are not going to wield much political clout, but could potentially wield great power.

The down side to being a Mage is that much time and energy needs to be spent in researching ever more powerful spells, leaving little time for the hurly-burly of intrigue. My preference is for a more political, interactive position than a pure Mage would provide, and yet neither did I wish to miss out on this important aspect of the game. I discussed this dilemma with Claire and eventually chose for my review position Caldicot the Minstrel, a simple wandering bard with a trusty mastiff and a tame song thrush as companions. He has some moderate magical ability, based mainly around divination and healing, in addition to his singing and wit. However, in addition to this position I am with my own money playing a more political role as head of Meridar, the city of Thieves - and a nasty piece of work at that. I hoped that these two disparate characters would give me a good feel for how different aspects of the game play.

The game turns each cover a season of play and are moderated on the first of the month, and the world ends in six years (go on work it out)... In addition to this monthly turn there is a strictly optional mid month deadline for those who want to submit subsidiary orders. This additional order cannot interact with another player (unless that player also submits one) and uses an allocation of 'Action Points' from the main turn. These action points are finite (six per turn) and so using two or three on the mid-season subsidiary means you can expend fewer on the main one two weeks later. This is a nice way of ensuring those players submitting the supplementary orders do not gain an advantage.

The turn is composed of free-form orders and you can submit as many of these as you like, but the chance of success of an order depends upon how many Action Points are expended in its execution. So, for example, if I wanted to walk from one village to the next I would submit an order and expend 1AP. If I wanted to research a particularly difficult spell, then I might need to spend more time on this to ensure success, perhaps 2 or even 3APs. At the other end of the complexity spectrum, let's say I wanted to teach Warble (my tame thrush companion) a new song. I would simply say that I was doing it as we strolled along some woodland path between villages, walking through the dappled shade but expending no additional action points. It may fail, or it may succeed, but for an action like this I am happy to take the chance. Within the game I tended to submit four to six orders in total, each costing a combination of 0, 1 and 2 action points.

### The Game objectives

Conclave is entirely free form: it is up to individual players to decide their area of interest, their objectives and indeed everything they do. There are no restrictions other than the obvious one; that is of course that the world will end in six years unless some way can be found to prevent it.

### Gameplay

I decided to play my two characters very differently. The Taskmaster (after some initial discussion with Claire to fill in background) knew exactly what he wanted to do and has worked diligently and with the

### *Conclave at a glance*

A fantasy roleplaying PBeM game from Undying King Games. Startup + 2 turns is £10, with further turns at £4.50 each. There are some places available.



single-mindedness of a rabid dog to achieve this.

Caldicot is by complete contrast a fairly passive nice guy, wandering through the countryside singing a few songs and spreading news of places near and far to pay for his humble board and lodgings. Claire has thrown him across the path of other PCs and has given me leads to follow such that if I had wanted to I could probably gone down one of several different routes. Some clues were obvious, some were more subtle ones that I have only realised were clues now that I have re-read the game background prior to writing the review. He has however been content to just amble along. I would guess from a GM's point of view this sort of passive player is more difficult to manage and I wanted to see how she dealt with this, particularly knowing I was the reviewer! She answered my passivity by taking a hand developing Caldicot and whilst it was not what I intended when I conceived the idea of my humble character, it was certainly fun. The shy, retiring Bard began to achieve Pop Idol status, with ladies throwing articles of clothing at him and with his attempts to sing a few songs in the local tavern turning into sell out concerts requiring bouncers with black suits and no necks to keep out the uninvited. So much fame did he achieve, that after an attempt on his life he actually had to use magic to make himself less conspicuous in order to walk on the streets without being mobbed by admirers.

After much effort (and I would imagine, relief from the GM point of view) Claire did eventually pique my interest with a storyline and it involved a pair of metallic wings in a crystal case. This is the item referred to in the turn extract at the beginning of the article. I will enclose another extract from my turns for you to get a further feel for the style of the game. Caldicot has decided to try on the wings whilst skirting the great forest en route to the city of Ambar.

### Wings

*'The test flight leaves you feeling exhilarated. You seem to know instinctively what to do, allowing the wind to lift you up, then tilting your body to change direction. Your arms ache a little when you've finished, but no more than after a session of martial arts practice. Flying higher the second time, you remember the story of the girl who flew into the sun until she died. You allow Warble to guide you, swinging round in huge circles. The sun is warm on your back, the wind caresses you, all is peaceful. Spread out below are the fields and forests of north Bernea. You see the sunlight sparking off the fabulous glass tower in Ambar, home to the mage AiEsha Dalgroth. You see people hurrying about, looking like beetles at this distance. Some of them stop and stare upwards as you pass overhead. A fleet of ships is moving southwards to Veluta. Another, smaller, fleet is coming north. Your gaze scans over the swell of the hills, on towards the sea, and for one moment you feel a strong urge to fly in that direction, gliding out over blue water until you reach the other side of the world. Warble chirps a warning to you, reminding you of where you are and you circle round, turning back to your starting point. As you do, you hear a voice in the air around you, something telling you don't belong in this element. A squall of wind catches you. You ride it, wings outspread, twisting free as another gust catches you from the other side. You've outstayed your welcome, you feel. You glide back to your starting point, steering carefully as odd currents of air try to take you off course. The moment your feet touch the ground, the wind stills. There is one last echo of a woman's voice in your mind then that too is gone, leaving you with an overwhelming sense that you were lucky to get off so lightly.'*

### Turn Results

As you can see from the turn extract above, the majority of the turn is taken up with a free form reply. In addition to this comes a more general newsletter type of piece that is circulated to all players. As you can imagine, all major events including misleading ones such as the sighting of a manifestation of the Wind Goddess are reported faithfully. The final part of the turn comes in the form of an email spreadsheet that ranks all players depending on how well they are achieving their objectives and in order of Political and Magical power.

### Strong points

The Magic system is nice: like the game it is free form, and while the GM will give guidance I get the impression that if you can think of it you can do it. The areas of expertise are divided up, so that for example Earth mages have a tendency toward healing and Stone on defence and wisdom. I do not however want to bash on about the system here since it is well explained in the rulebook. Suffice it to say that it works well.

Another advantage is one that is neatly illustrated by the use of email. The Taskmaster decided to 'rescue' a fellow city (Sher) from the oppressive control of another city (Squill), and if (ahem) in the process Meridar gained control of the city then well, c'est la vie! I prepared and trained my forces and 'liberated' the city, beating off a huge counter-attack such that Squill sued for peace. All this was related in my end of turn report and was reported in the newsletter. What was not reported, however, is the fact that in the following month between turns month dozens of emails passed between Claire and myself as we negotiated the fate of the city. This was treated as a subsidiary turn and was concluded without interfering with the main flow of the game at all. Just before the next turn was due, Claire announced onto the message board that negotiations were complete and peace was restored in Southern Bernea. This flexibility was not needed for the passive Caldicot but was used several times by the plotting and scheming Taskmaster as he communicated with GM-run characters within the game, forming alliances and indeed (gasp) breaking them occasionally.

### Weaknesses

There are few: the GMing is imaginative and the game concept is good. My main area of discontent revolves around the monthly turnaround. In games like this much of the fun comes with interacting with the other players (remember my preference for political games) and the availability of a yahoo-groups message site for all to post messages adds greatly to the potential for such interaction. Alas, I think the infrequent turns reduce the impetus to communicate and so the game never seemed to grip me and live up to its potential in this hugely important area of player interaction. It is of course an area in which the GM is relatively powerless to intervene, although I think I said already that Claire had thrown Caldicot in the direction of a few other players during his travels.

### An Overview

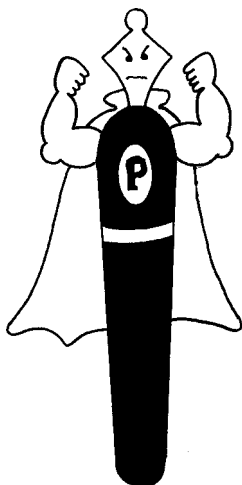
So now you have a feel for the game and how it runs, is there anything about the game which makes it stand apart from the rest? Well, there are a variety of ways in which Conclave differs from other games that are on offer. That it is played via email is either an advantage or disadvantage depending on personal preference. That it is pretty much free form and email-only I think sets it apart.

If you find your curiosity tickled by this review you could do worse than visit the excellent Undying King web site which can be accessed at [www.ukg.co.uk](http://www.ukg.co.uk). On the site you will find details of Conclave and other UKG games to play. There is a glorious full colour map, miscellaneous background information and the rulebook all ready to download. You may have noticed I have mentioned several times that an item is covered well in the rulebook, only then to move on. Now is your chance to see it you agree with me and read the rules!

I am informed by the GMs that anyone wishing to join the game could do so straight away with an enhanced set-up so that you can quickly get into the swing of the game. Also that while the game is an email one, UKG will happily send a copy of your turn to you on paper for which there is an extra charge. Membership of the message board is, however, compulsory and so you must have access to the www in order to play. If there were sufficient interest Claire has said that she would consider a postal game, but I understand when UKG polled players about it there was little enthusiasm for this. The players all opted for a month turnaround as well, and so since this is my main criticism it should perhaps be seen more as a personal preference rather than a game flaw.

On balance, the game is a winner, combining a realistic gameworld and an interesting scenario with good GMing.

# THE MIGHTY PEN



## More on Interviews...

Like Richard Miles (Prudent, in Interviews? - The Mighty Pen, issue 95) I have encountered problem in job interviews when the subject of PBM (and LRPG) had been raised. It got to the point that I removed PBM games (and LRPG) from my CV and, when I got to the interview, did not bring it up, preferring instead to concentrate on more 'mainstream' hobbies which the interviewer could understand and had little chance to be prejudiced against.

**Antony Dunks** (*GM of Xott*)

I was interested to read Richard Miles' experience of a job interview. I have sat on such interview panels and have come across people with a clear interest in gaming. I don't think any have been disadvantaged by owning up to having such a hobby. In fact it's usual to look for a healthy set of hobbies and interests outside work. This is generally held to indicate that the interviewee leads an active life and has an active mind, qualities any employer is looking for.

I can only sympathise with Richard and suggest that the problem lies not with him, but the IT Manager who may well have been reacting with a specific case in mind. A question of being in the wrong interview at the wrong time.

Keep Gaming on your CV: it won't normally do you any harm and, in some instances, will actively help your cause.

**Duncan Chisholm**

## Let's hear it for computer games

Hasn't Patrick Gleeson ever heard of Nintendo's Game-Boy? (Or the mighty new Game-Boy Advance?) Here we have a portable gaming machine, about the same size as an average book, and decidedly smaller than many fantasy tomes, which consumes precious few batteries, and runs absolutely crashless/bugless games many of which positively encourage social contact! (I mean, to complete any of the *Pokemon* games honestly, you either need to have two Game-Boys and a copy of each of the different coloured versions of the game, or track down a like-minded soul to trade the little critters with. I know which is the cheaper option, and there are more closet Pokemaniacs out there than you'd ever imagine! Or you could, I suppose, just hang around outside the local Junior school ... but that might lead to arrest, and we don't want that, do we?)

By playing using one of these little wonders, you have freedom to avoid all the pains listed in Patrick's article, except perhaps the sore fingers, and play top quality games of a varied nature - *Harvest Moon 1 & 2* for instance, bizarre mixes of RPG and Farming Simulator, or *Stranded Kids*, nothing more than a survival RPG. Then there's your *Zeldas*, a good few *Final Fantasy* games (and this was before style overtook substance in the series ...). the ubiquitous *Pokemon*, solid little RPGs with the added bonus of, well, at a glance I've put in over 100 hours on *Pokemon Red* ... and I still haven't caught 'em all. Then there's *The Legend of the River King 2*, a fishing RPG, which allows you to trade fish, butterflies and other assorted insects with *Harvest Moon 2*.

And in the wake of the release of the Game-Boy Advance, the games have taken a great step forward, with lush graphics, music to die for,

special effects that are nothing short of astounding, and stories that are, well, all the more involving thanks to the aforementioned improvements.

I'm not saying don't read, I'm just saying that there are more convenient ways of playing digital RPGs than on the big beige breeze-block in the corner ...

**Larry Deyell**

PS: Yay! Consignia is gonna change its name to Royal Mail!

## Interactive Gaming

I've noticed that Madhouse no refer to themselves (on their website, at least) as Madhouse Interactive Entertainment. With so many games now being offered via email and web interfaces, surely Flagship would be remiss if it did not change its nomenclature to match this trend. Yes, we're still playing postal games, but wouldn't *Postal and Interactive Gaming* read better than *Email and Postal Gaming* under your masthead?

I know this debate has been had before, with people pointing out that chess was an interactive game, but haven't things moved on since then? After all, Flagship regularly runs material on board games. And what of turn-based computer games that can be played over the net?

**Terry Royle**

## Ideas?

I'd like to ask GMs where they get their ideas from for new games.

Is it entirely from other games? (Hope not!) Or are you working up an idea that's been in your minds for ages?

And how much research do you have to do, fellows? Do you know it all already, or have to build up the background by visiting the library?

Will anyone tell me? Are you students or gods?

**Barry Garson**

## Payment and Technology

I've just bought a computer. If I join email only games, do I need to pay by credit card, or will the GMs accept a cheque?

**Paul Appleby**

[Cheques are OK for UK based GMs; overseas you'll need a credit card. Or play free games?]



## Your Feedback on Issue 95

YOU RATED last issue at an honourable 8.35, with particular praise for its appearance and for the introduction of regular columnists who write well and know their stuff.

You liked the two-viewpoint coverage of Aspects of Might, and Steve Tierney's Retroscope was enjoyed by ex-players of Medokh. Also praised were Great White Hunter, Eldritch, Austerlitz, Lands of Elvaria, Zine Scene, Neutral Zone, Spiel 2000 and Beelzebob ('I can understand US readers complaining, but what news Bob McLain doesn't give you, he doesn't give you with style! And the style is: scary. Americans who lose "the dream" and get all cynical are just terrifying. Bob, Eminem, Donald Duck - ever see 'em all together? Thought not' - **Paul Appleby**).

Nothing was universally disliked, hooray. **Duncan Cockayne**, however, found Bob 'below par this time round. Fling another cute furry mammal into the cage!' Argh, heaven knows what response we'll get to this suggestion, Duncan! Also criticised were the Chevia diary ('well written, interesting stuff, but why publish articles on games readers cannot join?' - **Jason Brown**), Neutral Zone, The Displacement Engine, while **Chris Morris** thought Spiel 2000 didn't have 'enough about any one game'. One objection that I can't resist quoting came from **Paul Appleby**: 'Do we really need an apologia for Great White Hunter when loads of other games involve mass slaughter of *people*? The words "political", "correctness", "gone" and "mad" spring to mind. Oops, sorry, that was you ...' You have a point here, Paul, I must admit. The glib reply is 'Ha, animals can't shoot back!', but to tell the truth your editor was trying to conceal an unBritish dislike of animals (rough, smelly, loud) only surpassed by a strong dislike of animal libbers (wet, smelly, loud). Over-compensating, sorry.

Question 4 asked whether *Flagship's* coverage should be broader. No-one wants us to stick just to games that are frequently reviewed, with 76% thinking that little-publicised games may well be excellent and 24% that if we list games, we should jolly well try them out. A neat idea comes from **Stuart Rose**, who suggests running 'a column on little known games': any volunteers for this? And remember: if you're playing a game that doesn't get enough attention, we'll be glad to hear from you.

Question 5 asked whether you prefer your games grouped by subject in *Galactic View*. 20% favour an alphabetical listing, while 35% like *GV* to be grouped. 10% think this is too difficult ('I rather suspect that the "Miscellaneous" categories might end up bursting at the seams' - **Larry Deyell**), but the rest of you came up with a useful compromise: that of alternating the two versions. So let's go with the compromise! Sorry *GV's* print is so small, it's the only way we can fit all the material in without spreading onto more pages.

Finally, Question 6 asked whether you'd like to see more features of a game listed in *GV* than those we already cover: namely turnaround, length or interactivity. Most of you went for all three! 'All of them are useful to know, but unless a game has a daily turnaround or is expected to run for ten years none of them would have an actual effect on whether I chose to play a game or not,' says **Stuart Rose**; 'All of these, but interactivity is probably the most important. Though it never works out quite as reported...' says **Chris Morris**. Indeed, turnaround may vary depending on a GM's real-world concerns and interaction may depend on the attitude of the other players. Several of you suggest noting these aspects of a game in reviews rather than in *GV*, and this does seem a better course for us to take.

Many thanks for all replies. We don't have the space to quote them all in full, but we do always take notice of them.

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  - (a) no, I don't have enough time,
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  - (a) Pish, I don't care, it's content that counts,
  - (b) Pshaw, no, let's not lose sight of our roots,
  - (c) Phew, yes, that'd make our hobby sound prestigious!

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# Middle Earth

## The Mid-Game

*JEFFERY DOBBERPUHL continues his in-depth advice for beginners ...*

*'There was an angry debate concerning what they were to do now: which way they were to take and what should be done with the prisoners.' Lord of the Rings II*

A MID-GAME of **Middle Earth PBM** probably begins around turn 10 or so in most games. It can be the longest portion of the game, and one in which it is far too easy to become complacent. Mid-game should be defined as a period which starts when two events occur: (i) at least three neutral nations have aligned themselves with good or evil, and (ii) the camp limit has been met (ie, no more population centers can be regularly placed by emissaries. Note that the game only allows a fixed number of population centers in the game at one time. In an *extremely* aggressive game, this number can be met around turn 7 or 8. At that point, only ruins can be 'camped' until other population centers have been destroyed.).

Until these events occur, it is difficult to say truly that the game has gotten a full head of steam. This is because the declaration of neutrals drastically determines the balance of power in Middle Earth and the fixing of population centers determines where are the resources and staging areas available to those powers.

### Establishing Goals

As with the opening moves of the game, it is important to have long-term goals for both the team and each individual nation. These goals must include: a method of tracking enemy Army movements, a method of tracking enemy Agent movements, a method of turning Emissaries from mere economic supporters to offensive tools, and the development and deployment of character killers - Agents, Curse Companies, and Challengers. Armies, of course, must continue to press their goals.

Tracking enemy army movements is not always an easy task. This is because each player's map is small compared to the entire area covered by the game map. Recon is possibly the most effective Army locator in the game. However, there are a number of spells, Agent actions and artifacts that can help.

Learning what is *in* an Army is more problematic. Recon typically only gives you a guess as to the Army's size. You will need spells or an Agent actually scouting the Army to get a better read of its composition. Further, be warned: an anomaly in the game will sometimes prevent an Agent performing a 'scout for characters' order to detect the name of an enemy Army Commander. Issuing the 'recon' order is actually more effective for discovering this information on a reliable basis.

Finally, do the math. If another player knows where an Army was last turn, even 'off-map', one can easily pull out the master map and figure out where the Army could be. Comparing this against known targets in the area will more often than not reveal the Army's new location.

Methods for tracking enemy Agents are few and far between. There

are two magic spells, one for revealing a character's location, and one for revealing the location of an artifact the Agent is known to be carrying, that are somewhat effective. However, experienced players will use Emissaries to turn enemy Agents into double Agents! Each turn, that turncoat will reveal the orders she was given as well as her new location. Best of all, the owning player does not know the Agent is revealing this information to the enemy! It is also critical to check each player's turn sheet for messages. By comparing notes, it is actually possible to track enemy Agent movements based on the 'gold stolen' reports.

During the mid-game, it is very important to start using Emissaries on aggressive missions. An Emissary Company (a number of Emissaries led by a single Commander) can be devastating if used against former neutral nations. This is because, unless the neutral nation has used valuable orders to shift its nation's political views, it is vulnerable to diplomatic attacks. On a single turn, Saruman (The White Wizard) can fall to a coordinated strike from a team even with an enormous Army in Isengard. Additionally, Emissaries can deny critical resource producing sites from the enemy, as well as recruiting centres.

When should Emissaries start taking this role? As soon as all population centers have been camped. At that point, it makes no sense to try to establish new population centers (see above). Keep in mind the two exceptions: a hex with ruins on it can almost always be camped, and when another population center is eliminated, this frees up a new hex to be camped.

How to develop and deploy character killers has to be considered. There are three basic forms and all three have their uses.

First are Agents. Once Agents reach about level 60, they can start assassinating enemy characters on a regular basis. The chance of success depends on whether the character is in a population center, is guarded, commands an army, and how skilled the character is. A stealthy Agent's chances go up dramatically. Assassination and Curse Companies can kill anything, even a cowardly enemy Commander (see below).

Curse Companies are amazing. These are a group of wizards who have learned a spell that attacks an enemy's characters from a one hex distance. Coordinated Agent scouting and Commanders issuing recon will give any Curse Company plenty of targets. Unfortunately, the only way really to get these spells is first to find artifacts that will let wizards learn the magic necessary.

Challengers are characters who have a great deal of fighting skill. They run about, perhaps with an army, perhaps with a company, or perhaps just on their own. When they meet an enemy character, they issue a challenge. The better character wins and gets just a bit stronger. Mages and Commanders tend to make the best challengers. The limitations on challengers are two-fold. First, an Army Commander cannot be challenged by a non-Army Commander, and second, a character can be a gutless ankle-biting coward and issue the 'refuse personal combat' order and be immune to attack (Wormtongue always comes to mind when I think of this order...).

With the above in mind, Armies must continue to press their attacks. If a nation is on the ropes, never give it any breathing room. Kill it or it will return. Also, be aware that many players are willing to do a 'suicide run' to wipe out an enemy. This tactic uses a little understood part of the rules that states that a population center that is attacked during a turn produces *no income*. Since combat occurs before production, an attacked population center will yield no gold, an event that can put a nation on the edge into bankruptcy.

### *Middle Earth PBM at a glance*

Team-based fantasy wargame from Harlequin Games, with a 'Lord of the Rings' setting. £10 for startup + 2 turns, with further turns at £3.90. Turnaround depends on the game, ranging from one to three weeks. There are a variety of Scenarios available ...

Battle of the Five Armies, especially recommended for beginners  
Third Age: 1650, Third Age 2950, Fourth Age: 1000, the Last Alliance and the War of the Ring.



### Characters

Mid-game is a challenging time for character development. Each nation's strategies during the opening moves must be built on during this time period. It is not uncommon to have characters that are now 'dead weight' because of a too heavy focus or too light a focus in any particular area. Did the nation hire too many Emissaries? Then the military may suffer. Did the nation fail to hire enough Agents? Then enemy Agents may be stealing the nation blind. Did the nation fail to maintain enough wizards? Then the ability to shift combats unexpectedly, as well as locate artifacts, is compromised.

That said, there seem to be two goals of character development: Advancing current characters, and Recruiting new characters.

Advancing current characters is always a challenge. Emissaries and Mages in particular find themselves typically getting only 1-5 points per skill enhancing event. Agents and Commanders have more opportunities.

Perhaps the best 'second class' for a multi-skilled character is Commander. Consider the possibilities: A 20-point Agent 10-point Commander is placed in an Army. Each turn, it can train the troops for 1-7 point of command rank, the Commander of the Army (a separate character) can train the Army for an additional 1-5 points of command rank, and the character can also guard the Army Commander for 1-5 points of Agent rank. This character can become very deadly in a short amount of time. By mid game, such a character can easily expect to be a 30 Agent/ 30 Commander or better.

Commanders should be available for training Armies, raising Armies, and providing all the economic orders necessary, such as changing alignment, changing relations, and raising or lowering taxes. Agents should be stealing gold, scouting for enemy characters and assassinating enemy characters. Emissaries should be congregating on enemy population centers to take them over. Mages should be locating enemy characters, either through a character name or an artifact known to be possessed by the enemy.

Recruiting new characters is especially challenging during the mid game. First, each character costs at least 5,000 gold. This can be a challenge for an economically strapped nation. Second, each character requires upkeep. When a nation is trying to pay for fortifications and armies, characters are just another straw on the economic camel's back. Finally, unexpected loss of a character may mean scrambling to fill in a gap in the nation's skill needs. A trick some economically challenged players employ is to hire a 10 point Commander to issue buy-sell orders. The upkeep is minimal even though the commander still costs 10 points.

### Economics

Mastery of mid-game economics is like juggling cats: it's impossible. However, there are some good things to consider.

First, a nation should consider using a 'scorched earth' policy on enemy nations. Whenever an Army destroys an enemy population center, a 'slot' opens up in the camp limit. Since the enemy will not necessarily know that its population center will be destroyed, chances are the destroying nation could use an Emissary to place a new camp in friendly territory. This also prevents a nation from tricking itself into believing it has to hold on to a piece of real estate it does not need. Unless an enemy population center could be easily defended, or used for a quick recruiting center, the advantages of holding a population center may be outweighed by simply destroying it.

Second, communication with team-mates for a 'buy-sell' strategy is critical. Careful planning can result in all the team buying a product on one turn (driving the price up) and then selling on the second turn (driving the price down).

Third, examine whether the tax rates can be increased. If a nation kept its rate at 40 from the start, an increase to 60 can increase income by a third. Alternatively, if a nation fortified the majority of its population centers, the tax rate can be raised even higher. No matter how low loyalty drops (a raise in taxes lowers loyalty and high taxes lower loyalty every turn), a population center cannot degrade if there is a fortification on it.

Fourth, increase the nation's own holdings. Emissaries are the only

character in the game than can make a camp a village. Building a number of villages will directly increase a nation's economic base in short order.

Finally, take the enemy's gold! Agents and Emissaries are critical for swinging a bad economy away from the brink of disaster. Agent 'steal gold' strikes on enemy villages or towns, especially those in rough hexes, can result in literally thousands in stolen gold. Emissaries can steal away an enemy population center - even a lowly camp - each turn. This denies resources to the enemy while increasing a nation's net worth.

### Consolidating the Nation

If the opening moves of a game are about expansion, then the mid game is about consolidation. All of the 'camping armies' (small Armies led by higher level Commanders to place camps) should be recalled and either joined or buffed up with new troops. Emissaries should be employed in groups either to increase the loyalty and size of existing population centers rapidly, or to steal population centers from the enemy.

Commanders should be doubled up to decrease the chance of a loss of an Army to enemy Agents or Curse Companies. Mages should be organized into Curse Companies. Agents should form killing/stealing squads. Often, this consolidation can take place with other nations. Curse squads are difficult for a single nation to establish, for example, but not that difficult for two or three nations acting together.

### Attacking the Enemy

This should really be established as the dirty tricks department. It is simple enough to amass a horde of troops, move in on an enemy population center, and attack. It is an art to use 200-man Armies to destroy an advancing 2000-man Army. Here are a quick half-dozen ideas.

- 1 The fence line: When hunting pheasants in the prairies of South Dakota, one will often come to a fence line. At that point, you need to stop, put down your trusty 20 gauge, and crawl through the barbed wire to get to the other side. Enemy nations can be made to do the same thing. Throw a series of camps around a vital population center (or a single camp in the middle of a pass). Then, throw a fortification up. The enemy Army will have to stop there. This is also where your sickness squad is sitting... For flavor, alternate with an Agent to issue assassination orders.
- 2 Prop up fence line: Similar to the fence line, this establishes a camp in the middle of an enemy advance. One can either hire an Army (risky due to over-runs) or throw up a fortification that the enemy did not know was going to be there. Then see the fence line for finishing off the enemy. This can be also used with Armies to whittle down an enemy's advance.
- 3 Extreme Agents, chapter 1: Stealing from an enemy major town or city is cool. Its also risky. It is much safer to look for enemy villages and towns that are located on typically gold producing hexes, such as hills and rough. Because of the way the 'steal gold' formula is set, there is almost no limit how much gold can be stolen from safer hexes.
- 4 Extreme Agents, chapter 2: Move into an enemy population center, not to steal gold, but to scout for resources. If lucky, a large stock pile of food, timber, etc will be discovered. Successfully sabotage will hurt an enemy far worse than any gold steals. This is because a nation may be living off its sells...
- 5 Locate Artifact: I think this is one of the best ways to track enemy characters. First, you may not know that your enemy named a character 'Miss Fluffy', but if Miss Fluffy is holding an enemy starting artifact, you now have a new target for your agents and mages.
- 6 The land of mists and shadows: This only works for the Free Peoples. Use the noldo hiding artifact to place and hide a population center in Mordor. Use your imagination after that...

### Success

Mid game really belongs to the experienced players. This is where a soft opening strategy begins to fall apart, and well-laid plans grow fruit. A successful mid game will result in a successful end game.

# Tough at the Top

## It's addictive!

**PAUL HARRIS** on a game that stands out from the crowd ...

*'Wilson dinked the ball over the defence which landed brilliantly for Engonga. He could sense he was being tracked but clever thinking and sheer control and smart footwork managed to fool an over eager Llewellyn and unleashed a shot. The keeper saw it late, made a great effort to get across, but it was in vain and the ball skidded sexily past his outstretched arms and into the far corner. GOAL!'*

I love Fridays. Last day of work, weekend to look forward to. **Tough at the Top** waiting at home for me, along with an understanding wife who knows that talking to me before I've finished reading my turn is about as worthwhile as trying to mend the ozone layer with a needle and thread. And scoring a goal like that makes those turns worthwhile.

### So what's TATT all about?

I've enjoyed nearly all of the PBM games that I've played over the fourteen years I've been a part of the hobby, but it's rare that I get a weekly turn of a game that I have to open *now*, have to read *now*. Do you remember when Take That split up, they had to have helplines for all the distraught teenyboppers. TATT addicts would have about the same reaction. As Gershwin almost wrote, 'You can't take TATT away from me.'

So what's TATT all about? As you may have guessed from the opening extract, it's a football game. But is it just a football game? If you mean 'Can I have a team full of elves and dwarves?', then yes, it is just a football game. (Although I'd quite like to play against a team with a dwarf in goal.) If you mean just a football game in the sense of just another one in a crowded market, then I'd have to say no. So what makes it stand out from the crowd?

I've been playing PBMs for around fourteen years now, sticking mainly to sports games. Perhaps surprisingly then, **Tough at the Top** is the first time I've dipped my toes into the world of football PBM. I'd never gotten around to football, partly because I've never been a huge soccer fan and partly because I've always had a sneaking suspicion that football PBMs would be too simple to be entertaining in the long term. Surely they would have to focus on getting players from the wider football market rather than concentrating on the dyed in the wool PBM fan. As far as TATT goes, I've come to the conclusion that I was wrong. And right. Confused? I'll try to explain.

### Getting started

At its simplest, TATT consists of picking your best eleven players, putting them in a formation, telling them what tactics to employ and letting them get on with it. But then again, you decide that if you're 2-1 up with five minutes to go, you'll take off a striker, put on an extra defender, change tactics to something more defensive and move one of your midfielders into a position where he can defend more. You can do that if you want to. TATT is what I can best describe as surface simple. When you first start to play things seem straightforward. The longer you go on with it, the more

variation and flexibility become apparent. From a very simple to follow and fill in turnsheet, you can work in an awful lot of options to cover all the eventualities that you can envisage. In a recent game, I started off playing a style called continental, knocking the ball around and trying to create skilful openings for a shot. Leading the game at around the hour mark, my team switched to heavy marking, trying to preserve the lead by giving the opposition no time on the ball. With a little over five minutes left, we switched tactics again, going to all out defence and bringing an extra defender on to keep us one goal in front. This is all very straightforward to do after a few turns, the initial difficulty being not so much in how you make the changes (simply a matter of filling in numerical values in six boxes), but rather in being able to visualise all the possibilities that may make you want to make a change in the first place.

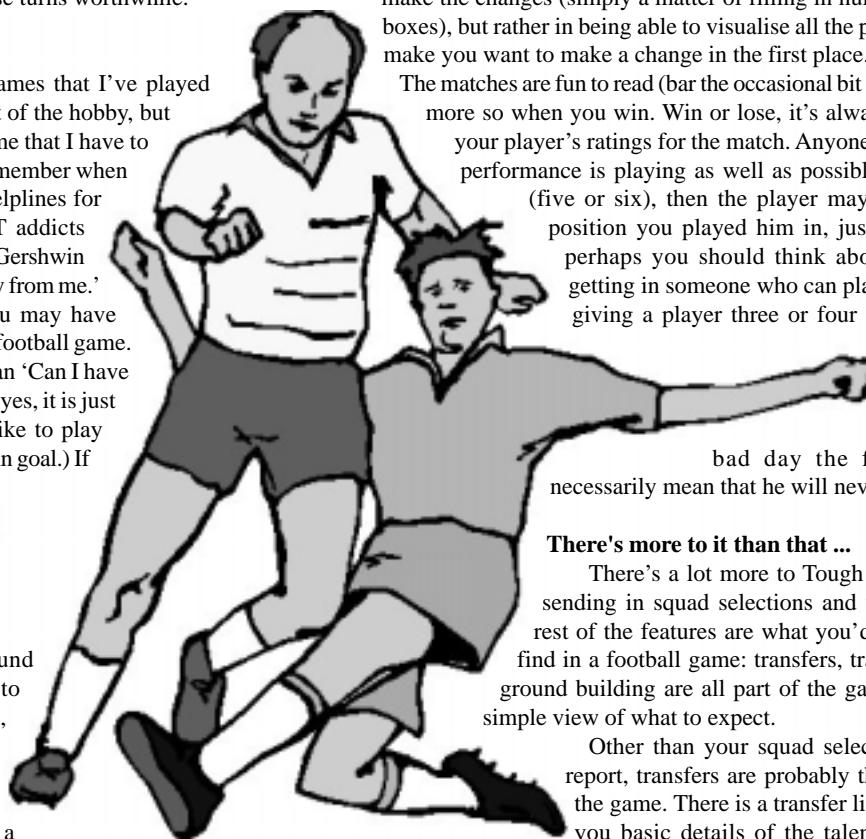
The matches are fun to read (bar the occasional bit of strange grammar), more so when you win. Win or lose, it's always worth looking at your player's ratings for the match. Anyone getting a ten for his performance is playing as well as possible. If a rating is low (five or six), then the player may be unsuited to the position you played him in, just had an off day or perhaps you should think about selling him and getting in someone who can play. I take the view of giving a player three or four games in a position before I can decide if he's going to be any good. Just because he has a bad day the first time doesn't necessarily mean that he will never do well.

### There's more to it than that ...

There's a lot more to **Tough at the Top** than just sending in squad selections and tactics, though. The rest of the features are what you'd probably expect to find in a football game: transfers, training, scouting and ground building are all part of the game. Again, this is a simple view of what to expect.

Other than your squad selection and the match report, transfers are probably the heart and soul of the game. There is a transfer list each week, giving you basic details of the talent on offer. The list contains vital information on the players who are up for sale, including their name, current club, and their six best statistics. You may be able to look at this information and decide that you want to buy someone, in which case you can check his value and bid for him. Bidding for players is one area where TATT's rules come into play. You can bid what you like, up to a point. The rules state that you cannot offer less than half or more than twice what a player's listed value is. This is one of several checks and balances in the game to prevent inexperienced players from being ripped off, or spending money that they can't afford. This goes further, with players who are too expensive refusing to sign for lower division clubs. For instance, a player who is worth more than £6,000,000 will not sign for any club outside the Premier league.

Far more likely than plunging straight in to buy is that you will be interested in a player, but feel the need to check him out properly. You do this by scouting, simply entering two numbers on the turn sheet (for the player's club and his personal number) and get a full breakdown of all of



his stats with your next turn. When you know that every player has twenty stats that define his play, you realise that it's pretty much always worth scouting before putting in a bid. Up to three players can be scouted per turn and the choice of who to scout is entirely your own. I frequently use scouting on my own players to assess their potential for improvement. It is also possible to scout two clubs per turn, always useful for checking the tactics of upcoming opponents.

Training is where the players' potential comes into play. Every player has an overall rating, based on the twenty stats previously mentioned. The highest possible rating is 1100, meaning they are one of the best in the world, but not all players will have the potential to ever reach this level. Every player in the game has a hidden potential rating. Once this rating is reached the player will not improve any further. If they haven't reached their potential already, players will also stop improving at the age of 33. From there on they will slowly deteriorate, until at some point you will probably decide that they no longer justify their wages and sell them off. Fulfilling potential can happen at any point in a player's career – I've had a 21 year old reach his maximum potential. When this does happen, the good news is that the player will not decline until age kicks in.

Ground building is simplicity itself in terms of filling in the turnsheet. You have four sides to the stadium and when you want to build more seats you write the number of seats to build in the box corresponding to where you want to build them. For instance, if you wanted to build 1000 seats on the North side of the ground, then simply write '1000' in the box headed North. But nothing is ever that straightforward in TATT. It's as simple as it seems to increase the capacity of your ground (which you need to do to get more people in and hence get more money), but TATT has another one of its checks and balances here. This comes in the size of your stadium bearing a direct relation to the amount of money that you can spend on player wages. The sum is very simple (7 X capacity = wage limit), but very effective as it stops you from building a multi-million pound squad that you will never make enough money to pay each week.

#### So is that everything you can expect to get from Tough at the Top?

No. TATT is one of those games that, for me, has that almost indefinable bit extra. As I said back at the beginning, I *need* to read my turn each week. TATT has that addictive quality to it that you can't really pin down, can't really explain, but for half an hour on a Friday evening it takes over my life while I read my turn. It takes over at least a couple more hours over the weekend as well while I'm considering my actions for the next turn, rereading my last turn and writing out the next one.

So is TATT my perfect game? The honest answer is 'not yet'. There are parts of the game that have the potential to be annoying. Initially I found it very frustrating to play what I considered to be my best players and have them perform well below what I thought they would. It takes a while to get used to the idea that a player who has the highest rating in the team will not necessarily be the best at the position you choose to play him in. I don't find it frustrating any more, partly because (through trial and error) I've figured out the best positions for my players, and partly because this seems more like real life to me. Training players is very similar in this respect. What else? Some of the grammar and syntax in the match reports gets a little odd at times ('the chase finally ended with Alicarte slid in for a perfect tackle'), but this is such a minor niggle that it's almost embarrassing to mention it. The major annoyance in the game is losing a match that you feel you should have won. Is that a fault with the game? Only if you're the kind of person who likes to win all the time.

If those are the only drawbacks that I've found with Tough at the Top, why isn't it my perfect game? As I said, not *yet*. The *yet* is very important. The *yet* is down to the constant development of the game. You might think that that makes it sound as if TATT is a constant beta playtest nightmare, but it couldn't be further from the truth. TATT is a fully developed and fully functional game that is blessed with having a dedicated full time developer working on it to deliver improvements to the game play. And they are improvements. In the time that I have been playing, there have been a lot of changes and I have to say that they have all been for the better. As an example, the most recent change has been to training.

Previously, training was split into twenty blocks for the week for the team as a whole. This has recently changed so that each group of players (goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders and attackers) all have separate training so that you can concentrate on improving them in the skills relevant to their position. The age at which players peak was also changed recently, following a vote that came round with the turns asking all the players for their opinion. There is a real passion for TATT not only among the players, but also at Games by Mail (the company behind TATT). Whenever I have needed a question answered or had to get a turn in at the last moment, I have found the staff (Colin and Yvonne) to be extremely friendly and helpful. This is the kind of thing that makes all the difference to me. If that's not enough, go along to the TATT website, post a question about the game and don't be surprised when Trog, the game's developer, answers it for you.

One thing that I must mention is the rulebook. It is professionally laid out, put in a logical order to help you through the turnsheet and full of handy tips. It's certainly the easiest to follow rulebook I've ever seen and gives good advice to the experienced PBMer and complete novice alike without talking down to anybody.

#### Pros and Cons

Is there any reason why you shouldn't give TATT a try? Only if you loathe sports PBM and football in particular.

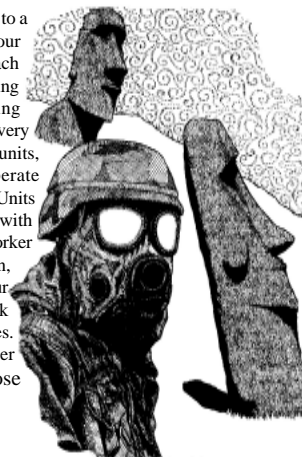
Reasons why you should give it a go – too many to count. I'd start with addictiveness, ease of play, the old cliché of 'easy to play, hard to master', and, most importantly, it's fun! But let me leave the last words to the phrase that's written on the front of the rulebook (which I greeted with a cynical eye, but now totally agree with):

*"Written for supporters ...  
... played by fanatics"*

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# Company Commander

## Building for Battles

*PETER JULL prepares for war in Game Seven ...*

THIS GAME did not get off to a good start. The manual comes in a ring binder packed in a Jiffy bag which would not go through the letter box so the postman's banging on the door got me out of bed!

### Boys' Toys

The manual needs the ringbinder to cope with the 130 pages of information it contains. The first 88 pages detail the various units that are available and read like an extract from *Jane's Military Aircraft* or the *Fighting Vehicles* version. Each unit has a picture and a text description of its real life weapons, history and usefulness with strengths and weaknesses. These are then codified for game purposes to give comparable values for range, weight, speed, armour and attack capabilities against infantry, tanks, aircraft or fortifications. There is also a guide price and a figure for the amount of training required before your troops are smart enough to use it.

If you're the sort of person who would enjoy sitting in the reference library reading *Jane's Naval Ships of the World*, this section would be interesting in itself but even if not it adds to the realism of the game to know that you have just bought a Centurion MBT rather than 'a tank' or a SA-341 Gazelle and not just any old helicopter. It's also nice to see what that M-50 Ontos Multi Barrelled Light Anti Tank Vehicle you just bought actually looks like, unless you're obsessive enough to know already. This part of the manual is generally good, with the units divided into sections for infantry, trucks, armoured cars, tanks, artillery, aircraft, munitions etc, although there are some discrepancies between the nomenclature used with the unit description and that on the training lists (more of which later).

### Book Review

Unfortunately the rest of the manual is less well ordered and consists of Game Documentation, Reference Tables and Rules. The Game Documentation explains how to fill in the various sections on your turn forms: there are 14 spread over four pages, and if this does not cover everything you might want to do, there are always special actions you can try. The explanations in this section contain some of the rules, which are then repeated or expanded upon, added to or even confused by the Rules section and sometimes it is easier to find the answer you are looking for in the Reference Tables.

These sections have obviously been rewritten from earlier versions of the game (I was playing Version 7) played on different maps and in which there were variations from the current rules, and proof-reading hadn't spotted all the discrepancies. Early in the game there were a number of times when I couldn't find or didn't understand what I was meant to do, but the GM responded to my errors with explanations on my turns. Fortunately the game is mixed-moderated and GM Jason knows what the rules are meant to be.

### *Company Commander at a glance*

A mixed-moderated modern wargame, from Jason Oates. Startup + 2 turns is £12, further turns are £3.50, with £1.50 for the monthly update. Additional credit if you use the Flagship discount coupon. Turnaround is monthly, with a play-by-email option also available.

### Where am I?

The game is set in an un-named mythical South American country, but from its size, shape and orientation it could be Surinam. The internal geography differs, however, and the map shows several hundred villages scattered over the country and the five inland towns, control of which is the victory objective. These are connected by an incomplete road network which is in places obstructed by lakes, mountain ranges and forested areas, so that two villages which may be only a few miles apart as the helicopter flies require several days travel if moving by road.

Off-road travel is permitted but not all available vehicles have this capability. For this reason, although start and finish points for movement are entered on the turn sheet, you are required to draw your route on the map and send it in with your orders. This also covers situations where there are alternative road routes or aircraft are avoiding known enemy flak sites by flying circuitous routes.

The map is supplied on 15 A4 pages (5x3) which are used to mark routes on, and also condensed onto one sheet, but the scale of this is too small to be useful other than to identify your starting position which is marked on it. Mine was on sheet 2, reading across the top from left to right, at a village on the coast called Espera. I am guessing that a player is started on each sheet as I have bumped into one on each of sheets 1 and 3, but probably not on the three middle sheets as you require a port or border village to interact with the arms dealers and commodity traders in the outside world and you would be at a great disadvantage if you didn't have one. To avoid these rivals and the hassle of copying more than one map sheet I have concentrated my early exploration and campaigning to sheet 2.

The villages are unoccupied and can be brought under your control with the smallest force, which can then move on. The towns are effectively four big villages stuck together and you have to capture each sector separately. At the start these are occupied by the remains of government forces which took me by surprise after all those empty villages, but if not the game could be too easy. You get to name your faction at the start but I was waiting for inspiration when the GM gave up and called me the Renegade Legion after two turns, but I am still Colonel ChooseaLeaderName. So the National Liberation Front, Conquistadors, Red Lions, Darkest Sons, Straw Dogs, Blue Division, Konga Kestrals, Gatekeepers, Cascadora, Black Lions and Ebola Contamination now know where I am but can't attack me for not mentioning them.

### Swords & Ploughshares

Your aim in **Company Commander** is to defeat your rivals in battle, but the logistical and economical aspects of doing so feature heavily in the game. You need to build Logistics Centres which, when provided with money, produce combat supplies: the bullets, shells, bandages, petrol etc which your soldiers can use once they have been transported to the front line. To buy more equipment you need money, which you get by selling the commodities available in the game: sugar, bauxite, lumber and oil.

To get the commodities, you need to spend money buying their production facilities. The Lumber Yard provides the best return on capital but there is not much potential in my part of the country and I have had to rely on Sugar Plantations. You find out the potential of each village by sending a commander there to carry out a resource reconnaissance. Commodities need to be transported to a port or border village before they can be sold.

An even better return on investment can be achieved from Contraband Centres when the contraband they produce is sold on the black market or, better still if you don't get caught, smuggling it across the border; but they cost 500 MPs to build and carry the threat of attack from American anti-drugs forces. They also lose you Political Favour Points (PFP), as do logistics centres, which are the goodwill and support you have from outside countries gained by improving the economy by building oil wells, bauxite mines etc.

PFPs are used to obtain the training needed to use equipment and without which you cannot buy it. Each type of equipment has a PFP base value and each month there is a multiplier published to give the training cost. This increases each month so it is better to get as much training done as early in the game as possible. Also, you cannot be trained on modern advanced equipment until you have learned about older, more basic equipment. For example, with helicopters, you must learn to use a Whirlwind before you can learn about a Wessex before you can be trained on a Gazelle. Each section of unit listings has a Training Tree which shows the order in which you must purchase instruction. So, to get the best equipment from one of the larger sections, such as a Mirage or Hawk aircraft, will require an enormous investment and will be out of reach for much of the game.

Availability of PFPs is further restricted because the number of production facilities you can build is limited by the size of the village.

Village size also restricts the level of fortification that can be constructed. These include anti-tank ditches, weapons pits, mine fields, barbed wire and command bunkers and give your forces an advantage if they are attacked in a village containing them. The longer runways required for faster jet aircraft are also restricted to larger villages. Village size can be increased by investment (more money!) but its effect can be very varied. I have spent 20MPs trying to improve a level 1 village, where I wanted to build up the fortifications, with no effect while lesser expenditure elsewhere has resulted in an increase of several levels.

### Time

You get the money and PFPs you have earned at the end of the month, when the monthly update is run. The game is run in real time: having started in July 2001 the game date was also July 2001 and one month of life is one month of war. The first line on the manual reads 'The time is: 10 days into the Civil War'. Except by the time I received my startup I think it was 10 days later, because by the time I had read the manual and submitted my first orders the monthly update was received and from the news letter that was received with it, it was obvious that others had had a head start.

The news letter has a title but I can't tell you what it is because it is in such a difficult-to-read typeface I haven't been able to decipher it. It contains news of fighting from around the country which is good source of intelligence about your rivals and rule clarifications and tips from the GM.

There are no fixed turn dates in Company Commander: you can submit another set of orders as soon as your last set of orders is received. This means that other players can be sending in orders out of sequence with you that impact on your position and you won't know about until you submit another set of orders and get an updated printout. This could make your orders no longer appropriate or desirable and by the time you find out your rival can have attacked you again. Is this fog of war or a design fault?

In my first skirmish with the Northern Wolves, who I bumped into three villages along the coast, I captured the lightly defended village from them with a small probing force. Before I could bring up reinforcements on my next orders the Northern Wolves had counter attacked and recaptured the village without me knowing until the reinforcements didn't arrive. Fortunately I had taken control of the preceding village and they stopped there but could have been destroyed piecemeal. I was then able to retake the village I lost before the Northern Wolves could follow up.

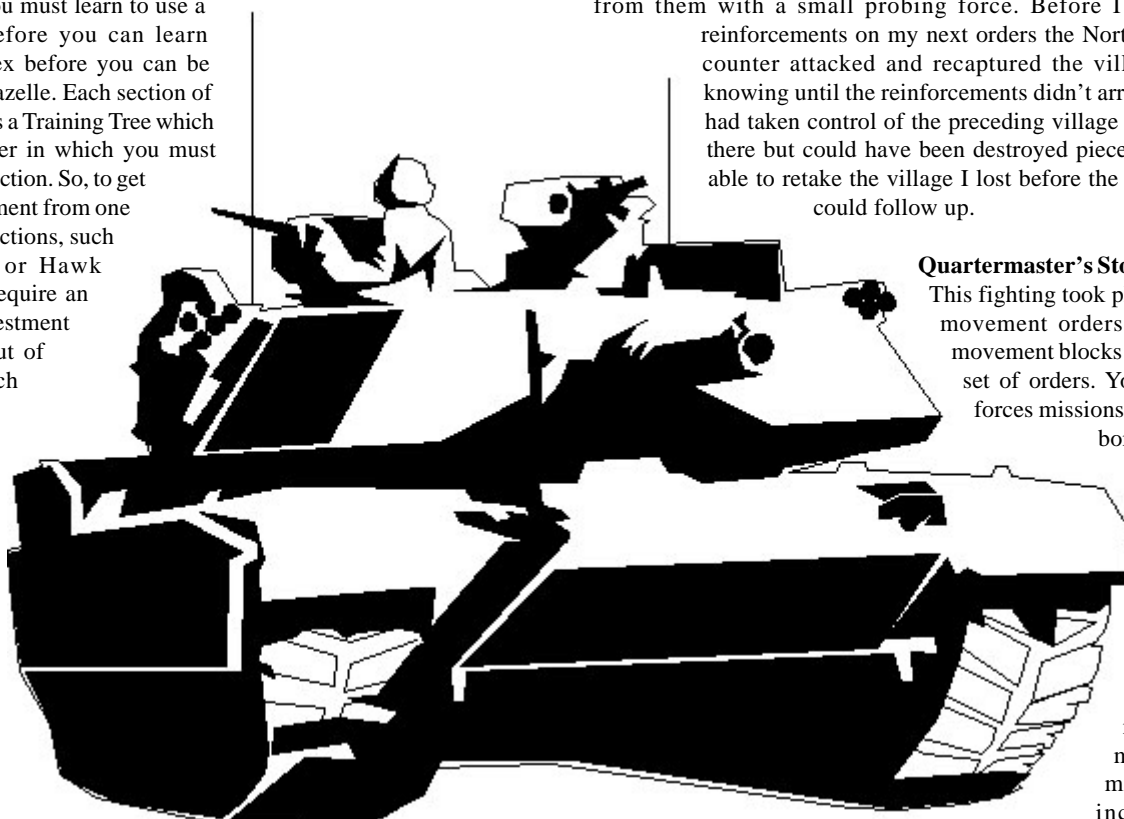
### Quartermaster's Stores

This fighting took place as a result of movement orders using the eight movement blocks available on each set of orders. You can give your forces missions to probe, assault, bombard etc and to do so by day or night, on or off road, sea or air. As part of the order you have to calculate the combat supplies that will be needed for the mission, how many of them are included in the combat load carried about their bodies on webbing

and how many need transport in trucks and the weight and space they take up with the troops and other equipment.

Most order blocks will be used to simply move a few items from place to place, often resources to ports or supplies to the front line. For larger attacks there is a combat worksheet which I had thought would contain space for detailing a plan of attack but is just a way of showing the calculations for the transport and supply requirements of the force. It does get over the 12 line limit of the order block, which can easily be filled. If you are sending a balanced infantry force with commander, regulars, HQ, Medic and Communications sections and engineers with their supplies and transport and extra munitions such as anti-tank missiles, there's not much space left for tanks, artillery or other supporting units.

This is one reason I have tried to restrict my purchases to a limited range of such things and have patriotically picked some good old British equipment like Land Rovers, Fox and Saladin armoured cars and Stalwart trucks. It also limits the training required. I have had to buy some Russian, Swedish, French and American kit, even Thai, because British is not always best or listed or available from arms dealers whose availability list changes from month to month.



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### SitRep

At the time of writing, after eight months of war, I control all of the villages on map sheet 2 as far south as the forest, about 5% of the country, but only four have meaningful defences and only eight or nine make a significant economic contribution. I control two sectors of one town, Vitocara, having just been rebuffed in an attack on a third having found it unexpectedly defended by more heavy equipment than reconnaissance and experience had led me believe. Only another 18 sectors to capture for victory!

Gleanings from the newsletter indicate that Blue Division control parts of three cities so must be the leading faction. Fortunately they are based in the central eastern part of the country away from me, as it will take a couple of months of inaction to rebuild from the setback received at Vitocara. The Conquistadors and NLA are constantly reported in combat with each other in the south west, while the Red Lions and Darkest Suns slog it out in the north-east. Little has been heard of aggressive action by the other factions. Have they withdrawn from the fight or are they quietly building for a late assault?

I have been in occasional contact with the Konga Kestrels to my west and we have agreed zones of control, but this has otherwise not been a game for diplomats. This war appears to have many months or even years to run before it is concluded.

### Opinion

To play this game, in addition to the usual pen, envelopes and stamps you will need a calculator, felt tip pens and access to a photocopier. The game has a number of minor irritations which could be easily fixed. The turn report is always stapled together in the wrong corner because the computer doesn't leave enough room to do so in the normal top right. The order forms have large boxes in which to write a single figure while elsewhere even micro-writing would be too big to fit the long name required in the box space available. Even the return address is so small I didn't see it the first turn but fortunately had a copy of *Flagship* to hand to look it up.

The difficulty of acquiring money, combat supplies and recruits, makes this a game for careful planners rather someone who likes a punch-up from turn one and even so might be poor value for money in the early turns when there is little action or excitement. Having invested in production facilities these are too often destroyed by random earth tremors or bush fires. However, judging from the newsletter others have been getting stuck in more than I have. The variable turn times could give richer real life players an advantage and I am undecided whether this is a fair or realistic way of representing the position of a real civil war commander.

The amount of work involved in preparing a turn, rather than the tactical planning (or indecision) is high, relative to the enjoyment level. I am not a fan of special actions, preferring games with fixed rules for everybody but I have used them to set up a camp within marching distance of Vitocara, the first town I have captured, when I had insufficient transport to attack from the nearest village but an attempt to bribe a government garrison over to my side failed. This may have coloured my judgement and reading the foregoing I have been rather critical and I am now going to contradict myself and give the game a thumbs up on balance because I like the scenario and the realism.

Not my favourite game but a long way from being my least. If you like the sound of Company Commander from this review, contact Jason for a go because he has tweaked some of the rules for the next game. In version 8 the technical training tables have been removed so you can now learn to fly a supersonic jet before a spotter plane which reduces the need for PFPs, there are new units available including a tank transporter but logistics centres are restricted to level ten villages which would limit them to only three of the 26 village locations I control making combat supplies even harder to come by.

[Next issue we have some tips on the game from Den Tempesta ...]

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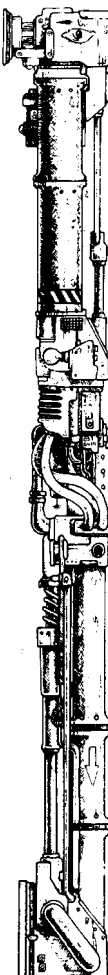
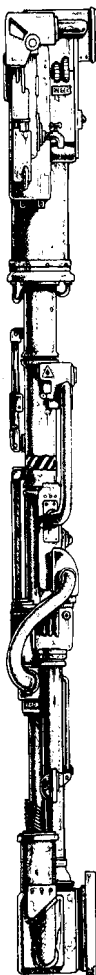
'Objective Quests can be set and teams will often have to battle it out.'

'They'll have a forum show where they can boast and taunt other teams and meks.'

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# WESTPOINT AD

# Beer Mogul

## Run a Pub or a Brewery

*COLIN FORBES goes down into the cellar of this web game ..*

HAVE YOU ever wondered what it would be like to run a pub or your own brewery? No, neither had I really. However, when I came across **Beer Mogul** (thanks to Greg Lindahl's excellent PBMList) I was soon hooked. Before long I was lost in the world of supply and demand - would my customers prefer *Three Dogs Beer* or *Aardvaak Ale* (it's got a good nose)?

### What is it?

In essence Beer Mogul is an online simulation game of the sort that computer gamers will be familiar with - but turn based so as to be suitable for playing to daily deadlines. There is nothing to install because you play BeerMogul through your browser, and email keeps you up to date. The game is totally free, all you have to do is register and play. Once you have gone through the simple sign-up procedure, you find yourself with one million BeerBucks which you can choose to spend in any way. Managing a growing Beer Empire is easy, it's just a matter of using the web-based graphical interface: if you have an internet connection and can use a mouse, then you can play this game. It doesn't take long, so if you're paying for your internet connection it won't prove too expensive.

Your first choice will be to decide whether to open a pub or brewery of some sort. You could do both, but I wouldn't recommend it as your funds won't really be sufficient to buy all the improvements you need.

### Buying and running a Pub

I'd recommend first time players to buy a pub. My own experiences suggest that this is an easier way of making money and takes less time than running a brewery. Having decided to run a pub, your next decision will be what sort of establishment you wish to open. Initially you'll have a wide choice of pub types, though I'd recommend buying something for under half a million BeerBucks, from a choice of a Bar & Grill, a Small Country Pub, a Nudie Bar (oh yes), a Small Irish Pub or a Hotel Motel. There are another fifteen types, but you'll want to save your BeerBucks towards future expansion. Who knows, one day you could be the proprietor of a Comedy Club, a Gay Bar or the ultimate Casino Bar (at 400 million BeerBucks, nobody has yet managed to afford one of these).

Your pub acquired (don't forget to give it a name!) you should give some thought to buying some features to attract punters to a property. You'll need to experiment with the different features to find the right combination which will satisfy your customers. A barber's shop perhaps? Extra Parking is always useful, whilst Waste Disposal and Security is probably essential if you want to attract a high class customer. A Main Bar is a really good idea as is an Advertising Campaign of some kind, but you can have a Band Room, Disabled Access and all sorts of things. Beware though, these features cost money to install and have ongoing costs which can prove crippling if you're not careful. What now? Well, there's the small matter of buying some beer for your customers to drink!

There's a lot of beer out there! A first glance at the Beer Market may prove a little overwhelming. What's best to buy? Well, this is something

you'll have to experiment with, but I'd recommend a few basic guidelines. Take a look around the beer on offer, there's a useful search engine to help you with this. Buy a selection of beers of varying quality. Don't be tempted to enter into long-term contracts yet, you'll need to work out what your customers want. One day's business should give you some pointers as you'll be told what quality beer your customers are looking for (note that the type of customers you attract depends on the type of establishment you are running and the features you have bought). Once you know what beer you should be buying, take a look around the Beer Market for bargain one-off sales or good value contracts. One-off deals can often be better value, but establishing a series of contracts will mean that your position will happily tick over if you can't manage to put orders in every day. Each beer has a description chosen by the player running the relevant brewery - this is just attractive window dressing. A better guide to what a beer is like can be found in the Smile rating. Each product gains popularity through sales and advertising - the more Smiles a beer has the better it will sell, though of course it will often be more expensive!

So, you've bought a pub, added on a few features and stocked your cellars with the amber nectar. You'll need to set your sale prices so as to make a good profit at the bar, but if you've got some money you might want to go into the wholesale beer market. Buy beer at a cheap price and see if you can sell it on at a profit. Perhaps you could buy beer cheaply and hope for the Smile rating to go up, thus increasing the resale value. This is highly speculative of course, but can prove a profitable sideline.

### Buying and running a Brewery

Running a Brewery is the harder option and is, frankly, something that I have been unable to crack thus far. If you do decide to run a brewery straight away, then you'll need to choose from a variety of brewery types. You don't have too many options here, you really have to start small and open a Backyard Brewery or a Country Brewery: anything else will be beyond your budget at the start of the game. Thereafter you can dream about expanding to a European Brewery, or the ultimate, a Large Brewery (costs four and a half million BeerBucks). In all there are twelve brewery types to choose from.

As with pubs, your first stop after purchasing the property is the Buy Features button. You'll need a vat to start brewing - these come in various types and range from unreliable (cheap) to highly reliable (really expensive). Additionally you may wish to install Security, put your product into Moulded Bottles (these sell better) or even purchase an expensive Bottling Plant which will speed up production no end. This done, you decide what sort of quality beer you'd like to produce, how much you want to spend on brand-building, how much beer you want to produce and, importantly, the price at which you want to sell your product on the Beer Market.

### Pros and Cons

You'll find all the little icons attractive, very reminiscent of the *Sim* computer games. Given the game is free, there can be no criticism there and I'd also give credit to Red Mohawk for listening to player comments and making substantial changes to the game during the time I've been playing. Criticisms? Well there's the hassle of playing on line, sometimes the pages don't load very well and the site can be a bit slow at times. But it's a fun game to spend fifteen minutes on every day, though the attraction does pale when things start going wrong.

### *Beer Mogul at a glance*

A free, computer-moderated, web-based, economic simulation from RedMoawk Games. Sign up by visiting [www.beermogul.com](http://www.beermogul.com). Turns are daily, with email updates every three days.

# The Top Zines

*JOHN HARRINGTON on the 2001 Zine Poll ...*

I SAID LAST issue that this time I would look at the footie zines, but it has since occurred to me that I completely overlooked the release of the 2001 Zine Poll Results and I think it would be remiss of me not to cover them in some detail. So, apologies to those of you who were waiting for my views on the football management zines, but being a Spurs supporter I have recently decided that football is a stupid game which is not worth wasting my time over. Maybe I'll feel different by the time the next issue comes out.

The Zine Poll is an annual event dating back to the seventies. The voting system has changed several times and even the eligibility rules have altered - it used to be that only zines running **Diplomacy** were eligible for inclusion - but the intention has remained the same: to find the zine which, in the opinion of the postal gaming hobby, has been the best in the year gone by. Voters are free to vote using whatever criteria they choose. They may, for instance, simply vote according to which zine they most enjoy receiving, or they may take a more objective view and take into consideration things such as reliability, value for money and variety of games on offer. It has even been known for the 'John Wayne's Oscar' effect to hold sway, in which a long serving zine which has never won the Zine Poll before gets a kind of sympathy vote. These days all zines are long serving, so the John Wayne effect tends not to apply. And the winner is ... I realise it is traditional to do these things in reverse order but it makes more sense to start with the winner and work down.

## *For Whom The Die Rolls*

Keith Thomasson, 14 Stepnells, Marsworth, Nr Tring, Herts. HP23 4NQ.  
<http://freespace.virgin.net/keith.thomasson/fwtldr/index.htm> Latest issue: 82, A5 booklet, monthly, 92 pages, £1.50 including postage.

I feel obliged to observe that Keith ran the Zine Poll this year, which many consider gave his zine a small advantage. I also feel obliged to observe that his zine won the poll by a street and deservedly so. Consider this: Keith runs 56 games within the pages of his zine, which is probably three times the average number of games you will find in a zine. The games include standard postal games such as **Bus Boss**, **Breaking Away**, **Sopwith** and **Railway Rivals** plus some of the meatier board games such as **1830**, **Outpost**, **Acquire** and **Source of the Nile**. Adjudications are very efficient and the zine utterly reliable. It's not the zine to get for title-tattle about the hobby or the editor's opinions on how joining the euro will affect rainfall in outer Mongolia, but it is the zine to get for a top notch games service.

## *Underneath the Mango Tree*

Alex Bardy, 29 Harrier Way, Evelyn Mews, Beckton, London, E6 5YP.  
<http://www.mangozine.com> Latest issue: 29, A5 booklet, 5 weekly, 28 pages, £1 including postage. Though it has been around for three years this is considered one of the 'bright young things' of the hobby. Initially characterised by the brash enthusiasm of its editor, it currently appears to be going through a bit of a motivation crisis on account of real life intervening. All zines are loss-making labours of love and so it is only natural that a zine should get pushed down the list of priorities when work gets hectic or the editor moves house, or changes sex (don't laugh - it has happened, but not to Alex, I hasten to add). Sometimes the zine never recovers and it folds, but I should stress that in 99.9% of folds the games are handed on to another zine and no one loses out. It would be sad if Alex were to fold Mango as it has some interesting and original games, including the excellent **Gutterpress**, the zine-based game about editing zines.

## The Rest of the top 10

3rd *Ode* This reliable zine won the Zine Poll back in about 1983 and is still going strong. It's primarily a Diplomacy zine with a healthy smattering of railway games on the side plus the odd SPI classic such as **Empires of the Middle Ages** and **Origins of World War II**.

4th *Cut & Thrust*, 5th *Sprouts of Wrath & Where Is My Mind*, 7th *Armistice Day & Hopscotch*, 9th *Flights of Fancy*, 10th *Bloodstock* You can't go wrong with any of the above. *Sprouts of Wrath* and *Armistice Day* are two excellent Diplomacy zines. The former has little or no time for hobby organisations and history, while the latter is practically the Diplomacy hobby's journal of record and official archive. *Hopscotch*, *Flights of Fancy* and *Bloodstock* are zines dedicated to cramming as many games within their pages as possible. Those of you still annoyed at me for not reviewing football management zines this issue might like to note that *Hopscotch* and *Bloodstock* run two of the best **United** campaigns around. *Cut & Thrust*, whose editor Derek Wilson won this year's Les Pimley award for services to the hobby, also offers a wide variety of games but with less emphasis on covering every inch of every page with text! *Where Is My Mind* is not short on games either but is primarily known for the idiosyncratic writings of its music-obsessed editor, David Oya. It's a bit of a throwback to the days when zines achieved high Zine Poll rankings on the basis of entertainment value as much as games service.

Full details of the results are on [www.fwtwr.com/polls/zine/2001.htm](http://www.fwtwr.com/polls/zine/2001.htm) and full details about the zines are available in *Mission From God* (£1 from John Harrington, 1 Churchbury Close, EN1 3UW or available online at <http://www.fbgames.co.uk/words/mfg/mfgtoc.htm>).

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# Heading for the Shelves

*PEVANS on games at the toy fairs ...*

## London

This year's Toy Fair was the second held at the ExCeL exhibition centre in London's Docklands. I took a day to wander round and look at the new games. As usual the companies were a mixture of the big names and the young hopefuls. Here I will concentrate on new games that may be of interest to hobby games players.

They don't come any bigger than Hasbro, of course. I was hoping that Hasbro UK would have decided to carry the Avalon Hill range, but there was no sign of this. Instead the games were mostly themed variants on old favourites: *Lord of the Rings Risk*, *The Simpsons Cluedo*, *Trivial Pursuit Kids' Edition*. One exception is *Saint or Sinner*, Hasbro's entry for the truth-or-dare adult game. The aim is to collect Saint Tokens by denying that you've done the naughty things you are accused of by the cards. The gimmick is that there's a 'lie detector' to catch you out. No doubt it's fun in the right circumstances. The bright spot was the Reiner Knizia-designed *Lord of the Rings* board game from last year together with the new *Friends and Foes* expansion. At Christmas imported copies of this were selling at much the same price (£30 give or take a bit) as the full game. I was relieved to find that the official UK edition is priced at £14.99.

Over the years the emphasis at Gibsons has switched to jigsaw puzzles. The games section continues, however, and this year has three new releases. *Blast it!* is, like *Pass the Bomb* before, licensed from Austrian publishers Piatnik and contains a 'bomb' timer. The game has a number of dice with letters on. Players have to come up with things in the chosen category using the letters available before the time runs out. *Don't Eat the Neighbours* is a licence from a TV game show and is due for publication later this year. *Talkin' Tango* comes from the US and is a parlour game for teams. Players have to speak one word in turn, aiming to explain the word or phrase from a card to the other team(s).

There are several additions to The Green Board Game Company's range of children's and family games. Chief of these is *Egyptians*, a family board game in which players struggle to become supreme Pharaoh by collecting cards. Apart from collecting cards in their own right, players can barter with other players - or attack them for cards. The game did well in France last year and the company hopes to repeat that success in the UK.

Then there are the companies and games that are new to Toy Fair.

Boardroom Productions have *Cat Attack*, a board game in which the players are cats. The aim is to collect set of food items while not losing all of their nine lives. Players have the option of raiding others' larders, which adds some spice to the game. Then there are the Curiosity cards: and we all know what curiosity does to cats! (Actually that reminds me of a Far Side cartoon.) Anyway, this looks like a fun family game - and the playing pieces are great, too.

*Cut and Run* is a gambling board game from Cut and Run Productions. According to where you land on the board, you get the opportunity to gamble chips at various casino games (Roulette, Blackjack et al) or buy the casino. Just to add to the fun, there's a bluffing element that allows you the chance to re-roll (or whatever). The game went into production at the end of 2000 and sold well through 2001. Once you've got enough cash you try to cut and run by making a final circuit of the board.

Games Editions is the UK arm of French publisher Editions du Jeu. Their game is *Expression*, a rather different word game. It's a sentence game. A random selection of words is placed on the stands and players try to make the longest sentence possible from the words. The game has been successful in France and the publishers are hoping to get it established in the UK.

*Oil Barons* is not Dallas - even if the inventor was wearing a ten-gallon hat. However the game is about oil production, refining and selling. The Monopoly-style board has several oil fields in middle. Oil barrels pass from the fields along pipelines to refineries. Control over the valves on the pipelines allows players to move their own barrels or block others. So getting your oil to the refinery may require some negotiation with other players who have control over crucial valves. Passing the start position on the board allows players to sell their oil. The game is for 2-6 players - better with more, says the main man - and has been out since Christmas 2001.

Being something of a punster, I love the name Sibling Revelry. This company is the publisher of *Cinématique*, a performance/trivia game with a cinema theme. Players have to gain five topics in two of the available eras of film history. The game features some great art deco-style design, but was only at the show in prototype form. Publication of the UK game is due this spring and international editions are in the pipeline.

## Nuremberg

The Nuremberg fair is potentially of more interest to games players, despite being in Germany. This is the first chance to take a look at this year's crop of European games - generally more interesting and challenging than their UK counterparts. I didn't attend Nuremberg this year, but I have picked up on a few games that were on show.

Ravensburger is well-known as the largest games publisher in Germany. Although much of its output is aimed firmly at the children's market, the company has a tradition of producing a big, family/strategy game each year. This year's offering is *Mexica*, the latest collaboration between Wolfgang Kramer and Michael Kiesling. It clearly follows the mould of *Tikal* and *Java*, with artwork that reflects a jungle theme, gameplay based on a limited number of action points and lots of high quality cardboard tiles and wooden playing pieces.

The setting of the game is the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, which the players are trying to build on the shores of lake Texcoco. As always there are lots of things to do and too few action points. An interesting twist in this game is a mechanism for saving unused action points for a subsequent turn. However, the main task is to erect buildings in the different districts of the city. The bigger the district, the more points it scores. But also the more buildings it requires, providing more opportunity for players to fight over it. It sounds good and looks great, so I'm looking forward to playing it. Rio Grande Games are publishing an English language edition of the game in the US (also distributed in the UK) - which tells you something about Ravensburger's US and UK subsidiaries and their markets.

The American designing duo of Alan Moon and Aaron Weissblum had several terrific games published last year. The first (that I've seen) of this year's crop is *Lumberjack*, published by Schmidt Spiele. This is a complete departure since it is a dexterity game - albeit with strong tactical elements. The main component of the game is a set of wooden cylinders ('logs') in a variety of colours. The object is to build towers with them (Bausack-style), scoring points according to the size of the tower.

The rules allow several different games to be played from the base components and objective. These add other considerations to play, such as which colour to use. Or not. This is clearly not a hugely intellectual game, but it is certainly interesting and looks like it should be fun.

A longer report on the London Toy Fair is on my website:

<http://www.pevans.co.uk/Reviews>



[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 from February 18th ...

Mike Absalom, David Ames, Phil Austin, David Blair, Jason Brown, Duncan Chisholm, Colin Forbes, Tom Fyfe, Patrick Gleeson, Jim Kemeny, Andy Kendall, Niels Lademark, J. Lanza, Mark Ley, Chris Morris, Carol Mulholland, Nicc Newton, Robin Orman, Stuart Rose

## GAMES FEATURED THIS ISSUE

### Austerlitz (*Supersonic Games*)

**David Blair** - 'I knew it - just after my update on game 157, Austrian and French troops converged on the Ottoman Empire (Turkey to you and me), and Istanbul has fallen after a bloody battle with over 130,000 casualties, most of them mine. I fear the worst, as my allies are too far away to help.'

### Beer Mogul (*Red Hawk*)

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'A fun little web-based game which I found thanks to the recommendations of other PBmers. It's basically a simulation of running a pub or a brewery, a bit like the old Sim City game and variants. However, this game is turn based rather than real time, with turns being run off once a day. There is a surprisingly large variety of things to do in the game, though of course it's mostly an economic simulation. Since I started playing I have bankrupted my first pub - the beer was good but too cheap and I could never seem to attract enough customers. However, the new pub is going much better. Breweries seem harder work! Check it out at: [www.beermogul.com](http://www.beermogul.com)

**Colin Forbes** - 'I had a problem with the email updates, the body of the email seemed strangely empty of text. A quick note to the GMs however and they spotted the problem (incompatibility caused by an updated web browser) and they have promised to have this fixed within 24 hours. Given this will involved new coding, this is really impressive.'

### Crack of Doom (*Harlequin Games*)

**J Lanza**: *D&D*. Long time since I've heard *D&D* mentioned with - do I dare say it? Reverence? I started playing *D&D* in '76 - long time ago now, it seems. I played regularly up to about the time I got married. Wives put an end to that sort of thing real quick, whether it's *D&D* or a Saturday poker session. I've still got all my old books (the *old* softcover editions from the box set and its supplements, and the more recent *AD&D* and *AD&D Second Edition*) stored away in my closet and garage, along with my old character sheets and world (which occupies about six binders right now).

Crack of Doom, in some respects, is the closest thing I've found to both *D&D* and good 'ol wargaming. Which is probably why I like it so much. John does a great job with the npcs, plots, and in bringing the world of Lorasias to life, but it is really the other players, from the Grelgs to the Dwarves, the Girlz! to the Dark Elves, and everyone in between, that really make this particular game go.'

**Mark Ley**: 'I have been involved with RPG and PBM for some time now, usually favouring sci-fi games (*Cyber Punk*) to fantasy (*Stormbringer*, *Runequest*, et al) I started PBM gaming back with *Legacy of the Panther* from West Pennine games, a computer-moderated game which came to life through player involvement, and many hours of fun were spent trying to come up with better insults with which to stun your enemy into silence.

But I like *Crack of Doom 2* because it is the kind of game which evolves to suit your own style of playing. John is very flexible, and will pander to those of us who like to wax lyrical into a three paragraph explanation of just how my characters are going to lift up a stone in order to become stronger. Likewise, if I am writing a short explanation, he can be equally brief.

COD boasts a good player base, many of whom are exceedingly experienced, and do bring a depth to the game that could easily be missing were it just another computer-moderated wargame. John injects his returns with his wry sense of humour, and some quite surprising plot twists, which help to keep me interested, and stretch my imagination into coming up with methods of dealing with whatever I encounter.

Not only is there a monthly broadsheet, the *Cosmic Balance*, which is heavily devoted to player contribution, but also a web discussion group, to which many of us are subscribed, and which we use to find advice as well as hurling the occasional barbed comment.

Downsides? If you rely on expanding your actions too much, the incurred additional costs of expanded responses can make the turn price quite expensive. However I must point out that I do tend to waffle on a bit, and the normal turn charge (£4.50) is not bad when you consider the large amount you can do by keeping your actions simple.

Certainly I would recommend COD2 to any player looking for a challenge, be they wargamer or budding novelist; Crack of Doom has what you seek. And we established players will not kill you if you promise to be nice to us ...'

**David Ames**: 'Reviewed the game, loved it, still in it.'

### En Garde! Orleansengarde (*Brian Jenkins*)

**Stuart Rose** - 'This has stalled at present due to problems in the GM's personal life but he has kept players informed, and he is now updating the web site and other paraphernalia and we should soon be swashing our buckle again.'

### EG! Les Petites Betes Soyeuses (*Paul Evans*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'Sir Guy de Lynes is back from the front and has plunged into the social whirl that is Paris. I badly need to find a patron of higher social level who is willing to sponsor my political ambitions. I had not anticipated the sudden rise in society caused by my unexpected (but very welcome) knighthood. Much to ponder and an amusing read too. If you haven't played En Garde!, why not? It's actually a very solid PBM which should especially appeal to anyone who likes political intrigue.'

### EG! Paris Tribune (*Canterbury Games News Zine*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'Sadly, I managed to miss the last turn. However, I'm definitely sticking with this one - having a cracking character like this doesn't happen every day. This game has a few more unusual features than a number of other EG! games.'

### Kings of Karadon (*Timewyrm*)

**Jason Brown** - 'I've just joined game 2 and have been blown away by the sheer scale of the game (yet again). It's my own fault for volunteering to take up a major position which has been played for much of the game but dropped when the previous player had to concentrate on other commitments. The start-up material included a fifty-two page turn, seven





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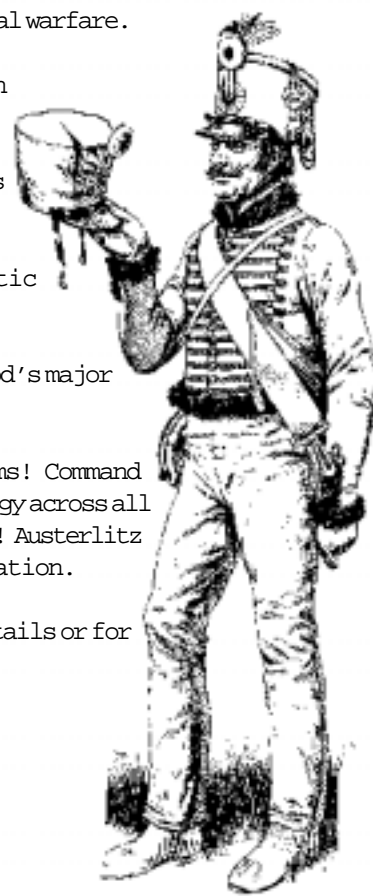
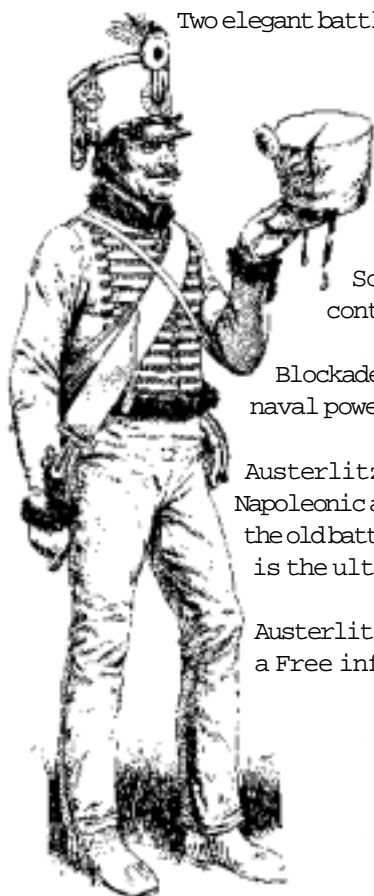
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pages of maps, a nicely produced 40 page rulebook, a short scenario booklet, a ten page game newsletter, two Beginners' Guides to the game and a stack of information sheets.

There is just so much to do! I have already received thirty or so emails and several letters: not all players are on email and, to be honest, turnaround is such that letter writing is still a feasible way of communicating within this game. A week after the turn came out I find myself embroiled in elections within various Guilds and Conclaves, a couple of Secret Societies and world politics on a grand scale.'

**Duncan Chisholm** - 'My head hurts. My people are learning to eat trees (there's little else), three of my characters are suffering from magical diseases, the political situation is labyrinthine and I may have been a little over-enthusiastic with a recruitment drive - I just don't have enough bears to mount all the troops! But the real problem is the addictiveness of this game. The other day I even began to dream that in real life my name was Duncan and I had to go to work in an office... but then I woke up and knew that I was King Khothkhan of Reichmar with the problems of nearly a million people on my shoulders. Did I mention the severe economic recession?'

**Robin Orman** - 'Game 1: is still suffering from delays due to real life issues for the GM. However, Karadon is worth waiting for and I have great confidence in this game resuming normal turnaround eventually. Until then, I guess I'll just have to try a few new games to keep me occupied!'

**Andy Kendall** - 'Game 2: After a long hiatus, this is now running again, with several new players to bring up to speed. A slower turnaround is now promised, but that's fine if it's regular. Far more goes on than I can keep track of, and still a challenge. There's one major threat to the world, which most players are working against, but I'm not sure it's enough.'

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'Game 2: The Ancients Return. Having picked up the position of Kobo a couple of turns ago, available time for playing other PBMs has been substantially reduced. This game has a totally different feel to game 1 (The Great Winter) no doubt because it has a different GM. However, I believe that this ability of the game system to adapt to the warped imaginations of different GMs and players is critical to the success of Karadon.'

This past turn has been particularly interesting, since I am suddenly faced with a possible invasion from the south, just as I was preparing to send forces northwards to help my allies. But I wouldn't like to give the impression that this is a wargame! Far from it, most of my time is spent working out the economics, roleplaying my characters through quests, and figuring out the labyrinthine politics. Play this game if you get a chance!'

## Legends (*Harlequin Games*)

**Stuart Rose** - '*North Island Campaign 24*: Still appears to be a relatively quiet game, or maybe I have just got better at staying out of trouble. Things seem to have settled down into three main power blocs: the alveran faction who are goody human, dwarf and giant types: the saurians, druidic council and some dragon riders who are respectively berserker lizards, a bunch of tree huggers and various psycho monster bashers; whilst the third grouping is three characters with Japanese names all with the surname Shimazu in front like all good Japanese names should be, two of whom are chaos lords. There are of course the sneaky solarans but they are being very sneaky and don't seem to be doing much. The alverans are by far the largest grouping but it is early days yet.'

*North Island Campaign 26*: This one is still at an earlier stage and seems to have more groupings. Once again the alverans seem to be a popular choice but there appear to be more elves in this game: that can soon be sorted.'

**Jim Kemeny** - 'One of the neat things about Legends is the myriad of ways to specialise in the game, even for small positions, or as a sideshow from whatever your main aims are. One of these is raiding. In the Swords of Pelarn module, one of the numerous scenarios and sub-plots in this complex world is an invasion of the Sylvan Forest by the evil Vektricar's forces. Here is a description of a campaign of raiding:

*'3 small legions, each of 30 light elves, were on foot and equipped with bows and leather armor to minimise noise and reflected light. They were supplied from buried food caches. They managed to surprise several small newly-established underground villages of orcs and goblins before their garrisons could react, picking up some useful loot, including a magic item that will have to be taken home and studied. Took some losses when surprise was not achieved and the garrison drove the raiders off, but losses were kept down by orders to retreat at a low loss threshold.'*

**Phil Austin** - '*Swords of Pelarn 22* was good fun. It had no SEI cap and no pop growth cap so the power curve was heading towards infinity. By end game I must have trained well over 200,000 troops.'

My strongest memories of that game was about a year before the end when all-powerful Skystone destroyed my main base (Mathaal) destroying 25k troops, 15 high powered guilds, and enslaving 80k of my pop. I was planning to ambush the enemy cloud castle before then but the Raven Faction managed to get through my barriers and block my fleets so everything looked like it was falling apart. I was in a state of depression for three days, then thought 'all is not lost, I still have my fleet'. So I re-planned my ambush. Since I was working without any substantial help I couldn't track Skystone so I had to guess his movements. I knew they were tracking me (don't underestimate the power of a few beers at the Legends pubmeets, it does add an extra dimension to the game)! I guessed Windwalker would be their next target but I couldn't defend it sufficiently, so I emptied all its troops into my remaining army and waited for them to come to me. On my following turn I made an assumption that Skystone had reached me and conquered an empty Windwalker, so I pulled everything together for one final hit against Skystone. Luck was with me, the trap was sprung, and a glorious victory was had! [My heart was pounding so fast as I opened that turn that it was booming in my ears!] The Ravens had thought the game was won the turn before, I think they were gutted afterwards! And things were only to get worse for them!

So I guess my feat here was emulating a phoenix, rising from the ashes of near defeat to turn the game completely around.'

## Middle Earth (*Harlequin / MEPBM Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'I seem to be in far too many of these games and can't work out how it keeps happening. Perhaps it has something to do with Harlequin/MEPBM Games' unique brand of friendliness and professionalism - or maybe it's some sort of subliminal program that runs when you download a turn. The game remains the same as ever, though the service keeps on improving.'

It's good to see a number of new players continuing to come into the game (or, in many cases, return to the fold after a long absence). This has the effect of enlivening games with new tactics. Of course some might argue that many of new players are wonderfully gullible - but I really can't comment further on that at this stage. Finally, might I debug the popular myth that the GMs are gods - I've met them and well, no-one with hair like that could possibly be divine! Sorry guys - you'd better up the subliminal programming again ...'

**David Blair** - 'Must confess I really enjoyed Darren Hayward's article on his starting up in Middle Earth. If I wasn't so poor I would be adding this one to my collection, and may still do. He painted a good image and I felt I wanted to find out more to the extent of visiting the web site to glean more information. Hold the good guys - I want to join them!'

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'Unfortunately I felt compelled to drop from my one game, though this in no way reflects upon the quality of the game or the service from MEPBM Games. A combination of real life pressures and in-game events which rather wound me up. I will however return to this game as soon as time allows. The service from MEPBM Games is truly excellent whilst the game itself is both challenging and fun.'

## GAMES FEATURED LAST ISSUE

### The Chevian Chronicles (*State of Mind Games*)

**Robin Orman** - 'Turnaround is still to extended deadlines in this, but a new turn has just recently arrived! Richard Skye (along with Corleth,

Lano, Alyx, newcomer Geran and a couple of NPCs) has just arrived at a second mysterious tower - this one made of fire it seems - where we believe the second of the magical bells that have opened the gate to the realm of Fury need to be placed to remove the demonic threat (keep up!) ... once we figure out how to do so, of course!

### Neutral Zone (*Neutral Zone*)

**David Blair** - 'An American Football PbeM. Nice to see Chris Sadler give the low down on how the game was created. I played till recently in two of the four current Leagues with "moderate" success - alright, I was struggling to break even on a season. But that did not stop the excitement on a Saturday night late to download the week's matches to see how my teams fared.

It is habit-forming, with local rivalries, top 15 team matchups and quite a bit of interaction amongst coaches. Well worth a look if American football interests you.

[www.neutral-zone-football-pbem.co.uk](http://www.neutral-zone-football-pbem.co.uk)

### Quest GME (*KJC Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'I must say the new mixed-moderated features seem likely to add a whole new dimension to this classic PBM. The service from KJC remains as professional as ever, though with a slightly more human edge than before. Proof that competition is indeed a positive force!'

## ROLEPLAYING GAMES

### Einstein's Lot (*Ulaidh Games*)

**Carol Mulholland** - 'Time for my character to set off home - but will she manage to avoid the spectral serpent which seemed to be pursuing her when she arrived? And is it any help that the pub has a lion on its sign, when it looks as if a lion is the serpent's enemy?

I've not put many turns in lately for personal reasons, but the game's baffling story-line still holds my interest.'

## HISTORICAL ROLEPLAYING

### La Gloire Du Roi (*Agema Publications*)

**Nicc Newton** - 'Still enjoying this immensely and Game 3 seems to be building up to something. Tension is rising around the globe: Protestant and Catholic powerblocks are forming in Europe, the Dutch and Spanish continue to squabble in the Far East and the Moors are restless, plus a few failed harvests, bad storms and lost shipping all thrown in for good measure.'

### Great Game: 1820 ([www.geocities.com/epochelipse/](http://www.geocities.com/epochelipse/))

**Colin Forbes** - 'Just received my start-up in this hand-mod game (at least, I assume it is). Looks as if there's a surprising amount to get to grips with, but the material is such that I'm rather looking forward to it. Watch this space for more news on this promising email game.'

### Gunboat Diplomacy (*Agema Publications*)

**Nicc Newton** - 'Now this is excellent! While it is set in the Victorian era, [1881 is the current year] Richard is very flexible over the availability of certain items and technology, so you can, if you want, have an early Submarine or early Aeroplane. Both probable death-traps and not "really" available for another 20+ years but they add good colour to the game.

Another good feature is allowing players to design and introduce their own items: we have telegraph-cable-laying ships, steam cranes, steam fire engines, and mobile horse-drawn armouries to name a few. The game also nicely mixes real historical events with in-game events: US president Garfield has just been shot and killed by Charlie Guiteau, but it now seems it was all a fiendish Chinese plot, with Guiteau himself being assassinated by a lone Chinese gunman before he could talk!'

### Heroes of Olynthus (*Timewrym*)

**Chris Morris**, our reviewer - 'Back on line again after the GM had to deal with bereavement and illness. Same superlative standard as before.'

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'It's good to see this game up and running again after a difficult time for the GM in real life over the past six months. My character, Apollodorus, is far from being an all-action figure, preferring to spend his time in research. If I had thought this might prove challenging to the GM, I should have known better. As a result of my researches, GM Colin Forbes has bombarded me with information about the game world, I'm not entirely sure that there isn't anything which doesn't have its own niche in the world of Olynthus. There are copious plotlines running at various levels of the game - so there's always something to get involved in - and if you don't, the chances are that the arachnidous GM will spin a specially twisted thread just for you. I'm not sure whether there are any positions going in this game, but if there are sign up now!'

### Primvs Inter Pares (*Interesting Times*)

**Mike Absolom** - 'Haven't really had sufficient free time to do this excellent game justice. Heavy in politic and intrigue, events in Rome have reached a critical juncture... just when I have to reduce my commitment to the game. Having withdrawn from the frenetic political arena, I have instead concentrated upon my Legate. Marching a Legion from city to city is a time-consuming process that suits my current gaming commitment nicely. And this is perhaps the strength of the game. Numerous aspects and styles of play. Truly something for everyone. And as such, highly recommended.'

**Andy Kendall** - 'Difficult this for me. A game I like, which desperately needs players, but that I'm not sure how to attract them. The service has worsened for me, although I have heard that email service is improved. It must be six months since I had a full month correct.

Why am I still playing? I believe there is a good game here, but it needs more players urgently; because a few other players have asked me to stay; and largely not to let others drive me out. If anyone wants a political game, it's here; come along and contact me. Actually it would be even better if you form a brave independent third way, and use the facts rather than what people will tell you, something I have advocated to every new player for over a year, simply because the game needed it more than I did.

Recently divisions have grown, and email is at the heart of it. The email forum has become unconstructive, and serving to prove the adage about shouting loudest and most often. Some seem to believe that it's easier to remove their political opponents by irritating players into dropping. Two have gone this year already, one largely as a result of email, one certainly, the departures also serving to transfer the balance of power to the e-crew. I know I object to being told by other players that I should join an email forum to "fully play" or to know what occurs in a postal game - the GM, as far as I can tell, agrees on this point.'

## ADVENTURE GAMES

### DungeonWorld (*Madhouse*)

**Robin Orman** - 'Things are growing interesting again, now that our group is being assaulted by Vesune Vampires and Chelonian Horrors on the second level of the Pits of Poldoon. My necromancer, Lord Alamar (nicknamed "Deathstrike" for his uncanny ability to deliver the death blow to monsters in melee), is preparing to unload his inventory at a Magical Trader prior to heading for a Temple of the Mind where he can learn the Psionics 1 skill - a nifty little number that, amongst other uses, allows the psionist to attack through walls. Mwahahahaha...'

### DungeonWorld Broken Lands (*Madhouse*)

**Robin Orman** - 'This free email-only version of Madhouse's DungeonWorld game is definitely worth a look, whether you're playing in the main game or not. My first character, Braxus, a male human fighter, met his demise a dozen turns back at the hands of a Zombie Master; since then I've started up a rogue, Gaelan, who is doing considerably

better - acquiring the (now deceased) Zombie Master's Skull Sceptre, which allows him to see further around him.

Gaelan has now teamed up with three fair ladies (as he puts it): Kara, a priestess, Wren Essedril, an Elven Warrior Maiden, and Foxyjem, a human warrior(ess). They are preparing to descend a set of stairs into the aptly named Hall of Doors, where doubtless new horrors await ...'

**Colin Forbes** - 'I've just started up in this single character DungeonWorld module. Why? Well, more than partly because it's free! Then there's the undeniable fact that the DungeonWorld system is easy and enjoyable to play - it's certainly come on a lot since the early days.

Maybe a Bard wasn't the best character to have chosen for a single character module, but we'll see how things progress in Outer Slythia.'

### Monster Island (*KJC Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'I'd started up in this game with a good deal of enthusiasm about a year ago, but real life concerns meant that I rather let things lapse. Coming across the old turns in a clear-out, I thought I'd quite like to pick the game up again. A quick call to the KJC hotline established that amazingly my position was still active. An update was winging its way to me that very afternoon. Excellent service. Meanwhile my poor Furrat has found some small rocks to put in his sling and is licking his wounds having had a few chunks taken out of him by a passing scorpion - now mercifully dead and dismembered.'

## FANTASY WARGAMES

### War of the Dark God (*Morten Larsen*)

**Niels Lademark** - 'The current instalment of War of the Dark God is a basic version. It follows that there must be/have existed an advanced version. Currently I can find no mention of future plans for an advanced WDG scenario at <http://www.pbem.dk>. I would like to ask veteran WDG players what they miss the most in the basic version compared to the advanced. In my opinion, the main differences are:

- \* No subpositions within hexes
- \* No hide order (I miss that one) and the monster can still hide (unfair!)
- \* No ships units (sea lanes are used instead)
- \* You cannot build roads or bridges
- \* You cannot change your tax rate
- \* You cannot change villeinage rate
- \* Units do not rebel if upkeep is not met they merely disappear
- \* Reaction and tactics are reduced to a single order
- \* A transfer order to transfer resources directly between nations (at a cost) was implemented.

Personally I miss the hide order the most. Sub-positions had a major impact on the game because it affects the rules for blocking and the possible locations of cities, caves, mines and castles. So although I miss sub-positions (to avoid enemies and pick my favourite terrain) I acknowledge that you can hardly keep them and call the game "basic". What do other people think?'

## EMPIRE-BUILDING GAMES

### Empires of Corinium (*Viking Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'Got my latest turn back today - to discover that the evil empire of Nahald Oran has in fact conquered my last remaining vestiges of territory. It looks like the Atlan people are at last united, though perhaps not in the way that I might have wished! May I wish the mighty Atlan Empire under the leadership of Nahal Oren (Andy Ratcliffe) success in the future. Me? I'm off to concentrate on my Realms of Israa position on the other side of the world from the warlike types on the Corinian continent.'

### Prometheus (*Hunky Monkey*)

**Jason Brown** - 'Just signed up for a new game of this computer mod empire builder from Hunky Monkey. It's simple enough to begin with, but there seems plenty to get your teeth into later on. The orders are easy

to write and there are some elegant touches such as the ability to define your own order abbreviations (useful for long lists of orders you want to repeat on a regular basis) and also the interesting Strategy options which you can issue each unit - this enables them to react to a variety of situations flexibly without having to wait for the next set of orders.

A decent, solid game with regular turnaround. The only criticism I have concerns some of the poorly translated English, it's a bit obviously German in places. However the GM is working on this.'

**Duncan Chisholm** - 'A nice side-game, if you know what I mean. This one is never going to take up hours and hours of your time, but it's a nice game, easy to play and with lots of potential. I suspect I'll have to play three or four games before I settle on the best strategy to pursue, but at this price that's not a problem. If only some more people would sign up, as games are a bit slow to start at the moment.'

**Colin Forbes** - 'Game 1 is starting to hot up, with the nation of Cardolan taking pole position on almost every table. My guess is that they have already absorbed out several positions - come on guys, let's start fighting back! I'm starting to find the restriction on the number of orders to be challenging, whereas earlier on in the game I wasn't sure how I'd ever fill the order sheet. I'm becoming a big fan of the Strategy order for units as well as the Define Abbreviation order - both save so much time and effort and are quite elegant in a PBM-ish sort of way.'

**David Blair** - 'Have played five turns now in game 2 and judging by my Country's ratings, I must have missed the boat in development. Hope I don't find an unfriendly face soon, as I am not prepared for defence, attack, or actually anything. Still getting to grips with the rules and what I can and can not do, and suspect this game will be a short one for me, unless the GM has conveniently hidden me away from the rest of the world until I get on board. I can see how it can develop very quickly once the area is discovered and developed, and the players who have played before will have a huge start over us new lads.'

**Andy Kendall** - 'Game 1: After my comments last year, the starting territory benefits appear to be only an initial issue. After 12 turns, the order limit starts becoming an issue, with significant effects on what is possible. The trade off of build vs. research is tricky, and every turn random "beneficial" events assist in messing up plans. I have one town which is now probably doomed to starve for a year as a result of high growth last year.'

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'I'm beginning to think I went down totally the wrong avenue in game 1. I'm doing ok, but I simply didn't expand fast enough. All thoughts of war must go by the by for now: I need allies! My position in game 2 is going rather better. I would think that games are going to go on for rather longer than I had at first envisaged and there is perhaps an argument for trying a one week turnaround version. But I've no complaints about the game itself or its GM. Turnaround is now like clockwork whilst I haven't come across any bugs in the game. An intriguing game.'

## WORLD GAMES

### Realms of Israa (*Viking Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'Despite turnaround being slow, the game remains worth playing. I seem to keep being drawn back to it, somewhat compulsively. I suppose it's having played the position for so long - but there are still so many things I want to achieve. The Empress Brianth of Albyan has many matters to consider, not the least of which are the everlasting wars which seem to rage on and on in the outside world. Isolationist? Albyan? Well, yes actually ...'

## NON-FANTASY WARGAMES

### Crisis! (*TimePatterns PBM*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'This has just re-started after the understandable break. The new GM seems to have a firm grip on the software - so it's back to business again. A simple enough game, but one that has a solid following. A good second rank game to keep the PBM juices flowing in between more taxing games. My only criticism would be that the game looks a little dated, more a question of presentation than anything though.'

**Tom Fyfe** - 'Nice to see this game running again, and I've already taken another starting capital rather unexpectedly too, which is a bonus! Good game which keeps ticking over. Decent value for money.'

### LTWars (*Spellbinder*)

**Mike Absolom** - 'I have plummeted from the leaderboard in dramatic style. Not a consequence of bloody mayhem, but presumably one of slow expansion. Indeed, it is extremely difficult to understand just how the scoring system works! Still having fun, though, and have decided to adopt a more proactive style for the remaining turns of this game. Lock and load, boys.'

## SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

### Star Fleet Warlord (*Pagoda Games*)

**Robin Orman** - 'I signed up for this after reading a couple of Flagship articles (and having tried a five-turn sample game) and can honestly say that it's the best wargame I've played for a long time. In game E16, the Corellis Cleaning corporation ("Boldly going where no one has swept the floor!") is expanding nicely into nearby sectors, and has just begun to run into other player-owned ships.

The next few turns could prove vital for our future, but we have an ace up our sleeves ...

Some friends and I are also interested in playing the next historical game of SFW - if there's an opposing team out there that's interested in opposing us, please contact the Pagoda GM (Keith - [mail@pagodagames.co.uk](mailto:mail@pagodagames.co.uk)) for more info!

## WEB-BASED GAMES

### Haunted Manor (*Madhouse*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'A spin off from the DungeonWorld game engine, this is a free web-based game with turns processed every 24 hours. It's very easy to play, but make sure you can put orders in every day since the game tends to be unforgiving if you stand still too long. Avoid the Horrors, though you might be able to beat up a Ghost. Lady Anne de Tramp very much enjoyed her exploration of the Manor, though alas, it was all too brief and her ghost now walks the rooms wailing and bemoaning her fate. Time for another character in another game methinks! Enter Vinnie D'Pooh, an adventurer of very little brain who has gone in search of his missing porcine friend, last seen in the vicinity of the haunted house. Thus far things are going better, though Vinnie is getting a little nervous that the Poltergeists which keep throwing furniture at him might actually be heffalumps - or worse ...'

**David Blair** - 'Have joined the Madhouse operated Haunted House game being played daily - turns every 24 hours so you don't get bored. They advertised for people in the last issue and hopefully they have done well. Have just started - the object is to amass the largest treasure you can find in this house of many rooms, monsters and ghosts in 21 turns - not to mention you can be attacked by any human player as well who, if he kills you, will then gain 50% (why not 100%?) of your hoard. Now then, 50% of nothing is, er, nothing. Not worth anybody killing me at the moment then, is there?'

### Laser Squad Nemesis (*Laser Squad Nemesis*)

**Robin Orman** - 'This is a relatively new PBeM game that has just emerged from playtest. It has a very nice GUI (Graphical User Interface) of the quality found in modern computer games, and is made by the creators of the X-Com series of PC games as well as the original Laser Squad. Turns are run by a client program on each player's computer, before being sent to an automated central server, followed by results being returned by email.

The game itself involves squad-based combat between forces of Marines (the good guys), the Spawn (nasty bug-like aliens - think the Zerg from Starcraft or those critters from Starship Troopers) and the Machina (sentient machines the humans originally created to combat the

Spawn, but who've decided to follow their own agenda). Some features (such as the Spawn race, a morale system for the Marines and new maps) are still being implemented, but the game is already brilliant. It costs \$15 (about £10, payment in either currency) for six months (!) play, in which time you can play as many games as you can find opponents, but a subscribed player can challenge non-subscribers to games to let them try it out. Check out [www.lasersquadnemesis.com](http://www.lasersquadnemesis.com) for more info!

### Tribe Net (*Peter Rzechorzek*)

**Antony Dunks** - 'I have been in the game now for one real year: that means my tribe of Ormers has the hardship of two winters, and enjoyed the warm days of two summers. Though we have built ourselves a village at what we felt is a good site, we are still very much reacting to our environment, rather than controlling it - or as the rules put 'being a tennis ball'.

This, however, has all changed. We have joined a Religion and things have improved greatly. We are still busy herding goats and digging for coal, but the interest has increased ten fold. For the present we are still very much a tennis ball, but a far better class of tennis ball!'

## GAMES IN PLAYTEST

### Destiny (*Madhouse*)

**Nicc Newton** - 'I am in the playtest and enjoying it so far, but as you know can't say more due to Madhouse restrictions...'

**Chris Morris** - 'Playtesting highlighted for me the importance of knowing the style of what you are getting into. No point in playing a computer-moderated game if you accept the comment of Moltke the Elder "Of the three options open to the enemy, he will choose the fourth."'

**Robin Orman** - 'Playtesters aren't permitted to say much about this at the moment (since features mentioned now may still change). However, I hope Steve won't mind me saying that I really like what I've seen so far (so much so that I've signed up a second playtest position!), and I think this will prove to be just as popular as DungeonWorld. Playtest positions are still available, contact Madhouse for details!'

### On Stellar Seas (*Sven Bauer*)

**David Blair** - 'Have been trying out Sven Bauer's space PBeM and it certainly is one for those players who like lots of ships, movements, exploration etc. The sky is massive and the main computer screen has literally dozens of boxes, options, tasks to ensure you get a good grip of the proceedings. Sven is still playtesting, but as he has two full games well on in the test, my reckoning is he will be starting for real very soon now. For space fans anywhere try Sven direct ([svenbauer@home.com](mailto:svenbauer@home.com)).'

**Contributions welcomed for Flagship 97, by May 18th.**

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THIS is a list of (mostly) European PBM firms thought by FLAGSHIP to be operating at the time this issue was published. There is no cost to GMS for this listing, which we publish as a service to our readers. GMS listed below are cross-indexed by a code to the game register on the following pages. GMS to whom payment should be made by name are listed by name rather than firm.

We ask GMS and our readers to check the listings here and verify their accuracy; please notify the editor if you find an error or omission. Readers are advised to send an SAE rather than money to GMS who aren't obviously operating (by advertising, or a mention in *Spokesmen* or players' comments in *Rumours*).

We also include Websites, Email addresses and GM phone numbers (where the GMS have given permission or they've announced the number as a service to players). However, please play fair: *only* call at reasonable times (or the specified times if they're given) and try not to pin the GM to the phone for hours!

**UK & WEB-BASED GMS**  
Next issue we hope to be merging the UK and European listings. If European GMS could contact us with their latest details, we'd be grateful.

**Additions:** Great Game, Red Malwak, Gregory Rick, Seadogs & Darlings, Leaf Stensson (+5)  
**Deletions:** Michael Cruikshank, Forgotten Front, Nocom Games, Soccer Dreams Ltd., Star Cluster, John Stoker (-6)  
**Changes:** Antony Dunks, Nick Haynes, Premier Management, S.E.S.L. Mark Cressy, Tlun PBM  
**Total: 147 active UK & Web-based GMS (+4)**

**A&D Entertainment**, PO Box 108, Bacton, Stowmarket IP14 4RX  
WEB: [Webmaster@facebook2.demon.co.uk](mailto:Webmaster@facebook2.demon.co.uk)  
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**Adrian Aramuro**  
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**Adventures by Mail**, 100 Fuller Road, Albany NY 12203  
WEB: [www.adventuresbymail.com](http://www.adventuresbymail.com)  
EM: [keith@adventuresbymail.com](mailto:keith@adventuresbymail.com)  
TEL: 518-489-2605 (8:30am to 4:00pm ET)  
FAX: 518-489-9151 (24 hours)

**Agenda Publications**, 3 Workshop Rd, Off Carlton Rd, Sneinton, Nottingham NG3 2BA  
WEB: [go.to/agenda](http://go.to/agenda)

**Albrecht, Chris von**  
WEB: [www.throneworld.com/lords/late91/index.html](http://www.throneworld.com/lords/late91/index.html)  
EM: [late91.gm@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:late91.gm@yahoo.co.uk)

**Andrews, Colin**, 26 Brown Edge Road, Hollis, Oldham, OL4 5QG  
EM: [colin@brownedge.co.uk](mailto:colin@brownedge.co.uk)  
WEB: [www.sjastystems.co.uk/](http://www.sjastystems.co.uk/)

**Arnott, Steven**  
EM: [g3@norrealty.co.uk](mailto:g3@norrealty.co.uk)

**Bartram, Giles**  
WEB: [www.pentaba.net/~serge/centre\\_earth/arcadecountries.html](http://www.pentaba.net/~serge/centre_earth/arcadecountries.html)  
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**Baylis, Chris**, 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex SS15 5EG  
**Blarpo**,  
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**Boothford, Alex**, 30 Sawyer Drive, Biddup, Staffordshire, ST8 6SU  
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**Brambley, Francis**  
WEB: [freespace.virgin.net/francis.brambley/ArkhamAdvertise.htm](http://freespace.virgin.net/francis.brambley/ArkhamAdvertise.htm)  
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TEL/FAX: 0115 9224901 (pre 10pm)

**Burrows, Martin**, 47 Greenfield Terrace, Newbridge, Gwent NP1 4QY  
**Bury, Chris, World Fictional Wrestling**, 1A Chapel Terrace, Southend, Essex SS1 1EX  
**Callan, David**  
EM: [gorlos@netcomuk.co.uk](mailto:gorlos@netcomuk.co.uk)

**Camelot Games**, 6 Llys-Y-Foel, Cuemurvon, Gwynedd LL55 2LU  
**Carter, Dave, Scorpions Games**, 13 Liverpool Rd South, Burscough, Lanes L40 7SU  
EM: [dave@clara.net](mailto:dave@clara.net) or [infibreck@aol.com](mailto:infibreck@aol.com)  
WEB: <http://www.scorpionsgames.co.uk>

**Casey, Ashley**, 16 Willow Grove, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 4HP  
WEB: [www.ashtcasey.co.uk](http://www.ashtcasey.co.uk)  
EM: [serpent@ashtcasey.co.uk](mailto:serpent@ashtcasey.co.uk)

**Cleopatra Computer Games**, 82 Farningdon Avenue, Bromley, Kent BR2 8BU  
**Clovenshield**,  
WEB: [www.angel-fire.com/realms/clovenshield/](http://www.angel-fire.com/realms/clovenshield/)  
EM: [realmsphm@yahoo.com](mailto:realmsphm@yahoo.com)

**Cochaw, Mark**, 10 Ellis Close, Glenfield, Leicester LE3 8DW  
**Coleman, Ian**  
WEB: [www.thera.org.uk/engarde.htm](http://www.thera.org.uk/engarde.htm)  
EM: [ian.coleman@ukgateway.net](mailto:ian.coleman@ukgateway.net)

**Colnar, Lorne**  
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**Cooper, Quincy**  
WEB: <http://timeofhonor.com/>  
EM: [TimeofHonor@aol.com](mailto:TimeofHonor@aol.com)

**Cozens, Richard**, 16 Fox Close, Boston, Lincs PE21 8EE  
WEB: <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/r-cozens>  
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**Crawford, 4** Barkelyfield, Clayton-Le-Woods, Preston, Lancs PR5 8JQ  
WEB: [www.crashtworld.com](http://www.crashtworld.com)  
EM: [andy@crashtworld.com](mailto:andy@crashtworld.com)  
TEL: (Andy Smith): 01722 334878 (credit card hotline)

**Crofts, Richard**  
WEB: [www.chariot.net.au/~dancelin/engarde.html](http://www.chariot.net.au/~dancelin/engarde.html)  
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**Cyclop PBM**, 18 Kington Road, Romford, Essex RM7 9BS  
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**Dodd, Leslie**  
WEB: [www.lordsoffhearth.co.uk/late42/index.htm](http://www.lordsoffhearth.co.uk/late42/index.htm)  
EM: [lord42gm@throneworld.com](mailto:lord42gm@throneworld.com)

**Draes Games**, 21 Chippertfield Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4DP  
WEB: [www.draesgames.co.uk](http://www.draesgames.co.uk)  
EM: [derak@draesgames.co.uk](mailto:derak@draesgames.co.uk)  
TEL: (Derek Rainey): 0117 9607173 (9am-6pm Mon-Fri)

**Dunedin Games**, 65 Boswall Drive, Edinburgh EH5 2BE  
EM: [dunedin@crumbie68.freemove.co.uk](mailto:dunedin@crumbie68.freemove.co.uk)

**Dunks, Antony**, Far Horizon, Sark, Guernsey GY9 0SE  
WEB: [www.sark.net/~xott](http://www.sark.net/~xott)  
EM: [xott@sark.net](mailto:xott@sark.net)  
TEL/FAX: 01481 832926

**EFIFA**  
WEB: [www.geocities.com/emallffo/](http://www.geocities.com/emallffo/)

**Entertainment Plus More Games**  
WEB: [www.epmgames.com](http://www.epmgames.com)  
EM: [ag@epmgames.com](mailto:ag@epmgames.com)

**Evans, Paul**, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF  
EM: [paul@pevans.co.uk](mailto:paul@pevans.co.uk)

**Faraway Games**, 3 Maslem Rd, St Albans, Herts AL4 0GS  
EM: [jabbons@faraway.co.uk](mailto:jabbons@faraway.co.uk)  
WEB: <http://www.faraway.co.uk/>

**Flying Buffalo**  
WEB: <http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/>  
EM: [games@flyingbuffalo.com](mailto:games@flyingbuffalo.com)

**Foster, J. Ton to Three**, 75 Frensham Road, Southsea, Hants PO4 8AE  
**Fritz, Aurik**  
EM: [www.throneworld.com/lords/late24/index.html](http://www.throneworld.com/lords/late24/index.html)

**Fryer, Richard**, 6 Flamingo Close, Wooschill, Wokingham, Berks HP11 1SL  
**Fuel PBM**, 48 Crest Gardens, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 9HD  
EM: [jrcrmey@compuk.co.uk](mailto:jrcrmey@compuk.co.uk)  
TEL: (07980) 334867 (8pm - 9pm, weekdays or weekends)

**Galactic Society Four**, 1 Peter Coats, 31 Caliside, Paisley, Scotland, PA2 6DB  
WEB: [www.gsfgames.co.uk](http://www.gsfgames.co.uk)  
EM: [grblam@gsfgames.co.uk](mailto:grblam@gsfgames.co.uk)

**Games by Mail**, Bridge Street, Neston, S Wirral CH64 9UJ  
WEB: [GamesByMail.co.uk](mailto:GamesByMail.co.uk)  
EM: [colin@gamesbymail.co.uk](mailto:colin@gamesbymail.co.uk)  
TEL: (Colin, Yvonne, Trug): 0151 336412  
FAX: 0151 3361009

**Gillard, Trevor**,  
WEB: [horseguards.org/en\\_egarde.html](http://horseguards.org/en_egarde.html)  
EM: [trevor.gillard@horseguards.org](mailto:trevor.gillard@horseguards.org)

**Glover, Adrian**, 4 Strevane Court, Lessness Park, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5BG  
**Great Game**  
WEB: [www.geocities.com/epochelpse/](http://www.geocities.com/epochelpse/)  
EM: [horrifique@hotmail.com](mailto:horrifique@hotmail.com)

**Guild of Blades**  
WEB: [www.guillofblades.com/interactive/1483/www/www1.html](http://www.guillofblades.com/interactive/1483/www/www1.html)  
EM: [1483@guillofblades.com](mailto:1483@guillofblades.com)

**Paul Green**, 11 Belgravia Mews, Shaw, Oldham OL2 7TB  
EM: [clans@varriorgames.co.uk](mailto:clans@varriorgames.co.uk)  
TEL: (Paul Green): 01706 883444

**Harbinger Enterprises**, 3 Nelson Square, Norton Green, Stockton/Tees, Cleveland TS20 1EH  
**Harlequin Games**, 340 North Road, Cudthif CF14 3BP  
WEB: [www.harlequingames.com](http://www.harlequingames.com) AND [www.middleearthgames.com](http://www.middleearthgames.com)  
EM: [phm@harlequingames.com](mailto:phm@harlequingames.com)

**TEL**: 029 2091 3559 (9-6.30 weekdays) - Middle Earth only  
TEL: (Sim Roads): 029 2062 5532 any time  
FAX: 029 2062 5532 any time

**Haynes, Nic**, Flat 4, Brookfield Court, Victoria Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 4GJ  
**Hemsoft Computer Consultants**, 54 Crelow Fields, Sthians, nr Truro TR3 7RE  
EM: [moonbier@hotmail.com](mailto:moonbier@hotmail.com)

**Hill, Adam**, 16 Shawfield Close, Sutton Hill, Telford, Shrops., TF7 4BB  
EM: [adamhill@cablenet.co.uk](mailto:adamhill@cablenet.co.uk)

**Hollidate, Adam**, 113 Corouation Rd, Brimington, Chesterfield, Derby S43 1EY  
EM: [psych-ent@mailt-ty.com](mailto:psych-ent@mailt-ty.com)

**Hunky Monkey Games**, 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1BS  
WEB: [www.hunkymonkey.co.uk](http://www.hunkymonkey.co.uk) AND [www.sjastystems.co.uk/karadon/](http://www.sjastystems.co.uk/karadon/)  
EM: [qpc@hunkymonkey.co.uk](mailto:qpc@hunkymonkey.co.uk)

**TEL**: /FAX (Tom Fyfe): 01392 420582 (4 - 8pm + weekends)  
**IB Postal Games**, 90 Queen Elizabeth Way, Kirk Hallam, Ilkerton, Derbys DE7 4NT  
**In Off the Post**, PO Box 302, Halstead, Essex CO9 2LA  
EM: [phm@ictp.co.uk](mailto:phm@ictp.co.uk)

**Inchus Designs**, POB 263, Loughborough LE11 1ZG  
WEB: [www.inchusdesigns.co.uk](http://www.inchusdesigns.co.uk)  
EM: [inquis@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:inquis@globalnet.co.uk)  
FAX: 01509 217957

**Interesting Times**, 37 Whitehouse Way, Southgate, London, N14 7LX  
WEB: [www.interesting-times.co.uk](http://www.interesting-times.co.uk)  
EM: [starting@interesting-times.co.uk](mailto:starting@interesting-times.co.uk)  
TEL: 07050 658383

**FAX**: 07050 658384  
**Jade Enterprises**, 127 Queen Adelaide Court, Peage, London, SE20 7EB  
EM: [jade@jee.co.uk](mailto:jade@jee.co.uk)  
TEL: 020 83256507

**Jenkins, Brian**  
WEB: <http://hijinks.com/engarde/>  
EM: [engarde@hijinks.com](mailto:engarde@hijinks.com)

**Kelom Games**, 7 Claverton, Hanworth, Bracknell RG12 7YN  
WEB: [www.kelom-games.com](http://www.kelom-games.com)  
EM: [kelomgames@btinternet.com](mailto:kelomgames@btinternet.com)

**KJC Games, FREEPOST**, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 3UL  
WEB: [www.kjgames.com](http://www.kjgames.com)  
EM: [enquiry@kjgames.com](mailto:enquiry@kjgames.com)  
TEL: 01253 866345

**Lancaster, Thomas**, 16A Stodard Road, Anerly, London, SE20 8ET  
**Laughing Dog**, 31 Leopold Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7NP  
TEL: (Sim Bennett): 01394 274432 (7-10pm weekdays)

**Lindahl, Greg**  
WEB: [www.pbm.com/~lindahl/jc.htm](http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/jc.htm)  
EM: [info@pbm.com](mailto:info@pbm.com)

**Lyakhovskiy, Pavel**  
WEB: [www.klp.pbm.ru](http://www.klp.pbm.ru)  
EM: [klp\\_game@mail.ru](mailto:klp_game@mail.ru)

**Madhouse**, 13 Marchmont Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 5BB  
WEB: [www.madcentral.com](http://www.madcentral.com)  
EM: [madcentral@aol.com](mailto:madcentral@aol.com)

**TEL**: 01442 52950 (answerphone)  
**marvelshelpline**: 01442 402763 (8pm-10pm Mon-Thurs, all day Sunday)  
**Maestro Games**, PO Box 216, Farnham, Surrey GU10 8XA  
**McConnell, D. Ab Iulio Games**, PO Box 150, Beckenham, Kent BR3 5ZD  
EM: [danny.mcconnell@virgin.net](mailto:danny.mcconnell@virgin.net)

**Miles, Richard**, 27 Laytona Avenue, Heath, Cudthif, CF14 3BQ  
**Mindless Games**, 217a Ilkerton Road, Nottingham NG7 3FX  
WEB: [www.mindlessworld.net](http://www.mindlessworld.net)  
EM: [andy.mindless@virgin.net](mailto:andy.mindless@virgin.net)

**TEL**: (Andy Simmonds): 0115 979 0797 (9.30-18.30 weekdays only)  
**MMJ Enterprises**  
WEB: [www.mmj-ent.com/gel/](http://www.mmj-ent.com/gel/)  
EM: [nicole@mmj-ent.com](mailto:nicole@mmj-ent.com)





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).

#### HOW TO READ THE GALACTIC VIEW TABLES

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

**Medium** shows whether a game is available via email (e), paper (p) or web-based play (w).

**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. More for several possible extras, (e) lower cost if you join the club \$ indicates no credit refunds available.

**Flagship Ref** shows the issue of Flagship where you can find the best description so far: a=article, s=Spokesmen Speak, d=diary. Thus, 4s means 'Spokesmen Speak issue #4'. Candidates 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.

**New Entries:** Banana EG1, Barbarians at the Gate, Beer Mogul, Empires, LT Wars, Play On, Ruby League Breakout, Rugby League Stats, Rugby Union Stats, Seadogs & Darlings, Scottish Email Soccer League (+11)  
**Deletions:** EG1 The Sun King, Forgotten Front, League Soccer, Royal Alliances, Rugby Stats, Soccer Dreams (**5**)  
**Changes:** Ausertitz, Kings of Kamond, StarCluster  
**Total: 264 games (+6)** Note that all prices are for the UK and are given in £'s except where noted. Non-UK European rates are usually about 25% higher, and overseas rates can be up to double.

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagged.
<b>ADVENTURE</b>									
Aspects of Might	M-O	Adventure	SIL	e	£2.50	0	£2.50	(a)	94s
Beyond	M-O	Adventure	CRA	e, p	£9.95	3	£2.95	(c)	86a
Dungeons & Dragons	C-O	Adventure	MAD	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.00	(d)	77-80d, 92-94d
Herbie Fantasy	C-O	Adventure	FBI	e, p	\$5	0	\$3	-	40a
Legends of Israel	C-O	Adventure	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£1.00	-	-
Monster Island	C-O	Adventure	KJC	p	Free	0	£2.10	-	-
Monster Island	C-O	Adventure	ABM	p	\$6	0	\$6.50	-	-
Monsters	C-F	Adventure	PEG	e	Free	0	Free	-	91s
Phantasmach	C-O	Adventure	CRA	e, p	£9.95	3	£1.95	-	30a
Quest	C-O	Adventure	KJC	p	Free	0	£2.10	-	36a, 47a, 94a
Quest Online	C-O	Adventure	ABM	e	Free	0	£1.75	-	36a, 47a, 94a
<b>ECONOMIC</b>									
Quest Online	C-O	Adventure	KJC	w	Free	0	£2 for 10	-	36a, 47a
Beer Mogul	C-O	Economic	RED	w	Free	0	Free	-	96a
Covert Operations	C-F	Economic	FBI	e	\$25 per game	0	n/a	-	-
Games Guru	M-F	Economic	GUR	p	£5.00	3	£1.75	-	-
KLIP	C-O	Economic	LVA	e	?	?	?	-	89s
Pop Tarts	H-F	Economic	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£0.50	-	91a
Speculate	C-F	Economic	SOF	p	£5.00	3	£2.25	-	-
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>									
Battle Robots	C-F	Misc: Robots	GSF	e	Free	0	Free	-	85a
Continental Rails	C-F	Misc: Railway	FUE	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.25	-	21a
Food Chain	C-O	Misc	LIN	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
Election Year	C-F	Misc: Political	FBI	e	\$25 per game	0	-	-	-
Godfather	C-F	Misc: Crime	PAG	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	(a)	73a, 83d
Godfather	C-F	Misc: Crime	LOC	p	Free	0	£4 Euro	-	73a, 83d
Great White Hunter	C-F	Misc	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	94s
In The House Today	H-F	Misc: Politics	SAB	p	Free	0	£10.00 for 2	-	-
It's a Crime!	C-F	Misc: Crime	KJC	p	Free	2	£1.85	-	-
It's a Crime!	C-F	Misc: Crime	ABM	e	Free	2	£1.50	-	-
Mystic Arena	C-O	Misc: Arena	MYS	e	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Tartarus	C-O	Misc: Robots	FAR	e	Free	0	Free	(a)	75s
Wild World Web	H-O	Misc	RCW	e, p	£9.99/year	-	-	-	-
<b>POWER</b>									
Absolute Fantasy	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£15.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Absolute Fantasy	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£15.00	2	£4.00	-	-
American Civil War Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	60s
Ancient Empires	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	78s
Assyria's End	M-O	Power: Historical	OAT	e, p	£4.00	2	£3.25	£1 month	58a
Centre-Earth	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	90a
Conclave	C-F	Power: Fantasy	BAR	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Dark Age II	M-F	Power: Fantasy	UKG	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.50	-	91s
Diadochi	C-F	Power: Historical	SOF	p	£5.00	3	£9.00 for 3	-	51a
Empires of Corinnum	M-O	Power: Historical	CYC	p	£5.00	2	£2.50	-	78a, 79d, 81d
For God, King & Country	H-F	Power: Fantasy	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£4.00	-	63s
Gryphon	H-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£0.80	1	£5.00	-	-
Gunsbot Diplomacy	M-O	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	-	46s
Knights of Karadon	C-F	Power: Historical	TIW	e, p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	-
Knights of Christendom	H-F	Power: Fantasy	AGM	e, p	Free	0	£5.00	-	83a, 87a, 93-94a, 96d
La Gloire du Roi	M-O	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 2	-	-
La Ultima Cruzada	H-F	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	£5.00	0	£5.00	(d)	47a, 76a, 86-89d
Lords of the Earth: 24	M-O	Power: Historical	BRU	p	£7.50	0	£2.00	-	84a, 94a
Mundis	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-
Napoleonic Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£6.00	0	£2.80	-	71-73d
Primo's Inner Pares	M-O	Power: Historical	INT	e, p	£10.00	1	£6.00/month	-	57a, 75a, 84a, 85a, 92a
Remains of Iran	M-O	Power: Fantasy	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£4.00	(a)	62s
Riddle of the Sands	M-F	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£20.00	10	£2.50	(d)	89a
World War 1 Battles	H-F	Power: Historical	CMB	p	£10.00	0	£3.00	(c)	62s
World War I Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£3.00	-	78s
<b>Game</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>GM</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Free Turns</b>	<b>Turn Fee</b>	<b>Xtra £</b>	<b>Flagged.</b>

## Game ROLEPLAYING

Bakufu	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£36.00 for a whole game	-	-	-	-
Barony of the Rivers	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HIL	p	£10.00	3	£2.50	-	-
Chaos Trail	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WIL	p	Free	0	£1.25 \$	(d)	47a, 86a
Clovershield	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	CLO	e	Free	-	Free	-	93a
Dragonhead	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	ULA	e, p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	79a
Epoch of Might	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.00	-	63a
Exile	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£10.00	2	£3.00	-	53a
Guardian	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	RIC	p	£10.00	2	£2.00	(c)	53s
Heroes of Olythus	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	TIV	e, p	£10.00	3	£3.00	-	88s
Lands of Elvoria	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	FIN	e, p	£10.00	3	£3.50	(c)	59a, 93a
Portals & Palaces	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HOL	e, p	£5.00	1	£1.30	(c)	23s
Saurialia VI Adventures	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£40.00 for 12	-	-	-	-
Saurialia: NW	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WLL	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Saurialia: S	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	ABS	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Saurialia: Serpent Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	CAS	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Saurialia: Viridian Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£10.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Shannaha	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WAY	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	-	-
Terran III	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	BRD	p	Free	0	Free \$	-	-
Worlds Apart	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£0.70	-	-
Vitrol	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	AND	p	£4.00	4	£4.00	-	92s
Xott Solo	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	DUN	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	-	33a
Xott	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	DUN	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	-	-
Psychic	H-O	RPG: Future	COO	p	£20.00	1	£3.50	-	41s
Seadogs and Darlings	H-O	RPG: Historical	SDD	e	Free	3	£1.50	-	-
Viking Saga	H-O	RPG: Historical	VIS	e	Free	0	Free	-	90s
EG1: Banana	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BAN	e	Free	0	Free	-	96a
EG1: Blarpo	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BLA	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
EG1: Delon	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	CRO	e	Free	-	Free	-	93a
EG1: Horsesguards	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	GIL	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	-
EG1: King & Cardinal	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	COL	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	94s
EG1: LPBS	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	EVA	p	£10.00	4	£2.00	-	34a, 93a
EG1: Orc	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	ARA	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a
EG1: Orkians	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	JEN	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	-
EG1: Slumbers	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BRM	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a
EG1: Time of Honor	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	COP	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
EG1: Dangerous Liaisons	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	SPN	p	£5.00	5	£0.80	-	93a, 96a
Einstein's Lot	H-O	RPG: Modern	ULA	p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	84s, 93a
Absolute Heroes	M-O	RPG: Suphero	JAD	p	£15.00	2	£4.50	(b)	91a
Mighty Heros	H-O	RPG: Suphero	RCW	e, p	n/a	0	n/a	-	-
Vampire! 2	H-O	RPG: Vampire	HRB	p	£10.00	1	£4.00	-	60s
<b>SCI-FI</b>									
Beyond Green Sun	M-O	Sci Fi	SEV	e, p	Free	0	£4.00 - £6.00	-	87a
Beyond the Stellar Empire	M-O	Sci Fi	KJC	p	Free	1	£2.50 - £6.00	-	22a, 83a
Conquest of the Stars	C-F	Sci Fi	PEG	e	TBA	TBA	-	TBA	-
Directive 32	M-F	Sci Fi	COZ	p	£10.00	0	£6.00	-	73s
Endless Time and Space	H-F	Sci Fi	SAB	p	Free	0	£10.00 for 2	-	-
Galactic Invasion 2	C-F	Sci Fi	WRG	e, p	Free	3	£2.00	-	29a
Galactic Invasion 3	C-F	Sci Fi	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
S-F	H-O	Sci Fi	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£1.10	-	62s
Space Troopers	C-F	Sci Fi	KJC	p	Free	-	Free	-	94s
Spaceplan	C-F	Sci Fi	SOF	p	£5.00	3	£9.00 for 4	-	-
Star Empires IV	C-O	Sci Fi	SOU	e, p	£10.00	3	£3.00	-	57a
StarFleet Warlord	C-F	Sci Fi	PAG	p	£5.00	0	£3.00	-	64a, 74-75a
TimeLapse	C-F	Sci Fi	WRG	e, p	Free	3	£2.00	-	72a, 78a, 91-93d
Evolution of the Stars	C-F	Sci Fi	VdF	e	TBA	0	£0.5	(c)	46a
Galactic Conflict	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	£5	0	£3.50	-	-
Galactic Empires	C-O	Sci-Fi	MMI	e	Free	5	\$2.25	-	-
Mobius I	C-F	Sci-Fi	REB	e, p	Free	6	£1.50	-	94s
Riftlords	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	\$8	0	\$8	(a)	47a
Smuggler's Run	C-F	Sci-Fi	ABM	e	No	3	\$4	(a)	-
StarCluster	M-F	Sci-Fi	STE	e	Free	0	\$0.50	-	-
StarQuest	C-F	Sci-Fi	HAQ	e, p	Free	1	£3.50	-	96s
Starweb	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	\$7	0	\$14.50	-	46a
Takano	C-O	Sci-Fi	ALG	e	\$9.99	0	\$19.99 / month	(a)	9a, 32-37d
Weapon, The	C-F	Sci-Fi	VdF	e	€	0	€	(c)	89a, 90a
<b>SPORT</b>									
Gameplan	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOF/McC	p	£5.00	0	£11.00 for 4	-	20a
Gameplan: Advanced	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOF/McC	p	£5.00	0	£13.00 for 4	-	-
Gridiron Stats	C-O	Sport: American Football	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	-
Neutral Zone	C-O	Sport: American Football	SAT	e, w	3.5	0	£1.25	-	92a
Postal American Football League	C-O	Sport: American Football	CLE	p	£5.00	0	£54 a season	-	-
Play On	M-O	Sport: American Football	TOU	p	£5.00	0	£2.75	(c)	-
Touchdown	C-O	Sport: Aussie Rules	McC	e, p	AUSS\$10	?	AUSS\$5.50	-	-
Gameplan Baseball	C-O	Sport: Baseball	McC	p	£5.00	0	£3.00	-	-
Gameplan Boxing	C-O	Sport: Boxing	McC	p	£5.00	5	£9.00 for 4	-	-
Run Chase	H-O	Sport: Cricket	SOF	p	£5.00	5	£5.00 for 4	-	-
Ultimate Test	C-O	Sport: Cricket	WIL	p	£7.50	1	£2.50	(c)	-
Ultra Cricket	C-O	Sport: Cricket	Ulm Sports	e	Free	No	Free	-	91s
Fantasy Cycling 2001	C-O	Sport: Cycling	ULI	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Aeroball	M-O	Sport: Fictional	WVG	p	£2.00	1	£1.25	-	62-63a
Gobball	C-O	Sport: Fictional	SYN	p	£7.70	2	£3.00	-	79s
Monts Maximus	C-O	Sport: Fictional	MAD	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	-	81s
No Holds Barred	C-O	Sport: Fictional	LAU	p	Free	2	£2.00	-	69a

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
Tribal Kingdom Soccer	H-O	Sport: Fictional	DND	p	Free	1	£2.60	-	77a
Fallen at the First	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	-
Grand National	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.75	-	38a
Horse Racing	C-O	Sport: Horse Racing	REA	p	Choice	0	£1.25	(d)	71s
Reality Racing	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.75	-	89s
Winning Post	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	GLO	p	£25.00	10	£2.50	-	58a
Slapshot	C-O	Sport: Ice Hockey	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	53s
Chicken Run	H-O	Sport: Motor Racing	RCW	e, p	£0.50	0	£0.50	-	-
Raceplan Grand Prix	C-O	Sport: Motor Racing	McC	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	-	60a, 90s
S League, The	C-O	Sport: Motor Racing	SPO	p	£5.00	0	£2.00 for 9 wks	90s	-
A Day at the Races	M-O	Sport: Racing	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	42s
Rugby League Breakout	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	3	£5.00 for 4	-	96s
Rugby League Challenge	M-O	Sport: Rugby	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.10	-	41a
Rugby League Stats	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	96s
Rugby Union Stats	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	51a, 85a, 96s
Ultra Rugby	C-O	Sport: Rugby	Ultra Sports	e	Free	No	Free	-	-
522 Soccer FA	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£7.00 per season	0	£0.00	-	41a
AK&D Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	AK&D	p	Free	1	£1.50	-	81s
Apex FHM Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	AFE	p	£1.50	0	£3.00 for 2 games	35a	-
Away the Lads	M-O	Sport: Soccer	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.40	(a)	42s
Championship Football	C-O	Sport: Soccer	HEM	p	Free	5	£2.00	(d)	41s
Championship League	C-O	Sport: Soccer	COE	p	Free	0	£1.95	-	53s
Coslaw Postol Football League	M-O	Sport: Soccer	SUP	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	70s
Come On You Reds	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£1.00	1	£1.00	(d)	34a, 41a
EHFA	C-O	Sport: Soccer	EHI	w	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Extra Time-Chairman	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KJC	p	Free	1	£2.25	-	53a
Extra Time-original	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KJC/CRA	e, p	Free	1	£1.90	-	53a
Fantasy Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	FLO	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	93s
Floodit Soccer	M-O	Sport: Soccer	MAE	w, e	Free	-	£2.00	-	84a
Football Maestro	C-O	Sport: Soccer	DRC	w	Free	0	Free	-	33a
Football Predictions	C-O	Sport: Soccer	IOP	p	Free	1	£2.25	(d)	65a
In Off the Post	C-O	Sport: Soccer	WRI	p	Free	1	£1.00	-	18a, 34a, 89a
It's in the Net	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SPE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25	-	43s
Kickabout	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAR	p	Free	0	£1.40	-	43s
Offside Ref!	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SHO	p	Free	0	£10.00 for 6	-	65s
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Premier League	M-O	Sport: Soccer	PRE	w	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Premier Management Football	C-F	Sport: Soccer	OLY	p	Free	1	£1.60	(c)	32s
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Scottish Email Soccer League	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SEF	e, w	£12.50 per season	0	Free	-	52s
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Soccer Stats	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SOF	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	35a, 41a
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SSFA	M-O	Sport: Soccer	SSL	e	Free	0	£15.00/seasons	-	85s
Sunnati Soccer League	C-O	Sport: Soccer	BRB	p	39p SAE	0	£2.50	-	41a
Team Balance	C-O	Sport: Soccer	FOS	p	?	0	£4.00	-	92a
Ten to Three	M-O	Sport: Soccer	BLR	e, p	£4.00	5	£1.00	-	76s
TOTL	C-O	Sport: Soccer	GBM	p	Free	0	£2.75	-	92a
Tough At The Top	C-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£10.00 per season	0	£2.00	-	-
Wadsworth	M-O	Sport: Wrestling	BOO	p	£1.00	0	£1.00	-	57a, 92a
ADPW	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	TUR	p	£7.00	6	£1.00	-	-
British Wrestling Association	M-O	Sport: Wrestling	FRY	p	£1.50	0	£1.50	(a)	-
JWA Wrestling	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	LAN	p	Free	0	£3.50	-	-
Planetary Wrestling Syndicate	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	BRY	p	Free	0	£2.50	-	-
World Fictional Wrestling	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	SMI	p	£3.50	0	£3.50	-	-
WOW	C-O	Sport: Wrestling	CAM	p	£10 per season	2	£3.25	-	-
Basketball	C-O	Sport:Basketball	McM	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	-
Hoopball	C-O	Sport:Basketball	McM	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	-
Stamduk	C-O	Sport:Basketball	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	-
Ultra Tennis	C-O	Sport:Tennis	Ultra Sports	e	Free	No	Free	-	-
TRIBAL									
Blidian Diary, A	M-O	Tribal	SPE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25 - £3.25	\$	80a, 81, 84d
Clans II	C-O	Tribal	GBE	p	£10.00	1	£2.00	-	38a, 84a
Crack of Doom II	M-O	Tribal	HAQ	p	£10.00	2	£4.50	(d)	7a
Crashnoff's Quest World	M-O	Tribal	CRA	p	£9.95	2	£2.50	-	86a, 90a
Tribe Net	H-O	Tribal	RZE	e	Free	6	£1.80	-	37a, 79a
Tribes of Crane	M-O	Tribal	ZEN	p	£12.00	1	£4.40	(c)	-
WARGAMES									
Battle Plan	C-O	Wargame	FBI	e	\$5	0	£3.50	(a)	19a
Company Commander	M-F	Wargame	OAT	e, p	£12.00	2	£3.50 + £1.50/month	-	68a
Crisis!	C-F	Wargame	TIM	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.20*	-	7a, 85a
Nuclear Destruction	C-F	Wargame	FBI	e	\$5	0	£2.50	-	-
Parazgruppe II	M-F	Wargame	AGM	p	£4.00	0	£3.00	-	82s
Prometheus	C-F	Wargame	HKM	e, p	£10.00	0	£2.50	-	91s
Squad Leader	H-F	Wargame	SOV	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	82s
Warlord	C-F	Wargame	KJC	p	£3.00	3	£2.20	-	61-62a
World War IV	C-F	Wargame	PAG	e, p	£10.00	3	£3.00	-	56a, 59-61d, 76a

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- off-the-shelf**, Tom Howell, 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363, USA (Email: off-the-shelf@olympus.net)
- Psychopath**, www.psychozine.co.uk (Web publication only.)
- Rhine-Neckar-Zine**, (German language), Lukas Kautzsch, An der Rossweid 18a, 76229 Karlsruhe, Germany, (Email: lukas@oberfoul.de)
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- Variable Pig**, Jim Reader, Vredelanstraat 20, 3633 EC, Vreeland, NETHERLANDS (Email: cj.reader@wanadoo.nl)

# The Lost Gold of Stronnmark

## The Adventure Begins ...

AFTER THE success of *The Displacement Engine*, we now present **The Lost Gold of Stronnmark**, an adventure set in the lands of **Midhír** (winner of the *Flagship Game of the Millenium* award) After each instalment of the story, you'll have the chance to decide what happens next, much like the old *Fighting Fantasy* books. GM Colin Forbes' decisions will be based on the majority of your choices, reserving the right to nip and tuck as appropriate.

Many leagues north of the old Empire and east of the lands formerly held by the strong King Erik of Stronnmark, lay the land of Rognfjord. Lying on the southern edge of the trackless northern mountains, the frosts of winter had already hardened the ground in a white-tipped glaze. The relentless eastern wind blew down from the mountains bringing a bone cold chill from the expanses of the Asleif glacier. Out to sea the great bergs of the Straits of Thargund drifted slowly past, the wind howling off their high-riding tips in a grim reminder of the coming season.

The blanketed white of the land was broken only by the small village of Egilsheim, a motley collection of huts and hovels that, until recently, had housed a small community of fishers and farmers. Three weeks ago, unknown raiders had come from the north, no doubt driven to the sea by the cruelties of the Brotherhood. Not content with stealing what little gold there was in the village, the raiders had slain the men and carried off the women and children, leaving the smouldering ruins black against the stark white of the deserted fields beyond.

Ragnar Ingarsson sat in the remnants of his wooden hall mulling over a tankard of the finest Stronnmark Ale. He had been away to the south trading furs with the Dwarves of Hastaburg when the raiders had come, killing all the men, and carrying off a large number of the womenfolk. Ragnar's sister Astrid was amongst those taken, and Ragnar swore that he would have his revenge one day. As far as he knew, he was the last surviving inhabitant of Egilsheim. Ragnar was plotting revenge on the raiders, but for now he had more immediate problems. His supplies of food were low, and there was little enough ale. The only thing he had was his small boat, sufficient to move along the coast with, but hardly seaworthy in unsheltered waters. Ragnar sighed, the *Sleipner*, although a fine vessel (it had been built by his father) would not be any good against the dragon-headed longboats of the northern tribes. He would need to leave Egilsheim once the spring thaw set in and seek means of gathering men and money. Still, Ragnar was a good fighter, even if he did often blank out in the heat of battle. His friends had told him that he was blessed by the gods with the *Beserkerangr*, an affliction that made him fight without any regard for his own safety. Ragnar pondered the situation, where should he go come spring? North to the barren forests of Thargund, south to the lands ruled by tribes of Giants, east to the forested mountains haunted by the accursed Brotherhood, or west to the more civilised waters and coasts of Stronnmark? The latter seemed the more sensible route to take, after all it was said that the streets of Stonnmark were paved with gold ...



With the arrival of spring, and the melting of the ice that had closed off the Rognfjord for the last few months, Ragnar began to make preparations for the journey that lay ahead. Throughout the winter he had been busy giving the bodies of his former friends and comrades an honourable passage to Valhalla, an onerous task, but one which Ragnar performed with grim determination to avenge the fate of all those that had died.

Finding the necessary equipment for the journey was not too much of a problem. Many of the villagers had been skilled craftsmen, and there were no shortage of well-crafted tools, fishing nets and hunting traps. Food though was more difficult to come by, many times in the depths of winter Ragnar had gone hungry for most of Egilsheim's stores of grain had been either burnt or carried off by the raiders. However, with the coming of spring Ragnar had been able to find good hunting in the surrounding hills, and begin laying in fish, which he stored using the rather meagre reserves of salt which he had brought back with him from Hastaburg. Spears there were aplenty, even some tipped with feathers from the crests of Great Wyrms - these had belonged to his father who, in his youth, had taken part in a great hunt in the mountains to kill one of the troublesome beasts that had been plaguing the surrounding lands. Ragnar noted with pride that they had been used in the battle for Egilsheim, for he found some buried deep in the bodies of two of the raiders, they were indeed sharp and true, loading the *Sleipnir* with this equipment, and as much salt fish and meat as could be managed, Ragnar set off southwards down the coast, his shield and sword lying ever-ready by his side.

Many of the small farmsteads along the coast Ragnar found to have been reduced to little more than blackened ruins. Obviously the marauding raiders had not stopped at Egilsheim. Once he even came across an isolated farm whose fields and buildings were still smoking from the fires lit not more than a day or two previously. The raiders had long gone, and Ragnar feared for the farmer and his family. Beaching the *Sleipnir*, Ragnar found evidence to support his fears. A man lay slain at the gates of the farmyard, a rusty sword in one hand and an empty hole gaping through his chest. Clearly he had given his life in defence of his farm and whatever family he may have had. Ragnar grimaced, no doubt they had either been slain too, or worse, been carried off to a life of slavery in the northern wastes. Just then, there was a sound from a large barn to his left. Ragnar sprang up, sword in hand and turned to face whatever might be there.

### What will Ragnar do?

- 1) Go beserk, charge in and slay anything that moves?
  - 2) Investigate the area cautiously?
- You can also have you say about other things too ...
- 3) What does Ragnar look like? Write a short description if you like!
  - 4) What about Ragnar's personality traits? I'd welcome your thoughts ...

Please email the GM [colin\\_pbmgames.com](mailto:colin_pbmgames.com) or fill in the enclosed Feedback Postcard which includes room for responses to *The Lost Gold of Stronnmark*.



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