

# Flagship

POSTAL AND INTERACTIVE GAMING

## Phoenix

Absolute Power 2  
Email Roleplaying  
Epsom  
Galactic Invasion  
Galaxy  
Legends  
Lords of the Earth  
Lunatix Online  
Space Troopers  
StarFleet Warlords

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# Report from the Bridge

## Bumper Summer Reading

AUGUST has its holiday delights, but it's never the best month for playing games. Read this on the beach, then, and plan your September campaigns! We've continued to expand the magazine (to a bumper 56 pages) which allows us to broaden our gaming coverage without reducing the space devoted to PBM.

A recent nasty experience was collecting the final copy for #97 from the layout team just as Tom Fyfe of Hunky Monkey discovered that a hacker had broken into his machine while he was online, wiping vital game files. We cover this disaster here, and include vital advice on guarding your software. But obviously there are destructive non-PBMing saddos out there who've never heard of fair play: let's take this as proof that games are a good thing.

This issue, we welcome Mo Holkar aboard, as our second Consultant Editor. Nick Palmer, *Flagship's* Founder, is so busy with his other duties that we don't want to present him at short notice with reviews that cover the games that the *Flagship* team run themselves. I'm itching to start a new game myself, though don't hold your breath, and Colin Forbes plans to postbox Last World's Right of Kings. Mo will cast a calm, practised eye over this coverage. He'll also act as backup while I'm off visiting my son in San Francisco at the start of September. Contact Colin in the first instance when I'm away, but Colin's health is variable, so Mo will help out. I'm promoting Colin to Assistant Editor: his help has been invaluable over the difficult period of learning to manage this magazine on my own. I remain responsible for everything that goes into *Flagship*, but I couldn't manage the work on my own.

So what's *Flagship* for? Good reading mainly, I hope: with plenty of news, opinions and thoughtful articles. I'm a great believer in the fun that games provide. Well, maybe a bit of frustration, too, but that's healthy.

Nick Palmer founded *Flagship* as a keen games player, and so we've always looked at games from their players' point of view. I've worked to maintain this approach since taking over as editor, and I hope that I've done a fair job. We've got plenty for you this issue: reviews, game diaries, articles on design and lots of good advice. We hope you'll find this issue fun!

*Carol*

FLAGSHIP: #98

August / September 2002

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## NEWSDESK

CAN YOU help us to publicize the hobby? We'll gladly send flyers and sample copies of *Flagship* to you if you're attending a convention where people are likely to be interested. Just get in touch with the editor.

Oh, and if you decide to join a game because you've seen it in *Flagship*, remember that it'll help us if you mention this when you apply to play.

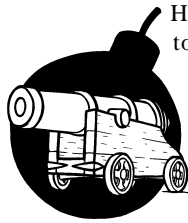
## ADVENTURE GAMES



Madhouse are on the point of opening a new area in game 5 of their adventure game, **DungeonWorld**. Kyr is an exotic desert kingdom, far from the main area of *Dungeonworld*, and its main appeal is that everyone will be starting off on equal terms. Although the existing *DungeonWorld* game is large enough for newcomers to explore without being threatened by established players, Madhouse feel that some potential players are put off by fear of finding powerful players already in the game. 'In Kyr,' explain Madhouse, 'everybody is new, so arrivals to the game need not worry about power characters. They will have an even environment to learn in, allowing them to discover that their fears were groundless in the first place!'

A spin-off of Madhouse's free online web-game, **Haunted Manor**, has just gone into playtest. **Catacombs** uses the same system as *Haunted Manor*, but the setting is now a network of caves, and you play a fantasy character instead of a treasure hunter. It'll play differently from *Haunted Manor*, because although the game mechanics are the same, there are differences in the starting values, some game elements and game items. Initially, *Catacombs* will also be run for free. Madhouse are still working on their new game for the winter: **Abnormals**. Early days yet, of course, but *Abnormals* will be an adventure game where you can play a super-hero or super-villain. They plan to offer both free and commercial options to the game. The free version will have a limited range of actions and be email-only; the commercial game will have many more possible actions and be playable by email or by post.

## WARGAMES



Harlequin Games ran a face-to-face session of **Middle Earth PBM** in Cardiff over the weekend of July 26th-28th: we went to press just ahead of this date, but were able to gather that all those planning to play were cheerfully anticipating three days of vigorous initiatives and dastardly schemes.

Middle Earth's player base continues to grow steadily, which is good news for the moderators and for PBM/PBEM in general, since it's a game which, because of its setting, has an immediate appeal outside the hobby. Harlequin have a high reputation as moderators and they work steadily to keep Middle Earth fresh for new and old players alike. They issue regular newsletters and there's plenty of chat about updating the modules. Chatting to players and using their input helps Harlequin to keep the game vibrant, toned with their experience of running the games for a long period now.

Good news, too, is that Middle Earth FA 1000 won the 'Best PBM Game' award at *Origins 2002*.

We advertised the playtest of **Total Conquest** nearly two years ago, so are delighted to bring you the news that the playtest is almost complete and that the commercial release of *Total Conquest* is scheduled for Friday the 20th of September.

The game comes a team of European designers and programmers, and is designed to be played world-wide. Charges are very low at 1 euro per turn or 10 euros per month for unlimited games. There will even be small scenarios for two to six players only that will be absolutely free for everyone.

Although you can still get your turn by mail, *Total Conquest* has grown closer to an online game during its development. You can use a graphical user interface system that allows you to enter your orders in what the GMs are confident you'll find a 'fun and user friendly way'.

But what's it about? you're asking. *Total Conquest* remains a fantasy turn-based wargame, with deadlines that vary from two days to a week. The internet site offers players their own accounts, the ability to join online alliances, a chance to write in the forums and to send instant messages to each other. You can watch progress in all the games, see the hall of fame, and there's plenty more. Although there will be major changes in the site on the day of the commercial release, you can still take an early look at the website:

<http://www.total-conquest.com>

It's good to see plenty of life in Midnight Games' **Legends**, a fantasy wargame with breath-taking materials, varied modules and a huge range of opportunities for different kinds of play.

Harlequin Games run *Legends* in Britain, and have just started a new game, *North Island Campaign 27*: there's still some room for new players. Sam Roads, its moderator, says he has responded to discussion on the mailing lists and adapted the database to change many aspects of the module for this game. This means that the game has been freshened up for everyone, and that players from games *NIC24* or *NIC26* won't have an advantage from the information they've gained there. In addition, new and updated spells add to the new feel of the game.

Sam reports that the web-based sign-up system was working well again as the game-start approached, 'with powerful Alveran and Elven factions already organised, whilst Solaran and Saurians have been gathering members'.

Their previous game of *Legends*, *NIC26*, is full but it isn't 'closed', as we mistakenly stated last issue.

Good news for *Legends* players is that there are no price rises in *Legends* this year. Even better, Harlequin expect to be able to create a way to remove the 5% credit card surcharge in the near future.

Incidentally, Sam has discovered that his decision to lower the maximum price from £14 to £10 has not lost Harlequin a great deal of revenue. Perhaps he's right to deduce from this that many players are limited by money as well as time? Sounds plausible ...

We've also heard from a US firm called EpicMail, who, like Harlequin, are licensing **Legends** from Midnight Games. They are launching a new module of *Legends* in the States. Called *The Ruins of Rome*, this has been created as a mini-module to help new US players learn the system mechanics. It avoids direct competition between its players, and can be played at a pace to suit the individual player, even daily if you wish. 'We got into this because we enjoyed the game tremendously, but saw how hard it was for new players to learn. So we decided to try to make it easier for people to play,' says James Buell, EpicMail's co-founder.

For players who've mastered *Ruins of Rome* or who've played the game already, EpicMail also offer an updated *Dark Domain* module. *Dark Domain* provides a good mix of role-playing and war-gaming, where teamwork and communication are necessary for success.

We wish EpicMail well with their efforts. It'll be good to see *Legends* attracting more players in the USA. The contact details are: EpicMail, PO Box 150721, Kingstowne, VA 22315-0721, USA:

[www.epicmail.com](http://www.epicmail.com)  
[info@epicmail.com](mailto:info@epicmail.com)

Most of you will know that different games of the fantasy wargame **Serim Ral** are run separately by three firms: Incubus Designs (the original designers), Mindless Games and Harlequin Games. Good news for the game's fans, of course, who can play 'em all! *Serim Ral* is a complex game, with opportunities for diplomacy, alliances, magic-wielding and plenty

of mayhem. Plenty of news this issue, with games starting from all three firms. Oh, and it's worth mentioning that credit-card payment is available from all three firms.

Incubus Designs are launching a new game of **Serim Ral Keltica** on August 30th. This is set in the British Isles around the 1st Century BC and puts you in control of a tribe of Celtic warriors. Here's how they describe it: 'The game involves 100 players who control Bards, Warriors, Rogues, Druids and Hunters, each of whom can command your loyal troops to glorious victory or devastating defeat. Unite the tribes of the Celtic era by establishing huge settlements, building fleets of mighty warships, and crushing your enemy on the bloody road to conquest. The ultimate aim is to bring the very Gods themselves down from the heavens to wage war on your behalf, thus securing dominion over the realm for your people.'

'Serim Ral,' they continue, 'is a game where diplomacy, economics, strategy and magic, together with the all-important mass-bloodshed, all play an important part. Alliances of religion, tribe and region can all be forged in an effort to survive the harsh realities of living in a mystical world of fickle Gods, mighty heroes and hidden death.'

Incubus' website features example turns, frequently asked questions, an online rulebook, message boards and the chance to sign up if you're interested:

<http://www.incubusdesigns.com>

In the past Mindless Games relied on Incubus Designs for most of their programming updates, but since Incubus allowed them to do their own coding on the game, they've embarked on their own major rewrite. Their next big project is **Serim Ral - Dragon Isles**. They'd originally wanted to start this game over a year ago, but decided to wait until they could offer email play and play-by-disc for those with no internet connection. As well as allowing play-by-email and play-by-disc (though they stress that 'we're still very committed to offering a play-by-mail option'), the re-write allows numerous other improvements.

These include more different creatures than ever before ('at least six different dragons!'): a multi-level map where routes to the underworld can be found during game-play; more professions becoming available during game-play ('including the almost mythical Bard!'): a new, more realistic weather system; fatigue; improved starvation rules ('no longer will a slip of the pen cause your entire army to starve in one turn!'); improved siege rules; new artefact powers, and lesser magic items. What else? There are new races which 'include Lizardmen (Saurians), and Half-Angels (Seraphim), while some old favourites (Hawkmen, Harpies) make a re-appearance, and the stalwart Drowe, Dwarves, Orcs are as ever available.'

Because Serim Ral is a complex game, and they're re-writing the website and the rulebook to include more help for beginners, and will make more information sheets, combat tips,

## 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.

racial and religious preference sheets available to help out.

After starting *Dragon Isles*, they intend to start a very different version: **Serim Ral - Apocalypse!** This'll be 'a no-holds-barred game with no GM interaction/interference whatsoever, in which everybody will start ready for mayhem with high level characters and *lots* of troops.' Sounds suitable for experienced Serim Ral players, we reckon!

Harlequin Games, in turn, report that **Serim Ral 51** has ended after three years of play. 'Turn 79 sees the Doth Naragians pull off a sweeping victory, destroying the opposition with excellent team-play. Individual victory was won by Dave Massie (Silverglass) with winning team-mates Peter Croucher, Dave Hart, Tina Hart and Bob Davidson.'

The new game, **Serim Ral 52**, is now mostly filled, but some spaces are still available. 'What makes this game different from others on the market?' they ask, answering, 'Special Actions, a newsletter each turn with player contributions aplenty, to name but a few. Test your knowledge of riddles, quizzes and much more. New map, profiles, spells are the standard by which we set ourselves. Get in touch if you would like a copy of our free module ...'

While Time Patterns have been continuing the existing games of **Crisis!**, there's been a long delay in starting a new one. This is because it's been hard to work out the necessary path for actually starting a game. Apologies are offered to all who've applied to play. It's planned to restrict this new game to less experienced players, once it's ready to go.

For wargamers who don't enjoy fantasy wargames, here's some last minute news about **Feudal Lords: Right of Kings**, the version of Feudal Lords updated by US GM Vlad Degan of Last World Games. We know that this is a fully revamped version of the old favourite, and we've just heard that it's about to become available for European players from Colin Forbes of Timewyrm. Colin will be starting off with a game map consisting of Western Europe and will be postboxing orders to last World Games.



## ZINES

A note from Mike Dean of the webzine *psychopath* reminds us that this runs: **Diplomacy**, Diplomacy variants (current opening for **Abstraction II**, you can also join the following games which are in progress: **Ard Ri**, **MAD Diplomacy**, **Game of the Clans**, **Gunboat**), **Machiavelli**, **Breaking Away**, **Psychos[h]occer** [MSWL football league], **En Garde!**, **Hare & Tortoise**, **Warlords**, **Survive!**, **Sopwith**, **Snowball Fighting**, **Swashbuckler**, **By Popular Demand**, **Where Is My Mind?**, **Formula 1** (coming soon), **Circus Maximus** (coming soon), **Maneater** ... Also planned for the future are **Junta**, **Kingmaker** and others.

In other words, it's an impressive range of free games with most of the amateur favourites! <http://www.psychozine.co.uk>

## GAMES IN GERMAN

Harald Topf of the German firm CSPP/ABAS reports that he's working on a webpage for his most popular PBM game, **Ashes of Empire**.

[www.the-ashes-of-empire.de](http://www.the-ashes-of-empire.de)

Most of the surface is still in German, but other languages will follow: the rules can be downloaded in English as a PDF-file.

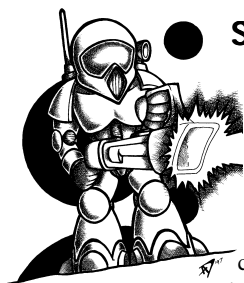
Boardgames and card games are also available, with English rules. Simply ask by email: [h.topf@cspp.com](mailto:h.topf@cspp.com)

German speakers may be interested in the ABAS branch, which concentrates on text adventures in German, with no player interaction.

While Supersonic Games run the British version of **Austerlitz**, the game is available to overseas players from Quirxel Games in Germany: Quirxel Games Gbr, Am Pannofen 7, 47608 Geldern, Germany. There's an email address, too: [QuirxelGames@t-online.de](mailto:QuirxelGames@t-online.de)

The pbm-game **Trangrad** run by STS provides textbased play by email, mailbox and letter in one-week or two-week terms in German. The costs per turn are 2.50 Euro plus 40 cent per character: [www.trangrad.com](http://www.trangrad.com)





## SCI-FI GAMES

KJC's new space opera, **Phoenix**, is planned to start in September, with a big push to follow in November. They are currently working on the front end. A beta version of this has been sent out to the testers for initial scrutiny.

They are confident of a big hit with this game, because its starships can be run for free: you only start paying when you run an entity like a starbase. They promise plenty to do in the game - 'battles, trade, exploration, politics and espionage' - and a game universe based on the history of **Beyond the Stellar Empire**, where there's always been plenty going on.

Interested? If you join an affiliation in **Beyond the Stellar Empire** now, you're guaranteed a priority position in **Phoenix**. Affiliation contact details, and more, can be found on the webpage

<http://www.kjcgames.com/phoenix.htm>

KJC's Mica adds, 'Have other companies also noticed a recent influx of old players returning and new players trying this style of gaming? We are hoping that players are finally coming to realise the limits of real time gaming. Maybe the online market is finally cooling.'

Harlequin report that they have had a good response to their new **Star Quest** module, *Aftermath*, and have been able to start up a game just for new players. This seems a good idea with a fairly complex game. **Star Quest** is winnable, but achieving victory takes some time and planning.

John Davis, the moderator, says that this will probably be the last game to start for a while, but a new function allows them to start up new 'boosted' positions in an existing game, which are created based on the average strength of existing positions. This means that players coming late to the game can still compete on an equal footing. So, if you want to play, get in touch with Harlequin and as soon as a position becomes free, you can join in.

A recently started free webpage with a science fiction setting is **Planetarion**. The first game started on the 3rd June, and runs in real time, so you may find that it is well advanced by now. However, each game lasts for three months, so if you like the look of **Planetarion**, with its emphasis on alliances, you won't have long to wait for a new game. Details from:

<http://www.planetarion.com>

Here's an interesting variation of **En Garde!** - Pete Cooney has started **Star En Garde!**, with sci-fi setting. There are two websites:

[www.cooneysite.com/starengarde](http://www.cooneysite.com/starengarde)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/starengarde>

## ROLEPLAYING GAMES



Mark Pinder makes an offer for anyone planning to join his fantasy roleplaying game **Lands of Elvria**. You can join in any one of three different ways. Yes, there's the traditional paper method, then there's email, but new is the third idea, whereby Mark will send you a CD for your PC. As a CD is easier to produce than having a rulebook printed, anyone who joins via a CD gets an extra free turn.

Harlequin Games' John Davis ran their variant of **Saturnalia**, **Exile**, for several years and he has been ruminating about how this game has developed with time. His comments seem of general interest ...

'Together with a small handful of others I have had the privilege of being involved in **Exile** since its conception. I have read every turn written by Clint and Sam, then ran the area myself for a few years, before playing under first Jim and now Marcus, and what struck me recently is that the game seems to have grown up, become more adult.

By which I don't just mean Marcus's predilection for attractive female NPCs, but the whole feel of the game. In the beginning, **Exile** was essentially a heroic fantasy game, albeit dark in style, where plots revolved for the most around fighting and thwarting a variety of enemies and monsters. When I took over I like to think I introduced a spot of romance, but still, for the most the plot-lines were of the 'trying not to get killed' variety. Jim, for his part, was given a land in the clutch of the Renchyu church and under threat by pandemons, a rebellion, and the sylvans, and I remain amazed that he managed to steer a path successfully through all that. But now, whilst there are of course plenty of life-threatening enemies, creatures, demons and aspiring gods to go round, there is also more to the game than that. Characters are as likely to spend their time in argument and debate as in battle, and disputes over such thorny issues as religion are frequently resolved without recourse to the traditional means of bloodshed and the destruction of temples.

And it is not just the world but the characters who have grown up. Adventurers who used to fight their way through the world have settled down, married, started families, becoming central figures in government and the churches. Where the newsletter used to be filled for the most with violence, from who killed what to death threats from players, now there are announcements of births, tracts of learned(?) philosophy, and - for some reason best known to the author - stories about sheep.

I suppose part of this is that our characters reflect ourselves to an extent - and there ain't none of us getting any younger! But it is also, I think, because the world has developed to allow such things, which is something you don't see in too many other pbms. Does all this have a

point? No, not at all. (What, you expected one?!) Other, perhaps, than to say that I think this development is why I - and perhaps others - have remained with the game for so long. It isn't always the most "fun" game I've played, and nor is it meant to be - it is hard to say a game is fun when you're fuming at the latest indignity heaped on your decent, upstanding character by the corrupt rulers of the land, for example - but it is certainly the most consistently compelling. And long may it continue.'

If you've been moderating a long-running, hand-moderated game (we know there are still a few of you out there), perhaps you would like to describe how your own game has changed over the years? If so, we'd be happy to hear from you.

## 'ORIGINS' AWARDS 2002

### BEST PLAY-BY-MAIL GAME

*Middle Earth FA 1000*

Publisher: Game Systems

### BEST ACCESSORY

*D20 System Character Record Folio*

Publisher: Green Ronin Publishing

### BEST AMATEUR PERIODICAL

*Alarums & Excursions*

Publisher: Lee Gold

### BEST PROFESSIONAL PERIODICAL

*Dork Tower*

Publisher: Dork Storm Press

### BEST GAME-RELATED NOVEL

*Clan War 7th Scroll: The Lion*

Author: Stephen D. Sullivan

Publisher: Wizards of the Coast

### BEST GAME-RELATED SHORT WORK

*Prometheus Unwound*

Author: Matt Forbeck

Publisher: Eden Studios

### BEST HISTORICAL MINIATURES RULES

*Fear God and Dread Nought*

Publisher: Clash of Arms Games

### BEST SCI-FI/FANTASY MINIATURES RULES

*D&D Chainmail*

Publisher: Wizards of the Coast

### BEST HISTORICAL FIGURE SERIES

*World of the Greeks*

Publisher: Wargames Foundry

### BEST SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY FIGURE

*Mage Knight Great Fire Dragon*

Sculptor: Kevin Barrett

Publisher: WizKids

### BEST VEHICULAR MINIATURE

*Mage Knight Atlantis War Machine: The Fist of Fezk*

Sculptor: Kevin Barrett

Publisher: WizKids

### BEST ABSTRACT BOARDGAME

*Cosmic Coasters*

Publisher: Looney Labs

### BEST HISTORICAL BOARD GAME

*Axis & Allies: Pacific*

Publisher: Hasbro/Avalon Hill

## PBM PEOPLE

Readers will be pleased to hear that **Mo Holkar** of Undying King Games has recently become engaged. We offer our best wishes for future happiness together to Mo and his fiancée, Tracy Bose.

Are all PBmers couch potatoes? Proof that some of us are athletic is the news that our reviewer **David Ames**, with his son, has just completed the John o' Groats to Penzance cycle ride.

Your editor, **Carol Mulholland**, will be visiting the family in San Francisco at the start of September. Keep an eye on the Emmy Awards in case Michael Mulholland & his team win one of them! While Carol is away, contact Colin Forbes (assisted by Mo Holkar if need arises).

### BEST SCIENCE FICTION / FANTASY BOARD GAME

*Risk 2210*

Publisher: Hasbro/Avalon Hill

### BEST CARD GAME EXPANSION OR SUPPLEMENT

*Apples to Apples Expansion Set 3*

Publisher: Out of the Box Publishing

### BEST TRADING CARD GAME

*The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game*

Publisher: Decipher

### BEST TRADITIONAL CARD GAME

*Munchkin*

Publisher: Steve Jackson Games

### BEST GRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF A BOARD GAME

*Zombies!!!*

Publisher: Journeyman Press

### BEST CARD GAME GRAPHIC PRESENTATION

*The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game*

Publisher: Decipher

### BEST BOOK GRAPHIC PRESENTATION

*Call of Cthulhu 20th Anniversary Edition*

Publisher: Chaosium

### BEST ILLUSTRATION

*Dork Shadows Cover Illustration*

Artist: John Kovalic

Publisher: Dork Storm Press

### BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME ADVENTURE

*Unseen Masters*

Publisher: Chaosium

### BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT

*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*

Publisher: Wizards of the Coast

### BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

*Adventure!*

Publisher: White Wolf Game Studios

### GAME OF THE YEAR

*Hackmaster*

Publisher: Kenzer and Co.

### HALL OF FAME

Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

*The Settlers of Catan*

## FIRMS



Awful news from *Timewyrm* and *Hunky Monkey*. Disaster struck when a hacker got into their computer network and started

deleting game files from the hard drive and, horrors, from the back-up disk drive. The game that was worst affected was **Kings of Karadon**, because not only were players' positions deleted, but so too was the main program. Many crucial files can't be recovered, and the moderators have had to close the two Kings of Karadon games that were running.

Karadon players who are in other *Timewyrm* or *Hunky Monkey* games have had their balance transferred to that game. Although anyone can have their credit refunded or transferred to another GM on request, ex-Karadon players can take also advantage of the following offers:

- 1 Warrior Games offer a home to ex-Karadon players and will honour up to £20 credit if they wish to play in **Clans II**.
- 2 Mindless Games also offer to honour up to £20 credit from Karadon in their new game **Dragon Isles**, and will be happy to inform everybody as and when Karadon can be restarted.
- 3 Credit may be changed into **Flagship** subscriptions at a rate of £3 an issue.
- 4 Players can ask for their credit to be donated to charity (unless you ask otherwise this would go to *Tarbat Historic Trust*, in memory of GM Colin Forbes' late mother)

There's a good chance that a new game on the Karadon system will return once an older version of the code has been worked up, but unfortunately it'd be too difficult to try to reconstitute the existing games. However programming time for the new code will not be available until the autumn. The GMs state, 'All players will be informed once there is any news on the possibility of a new game. We'd like to thank the many players who have sent messages of support and understanding.'

The hacker also began to delete the files for *Hunky Monkey's* **Prometheus**, starting with the program, but didn't reach the games files or the back-up files before GM Tom Fyfe realised that something was wrong. So apart from a delay while he set up a firewall to prevent this happening again, *Prometheus* is continuing normally.

An alarming and depressing experience for the moderators and their players. *Flagship* has sent out a newsletter to all moderators, warning them to take precautions. We're also running an article in this issue, in which Harlequin's Sam Roads describes how to erect a protective firewall: it could happen to players as well as moderators.

Cheques for *Warrior Games' Clans II* should now be made out to Highstreet Internet Ltd, rather than to moderator Paul Green. Credit card

payment can be made online, and turns can be received by email as well as post; indeed, there's now an email chatline. The turn fee has been increased, but it's now possible to receive the *Clans II* startup and the first four turns for free.

*Clans II* is one of the limited number of PBM games that don't have deadlines.

*Stephen Weir* owns the UK rights to an old favourite, **Midgard**, which he took over planning to revive it some time ago now. Well, *Midgard UK* isn't up and running yet, but *Stephen* writes that he's set up an email discussion group to work towards this. He's aiming 'to get feedback from former players, and PBmers in general, to make the game great again.' If you'd like to participate in the discussion, log onto:

[http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/midgard\\_uk\\_pbm](http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/midgard_uk_pbm)

A couple of readers have reported that *Cleopatra Games* haven't processed the American Football game **PAFL** for 'many months' now. They're really missing the game! We haven't heard back from our letter of enquiry, so will put a ? in *Galactic View* while hoping for better news.

*Peter Rzechorzek* adds his **PBEM Tribe Net** to our Refugee Rescue Scheme, offering £10-worth of credit to any player affected by a dirty fold. Remember that a dirty fold must have been declared here in *Flagship*, and that you'll need to send a final turnsheet as proof of your outstanding credit. It's been some time since we declared a dirty fold, but if you think you qualify as a refugee, I can send a list of the participating firms upon request. Anyone who's simply interested in taking a look at *Tribe Net* should contact: [tribenet@netspace.net.au](mailto:tribenet@netspace.net.au)

*Dean Saliba* is looking to buy a PBM sports game to run. He is interested in any sports, and invites any interested GM to contact him with details and price. Dean can be found on:

[laurence@saliba.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:laurence@saliba.fsnet.co.uk)

Moving house is a stressful experience at the best of times, but really hard work if you're running a postal business as well. *Madhouse* have had some delays in their planned move to Wisbech, but hope that all will be sorted by the time this issue hits your doormats. They'll inform their players of the new address, of course, but if you wish to contact them by post and aren't already on their mailing list, try giving us a ring to check. The email address stays the same, of course.

*Madhouse* announce that they will be starting their new *Passport to Adventure* project shortly. As well as the games we listed last issue, the *Passport* will include a special **DungeonWorld** module called *The Time Of Thunder*. *Madhouse* promise that this will be 'extremely dangerous', and set 'way back in time during the most infamous dark age of the game's history'.

# Meets & Conventions

## AUGUST

**GENCON USA:** August 8th-11th, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. The big US gaming convention, celebrating its 35th year. Madhouse will be taking a stand here, and look forward to meeting their US players. [www.wizards.com](http://www.wizards.com)

**GAMES GAMES GAMES DAY:** 10th August. 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@sfcop.co.uk](mailto:events@sfcop.co.uk)

**DISCWORLD CONVENTION:** 16-19 August 2002 at the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leicestershire. Convention for Discworld fans with some role-playing games. Guest of Honour: Terry Pratchett. Other confirmed guests include the illustrator Stephen Briggs. <http://www.dwcon.org/>

**DICECON:** A boardgames convention, to be held on 25th August 2002 in the *Central Hotel, Glasgow*. Tournaments with prizes for Settlers of Catan and Ivanhoe, 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)

## SEPTEMBER

**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.'

**GAMES GAMES GAMES DAY:** 14th September. 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@sfcop.co.uk](mailto:events@sfcop.co.uk)

**MINICON:** 14th September, in *London*, a get-together for boardgamers and other game players. For more details visit: [www.thegamesclub.co.uk/](http://www.thegamesclub.co.uk/)



## OCTOBER

**GAMES GAMES GAMES DAY:** 12th October. 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@sfcop.co.uk](mailto:events@sfcop.co.uk)

**GAELCON 2002:** 26-28 October 2002, Clontarf Castle Hotel, Dublin. Gaelcon is Ireland's largest independent games convention, catering to both long time gamers, and those who are just starting out in the hobby. Spanning three days over the October Bank Holiday Weekend, Gaelcon is non-stop gaming experience designed to pack as many different, varied and above all fun experiences as possible into a short time. <http://www.irishgamesassociation.com/gaelcon2002/index2.html>

## NOVEMBER

**GAMES GAMES GAMES DAY:** 9th November. 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@sfcop.co.uk](mailto:events@sfcop.co.uk)

**MIDCON:** November 22nd-24th 2002, at the Thistle Hotel, Queensway, Birmingham. Will include the UK National Diplomacy

Championship as well as plenty of other gaming events. Newcomers welcomed! Bookings and further information from: Midcon, Not Just Stamps, 17 Crendon Street, High Wycombe HP13 6LJ

[webmaster@sfcop.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@sfcop.co.uk)

Re the National Diplomacy Championship itself: Jeremy Tullet, 7 Midland Place, Derby DE1 2RR

[jeremy.d.tullet@btinternet.com](mailto:jeremy.d.tullet@btinternet.com)

**DRAGONMEET:** November 30th in *Kensington Town Hall, London*. A friendly convention for all gamers. There will be a PBM presence here. Details from: [www.dragonmeet.com](http://www.dragonmeet.com)

## DECEMBER

**SETTLERS TOURNAMENT:** 1st December 2002, in *Brighton*, run by the Brighton Boardgames Club. Info from:

[news@brighton-boardgames.org.uk](mailto:news@brighton-boardgames.org.uk)

**GAMES GAMES GAMES DAY:** 14th December. 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@sfcop.co.uk](mailto:events@sfcop.co.uk)

## JANUARY

**OXCON 2003:** 25th-26th January 2003 at *The Mitre, The High Street, Oxford*. Tournaments of Diplomacy, Settlers of Catan, Lost Cities, Fifteen-To-One with many other games played informally over the weekend. Comprehensive weekend entrance fee, £6. Details from [dipsoc@hotmail.com](mailto:dipsoc@hotmail.com) or [richard.Huzzey@st-annes.ox.ac.uk](mailto:richard.Huzzey@st-annes.ox.ac.uk)

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# Phoenix: Beyond the Stellar Empire

*KJC's MICA GOLDSTONE describes the updating of a PBM classic...*

**PHOENIX**, THE replacement for **Beyond the Stellar Empire** has taken literally years to code, but we are now almost there. It has been a long road and at times bone-wearying but the light at the end of the tunnel is now firmly in sight.

## So what is Beyond the Stellar Empire?

For more than a decade KJC has been running a game set on the very edge of human civilisation, some time in humanity's future. Such is the appeal of the game that some people are still playing having signed up at the start all that time ago.

The early years witnessed an alien invasion by a species known as the Flagritz. These pear-shaped monsters rampaged across the human controlled star systems. At a vital moment they were aided by a human faction which set the scene for many later arguments about the betrayal of the human race by the Detinus Republic.

Since this time, though, the game has changed fundamentally. Humanity recovered and a new faction sprung up, the most powerful of which was the Confederacy. This loose alliance was formed when the Inner Empire fragmented under civil war. The defeated Confederacy fled to a distant region of space. The Detinus Republic threw its lot in with the Confederacy in order to avoid further reprisals by the Empire.

Over the years, though, from that small beginning the Republic drifted away from the Confederacy. Striking out on their own, they sought alliances with alien governments and gained in strength. As they prospered, the Empire and Confederacy suffered crisis after crisis. Wars with the alien Flagritz, the occasional skirmish with each other, and finally the discovery that the Emperor himself was a clone. This revelation meant the entire rebellion was founded on a fallacy causing the two factions to rip themselves apart from the inside.

The game now stands at the start of the new era. The Detinus Republic dominate the border between the Confederacy and the Empire. The inner systems of the latter two lie reeling from the intrigue and war, and are ripe for the plucking. Alien factions grow in strength and have set their sights on gaining new territory.

## Phoenix: BSE at a glance

A new game developed from one of PBM's classics, this open-ended space opera is designed and run by KJC Games. A £5 per week package consists of up to 10 starships (free), 1 political position (£1), 2 starbases (£4). Contact: KJC Games, FREEPOST, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancs F5 3UL.

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

## What changes with Phoenix?

It would too long to list the changes between the two systems and for the most part, unless BSE has been played, it seems a little irrelevant. Instead it is best to briefly point out the why we have designed Phoenix in the way we have.

1 - First of all, we have taken a novel approach to the pricing structure. Standard ships can be run completely free of charge. This gives players the chance to try the game and see if they like it, as well as allow every player to control as many ships as they have time to run, presuming they can get their hands on them and can afford the wages of the crew.

The game is able to afford this due to a front-end package. This allows players to produce their turns in a format that can be emailed and automatically run and sent back. The package also allows for the design of ships, storage of codes, data and other important information.

The overall premise is that players will be able to play to their own budget. We expect that most players will choose the £5 per week package consisting of: 1 Political (£1 per week), 2 Starbases (£4 per week), at least 10 Ships (free). This will give hours of entertainment, wars, political intrigue and much more.

2 - As a prospective player all this background and information can seem a little daunting. To get around this, the game has been designed in layers.

Ships are simple to control. Taking control of a ship can be achieved in one of two ways. The first and recommended way is to contract a faction in the game. They will outfit you as well as give you some idea of what to expect. Obviously you can change factions at a later date, but this is an excellent way of discovering the basics.

The alternative route is to start a fresh ship as an independent trader. This package starts with a dilapidated ship with a cargo that can be traded. It is then down to the player to discover the best markets, make some hard cash and attempt to purchase more ships. There are risks of pirates, belligerent factions and much worse.

3 - Beyond shipping there are starbases, ground parties, characters and outposts to control. These can be controlled as and when the player feels ready to do so, but they greatly add to the overall depth of the game.

Because this is such a major overhaul, we're re-naming the game Phoenix. It'll keep the advantages of Beyond the Stellar Empire: lots of well-tested, interesting detail and the chance to play as part of a faction. Phoenix adds the chance for new players to start afresh in the game, and to find it easier to play. We've developed this game in response to what our players have asked us to do, and are confident that you'll enjoy it.



# Absolute Power 2

## Back to the Future

**DARREN HAYWARD** describes the resurrection of a famous powergame ...

SILVER DREAMER'S game, **Absolute Power**, started six years ago and ran for five years to a weekly turnaround. Eventually it collapsed under its own weight and diversity. Mystical religions that could create volcanoes on other player's fiefs vied for power next to the launching sites of player-built starships. Meanwhile huge populations grew up on some fiefs supported by one small hospital, whilst others had more troops than population, troops that needed no support at all! Political influence went to the sharpest wit, and I knew the trick to getting 100-rated wit characters. The turns themselves featured anywhere up to six pages of construction lists, fifty constructions to a page.

Would the GM notice you had built a police station one hundred and twenty turns ago, or that you had researched Dirtwart flu cure halfway down page four of your research list when you needed them? The answer was increasingly becoming 'no'. GM John Davies decided to call it a day and went on to run the successful Absolute Heroes game. Absolute Power, supreme mix of politics, fief building and role-playing was dead but not forgotten.

So, as is obvious from the title, Absolute Power is back. Run to a two-weekly deadline by new GM, but long-time AP1 player Alan Crump, the game has been overhauled and the glaring anomalies removed. Troops now need support, some buildings need staff and mystical religions only get mystical power from non-productive population. That's just a few of the changes.

### Background: long ago

Absolute Power 2 is a prequel game. In the original game players took the role of major nobles just granted land to repopulate a devastated empire. The scenario now is set in the distant past, before the empire arose. You take the role of nobles (the distinction between major and minor is gone) who have been given a land grant to establish a fief and colonize the area the empire will one day occupy. Only one planet, Capitol, is currently available, so all players start on the main continent close to each other.

You start out with virtually no technology in a feudal society with a small population base, no knowledge of the world around you and few resources. There is no trade with other players unless you research and build the capability yourselves.

### How's it work then?

AP2 is a character-driven game. Each player controls a house of up to eight characters, plus a small fief with a meagre population base and even more meagre resources, but you can develop your fief almost any way you want. Each of your characters can give one order per turn. Three of those orders are long orders and five are short orders. The long orders generally fall into two categories. They are power multiplier orders or more complex orders requiring a GM response. An example of a power multiplier order would be building constructions. You can build one construction by short order or up to three constructions by long order, but only if you have researched and built a planning office. An example

of a 'special action' type long order would be battle orders. Put in orders telling your troops to raid another fief and you get back a battle report from the GM. There are restrictions to all this. You need to research navigation to find your way around off your own fief, then you need to locate another player's fief so you know where to go and, the biggie, you do actually need an army!

Short orders are just that, one-line orders to do one thing. Build something, move population between production types or start researching a new project are all examples of short orders.

There are also a number of 'free' orders per turn such as voting instructions and some trading. These orders are of the 'fill in the box' variety but are absolutely critical as time passes.

### What do I get then?

Your fief itself starts with very limited resources: just enough to build a few of the basic buildings you have available without research. You soon realize there is a massive expansion needed to build even mundane constructions. You start by producing 150 IP1 (Industrial Points one) but a science lab will cost you 2000 IP1 plus a few other resources. Why do you need a science lab? Because most research projects at this point will cost 1000 research points: you start by producing 75 per turn, a science lab would double that. So you research IP1 factories to increase your IP1 production rate, right? The only problem is that you need 2000 IP1 to build an IP1 factory in the first place! The other way out of this problem is to increase your work force. This is probably the easiest answer in the short term but brings its own problems. You increase your population base by use of the Govern order. This uses Prosperity times the Charm efficiency of the character giving the order, to give you a percentage increase in population. This increases morale, up to a limit at this stage of 1.20, and brings in some population. A 10% increase is possible internally but any number over that brings in population from outside your fief, which can include a criminal element or religious fanatics. You really don't want to do that.

The problem with governing is that you need large quantities of prosperity and characters highly skilled in charm to get in even a few hundred more population. And IP1 is only one type of resource I've used as an example. There are also some emerging brakes on expansion that were not seen before. Many common constructions need staff that are otherwise unproductive but count towards your population totals. The same applies to troops who need feeding and support from your fief in the form of prosperity points.

### A different pace

All this means a few players have had a shock because, although they played before, they played in a resource rich mature game. The slow pace of life starting over again means they have had to cut back their expectations of advancement. This does mean that this is the perfect time to get into the game.

The other really big difference is that there is no spacing guild to transport goods around for anyone. For ten years each house gets free transport to the capital city to sell goods but cannot buy anything. After that you will need to develop your own transport. Given that the CC is on an island and all player fiefs are on the coast, this means naval transport. As far as fief power goes, the naval race will likely determine the early leaders.

The beauty of AP is that you can virtually ignore the fief development options if you want and play a much more political game. In AP1 players

### *Absolute Power 2 at a glance*

A powergame run by Alan Crump of Silver Dreamer. Charges are £20 for startup + 2 turns, £5 for subsequent turns.

could gain control of powerful 'seats' that they could use or abuse as they saw fit. Get elected as police chief and simply arrest your enemies. If the Lord Chief Justice was your ally he could execute them for you. The down side was that when crime became a problem in the capital you took the heat from the NPCs and players. These seats have yet to emerge and early indications are they may not exist but will need to be voted into existence by the players themselves. That will be interesting indeed.

### Getting started

When you start up in AP you can pick three advantages from a list supplied in the rulebook. These are summarized here with a few very brief comments.

- 1 1000 extra population: A poor choice, as you get more population from 'governing' which you need to do anyway. Ignore and take Charm skill tradition instead.
- 2 Skill traditions: You can choose a skill and every character gets plus 20 points in that skill. The obvious move is to have your older characters double up their main skill choices so your head of house gets a 50 rating in one skill. This can have a dramatic effect.
- 3 Extra child: You start with a fifth character. Possibly an option in year one, but by the time you read this marriages with other houses will be freely available. Ignore.
- 4 Fertility: You get an extra efficiency on food production on your fief. Never runs out, but there are plenty of ways of getting more food production. Probably more valuable than in AP1 with lots of staff and troops to support: not a bad choice if you are undecided as to what role to take in the game.
- 5 Minerals rich: You get larger deposits of minerals on your fief. In AP1 metals production could run out unexpectedly. In AP2 you know what your reserves are. Worth picking if you want long term security but possibly overrated by some.
- 6 Fossils rich: More oil and gas available but with the same issues as Minerals rich.
- 7 Happy people: You start with morale on your fief at 1.00 rather than 0.75. This is a nice early boost but you effectively lose it once you hit the morale ceiling of 1.20. Ignore and take Charm skill tradition instead.
- 8 Companies: You get three decently trained companies of 100 troops plus supplies for them to last 20 years. A good security choice but early player vs player aggression will likely be non-existent and the NPC threats will only develop slowly. Of more use if you want to strip their supplies to fuel early expansion.
- 9 Boffins: Gets an extra efficiency on science research. A safe choice but it does become less valuable over time.
- 10 Social workers: Similar to Boffins, but for cultural research.
- 11 Status: Your house is well respected and gets 30 extra votes in council. An absolute must for political houses.
- 12 Wealth: You get 50,000 marks rather than 5,000. There is a limited amount that you can do with money, although a political house will need ready cash to throw parties to gain status. A safe choice for non-fief builders but others will want more tangible benefits.

So what do you choose? There are hundreds of possible combinations but you need to choose your advantages based on what you want to do in the game. My only advice on these combinations is to take at least one skill tradition. You need Charm to expand your fief rapidly but you could take another skill tradition and marry a charm character into your family whilst marrying another character out. Science, social engineering, soldier and admiral skill traditions are all tradable when it comes to marriages. You could even take three skill traditions and have the most tradable characters in the game. There are no really bad choices at all.

### How's it going?

It's still very early days, with only four turns being run so far, and most orders have been arranging marriages to expand your family, but indications are that this game will develop very, very differently to AP1.

Hot topic of conversation so far has been education: although some

players are keeping their thoughts very much to themselves, it is apparent that there are multiple research strings that can be followed. In AP1 you did Primary education to start and followed through eventually to universities. On the university FS there was a warning that universities could be hotbeds of trouble but this only ever occurred once and for a limited number of players, so who cares, right?

Wrong. Alan Crump was a vocal critic of this sort of thing where research drawbacks failed to emerge and from the off it has been apparent that a lot of thought has been put into all the Feasibility studies seen so far. In AP2 we have seen two versions of Primary education emerge. Butlerian primary education is the start of the old standard AP1 string, but with the addition that you need a small number of your limited supply of researchers to act as teachers. Given the suspect nature of Butlerian universities, another research string has emerged. Utopian primary education caused a stir when first seen as it gave only half the education bonus but gives you additional agriculture efficiency and it doesn't need teachers. This is very valuable in the early stages of the game but agriculture efficiencies are fairly easy to come by as the game progresses. Some players are considering researching and building a Utopian Primary school and then researching and building something better later on. That would never have happened in AP1. And that's only the start of the educational research string, we haven't seen any of the Secondary school stuff yet.

Next on the agenda is a small problem with housing. The interest in education has pushed this problem out of the limelight but it is of vital importance. Your fief population starts out housed in tents that will last fifteen years, so you need to house them pretty quickly. Working off the old AP1 housing research details, a lot of us have come to the conclusion that we will need the cheapest, nastiest housing we can get until more resources become available later on, at which point we will be able to rebuild as necessary.

### The future?

Looking into my crystal ball to the next stage of the game I predict that trade will be a huge factor for the fief power gamers like myself. Although every resource in the game is readily available on one planet, the natural blocks on development mean fiefs will be much more specialist in nature and will trade with each other as the most efficient way of getting the resources they need. This can only be good for the game as player diplomacy becomes vital and every one's troops and characters become less fief-bound. In AP1, many fiefs were self-sufficient fortresses and the players never bothered to look at what was in the next sector to their fiefs! This also led to an attitude where losing a battle meant effective elimination from the game as your fief was lost or irreparably damaged. Battles now will more likely be skirmishes or ambushes away from fiefs or naval actions. Getting away from this do-or-die mentality is another thing that can only be good for the game.

The last and possibly biggest effect on the game is the turnaround. AP1 was weekly, AP2 is two-weekly. The slower pace of life in AP2 means that players want more out of a turn. My style of play has always been one where I was prepared to invest time in preparing for major actions. Twenty turns to research decent tanks, another ten to raise them. No problem, I'll fight my first battle in late 2003! Er, maybe not then.

AP2 is already developing into a game where a lot of thought is needed before doing almost anything and where expectations are more realistic about technology. Forget about tanks, dragoons and horse artillery will be like nukes for the foreseeable future. Steam vessels will be state of the art for trading and you can spot where the nobles live on your fief: they live in the portacabin in the middle of the sea of tents.

### The bottom line

At £20 to set up (with two turns) and £5 per turn, AP2 is not cheap, especially in the first two or three turns where characters, and therefore orders, are limited, but after that the sheer range of options available and the quality of the GM are what make the game what it is. In fact AP2, with its two week turn around and current limit of one position per player is much cheaper than the original version.

I'm in it for the long haul, maybe you will be too.

# Lords of the Earth

## Campaign One, part 2

*MARTIN HELSDON lives in an Age of Air and Steam*

AS YOU MAY recall from Part 1, **Lords of the Earth**<sup>01</sup> is a long-lived game (turn 212 is out soon) set in an alternate history where the Age of Air and Steam has commenced in the early Eighteenth Century. The nations of the world are locked in combat with the agents of the Ice and other ultra-mundane forces (and with each other). At this time, the Ice War seems to be over. But other threats are rising.

We are following the fortunes of Norskrad, the Norse Trading Company, a Catholic merchant house based at Lisbon, the capital of the Republic of Spain which owns the entire Iberian peninsula and much of what in our world is southern France.

And so it begins...

### Anno Domini 1739 - 1740

*Faced with civil insurrection in the Spanish capital, the Company ordered Malcom and Marget (Johannes' children, and able lieutenants) home with all speed. Though the Imperial Guard had promised to protect the offices of the Company, the Maklarevalde did not trust them one bit. His agents also secured the marriage of young Malcom to Lucrecia of Friesland, binding his family to that duchy in a political alliance.*

*As it happened, Malcom and his fleet returned to Lisbon just in time. The various revolutionary and counter-revolutionary elements in the capital had gone wild, rioting in huge mobs, shouting slogans, flinging stones and burning brands at one another. A particularly vicious and well-organised crowd attacked the Offices of the Company with clubs, sledges, scaling ladders and fire. Malcom and his sailors from the fleet rushed to defend the compound and a fierce melee resulted among the warehouses and offices. Though the Company sailors (a rough lot) threw back the attack - causing thousands of casualties - hundreds of workmen, artisans, clerks and stevedores in the compound had been dragged from their offices or barracks and beaten to death.*

*The Maklarevalde, arriving after security had been restored, looked around with a sick, sinking expression. 'Our enemies are growing bold,' he muttered to his son. 'What next, I wonder?' Company possessions, holdings and warehouses in Andalusia, Aragon, Barcelona, Murcia, Madrid and Talavera were all attacked and damaged or destroyed by agitated mobs or revolutionaries.*

This, then, was my birth of fire in LOTE01. Having been recruited to play the Norskrad, my initial thoughts were not dissimilar from Johannes, my alter-ego: What is going on? How am I going to survive this?

### A matter of historical record

The immediate strategy was to research as many of the old newsfaxes as possible. There I read of the troubled history of the Empire of Occitania, now the Republic of Spain. In the past few years the Empire had been racked with political intrigue: an ambitious general had married into the Royal House (the bride was drugged during the service), cast her aside and married her younger, supposedly less strong-willed sister. However, she had ultimately killed him, naming herself Empress. Subsequently the royal heir was murdered and the Empress vanished under mysterious

circumstances aboard her airship Achamoth.

Occitania fragmented into civil war, as various national leaders fought it out. Eventually Largo Cabellero prevailed, declaring the birth of the new Republic and himself Presidente. After a Dynastic Failure, the original player picks up the strongest of the successor states. The nobility swarmed to the banner of the self-proclaimed Kingdom of Navarre, the other surviving fragment of the Empire. The communists of the Students Revolutionary Committee took advantage of the chaos to seize a number of cities in the south and east.

My position, Norskrad, had been founded in the Swedish Empire of Russia. As a result of one of the frequent wars between the Swedes and their archrivals the Danes, the Company had moved to the United Kingdoms of Britain and then to Spain as the climate worsened with the encroachment of the Ice. During the war between the Swedes and Danes one of the Anchors that protect the Earth had been destroyed: The True Cross, burned as the Danish Hussites warred with the Catholic Swedes ...

### Blocs and the art of real-politick

On joining the game, the Swedish and British players were identified as the major patrons of the Company, but replies to my greetings at this stage were terse. Many of the foremost positions have been played by the same players since the inception of the game. One downside of the campaign is that newcomers are rarely viewed with any confidence. Other players informed me that I would not be considered trustworthy for some time; one mentioned twenty turns... Fortunately I seem to have won a modicum of trust in five turns or so.

I briefly considered moving away from the Spanish bonfire, but decided to stay. Fleeing immediately from another Catholic position in trouble would win me no allies. Unfortunately the previous player of Norskrad had already been posted elsewhere by the time I tried to contact him.

So I asked questions of the GM, and sat down to read the rulebooks, wondering what I had got myself into. To a beginner, the complexities of LOTE, and the dimensions especially of Campaign One are bewildering. The in-game rivalries and the division of positions into political and religious blocs are not easy to get into. Europe is known as the snake pit with good reason.

It was worth hanging on, though...

### Anno Domini 1741 - 1742

Still stunned by the public rioting against his company, Johannes remained in Lisbon and invested considerable effort and time in seeing that the damage to the city and the Company buildings was repaired. The Company also opened a hospital for the poor, and made a consistent series of public announcements refuting the rumours the Company had attempted to destabilise the Spanish currency and overthrow the government.

Much to the disgust of the Company, the student communist gangs in Seville seized and 'nationalised' the company factories, warehouses and offices there, throwing valuable Company employees into very dark, dank cells under the town hall. Efforts to negotiate their release had, so far, failed. An attempt upon the life of Johannes by a student from the University of Lisbon - though it failed - did nothing to alleviate the grim feeling of doom. A slight improvement. Instead of frenzied mob attacks, now my offices are being looted and my 'king' is being targeted for assassination.

By now the Catholic bloc's e-group had invited me to join. I was

### *Lords of the Earth at a glance*

A commercial PBEM powergame that exists in several separate games covering different historical periods. Contact details:

<http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lotte01>

starting to feel slightly more confident with the multitude of rules. Some of the mechanics were still eluding me, but my first tentative actions were at least not disastrous. It was apparent that Spain was now the arena for the three-sided conflict. Oh joy.

Having read the back history, the situation in Spain hinted at something going on behind the scenes. In-game, the Norskrad intelligence apparatus discovered an unsuspected Secret Empire hidden in Lisbon. It had its tentacles throughout the Spanish government, intelligence service and even the military. The strange goings-on were now revealed as the machinations of the sinister cabal of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn! Could this be an assumption in progress - a plot to cause the downfall of a Catholic state? Surely the collapse of the House of Cortez and the disappearance of the Empress could not be coincidental. Also, the assassination of the Imperial heir seemed unlikely to be the work of the Albanian East India Company as the newsfax suggested.

I shared this news with the Spanish player. His own agents had uncovered nothing - because they were now entirely subverted.

Out of game I started to research the histories of real secret societies and to speed-read my old collection of HP Lovecraft Cthulhu Mythos stories. Correspondences and disturbing patterns started to accumulate.

#### Anno Domini 1743 - 1744

A new airship factory was opened just outside of Lisbon, in the vast industrial district the Company had been building for some time. A great deal of money was sent to Sweden, to help restore the inhabitants of Malmo (once the offices of the company) to their home. The Swedish government - eternally strapped for cash - was only too happy to take the donation.

Much to their surprise, the Norskrad offices in Brest were suddenly entered in the summer of '43 by a huge mob of Commonwealth soldiers. The horse-leather clad shape of Princess Margaret prominent among them, they proceeded to eject the Catholic merchants from their city - lock, stock and barrel. The properties previously owned by the company were forfeit to the Archon and there was no receipt forthcoming. On the sidelines, a lean, cadaverous representative from Wolfden & Cane laughed into his stovepipe hat.

Despite the physical attacks upon the Company - by the Commonwealth, and the Republica Popular - a sustained effort by Johannes managed to restore the reputation of the business in government and Catholic circles throughout Spain and England. The simple matter of the company being targeted for slander, abuse and physical attacks by agents of the Hussite powers was well established.

#### How to buy friends and influence people

One thing a merchant house has is cold hard cash. The position is limited in manpower and usually in territory directly owned. But money talks in diplomatic circles. I began a policy of nothing less than bribery, aiding nations on the idea that if Norskrad helped them, they might help me. As

time went on, the Swedes and Jesuits, and others, would benefit from Norskrad largesse.

The sudden closing of my offices in Brest was not a surprise; the Franks are a Hussite satellite of the mighty Danish Empire. I shrugged and decided to open new offices elsewhere. What was unknown at the time was that Wolfden & Cane were a front for the Golden Dawn ...

Elsewhere, an international force mostly headed by the Danish Empress Oniko, marched against the Dæmon Sultan in the Middle East. Various parties had determined that he was nothing less than an avatar of the hideous messenger of the Outer Gods, Nyarlathotep. Aware of the danger, the Dæmon Sultan had his extraterrestrial minions, the Mi-Go, drop asteroids on the Danish capital of Venice, and Japan. The latter skimmed off the atmosphere and came down in the sea near China. The results were not pretty.

In India peace was declared between the Moslem Yasarids and the Hussite states. It was not destined to last. There was a nasty little war in the Far East.

And in Spain ...

The Royalists had marched south from Galacia with all speed, lunging for Lisbon and the prize of the entire Republican government... with Largo delayed among the mountains of Galacia, Jose Sancho and his small force reached Lisbon two months

ahead of il Presidente. The Royalists approached the city stealthily, sending ahead agents to inspire a rebellion in their favour.

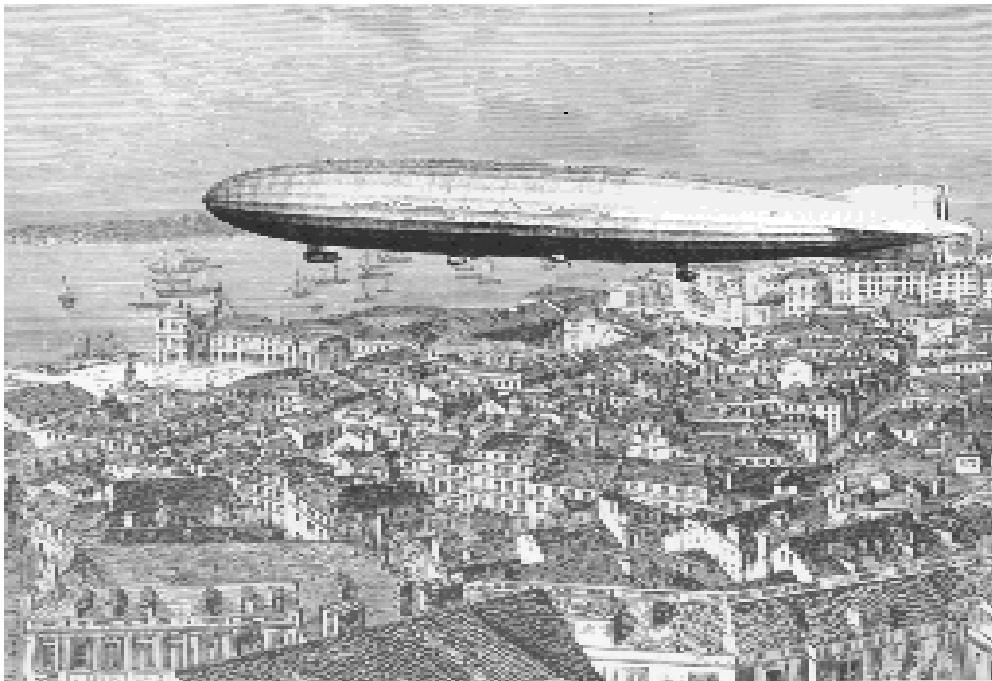
Luckily for the Republicans, the Norskrad Company had had just quite enough of skulduggery and civil unrest, so their agents were keeping a careful watch on the surrounding countryside, the city... everything. The revolt was aborted in the womb as Norskrad mercenaries (a grim lot of Frisians) swooped down upon the Royalist sympathizers and arrested them all. Jose Tordesillas - roused from his bed by Malcom Procure's guardsmen - rushed to take command of the city garrison. Between the 3,000 Frisians and the 800-man city watch, the walls were held when the Royalist army actually came within sight of Lisbon.

Lacking the strength to try the fortifications, the Royalists then skedaddled south into Estremadura, where they found (rather unexpected) allies in Quipo de Lana's students and workers. Largo himself and his army were not far behind, and hot on the chase.

Having had my fill, thank you, of having my locations trashed, Norskrad had brought troops southwards to defend the yards and properties in Lisbon.

I had not anticipated that my orders to defend Lisbon would preempt a Royalist attack, for the Republic had left its capital unguarded. If the Royalists had seized Lisbon, the Republic would have lost half its government and intelligence service, and the Spanish player would have been in even worse trouble than he was. For the first time (whilst under my control), Norskrad had influenced the course of history. And not for the last time...

Despite the feeling of being an outsider, the game had me firmly by the throat.





# Sports News

## DAVID BLAIR plays Basketball, American Football and Football ...

I MUST SAY there appear very few new games coming through, if my emails are anything to go by. This is not a real problem at the moment as there are still many games in the *Galactic View* that have not yet been covered. This issue I will be reviewing games involving American football, basketball and football. I would still like to do cricket and tennis before the summer is out, and will scour GV to get some action, unless a GM out there would like me to go into their offering of course. Whilst on the subject, it is not my scene to name and shame, so I will just say I am still waiting for two companies to respond to me after at least four months. Both are in GV, and in one case I sent a SAE. Poor show, lads, the report card says please treat strangers offering free advertising with respect. On another tack, three other games I signed up for playtesting still have not started, or if they have, they have not included me. Would it be too much trouble to email players to keep them informed of any possible delays?

Okay then, moans over, let's get on. First up is basketball in the shape of **Hoopplan** by Ab Initio Games (Danny McConnell). In the past I could never have gone to a live match where massive players in ludicrous shorts run back and forward on a short playing surface scoring points or stopping the scoring of points, depending upon whether they be attackers or defenders, just bouncing a huge ball and sticking it through a hoop. The only skill seemingly required is to be at least 7ft in height, the taller the better. I have usually become bored within a short time when viewing it on TV. Basketball itself seems a simple enough game, but being American in origin and knowing their love of statistics, you know what you are going to get when you dive into any of their sports. From a point where I looked at the game to the actual reading the rules and implementing gameplans, I confess my viewpoint changed quite a bit. Hoopplan faithfully re-creates the game all the way from the real life teams and squads down to the tactics, plays and statistics expected in an American sport. Every player on your squad has ratings, ranging from Poor to Excellent (even World Class) for every activity necessary for playing the game. Sixteen attributes in all, going from jumping, passing, blocking, defence, long range (and medium and short) shooting, rebounding, etc etc, so you can build up a picture of which players will fit each position. There are tables given showing percentages for everything, all designed to allow you to make adjustments to your dream team to maintain or improve their game. You get 80 regular season games at a rate of 5 per turn, with full league tables, fixtures, winning or losing streaks, and an update on your spending. Spending? Come on now, this is an Ab Initio game, so financial maintenance is a necessity, and crucially so, as it is the LPs you earn or gain through transfers and results that will be required to pay your squad, train them in areas that requires help, and to get your lads into the Playoffs.

I was given the Orlando Magic for practising with, and even with my little appreciation of the finer points of the game spotted that they were poor in many aspects of the game. (The 1-9 current record helped me in my judgement, I must confess). Five games later with little tinkering of the team I was standing at 2-13. I decided to change things around by moving a couple of players into new positions where I felt their skills might be better suited, and also used up a few LPs and trained a Center in

Close Shooting. Now although I still lost 1-4 in my next series of matches, I did notice the number of attempts on target went up, and I averaged a few more points per game. Now if only the Defence would turn up and play.

Hoopplan has 28 of the real NBA clubs, with real players' names, so the feel is there from the off. You have to balance out your team as these lads are only human, and require resting throughout each match (which consists of 4 x 15 minute quarters). Your squad for each match totals 12 players so the trick is to try to select cover for all five positions, and ally this with in-game tactics to counter the opposition and improve your lot. Don't worry too much, many players can adequately cover a second

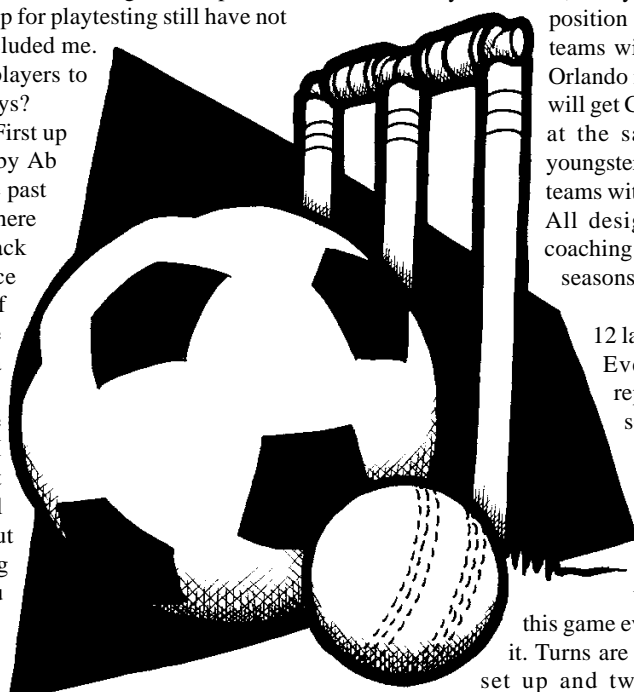
position on the court. There are Playoffs for the teams with the best records, but even those (and Orlando is amongst this lot) who don't quite cut it, will get Consolation competitions to play in, whilst at the same time be gaining new promising youngsters through the drafting system whereby the teams with the worst records get the better choices. All designed to allow the Magic - with good coaching - to be the NBA Champions within a few seasons.

Reports each two-weekly turn are up to 12 laser printed pages, and here is a good part. Every play of every game is faithfully reported, by player and by tactic, so you can see how you won well or were just pipped by a late surge because your boys were tired etc. The team's entire running is up to you. I may never enjoy the sport as much as some others, but with a readable rulebook, I now have a better understanding of the sport and can play this game even if I had had no previous knowledge of it. Turns are fortnightly, and £5 gets your rules, team set up and two turns. Hoopplan can be found on

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

Chris Martin wrote to me to say he has set up a new British League football game on email using the Olmec system. It can be found on [www.besl.xs3.com](http://www.besl.xs3.com) if you are interested. Chris is on [chrismartin1122@aol.com](mailto:chrismartin1122@aol.com) - the League is imaginatively called the **British Email Soccer League**, and puts the top English and Scottish teams into two twelve-team divisions.

**Football League Mania (FLM)** is a free PBeM game played weekly and again run under the Olmec system. The basic play mechanism is the same for all such leagues but each GM can tweak certain aspects of it to include or exclude certain facets as he wishes, for example referees with attitudes - alright, we will call them traits, but some are known to favour one team or another, some have an offside fetish (helps the defence of both teams) and some need only a part excuse to wield yellow and red cards. This makes for some serious homework to be done to avoid falling foul of an occasional dictator, but it does add colour to the game. GMs can also use crowd size to determine gate receipts, and also how the gate money is split between the clubs (if split at all). FLM uses the men in black and splits the money 2:1 for the home team. They operate four Divisions of 12 teams each and use 20 weeks for the complete season. Their web page [www.flm.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.flm.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk) is a joy to use and to view. Everything on the home page and many more underneath as you click away merrily. Having printed off the season's fixtures, I saw they were evenly spaced out between Cup and League so if you are going well



in either of the competitions, you can 'rest' some players in order to have a full squad for the games that mattered.

I was allocated Walsall in the bottom division, but they arrived with some good players and enough money and coaching points to give me a chance of doing well. I found early on I could compete with 1st division teams, even if not winning all the time, and it has made for an interesting season all round. Everybody will play five matches in an FA Cup section with every club in the hat together, and five more in a Divisional Cup group. A minimum guarantee of ten Cup matches even if you lose them all! The beauty is the gate monies are inflated to provide funds for investing in better players, and from next season, to allow clubs to enlarge their stadium. Walsall qualified from both the Cup sections (well, you only need to be in the first four positions out of six) and went on to the FA Cup Quarter Finals (damn Tottenham Hotspurs) and the Divisional Semi Finals. We lie fourth in the league with only six games left, but would need real help to go up. Maybe better being a big fish in a small pool for another season perhaps!

A real plus is the Press each team can send in. In most leagues you type it up, send it through and somebody collates it for a general release later on. In FLM you basically see the front of a newspaper, pick your column, and do your report. When satisfied with it, you 'add' it to the paper for all to see. There is even an opportunity to reply to the author of any article/review directly. The Commissioner of the League even allocates money for such articles. There is help given at all times, even automated help in some occasions. Your team page has a warm feel about it, with players 'recommended' not to play (low endurance levels) having a symbol on their jerseys, along with some miscreants who can't be played (having gone over the disciplinary points threshold). Injured players have yet another symbol displayed indicating their rehabilitation weeks required. All in all a well-run game with a very good home page and Gary (GM) can be reached on [flm@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:flm@blueyonder.co.uk)

Now, American Football I like, even to the extent of at one time being a referee in the British American Football Referees Association. It was another way of being involved with a great sport (in my humble opinion), so when **Gameplan** came up to be reviewed there was no twisting of arms and legs to get me in there. To be fair I played this game some time ago when I had little or no knowledge of the sport, and relied on a friend to keep me right.

Years later and now with a good grounding in the game, I re-visited the sport by taking over the Dallas Cowboys in another of Danny McConnell's offerings. Gameplan allows you to coach a team in the NFL, taking responsibility for the drafting of new players, implementing a training regime to get the best out of them, team selection for each game and of course plotting the gameplan your squad will use in attack, defence, and special teams (punting, kicking etc). In addition you will have to balance the books (as is commonplace in all of Ab Initio's games) so you can use your cash to coach some of your members in one or more of their attributes. You could also spend money on attracting more fans to your home games, which in turn will improve your income, some extra merchandise to sell at your matches, again that generates more ready money. Players have strengths and weaknesses, and one of every player's weaknesses is age. The older they get, the less they perform, so eventually squad members need to be retired and replaced.

It is a finely balanced game where an exceptional team can take up to three-four years to get to the top, but can disintegrate in about the same time. It is the constant coaching up of some youngsters and the timely replacements through an end of season draft, plus using some of your money to gain suitable free agents, that will improve your team or maintain your results as some of the old timers get ready to go into broadcasting. You get a couple of pre season friendlies to practise your moves etc, before embarking on a 16 game season. If you are good enough you may get into the playoffs (ten teams will make it) and can go all the way to the big one, the Superbowl. But don't despair, the 14 who don't qualify are placed into a Consolation tournament so everybody has something to play on for. In-game tactics are so important. Think about it: if one of your running backs can outpace a cheetah, why consider giving the ball to the other back who would struggle to beat a new born baby in a 100 metre race? It is a case of choosing tactics that complement the skills

your players have got, whilst attempting to nullify the threat from the opposition. Again, if you are facing a team with outstanding pass receivers and who pass on 80% of their plays, it doesn't make sense to put a defence in where your lot are expecting mainly running plays. You get chances to key opposition plays (basically to reduce their effectiveness), and to enhance a couple of your own per game. How do you know the opposition's strengths and weaknesses - did I forget to mention the plethora of pages per game turn you receive? They include a play by play account of your game showing what you and (more importantly) they chose as their tactic, results from around the league, trades, your home sheets showing incremental stats for your players, a 'spy' report from your next opponent's game showing all the scores and how obtained, including the stats for the game down to the total number of runs inside and outside, long, medium and short passes, along with their total offence and defence figures to date, all designed to allow you to plot their downfall. I should point out that the opposition get your stats too!

Turns are fortnightly and Gameplan has a Basic and Advanced game. In the latter very individual plays can be placed depending upon the down and distance and the score at the time etc. Danny recommends newcomers to go for the Basic and work up. Joining costs £5 which gets you the rules, team set up and two turns. If you like the genre, this is as near to the coal face as you will get without getting your face dirty. Danny is on [danny@pbmsports.com](mailto:danny@pbmsports.com) - web site is on [www.pbmsports.com](http://www.pbmsports.com)

Next issue will feature motor racing and ice hockey for starters, but after that the agenda still has spaces. Any GM needing/wanting a game review done?

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# Designing a Game: 2

**CHRIS WILLIAMS** *considers Monstrous Behaviour in computer-moderated games ...*

IN A TYPICAL human-moderated fantasy PBM, it's safe to say that the GM does a fairly respectable job of thinking for the monsters or NPCs that you encounter. But, what about computer-moderated games? Assuming you want your NPCs (and creatures) to do more than just stand around waiting to be killed, robbed or rescued, you're going to need a method of determining how these poor beings behave in a variety of situations. Non-player behavior can be driven by numerous stimuli, but for now let's break it down into five somewhat generic types: desire, fear, aggression, wander and order.

(*Sidenote:* Wander and Order aren't typical stimuli, more like modifiers to the existing stimuli. Wander introduces a random element to avoid predictable behavior. Order relates to predefined behavior, such as guarding a specific item or area.)

## Making decisions

Each of the five types would have a value. Additionally, there may also be one or more behaviors specific to that person or creature, such as animosity (Orcs hate Elves), fear of undead, or even an overwhelming desire for a specific item or type of item (the stereotypical Dwarven love of gold). Each of these will also have a relative strength and should be considered in addition to the value of the basic behavior types.

## Fear, Aggression and Desire

In order for the fear and aggression behaviors to work, the creature must have a perception of strength not only for itself, but also any other creature or person it sees. For desire to work, the creature must have a sense of worth for the items or treasure it wishes to possess. The simplest (but not necessarily most realistic) way to do this would be to use the items in-game value. Food would be handled differently, as it would be based from off hunger.

## What does it all mean?

During the creature's turn, it will:

- 1 Evaluate surroundings, checking each square within a certain radius. Each object or person/monster it finds will influence what it wants to do.
- 2 If it finds a source of courage, such as an ally, the creature adds to its own perceived combat strength.
- 3 If it finds anyone who is not an ally, our creature will treat it as an enemy. At this point, the aggression value is a combination of the creature's own perceived strength (#2), modified by distance from closest enemy, the base aggression value and any specific behaviors.
- 4 We also calculate fear towards each unfriendly monster we find. This is based on our creature's perception of the strength of the unfriendly monster, modified by distance and any specific behaviors. We might also modify it further by the number of unfriendly monsters since groups would be considered more dangerous than a single enemy. So then, if there are any monsters we would add the fear value to the appropriate direction. In this way, we represent fear as a desire to

move the opposite direction.

- 5 For each object or target monster, calculate any desires if applicable. If the monster our creature is looking at has something we want (ie gold or equipment), use the perceived value. If our creature is hungry enough, base it on the nutritional value of the monster's corpse. Objects on the ground should be calculated the same way. This gives us the total desire for a particular direction.
- 6 If you see something that would trigger our creature's specific behavior, then calculate a value for it. Examples might include staying close to an altar, or approaching a visiting hero, etc.
- 7 Calculate a wander value. This would come into play more when there aren't obvious threats or objects of attraction, but it can still make the creature a little less predictable.
- 8 Compare all the values and you should be able to come up with a direction our creature wants to go. Also determine which of our five behaviors is the strongest as this will help us to determine what our creature actually does.
- 9 Be sure to calculate all of the monster AI values in a turn before they move. This will keep groups together.

The result is some interesting behavior, as shown below:

Example 1: If a goblin has to choose between fighting a close weak monster or a slightly stronger one a little further away, he'll move towards the weaker one first.

```
#####.##
#.....r#  g = goblin (str 4)
#...g...#  r = rat (str 2)
#.R.....# R = big rat (str 4)
#####  # = wall
```

Example 2: If the same goblin was presented with the following:

```
#####
...p...#  g = goblin (str 3)
###.....# p = Puppy (str 1)
#....T.  T = Troll (str 6)
#.g...#  # = wall
#.....#
#####
```

He would move left and try to come around the puny puppy (p), attack it, and run away to the west. Thereby avoiding the much tougher troll (T) altogether.

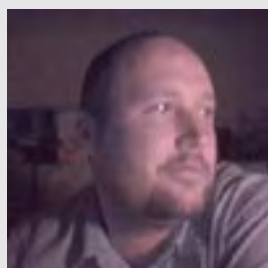
Example 3: You can also define a cowardly rogue type. If Timmy the Thief (strength 2, aggression 1, fear 4, greed 4) spots a hero (strength 4) toting a nice assortment of treasure, he will stay a few spaces back, moving further back as the hero encounters other monsters, moving in closer if the hero gets injured (and weaker). Our thief would 'tail' the hero, picking up any goodies left behind, and moving in closer only if the hero is weakened enough for him to finish him off.

This opens the doors for a lot of behaviors, such as monsters hunting each other, slowly accumulating a treasure hoard, worshipping at altars (the altar could subtract from the Fear value), and so on.

Example 4: A group of kobolds encounters a huge dragon. Since it is stronger than the entire band together, all of the kobolds will flee.

```
#####
#.....D.# k = kobold (str 3)
#...k...#  D = Dragon (str 25)
#..kk.k..# # = wall
#..k.k...#
#...k.k..#
#####
```

Fear could manifest as a strong desire to move in a particular direction without a specific destination. It could also negate a lot of sensibilities. Example 5: Timmy (our cowardly thief) will now run for it as fast as possible, ignoring the traps because he is so scared of the dragon.



### Chris Williams at a glance

Chris is a fulltime commercial software developer and father of five, who once thought working from home sounded like a great idea. In his rapidly dwindling spare time he plays in a few fantasy RPGs and heads up the PBM Design group on Yahoo, which can be found at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pbmdesign>

```
#####
#.....#
#...t.XXX#### X = Pit
#...XX.... t = Timmy
#..D...XX..#### D = Dragon
#.....# # = Wall
#####
```

Maybe you could have a strength value for traps just like monsters, and he'd run through the traps because they were lower strength than the dragon, since if he tried to go around the pit, the dragon would most likely eat him.

```
###.###
#.....# X = Pit trap
#.....### ! = Potion
#.t.X!... t = Timmy
#.....### # = Wall
#####
```

Example 6: Here Timmy would run straight into the pit, or stop at the pit edge and be stuck until the 'wander' behavior allowed him to break free, possibly a few turns later. Unfortunately the problem gets worse the more Timmy wants the potion, since he would be more likely to ignore the random impulse, and it would therefore take him longer to get around the obstacle.

Example 7: Now we have a monster standing behind a pit. Because of the obstacle (the pit), we would reduce the fear value generated by that monster. As a result, our little kobold (strength 3) would be slightly less afraid of the troll (strength 9). However, if the troll moves west around the pit and starts heading south, our kobold will flee to the east. Likewise, if the troll heads east, our kobold will beat feet in the other direction.

```
#####
#...T..# X = Pit
#..XX..# k = Kobold
###.....### T = Troll
....k..... # = Wall
#####
```

### Taking it a step further

Several ways you could expand upon this system are:

- 1 Give each creature a perceived offensive and defensive value rather than a single perceived combat value.
- 2 You could have a special routine for your smarter creatures so they can plan based on where they think their buddies (or their enemies) will go.
- 3 Add intelligent use of magic items or spells so a creature could attempt to create an obstacle between itself and a dangerous monster or hero instead of running away.

Of course we don't really want all the monsters to kill each other off, since it wouldn't leave the heroes much to do except walk around and collect the treasure.

### Just following orders

One example of ordered behavior is guarding a specific thing or location. In this case, you would need some sort of flag or trigger in the move routine preventing the monster from roaming too far away from the place or thing he is guarding. Our creature may see something he wants off to the west but won't go after it unless the desire becomes incredibly strong.

For pets or familiars, we would make more use of the wander behavior. The desire behavior would point to the master, assuring it didn't wander too far off. There would be a constant attraction to its master, which we could increase with distance, so that it might wander off, but eventually it would come back.

For example, a dog might run after a small monster, or a bird might investigate something shiny but will eventually return after catching the monster or losing interest.

Of course, a zombie (without any specific desires or hungers) will stay close to its master all the time, until there's something to kill.

Typically, a pet would emulate its master in terms of attitudes towards other creatures. This way your pet dragon doesn't go around eating the other pets or servants while its master is off on an adventure.

Like all things, this is flexible and should be affected by other factors such as the intelligence, strength and natural aggressiveness of the creature in question. A dragon should be more willful and therefore harder to control than a mindless zombie. Another factor should be the length of time the monster has been a pet. In other words, the loyal dog (raised from birth) isn't about to go nuts and start attacking everything that comes near. On the other hand, a recently acquired hellhound might see nothing wrong with attacking anything that crosses his path.

Determining how much control the master actually has over his followers (pets/familiars/slaves/etc) could have a definite impact on behavior. This could range from complete mind control down to simple obedience or loyalty.

Example: A zombie with no free will of its own would never challenge the authority of its master. It would simply perform whatever orders it is given until it is commanded otherwise or destroyed.

On the other hand, a pet might follow orders out of fear or loyalty (most likely a combination of the two). Familiars would be special in that they have some sort of magical bond to their master. So, depending on the level of control, a violent natured creature could be curbed, in the sense that the master's wishes/orders would be imposed upon it.

### You can't get there from here

Finally, I'd like to discuss pathfinding. Basically, this is the problem of how to get our creature from point A to point B without running into the wall between them. Pathfinding works well if you know the movement cost of traveling to a given spot. The problem, in most cases, is that the cost isn't known until you've examined all of the other squares to find the locations of other monsters, heroes, impassable terrain, treasure, etc. In addition to avoiding the square containing your enemy, you might also wish to try avoiding all squares within combat range of the enemy.

An example:

```
##### g = Goblin (strength 3)
#.g....# # = Wall
#..X...### X = Pit
#.$X...t... t = Timmy (strength 2)
#.....### $ = gold
#####
```

Timmy (the thief) wants the gold. He also wants to avoid the goblin if at all possible (remember he's a coward). The ideal path would be around the south edge of the pits, and then re-evaluate the situation. With luck, he'll be able to get the gold through stealth and then get away, avoiding combat altogether.

A way to accomplish this is to take each enemy monster or hero and increase the costs of squares near them. If Timmy's fear of the goblin is high enough, he'll go around the pits to avoid passing through any dangerous squares. After Timmy moves a square (and so does the goblin), he re-evaluates and decides maybe the gold just isn't worth it.

### Pathfinding

It's not enough to find the straightest path to the goal. We want the safest path.

Ultimately the AI methods I have described here are a combination of several different methods. Pathfinding by itself works great for obstacle (or monster) avoidance when you know exactly where you want to go, but not quite as well when you have numerous other factors such as desire or fear causing zones created by altars and enemies. This is where our behaviors come into play, possibly driving our creature a little crazy in the process.

If you want to incorporate pathfinding, then I suggest the following:

- 1 You should only use pathfinding when your strongest behavior is Desire or Aggression. This means evaluating your surroundings once before you even attempt to perform pathfinding.
- 2 If your monster is afraid, don't bother trying to find the best path, since it just wants to get far away as fast as possible.

That pretty well wraps it up for this month. I hope this helps anyone working on the next big game. My next column will be covering the use of magic and ways to keep your game balanced. Until then...

# Austerlitz

## Down Portugal Way (part 3)

*DOMINIC COOK's diary for the Kingdom of Portugal in game 134 ...*

### June 1808

Interesting. Holland and Italy went ahead with their attack on France. Holland took four co-ordinates while Italy took four more, including Marseilles; my spy in Paris reports 182 battalions there so I guess he will strike against Holland's invasion force 1st this turn. Italy has landed some men in North Africa and secured Cairo. He said he was going to, so that came as no surprise. Otherwise there is no one in my area of the desert, although an Austrian fleet is in the Aegean and could be on the way with troops.

Colonies seem pretty quiet: Spain is counterattacking Holland in Central America, interestingly it seems Italy is attacking Spain in Mexico and has captured a Spanish square - I'll have to find out from Spain what is going on there as Italy and Holland appear to be getting too big for their boots. France has done nothing in the colonies - odd I wonder if it is being played properly or in support of someone else? Time will tell. Good news for me is that I got the mine at 30/82, otherwise everything was quiet and according to plan for me.

### Turn Planning

Money is getting tight. Every square of homeland Portugal is built on now, so it will be a quiet turn for me again. My first order is to take the zinc mine at 31/97 and move to 32/98 to meet my other brigade coming northwards. That should give me the odds over the Dutch brigade in the area. My two colonial fleets load with ore and gold and head to the respective drop-off points. They will collect European troops earmarked for colonial duties and return with them.

In India my I exchange battalions to form a 5 KT brigade which will seal off the northern section of the coastline, and my commander and colonial brigade continue inland into India to mark off the agreed boundary with GB.

In Europe, grab three more squares in North Africa and in the process seal off anyone else landing there. My merchantmen and militia brigade will arrive in Sweden and offload at the island at 50/10 which I will be taking control of for a trade bases.

### Military

Train, train, train.

Because of the money situation I can only afford two brigades. I like my brigades neat, so these are a mixture of troops for swapping around with other brigades already built, but include more light dragoons. My total army tops 210 battalions now, which isn't bad really for little old

Portugal! As an afterthought I load two almost-trained colonial brigades (exp 6) onto my home fleet. I suspect I will need them in the Caribbean sooner rather than later and my colonial fleets can pick up another brigade each when they arrive. Both brigades are 2 Cz, 2 Ln and 1 La, which will give my colonial forces some punch.

### Production

No more building in Europe. I might build something in North Africa but that will have to wait a while. But that does mean I can put about 30,000 people into the population which will help.

In the Caribbean I continue to expand, putting a weaving mill on 40/99 and an estate. In India lack of citizens only allows me to up the ore mine site to a 1 population level, but I don't have enough to build the mine so that will come next turn.

### Trade

I managed to buy ore in Paris and now should do well selling into Amsterdam, which is empty of all goods and at level 6. I will sell my 40 ore in ten 4-unit lots (sell small quantities of goods rather than one large sell - in this case 10\*4 units will make more than 1\*40). My other baggage train in Vienna will now move for Berlin, which is moving upwards. Vienna stayed at 2 so since I am loaded with ore and wood, isn't much use for selling! Berlin may go to 5 this turn which gives me a selling market. Lisbon is coming down and is at 3 this turn so hopefully if it goes to 2 next turn I will buy as much as possible from the market.

### Diplomacy

Pretty quiet really. Spoke with Spain and GB to catch up on the gossip. Nothing much to report. I had a note from Roland playing France, he seems to think that if he can take Amsterdam Holland will crumble so he is putting most of his effort in there. I agree to help him how I can and I also suggest that GB will probably stay out of the conflict if France agrees to lose his colonies - no reply to that! Lets see what happens! Holland rings me just before the deadline and says he hears I am at 2 with him and asks why. I say I want the zinc mine and I am supporting my ally Spain against him. He asks whether there is anything he can do to stop me, but I say no and wind him up about France a bit - he didn't realize he was a three-times elite game winner!

To be honest I cannot see the point of this type of call. Once you are set on one course of action it is unlikely you will change that course. Also, this is my best time for an anti-Holland move, when he is caught up in a war with France. With any luck we can capture all his colonies so if he does beat France, he doesn't get too powerful.



### *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 played. Austerlitz is also run by Quirxel Games in Germany and Sphinx in Greece.



**July 1808**

Not too unexpectedly, Rhineland forces also invade France this turn taking his sole ore mine. Holland however only takes two squares (odd) while Italy goes wild in the south capturing six more French squares. My spy on Paris reports an increase in French battalions from 182 battalions to 280 battalions! I guess he must have missed a turn due to the moderators' mistake, which they obviously rectified with the builds from last turn. That will put the wind up the invaders! More surprising is the fact the Naples and Morocco have allied. Must write to Morocco, but I understood that both were itching to get to war with each other! Sweden has handed over 50/9 which is great - a barracks will go up there this turn to build my trade port!

In the colonies, nothing too unexpected happens. I captured Holland's newly captured zinc mine at 31/97 and unite my two forces there. GB finally captures the zinc mine at 29/77.

**Turn Planning**

Everything continues to be tight. I just have over two million in the bank after costs, which is pretty feeble considering I need to build a barracks in the Baltic. Still, everything looks OK otherwise. My two active brigades in the Caribbean will unite to go after Holland's brigade near 29/97. If I can knock out that one, and Spain kills his other one in central America, Holland will only have one other brigade capable of capturing territory, unless he has built a Kt which is unlikely with his war with France.

My fleet loaded with two brigades will head to the Caribbean to support my effort there. Meanwhile my two colonial fleets will return and load a brigade each, one for India, one for the Caribbean.

**Military**

Train, train, train.

Bold move here for me this turn. Rather than produce some battalions for Europe I recruit a single brigade of 2 Kt and 3 Mi. I have little money, so this uses all my cash, but the brigade will be helpful. I will probably use it in India to pick up a nice island target.

**Production**

No building in Europe except the barracks at 50/9. But I put 24,000 into my home population which has already welled to 888,000 people. Not far off the magic million when population increases considerably. In the Caribbean I add a population to 40/97 to allow the building of a vineyard in a couple of turns. In India, no population increases as I only have 2,687 citizens but I can finally build my ore mine at 56/70. The ore can be shuttled back home for Ect Pts production.

**Trade**

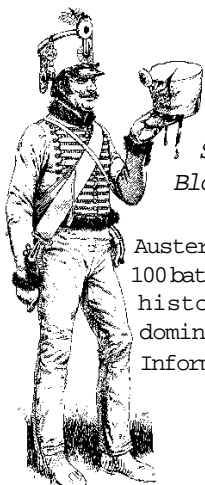
Lisbon is down to a 2, so every spare penny goes to my home baggage trains including one million from India. I also return my Madrid train to Lisbon as Madrid seems loathed to move down to allow me to buy. There are some useful goodies in Lisbon - 71 tons or ore for one thing! My baggages train in Berlin will sell the ore and wood it carries and then move south towards Rome.

**Diplomacy**

GB and I agree a share of colonies with Spain. If everything goes according to plan the three of us should have by far the largest colonies. We will need them, I think, as we are likely to find ourselves at odds with the central alliance of Rhineland, Italy and Holland.



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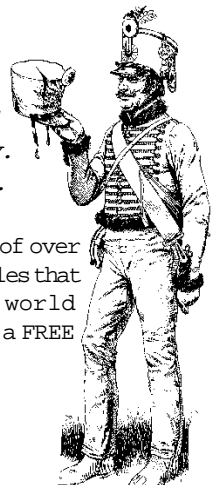
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# Lunatix Online

## It's never felt so good to be insane!

*MATT MINGUS takes over the Asylum ...*

ONE WORD can describe the essence of **Lunatix Online**, Insanity. Lunatix Online is one of the best browser-based games I, personally, have ever played. Who wouldn't want to be a deranged mental patient trying to escape from the wackiest mental institute in the world!

Gameplay is surprising. With hundreds of places to go and interact, this game takes you from the cafeteria to battling evil shadows in your cell's closet. I very much enjoyed hitting on my hallway's nurse (you can invite her into your room eventually to . . . uh . . . 'fool around') and trying to win cash by beating the computer at Tic-Tac-Toe. Very few online games have the originality and humor that Lunatix does. When you sign up, you choose whether your character will be a Homicidal Maniac, a Paranoid Schizophrenic, or a Manic Depressive. After logging in, you find yourself in a padded cell room where you can attack shadows in your closet, be healed by shadow puppets, hire the guard outside your door to keep people from attacking you, stash cash under your mattress, and lots of other fun things. Once you leave your room, the real fun starts. You can write romantic notes to other patients, or maybe make a potion in the Laboratory. If all else fails, visit the elevator, which opens the door to over thirty mini-games/quests that all help you toward your main goal: *escaping!*

One thing I like about Lunatix Online is the fact that you can win, yet you can still play the game. Some other games (**Dark Galaxy** for example: to be reviewed in a future issue) end once someone wins. Then, the entire game starts over and everything you worked for is mass deleted. However, in Lunatix, once you win you can keep on playing. You can even win again! Also unlike many online games, Lunatix offers prizes for winning its gaming - a great incentive to at least try. Winning, however, is not easily accomplished and takes hours of gameplay.

One of the draw-backs of Lunatix is the fact that it is a 'pay-to-play' game. It allows up to two weeks of trial play, and then you must pay five dollars a month or twenty-five dollars for six months to play. This, obviously, makes the game less popular and a little more unattractive. In my opinion, though, it's worth the cash.

The stability of Lunatix Online is remarkable. Not only did its graphics load incredibly quick (I'll talk about this later) but its server is very fast. I could go to any page on the site faster than I could at sites like AltaVista and Yahoo!. I was impressed by the amount of people all using the server at once and still keeping the site moving as quickly as it would if I was the only person on it. One of the reasons for this, though, is the fact that Lunatix Online is part of the online game creating company, Prowler Productions. Prowler has a powerful server setup to keep all of its web-browser based game free of lag.

There are nice 3D still-images on every page. Normally, this would create lag like no other and slow down its server. However, Lunatix offers the graphics in a 1.54 MB file which, when downloaded and unzipped to



your computer, loads those graphics quickly. The smoothness and roundness of the graphics are very nice to look at after staring at the normally choppy graphics of the average website. I will say, though, that Lunatix's layout could use some improvements. The links are centered on the page. There is no menu or side link bar (except for links about FAQs and Subscription Info). It's not a pretty layout. That is the biggest problem for it though. The content of the site is great, but its layout could really use a make over.

Finally one of the best things about Lunatix Online was its astounding community interaction. I mean, sure, it has the forum and the chat, but what really overtook me was the fact that the chat was on every page. It's at the bottom of every page. That way, you can play the game and talk to your friends in the game chat. Another really cool feature of Lunatix's chat was the ability to put actions into chat. I had seen this before but not like this. You could kiss people and smack people around in chat just by clicking a button. Also to Lunatix's benefit, is that the people in the chat rooms and forums are friendly. That's something I always look for when reviewing a game: are the people playing the game friendly? Without friendly people, the game loses its appeal very quickly. Especially in a game like Lunatix, where interaction and communication with other players is almost unavoidable. I was pleased to see people helping out other people and just showing the spirit of a community.

Lunatix Online is a game that not only exhibits great community features and gameplay, but beautiful graphics and great server stability. Please believe me when I say that the fact that this game makes you pay won't keep me from playing it awhile longer. It's definitely got me hooked and, personally, I never want to escape . . .

### The Low-down

- \* [www.lunatix-online.com](http://www.lunatix-online.com)
- \* Unique browser-based game
- \* Turn based RPG
- \* New turns each day
- \* Two weeks of free trial play, then \$5 per month or £25 per 6 months
- \* Humorous gameplay
- \* Great community interaction
- \* First-rate gameplay
- \* It's just plain fun being a mental institute patient! :)
- \* Poor Layout
- \* You have to download the graphics pack to make load time faster

# Epsom

## Up and Running

*'Whoa, there,' cries DAVID BLAIR, 'wait for me!' in this horse-racing game ...*

NOW A GOOD thing about PBMs is the ability to try out something different with little change to your normal life. So here am I doing just that - swapping my normal sports games to take up the smell of leather, swishing of whips, studs, and ... behave yourself there! - I am talking about the noble art of horse racing, involving lots of horses, jockeys, bookies and an enthusiastic GM. This is a horse-racing game, complete with all things to do with the sport of kings and simulates an entire season of racing from all angles.

We are entering the world of **Epsom**, a game formerly known as *Horses for Courses*, which Dave Scriven bought from Spellbinder Games and is running as his own by adding a few extras and revamping some rules. Your aims are two-fold - to be a financial success through winning races, and to gain money through judicious betting on the outcome of these results.

I asked to take a position in the game to see what was going on, and I have to say I am thoroughly enjoying it. Another sport that I never watch on the box and tend to flick the pages over in the papers that are devoted to it. I always felt if you were not betting or did not own a horse, where was the enjoyment?

Epsom intends to give you the pleasure of all aspects of the horse-racing world. But I digress. My turn arrived and I was allocated the ownership of a stable called Broom House, one of the 24 that the game plays with. In my stable I possessed 14 horses all of which have a name, sex, age, and statistics for their respective speed, stamina, strength, experience and fitness. The current and past form is also displayed, giving a feel of how successful or otherwise each horse has been. Further over on the same page is the number of races each has run, both during the current season and its overall record, how many first, second or third places it has achieved and prize money won. I am not finished yet, as the last part indicates each horse's preferred going (firm, good, soft etc) and its total career statistics and prize money. Now that is half of the opening sheet, as below your horses come the wee lads who sit on them to earn you the money, the jockeys. Broom House had five but very quickly went down to four as Paulo Heinz was 28 years old, had no skills and weighed 9st 4lbs. He hadn't won since the previous season, so he was cut soon after to make way for a youngster - such is life! To give an indication of the depth of the game, step forward jockey Gary Ian. Gary is 22, 6ft 3ins (no metric rubbish here), and has a skill level of 7. His experience is 4.34 and he charges £170 per ride. Gary is my best lad although his figures are way below some of the better jockeys at other stables. But he has time on his side which some of the others don't have. His earnings this season total £4665 to date and up till today he's had nine rides with a second and a third. Prize money gained while he has been riding my horses totals £19500, which is the same as his career statistics as he is a new jockey this year. Below the jockeys come the financial bit. Basically it is money earned and expenditure, at the end giving you a clear indication if you are being successful or not.

### Game materials

Okay, I have read the Stables report, what else was in the envelope? The 8-page rule book, which frankly could do with the writing being a little

bigger for us old timers, is plain but contains all you need to know to play the game. The turn sheet keeps you right, as all you can do has a space somewhere devoted to it, and you just need to carefully fill them in. Each turn comes complete with an A5 magazine totalling 12 pages which firstly runs through the previous meetings races, giving a real feel for each race with its reporting. It quotes the horses, the distances as each race is moving to its conclusion and then the results, distances and times. You almost feel you were there. There are the lineups for the next meeting, with the stables, horses picked, and their jockeys, the distances, and the odds set by the computer for each nag. This latter piece I will pick up on later. The editor picks his favourites, highlighting the likely contenders and the also rans, giving the stable owners some idea of how their horses may perform. Then there is the Declaration Card, where the races for the next session can be scrutinised so a suitable horse from a stable may be entered into. Tables showing the leading jockeys, horses that have won the most this season, future betting moves before the major classics come up, auction results, stable chat, injuries to horses and jockeys are reported etc etc, and you can see there is much to read before you can consider doing a turn.

### A run through the turn

I would like to take you through my current turn to try to give you a flavour of what is needed to fail.

Firstly I read the reports of the races run last time - bit of a disaster here, as only my experienced, but rapidly coming to the end of his days, jockey Patrick O'Shea gained a 4th in the Allez France 4 Y(ears) O(ld) fillies Stakes on Elvarian Lass finishing 6 lengths behind Chelsea Girl and only a nose in front of the 5th placed. This earned my stable £3500 prize money, but as I had spent £7200 on entering 5 horses into 5 races, it proved a loss. However I also bet on some races. The beauty of the magazine is the odds are given in advance of the race so you are aware not only who the bookies rate as the most likely to succeed, but you are also given the horses past record - their positions in races run this and last season, and if any fell or were pulled up ie didn't complete the race. From this you can make bets on all or any races, and on your own horses if you wish. In my case I seem to have been given a stable with horses that would struggle to complete a milk round, but that doesn't stop me earning pennies on other stables' horses, does it? Well, yes and no, as on this occasion I earned £18875 but spent £19000 to get it. Just as well Broom House has a good bank balance and can support a few bad weeks. Last turn I made £8000 profit from bets, the turn before the figure was £26476 profit and I earned £6800 in race winnings so there can be good weeks as well as bad ones - knowledge isn't so important to me, I tend to follow form and the bookies odds. Anybody ever see a bookie having to get a bus!!

I read the training I did, spending the Training Points given for a variety of reasons. For example sending in your turn before the due date will get you a point and points are awarded for race results. I used mine to coach Gary Ian and Van Knight up in skills and My Swanee moved from 51% to 59% in speed. I checked on the upcoming races and see I may have been a tad optimistic in a couple of races firstly placing Bernard the Slug in a 3 YO + Colts Stakes. I am rated 20/1 and there are only 7 horses declared. Could it be my horse is 7 years old, and the others are only 3 years old? I am also drawn in position 1 when all the races at this meeting have advantages at the other end - lucky white heather, anybody? The only thing in my favour is that I have spent a little cash obtaining the services of a freelance jockey Les Holmes from New Zealand who may

### *Epsom at a glance*

Horse-racing game from David Scriven. Turns are £2.10 each, or signing up for the whole season (16 race meetings) costs £30. Contact: [D.Scriven@btinternet.com](mailto:D.Scriven@btinternet.com)

at least move me up into 6th with a push. Unlikely to get me into the top 3 unless the others come down with something - Les is an experienced jockey, not Merlin the Magician. However in the Senegal Stakes where there are again 7 runners (the races contain between 7 and 16 runners) Gary Ian is on Noon Sunrise and is quoted as 5/2 second favourite. Despite not having had a race this season the bookies appear to like Noon Sunrise, although the magazine editor plays down his chances. Suffice to say I will not be betting on him to win.

The main thing is to read the race - many are restricted in that some only want fillies, others will place an age on them, such as the Italian 4 year old Colts race which is specific to any of your horses that are male and are 4 years old. Some are amateur races where only your jockeys who are 20 years old or under can take part. I have been caught out trying to slip in the wrong horse into a race, but Dave spots it and I get informed to that effect. This is one reason for having so many horses, to be able to enter one in each of the 10 races per meeting (should you so wish and can pay the entry fees) you need to have a good variety of them. In addition an occasional injury, and in my case 2 of mine can't race for a few turns yet, and it is possible not to have a suitable horse to go into a particular race. It is all a question of planning.

One thing not considered here is the length of the race. A short race demands a speedy horse, not one with great stamina and strength but whose speed rating means it is still waving to the official starter just as the winner is entering the paddocks. Some of my stable have excellent Stamina and Strength which makes them likely candidates for the longer outings, but only 1, Master Stroke, has a good speed rating. To illustrate this I have entered Master Stroke in 3 races so far this season. In a 5 furlong race he finished 2nd out of 8 runners, in a 6 furlong race he finished dead last 6 out of 6, and in an aberration I placed him into a 9 furlong race and he came in 8th out of 13 runners. How do I know this? Because every turn a sheet arrives showing you every horse you have entered, and how they did, including their positioning at the end of each quarter mile markers. I have just noticed that Bernard the Slug has had only 1 other race - a 14 furlong where he started very slowly and fell away - in fact was 10th out of 10 for the whole race. The race I have just entered him into is only 2 furlongs shorter, so perhaps the bookies got his 20/1 tag correctly!

Anyhow I now go through the races, reading the information on the performers' recent results, and their odds and make my bets. Betting is realistic in that you can place money for a horse to win, or bet each way (at double your stake) but will get you money back if the horse finishes lower than 1st depending upon the number that takes part in the race. In addition you can bet on accumulators whereby each horse in the races you put into your accumulator need to win, but the amount of money that can be earned is massive. I am a conservative Scot, so it is Win or Each Way for me, I'm afraid. In the above race involving Bernard, despite the horse finishing way down the pecking order, I actually scored

by betting £4000 on the winner at 7/2, so it wasn't a total disaster.

### Training & Auctions

I have 2.5 Training Points so I feel the best results will come from training up the younger horses, in particular Dre, whom I inherited, and Fast Convert, a young filly I "acquired". Nothing devious about Fast Convert, but when you have a good horse past it's sell by date, you can put it out to stud if it's a male, and arrange a meeting, so to speak, if yours is a filly. Elvarian Express is nearing it's finish and had amassed £246,500 in career winnings, so I paid £15000 to a stable who had a good stud horse named Firm Believer. The result was a filly which I named Fast Convert. Because the name seemed a good compromise with the youngster's parents names - think about it - I was allowed to claim an extra training. The downside is the parents can't race for a good long time, but in my case that isn't a problem, but also the youngster has to sit out a minimum number of turns - in my case 9. However I can use the time to train it up so it is ready to go when it does become available. This keeps new blood appearing in the game and it gives me 2 fillies now to unleash on the world - Dre has only 3 more turns to miss and is champing at the bit!

This turn there isn't an auction, but when there is, you can bid for jockeys and horses, and a couple of stables are offering a colt for stud. I don't need that now, but next season a couple of my lot will be pushing it to compete, so it will be an option to consider. If I wished a loan at preferential rates, I would request it on the turn sheet, and if you feel your stable is too small for the number of horses you wish to keep, you obtain planning permission to increase your stable cap. I have 15 horses, and my cap is 16 so that's fine.

### The final straight

Dave has got Epsom firmly under control with turns arriving on the due date. Currently turn costs are £2-10 but signing up for 16 turns will cut the cost to £30. (There are 16 race meetings in a season).

I thoroughly enjoy this game, and it has given me some basic knowledge to be able to scrutinise the papers now and understand the lingo that surrounds the sport. Lots to do for your money and there is some good interaction amongst the stable owners through the magazine - a read in itself. Knowing nothing about the sport should not debar anybody from playing this, as the rulebook is simplicity itself.





# Godfather

## Two new Mob Bosses

*Waxy Gordon and Al Capone continue to fight it out in the head-to-head version ...*

*[This game is still being played as we go to press. The players don't know each other's names yet, so we're keeping shh about who they are for the time being ...]*

### Turn 4: Losses, gains and standing still

**Waxy Gordon** -The good news is that I have been promoted to Mob Boss. This means that my income is now at a level such that my power and prestige have increased. This has mostly positive effects: I can recruit two more enforcers and my protection bagmen can earn more money by covering twelve city blocks instead of nine. On the down side, a higher profile does increase the risk of police raids - I expect them to start closing down my protection rackets quite soon.

More good news is that I have overtaken Capone on the economic standings, but only by a small amount. He too has qualified for Mob Boss status.

There are two pieces of bad news. Firstly, I failed again to find anything interesting with my cruise area command. Failing twice like this is fairly unusual and pretty unlucky. The second piece of bad news is that I made a mistake estimating the cash available this turn. I failed to spot that Capone placed a new protection racket directly on top of one of mine - exactly what I had been trying to do to him in the first two turns. As a result I was about \$3,000 short and ran out of cash trying to build a Large Hotel: that is about \$6,000 of income I will miss out on next turn.

One interesting point about his new protection racket was that he set it up in the same ward (9x9 set of city blocks) that he started the game. I have deliberately set up my new rackets away from my starting location on the grounds that it would be the first place he was likely to attack. Based on this, and the fact that one of my bagmen managed to steal a few blocks from one of his protection bagmen nearby I think that I should be able to destroy two of his protection rackets with a single attacking enforcer.

In a regular game of Godfather, you would never start a war over a single protection racket. In the head to head game, however, it is in my interests to attack if I can take out two of his bagmen with only one of my enforcers. It is a risk (he might have a more heavily armed enforcer nearby) but one I am prepared to take. I am going to withdraw my bagman from the area (so that Capone cannot attack the following turn) and try my first offensive move of the game.

Since I am starting a war, I will also spend as much cash as I can spare on more armaments this turn. I also have to set aside a day of one of my enforcers to declare Al Capone officially an enemy (otherwise the attack will fail) and I have to buy some more liquor or else I will run out next turn. By the time all that is done and I have recruited a new enforcer, I only have one enforcer spare to expand my empire, so I will set up one more nightclub.

I have transferred virtually all my heavy weapons and armoured cars to one of my enforcers: Bobbie Yale is to be trusted with the serious job of launching the first attack of the game. As a junior enforcer he can only control 12 hoods, but they are all carrying choppers so should have no trouble wiping out a protection bagman. My only major worry is that he

runs into another heavily armed enforcer, or a more experienced one such as Al Capone himself.

**Al Capone** - Every now and then, you get an uneventful turn. This seems to be one of those. Waxy took three blocks off one of my Protection rackets: I'll get them back this turn. The cruise revealed nothing new. I made Mob Boss.

My plans? Hire a new Enforcer, take back those blocks and establish protection in Waxy's wards. Let's start taking the fight to him and see how he likes it.

### Turn 5: A first attack

**Waxy Gordon** - Bingo! Bobbie Yale took out not one, not two, but three of Al Capone's Protection racketeers. None of his enforcers were in the area and the Protection bagmen had only the minimum of weaponry. The end result is that three of his bagmen are killed and my men were uninjured.

The main effect of this attack will be loss of income for Capone. Those three rackets would have brought in over \$10,000 a turn (or about a third of his current income). There are some other minor benefits: a boost in morale for my staff, a dent in his morale and my attacking enforcer increases his experience level. If you suffer a series of defeats, low morale can lead to staff desertions which are a real pain.

Combat in Godfather is always a series of skirmishes like this one. Because you can operate rackets in any part of the city, it is very difficult to eliminate a determined opponent. A victory like this is never decisive, but it is a useful blow.

It will be interesting to see how Al Capone reacts. Elsewhere in the city this turn, two of our Protection bagmen clashed over a city block we were both trying to extort money from. This gives us both a possible target for an attack next turn, so he is likely to retaliate. With enforcer time being so valuable, taking out a single racket with an attack is of marginal benefit, but to keep up the pressure on his staff morale I will try to take out this other racket of his.

Capone has one advantage in a war now: his military ranking is now quite a bit higher than mine. My attempts to buy more weapons and recruits last turn brought only limited results because I had to use a junior enforcer who only managed to find five more hoodlums. Capone probably has enough armaments for two or three heavily armed sections while I can only muster one or two.

I can recruit one more enforcer next turn, which will keep my boss busy. My remaining three enforcers will set up more boozers. I need to strike a balance between building up business and fighting a war with Capone.

**Al Capone** - October 2nd: Didn't things just take a nasty turn... Three rackets attacked by Waxy's heavy mob, three blocks taken over in another ward and one racket rounded up by the cops! Either he got lucky or he cruised last turn. He picked the one block to attack that would take out three at a time. Nice try at the knockout blow, Waxy, but you failed ...

Well, this was all very painful, to say the least. I managed to set up two Protection rackets in the southside of Chicago: in his backyard, as it were.

My military rating is high and I'm going to be using it later. Time to scatter everyone across the city to set up income generating businesses to make up for the losses this time around. That means two more Protection rackets and a nightclub. All at random locations! I don't care whose toes I step on at this point. I'm also going to have to do something next turn to increase gang morale which took a real nosedive after

### *Godfather at a glance*

A game of rival gangsters, set in 1920s Chicago. Available in this two-player version but also in a multi-player version. From Pagoda Games, at £10 + 2 turns for startup, then £2.50 per turn.

Waxey's attacks. Later I can use my guys to hunt down this scum.

#### Turn 6: Gains, losses and police intervention

**Waxey Gordon** - Another successful attack: by attacking near where an bagman bumped into one of Capone's Protection bagmen I managed to destroy two of his rackets. In total I have now removed five of his Protection rackets, which will make a serious dent in his income.

On the downside, I suffered my first police raid this turn. One of my Protection rackets was closed down and the bagman imprisoned. This is to be expected and is the main reason that I have shifted away from establishing more Protection rackets towards building boozers. I have to react by decreasing the amount of cash demanded by my remaining rackets.

My attack last turn is showing up in the game rankings. In the all important economics score (the average of the last three turns' income) I now lead Capone by \$28,000 to \$22,500. With two more of his rackets destroyed I would expect this gap to grow next turn. My job now is to use this small but significant advantage in two ways: to keep reinvesting my extra income in new rackets and increase the lead further while also diverting some cash and time into other activities, such as building up my military strength.

Much as I would like to keep attacking, I have no more useful targets and do not want to waste by time with random attacks. Next turn I will concentrate on developing my own empire in three ways.

Firstly, I have to set up another warehouse to produce more booze. This time I can afford to buy 'complex' of warehouses - the largest type available in the game. In addition I am going to establish a second distribution racket. This is not strictly necessary yet (my existing distributor can handle a fair amount more) but it is a defensive move: if Capone were to find and destroy either my producer or distributor bagman it would seriously mess up my income for a few turns.

Secondly, I am buying more weapons, liquor and vehicles (for the distributor). Finally I will set up two more boozers: one large hotel and one nightclub. All this is carefully planned to spend all the cash I can spare this turn so that I make the most of my slight economic lead in the game.

Meanwhile my boss will try yet again to cruise for new racket information. Surely he can't fail yet again.

**Al Capone** - This is becoming annoying. Another two Protection rackets fall to the hail of bullets and explosions provided by my opponent. Not only is this costing me money, gang morale is taking a very real nosedive and I could start seeing desertions if he keeps this up.

I have to mount an attack or two. I'll hit random areas. If I hit a neutral gang, we should take out some or all of their racket and gain morale. If I hit Waxey, I get all of that plus I take the fight to his turf and cause him financial pain.

Cash is very tight due to the heavy losses we've suffered. However, since he's been snooping around my turf, I'd better start reinforcing my premises against attack. I also need to replace lost men and equipment.

#### Turn 7: A cautious stand-off

**Waxey Gordon** - 'At last, my boss turned up a new type of racket. He discovered the 'Independents' racket which has the potential to be a big income generator. The idea is that, as well as selling booze through my own establishments, I can employ bagmen to sell booze through a network of much smaller independent operators. There a lot of these operators in the city: a bagman covering 18 city blocks could sell as much booze as 12 of my own nightclubs. The disadvantages are that the margins are not so good (I have to sell booze at half the retail price), I have to set up a lot more production capacity to supply them and these bagmen are much more exposed to enemy attacks in much the same way as Protection bagmen.

Other than that, it was a quiet turn. I continued to expand my empire without much sign of what Capone has been up to. As expected, his economics rating has suffered as a result of my attacks of last turn - I now have a healthy lead.

I have decided not to set up any Independents rackets quite yet. There are two reasons. Firstly, I am still expecting Capone to start retaliating soon (he still has a stronger military rating than me, so he has plenty of

armoury) so prefer not to have lots of street-based bagmen who can be quickly taken out. Secondly, I want to get the Alky racket first: this lets you reduce the cost of producing whiskey and liquor - and makes the high volumes but lower margins of the racket much more appealing. I will migrate into Independents a bit later when I want to generate lots of income.

I am hoping that Capone will be determined to catch up on the economic ratings and be tempted to set up high income, but easily attacked, rackets such as Independents. When we end up at all-out war I hope to have the advantage of much more secure income from all my boozers.

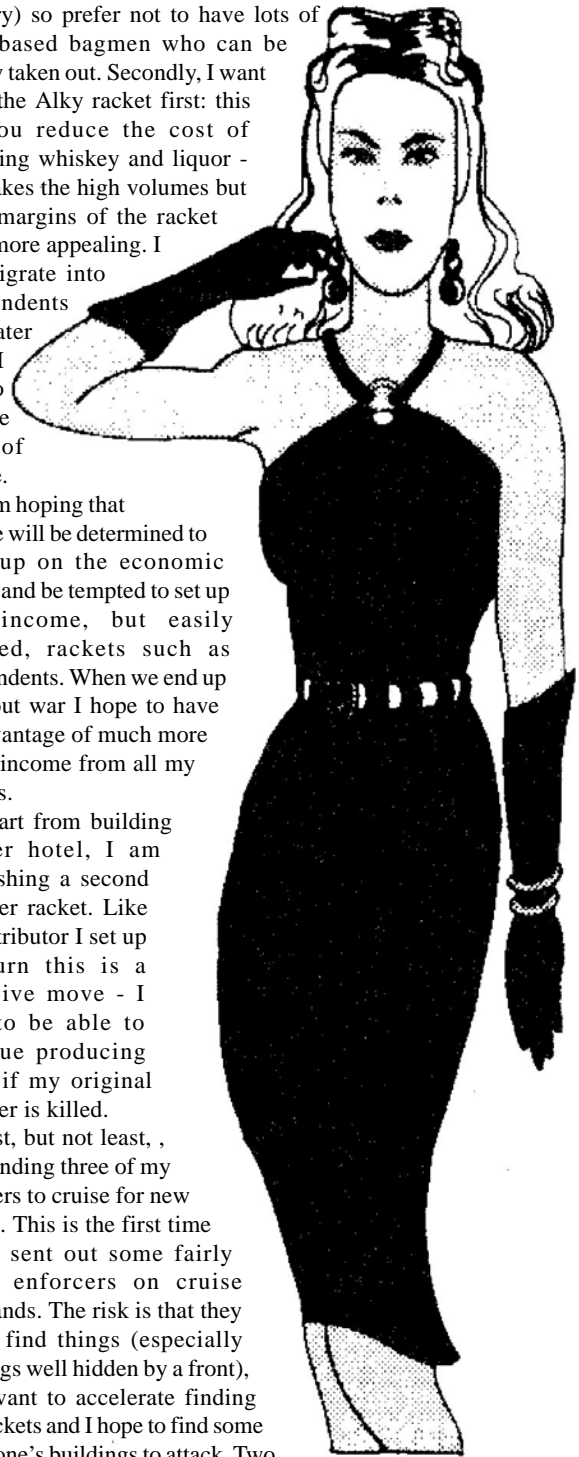
Apart from building another hotel, I am establishing a second producer racket. Like the distributor I set up last turn this is a defensive move - I want to be able to continue producing booze if my original producer is killed.

Last, but not least, I am sending three of my enforcers to cruise for new rackets. This is the first time I have sent out some fairly junior enforcers on cruise commands. The risk is that they fail to find things (especially buildings well hidden by a front), but I want to accelerate finding new rackets and I hope to find some of Capone's buildings to attack. Two of the enforcers will be operating in the far corners of the city. Hopefully Capone has been building his warehouses there to try to avoid prying eyes.

**Al Capone** - I'm glad to see that Waxey has taken a turn away from attacking me. This gives me time to regroup! One of my attacking enforcers found nothing to fight. The other removed a couple of blocks from an NPC gang that was running a Numbers racket. Gang morale has gone up quite a bit.

I think I'll concentrate on cruising and setting up rackets this turn and buy just enough to equip them: that way, I might actually end up with something in the safe at the end of the week. I'll cruise randomly in the centre of town and set up more Protection well away from my existing rackets. I really need the cruises to turn up something good: Independents or Door-to-door would be especially useful at the moment!

*Next issue: Waxey runs some rackets and a turf war is brewing ...*



# Discovering Sci-Fi Games

## Part 2: Winnable Games

*Players describe their efforts at galactic conquest ...*

LAST ISSUE, we ran a series of player descriptions of open-ended science fiction games. This issue, it's the turn of the winnable games. We've not got 'em all, but from those covered here you'll see how they differ, from straightforward games to complex ones.

We hope both articles will give you some idea of the variety of games which use science fiction themes. In many ways they show our type of gaming at its best, with its scope for dynamic choice, discovery and interactivity.

The games are in *reverse alphabetical order* and contact details are in *Galactic View*. Our thanks to the GMs and players who've helped!

### STAR FLEET WARLORDS (Pagoda Games) - Mike Roble

**Star Fleet Warlords (SFW)** is based upon *Star Fleet Battles*. In SFW you find yourself cast in the role of a rear admiral, planning economic expenditures, force deployment, diplomacy and utilization of long-term strategic resources. There are four different common formats of this game; the standard game, the die-hard game, the historical game and the tournament game. Diplomacy, intelligence and networking are a vital part of all these variants: Warlords who fail to maximize each of these elements will bring about their own demise.

In a standard game all players start out the same, with 300 Economic Points (EPs), and the availability for an additional loan. To choose how to spend the 300 EPs is the first gambit with the 10 miscellaneous orders you have available. Do you build to fight or to explore? Do you build light cruisers or destroyer class vessels? Do you build more expensive generic hulls to maintain flexibility, or budget to build set-mission hulls?

The starting turn for SFW is year 165, which is three years before the onset of the general war in SFB, but it will take every player three turns to enter into the surrounding territories for exploration. SFW has an unusual hull class onto itself, the Warp Gate. A Warp Gate (WG) is a portal from which ships can enter the battlefield. there are three different types of WG. The standard, obsolete, and battle variants. Each type of WG has its own place, cost and year of availability.

There are endless features of SFW that boggle the minds of the Admirals. One feature is the comprehensive supply and demand of hulls, related in their costs. If no-one buys a particular ship, the cost goes down by 1 EP, but if someone buys a particular ship, the cost increases by one EP for that ship. Now if 25 players all buy the same ship, the cost of that ship goes up by 25 EPS in a single turn.

All in all, SFW is a far-reaching game that challenges its Admirals in dynamic ways, and places players of all nationalities against each other in a common format. Enter a game of Star Fleet Warlord and see what challenge is all about.

### SPACE TROOPERS (KJC Games) - C D Brenizer

Hey all you lousy grunts out there! I'm Lieutenant Morrison and I've been assigned to give a detailed report of what Space Troopers is all about... Now listen up, because I'm only going to go over this once! (He shifts his greasy cigar to the other cheek.)

Our squad of five marines were assigned to work for a mega-corporation on the distant planet of Sarin IV in the Omega Quadrant. We were all green recruits fresh out of basic with only standard equipment but hell bent for blood and a chance to earn some real stellar cash.

Now these mega-corporations are all out on this God-forsaken ball of rock and dust to mine the most sarinite they can. Mineral rights are constantly contested between these rival corporations along with the ugliest damn aliens you've ever seen, pirates and independent companies.

All of 'em are out for a piece of the action and it's our job to protect our corporation. You ain't pullin' your weight, you'll be shipped off planet so fast you'll think you were swept away by a methane vulture!

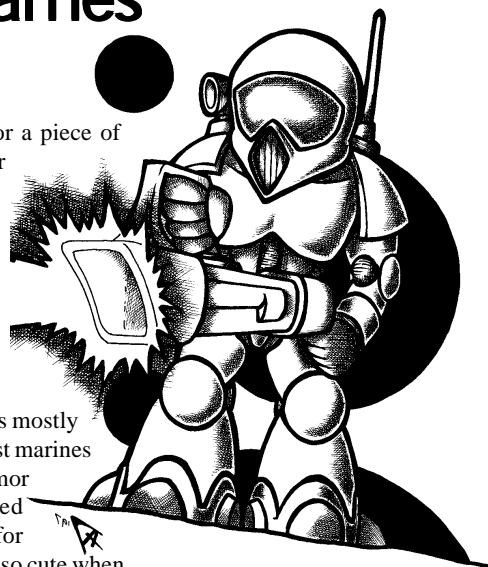
The atmosphere is mostly a thin methane so most marines wear Light Body Armor or a special Armored Survival Suit. ASS for short. Cute, huh? Not so cute when you start getting cut to ribbons by enemy fire. Most armor suits can hold up for awhile. The standard ranged weapon assigned to a marine is your basic assault rifle, which can fire standard, Armor piercing or High explosive rounds. For close combat, and believe me you'll experience it, is the standard reengineered knife which can slice through most anything. Of course any marine worth their salt will ditch that in favor of a set of Power Claws. Well, that's about it for standard equipment and you'll be sure to be buried with it unless you live long enough to upgrade to some of the better stuff.

I'm what you call a Heavy Weapons specialist and damn proud of it! We're the grunts that wear the ASS suits and carry the heavier hitting rounds. (I wouldn't mind getting a hold of one of those plasma cannons myself someday!) You start off with only two Heavies to a squad along with a Field tech that can scout for you and spot new mining areas for your corporation, a Demolitions specialist and a Medic. The medic will be able to heal your squad out on the crust but if you ask me that's all they're good for. But you'll be able to hand-pick new squad members as they get picked off out there. Heh, heh.

Every marine starts out green (level 1) and every marine possesses standard skill, physical prowess, technical aptitude and health but can buy training and weapons improvements at the HQ. That reminds me. Every squad starts at one of three Head Quarters on the map. Rival corps will have the same number scattered around along with their own marine squads. HQ's are the only safe haven on the planet. Transports can only take you from HQ to HQ within your Corporation which are called Drop Zones. Dust offs can also be called up if you really find yourself in a tight spot out in the field.

What about rank, you ask? The answer is missions! Missions are given out at each HQ and with each mission completion you are one step closer to the next rank. With rank means more squad members! You heard me right you mama's boy! More marines in a squad mean more firepower and more killing! If I could only live long enough to see my own squad with nine members! Then we'll see what those rival corporation are really made of! (Major Morrison slams his fist so hard on the podium that it shatters into pieces and he has to take a moment to compose himself.)

Let me warn you though. It ain't no picnic out there! First time out these Rouge Marines surprised our squad and darn nearly wiped us out! If it wasn't for Collins running at them like a maniac with his rifle blazing away we would have never made it out of there. He got a hero's funeral even though we never found the body. Lessons learned the hard way though. But that's the life of a marine! Who wants to live forever! (The



Lieutenant wags his finger and glares at you with squinted eyes and the stub of his cigar clenched tightly in his mouth.)

Well, I think I've covered all the basics for you sorry excuses for soldiers! I only have one more thing to say to all of you: Marine core! Hoo-Rah!

### **GALAXY (Rebus Games) - Antony Dunks**

**Galaxy** as a science fiction PBM, has been around for years, run by different GMs in various formats. The difference with the game as run by Dominic Miller of Rebus Games, is that Dominic has rewritten the software using Visual Basic and Microsoft Access. The advantage this gives over previous GMs is that he not only has the original source code, but the ability to change, or add to it.

At its heart, the core of Galaxy is just like those that have gone before it, being a game of interstellar war for several players. At the start of the game, each player occupies one planet on the game map, the objective being to become the dominant force and so win the game.

Each planet has been given a Size: this represents the total Population that may be present, as well as the maximum Industry that may also be there. Income is derived primarily from the Industry present, though if Population is in excess of Industry, it too makes a small contribution. A fully colonised and developed world thus gives its maximum income. When at maximum its, the number of Production Points a world generates will be equal to its Size.

Exploration, Colonisation and Combat are all achieved through Space Ships, each of which is built to designs provided by the player, according to their own needs, and of course available funds. Progress across the game map is determined by the Drive allocated (as a function of Mass) and Drive Technology of each ship, thus the whole process is a balancing act between needs and funds.

Colonisation is a two-pronged affair, transports being used to move colonists (excess population growth) from fully inhabited worlds, to those needing the people. Population, however, is not sufficient, as only when they are actively employed does a world achieve its maximum income. People are employed by the Industry present, which is increased by the production of Capital Goods [CAP]: this may be done locally, or by importing them from elsewhere. The cost of CAP, like everything else manufactured in the game, varies according to the Materials [MAT] present, or the Raw Material [RAW] value of the planet (MAT being RAW that has previously been stockpiled): thus some planets are better at producing items (Ships, CAP, MAN) than are others.

One other aspect of Galaxy that the players have some control over is Technology. Initially the tech levels of DRIVES, WEAPONS, SHIELDS and CARGO are set at 1.00 and by the expenditure of 4,000 Production Points (which happens to be four times your Home System's production), you can advance one of these tech areas by 1.00 - though fractional increases are possible. Spending 40 Production Points will bring about a tech gain of 0.01, which represents an improvement of 1% - every little helps, and believe me, it does. New ships will automatically be built at the new tech level; old ships however need to be upgraded to take advantage of the improvement(s).

Combat occurs when two or more non-allied players meet. If no enemy ships are present, then worlds are attacked, automatically removing all trace of any previous owner. Ship to ship combat is dealt with a modest formula, which is printed in the rules, for those who like to crunch numbers and designing their ships to the maximum efficiency.

Victory is achieved according to the game set up. Open-ended games conclude when one player (or alliance) is agreed as being the 'dominant force'; alternatively, fixed length games are decided by a Victory Point system, the player with the most points on a pre-set turn being declared the winner.

As mentioned at the start, Dominic is able to make changes to the software, thus his version of Galaxy will be unlike any others. So far we have seen a new mapping order [K], multiple production at a world, a HTML format for the turns to replace the .DOC format, discussions on space bombs and rumours of battles elsewhere in the game, and these are just the start. I am in a privileged position, being one of the playtesters: not only am I helping see that any bugs are removed, but as Dominic

asks us what changes we would like to see, I can suggest something and see it put into action: 'It's Galaxy, Jim, but not as we know it!'

### **GALACTIC INVASION 3 (Steve Arnott) - Neil Skene**

**Galactic Invasion 3** is a strategic multi-player computer-moderated PBM game of stellar conflict. With a fortnightly turn round most games last about 50 turns, or two years.

The game is a delicate balance of spending enough resources on ships to expand your empire while building sufficient bases to defend your territory and at the same time building enough mines to provide the resources needed for expansion.

There are two basic units of play, Planets and Ships. At the start of the game you get a map of 200 star systems but the only information you get as to how they are connected is for the planets your 'empire' controls. Planets have Bases (armies) and Mines (produce BP) and available Building Produce (BP) (used to build bases, mines, ships, weapons or research technology). Ships have weapons, shields and cargo capacity, and can initially move one Jump. Movement is via stargates to neighbouring systems, or through random wormholes to anywhere on the map (these frequently change). I've been caught out a couple of times by large fleets appearing from nowhere in a relatively undefended area of my territory. It's important to build defences for your colonies quickly, however great the temptation to concentrate on mines. There's no point in building a big colony for someone else. BP can also be moved around by teleportation from and to planets with a base of level 20 or above. I try to establish colonies at this level: difficult at the start of the game, when you really need to be building as many mines as possible.

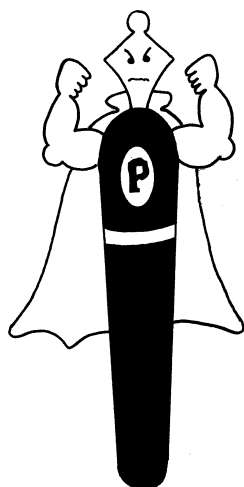
At the start of the game you get one fleet with four ships in it. I've found that in order to expand quickly it's important to split this fleet up quickly. Also, the ship designs at startup are completely useless as they cost so much to build. Use some of your early orders to change these designs to small ones that can be built and only register the big ship designs when you want them. The smaller ships that survive can be merged into larger ones later in the game. Resources spent on research lead to increases in technology levels which improve the effectiveness of weapons, shields and mines and allow the building of Nukes (ship killers) and Busters (planet killers). It's also important to keep an eye on your rivals' technology level as falling behind can be fatal. I've found that getting Nukes as early as possible saves a lot of ships, in that you can destroy an enemy at a distance and so do not take casualties. Getting to the level of planet buster missiles before an active enemy is essential.

It is possible to make an official alliance with other players: this enables you to spend your resources on repairing their ships and you may not attack an ally. (However, you don't get automatically notified if your ally terminates the arrangement.) A good ally with whom you share information is a great advantage. An untrustworthy one can easily spring some nasty surprises.

Each turn you can order up to forty actions (eg attacks, moves, builds, repairs, research, and terminate alliances etc). This seems a lot at the start of the game but it soon becomes necessary to prioritise your orders. I use scans a lot at the start of the game to find out as much information as possible but hardly at all by the mid game. You can send one message either to one other player or to all, a feature not often used except for diplomatic insults, but it does add colour to the game. The results sheets give a list of orders entered, the results of those orders, a news section of random events, a report of any attacks on your forces, a report of all planets that you control, have scanned that turn or have forces at, a report of foreign ships that you are aware of, a report of your own ships and player charts showing which empires have the most planets, bases, mines, ships and the highest technology level.

The game's great fun when there are a number of committed players but can be spoilt when people drop out if they start losing. It is important to keep a close watch on the Empires around you for signs of inactivity. Planets with inactive empires quickly build up resources and if you don't exploit them somebody else will. The object of the game is to control planets. You win if you get 50%, or 70% for a two-player alliance, or 90% for three, but you do have to spend an order asking the game to check if you've won.

# THE MIGHTY PEN



## Reviewing Flagship's reviews

I read the letter from Jason Oates with some disquiet. I have never played in any of Jason's games, but they do have a good reputation amongst the wargaming fraternity. Consequently, I read the review of **Company Commander** in issue 96 and, whilst feeling that the review did not tell me all about the game I might want to know as a prospective player, I was not unduly put off the game. I found the subsequent letter from Mr Oates to show a mixture of over-reaction to mild criticism, over-sensitivity to someone else's opinion and a poor grasp of the purpose of Flagship.

To suggest, as Jason does, that 'the article fell short of being even an average review' seems a vast over-reaction. From a player's perspective, I read the review, I noted that the reviewer had problems with the game and compensated accordingly. The review was not well written, but I've read worse. The views of the reviewer were generally favourable: there have been some pigs printed in the past which were much worse! You get good reviews and bad reviews, this was neither. The fact that it could have been better written is not really the point. The article seemed a fair reflection of the reviewer's thoughts, certainly not a stitch-up job! Bear in mind too, that *Flagship* has no way to check for accuracy in a review. I believe it is *Flagship's* policy to offer a second review if a GM can show substantial mis-information has been given in a published article.

I was particularly disturbed to read Jason's view that, 'If *Flagship* is not to promote PBM, then what is its purpose?' Well, to begin with, *Flagship* exists to give PBM players a forum in which to pass on their views to other like-minded people. It's not *Flagship's* responsibility to promote your games, Jason, it's yours! As I understand the situation, *Flagship* does not exist to make money from PBM, whilst the majority of GMs make some sort of profit out of their games. I don't expect What Car magazine to promote car ownership. I buy it to read about new cars and how good, or otherwise, they might be. *Flagship* is a consumer magazine at heart. If a reviewer doesn't write about your game in glowing terms, then tough!

Finally, why is it up to Jason Oates to decide whether his games are reviewed in Flagship? I am pretty sure at least half the reviews are written by paying players rather than Flagship's small band of reviewers who play games for free then write about them.

Jason Brown

I can understand Jason Oates' unhappiness with the review of Company Commander, but I don't think that it is fair to blame *Flagship* for its being less than 100% favourable. You didn't review it, so you are dependent on the reviewer. Whether the review was fair or adequate, I have no idea and Jason didn't actually produce much evidence in his letter on the point. He seemed more concerned that it was 'badly written' than anything else, which sounds a wee bit like Oscar Wilde's 'Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.'

Chris Morris (Ulaidh Games)

J P Oates asks (Mighty Pen #97) whether the role of *Flagship* is to promote PBM, and if it's not, what is its purpose? I don't think that *Flagship's* role is (or has ever been) to promote the industry it reports on — it's not

a trade mag, but a consumer one. Its purpose is to describe developments in the hobby without fear or favour, for the benefit of its readers, whether or not that pleases the businesses running the games it covers. Part of that role is reviewing games, and those reviews won't always be favourable — if they were, it would be a disservice to the readers, who have a right to expect objective coverage and to be told whether the reviewer thinks a game is any good or not.

I can't comment on whether the Company Commander review was fair or not -- but if a review is unfairly negative, sketchy, lacking in insight or whatever, then the GM certainly has a right to complain about the quality of the reviewer and of the editorial control applied. *Flagship* isn't perfect, and there have been reviews of UKG games which we've felt were rather disappointing for some of these reasons. But I don't think that the presence of unenthusiastic reviews is necessarily contrary to the magazine's remit, as Mr Oates seems to be suggesting.

Mo Holkar (Undying King Games)

I enjoy your magazine, though I do not subscribe as my interest in the games you cover is quite narrow (I only play sports PBMs). Having said that, I have often played boardgames of a wargaming nature and, as such, am probably a potential customer for games like Company Commander.

I read the Company Commander article published in *Flagship* 96. It did not persuade me to play the game, though one review is not going to do that. Continual favourable comments in Rumours from the Front are far more likely to persuade me to play a game. Nothing in the article made me less likely to play Company Commander. Sure, I noted that the reviewer thought the game materials were sometimes poor, but you should see some sports games!

Then I read Jason Oates' letter in *Flagship* 97. Now here was something that has definitely put me off playing any of his games! Come on Jason, the review wasn't that bad! I fail to see that any single review will cause a game 'untold damage'. For heavens sake, look at some of the reviews and comments that have been printed in the past! By launching a savage attack on the editor of Flagship, Jason is seeking to deflect attention away from any inadequacies there may be in his game. Sorry Jason, but that just won't do. Defend your game, by all means. Try and get another review by a more experienced player - advertise and persuade us to play the game. That's how a proper businessman would react. Whinging in public does no good whatsoever.

By reacting in the way he did, Mr Oates has done more damage to his reputation than a review which, in truth, was neither good nor bad.

Nick Jones

*[Maybe some potential players will be favourably impressed by a moderator who stands up for his game? I can understand a reviewer being put off by weaknesses in a game's presentation, myself. As with any games, we'd welcome further articles about Company Commander. We have always tried to present games from the player's viewpoint.]*

## Roleplaying systems

I greatly enjoyed Gary Forbis's article last issue, Which Roleplaying System? Since he didn't mention Columbia Games' *Harnmaster*, I'd like to. This skill-based system with its rich character generation and innovative combat resolution is definitely my favorite RPG.

Sven Bauer (Offworld Games)

## Email: blessing or curse?

Regarding the comments about email lists, I said some things in feedback last issue. The main things I've noticed seem to be:

- \* Lack of thought in writing, in favour of hurry
- \* Ease of mass mailing at no cost
- \* As a followup to the last point, that arranging cartels is much easier
- \* Speed of reaction to offers/events far outweighing a postal player
- \* The creation of the attitude that non-email players are lesser species, and can be ignored
- \* Misunderstanding/misquoting, resulting in Chinese whispers
- \* Lack of acknowledgement of the need for parity. e.g. four positions A, B, C, D, are opposed to a position E. A posts, B, C, and D post sequentially thereafter; A and C then exchange more comments; the subject mutates and B and D comment on that. E, who has only



occasional access to email, reads this pile of messages about lots of subjects, twisted away from the original, and cannot possibly answer everything alleged against him. A, B and C then criticise E for failing to respond and blacken his name to other positions. Utterly unreasonable, but I've seen it done. It also does not need multiple correspondents but just unequal access.

That's all that springs to mind right now. I've suffered all of them, and indeed committed some.

**Andy Kendall**

*[I've some experience of email 'discussions', and agree with these pros and cons. Misquoting is common, and so is misreading, but it's unwise to get into an I-didn't-say-that sort of argument, however justified. I try to keep my messages short and to repeat the major point I wish to make if anyone else takes me up. If I send a message in the heat of the moment, I usually regret it!]*

### Seeking a game

To answer Roger Trethewey's query, last issue. I guess it depends if you have e-mail access. **Starweb** is available from Flying Buffalo, check out [www.flyingbuffalo.com](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com) for more details. There are 2-player **Diplomacy** games (WW1 variant) available in the zine *Strangitude*, but I'm not sure of any games similar to 'You Rule' that are around.

**Bruce Edwards**

### When's my turn?

With the end of **Kings of Karadon** (so sad!) I'm looking to join a new PBM game soon. One thing I'd love to see included in the markings of a game, including anticipation, GM rating etc is turnaround accuracy. KoK was so difficult to keep track of. In one real year I played just one turn. In **En Garde - The Sun King**, I had no turns for 15 months! A constant turnaround, similar to what I get with Harlequin for example, is an absolute must! This is so important and doesn't really get mentioned.

**Kevin O'Keefe**

*[I agree, though I think that it's hard for the moderators of hand- or mixed-mod games to guarantee regular turnaround, and that any turnaround they promise us and their players may be hopeful rather than achievable. Perhaps Rumours comments could be more specific about turnaround? Tell us if your GM's painstaking!]*

## HALL OF FAME

### LEGENDS (Harlequin Games): North Island Campaign 25

This game was designed to be played by two teams of six on a small island with massively accelerated setups. Harlequin congratulate Team Farport for winning, adding 'well done' to both teams - this was a very closely fought game.

**Seb Sarafian** - Moo Shoo (Captain)

**Andy Sells** - Rockhead (Mentor)

**Wayne Newton** - Palagar Korel

**Bill Dolan** - Longbeard

**Robert Duncan** - Lionheart

### MEPBM: Third Age 2950, Game #20 (Harlequin Games)

Game ends on turn 100, so respect from the GMs. Congrats to the DS team, with 4 Neutrals turning to the Free Peoples it was a good victory. Commiserations to the FP who fought gallantly to the last.

**1: Alan Greenaway** (Dark Lieutenants)

**2: Nick Barnes** (Cloud Lord)

**3: Steven Connelly** (Dog Lord) - a good result for his first game!

### CRISIS! TimePatterns PBM

**Game 24** was won by **Clive Wraight** after a determined battle with **Shaun Martin**.

**Game 25** ended in a joint victory for Ecuador (**Dave Midwood**), Mexico (**Shaun Martin**) and Sumatra (**Stephen Perry**) after a hard-fought game.

## Your Feedback on issue 97

LESS FEEDBACK that usual arrived on issue 97: does this mean you all loved it or that you all hated it? Or were you distracted by the various controversies aired in 97? I suspect that we're simply getting into the holiday period now!

Anyway, the issue was rated at 8.43, with those who added comments all favouring our broader approach to gaming. 'All the regular columnists are a joy to read,' says **Jason Brown**, 'Welcome especially to Gary Forbis.' Articles that were praised were the s/f roundup, Lords of the Earth and Godfather, less welcomed were the Austerlitz diary and Dark Age of Camelot: 'I have no interest in this type of game,' says **Bruce Edwards**.

Design articles are generally favoured, 'But keep them short!' cries **Ed Perry**. There's no-one who doesn't read them, option (a), and no-one actually admitted planning design a game of his own, option (d), but 47% of you like to know how GMs think (b), and 53% like the inside info on what's coming up.

93% of you now use email to contact fellow players, though some of you who use it still agree with **Mark Avery** that 'letters and phone calls are more personal: it's harder to trust email contacts.' 'I'm an email man myself,' agrees **Jason Brown**, 'though part of me hankers after the atmospheric letter writing of yore. Hate the phone.'

If you're short of time to play, 67% hanker after giving up the day job! Those of you who felt this option was maybe a little unrealistic wouldn't take the option of giving up all your games, oh no, but nor would you give up your most demanding game, 'because I've already put a lot of effort into it' reasons **C Motson**. 13% would drop their most expensive game and 20% their minor game(s).

Question 6 (sorry, I misnumbered them!) asked whether you'd play a game you've enjoyed more than once. Of course, I know some of you are fans of a particular game (Middle-Earth, Legends, Serim Ral, for instance) and may play little else! But 36% of you will play a game again, 7% will look for something similar from another firm, 39% will try another game from the same firm, and 19% will just move on. 'I just love the buzz from starting up in something new. I'll stick with it till I'm beat,' says **Joe Templeton**. 'I suppose it depends whether I feel I've got to grips with the game and done as well as I think I could,' thinks **Jason Brown**, 'If I like the way a game plays but feel I could do better, or want to understand the game more, then I'll probably play it again.'

Question 7 asked which sort of games you most enjoy playing. 43% answered 'yes' to *all* the options we listed (even 'Other'), and everyone chose more than one of them! Unsurprisingly, PBM/PBEM was the favourite option by far, followed online gaming, then computer games, then boardgaming, with tabletop roleplaying close behind. 'I don't get much chance to play boardgames,' says **Bruce Edwards**, 'but the children are getting older...' 'I'll play anything, as long as it's against other people,' says **Mark Avery**, 'I don't have oodles of spare time, so PBM suits me fine.'

Many thanks to all who wrote in. Enjoy this issue, everyone, and your summer!

### Feedback questions on #98

*[Choose more than one answer if you wish, and feel free to comment.]*

1 - Please rate this issue from 1 (weedy) to 10 (wondrous).

2 - Which articles/sections did you most enjoy, and why?

3 - Which bored you, and why?

4 - Do you play overseas games (a) by post, (b) by email, (c) not at all?

5 - Which GM(s) would you like us to interview?

6 - We're planning a cover CD: what game materials would you like to see included on it?

*Replies welcomed by surface mail, or by email to  
carol@pbmgames.com*

*By September 14th, please!*

# Inspiration

## Where do ideas come from?

**CHRIS MORRIS** of **ULAI DH GAMES** considers the question ...

RECENTLY, a *Flagship* correspondent asked about where GMs get their ideas from for new games. In my own case, I have three games running or in prospect, and their origins are noticeably different.

The first of my games, **Dragonhelm**, started out with teasing a fellow school pupil about his 'primitive' home village. I started a mock history about the career of conquest launched by the barbarians living in the place. My father told me off for wasting my time, because that sort of thing would only be of use if I was going to write a novel. Ever perverse, I started to write a novel. About 2,000 pages later, it was squeezed out by pressures of work and life, but I didn't throw out the masses of material generated. Years later, when I was interested in developing a PBM game, I did not have far to look for a world in which I could set it. There were towns and people and situations just waiting to be exploited in a medieval style game.

The second of my games, **Einstein's Lot**, had its roots in the work of an 8th century Welsh monk called Nennius. He wasn't exactly an historian - he claimed no more than to have made a pile of the papers that he had found, so in there among the twelve battles of Arthur and a list of the cities of Britain, there was a section entitled 'The Wonders of Britain'. Some bits of the list are inventions and others - such as a description of the Severn Bore - are real. With some of them, however, you just can't tell. All that you can do is give a definite 'maybe'. One of them is a cleft in the earth, somewhere in Gwent, where a wind always blows. That set me thinking about what a place like that would be like, and what caused it. Then all that thinking linked up with Geoffrey of Monmouth's assertion that King Vortigern came from the Gwent area and a tale emerged, mostly set in the Forest of Dean in the present day. Again characters and places emerged, and almost without planning it, I had a ready-made setting for a modern game.

The third of my games, which has a futuristic, semi-galactic, setting has not been released yet, so I will go lightly on the details, but it has its roots in a dream. I am usually quite good at remembering dreams (it's a knack that you can develop, if you have the time and inclination), and this one seemed interesting - weird, but coherent. I spent some time generating science to explain what was going on in the dream, and at the end, I had an interesting setting for a game, full of potential for conflict at a manageable scale.

In all three, there was first of all a basic idea, arrived at almost accidentally, and then a good deal of developing the world into a coherent structure. Once I had an idea of what the world was like, and what was going on in it, I started to get an idea of what players are going to be doing within the game world.

Whether one can build up the game world using facts from the real world depends on the nature of the game. It can be useful, certainly, because players are apt to do their own 'reality' checks, and it doesn't help anyone if the player's perception of what 'ought to be' the case doesn't match the GM's - the real world provides a handy touchstone.

Though, that being said, anyone who has read a few history books begins to see how rarely historians agree 100%, often because they're looking at different sources. And when one gets to fantasy, the touchstone is nothing more than what seems right. Were the makers of the *Lord of the Rings* right to give Cate Blanchett pointy ears? Since Tolkien was strangely silent on the subject of Galadriel's ear configuration, there is no answer - except that if elves had pointed ears, there was at least a slight chance that Aragorn had them too (like the Habsburg lip). Probably best not to get into that subject.

Meanwhile, back at the point. It is only after one has decided what

one is trying to simulate that one can start doing it. In my view, it is then that the simulation and rules can start. I know there are GMs for whom the game's the thing, and rules may be as arbitrary as one likes or needs, because the world itself doesn't much matter. If it makes a better game, change the world to suit. In fact, they are the game design followers of Plato, where form, ideal and abstraction are key, and what is thought is the true reality - the game determines the world. For my part, I tend to be a follower of Aristotle, where substance, actual, and concrete are dominant, and the game must follow the world.

Does it all sound very airy fairy? Probably, but it's not really. On one occasion when I have asked why something in a game was so, I got the answer 'Why do you go clockwise round the *Monopoly* board? It's the way the game is'. Now all game designers follow that line to a certain extent - most maps of 'what you can see from here' tend to the rectangular, even though in any world, they should be circular unless the presence of the observer distorts space - but I like to keep such things to a minimum. They can often make a big difference - going round the *Monopoly* board anti-clockwise would make the game much more randomly variable and need a more money rich environment to work - and they need some sort of justification. Otherwise, the game world carries no real conviction - a collection of arbitrary rules assembled together for no particular reason (rather like an accounts branch insisting that travel claims for different months be submitted on different forms, but quite unable to say why). When game mechanisms and rules start to govern the shape of the game world, rather than vice versa, everything starts to change. For a start off, it is far harder to work out what is going on. For example, if a nuclear device works on Monday and on Tuesday, but doesn't work on Wednesday, it's clear that something is different on Wednesday - but what? In a rule driven world, it could be that simply that the rules say 'nuclear devices don't work on Wednesday' (it gives a better game if they don't work all the time) and that is the end of it. In a 'reality' driven world, there is perhaps a periodic nuclear suppression field generated by the sun on Wednesdays. So what's the difference? The result's the same, after all. Actually, there's a big difference. In the latter case, clever scientists working under the direction of one of the players might work out how to shift the effect to Tuesday, and throw enemy plans into disarray - and then again, they might not. The game is potentially much more open-ended and interactive between player and GM. Harder work for the GM, but much more interesting all round.

Finally, strange isn't it that the Greek philosophers always seem to have got there first, even in PBM! Anyone ever play Plato's 'Atlantis v Athens' or Aristotle's 'Alexander: Conqueror Kings of Macedon'?



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# Roleplaying via Email

## Worlds of Adventure

**SCOTT HOLLISTER** on how to get involved...

"THE ONLY thing I consider actual roleplaying is sitting around a table with my friends and the live interplay between us." Many times have I heard this or similar comments. Face to face gaming is an experience that surpasses any other. I cannot argue with those words. But there is something that runs a close second.

Play by E-mail games (or PBEMs) have become very popular. But what exactly are they? Well the easy answer is that they are roleplaying games where you interact and 'roleplay' via E-mail. But, let's go a little further.

Not everyone has the time to get together on a regular basis. Maybe because of school, busy job or other commitments, it just can't be worked out. But, it doesn't take all that long to look at E-mail. You can do that when your schedule allows and not have to worry about sorting out time conflicts.

But, I hear you asking, doesn't the roleplaying lose some flavor this way? Don't be embarrassed: that's a common misconception. And I am here to tell you that it can be just as social through E-mail. More of that later

### Joining a game

First, how do you start a PBEM? Well the quick and easy way is if you already have some gaming buddies and you set up a mutual game online. This way all you have to do is set up the list and you are good to go. Here is how it happens in most cases. You join a community list. To make this simple let's call that list RPGsRus. Of course, you quickly join the discussions on your favorite games and systems. The animated discussions start to intrigue you and finally you decide that you want to try one of the many PBEMs out there.

First thing to do: post to the list asking if they can recommend a good game or where you should look (try the postings on *rec.games.pbm*). After you get a few suggestions, or find a few games doing your own searching on the web, I have one suggestion, but it's a real important one. After joining whatever lists(s) you picked, contact the GM and ask for permission to lurk.

Talking to the GM is understandable enough: you can tell if you have the same outlook and views on gaming. If you enjoy having a rules heavy game, you do not want a GM who gives his players full reign in a freeform atmosphere. Once you have found the GM you feel comfortable with and he/she has agreed, you can begin the next step.

### Playing the game

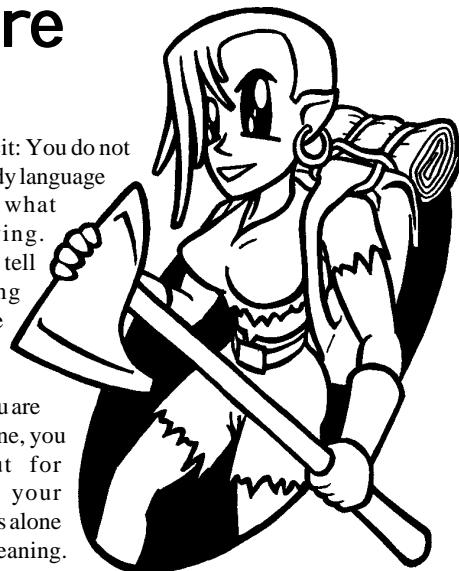
PBEMs have a feel and timing that is definitely unlike a face to face game. Most obvious is that the advancement of a storyline is slower: although it may not be as much as you think. Whatever the case, you have to get a feel for how the players interact and the flow of the game. By lurking (*ie* joining the list and watching the action, but not as one of the characters) you learn what is going on within the game, you see the give and take between players and characters, and, very importantly, you see the GM's style. Important as it is to mesh in a face to face game, it is probably even more important in a roleplaying PBEM.

So, you have been watching for a little while, you love the storyline, the participants seem right down your alley, and the GM's style is exactly what you were looking for. You and the GM have worked out a character for you to join the game. Here are some differences that you will notice right away.

\* Extra planning time: Since this is happening via E-mail you do not have to come up with a plan immediately. You have a little extra time to sit and plan out exactly what you want to do.

- \* The need to be explicit: You do not have the luxury of body language to understand what someone is saying. Sometimes, you can tell someone is being sarcastic, because their tone and body language is quite apparent. Because you are relying on words alone, you have to spell out for everyone what your intentions are if words alone can't convey your meaning.

- \* Expound on what your character is doing: Since you are not all together, you need to let the GM know what you are planning to do physically and/or mentally. And at the same time you need to leave room for the GM to be able to pronounce the attempt successful or unsuccessful.



### An example

For example, in a superhero game, Ice Queen's baby sister was taken hostage by Flame Dude, her arch nemesis. Without so much as a thought for herself, Ice Queen rushes off to save her sister. Note the differences in these two examples ...

*Ice Queen's raises her arms and gestures forward, forming her ice slide and she sails off towards Flame Dude's lair. She bursts through the window and shoots out a halo of ice engulfing her foe so he can't move.*

*Ice Queen's raises her arms and gestures forward, forming her ice slide and she sails off towards Flame Dude's last known lair. Upon arriving she looks for any signs of danger or a way to enter his domain. She will not lose her sister to this monster...*

As you can plainly see the second choice conveys the same idea, but doesn't step on the GM's toes. It says what she plans to do and allows the GM to tell her that either there is a window open or a note gloating that he outfoxed her this time. Either outcome, the flow of the game is not interrupted by the player having to repost. Whereas in the first post, there may not have been a window, or he may have had a defense against her wall of ice.

Actually, many of these so called differences are not really differences, it is just a matter of subtlety. And you get used to it pretty quickly.

### Is it fulfilling?

Finally, there is the question of socialization. How can this game be anywhere as fulfilling as a face to face game? In my opinion, it can't. But when you do not have the time to get together it can come pretty close. You can make jokes (just make sure that you state whether its OOC [out of character] or IC [in character.] You can definitely show emotion and humor in your typing. I play in quite a few PBEMs and I have made true friends in each game. I can honestly picture in my mind exactly what someone will do or so after knowing them for so long.

And, who knows, if time allows, maybe those co-PBEMers can meet you face to face sometime. But, in the meantime, you can make some damn good friends and have a wonderful time. It couldn't hurt to give it a try.

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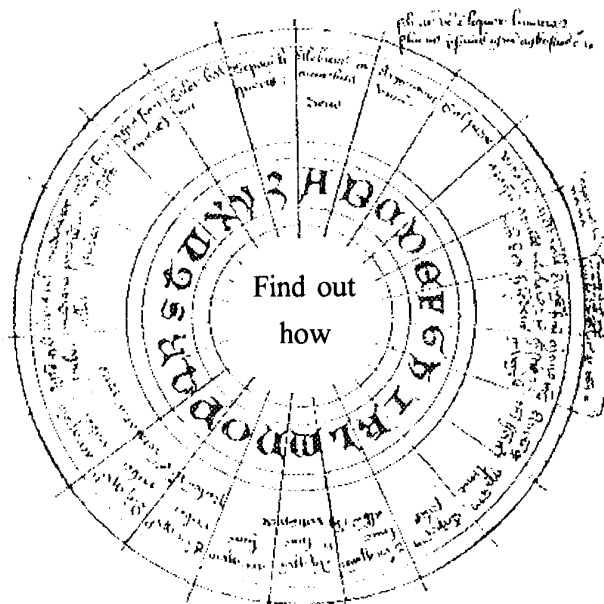
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# Preventing Disaster

## How to Save Your Business

**SAM ROADS** of **HARLEQUIN GAMES** describes the precautions to take ...

*[WE ISSUED a warning to all moderators as soon as we learnt of the catastrophe which befell **Kings of Karadon**. We've covered this in Newdesk but, as a brief reminder, the game's datafiles were erased by a hacker who got in while the GM was online. Not only has this killed all the current games, but it will also require a total re-write of the system software. Horrendous!]*

*Sam Roads now helpfully describes the precautions they take at Harlequin Games. It's useful advice that's easy to follow for both firms and players. Could happen to any one of us. Do it before your horse bolts, too ...]*

HERE IS A list of safety precautions you can take to make your computer more secure.

### What is a Firewall?

A firewall is a program which sits on your computer, keeping its eye on the information traffic going in and out of your computer. When you first run it, it questions everything, but quickly you tell it which programs you like to use and after a day or so, it will only ask questions of suspicious activities.

Go to [www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com) and download *zonealarm*. It's free, popular, effective and it's very easy to remove if you decide you don't like it. Run it on medium level internet security (for reasons not worth going into here).

You may hear that only people with permanent internet connections need a firewall. This is wrong. Anyone needs a firewall.

However, you can only get a virus, or get hacked if you are connected, so disconnect when you're not using the connection. If you have a permanent connection, turn your computer off when you're not using it (and save on your electricity bill, whilst being eco-groovy).

### Antivirus Software

Antivirus software is crucial. Not only will your computer be much safer, but you will avoid sending viruses on to your friends and business contacts if you do get infected. As these things have a knock on effect, you'll also be lowering the spread of viruses around the world.

Don't believe people who say that antivirus is ineffective because hackers find ways around them. I interact with about 1000 amateur internet users. About one a fortnight suffers from a virus, and I receive and deal with two-four viruses a day, so the danger is quite real. Antiviruses won't deal with ultra-new viruses (like *nimda*, when it was released) but do deal with the 95% that have been seen before and can be just as damaging.

I use symantec's *Norton*. I don't have much advice to give on which to choose - it is probably worth spending some money on this, though many other software packages include a decent antivirus for free. You will need to update its virus lists as frequently as you can. I do it once a week, or the instant that I hear about a new, big virus.

### Backing up

Back up vital data. The easiest, but least effective way to do this is to make a copy on your own computer. This may help if you have a hard disk corruption, but is unlikely to help if you get hacked, hit by a virus, or natural catastrophe such as theft or a fire.

It is better to back up onto another computer, or a storage device, such as a tape, CD or floppy. You can buy dedicated backup devices though for many people simply backing up crucial data onto floppy or CD can save months of work. If you do this, try to move the storage medium into another building so that it survives a fire.

Best of all is to use the internet to get your data onto another computer. You can upload files into any webspace you have. Many accounts give away a small bit of free web space (eg NTL give 10mB with each account). This is plenty of space for backing up your vital files. Get an FTP program (there are many free ones at [www.tucows.com](http://www.tucows.com)), which will let you move files to and from your computer easily.

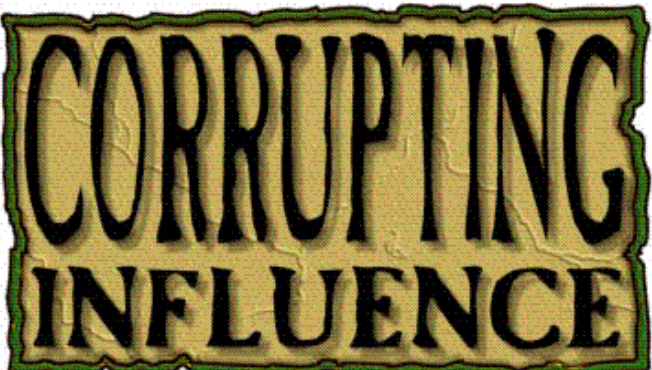
### Get insurance

If your data is worth a lot, value it the same way you would a car or house contents.

*[Ken supervised students' projects before he retired, and would repeatedly warn them to make frequent backups because university computers are so prone to viruses. Alas, there were still sad cases of tearful students whose work was lost simply because they hadn't backed it up.]*

*Be warned ...*

*I think that it's always a mistake to believe that technology works. My brother is a futurologist (yes, really), and has great faith in the internet as a repository for all human wisdom. But the sort of spam that I receive on a daily basis convinces me instead that wisdom is in short supply. There's no shortage of folly and madness, though - C]*





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# Playing the Thief in Legends

*Psst! JIM KEMENY whispers some useful secrets ...*

COVERT CHARACTERS - spy, thief, assassin and rumormonger - can be great fun to play, and as a class of character they comprise a whole theme of **Legends** in its own right. Of these, my own favourite is the thief, who can play a key role in many ways - stealing magical or skill-enhancing items, or causing starvation and plummeting morale by stealing or sabotaging the food supplies of an enemy army or a location, or stealing crowns to cripple troop training, sabotaging fortifications or the morale of troops just prior to an attack, rescuing prisoners, body-snatching and grave-robbing. The thief has many uses and is a versatile member of your team, greatly enhancing your position when used aggressively.

Lairs and ruins abound in **Legends**, containing the valuable possessions of hapless victims. And often villages, towns and cities - or the palaces and guilds inside them - contain tempting items in their vaults. A thief can even be useful in the very earliest stages of the game when cash is short for troop-training, to steal a few thousand crowns to fund training those mage-knights. Send your spy or seer in first to provide you with good intelligence, and then let your thief loose on the targets.

## Items in Legends

The most obvious use of the thief is, of course, for stealing items of great power. Magic items are a major resource in **Legends**, and wielded by the right character they can make a huge difference to the development of your realm. And there are many hundreds of them, the overwhelming majority unique.

Items are often skill, race or religion specific - that is there are restrictions on who can use them and gain their enhancing benefits. So your thief has to be selective in what he or she steals.

You can often tell roughly what an item can do by its name and the description of it as an object that you get (sword, bracelet, ring etc). So a spy's orb is likely to enhance a spy, a cloak of invisibility is probably going to be handy for any character with a covert skill, and an orc's power bow is clearly intended for characters of that race. But many items have less obvious uses and character restrictions, and will need to be examined in some way. What, for example, does an anti-chasuble (cloak), or a mirror of runes (key), do? The answer is that you need to study it.

There is a whole range of different ways an item can be studied. The simplest action that any character can do is to examine it, which may yield minimal additional information. If it is a book, it can also be read and will contain some further information, perhaps giving information on a quest.

The item can also be used, by trying to equip it as a weapon, or putting it on, like a ring, or other ornament, or a cloak or crown, and then see what happens. This can, of course, be risky. The item may do something surprising like teleporting you halfway across the world, or something nasty, like inflicting wounds, giving you a disease, or turning you insane, or even just draining your strength to the point at which you

can't carry anything, or even move.

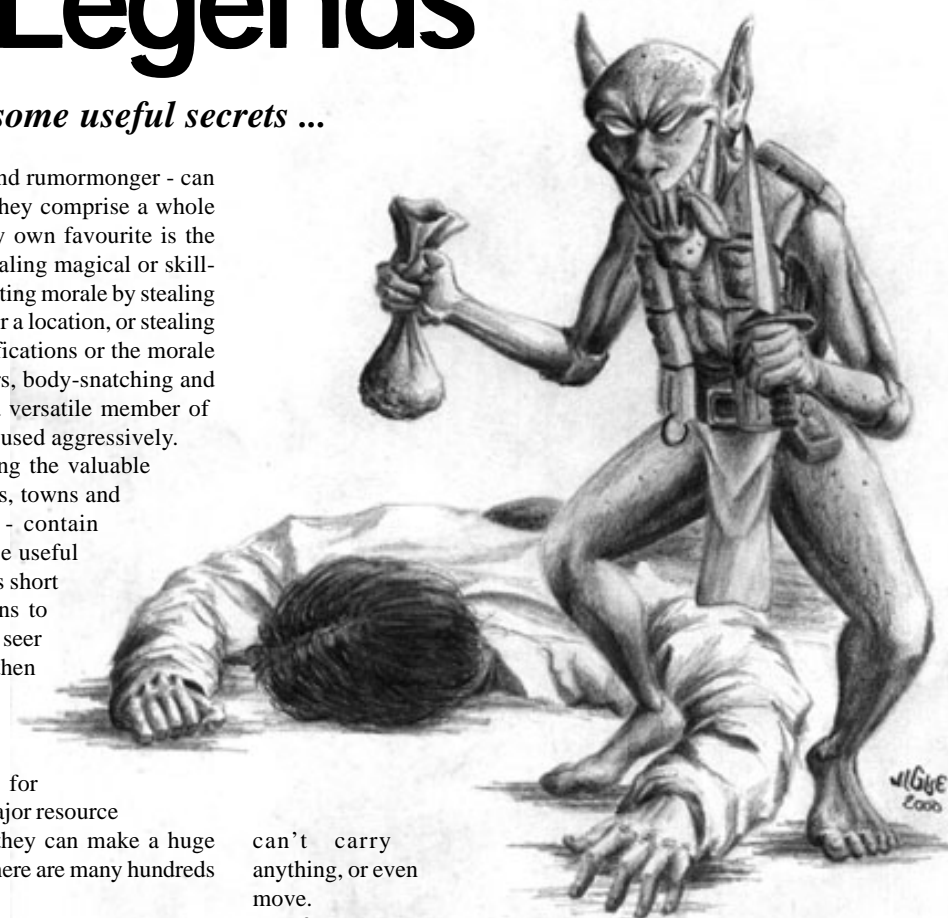
If you are not prepared to take the risk of just trying it, then the item can be taken to a mage for magical examination. There is a whole hierarchy of enchanter spells called runespells that can be cast on the item to give you some information on it, up to runepower, yielding full information. Since a character can have three skills, a thief can also be a mage and may have such a spell, to enable her to conduct a full examination on the spot.

## Why bother stealing?

Why bother with a thief who can only steal all of any one item for each character action, when you can have a party of hero-fighters that can defeat the lair's denizen and scoop everything in one fell swoop? The main reason is that early in the game some lair monsters are just too strong and even many smallish non-player owned towns too well-defended to be conquered. The stronger monsters often hoard the most powerful and most sought-after items, and even some smaller towns can hold the odd tempting item. So a good thief can complement your army and your party of lairbashers by providing your position with character-enhancing items far earlier than would otherwise be possible. Later in the game as your thief becomes more skilled, her attentions can be turned to causing grief to your enemies.

## Complementary skills for the thief

What are the best skills to complement the thief skill? This is a matter of some debate among players. A high level of stealth is an essential attribute for a thief. Stealth in **Legends** is a skill in its own right. But stealth is also enhanced by a number of factors such as high dexterity and the ability to hide - what in the game jargon is called 'sighting value' (which includes the ability to move silently). A character's sighting value is affected by



## Legends at a glance

Fantasy wargame with different scenarios, run by Harlequin Games. Start-up with 1 turn is £20, subsequent turns are £3.50. Also run by Midnight Games from the USA.

many things, including the character's size, the kind of equipment carried (like not wearing plate armour which both reflects the light and is hard to move silently in; or not travelling with a string of horses or a wagon train), and skills that enhance concealment (like ranger).

My first choice for a complementary skill for a thief is therefore the skill of stealth, the classic enhancement of any covert skill. The thief skill enables a character to steal, but the stealth skill enables the character to get away with it without being caught. Or if the thief is caught, it gives her the chance to escape her captors. There is nothing worse than being trapped in some cul de sac in a lair and not being able to sneak or dodge past the monster, or being thrown ignominiously into the dungeon of the small fortified town of a petty lord.

It's important to bear in mind that all covert actions entail some risk. It isn't just a matter of having high levels of thief and stealth skills. Against this has to be set the guard ability (or 'guard rating') of the target. A lair with a vigilant and ever-awake Great Dragon on his mound of rare items will lower the thief's chances to pull off a theft, as will a location garrison that has many guard-trained soldiers. If the target is another character, the covert and stealth skills of the target also count against success. In fact, if the target character is more stealthy than the thief, the thief may not even be able to find the intended victim!

The point is, that there is always a chance of failure. The canny player weighs up the risk, and doesn't send his thief to steal from a city which has a garrison of a thousand guard-trained soldiers!

But this is not the end of the story. There are further ways to enhance the ability of a covert. Perhaps the most effective is invisibility. An item, like a cloak of invisibility, does this. There are also herbal potions that, when consumed, confer temporary invisibility. Finally, there is an invisibility spell that a mage can cast on himself to make himself temporarily invisible.

So the third and final skill that complements a thief with stealth is, for me, a mage skill. There are several disciplines to choose between.

Illusionist is the most effective for researching and casting invisibility spells, while enchanter is the best for runescripts to find the details of what the item you stole does. It is also useful to know the teleport spell so you can get in and out quickly.

However, there are other combinations of skills that some players swear by. Some opt for thief/assassin/stealth so the character can double as either a thief or an assassin as needs dictate, and they rely on an equipped item or potions for invisibility. A variant of this is thief/spy/stealth which both gives the thief espionage skills and is also a good combination for rescuing characters. Others will choose thief/ranger/mage to enable the thief to cast the invisibility spell while relying on an equipped item or potions to replace the stealth skill. There is no 'correct' way. This is exactly as it should be in a complex game with innumerable permutations and combinations. The combinations are as many as your imagination and inventiveness allow, and while one combination gives you some advantages, it will often be at the expense of others that you will have to do without.

#### Last words

Finally, a player in Legends can have up to 40 (yes, forty!), individually unique followers: mostly characters you have persuaded to join your cause, including those who own towns and cities or the guilds in them. These are your staff - generals to lead your armies, administrators to run your cities, fighters to clear lairs and ruins of monsters, merchants to make you rich, and many others, including high-level mages and priests, and characters with skill-combinations that make them troop-trainers of the training types you decide to concentrate on; the needs of a ruler are many. But among these, don't forget to recruit, train and groom at least two or three thieves (including if possible the owner of a thieves' guild in one of the major cities).

You won't regret it.

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# Suspension of Disbelief

**BEN WILLIAMS** with advice on how to maintain and enhance your immersion in tabletop roleplaying ...

WILLING suspension of disbelief is a reference to the literary principle that to enjoy a work of fiction fully you need to deliberately believe things you know not to be true. For example, I recently went to see the movie *Blade II*. A basic premise of the movie is that there is an entire sub-culture of vampires that co-exists with us. Now, everything I know suggests that this is not true. However, for the purpose of the film, I accepted the premise and I enjoyed it.

Suspending disbelief is even more important in a roleplaying game. In a movie situation you can completely disbelieve the entire premise and still enjoy the special effects, the sets and the actors. In roleplaying, you supply the actors, sets and special effects with your imagination and the imaginations of your friends. If you don't believe the things that are happening it can drastically reduce your overall enjoyment of the process.

Roleplaying presents the additional challenge of giving the participants far more knowledge of setting and world mechanics than anyone has in a movie setting. How much more difficult would it be to believe that Blade defeated a certain enemy if you knew that he had to roll a 19 to hit? Players in a roleplaying game often have so much information about the way the world works that suspending disbelief requires ten times the effort of a book or movie experience. So the question presents itself: what can I do to enhance my willing suspension of disbelief?

First off, in order to determine how strong your belief muscles are, think back to the last time you told a story about something that happened during a game session (come on, I know you tell those stories too). In your story, how many times did you refer to dice rolls? When you described a combat situation, did you talk about mighty blows, surging adrenaline and explosive spells; or did you remember the exact dice rolls and points of damage inflicted? Contrast the number of references to game mechanics vs the references to actions taken and deeds done. If your stories tend towards dice rolls and statistics over mighty deeds and tense moments, you may be able to enhance your games with the following tips.

## Speak in descriptions rather than numbers.

Though most RPGs are driven by numbers, each number is intended to represent something, whether it is a measurement of strength or an indication of how well you performed a task. Take full advantage of the stories behind the numbers to make your actions interesting.

If your character is working to disarm a trap or bomb that threatens the lives of the group, don't just roll dice and add your skill modifiers. Elaborate on what you are doing. Describe the sweat beading on your brow and the trembling of your fingers as you go to snip the last wire. Conversely, you can emphasize how cool your character is in the same situation.

Movement rates in most games are fairly arbitrary and allow for great descriptions. Moving 30 feet during a round of combat and then attacking

could be described as a mad dash across open ground followed by a desperate stab under your opponent's guard. It could just as easily be a confident stride, heedless of danger, followed by a contemptuous backhand slash. The actions taken and the numbers involved are exactly the same, but the descriptions make the two events seem totally different.

## Keep damage secret.

While this tip does require extra work on the parts of both players and GMs, it is well worth the effort. Most games have some means of healing characters, and this is generally a good idea to keep your character alive. However, when damage inflicted is judged by how many cure spells it will take to repair, a great deal of combat tension is lost.

Ask your GM to show you your damage on a note pad so that you can describe it to the group rather than having her call out numbers to the group.

If someone asks you how hurt your character is, refrain at all costs from referring to your hit points or other numerical damage indicators. Instead, use terms like: 'It's only a scratch' or 'Well, I could probably take two or three more steps without falling down'. The way your character indicates his damage levels allows you to convey a lot about his personality (though it tends to drive cleric characters nuts).

## Treat your character sheet like your hand in a card game.

When you play cards it is an important part of the game that your hand be kept secret. Even in games where you have a partner at the table, it is considered cheating if you know exactly what everyone has in their hands.

Most RPGs have no hard and fast rules regarding looking at other players' character sheets. You can, however, enhance your enjoyment of the game by deliberately avoiding knowledge of your friends' stats. Do them a favour as well by not sharing too much information about your character. It is much easier to picture someone if all you know is how they have been described and what they have done. Each number you attach to a character makes suspension of disbelief a little bit harder.

There is nothing at all wrong with rolling dice or even with remembering the die rolls behind the exciting events in your campaign. Dice add an important element of randomness to RPGs that helps simulate reality. Statistics are also important to help us define what our characters can do, what they look like, and how much damage they can take. The problem with dice and stats is that they can become the focus of the game at the expense of good storytelling. Use those numbers to enhance suspension of disbelief and you will be doing a favour both to the people you game with and yourself.

*Ben is a long time tabletop roleplayer and GM who is still trying, with limited success, to follow the advice presented in this article.*



# Ideas for Your Campaign

**GARY FORBIS** *advises on borrowing from the movies for tabletop RPG ...*

MOVIES ARE modern myth; they transport us to other places and times and unlock our imaginations to the creative visions of the director. By no coincidence, these words also happen to perfectly describe roleplaying, so it is little surprise that many games are inspired by movies and television. However, using a movie as a basis for a game can have some pitfalls that are easy to avoid if you are aware of them when developing your ideas.

There are two main ways to adapt a movie for roleplaying. First, you can run a game in the same setting as the movie, by buying a licensed game product or adapting a favorite system. This is perfect if you plan to run a specific campaign or one-shot adventure - in short creating your own sequel. If any of your players haven't seen the movie, you can rent it and let them watch during character creation. This will help familiarize them with the setting and appropriate types of characters.

The main thing to watch out for here is not to try to retell the movie. Your players will make their own decisions; they don't follow scripts like movie actors and you can easily wander off into unknown territory or worse - one of the main characters could die or go his own way before the story really even begins. It is best to tell a story related to the movie peripherally or not at all. An example of this would be to run a game as the Bothan spies who stole the plans to the Death Star - they played an important role, but the only thing that is known is that they succeeded. The rest of the story is open for anyone to fill in - like your gaming group.

Another thing I would recommend is to leave the main characters from the movie as background NPCs only. If you want Luke Skywalker sending your party after lost Jedi artifacts, or Ellen Ripley (from Alien) debriefing them about xenomorphs that's just fine. However, don't have Luke or Ripley come along - it's a recipe for disaster. Either the hero will get killed or he will end up overshadowing the rest of the party, relegating them to being minor characters there to assist the exploits of the 'star'.

There is another way to use a movie. Perhaps even a better way if your group has one system they like and don't want to change settings. You can adapt the story to fit your game. Find elements of the setting that overlap and weave them together to fit the genre you are playing in. You should probably be careful not to use so much that your characters recognize the movie you are adapting - it takes away some of the mystique of the game. A trick to help disguise your source is to include other elements created entirely by you, or at least borrowed from another source. It doesn't take much to throw your players off the scent, plus if they do deduce the source of the plot, you still have something to surprise them with. Also, don't try to script the end - your players should have some way to resolve the story without duplicating the end of the movie. Set the pieces in motion and let the characters run with it and find their own solutions.

Let's say you are playing Dungeons & Dragons and you're stumped for an adventure, so you decide to adapt Alien. You could change the spaceship into a sailing vessel, the planet into an island, and the alien into a doppelganger. If you name the boat 'Nostromo' and include a scene with hundreds of mist-shrouded doppelganger eggs, you will probably be discovered, so those are things to avoid. Since there isn't all that much to our story idea so far, it might be a good idea to add something else like a pirate or an evil wizard.

Another example would be adapting The Thirteenth Warrior for Star Wars. An unknown force is attacking a planet and the Jedi Council (or

the Rebel leadership) decides to send the characters to investigate. Instead of humans wearing bearskins we use a band of renegade Wookies (or to be truer to the story, humans impersonating Wookies). The mother becomes a Sith sorceress, and the leader of the army becomes the enemy flagship. That alone is plenty to run a game. You might also choose to include the greedy prince of the planet, and the old seer could easily become a Jedi hermit.

As you can see, going from space fantasy to medieval fantasy and back again is very simple. It is also just as easy to adapt other genres of movies, but be careful that your choice of movies isn't totally driven by characters or circumstances that are difficult to bring about in your game. For example, while it would be quite interesting to play a Highlander game, the story wouldn't fit into the middle of a D&D or Spycraft campaign. Without immortal characters and a prize to drive them to kill each other, that story doesn't exist. A better choice that would result in a similar game would be The Running Man. A guy gets dropped into a big, convoluted gladiator arena and has to fight his way through it to face down the people who put him there - something easy to translate into any adventure genre.

In adapting a movie like The Hunt for Red October, you have to make sure you can adapt the situation as well. The enemy has developed a new technology (or magic item) that could shift the balance of power. The players' superiors are out to destroy the thing, but the players know through instinct, divination or clues that the true intention is to turn the item over. The story then begins and the players must help the defecting commander fight or flee both sides until their superiors can be made to understand the situation. This could be an intriguing adventure for any genre, although difficult to disguise the source material. In this case I would recommend adding a few other random elements or plot twists like a bounty hunter or a pirate who is after the item for his own purposes.

Finally I suggest you tread very lightly borrowing ideas from recent hits. If you try to create a retelling of The Matrix, your players are almost sure to notice the connection. Instead I recommend more obscure titles, or using hits from the early nineties or before. This way you still have a nearly limitless supply of story ideas without your players ever knowing how you can keep it up.

Sometimes it can be a real chore to think up new adventures for your group, and lots of times games end because they just run out of steam. Borrowing plots from other stories can help get you through dry spells, and sometimes just the act of twisting them enough to make them your own can inspire you with a new direction to take the game, sparking an entire series of adventures that are entirely your own. So the next time you watch a movie don't just stare at the screen, but engage your brain and figure out how you would tell the story in your own game. The more you do this, the easier it will be to come up with ideas for your next game. Until next time, good gaming.

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# Web Gaming

## For Fun and Profit? Well, Fun Anyway ...

*MO HOLKAR has some thoughts and suggestions for getting a game up on the web*

AS RECENT *Flagship* coverage has shown, more and more of what we think of as 'PBM' is now being played via the Web - which is pretty much the ideal medium for turn-based strategic gaming. If you have a look at one of the directory sites, like

<http://www.mpogd.com/> or [http://directory.google.com/Top/Games/Internet/Browser\\_Based/Strategy/](http://directory.google.com/Top/Games/Internet/Browser_Based/Strategy/), you'll see literally hundreds of games which could quite happily be played as PBMs.

Running a game over the Web is cheaper, quicker, more convenient, more reliable and more flexible than running it by post. Sure, it needs a bit of technical nous, but you're not going to let that hold you back, are you? If you have a great game idea ticking away in your imagination, it's now easier than it's ever been to turn it into a real game, being played by hundreds or even thousands of people all over the world.

The downside to this is that it's very, very difficult to make money running games on the Web. To charge people real pounds and pence, you've got to be offering a pretty special product, when there are so many free games out there, many of them good. (In the traditional PBM world, not-for-money games have stayed small because unpaid GMs are rarely able to sustainably meet the time demands. This disadvantage is greatly lessened on the Web. Web games need a lot less time to administer than PBMs, and if you're a good designer you can set it up so that the day-to-day stuff pretty much looks after itself.) So I'm not suggesting that you can easily earn a living from Web gaming - that, I think, is considerably more difficult than it was in traditional PBM. But with a bit of savvy you can put up a nice little free-to-play or pin-money game that will provide decent enjoyment to you and your players.

I should probably be clear here what I'm talking about. By 'Web gaming' I mean you play it through an ordinary Web browser like Internet Explorer, not via a client application that you have to download first (that's a whole nother order of technical skills required, which I'm not going to go into here). The purely-browser interface means that there can't be any serious real-time component to your game: it must be turn-based. I'm also not talking about hand-moderated games which mostly use the browser as an interface for sending messages between players and GMs - there are some excellent ones of these out there (like <http://www.siliconhenge.com/elsewhere>) but they're basically the same as play-by-email with a bit of added functionality. Instead I'm talking about turn-based strategy games where instead of the traditional PBM order sheet you fill in an online order form, and instead of getting a printout of the turn results you get a Web page displaying them.

### A design for living

Let's suppose you have a wonderful game idea. What do you need to bear in mind while you're designing the game around it? Formats which work in PBM won't necessarily work so well on the Web...

\* Dropouts - You can guarantee that you're going to have an awful lot of dropouts. You should reckon on at least 75% dropout inside a fortnight, for a free game. So any board-game-like format that relies for its success or balance on a majority of players sticking it out to the end of the game is doomed to failure. Balancing dropouts when there are spatial relationships between player positions (eg. neighbours on a map) is always difficult, so you may find you need to make it a bit more abstract.

\* Player numbers - One big game which can keep on taking players, or a load of fixed-player-number games running alongside each other? The Web makes it easy to get large numbers of players into just one game,

which is an exciting possibility, but you have to be wary that game balance isn't damaged by people who've been in there longer having an advantage over newcomers. If you go for the fixed-player-number approach, do you operate a waiting list and start a new game instance when it's full, or do you allow people to start as soon as they sign up? If the latter, you have to be careful not to give early starters an advantage (or a disadvantage), but if the former, you'll get even more dropouts than usual.

\* Information - In traditional PBM every player gets sent their own turn package, and they don't get to see anyone else's. By default Web pages are viewable by anyone, so if you want each player to have private information you'll have to set up a login / password system to allow them to view their own pages. This isn't technically demanding, but where there are password systems there are invariably people who'll try and hack them and make your life hard, so you may instead want to design from the start for a completely-open-information game.

\* Deadlines - The Web allows much quicker deadlines than are possible in ordinary PBM, which means either you can get an ordinary-length game over more quickly, or you can fit a lot more turns into the same space of time. The fastest practical is about a turn a day, which is quite something compared with PBM's typical fortnight. But bear in mind that some of your players will not have seven-day access, and anyway they may not want to have to think about the game every single day. You'll have to design for a much higher proportion of players not sending in orders every turn. This might mean a clever default-orders system, or a slow-developing game which doesn't need a player to provide input every turn. One thing's for sure, if your design is such that people who can play every day will have a big advantage over those who can't, you'll be limiting your keen player base considerably.

### Getting practical

Once you've got your design, there are a number of practical considerations to how you're going to present and structure it. I'm not going to go into technical detail here, just sketch out the kinds of things you should be thinking about. I'm assuming that you know how to program the actual workings of the game!

\* Hosting - The easiest way to get your game up is to pay a firm to host your domain name and your site. There are loads and loads of people who do this: you want to make sure that you'll get enough storage space, that you'll get enough bandwidth, that you'll be able to run your own scripts, and probably that you can run a database as well. The very cheapest suppliers will not offer this sort of functionality (see <http://www.lowcostnames.co.uk> for a decent one that has a good range of levels of service).

You could, instead, run the game off your own server, then you could do whatever you wanted with it; but unless you're an expert you should definitely avoid this path - the security considerations are very serious.

\* Presentation of data - It's a lot more difficult to take in big screeds of information on a screen than it is on paper. You should avoid big tables of data, maps with myriad units, large numbers of pages which all have to be open at the same time for the player to make decisions, very long pages which need a lot of mousework to read, and so on. You can give the player a button to download the whole package and print it out onto paper, but that will put off people who wanted to get away from all that.



Better to design the information presentation specifically for the new medium. There's a load of good resources on the Web about usability.

\* Validation - when players are submitting their orders via the Web, it's easy and convenient to screen them for mistakes or mis-orders, offering the player a chance to correct them before final submission. A bit of thought here can save your players a lot of frustration and annoyance. Also, of course, it's easy to provide an order form tailored to that particular player's position, if you're operating some sort of login system as discussed above.

\* Communication - Your players are likely to want to discuss the game with each other, and it's in your interests for the game's survival to channel this enthusiasm by building a community and fostering communication. This can be done simply with an ordinary mailing list, already seen in many PBM games, but you might also want to think about an intra-game messaging system (which conceals players' email addresses), or maybe a threaded discussion group / bulletin board (<http://www.discusware.com> does a good one). You can also easily have the game itself generate emails to alert your players of exciting developments.

\* Privacy - Your players will probably not want their email addresses or other personal information revealed to the Web in general, or even to other players in their game unless they specifically allow it. And they certainly won't want to be bombarded by adverts and spams. You should draw up and adopt a privacy policy - say exactly what you're going to be doing with people's data, and stick to it. In the UK, you don't have to notify under the Data Protection Act if you're only storing customers' data for administration of their accounts and records and for marketing your own services to them, but you still have to comply with the Act's principles. See <http://www.dataprotection.gov.uk> for more on this.

\* Charging - If you want to charge people money to play in your game, there's a whole load of ways of doing it. You're unlikely to be able to set up your own card-payment facility, as the banks tend to want a long track record. If you're organized as a business rather than an individual, and have a good credit history, it's pretty straightforward to get a third-party card payment system (eg. <http://www.netbanx.com>) up - this way the players make the payment on the third-party's site, and you get the money at the end of the month. This will cost a couple of hundred quid and will require some integration with your own site. Or, easier yet, you can use one of the many online payment systems - such as <http://www.nochex.com>, <http://www.paybox.com>, <http://www.smartcreds.com> (I don't recommend <http://www.paypal.com>).

\* Security - This is one technical area where you really will have to know what you're doing. You can guarantee that someone will try and hack your game before more than a couple of months are out. The simpler you keep the interface, the less opportunity they'll have to do so. There are plenty of Web resources you can look at which explain the commonest attacks and what you can do to prevent them. [See the separate article, Preventing Disaster, in this issue - C]

#### Look to the future

We're just about on the edge of a massive expansion in online gaming possibilities. The hundreds of games that already exist are nothing compared to the thousands there are going to be in a couple of years' time. A big step in available technology is ushering in a new wave of creativity, like we saw in PBM in the early 90s when PCs first became affordable.

The Web hasn't yet come of age as a gaming medium, but it will do very shortly - and if you've ever wanted to run games, now's the time that you can take your place in the front line!

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Read the rest at:

[http://www.faraway.co.uk/tartarus/gamestories/2002\\_02\\_25\\_revelatiad/book1.html](http://www.faraway.co.uk/tartarus/gamestories/2002_02_25_revelatiad/book1.html)



Chaos rules the battle sphere. Elder clans tearing at each other, Kings rise and fall, and youngsters make war, one upon the other.

**It's Free**

# Britannia

## A Boardgame with Historical Clout

*You've not played it? MARK STRETCH shows why you should ...*

**Britannia** is a classic boardgame first published back in the 1980s. The game replays the history of Britain from the time of the Roman invasion through to the Norman invasion. Whilst every schoolboy knows that Britain has not been successfully invaded since 1066, up to that point numerous nations tried to invade with greater or lesser success. Who can forget the Romans, Angles, Saxons, Danes, Normans and the rest? Even nations like the Scots arrived from overseas to settle here. All these invading peoples have shaped the country's history and this mix of different races is what the game of *Britannia* is all about.

The board depicts Britain divided into 37 areas, some lowland and some highland. It also shows the adjacent sea areas from which nations arrive to attack Britain. There are counters to represent the various nations in the game with of course a finite counter mix so that nations in the game don't become that much stronger than they did in real life.

In the game of *Britannia* there are a total of 17 different nations, varying in size and importance. Each player will play a number of these. Though the game plays with three-five, *Britannia* is most balanced and plays best with four players. In this version, the nations are divided as follows:

Red: Brigantes, Saxons, Irish, Norsemen

Blue: Picts, Belgae, Angles, Normans

Purple: Romans, Romano-British, Scots, Dubliners, Norwegians Black; Welsh, Caledonians, Jutes, Danes

As you can see this gives each player a mix of large and small powers that appear at different stages of the game to keep them interested.

Each nation has to meet various criterion to gain victory points (occupying areas, killing opposing units etc). These are set to encourage nations to what they actually did in history. For example, the Welsh gain points for Wales during the game but virtually none for anywhere in England.

New nations appear during each of the 16 turns of the game in one of the sea areas adjacent to the British Isles. Some come as raiders, some to settle and some constitute major invasions. Again this has been set up to reflect history. Thus the game starts with Romans appearing in the English Channel. Later Angles & Saxons head over the North Sea and so on.

Occasionally units are obliged to leave the UK. For example, the Romans heading back to Rome in 410AD.

The above means that the game usually follows a fairly similar route to the actual history of Britain. Everything that happens thus seems vaguely familiar though slightly different. For example in the game the

battle of Hastings may see the Saxons repelling the Norman invasion rather than the other way round (hopefully not when you're the Normans though).

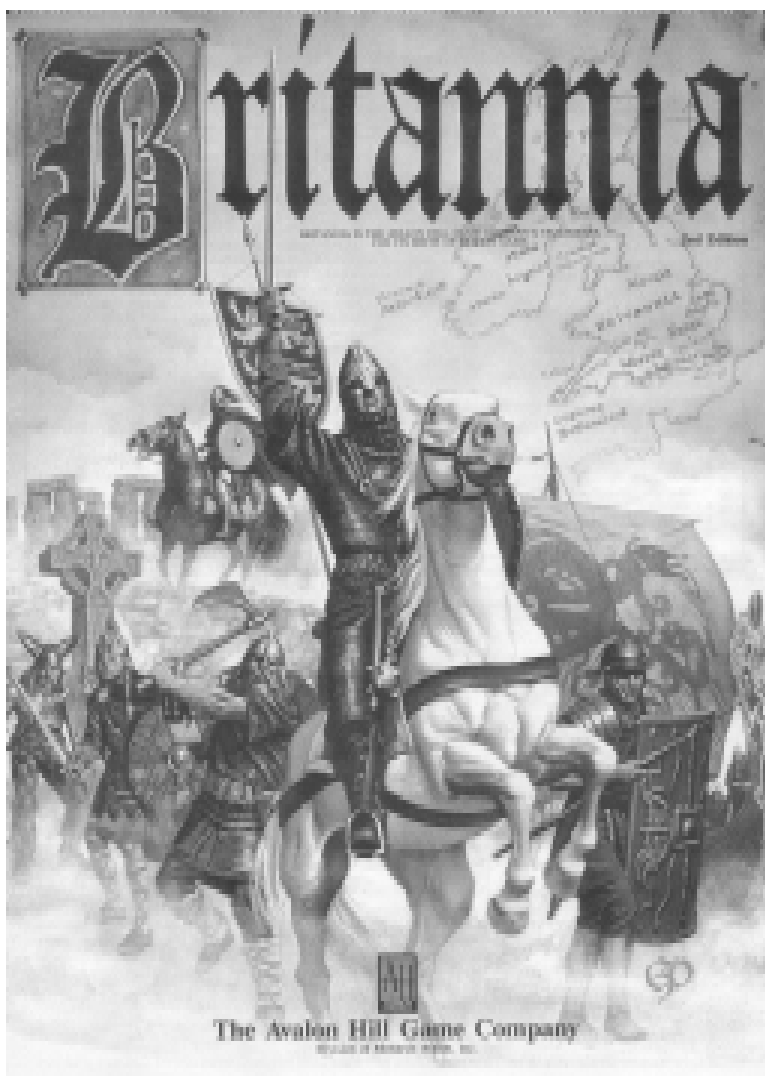
The mechanics of the game are relatively simple. In each of the 16 turns of the game each nation has its turn in order (provided that it has units on the board - the Normans don't play before 1066 for example). On their turn they count how many areas they control and gain new units as a result. They then move armies around the board and resolve any conflicts. Conflicts are resolved using dice. Generally results go based on weight of numbers. However, this is not always the case, as some troops such as the Romans and cavalry fight better. Also, defending in mountains gives the defenders better odds; the problem being that mountains produce less food, so if you're hiding in the mountains you get fewer new units unless you are expecting reinforcements from overseas.

*Britannia* can also be played by post, such as through the zine *Western Front*. With the advent of the internet email play has also become possible. A quick search on the web will identify numerous places or see the listing in *Flagship*.

*Britannia* has been popular enough to spawn a few variants. These have the same idea but are set in different areas of the world. Two published commercially cover Spain and India (the games are called *Hispania* and *Maharaja* respectively). For those with more time to spare there is a mammoth unpublished version of *Britannia*. This is called *Conquest Europa*, covers the entirety of Europe and takes around 16 hours of play. Not for the faint hearted!

[Mark's website [www.34dartdrive.freereserve.co.uk/](http://www.34dartdrive.freereserve.co.uk/) contains further reviews and general gaming news.

*Sadly Britannia is currently out of print, though it's always worth checking with your local games shop. Other than that you could try the E-Bay website in case someone has a copy for sale.]*



# An Odd Type of Gaming

*CAROL MULHOLLAND enjoys what's going on ...*

I DON'T NORMALLY aim for a strong editorial presence in *Flagship*. That's because I reckon that I don't need to, thanks to the dazzling patchwork of facts and opinions that everyone else supplies. Nevertheless, here's the first of an occasional column, which I hope you'll find interesting. While I'll be writing mainly for would-be moderators, I bet that plenty of you have an idea for a game rolled up in your playerly knapsacks. I'll bung in a bit of chat and some grumbles, too, but Relevance will be my watchword, honest. Well, for as long as I can remember it.

In May, there was a discussion on the *rec.games.pbm* newsgroup about what sort of games can be counted as PBM/PBeM games. Colin Forbes, Rob Harper, Greg Lindahl, Enno Rehling and Steve Tierney all contributed: you'll recognise some if not all of these names, and they know their stuff. Of course, the games are all so varied that it was easy to find exceptions to most of the ideas that we put forward! So I'm not going to try to come up with a super-duper definition of my own here: I just think that it's worth mulling over the potential that a PBM/PBeM game has to be special, and different from other types of gaming. I'm mainly interested in what features our games share, rather than how they differ from each other.

I can't get my list into an order of priority, so won't try. Each item has both advantages and disadvantages, of course - but you'll work these out yourselves ...

- 1 One important characteristic is that a new PBM/PBeM game costs very little to set up, compared with other types of game.
- 2 In the commercial games, players pay for their turns in advance, but they don't usually pay for the entire game at its start.
- 3 Games can either last until someone's won, or can continue indefinitely: this gives both designers and players plenty of systems and scenarios to choose from.
- 4 Winnable games are usually turn-based, with every player sending in orders to be processed together at the same time. This synchronous processing usually means that PBM/PBeM games are designed so that players know about their own individual positions but not about those of the other players. This, in its turn, means that players will do better if they make contact with each other between the turns to decide on borders, plan joint action, share information, spread misinformation or, hey, just brag.
- 5 The games that can't be won outright may also allow for players to contact each other between turns, though not all of them do. In some open-ended games where there's a lot of contact between turns, *no-one* has the whole picture: neither the players nor the moderator. A long-lasting powergame, with its rival factions, can assume a life of its own - ooh, that's a scary prospect!
- 6 There are plenty of simple games, where it's player diplomacy between turns that adds the excitement. Our type of gaming, however, often has considerable depth, with a lot of information, and plenty to discover. Quite often, too, you can only learn how to succeed through play.
- 7 Most games offer a large number of possible actions, and a choice of different ways in which to succeed, whether you pick your own course of action in an rpg or seek to gain victory points in a wargame. (I've said 'Most games' just in case there are exceptions, but I can't think of any off-hand.)

Seven points, then. Feel free to disagree with them or add to them, but I'll rest with these seven points up till then. I reckon they offer a tremendous potential for game designers. All sorts of variations are possible: a game with anonymous diplomacy, for instance, will be vastly

different to play from one where contact details are freely available from the start.

Of course, my fluffy brain isn't up to thinking of a perfect new title for our hobby of PBM/PBeM - something that's clear but catchy and implies all these points. Moderated Gaming? - nah, 'moderate' sounds boring. Far-Flung Play? - nah, sounds like cricket. Invisible Arbiters? - at least this provides a neater acronym than PBM itself, except that it's not exactly precise ...

But then, who really cares? - let's just aim for attractive names for the games themselves. Here's a tip for serious game designers: the place to check out promising synonyms for naming a new game is Roget's *Thesaurus* (available in the Penguin reference series). Don't set out for the market-place without it! And it helps to check that your name is original: one new GM has just proudly announced a new wargame called *Diplomacy*, which doesn't seem a brill choice of name to me ...

I started off in PBM as a moderator myself, and I wouldn't discourage you from trying to design and run a new game: it's like parenthood, a big responsibility that's fun as well.

Gosh, though, I do get sick of the way that people's eyes glaze over when I reply to polite enquiries by saying that I work in games. Without hesitation, they see me as a sort of Cruella de Pixels, battenning on youngsters' pocket money. As a moderator, don't expect to be admired by anyone except your mum and (let's hope) your players. Here's a final tip: always take a copy of *Flagship* to interviews with your bank manager, to show that you ain't alone ...

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# Origins 2002

## *The big US Games Convention! GLOBETROTTER was there ...*

FOR THOSE of you who do not know, the Origins gaming convention (or con, as they are referred to) run by GAMA took place this past week from July 4-July 7th, at the Columbus, Ohio Convention Centre. For those that do not know, Origins is an annual convention showcasing games of all types: board games, card games, roleplaying games, miniatures, wargames, play-by-mail, collectible card games, computer games, and much, much more. I myself have been a gamer since I was twelve and have been to numerous conventions. However, they have mostly been local and relatively small. So, I was very intrigued by the prospect of attending my first *big* convention.

### An early start

I arrived the day before to get my press badge, don't ask - I know someone! Here I was going to a convention for gamers and I get to write about it as well. Things could not get much better. When I arrived, already there was a pretty long line of people waiting to choose the special events they wanted to participate in. People were started to grumble, however, because the printer was down and people had to wait until it was fixed. So after a long 12-hour drive, I had to wait even more. Fortunately, they fixed the printers pretty quickly, however, and soon I was able to sign up for most of the games I wanted. That night I actually got some sleep.

I was at the convention centre the next morning at 7:00am. Already there was an incredible number of people there and games were beginning. First thing I noticed right away was that the staff and volunteers were very prepared. Each assigned area was well staffed and they quickly took care of any problems or complaints. Everyone there was extremely approachable and if they didn't know the answer to a particular question, they made sure you got to speak to someone who did.

I tried to participate in games or demos of games for which I didn't have any (or at least not a lot) experience. This way I would be able to let you know what I thought of various game systems and recommend some to you.

Before I went to my first event, I walked by the registration booth. There were thousands of people waiting to sign up for various games and events. Even at such an early hour people seemed enthusiastic and raring to go.

### Shopping

After the first game I played (It was actually a *D&D*, 3rd edition module because I had to at least play one of them) the exhibition hall was open. I was approaching the most dangerous time during the convention: Shopping. Breaking the record from previous years, the exhibit floor space was filled to over 100% capacity. Stepping into this hall was like entering another realm. As far as the eye could see there were wall-to-wall vendors and gamers, tabletop strategy games, miniatures, dice, and all sorts of interesting items. I walked around for a while just absorbing all this information, craning my neck to see as much as possible. Small cons also have big exhibit halls, but I was not prepared for the sheer numbers. I felt like the country cousin who is overwhelmed by the big city and all its wondrous sights. Looking around I could see others certainly felt that way. And, their eyes shone with the excitement of meeting and being with people who share your interests.

Many of the vendors happen to be or know people who have been in the gaming industry since it began. It was at this point that I started realising just how many people were present. By Saturday there were over 10,000 confirmed attendees - breaking Origins previous attendance records. Being surrounded by so many people who are all there because of their passion for the industry, creates the same kind of exhilaration you feel at a sports event when the stadium is completely packed, your team is winning and the fans are going wild. I realise how clichéd that

sounds. But I was truly blown away by how efficient, organised, and friendly the staff at the site was.

### After the event

Nothing is perfect. Of course there were things that went wrong. Many of them could not be helped (such as the printer having problems) but even those that they should have been prepared for were handled with little fuss. Many of the gamers attending the convention noticed how hard the crew was working. I talk to anyone and everyone. Nobody had any serious complaints (of course nothing is perfect, but most things that went wrong were relatively minor or were handled quickly and privately so that no one attending the convention was aware of it). All the events were monitored and the volunteers made sure that everything was running smoothly. The guests at the event were friendly and approachable and an effort was made for as much interaction as possible.

Having been to a number of smaller cons and being privy to the amount of work involved I am incredibly impressed by what I saw. This is especially true considering that this is the first year that GAMA actually ran the event. There is no question that they put in incredible amounts of time and effort both before and during this convention to make sure it ran as smooth as possible. I heard from others that this was the best run Origins they had ever been to. Having never been to a convention this big, I don't know for sure, but I had a fantastic time and I'm sure everyone who went appreciate the hard work put in by the guys at GAMA.

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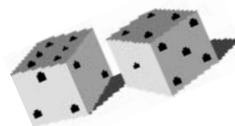
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# New Board & Card Games

*PEVANS repairs an omission and continues with the latest news ...*

YOU MAY HAVE noticed that last issue's column referred to a description of *Alles im Eimer* that wasn't there. It was the victim of our esteemed editor's blue pencil in order to make room for something else. But I'm not going to let a little thing like that stand in my way, so here it is resurrected and none the worse for it.

*Alles im Eimer* is another fast-moving, fun game and is familiarly known as the bucket game. Designed by Stefan Dorra and published by Kosmos ([www.kosmos.de](http://www.kosmos.de)), it features lots of cardboard buckets in five colours. Well, cardboard pieces with pictures of buckets on, anyway. You start with three buckets of each colour, which you arrange in a triangular formation (5-4-3-2-1), and a hand of cards. The cards show a number and have the same five colours as suits. Now the game starts: in turn players play 1-3 cards and then pick up one. You must follow suit and must beat the (total) value of the cards laid by the previous player. If you can't, you lose a bucket of the appropriate colour. If it's 'supporting' other buckets in your triangle, you lose them too. Oops! Then you start the next 'trick'.

Depending on the number of players, the game is over when a certain number have gone out. The winner/s is/are the player/s with the most buckets left. There are some tactics to this game, but basically it's just fun. It moves pretty quickly, too, and proved a big hit with the people I was playing it with. 9/10, because I like this kind of game.

I feel much better now I've got that out of the way. In the meantime the Spiel des Jahres jury has delivered its verdict. Two of my three suggestions, *Puerto Rico* and *Dschunke*, made it into the top three, but of course it was the third, *Villa Paletti* that won. Well done to the game's designer, Bill Payne, and its publisher, Zoch ([www.zoch-verlag.com](http://www.zoch-verlag.com)).

However the prize is a bit of a shock as *Villa Paletti* (see picture) is a dexterity game (think *Jenga*). And it's the first time a dexterity game has won the prize. This has caused much debate in games-playing circles: sometimes the jury picks a game that hobby gamers agree with (*El Grande*, for example), sometimes they don't.

Anyway, I thought I ought to tell you about the game, given that it's a prize-winner. The main components are a bunch of wooden cylinders (OK, some of them are hexagonal in cross-section, but you get the idea) in four different colours and some flat sheets of wood in interesting shapes. (This would be a lot easier to understand with a picture or two. The effect is that the cylinders act as pillars supporting the different floors in the 'villa'.) You start with all the cylinders standing on the cardboard base. The largest sheet goes on top. Then you take it in turns to pull one of the cylinders out and place it on the sheet. When everybody agrees that no more can be moved, the next largest sheet goes on top of the new set of cylinders and off you go again. Until the whole thing falls down.

Arriving at the winner is where the tactics of the game come in. Each player is one of the colours and the cylinders are worth differing numbers of points according to their thickness. The player with the highest points value of cylinders in his/her colour on the top level is the 'master builder'. If you can get more points onto that level, you become master builder and take the token, turning it to represent the player you took it from. When the villa collapses, the master builder wins - unless the master builder knocked it over, in which case the previous master builder wins.

Clearly there are some tactics involved in this. The most obvious is that you want to get more of your cylinders on the top: you can't win if you don't get to be master builder. So you only move other people's cylinders if you're forced to. Then there's the priority: the thicker the cylinder, the more you want it on the top. And where do you place it? On the edge should be easier to remove when the next level is placed on top - and may even be clear as the levels get smaller. However, an edge position is more likely to be load-bearing. So closer in may be difficult to remove, but it may actually be possible to remove it (the game includes a wire hook, which can be used to pull cylinders out).

And there you have it. It's not a particularly demanding game: there isn't that much tactical play, nor does it require a high level of manual dexterity. But it is entertaining fun while it lasts. Oh, and it's limited to four players at most. It's interesting to contrast this game with Zoch's original dexterity game, *Bausack*.

*Bausack* has been around for nearly fifteen years (a UK edition was available for a while as *Sack o' Bricks*) and was designed by Klaus Zoch himself. It consists of a canvas bag of wooden blocks, a drawstring bag of beans and rules for several games that can be played with the blocks. The blocks are all different shapes, often skewed: cylinders of various sizes, cut on an angle, wedges, an egg-cup, an egg, a ball, a 'Christmas tree', a top - several dozen of them. The games all involve building towers with the pieces, which on its own is rather more demanding than stacking up the levels of the *Villa Paletti*.

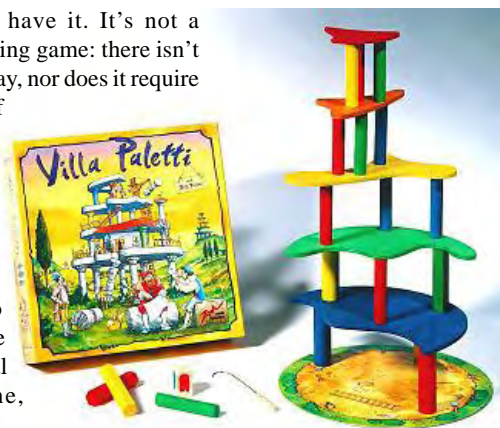
The game played most with the *Bausack* also involved the beans. Everybody (and the game can take an awful lot of players if you're so inclined) starts with a base piece and some beans. The first player takes a block and passes it to the player on their left. The second player can either add the block to their tower or pay one bean to pass it on. The third player has to pay two beans to pass it on, the fourth three and so on. If you don't have enough beans to pay, you must accept the block. And if your tower falls over, you're out: last man standing wins.

Should a block go right round the table back to the first player s/he has to use it. So there's an immediate balance between choosing a simple piece and knowing someone else will use it or a difficult one that will probably come back to you. The trick, of course, is to pick a piece that's tricky for other people, but easy for you. What you're always trying to do is run the other players out of beans. Then you're in the driving seat, forcing other players to take impossible blocks.

It's a simple, elegant game. I think it has more tactics than *Villa Paletti*, requires more dexterity, allows more players to participate and is more fun. There is even an expansion set - extra bits - and a rather classy version that uses black-stained blocks (*Sac Noir*). All in all, I consider *Bausack* the superior game. Of course, it did not win the Spiel des Jahres (though it made it into the 1988 recommended list).

I ought to add a couple of notes to last issue's column. I mentioned that *Clippers* is a re-working of Alan Moon's earlier *Santa Fe*. Another development of the original game is *Santa Fe Rails*, which has just been published in the USA by GMT Games ([www.gmtgames.com](http://www.gmtgames.com) - *Santa Fe Rails* is under 'Card Games'). This retains the original's railroad theme and is, by all accounts, a worthy successor to *Santa Fe*. Readers looking for *Magellan* may have had trouble finding it: the German edition from Hans im Glück is indeed called *Magellan*. However Rio Grande's ([www.riograndegames.com](http://www.riograndegames.com)) US edition is titled *Pizarro & Co* - due to a clash with another US game that already uses this title. This version is most available from games shops in this country. And, finally, Rio Grande is producing an English language edition of *Trans America* (which I find fascinating, given that the game's German publishers, Winning Moves, have a US arm!).

I've got to dash off on holiday now, but I'll be back in good time for next issue.





# Getting Your Kicks!

**JOHN HARRINGTON** *tackles Fantasy Football ...*

MOST OF US have experienced that uncomfortable moment when one has to explain the PBM hobby. I certainly get strange looks from colleagues at work if I am at my desk plotting my next moves in **Railway Rivals**, although possibly they are just wondering why I built that redundant branch line from Wolverhampton to Nottingham via Shrewsbury. Any adult who plays games regularly is generally regarded as some form of retard perched one rung up the evolutionary ladder from train-spotters. This approbation often comes from folks who spend large chunks of their spare time watching people brush their teeth on 'reality' TV shows such as *Big Brother*. It all strikes me as a bit odd that they think we are the weirdos. Some have a hard time understanding why we would want to play games by post and others even have trouble grasping the concept.

The latter I find rather odd in a country (Britain) where filling in the football pools on a weekly basis has long been a tradition, albeit one now in decline since the advent of the national lottery. So next time some bloke is questioning your sanity over your hobby of playing gamed by post, ask him this question: 'Do you play fantasy football in one of the national newspapers?' Chances are that even if they don't, they know someone who does, and thus they might be able to relate to the thrill of getting your turn results back each week.

True, in the case of newspaper version of fantasy football, the PBM experience is a bit short on player input, but it is very decent of the TV stations to televise the turn reports for us! The fantasy football games run by the newspapers are a cut-down version of the much more interactive games run by PBM companies. These games are, in turn, based on the sort of rotisserie and fantasy leagues run in the USA for several decades now.

These games do not seem to be regarded as part of our hobby and so do not get a lot of coverage in Flagship, but seeing as there are a few zines that run fantasy leagues, it seems appropriate to examine the advantages of playing fantasy football in a zine rather than in *The Times* or the *Daily Telegraph*. Conveniently it also continues the theme of my last article on football management games.

## There's only one David Beckham

It may seem from the amount of press coverage he gets that there are several David Beckhams, but in the professional football world at least there is only one David Beckham. The newspaper leagues blithely ignore this biological fact and allow 'Mr Posh Spice' to appear on the team sheet of several thousand managers. A 'proper' fantasy league will have none of that nonsense. Each footballer can be owned by only one club and as in the real world may be transferred from one club to another. This is just one of the significant differences between the game as played in newspapers and as played in zines.

The ownership of a player is normally (initially) determined by an auction, which immediately increases the amount of interaction between the players. Thus, like George Graham, you get the chance to waste

£11,000,000 on Sergei Rebrov and spurn the chance to pick up Robbie Keane for a bargain £4,000,000. Although each fantasy league is slightly different, generally the features of a zine-based league are:

- \* New footballers are made available by auction, thus prices are determined by the market rather than by the GM
- \* Managers may have more than 11 players in their squad, and thus have decisions to make over which team to pick and, often, what formation to use
- \* Squads are retained from one season to the next
- \* Scoring is normally done by reference to one of the leagues run by the national newspapers (but don't tell them that!)

The above features make for a much better game, in my opinion. The auction system enables talent spotters to pick up a real bargain; I recall a game ten years ago when a Norwich supporter nominated for auction a young centre-back on Norwich's books named Chris Sutton and picked him up for a song (Sutton would later rack up a hat-load of fantasy points as a centre-forward with Blackburn Rovers). In a more recent game, a manager bought Ruud Van Nistelrooij a good three seasons before Alex Ferguson bought him in the real world.

The retention of squads from one season to the next - what Americans call 'dynasty leagues' - can lead to a very realistic, but possibly not desirable, situation where certain teams become powerhouses and others perennial strugglers. As in the real world, however, it is possible for the strugglers to sell their star player to a championship contender and use the funds to strengthen their squad elsewhere. This was certainly an option last year, for instance, for any club who

owned the high-scoring Pires of Arsenal, whose 2000/1 fantasy performance was so mediocre that he most likely could have been purchased at the beginning of the season for a packet of crisps and sold halfway through the season for several million pounds.

At this point in the article I have to declare an interest and state I run a fantasy football zine (details below) so I am hardly a disinterested observer, but it is a style of game I would recommend to any football fan; nothing quite compares to the clash of loyalties you get when the star forward in your fantasy team sticks three goals past the team you support in real life.

## Fantasy footie zines

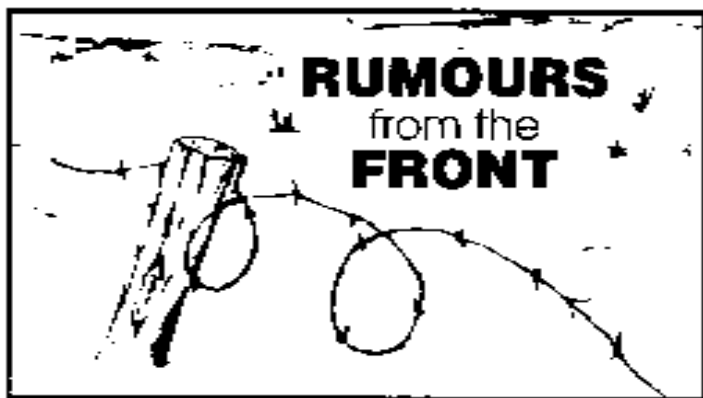
*Jack Duckworth's Alternate Universe*, £8 a season from Simon Ives, 42 Elmlea Road, Kings Stanley, Stonehouse, Glos GL10 3HR

*A League Of Our Own*, £5 a season from John Harrington, 1 Churchbury Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3UW <http://www.smartgroups.com/groups/alooo>

*Bloodstock*, 60p an issue including postage from Mick Haytack, 43 Swanmore Road, Littleover, Derby DE23 7SD







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

#### Comments received after June 18th from ...

David Ames, Mike Barber, Andrew Chadwick, Bruce Edwards, Colin Forbes, Les Jones, Andy Kendall, Phil Lewis, Chris Morris, Carol Mulholland, Dan Newman, Rick Ryker, Robin Orman, James R Phillips, Bob Thomson, Walter van Vliet, Richard Watts & Ben Williams.

## GAMES FEATURED THIS ISSUE

### Lords of the Earth (various GMs)

**Walter van Vliet** - '51: I've been playing Lords of The Earth 51 for quite a time now. It's a not a historical setting, but a fantasy one and it's the best game I have ever seen!'

### Star Fleet Warlord (Pagoda Games)

**Robin Orman** - 'EH6 (the historical game) is proceeding apace, with my Hydran and Kzinti positions expanding rapidly into the nearby sectors. The first battles will happen any time now, as our forces begin to clash with the NPC ships in those sectors. Of course, we're also competing with our US opponents for valuable sites and prospecting terrain, so early skirmishes with the Klingons and Lyrans are also a possibility ...

**E16** (the standard game) is coming together more and more each turn, although I *still* haven't caught those raiders that an enemy corp sent to flit about my home sector, but I'll get them eventually! At least I managed to get a scan of his home sector as recompense. In another area, a new opportunity has appeared, and the next few turns will be crucial. Things should have resolved themselves by the time this is printed, but I won't reveal my cunning plan until the next issue, just in case ...'

## ADVENTURE GAMES

### DungeonWorld (Madhouse)

**Robin Orman** - 'Having decided to stick with the second level of the Pits of Poldoon for now, Lord Alamar and co are heading west and have just run into some Vesune Vampires. These shouldn't be much of a problem, especially with our newly summoned Wraith Dog acting in a supporting role and I'm still waiting for Psionics to 'go active' (skills aren't immediately available after you've learned them, they need to be practised for a few turns beforehand) ...'

**Bob Thomson** - 'Things have been going from bad to worse down at the Lake of Blood. Yesterday a horde of Blood Devils appeared and my companions

and I were saved from certain death by the arrival of a heavily armed party of adventurers. Praise the Gods and the strong bow arms of Lorna the Huntress, Cadoras, Thanos and their companions!

Myself and Blood Menahem still suffer the horrific "Burning Death" from the Skarions' attacks, but this did not stop us from wading into the Lake itself. Blood Menahem charged in a berserker rage brought on by the Burning Death, only to have the Blood Lake swallow her up ... She arose "covered with a thick viscous bright red blood. The smell of blood is also ever present" (OOC - She now has the Magical Effect "Blood Covered" ... pretty cool considering her name!), but the worst was yet to happen. The bloody waters began to bubble and hiss near the centre of the Lake and the Skarian froze, while the Devils began a high pitched keening. This got louder and louder, my ears popping, until suddenly the lake exploded upwards and a huge crimson drake flew out, roaring his deathly challenge. It was the legendary Drax Blood Dragon, Kazmordac of Drax! This may be my last report ...'

**Robin Orman** - 'Broken Lands: Gaelan and the rest of "The Group" (as we're known on the discussion list) have descended to the third level of the dungeon, known as the Halls of Stone and Iron. Best of all, we've located some Magical Traders (a rarity so far), and are eagerly spending our vast hoards of gold. Magical armour or a nice new weapon? Hmm ...'

**Robin Orman** - 'Frontier: An offer for Broken Lands players to sign up a free character in the Frontier tempted me into this module recently. Chunthalaka (my tribal warrior) has just emerged from the jungle into the new bordertown of Freedom Rivers... I notice that this module has just become mixed-moderated as well, with the option for players to use special actions (at extra cost) each turn. Obviously these won't be available to my free character, but might serve to bring in players who enjoy exercising their imagination ...'

## Quest GME (KJC)

**Colin Forbes** - 'I've not put in turns for a while, but fully intend to get back into the swing of this game now. Turns are attractively presented and the simple fact that there are so many players means that there is always something going on in the game. I only hope my party hasn't succumbed to those huge parties of orcs and goblins which were hanging around outside the little village I was going to (to fulfil a minor quest). Ah, the anticipation ...'

## ECONOMIC GAMES

### BeerMogul (RedMohawk Games)

**Robin Orman** - 'Fun for a while, but I'm losing interest. Once you've discovered the best money-making formula for pubs, where else is there to go? The Top Ten list of players are already using it, and are so far ahead they can't be caught, and there's no other league table for comparison. Short of buying yet more pubs and breweries, there's little to do, and I've got better things to do with my time.'

**Colin Forbes** - 'I'm afraid I got bored of this web game after a while. The graphics are nice and the game appears zany at first, but then you realise that there's a set formula to making tons of dosh as a pub and, once you've set things up along those lines, there's not really any challenge left in the game.'

Like a great number of web games run by people without the experience of designing other forms of game (eg PBMs), Beer Mogul suffers from a lack of thought in the design process which ultimately proves the game's undoing. Maybe some of the experienced PBM designers out there could join Madhouse & KJC in developing a web game? Some would argue that it's the way forward - but I just want to play a well-designed game via the web!

**Ben Williams** - 'Having fun with this one. Although there is a formula that seems to work for pubs (and thus detracts from the point of playing them), breweries are more challenging and, if there is a failsafe formula for success, I haven't found it yet. A nice idea for a game and pleasantly attractive on your browser. Nice Sim City-style icons for everything.'

## POWER GAMES

### Conclave (*Undying King Games*)

**David Ames** - 'I reviewed this game two issues ago, starting with both a paying and a review position. I have retained my paying position after the conclusion of the review, which I think must count as an endorsement despite what Bob McLain might think. The game is run to a monthly turnaround which I find a little slow for my liking and it does reduce player interaction. Overall, though, this game is good and to be recommended.'

### Gunboat Diplomacy (*Agema*)

**Richard Watts** from Agema takes Right of Reply re the comments from Stuart Fieldhouse - 'I have to admit to being mildly confused by Stuart's comments about Gunboat Diplomacy last issue. First off, it isn't a game of "corporate exploitation". I know what he means in one way, as you can take that approach, but the game is supposed to be an adventurous romp in the setting of China in the Victorian era - you know, Boy's Own stuff, Fu-Manchu, Flashman... not corporatism for crying out loud!!! Now the game can be played like that, but that is the player's choice. If a player doesn't want to, he can do something else like be a brigand, smuggler or go on a military adventure. He can change his mind about it during play.'

I only mention this because of the real sting in the tail, which was that "you have to invest a lot of money and time in the game before starting to get any results." Boo! Hiss! Unfair! Yes, Stuart, you are right, that can happen, but you also choose to start on Turn 1 with a Chinese warband or a British gunboat and start blasting things to your heart's content immediately. The point is, the choice lies with the player!

Other companies have managed to do quite a lot in the game, to take up another criticism: LaForce trade stations in major ports on the Chinese coast; the Franco-Russian Rail Consortium linking the trans-Siberian railway to Manchuria. I could go on, but I won't, just to say that the point was inaccurate.

A brief final explanation may shed more light: Gunboat Diplomacy, like La Gloire du Roi, isn't run with an endgame plan or even necessarily achieving things in mind. The intention with both is to enjoy the experience of playing, even in adversity, so there is a subtle difference in relation to many other games. In other words, it isn't how you get to A and B which is important, it is the journey itself which these games focus on!

### Kings of Karadon, RIP (*Timewyrm & Hunky Monkey*)

**Andy Kendall** - 'RIP due to a hack. I don't think anyone in Game 2 knew where Colin's devious imagination was taking us, but even after the problems of the last year, the sudden end is still very sad. Maybe another game similar will appear from Tom/Colin to keep us happy - I hope so.'

**Robin Orman** - 'After a hack on the computer that runs this game, destroying critical program files, Game 1 has been suspended, probably for good. However, there's the hope of a new game starting in 6-8 months when Tom has had a chance to get an old version of the game code back up to speed. I'm leaving my credit with the GMs and waiting for this.'

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

**Andy Kendall** - 'Has a new GM since I last wrote, and a huge improvement. No errors, no misprints in three months. Sadly new players are still not forthcoming, and existing ones are going silent. Becoming more of an effort to generate any enthusiasm. I have described a collective who work to seize overall control - it continues through underhand (note: perfectly acceptable in the game, just ignoble and fitting the positions that are so doing) means such as theft, arson, electoral fixing. As they now have the power to do what they want, few will oppose them for fear

of reprisals, and politics grinds to a halt, as money becomes paramount; the result is that the game is increasingly unhealthy.

Re the comments made last issue against me: I hate being misquoted, but it does seem to be endemic among email players in this game. I have never said that email players should be barred (how dumb would that be?), and much of the rest was wrong as well. It is true that I have never been on the in-game forum, but I have been copied more than Richard can know, and can judge for myself. The rules forum has turned into a row before now, and I have no wish to re-visit that. I have raised the subject of the email effects several times to GM and players alike, and generally have been told "we can't do anything about it" or "don't partake" - the latter being galling when players then criticise me in game for not doing so. It all invokes a sense of powerlessness and unwantedness. They may get their wish.'

**Les Jones** - 'I have been following the debate regarding the email forum in Primus (PIP). Let's get things straight before I make my main point:

- 1 - The forum is unofficial in nature, and not part of the main game.
- 2 - The forum is not unfair as regards access - you can join or you don't. I will say, though, that it is restricted to members only. Maybe to attract more players it should be open to the public.
- 3 - On balance the emailer has an advantage. I, as a postal player, do not fear my electronic friends.
- 4 - Email is not essential to play PIP.
- 5 - Richard Loutzenheiser says PIP is "just like life", which brings me to my main point.

Is the email forum just like life? If it is played in character, where insults flow freely, and not against the player, then perhaps Richard is correct. For Plautus describes the Republican Forum of 200BC as follows: "For perjurers, try the Comitium. Liars and braggarts hang around the Shrine of Cloacina: married ne'er-do-wells by the Basilica. Pacts of prostitutes there too - but rather clapped out ones. By the Lacus Curtius you'll find both fellows with a tongue in their head and bad intent in their mind - great slanderers of others and very vulnerable to it themselves. Behind the Temple of Castor, there are men who sell themselves..."

Liars, prostitutes and slanderers. By the Gods we don't have them in Capua... but I'm trying!

## ROLEPLAYING GAMES

### The Chevian Chronicles (State of Mind)

**Colin Forbes** - 'It's all gone rather quiet... Pryderi will spend the time sharpening his sword: after all we have a million and one goblins to kill or the Duchy of Chevia is doomed!'

### En Garde! LPBS (*Paul Evans*)

**Andy Kendall** - 'Four turns in, off to the front, come back in a box. Hmm. Warring will be a bit dangerous in this then. I wonder if the one who financed me got his cash back. So the new improved person is wheeled out of the nearest pub, and sets about seeking fame and fortune ... Not involved in the top level politics.'

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

**Carol Mulholland** - 'Gosh, I never knew that the county in which I grew up could be as spooky as Chris Morris has made it: even the trains hiss in sinister fashion at my character! She's made it back to her university town, but my instructions that she'll do her best not to be left on her own have been turned against her by the GM. She decided to keep close to some meek-looking chap in an anorak while crossing the station carpark - and now he's leapt at her and knocked her flying ...'

### The Forty Four Nights of Amn (*Robert Rees*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'GM Robert Rees is a talented writer and GM who produces the most enormous turns. At times you have to wait for them,

but it's worth it. My character has just met up with a group of other players and may be weirding them out a little. I am apprentice Tin Gronk of the Glorious Gond, the True Maker. In appearance, well, it's difficult to explain really, but suffice it to say that the catwalks of Milan have yet to dream up anything quite as avant-garde!

## Heroes of Olynthus (*Timewyrm*)

**Ben Williams** - 'Turnaround is back to normal and turns are remaining of high quality. I can't say much about my character as his actions are probably not suitable for publication (I don't want other players knowing what I'm doing). However the game world is meticulously detailed, without getting in the way of game play.

Turns are normally about an eight or nine in length in all, attractively presented and with plenty to read about events in the world at large as well as your own character's actions and skills. I'm not sure how many places there are in the game, the GM restricts himself so as not to get overloaded, but I have been hearing rumours of a new game in the pipeline which will run under the same system. Watch out for this and play it if you get a chance!

## SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

### Beyond the Stellar Empire (*KJC & SlowMotion Games*)

A player described KJC's game last issue; now US player **James R Phillips** comments on the American game, run by SlowMotion Games - 'Are you bored? A Captain without a ship? Tired of being passed over for promotion? Then the Frontier Exploration and Trade Company (FET) needs you!! Positions are currently open for Captains of freighters, explorers, defense ships. Want to put that swagger back into your walk? - join the blockade runners Department of the FET, high pay for high danger. Need the comfort of being home nightly? - Colony Governor positions are available, only the FET also offers the Governor the use of pleasure slaves. Like that little extra kick? - during the day the FET has exclusive rights to many of the modern body boosters. Come join The Frontier, Exploration, and Trade Company: conquer the Beyond the Stellar Empire galaxy by Economic means.

Beyond the Stellar Empire, (BSE): a never ending game of space exploration, roleplaying, trade, and combat. The game has been reported dead several times over the past years, but the players have always managed to make a comeback. BSE was purchased by SlowMotion Games, a company formed by former players to bring the game new life. To prove the game is going to continue, SlowMotion Games is offering one free basic ship turn per week, any ship you have. Turns can be sent in by email and are processed regularly by the GM Neil Bradley, a long time player turned GM.

Visit <http://www.slowmotiongames.com/bse> to get a free download of the rulebook. Send an email to [neil@slowmotiongames.com](mailto:neil@slowmotiongames.com) if you would like more information.'

### Star Kingdoms ([www.starkingdoms.com](http://www.starkingdoms.com))

**Colin Forbes** - 'A nice little web game based in a sort of virtual series of galaxies (there's no actual map). It's a good game to join if you're new to the sort of game where you need to put in some on-line orders at least once a day. You'll start in a sector where everyone is your friend and, in all probability, your sector will pretty soon join an alliance. This is both good and bad. Good in that there are lots of people on your side, bad because there tends to be an elite of players who are awesomely good and have their own agendas to follow. After a time it may become apparent that the big guys are less willing to stand up and defend you against your (bigger) enemies. But maybe I was just unlucky with the sector I was in.

Worth a go, though, and it's free!

## TRIBAL GAMES

### Bledian Diary (*Spellbinder Games*)

**David Ames** - 'I'm not sure how many players are active in this long running, free format Tribal game nowadays, and the game runs more slowly than I would like and with little interaction, but I'm having fun struggling with the hardships which the hostile game world throws at me.'

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

**David Ames** - 'The transition to a new GM seems to have gone through smoothly enough, although it's never easy in a free format game with GM plot-lines criss-crossing the ether.

A new threat to the world is now emerging which may require some inter-player co-operation, which makes a change from us all plotting against each other I suppose. Still my favourite by a clear margin.'

## WAR GAMES

### Crisis! (*TimePatterns*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'As I suspected, my newbie mistakes in game 26 have finally come home to roost. I'm actually surprised I lasted this long before getting dumped on from a very great height. I wish the remaining players the best of luck. This leaves me with game 27 where my closest ally has just stabbed me in the back, giving some rather lame excuses as to his reasoning. Given that this is the second time in as many games that this guy has done the dirty on me, you can imagine that I am unlikely to trust him in any future game. Although my enemy does not deserve such magnanimity on my behalf, I will refrain from mentioning his name. Let him destroy his own reputation! Oh, good game, friendly moderator, prompt turnaround, though presentation leaves a little to be desired. Fun.'

### Dominion (*Kamikaze Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'My current favourite web game. Similar in design to *Star Kingdoms*, Dominion ([www.kamikazegames.com](http://www.kamikazegames.com)) is set in a quasi medieval fantasy setting - though again the map is virtual. Again, you begin play as part of a Realm along with 15 or 20 player allies. However, unlike *Star Kingdoms* there are no huge alliances, which means that the various Realms tend to be somewhat more closely knit. Advice for newbies is easily obtained and all new players have a period of protection during which they cannot be attacked. The resource management is more complex than that of Dominion's sister game, *Star Kingdoms*, and if worst comes to the worst your private dominion can defect to another Realm.

Although the game is centred around a fair bit of basic maths (rations of defence to land held, that sort of thing) it's quite possible to roleplay the whole thing to no significant disadvantage. I chose to play the Sylvan race for roleplaying reasons, though I would say with hindsight that this is definitely not the best race to choose. Much depends on your preferred style of play, if you like to attack then Trools are probably your thing, though Dwarves are cool too and the Halfling realms are excellent spies, thieves, assassins - you get the picture?

As with many web games, this one is free, though be warned - your position will suffer if you don't put orders in every day, ideally every 12 hours.'

### Feudal Lords: Right of Kings (*Last World Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'I've been trying to play Feudal Lords for ages - literally years and years. However the game has long since ceased to be available in the UK (or indeed Europe). I was intrigued therefore to see that the game had been re-worked and was being run in the US by Last World Games.

While I was pondering whether to join, Bob McLain wrote to me and

asked if I'd like to join the game as one of his heirs. Some may call me mad for willingly submitting to Mr McLain as overlord, but then some would call me mad anyway, so who cares! Although I've only had a couple of turns, I'm very impressed with the game and its GM, Vlad Degan. I last looked at the original game of FL a long time ago, but there does seem to have been a fair amount added to the game. The most impressive addition is the Seneschal front-end software which makes running your fief and writing orders a matter of simplicity itself. Now I've started playing this game I can't imagine a time when I won't be playing it in the future.'

**Rick Ryker** - 'I played Feudal Lords back when it first came out over 19 years ago. I think it was game number 11. I thoroughly enjoyed playing Feudal Lords and exchanging mail with players from all over the country. I am much older now, and I kind of miss my old PBEM games. So when I found out about the beta test for FLROK, I immediately asked if I could join. Now I have been a both playtester and a moderator for the next version of an old favorite.'

Feudal Lords: Right of Kings (FLROK) has all of the old elements that were present in the basic game, plus a whole lot more. For one thing, the different kinds of orders available to the players has been greatly expanded. And many elements have been added to enrich the flavor of the game, including a tournament, caravans, new unit types, expanded random events, and new and larger maps for use in different games.

But the part I like best is the presence of a real live moderator to run each game. Among other things, the moderator is responsible for (1) game set up, including choice of maps, (2) customizing the game, including special events and alternate win conditions, (3) collecting orders and distributing turn results, (4) interacting with the players turn by turn, and (5) "recruitment".'

**Phil Lewis** - 'I am in all three currently active games.'

Game 7 is the playtest where we get to try out new rules and additions for possible inclusion in the pay games. It has been going on for more than 65 turns now and is probably nearly done although I am sure there is more playtesting to do. It is the game that got me hooked on this stuff in spite of being hit hard many times and bounced all over the map.

Game 1, set in Western Europe and with all of us beginning in England, Scotland, Wales, or Ireland and all the other fiefs having a 50% minus 2% per turn or revolting if you conquer them so as a result few mainland fiefs were conquered early and all local fiefs were snatched up as quick as we could. As a result, there was a great deal of diplomacy even before the game actually started and first turn results came out.

Game 2 in a fantasy setting called Osprey where there is a whole subset of random events that can happen to players, most good, some neutral, a few bad. There are no across sea fiefs so all favors are as if local in the other games. There was a greater distance between players in Game 2 so there was little interaction for many turns and there are still players, after 25 turns, that stay in their area and have no need of allies and have made no enemies.

The group and individual dynamics are very different in each game. One of the things I see some of is players that are enemies on one game are allied in the next. There is certainly some of the "he betrayed me last game (or 4 games ago) therefore you can not trust him, kill him now" but only with a few players.

Each of the games could use some heirs (me in game 1 for instance). I suggest that any interested player go to [www.rightofkings.com](http://www.rightofkings.com) and check out the maps and such things. You would find enthusiastic welcome into the game.'

## LT Wars (*Spellbinder Games*)

**Bruce Edwards** - 'Pipped at the post by Dark Earth. Judging by the scores, it seems there are various "milestones" that can be reached and Martin hit a few in the final turn. I really wasn't planning very well coming to the end, so despite leading for most of the game, I couldn't hold on until the end of the line! Despite the game being up for sale, I believe Spellbinder are still running a game of LT Wars.'

## Middle Earth (*Harlequin Games*)

**Mike Barber** - '*Battle of the Five Armies scenario*: Battle of the Five armies is a new variant with Wargs and Goblins set against Elves, Dwarves and Northmen in a restricted map (and perhaps restricted order set). Mayhem from turn 1 is guaranteed by the large starting armies and close proximity of the protagonists, with the game ending on turn 10 (or earlier).'

The irrelevance of economic build up and artefact hunting (critical in other variants) makes for an enjoyable wargame. High visibility of enemy dispositions allows deep analysis of every turn's tactics, which contrasts nicely with the more instinctive / strategic side to 1650. Early game results do not seem to favour either Dark Servants or Free Peoples particularly - though the game is likely to favour rather brutally a competent team over two or three solo players. Good practice, then, for the "full" game!'

**Dan Newman** - '*Fourth Age scenario*: I expect a lot of Flagship readers are like me, also board wargamers. Although ME-PBM is a fabulous game, the traditional scenarios miss the pleasure of laying out your pieces in preparation for war. In the Fourth Age, your entire approach is made by design.'

**Colin Forbes** - '*TA 1650*: Strangely I find myself in only two regular 1650 games, a scenario which has long been my favourite. A couple of games have come to an end recently, one in glorious victory for my team, the other in less than glorious defeat. Ah well, such is the way with a game that is (despite the continuing arguments) beautifully balanced between the two sides. As to the two remaining games, well in game 91 I'm revisiting my new and improved Cloud Lord strategy (first tried out at the face to face game last Christmas). Despite moans that agents aren't what they used to be, I'm managing a kill ratio which exceeds the turn number even quite early on in the game. You see, agents *can* still be powerful!'

*TA 2950*: Turn 100. That's not something you see very often at the top of a PBM turn, especially when it's a closed ended game. But after years (literally) of intensive play, game 20 has finally ended with victory for the forces of Sauron the Great. I'm no longer sure what turn I joined the game on, as a stand-by player with one major town and, er, nothing else in terms of settlements. Still, I was happy to help some friends out, even if only for a couple of turns.

Well, that was at least seventy or eighty turns ago now! It's been a game of swings and roundabouts, with both sides veering from being close to victory to staring defeat in the face several times. This has been a very welcome antidote to the short, sharp and furious games of MEPBM that are much in vogue these days. Nothing wrong with fast and frantic games, great fun - but you never get to see the beauty of a two-man Curses squad, or Din Ohtar working on his mage rank because he's already maxed out on everything else. Sigh, I'll miss this one ...

*"Gunboat" variant*: This one's tricky. I can't say anything about the game because we're all sworn to silence. Why? Ah well, the cunning set-up is that each player takes on two nations (so it's a twelve player game) but beyond their own nations there is *no communication allowed whatsoever!* So, no chatting to your allies (or enemies) on the phone, no sending messages in-game, no desperate calls for aid - you've got to play this one on your own. I really couldn't recommend this scenario for anyone but veteran players, you really need to have a fairly good grasp on the patterns of play that usually emerge and on the long-term implications of the minute amount of information you can pick up from your map, lore spells and so forth.

That caveat aside, "Gunboat" is a brilliant masterstroke, a way of getting the MEPBM fix without spending too much time on the phone or hacking in fifty email messages a day.'

## Napoleonic Battles (*Agema*)

**Andrew Chadwick** - 'I play numerous games of Napoleonic Battles with Agema. I find Richard's service to be first class. His moderation is unfailingly "firm but fair" making the games a joy (and a frustration when my carefully conceived tactics fall in to ruin in the face of unexpected enemy manoeuvres). The "head to head" nature of the games means that they are never ruined by drop-outs, and the occasional campaign games are lively and exciting.'

## Prometheus (*Hunky Monkey*)

**Andy Kendall** - 'Continuing merrily despite a few computer issues. Game 1 has a clear leader, and then a whole bunch about equal. The order limit restricts what can be done, so the large empires must plan more carefully. The limit works very well, and is suitably aggrieving - usually a sign that it's set about right. Each town each turn can be given a bonus, which usually throws planning out of the nearest window. Beneficial in one way, but it can ruin plans in other ways. Now if only I could tell the difference between East and West ...'

**Colin Forbes** - 'I'm chuntering along in game 1 of this "Civilisation"-style empire-building wargame. Trouble is the game leader is a mile and a half out in front. Maybe it's time for an alliance of all us poor also-rans? Good to see some of the dodgy English (or Germglish) in the information blurbs being corrected.'

**Ben Williams** - 'I didn't do terribly well in game 1, but things are going better in game 2. An excellent game of conquest and resource management which has clearly been extensively playtested and tweaked. The game balance is superb, which isn't something you can say about every game out there. True, some of the text is a little stilted (it was translated from the German and it shows) but this doesn't particularly detract from the game as a whole. If you like the Civilisation computer game, then you'll love this!'

## Serim Ral (*Harlequin Games*)

**Andy Kendall** - 'First real run at this; after one game I had to drop due to a short turnaround. Muddling along, only occasionally starving my people. Fairly straightforward at the moment, but would be so much easier if the map was reprinted each turn! Has add-on features to allow risks to be taken for gain which are rather nice.'

## GAMES IN PLAYTEST

### Celestial Empires (*Hunky Monkey*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'A playtest space game from Hunky Monkey. The rules are, er, mathematical! I approached this game with some trepidation as a result, but managed to get to grips with the rules sufficiently to get the first few sets of orders in without too much hassle. The basic game system works fine, but there are definitely issues with the rules and turn presentation which will need to be resolved. The GM has established an email discussion forum to help the development of the game and is already putting some player suggestions into the game code.'

### Destiny (*Madhouse*)

**Robin Orman** - 'Steve is now allowing playtesters to send in rumours for this game, so I can talk a bit more freely about it.'

A basic signup gives you four characters and a junker (spaceship) for £3.50 per turn. From there, the galaxy is your oyster. Players have joined fledgling bounty hunting, trading or pirating organisations, headed for the borders of the solar system in a race to be the first to a new star, remained on High Earth to explore the bowels of the Undercity, or flown off into the vast unknown to see what awaits them. Or, more usually, a combination of the above.

Mark Cullup and Steve Tierney have both done a great job with this game and are always helpful and open to suggestions. Thanks guys!

Of my characters, one of my groups (nominally attached to the bounty hunters guild) has just entered interstellar space and is heading for the Crabb system, while the other is becoming involved with Stellar Patrol, a player-run and organised police force. Stellar Patrol (SP) has received a rather bad press recently (unfairly, in my opinion), and has undergone a few radical overhauls. Things now seem firmly back on-track under the leadership of our new Supreme Commander, Texas Jack. We're also accepting new recruits, just don't believe all (or indeed, anything) you read from - particularly the DFF..'

**Chris Morris** - 'I was interested by Dave Senior's comment last issue (p11) about Destiny and how you have to spend a lot of time eating,

sleeping and maintaining the ship. He's quite right, and it's actually a consequence of the game system. Computers have no sense of proportion. If these things form part of the game at all, as perhaps they should, they become as important as all the other parts, whereas a human-moderated game says "You have your dinner and a good night's sleep - on with the adventure of the next half hour of your life ...(as described in five more pages)". People spend a third of their life unconscious, but who wants to pay a GM a third of their game fee to process commands that are effectively "Do nothing"?

Ever try operating a computer using a manual that leaves out half the commands essential to do something interesting because the online help system will give you further details when you need them? That's what Destiny was like. Challenging? - yes. Complex? - yes. Frustrating? - yes. Fun - yes, if you enjoy crosswords or code breaking: no, if you enjoy colour in your universe. I dropped out, leaving the residue of my turn fees behind, because I simply could not be bothered to fill in the turn sheet any more.'

## Destiny - Star Marines (*Madhouse*)

**Robin Orman** - 'This is a cheap and cheerful area of the Destiny game, where players control the Star Marines of the title on various missions. The area I'm involved in is a spacestation overrun by Alien-style critters - another area opening up is loosely based on Starship Troopers. Note that (like Broken Lands) email players can control a single marine for free, although larger teams are available at normal prices to both postal and email players.'

## ZINES

**Bruce Edwards** - 'Alex Bardy (*Underneath the Mango Tree*) and Philip Honeybone (*Flights of Fancy*) have both moved house recently. The e-mail addresses are still valid though.'

Derek Wilson (*Cut & Thrust*) has decided to call it a day, and he is winding up his zine. However, he is running all the games to a finish, and the zine may run for another year or more yet.'

## Snowball Fighting (*Psychozine*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'A profoundly silly but disturbingly addictive zine game from the excellent Psychozine website run by Mike Dean. When you start spending half an hour trying to work out tactics for a simulated snowball fight you know that you've been out in the snow for too long. A great little game of the sort that traditional "amateur" zines do so well.'

*Contributions welcomed for Flagship 99,  
by September 14th please!*

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# Galactic View

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 *Spokesman* or players' comments in *Reviews*.

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, EUROPEAN & WEB-BASED GMS**  
We have begun to merge the UK and European listings. We have only included those European GMS whom we have heard from recently - if you are not listed then please get in touch!

**Headlines from Pote Conney, CSPP, Dark Wolf Games, EpicMail, Highstreet Internet Ltd, Kamikaze Games, Last World Games, Quixote Games, David Scriven, SSV Klapp-Buchler OEG, STS Games, Sphinx O.E., Terre de Jeux, Total Conquest, WOW Games, (+15)**

**Deaths:** Paul Green, Harbinger Enterprises, WORC (+3)  
**Changes:** Danny McConnell/Ab Initio Games, State of Mind, Viking Games

**Total: 170 active European & Web-based GMS (+12)**

<b>A&amp;D Entertainment</b> , PO Box 108, Becton, Sowermarket IP14 4RX WEB: <a href="http://www.aand.com">www.aand.com</a> EM: <a href="mailto:info@aand.com">info@aand.com</a> FAX: 01449 781916	<b>Abolition Mike</b> , 96 Bishopwood Road, Tully, Hants RG26 4HG EM: <a href="mailto:mike.abolition@aol.com">mike.abolition@aol.com</a> WEB: <a href="http://members.aol.com/SatSouthGM">http://members.aol.com/SatSouthGM</a>	<b>Adams, David</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/boards/lost4/index.html">www.throneworld.com/boards/lost4/index.html</a> WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/boards/lost4/index.html">www.throneworld.com/boards/lost4/index.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:dmcaster@oz.net">dmcaster@oz.net</a>	<b>Adrian Avramo</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.geocities.com/orc_engarde/">www.geocities.com/orc_engarde/</a> EM: <a href="mailto:adrian@aramano.freemove.co.uk">adrian@aramano.freemove.co.uk</a>	<b>Adventures by Mail</b> , 100 Fuller Road, Albany NY 12203 WEB: <a href="http://www.adventuresbyemail.com">www.adventuresbyemail.com</a> EM: <a href="mailto:keth@adventuresbyemail.com">keth@adventuresbyemail.com</a> TEL: 518-489-2605 (6:30am to 4:00pm ET) FAX: 518-489-9131 (24 hours)	<b>Agema Publications</b> , 3 Workshop Rd, Off Carlton Rd, Sneinton, Nottingham NG3 2BA WEB: <a href="http://go.azgema">go.azgema</a>	<b>Andrews, Colin</b> , 26 Brown Edge Road, Holts, Oldham, OL4 5QG Arnot, Steven. WEB: <a href="http://www.sjasytems.co.uk/">www.sjasytems.co.uk/</a> EM: <a href="mailto:gd@natrally.co.uk">gd@natrally.co.uk</a>	<b>Apex Games</b> , POB 56, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9LT Baird, Phil WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/boards/lost1/index.html">www.throneworld.com/boards/lost1/index.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:philbaird40@sprintmail.com">philbaird40@sprintmail.com</a>	<b>Bartrun, Giles</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.pentabva.net/~serge/centre_earth/thardacountries.html">www.pentabva.net/~serge/centre_earth/thardacountries.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:centreearth@yahoo.co.uk">centreearth@yahoo.co.uk</a>	<b>Baylis, Chris</b> , 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex SS15 5EG Blarpo. WEB: <a href="http://www.geocities.com/tonthecanadianblarpo/">www.geocities.com/tonthecanadianblarpo/</a> EM: <a href="mailto:engarde_gm@hotmail.com">engarde_gm@hotmail.com</a>	<b>Boothroyd, Alex</b> , 30 Sawyer Drive, Biddulp, Staffordshire, ST8 6SU EM: <a href="mailto:alex.boothroyd@virgin.net">alex.boothroyd@virgin.net</a>	<b>Brambley, Francis</b> WEB: <a href="http://freespace.virgin.net/francis.brambley/ArkhamAdvertise.htm">freespace.virgin.net/francis.brambley/ArkhamAdvertise.htm</a> EM: <a href="mailto:francis.brambley@virgin.net">francis.brambley@virgin.net</a>	<b>? Burd, Richard</b> , 83 Sandcroft, Sutton Hill, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4AD EM: 10653.2107.compuserve.com TEL: 01952 413655	<b>Burroughs, Martin</b> , 15 New Earth St, Oldham OL4 5ES TEL: 0161 6261580	<b>Burrows, Pete, Buzzwack PBM</b> , 8 Magnolia Court, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 3LG WEB: <a href="http://www.buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk">www.buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:pete@buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk">pete@buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk</a> TEL/FAX: 0115 9224901 (pre 10pm)	<b>Burrows, Martin</b> , 47 Greenfield Terrace, Newbridge, Gwent NP1 4QY EM: <a href="mailto:dr@claira.net">dr@claira.net</a> or <a href="mailto:info@beck@aol.com">info@beck@aol.com</a>	<b>Bury, Chris, World Fictional Wrestling</b> , 1A Chapel Terrace, Southend, Essex SS1 1EX Callan, David EM: <a href="mailto:gorlos@netcomuk.co.uk">gorlos@netcomuk.co.uk</a>	<b>Cambold Games</b> , 6 Llys-Y-Foel, Carmarvon, Gwynedd LL55 2LU Carter, Dave, <b>Scorpion Games</b> , 13 Liverpool Rd South, Burscough, Lancs L40 7SU WEB: <a href="http://www.scorpionsgames.co.uk">http://www.scorpionsgames.co.uk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:web@http://www.scorpionsgames.co.uk">http://www.scorpionsgames.co.uk</a>	<b>Cassey, Ashley</b> , 16 Willow Grove, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 4HP WEB: <a href="http://www.ashcasey.co.uk">www.ashcasey.co.uk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:srtpnt@ashcasey.co.uk">srtpnt@ashcasey.co.uk</a>
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<b>? Cleopatra Computer Games</b> , 82 Farningdon Avenue, Bromley, Kent BR2 8BU Clownshield. 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<b>Gillard, Trevor</b> WEB: <a href="http://horseguards.org/en_engarde.html">http://horseguards.org/en_engarde.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:trevor.gillard@horseguards.org">trevor.gillard@horseguards.org</a>	<b>Glover, Adrian</b> , 4 Srevane Court, Lessness Park, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5BG Great Game WEB: <a href="http://www.geocities.com/epochelipse/">www.geocities.com/epochelipse/</a> EM: <a href="mailto:horrtique@hotmail.com">horrtique@hotmail.com</a>	<b>Guild of Blades</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.gulldofblades.com/interactive/1483/www1/www1.html">www.gulldofblades.com/interactive/1483/www1/www1.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:1483@gulldofblades.com">1483@gulldofblades.com</a>	<b>Harlan, Thomas</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/boards/lost0/index.html">www.throneworld.com/boards/lost0/index.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:thomash@throneworld.com">thomash@throneworld.com</a>	<b>Harlequin Games</b> , 340 North Road, Cardiff CF14 3BP WEB: <a href="http://www.harlequinames.com">www.harlequinames.com</a> EM: <a href="mailto:phm@harlequinames.com">phm@harlequinames.com</a> TEL: 029 2091 3559 (9-6.30 weekdays) - Middle Earth only TEL: (Ssm Roads): 029 2062 5665 (9-6.30 weekdays) FAX: 029 2062 5532 any time	<b>Harwell, Eddie</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/boards/lost07/index.html">www.throneworld.com/boards/lost07/index.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:Allieharwell@yahoo.com">Allieharwell@yahoo.com</a>	<b>Haynes, Nic</b> , Flat 4, Brookfield Court, Victoria Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 4GJ EM: <a href="mailto:moonbiter@hotmail.com">moonbiter@hotmail.com</a>	<b>Highreet Internet Ltd.</b> , Warrior Games, 11 Belgravia Mews, Shaw, Oldham, Lancs, OL7 7TB WEB: <a href="http://www.warriorgames.co.uk">www.warriorgames.co.uk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:info@warriorgames.co.uk">info@warriorgames.co.uk</a> TEL: (Paul Green): 0870 7459297	<b>Helmshing, Michael</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/boards/lost23/index.html">www.throneworld.com/boards/lost23/index.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:lost23@core.com">lost23@core.com</a>	<b>Hemsoft Computer Consultants</b> , 54 Crelow Fields, Sithians, nr Truro TR3 7RE TEL: (Paul Hemmings): 01209 860116	<b>Hill, Adam</b> , 16 Shawfield Close, Sutton Hill, Telford, Shrops., TF7 4BB EM: <a href="mailto:adamhill@cablenet.co.uk">adamhill@cablenet.co.uk</a>	<b>Hollinde, Adam</b> , 113 Corcoran Rd, Brimington, Chesterfield, Derby S43 1EY EM: <a href="mailto:psych-arf@mail.tn.co.uk">psych-arf@mail.tn.co.uk</a>	<b>Hunky Monkey Games</b> , 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1BS WEB: <a href="http://www.hunkymonkey.co.uk">www.hunkymonkey.co.uk</a> AND <a href="http://www.sjasytems.co.uk/karadon/">www.sjasytems.co.uk/karadon/</a> EM: <a href="mailto:ape@hunkymonkey.co.uk">ape@hunkymonkey.co.uk</a>	<b>IB Postal Games</b> , 90 Queen Elizabeth Way, Kirk Hallam, Ilkerton, Derbys DE7 4NT In Off the Post, PO Box 302, Halstead, Essex CO9 2LA EM: <a href="mailto:phm@ioip.co.uk">phm@ioip.co.uk</a>	<b>Incubus Designs</b> , POB 263, Loughborough LE11 1ZG WEB: <a href="http://www.incubusdesigns.co.uk">www.incubusdesigns.co.uk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:inquis@globalnet.co.uk">inquis@globalnet.co.uk</a> TEL: 01509 217957 FAX: 01509 558788	<b>Interesting Times</b> , 10 Belmont Avenue, Barnet, London, EN4 9LJ WEB: <a href="http://www.interesting-times.co.uk">www.interesting-times.co.uk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:startup@interesting-times.co.uk">startup@interesting-times.co.uk</a> TEL: 07050 658383 FAX: 07050 658384	<b>Jade Enterprises</b> , 127 Queen Adelaide Court, Penge, London, SE20 7EB EM: <a href="mailto:jade@jee.co.uk">jade@jee.co.uk</a> TEL: 020 83256507	<b>Jenkins, Brian</b> WEB: <a href="http://hijinks.com/engarde/">http://hijinks.com/engarde/</a> EM: <a href="mailto:engarde@hijinks.com">engarde@hijinks.com</a>	<b>Kamikaze Games</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.kamikazegames.com">www.kamikazegames.com</a> EM: <a href="mailto:kelemengames@hotmail.com">kelemengames@hotmail.com</a>	<b>Kelom Games</b> , 7 Claverton, Hanworth, Bracknell RG12 7YN WEB: <a href="http://www.kelem-games.com">www.kelem-games.com</a> EM: <a href="mailto:kelemengames@hotmail.com">kelemengames@hotmail.com</a>	<b>KJC Games</b> , FREEPOST, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 3UL WEB: <a href="http://www.kjgames.com">www.kjgames.com</a> EM: <a href="mailto:enquiry@kjgames.com">enquiry@kjgames.com</a> TEL: 01253 866345	<b>Larsen, Morton</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.phm.dk">www.phm.dk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:info@phm.dk">info@phm.dk</a>	<b>Lancaster, Thomas</b> , 16A Stodart Road, Austerly, London, SE20 8ET Last World Games WEB: <a href="http://www.lastworldgames.com">www.lastworldgames.com</a>	<b>Laughing Dog</b> , 31 Leopold Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7NP TEL: (Sim Barnett): 01394 274432 (7-10pm weekdays)	<b>Lindahl, Greg</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.phm.com/~lindahl/jc-helm.html">www.phm.com/~lindahl/jc-helm.html</a> EM: <a href="mailto:info@phm.com">info@phm.com</a>	<b>Lyubkovskiy, Pavel</b> WEB: <a href="http://www.kip.phm.ru">www.kip.phm.ru</a> EM: <a href="mailto:kpa.gamedev.ru">kpa.gamedev.ru</a>	<b>McConnell, Danny</b> , Ab Initio Games, PO Box 605, Bromley, Kent BR2 0YQ WEB: <a href="http://www.rhmports.com/">www.rhmports.com/</a> / <a href="http://www.ucl.ac/adami/cal/s.co.uk">www.ucl.ac/adami/cal/s.co.uk</a> www.southernlumpyapl.eague.co.uk / <a href="http://www.backenhamcricket.co.uk">www.backenhamcricket.co.uk</a> EM: <a href="mailto:danny.mcconnell@virgin.net">danny.mcconnell@virgin.net</a> TEL: 020 8325 2448	
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*EM: madcentral@aol.com*  
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**Murdoch, Neil**  
*WEB: www.geocities.com/floodisoccer/home.html*  
*EM: darblinesNo1@activemail.co.uk*

**Mystic Arena**  
*WEB: www.mysticarena.com*

**Nelsen, Lesley**  
*WEB: www.throneworld.com/lords/lot24/index.html*  
*EM: lord24gm@throneworld.com*

**Ninth Legion, The**, 40 Hylkeham Road, Lincn LN6 8AB  
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*WEB: http://hometown.aol.com/solsone.sg/lords/lot6/lot6.htm*  
*WEB: http://hometown.aol.com/solsone.sg/lords/lot9/lot9.htm*  
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**Olympia Games**, 6 Sandy Ln, Brancote, Nottingham NG9 3GS  
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**Pagoda Games**, PO Box 5155, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4QQ  
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*WEB: http://communities.msn.co.uk/eharia*  
*EM: Markpuder@aol.com*  
*TEL: 01472 753430*

**Play-by-Electron Games**  
*WEB: www.pbegames.com/eldritch/*  
*EM: moderator@pbegames.com*

**Premier Management**  
*WEB: http://pml-cngaming.com*

**Professional Basketball League**  
*WEB: www.geocities.com/tomyzr*  
*EM: tomyzr@yahoo.com*

**Pure Fantasy Games**, Portland House, Boleover Business Park, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 6BH

**Quirrel Games**, Quirrel Games Ghr, Am Pannolen 7, 47608 Geldern, Germany

**Reality Racing**, PO Box 100, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10  
*EM: help@realityracing.com*  
*TEL: 01380 81819*

**Rebus Games**, 70 Greenfield Crescent, Brighton, BN1 8HJ  
*EM: dominicm@zoom.co.uk*

**Received Wisdom**, 9 Oundle Road, Alwalton, Peterborough PE7 3UP  
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**Red Mohawk**  
*WEB: www.becmugil.com*

**Richardson, Stephen, Guardian Games**, 51 Anersham Rise, Apsley, Nottingham NG8 5QN  
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**Rick, Gregory**  
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**SSV Klubb-Recher OEG** Postfach 1205, A-8021, Graz, Austria  
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**Williams, Mark**  
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**Williams, Simon**, 8 Oster Close, Ely, Cambs CB7 4AY  
*WEB: www.chaotrail.co.uk* AND *www.ultimatefant/freeservers.com*

**WOW Games**  
*WEB: http://www.wow.pbengame.com/*  
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# Zine Listings

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**Abyssinian Prince**, Jim Burgess, 664 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02908-4327, USA (Email: burgess@world.std.com)

**Armistice Day**, Stephen Agar, 47 Preston Drive, Brighton, BN1 6LA (Email: stephen@armisticeday.com)

**Boris the Spider** (Email: pbdoluc@aol.com)

**Devolution**, Tony Robbins, Lincoln House, Creaton Rd, Hollowell, Northants, NN6 8RP (Email: tony@hollowell.plus.com)

**Diplomacy 2000**, www.lancedal.demon.co.uk/dip2000/

**Fights of Fancy**, Philip Honeybone, Email: phil@melly98.freemove.co.uk

**For Whom The Die Rolls**, 14 Stepnells, Marsworth, Nr Tring, Herts., HP23 4NQ (Email: Keith@Thomasson.com)

**Ode**, John Marsden, 91 Westwood Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9RS (Email: John@ode\_online.net)

**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.)

**Rhein-Neckar-Zine**, (German language), Lukas Kautzsch, An der Rossweid 18a, 76229 Kadsruhe, Germany. (Email: lukas@oberfoul.de)

**S.O.B.**, Chris Hassler, 2000 S. Armour Ct., La Habra, CA 90631 USA (Email: chassler@adelphia.net)

**Serendipity**, John Wabley, Töpferreihe 4, 38259 Salzgitter, Germany (Email: jwabley@aol.com)

**Strangitude**, Paul Sands, Flat 2, 432 Birmingham Rd, Wyde Green, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1YJ (Email: strangezine@lineone.net)

**To Win Just Once**, Paul Evans, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge, UB10 8UP (Email: twjo@pevans.co.uk)

**Underneath The Mango Tree**, Alex Bardy (Email: alex@mangozine.com)

**Variable Pig**, Jim Reader, Vredelanstraat 20, 3633 EC, Vreeland, NETHERLANDS (Email: cj.reader@wanadoo.nl)

**Sabre Games**, Mill Farm, West Lydford, Somerset TA11 7DA  
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**Sedgods & Darlings**  
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**SESL (Mark Cressy)**  
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*EM: sesl@ukonline.co.uk*

**Seventeen Games**, 57 Olympia Gardens, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1JQ  
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**Shore, Justin**, 2 Langport Road, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset BS23 1YR

**Silver Dreamer**, 174 Charles St, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent DA9 9AJ  
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*EM: silverdrea@aol.com*

**Smith, Russell**, Middleton Cottage, 7 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1SL  
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**Software Simulations**, Georgian House, Trinity St, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UB

**Spillbinder Games**, 51 Abelskian Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE  
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**Sporting Dreams**, PO Box 5423, Derby, DE21 2ZB  
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**Squibb, Geoff**, 108 Teddington Park Rd, Teddington, Middx TW11 8NE  
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**State of Mind Games**, 13 Balmoral Road, Dicket OX11 8TZ  
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**STS Games**, Nulsenstr. 17, 3184 Bad Muenster, Germany  
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**Summit Soccer League**  
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**Supernote Games**, PO Box 1812, Galston, KA4 8WA  
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**Terre de Jeux**, 88 avenue de Jussieu, 91600 Savigny sur Orge, France  
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**Time Patterns**, 14 The Hollows, Exmouth, Devon EX8 1QT  
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**Total Conquest**  
*WEB: www.total-conquest.com*  
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**Trident Games** (Glyn Cary), 9 Trent Drive, Hucknall, Notts, NG15 6GR  
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**Ultra Sports**  
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**Undying King Games**, 31 Littlemore Road, Oxford, OX4 3SS  
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**Verein der Freunde**  
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*EM: The.Wagoner@gmx.de*

**Viking Games**, 38 Park Avenue, Hounslow, London TW3 2LX  
*EM: jefrigo@bepveworld.com*

**Viking Sage**  
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**Wightman, Mark K**, 31 Churchill Avenue, Gilegate, Durham DH1 1PX

**MAD**

**MAE**

**MAR**

**MAT**

**MIS**

**SOV**

**MIN**

**MMJ**

**MUR**

**MTS**

**NIE**

**TNL**

**OAT**

**OLS**

**OLY**

**PAG**

**PAR**

**PAT**

**PIN**

**PEG**

**PRE**

**TZR**

**PFG**

**QIR**

**REB**

**RCW**

**RED**

**RIC**

**RIC**

**REY**

**RZE**

**SSV**

HOW TO READ THE GALACTIC VIEW TABLES

Process shows if the game is run by computer (C), human (H) or mixed (M). The **Duration** of the game is shown by O (Open-ended) or F (Finite).  
GM is the GM's code shown in our listing of UK & Web-based (M). The **Duration** of the game is shown by O (Open-ended) or F (Finite).  
Medium shows how much a game is available via email (e), paper (p) or web-based play (w). Language is also indicated here where a game is offered other than in English.  
(G) German.  
Start-up shows how much you will pay to begin playing the game. \* indicates deposit returnable if you play to the end of the game, or prepayment discounts available (see moderator for details).

**Free Turns** - many GMs will give you a number of free turns at the start of the game  
**Turn Fee** - how much each turn costs. \* means that return postage is paid by the GM each turn. S means you need to send an SSAE or at least pay for the GM's postage.  
**Other Fees** - the following footnotes apply:(a) more for larger positions or later turns in the game, (b) more for battle reports, (c) more for extended orders/longer reports, (d) more for several possible extras, (e) lower cost if you join the club \$ indicates no credit/refunds available. (f) higher start-up fee for paper rules  
**Flagship Ref** shows the issue of Flagship where you can find the best description so far: a=article, s=Spokenmen Speak, d=diary. Thus, 4s means 'Spokenmen 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:** Absolute Power 2, Ashes of Empire, Dominion, El Mythico, En Garde!, Star, Epsom, Feudal Lords: Right of Kings, Fussball-Liga, Heldenwelt, Ksar Exo, Ksar Solar, Planetarion, Tananka, Total Conquest, Trangrad, World Conquest (+16)  
**Deletions:** Vampire 2 (-41)  
**Changes:** Clans II  
**Total: 290 games (+15)**  
Note that all prices are generally for the UK and are given in £'s except where noted. Non-UK European players should note that rates are usually about 25% higher than for UK players. If in doubt, contact the GMs.

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
1483 Online	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	GOB	e	Free	No	Free	-	94s
523 Sweet FA	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£7.60 per season		£0.00	-	41a
A Day at the Races	M-O	Sport: Racing	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	42s
A&D Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	A&D	p	Free	1	£1.50	-	81s
ABPW	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	BOO	p	£1.00	0	£1.00	-	92a
Absolute Fantasy	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£15.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Absolute Power 2	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£20.00	2	£5.00	-	-
Absolute Heroes	M-O	RPG: Superhero	JAD	p	£15.00	2	£4.50	(b)	91a
Adventurer Kings	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£5.00	0	£2.50	-	35a, 72-74d, 88a
Adventurer Kings	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	LOC	e	£60 per game	0	£2.50	-	35a, 72-74d, 88a
Aeroball	M-O	Sport: Fictional	WIG	p	£2.00	1	£1.25	-	62-63a
Aqamannon II	M-F	Wargame: Fantasy	KEL	p	£12.00	5	£2.00	-	76a
Alamaze	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£15.00	1	£3.50	-	71a, 80a
American Civil War Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	60s
American War of Ind. Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	78s
Ancient Empires	M-F	Power: Historical	OAT	e, p	£4.00	2	£3.25	£1 month	58a
Apex PBM Soccer	C-F	Sport: Soccer	APE	p	£1.50	?	£3.00 for 2 games	35a	-
Ashes of Empire	C-O	Sci-Fi	CSP	G only	?	?	?	-	98s
Aspects of Might	M-O	Adventure	SIL	e	£2.50	0	£2.50	(c)	94s
Assyria's End	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	90a
Atlantis	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	VAR	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Austerlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	QIR	G only	?	?	?	?	34s, 96a
Austerlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SUP	e, p	£10.00*	0	£3.75	(a)	34s, 96a
Austerlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SPH	e, p	?	?	?	?	34s, 96a
Austerlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SSV	e, p, G	?	?	£6 Euro	?	34s, 96a
Away the Lads	M-O	Sport: Soccer	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.40	(a)	42s
Bakufu	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£36 per game	?	£2.50	-	-
Barbarians at the Gate	C-O	Wargame: Historical	SOF	e, p	£5.00	?	£2.50	-	-
Battory of the Rivers	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HIL	p	£10.00	3	£2.50	-	-
Basketball	C-O	Sport:Basketball	CAM	p	£10 per season		£3.50	(a)	19a
Battle Plan	C-O	Wargame	FBI	e	Free	0	Free	-	85a
Battle Robots	C-F	Misc: Robots	GSP	e	Free	0	Free	-	96a
Beer Mogul	C-O	Economic	RED	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
Beyond	M-O	Adventure	CRA	e, p	£9.95	3	£2.95	(a)	86a
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	0	£2.50 - £6.00	-	22a, 83a
Bleddian Diary, A	M-O	Tribal	SPE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25 - £3.25	\$	80a, 81-84d
British Wrestling Association	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	TUR	p	£7.00	6	£1.00	-	57a, 92a
Centre-Earth	H-O	Power: Fantasy	BAR	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Championship Football	C-O	Sport: Soccer	HEM	p	Free	5	£2.00	(d)	41s
Championship League	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SUP	p	Free	0	£1.95	-	53s
Chaos Trail	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WIL	p	Free	0	£1.25 S	(d)	47a, 86a
Chicken Run	H-O	Sport: Motor Racing	RCW	e, p	£0.50	0	£0.50	-	-
Clans II	C-O	Tribal	HSL	e, p	Free	4	£3.50	-	38a, 84a
Clovenshield	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	CLO	e	Free	0	Free	-	93a
Coshaw Postal Football League	M-O	Sport: Soccer	COE	p	Free	0	£1.50	(d)	70s
Come On You Reds	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£1.00	1	£1.00	-	34a, 41a
Company Commander	M-F	Wargame	OAT	e, p	£12.00	2	£3.50 + £1.50/month	-	96a, 97a
Conclave	M-F	Power: Fantasy	UKG	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.50	-	91s, 96a
Continental Rails	C-F	Misc: Railway	FUE	e, p	£2.25	0	£2.25	-	21a
Covert Operations	C-F	Economic	FBI	e	\$25 per game	0	n/a	-	-
Crack of Doom II	M-O	Tribal	HAQ	p	£10.00	1	£4.50	(d)	96a
Casimoff's Quest World	M-O	Tribal	CRA	p	£9.95	2	£2.50	-	7a
Crisis!	C-F	Wargame	TM	e, p	£5.00	3	£2.20*	-	51a
Dark Age II	C-F	Power: Historical	SOF	p	£5.00	3	£9.00 for 3	-	78a, 79d, 81d
Diadochi	H-F	Power: Historical	CYC	p	£5.00	2	£2.50	-	-
Diplomacy	C-F	Wargame: Historical	TIW	p	£10.00	1	?	-	73s
Directive 32	C-F	Sci Fi	COZ	p	£10.00	0	£6.00	-	-
Dominion	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	w	Free	-	Free	-	-	-
Dragonhelm	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	ULA	e, p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	79a
DragonWorld	C-O	Adventure	MAD	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.00	(d)	77-80d, 92-94d
Eagle	H-F	Wargame: Historical	SAB	p	£10	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-
EPFA	C-O	Sport: Soccer	EPI	w	Free	0	Free	-	94s

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
EGE: Banana	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BAN	e	Free	0	Free	-	96a
EGE: Barro	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BLA	e	Free	-	Free	-	84s, 93a
EGE: Dangerous Liaisons	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	SPN	p	£5.00	5	£0.80	-	93a
EGE: Debon	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	CRO	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a, 96a
EGE: Horseguards	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	GIL	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	94s
EGE: King & Cardinal	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	COL	e, w	Free	4	£2.00	-	34a, 93a
EGE: LPBS	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	EVA	p	£10.00	-	-	-	93a
EGE: Orc	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	ARA	e, w	Free	-	-	-	93a
EGE: Orleans	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	JEN	e	Free	-	-	-	93a
EGE: Slumbers	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BRM	e, w	Free	-	-	-	93a
EGE: Star	H-O	RPG: Sci-Fi (EG)	COO	e	Free	-	-	-	93a, 96a
EGE: Time of Honor	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	COP	e, w	Free	0	£3.50	-	91a
Einstein's Lot	C-F	RPG: Modern	ULA	p	£4.50	?	4 Euro	-	-
El Mythico	C-F	Wargame: Modern	TDG	F only	?	?	-	-	-
Eldritch	C-O	Misc: Political	PEG	e	Free	2	\$2	-	74s, 91s
Electon Year	C-F	Misc: Political	FBI	e	Free	0	£2.00	-	-
Empires	C-O	Wargame: Historical	SOF	e, p	£5.00	?	£2.00	-	63s
Empires of Corinium	M-O	Power: Fantasy	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£4.00	-	-
Endless Time and Space	H-F	Sci Fi	SAB	p	Free	0	£10.00 for 2	-	-
English Civil War Battles	M-F	Wargame: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	78s
Epoch of Might	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	e, p	£10.00	2	£3.00	-	63a
Epsom	M-O	Sport: Horse-Racing	SCR	p	£6.00	3	£2.10	-	98a
Evolution of the Stars	C-F	Sci-Fi	VdF	e	TBA	0	£0.5	(e)	-
Extra Time-Chairman	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KIC	p	Free	1	£2.25	-	53a
Extra Time-original	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KIC/CRA	e, p	Free	1	£1.90	-	53a
Falcon	M-F	Wargame: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-
Fall of the Roman Empire	M-F	Wargame: Historical	OAT	e, p	£3.00	0	£1.50 + 50p per month	-	-78s
Fallen at the First	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	-
Fantasy Cycling 2001	C-O	Sport: Cycling	ULI	p	Free	0	Free	-	-
Fantasy Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KIC	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	53a
Feudal Lords	C-F	Wargame: Historical	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3.50	-	3a
Feudal Lords: Right of Kings	C-F	Wargame: Historical	LWG	e	\$5	0	\$1	-	-
Feudal Lords: Right of Kings	C-F	Wargame: Historical	TIW	e, p	£5	0	£2	(f)	-
First Crusade	C-F	Wargame: Historical	KEL	p	£10.00	5	£2.00	-	38a
Floodit Soccer	M-O	Sport: Soccer	FLI	w, e	Free	-	Free	-	93s
Food Chain	C-O	Misc	LIN	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
Football Maestro	C-O	Sport: Soccer	MAE	p	Free	0	£2.00	-	84a
Football Predictions	C-O	Sport: Soccer	DRC	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
For God, King & Country	H-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£0.80	0	£5.00	-	46s
Fush-bull-Liga	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SSV	G only	?	?	0.75 Euro	-	-
Galactic Conflict	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3.50	-	-
Galactic Empires	C-O	Sci-Fi	MMJ	e	Free	5	\$2.25	-	-
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	-	-
Galaxy	C-F	Sci-Fi	REB	e, p	Free	6	£1.50	-	94s
Gameplan	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOF/McC	p	£5.00	0	£1.00 for 4	-	20a
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	-	-
Gameplan: Advanced	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOF/McC	p	£5.00	0	£13.00 for 4	-	-
Gobball	C-F	Sport: Fictional	SYN	p	£7.70	2	£3.00	-	79s
Godfather	C-F	Misc: Crime	PAG	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	(a)	73a, 83d
Godfather	C-F	Misc: Crime	LOC	e	Free	0	4 Euro	-	73a, 83d
Gorlos	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	CAL	e	Free	0	Free	-	65a
Grand National	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.75	-	38a
Great Game: 1820	H-F	Wargame: Historical	GGA	p	Free	0	Free	-	96s
Great White Hunter	C-F	Misc	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	94s
Gridiron Suits	C-O	Sport: American Football	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	-
Gryphon	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	-	53s
Guardian	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	RIC	p	£10.00	2	£2.00	(c)	-
Gumbot Diplomacy	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	-
Haunted Manor	C-F	Adventure	MAD	w	Free	0	Free	-	97a
HeavensAbove	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	FUE	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.25	-	48a, 61a
Heldenwelt	C-O	Adventure	SSV	G only	?	?	6.9 Euro/month	-	-
Heroes of Olynthus	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	TIW	e, p	£10.00	0	£3.00	-	88s
Heroic Fantasy	C-O	Adventure	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3	-	40a
Hooplans	C-O	Sport:Basketball	McM	p	£5.00	2	£3.25	-	-
Horse Racing	C-O	Sport: Horse Racing	REA	p	Choice	0	£1.25	(d)	71s
In Off the Post	H-F	Sport: Soccer	IOP	p	Free	1	£2.25	(d)	33a
In The House Today	C-O	Misc: Politics	SAB	p	Free	0	£2.00 for 2	-	-
Iron Kings	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	PEG	e	Free	-	\$2	-	-
Isle of Crovans	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	ABM	p	TBA	-	TBA	-	-
It's a Crime!	C-F	Misc: Crime	KIC	p	Free	2	£1.85	-	-
It's a Crime!	C-F	Misc: Crime	ABM	e	Free	2	£1.85	-	-
It's in the Net	C-O	Sport: Soccer	WBI	p	£1.50	1	£1.00	-	65a
JWA Wrestling	M-O	Sport: Wrestling	FRY	p	£1.50	2	£2.25	-	18a, 34a, 89a
Kickabout	C-F	Power: Fantasy	TIW	e, p	£7.50	2	£3.00	-	87a, 93a-94d, 96d
Kings of Karadon	H-F	Power: Fantasy	WHS	p	£5.00	1	£2.50	-	13a, 77a
Kings of Steel	C-O	Economic	LVA	e	?	?	?	-	89s
KLIP	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 2	-	-
Knights of Christendom	C-F	Wargame: Robote	TDI	e, p	?	?	£2 or 3 Euro	-	73a
Ksar Exo	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	£5.00	0	£5.00 for 3	-	-
La Gloire du Roi	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	2	£3.50	(c)	59a, 93a
La Ultima Cruzada	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	PIN	e, p	£10.00	3	£3.50	(a)	90a, 93a, 96a
Lands of Elvira	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p, G	£20.00	1	£3.50	(a)	90a, 93a, 96a
Legends	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	SSV	e, p	?	?	?	-	-
Legends	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	EPI	e, p	?	?	?	-	-

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
Legends of Israel	C-O	Adventure	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£1.00	-	-
Lizards	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	TNL	p	£5.00	2	£2.50	-	54a, 90a
LoTe: 1	M-O	Power: Historical	HAR	e	?	?	?	?	(84a), 97a
LoTe: 10	M-O	Power: Historical	ADA	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 11	M-O	Power: Historical	BAL	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 13	M-O	Power: Historical	COR	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 16	M-O	Power: Historical	OLS	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 19	M-O	Power: Historical	OLS	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 2	M-O	Power: Historical	DGN	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 20	M-O	Power: Historical	HEF	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 23	M-O	Power: Historical	HEL	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 24	M-O	Power: Historical	NIE	e	?	?	?	?	(84a), 94a
LoTe: 25	M-O	Power: Historical	MAT	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 4	M-O	Power: Historical	ADA	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 42	M-O	Power: Historical	DOD	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 5	M-O	Power: Historical	PAT	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 51	M-O	Power: Historical	MAR	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 7	M-O	Power: Historical	HTW	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 8	M-O	Power: Historical	FLI	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 8	M-O	Power: Historical	SPE	e, p	Free	2	£1.90	-	(84a)
LoTe: 8	M-O	Power: Historical	HAQ	e, p	Free	2	£1.90	-	(84a)
Middle Earth PBM	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	RCW	e, p	£10.00	2	£3.90	-	6a, 80a, 88a, 94a, 96a
Mighty Heroes	H-O	RPG: Superhero	RCW	e, p	£9.90 a year	0	n/a	-	76a
MiSL	C-F	Sci-Fi	MIS	e, w	Free	0	Free	-	96b
Mobius I	C-O	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	£8	0	£8	(a)	47a
Monster Island	C-O	Adventure	KIC	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
Mortis Maximus	C-O	Adventure	MAD	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	-	81s
Mundis	H-F	Power: Fictional	SAB	p	£10.00	0	£10.00 for 3	-	-
Mystic Arena	C-O	Power: Historical	MYS	p	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Napoleonic Battles	C-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£6.00	0	£2.80	-	71-73a
Necromancer	M-F	Wargame: Fantasy	MAD	p	Free	0	£2.00	-	63a, 70-71d
Norland name	C-O	Power: Fictional	SAT	e, w	Free	0	£1.25	-	92a
No Holds Barred	C-F	Wargame	LAU	e	Free	2	£2.00	-	69a
Offside Ref!	M-O	Power: Soccer	CAR	p	£5	0	£2.50	-	43s
Overlord	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	STM	p	Free	0	£1.40	-	43s
Paloma League, The	H-O	Power: Soccer	SHO	p	£10.00	4	£2.50	-	43s
Penalty!	M-F	Power: Soccer	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£10.00 for 6	-	43s
Phantasm	C-O	Power: Soccer	CAR	p	Free	0	£3.00	-	82s
Planet Soccer	M-O	Power: Soccer	CRS	e, p	£9.95	3	£1.95	-	65s
Planetation	C-O	Power: Soccer	SCR	p	£5.00	0	£3.75	-	77s
Planetation	C-O	Sci-Fi	PLA	e	Free	1	£3.50	(a)	76s
Planetary Wrestling Syndicate	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	LAN	p	Free	0	£3.50	-	76s
Play On	C-O	Sport: Aussie Rules	McC	e, p	AUS\$10	?	AUS\$5.50	-	-
Pop Tarts	H-F	Economic	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£9.99 per year	-	-
Portals & Palaces	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HOL	e, p	£5.00	1	£1.30	(c)	91a
? Postal American Football League	C-O	Sport: American Football	CLE	p	£54 a season	0	£1.30	(c)	23s
Premier League	M-O	Sport: Soccer	BOU	p	Free	0	£8.00 per season	-	29a, 85a, 88a, 93d
Premier Management Football	C-O	Sport: Soccer	PRE	w	£10.00	1	£3.00	-	63s
Primus Inter Pares	M-O	Power: Historical	INT	e, p	Free	0	£6.00/month	-	94s
Professional Basketball League	C-F	Sport: Basketball	OLY	p	Free	1	£1.60	-	75d, 84a, 85a, 2a
Prometheus	C-O	Wargame	TZR	e, w	Free	0	£1.60	(c)	32s
Psyche	H-O	RPG: Future	COO	p	£10.00	0	£2.50	-	97a
Pub Kickin'	M-O	RPG: Future	COO	p	£20.00	1	£3.50	-	91s
Puma	C-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£5.00 per season	0	-	-	41s
Pure Fantasy Hbll	C-O	Sport: Soccer	BUR	e, p	Free	5	£1.00	-	-
Quest	C-O	Adventure	PGF	p	Free	1	£1.75	(d)	57a
Quest Online	C-O	Adventure	ABM	e	Free	0	£2.10	-	36a, 47a, 94a
Raceplan Grand Prix	C-O	Sport: Motor Racing	KIC	w	Free	0	£2 for 10	-	36a, 47a, 94a
Reality Racing	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	McC	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	-	60a, 90s
Realms of Israel	M-O	Power: Fantasy	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£1.75	-	89s
Riddle of the Sands	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£20.00	10	£4.00	(d)	62s
Riftlords	C-O	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	No	3	£4	(a)	89a
Rugby League Breakout	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	3	£5.00 for 4	-	-
Rugby League Challenge	M-O	Sport: Rugby	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.10	-	96s
Rugby League Stats	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	41a
Rugby Union Stats	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	96s
Rua Chase	C-O	Sport: Cricket	SOE	p	£1.00 for 4	5	£1.00 for 4	-	51a, 85a, 96s
SF	H-O	Sci-Fi	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£9.99 per year	-	62s
Starmania VI Adventures	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£40.00 for 12	2	£4.00	-	-
Starmania: Exile	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.00	-	53a
Starmania: NW	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WLL	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Starmania: S	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	ABS	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Starmania: Serpent Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	CAS	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Starmania: Viridian Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£10.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Scottish Email Soccer League	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SES	e, w	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Seadogs and Darlings	H-O	RPG: Historical	SDD	e	Free	3	£1.50	-	-
Serim Ral	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAR	p	£10.00	1	£4.50	-	50a, 92a, 96a
Serim Ral	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	INC	p	Free	0	£3.50	-	50a
Serim Ral	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	MIN	p	£5.00	3	£2.00	(c)	50a, 78a
Shambhala	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WAY	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	-	-
Shambhala	C-O	Sport: Basketball	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	-
Slapshot	C-O	Sport: Ice Hockey	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	53s
S-League, The	C-O	Sport: Motor Racing	SPO	p	£5.00	0	£20.00 for 9 wks	-	90s

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# The Lost Gold of Stronnmark

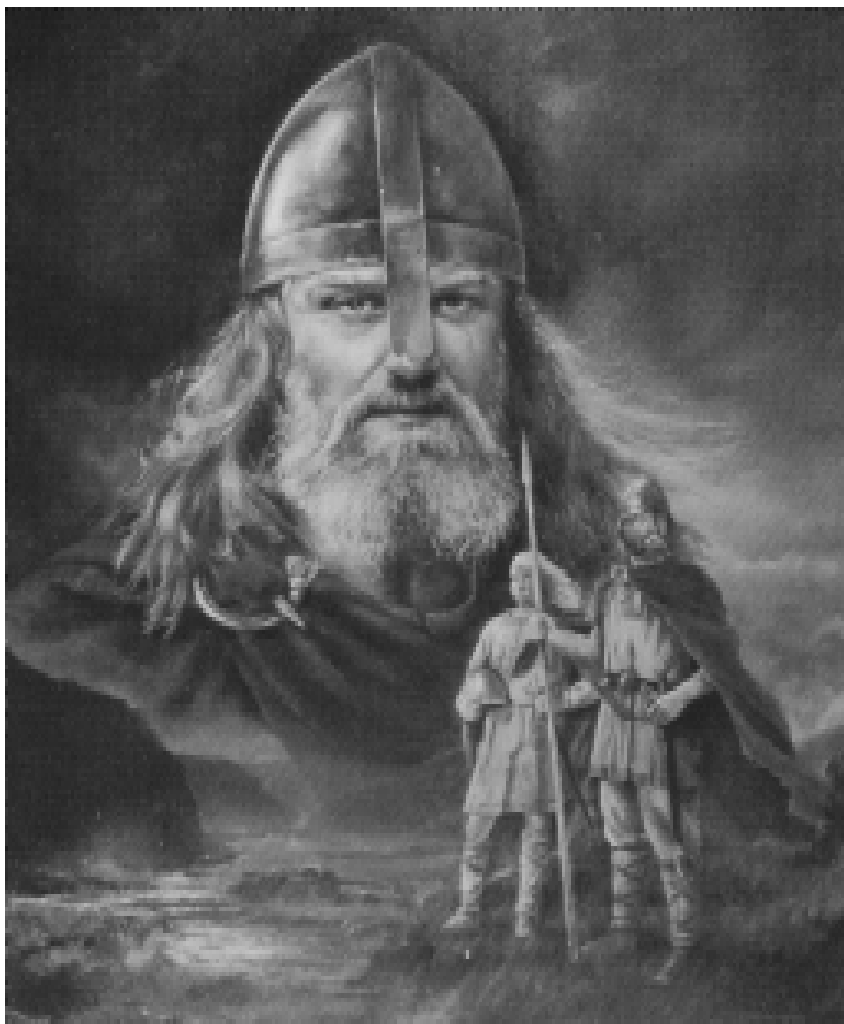
## Chapter 3: A Theft and a Disappearance...

WE CONTINUE the adventures of Ragnar the Vikjarl, 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 will try to fit in as many of your suggestions as possible, though obviously may have to pick and choose at times.

After a while the river began to broaden, and Lake Ramman came into view spread out like a glittering blue jewel in the summer sun. And there, on the large island in its centre was the greatest jewel of all, the city of Ramdalmire, ancient seat of the Ramdallian Emperors since time immemorial. Drawing the 'Sleipnir' up a deserted slipway, Ragnar and Haakon found that the streets were not paved with gold, instead they were stained with the blood of many hundreds of people, slain in whatever conflict had boiled up in this turbulent city. Warbands could be seen roaming the city and in some alleyways corpses could be seen just left to rot. More than once the great sword Mjolnir bit flesh as Ragnar beat off the roving brigands that roamed the streets in search of booty. Breathing hard, having just despatched a man who had thrown a dagger at Haakon, Ragnar was dismayed to hear the clatter of hooves behind him, and Haakon's cry of warning. Whirling round, Mjolnir flashing in the late afternoon sun, Ragnar prepared to fight again ...

Galloping up the road came a squad of disciplined cavalry in the scale-mail breastplates of the Imperial Guard. Leading them was a man Ragnar recognised as Haral, son of Patta. Ragnar knew the man from his roaming days, a colourless fellow, pretty useless with weapons, but he can defend himself, unarmed, against a berserker or anything mansized of about his own weight. Haral has a reputation for being an endless supply of ingenious ideas, traps and plans. Last Ragnar heard, he was a tax collector in the service of the empire, dreaming up new taxes. Quite what Haral might be doing in command of troops was beyond Ragnar, nevertheless he lowered the mighty sword Mjolnir and hailed his former comrade.

Later that evening Ragnar and Haral talked late into the night over a few jars of Mithlonian ale. The news was bad: Toric IV 'Peacemaker' was dead, rumour had it by an assassin's hand. Ramdalmire was once again a battleground for an undeclared civil war between various states jostling for position and power in the Empire. Most of the merchants in Ramdalmire remain in the pay of Cheyana, whilst some of the Imperial Guard have been bought by Rorik the Golden - a bastard son of Toric's and a pretender to the throne who has the backing of the Sarathosian faction in the city. The late Emperor's only surviving son Torfried had claimed the throne as Toric V and, until a week ago, it seemed probable that some arrangement would be hashed out by the nobles in the Thingvir. However that was before Ingold the Boneless, a mage rumoured to have learnt much from the hidden Brotherhood of the Void, stole the Amulet of Amygdalos from the Imperial treasury. The Amulet is an ancient stone filled with the powers of chaos. When it is wielded, bonds of honour, justice and loyalty begin to break down - just right for fostering a rebellion, but its effects could spread far beyond the Empire. Fortunately, Ingold has no idea how to unleash the full strength of the amulet. Sages say that in the hands of a wizard of sufficient knowledge and power, the amulet could break Midhír asunder, breaking the bonds of stone itself.



Ingold, banished during Toric IV's long reign on suspicion of practising dark magics, is said to have made a home in the mountains far to the east of the Empire: Haral thinks he may have fled there to study the Amulet. But there is a more immediate problem. Along with the Amulet, Ingold appears to have stolen the Imperial Regalia, golden artefacts dating far back into Ramdallian and Stronnmarkian history, without which none of the claimants can be crowned Emperor. If the wizard wished to keep the Empire in chaos, he could not have chosen a better way to do it. Haral, and the remaining loyal members of the Imperial Guard, have taken it upon themselves to find the missing regalia. Ragnar was on the verge of offering his help to Haral, hoping his friend would in turn aid his search for the raiders, when he noticed that Haakon had disappeared ...

*You can have your say on what happens next: the story will take whatever course **you** choose!*

- 1) Should Ragnar help Haral or look for Haakon?
- 2) What has happened to Haakon?
- 3) Suggest a character you would like to see appear and explain his or her personality, abilities and motives.

*Please email the GM (colin pbmgames.com) or send your thoughts to Carol with other feedback on this issue.*

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