

ARMI STICE DAY

Issue No. 22 and last

EDITORIAL

Welcome to a rather retro looking edition of *Armistice Day*. It has become painfully obvious to me that I am unable to keep this zine running to any sort of realistic deadline, which is not a satisfactory solution for a zine which claims to be running games. Therefore, the zine is folding forthwith and the following games are being transferred to John Marsden's excellent zine *Ode*:

MARNE - SOMME - MONS - HELIGOLAND - ARRAS

I will finish off TANENBURG and the remaining email games via the Internet - if there is still the demand given the appalling service I have been offering recently as a GM.

All subs are being transferred to *Ode* as well - John has been sent a cheque from me to cover all subscriptions. If you do not subscribe to *Ode* and you do not want to continue subscribing once you receive an issue from John, I am sure he will refund your subscriptions. But I would urge you to stay with *Ode* - it is a first rate zine, in the finest traditions of the traditional Diplomacy hobby. So you know what John has been told about you - your details straight out of my subscription database are on the back page.

Despite all this, I WILL continue to publish a zine - probably no more than 4-5 times a year - and it will be FREE to anyone who wants to register to receive it. In the main it will be the same sort of vintage Diplomacy stuff inside that normally found its way into *Armistice Day* - but the absence of deadlines and games means that I will produce it when I want to and when I have the time (without feeling guilty when I don't). All current subscribers to *Armistice Day* will get the first issue when it comes out and they can then continue to receive it free thereafter just by registering an interest (I don't want to send it to people who don't want to get it). I am going to hope optimistically that those UK editors who are trading with me will continue (as I need your zines to go in the Archive) - but if anyone isn't happy, let me know and I will send a sub (I don't want anyone to feel ripped off). I will assume that international trades are cancelled - as it would not be a fair deal for editors sending me zines from the USA.

Life is fairly crazy at the moment - because of work I am out the house 14-16 hours a day during the week, which is just making me feel shattered. Then the weekend comes along and I either sleep or try and be a semi-decent father/husband. And on top of that we're in the middle of moving house. There just aren't enough hours in the day to run this zine as it should be run and I have to face up to that.

All that remains to be done is to apologise for the sub-standard way in which I have ran these games over the past 6 months or so and to thank John for agreeing to help me out. I guess this fold has been inevitable for the past six months - my job is a complete killer when it comes to stress levels and working hours (I even had to go and give evidence to a House of Lords Select Committee a few weeks ago - that was certainly an experience, I can tell you!). Other recent highlights include dinner with eleven Tory MEPs, chairing a conference in Brussels and a work trip to Toledo. Still, I'm not bored - just shattered. And to cap it all it looks as though the CWU is about to vote on a national postal strike - clearly Turkeys do sometimes vote for Christmas even in July.

I'll stay in touch by continuing to publish on an irregular basis - make sure you do likewise.

A Very Short History of Mission from God

By Stephen Agar

A couple of months ago there was a query on the UKPBM mailing list about the history of Mission from God – so here is a brief chronology to keep the record straight.

The first issue of Mission from God was put together by frequent attendees at the Birmingham Hobbymeet – namely, Peter Tulk, Iain Bowen, Pete Doubleday (the title stemming from a Blues Brother reference (and these days it's also the name of a Blues Brothers tribute band as well)). The first issue edited by Pete appeared in November 1986 and carried reviews of 55 different UK zines. The reviews were very partial – being the strong opinions of the aforementioned plus a couple of pages from William Whyte and thus was a clear break with the earlier tradition of fairly bland hobby listing zines. The first issue was numbered "Genesis" which was the forerunner of immense confusion as to zine numbering. The second issue was predictably called "Exodus" and came out in February 1987, this issue being edited by Iain – and the pattern was set. The editorial board changed occasionally (Pete Tulk left after issue 3, William Whyte and Andy Bate joined at issue 4 and Nick Kinzett joined at issue 5). This formula continued for sometime – the bulk of the hard work being done by Iain Bowen. Iain managed to edit the zine for quite a while – up to issue 12 (which was not called "2 Kings" but "the Apocalypse of St. John the Divine"). 12 issues in 4 years is quite an achievement for a listing zine. Iain passed the editorship over to Andy Key and Madi Smith.

Issue 13 which appeared in the Autumn of 1991 was called "Matthew", Andy and Madi having decided to mark a change in editor with a move to the New Testament. The slightly tatty mimeo look was swapped for a photocopied DTP appearance. Andy and Madi only lasted for three issues, No. 15 "Luke" (their last) appearing in Autumn 1992. The zine was in abeyance for quite a while, but eventually Pete Sullivan came to the rescue, throwing together a thin issue 16 ("John") in early 1994. Pete managed one more issue (no. 17 – "Acts of the Apostles") after MidCon in late 1994. A trawl around the hobby for someone willing to take on Mission from God resulted in Kim Head taking over – though she only produced a single issue in July 1995. Confusingly she called her issue "No. 16" although it was in fact the eighteenth issue!

Another gap ensued until John Harrington stepped in to rescue MFG. His "issue 17" (which was really issue 19) appeared in January 1997 and John has kept the faith ever since (although his numbering has remained consistently two issues out). John managed two issues in 1997 and one every year since. Thus the latest issue was "issue 24" (though really issue 26) and published in January 2003.

RICHARD SHARP

Remembered by Chris Tringham

My enduring memory of Richard will, I think, be of sitting around the dining table at Norton House after an excellent dinner (probably roast beef) and several glasses of wine, discussing some matter or other. Richard would still be very coherent and lucid, but probably arguing something very extreme and almost certainly "politically incorrect". Our views were frequently a long way apart, but (in spite of this) discussions and arguments with Richard were always interesting and often revealed common ground or provided some insight into his thinking.

I probably first met Richard in 1977 when he was still (just) married to Jill. He was living at 27 Elm Close, Amersham and had recently quit his job in a publishing house in London to become a freelance writer. I had joined the National Games Club earlier that year and subscribed to *Dolchstoß*. I remember that in those early days I read every issue from cover to cover the moment it

arrived, and greatly admired the quality of the writing and the enthusiasm about Diplomacy and a whole host of other games.

I also knew of Richard as the author of the 'Bedbug Island' series of articles in Games & Puzzles (though I never rated them very highly) and co-author (with John Piggott) of a book about games published by Marks & Spencer. He subsequently wrote "The Game of Diplomacy".

I think that first meeting arose because Richard offered me a lift to a housecon somewhere up north, and this would certainly be when I first met Jill and their children, Dominic and Pippa, who were both very young at the time. Perhaps they were used to finding bedraggled hobby members sleeping in their father's car, or perhaps it was an unpleasant surprise (or both).

Not long after that, Richard and Jill separated. Richard carried on living in Elm Close whilst Jill moved to Kent along with their children.

The second Eurocon took place in summer 1978. This was something between a con and a holiday, and took place in a house in the deep south-west of France, that turned out to be more suitable for a large party of school children than for 30 or so adults (though I use that term loosely) – basically it was one large dormitory upstairs, with a few rooms plus a table tennis table, a dartboard and a large field.

Richard was very ill that summer, as he delighted in telling people afterwards. Part way through the holiday, he was admitted to hospital but thrown out on the (not totally unreasonable) assumption that he was just a drunken Englishman who had fallen over after one too many beers, and who would be fine when he sobered up. In fact he was suffering from atypical pneumonia, others forms of which have include so-called Legionnaires disease, and SARS. Not trivial at all, and fortunately the second hospital understood what was wrong and gave Richard the correct treatment.

After being thrown out of the first hospital, Richard was obviously not well, and the most apparent problem was that it was extremely painful for him when he laughed. Unfortunately, he chose to play cards (either bridge or solo whist) with the likes of Adrien Baird, Greg Hawes and Barry McManus. Anyone who witnessed this bizarre sight (as I did) will probably never forget Richard literally collapsing with laughter.

I also remember visiting Richard in hospital, delivering essential supplies of food and drink and playing a game of bridge that was rigged so that Richard had a perfect hand! Fortunately he was recovering by this time, and at the end of the holiday I think Pete Birks drove him back to Amersham (probably not an ideal arrangement for either of them!).

The next few months were probably one of the lowest points of Richard's life. Still recovering from pneumonia, going through a divorce, separated from his children and fighting a custody battle, and with no regular income, and on top of that he was being pursued by the two French hospitals for his medical bills. Understandably, Richard folded *Dolchstoß* and withdrew somewhat from the Diplomacy hobby.

The hobby did its bit to help, with a collection that raised a fairly substantial amount towards the medical bills, and at least one other person sent Richard a large sum as a life-time subscription to *Dolchstoß*. However, I have no doubt that what made the biggest difference was that Richard met Bron, who was to become his 2nd wife. She was also separated, also had two children, and also played bridge.

Eurocon III was an altogether happier event than Eurocon II. It took place further north, in the Dordogne region near Ribérac (if I remember correctly). The accommodation was very much better, being an old mill than had been converted into four large apartments, and the setting was also very pleasant (a few years later the property was being used for painting holidays and was featured on the BBC's Holiday program). hilariously, after making such a fuss about people bringing "flooziess" to Eurocon II, Richard brought Bron with him, and other couples included Paul & Karen Simpkins, Richard & Claire Walkerdine, and Mick & Jenny Bullock, which did make the holiday a bit more civilized.

Later that year, I went with Richard to Polycon (the national con, organized by Bob Brown at Preston Polytechnic). A large group of us (sometimes known as the "hardcore") spent almost all of our time in pubs and Indian restaurants, and at Ron Fisher's home, rather than playing games at the convention. Contrary to what some may have believed the so-called "hardcore" was never particularly exclusive, and Richard was happy to socialize with almost anyone, though a love of beer, Indian food and card games certainly helped.

Richard and Bron got married in October 1979. A large contingent of the hobby turned up at the Emperor of India in Farnham Common (not far from Slough) to celebrate this event. There was, however, a small hitch, in that Richard hadn't quite finalized his divorce, and registrars being a bit fussy about these things, they couldn't actually get married. Richard therefore had to go round the pub and quietly tell everyone that the wedding they had come to celebrate had not actually taken place (but they did get married a few days later). It didn't spoil the day, though it will forever remain a mystery to me how Pete Birks managed to get his car back to the Oval with either being stopped by the police or having an accident! We had all drunk an awful lot that day...

I remember spending many hours in the Emperor of India during the time that it was Richard and Bron's "local". This must have been the start of their 'open house' weekends for hobby members and other friends. The schedule was based around pub opening hours, with the remaining time spent at Richard's home either taking part in a quiz, playing chess or poker or sleeping. In the pub we played bridge, and (for a while) darts. The alternative venue was The Eagle in Amersham which was obviously much closer, but not so welcoming.

Richard was an extremely good bridge player, and had written a few books on the subject as well as being a bridge teacher. Bron is quite a useful player when sober, but her bidding and play got steadily worse the more she drank. On the other hand, in all the time that I knew Richard, he never seemed the worse for wear however much he drank, and I saw no evidence of his bridge deteriorating (though it possible that it did slightly whilst everyone else got much worse). This made the Richard and Bron partnership somewhat incendiary, and (to add to the fun), Richard devised a high complex bidding system that he always remembered but Bron often forgot.

Richard used to get extremely upset when Bron mis-bid or mis-played, and the "inquests" once the hands were over could get very acrimonious. Playing against them was quite strange - at times they seemed unbeatable, but when the wheels fell off it could go horribly wrong. Richard was always a very ethical player, so even if he knew Bron had misunderstood his bid or made an incorrect bid of her own he would insist on playing as if it were correct. Fortunately it seems that their arguments over the table were soon forgotten otherwise they couldn't have remained happily married for so long. They certainly seemed well suited to each other, if you'll excuse the pun.

I played bridge with Richard very many times over the years, and although I consistently lost (which cost me a fair amount of money), I also learned a great deal about bridge. Richard did teach bridge professionally at one time, and he was extremely patient with less capable players, and always seemed happy to explain what had gone wrong without getting too upset. He was also very adept at adjusting to different systems rather than expecting novices to be experts (a common mistake amongst better players) and I always felt more confident playing with Richard. Unfortunately, as I hardly ever played bridge with anyone else I didn't get much benefit from my expensive "lessons".

A few years after my last Eurocon (I think I attended four in total) I joined Richard and Bron on holiday in France a few times. This was as part of a smaller group, sometimes with Dominic and/or Pippa, and often with Glyn Palmer and Steve Doubleday. As a fluent French speaker, Richard tended to order the food in restaurants, though his patience was exhausted when translating the dessert menu (often not written down) and then taking orders for three different flavours of ice cream from each person!

By this time, Richard and Bron had moved from Elm Close in 'Top Amersham' to a property called Norton House, in Wheilden Street, 'Old Amersham', which they

purchased jointly with Steve Doubleday. This was a bigger (and much older) house with a cellar and a swimming pool, as well as an annexe that was occupied by Steve. Richard was working in Gerards Cross as a translator, on some sort of retained freelance basis that enabled him to work almost whenever he wanted and take several holidays a year. This was a good arrangement for Richard (especially as it meant he never had to go to London), and I believe that this was the happiest stage of his life.

Richard had restarted *Dolchstoß* and ran it very efficiently. He was still very much involved in the Diplomacy hobby, but totally on his own terms, and because he didn't attend cons (or hobby meets when they existed) he remained something of an enigma to most who joined the hobby after about 1979. Perhaps it's unfortunate that more people didn't take up his invitation to an "open house" for old hobby friends and anyone else who was interested, held twice a year (Easter and October). I always found Richard and Bron very hospitable and welcoming, and they didn't seem to mind when people turned up unannounced or a day earlier or later than planned. Richard was genuinely happy that people had taken the trouble to come, and seemed surprised and embarrassed when we insisted in paying for his dinner if we went out (normally on the Saturday night for Indian or Chinese food).

I went to France a few more times in the early 1990's with Richard and Bron (plus Steve, Glyn and others), each time staying in an excellent property near to Siorac-en-Perigord on the Dordogne. Richard had wanted to stay in this particular house (owned by the boss of VFB) for quite a while, but it had always been booked up. It wasn't difficult to see why - it has a superb location overlooking the Dordogne and a terrace with a great view, plus a large swimming pool and a table tennis room. It was a totally relaxing holiday, with the morning for light shopping and a trip to the bar for coffee and Armagnac, the days spent playing bridge on the terrace and swimming, and the evenings eating out at nearby restaurants or on the terrace (with Richard and Bron usually cooking dinner).

On reflection, I think that's how I would like to remember Richard - where he was happiest - in France, enjoying a good dinner and a few glasses of wine with his friends. We'll all miss him.

LETTERS

Chris Tringham:

What is the matter with John Wilman? I would agree that Richard wouldn't have wanted sympathy, and I am sure he was intelligent enough to know that he was taking a risk smoking so heavily. I believe that he enjoyed smoking and drinking so much that giving them up would have made his life miserable and he wouldn't have wanted it any other way. However, it's still sad that he died, and it also seems appropriate to pay tribute to what he contributed to our hobby.

It seems as if Richard didn't make a very good impression on John when they met, which doesn't surprise me very much. I got to know Richard quite well, and I am happy to say that he was very good company and a very nice bloke, but probably not easy to get to know. I think the large number of people who attended the funeral service really speaks for itself, and I'm sorry that I wasn't able to be there.

I can't say that I cared for his political views, but they were his own sincerely held beliefs and he was neither a politician nor a public figure of any kind, so of course he was entitled to hold those views and to express them freely. Naturally he aired his opinions in *Dolchstoß*, as many other zine editors have done, and he had put a lot of thought into the things he wrote. As for drink driving, I know very well that Richard did break the law (in France at least) but I can also say that I believe he was always an extremely good and safe driver even after a bottle of wine (or more).

Richard was a complex character, and most who knew him well will remember someone who was a terrific host, a good cook, and great company.

Incidentally, John must live in a different world to the rest of us if he thinks that only the rich take holidays in France. Hotels and restaurants are cheaper than their equivalents in the UK, and renting a house for two weeks is much cheaper than in the UK, whilst wine, beer and cigarettes are also significantly less expensive. I know that Richard had been seriously considering moving to France, and if he had been able to work from home I am sure that it would have made a lot more sense than living in Amersham.

Paul Reeves

I hope that Somme lasts long enough for you to change your mind about folding – can't you just reduce the frequency a bit? You could always make *Armistice Day* the official MidCon House Zine and publish once or twice a year. Hope the next issue has some information on the new house, and anything that isn't top secret on the job.

SA: I suppose in a way I am doing what you suggest – going for a handful of issues a year – but with no games and no subscriptions I needn't feel guilty about how long each issue takes. I am really looking forward to not having the pressure and so being able to make each issue worth receiving.

With luck we will have exchanged contracts by the time you read this – if we haven't then something has gone very wrong. We're paying £525,000 for a large detached 4 bedroom house, fairly near the centre of Brighton, but in a quiet cul-de-sac. It was built in 1935 and so has decent ceiling height and a nice oak panelled hallway. The loft space is huge and is crying out for a conversion – you could get at least another three rooms out of the loft – but that will have to wait a while, as a £300,000 mortgage is scary enough (even at 3.59% fixed for 2 years).

Most of my job at the moment concerns "access pricing" – i.e. the price the regulator says that other companies have to pay us to use our delivery network. At the moment this is being set at 11.46p, which is a bit of a problem as this is actually less than the cost of providing the service. The next 2-3 months of my life will be spent on this issue more or less full time.

THE TOP TWENTY ZINES NEVER TO HAVE WON THE ZINE POLL

=1	1901 and all that
=1	Cut & Thrust
3	NMR!
4	Puppet Theatre News
5	Fall of Eagles
6	Y Ddraig Goch
7	Denver Glont
8	A Little Original Sin
9	BUM
=10	Jigsaw
=10	The Acolyte
12	Vienna
=13	A Step Further Out
=13	Smodnoc
15	C'est Magnifique
16	Underneath the Mango Tree
=17	Fifth Column
=17	One Man's Rubbish
19	War Bulletin
=20	Armistice Day
=20	Prisoners of War

ITALY (Bruce Edwards) NMR! F(Tun); F(GoL)Std.; A(Swa); F(MAS); F(CYS); A(Dam); A(Zur); A(Pie); A(Nap)* [DISLODGED, DISBANDS, NRO]; F(TYS) all Std. u/o
RUSSIA (Bob Pitman) A(Arc)-Mos; A(Vol) S A(Arc)-Mos; A(StP) S A(Arc)-Mos

September 1916

A: Vie, Bud, Pec, Zar, Ser, Bul, Rum, Gre, War, Dre, Smy, Con, Ode, Si n, Mun, Nap, Ven, +Rom, +Sic = 19. No builds ordered, 3 short.
E: Lpl, Ply, Lon, Bre, Por, Den, Ire, Nwy, Swe, Edi, Hol, Ki e, Par, Bel, +Ber = 15. Builds A(Ply).
F: Lyo = 1. No change.
G: -Ber = 0. OUT!
I: -Rom, -Sic, Tun, Cas, Mar, Egy, Mor, Dam, And, Zur = 8. GM removes F(CYS)
R: StP, Mos, Arc = 3. No change.

Versailles: Surprising NMR from Bruce – hope all is well.

-[]-

BACKBIT

This issue isn't exactly the blaze of glory I wanted to go down in – but given we are in Minorca next week and then coming back to moving house, I think it is just as well to get it out of the way.

You know, I think I could get used to this sort of look. It is a liberation not having to worry about the layout – and there is a perverse pleasure in using a state of the art PC to pretend it is an old manual typewriter (if only there was a way to do the underlining...). In the finest traditions of the old stencil duplicated zines of days gone by, I now give you... a spacefiller!

Diplomacy Zines I Have Published Over The Years

Pigmy (Issues 1-32) (1977-1979)
Here We Go Again (Issues 1-2) (1980)
Variants & Uncles (Issues 1-7) (1980-1981)
Spring Offensive (Issues 1-73) (1992-1999)
The Tangled Web We Weave (Issues 1-2) (1997)
Armistice Day (Issues 1-22) (2001-2003)

DEADLINES

Games as for *Ode* 249

Contributions for the free new no-Deadlines no-games Diplomacy chat zine (not that I really expect any) – let's say

30th September 2003

Your credit to be transferred to John Marsden =

Space for special messages:

Goodbye and thanks for all the fish...