

DIB DIB DIB

ISSUE

22



Here boys, you don't think he's going to reach 30, 40, 50

So here you have it, you lucky things you - issue 22 of Dib Dib Dib (practically the Tenth Wonder of the World!), the zine that came lucky 7th in this year's Zine Poll (much to the disgust of Clive 'I'll hold the pressure-point' Booth, I'm happy to say). And for all this, all you have to do is part with a measly 1p per sheet (not page!) + the cost of postage. Not bad, eh? So now that I've got you all eager, just send your money, gold bricks etc to: Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

EDITORIAL

This has been one hell of a busy month for me I've hardly had any time to myself. It began when Pete Mearns (ex-editor of Puppet Theatre News, for those new to the hobby) decided to spend a couple of days down here in a more civilised part of the country (Pete hails from Inverness). Initially his idea was to go to a Sealed Knot gathering in the south somewhere, spend a few days here, and try and attend the hoobymeeet at 'The Lamb'. After much discussion the Sealed Knot idea was scrapped - though Jan and I assured him we were prepared to come and jeer at him from the sidelines. Pete decided that our support, although generous, was not really needed, and that he'd have a nice relaxing couple of days doing nothing. He turned up Saturday afternoon, said his hello's, and kept edging himself towards my computer. "Fancy having a look at my 'Wizardry' game?" I asked. "Och, I wouldn't mind having a wee look," he said. "By the way I've brought the Atari for Stuart to play with," and quickly pulled up the nearest chair.

That was it. After an hour of playing, the man had been turned into a fully-fledged 'terminal junkie' - never have I seen a sight more pitiful. After killing off countless characters (MOST of the time his party came up carrying their dead with bits of armour hanging off!) his hands became claws over the keyboard, his eyes became glazed, and his tongue was clenched between his teeth in concentration. All we could get out of him was the odd grunt as his party took yet another blow - even asking if he'd like some refreshment went unnoticed.

But came the time, as it always does, for us to go to bed (one o'clock in the morning it was). At my suggestion to quit Pete looked up at me like a man possessed: "What when I'm nearly WINNING?!". He winced as another one of his party was killed. It was a twitching wreck of a man that we showed upstairs to bed (not that he was far from being like this when he arrived on our doorstep).

Sunday morning he still had a slight nervous twitch, but I put that down to size of the breakfast. We pottered around until dinner time. Bang on the dot John Keight turned up. "No, don't bother doing anything for me," he said pulling a chair up. "Oh well if you insist," he added. John likes to please.

The rest of the day was spent playing on computers. John had brought his Atari 800 computer (NOT to be confused with the pathetic games console), so while Pete, Stuart and I tried that, John scuttled off to the Apple with his own Wizardry disk. (He's been hooked for a while now - bought his own disk to play on MY machine!) With the amount of hardware being used in that living room, wires all over the place, I got the feeling that if we had plugged one more thing in the house would have blown a fuse - looked like a meeting of renal dialysis users!

Monday afternoon Gary Piper turned up, minus his brother (where the hell were you, Karl?) John turned up shortly afterwards - about lunchtime. It turned out that Gary is taking over publishing Puppet Theatre News from Colin Bruce (bit sudden wasn't it Colin?). Gary has only three weeks before PTN's next deadline, but didn't have a typewriter, duplicator, stencils, paper, records or stapler. I couldn't help feeling he'd been chucked in at the deep end with not much of a chance at producing a good first issue - important I think when taking over an established zine. His suggestions of a new zine title were not up to much, Pete and I tried to help but even our most jocular ideas were passed over.

After lunch there followed the strangest game of 'Formula 1' I have ever played. Practically every time someone took a chance around a bend, the penalty throws using two dice ended up on 3 or 11, causing them to spin off. It left everyone too scared of taking any further chances. On the last bend it was Pete and I. Pete took a chance and threw the dice - SPIN OFF! Great, I crowed, now by taking a chance I could win - I threw my dice that's right, I spun off. Stupid bloody game anyway! The law of averages certainly took a bashing that day.

After that we played 'Hare & Tortoise'. I can never get used to this game; I can't stop the urge to race into the lead (almost fatal in this game). It's too subtle for me, I haven't won a bloody game yet.

In the evening Paul a student at Bath University helped make up a fair number for a Sopwith game. I shot down Paul, and let him come back on (with half damage and ammo); I shot, hit and out-manceuvred John Keight. After letting John back onto the board he decided with Gary's help to gang up on me (there's revenge for you). Consequently Pete won the game.

Tuesday was much the same, with the exceptions that most of the talking was again about what name Gary wanted to chose for his zine, and, we watched a couple of video films we'd hired. I must say now, before word gets out, that Pete's choice left a lot to be desired. He chose 'Jungle Burger' - the sickest cartoon I've ever seen. "But I was told it was good!" Pete bleated from under a cushion somewhere. A pathetic excuse indeed - the man's a degenerate.

Gary and Pete left Wednesday morning for London as both wanted to make the Lambsmeet (Pete was coming back on the Friday and leaving Saturday). But things still didn't quieten down. Ian Tilson and his wife turned up to collect his dog (we were looking after his Dalmatian for the day), found we were having an Indian meal with some friends (another couple not in the hobby), thought it was a good idea and sent out for his own Indian meal. Sunday Clive and Pauline Booth came for the day. All in all I had an excellent time, but come Monday I was shattered. I don't know why, but I did all the work! Many thanks to all those that came - hope you enjoyed yourselves. (I hope the madras didn't overcome you on the way home, Pete.)

ooCCOoo

Think I should make a break there - keep the hobby chat seperate. I didn't get much time last issue (or the space) to mention the fact that Richard Walkerdine has now taken over the responsibility of running the Les Pimley Award. For those who don't know, Les Pimley was a zine editor who died a few years ago. In his memory the award was started to give credit to the one who has done the most for this hobby in a given year. The award was originally lumped in with Mike Allaway's Gladys Awards, but complaints started piling up over the fact that the fun-type Gladys cheapened, or lessened, the seriousness of the award.

Anyway nominations for this award should be sent to Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey. The deadline is September 11th (not much time!).

But to the Zine Poll. It's been said before, if for nothing else the Poll is much loved by editors because of the chat it generates. Well chat certainly has been generated - strange comments have been flying around thick and fast (if a comment can fly). Even I can be paranoid. I get the feeling sometimes that Dib doesn't exist. To clarify that statement, let me quote Brian Creese in the latest NMR!:-

"Undoubtedly the top 6 zines represent the top 6 in the hobby to-day, and virtually everyone I have spoken to voted them there, albeit in various different orders. Generally the more pulis. zines seem to have prospered this year, though chat zine Home ((Home of the Brave)) was the highest new zine."

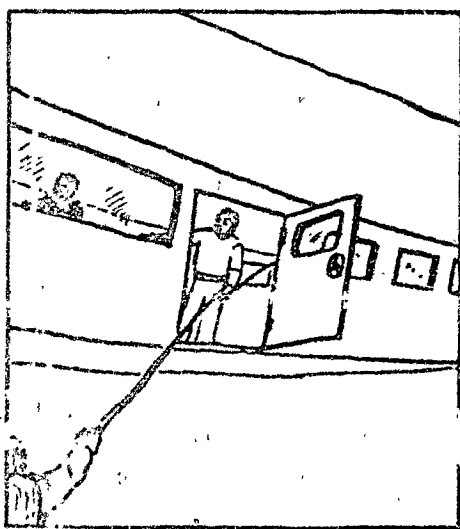
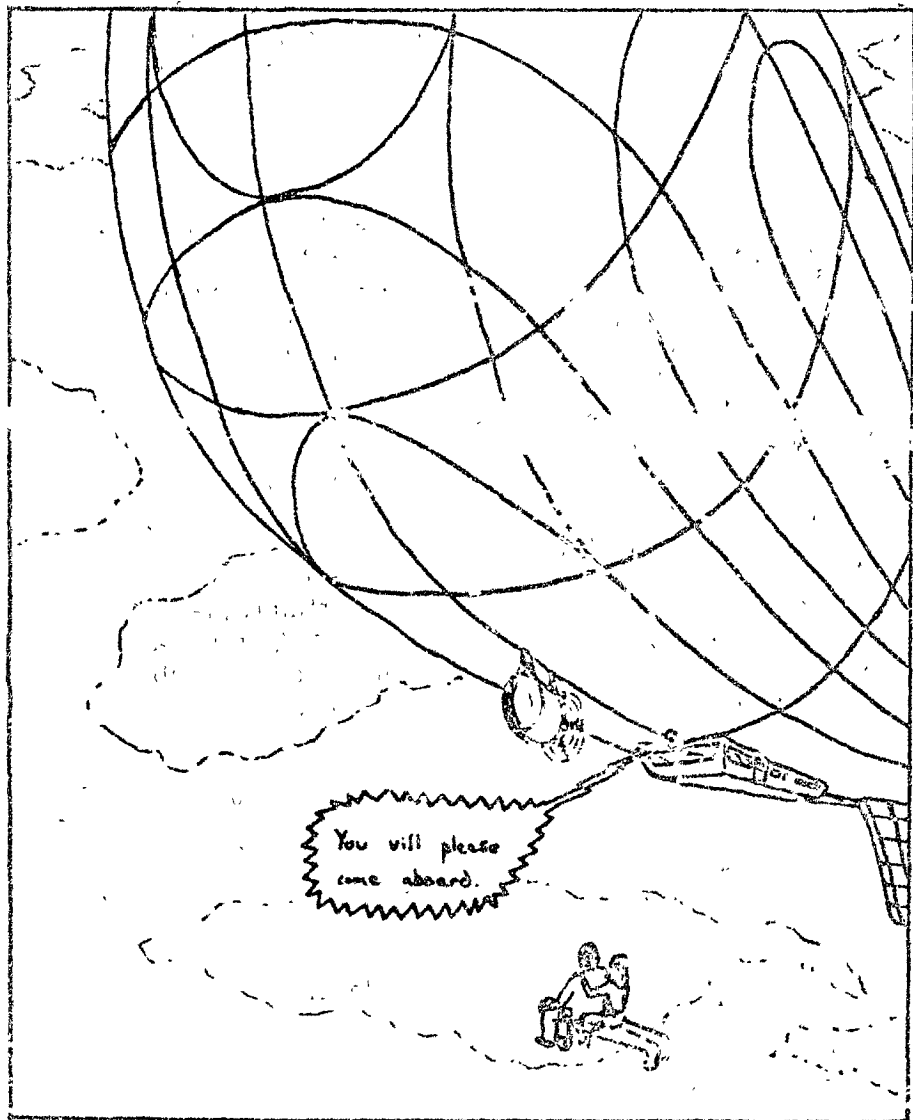
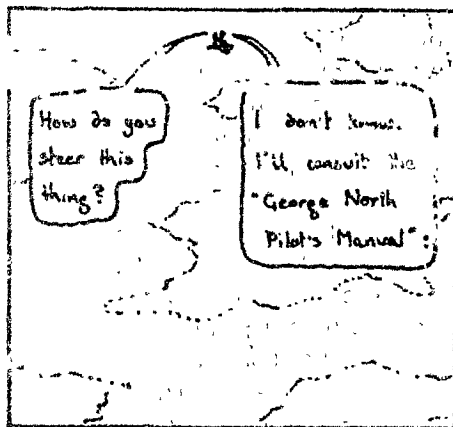
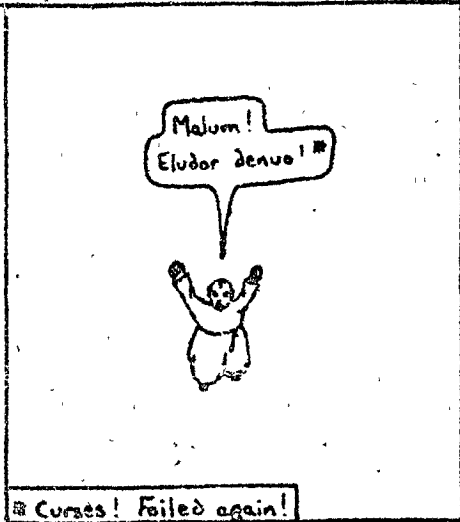
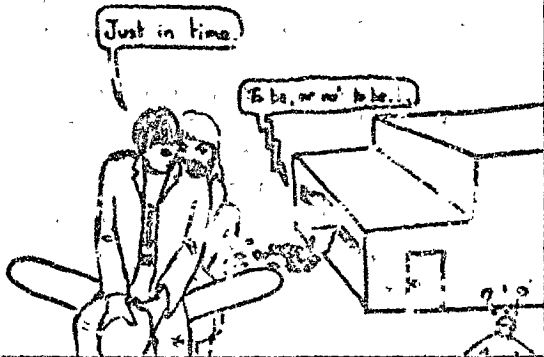
Great, eh? Now I've heard people talk about the 'top five' positions before, and even the 'top ten' - but the top SIX? Can this be mere coincidence when NMR! came 5th, Watch Your Back came 6th, D'ib Dib came 7th and Home came 8th? How

ONCE

by
Chris Sarpow & Mark Newman

Episode 8:
War And Peace,
Part LXVII

Tom and Angel make their escape —
floating away on their inflatable George
North.....



Who is in the mysterious
airship?
How do they know who Tom
and Angel are?
Why wasn't there a Gladys
Award for Best Cartoon-
strip — you ungrateful
swines! It's a plot, I tell
you! It's all you Connie-
ising, pinko, subversives out
to undermine our society,
stealing over the guardians of
decency, democracy, and equal
rights for all Americans.

Once again, through hell and high water, out of darkest Torquay, comes a report from North of G-Force - keeping his eye on the country's defences. Mind you, once again your editor wonders what he's done to deserve such missives as

SHOELOOSE AND FANCY FREE

by George North.

Not the best holiday I ever had but not having to go to work must count for something. Well I didn't make a very good start, did I. We arrived at Torquay in glorious sunshine and there is only two things a Londoner ever wants to do when he first hits the seaside. One is to make tea and the other is to pollute the sea with ones body. Well Peg and the two kids made tea and I was off to find the English Channel. I went all alone and unaided, you understand, and that was a mistake.

I carried a bag with my clobber inside. It was a pretty large bag since it had to hold everything except my red trunks and my shoes. Well since my gear was inside the bag and I didn't want to lose it I couldn't go for a swim. Instead I went for a paddle where I could watch my bag and see it was safe. This was not hard since the bag was white with red spots and stood out a mile. And while I was busy keeping an eye on my bag ... some bleeder stole my shoes.

No, it is not all that funny. It was only the second time I wore those shoes and they cost me twelve quid. Still I would sooner have my shoes pinched than lose the bag with all my money in it, so in a way I suppose I must count myself lucky. However, it did pose a problem. How do you walk back to the flat a quarter of a mile away, and what do you tell the wife? If I waited long enough they might miss me and come looking, but somehow nobody ever misses me all that much and the prospect wasn't very likely. So I could don my best suit and walk home without my shoes and socks and look a complete idiot, or, I could remove all but my red shorts and walk home like I always did wear nothing except shorts while on holiday. I decided the latter was best, in spite of my still lily white body and old age.

Have you ever tried walking four hundred yards without treading on stones and without attracting the slightest attention? Perhaps not. Well it wasn't easy and the homeward journey was right through the Torquay railway station where people were having tea outside and pretending not to see me and not to laugh. Old ladies turned their heads disgusted that anyone should walk through the town so scantily dressed, while kids shouted 'fatty' and made mock.

Then when I got to the flat Peg and the kids never stopped writing and telling everybody Dad had his shoes nicked. What is more Peg had not bought a spare pair for all day Sunday. Six pairs of her own shoes but none for dad. "You don't expect husbands to get their shoes pinched," is the reason she gave me. So on Monday we was off to the shops in my tatty old slippers. Peg told every shopkeeper how I lost my shoes on the beach. One assistant lost all interest in serving me and simply asked: "Did we mind if she went and told her friend," and then they stood sniggering instead of serving for ages.

The rest of the holiday isn't half as interesting. A buggy ride at Cockington, a boat trip to the River Dart, a day at Dawlish, and a visit to Widdecombe. All these villages are commercialised up to the hilt and therefore one could shelter in the houses (which are really all shops) instead of getting soaked outside in the rain.

Heh heh - oh such a tale of woe. Kids nowadays have no respect anymore, eh George?

Well that's George for this issue (my sympathy goes out to Peg), how much more trouble can he cause or get into in future adventures?

LETTERS

IAIN SINGER:

"Thanks for the last issue of Dibble - and congrats on the placing in the Zine Poll. Just like Sopwith stats you keep shooting up - well done it's well deserved - DON'T PRINT THIS IT'D RUIN MY CREDIBILITY!"

((Too late mate, I'm not passing up perhaps my only chance of an ego boost just to save your credibility!! Good grief...))

ooOOOoo

Though talking of ego boosts, it seems last issue - using the computer - met with some favour ...

SIMON BILLENNESS:

"I must admit to being pleasantly surprised by the appearance of Dib Dib Dib, with its new wordprocessor. If you had said you were going to do it last issue, I would have been the first to write in saying 'No!', after skimming some of my brother's lifeless, wordprocessed computer zines, but you've managed to keep your personality in it, so it works for me. Only one snipe, there seem to be less of Jan's pictures!"

((Hopefully the lack of pictures from Jan won't be a problem for long, I'm working through a new wordprocessing package (the Applewriter II) which should give me all the capabilities I need. Consequently, I should be able to get back to the layout I had before, thus giving space for Jan's cartoons. Glad you liked the look of last issue though - I must admit I was pleasantly surprised how well the printing turned out.))

ooOOOoo

ROB CHAPMAN:

"I'm very jealous of your wordprocessing facility. I suffer a 50% wastage of stencils when typing up PR, sometimes junking a stencil just to change one word in a paragraph. Now, if I could use a wordprocessor I wouldn't have this problem, I would enjoy writing Putty Riff, and it wouldn't be so bloody late every issue! ((All very true)) Still, I've no doubt that I will have a wordprocessor one day (but will I still be producing a zine?), and a computer, and a VCR - just like everyone else (who hasn't got an electronic calculator nowadays, and I can remember when they seemed such a luxury). As I say, I believe all these things will come to me - I just wish it was sooner rather than later.

DDD 21 was very impressive, clearly printed (mostly) and particularly well laid out (Ripping Yarns Best Looking Zine?! It's a mess; R p Goch has no idea about layout - given the facilities at his disposal just about anybody could make a better job) - the games section especially. Two different sizes of type, please explain.

Many congratulations on your Zine Poll and Gladys successes. Very well deserved."

((Thank you for those few kind words and congratulations, Rob - I can see I've impressed you so much I'll have to raise the price of your issue of Dib! (Such taste this man has ...))

The reason for two different type sizes is partly explained in Andreas Sarker's letter below. I prefer the proportional spaced print to other printwheels, but it's no good for lists or straight tabulation. In the games things need to be in line. Also you may have noticed, I can cram more things in (comfortably) using the smaller print.

ooOOOoo

JOHN DODDS:

----->

"Thanks for Dib Dib Dib 21. I was most impressed with the new printer and wordprocessor, it looks a treat! You've left me feeling green with envy - I have a Commodore Pet computer, but unfortunately no cash to buy disks or a printer, and so PD will have to continue to be produced the hard way for the immediate future at least ..."

((Nice computer the Pet - after the Apple it was my second choice. From what I could work out though, the Pet was basically cheaper than the Apple, but when one started adding bits on (e.g. disk drives, 80 column cards, colour cards etc) the Apple turned out cheaper. And CERTAINLY a disk drive is necessary with wordprocessing.

Ah but this envy I've provoked good innit!!))

ooOOOoo

And from a newcomer

GRAHAME MACLENNAN:

"Thank you for your letter and the complimentary issue of 'Dib Dib Dib'. I was pleasantly surprised to receive it and very surprised at both its contents and quality. I wasn't certain to what I expected a 'zine' to be like, perhaps a cross between a textbook and a five year old's scribbling book, but I found it entertaining, informative and thought-provoking (especially the letters). I therefore decided to subscribe (if you'll have me)."

((Do you hear that you lot? Here's a man who describes Dib as quality ... entertaining, thought-provoking etc, and wonders if I'll take him on as a subscriber. Thank God I got to him before Birks, Marsden and Creese!

Seriously though, Grahame. I found it interesting, if not a little surprising, that you expected our zines to be so amatourish. It's a description I wouldn't even have considered myself.))

ooOOOoo

DAVE TANT:

"Congratulations on what I thought was a pretty good Zine Poll result for you, labouring as you do under the handicap of George North as a major contributor. Mind you, I only get one of the zines which appeared above 'Dib Dib Dib', so I'm probably not the best judge. ((Good enough I'd say))

Your latest cover picture was most illuminating - assuming, that is, that you modelled the intrepid spaceship pilot on yourself. I read somewhere that psychopaths commonly have their index fingers as long as their middle fingers; well, all four of YOUR fingers are the same length!"

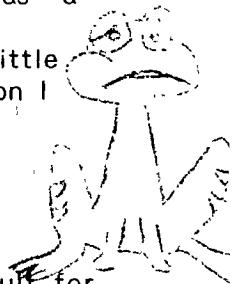
((My fingers started growing like that since my involvement in this hobby ... my thumb started growing like that after publishing my first few issues of Dib. I first noticed it after publishing Richard Hucknall's letter asking whether the human body could evolve into something grotesque under certain conditions (e.g. having your mouth in your navel). This theory in fact I proved right by showing him illustrations of Nicholas Clifton, Brian Creese, and a couple of others. Although he naturally suspected half as much after meeting Clive Booth (or so he told me). This letter, I might add, is the very letter that sparked off the bloody chameleon debate. Yes, that blasted Hucknall has a lot to answer for, and God it's been great abusing so many people in so short a paragraph!!))

ooOOOoo

IAIN SINGER:

"I love the smaller typeface - very handy for all those stats. ((I agree.))

I've just thought of an amazing way to save paper - you take a telepathic chameleon, think to it about the letter you want to write - this will appear on the chameleon, you then place it in an envelope - or possibly a bigger telepathic chameleon, think on the address (you don't even need to pay for the stamp!) post



it - once you've read it you simply think it off, place under flashing lights or whatever, and reply on the chameleon.

Now you may ask why bother, if the chameleon is telepathic it could simply pass on the message itself ((No, I can assure you, I wasn't going to ask that.)) - but chameleons don't speak English do they?

You could also simply place the chameleon on the letter - but this way is more fun.

However we must not overlook other message needs - flatfish for underwater messages; for aerial messages a chameleon and a catapult. You see how easy it is."

((Oh yes. Next I suppose you'll be telling me chameleons would be good for messages between spics - seeing as how easy it is for the message to self-destruct when stood on a flashy surface. God, how much more of this can I take! Will I crack before Martin Allen?!))

ooOOOoo

MIKE LEAN:

"Enclosed is a cheque to top up my credit which should either make you like me (if you're broke) or hate me ('cos it's extra printing/collating ... or do you get Janet to do the donkey work - thinks: vision of Tom in a Sopwith Camel complete with Vickers sub-machine whips making low level sweeps over poor Janet who is frantically trying to avoid losing pages 5-6 in the wind of Tom's propeller!) ((Are you mad, of COURSE Jan does all the donkey work.))

Anyway I thought I'd write just to tell you I'm alive and well and about to move, so can you send future Dibs to 74 Friary Park (yes just around the corner! Nora likes the neighbourhood.) ((Bet you only did it to save on removal vans!))

Now at last can be told the secret of the fold of Duel Purpose; I wanted to win a Gladys! (Well there was no chance of winning the Zine Poll). It was great seeing Duel Purpose up there leading the field of this years failures. It brought tears to my throat, a lump in my jockstrap and a rise in temperature (No I think that should read tears to my eyes, a lump in my throat and ...) Just think, I've beaten Greatest Hits in something - obviously Pete couldn't stand the opposition and decided not to fold. ((Obviously))

Enough of me and onto D:b. I enjoy reading it so keep up the good work. Mind you I see you have to employ Russ Abbot to do your publicity. Last week his mellow dulcet tones grabbed my attention with his Dib Dib Dib song (which of the chorus was Janet?) ((She was the one miming badly - they found it was better than her singing badly))

Your attitude towards Mike Close in the last issue was deplorable. Here is a young creative talent who has at last found a use for the ill-reputed chameleon and what do you do? You snicker and poke fun. Don't you realise that there have been too many British inventions which have been ridiculed, only to be later developed by the Americans for profit and money! Just remember the Hovercraft. Let Master Close expound his ideas. Who knows where they might lead? ((That's what I'm worried about!)) Just imagine a Rock concert with a whole army of chameleons suspended over the stage whilst coloured laser beams play over them. The effect would be tremendous! But what we need are British chameleons not damn Yankee ones so encourage Master Close.

Has anyone ever wondered what would happen if a green chameleon was sat on top of a red one? Would the green turn red and the red turn green, after which the original green one which is now red would turn green and the red one which has turned green would turn red and then the green one which turned red and then green would turn red and ((Another Dib subscriber cracks ...)) Anyway it would give the chameleons a blinking fright."

((Hellfire, that last bit took some time to type - every time I lost my place at either "green" or "red" I had to read it all through again to make sure I'd got it right. You'll pay for this, Lean!

Glad you like Dib, Mike (even though I'm not sure I should be encouraging you; anyone that agrees with Mike Close an' all that ...), and you're not far wrong in regards to Russ Abbot; it was his Scoutmaster sketch that gave me the

idea for the 'Dib' title!

Anyway no more of this agreeing with Close think of what it'll do for your reputation ...))

ooOOOoo

SANDY PETERS: (From somewhere in darkest Norfolk)

"HELP! I've gone off on holiday and only taken DDD 21 with me (slight exaggeration - the wife and kids are kicking about somewhere) so I don't have the address of Richard Morris to send my 'Redwing' orders to. Do you think you could be a white man and forward the enclosed stamped envelope? See what blind faith I have in you? I just know you'd never stoop to using the old Russel Hobbs to steam the thing open."

((Good grief not only am I expected to CARRY my subscribers, but now I'm expected to play the white man and resist temptation as well. Surely it's asking too much that I even pass on the orders of a sworn enemy and opponent - am I not mortal? Don't you worry though, Sandy, I wouldn't use the old Russel Hobbs to steam open your orders I own the new faster boiling Swan!)) ((In my haste to be the white man I forgot to send my OWN orders in!))

ooOOOoo

IAIN SINGER:

"Of course David Huson isn't a relative of George North - he is George North under a pseudonym. I have figured it out after seconds of thought - there have never been David Huson Dolls and why because there's no difference between D.H. and George North! Sherlock Holmes strikes again!"

((Sounds reasonable to me. Certainly it's likely that George would want to change his name...))

ooOOOoo

SIMON BILLENNESS:

"I suggest you persevere with the F(Rom) list for a while longer. It will only attract people because of the flyers via Twenty Years On so that you'll receive lots of names just after an issue followed by a long barren period. This should be a bit slower this time because a lot of my subbers also took the last issue so I didn't send them another flyer and, as Paul says, demand for the Novice Package is very low at the moment so the flyers there won't be sent out for a while. However I am now managing to sell 20YO to gameshops (32 copies sold so far!) so you should get some response from people buying them. Just let the service have a trial run till Christmas, it's not that much of a burden is it?"

((Well yes, at the moment it does seem to be. The problem is when players request Regular OR F(Rom), and Regular AND F(Rom). It sometimes means if I have 5 players for the F(Rom) game and 6 for a Regular, I have to keep taking from the F(Rom) list - which means it takes longer than usual to fill. I'll be the first to admit it's not a BIG problem - but I find it's the little problems that are the most irritating. I'll stick it out for the time being but I still wouldn't mind someone else doing the F(Rom) list as I think it'll stand a better chance of filling if kept separate.))

ooOOOoo

Actually, while I'm on the subject of letters from Simon, I feel this is a good time to print an apology which will hopefully stop what could develop (might've developed?) into a pretty nasty feud.

PAUL SINPKINS:

"Please allow me to use your letter column to apologise to Simon Billeness for mis-spelling his name. I hope this letter will clear up this feud before it

LETTERS
starts."

((Well that seems clear enough ...))



ooOOOoo

There's so many points brought up in this next two letters, I'll just have to answer the points as they crop up.

ANDREAS SARKER:

"The Applewriter seems to have done its job well. One of the Apple computers at work (Harlepool Nuclear Power Station) got nicked in April, so I'd be interested to know when you acquired it! A fork lift truck was stolen at the same time. Doesn't it give you a right-hand margin? ((Dunno, never tried using fork lift trucks for margins before ... Ho ho ho, good one that! now that I've changed the subject of where I got my Apple)) Can't you underline etc either

(a) By hand or
(b) By persuading the printer not to go to a new line but to repeat that line with the additions?"

((The reason I don't always have straight right hand margins is because I sometimes use the Proprtional Spaced daisywheels. Capital letters take up more space than lower case letters which in turn takes up more space than other lower case characters such as full stops, commas, etc. All in all I think the proportional spaced typing looks better.

Using the Applewriter 1.1 I CAN'T underline (a) I can't stop the printer, go back to the piece that is to be underlined, and restart the printer - it just wouldn't be practical, and (b) I don't know enough about my printer yet to persuade it to anything other than print. The main problem though is that the Applewriter is a professional wordprocessing package that I can't break into (interupt?) to give the underline command.

Fortunately I now possess the Applewriter II package which DOES underline, indent etc, but I haven't had time or the practice working on it yet.))

ANDREAS (CONT.):

"On Mike Close's letter: everything is allowable except deception of the GM (and that's okay so long as you don't get caught). ((Mike Close shouldn't even be allowed to tie his own shoelaces ...))

"What's this about a comic strip? ((see page 4))

"Is David Huson the one who lives in Birkhamstead? If not, why not? ((Yes, David does live in Birkhamstead))

"Trust Greese to try and be intellectual! ((That's our Brian ...))

"I can't see why anyone would want a zine just for the MidCon Ratings.

There's not a lot else to say, especially as I don't understand Sopwith.

Overall, quite an interesting and entertaining mag (well, I'm only really interested in the letter col anyway).

I look forward to the next one."

((Phew! Well, including the parts I cut out, I think you've covered about everything, Andreas. Glad you liked the zine. Sorry if your letter appears to be chopped about a bit - but if I had left all my answers to the end I think I would have got myself into a bit of a muddle.

Your point about no-one wanting a MidCon Ratings zine surprises me. What about the people who attended? Anyway it was also the National Diplomacy Championship - surely people are interested in finding out who our Diplomacy champion is? Or doesn't it really mean that much?))

ooOOOoo

GEORGE NORTH:

"It is sad that the Gladys Awards cannot be taken very seriously and while I expect respective winners of one thing or another might feel good inside some of

the voting was far from logical. Even Mike Allaway himself must know that the nomination for best editorial writer was nonsense and I would go as far as to say that but for the editorials Pyrrhic Victory would probably be in the top half dozen zines. I also thought the vote was unkind to Marie and the girl has spirit if she takes the joke in good heart. Also you are dead right about the nastiness of the 'Mug of the Year' category and I hope these characters will realise that this is a joke category and maybe just a couple of votes being enough to get a result."

((Nothing I can really add to this letter, as it's more in reply to what I printed last issue.))

ooOOOoo

IAIN SINGER:

"Enclosed are stats - a few points I'd like to bring up are (1) I've still put in the negative points. I've thought a bit about this and it is the only fair way - if a player scores 5 hits and crashes while on zero score he has zero points - if he crashes in one game then scores 5 points in another he scores 5 - this isn't equitable so I've retained it. I'm willing to be convinced however.

(2) Further congrats on winning Best Lettercol in the Gladys Awards ((Thank you, thank you, I must say I deserve it!)) - commiserations on Edna Everage award - I voted for you! ((Hmmm.))

(3) Is Pete Doubleday starting up a game of Sopwith? ((Yes, so I hear.))

(4) Er,um, there are no 'ladies' playing Sopwith - isn't this terribly sexist, how about Jan having a go?! ((Pah! apart from being no good at it, Jan doesn't have the time - she's too busy double-checking queries about credit!))

(5) I've found a reference to Chantecler in PD 23 in editorial - editor is Michiel Liesnard. I guess it's a foreign zine. ((Yes I've heard a nit more about it. Cropped up a bit fast though didn't it?))

(6) World Cup, Olympics, Commonwealth Games, Cricket World Cup etc etc all take over 3 years. The idea for a Dip. championship is 'valid' but would require a zine devoted to it solely - and no I'm not volunteering!

(7) Repair - it shouldn't be the number of times a player lands, but the number of points of damage which can be repaired which should be limited - say 8 or so."

((Thinking about this last point, I suppose it's better just to leave it up to the GM's discretion as to whether he's being mucked about or not. Certainly I would think it strange for the likes of Rob Chapman not to press home an attack on a fleeing enemy - and I think most GMs would spot these sort of tactics. The question is, is it NECESSARY for a hard and fast ruling on this point?

As for the 3 year Diplomacy championship idea, and having a zine devoted solely to it... It's an idea - but if Paul Simpkins couldn't sell a mini-zine with the results, how much chance will a full blown zine stand? Mind you, it all depends on who was going to be the editor. It might work if some of the games (all of them?) were played in it. I feel it would HAVE to be someone well-known to make it work though.))

ooOOOoo

DAVE TANT:

"Well, issue 21 will have to be my favourite issue - with two kills, three hits and someone else crashing I've more than doubled my points! I really must try to get in another game somewhere - presumably (when you think about it, that word should be assumedly, shouldn't it?) you aren't starting any more Sopwith games for a while, since you don't publish a waiting list.

Do you know if anyone in the hobby publishes a regular list showing which zines have openings in which games? It gets rather expensive sending off for trial subs only to discover that the editors very often have no intention of ever running a game I want to play."

((It sounds like you need to see a copy of 'Twenty Years On'. It's the only publication I know of that does a regular listing of zines and what they're

running. Costs a mere 35p from Simon Billenness, 20 Winifred Road, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR3 3JA. And worth every penny.

As for starting Sopwith games - I already have an 'unofficial' waiting list with enough names to fill two games - God knows how many I would have got had I opened a waiting list! Anyway I shall be starting more games when a couple of others finish (which should be soon!). You're welcome to put your name on the list if you like, but I can't exactly say when you'll get a game.))

ooOOOoo

WILL SHAND:

"Could you tell me please if there have been any attempts to play a game called 'The Crusades' first published in 'Strategy & Tactics' well over a year ago, also available as a single game from SPI.

Having played Diplomacy face to face and the Crusades it occurred to me that they should be similarly (excuse spelling as much as typing error) adaptable to a postal medium. They incur similar problems for face to face gaming due to the large number of players required, 7 players are required to play the simulation of the first crusade, however there would be a problem in the number of game turns required to complete a game. Anyway I will not detain you with tales of treachery in the war for the holy land, of plague jihad, visions, assassination, dissention and Diplomacy that go into making it an interesting and highly enjoyable game."

I would be greatly indebted if you could let me know if any zines run games of The Crusades, or if anyone has ever shown an interest in postal crusading. If you think that any of your readers would be interested in an article on the game I will be glad to write one for you. If there is, or was, some interest in the game I would be prepared to start a zine to cater for this, or possibly another zine may have space to run a game.

I would welcome comments or advice on any of the suggestions above."

((I welcome ANY articles on games, Will, and certainly one on The Crusades game; mainly because I've never heard of it before.

As for starting a game off... It's unlikely that a zine catering mainly for the game would catch on very fast (if at all). 'Introducing' it through an established zine is a far better proposition (as I started Sopwith off in Chimaera). If you send me an article on the game and it generates an undue amount of interest certainly I'd think about running a game. But I'm not a 'games zine' as such, it might be better for you see zines like 'Hopscotch' edited by Alan Parr or 'Chimaera' by Clive Booth - both much loved multi-games zines.))

JOHN DODDS:

"I'm glad to see the C.G.S. is working well, although I'd question your wisdom in giving a game to Bohemian Rhapsody at the moment. I'm sure that the zine will be regular in the future (as Malcolm promises), but what worries me quite a lot is its cost. At 60p an issue it'll cost players more than twice what it would in most other zines to play a game of Diplomacy. This is nothing personal against Malcolm - he and I are the best of friends - but I'm genuinely concerned that novices could be put off the hobby by the high cost if they end up in BR. With the average cost of a zine around 30p, it should at least be made clear to these players that they're going to be playing in an abnormally expensive place."

((A very good point, John, and one I have thought quite a lot about. But what choice is there? Say that zines applying for a CGS game shouldn't cost more than 30p? It would be difficult to enforce. I CAN take a zine off the list if I consider it unreliable. This I did with BR last time. Since then Malcolm has written to me with an explanation - consequently I've had to put BR back on the list. As for the novices, it's unfortunate and I don't like it, but they have to take their chances with the zines they end up in - it's explained to them on the application form.))

JOHN (CONT):

"I was disappointed to see that you'd printed a letter from 'liberal' Brian

Creese, and thus turned a formerly fine and upstanding Conservative Letter Column into one vaguely reminiscent of the Guardian! Come, come Thomas, we reactionaries shouldn't be even contemplating giving the 'other side' a fair hearing what do you think this is, a democracy or something! ((Hah! Dodds takes back the mantle of hobby arch right-winger. Thank God, it was too heavy for me!))

Actually, Brian has something of a point. There's no doubt that the Yorkshire policemen hunting triple killer Barry Prudom (for it is he, I believe, who is indirectly referred to by Brian) could have taken him alive if they'd wanted to. There are a variety of techniques for stunning a dangerous man who is within rifle range which could probably have been used. Although I can understand that they were desperate to make sure he didn't kill anyone else, I detect an undertone of revenge in the way he was finally dealt with. Still, the police have a hard job god bless 'em and perhaps we shouldn't be TOO critical, although it's only by shouting about their excesses that we can ensure they don't literally 'get away with murder' as happens in many societies which are less free than ours. To strike the right balance so they are effectively criticised and yet their authority is not undermined is not easy."

((Hmmm. It's possible John, the undertone of revenge you detected came from your own expectations of the outcome and one or two policemen in the firing line (they are, after all, human). But I feel safe to say by no stretch of the imagination was it an execution. The points to think about are: The Police are a PROFESSIONAL force which goes by set rules (by the book if you wish) for certain situations. When using firearms - as in War - it is sometimes necessary to state the objectives i.e. capture prisoners at all costs. If it's to capture prisoners, the force in question knows that a minimum amount of its own units are expendable in this cause. It's a fact of war.

In the case of Barry Prudom the Police force, as a whole, were probably instructed to take NO chances with the apprehension of this three-times proven killer; as another life of a policeman was not worth it.

Now I don't know what this means in the police force, but in the army it means you shoot for the centre (to kill) if there's no chance of a surrender. To even TRY and shoot a man in the leg/arm whatever in this situation it stupidity in itself. Wounded men are hardly ever disabled men.

To judge the police as anything other than professional in this sort of situation is harsh judgement indeed.))

JOHN (CONT):

"I tend to agree with you that the standard of teachers has fallen in the last few years. Even in my own short experience of education it seems that, not only has their ability to convey their subject to the students generally declined, but their standards of dress and discipline have fallen too. This is possibly a consequence of the changing status of teachers in society. Thirty years ago, 'schoolmastering' was considered to be such a worthy profession that it attracted large numbers of graduates - and that in the days when there were relatively few Universities. Today, although it is now an all graduate entry, it seems that many people choose to teach because they can't find anything else to do. My friends at college who finally opted for teacher training, did so by and large after they'd been rejected by Merchant Banks, the Civil Service, Accountants and other professional organisations. Teaching used to be a vocation whereas now, many see it as just another job."

((Well, there's nothing more I can add. John bears out everything I've said on this subject. It seems a shame our kids have to suffer the consequences though.))

ooOOOoo

FRANK DUNN:

"Is Richard Wernick comparing a local newspaper audience to the Diplomacy sub-culture? And if so I hope he isn't going to try and reconcile them. 'Cos he