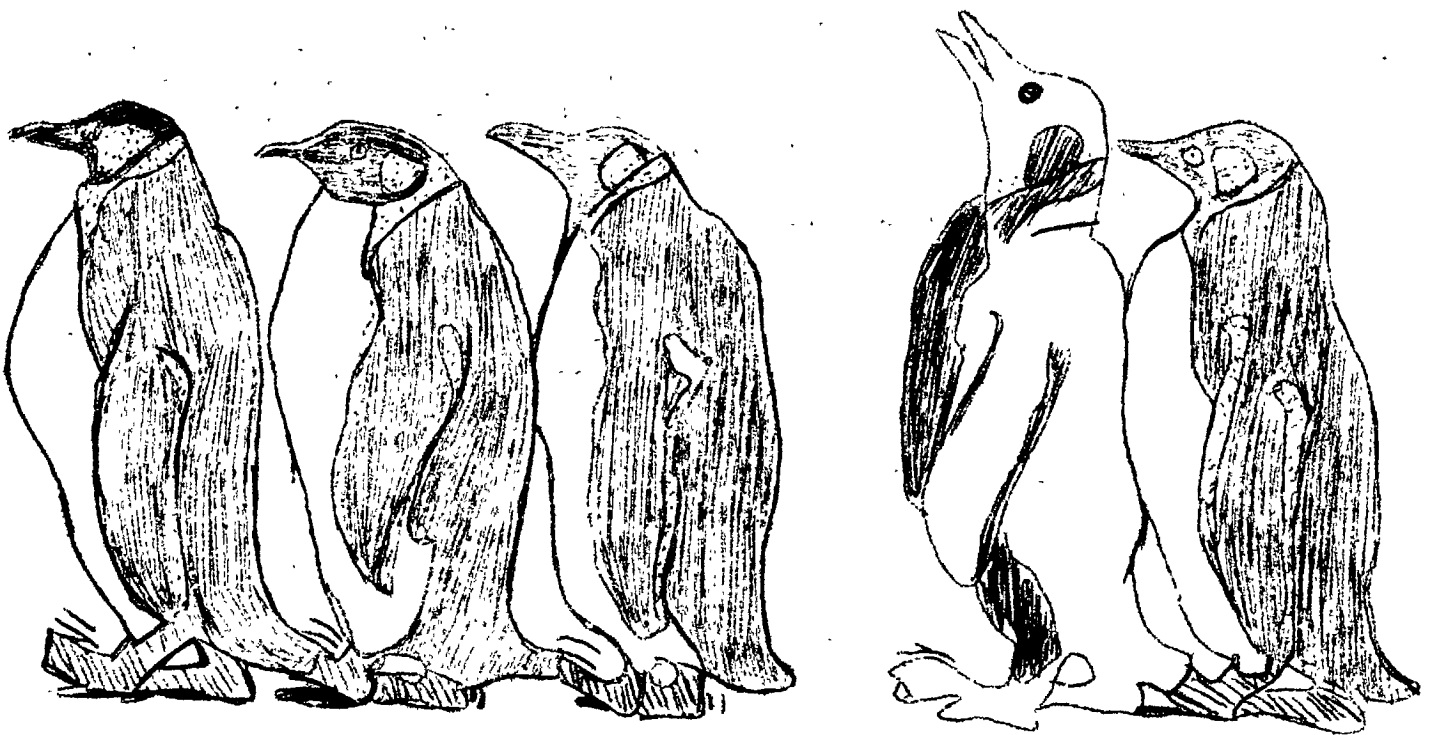


DIB DIB DIB

38

There's a potential Dib subscriber, everywhere!



Welcome to Dib Dib Dib 38 - a Diplomacy, Sopwith, D&D and anything else zine catering mainly for the rejects and misfits of our society. (Those that think they don't fit into this category shouldn't be reading this!) As always it costs the paltry sum of 35p per issue UK rates, about 49p to Europe, and a small bloody fortune to America (I hope you're listening Ms Cunning!), and comes to you from the nimble digit of Tom Tweedy, presently and for the foreseeable future living at, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

EDITORIAL

My God, it's that time again. It doesn't seem more than a couple of weeks since I was doing the last editorial. You lot soak up comments like a comedian loses jokes on TV. I wonder, if I left last issue's editorial on the computer, whether you lot would notice? So what's new this time I hear some of you ask (wake up, Chapman, I'm talking!). Well, not a lot really, what can happen in a month? I was invited up to a friend's house for dinner... does that count? To LINCOLNSHIRE!! Actually it's Jan again forcing me to move my backside when all I want to do is sit back and relax with my pipe and slippers. Even so, after she managed to rouse me, I found myself getting quite carried away with the prospect of travelling half way across country, because these friends have an added interest of owning an Arabian Stud Farm. And I must say, I do have a special fondness for horses, and the Arab breed in particular.

But stone me, what a nightmare drive up there! Up the A1 to Cambridge, Peterborough, Eye (via Sleaford 'cos of Jan's bad navigation!! - a fault I could cheerfully throttle her for from time to time), Spalding and Boston, and on to... I forgotton where now... a memorable place though... oh yes, Carrington. I suddenly decided then and there, I most definitely cannot stand fen country. Miles and miles of prairie-like contryside (bare earth instead of wheat), flat and stretching as far as the eye could see. As for the road itself, it was straight as an arrow and about 15 foot higher than the surrounding countryside. It was like travelling along a causeway, with absolutely no fences or hedges to stop the odd drunken driver from veering off the road into the dykes. It must be hell out there on dark and rainy nights.

Still, the horses were magnificent. What I saw of them that is - it was a miserable day with the drizzle and wind. Never mind though, we've been invited up again sometime in the Spring or Summer (all depends on when I can make the time), and Paul, the stud owner, has offered to take Stuart riding. This should prove interesting, because although he's been able to ride since he was five, I've never actually seen him do it. It would be nice to see what the riding fees I've been paying out for have achieved. Well, the truth of the matter is, I'd like to see my son achieve something! (He just failed his 12+ - but I don't want to talk about it.) Oh and I mustn't forget to mention Jan's reason for going up there, namely a litter of Dalmatian puppies and 4 adult Dalmatians!!

The only other thing we've done this month was to be dragged off (once again by Jan) to the Dalmatian Dog Show at Towcester. It appears as though my highly trained eye was needed yet again (yes, I do have some uses, she admits - even if it is only the one eye) to try and pick out a suitable stud for our Dalmatian bitch, Della. Yes, Jan has decided it's time to try for another Champion (fat chance, we haven't had the first yet!) and that we should have another litter. I think we stand a better chance this time because (a) we've more experience, and (b) I thought to hell with it, it's a gamble anyway, why not try line-breeding to a line we like. So, I've chosen the stud (well it's a choice of two actually), and time will tell whether our decisions will pay off. It would be nice to campaign a possible Champion I suppose... I dunno, I DO have to suffer a little with packed lunches and suchlike on these little outings you know. It's not as if she remembers to pack the pate or other civilised necessities even! Damn woman can be most inconsiderate at times. Even Stuart enjoyed himself, he found a 15 foot pile of dirt and taught Ian Tillson's 3 year old, Daniel, to roll up and down the side of it!! He's quite good with younger children is my son, he'll probably grow up to be a social worker.

But enough of the trivial natter. I suppose it's time I talk a little of the hobby. Not that there's that much going on though. Pet gripe of the month must go to Brian Creese for his title page of NMR!. It went way over the top this time, with a topless and bottomless, stockinged and suspended woman kneeling down with her legs spread apart. Not a bad drawing some might think, some drawings like this can of course be 'artistic' even, but it was really quite unnecessary for a hobby games magazine. Jan's comment was that it seemed to be drawn by someone who hated women. I don't know about that, but it certainly wasn't very flattering to women. And I DIDN'T like the fact that Jan felt it necessary to mention about Stuart opening the envelope. I've said more about this in the letter column, so I won't say anymore about it. I would have written to Brian personally of course explaining my dislike of the cover (I meant to) but haven't had the time. Ah, so it goes....

Mike Allaway has finally and most definitely folded Phyrric Victory - after all this time. Can't say as I blame him exactly, I just wonder why it's taken him so long to do it. It seems Mike has decided to pack in his job, sell-up what he can, collect his savings together, and take a 6 month trip over to America to see/be with his new girlfriend. More than that he has no idea what is happening. He doesn't know if he's going to apply for a work permit, and as far as I can gather he's just made up his mind to go over there until his money runs out. I wish him luck, but personally I like a more predictable life than that.

As for the 'Gladys Awards'... I'm not too sure what's happening about them either. I think Mike has decided to cobble together a final issue with them in, and then hand over the 'responsibility' to another zine to do with as it will. Brian Creese has already offered to take them on (and so have I if no other home can be found), but I think the final decision will be left up to John Miller, ex-editor of the once excellent zine, Mr Gladgrind, and founder of said awards.

ZINE POLL '84

Ah yes, it's here again. The much loved, sometimes hated, always controversial, but never ignored, Zine Poll. This poll is run every year by Richard Walkerdine to find out which zines you, the general public (readership, etc, so to speak), find the most enjoyable. This is about the only time subscribers get a chance to say what they like or dislike about the zines in the hobby. Well actually, it's not much of a say, but VOTES TALK!, as Pete Birks would say. Anyway, enough chatter, and on with the rules.

1. Eligibility: Any European amateur zine which is concerned with postal gaming and which has published at least two issues since January 1st 1984.
2. Voters: A voter must vote for at least two zines and should vote for every zine he reads regularly. Editors and co-editors may not vote for their own zine. But wives can vote.
3. Voting Method: Votes should be given to each zine in the range 1 (low) to 10 (high) to one decimal place. You can give several zines identical votes if you wish.
4. Assessment: Results will be calculated by the average votes method. Richard might also try a few variations on this, for general interest only.
5. Inclusion: A zine must receive votes from at least 8% of the voters in order to be included in the overall results. Richard hopes to be able to publish a few mini-polls covering some of the zines receiving fewer than 8% as well though.
6. Deadline: Thursday, July 19th 1984. All votes must be sent to: Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6PG.
7. Results: Will be published in Dib after I receive MP 99 in August. Anyone who doesn't normally receive MP can have a copy with the full results if they send Richard some stamps to cover postage.

That's it then, as Richard says, that gives you 4 months to get your votes in. Last year saw a record number of 224 voters, which was an excellent turnout. Let's hope we do even better this year. Please do give this Poll your support, with, of course, putting Dib at the top. My predictions for the top 5 this year? Mad Policy, Greatest Hits, Dolchstoss, Acolyte, and Hopscotch. Maybe even in

that particular order. Of course, I'd like Dib to at least be in the Top Ten - but I don't hold out much hope with 60 odd zines to compete with. We'll see.

On a completely different tack. Some of you who subscribe to Greatest Hits may have noticed talk in recent issues of using computers and daisywheel typewriter/printers to produce zines and cut stencils. Actually one of the things said, was how bad daisywheels were for cutting stencils. Normal complaints seem to be daisywheels clogging up with wax and the spinning daisywheel ripping stencils. Well I can now safely tell you that problems like this can now be cured. As I told Pete Birks, I've never cleaned my printer once since I bought it - and you can see for yourselves how well it cuts here. What I do of course is cover each stencil with a thin clear plastic foil, called a 'Roneo Contact Sheet'. This insures that the type cuts straight through, no bother at all, leaving the wax on the foil. They're not very expensive (about 10p per sheet), and one Contact sheet does a whole issue of Dib. Mind you it can be a little difficult to get hold of some. They might also prove useful for use in ordinary typewriters - I used them successfully with my Praxis electric for quite some time before getting a daisywheel.

If anyone is interested, and has difficulty with supply, certainly I'd be only too happy to supply them with some of mine. I get them in boxes of a hundred - but if you need less than that I could split them up. Price would be: 10p per sheet + postage. God, I hate this; it sounds as if I'm trying to advertise. I'm not... I'm just trying to help.

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#### COMPUTER GAMING

"BLUE MAX" from Synapse Software. Reviewed by DEREK ANDREWS  
Available for Atari 400/800 or XL series and CBM 64.

1915. World War I. The Allies are struggling to hold Europe against the might of the Axis power..... You are the renowned "Blue Max" - terror of the Skies. Your objective is to make a final assault on three specially marked targets within the city. But first you have to earn the privilege. This can only be achieved by annihilation of certain prime targets - specially marked buildings, planes, cars, ships and bridges - and it is essential that you destroy a certain number of these targets in order to advance to the next level. Your plane is a biplane fighter/bomber and you only get the one - so look after it!

The games graphics are excellent. A diagonally scrolling 3D screen offers three combat zones. The first is general terrain, dissected by a river. The "prime" targets are bridges, ships, buildings, enemy planes and cars. Success leads you to screen two: a major road into the city. The road cuts through the forest, and contains airstrips, vehicles, planes and buildings as the "prime" targets. Give Jerry hell and you make it to your goal - the city! Progress is impeded by anti-aircraft fire and Kamikazee pilots. The enemy planes don't shoot you down - they crash into you!!

The lower quarter of the screen is your information panel. The display informs you of altitude, damage, approaching enemy planes, etc. A bell sounds as you approach a "friendly" airstrip, where you can refuel, re-equip and undergo repairs. The only problem being that Jerry has a nasty habit of dropping bombs into your cockpit whilst you're grounded.

This has got to be one of the better games for the CBM64 and the only complaint I have against it, is the price - £25.75 - which is totally unreasonable.

((Thanks, Derek, please accept this issue free. Perhaps others of you out there will now feel encouraged to submit others articles of this type - especially for the BBC and Spectrum.))

LETTERS

MARTYN IVES:

"I must object in the strongest possible way at being labelled a loony (or a misfit come to that) as a professional musician I am a highly sophisticated ..... sophisticated artist ((Martyn I do so agree...)). Mind you the other bit about drink, girls, board games, girls, frivolities, girls and frivolous women was about right, oh, I don't like the politics or music but I do like the girls. ((How much not to tell Christine, YOUR WIFE, Martyn?)) I was going to send you a couple of quid but I stuck the envelope down!"

((So starts a typical Dib lettercolumn....))

oo000oo

NICKY PALMER:

"Thanks for sending me DDD again - carrying on this correspondence is clearly an excellent wheeze to get a free sub!

You and Pete make three suggestions about Flagship that the writing be jazzed up (Pete), that the articles go into more depth (Pete quoting Bob Brown) and that the general approach should be more lavish, in particular changing the cover each issue (you - though I think you'd agree with Pete's points too).

I'm coming to agree with Pete's two, though not, I'm afraid, with the third. The basic problem about writing is that the people who know most about a game are not necessarily the best writers: I'd love to revive Sharp's series, for instance, but his involvement with postal gaming has been pretty limited lately, though the return of Dolchstoss will change that. I'm now getting a much wider choice of writers who've volunteered after seeing the magazine, and without any disrespect to the early contributors (who've included myself!) I think the average standard is looking up.

The initial issues were very deliberately aimed at the PBM player who has only played one or two games and thinks they're pretty typical, and/or that there aren't many others. The flood of letters saying, good grief where do all these games come from?, confirmed that there are a lot of these about. In the long run it doesn't make sense to stay on this level, and the next issues are shifting sharply towards more analysis, using the extra space (36 pages in issue 3 vs 28 in issue 1) to accommodate it. Bob suggested that there aren't enough serious PBM players to make this worthwhile, but one of the functions of the magazine must be to create more of them - and anyway I doubt if non-serious players read magazines about their games.

An interesting point about the above is that the requests for better, and livelier writing have been exclusively from the Dippy hobby, whereas the requests for more depth have been mainly from the experienced, non-dippy players - the latter's not surprising, but the former is intriguing. Is it because the active general PBM players are so interested in the subject that they'll forgive lapses in style? Or that the two groups are more different than they look? I suspect a bit of both: Dippy players are on average older, for a start, and I think they're less game-oriented on the whole, especially the 'hard core'. Writing for both groups is an interesting challenge.

Where we part company is over the appearance, and in particular the ludicrous comparison with 'other glossy magazines'. Take Imagine, for instance, which I think is a first rate FRP magazine (which incidentally is also doing a lot for Dippy). Their circulation is well in excess of 30000, i.e. more than 15 times Flagship's they have substantially greater advertising; they have are backed by one of Britain's biggest games business, with further back-up from the biggest U.S. fantasy company; the target audience is so large that fantasy game books are appearing in the best sellers lists, whereas the total number of PBM players world-wide is unlikely to be over 15000, including the whole of the Dippy hobby and all the varieties of American Games. Of course they can afford to change the cover every issue! You might as well ask why we don't have interior colour like Newsweek. It would cost exactly the same as 12 pages in the magazine to change the cover every issue; we expect to go up to 40 pages next time (+12 on the start), and I really don't believe that more than 1% of the readership would rather have a changing cover. In fact the overwhelming weight

of feedback (insofar as about 100 replies can be said to be overwhelming weight of anything) suggests that people are mostly very happy with the appearance, calling it the only really professional-looking PBM magazine and the like. In fact most people seem pretty happy all round, but I do accept Pete's points all the same. Incidentally, the per issue price is £1.50, not £1.70, assuming you subscribe.

Sorry, when I seem to have gone on at more length than I meant to - a bad habit from the days when my primary negotiating tactic was to write two-page letters of detailed plans in the hope that the recipient wouldn't believe that I'd go to so much trouble if I was going to stab him. It worked quite well at first, but like all good tactics it gradually became known and lost its effect!"

((There's no need for me to comment of this letter at length, I'll leave it for others to do - besides it speaks for itself. You do make one point though, Nicky, when you said: "Bob suggested that there aren't enough serious PBM players to make this worthwhile, but one of the functions of the magazine must be to create more of them." How true - but how to go about it? Certainly PBM players aren't born. Attracting them to the magazine first should be the first course of action, then entertain and convert them afterwards. Backed or not, Flagship attracts first and entertains afterwards. It's no wonder it's become so popular.))

oo000oo

DAVID BIRD:

"Thanks for Dib 37, which I thought seemed somewhat different this issue. No offence intended, but I thought the printing quality was very good indeed. I prefer A4 size zines because I find them easier to read. ((Dib's fullscap?))

Mention of the CGS reminded me of my experience, which was similar to Bill Hagarth's. My first postal game of diplomacy was with BR. Although this proved to be something of a rip-off, this was by no means the fault of the CGS. Without the CGS, I doubt if I would have persuaded with my interest in the hobby. For all its faults, whatever one may consider them to be, I think it is worth remembering that this is only a hobby, and no-one ought to expect professional service."

((Thanks for those few kind words, Dave. It's certainly true I can't cover all the problems that crop up with the CGS; trying to seems to have created a harder job than I intended taking on. Perhaps it's time for me to pass it on?))

DAVE (CONT.):

"I have had a rather interesting week at work, which included a visit to a Pub, where a colleague and myself had to measure the lengths and bores of all the pipes in order to calculate the volume of beer contained in each pipe. Then we could calculate the amount of beer lost when the pipes are cleaned. We occasionally do this in order to substantiate the declared takings, but I personally had not done this before. It made a refreshing change from just looking at the accounting records."

((Now that's what I call a worthwhile job....))

oo000oo

STEVE RENNIE:

"Please don't be annoyed by the criticism of the CGS. Even if you have made a mistake you do provide a good and generally appreciated service. I originally tried to get in the 'hobby' via the old NGC but got no reply and only got myself a gamestart by chance (somebody I know had started playing in Pygmy). Services like the CGS and the Novice Package would have helped me tremendously.

I think there may be a mistake on your address list. As far as I know Nick Hoyle's move to Germany is relatively permanent and not just a university term time address. Certainly I know that he's over there working as a translator and not to study."