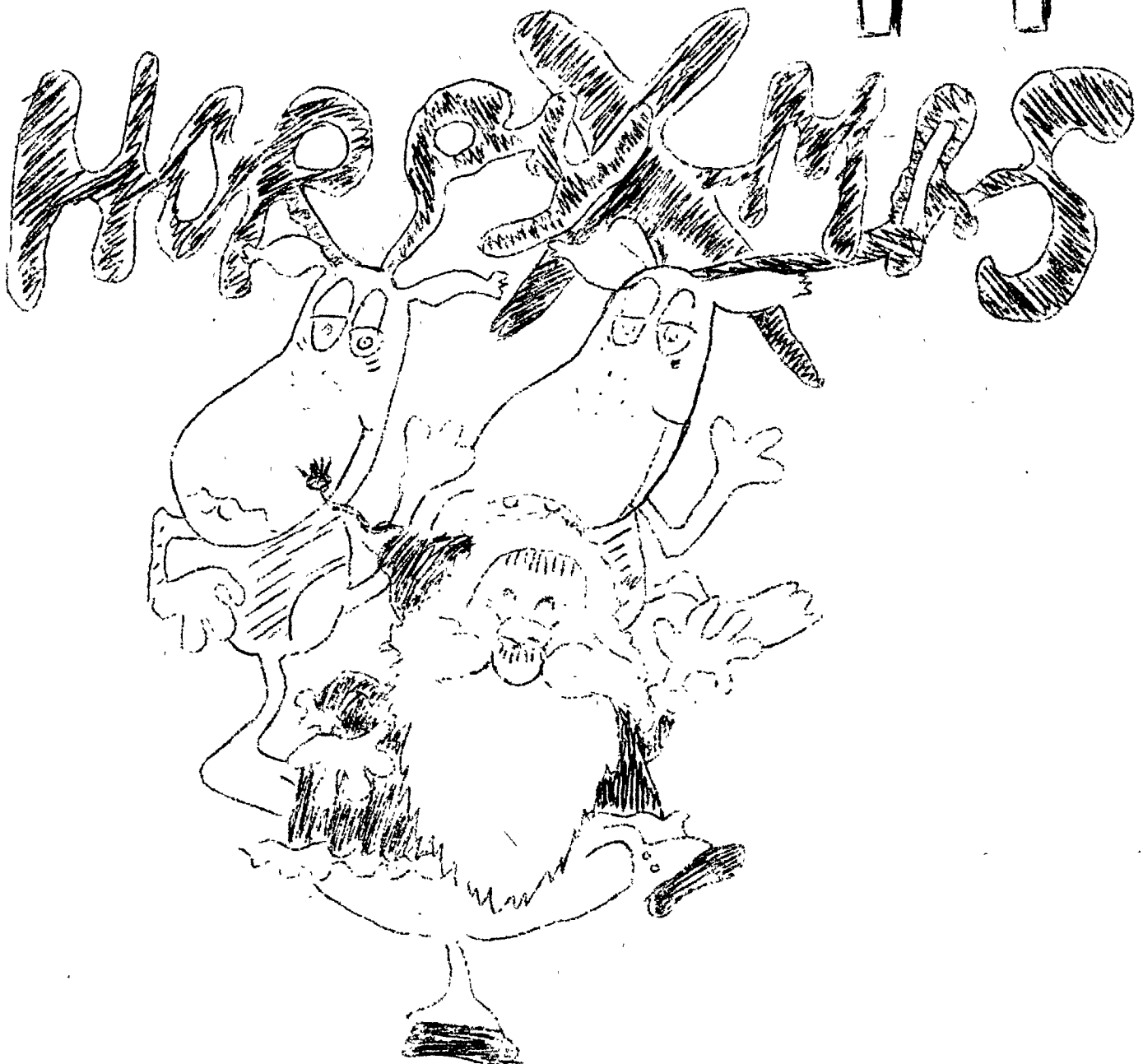


DIB DIB DIB

44



Welcome to the Christmasy edition of Dib Dib Dib 44 - this issue should bring you all the wonders of the festive season disguised as games, chat, letters and anything else your conscientious editor has managed to cram in. Cost of this issue is still 40p in the UK. And comes to you from Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

EDITORIAL

Many thanks to all those who have so far sent Christmas Cards - I like Christmas: the cards, presents, turkey, carols, the lot. To say that I go through a second childhood every year about this time is not quite correct - my 30th would seem more like it! And to all those who didn't send cards... WHY NOT!? Your names have been noted!

In case I don't get the space later on I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those that have stuck with me over the past year, a warm welcome to all the new subscribers I've recently picked up over the last couple of months, and to wish you all a very, MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR! Yeah, let's hear it for the Dib team.

"WewishyouaMerryChristmas,wewishyouaMerryChristmasandaHappyNewYear..."

Well, onto the boring old HOBBY THINGS: It seems Richard Morris has finally had enough, and is handing over the Sopwith stats to anyone who thinks they can do the job. Well, 'had enough' is not quite correct - to be more precise Richard is finding he has his hands full in 'just' producing Boojum, and thought it might be a good idea to give someone else a shot at the stats lark; someone who could bring a breath of fresh air into what could at times get to be a boring job. For more details and where to write to check Richard's letter in the lettercolumn.

Richard Downes, editor of the computer produced Back to the Dark Ages, seems to be expanding his grasp on this hobby, by taking over the editing and GMing of Martin & Diane Hammon's Stuart and Hypereconomical Diplomacy - an horrendous task I would have thought. Hell, I can hardly spell hyperwotsit, never mind play or GM it! This being the case, I wish Richard all the luck in the world with this job - he'll need it. Stuart 7 will end up being computer printed A4, photoreduced to A5 then photocopied. With such a mongrel upbringing surely it can't fail to be a hit.

Back to the Dark Ages: Edited by Richard Downes. Issue 1 was only a single sheet in a computer printed format. Certainly not a zine as yet, but Richard intends to expand it by publishing some chat, articles and suchlike, with game openings for: Diplomacy, Sopwith, Jotto, Vein Rats, Kingmaker, Nuclear War, and any other game that players want to suggest (plus his own LMII PBM game). Gamefees are 50p for all games. Don't be put off by the single sheet of print - Dib started off more or less the same way, the more subscribers Richard gets the more the zine will expand. Write to:-

Richard Downes, 8 Treasury View, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 1QY.

I didn't get to MidCon but from what I can glean from other zines it was a great success - the main results were: The Les Pimley Award was won by: Nick Kinzett. A very well deserved win it was too - my congratulations to Nick, it couldn't have happened to a nicer bloke (as I abstained!).

Results of the MidCon Diplomacy Championship:-

1st: (76.21 points) Andrew Sparkes

2ns: (73.26 points) Eric Knibb

3rd: (68.20 points) Paul Reeves

4th: (62.22 points) Jeff Edmonds

5th: (61.16 points) Robert Lozynskyj

6th: (61.11 points) Paul Lock

7th: (59.14 points) Pete Mason

((Rob and Pete are the only two Dib subscribers here - come on you two, buck up, you do have the glory of Dib to uphold y'know! Better luck next year!))

A special Tournament Director's Award was given to Steve Jones for his consistent performance over the years being on the top boards in the Championship. I snatched this piece of information straight from Walkerdine's Mad Policy. When I confronted the great man himself, hoping to pick his brains as to what exactly Steve had won, I found myself once again sorely let down; he hadn't a clue what the prize was actually for, even though he was there, and had wrote about it! This is not the first time I've unsuccessfully 'picked' this man's brain and found nothing. It all goes to show of course that it's his wife, Claire, the woman behind the man, who must be pushing like mad. God, she must really have to strain to keep him out in front... perhaps even to get him out of the armchair.

ANOTHER MINI-REVIEW? I don't like doing a special section on book reviews, film reviews and suchlike, but I do like to mention the odd interesting tome or two; you know, that I have found particularly interesting over the past month. So this is a review (of sorts) heavily disguised as chat. Piers Anthony (ah, a name to conjure with) has recently come to my attention with a superb collection/series of books under the main banner of 'Magic of Xanth'. Although the covers are not actually numbered, in the correct order the titles are: 'A Spell for Chameleon', 'The Source of Magic', 'Castle Roogna', 'Centaur Aisle', 'Ogre Ogre', 'Nightmare' and 'Dragon on a Pedestal'. Although I now have the complete set of Xanth books, I've only read up to Ogre Ogre so far and I'm finding them increasingly difficult to put down.

I found it interesting to note (once the penny had dropped), the complete change in the Piers Anthony style with these new Xanth books. It's so different from his earlier books that, for a while, I just didn't recognise him. I remember well, now, three classics of his called: Sos the Rope, Neq the Sword, and Vol the Stick. I put these down in the same category as the once-in-a-lifetime adventures like Harry Harrison's 'Deathworld' series, and Asimov's 'Foundation' trilogy. Well, I think Anthony has done it again, though some fans might not like the new style. His previous books, the first three earlier works I mentioned, were done very much in a serious vein. I suppose, the normal run-of-the-mill SF style one might expect from a serious SF book. However, his new style is much lighter hearted... ANYTHING goes. If he wants drinking chocolate trees in his fantasy land, he has it. At times I must admit it's a little irritating, as the writing then comes across as being a little too relaxed (flippant? blase might be a better word) - but when all said and done it's the relaxed, laid-back style, this type of SF story so obviously needs.

It's a bit like comparing an ordinary film with the new Fantasy Cartoons. Because Xanth does come across very much like a cartoon land. Mind you, this is no bad thing; one only has to see the cartoon bits of 'Lord of the Rings', or the superb video 'The Fire and the Ice' to get some idea of what the book feels like. The Xanth series is fresh, witty, and delightfully titillating, and about as D&Dish as a book can get. Which makes a nice change from the serious Sword & Sorcery/fantasy books I think.

Incidentally, and if you're a Piers Anthony fan, the three books of his I mentioned (Rope, Stick and Sword) have just been re-released all bound up in one new book called, 'Battle Circle' - if you haven't already read them/it, I recommend you do so. Perhaps put it on your Father Christmas List!

Cough, Cough, Splutter, Splutter - Gil Von Gavel has actually dared to send me an appeal for the striking miners. Hah! The leaflet actually says, I quote: "There are large numbers of families who will be deprived of anything resembling a Merry Xmas." As its the season of good will I should just like to point out to comrade Gavel that there are large numbers more of conscientious workers being threatened, intimidated, and worse, numbers who have no work to opt to go to!! I mean, how can you take this leaflet seriously with this priceless quote: "Have a Yorkshire miner to speak at your workplace." Ha ha, very funny. I have one of my own, how about, "Keep the unemployed and pensioners warm.... replace coal with striking miners!"

JOTTO Turn 7

Richard Sharp:	7th: 231211	James Cowie:	7th: 331121
George North:	7th: 020111	Ulf Jiretorn:	7th: 160111
Brian Moore:	7th: NMR!	Richard Morris:	6th: 413311
			7th: 220223
Richard Lampard:	7th: NMR!	Tim Collieu:	7th: 111121
Nicholas Whyte:	6th: 413214	James Steele:	7th: NMR!
	7th: 211131	Richard Downes:	7th: 414211
Rosie Roberts:	1st: 211232	2nd: 021121	
	3rd: 122011	4th: 312211	
	5th: 322311	6th: 302233	
	7th: 222023		

A couple of people dropped out - can't take the pace. And a couple of questions from our late newcomer, Rosie: (1) Do I use the computer to adjudicate this game? The answer is yes, it's impossible to get the markings wrong (er, unless I copy them in wrong at this stage - which isn't likely; this isn't Dolchstoss y'know). (2) Which dictionary do I use? Answer: The Shorter Oxford English (though why Jan can't use the Chambers stuck under the table leg....). Better watch out you lot, Rosie wins a lot at this Jotto lark, having just won a large amount in Dolchstoss (unintentional advt). Not that Richard knows many 6-letter words...

LETTERS

DAVE BIRD: "Thanks for No.43; keeping up the good work. Who designs the front covers - they're usually good for a laugh?"

Another question - who is this pedantic old bugger Sharp? He reminds me of a 'nit-picking' supervisor I had once a few years back."

((The infamous Richard Sharp - I thought everyone in the hobby had heard of him? Richard has been in this hobby ever since it started (it was then only known as the Diplomacy hobby); he was part of the Old Guard; accused of being a member of the notorious 'hard core'; was found guilty and was hounded out of the hobby (by such shining crusaders as Clive F. Booth, gentleman, entrepreneur, adventurer, and all-round good egg) - he then came sneaking back (under the pretext of resurrecting and putting right old commitments) as soon as he found out Booth had folded Chimaera. I suppose Richard was best known for producing his crusty old rag, Dolchstoss, and writing an enormous tome, called 'The Book of Diplomacy', which is excellent for propping open doors. Admittedly Dolchstoss had, and even has, its followers - of which, I am ashamed to say, I am one - but his popularity can't last much longer. You're right, he is a pedantic old sod.

As for Dib's covers - yes they are quite good aren't they. Jan does them. Of course if anyone else has any ideas for good covers, by all means send them in. Keep the drawings fairly simple though - tracing to a stencil is not the best medium for artwork.))

But, talk of the devil....

RICHARD SHARP: "What I meant, as would be obvious to most people, was that just marking a letter with the usual airmail markings is no guarantee that it will be carried by air. ((Why not? If I pay for Air Mail I expect Air Mail! Are you saying the Post Office are taking people for a ride?))

George North doesn't seem to have improved with keeping - he was writing rubbish seven years ago and still is. House cons seem to have almost died out, though, apart from our annual two (which aren't really cons in the old sense, since they're restricted). I went to about 4-5 a year, I think, between 1974 and 1979. We went solely to meet friends - oh sure, a few games were played to pass the time between closing and reopening, but they were incidental. It was de rigueur for every editor who

went to print a long, detailed and libellous account of the proceedings, and comparing, these afterwards was all part of the fun. The hobby was much more social in those days - it was very noticeable to me at MidCon that the people who were doing the socialising were the same people as were doing it 7-8 years ago, though sadly depleted in numbers. What the ridiculous Goerge calls 'the clique' was synonymous with the hobby - I mean my hobby, which is postal Diplomacy, not the Goblins and Gorillas brigade. It was not, of course, a clique, because anyone could join.

Just noticed another comic letter. On that scale of 1-10, I should think I must be about 25! Hunting, indeed. They even wear pink."

((Yes, I've always thought 'Hunting Pink' was a pretty weird way of describing red hunting jackets - why pink? As for your political grading, forget it, we don't have a scale that can swing that far to the right.

I think you might have been a little unfair on poor old George, I don't suppose he can help it if he got an invite to a lousy con. But I agree with you that the hobby seems far less social than it used to be. Though I don't think it's the fault of the people this hobby is attracting (people are still as genuinely friendly as they used to be) - it's my guess they lack the 'social leaders' we used to have in our day. When I first joined the hobby it was the zine editors that lead the way, detailing attitudes in their zines for everyone else to emulate. Today's zine editor (most of them) talk about nothing else but playing games, and they still, more or less, lead the way in regards attitude. This total preoccupation with playing games (solidly) at cons I think is more of a reaction (probably over-reaction) against the notorious "hardcore's" basic principle of booze, fun, booze and having a good time. Admittedly, and as you said, it was all 'over the top' reporting, but some people took it seriously. Hence the heavy reaction we see today. The quicker we get back to the good ol' hardcore reporting. the better, I say.))

GRAHAM FREEMAN. "As I'm 18, politics has not taken its strong hold upon me yet, and so I'm open to 'persuasion'. A couple of years ago, Nicky Palmer asked me to join the Labour party, but I refused ((Good for you!)) (actually, I never replied to his last letter).

Looking down your subbers list I find he's not on. Has he ever subbed to Dib Dib Dib?"

((No, he's never subbed. We traded for a short while when relevant letters appeared in each others mags, but that's all. I stand aghast at your admission of no political hold at 18 - at your age you should be out enjoying yourself, like... throwing eggs at Scargill, things like that. Of course his mob is more destructive, but there's no need to sink to their level, is there? - you sound like good Conservative material to me.))

I expected to be shot down in flames over my Ethiopian diatribe last month - the hobby not always being too easy-going on articles such as that - but to my surprise I find a couple of people actually agreeing.... strange.

RACHEL ROBERTS. "Yes, of course I'm a figment of Richard Sharp's imagination. Surely everyone who reads Dolchstoss is. They don't SOUND real, do they? ((That's true))

In my position as figment, I must support Richard on one point of your argument with him. it really isn't the same thing to say 'I sent the letter by sea' as to say 'the letter travelled by sea'. There's more involved in getting a letter to travel airmail than you might think, just how much more depends on where you live. If the sorter can't add up your stamps in his head, or thinks the letter feels heavy, or is in a hurry to knock off, it can go straight into the wrong sack with no appeal allowed.

In our case, the alternative isn't 'seamail', but 'printed paper rate', which seems to be even slower. ((My God, if I didn't know better, I'd swear a Sharp clone was arguing this case - it sounds so much like him!))

I agree with most of what you say about the famine. Someone said in the 'Times' the other day 'long term help always has strings attached, but

emergency help is given freely without strings'. That could be one reason why the governments of such countries do less than they could to avoid disasters. As to long term help - the only thing which could improve the climate is to tell all the farmers all over the continent NOT TO CUT DOWN ANY MORE TREES. The little bit of food they can grow on the land before it becomes desert is out of all proportion to the loss of harvests in the surrounding region due to the reduced rainfall.

I recall a study made using a computer model and quantities of economics and social science students. They found that, given the conditions of native villages in fairly fertile and prosperous regions, THERE IS NO TYPE OF HELP WHATEVER THAT THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES CAN GIVE THEM WHICH WILL NOT IN THE LONG RUN CAUSE DISASTERS. When the famines start it is then too late to leave them alone, but for people who are in harmony with their environment health care causes over-population, irrigation causes the water-table to drop - killing the vegetation which governs the rainfall, power tools and tractors cause environmental destruction and soil erosion, and so on."

((That's a pretty picture you paint there, and it's interesting to note what you say about long term help having strings attached - I hadn't thought of that aspect, but of course it sounds more than plausible. Are you saying then things like the 'Early Warning Famine Centre' in Rome is a waste of money? Hell, you may just be right, it did its job and warned the Western world in plenty of time, but as we can all see, no-one took the slightest notice. So what are we doing helping the starving at all... are we just prolonging the inevitable... the death of thousands?))

In an almost similiar vein....

JEREMY MILES: "I feel I must enlighten you about the long term prospects for Ethiopia. The main problem is bad farming techniques, Ethiopia receives 300mm (I think) of rain each year, and if my memory serves me correctly (because I can't find where I found it) this is the same as Inner London, the thing is, it all comes at once causing 'floods' and then later 'droughts' the Ethiopians, in their efforts to get as much food as possible from their land, virtually turn the land into a desert (desertify?) by overgrazing.

The real long term solution according to the New Scientist is to educate the Ethiopian is not overgrazing and generally being nice to their land, in the short term. They would get less from it, but in the long term they would get more out of it.

I agree with you about finding a suitable charity, but, to the best of my knowledge, the best you're going to get is the V.S.O. (Voluntary Service Overseas) which sends young people to places like Ethiopia to help them with farming and other projects."

((Sending volunteers can't be as easy as it seems - a firm here in Amersham, specialists in irrigation, were turned down when they offered their services to the Ethiopian Government. When I read the article I got the impression that the offer was for free - having been refused I just wonder what, if any, harm they could have done? Is Rosie's argument correct?))

TIM COLLIEU: "If it is any comfort I agree totally with what you say about Ethiopia. and as far as I can see this problem of famine will always be with us.

It seems to me that the superpowers will always see it's in their interest to keep a population unhappy, so that the country is unstable, creating the possibility of a revolution that would swing the country from left to right or vice versa; creating a friendly country in a geographically important position. Thus, long term aid would bring stability that would permanently (or as permanently as anything human can be in time) upset the balance of power. The only people who suffer are those who can't do anything about it, usually 99% of the population.

Therefore, as long as the men in the White House or the Kremlin play

their games, human despair will always be with us, and relief will only be temporary, as those with the money give it out of a sense of guilt.

Of course I don't believe that the Superpowers deliberately cause the drought, although the amount of carbon and other fumes being chucked up into the atmosphere must cause a greenhouse effect - did such drastic droughts occur with such regularity 100 years ago?

Also the Superpowers keep the third world poor by buying their products, e.g. cocoa, at low prices, and then sell them guns, cars or anything which makes them look a prosperous American state, but does nothing again, for the bulk of the population.

Human oppression of humans has always been with us, from 2,000 B.C. to the present day ((you've met my wife then, Tim?)) and no doubt will until we finally wipe ourselves out. Still, this view is a highly emotional topic and I fear this view is unpopular and in a minority. But what can we do?"

((So, Tim thinks the cause is political. It's a pat answer that's often trotted out by both super powers when attacking the other. Don't believe it myself, because it would have been spotted by more important people than us; people in a position to do something about it, even if it was only to cause a stink.))

JON MOSS. "You may be amazed to receive this - I am, that I'm writing it - however I felt so strongly motivated by your introductory article that I just had to put pen to paper.

I am tired of the emotional blackmail utilised by so many charitable causes to prompt donations, Friends at work expect sponsorship to stupid tasks - to support organisations of their choice. Christmas seems to bring them out in droves, if it's not the Catholic Boys Club then it's Scouts Football Clubs etc., all with their Xmas raffles or sponsored walk/swim/eat/talk and even sponsored TV viewing - Wow!

If people want to donate to such causes I'm not stopping them, but don't expect ME to.

~~You may think at first this is a bit way off National Tragedy level -~~ however I disagree. If the Scouts want a new hut and I donate a brick they won't be interested. OK so they'll probably be polite but don't expect undying gratitude. The people of Ethiopia etc. need a solution not a paltry patronising handout from the West. NUKE THEM would be a better solution than the hypocrisy we see at present. People give a few pounds to appease their conscience so they can forget for another 12 months or until promoted by the TV news Documentary.

I have no awe-inspiring solution - but then I've not really given it that much thought you see, like most of Humanity I suspect I just don't care enough and if that's the case then why bother helping anyway!"

((Yes, well, this might have been argued a little more forcably than I might have, Jon but I take your point - 'Nuke them' is a little strong though, in whatever context.))

JON (CON1): "Anyway so much for the depression - now to Biddle-Dibble-Dribble, yes that's it! I do enjoy Dib Dib Dib both playing the games and reading the letters - most of the time, and I am full of thanks for your dedication and effort in producing such a consistently high quality zine. Whilst I still consider myself a relative newcomer to the Hobby (18 months approx) I have looked around and subscribe to 3 zines that I enjoy - Dib Dib Dib, Denver Glont and Church Mouse. I would agree with Glover that to rate any in comparison to each other must be de-motivating to the editors therefore I believe the highest praise must be to continue my subscription.

So what if you're 36 - Dib's 43 and still going strong."

((Every now and then I need a note like this to put me right. Doing a zine at times one tends to get a bit 'down in the dumps' - the thoughts often are, am I doing this right, am I doing that right, is my effort even appreciated? I forget sometimes, that what Jon says, is right; the highest praise is when subscribers take out another subscription to this dear old rag. No other comparison need be made. So, while I remember just what is what, I'd like to take this opportunity