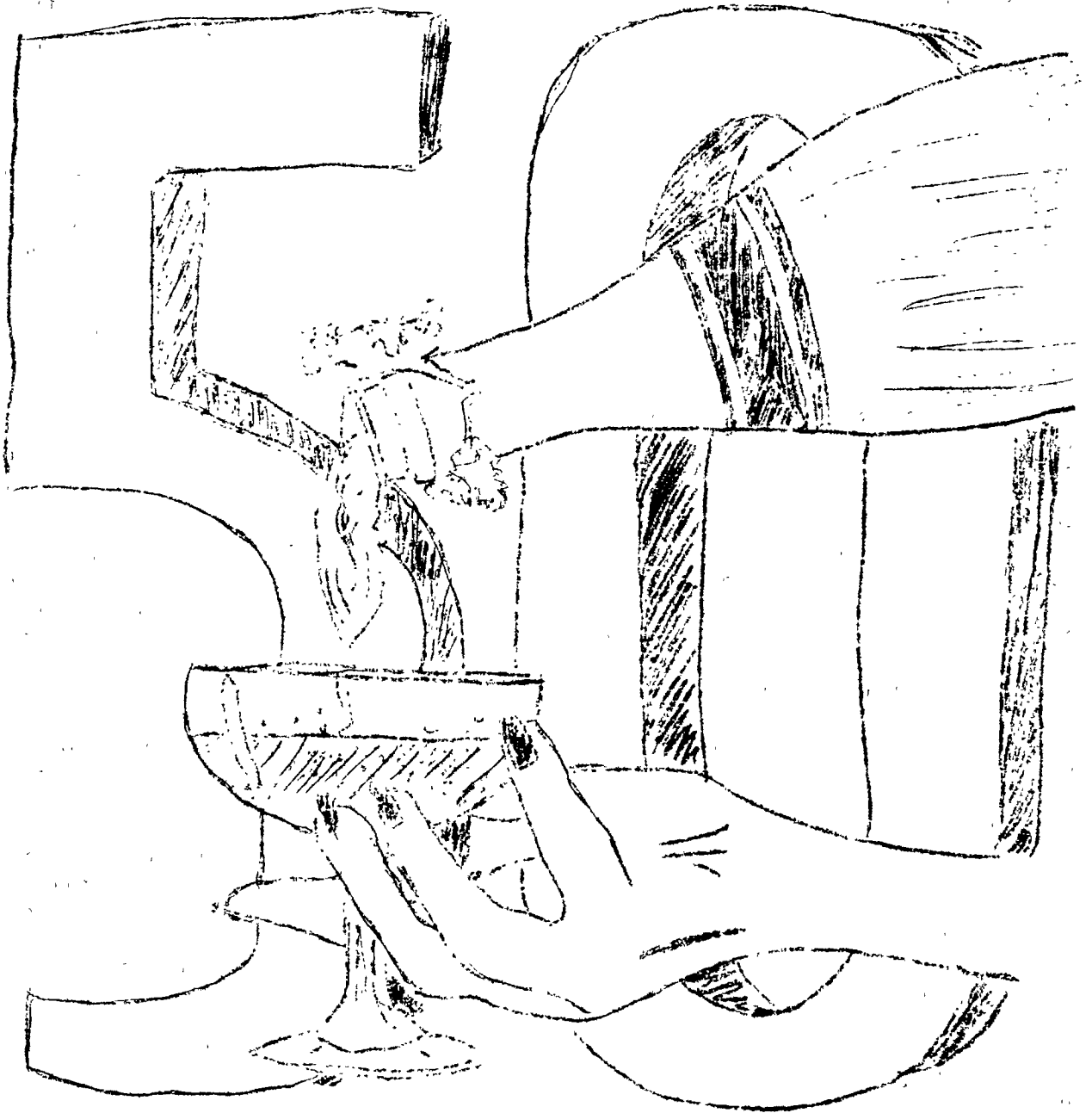


DIB DIB DIB



A warm welcome to the 50th issue of Dib Dib Dib - a bumper issue celebrating a milestone I thought I'd never reach. The cost is a fixed rate of 40p per issue in the UK and 23p + postage overseas. Anyone wishing to send money, send it to Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks., HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

EDITORIAL

I must start the editorial thanking all those who sent hearty congratulations on Dib reaching the magic 50 - it's all much appreciated, and omissions by Pete Mearns and Iain Forsyth are duly noted. This is supremely satisfying for me I can tell you. I never thought I'd survive this long. It may not surprise you to know I've thought of folding Dib more than a couple of times in the past (though I don't suppose there's many editors who haven't). Mind you, this was not because I didn't enjoy writing to you, or getting letters back, it was mainly due to stress - such as when the printer acts up or I'd bugged up a disc with the games on (putting me a bit behind). At times such as that I wondered just what the hell I was bothering for. Funnily enough, one of the worst times was coming up to this 50th issue. At about issue 47, 48 I began thinking about what I wanted to do for this issue. I didn't want to produce a potted history of what Dib has done over the 4 years or so (not that I could remember anything anyway), and I knew it was 'the usual form' for editors to do something special. Trouble is, I didn't actually feel like doing anything special. Not that I'm lazy - certainly not - nor did I want to cheat you out of a bumper issue, I just thought producing a special issue would be rather pointless. Then, on the other hand I thought, Dib has not done anything different the whole time it has been in existence, I MUST do something different for the 50th issue. Aaaaarrh, fold I thought, have done with this dilemma, be original, but unfortunately this is the result. You're lucky, generally I turn my back on unsolvable problems, on the grounds I've got other things to do without worrying about what I can't do.

So what HAS Dib achieved since I dragged it into the hobby? Not a lot as other zines go, I've tended to

keep away from what other editors see as the norm. I suppose I was more interested in the technical side of printing a zine, than in actually writing one i.e. better printing, typewriter, word processor, style of print - the ultimate, like this, double columns - yet still make it interesting enough to read. That's where the letter column came in; that and the games allowed me to carry on while I learned.

Mind you, on the side I introduced today's much-used version of the postal Sopwith game along with the Sopwith Ratings (which Andy Murby now produces). In actual fact it was to see how the Sopwith game would run postally that I brought Dib out in the first place; which I did by trying to tack it on as a subzine to Clive Booth's Chimaera. This idea failed miserably because Clive couldn't get his publishing dates right, so Dib started going out as 2 or 3 page photocopied game sheets to those playing in the games. Mind you, this was only until issue seven, when I finally got my 360 Gestetner - I was really determined to give this zine editing lark a go then. I'm not saying Dib is the BEST looking zine around - I know that some litho'd ones look better - but there's not many better looking mimeo ones, if I may say so myself. Oh, if only I had a good photocopier...

I was helped a lot in getting started by all the other editors then, mostly Richard Hucknall (who started off the famous Dib letter column by sending in The Letter that started off the chameleon fiasco), but at that time it was easy because other editors traded widely, and in actual fact made me feel welcome. Mind you, the fact that I was known in some small way through the letter columns in other zines helped - I wasn't a stranger just coming into the hobby, seeing a few zines and then just starting up.

I decided from the very beginning that, apart from seeing how the Sopwith would run, Dib would be a zine for the subscribers; a forum for anyone to feel welcome; to feel they could write in anything without fear of being ridiculed because of age, grammar, spelling, subject, or whatever. Hell why should I bother, I was comparatively old (seeing as most of my subscribers were students), my grammar and spelling are atrocious (they still are!), and as for subject... well anyone that can put up with chat about George North's inflatable dolls and Chameleons, needn't worry about what subjects crop up.

The only thing I never did, for no reason I can think of other than I thought it had all been done before, was never take the editing path of the normal zine. The seemingly obligatory baptisms of fire zines go through before they fold. I never did quizzes; questionnaires; introductory flyers detailing what Dib intended to do; potted histories; or many Diplomacy articles. Not that I didn't want them included in the zine, I've always encouraged others to write them if they wanted, I just never felt comfortable writing them myself. I think once again this boiled down to the fact I thought it had all been said before. This attitude is admirable for those that don't wish to see me repeating myself, but it does seem to spoil things for the novices that once from time to time, perhaps there should be a library of well-written hobby articles that one could go to so novices can get to appreciate the likes of 'Piggott's Law of Fanzines', the 'Bedbug Island' tales, Birks' article on 'Irving Tedious', Rob Chapman's 'Introduction to Diplomacy', and so on. Surely these gems cannot be allowed to be forgotten? Come to think of it I wouldn't mind collecting all these on computer if I had the owner's permission...

But I digress. Where do I go from here? More to the point where does Dib go from here? Well I'm certainly not going to fold now I've just passed the hard bit! After this issue it'll be down hill all the way to the one hundred mark. Maybe I'll try a

few quizzes? (As if my subscribers would answer questions!) A questionnaire might be nice. It's about time. Actually I've been pondering for some time now as to whether I should try another type of game in Dib to help break away from the label of merely being a Sopwith zine. What game though, that's the problem? Something on the lines of En Garde, or perhaps Formula 1 - but I would definitely need a dedicated outside GM with plenty of time on his hands to run it. I'll have to think on it... but if you have any suggestions write in (might as well 'ave done a questionnaire, gov...). One bit of interest anyway, Richard Downes says he wouldn't mind CMing a Bourse - fine, but I think I'll wait until I see if it generates any interest. Anyway, enough of me... what about the hobby and me?

I certainly mucked up my own chances of doing well in the Gladys Awards this time, didn't I? Like a twit I plugged the awards, giving my views on each category, and then I forget to print the address so you can send all your votes in! What a gherkin! Some of you tried, I hope. Why James Cowie even sent me his votes... too late for me to send on though. Damn... next year for hobby domination. The one hard thing to take is that the miserable Dolchstoss got an award - Sharp will be insufferable (well, more so than he is now). Please God make him come below Dib in the poll (is it possible to come 50th?).

I meant to mention the last couple of times, but forgot as usual, Geoff Challenger's latest hobby offering of a Diplomacy statszine called The Fat-Lady Sings; which is a form of the Who's Where Pete Calcraft was supposed to do. Apparently the last WW appeared in the final New Statsman run by Mick Bullock in 1979! It was then passed on to Pete Calcraft who has since been trying to get one out. Anyway, TFLS is interesting for what it is: it details exactly who's playing where. Also interesting to note only three zines - Ode, Vienna, and Zeebv - run more Diplomacy games than me, and I'm not even classed as a Diplomacy zine. Geoff Challenger, 117 Shrubbery Road, South Darenth, Kent, DA4 5AP.

FOOTBALL PROPER
From George North

I wonder if football will one day die the death? After all, nothing lasts for ever and attendances are dropping off gradually down the years. Mind you, if games like football and cricket last for several generations we will always have supporters that are young to replace those old ones who have been everywhere, seen everything, and maybe grown heartily sick of the very game of Football. Just the same there have certainly been a few changes down the years to keep the regulars happy. I mean, a few years ago who ever heard of Oxford United? And if you go further back than that there were times when even Aston Villa had a football team.

When I was a lad, way back in the dark ages, the players could charge the goalkeeper and kick the daylight out of the opposition with their heavy toe caps and rake a shin with studs protruding half an inch out of the bottom of the boot, supposedly for gripping the turf.

To me the wearing of boots presented its own particular problem for they were fine if you tied the boot laces and hung them round your neck until you got to the ground, but to wear them and try to travel across the road and down a concrete path was like walking on the Fakir's bed, or when you don roller skates prior to going on the rink. You could hardly stand in the boots let alone walk or run to the place; plus the boots normally had nails half an inch longer than the stud and protruding well inside the boot. Hence the thick woolly socks to soften the blow. Add to this the dreaded shin pads from ankle to knee-cap and there you had the full suit of armour, footballer for the use of.

So the heavy hobnail boot is gone, thank goodness, and so too has the laced up football. How that football ever got off the ground is not known. First find a sucker who has such a ball and then borrow a pump and connector and you are part way there. It takes some sort of technician to pump up the ball, pad the splits, tuck in the tit, and manoeuvre a crochet hook to weave the lace

through the holes without leaving too big a lump on one side where the lace had gone. To head a ball was some sort of Russian roulette and you could get away with it nine times out of ten. But catch the lace when heading a ball and you were in dire straits.

Not that I want to teach granny to suck eggs but so many of the niceties of football seem to have gone or been superceded that nowadays it is so difficult to realise these things ever existed. We have mentioned the pumping up of the ball and the lacing, but also there was the stitching and how long will it last. The first you realise anything is wrong is when the owner of the ball suddenly scoops it up for a close inspection and has a heart attack when he realises the stitching is coming undone. Then somebody either knocks it from the owner's grasp or the owner decides what the hell, the ball belongs to his bigger brother anyway, and he lets us continue so long as we don't toe poke it. Famous last words because no matter how careful, once a stitch is broken it spreads like wildfire and slowly the bladder comes into view until it either bursts the ball or the owner grabs it up and runs it home for repairs. Alas, they don't make balls like that anymore.

But strangely enough there would be at least a dozen games going on at the same time in every open space available, from the Lordship Lane Recreation Ground and the Tottenham or Hackney marshes, right the way up to Wood Green football ground to White Hart Lane - and the spectator was spoiled for choice. As a child one did not expect to pay to see a game, naturally. The Recreation Ground was free. At Wood Green you risked torn pants and a thick ear when you got chucked out, and at Tottenham it was a challenge rewarded by a boot up the backside, but complimented down below where one could nick the lump sugar. You could also watch the game by hanging off a rail above the steps. So my gang spent many a Saturday at Tottenham where bunking into the ground was almost legalised since the feeling

there was that the youngsters ducking under the turnstile were the paying customers of tomorrow. Just a token show of catching defaulters was all.

In later years it was the travelling and waiting for buses and trains that put me off, plus the struggle to survive inside the ground amid the mad, swaying, pushing, shoving, kicking, punching, hysterical, arm waving crowd of loud, bawdy beer swilling giants. You have to be six feet something to see over the heads of that lot, and with my luck I get stuck behind a pillar, have a banner waving in front, or umbrellas turn day into night. Get there early and grab a front railing then sure enough the fattest policeman in the ground would come and hibernate before your very eyes.

Then we moved to Harold Hill and from our upstairs window we could see across the brow of the hill whether a football match was likely on a Sunday morning, and if so I would be out and waiting behind goal during the warm up session and fetching and booting one or two balls just like old times. Then we moved house and the Harold Hill team I was following changed its venue to a field a couple of miles away and I would cycle every Sunday and continue to give my loyal support. I did this right up after they charged us 1/6d to go in. This was a silly price really because you could watch the game through the wire netting and yet being outside isn't quite the same as inside, is it? So I paid my fee and had one eye on my bike and the other on the game.

I suppose all teams have monetary problems and Harold Hill was no exception. Even the dressing rooms were hired out for wedding receptions and I have seen many a poor mutt dragged from the touch line by some woman from the reception who demanded that he old man come and listen while the best man read the cards. A sad day indeed for that poor fool.

But the final straw came when Harold Hill was taken over by a new manager who stopped the pay packet of the players which was one pound and ten shillings a match. The team broke up after that and I started going to the park again while the players eventua-

lly joined, now that they were well over the hill, the Romford Brewery football team, and that must be a step in the wrong direction in anybody's book.

Back at the park I watched Venus and Red House football teams but it was never quite the same. Often I would stay for half an hour, rain or shine, but enough was always enough and I would wander back home and wait for Match of the Day on telly instead. It is not known why one leaves halfway through a match on a beautifully sunny day but if you see, week after week, a bloke who looks like Brotherston falling over himself every five minutes, the urge to stay begins to wane.

But this morning I had a good excuse because with two blank pages of Postal Football still to be completed, and inspiration completely gone, it was a relief when Peg gave me a shopping list and handed me the trolley to get the shopping. I sat in the park on the way back and watched Brotherston until the score reached three nil. The sun was shining and it was too good for football as I sat on the bench and enjoyed myself. Then I took up my trolley and made my way to the park gates and across the main road. I knew it was risky with a bag of tomatoes perched on top of the trolley but I bounced down the kerb and away went the vegetables with me in hot pursuit. Cars in front and cars behind, a horn blasted as I edged the tomatoes over towards the kerb, only now they were not vegetables but little jars of snopake and inking rubbers that I was guarding with my life until the ref blew his whistle and I sat up with a start. The players were marching off as I staggered dreamily to my feet and smiled dopily at an old lady who scampered off as fast as her legs would carry her. The trolley hadn't moved and all was well with the world. I wonder who won the game?

So you see, the game still holds a fascination for me in spite of the aggravation and it is likely to last for the rest of my lifetime, I guess. Don't know about yours. But why is it so popular is a complete mystery to me, but I shall be there again on Sunday with about eleven other people

all hollering and knowing more about the rules than the silly old referee. I was even asked to run the line once - once - instant fame - but I wasn't having any of that. Half a game is my limit most days. How about you?

((Ah how this article brought back memories - thanks, George. I can remember when we used to use the good ol' soccer boot where one had to nail the hard leather studs into the boots. These boots sorted out the men from the boys! Boot rash was a painful experience. I used to be in all the football teams when I was at school (various schools - we travelled around a lot), meaning I must

have been fairly good as one had to 'try out' to see if one was good enough to get on the team. I was shocked when trying out for the army team to find I couldn't even touch the ball with the 'new' continental boots. Where was the shin support, and the hard toe for the sometimes necessary 'toe poke'? With the continental boot I found every time I tried to trap the ball under foot the ball would pass harmlessly underfoot completely missing the trap: "It's these short studs!" I hollered. Gone also was a time when one could take one's girlfriend, or, in later life, son, to football matches without fear of being torn to pieces. *Sigh* It's all gone.))

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#### JOTTO Turn 6

Bloody hell, I've had more questions about rules fired at me in this one game than in my whole editing career. What happened to the good old days when the only thing that Sharp would ask of me was where he could possibly get a book with enough six letter words in to give him a choice? Of course UMBLES is a natural plural... YES plurals can now be sent in... NO I'm not going to tell anyone if I've chosen plurals for my secret words... and, how would I know what the hell I'm talking about!!! The kitty still stands at a HUGE £5 - someone hurry up and win it so I can be put out of my misery... \*SIGH\* and to think I started this because I thought it was a simple game.

KATH COLLMAN: 6th: 120101  
MIKE DEANS: 5th: 330353  
6th: 231122  
BRIAN MOORE: 6th: 214332  
ULF JIRETORN: 6th: 241132  
ANDREW SMITH: 6th: NMR'd  
RICHARD SHARP: 6th: 111011

R.J. LAMPARD: 5th: 122112  
6th: 212223  
RICHARD DOWNES: 5th: 211112  
6th: 213322  
ALAN POWIS: 6th: 321234  
ROSIE ROBERTS: 6th: 162131

Zine Poll Game: So far the prize is the magnificent sum of £1, but right up until the results are made public anyone can join. Just send in your five guesses in the order you think they'll be in when the final result is in, and the closest guess gets the prize. Game fee only 25p. Already we have:-

TOM TWEEDY: 1st Dolchstoss; 2nd Mad Policy; 3rd Ode; 4th Hopscotch; 5th Greatest Hits.

DANIEL BROOKS: 1st Mad Policy; 2nd Ode; 3rd Dolchstoss; 4th Dib Dib Dib; 5th War & Peace.

DAVID ABBOTT: 1st Mad Policy; 2nd Dolchstoss; 3rd Greatest Hits; 4th Hopscotch; 5th War & Peace.

ULF JIRETORN: 1st Mad Policy; 2nd Dolchstoss; 3rd Ode; 4th War & Peace; 5th Dib Dib Dib.

I've heard nothing yet about the Zine Poll - Richard Sharp complained that he'd be the last to publish it, I'd dispute that it looks as though I might be. Perhaps I'll have won and everybody'll get to talk about it except for me. By the time Dib 51 is due out no-one will want to hear about it. Typical!