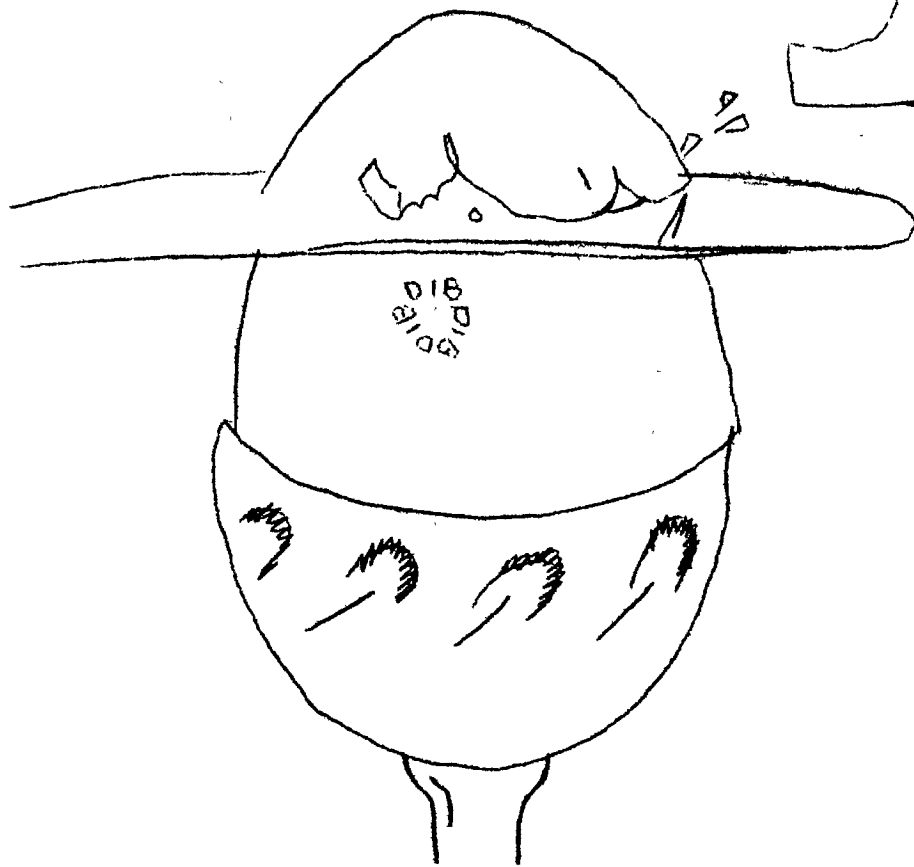


**DIB DIB DIB**

**51**



When I asked for a "bold" design, I think my artist misunderstood.....

A warm welcome to the 51st issue of Dib Dib Dib - not so much a bumper issue celebrating a milestone of fifty-one, more an overflow from fifty. 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

It's a difficult time for me to sit here doing this. It's a lovely sunny day outside, Jan's just finished laying the paving slabs for the patio (only a temporary measure as I'll get a rich uncle of mine - in the trade - to lay it down properly once we've got used to where we want it). I can see it from here - sun-hot white slabs (beige actually) surrounded on two sides with cool green grass - butterflies flitting around. Ah the ingredients of a summer's day. Actually she's made quite good job of it if I may say so myself, under my supervision of course. Anyway I should be out there sunning myself instead of typing this - laying on my back watching the passing puffballs of cloud (my God it makes a change though from thunder clouds) counting the myriad of bumble bees coming to service the plants bordering the patio - yes, Jan's a good gardener as well. Ah, life can be idyllic at times. BUT I'M STILL SAT HERE NATTERING TO YOU LOT! I must be mad. What IS it that keeps us humble zine editors stuck to our typewriters when all we really want to do is skive off? It make yer wonder, dunnit? Well it makes ME wonder.

Well I refuse to be a slave to this mag - er, with permission from you lot - I haven't much to talk about so I'll just get on with it, finish it and dash off. Enclosed in this issue is a copy of the Bourse rules in case anyone is interested in playing another game in Dib. Also there is some mention in the letter column about other types of games - notably 'En Garde'. If there's anyone out there who knows of a good GM, and is reliable (not always the same thing), please get in touch. The reason I'm wary about GM's is because once bitten and all that - because you'll find some mention of Chris Sandow who tried to DM a D&D game I wanted to run in Dib. A disaster. All those that played in 'Catacombs of Coper-

nica' please note Chris' letter. Please accept my apologies for mucking you all about.

The only other thing of note is on the printing side of producing a magazine. I've been interested for a while now to find out if matrix printers work properly with duplicators. I feel I didn't want to be tied down to a daisywheel printer when matrix printers are more versatile, better catered for in regards software printer drivers, and a letter quality print that is getting better all the time. Anyway with finding out about all this in mind I sent some stencils and 'Contact sheets' to Jake Cheung and Richard Downes (for those who don't know wax from stencils can often clog daisywheels and matrix printers. Covering the stencil first with a contact sheet prevents this). The results were extremely impressive. For those who already get Back to the Dark Ages they'll have already seen the quality of print Richard produced. Letter-quality print AND graphics on a duplicator (as matrix printers can 'draw' pictures). So as to prove this is not a fluke I waited for the return stencils from Jake - the result was almost the same - perhaps even better. So, the conclusion is, and in case anyone asks you, some matrix printers (though perhaps not all) CAN produce duplicated zines without any mess, trouble or bugging up the matrix printhead. Mind you, I don't know how much trouble you might get cutting stencils WITHOUT using the clear film 'Contact Sheets'. I do have supplies of the sheets if anyone wants to try them out - give me a ring. They cost about 15-20p each but you can use them for at least 30 pages.

THE 1985 ZINE POLL RESULTS

	Pts	1sts	Vts		Pts	1sts	Vts
1 Mad Policy	468½	12½	83	13 DIB DIB DIB	160½	-	40
2 Dolchstoss	302	20	56	14 Back to the Dark Ages	157	10	25
3 Home of the Brave	292	7	53	15 Rapscollion	151	5	28
4 Hopscotch	289½	11½	50	16 Rostherne Games Review	135½	3	34
5 Zeeby	285	7	51	17 Vienna	132	9½	20
6 Denver Glont	284	12	42	18 Lokasenna	129½	1½	23
7 Greatest Hits	268	1½	56	19 Morrigan	129	3	25
8 War & Peace	239	5	43	20 Gazfinc	122	1	30
9 Ode	236	5	46	21 Sauri's Allstar Unltd	120½	4	26
10 Cut and Thrust	226	8	43	22 Howay the Lads	119	-	32
11 Thing on the Mat	219½	11½	33	23 Prisoners of War	114	1	24
12 Boojum	169½	6½	34	24 NMR1/ABolFroB	111	1	25

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Poll No. 1	2	3	4	5
Pos.: Jan 1974	Jun 1974	Mar 1975	May 1976	Apr 1977
1st Ethil the F.	Dolchstoss	Dolchstoss	Chimaera	Chimaera
2nd Mad Policy	Mad Policy	Mad Policy	1901 a.a.t.	1901 a.a.t.
3rd Dolchstoss	Orion	1901 a.a.t.	Mad Policy	Jigsaw
4th 1901 a.a.t.	1901 a.a.t.	Fifth Column	Jigsaw	Dolchstoss
5th War Bulletin	Frigate	Hyperion	Trojan Horse	Rats...
6th Grafeti	Fifth Column	Greatest Hits	Ad Nauseam	Mad Policy
7th Frigate	Comet	War Bulletin	Bumm	Greatest Hits
8th Our 'Enry	Hannibal	Relief	He's Dead Jim	Ad Nauseam
9th S of Bellicus	War Bulletin	Lemming Expr	Rocinante	Trojan Horse
10th Hannibal	Ct. Circular	Frigate	Dolchstoss	PTN

Poll No. 6	7	8	9	10
Pos.: Apr 1978	Jun 1979	Jul 1980	Jun 1981	Jul 1982
1st Dolchstoss	Greatest Hits	Greatest Hits	Greatest Hits	Ode
2nd Ethil the F.	PTN	F of Eagles	PTN	Greatest Hits
3rd Chimaera	Chimaera	PTN	NMR1	F of Eagles
4th Lemming Expr	Megalomania	NMR1	Chimaera	The Acolyte
5th New Statsman	Mr Gladgrind	Chimaera	F of Eagles	NMR1
6th Tinamou	F of Eagles	Putty Riffo	Persp Dreams	W Your Back
7th Jigsaw	Filibuster	P. Victory	Ripping Yarns	Dib Dib Dib
8th 1901 a.a.t.	Pigmy	Megalomania	Putty Riffo	H of the Brave
9th PTN	Gallimaufry	Tinamou	Ode	Chantecler
10th Greatest Hits	Tinamou	Filibuster	P. Victory	Chimaera

Poll No. 11	12	13	
Pos.: Aug 1983	Aug 1984	Aug 1985	Thank goodness, more of a sensible result this year.
1st Greatest Hits	Hopscotch	Mad Policy	Dib came 13th (19th last year), which was more or less what I expected, but in their correct positions (in the top ten) comes Home of the Brave (last year it came 20th), Greatest Hits (last year it came 22nd), and Denver-Glont (which came 32nd!).
2nd Mad Policy	NMR1	Dolchstoss	Some difference. Which just
3rd The Acolyte	Mad Policy	H of the Brave	
4th NMR1	Die Pop-Rev	Hopscotch	
5th Denver Glont	Dolchstoss	Zeeby	
6th Hopscotch	Cut & Thrust	Denver Glont	
7th Ode	The Acolyte	Greatest Hits	
8th H of the Brave	Church Mouse	War & Peace	
9th Lokasenna	M Die Spuhl	Ode	
10th 20 Years On	TTYF	Cut & Thrust	

goes to show this must be by far the better method of voting, with the right zines appearing at the top where they should be. Though I'm sure there will be many who will disagree with this - there always is. Congratulations must be in order to Richard Walkerdine for Mad Policy winning most convincingly. I'm sure Richard will be well pleased with winning his poll after so many years of

coming second. Also one who must be congratulated is Richard Downes as best newcomer bringing Back to the Dark Ages up so high in his first poll. The number of people who voted this year was fairly good, though it was exactly 10 down from last year. 1983 had 224 voters, 1984 had 258, this year 248 voted.

As you can see 40 people voted for Dib (not too bad I suppose out of 110 subscribers and trades), but no-one voted it TOP? - this is impossible! I suppose it must have something to do with the couple of bad issues I put out beforehand. I hope so anyway. My thanks to all those that did vote for Dib though, coming 13th out of a total of 85 listed zines (143 zines voted for) just isn't bad. The results speak for themselves but just to explain the headings: 'Pts' based on the 3-2-1 method where if a voter only sends in votes for two zines the top zine gets 2 and the last one 1; '1sts' the number of people who had the zine at the top of their list; 'Vts' number of voters who voted for that zine.

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#### Zine Poll Game:

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.

The correct order was: Mad Policy; Dolchstoss; Home of the Brave; Hopscotch; and Zeeby. As you can see David and I got three guesses in the top five right, but David got Mad Policy, Dolchstoss and Hopscotch in the right order. So he receives the prize - a whole £1 note from Dib's coffers - as his reward. This will be included in his credit (therefore it goes right back where it belongs into my piggy bank) unless the rotter really wishes me to go to the trouble of writing a WHOLE cheque out! Hard luck the rest... maybe I'll have better luck next year.

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#### THE CATACOMBS OF COPERNICA The Final Chapter

"The management regrets to announce that the Imperial Surveyors - having examined the catacombs, and having found them to be structurally unsound and beyond repair - have advised that the said catacombs should be closed to the public forthwith.

As the players no doubt will have already guessed, the Catacombs campaign has run into difficulties. I apologise for taking so long before announcing the closure of the game, but I've been trying to see if I could solve the problems. Unfortunately the Campaign suffers from too many basic design faults (the result I suppose of my never having run a postal campaign before) and the only solution would have been to scrap the game and started again from scratch, which hardly seemed reasonable.

So, my apologies to all the players, especially those who had only just started. You will all be getting your money back very shortly. My thanks to you for the entertainment you gave me, and I'm sorry it couldn't carry on any longer."

Chris Sandow (DM)

((Chris, according to my records the following should be getting their money back: Simon Craddock, Derek Andrews, Clive Booth, Nick Clark, George North, Dave Tant, Victor Hall, Mike Close, and I think Ian Tillson, but perhaps those players involved could contact Chris at 2 Coronation Avenue, Keynsham, Bristol, BS18 2PT Tel: 027 56 68874.))

DIPLOMACY BOURSE HOUSERULES

The 'Bourse' is not really a Diplomacy variant, but a separate game run in conjunction with a game of Diplomacy. The rules are believed to have been created originally by Don Miller, although many changes have been made over the years. In this version players are allowed to retain a balance in Dollars.

1. It is usual (but not compulsory) to play in a Bourse using a pseudonym.
2. Each player begins with 1000 units of the seven active currencies: Austrian Crowns, English Pounds, French Francs, German Marks, Italian Lira, Russian Roubles and Turkish Piastres. All currencies are equal in value at the start of the game. With one unit of each currency worth \$1.00. Throughout the game the value of each currency is always denoted in terms of Dollars.
3. The deadline for Bourse orders is the same as the deadline for the Diplomacy game. The orders are in two parts, selling and buying.
4. On a turn a player will sell some currencies and buy others. He may never sell more than 500 units of any one currency on a turn, but he may buy as many units as he can afford. If his total purchases on that turn costs less than the income he has generated from his sales, the surplus is retained as a balance in Dollars. This balance may be used on future turns when he wishes to buy more units than he can afford from sales. The Dollar balance may grow to any size but may never be in deficit.
5. Each turn the value of a currency will change according to the amount of trading in that currency. The value of a currency will increase by 1 cent for every 100 units bought, and will decrease 1 cent for every 100 units sold. The overall movement of a currency will thus be determined by the difference between total units bought and total units sold. If, for example, 2990 units of a currency are bought and 2000 units are sold, the difference is +990 units and the value of that currency would rise by 9 cents (fractions of cents are lost).
6. In his orders a player should list all of the currencies, their current unit values, his holdings in them, and give details of his buying and selling and any adjustments necessary to his balance of Dollars. It is important to check that you can afford to make the purchases you specify. In the event of an error the GM will attempt to make/buy as much as possible for you, but cannot guarantee to carry out your exact wishes.
7. Each season the GM will list who has sold and bought what, old price, new price, each players holdings and the total value of those holdings in terms of Dollars.
8. When a country is eliminated from the Diplomacy game (which is only possible in an Autumn season) the value of its currency falls to zero and it no longer plays any part in the Bourse. Apart from this no currency may fall below a value of 1 cent. There is no upper limit to the value of a currency.
9. Anyone may join the game at any time and will start with 1000 units of each currency still active in the game.
10. The Bourse ends when the Diplomacy game ends. The winner is determined by computing the 'credits' of each Bourse player by multiplying the number of units of currency he currently owns by the number of supply centres owned by that country at the end of the game and dividing the total result by 100. The winner is the player with the highest 'total credits'. Thus if England wins with 18 centres and the surviving countries are Italy (10 centres) and Russia (6 centres), a player who had 6000 Pounds, 5000 Lira and 8000 Roubles would have total 'credits' of  $1080 + 500 + 480 = 2060$ . Any Dollars still held at the end of the game are lost.
11. No conditional orders are allowed.

These Bourse rules were copied exactly from BttDA 14 with kind permission of Richard Downes (who got them from Mad Policy) - thanks Richard. Waiting Lists for this are now open on the back Dib.

JOTTO Turn 7

A lot of NMR's this turn. I think Rosie managed to scare you all off last time with her 6 - wotta buncha nancies; no staying power. The kitty still stands at £5. Andrew if you can't get 3 guesses in next time I'll have to take your name off - it's too difficult to print and GM otherwise.

KATH COLLMAN: 7th: 431123  
 BRIAN MOORE: 7th: 113121  
 MIKE DEANS: 7th: 221132  
 ALAN POWIS: 7th: NMR1

R.J. LAMPARD: 7th: NMR1  
 RICHARD DOWNES: 7th: 220111  
 ULF JIRETORN: 7th: 223242  
 ANDREW SMITH: 6th: NMR1  
 7th: NMR1  
 RICHARD SHARP: 7th: NMR1

ROSIE ROBERTS: 7th: 224232

LETTERS

MICHELE MORRIS: "The lettercol in Dib 50 was quite interesting. It was, of course, much enhanced by the addition of my spouse and self. ((Undoubtedly)) Thanks for the warm welcome, you sycophant you, if that's your response to a £3 cheque all I can say is that you must be as desperate for the green'uns as we are! ((I HATE it when women 'understand' me))

I've decided to ignore your chauvenistic comments on page 11. I'm not so naive that I'll rise to the bait so easily. It would be a bit pointless anyway, you only seem to have 3 or 4 female subscribers so any arguments in our favour would be rapidly descried by the misogynists among your readership."

((Hey, unfair comments! For a start a lot more women than you realise read Dib - the wives of Dib subscribers for a start (Dib is a family mag!) - but their husbands have them under proper control. Anyway, for someone who wasn't going to comment you certainly got a lot of cracks in - I haven't been called a misogynist for quite some time now. Kris, DO something....))

MICHELE (CONT): "Very nearly forgot. As Danny Collman said it does take several readings of the rules before they are comprehended. Isn't this true of many good games also (have you read the rules to Monopoly lately?). For sheer lack of clarity nothing beats the rules of 'Colditz'. If anyone knows how to play that and can summarise the rules in plain English we'd be truly grateful.

I'm very sorry Danny ((Re Danny Collman's letter last issue)) but your rewrite of Rule XII is just as bad as the original. As a true novice (we only bought the game in June), I can say your explanation did nothing to clarify the situation. The fact that you think it does is an example of just how difficult it is to write truly clear instructions to anything. In order to be able to write (or rewrite) the rulebook you have to have a full understanding of the game. You are thus far removed from the difficult position of the beginner. What you may consider to be the stumbling blocks may not in fact be what bothers the novice. Add to that the loose ends and often imprecise nature of the English language and you have a scenario ripe for chaos. Because you know what you meant to say you may find it impossible to interpret what you have written in any other way. An outsider without previous knowledge of the game may view your 'unambiguous' sentences in totally the wrong way.

Learning theory states that we learn most easily when the learning situation allows active rather than passive learning. translated into 'plain English', if there is such a thing, it is easiest to learn by doing. As Tom suggested the best way to learn is by actively playing the game or as Gibsons suggest by working your way through the examples (or even as Danny Collman has done by rewriting the rules in your own words).

Either way is preferable to just passive learning i.e. reading the rules. When learning anything the way to make progress is, therefore, to get stuck in there!"

((I don't think I need to make any comment here, Michele says it all in regards Danny's Diplomacy rules. As for the 'Colditz' rules, come now Michele, a women of your calibre, the rules are EASY. Mind you, I don't think I could explain them in printed form all in one go - perhaps if you fired a question at me one at a time I could help you.))

DANNY COLLMAN: "Naughty, naughty! Do I detect a hint of petulance? (Uther Gamestart) Kath is having fun trying to decide who she can trust.

My final word(s) on the rule revamping, mainly answering your comments. I'll accept that you understood the rules instantly (unlikely though that seems) - but how on earth did you find out about the hobby? There was no mention in my game when I got it, and I only found out (re. letter, Dib 50) after writing to Gibson's. This particular problem has only this April gone and been rectified by Richard Bairstow's box-fliers.

I still feel very strongly (gently echoed by others) that the rules are badly written. I don't want them changed, just written in a way that the normally intelligent person who wishes to play at home with friends, can understand them. For your perusal I enclose a copy of the finished revisions (despite what I said last time I decided to do the job myself). The curious supplement is the result of my ignoring certain sections with the words 'As published', then realising that I did not intend them to be as originally published. If anyone else wants to see my revisions - A4 or A5 S.A.E. with an extra 17p stamp, address as per Dib 50 'Uther' gamestart.

Your quotation of Kevin Elliott in 'Hacking Times': where the hell does he get his reading of rule 9? Neither the 1971, nor 1983 rules (photocopy enclosed) say that at all, never mind rule 9, and in the 'Basic Rules' sheet (photocopy enclosed) published by Gibson's it's their one appalling error at rule 10 in an otherwise commendable effort to paraphrase the rules.

Above are my final words on the rules."

((I haven't had time to read your rules closely so I can't make any comment on them yet. However looking at Gibson's supplement it seems as though Kevin Elliott was going on about rule 10 - and as you say, you recognised the error.

I joined the hobby first, having seen it advertised the 'Games & Puzzles', and asked the NGC Custodian, Richard Sharp, what sort of games were played postally. He told me Diplomacy was the main game (it was a strong Diplomacy hobby in those days) - so, I went out and bought a box. I thought my entrance into the hobby was pretty straight forward.))

BRIAN MOORE: "Re. Diplomacy Rules: I was given a copy of the 1971 game, given, because the person who had bought couldn't understand it. At that time I was also getting G&P, and saw an ad for the Postal Games Association 'run' by Richard Sharp. I sent a pound and heard nothing more, till a couple of months later when I received a flyer telling me that the PGA wasn't running any more but I could write to the magazines listed. I chose one called Bellicus because the editor, Will Haven, lived in Chorley and I could also ask him about T&T/D&D as well as Diplomacy. I soon found myself also subbing to Chimaera where I played my only game of postal Diplomacy, 'Deneb', apart from playing in 2 or 3 others as stand in. I came second in Deneb.

I've not played Diplomacy since, either F&F or PBM. Reason: Diplomacy played well needs oodles of time devoted to it in analysing positions, yours and others, and also in writing to all the players, or most of them every month. With all my other hobby commitments I just can't devote enough time to a game which in turn would spoil it for the others. I never did get my pound back from Richard Sharp.

You say you are looking for something else to run. Something like

'En Garde' or 'Formula 1'... Well I could suggest 'Becket' for En Garde - run quite successfully by Brian Ashbury in Chimaera for a while. I enjoyed playing in that myself. I found it had more players interaction than E.G., but that's not saying much as you could play E.G. quite well without once contacting another player. In 'Beckett', players must interact or wind up dead! Formula 1 I don't know much about it but... Remember Griffin run by Keith Thomasson... And Herald run by Robin Hood... And Duel Purpose run by Mike Lean? All ran 'Railbaron' quite successfully, in fact I've just raised it again in Hopscotch. That is a good game."

((I think I'll have to do a questionnaire if I'm to find out who likes what games. 'Becket' sounds interesting. Mind you it also counts on who is doing the GMing - I've played 'En Garde' with a bad GM and the game was terrible, yet I enjoyed it immensely in PTN. This game MUST have a good GM if I'm to start it. (But who?) More about bad DM's/GM's later.

As for your £1 fee for the NGC/PGA you're not the only one in that's had to fork out for no reason. I paid £2 (a pound for me and a pound for Jan) and received a flyer telling me what's what and I think (I can't remember that far back clearly) placing me in a CGS game. A couple of months later the NGC ceased to exist. Mind you, what's a couple of quid when it's introduced me to 7, 8 years of fun?))

And time I think to print a couple of little ego boo's - BECAUSE - I like to see them....

ULF JIRETORN: "Thanks for Dib 50 - it was very good. I was glad to see a Diplomacy article in it at last - that's one thing I missed in Dib before. I hope you continue to print Diplomacy articles.

I would much appreciate it if you started an 'En Garde' campaign. I played in one here in Sweden a couple of years ago, and would like to do it again."

((I'd like to start one, Ulf, IF it was popular with the other subscribers, and, as I said above, if I could find an enthusiastic GM. Believe me, they are hard to find. As for Diplomacy articles, I like to print them when I can get them, but I don't seem to be able to find time to do them myself. Are there any Diplomacy fanatics out there who would care to try? A free issue of Dib for each article published.))

TIM COLLIEU: "I'm sorry that this is a bit late, but for what it's worth, congratulations on your 50 issues, having only been with you since issue 37, I can still appreciate the effort that goes into producing Dib regularly and excellently, may you keep on going to issue 100.

Can I clear up a little point, Vienna has nothing to do with White Dwarf. This is a common fallacy, a small group of subscribers, about half a dozen, were recruited from an ad Rick placed there. They provided the basis for the first game of standard Diplomacy. That was the first, last and only connection with WD. Oh yes, and what was wrong with my article on the Russian Revolution, pray?"

((Nothing really, I found it quite interesting, I was just a little surprised to see it in a gaming magazine that was all. It seemed more fitting for an exam paper. Thanks for clearing up the point about Vienna.)

MARTIN CLIFFORD-KING: "Many thanks for Dib 50, much appreciated - it kept me reading throughout my train journey. Congratulations on the Zine Poll, there are a lot of good zines up there and you deserve to be with them."

((True, true - glad you enjoyed the zine, Martin, it sounds good and is much appreciated coming from a discerning 'old sweat' like you.))



PAUL DONLEY: "Congratulations on reaching the magic 50, and also on such an excellent issue to celebrate. Surely the highlight was George North's article on football. I'm surprised that there's anyone old enough in the hobby to remember that long ago."

((Hey, I can remember that far back! I agree with you though it's nice to see George back in such fine fettle. But speaking of 'im...))

GEORGE NORTH: "You have an artist doing the front cover which is always brilliant. If it is your dungeon master then you can tell him that I am still waiting to know when this game is going to continue, or is he another of those five minute wonders we keep getting to run a dungeon and pack it up before anybody has got anywhere? I can name at least eight people who commenced a game and then dropped it inside a year. My own dungeon lasted several years until the very last adventurer reckoned it was time to call it quits. I wanted to fold but didn't."

((Yes, I'm sorry for the way this has turned out, because as I explained in the editorial it IS partly my fault, but this the trouble with outside GMs anyway, editors always have to take a gamble. Some outside GMs are excellent - Dave Tant, John Bycroft, Matt Quartermain, etc - but this way of running games can only be a matter of trial and error at the best of times. Anyway I've chased Chris up - there should be some mention of Catacombs of Copernica elsewhere in the magazine.

Jan does all of Dib's covers - clever isn't she?))

BILL HAYGARTH: "Happy 50th. I've said it before and I'll say it again - the prompt turnaround is greatly appreciated, especially when you play in so many 'highly irregular' zines like I do (maybe I'm just unlucky). Do you think you can manage another fifty?"

((Certainly. Sorry to hear about your problems with other zines though, Bill, I hope it doesn't put you off. There's a lot of other good reliable zines out there, believe me. My thanks though to all those who sent their congratulations - it IS nice to be appreciated I suppose. On these very subjects here's one reliable editor...))

NICK KINZETT: "The ex-Foil/Newspeak Sopwith games are going to Andy Murby as Sopwith statsman, and he'll attempt to resurrect them in a mini-zine which'll run alongside The Ring (this cuts down costs and risks on all sides, but as you already trade with Andy, Stuart will get said mini-zine free).

The other games, those which are worthwhile, are in hand. Don't be too hard on Lee - it was partly the poor response by most of the orphaned players which sent him over the edge (and it's happened to him twice, since he originally launched Newspeak to rescue the Blackmail games). But thanks for the implied vote of confidence in me. Nice to get it given that one of the ex-Foil players - who evidently has no idea about orphan rehousing realities, is apparently laying the blame on yours truly.

Mind you, that cheering thought does remind me of an OGRE omission which I really must clear up. You recall the Bohemian Rhapsody Mk.I games? I think most of the (few) players who contacted me about them eventually learned what kind of result, if any, I had to impose upon them; but one who almost certainly don't was Cathy Cunning (now Ozog?), to whom apologies. (I think I also owe Cathy comments for the American rolegaming zine A&E of about two years back, but I haven't seen or contributed to it for a ss. Anyway Cathy your game was abandoned outright since only one other player besides you sent Spring '02 orders and because the statsman would have taken a dim view of a game in which the second GM (John Chisholm) was also one of the players! Many thanks for your efforts anyway, Ton, I would be most grateful if you could publish this message. It also might have relevance to those contemplating a flutter with B.Rhapsody Mk.II, though far be it from me to cast the first

stone (just the second third and fourth). ((No sooner said....))

The Coventry hobbymeet is now held at the Windmill in Spon St., which is just off Corporation Street in the City Centre. 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of every month. Actually it's been meeting here for some time, it's just that I keep forgetting to mention the fact in Zeeby it being possibly the least important item (all those who attend know anyway)."

((From what I hear this has turned into a popular hobbymeet - it WOULD be with Kinzett running it though wouldn't it.))

DAVID ABBOTT: "Luke Clutterbuck's article was quite interesting, however he has made one vital miscalculation. His flaw is that he has forgotten to mention that Italy is the best country on the board, any person with half a brain cell will automatically win with that country. Indeed Italy is such a good country that all the other players may as well concede in Autumn 1901 it is only due to my natural philanthropy that Taranis continues into 1903.

Finally I must feel sorry for that poor wretch Dave Bird. Obviously the euphoria of subscribing to Dib Dib Dib has been too much of a strain for him, since nobody of sound mind would ever vote labour. One hopes he rapidly recovers at whatever nursing home he will be staying."

((I must admit Italy, along with Austria, are my two favourite countries when playing Diplomacy. I suppose it's because one HAS to get involved in the game more with these two countries if one is to even survive. Both countries are difficult to play. If you don't write to the people around you, you die! It's as simple as that.))

It seems as though off the cuff remarks made by myself and John Piggott last issue comes under a bit of flak...

MICHELE MORRIS: "I'll leave Kris to fight his own battles re the misguided and naive comments of yourself and John Piggott concerning unemployment. You'll be demanding the return of National Service next. If only it were that simple! Kris has been out of work for three years now and at 33 is considered too old by employers and the DHSS; the latter having given in entirely and after asking permission to tidy up their files (i.e. can we throw yours out?) came up with the really useful suggestion that Kris 'went home to grow roses'! Yes there are a few jobs about but the average wage in Cornwall is between £50 and £60 p.w. (if you don't believe me I'll take you down to the local jobcentre any day you choose). How on earth can you pay off a mortgage (ours is small by today's standards), and raise a family on that? Margaret Thatcher has been quoted as saying she is horrified at how much tax a man on the 'average' wage of £180 p.w. has to pay and that she can't understand how people can cope on such 'low' wages. I'd love the opportunity to try! Not everyone has the necessary talent, backing or business acumen to start their own firm. What is needed are real jobs on reasonable wages with a fair tax system that doesn't penalise the married and low waged earner as the present system does. The vast majority of the unemployed do want to work but would be committing financial suicide if they did. The 'poverty trap' isn't just a phrase invented by economists, millions of us have to live it every day. This is in no way intended as a personal attack on anyone. All I ask is that people open their eyes, forget the stereotypes and personal prejudices and find out what is really happening in this country today. I'm sorry if I sound a bit over-the-top but I'm fed up with my family and I being labelled as lazy no-good scroungers by the fortunate, when circumstances keep kicking us down in spite of everything we do to try to improve our situation."

((I'm afraid you have got me all wrong, Michele, I didn't attack the general unemployed man-in-the-street - and certainly I don't see them as a bunch of skivers and lazy no-good scroungers. I merely mentioned my own experiences

with people I've been associated with as scroungers on the dole. John only mentioned HIS own experiences with regards getting a young person to work for him. As they WERE personal experiences you can't say they didn't happen - but that doesn't imply we haven't the intelligence to realise not ALL people are like that. We don't live blinkered lives and we are not without some sympathy for people with your problems, even though we both might vote Conservative. But, as you might rightly guess, sympathy doesn't count, so it's never ever mentioned. I'm sure both John and I would like to change things if we could. But how can we help... by voting for Labour? Even if I did, I still couldn't keep quiet about the dole and DHSS scroungers I've seen - though I apologise if my comments last time upset you. I can assure you it was unintentional.))

MIKE POLLARD: "In answer to John Piggott's letter in Dib 50, I can hardly believe the magnitude of your generalisation, John: There's an interesting quote often used to answer people with your point of view. I can't recall the exact words, but it is a criticism of the youth of 'today', saying they have no respect, morals, etc etc. It was made by a famous ancient Greek theoretician over a thousand years ago.

Young people will always pose similar 'problems' in every generation. The older the complaining onlooker is, John, the greater the 'problem' appears to be. It is just as easy to quote examples of young people (unemployed or not), demonstrating exemplary behaviour and reliability.

It's the reasons behind the examples of bad behaviour that we ought to be looking at. Tom Tweedy also produced the same sort of worn out generalisations that we have been touted around for centuries as reasons: not enough discipline, irresponsible parents, etc.

If you want people to be friendly, caring, cooperative, understanding, and responsible you have to build a society that promotes these qualities. Our present society is promoting the following:-

1. Warlike attitudes - through the Falklands propaganda, Thatcher's jingoistic speeches, massive expenditure on nuclear weapons. Did you know that India, that country of famine, disease and poverty has already spent over £200 million on its nuclear programme? Or that the USA is now spending \$ 0 million to bury nuclear waste, after their first attempt to bury it and keep its presence hush, hush, resulted in hundreds of people in the nearby town contracting various forms of cancer? These are not caring leaders we have in charge. ((Agreed))
2. Extreme competition in business - good for getting the best out of people, yes, but it also brings out the nasty, money-grabbing merchants. You can see them on 'Watchdog' and 'That's Life' etc all the time. ((You can't argue both ways - either you find this 'good', or bad. I think competition is good for building a strong healthy business.))
3. Widening divisions between rich and poor, North and South. The average business executive got about 8 to 10% pay rise last year, plus perks that we can only guess at, and this rise follows years of other increase above inflation levels and the rises awarded to the public sector. Once again the nurses and teachers suffer - the very people we need to build and care for our society.
4. Unemployment - the despair many people feel drives them to crime, drugs, and physical mental deterioration. You can't 'get on your bike' and race around like Superman for years on end when there are simply no jobs available. And if Fowlers 'Welfare' report becomes law, the situation will get worse.

I apologise for not being able to go into greater detail to back my theories and statements, but this is only a games 'zine, isn't it? I do have examples and figures to support what I say. Let's have some more pity, care and tolerance in this world, eh?"

((This letter is the same as above and my answer to it is more or less the same. However there's still a lot of 'bug in this letter to be answered -

for a start, I'VE been unemployed and I wasn't 'driven to crime, drugs, and physical, mental deterioration' - I never could be. This is like saying all unemployed people are like this, something which I'm sure Michele will take great pains to put you right about. There is NO excuse for criminal acts whatsoever! And there is no excuse for childish bad manners with regards the youth of today. If you try for a job, don't expect to get it by lounging in a chair, not agreeing with society's way of doing things, or dressing like a punk. It's as simple as that. Employers DON'T have to tolerate anarchists - even though YOU may see it as your God-given right to be one. Having said all that I agree with you about the problems, and agree that answers must be found fast. But don't expect us 'old fogeys' (?) to except the fact that the youth of today should be 'allowed' to go off the rails because we haven't been able to get Thatcher out, or because there's no work for them. There's not much work for anyone and that's all the more reason to see that we cope with each other and the problems, not tear each other's throats out. Mind you, care and tolerance won't work - everyone's too scared to help in case their 'giving hand' is chopped off. Cynical, me?

As for widening divisions between rich and poor with regards pay - this is called pay incentive. This is not a Marxist state, if one wishes to study to be a doctor, lawyer, politician or engineer one can put in the years of work for high rewards. Do you expect someone who empties dustbins to get the same rewards? Or perhaps you wish our professional people to get the rate of a labourer? If so what then is the incentive to study? I agree nurses and teachers should get more, but the degree should be assessed. Not all teachers are worth it, and high pay might encourage even MORE diabolical teachers - God forbid.))

PETER SULLIVAN: "Hah! Just goes to show how much George North knows. Kindly tell him that basses do not use the treble clef (!) ((Sorry, guv, can't do that treble clef thingy with my typer...)) but the bass clef (!) ((You might not believe this...)) as is used for the left hand of a piano.

I seem to have scared off Mike Close for you - he's obviously afraid of crossing swords with me.

Re John Piggott and the Rev. Malthus (an unlikely combination): Wasn't there a Victorian gentleman who predicted that by 1980 all the streets would be knee-deep in horsie doings due to the exceptional increase in the number of horse drawn vehicles?"

((Yes there was - bit like science fiction predictions really, isn't it? And on Americanisms...))

LUKE CLUTTERBUCK: "Congratulations on issue 50! A numerical and editorial feat which I am almost certain I will never achieve with Rumplestiltskin. Well done.

I detect from the letter column that that D&D game is starting up again. You know that one where otherwise perfectly normal, intelligent people start arguing with great conviction and considerable ardour over points such as '17th century spelling in Maryland' and 'The seventh speech in 'King Lear'. Oh well, last time you said I could play too so back I go as a character to my school days where the sensitive dedicated teachers used to cause four foot lengths of cane wood to speed at a velocity of up to 200 miles an hour through the air, braking abruptly on the outstretched hand of the 10 year old victim of their sado-masochist perversions who'd been unlucky enough to spell 'Night' with an 'e' and without a 'gh' (viz 'nite') because that's the way they spelt it on 'The Flintstones'. So, in answer to Tim Collieu's question: Australian's officially follow British spelling though American culture does 'intrude' from time to time.

Frankly I can't see why it isn't possible to accept any spelling of a word provided it still communicates. Why should there be one way to spell something? There are about 4 ways to pronounce each word. Yanks understand scouse, Aussies comprehend the Upper crust etc. If we can allow that sort of freedom with our verbal language, why not the written?

I suspect the answer lies in the fact that the conservative 'intelligentsia' have been able to exert their direct control on the written word by means which include the savagery described above, far more than on the spoken word, which is, by its nature, a far more pragmatic form of communication. What do you think?"

((Yes, I agree the written word should have complete freedom (why not, mine has) to communicate as one wants to - providing it can always be understood by the reader. If even one literate reader fails to understand what's being said (written) then it's wrong. Mind you, this could well imply that most of what the intelligentsia writes. Communication, in whatever form, is only relative to the 'group' it is meant for anyway. Words in some trades will absolutely puzzle those not in the trade. Every trade has them: computers, railmen, sailors, cobblers, you name it.))

DANNY COLLMAN: "Here are (not necessarily) my final words on Americanisms. 'Americanism' to me means either 'standard usage in the U.S.A.', or 'usage strongly reminiscent of the standards of the U.S.A.'. I use both in a pejorative sense when in Britain.

Tim Collieu on American spelling: I take issue with his 'American spellings are those used in the 16th and 17th centuries'. It's a finicky point (I like finicky points), but American spellings are among the spellings used in 16th and 17th century Britain - the two sets of spellings were not definitively different until Johnson in the 18th century produced his dictionary (which became the standard for English spelling) and Webster, in the early 19th century, produced his (American) dictionary, which became the standard for spelling in the U.S.A. (Canada also?).

I do agree however with Tim's parenthesis about the influence of America, which is virtually my argument in a nutshell. Isn't it a shame that I spoil it all by enjoying American (and any other) cops and robbers films so much!"

((This takes the argument too deep for me... I don't think it matters unless one is interested in the source of specific words.))

KRIS MORRIS: "It's nice to see others against the use of 'Americanisms' in our language. I remember when at school - a long time ago as, like you Tom, I will never see 30 again! - that the use of 'and' or 'but' at the beginning of a sentence was highly frowned on. Two other pet hates of mine/ours (whether they are 'Americanisms' or not I haven't a clue) is the use of 'these ones' and 'I myself personally'. (Loud cries and gnashing of teeth)."

((Yes, bad habits like 'these ones' are bad - I have to watch this sort of thing myself sometimes. It's because of a lazy way of speaking I think, and is probably a regional habit like "see-you Jimmy" is to some Scots.))

KRIS (CONT.): "Re Daniel Brooks enquiry on the BBC computer. I really can't see how anyone could contemplate purchasing one, when there are much better systems available for less money. O.K. it was very good at the time of launch, but when such machines as Amstrad's new 128K computer, c/w disk drive and monitor are available for £300 (it even runs 'CP/M' and 'Logo') then I can't see how Acorn can survive with the current pricing policy. We've only got a Spectrum 48K, great as a games machine but for serious use - and I include word processing under that heading - it's a total waste of time. Look what you have to buy to make it 'usable' - real keyboard, interfaces, etc etc - a very expensive exercise."

((And, further down...))

ALAN FROST: "You've said that the correspondence about Dave Bird's dissatisfaction with the hobby is closed. Fine you may not want to publish this but it may make you feel better personally to know that Dave Bird is the

man who RESIGNED TWICE in his novice game (which is still going on with the four 'committed' players he mentions in his letter). Admittedly, there were problems of folds and poor turnover but the rest of us stuck to it. We let him back in when the game was orphaned and relocated and the bastard had the effrontery to play a couple of seasons and jack it in. You can imagine how this affected strategy.

It seems to me that you can't expect professional publications and spot-on deadlines in an amateur hobby. It amazes me that editors do so well. And what the hell is he in it for? If he wants chat, then I suggest he subscribes to Woman's Own. The games are the thing and I think you did exactly right to publish them without the rest of the chaff. (O.K. I like the letters, but they're secondary.)

If he wants a social and drinking club, he'd better join the British Legion, not go to hobby meets. I didn't join the hobby to meet nice chaps, did anyone else? Perhaps he should try a dating agency.

As to Daniel Brook's question about what computer to buy, the BBC is a rip-off! I've bought the one from work home for the holidays. The only thing it's good for is learning a highly complex form of Basic and seeing what computers can do without being able to do it. It has the disc interface so it won't run any programs of decent length. It certainly won't run games (apart from trivial ones).

As a machine for learning about computers it may be excellent. but its lack of memory makes it hopeless.

Buy a Spectrum. Or perhaps, for the limited use that Daniel envisages a QL. This is especially true if he knows little about computing because the Spectrum at least is very user-friendly and uses a simple form of Basic. The BBC manual is almost incomprehensible."

((Well it just goes to prove then 'Yer pays yer money, and yer takes yer...'))

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((I'm STILL not going to include letters like this in MY decent letter column - but just to show you the kind of nutters us poor hard-working editors have to put up with...))

MIKE CLOSE: "Great to see the irrepressible George North back. As a special treat for you ((oh yeah)) I've written some music to go with George's composition for a knicker-string base. It's for Jew's Harp, and goes like this:-" ((Do I REALLY have to be put through all this? I don't worry for the rest of my subscribers, they deserve all they get, but ME?))

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"Pause for applause. ((Forget it)) I wonder who will do the washboard bit?" ((Please, I have enough nutters in this zine, don't encourage them.))