

DIB DIB DIB

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"CLIVE, IT'S
OKAY. YOU CAN
STOP HIDING,
MR. COLLMAN DIDNT
MEAN ALL THOSE
NASTY THINGS
HE SAID AT
MIDCON"

(with apologies
to
Poulenc!)

Welcome to the 53rd issue of Dib Dib Dib - an unexpected bumper issue full of games, articles, and letters, and is dedicated to me because I deserve SOMETHING after putting out this little lot. 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

A warm welcome to two new subscribers, John Colledge and Rowland Goodman, I hope they enjoy the magazine and manage not to be too influenced by the subversive influence that tends to appear in my letter column!!!

Before you start this mammoth issue, I would like to point out to you all, that it was meant to be a GAMES ONLY issue. I had it all planned, I told Jan that as it was so near Christmas this had to be a fast turnaround to get the next issue but before the Bank Holiday. However..... I got a letter, "Oh, you must include that", then an article,..... well, I couldn't leave that out, then, three more letters with amusing comments,..... well, I like to make the zine a lighthearted one,..... and I had to balance up the other letters..... Hence, the zine got bigger and bigger, and I've got a great ploy for the Zine Poll, I simply tell you lot that the two issues before the Poll will be Games Only, that should ensure about a hundred and fifty letters with really interesting articles and a few gamestarts thrown in.

Trouble is, a big issue means higher postage costs, so I'm paying for your greater enjoyment, ... sigh... I really amaze myself with my generosity sometimes.

I see in GH 126 that Pete Birks, John Webley and Geoff Challenger will be on the new TV quiz game, 'Masterteams', on December 10th or thereabouts. Unfortunately Pete tells us the result - well it's been spoilt for me so I'll spoil it for you - they got beaten. I hate knowing the result of something I want to watch beforehand, it detracts so much from the enjoyment. Of course I won't be watching Masterteams just because Birks is on it, because I watch it normally anyway (hell, at five nights a week how can one even miss it!), but it should prove interesting enough for those who like to put names to faces.

Did any of you see BBC2's programme 'Open Space' on Monday? An absolutely amazing programme entitled 'The Bomb on Trial', in which the nuclear weapons establishment and political leaders were 'put on trial' by a Nuclear Warfare Tribunal. The tribunal seemed to consist of British and International lawyers posing questions, and debating whether nuclear governments (England, America, Russia, etc) were breaking international laws by pursuing the policies of deploying nuclear weapons with the intent of using them. The trial proved overwhelmingly that they WERE in breach of the various peace treaties: The Geneva Convention, the findings of the Nuremberg Trials, the United Nations agreements etc - in fact flouting international law. However, they proved if the super powers don't want to recognise basic human rights and international law, there is nothing that can be done about it.

To the lawyers and scientists it seems the only hope for the future are the Peace Movements (a rather tenuous hope I thought). I still think having a weapon to protect oneself is a sensible thing, but, not at the expense of giving up our only redeeming civilised feature; Law and Order.

Oops, I only meant to mention this programme in passing - got a bit carried away there. Think I'll keep quiet about TV in future.

Just got space to mention here (although I've lost the actual report I wanted to do) that Dib subscriber MARTIN CLIFFORD-KING won this year's Midcon Diplomacy Tournament. Congratulation Martin.

JOTTO Turn 9

SHE'S DONE IT AGAIN!! Rosie 'Wonder Woman' Roberts has proved once again she is unbeatable by sending in six correct guesses: ENWRAP, MORBID, UMBLES, ZEUGMA, CAMBER, and ENTRAP. And even had the nerve to throw down the gauntlet by adding: "Stung by your comparison of me with certain other people I have no option but to terminate your Jotto game."

See! Is there no-one to beat her? In actual fact my sixth word was TREPAN but as anagrams are allowed Rosie wins the £5 prize. Aren't you lot fed up with Rosie taking your money? This game proved interesting before when, if you remember, Richard Sharp queried the use of plurals and actually put forward UMBLES as an example! Hah hah, that'll teach him.

COLLMAN LETTERS BREAK INTO JOTTO COLUMN! (An interesting aside...)

KATH COLLMAN: "Let's get the Jotto out of the way first, shall we? Actually I have a list of 6 possible words, but I'm very dubious whether they are right - one of the main things that puts me off is your comment in issue 50 (much flipping through back issues as he tries to work out what the hell she's talking about) I refer to your mentioning the word UMBLES - which was one of my 6, so of course I'm on the wrong track ((Er, Kath I hardly know how to explain but...)) unless it's a game of bluff and counter bluff, requiring an iron nerve on the part of the participants.... what on earth am I rambling on about? Oh what the hell, here goes let's see what happens:-

JOTTO Turn 9: UMBLES

though now that Rosie scored 2 6's she's bound to have won anyway.

I hope returning your Chamber's to its proper place under the leg of your dining table will cure your dyspepsia!" ((Great, innit? - wot a shame))

So, what about another game - anyone interested? Or are you scared Rosie might volunteer for another game and take your money again? For anyone who feels up to it, the gamefee is 75p with 50p going towards a prize. And the rules...

As before I will choose six words from the Chambers dictionary (see Kath, I remembered), each word will be six letters long. Each month you send in one word and I then score each letter against each of my six words. For instance, if you submitted DETOUR and the six secret words were: RESORT, BASKET, GENTLE, PRIEST, MORTAR, BOTTLE the scores would be: 4, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3 respectively. Obvious aim is to find all six words.

When you think you know all six words you may take a guess at them (you must guess all six) - but you must get ALL six right! Get one wrong and you're out. Plurals are accepted. Anagrams of the secret words are accepted.

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DIPLOMACY

It seems that Diplomacy articles go down quite well with you lot. It's not surprising I suppose seeing as this is a gaming hobby, with Diplomacy the main game played. Requests have been made many times, now and in the past, to publish Diplomacy articles in Dib, but I've always managed to avoid doing them. My excuses ranged from: I didn't want to give away trade secrets to my opponents, to, other people write better Diplomacy articles anyway so why bother. Really I suppose I was just plain lazy. Anyway I've decided to give it a go, and jot down a series of articles on each country each month. This issue I'll just concentrate on basics of starting any country, and attitudes to the game.

Although I've won several games in the past, I've never taken my Diplomacy seriously enough to try and break down what it is I actually do to win. My main reason was just to get on with it and enjoy myself. If I had to categorise myself, I suppose I might be classed as an instinctive player. I fly by the seat of my pants and alter my strategy to suit my purpose as and when the different letters come in. If there's one basic rule to remember with

playing a decent game of Diplomacy, and wanting to win, it's that one should never get too greedy at the beginning. The idea is not to attract too much attention - large countries make neighbours nervous. And always remember to write to the other players in the game. Without it, you just help spread suspicion and you'll get jumped on, often, from a very great height.

The infamous Keith Loveys could well put you right on this point. As a master of the art he'd join dozens of games, write to no-one, and get chopped out of the game - often as soon as Autumn 02. As far as I know Keith still persists with this madcap strategy, and has even become a hobby personality because of it. He might enjoy himself (he must do as he spends a fortune) but it's no way to win a game.

In the first season it's definitely a good idea to write to everyone. Start off with the countries closest to you in order of importance: e.g. if playing England, I'd write to France first (he's the most dangerous because he could foolishly move to ENC), Germany next, obviously (in case France takes a sudden dislike to your cologne). and then Russia (assuring him of your friendliness so he won't start panic building in StP-nc). After that Italy (in case you need him against France), Turkey (against an aggressive Russia) and Austria (also against Russia). You may not think so at the time, but if you're a good player, it's highly probable you'll meet the likes of Turkey somewhere in the middle of the board in the middle game and want his help against Italy. It won't be easy to ask for his help if you then start writing to him, after all he might already have the Italian ear.

All letters in the first season must be non-committal and friendly. Sort of: "Dear Whoever, Just a letter by way of introducing myself." Promise help with information, though emphasise, IF you get it (you don't of course have to pass anything on; but it gives your opponents the idea you're friendly) and suggest they do likewise; you never know they may even believe you and pass on information of a possible stab against you. Never send angry or threatening letters; not only is it bad manners, it's bad diplomacy, and you're only likely to get your opponents back up and find yourself fighting against stubborn resistance.

I know the temptation is to stike back in anger after you've trusted someone - some even lose heart and drop out of the game. Believe me, in Diplomacy the game is never lost until your last unit has been completely knocked out. In one game where I was playing France, I was down to one unit [A(Bre)] with a German army in Paris. England was out, and Italy was helping Germany. God knows how, but I actually came back to win the game. The only thing I can put it down to, it the fixed 'friendly' smile and diplomacy letters. Bide your time, and diplome, diplome, diplome - nine times out of ten it works. And vengeance is certainly sweet when it's your turn to call the shots!

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Tell me, I am curious, were there two midcons to attend, from the reports I've received there appear to have been jolly party atmosphere events, knife in the back events, nasty people to meet and be annoyed by events and a general booze up... For example,

MIDCON: A PERSONAL VIEWPOINT
by Kath Collman

Tom Tweedy has asked me to write a report on Midcon from a woman's point of view, so here goes:-

Let it be said first of all that I was unable to attend the daytime sessions when the National Diplomacy Championships were being played, as I had to stay at home and mind the kids, and perform housewifely tasks like stripping paint off the concrete lintel over the garage, while Danny was actually playing Dip.

MIDCON - A NEWCOMER'S VIEW

by Danny Collman

What exactly 'Midcon' is supposed to mean, I'm not at all sure (Midlands Convention, presumably, though 'Convention' of what and whom, and for what and whom, is not actually clear anywhere you're supposed to 'know'). Still, whatever it means, Midcon was held in Birmingham, at the city-centre hotel, the Royal Angus (a Thistle Hotel no less!), between Friday 1st and Sunday 3rd of November.

Since I live in Birmingham, going along was no problem, and having gatecrashed at Manorcon last July, I had at least a vague idea of what to expect - which was: on Friday evening a lot of people boozing and playing various games other than Diplomacy; on Saturday between 9am and 5pm, slightly fewer than 100 people (I think) playing Diplomacy in a large room, with boozing included, and non-Dip games on the side; Saturday evening, boozing and a lot of non-Dip, games in progress, plus 'The Quiz' (semi-finals - the initial sort-out round had been Friday evening). Sunday, 9am - 4pm, the second and final game of Diplomacy, followed by various awards and presentations. As a side show (for me at least - I knew nothing about them except for the publicity), there was apparently also a darts match, and a snooker, pool or billiards game - I don't know what it was - in progress at some time during the weekend.

Two things seemed to unite people - games and booze, not necessarily in that order.

On the Friday evening, when I went with my wife (one of the few Diplomacy enjoying ladies apparently known to Britain) to the social/games evening, the biggest thing that struck me very forcibly is that everyone expects you to know somebody: how the reception committee at the registration desk would have reacted to a totally unknown person appearing, could have been a fascinating thing to watch. The bar and games room were separated by a beautiful furnished corridor, some 50 metres long, which had been all but taken over by gamers along the sides, with many more players in the games room. During the evening only one person invited us into a game - and that was Jack Jaffe trying to promote his game, 'Save the President' - apart from him, we may as well not have existed: presumably the outsider is expected to push forward and invite himself into a game.

I can just see the question welling up in people's minds: did I? Yes, I had the opportunity to invite somebody to play the game that I had brought along and started to play (Kensington) and yes, I did make that invitation to the two solitary persons who, without a look of scorn passing across their faces, stopped to look. Plenty of people gave us a cursory and derisive look in passing.

My over-riding impression was of a group of highly introspective people, who had their own little group of friends and wanted nothing to do with anyone else. That's probably highly unfair to a lot of very nice people, but my 'newcomer's' impression it definitely was. The problem, I readily admit, is that you can't know everybody. My other problem is that I just don't like games which require dice and/or 'chance' type cards for play - OK., so it's true that if I played a few, then I might change my mind, but I happen to be in that minority of one that likes games which require heavy, extended mental exertion. I'm no good at them but enjoy them I do.

The National Diplomacy Championships... was very well run. My thanks to Paul Simpkins (editor of 'Bruce', the most reliable magazine I've yet seen, with the possible exception of 'Dolchstoss', which I don't like, sorry Richard), John Dodds (more of him soon), Nick Kinzett (who is plain, friendly, helpful and nice), Niall Litton (who GMed both my games, and did so both well and fairly), and to all others responsible. ((Oy, Danny what about Dib, I've not

missed an issue yet, and I've always prided myself on the reliability of the zine...))

The National Diplomacy Championship... consisted of two games played (in theory) with two different countries, and two different sets of players. The Champion (who did win?) was determined by the most incredible scoring system you have ever seen. A scoring system which ultimately meant that players were often more interested in how their country was fairing on other boards, than in beating the other players in their own game (a viewpoint expressed by Michael Longdin, but definitely endorsed by me). The actual games did mean that I got to meet and know a few faces to go with the names. And it was nice to get to actually play a game of Diplomacy with six other players actually present in the flesh.

I'll finish with the 'Quiz'..... which for me was a disaster. No disrespect is intended to John Dodds, who is patently a lovely person to know, friendly, helpful and without malice, and who clearly spent a lot of time compiling the questions. Unfortunately I didn't want to be in it in the first place, any more than did Al Reason or my wife (who is Kath not Sid - 'in joke' to be explained on receipt of query plus a SAE). The problem was that the initial round on the Friday evening was a written quiz, open to all comers. Kath just can't resist written problems - especially with a time limit (60 questions in 30 minutes). We just squeezed into a place to qualify for the semi-finals.

So there we were, sat up on the dais with buzzers and audience - and questions which included games in general, the Hobby, and music. Except that the music questions were on pop music of the last ten years (or thereabouts). Whoever set those questions (not John) made a determined effort to be as obscure as possible - not even the audience could answer them. And who can answer questions on the Hobby unless they've been in since 1960 take every magazine and read every word? We couldn't.

The real disaster had nothing to do with the audience (who were there for a bit of fun and got it), or the teams (who simply couldn't concentrate), or the question master (who was equally distraught, despite the brave face he put on it). The real disaster was caused by a bunch of RUDE, UNMANNERLY, DISCOURTEOUS IGNORANT, MORONIC, BASIARDS in the other half of the curtained-off room, who were playing some game requiring a constant shouting competition. Despite at least four requests to either shut up or move elsewhere, they continued their shouting match, totally destroying any possibility of concentration, and twice bringing the quiz to a halt. When the questions had finished, and our team had been knocked out, I went to tell them exactly what I thought of them - by which time they'd gone.

If the bearded man ((actually CLIVE BOOTH, Danny)), to whom I did speak happens to read this, or if anyone knows him and can pass this on, I'd like to apologise to him. I'm given to understand he just happened to be there at the moment I arrived, but was not one of those that I was quarrelling with: I was in a foul temper, in no mood to listen and he got the rough end of my tongue. To that person, please accept my sincere apologies - I tried to find you both later that evening, and on Sunday, without success.

The people responsible were clearly ignorant morons. If the Hobby, or Midcon or both, are not better off without them, then it definitely is better off without me, because I want no part of any group that condones their behaviour. Nick Kinzett did apologise, on behalf of Midcon.

So did I enjoy myself? Yes, hugely. Mainly because I met a number of people playing postally with me who enabled me to put names to faces. Also because, eventually, I met a lot of nice people, including some local Dip players (there aren't many in Birmingham) that I can arrange some face to face games with - and if you live in or near Brum and fancy playing FTF, give me a ring on 021-554-9401.