

DIB DIB DIB

53



"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 Nuremburg 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!

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.

However, I was able to attend both evening sessions, and thoroughly enjoyed them.

The Angus is a large luxury hotel in the city centre, and the staff seemed to wear a slightly puzzled air during the whole weekend - I don't think they quite knew what had hit them when a motley crew of Diplomacy maniacs (dipsomaniacs for short) descended on their hotel and proceeded to take over. On the Saturday night in particular, there was a marked contrast between the scruffs attending Midcon and the well-heeled Brummies out for a Saturday night drink and meal! Posh women in furs were glancing into the games room and looking either bewildered or supercilious, and you should have seen the looks we got when we settled down in one corner of the bar for a quiet game of Cluedo!

We had a few funny looks from the Midcon attendees who saw us playing Cluedo - most people were playing things like Diplomacy variants, 1829, Circus Maximus and the inevitable Save the President, and many others too numerous to mention. Most people had brought along their own games and were playing for sheer enjoyment, but I found Jack Jaffe's presence somewhat incongruous - he was trying to inveigle all comers into a game of Save the President, with the apparent object of selling them the game - which struck a rather jarring note as far as I was concerned.

We were lucky in being able to meet people who we'd only known by name before, though the Friday night was a bit hilarious, as all the registered attenders were sporting yellow lapel badges with their names on, so there was much peering at people's lapels to see whether you recognised the names! A good test of the keenness of one's eyesight.

One of the 'attractions' of Midcon is the quiz which takes place on the Saturday evening. The preliminary round took place on the Friday night, taking the form of 60 written questions to be answered in 30 minutes. Eric Knibb, who was sitting with us, was interested to see the questions, so he fetched a paper, and just for a laugh we filled it in, managing to answer most of the questions. Eric then ~~buggered off~~ had to go home, but we decided to hand the paper in anyway - it couldn't do any harm, could it? Unfortunately we didn't have a name for our team, so in the end Alan Reason said, "Oh, put Sid" so we did... and then the laugh was on us when we discovered we'd come third and were through to the semi-finals. So, by default, I had to answer to the name Sid whilst on stage - which caused a few ribald comments from the well-lubricated audience. No expense was spared for these semi-finals. John Dodds, as question master, was in evening dress, the tables had cloths on, and we had real buzzers to press (the fact that Danny's wasn't working properly didn't matter too much as he didn't know many of the answers anyway). Unfortunately our round was somewhat marred by the activities of some cretins at the back playing a noisy game of Pit, which was a bit off-putting to put it mildly. Luckily for our babysitter, we didn't through to the finals, but were soundly thrashed by the Puffing Billies team, who eventually won the event at about 1am.

And now a private word with the females reading this. (Tom, please don't look while you're printing this bit) - Girls, where else can you go where you can be so heavily outnumbered by fellas, many of whom will buy you a drink if you smile at them nicely...? ((Hey, that's how I get my drinks off girls!))

Seriously though, I think that what you get out of an event like Midcon depends on how much you are prepared to put into it. Since many people are likely to be newcomers who won't know anyone else, it is up to you to wander round and get to know other people, rather than sit in a corner waiting for someone to come to you. All in all, I found it a lively, social, relaxing weekend, and I should to propose a vote of thanks to the organisers.

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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 gamesplayers 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.

My thanks to Danny and Kath for their much appreciated contributions - a whole free issue to each of you (80p added to credit) plus the fame of having your name in Dib up in lights. What more could a subscriber ask for?

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LETTERS

I didn't think I'd be doing a letter column this issue, so, because of lack of time, some of my comments might be limited to just a couple of words. What do you mean, this might be an improvement...?

MIKE DEANS: "I've just been re-reading bits of Dib 52. "Kevin, a Sloane Ranger fall of earth in a tunnel", brilliant, I laughed till I cried! Did Jan write that bit? ((Who told YOU, Deans...)) And what's 'knicker elastic'? Come to think of it, what are 'knickers' (signed a pimpled youth)! Anyway, not discussing sex just because you have some female readers? Isn't that being sexist? Or is that racist? ((If it is most of Dib readers are bringing up the rear; er... perhaps I mean at the back of the field, or late runners, oh dear, I'm not cut out for these witticisms...)) They're free to discuss y-front elastic if they want. ((A particularly revolting thought if I might say so Deans)) If Mike Close wants to discuss his girlfriend's skimpy knickers, let him. I don't mind at all!!!"

((Well no-one can ever accuse Dib of being highbrow anyway... A good start for a typical, though extra large, letter column I think.))

DAVE FISH: "Normally I like your zine, particularly when I'm doing well in my games of Diplomacy, however in issue 52 there was an item I have to disagree with, namely the best way of breaking open a boiled egg.

This subject has been studied by the English Breakfast Society (findings available for me at £10 per volume - n.b. 4 volumes. Regarding hen's eggs the following checks must be made before trying to crack it.

BATTERY AND FREE RANGE EGGS

Heavier objects must be used on free range eggs as the hen's eat heavier grit.

LENGTH OF BOILING

If the egg has been boiled for more than an hour try a mallet.

AGE OF EGG

If more than 2 months old a gas mask becomes essential.

IS THE EGG LARGE AND RED

You are trying to eat a cricket ball - get some glasses at once.

IS IT SMALL AND FLUFFY

Before proceeding any further check to see that none of the family's pets are missing.

This gives only a rough idea about the art of eating boiled eggs and I would be obliged in future you did not make such flippant remarks about such serious matters.

P.S. Only put that in if you are desperate for stuff."

((You can't disagree with me, because I'm right! (How's that for a good opening gambit for a debate?) All this scientific twaddle is no excuse for bad manners; beating an egg to death at the breakfast table is just not done. I dunno, educate the working classes and what do you get.... Thank God for the more sensible people, Tim...))

TIM COLLIEU: "I found your 'Heroes and Heroism' article very interesting. Set me thinking about who my heroes are: it's very easy to find different categories of heroes, like the guy who was blown up diffusing the Bomb in the Wimpy store a couple of years back, or a particular ((?)) from Reading F.C. or the Seattle Seahawks plays particularly well or the Welsh Guardsman who was badly burnt, but has accepted it. However when it comes to it, I find it hard to find a hero to set above all the rest, the only



thing I know, it's more than likely to be a 'man of the street' rather than someone well known."

((Actually, having had to dive and diffuse several bombs, Tim, I can honestly say it's a great deal safer relying on oneself than digging holes for little twerps of officer material, who, overhead on the headphones, plaintively call, with hammer and chisel in hand, "What do I do now sergeant..?" I kid you not!!!!!!

Actually, if never occurred to me to think of sporting heroes. I realise that people do have them, but for the life of me I can't see anything heroic about someone running around a field kicking a ball. To my way of thinking, superb sportsmen could easily be nasty, evil, yet still be good at their job. Can an evil person be heroic? My type of hero certainly can't.))

JAMES STEELE: "Your article on heroes was quite interesting. I agree that most people would like to (or think they would be able to, if the situation arose) act like the 'good guy', not so much a hero, but standing up for justice. However, whether most people would is a matter for debate. I certainly wouldn't watch any of my family being raped or beaten up, I too would kill or seriously maim if there was no other way. But seeing someone in the street being kicked and beaten up by three or four attackers is a different matter. One of my friends went to help someone in this situation and ended up with his jaw broken in three places, and the victim ran away. No justice, surely.

Your reference to the American who stabbed the muggers wasn't quite accurate. he actually shot four of them, three in the back while they were trying to run away. I agree with his initial act of shooting the first one but there is no justification for shooting the others in the back. He should be charged and put on trial for that. It actually turned out that he was mugged before, and was taking what he saw as justice out on the muggers of New York."

(('Death Wish' brought to life then. Although I'm a firm believer in Law and Order, I still can't help feeling that my sympathy lies with the man doing the shooting. In a way, aren't muggers merely looters? They shoot looters in times of strife and civil disorder.))

KRIS MORRIS: "Well, here I am again. I bet you wish that Michele and I never decided to subscribe to your mag. after the number of letters you seem to receive from us, still such is life, and now you've got us I'm afraid you're stuck with us! ((No problem - I'm strong))

Firstly may I send my congratulations to Jan on such a well drawn cover. It is obviously of you Tom, but I feel sure that all your subscribers realise that modesty forbade you to entitle it "a portrait of the editor"! Secondly, may I say how refreshing and rewarding it was to read an article on Diplomacy. I'm sure it would help other newcomers (such as Michele and myself) to print further articles on the subject, providing people send them to you in the first place of course, but I'm sure that with the many years you have played you could fill the 'zine yourself with amusing and interesting articles. How about it? It was, after all, a very funny series of articles written by Keith Pottage entitled 'Gamestart Alpha Victory' in 'Flagship' that brought Diplomacy to our attention, and thereby started the rot! Thirdly, your article on Heroes was most interesting, I bet it will stimulate some very interesting replies. My idea of a hero is someone you admire greatly for their personal prowess. In my case, my 'hero' would be the late Mike Hailwood, perhaps the greatest motorcycle racer that there ever was. He was someone who I could look up to as a superb exponent of his profession (one that I had a go at myself to no avail!) and was sadly missed by all motorcycle enthusiasts when he died."

((Certainly I'd like to conjure up Diplomacy articles... if I can drive myself to it. As for injecting HUMOUR into them, I don't know about that; I've had

many years at it, yes, but have won my games with gritted teeth and up to my neck in muck and bullets. I've come out of many of them shell-shocked and swearing, never again! So, be off with you, Morris - serious, war-torn articles is what you'll get. Humour indeed...))

KRIS (CONT): "I'll try again now after getting myself side-tracked, and make some comments on the letters. Only a few things to say this time, much to your relief no doubt, one about me, one about unemployment (not again I hear you say) and one about computers, so here goes.

Firstly I would like to inform Richard Sharp that (a) Kris is not an Americanised spelling but is short for Kristian, which is Norwegian (I bet you'll have fun working that out Tom, Norwegian christain name, and a Welsh surname). Actually my uncle was from Norway, a place called Tromso, and I am named after him. (b) As I have fathered three children, I think that makes me male, at least I was the last time I looked! ((As they say "if one has to look..."))

Secondly I disagree with Richard when he says that he enjoyed his period of unemployment. What I think he meant to say was that he enjoyed the free time that unemploment gave him. No-one in their right mind would say that it is nice being unemployed, as despite the governments - and the majority of peoples - assurances, you are made to feel a second class citizen, accepting handouts from the D.H.S.S. Harsh words I know, but true none the less. What I do enjoy is the opportunity it has given me to take a greater part in looking after our children. I believe that many young fathers do not have much to do with their children when they are very young, not necessarily because they have no wish to, but due to a lack of time, they have to rely on their wives to look after them. By doing so, they lose out on a great deal of enjoyment, try spending a week at home with two children under five (Michele was at OU Summer School) and I'm sure you'll see what I mean. It also has made me realise how much hard work it is to run a house and be a mum at the same time (I can't wait to see the replies I get to that little epistle):

((Nor I. I don't mind looking after my son (still being a kid at heart I enjoy most of the things he does anyway) but I do draw the line at housework - eyeuk! As for decorating the house, being more artistic Jan asks for my opinion anyway... then chooses the opposite. Consequently I've ceased being baited in this way, and keep my head down when the pots of paint and wallpaper come out.))

DAVE TANT: "I know the problems of the school uniform syndrome too. It's all so ridiculous - school uniform enables all the kids to dress alike regardless of their parents means - once it's discontinued you get some kids turning up in hundred quid leather jackets, designer track-suits and heaven knows what, and the disadvantaged ones can't keep up. As for those whose parents could afford it and won't - well the atmosphere at home can get quite unpleasant!

It's this business of 'freedom' again, I suppose. All the rules and regulations brought in from years of experience have to be 'kicked out' because they infringe upon the freedom of the individual, regardless of the harm that comes when people use their freedom to excess.

The letter from Bernard Emblem was illuminating. If someone with such shallowness of thought can be a Deputy Head it demonstrates to me (i) why today's kids have the attitude to work and society that they do and (ii) how easy promotion in the world of education must be (and what the bulk of teachers must be like). ((Danny Collman brings up a similar point below.))

Does it occur to him to compare hours of work, years of training or degrees of responsibility between doctors and binmen? And as to working conditions, if I had to choose between visiting sick and dying old people at home, plus 4 hours a day in a tiny room examining people's infectious rashes, piles, flu-ridden throats, and pus-oozing sores, from 9 in the morning until 8 at night, and spending 7 hours in the open air with half-

a-dozen mates emptying bins, I know which I'd choose. And if the money were the same, we'd have no doctors at all!"

((Ugh! The way you put it, Dave, I'm glad I didn't bother to chase my dream of becoming a brain surgeon. Some good points... I wonder how Bernard will react to the accusation of not knowing his kids? Could prove interesting.))

ALAN FROST: "An interesting lettercol this month that threw up some related questions from Dave Tant, you and, maybe, Bernard Emblem.

Surely Dave Tant's question about it being chic to be ignorant answers itself: his father would have no doubt considered himself working class but Dave is probably middle class. The massive expansion of free university places in the 60's meant that the young intellectual working class no longer produced enough able children for anyone to have much pride in academic or intellectual achievement.

Since fashions of all kinds including speech, attitude to knowledge and all the rest are governed for profit reasons by the largest section of society, the working class, it follows that fashionable people of all social groups will tend to follow this rejection of traditional values.

If you're frightened by this prospect of social stratification, then you're dead right. The recent riots were part of it. The pundits who said that the cause was not racial may well have been right. The West Indian kids who were rioting belong to the same working class that we've been talking about.

Which brings me to your comments about schools and discipline. OK, I admit it, I'm a teacher too. Most of the teachers I know would not wish to be "mates" with the ghastly little turds we have to deal with every day. They have an attitude to punishment which would have Attila the Hun writing to the Times to complain about unnecessary inflicting of pain. ((Heh heh - I like it. Now this is a teacher who understands kids!))

But we can't do it. Many authorities have actually banned the cane. If you breathe on a child you run the risk of a law-suit for assault. If you put a child in detention why should he turn up? What can you do to him? Of course, you throw the problem back to where it should have been sorted out in the first place: the parents.

Unfortunately, there are the same parents who think ignorance is fashionable. You can't win.

Nasty, isn't it?

While Richard Sharp is on his racist tack, he may like to get his teeth into a hand-out we recently got from the fire brigade about the dangers of chip pan fires: It was printed in 6 languages: Gujerati, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu and yes, English. Now how many Asian households have chip pans? How much did that little lot cost to produce? What will the Welsh say? (Not a lot. They won't be able to understand it)."

((It was interesting to read in the Daily Mail today of a young boy returning to school for his punishment after being suspended for refusing the cane. The young lad faced up to it (though I don't know if the head eventually ended up caning him) and was praised by the headmaster in front of the whole school for his bravery. If the Labour councillor and boy's parents didn't agree, at least the boy realised he had to face up to his mistakes. Caning may be barbaric, but I can't help feeling in most cases the punishment is warranted.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "This will be back to my usual verbose standards. So much so, that I'll probably have to ask Kris to send his letter in a separate envelope! John Piggott taught me a new word this week. He reckons he suffers from logorrhoea and I reckon it must be infectious. You have been warned!

On to Dib 52, another fine effort and some very interesting articles. Whilst Jan's drawing of a 'typical Dib subscriber' may be fairly accurate where your older subbers are concerned, i.e. John Piggott, I doubt if it is applicable to the younger members of your clientele. I hope Jan doesn't mind, but I've sent you a little sketch

that I believe will be somewhat nearer the mark. I hope you both enjoy it anyway. Who knows, if you hang on it, perhaps you will one day be able to boast proudly that you have a Morris original, and signed to boot?

I didn't say Kris was Cornish, just that he's Cornish by nature. He's a Plymptonian actually, but many Cornish people allow that Plymouth is more Cornish than Devonshire, even if the country borders deny it. (I'm from Kent originally, but have spent most of my life in the Plymouth area) Saltash is joined to Plymouth by two bridges, one beautiful old railway bridge (the Albert bridge) designed by I.K. Brunel, and a monstrous suspension bridge of tatty '60's design. When they built the latter bridge they put the crests of Devon and Cornwall either side of the riddle supporting pillars to show where the county border goes.

Some young wag has added a wee bit of graffiti to it. As you drive from Plymouth to Saltash he's written "Kernow" under the county crest. That's the Cornish language name for the country. Driving from Saltash to Plymouth you see "England" written under the Devonshire crest. That's sums up the Cornish attitude to you lot quite nicely. The bridge is a toll bridge, but an interesting point to note is that you only have to pay to be let out of Cornwall! The Scots may have a reputation for being tight fisted, but believe me, the Cornish can beat them quite easily!"

((Don't you mean pay to be let into England? In actual fact I'm a Plymptonian. Does that mean I could be infected with a latent Cornish nature? Ye Gods.))

MICHELE (CONT): "How dare Dave Tant denigrate Hamley's! Let it be known that Hamley's is one of my three favourite places in London, (the other two being The British Museum and the Science museum. When I die I want my ashes, (in an urn of course) left in the Teddies section of the Regent Street store. Talking of teddy bears, yes I do spoil Kris, but if I don't who will? You men have such fragile egos. Witness Dave Bird and Mike Pollard. The least bit of criticism and off you go, whimpering, with tail between your legs! Women, in general, tend to be made of much sterner stuff. ((Oh ho, is this a challenge I see before me... lads?))

Thanks for your comments re Kath Collman and myself. It's nice to be appreciated. I doubt if you'll get many women trying for the obvious positions of leadership. We prefer to be more subtle in the ways we mould the world. Children learn most before they are 5, just the time they are with their mothers. What was that saying, "show me the child, and I'll give you the man?" Women influence the attitudes of all children until they are at least 10. Not only as mothers but also as primary school teachers. Some people consider motherhood as trivial pursuit, but I'd hardly call shaping the attitudes and abilities on the next generation trivial. I wish motherhood would be seen as the difficult but important job it is, rather than as now, being seen as the escape for the untalented. That way the standard of parenting might improve, people might think a bit more before embarking on a family, and there might be fewer battered babies. After all no-one nowadays has to have a family if they don't want one. People should be encouraged to be more responsible in their decision to have a family and childless couples shouldn't be looked on as abnormal.

Ye, Gods, I'm getting serious again. It's all your fault Tom. You bring out the self-opinionated bore in me. But if, as Alan Frost wrote to me, the only person concerned with the letters in Dib are the people who write them, then I guess no-one will read my drivel except me, and that's O.K. (I guess you read 'em too, but that's your fault for encouraging me). Still it is nice to at least be given the impression that someone is listening to me. It does my ego no end of good. We all need a bit of appreciation now and then after all.

If I carry on this way I'll soon be taking over Dib. Heaven help us all. I think I've finally run out of steam. If you're interested in how Kris came to have a Norwegian first name (not American as Richard Sharp thought) take a look at his letter (or ask him if he doesn't explain).

Morris is a Welsh surname. Long ago his ancestors were from that land. I've Celtic origins too. According to my dad we were originally Scots and had Irish ancestry. My maiden name of Andrews bears that out. Explains a lot doesn't it."

((It might, but please, no more jokes of the ilk sent. Apart from a fragile ego, I have a sensitive stomach. I must say I agree with your views on Mothers. As for behind the scenes leadership, yes you rotten lot, but must you be SO subtle? It takes us poor husbands most of the day to work just what it is you want us to do. It's not good enough I say, there's nothing like the sane, sensible, straight-forward approach of the male half of the species to get things sorted out.))

RICHARD BASS: "Issue 52 was at least up to your usual standard, no, better. ((Um, do you mean no better, or no... better?)) I dunno how you keep it up but I'm glad you do! ((Blue circle cement is always very good at our age, or perhaps for that extra special occasion Robin starch))

Midcon was as excellent as ever. I am sure you will have read all the various 'results' by now. For my part I played Civilisation from 6pm Friday to 2pm Saturday with ample breaks for food, the Quiz, and sleep. It was a half expert, half novice game with Lee Paddon, Ian Drylie, and Geoff Hardingham as expert - Ken O'Brian, Rob Cullender and myself as novices and Walkerdine half and half (he has played before but is no expert!). I was in the Quiz with Richard Downes and Ray Miller. We mistakenly qualified for the semi-finals on the Saturday. ((Judging by the letter from Kath Collman, half of the teams on the stage at the semi-final, were originally looking for the exit, or maybe the dining room, did anyone actually explain to them that they were in the wrong place? Perhaps they thought there was severe competition for the food at the event...!))

We met our fate at the hands of a team dominated by Julian Shepley. I gave the Diplomacy a miss as usual as like yourself I am too nice for such a vicious game.

Over the course of the weekend I played 3 games of Aquire, Hey Culligan Man (more details will I am sure be available from Mad Policy), Organised Crime, Regatta and probably some others I have forgotten. I also met a few people and renewed many old friendships. Yes, Midcon is a bit special.

Back to Dib. If you are wondering about my not playing Diplomacy in Dib ((No..)) it's because I've cut down on my Dip games since "Fergus" finished. I am now playing I regular game in Gazfinc (where I am stuffing Walkerdine and 2 variants - Deluge, in Mad Policy and War of the Roses in Chimaera Corner in Boojum). Incidentally, Clive Booth was at Midcon."

((Er, yes, I think Danny mentioned him in his Midcon article...! Still it sounds like you all had a real good time. Tell me though, do you find face to face games more aggressive (Robert Lozynsky tells of an instance of where he played someone eyeball to eyeball; the other person being childishly aggressive), or are most hobby members still the shy retiring type?))

DANNY COLLMAN: "What is it I enjoy about Diplomacy? Well, for starters, I prefer FTF, and playing in a foursome (I've only played one 7-player game) Its the guesswork involved in deciding what my opponents are going to do, having to calculate moves for the next campaign, plus having to try to persuade other players to work with and not against me. In postal play, there's the incredible satisfaction I get when I arrive home from work and find that the postman has not passed me by. On top of that, trying to decide who I can trust among possible allies/opponents. Plus the fun of simply writing that kind of letter (me, I enjoy it!). Finally comes the pleasure of spending hours in odd moments at a time, studying a map of the present position, considering angles for possible future moves. The statistics of the game interest me not one jot - with the possible exception of the information given in 'The Fat Lady Sings' - a