

# DIB DIB DIB



"One of Dib's  
more left-wing  
Subscribers"

"I deny I use  
a monocle"  
said  
Bernard

Welcome to the 55th issue of Dib Dib Dib - a zine dedicated to games, games players, loonies, but mostly, to the civilised game of Diplomacy. The cost is a fixed rate of 45p per issue in the UK and 28p + postage overseas. Send money, to Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks., HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

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### EDITORIAL

I hate to have to do it but due to rising prices of paper, ink, postage, etc, the cost of Dib has to go up to 45p per issue. This has been on the cards for a while really but I've managed to put it off until now. Everyone gets the general idea of the rising prices. For those who think the price is steep, please compare Dib's price with other zines.

But enough with all the boring housekeeping stuff, how about some hobby stuff and other such trivia? My thanks to all who sent Christmas cards. I shall not be going on about it - now Christmas is over I suppose we can all sit back now and look forward to the Summer. Great, can't wait to take the ol' typewriter out onto the patio and sit back watching the bumble bees flying around a blank sheet of paper - it's so artistically productive.

Actually, talking of trivia, one thing I did get for Christmas was 'Trivial Pursuit'. It's far from trivial, mind, we all thought the game was GREAT. So much more a family game than most others (at least since Monopoly), literally anyone can join in and play. We even had some funny bits. One question, "From what book did the character Bilbo Baggins come from?" went to the only person in the room who hadn't read The Hobbit or Lord of the Rings. Everyone jeered at him, aghast that he didn't know the answer. Of course after a while it soon became clear to me that everyone else had the easy questions. It always seemed to work out that whilst I could answer everyone else's question, when it came to my turn I was stumped with absolutely weird questions, seemingly about giving details of some boxer living in outer Mongolia. Typical! Still, I did win once though!

To be fair, I used to think (before I actually saw the game) that any question game of this sort had to be a rip-off - especially at £23 a box. Quite frankly I thought you'd have to be nuts to pay for what was obviously just a name and a fad. However, it was such a nice change to see a game of quality - a good sturdy board, well made boxes for the cards, and a self-sealing bag for the bits and pieces - that I didn't begrudge the high price one bit. I would recommend the game highly to anyone.

For those interested in hobby history and collecting zines, Pete Northcott (ex editor of Last Stand) is selling off all his zines to make way for moving house or something. By 'all' his zines I mean his whole collection. I can't go through the whole list here as it'd take up too much room - but those wanting back issues of Dib Pete has them from issue 7 to issue 53. If interested in these or others write to Pete straight away detailing what you'd like, to: 16 Fawley Road, West Hampstead, London, NW6 1SH. He says bids for the zines should be in by the end of January, but give him a try anyway you never know your luck.

It seems 20 Years On is changing hands yet again, thank goodness. Since Ian Shaw took over from Mark Billenness I've only seen one copy of the blasted zine, yet I must have sent numerous issues of Dib to him. What a waste it is when people take the hobby for a ride like that. For months Shaw must have had freebies from dozens of editors, without so much as a 'how's yer father', an apology or anything. Well, hobby hero, Martin Le Fevre, rides to the rescue yet again. From now on Martin will be publishing 20YO (amongst other things - he also publishes other hobby stuff), but I can't say as yet when the first issue is due out. Anyway the advert for 20YO, if anyone wants to get in touch with Martin, is at the back in 'Dibs and Drabs'.

PLAYING AUSTRIA

Some people say Austria's greatest strength lies in the 'knot' of easily accessible Balkan centres to the south of her. A sweeping statement if ever I've heard one to quickly cover the fact that Austria has NO great strength. This is not to say she has no great virtue: it's common enough nowadays for this little hotbed of trouble and strife to actually be preferred to most other countries. It's certainly my favourite country to play (in Intimate Diplomacy especially, where I think if one chooses it, one can't lose. But that's another story).

I know this sounds ridiculous, after all, who needs that amount of trouble? But the fact of the matter is, Austria is popular because of the trouble it takes to keep her flag flying. If she is to have any chance of survival at all all other countries must be contacted. And, whereas after Spring 1901 the other super powers can dispense with writing letters to all but one or two neighbours, Austria must keep on writing to all her surrounding neighbours constantly. She must always (in the first two seasons at least) be ready with a smile, be friendly, and of all countries must NEVER commit herself to an early attack on a neighbour if she can help it. Attacking Italy while Russia and Turkey move in behind her is definitely a situation to be avoided at all costs.

Instead of blindly attacking, mutual agreements can be worked out. Italy will be just as nervous of the Austrian move F(Tri)-Ven as Austria is to Italy's A(Ven)-Tri. From Austria's point of view however an Italian army in Trieste is far more devastating. Similarly, Russia might feel a little uneasy at an Austrian army in Galicia. Mutual agreements for stand-offs in both these areas would be no bad thing for Austria. Telling Russia that you intend moving A(Vie)-Gal 'if it's okay with him', and suggest to Italy it might be a good idea for the Austrian move F(Tri)-Ven if Italy moves A(Ven)-Tri. This not only puts any thoughts of an Austrian attack in the clear, there can be a justifiable plea of innocence if either move succeeds, but this strategy will also help to 'feel out' Russian and Italian attitudes towards her.

Apart from being surrounded, Austria has one other great weakness; the fact that of all the powers she has only one coastal home centre. Furthermore, each newly built fleet has the added difficulty of escaping the Adriatic/Albania funnel. Austria is therefore the only power for which naval strategy is not usually a viable first option.

NEGOTIATIONS:

**ENGLAND:** England is not much use to Austria in the first few seasons. There is a small possibility of her distracting a hostile Russia in 1902 onwards, but generally England is more interested in the activity of France and Germany to be of much use. Worth a letter though to open communications for the middle and endgame.

**FRANCE:** Some say Austria usually has a strong interest in keeping France out of Italy, but I can't see this being so in the case against an aggressive Italy moving into Tyrolia. It's true that Austria wouldn't like to see too many French fleets in the Mediterranean, because she needs breathing space later for her own thinly spread fleets. It's better for Austria to keep friendly (once again) with France, promising any help if she, at some future date, 'desperately' needs it, but keep her for the time being interested in the north and northeast and out of harms way.

**GERMANY:** Germany should be the least of Austria's problems. Generally, because they command the centre of the board, both stand back to back against the rest of the super powers. An alliance between the two is not normally needed, or desired; merely an acknowledgement of neutrality is all that's required. Sometimes Germany might wish support against Russia, this option must be explored with care. Out and out refusal might cause problems - if it's midgame or endgame, fine, but it's not recommended as an opening option. Although it would be a foolish Germany that attacks Austria, it's not unheard of, so tread carefully and try not to offend her.

ITALY: Next to Turkey Italy is Austria's greatest threat. From the beginning Italy can make the devastating move A(Ven)-Tri, and without friendly overtures from Austria this move will happen 9.9 times out of 10. She's extremely difficult to attack successfully because of the Austrian F(Tri) situation and the Italian supply centres being on the other side Iberian peninsula. Therefore Austria must pull out all the stops to ensure Italy becomes friendly, and stays friendly, until perhaps such time as the threat of Russia and Turkey is removed, or she's in position to deal out a successful surprise attack on her Italian foe.

RUSSIA: The main aim of Austrian diplomacy here is to stop the terrible Russo-Turkish alliance, and... 'The Juggernaut'. It's a horrible sight to behold witnessing a weakly struggling Austria being ploughed under once this alliance starts rolling. Even with full Italian co-operation nothing much can be done against it. The best that Austria can hope for with Russia is an alliance against Turkey, the least, a neutral agreement. Once again, hard and fast diploming is needed for Austrian survival.

TURKEY: Diploming to get Turkey on Austria's side can be a bit tricky (but then what isn't for Austria?). It's true that Turkey needs the Black Sea if she can get it (failing that, standing Russian F(Sev) out), however, having already moved through the Constantinople funnel to Bul, the rest of the Balkan centres and beyond look very desirable to Turkey. Turkey needs to get to the Western Med, and any alliance with her will expect to take in Greece on the way. The best that Austria can do is turn Turkey against Russia, pointing out that her moves F(Ank)-BLA, A(Sry)-Arm, and A(Con)-Bul are very strong against the Russian defences - with the possibility of depriving Russia of the valuable Rumanian build. Strong incentive for Turkey.

#### OPENINGS:

1. F(Tri)-Alb, A(Bud)-Ser, and:
  - 1a. A(Vie)-Gal (preferably an agreed Russian standoff)
2. A(Bud)-Ser, A(Vie)-Gal, and:
  - 2a. F(Tri)-Ven (if unsure of Italian diplomacy)

Above are the more popular openings (as I never really trust anyone unless I have to, when I'm playing Austria, I prefer 2/2a with agreed Russian and Italian standoffs). Other openings can be: [anti-Russian] A(Vie)-Gal, A(Bud)-Rum, F(Tri)-Alb; or [anti-Italian] F(Tri)-ADS, A(Vie)-Tyr, A(Bud)-Tri. Foolish openings consist of letting units stand [i.e. F(Tri) stands, or, A(Vie) stands], A(Vie)-Boh and not snapping up Austria's only sure build in Serbia. Letting F(Tri) stand gives Italy the opportunity of moving A(Ven)-Tyr, A(Rom)-Ven. And letting Russia into Galicia by ordering A(Vie) to stand makes a guessing game for Austria in regards covering Vie or Bud, or it gives Russia a better chance of getting Rum. It's not good to chance the protection of Bud by ordering: A(Vie)-Bud, A(Ser)-Bud, hoping for a standoff, because a Russian support: A(Gal) S Austrian A(Ser)-Bud, would insure a possibility of no Austrian builds that season.

Life, The Universe, And an Army in Paris: Yes, a weird title for a zine - but now on issue 4 it's coming along quite nicely. A joint effort from Matthew Wright and Paul Dunning, and produced, I think, on Matthew's BBC computer. Well laid out and quite chatty, a good article on the BBC game 'Elite' ('cos I like such thing), Bourse rules, a thought provoking statistics article on 'The Post' (I never knew someone office machine only read the first part of the postcode - making it a total waste of time), and of course the games, making up the whole 8 pages of computer print. Games offered so far are: Regular Diplomacy (21); Abstraction II Diplomacy (21); Intimate Diplomacy (no fee); Pass the Pigs (no fee); Squish (50p) Propaganda (no fee); and Bourse. A good zine and as with all new zines should be given a chance. My only reservation about it is the method of production - at the moment I think Matthew is running it off on his printer (which will slow things down when his subscriber/size of zine picks up), but I think there's plans in the pipeline for photocopying. Give it a try.

Matthew Wright, Cedars, The Avenue, Bushey, Herts, WD2 2LL.

## OUR JOHN'S CHRISTMAS

Or, Xmas with a Canvey Island Frog breeder.  
(with apologies to A.A. Milne)

1. Our John was not a good man -  
He had his little ways.  
And sometimes no one spoke to him  
For days and days and days.  
And men who came across him,  
When walking in the town,  
Gave him a supercilious stare,  
Or passed with noses in the air -  
And our lad John stood dumbly there,  
Blushing from head on down.
2. Our John was not a good man,  
And no good friends had he.  
He rushed home every afternoon...  
But no letters did he receive.  
And round about December,  
The cards upon his shelf,  
Which wished him lots of Christmas cheer,  
And fortune in the coming year,  
Were never from his near and dear,  
But only from himself.
3. Our John was not a good man,  
Yet had his hopes and fears.  
They'd given him no present now  
For years and years and years.  
But every year at Christmas,  
While minstrels stood about,  
Collecting tribute from the young  
For all the songs which they have sung,  
He stole away upstairs and hung  
A hopeful stocking out.
4. Our John was not a good man,  
He lived his life aloof;  
Alone he thought a message out  
While climbing up the roof.  
He wrote it down and propped it  
Against the chimney stack:  
"TO ALL AND SUNDRY - AND MAYBE -  
F. CHRISTMAS MOST ESPECIALLY."  
And signed it not "Best, John P."  
But very humbly, "JACK."
5. "I want Vortigern,  
And I want Pryderi;  
I think a pact with Russia  
Would come in handy;  
I don't mind losing,  
I don't like to win!  
I don't like stabbing,  
It's an awful sin.  
And, oh! Father Christmas, do be a doll,  
Please give me Walkerdine's Zine Poll!
6. Our John was not a good man -  
He wrote this message out,  
And gat him to his room again,  
Descending by the spout.  
And all that night he lay there,  
A prey to hopes and fears.  
"I think that's him a-coming now,"  
(Anxiety bedewed his brow.)  
"He'll bring one present, anyhow -  
The first I've had for years."
7. "Forget about Vortigern,  
And forget about Pryderi;  
I'm sure a pact with Russia  
Would never come in handy.  
I do mind losing,  
I do like to win!  
I do like stabbing,  
It isn't any sin.  
And, oh! Father Christmas, do be doll,  
Please give me Walkerdine's Zine Poll."
8. Our John was not a good man -  
Next morning when the sun  
Rose up to tell a waiting world  
That Christmas had begun,  
And people seized their stockings,  
And opened them with glee,  
And crackers, toys and games appeared,  
And lips with sticky sweets were smeared,  
Our John said grimly: "As I feared,  
Nothing again for me!"
9. "I did want Vortigern,  
And I did want Pryderi;  
I know a pact with Russia  
Would have come in handy.  
I don't mind losing,  
I don't like to win!  
I don't like stabbing,  
It's an awful sin.  
And, oh! if Father Christmas had loved me this hols,  
He would have brought me the running of the Polls!"
10. Our John stood in the hallway,  
And frowned to see outside  
The happy bands of boys and girls  
Out for a B.M.X. ride.  
Awhile he stood there thinking  
Thoughts both rude and mean...  
When suddenly through the doorway fell,  
A change in Zine Poll owner to tell,  
Making his head and heart to swell,  
A folded yellow zine.
11. AND OH, FATHER CHRISTMAS,  
YOU ARE SUCH A DOLL,  
FOR BRINGING HIM WALKERDINE'S ZINE POLL!

Signed: (A Nonie Mouse) ((Oh no you don't: alias Michele Morris - well I'm not taking responsibility for it, Michele!))

JOTTO Turn 4

Welcome to two newcomers, Matthew and Denise - as you can see the prize is now £3.50. If you check Rosie's letter in the letter column you'll see her computer's broken down so this can be anybody's game. Why, Rosie was even beaten in the Mad Policy jotto (I think it was MP), the shattering of a legend.

ROSIE ROBERTS : 4th 212202	MATTHEW WRIGHT: 1st 111112
ULF JIRETORN : 4th 323232	2nd 103111
KATH COLLMAN : 4th 212011	3rd 222023
MICHELE MORRIS: 4th 231341	4th 413111
BRIAN MOORE : 2nd 332014	DENISE SMITH : 1st 351223
3rd 432322	2nd 441212
4th 222331	3rd 342212
	4th 231311



LETTERS

And we start with two new Dib subscribers for which much welcome (welcome also to Roberto Della-Sala)...

ANDY MANSEFIELD: "Thanks for the copy of Dib 54. I hope Dib 3 is the right abbreviation and doesn't cause offence.

I enjoyed the zine. It was nice to be able to take longer than 10 minutes to read a 'magazine'

It was also nice to come up against some old 'friends'. You already know that I know (1) Danny and Kath, but I also have locked horns with Kevin Baker and Daniel Brooks. I see Kevin is still using the same Julie Andrews press line - I first came across him in Bruce 4 - he's Italy to my Austria and we had some fun with it for a while before it died a death.

If you want to make him laugh just remind him that he bestowed the Kevin Baker Diplomacy Award for 1985 on me - and then proceeded to walk all over me next season.

Anyway that's enough on that subject. Your letter column I found enjoyable and no doubt it won't be too long before I put pen to paper and join in. The only thing that's stopping me in this letter is that it's late and I'm usually at my best in the mornings - one gets the feeling that you could get ripped to pieces if your argument is not well thought out and presented. That's fine by me but I've got to feel on top of the world before I'll compete."

((Glad you liked Dib 54 enough to subscribe Andy. Don't worry about the Dib 3 abbreviation, normally just Dib is enough. However, I must stress that in no way is my letter column a means for tearing people to pieces. I wanted to get away from all that with the likes of the old Greatest Hits magazines. My main intention was to have a forum where it was felt anyone could write into and contribute to Dib without fear of being picked up on age, spelling, grammar, colour or creed. In fact if there's anyone who gets picked up for spelling, it's ME! Just relax, Andy, contribute and enjoy yourself.))

HEIKO SCHAFER: "Let me introduce myself; I am 17, studying Aeronautical Engineering at Manchester University. I was born in Hamburg, Germany and now live near Frankfurt. Why do I study in the U.K.? My parents put me in an International School, thus my rather good English. At the end of that I made the International Baccalanreate, and to study in Germany I'd have to repeat the last two years in a state school, which isn't worth it.

When I came to Manchester I joined among others, the Figure and Board Society. There I met Diplomacy and the flyer which made me write

for the information slip. Then, via Novice Package and Zine Bank (Alan Parr) I got to you.

Why Dib? It seems effecient and reliable doesn't cost too much, has a very nice friendly atmosphere (not too Dip-fanatical) and had a waiting list of 5 in November (I got issue 53 from Alan) which I hope I can still get into."

((Welcome to Dib, Heiko, it's always interesting to read brief introductions of fellow hobby members. (Not that I wish to encourage the Morris', Collman's, Clutterbuck and Close to do theirs...) Sorry you can't put your name down for the Dib 53 game, that filled. However I've put you down for another - if you check the back of Dibs and Drabs.))

ROSIE ROBERTS: "Thank you for a sensible deadline. I returned from the Christmas holidays to a pile of impatient zines. Mind you, if your deadline had been two weeks ago I could have written this before the computer died. (The dish doesn't rotate any more - it just twitches a bit. Since it's a main-frame computer that is total curtains. I don't mind, so long as it doesn't infect the washing machine (which it stands next to)).

Tell Alan Powis not to worry - the floor is the best place for 'Long Life' milk."

((A thank you and telling off in one go?! Mind you it just goes to prove how Rosie was winning the Jotto games, eh, a mainframe by the washing machine? Mind you, now it's packed in perhaps everyone else will have a chance of winning - HAH! now I think of it I bet Sharp thinks he beat Rosie in MP's Jotto through sheer brain power (he was crowing about a joint win). Wotta turkey! This'll teach him.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "What is the burning question of the day in the Morris household? Should Westlands accept the Eurpoean deal? Should Devonport Dockyard be privatised? Is Halley's Comet responsible for the recent spate of disasters? No, none of those have occupied our thoughts as much as the great debate about whether or not I should have my ears pierced and will it hurt if I do? I've fought shy of having it done until now because I've always had very long straight hair that covered my ears completely, but now I've had my hair cut short you can see my ear lobes all the time. The question is, do I pay someone to punch a hole in each ear so that I can sport a pair of metal pins with bits of polished rock in, or do I leave the lugholes in their virgin state? What do you reckon Jan? Do either of you have pierced ears and if so did it hurt much when you had it done? (I'm an awful coward you see.) ((Jan says the piercing is over too quick to hurt, but wearing sleepers and turning them to keep the pierced hole open, can hurt. Sounds a bit barbaric though to me.))

I suppose I ought to dig out our copy of Dib 54 and see what gems therein need a reply or take my fancy. How dare you accuse me of having little foibles Tweedy. I had a medical just last week and was pronounced to be in perfect condition! As for Walkerdine having given Piglet the Zine Poll I've sent my ha'penny worth on that subject to Walkerdine himself. ((Yes but does Richard have enough space to print it?))

I enjoyed the articles and wasn't in the least bit offended by James Cowie's bit. We all had a good laugh about it and it has made us alter our opinions of Mr Cowie a fair bit in his favour. Alan Powis has my sympathies. I hope he got his rice pudding in the end (or should that be in the bowl?). The bane of my life are the so called child proof bottles. No matter which type they are they always seem to be impossible for adult hands to open but the kids never have any troubles with them! As an experiment a few years back, after seeing a similar frightening experiment on telly, I put a sweet in an empty child proof pill bottle and gave it to Pip, then aged 3. He opened it in about 2 minutes. I then gave it to Mattie who took much longer to open it but open it he did even though he was only about a year old. Since then I have been very careful to keep all medicines locked in a cabinet with the key out of reach and we fitted

child-proof locks on the kitchen cupboards to safeguard the disinfectant etc. They work quite well although a determined toddler probably could work out how to open them given time, but hopefully that would be enough time for you to arrive on the scene and stop them.

We did see 'The Gamer's Postal' on Masterteams and thought they did very well. It was quite a close game, they only lost by a few points, and the winning team went on to make mincemeat of several other teams, so no disgrace to the losers. The only thing that surprised me was how normal, in fact how staid and conventional they all looked. They didn't look at all the sort of loonies I would expect to find in the hobby."

((Yes, I always expect hobby members to look... unusual. Experience tells me, after meeting a lot of them, they always do. Mind you, after meeting Richard Downes last weekend, apart from myself, he's the only one so far who appears to look almost normal (mind you he can talk the hind leg off a donkey - he can even out-talk Jan, and that's going some). Glad you liked James Cowie's Microbit.

You do surprise me about children opening child-proof bottles. I can't open them, and Jan finds it a bit of a job. I hadn't thought to let my son open them - I think I'll let him have a go for next time. Typical though, grown up inventions like these.))

Someone who has the same answer to a similar problem...

BERNARD EMBLEM: "Allow me to contribute to the forthcoming Dib Milk Debate, and to put forward a point of view rarely expressed in your zine.

It's this:

There are only four reliable methods of opening milk cartons. They are, in order of preference:

3. Use a clear sharp instrument to bore a hole in the top of the carton, then pour.
2. Use your teeth to tear along the perforations with controlled force.
1. Ask a child for advice.
0. Ask a child if she/he wants a drink of milk. She/he'll then do it for you."

((There's wisdom in this man somewhere struggling to get out...))

MIKE CLOSE: "Nice to see that my name appears several times in your lettercol (mostly in vain) without me having to write a letter in. Such is the price of fame... (Yawn!). Regarding sex in the lettercol, it's about time we gave the girls a go. (Perhaps I'd better rephrase that!) Us men can be so serious in a lettercol (I still haven't managed to plough through pages 12-18 properly). I only found Clive Booth's letter at the second reading - perhaps it should have been up the front with the other sensible people, like George North and Cathy Ozog? The rest can then be preceded by the warning "This part of the Lettercol can seriously damage your brain".

However, back to sex. I liked Jimmy Cowie's Microbit. I'd just like to ask the question "When you connect a micro to a mini, does the mini enjoy it as much as the micro?" We had an interesting discussion about the amazing effect that the words "stockings and suspender belt" had on any male between the ages of 18 and so, Perhaps the ladies of our lettercol could enlighten us with their views? Yes, I know tights are more practical, but they are also highly unromantic, wouldn't you agree Tom?!"

((I do agree, tights are horrible. However, much as the glimpse of a stocking-ged thigh used to drive me to distraction in my younger days (I nearly crashed the car because of it once) this is a subject not of my choosing and I wish to distance myself from it entirely. Away with you Close, you, sir, are no gentleman.))



BERNARD EMBLEM: "Allow me to be the first to contribute to the forthcoming Dib nuclear debate, and to put forward a point of view rarely expressed in your zine."

It's this:

Man has, throughout history, continually misused his talents, to such an extent that the universe would now be much better off without him. The nuclear bomb is, therefore, our greatest hope, not because it acts as a deterrent, but because a full scale nuclear war would bring about an end to all suffering.

A post nuclear world would have no famine, no torture, no inequality, no pain. Wouldn't that be better for those now suffering, and shouldn't the rest of us be prepared to make such a sacrifice?"

((I'll say from the start, there'll be no nuclear debate in Dib, because I hate them. However this is an interesting point, and no joke. I've often pondered on whether or not nature/the world/the universe might not be better off without humankind to infest it. Some might say we could be compared to a virus that needs sterilisation. I suppose, ultimately, we must colonise the universe to survive; being on one planet is like having all our eggs in one basket.))

TIM COLLIEU: "Like you, I'm not overly fond of playing f-t-f Dip, I just can't find it in me to follow through a stab, and usually end up swinging between ally and ally. The game I played at Manorcon was a particularly good example - it ended up in a 6 way draw, round about 1906 with only Russia being knocked out. It was almost farcical, it seemed that I was on 3 and 6 centres alternatively. Postal Dip is much more fun - unlike Steve Rennie, I take no satisfaction in seeing the faces of the people I've stabbed - I suffer from the Diplomacy players worst enemy, guilt! One look at the face of the person I've just stabbed. I immediately wish to apologise. That's why I prefer postal play, you can simply sit back and feel totally vindictive. Though more often than not, I end up getting stabbed, before anyone else!"

((Welcome to the clan then Tim, you never know, eventually us sheep MIGHT inherit the earth. Leave such bloodthirsty work to the merciless such as Close and Piggott.))

RALPH BAKER: "Can you let me know how I can get En Garde rules?"

((I assume you mean a copy of the official rules. I don't know, Jan bought me mine and I got rid of my copy years ago. Perhaps you could ask Peter Sullivan, 36 Bushey Hall Road, Bushey, Watford, Herts, WD2 2ED, he does the En Garde for me.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "Re. En Garde your correspondent obviously had a hard job envisaging a woman being able to role play a man. He must think that women have very different styles of play than men. It might be interesting to test this by setting up an all female game of Dippy. There's Kath Collman, Cathy Ozog and myself for starters if they are willing. Possibly Rosie Roberts too, though I'm not sure if she plays. That only leaves 3 or 4 more and I'm sure there must be several wives/girlfriends of your other subbers who might be willing to give it a try in an all girl game. What do you reckon?"

((I think it's a jolly good idea. I'd be more than prepared to GM a female only game of Diplomacy if one was required, but quite often women are too shy (or too sensible) to come forward. What am I saying... you, Kath and Cathy... SHY? There's a new likely candidate just joined the Jotto, Denise Smith (Australian I assume as she was introduced by Luke Clutterbuck), but whether she is interested in Diplomacy I don't know. Denise, Rosie, anyone, are you interested?))

ALAN FROST: "I enclose a flier which was contained in the house zine of the English Bridge Union. It advertises a number of games including Sopwith on mail order. It occurred to me that subscribers might be interested. I also wondered if a letter to these suppliers might get them to make a small contribution to the hobby (say, to the CGS) for the privilege of putting these fliers into zines and reaching a small but concentrated market. Has anyone thought of this?"

((Ah! I had a word with the proprietor, thanks Alan, who sent me all the flyers he had left. Apparently they were too expensive to print more. Anyway everyone should find said flyer enclosed. The address to write to is: 'GAMES MAIL ORDER' (proprietor: R.G. Higgins) 87 Victoria Street, Liverpool, L1 6DG. Tel. 051 227 1505. No more complaints about not getting games in Ireland/-Sweden/Germany now, eh? Talk to Mr Higgins about postage, he did tell me something about doing it free for some areas, but I forgot. It may jog his memory if you tell him how you got the flyer. I've given some flyers to Richard Downes, and have some left (100+) for another zine if any editor is interested.))

DAVID CRAWFORD: "Thanks very much for the review of LC in DIB 53, but, you weren't supposed to mention the 'slight delay' (of only six months). You were supposed to start a page of Dib with three or four lines about my zine, and then fill the rest of it telling your readers about its fine, handsome, brave, etc, etc, etc, honest genius of an editor it has! (indeed being too modest in his only weakness)

Having got that totally wrong, you then failed to point out the good points of a six months deadline. These are obviously too numerous to mention, but the two which immediately spring to mind are all that time for diploming and, even more important, the fact that one subscription of £5.00 will last at least six years! What other zine can afford that?

It is now my duty to inform you Mr Tweedy, that, after due consideration, the board of controllers of L.C. inc. have decided to overlook your behaviour on this occasion."

((I never get anything right...))

JULIEN SHEPLEY: "Clive Booth in his letter misses the point about the 'Pit' player's noise affecting anyone's concentration. The problem was that no-one could hear John Dodds read the questions out."

((Which is the main point, isn't it? I think rowdies should be policed in some way and kicked out if they don't knuckle down and quit spoiling things for the majority.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "Tom you disappoint me. John and his wife have obviously talked over their decision not to have children like sensible adults, as it is their right so to do. What do you do but start putting pressure on them to change their minds. Your statements in Dib 54 are a fine example of the harassment childless couples can receive. OK so we enjoy being parents, but other people are perfectly content not to be. They should not be pitied or looked on as abnormal or selfish as so often nowadays. As you so rightly pointed out having children can be a selfish act. Whatever people decide it is their business and neither decision should be looked on as abnormal in any way."

((Michele, you cut me to the quick! I didn't harrass John and his wife, John asked WHY parents went on about children, I merely explained my version for why I wanted them. I agree with you about them sensibly talking it over. So stop PICKING on me! You're getting worse than Nicholas Clifton.))

TIM COLLIEU: "How come everytime I sit down to write a letter to you on all the things said in the previous bit, which made me seeth, or provoked me in a similar way, every sentiment argument I had immediately leaves me."

Anyway, I'm afraid you won't think me too sebsible after Vienna 17 comes out. I can't say too much, but within a couple of days of the next Dib being published, all I can say now is that if any recorded producers wish to sign me up, they know why they can get in contact with me.

Can I be considered a Plymouthian? I promise I can tell an anecdote about the Cornish. As I was driving about, trying to find where Kris and Michele lived in Saltash. As usual, I'd forgotten to ask for a map, and so I got convincingly lost, so in desperation I asked an old lady if she knew the way. Of course I should have realised my mistake, she then proceeded to give a run down of the history of the area - "of course it was all fields when I was a girl" she said, I wouldn't have minded, but I was in the middle of a main road holding a whole lot of traffic up. Still, I managed to get to Morris' residence.

Anyway, I must not leave you without my comments on the teacher's strike, suffice to say that my father is one and that it often puzzles me that the people who lecture me here, especially the statisticians and the sociologists who get a load of trouble from the business students, aren't earning huge quantities of money being retail managers or the such like which they are training us to do?

People who my father was teaching about 5 years ago are now earning twice as much as he is, and why anyone would want to earn very little money, trying to install a few pearls of wisdom into the heads of a bunch of little brats, who are cheeky, uncontrollable is beyond me. I've seen what teaching can do to people - and the idea that teachers get any longer holidays than anyone else is a load of rubbish."

((So, why do teachers teach? If it's not for the money, why strike? Michele Morris has a clearer point further below, that some sub-standard 6th formers are pushed ahead instead of those dedicated teachers.

You should be shot for your contribution to the Vienna Christmas tape, at least the rest of my family think you should be. Their reaction was: "Turn that bloody noise off!" I mean I had to have it loud so I could hear the questions being asked in the Glover interview. God, there was some horrible 'singing' on there. Please let my Vienna's come on plain paper in future!))

BERNARD EMBLEM: "I gotta keep this short, since there's so much to do in the new house. Perhaps one general point will answer all criticism...

My basic argument is that inequality leads to problems. As you say, life doesn't have to be fair, but the less fair it is, the more trouble society has. Take, for example, one of our favourite themes, the teachers and their current pay dispute. By being reasonable in their negotiations, teachers have seen their salaries annually eroded. When they get tough, children suffer, and parents like yourself shout "It isn't fair!" Of course it isn't, as you pointed out to me last time.

Should we not be aiming towards a society where parents can earn enough to support their children, where public servants do not have to make people suffer in order to maintain their standards of living?

These things are possible."

MICHELE MORRIS: "It is all very well for you to say that we are not 'entitled' to a job, and that any job we take doesn't necessarily have to have a 'fair' wage, but how do you expect people to live? Do you really think that people should work for whatever their employer chooses to give them and not for a wage commensurate with the effort and skills required for that work? That is nonsense Tom and you know it! People have the right to ask for a living wage in exchange for their time and effort. If you like Tom they are bartering their skills for money. I always thought that an essential part of bartering was that both parties negotiated the rate of exchange, it wasn't set by one party alone. Where the teachers are concerned it is a hard job which has a very low status in this country. When I was at school all those who were able were encouraged to go to university and the rest of the sixth form were encouraged to go into teaching! The teachers were selling themselves short. It is a very

demanding and responsible job and deserves to be given the professional status and wages the teachers are asking for, but in return we should demand that it has professional entry standards. By that I mean that all teachers should be of degree standard at the very least and heads of departments etc. should have higher qualifications still. ((I AGREE)) Having said that I can understand why the teachers feel hard done by in the wages stakes. For years now they, and many others in the caring professions, have seen their wages slip back in relation to other jobs, in fact their wages have barely kept pace with inflation. When they began teaching the pay and prospects were very much better than they are now. I say that teaching should be restored to the level it once had, both in financial terms and in terms of teaching standards. The teachers gain and we gain in having a better standard of education for our children.

Oh Luke, "The chronically unemployed have no moral obligation to abide with Law and Order"! What nonsense. It is patently untrue to say that we do not share in the wealth of society. We may not have jobs but we do receive welfare benefits, our children attend state schools, we use the National Health system etc. There is no justification for rioting and theft no matter how hard done by you may think you are. Tom's definition of a crime is far too simplistic but will do for now. I don't want to get involved in a debate about whether or not it can ever be morally right to commit a crime. All I can say is that if you wouldn't want someone else to do to you what you've been thinking about doing, then you shouldn't do it at all. I think Luke strays when he says that because we have responsibilities to society it has responsibilities towards us. He equates this as meaning that we should all be equal in every way no matter what our contribution is. This is a nice thought but impractical and unfair. Impractical because no matter how strongly you believe that everything should be shared out evenly, in practice basic human nature and greed prevents this ever occurring. There is always someone who thinks they should get that little bit more, and if they are contributing more than I don't see why not. You only have to examine the failure of traditional communism in Russia and China to see this. In both countries it has been proven that people work harder and produce more when they get a fair share in the profits and a just reward for all their effort. This is not wrong provided that society ensures that by giving more to some it is not denying the very basics to others. If society has a responsibility it is to see that we all have food, clothes, shelter, medical attention when we need it and an education to enable us to contribute as much as possible to the society that nurtures us."

((I think Michèle has cornered Luke enough without any need of comment from me. However, I never said that people should blindly accept 'whatever their employer chooses'. What I said was, that an employer sets the wage he can afford for a specific job, and, when you apply for that job, you talk it over, take it, or leave it. But once you accept it, it's a contract to do that job. One shouldn't have the god-given right afterwards to bicker about it. One should bicker before taking the job, and work out all prospects.))

MATTHEW WRIGHT: "Is Bernard to be taken seriously, how can he suggest a Bin Man should get paid as much as a doctor. If everyone is guaranteed a job at the same wage no matter what, motivation goes straight out the window, and without motivation progress won't be made. Don't repeat your argument that a rewarding job is nicer to do, of course it is, but when you are considering further education you're not going to be thinking of the satisfaction you're going to get from doing a particular job in five years time. Students will no longer stay for higher education, why should they slave away at their books for the next 5 or more years while all around their friends are bringing home the same wage they will get in 5 years time and then going out in the evening doing whatever they want. In fact with a guaranteed wage at sixteen, why should they ever go to school in the first place. In the end this country will just become a bunch of illiterates and the whole country will just collapse and then every one

will be below the poverty line.

As for saying those that stay on for further education are doing it to just prolong them getting a job is pathetic. Maybe when he was a student unemployment wasn't as big a fear as it is now, but in today's world you've got to compete for a job and if you want a good job you need the qualifications. He also says they all wanted to be teachers and that they weren't really bothered about the financial rewards, well why are you on strike now, not for more money surely. As for background, it does affect your education I admit but not as drastically as you suggest, look at Margaret Thatcher she was the daughter of a greengrocer and is/was a woman so she had everything going against her, yet she still made it to the top. Also it's not your parent's financial background that affects their education, but how successful they have been in life (hence the financial connection) and in general the more successful one is the more they expect from their children.

Finally: I notice that teachers more than any other profession play Diplomacy, perhaps it's because they have more time after work than people in other professions."

((That last bit is a telling point - perhaps that's where our teaching profession is going wrong; we have too many of them in this hobby, and we all know how weird hobby people are, don't we? Everything that Matthew says merely confirms what I've said before. One has to work for the better things in life.))

ALAN FROST: "Why me, Lord? I received this month's Dib with no p.19 printed on the back of page 18. Michelle (Barbara Cartland) Morris's deathless prose was cut off in mid-sentence. It's worse than those old Flash Gordon cliffhanger (far worse).

Can I have p.19 please? ((You have it on the back of 18))

I promise not to write any more about teachers except to say that the word processing/drama business is more likely to be the result of a timetabling and resources problem than a direct curricular policy (it would be in my school). I share your feelings on the value of Drama, but one could argue that, since most kids will be unemployed for a sizeable slice of their lives, such futile leisure pursuits are pretty important. I take it you don't mind Games being on the curriculum? Same value. See what I mean? The other problem is that there aren't enough teachers of real subjects to teach worthwhile things all the time. We can't get enough Physics teachers because they can earn so much more in industry (oh, how did that get in?). All the more reason for concentrating our resources - but I've been here before.

The fact that Bernard Emblem teaches in a Special School explains a lot. They're not representative of the main body of the profession, you know. They also get paid at a higher rate than the rest of us."

((It seems my fears may be unfounded to a certain extent. As you may know already there's talk of putting off the GCSE exams until further notice because of lack of preparation. Great.

As for the page 18/19 mix up, yes, I'm sorry. Because of the Christmas rush I got my son to help doing the collating. As you guessed he put it back to front. But it's still all there!))

MICHELE MORRIS: "One little note to Richard Morris, you poor lad, you could be related to us! Kris' dad came from a large family, large enough that he had to be sent away to his grandparents to be raised as his family couldn't afford to keep him. Because of that Kris only knows a few of his relations. Add to that the fact that some of his aunts and uncles chose to have enormous families, i.e. 16+ children! and we have a situation where Kris has around 100 cousins most of whom he's never heard of, let alone seen. So you see Richard, we could easily be related."

((Poor Richard...))