

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

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(Smy)-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