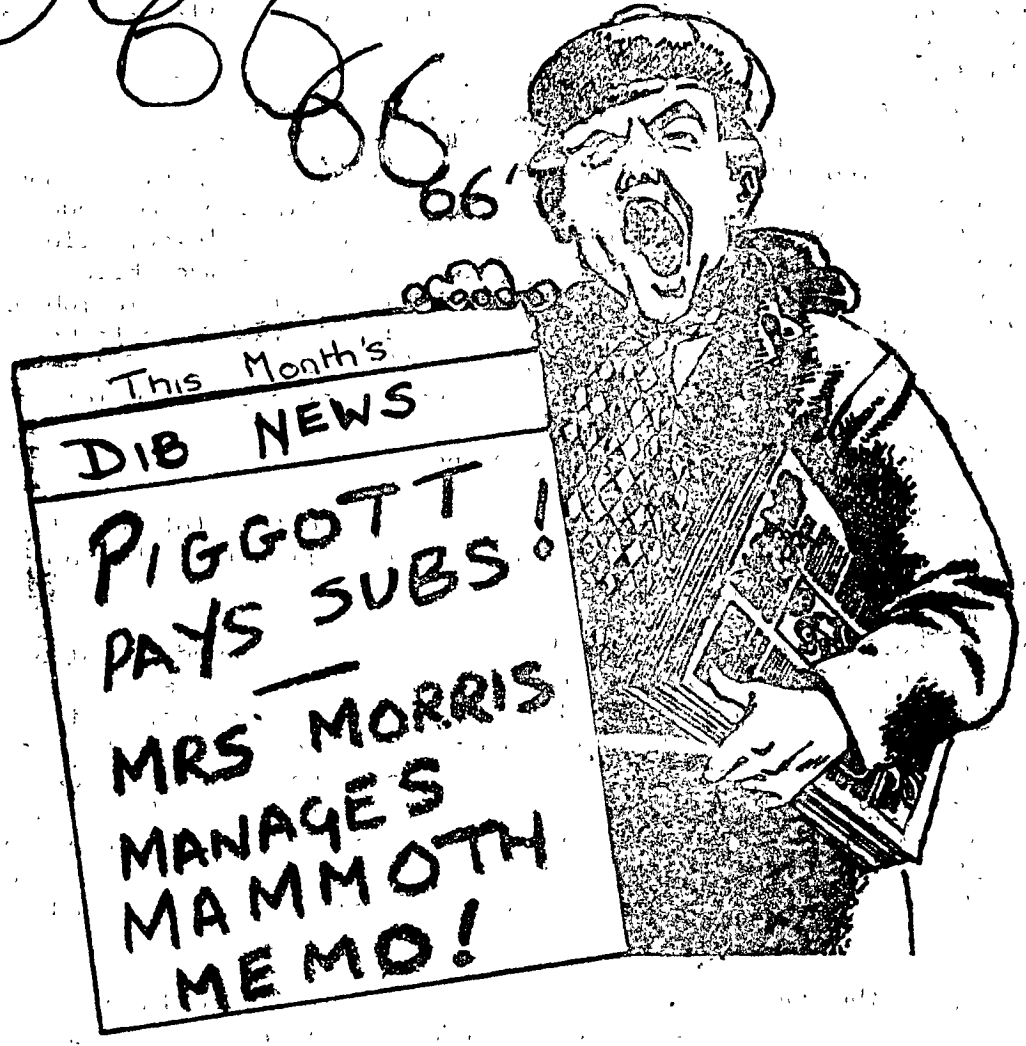


DIB DIB DIB

66666



This Month's
DIB NEWS
PIGGOTT PAYS SUBS!
MRS MORRIS MANAGES MAMMOTH MEMO!

Welcome to the 66th 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.

 * EMAIL: I can also be reached via bulletin board on 'West London TBBS' *
 * 0895-52685 (1200/75 or 300/300 baud - No parity, 8 data bits, 1 stop *
 * bit), where all orders, articles and whatever can be sent to me in the *
 * Diplomacy section reached via the SIGS Area (Special Interest Groups). *

EDITORIAL

At last, I've found someone to take over the EN GARDE! game. Jake Cheung has agreed to take over where Pete Sullivan left off (thanks Jake) - and as he has a computer and printer to run it on, it won't be far removed from what it used to be. I'll try and get Pete Sullivan to hand over any stats he has for the game - though I don't hold out any joy as he seems too busy to bother - but I suggest if you have your own scores written down you send them in to Jake yourselves so he can catch up. Write to 15 Albert Road, Retford, Notts, DN22 6JD (his Home address), and later to 41 Portman Street, Middlesborough, Cleveland (his Term address).

Since I posted the last issue I've had a great time on the modem. We (the Diplomacy players) have finally been given our own section on two different boards, where games can be played and orders and articles (on one board at least) can be uploaded easily for me to pick up later. Richard Walkerdine has been on TWICE - and THAT from a grand old man of the hobby who has stood out against technical aberrations creeping soulessly through our hobby. Richard left a message that he'll be on again in March (as soon as he can 'borrow' a machine from his work). He may be one of the last editors (of the Old Guard) still producing a zine with ink and quill, but we'll welcome him aboard all the same.

*** Diplomacy Battleground ***
 T.....Time E.....Exit G.....Goodbye
 R.....Read Diplomacy Messages
 Q.....Quickscan Diplomacy Messages
 L.....Leave a Diplomacy Message
 D.....Download a Diplomacy file
 U.....Upload a Diplomacy File
 K.....Kill a Diplomacy file YOU uploaded
 M.....Mail - PRIVATE User to User Mail
 S.....SIGS Menu
 \$.....Game Master's File Delete
 Command:

Kris and Michele Morris are also thinking of getting a modem. At first I wondered is this was a good thing, letting them loose on a totally unsuspecting bulletin network, and more to the point into my life through another channel. But then it occured to me that I could save WEEKS by not having to type up their letters because they could upload their pages of chat directly to me! Oh joy of joys... now I can begin to live life normally once again; be able to take time out to see the seasons as they pass; play games on my computer (my God, it's been ages since I've played Wizardry!), and even have time to play games with my son. What more can a overworked editor ask for?

(Since typing up the above I've heard the Morrises have sorted out their modem and could be on-line any time now - should I go on-line now and look? I daren't! It seems Rob Watson sold them a second hand Nightinagle modem (thanks Rob, you may have a lot to answer for!)) Rob was the first Dib subscriber to send his orders in using the bulletin board. Other hobby members that have used it are John Cavanagh, and Rod Chamberlin. Hopefully soon there will be many more.

One interesting thing came out of ringing around different bulletin boards. Stuart was eager to see what public domain games were on offer and downloaded an interesting hi-res graphics game called 'Trek'. Interesting because, apart from being an excellent 'stand alone' game, it's a two-player real-time space game that can be played between two computers on a modem! I'm amazed at the high quality of some of the PD software - but unfortunately all of it seems to be of American origin, which means if you like it and want updates one has to contact and send \$25-\$30 to American authors. Don't we have any decent British programmers out there who believe in public support software?

WOT'S THE RECIPE WOT'S THE RECIPE WOT'S THE RECIPE WOT'S THE RECIPE WOT'S THE

OSSO BOUCO

This month's recipe comes from John C. Piggott - gourmet extraordinaire

Serves 4-6

1. Brown about 3 lbs oxtail in the frying-pan, using olive oil (failing that, any vegetable oil will do.) The butcher should have cut the tail up into lengths of 1½ - 2 inches, according to the arrangement of the individual vertebrae. If he hasn't, shoot him.
2. Add about 1lb sliced and chopped onion. Add about 750 ml. passato: (NB - passato is tomatoes, sieved and liquidised. If you can't get it, tinned tomato puree mixed with an equal quantity of water will do.) Add 1-2 tsp. each of the following spices, to taste: thyme, oregano, basil. If you can't get basil, complain to Sybil.
3. Crush two good-sized cloves of garlic and mix it all up well with the rest of the ingredients. Bung the lot into the oven for 4 hours on gas mark 3 (170 C, 325 F).
4. Serve on a bed of yellow rice (add 1/4 tsp - no more! - trumeric to each 8 oz. quantity of plain uncooked rice). For garnish, try small quantities of one or more of the following: parsley, finely chopped garlic, or lemon zest.
5. This is a wonderfully messy meal, so don't stand on ceremony. When you've half-finished, use your fingers!

((Perhaps we should ask this man back again with a regular feature... I DO like good messy eating. Trouble is, Jan will insist I wear a bib - I don't know why, most of it goes down my lab rather down my shirt front! These women never learn.))

JOTTO Turn 6

Well, we have another confident challenger, who thinks he can dive in at THIS late stage and snatch the prize from such earlier winners like Rosie and Kath (or was it Michele?) - no chance of that of course, but we'll humour him. The prize now stands at the princely sum of £3.00!! A fortune not too readily sneezed at.

MICHELE MORRIS : 6TH 211345	RICHARD SHARP : 1ST 211211
MIKE CLOSE : 6TH 022212	2ND 121133
STEVE THOMAS : 6TH 331211	3RD 322212
KATH COLLMAN : 6TH 224203	4TH 013313
ROSIE ROBERTS : 6TH 322010	5TH 111221
	6TH 112112

ITALIAN STRATEGY - A PERSONAL VIEW

by Paul Donley

This article will look at the playing of Italy, a country that is often ignored and maligned in the Hobby because of its location outside the Eastern and Western triangles. It occupies a somewhat unique position, commanding the Mediterranean but with too few fleets initially to exploit this position. On land too Italy is constrained in its breadth of operations. Access to the European heartland through Tyrolia, Marseilles, Trieste is never easy until either Austria or France has been subdued (almost certainly by a third party). Thus it may be said that the first problems any Italy must face are those of access to potential gains and rebuilding the unit structure to a more suitable mix.

Italian openings are fairly standard with only a few being used with any frequency, a situation fostered by the factors mentioned above. F(Nap)-ION is an essential, if not automatic, move, and the only choices after that are whether to move A(Ven)-Tyr or Tri or Whether to Alpine Chicken (A(Ven)-Pie).

The more interesting aspect of early Italian play though is the alliance building section. Given Italy's poor initial situation, friends are of the utmost importance and should be found without delay. It is not necessary to find a game-long ally who will never leave you, just someone who will not make life difficult in the early years. What happens after that depends on the game's development.

The most useful ally for Italy to have at this stage is France. A demilitarised zone should be established from North Africa to Piedmont, with some regulation of builds in Marseilles and Rome. Tunis becomes Italian indisputedly, but Italy must forget any plans to conquer Iberia for the present. By taking such action the Italian player has created a temporary corner position from which to spread. Linked in with such an arrangement (in a very concrete agreement) is support for France to move from Bur-Mun, provided Tyrolia can be gained in the Spring. This often a small price to pay for the goodwill that is fostered.

The only other countries Italy need be concerned with in the short term are Austria and Germany. In the case of Austria, friendly overtures should be made with the aim of establishing armies in Tyrolia and Venice. Once this has been achieved you can bargain from a position of strength and invade or not at your whim. Another course of action involves posing the threat and then releasing it, creating both goodwill and a debt in your favour which may be called in at the most opportune moment. If friendly relations can be set up in such a way, with you pulling the strings then you have considerably improved your initial situation.

But given your S01 moves, your aggressive armies must move somewhere. The target that I would suggest is Germany. Most French players would be only too grateful to support an Italian A(Tyr)-Mun, and Austria would be grateful to be let off the hook. Naturally Germany wouldn't be too pleased with this situation, but then he is not an important factor in Italy's early game progression.

The situation that has now been created is one where France is your ally and confidant, Austria is friendly and grateful, but Germany hates you. Also in the process you have siezed two builds in O1. You can never get much penetration into Germany so that is a dead-end, but France and Germany have been set at war and will beat each other into pulp for a number of years. Eventually you should be able to exploit this situation, perhaps with England's help. Afterwards Russia, if still strong, could be enlisted to deal with England. This technique (I call it rolling allinaces) can prove extremely effective when attacking from a corner position (which a stab on France creates). This idea introduces another area I will wander over, that of Italy's enemies.

Surely Italy's foremost enemy is Turkey, there is no way that the yellow man can expand in any strength without taking the Ionian and subsequently your centres. Thus much effort should be concentrated on limiting his expansion, mainly via supporting Austria as a bulwark against him. Also fleets should be pushed into the Aegean and Eastern Med as soon as possible, before Turkey can get any there. Again, once this position is established, flexibility and ease of attack has been facilitated and diplomatic channels are forced open.

England is a potential enemy only should he master the Western triangle too quickly and threaten to move into the Western triangle and beyond. Hopefully your support of France will stop this from happening. Russia is a difficult country to categorise though. Popular opinion cites the Russo-Italian alliance as a natural, and to both's benefit. But given a decision to support Austria relations will be shaky at best, but may be repaired by a joint attack on someone, preferably Turkey. Russia must also be watched as if he becomes too big a naval force in the North this may decidedly inhibit your latter game expansion.

Thus to summarise my ideas on playing Italy are to ally with France and Austria and stab Germany. Later on attack Turkey and wait for the moment to stab one of your allies. From there use rolling alliances and good diplomacy to hopefully win, or at least get a good draw. I have used similar tactics on a couple of occasions now and have got a good draw FTF and a probable second place (due to 2 NMRs and an exceptional player, Mike Close, as Russia) which to me at least justifies the approach.

((Thanks for the articles, Paul, very much appreciated - please accept the next few issues of Dib free.))

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INFOCOM

by Michele Morris

Introduction:

Many years ago two misfits, called Crowther and Woods, wrote a computer based adventure game called 'Colossal Cave'. The text-only game involved the exploration of an underground cave system in search of treasure. Many puzzles had to be solved in order to get from one location to the next. Times have changed and now many adventures come complete with pretty graphics, but many die-hards, myself included, still prefer text-only games for the freedom they give to use your imagination. Many of the graphics used are inadequate or badly drawn, if not downright misleading. If you like graphic adventures then this review may not be for you, but before you turn the page let me ask you one question: Do you always insist the books you read have pictures? If the answer is 'no' then you might find text-adventures to your liking after all. In a good text adventure the plot unwinds slowly as in a good book, but you can't cheat and skip to the back page to find out what happened!

One of the foremost producers of text-only adventures is the American company Infocom, although they prefer to refer to them as Interactive Fiction. They have produced many different titles over the years, covering many topics and styles. There are certain features common to all Infocom games and I shall use this introduction to make you familiar with these. The games are written at four levels of difficulty:

- Introductory: for beginners from the age of nine;
- Standard: for beginners and experienced players;
- Advanced: for those with some experience;
- Expert: for those who are finding your average adventure too easy.

(Continued over...)

All games are disc based, require around 128K of memory and are available for a wide range of computers including Amstrad, Commodore and Atari. They are not cheap at anything between £20-£30 but most adventurers consider them worth the price. One notable feature of Infocom games is the standard of packaging provided. The disc is supplied in a large card folder, usually with a plastic tray to hold the disc, and a great deal of documentation containing much information necessary to the successful completion of the game or which adds to the overall flavour of the game.

Playing the Game:

The chief feature of the Infocom games is their excellent parser. This is the bit of the program that interprets the inputs you supply from the keyboard. The earliest adventures had a very limited vocabulary they were only able to accept inputs in the 'Verb Noun' format e.g. take sword. Infocom adventures have quite large vocabularies, including all the standard commands such as take, drop etc, and can handle complex inputs e.g. "drop all except the sword and shield and then attack the troll". The most recent adventures from this stable also recognise the word "it" allowing inputs like "pick up the paper and then read it". The problem with such long inputs is that it is very easy to make a typing error. Never fear, the later adventures contain the Oops command which allows you to type oops followed by the corrected version of the word you mistyped and the parser will happily carry out your original order.

The location descriptions are very detailed but two commands, Brief and Super-brief, allow you to reduce these to a minimum should you prefer. You also have the option of Restarting the game at any time or of Restoring the game. This last option makes use of the Save and Load commands which allow you to save your current position to disc and reload it should you unfortunately die after making an unwise move. Most of the adventures have some kind of scoring system and many have a time limit. The later is not real time, but game time i.e. you may have to complete the adventure within a set number of moves, but the computer takes no notice of actual time elapsed and you may leave days between each move if you wish. There is also a Script command which sends the data on the screen to a printer, if one is connected, allowing you to produce a hard copy of the adventure. This is cancelled by the Unscript command.

Most of the problems can be solved given sufficient time and thought. However, now and again you come across a rather tricky one and can be stuck for months. Infocom have tried hard to help by producing a series of 'Invisiclues'. These are books containing the solutions to a particular adventure and they also have suggestions for alternative inputs which may provoke an interesting or amusing response. The book won't spoil your enjoyment of the game though, as the clues only become visible when they have been wiped over with the 'magic' pen supplied. The main drawback is the cost. Each book costs around £7 and most adventurers prefer to rely on informal clue networks and magazines to help them out of their difficulties.

((And Michele's first review...))

DEADLINE

This is the only one of the four adventures that I have completed and is at Expert level. You are a detective called in by a lawyer to investigate the suspicious death of Mr Marshal Robner. It looks like suicide but the lawyer suspects murder. You have twelve hours in which to prove murder and find the suspect(s). You are given a dossier of information containing a letter from the lawyer, a photograph of the scene of the crime, the coroner's report, a police memo, the lab report, statements from the deceased's family and business colleagues, three "Ebullion" (sugar) tablets as evidence and an Inspectors Casebook.

The latter explains the vocabulary understood by the parser and the use of certain commands peculiar to this adventure e.g. you can Fingerprint objects or send them to the laboratory to be Analysed For anything or a particular