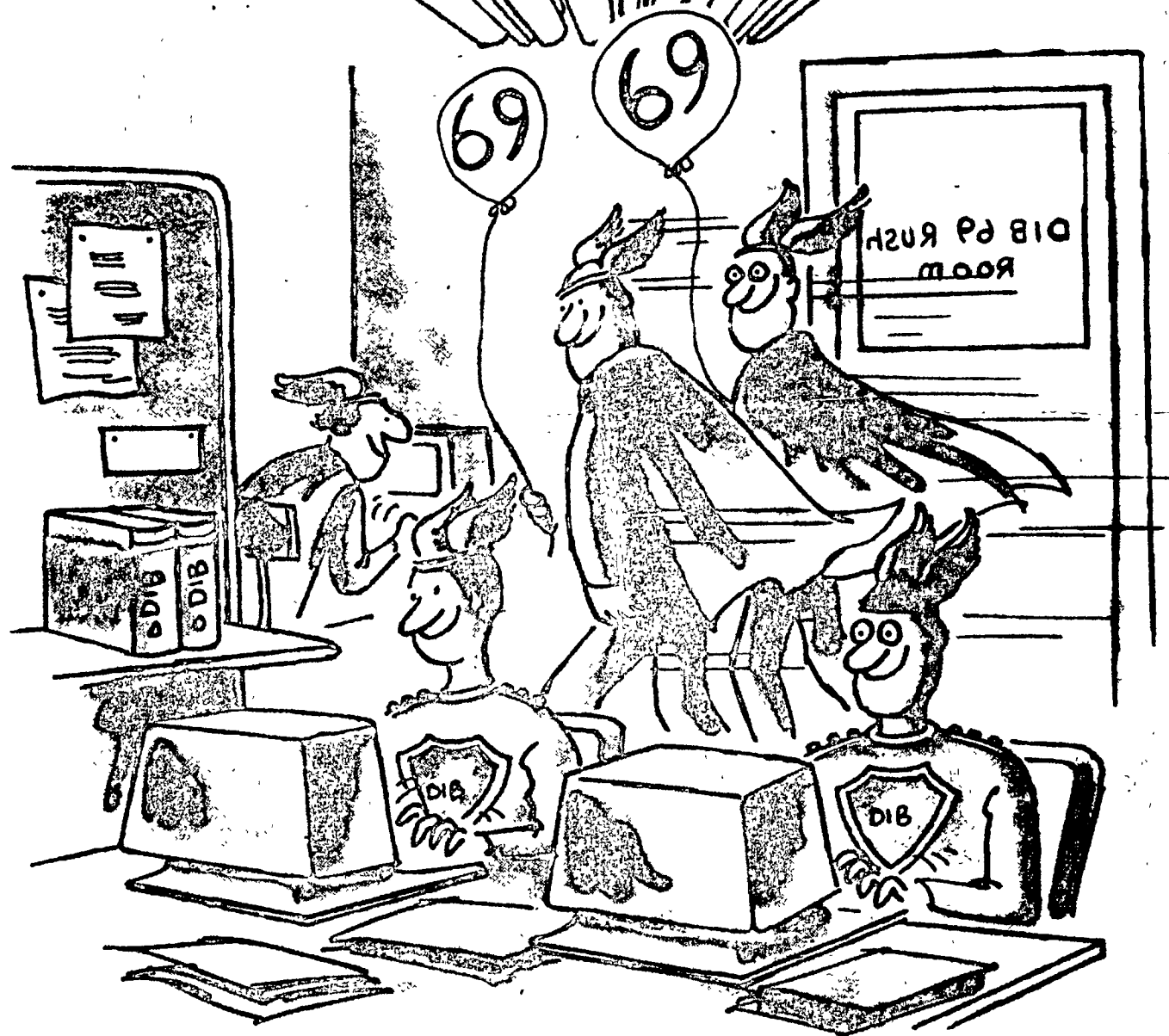


DIB DIB DIB



When DIB is late or just overdue,  
we'll employ extra staff to rush it to you!

Welcome to the 69th issue of Dib Dib Dib - a zine dedicated to games, games players, 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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 \* EMAIL: I can also be reached via bulletin board on (net 503, node 60) \*  
 \* 'West London TBBS' 0895-52685 (1200/1200, 1200/75 or 300/300 baud - No \*  
 \* parity, 8 data bits, 1 stop bit), where all orders and articles can be \*  
 \* sent to me in the Diplomacy section reached via the SIGS Area (Special \*  
 \* Interest Groups). \*  
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#### EDITORIAL

My apologies for this late issue of Dib (only 1 week late of course) - just my luck really, Ulf Jiretorn has been writing to me the last couple of issues complaining, and quite rightly, that his issues of Dib have been turning up late or not at all. Not my fault really the post has been so bad lately it seems - I put the correct postage on. Anyway he'll probably think, along with the rest of you, that his Dib has gone astray yet again. Already I've had Mike Sykes-Gelder ring me up wanting to know where his copy has gone. Still, one good thing I suppose, it shows you do miss it.

So, what's my reason for being late? Nothing so earth shattering that it would be a good enough excuse to you (hence the apology), a little bit of overwork in some areas, a bit lazy in getting on with Dib, and Wimbledon. I can't help it, I ALWAYS watch it, it's tradition with me now.

Talking of bad luck (more to the point, good luck). Do you know, that I've had a ~~Premium Bond for 25 years without winning a sodding thing? It may even~~ interest you to know I even have £26 worth of bonds now and STILL I've never won anything! Of course, I well realise any of this may not surprise you, most of you probably have more than that and haven't won anything either - but it may surprise you to learn that Stuart has won the Premium Bonds again FOR THE THIRD TIME! I couldn't believe it.

Here am I trying to teach him that it's a hard hard world out there, and he's sitting there smugly raking in the money right left and centre like it's the most normal thing in the world! Of course, I hasten to add, he's only won the £50 prizes each time... but he's only had his bonds about 3/4 years! I'm sick I have to tell yuh, and I want to know where my share of luck is NOW.

But enough of my problems... on with the hobby stuff. Things are looking good for Diplomacy on the bulletin boards - on the GODS BB there are now SIX games of Diplomacy being run (the last two filled within a week), plus other games like Marvel 'Super Heroes', etc. The problem seems to be finding GMs rather than players. I can't GM any more.

As for the postal hobby and Dib - the EN GARDE is held over until next issue so Jake can hear from the rest of the players that still wish to play. BRIAN MOORE, SIMON CRADDOCK, ULF JIRETORN, DAVID ABBOTT, CATHY OZOG, and CHRIS SANDOW - if you are all still interested in carrying on, please contact Jake Cheung (who'll be home from 3rd July) as soon as possible at 15 Albert Road, Retford, Notts, DN22 6JD. New player to start in the game this time is Jon Moss.

This is the last time I can remind you of the GLADYS AWARDS, because the deadline is Saturday 18th July. Will Dib win the Best Lettercolumn category yet again? That's up to you lot, we've won it five or six times, but it's your column - if you like it why not vote for it. If you're interested in taking part, send your votes in to Brian Creese, 256 Canbury Park Road, Kingston, Surrey, KT2 6LG.

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## UNUSUAL WORDS FOUND IN CHAMBERS

by Steve Thomas

Over the past few months I've been delving deeply into *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary* in search of 6-letter words for the Jotto game. This search has shown up a few oddities which I thought I'd share with a wider public, hence this article.

The first words I wish to discuss are those with excessively specialised meanings. The emphasis is on the word *excessively*, otherwise one is deluged with scientific terminology and dialect words for diseases of sheep.

Perhaps the oddest word is *sooterklɪn*, defined, along with four other meanings, as a fabulous afterbirth induced by Dutch women sitting huddled over their stoves. One wonders why anyone would require such a concept, although in this case the etymology (a corruption of *soot-child* in various Germanic languages) isn't hard to guess. Without straying too far in the dictionary, we find *shrew-struck*, defined, reasonably enough, as blasted by a shrew. The reasonable man (or woman) might regard this word as an excellent way to describe Petruchio, and pass on. However, it's hard to dispel an enchanting vision of small, insectivorous mammals scurrying about carrying sticks of dynamite (at least, I find it hard, which may explain a lot). If we go to the lengths of consulting another dictionary, such as *Webster's Second*, we find that this vision is closer to the mark, since that work defines the word as struck by a shrew (the animal).

Let us move on to *meritɪn*, a hair-piece for the pubic area. I have yet to find anyone who claims to possess such an item, still less wear one. Can anyone out there help? (This word was omitted from the 1977 edition of *Chambers*, probably by accident.) *Serein* – fine rain falling from a cloudless sky – is another word for which *Chambers* gives a meaning differing slightly from that given in many other dictionaries, since, as the etymology suggests, such rain should really fall after sunset to qualify.

*Montem* is a former custom of Eton boys to go every third Whit-Tuesday to a hillock on the Bath road and exact 'salt-money' from passers-by, for the university expenses of the senior scholar or school captain. *Salt-money* is defined as money for salt; money collected at *montem*, which helps a bunch. Presumably this form of highway robbery has fallen into disfavour either because of legal problems or because the student grant is now sufficient for the senior scholar to buy his salt with part of that. Many other words have unhelpful meanings; for instance, *thridace* is defined as inspissated lettuce juice, but those of us without a great deal of Latin have to thumb through the dictionary to find that *inspissated* means thickened. The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* points out that *thridace* is (or was) used medicinally, but provides no insights into the diseases that it's supposed to ameliorate. *Emboguo* is unhelpfully defined as to disembogue. Hands up all those who know what this means.

*Taghalrm* – inspiration sought by lying in a bullock's hide behind a waterfall – leads us on to another rich vein of human activity. Through the ages, peoples have longed to know what the future holds, and have indulged in all sorts of practices to find out. Most readers will be familiar with *augury* as a means of divination, but perhaps not that, strictly speaking, it only applies to divination by observing the flight and the cries of birds. Similarly, we have *haruspicy* (inspection of animal entrails), *myomancy* (movements of mice), *oneiromancy* (dreams), *theomancy* (oracles), *crithomancy* (meal strewn over victims of sacrifice), *axinomancy* (motions of an axe posed upon a stake), *coscinomancy* (a sieve and a pair of shears), and many, many, more. One wonders whether the foremost emotion should be despair at the human psyche or admiration for the people who dreamed up all these words. It's interesting to speculate where opinion polls fit into all of this, but that's beyond the scope of this article.

We now move from the implausible to the unpronounceable. Over the years, English has gathered a large variety of foreign words. Many have become anglicised and trip readily off the tongue, but others tend to stick in the English-speaking throat. There are many initially unpromising words for which the pronunciation guides give some help, for example *crwth* (a Welsh stringed instrument), *k'thibh* (a textual reading in the Hebrew Scriptures; originally a marginal note calling attention to the textual form), or *ctenoid* (comb-shaped). However, that still leaves words like *shitchl* (cabbage soup) which is a one-syllable word. How one is expected to fit all those consonants into one syllable is beyond me. *Kgotla* – an assembly of tribal leaders in Botswana – is another example. Presumably the original word had a glottal stop or something in there, but *Chambers* only indicates that the stress should go on the first syllable.

Some definitions allow the lexicographer's prejudices to show through. For example, the definition for *tyke*, a dog; a cur; a rough-mannered fellow; a Yorkshireman, can only have been written by a

Lancastrian. Similarly, one suspects that the definition for **pock-pudding**, a bag-pudding: a Scottish contemptuous name for a mere Englishman, was not written by a Sassenach. Intellectual prejudice shows through in **Welsh rabbit**, melted cheese with or without ale, etc., poured over hot toast - sometimes written 'Welsh rarebit' by wiseacres. In a similar vein, we find **kazoo**, a would-be musical instrument, a tube with a strip of catgut, etc., that resonates to the voice, and **bubukle**, a ridiculous coinage of Fluellen's for a red pimple, compounded of *bubo* and *carbuncle*.

It is the practice of modern lexicographers to add a few jokes and so on in order to prevent unscrupulous rivals from infringing copyrights. Perhaps the most extreme example of this is the etymology given for **Isabel** - dingy yellowish-grey or drab [Origin unknown: too early in use to be from *Isabella*, daughter of Phillip II, who did not change her linen for 3 years until Ostend was taken.] Another example is **radar**, which includes in its etymology ... appropriately, a palindrome word. (This should of course be palindromic and not palindrome.)

This article has only brushed the surface. There is much more to be gleaned from a deeper study, although it's a time-consuming pastime, and there's a vast amount of dross (i.e. commonsense definitions of common words) which must be discarded. For the true aficionado, the standard work is *Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure, and Preposterous Words* which is, I believe, sadly now out of print. Other dictionaries have their own idiosyncracies, too. For example, few words can compare, for sheer uselessness, with **ucalegon**, a neighbour whose house is on fire, but this word does not appear in *Chambers* at all.

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((Thanks Steve, now I know how to fortell my future luck, easy really, I just cast my Merkin on the floor and peer into it - presumably to see what scuttles out I suppose. It may not work: I realise, but it MUST be better than peering into someone else's Merkin. You deserve a free issue of course.))

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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING FLEET MOSCOW

by Mark Berch

That's right, I said Fleet Moscow. Why would anyone want to do that, you ask? Two reasons: To harass the gamesmaster, and an obscure tactical ploy.

First, visualise the GM's situation where he reads "Build F(Mos)". His initial reaction is doubtless to wonder why his zine seems to attract all the incompetents floating around. He may wonder if he should correct the obvious error (under rule III, 4, "A badly written order which nevertheless can have only one meaning must be followed") or disallow the build. He'll probably go for the latter. But first, a nice, crisp citation of chapter and verse from the Rulebook as to why such a build is illegal seems to be in order. This will not only quell any possible protest, but will also persuade some of the more sceptical readers that he really does own a Rulebook.

Flipping through, he finally locates Rule XIII, 2: Building and Removing Units (adjustments). He reads "...number of units must be adjusted... disband the excess... in his home country only... written and exposed simultaneously without any preceding diplomacy." End of Rule. Hmm! Nothing is there even covering F(Mos)! Better have another look. The closest he'll find is "He must specify a fleet or an army in a coastal supply centre." This is on the assumption that in a coastal SC he might desire either but in a non-coastal SC only a fool would want a fleet. But it says nothing about building in inland centres, so it doesn't say it's illegal. And this is the only rule covering builds.

This presents the GM with a serious dilemma. If he allows F(Mos) he will look a total jackass. Jocular comments will appear in other zines. Ron Kelly may resurrect his Zine Rating Project just to castigate him. The game could even be called irregular. But on the other hand, to deny the build will incite a storm or criticism from the Russian player, not to mention his allies, cantankerous readers and those who just love a fight. They will all point out

that the section on builds says nothing against this unorthodox tactic.

There are however, some players for whom harassing the GM is not one of their prime reasons for playing Diplomacy: Myself for example (I'll have to ask several of you to stop snickering). So consider the following board situation: you have Mos open for a build. England has A(StP) and another fleet in an adjacent province. The F/E/G triangle is somewhat stagnant and so there are no compelling demands on England for that fleet. There is no chance of getting help from a German fleet.

Your long range goal, of course, is to retake StP, but as long as that English fleet is uncommitted this cannot happen. The best you can do is place armies in Lvn and Mos, not enough to dislodge the supported English A(StP). Your building A(Mos) and/or bringing armies up north will only cause England to arrange his alliance in such a way that the fleet will not be needed elsewhere, dooming your attempts to retake StP. Building F(Mos) will signal to England your 'disinterest' in retaking StP while at the same time not tempting him by leaving Mos open. The goal of all this is to have England involve the fleet elsewhere in such a way that quick return is not possible. Indeed it may be possible to get England to pull the ARMY out too, in much the same way that an English fleet in StP does not require a Russian army in Mos. If this happens you may be able to retake StP by building A(War) later. Otherwise the carcass of F(Mos) will have to be disposed of. The simplest way is to 'loan' a southern centre to an ally, necessitating the removal of F(Mos). Later the centre is taken back and A(Mos) appears.

Alternatively, F(Mos) can be part of a plan not to take StP, but rather to avoid further war with England, a war you may be unable to wage. This is especially true if England has taken StP with a fleet. This is somewhat analogous to building F(Smy) when the Russians have a unit in Ank.

In conclusion, building F(Mos) can be used to aggravate the GM and to defend Mos without threatening StP regardless of your ultimate aims.

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((This article was given to me by Andrew Newton (which he says was extracted from The Novice Package) to strengthen his argument that building fleets in inland supply centres should be allowed. This could be bad, if you check the letter column for the Steve Thomas letter you'll see even sensible people can fall prey to such radical and, well, let's face it, ridiculous ideas. Newton is not to be trusted, and should NEVER be agreed with.))

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BAUD OF THE (TELEPHONE) RINGS:

by Nichele Morris

One of the reasons many people find computers so baffling is the insistence of those "in the know" to refer to everything to do with them by acronyms and jargon words. Computer communications is no less prone to this than any other area of computing. I hope by the time you reach the end of this article I will have clarified for you the cryptic little instructions that Tom keeps leaving around Dib, e.g. no parity, 8 data bits, 1 stop bit. Hopefully when you know a little bit more about E-Mail and Comms some of you will be tempted to try it out for yourselves.

I think most people know that data is stored in a computer as a series of binary numbers. This is because the memory of a computer is made up of a series of little "switches" which can be either on or off, usually represented as a 0 or a 1. Each "switch" represents a BINARY digit known as a bit. (I'm sure you can see how the name is derived.) You cannot, however, get very far with a numbering system that can only represent 0 or 1 and so in most home