

MEGALOMANIA

No. 30

40p

The whole postal
Diplomacy hobby would
like to hold a convention
in this hotel.

Yes sir. Would
you like a single
room, or a double?



This is actually my second attempt to start the zine. The first attempt ran to a two-page editorial, rambling all over the place about various strange subjects, and was written about ten days ago. A great deal seems to have happened since then, so I'll junk that and start again.

You may remember in Megalomania 28 that I floated a couple of ideas: taking a minibus up to Geordiecon, and running a National Diplomacy Tournament next year. Well, neither exactly took off, and I had given up the minibus idea on the grounds that no-one was interested. However, both are now ongoing.

I had actually got so far as writing two letters, one to people in the hobby and the other to hotels, about the Diplomacy, and even sent out the former! Then Howard Sayles rang me, with information from his investigation of Birmingham hotels. This produced one very promising venue, the Royal Angus Hotel in the centre of Brum, 8-10 minutes from New Street. The rate per room is actually cheaper than the Rex are charging for their cells at Geordiecon. And these are rooms: each has a colour TV, radio, telephone and private bathroom. Not bad, eh? We'd actually have to charge more than that, of course, to cover hire of a large hall, and the various other expenses involved in running a con, but a tenner a night should cover it all.

I have the info here, and the hotel looks very impressive: they can offer buffets or banquets (from £5.25 a head) for example, and I've even got the wine list (not quite sure why, but I have). They even have experience of this sort of thing: a few Science Fiction Novaconns have been held there, very successfully apparently.

More details later on, probably under 'hobby news'.

Last Saturday I attended the regular Birks poker game, expecting to see the usual people. Imagine my surprise, then, to discover Doubleday and Piggott in attendance. The latter, you may remember, ~~have~~ gave up the Hobby for the joys of Canvey Island and Fatherhood. Or rather he did, but is now sliding back into his old ways. Doubleday, was (naturally) demolishing a large plate of food when I arrived - some things never change!

I enjoyed the game, perhaps mainly because I won large amounts of money. If I could remember, I'd bore you with the details (if I were Eirks I'd also get the facts wrong, but never mind). As it is, all I do remember is the last hand: Geoff (friend of Birks, nothing to do with the hobby) had about £49 in front of him, so was "losing £1 compared with the amount of chips he had bought. However, he has won the last 28 or so games that he has played, so needed to make that £1 back to continue the record. Birks was anxious that he should fail to achieve this, and having failed to persuade everyone else to drop out had to play the hand against Geoff and Steve. So there are these two maniacs battling it out for a low, whilst Doubleday sits there with the high. After some ridiculous betting, Pete was unlucky enough to get a bad 4th card (a king, I think), so Geoff won his half of the pot. At this point Pete insisted that Geoff exposed his cards (Birks had folded, and Steve had declared "high"). This he duly did, but then proceeded to argue about it for at least ten minutes. Pete, I need hardly add, was tired and emotional, and wished only to crawl into bed, but Geoff was anxious to establish what the rules actually say. This went on for ages, before Geoff finally realised that Birks didn't care, and went home. It was a very memorable scene, though.

Well, I found it interesting, and it's my zine, OK?

Yes, what I was trying to say was that at the poker game some interest was expressed in my idea of hiring a minibus. I therefore phoned up a few companies to get some details. Whitgift Hire (from whom I once hired a large van that must have been ten years old and serviced at least twice in that time. That, however, is another story.) wanted £120 +VAT for a week, so that was out. After getting a few quotes I sat down over breakfast (I have my breakfast at 10.30 am) to work out the costings.

Only then did I remember that they often have minimum fees. The first three all did, and it was 24. This depressed me somewhat, but I pressed on, and finally found a company that would let me hire its vehicles, so booked it immediately and paid £30 deposit the following day. 'How much do you want me to pay', I enquired 'Well, it would be convenient if you paid the full £90.' Yes, I'm sure it would be.... Having discovered that I wasn't going to pay that, they told me that £30 would "stabilise my booking" whatever that means.

So, having paid the deposit I had to get eleven people to fill it.

Fortunately, there were plenty of people at the Lamb this week, and I managed to persuade a few to go in the minibus, so it should be OK.

Yes, the Lamb. I was assured that plenty of people would be there, and indeed they were. Even Nick Shears, taking time off from writing his book, with news on the Atari Space Invaders he's buying (on 12 months interest-free credit. I'm tempted!). I managed to avoid going to the New Calcutta; despite Creese's attempts to persuade me, and Greg failed to turn up and collect the fiver I owe him. A good evening.

I phoned Birks up last night, to ask whether he wanted to travel in the minibus - not really expecting that he would - and who should answer the phone but Greg Hawes (who, Birks informs me, is not in the hobby any more, but who cares. I know who he is, and a reasonable number of the people who read this will as well.). This has happened to me before - Greg once answered Sharp's phone when I rang him up - but nevertheless caught me slightly by surprise. Looks as though I'm gonna have to pay out that £5 after all. How depressing. If I haven't said so before, poor old Greg is getting married on August 9th, to Debbie (who was with him at Sharp's non-wedding reception). I shall be in France on that date, so will miss this event. (I notice that Europ Assistance will fly you back to Britain for the death of a relative whilst you're on holiday. Don't suppose I could invent a relative to die that weekend.... No, I guess I'll just be stuck in France.)

Pete won't be travelling to Geordiecon in the minibus (ha! - an unintentional Birks-like typo).

Actually, if I hadn't organized it, I doubt whether I'd want to go all the way to Geordiecon in a minibus with a bunch of lunatics like what we have. Driving is a slightly different prospect - not sure whether it's more or less worrying, but it is different.

My singular lack of success with bets on Palace leave me with a problem. Do I give up whilst I'm behind or have another go? Trouble is that I really don't know how well they're likely to do: they are potentially good enough to win the league, but without a class striker there's no way that they'll realise that potential. It's quite possible that Walsh or Flannagan will develop into forwards of the quality required, but neither had got there by the end of last season. Whilst thinking about it I'll accept £1 bets on your local/favourite team to finish above Palace.

Talking of betting, Adrien Baird suggests (in the new mimeo) Filibuster that my 'book' on the Zine Poll was a losing one, adding up to 99%. This is interesting, as it was reading Adrien's article on Craps (the American dice game) that started me thinking about betting and odds. Since then, I have taken to adding up 'books' in newspapers: most come to about 110%, which means that the bookie makes about 9p in the £1. The taxman takes another 8p, so you need to bet about £1.19 to 'win' £1. That is much better than the pools, where you need to stake about £1.50 to win £1, but far worse than casino games, for which the "edge" is a few pence. Gambling is a fascinating subject, and any study of it will make you wonder why anybody anybody gambles in any of the most popular ways. Playing poker for money, on the other hand, doesn't involve paying large amounts to either a big company or the taxman. All the money stays in the game. Incidentally, my Zine Poll book actually added up to 115%, so wasn't a losing book at all.

Someone (might have been Birks) commented on Wednesday that I always seem to be depressed about zine production. I suppose that I do start editorials rather often by saying something along those lines, but only because starting the zine is the most difficult part. I was going to start this editorial by saying exactly the opposite to normal (that I was looking forward to this issue), but I've scrapped that editorial for the reasons stated earlier. I still approach this issue in a far better state of mind than of late

One reason for this must be that I'm running a much smaller number of games. The heavy burden of all those games probably brought Meg nearer to folding than ever before, and the outside GM's have now relieved that pressure, leaving me to concentrate on what I'm best at: writing and editing the zine.

It occurs to me that one of the many things wrong with the hobby is that quantity rather than quality has become important. There are an awful lot of dreadful games in progress here and there, in which neither the GM nor the players have very much interest. Players go through the motions, sending orders and so forth, but never get any enjoyment or satisfaction out of it. I plead guilty on both counts, certainly. The real problem is that Diplomacy games are far too cheap and easy to start. Someone like John Norris (to take a current example) can enter goodness-knows-how-many games fairly simply, and will no doubt put a great deal of effort into the early stages of all of them. But what will happen when his current surfeit of spare-time disappears? He may not drop out of the games, but will probably be forced to spend less time on them, and so concentrate on winning positions, and write far fewer letters in all the games. And this isn't only true of people who enter a lot of games: how many games have you played in that feature any significant diplomacy/negotiations etc. after about 1903/4?

Some of the best, and most enjoyable, games are the ones that are run by GM's who run only two or three games, containing players in only a couple of games. Unfortunately, the GM is then tempted to expand, so that he is running more and more games, and players start a large number of games in a short time. The result is a number of games that interest neither the GM (who has his zine, and all the other games, to worry about) or the players (who are in several other games, and don't have the time to dabble). If a game hasn't caught alight by, say, 1902, then it's highly unlikely that anything will ever happen. Of the games I've run, a few have had interesting starts (3, 4, 5, 14, 15 come to mind), but even then they don't always live up to their early promise.

The most frequent reason for games being disappointing is that players drop out (or NMR), but it is equally damaging for a game if the players fail to take a real interest. When, as often happens, a game includes both these features, all interest disappears. To take an example, Bruce 'Rupert' (78 DH), and GH 'Anderson' (78) featured several NMRs and dropouts, so that before long each was a 3-player game. In each case, I was in a poor position - and did well to win 'Rupert', whilst Wakefield deserved to win 'Anderson'. However, neither game was very interesting, and those are just two examples that immediately occur to me. Why do people start games if they're not prepared to devote sufficient time to them?

They do it, I fear, because they believe it to be a good idea, and the "done thing". No-one actually advises against it, and people get carried away with their own enthusiasm for the game. (Having got my GH file out, I keep pausing in my typing to read the wretched thing. This is interesting, but makes cohesive - do I mean coherent? - thought more difficult. Ah - the editor's life is tough y'know)

Diplomacy games are also very cheap to enter, and the real cost (in terms of both time and money) only becomes apparent later. I wonder whether the deposit is perhaps the answer here, but in the form of a minimum subscription before you can start a game - set at £4-£5 depending upon the price of the zine, - This should make players aware of the high cost of playing a game of Diplomacy, and perhaps dissuade them from starting too many.

I realise that any such proposals would meet with considerable opposition, from people who believe (quite wrongly) that because the hobby is about playing Diplomacy people should have the opportunity to play as many games as they like. But I'm not trying to prevent that, merely to make it more difficult. I also realise that very few editors would be prepared to enforce such a rule. Doesn't mean that I'm wrong, of course, but it does mean that it must remain an idea.

In future, then, I'll ensure that I only run a small number of Diplomacy games. I won't close the waiting list, but will operate the sensible policy of only starting new games to replace ones that finish. Game 11 will end this issue, and a couple of the others are on their last legs, so that won't actually restrict gamestarts, but be warned that there will come a point when it will.

My critics will probably complain about this policy, and mutter darkly about this being the Diplomacy hobby. Quite true, but this is a fanzine: by definition a magazine for fans. I regard myself as a fan rather than a player, and Megalomania reflects that. I see no reason why I should go against my better judgement and change the basic "philosophy" of Megalomania, and will continue my efforts to move the hobby towards fandom, and away from games-playing. The latter has its place in the hobby, but will never hold the hobby together - something that fanzines and conventions do very well. To that end, I will continue to provide Hobby news, con reports and zine reviews, as I genuinely believe that they do more to bring the hobby together than anything else.

The Zine Poll deadline passed a fortnight ago, and the results are eagerly awaited. It looks as though they won't arrive in time for this issue, and will be rather old news by next time. Ah well, such is life. Greatest Hits will win, with Fall of Eagles, Megalomania and Putty Riffo following on behind. Boring, isn't it?

I am told, incidentally, that Griffin has folded, but no-one seems quite sure about this: he seems to be continuing with the games, but folding the zine. So yet another games-playing zine bites the dust - one day perhaps we'll see one that lasts! I gather that Keith has lashed out at me for various assorted crimes against humanity. I'd tell you more (sounds fascinating) but I ain't been sent a copy, so I can't. Odd that.

On the subject of zine editors, part of the scrapped editorial went on about enthusiasm and its importance. There are some editors who have that enthusiasm because they are naturally attracted to writing and editing, and others whose enthusiasm rapidly wanes when something more interesting comes along. I've always believed that the problems that editors blame for folding are usually not as impossible to overcome as they make out. For every difficulty that has caused a fold it is possible to find another editor who has overcome the very same difficulty. There are exceptions, particularly where several problems coincide, but as a general rule I think that's fairly safe. A "natural editor" who encounters these problems may fold, but is less likely to do so, and is more likely to return. Of the present crop of editors, I'd say that Birks, Booth, Baird, Bullock, Agar, Doubleday, Mearns and myself probably fit into this category. They produce the best zines, the most important zines, the longest-established zines, whilst others come and go. The hobby owes its existence and survival to this group. Where would be with Turnbull, Piggott, Birks and Sharp? (all of whom are still around - Piggott is back in the hobby already, and Sharp will almost certainly return before too long. Where are the "supernovas" - Maiden, Stutt, Willis, Jervis, Brown et al?

(I'm still not entirely happy with that: I don't think I'm actually saying what I mean - it's meant to tie in with the bits about the hobby and fandom, but I suspect that it don't. So it goes.)

Well, here it is. Anyone who spoke to Pete whilst he was compiling this tome will know all about it. He just couldn't stop telling everyone about the agonies of decision-making: "Should I include Eric B Smith, who was the inventor of a little-known game that was crucial to the history of wargaming?" he would muse, trying to demonstrate his ~~age~~ knowledge of the history of gaming. The theory was that it would cover most phrases and words that anyone new to the hobby might not understand. "It was years before I understood what 'SPI' stood for" he would observe, just to prove that there was once a time when Birks was ~~Wahwah~~ just another innocent newcomer.

The theory was that this work should be both comprehensive and self-explanatory. It is, of course, neither. There are countless examples of entries that either omit vital information, contain obscure references or are just plain misleading. The entry on Megalomania, for example, tells the reader that it is:

'produced by Chris Tringham. Noted for atrocious gamesmastering, commentary on television and football, vituperative and destructive reviews of other zines, and inexplicable appeal.'

Which I find fairly amusing, since I know that Pete is just saying that to score a few points off me in print. It will, however, not be seen as that by yer average reader, who will probably believe it to be an accurate representation of Megalomania. I'm not worried by the "damage" it might do to Megalomania, but the confusion it will cause to anyone reading the thing is regrettable.

Pete often misses out useful information, substituting an interesting but irrelevant detail, particularly with people/institutions he knows fairly well. Richard Sharp's entry gives virtually no biographical information, doesn't actually say that he ran the NGC for several years (though the NGC entry does), and incredibly makes no mention of "The Game of Diplomacy". My entry is merely a rehash of the Megalomania one, and tells people nothing about me at all. There's no entry for Pete Birks, an understandable but silly omission, or Greg Hawes (who is still around, and was once pretty important). Several other entries about people are very weak, though many more are very good (Piggott, Davidson, Levin).

Other entries are garbled - having decided to include poker, it's a pity that the entry tells the reader nothing about the game, or its importance to the hobby, and the piece on 'Anarchy' misses a good opportunity to explain a rather confusing situation.

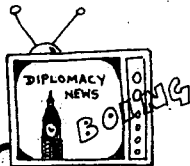
Some omissions intrigue: why are the "Anchluss" and "Lepanto" openings included, but the "Hedgehog" ignored? There's nothing on stalemate lines, and the promised entries on turnround and false readjudications don't materialise.

I could go on all night, but it wouldn't get us very far. The reason for all these omissions is that the thing has been produced in something of a hurry - checking and sub-editing should have sorted them out. Perhaps a revised edition will incorporate revisions and corrections to improve the thing, so that it will be all that Pete originally promised.

Oh, all right. I can be vituperative about it, but I must admit that it's a very interesting document, and fascinating reading for anyone in the hobby. I always enjoy reading dictionaries and encyclopedias (no, really) and this is no exception. Pete has obviously put a lot of effort into it, and I suppose we should be grateful that he was prepared to do it.

This is the first product of the Postal Games Association, and for £1 you get the GoT, a copy of Compendium, a list of Hobby Services, and a letter from Simpkins, plus details of a Central Gamestart Service run by James O'Fee. Send your money to 35, West Park Street, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. Do it now.

HOBBY NEWS



HOBBYMEET PUBS: Having been involved in arranging the first of these, I'm glad to see that the idea seems to have really "taken off" in the last few months, to the extent that there are now four in various parts of the country. They enable anyone who is interested to turn up and meet other hobby members without going to the trouble (and expense) of attending a con.

Anyone who is following the Birks/Palfrey debate on pubs (which mysteriously wandered off and is now to be found in Filibuster) will know why they are a good place to meet, but I won't go into that at the moment.

The pubs, then:

The Lamb, Lamb's Conduit Street (Russell Square LT) on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. I am usually there from 6.30 onwards, others may be there earlier.

'Whitelocks', off Briggate, central Leeds on Wednesday July 30th and the fourth Wednesday of each month thereafter. Contact Ken Bain for details (74 Hollyshaw Lane, Leeds LS15 7AG -- work phone (0532) 605343.)

The Red Lion, Nuthall Road, Nottingham on the fourth Monday of each month, in the Smoke Room. Contact Richard Hucknall for info (124 Southcliffe Road, Carlton, Nottingham, NG4 1ES -- home phone (0602) 876969, work phone (0602) 410342.)

The Bulls Head, London Road, Manchester 1 in the Lounge Bar on the second Wednesday of each month. Contact John Marsden, (061) 445-2876, 6 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M20 6WT.

And I've just worked out that you can attend all of those events if you wanted to (as Nicholas Parsons might say). There's no need to ring then "organizers" first, but they should be able to confirm that there is a meeting on a particular event and make efforts to recognise you when you wander hopefully around the pub.

Any more such hobbymeets would be welcome, and if there are already groups in particular places (Bristol and Newcastle come to mind) it might be worthwhile trying to organize a regular meeting to give others in the area a chance to turn up.

GAMES DAY 80 will take place at the Royal Horticultural Society's New Hall, Greycoat Street, on Saturday 27th September. My offer to run a stand representing the Diplomacy hobby has met with no response, and it's now getting a bit late to organize something. I will probably be at the event anyway, and assume that others will as well. Victoria (BR/LT) or St James Park (LT) are the nearest stations.

OGSCON III takes place the previous weekend, at the West Midlands College of Further Education, Gorway Road, Walsall. I won't be there, because (i) it's deadline weekend, (ii) it comes between Geordiecon and Games Day, and (iii) I'm working on the Saturday. Apart from that, there's no problem. So, it seems that I'll keep my record of having been to every con since I started Megalomania bar the various OGSCons (well that's what Nick Shears says - and he should know, he hasn't been to any!). OGSCon is an SF/F con, though I know that the Hobby has been represented at previous events, and details can be had from Chris Harvey, 11 Woodside Way, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands. £4.50 per night, plus £1 registration.

EUROCON 80 approaches, but the next one is already been planned. Mick Bullock (14 Nursery Avenue, Halifax, W. Yorks HX3 5SZ) is on the look-out for somewhere in France that can accomodate two dozen ~~Livepool~~ people for a fortnight. If you know of anywhere that fits the bill, let Mick know.

The Zine Poll results will be out in about a week, thus guaranteeing that I'll be just about the last person to report them. Thanks, Mick!

8. HOBBY NEWS...HOBBY NEWS.....HOBBY NEWS.....HOBBY NEWS.....HOBB

Geordiecon II THE LATEST NEWS

This remarkable event will take place over the weekend of 5/6/7 September 1980 at the Rex Hotel, Whitley Bay, top RH corner of England. I am told that this event will be even better than the last one. Apparently the Rex has actually managed to afford some decorating (probably from the insurance money...), and the room we are using (the same as last year) now has a food bar as well. The fact that it'll probably only sell reheated overpriced English food rather mitigates against it, but at least they're trying. More importantly, a 50" TV (which can be connected up to a video machine) is promised, as are a number of video machines borrowed from local arcades. Any requests (apart from Space Invaders, Asteroids and Galaxions which are already booked) to Richard Gooch.

Rooms are £8.25 per night, plus £1 registration, from Richard Gooch, 110 Tynemouth Road, Howdon-on-Tyne, Tyne & Wear, NE28 0LQ before August 8th.

I will be there, and have now obtained details about minibus hire. After finding that the first company would only hire them out for a full week (at £138), and most of the rest have a minimum age of 24, I eventually found someone who would hire me one for three days. I haven't got the exact details to hand, but it works out at about £14.00 per person for the return journey. The exact amount depends upon the number who go and the exact mileage we cover, but it certainly wouldn't come to more than about £16. If you want to book a place, I would like the money NOW, as I'm not prepared to take the risk of people saying that they'll go and then dropping out at the last moment.

The plan is to leave here early (about 9 I should think), and then pick people up around London and en route, to arrive in Whitley Bay in the early evening. I will try to arrange to pick up as many people as possible from home, but that won't be practical in every case.

The return journey will start shortly after lunch on Sunday, with the aim of depositing all passengers en route and arriving back here (Croydon) at a reasonable hour.

This is on a strictly first-come, first-served basis, and I must have the money to book you a place. I consider it very cheap (about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the rail fare, and probably less than you'd pay someone on a petrol-sharing basis with two in a car) so I don't expect to have any trouble filling the bus. If you wish to take advantage of this, send me the money now. Note that I am on holiday from 31st July till about the 17th August, but any cheques arriving in that time will get you a place (assuming that some are left).

The route? Well, looking at the map, it seems as though the M1/M18/A1 route that I went up with Keith Jewers is the most direct, though other suggestions are most welcome.

Having just spoken to Richard Gooch, I can prolong this item a little more. Apparently the new management of the Rex are anxious to revitalise the place, and have spent a lot of money refurbishing it. They obviously hope that it can be restored to its former grandeur (and presumably profitability) - certainly last year it seemed very rundown, though it didn't look likely to fall down. So, perhaps we will be getting better value for money than I had imagined.

As things stand, nine people have told me that they're going to send me money for the minibus trip, and three have actually given me the money. They are Mike Allaway, Marie Cawley, Mike Woodehouse, John Jackson, Keith Loveys, Steve Doubleday, Tony Hetherington, Andy Tringham and myself. There are therefore a couple of places, though there may be more if people drop out. All those named above, and anyone else interested, will get a note in with this giving further details. Money is requested from everyone who hasn't yet paid, as soon as possible. I'm not going to wait - if you haven't paid I'll offer the place to someone else, simple as that.

Something has actually started happening with the Diplomacy Championships I was talking about a couple of issues back. Howard Sayles has found a good (****) hotel in central Birmingham, that can offer rooms at a reasonable rate and a large hall for the activities. It has suffered several Novacons (SF cons), and each room has a colour TV and shower, so it looks like an ideal venue.

Several problems still remain: I'm not sure about the best method for organizing the Diplomacy tournament. I originally considered local heats, but that may not prove feasible, then Paul Simpkins suggested that the tournament could accommodate as many people as wish to play over the weekend. The latter is the simpler and least complicated approach, but will inevitably cause problems: if it is well-advertised, more people will apply than the hotel or the tournament can handle.

The projected date is Autumn 1981, which means deciding whether to combine it with the national con or not. The advantages of running the two together are primarily that it would make it financially viable and enable us to book the whole hotel. It would also introduce people to the hobby (which is, after all, the main aim of running the thing). There is an equally strong case for separating the events, which probably means moving the Championships back to late October or November. This would make it imperative to publicise the event outside the hobby, as people who make a habit of going to the annual con probably wouldn't go to this as well. Since that is the idea anyway, it's hardly a problem. I would hope that the hobby would be well-represented in any case, so turning the event into a good con in the evenings. I'm undecided, and it must rest largely on other people's plans: if Richard et al are happy to put on Geordiecon III in September 1981 then it would be foolish to put them off. If on the other hand there are no plans for September 81 then it might be logical to combine it with the national con and run it on the traditional date.

I'd like to discuss this at Geordiecon, and would hope to be able to book the hotel and distribute flyers/entry forms shortly afterwards. I am looking for people who are prepared to help, mainly with tedious administrative tasks and distribution of flyers/entry forms to local shops and media.

The main worry I have is that if this receives adequate publicity we will have far too many people wishing to compete. Local qualifying competitions may be a necessity: fortunately they would only have to run for one day (no problems with booking hotels and all that), and wouldn't require too much organization. Local hobby groups exist in several convenient locations (Bristol, Nottingham, Newcastle, London, Preston), and something could surely be organized in the other areas - notably, Scotland, Ireland and perhaps even Wales. I have written to various people about this, and will print any replies in the letter column. Watch this space.

The alternative solution (or one of them) is to run it over three rounds, two on Saturday with a final on Sunday. Clearly that would mean that it becomes a Diplomacy Tournament pure and simple, as there wouldn't be much time for anything else, though a con could run alongside for people who don't want to play in the tournament (or are eliminated early on - if we use that system).

A decision needs to be made, and Geordiecon is presumably the best place to make it. I suggest that a meeting of everyone interested should be held (and properly publicised and organized) at a convenient time - Saturday afternoon, perhaps. Any comments/suggestions to me, and I'll summarise the alternatives together with the arguments for and against each of them. I might also have a reply from Philmar (though James O'Fee thinks they won't be interested) - certainly if they are prepared to back the tournament that is all for the good. It can be done without their help, though.

Whatever happens, the hotel looks like an excellent venue, and I'd like to organize an event of some kind there sometime next year.

29 Stanley Hill Ave.
Amersham
Bucks HP7 9BD
15th July 1980



Dear Chris,

A most interesting issue, though a little thin. Although you attacked various aspects of our civilisation as usual, for some reason the zine seemed less aggressive, and therefore much more enjoyable to read (for my part anyway). (applause stage left)

Why do you still insist on decrying the Chimaera letter column? Do you think that 'beginners' should never talk or write about politics/science/mathematics/nuclear power? Who do you think has more right to talk about their lives, the people who have to put up with it in stations... or the people that create, fathom and paw over nuclear equations? (Anyway, Einstein was a beginner once, perhaps even you were!) (applause throughout theatre)

(TOM TWEEDY)

It's hard for me to even imagine whom you consider to be a beginner. Should we have discouraged Flachs and Galileo. Yes, come to think of it, I suppose we should. Fair enough, if people aren't interested in the subject, like you, I think valuable space shouldn't be wasted, and the editor-- if he's interested he'll leave it in, if not... To quote your own words: 'I've always felt that a lettercol should be a dialogue between the editor and his subscribers, about subjects of common interest...' Well, if Clive left the letters in, it must have been because at the time he was interested. Hah, admit it Chris, I've got you by the balls! (hero rises and parades around room, looking visibly pleased with himself. Returns to desk.)

I don't agree that just because Clive prints letters he must be interested in the subjects that they cover. I wouldn't have thought that anyone who was really interested in the subjects discussed in the Chimaera letter column would print some of the letters that Clive has. I have no objection to "beginners" talking about

any subject, but there's a difference between ignorance of well-established theories and intelligent discussion of an important topic. I've always been baffled by people who write about important subjects from a position of ignorance - the national press employ several writers who are guilty of this.

PETE BIRKS: Some of the more tedious lettercols have arisen because of a fault in the editor's personality and a willingness to type up stuff which he doesn't understand or even want to understand. GH would never have anything on nuclear power, for example, not because it isn't important, but because I am not that interested in it, no matter how interested I know I should be.

CT: That seems a sound principle - there have been several cases of lettercols that have been allowed to get out of control, leaving the editor a mere spectator (and typist, of course). If Clive was really interested in the tedious subjects he published letters about, then I question his editorial judgement. That good enough, Tom?