

like will be provided. The man to contact for further information (maps, timetables, guide to local pubs etc.) is Jeremy Hawker, 23 Coombe Road, Nailsea, Bristol, BS19 2HH. Tel. 027-55-6255. I understand that this con actually has the "Richard Sharp Seal of Approval" whatever that means.

Zine news this month is that the Queen's Lane Advertiser has folded. QLA, like Ferkin, only reached six issues. It's a great shame that QLA has had to fold due to lack of support, the potential for a good, interesting zine was there - a few CGS gamestarts or perhaps some Ethil orphans would have set them up nicely. Admittedly, QLA was a little expensive, but even so Ian and Jeremy could have made a go of it with some help from the hobby establishment. I understand that QLA's solitary game will continue to be run by Ian - all cash to subbers etc. has already been returned. A tidy fold, but still a great shame.

As one zine goes, twenty million rise to take its place.- well it seems like it. By the time you read this, issue one of The Fool Plays On from Malcolm Brown should be out. Malcolm has advanced his publication date by four weeks through sheer impatience, once he'd got the thing done he thought he might as well show it to everyone immediately.

One project worthy of your support is 25 Years On, newsletter published more or less every other month by Peter Calcraft and Robin Hood. The thing itself includes information on current zines, waiting lists, hobby services etc. and is free! If you want a copy write to Robin Hood, 103 Oxford Gardens, London, W10 6NF. Hopefully 25 YO will be continually updated, although I'm not too sure how useful it will be after the first couple of issues. It would make a handy newsletter to give to novices along with a certain novice package.

A plug for Richard Sharp's book, "The Game of Diplomacy", is clearly in order. It is published by Weidenfeld and costs a modest £7.50 for 150 pages. It's a damned pity that this hobby is so small, with a larger print run the book could have been made a lot cheaper. I'll try to get it for a birthday present or some such thing, as there's no way I can afford it. I suspect the vast majority of people will be in the same position.

Speaking of Richard, did any of you see Dolchstoss 69? Funny wasn't it! For those of you who were lucky enough not to see D, I'll tell you what the joke is. Richard Sharp devoted a whole page just trying to be nasty to me because he thinks that I distort what he says to fit my own ends. He flatters himself if he thinks that I would go to the trouble - Richard can make a fool of himself without any help from me!

To spend a whole page whinning that when I paraphrased "most new zines" it came out "the newer zines" is to display paranoia of Bartle-like proportions. I suppose that it's a bit sad that the so-called "leading light" of the hobby is reduced to such incredible displays of insecurity. Mind you, maybe I should be flattered that Richard inspects Pigmy so closely... I know you love me really Richard!

Pete Birks talks about the lack of newcomers to the hobby in recent months, saying, among other things, that spirit of the age has succeeded at the expense of the other newish zines. In this respect I think that Pete has misjudged the situation, sota isn't really in competition with the other newish zines - firstly it is really a games zine, secondly the diplomacy gamestarts in sota consist mainly of players that have come through different channels from the established ones. These players could never have landed up in Entente or QLA because they come from various wargames associations and such like. Peter is to be rewarded for his initiative, but sota certainly isn't gaining at the expense of other zines. When you think back, it's nearly a year since a zine was successfully launched using traditional means - in fact I suppose the last was Pigmy. Novices are getting in from new sources, but it is important that established publishers should realise that traditional sources of new subbers are exhausted.

Finally, a mention for Down Alien Skies - yes, you guessed it, a new Dip. zine! This one comes from Nick Shears of 2 Jennifer Court, 92 The Street, Ashted, Surrey. Cost about 20p. Did you realise that while Paul Openshaw's enjoying his four issue holiday he expects to receive all his trades. At an average of 20p a go, times four, times twenty - that's £16 he wants the hobby to give to him. I think he's got quite a nerve.

So ends Pigmy 23, as the editor walks away wondering why some people take this hobby so seriously.

LETTERS

John Miller, "Aaargh! Pigmy 22 arrives before I even finish typing MrG 22!
9 Carysfort Road, Wonder who will be the first to crack and bow to a 5 week
Stoke Newington, deadline? (Me, I expect...)
London N16 9AA

"I enjoyed your latest review of MrG (as I did the earlier one) - I think you write good and fair reviews. I'm not sure what you mean about MrG being a "pubbers'" zine as opposed to a "subbers'" zine. Certainly I've always been fortunate enough to have favourable reactions from publishers, but then I get a fair amount of feedback from non-playing subscribers too. Players, however, tend to steer clear - perhaps this is what you mean?

"Er, um, did I spark off the "hard core" debate? Well, yes, I suppose so, but it was all right until other people joined in - blame them!

"A zine for normal people"!!! Who is normal? I don't know whether I'm pleased or not about that remark. "Normal Postal Diplomacy Fans", yeah, great.

"So! Agar, you little creep, you have realised that the "nice guy" image is only an image! Rats...."

"I mentioned the similarities between Pigmy and MrG to you before - pleased to see Graham's noticed them too. I too think of them as "sister zines", both alancing and complementing each other. The Brontë sisters had masses of talent, imilar interests, similar outlests for their creativity, but very different personalities which are reflected in their novels. Similar thing, perhaps?

"Re. Stab: I think there can be too much secrecy and I prefer the number of sc's and builds/removals to be listed each winter for each country. However, I could quite easily do without the GM barging in with news of home bases captured. ("Some people are fussy," you will be saying...)"

[/ Last thing first. All I can say is that my ammendments make the game easier to play and easier to GM, and they are within the spirit of the original. Your ammendments make the game more complicated and are definitely not within the spirit of the original. Some people are fussy...

By a "pubbers" zine, I meant a zine which is sufficiently good and sufficiently moderate to appeal to nearly all publishers. Pigmy is most certainly not a "pubbers" zine.

Brontë sisters? I thought that Jekyll and Hyde might have made a better simile!]

attimeslikethesewhenenemiescannumbermorethanfriendsafriendindeediswh

Cliff Kennedy, "The reason I wish to play in a dippy game in Pigmy is not out
ilcree, of any great esteem for your GMing ability, but for the simple
andyford Road, reason that I find a zine anything up to 30% more interesting
Dundrum, when I'm actively involved in something in it, as opposed to
Dublin 14, viewing it from afar.

EIRE "Having said all that, however, I beg to inform you that there's a postal strike (nationwide, including phones) due to kick off over here across the water in Ireland on the 18th of February, so if you don't hear from me for a while you know the reason!"

[/ I completely agree that participation in a zine does make it far more enjoyable, I suppose that's why I'm in so many games all over the place. If you merely get a zine to read you'll find that you don't notice if it's a few days late, you tend to judge the zine in a completely different way. Reading material becomes more important than efficiency. This is why when zine polls are ran, the publisher votes can be radically different from the subscriber votes.

This thing about a postal strike in Ireland may well upset some of my games which have Irish players. There's no way I will NMR a player because of a strike, so if some of the games are held over (P/9V, P/11V spring immediately to mind) you'll know why. As this is being typed 4 days prior to the deadline I have no idea how serious the situation is.]

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A Peter Sealy quote: "You know something? I think the most spectacular thing you could do now is fold." ((P*** Off, Sealy!))

Keith Black, "My opinion of P 21 was along the same lines as John
48 Stamford Drive, Miller's. I don't agree with the spacefiller obsession - what
Agar Nook, is wrong with a few blank spaces provided they are small?
Coalville, "I wholeheartedly support your plea to revitalise the
Leics. system for handling new entrants to the hobby. The Diplomacy
box flyer is too important to waste.

"Is it true that you are housebound? And don't watch television? Or climb stairs? After all, it is very dangerous to walk the streets or expose your eyes to nasty X-rays or risk falling downstairs. I think you're very sensible to stick to the safe options like... chicken omelette and chips! What a cop out! Just as we have come to expect from the leading exponent of the "soft core". ((No I'm not!)) As a "vindaloo" man myself, I look upon most ordinary mortals with disdain (whilst looking up to the "phall" men) but I reserve my fullest contempt for those who eat "English" in "foreign" restaurants. Seriously, try a Chicken Dansak and live a little. You can even ask the waiter for a very mild one!

"Espionage looks quite good, although I still think it would take quite a lot of effort on the part of the players to make full use of their special units. Just imagine the conditional orders which would be needed. Still, I guess it is no more than is required by my version of Geofizz, and probably doesn't come anywhere near the work needed in Stab to analyse and integrate the snippets of information. A more valid criticism is the way in which the rules are worded (at the very least they should be numbered).

"I approve of your revision of Stab - something along the lines of my revisions of Multiplicity and Geofizz. Although I am playing in a game, I hadn't thought too deeply about how supports are revealed. What is the thinking behind the different treatment of attack and defence supports?

"You may be interested to know that there is now extant a pop (possibly punk) group called Ethil the Frog. Perhaps this explains the long absence of the zine - Piggott may have interests other than Dippy and women."

[/ The system for introducing novices to the hobby doesn't need revitalising - the only thing that needs revitalising is Richard Sharp!

I will have you know that I do not always take the safe option! There's not many people around who dare walk the streets on Newcastle late on a Saturday night, let alone on a day when Newcastle have been beaten 4-1 by Sunderland at home! It's funny how interesting the pavement suddenly becomes when you approach a group of undesirables late at night - I usually get a sudden urge to look in some shop windows on the other side of the street. Failing that Claire is under standing orders to fight them off while I run away...

I admit I could have tidied the Espionage rules up a bit, but I was a bit pushed for time. I published them in the same format as the original that I was sent by Ian, although I clarified a few things.

A pity that as soon as I revise the Stab rules, everyone says "Great, I really like them, I'll just make a few modifications of my own..." - M. Brown. That rather defeats the purpose - I want to see one set of Stab rules used everywhere, only subject to house rule peculiarities. I understand that Malcolm intends to inform a player whenever he loses any sc's - a bit pointless really.]

painmustiexplainmyeverymeaningtoyouitssuchadragthewayyouagatmeandma

Silly Openings No.1

Italy attacks France

Are you looking for an alternative opening for Italy? Are you sick of making ineffectual attempts to stab Austria? Does your Lepanto always come unstuck? The answer could be to attack France...

The problem with attacking France from the outset is that you can only get one unit onto Mar by AO1, and that can easily be stood off while Austria walks into Venice. One solution is as follows:

SO1: A(Ven)Std.; F(Nap)-TYS.; A(Rom)-Nap or Std.; AO1: A(Ven)std.; F(TYS) C A(Nap)-Tun.; build F(Nap). SO2: F(TYS)-GoL; F(Nap)-TYS; A(Ven)-Pie; A(Tun)Std.

This gives you two units on Mar for AO2, the possibility of a convoy to Spa, and the possibility of F(TYS)-WMS to give you two units (or three if you take Mar) onto Spa. Also Austria is more likely to trust you in 1902 instead of 1901.

David Parry, "How is my favourite zine editor? Ask Bob Brown when you see
132 Rammoth Road, him next!

Wisbech, "I rang Chris Tringham and He's threatened to cut me off his
Cambs., mailing list if I ever mention you again!

"Things have changed a little re. my magazines. WR will carry just serious articles on fantasy gaming and rule additions. The game supplement will be called Necromancer and will carry various games, reviews, general chat etc. I think I might have a flyer done by litho just to top all these photocopied things which float about these days. I guess you wouldn't mind distributing a few for me?

"I shall be getting most of my subscribers from outside the closed system of the Dippy zines. The main reason for me setting up Necromancer is to provide a service whereby Fantasy fans can play their games by post. N will be right out of the Dip. dominated postal games hobby, it will rub shoulders with AHIKS (Avalon Hill Intercontinental Kriegspiel Society) and White Dwarf. I intend to run a fantasy campaign with plenty of maps, etc. if anyone is interested?

"Might I ask your advice as a novice GM to an experienced GM? How long does it take you to GM a game of Diplomacy? Are there any particular pitfalls?"

[I think your zine should cope very well as it is aimed at what is at the moment a flourishing market. I'll distribute a flyer for you, but I can't see it doing you any good - a better bet would be Howay the Lads, Gallimaufry and possibly spirit of the age. Richard Bartle's running a fantasy campaign, so you might be able to get a few players through him.

Dip. games are more my thing. I think that the vast majority of postal diplomacy players underestimate the amount of work that goes into adjudicating diplomacy games. I'd guess that a regular game takes about 10 minutes to adjudicate, 15 minutes for an autumn season, and it takes as long again to type up the report carefully. Throw in ten minutes for press, multiply by 12 and you have something approaching my workload. However, variants take longer - an autumn season for Game of the Clans can take 2½ hours to adjudicate and type on its own. Other variants vary depending on the degree of complexity.

Things to watch out for? Hmm. I'd say it pays to keep an eye on countries that have units annihilated in the spring, so that you remember to give them an extra build if necessary to cover that loss. After an autumn season always count up the units on the board and compare it to the centre totals. You have to be careful about players ordering non-existent orders, never assume that someone's orders are correct. Try not to be pedantic - the role of the GM is to enable the game to be postally, the GM is not meant to be a trap to capture the unwary player. Remember that only three orders are ambiguous (F(Por)-Spa; F(MAO)-Spa; F(Con)-Bul), everything else is okay. As a quick check it pays to glance at the failed moves on the finished movest, make sure you can see why it failed and if it was a standoff make sure the other unit concerned is underlined. Finally, inform all concerned parties about GM errors as soon as they are drawn to your attention. You shouldn't go far wrong.]

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Smartie Diplomacy by Phil Bass

1. Each player is allocated one of the seven Smartie colours by any agreed method, usually an adult.
 2. A few minutes are allowed for negotiations (eg. Janet may say to Tom "If you help me I'm yours for the evening", or Tom may say to Janet "If you don't help me I'll bash your face in".).
 3. 3-4 tubes of smarties are then emptied into a bowl and thoroughly mixed. The players then all select one smartie simultaneously and attempt to suck the colour off.
 4. Inbetween each round of sucking two minutes are allowed for negotiations.
 5. The winner is the owner of the first colour to disappear.
 6. A game with five players is possible if you use jelly babies.
- NB. Chewing and swallowing are not allowed.

I volunteer to run a tournament at the next con!

ZINE REVIEW : CHIMAERA

Available from Clive Booth, 71 Clara Mount Road, Langley, Heanor, Derbyshire, DE7 7HS. Cost 25p.

Chimaera is easily the most readable of the games zines, Clive has a flair for well written editorials with a hint of paranoia - just the right balance! Chimaera was really the first of the games zines, I suppose, but even so a fair proportion of the zine is still devoted to Diplomacy. Games being run at the moment include Railway Rivals, Nuclear Destruction, Source of the Nile, Kingmaker, Rail Baron, Cricketboss, Soccer Manager, Profit and Outdoor Survival. Quite a list. Thanks to an unusually small typeface (14pt?) Clive is able to keep the zine down to around 36 sides, equivalent to at least 50 on a standard typewriter.

En Garde was, until very recently, a sister zine to Chim housing Allan Ovens' En Garde game, but Allan folded last issue due to changing circumstances. Oddly enough EG's folding has coincided with what is undoubtedly a rough patch for Chim. The trouble is that Clive's just joined the police force, and at this moment in time he is undergoing three months intensive training, which is playing havoc with zine production.

However, the delays that Chim is undergoing now aren't that important, the crunch will come when Clive's training is over. Only then will we know if Chim is once more to be the efficient games zine we all know and love.

Other regular features include a wargame column by James O'Fee, Puzzle Pages, various game reviews, and a column where new subbers introduce themselves.

Chim has now passed the 50 mark which is an indication of durability - I think that a subscription to this zine is mandatory for all games players.

naturescallinanimusgothereaglassofwinewithgertrudesteiniknowillneve

NEW ZINE : THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Available from Steve Plater, 154 Tebiro, Kamakura-shi, Kanagawa-ken, Japan. Cost postage only (I bet that doesn't last for long!).

Issue 1 which I have before me is photocopied, but due to various hassles at the British Embassy in Tokyo, I understand that future issues will be stencil duplicated. This means that I can't in all fairness discuss the quality of the reproduction, so let's move on to content.

Common to all first issues, Steve uses up the editorial talking about what he wants the zine to turn out like. Basically TOE (like it!) will include a crossword every issue, various articles on practically any subject under the sun, a soccer-league, lettercol, and lots of Dip games (hopefully) with an emphasis on variants.

In fact most of the first issue is devoted to variant rules - Steve wants to run a game of "Rather Silly Vainst abstractionfizzrats and Trogs", a combination of no less than 6 different variants. It will never work.

Part one of an article called "Learn Japanese" is in issue one - okay, so it's not games-related, but I found it quite interesting.

Well, it's difficult to say much more from a first issue which the editor admits will be radically different from all subsequent issues. I know from his letters that Steve's a fine writer, and the gamefees are only 50p, so why not take a look?

rsharebutidontmindthatsjustthekindofcrosseachmanmustbearimonmywayica

NEW ZINE : KNIFE AND FORK

Available from Phil Bass, 106 Hillside Grove, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 4DD. Cost 15p per issue.

This is a mini-zine (one game only) in the Pigmy/MrG tradition, easily the best way to start off publishing. I must admit that issue 1 is far superior to anything that I did for my first eleven issues, as it includes a few short articles (or long jokes). Reproduction is by good quality photocopying, but although issue 1 stretches to 7 sides, Phil warns that future issues will be a lot shorter, Not one that you'll want to sub to, but I thought you'd like to be kept informed.