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DEADLINE For all GMs Sep 30th 2003

waiting lists (See subzine for their waiting lists, write to the GM concerned to join.)

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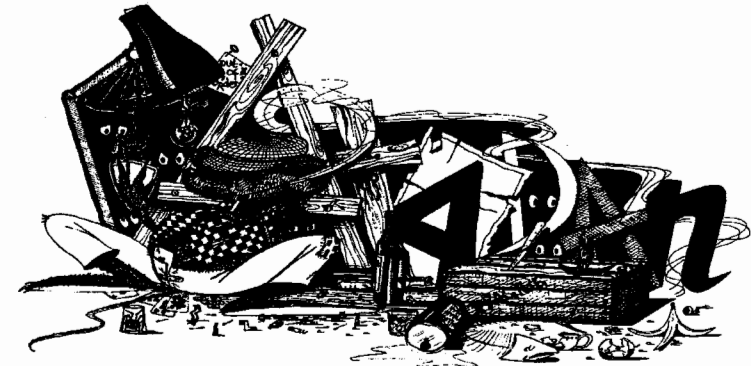
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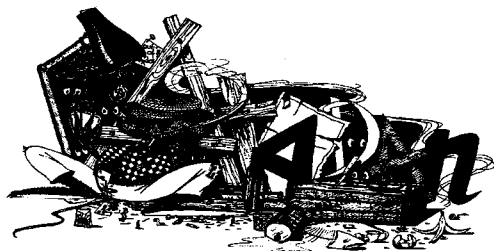
This is **Ratadan** the Zine!

Issue **133**

Incorporating; Pigbutton & Shambles in Camra

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Ratadan 2



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ISSUE 135

A very late hello and welcome to Ratadan. I'm sorry about the delay and seeing that I'm still 'retired' there is no real excuse, but believe me, it's amazing how busy one can get when one doesn't have to go to work. I started this editorial in June and finished it in August!

June

Australia continues to surprise me. I'm living in Queensland, which is supposed to be sub tropical, but winter has arrived and it's actually quite chilly some evenings. On our land, which is at a higher elevation than our current house on the coast, there have even been some slight frosts. I didn't expect it to get this cold and am thoroughly enjoying it. I had thought that I would be 'doomed' to an existence of varying degrees of hot weather with a high humidity, which for someone who remembers kindly his months in Norwegian winters, was not ideal. During the day the temperature still gets up to the low to mid-twenties but the mornings and evenings are delightfully cool.

The season does not appear to have dramatically affected the bird populations, although I think there are slightly fewer Rainbow Lorikeets around. However, it's difficult to be certain when there are millions of them around to begin with and there's at least hundreds of thousands of them still about. As you can imagine my birding pursuits continue and the number of new birds I come across continues to climb. The main problem is identification, especially with the smaller honeyeaters.

I have been buying plants for our land in the last few days. Who needs plants when you own a 19-acre Eucalypt woodland you may ask, but I'm trying to plant groves of shrubs that will attract the afore mentioned honeyeaters amongst others. I spent hours pouring over encyclopaedias of native plants and manuals on gardening in Australia before visiting a nearby garden centre that appeared to have the best range in the local area. Despite having a long list of required buys my method of selection soon changed as I noticed a pair of Brown Honeyeaters fluttering about in the shrubbery. I watched the pair for about twenty minutes or so as they flitted around the garden centre, visiting certain shrubs and feeding from their flowers. I abandoned my list and simply bought the shrubs chosen by the birds and then spent the rest of the day planting. Checking back most of the bushes were on my list anyway but it's nice to have your research confirmed by the target audience.

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First		
Richard Leeves	Wrongue-	Laurence Parsons
Larry Latecomer		Phil Mairs
Tardy		Paul Ibbs
	T	
	i	
	m	

" A fraudster went to the police station to report that her expensive ski trousers were stolen - but forgot to take them off first. The 23-year-old wanted to claim on her insurance but confessed when officers in Tryol, Austria, pointed out she was wearing the trousers. She told them: "I was no nervous I forgot to take them off."

METRO

Beat The Boss

Wednesday 10th:					
NAME	ARRIVAL	POINTS C/F	POINTS THIS TURN	TOTAL	EXCUSE LEFT??
Flex E.Time	9.18	13	18	31	No
Tony Bleary	9.03	145	3	148	No
Earl E. Bugarov the First	9.09	6	9	15	No
Richard Wrongue-Leeves	9.54	-171	-54	-225	No
Larry Latecomer	9.52	19	-52	-33	No
Tardy Tim (Boss)	9.35	60	30	90	No
Thursday's Boss is:	Tony Bleary				

Richard is truly in the doghouse now and HR threaten to arrange a meeting to escalate the oral warning. Larry might join him soon.....

Tony, The model employee that we all love to hate, gets in at a brown-nosing 9.03, well in advance of a rather apathetic Tim.

Perhaps the boss penalty should be -60 or -80 or score halved rather than lose 40? I might give this another go soon with this rule change in place.

Only a couple of turns to go so - just for fun - the players are (I think):

Flex E.Time	AndyTucker
Tony Bleary	Paul Voller
Earl E. Bugarov the	Howard Bishop

The planting isn't easy as the land is pretty rough. The floor of the woodland appears to have about 4" or so of rich rotted leaves and then breaks into shattered rock and stone. Planting entails digging a fairly large pit, remembering that some of these shrubs will grow to 10m in height, lining the pit with special compost mixed for natives, scattered with water retaining crystals. The plant is then seated and supported with the extracted soil and soaked in. The final touch is a 6" layer of fragrant tea tree mulch to help retain moisture and deter terrorists from the insect world. It took me five hours to plant the dozen trees I bought at the garden centre, and in the warm sun it was hot work. Despite the work it was wonderful being up on the land where there is no sound of traffic, only birds. The call of birds over here is quite different to that in Europe. Instead of the trills and songs of the Robin and the Wren one gets the "boing" "b'doops" and "b'dings" of the rainforest. It gives an amazing feeling of being somewhere foreign and mysterious.

The rain that has fallen recently has filled both dams and these are attracting the odd duck and Pied Cormorant, to join the Australasian Grebe that appears to have taken up residence. Each dam leads up into a small valley that climbs up the hill. These steep-sided valleys are lush with tropical ferns and one has an ancient Grass Palm growing on the side. The valleys provide excellent cover for birds and appear to be bustling with Scarlet Backed and Variegated Wrens, Grey Fantails, Laughing kookaburras and the odd Pheasant Coucal. As you can imagine I visit the land whenever possible.

I have a meeting with the builder later today, when hopefully we will sign off on the final plans. One this has been done we should be within weeks of the real building beginning. Despite the inevitable disturbance I doubt that the birds will be scared off, and whilst this is going on my groves of Grevillias, Banksias and other nectar providing shrubs will be growing ready to bloom in the Spring (October), after which they should continue to flower throughout the year, providing a rich source of food to pull in the birds and create swathes of colour to please the eye. The rainforest belt that I am planting will take considerably longer to become established but I have heard Eastern Whipbirds (rainforest specialities) on neighbouring properties and so I am confident of success.

Unfortunately there was a death in Susanne's family, a fairly distant relative, but near enough to warrant attendance at the funeral. To add to the misfortune the funeral took place several hundred miles away and on the weekend of the Brisbane Games Convention. This meant that I lost my best opportunity to start meeting the gaming community, which up to now have proved elusive. I have been invited to the odd games evening in Brisbane but haven't been able to get to one of these yet so I'm suffering from gaming withdrawal symptoms. The rugby club provides some companionship outside of the family circle but I do miss the intellectual repartee provided by the gaming groups I frequented in the UK. Hang on, what am I talking about? I used to go the pub with Geoff Brown and co and play some of the most mindless games available whilst discussing who was shagging whom!

The combination of swinging an adze and a machete up on the land with my running and rugby training has resulted in a higher fitness level than I've enjoyed for some time. However, last Saturday I had to referee to rugby matches with only a 20 minutes break between each. Now midi-rugby (U11 & U12) is only 20 minutes each way, but don't kid yourself that 11-year and 12-year olds don't run fast because, trust me, they do. The upshot of which is by the time the morning had finished I had refereed for an hour and 20 minutes and was bushed. If I hadn't been training I simply wouldn't have been able to keep up with play. I certainly feel a lot healthier having shed some pounds and lost a bit of the expanding tummy, but I also feel that I'm doing myself a lot of good in the long

term. My father turned eighty-last year and is swimming a mile every morning and attending yoga classes on a weekly basis. His fitness has certainly given him a better quality of life than many other eighty year olds than I am acquainted with. He could drop dead of a heart attack tomorrow, but his quality of life now is what is important, and his level of fitness hugely improves that. With Dad as an example I feel more content in myself if I am keeping up some sort of physical activity. I suppose having a physically orientated family helps. My elder brother Martin is a professor of Physical Education at Seattle University and a professional salmon fisherman, both physical jobs, and in his earlier years played for England A at basketball and represented his county at rugby. My younger brother is credited with being one of the world's leading cave divers, a suicidal hobby in my opinion, but one requiring a high level of fitness. Then there's my 27 years in the Commandos, generally considered a physical lifestyle (!). Our father represented the county at rugby in his youth and after leaving the army after the war went into the Radio Service, hardly a physical job, but in his spare time got involved (because of us) in the Scouting organisation and spent much of his spare time hiking over Exmoor and the Mendip hills with eager young scouts. Now he hikes around bird reserves with his scope over his shoulder, but we are talking about trips of several miles over some fairly hilly country, which requires a certain level of fitness at his age.

I note with interest that Blair is now being accused of doctoring the intelligence to justify Britain's membership in the coalition of the willing. I don't believe that for one minute but I do believe that he chose to believe the bits of intelligence that fitted his purpose and ignore those that didn't. It's a common problem with intelligence analysts and they are trained to avoid it, so I don't hold him entirely at fault on this score. Having said that I believe his judgement was wrong. Now anyone can be permitted to make a mistake, but not when you are committing your country to war and potentially igniting a flame of terrorism that could burn for generations. In this I find him entirely at fault and no excuse of him trying to moderate Bush's activities will moderate my anger with him. He should no longer be Prime Minister; he simply cannot be trusted with the position.

As to Bush, well you can imagine my feelings toward him. The people I feel most sorry for at the moment are the French, who are having their businesses damaged and in some cases livelihoods destroyed because of the sensible opposition to the war. One American commentator remarked that the French were paying for their disloyalty after the Americans had saved their arses during WW2. Well I can think of several occasions when the Americans have stabbed us in the back, the Suez crisis being probably the largest if you ignore the slight matter of them insisting on Great Britain repaying all its war loans within 10-years instead of the 50 agreed with the deceased Roosevelt, after the war effectively ensuring that the British Empire had no chance of recovery. Their lack of memory over their own country's activities really irritates me. Loyalty between nations doesn't mean a dumb follow-the-leader mentality, it means patience and negotiation and having the courage to tell your friend when he's got it wrong without losing your temper. And people argue that history shouldn't be taught at school! What is a real shame is that our 'independent' press fail to argue the options from an unbiased viewpoint. Instead they take positions that will help them sell newspapers. They are well named 'scandal sheets' as much of the writing is scandalous.

was learned and capable in many arts and devices. Messiere Mycore claimed to be a savant, a mage, a cleric and an enlightened follower of the ancient truths, although how much of this was truth and how much bluff and illusion I had yet to discover.

The wonderful thing in human affairs is the linking of effects and causes. When we come to consider the strange succession of incident and consequence wherein our destinies clash, we are bound to recognise that God in His perfection is not wanting in wit nor fancy, nor in comic spirit; but on the contrary, that He excels in imbroglia, as in all else, and that after having inspired Pandelume, Seraphim and Voltur, if he deigned to inspire Messiere Le Sage and the playwrights of the booth. Thus, for instance, I became the secretary to a pagan who sought for ancient truths that had already been denied by Father Saex in his immortal teachings.

Despite his pagan beliefs I cherished my time with Messiere Mycore with a gratitude that will only end with my life. The obligation he laid me under may be conceived when I say that he left nothing undone that might help to shape my affections and my soul along with my intelligence. He explained to me, in many a fine passage, the beliefs of the ancients. He sang their verses with the voice of a nightingale and conjured forth illusions that were a delight and wonder. His faith remained intact above the ruins of his fondest illusions and of his most rightful hopes. His weaknesses, his mistakes, and his faults-and he did not try to conceal them or lend them colouring-had not shaken his trust in divine goodness. And to understand him well you must realise that he took thought of his eternal welfare on occasions when he seemed apparently to care least for it. He inculcated in me principles of enlightened piety. He exerted himself to apprentice me to virtue-to make it, so to speak, homely and familiar to me by examples drawn from the life of Voltur.

That I might learn the dangers of vice he drew his arguments from a source nearer at hand, confiding to me that though he loved wine and women over much, he had to renounce the honour of being raised to collegiate chair at the Punillicrilum in Utkari, the long robe and the doctors cap.

To these exceptional merits he joined constancy and assiduity, and he gave lessons with a punctuality that one would not have expected from a man given up, as he was, to every caprice of a wandering life, and driven about incessantly by his urges to uncover the ancient truths. This zeal was the result of kind-heartedness, and a purity of spirit that was rare amongst his ilk.

The day after our my taking employment under his age advices I found myself aboard the seas again, but this time the emerald waters carried us further west, past the iniquitous and eclectic port city of Lar and then on to the white city where we now enjoy our rest.

And th..th..th..that's all folks.

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shambles In Canra

North of Port Lar one can travel to the High Downs, a land of wind swept hills where petty lords raise their horses. It is said that this barren landscape was the devastation left after a war between the ancient Lantics and some long forgotten enemy. The hills are broken and amongst them are pockets of strange things that should not exist in our world. The largest of these is the Violet Forest, an unearthly sore upon the landscape that defies all attempts to remove it.

Even further north lies the southern reaches of the Utkarn Mountains and the last refuge, Castle Phoenix. Established by the adventurer, the Baron J' Hael Ici, the castle protects the northern borders from Barbarian incursions and from the strange creatures that occasionally creep out from the roots of the mountains. The Baron is long dead but his traditions of providing a home for adventurers have been maintained, and many infamous personalities can be met within the castle walls.

At the Sign of the Laughing Fox by Gaston Poignard

My father scratched his ear, and poured out some more wine for the Abbé, who said, sighing:

"Knowledge is no longer honoured in our day, in the kingdom of Tidûl, as it was in the days of the Lantic Empire when, though fallen from their pristine virtues, rhetoric raised Agrimon to the celestial choirmaster. It is no rare thing in our time to see an able man in a garret without fire or light. I am an example".

He then gave us an account of his life, which I will report to you as it came from his lips, save where in places my tender years hindered me from understanding it plainly, and consequently from retaining it in my memory. But I believe that I have been able to fill up such gaps from confidences he made me later, when he honoured me with his friendship.

"Such as you see me," he said, "or to put it better, such as you do not see me, young, lithe, bright-eyed and black-haired, I taught in the liberal arts in the college of Inig under Messieres Dougar, Cattafin, Rollin and Baffaliere. I had taken orders and I thought to make myself a great reputation in letters. But a woman overthrew my hopes. She was one Nicole Pigoreau and she kept a bookshop at the sign of the Bible d'or, on the square in front of the college. I was in the habit of going there, for ever turning over the pages of the books she received from the capitol or from distant Crienné and also those Bipontine editions furnished with notes, glosses and learned commentaries. I was a pleasing youth, and, to my pleasure and misfortune, Madame Pigoreau recognised it. She had been pretty, and could still attract. Her eyes could speak. One day all the authors from the poet Aramous to the theologian Messiere D'Zewin, assembled on the walls from ceiling to floor witnessed our embraces. 'You are irresistible,' she said. "Do not think too badly of me."

"She avowed her love in raptures inconceivable. I consented and took what was offered without fear or misgiving.

"My happiness lasted until I discovered I was not the sole object of her amour and thus I no longer repaired to the Bible d'or lest I should see there sights likely to offend the modesty of a young cleric. Madame Pigoreau, hearing of my behaviour in regard to her, told everyone that I had stolen some lace bands and ruffles. Her false accusations came to the ears of the governors, who turned me out and had me taken to Crienné, and thus I learned of the wiles and wickedness of women.

Finding myself in a strange new country, with my clothes and my oratorical text-books I ran a great risk of dying of hunger there, when abandoning my clerical collar, I offered myself to a gentleman of Preyea, who took me as a secretary, and dictated to me his pamphlets. The gentleman's name was Arbalain Mycore, a man who hailed from the pagan lands of Preyea, but

August

Things have moved along considerably in the last 6-weeks. In short order I have been to New Zealand (to obtain my residency), I have passed my final exam for my post-graduate diploma, the builders of our new home are moving onto site as I write this, and I have had an operation to remove a polyp from my vocal chords, which means I am not allowed to talk for a week.

It may seem ridiculous, at least it does to me, but to gain residency I had to leave the country for a week and get my passport stamped abroad. This led me to my trip to New Zealand. Susanne stayed at home and carried on working and caring for her mother who has recently had quadruple heart bypass surgery (she's doing well), whilst Richard and I headed over the 'ditch' to the land of the Kiwis. To save money we camped out in a cheap motel near the airport but hired a car and spent the week sight seeing and birding. We only had to go to the embassy once and the visit only took 30 minutes so we had plenty of time to explore.

We were on the North Island, staying near Auckland, which is a small but attractive city/port. The population of New Zealand is only 4 million so this is not a crowded continent. After our first night getting settled we drove down to Rotorua in volcano country. Rotorua is built on the banks of a large lake and at first glance looks like an attractive town built amongst a range of high hills, almost alpine in feel. However, the whole place is built on a thin crust over 'lively' volcanic activity. There are steaming mud pools around the town. These pools belch forth-sulphurous clouds and are hot enough to cook you instantly if you fell in. One end of the lake is so warm that fish fry unfortunate enough to swim into the area are stunned by the heat and gobbled up by opportunistic trout that hunt the 'wall'. All the buildings in the town are single storey apart from the town hall, this is because the town hall was built on the only solid piece of rock the rest is built on pumice and heavier buildings will sink through the crust. Who would want to live here? But the city is thriving on tourist activity. Apart from the energetic volcanic activity there are lakes so clear you can drink from them direct and in them swim trout the size of salmon, there are hills and mountains, alpine walks and the area is simply beautiful. We were visiting out of season, which meant there were no crowds, a bonus, although it was pretty chilly and we had to wrap up warm. Apart from the lakes we visited the local wildlife parks and spent a morning on the luge (sleds on wheels). The latter was Richard's favourite.

At this stage of our trip I was surprised to observe that virtually all the birds I was seeing were British. The fields and valleys were full of goldfinches and yellow hammers, greenfinches, chaffinches, starlings, song thrush and blackbird; in fact they were far more numerous than in UK. The only NZ species I encountered outside of the wildlife parks were the Pukeko (a large moorhen), the New Zealand Falcon and the Australian Harrier. Now there is a good reason for this. When New Zealand was colonised, first by the Maori and later by the Europeans, much of the bird life was slow, flightless and without defence against predators. The colonisers brought with them cats, rats and dogs that decimated the local populations and the Europeans brought their native wildlife with them so they would feel at home. The upshot of which is that at first glance NZ appears to have been remodelled to copy Britain, with the addition of some stunning mountains and lakes.

However, later in the week we made a couple of trips that broke though the English veneer. The first was to Miranda on the Firth of Thames. We drove through the Hanua Ranges national park and then down onto the flat country that forms the rim of the Firth.

Here a shingle strand forms a boundary between the sea and salt marshes, and a long straight road the salt marshes and the farmland. It was a still dull white day when we arrived, the diffused light perfect for birding and I wasn't to be disappointed. In the salt lakes I found Variable Oystercatcher, Bar-Tailed Godwit, Pied Stilt, Paradise Shelduck and Little Shag. Along the shingle strand I added Wrybill, Banded Dotterel, New Zealand Dotterel, White-Fronted Tern, Red-Billed Gull, Black-Billed Gull, Pied Oystercatcher, and Caspian Terns. There were tens of thousands of waders on the mudflats and this made a keen birder very happy.

A couple of days later we headed north of Auckland to Muriwai beach and the end of a long line of cliffs where there was a colony of Australian Gannets. This proved to be a little sparse with only half a dozen birds present but Richard and I then followed a path back from the cliffs into the New Zealand ancient forest and here he added the Kereru (a rare, huge and beautiful pigeon), the Kaka (a massive red and brown parrot) and the Tui to our lists. The latter is blackbird size but metallic bottle green in colour with two white pom-poms hanging from its throat (seriously strange to look at). Later we wandered onto the black volcanic sand beach as angry cream coloured waves crashed onto the shore. Richard chased white-sea foam across the black beach (trust me, this was surreal) whilst I wandered right up to a colony of White-Fronted and Caspian Terns that were hunkered down against the wind. This was a good day.

Unfortunately most of the other birds that are peculiar to New Zealand are only found in the outlying islands, and so I had to content myself by visiting Auckland Zoo and Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounters and Undersea World to see them. The former proved to be very well done and Richard had a whale of a time with the lemurs and apes whilst I spent a happy half hour in their excellent aviaries with the birds flying around me. The latter is entirely underground and the penguin sections are filled with artificially made snow to keep the birds happy. The Antarctic Encounter section included a museum covering all the great Antarctic explorers and was worth a visit in its own right, but the penguin colonies and the aquariums were the high point for me.

Back in Australia, now a resident, my job hunt has begun. It's very early days yet but I've been interviewed by a couple of placement experts who appear confident they can find the right spot for me and Susanne is using all her contacts and networking furiously for me. I am confident I shall find something before long, or I can always fall back on the offer to become a commercial and industrial estate agent.

I briefly mentioned an operation, I had better explain. My voice has been degenerating for the last few months and an ears, nose and throat specialist, Dr Cronin, threaded a camera up my nose and down my throat to discover I had a polyp on my vocal chords (shades of Julie Andrews). This was removed in a minor operation last Monday and despite a slightly sore throat for a couple of days proved to be a relatively painless procedure. The polyp has been checked and is benign, so no worries there. The upshot of which is I am fine, my voice has developed a slightly deeper timbre, and life goes on. The only painful bit was that I had to pay for it out of my own pocket, so I have a clearer voice but I'm \$AUS 1,500 worse off.

Never mind, life is good and the builders have started, so lets get on with the zine.

Lar

The largest of the southern Cantons stretches from the country of Lar in the east and the canton of Hagen in the West. Its southern boundary is the sea whilst the north is joined with the Elven Forests and the southern reaches of the Utkarn mountains. It is a canton divided between the warm rich red soils and rolling downs in the west to the high wind swept moors in the northeast. Those red soils provide a garden where farmers produce a wide variety of crops that easily feed the population, whilst the moors are home to large herds of horses, much prized throughout the realm. The edges of the Elven Forests provide timber, but fear of the Elves has limited this as an industry, and fishermen ply their trade in the rich waters of the Southern Ocean from all the coastal ports.

The capitol of Lar is Port Lar, the largest seaport in the world and home for the great Merchant Houses. Since the joining of Tidil and Preyea there had been no Loat Knight ruling the canton as the holder of the office disappeared in mysterious circumstances. With the agreement of the High Steward the ruling of Lar has been taken by the Council of the Merchants, a body comprising a senior member from each of the Merchant families and headed by the 'independent' Doge of Lar. There is continual competition between the houses and much work for spies and assassins within the city. The merchant's trade can offer great wealth but here it also entails great risk.

The power of the Merchant families is such that even Kyngs and Lords must bend their ears to them, and in granting them semi-autonomous authority the royal families of Tidil and Preyea gained in wealth and good intention.

Port Lar combines a sheltered harbour, a route centre, and the great markets where merchants ply their trade. It is said that anything can be bought or sold within the great markets of Port Lar, and in truth the markets, that run through day and night are living proof to this testament.

The city houses the Seabinders Gorda, the only school of majik established outside of Utkari, but since that city's fall many of the refugees from the other Gordas fled to Port Lar and now Houses of Refuge have been established. Magii and wizards are now common in the city streets, a situation encouraged by the Merchant families as they above all realise the opportunities raised by the situation.

Beyond the turmoil of Port Lar the canton is a much gentler place. To the east lies the district of Cawn where the hobbits have developed a pleasant rural economy. They have turned the fertile downs into a huge garden that provides the sweetest fruits and vegetables and is the source of some of the finest wines and ales to be found outside Crienné.

Following the coats road from Cawn towards Port Lar one comes to Port Hidal, a small fishing port famed for its alehouse and particular Ma Duckham's Pink Mowkie hotpot, a dish that is renowned across the kingdom.

Whilst Port Hidal is a sleepy fishing port, a vision of tranquillity, the lands to the north of the town are far more perilous as here lies the realm of the Kyng of the Golden Rivers, a faerie realm. Savants will explain that there is a breach in the barrier between the mundane and the lands of Faerie. The breach appears constant and allows regular travel between Faerie and the mundane but only adventurers who lack all caution would dare to cross as Faerie does not follow the rules of our world and a man crossing over for what seems a day could find that 20 years have passed in his absence. The breach is marked by an ancient boundarystone, a mile north of the coast road although only the foolhardy would seek it out.

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Marmarica	Oil	Saguntum	Wheat & cloth
Massilia	Oil & cattle	Salamis	Copper
Miletus	Marble &	Salonae	Gold & cattle
earthenware*		Sinope	Timber & fish
		Small island between Cnossus & Miletus (Rhodes) - grapes	
Narbo	Earthenware & lead	Syracusae	Horses & cloth
Nubia	Slaves	Tarentium	Pottery
Olisipo	Horses	Tarraconensis	Slaves
Panonia	Silver & earthenware	Tarsus	Timber & cattle
Pelusium	Pots	Thessalonice	Gold
Pisae	Earthenware	Tingis	Wheat & oil
Pontus	Copper & hides	Tomi	Slaves
Portus Magnus	Timber	Trapezus	Tin & gold
Portus Namnetum	Hides & fish	Tyrus	Timber & glassware
Roma	Glassware & pottery		
Sabrata	Wheat & fish		

VICTORY CONDITIONS

<u>State</u>	<u>Artworks</u>	<u>Buildings</u>	<u>Provinces</u>	<u>Goods</u>
Dictatorship	4	7	6	5
Republic	7	6	5	4
Monarchy	6	5	4	7

HIGHWORLD tales

This is a series describing the Cantons of Preyea. Preyea is the main country in which player/characters spend most of their (short) lives and so the intention is to give a general flavour of each Canton. A Canton, in Highworld terms refers to the lands controlled by a Loat Knight. Loat Knights, often referred to as Dukes or Earls, control large tracts of land and normally employ a number of Courtier Knights, Bailiffs, Stewards and Tallymen to enforce their rule. In most Cantons much of the land is wild and untamed, at best it is used for herding, but the limits of each Canton were established by the Council of the Loat Knights under the direction of the Loat Lord Alcaz II some 3 centuries ago and have largely remained the same since then.

A correction

In the previous edition I named the town at the northernmost tip of Hagen as Rai Chryshadon it is of course Alcunnon. Rai Chryshadon is the village at the foot of the Utkarn Mountains that straddles the road to Utkari.

Ratadan 7

Letters

- Doug Rowling Ratadan the game. I thought I had emailed you all I needed to create a character. Is there something more I need to do?
- Rob Send me some orders. What do you want him to do?
- John Webley No games to order for, put me down for the new Fic Dic, any chance of something a bit more conventional that I'd play?
- Rob Like what? You name it I'll run it.
- John Where to start, well I found your analysis of the reasons for war interesting, but it all seems such a complex mass of possibilities, any of which might be the one that actually tipped the balance for the people involved, I suspect that the historians will be arguing about this one for decades. Now the war itself is won, and the media are immediately moaning about the "peace", or lack of it. As you say, what the hell does Blair get out of it? Ulf and Angela have been skiing with some friends, one of whom is the number 2 in the foreign ministry here, and he thinks that Blair is just trying to act as some sort of brake on the Bush administration in the hopes that he can keep them from going too far if he is seen as being on board. Doesn't sound very sensible to me, but I suppose it makes as much sense as anything that I've heard. I'm still going for the blackmail theory myself, but what can Blair possibly have to hide that is worth this?
- Rob I can see John Howard's reasons, trade and continued protection from Indonesia by the US, but Blair's commitment is a mystery to me.
- John As for your enthusiasm for the monarchy, there has been yet another Diana and Charles series in Britain over the last couple of weeks. Some new people that I'd not heard interviewed before, and certainly enough evidence to confirm my opinion that I wouldn't let Charles run a winkle stall, let alone hand over Britain to him. Quite apart from the fact that he seems quite happy for Camilla to run every aspect of his life, even when he was married to someone else, there is also the minor matter that he was completely outclassed in the public relations war by a bubble headed blonde with one O level in domestic science. His ex-valet seems to be a very nasty piece of work, now he's been caught flogging off gifts, and Charles, having been forced to sack him, has decided that he would be a good man to take on as a "consultant" at a six figure salary. There's a story to be told there, and I don't think it's a very pleasant one. No, maybe William, or even better Harry, given that it seems highly unlikely that he has any genetic inheritance from any member of the Royal family, but not Charles, please.
- Rob Oh come on, I like the idea of British eccentricity and Charles epitomises it. He's just the man we need.

Ratadan 8

- John Oh, I know that you're out of touch with British politics now, but the ex foreign secretary, (and former racing tipster) is Robin Cook. Roger Cook is a nasty little creep who does consumer programmes for the BBC.
- Rob OK, you got me there.
- John More important stuff, birds: O'Reilly's rain forest guesthouse sounds fantastic. One day I'll make it there, one day. Oddly enough, never having heard of the place until you talked about it, I got a Sunbirds brochure today, and their Australian trip (a whole month, from Melbourne to Adelaide, Alice Springs, Darwin (Yellow Waters of course), Queensland and back down to Sydney) involves several nights' stay there. Their star species were Bassian Thrush, Noisy Pittas, Marbled Frogmouth, Eastern Whipbird and Spotted Quail thrush, so there's more for you to find! The other places they visited in Queensland were the Barrier Reef and Lake Eacham, which I think must be up in the north. That had a Cassowary as well as all 3 Australian swift species. Sounds like a great trip, but then so do all their reports. If I enjoy the Spanish weekend, I'll be looking to book up with them again.
- Rob I have now identified Marbled Frogmouth and Eastern Whipbird on my own land, as well as the endangered Glossy Black Cockatoo.
- John Here, spring migration was going well, and then came to a crashing halt ten days ago with a burst of very cold weather, we even had snow last week. Today it's been warmer again, and there are a mass of Chiffchaffs about singing, plus my first Willow Warblers and Mash Harriers of the year. 6 Gargeney on some sugar factory outlet pools were nice, and at the lakes where we went when you were over, I got some excellent views of Crested Tit and Firecrest, this is the only time of year that they come out to be seen reliably. The best bird so far this spring though, was a couple of weeks ago when I found a Ring Ouzel in with a flock of Fieldfares and Redwings, the first one I've seen since Dartmoor days.
- Rob Happy Dartmoor days.
- John Rugby-wise, as I wrote to you, the England display against Ireland was awesome, and carried out on a dry pitch and a (for an European Spring) "hot" day. Not quite Australian conditions, but a lot closer to them than your standard rainstorm on a quagmire 6 nations game. If the South Africans are as bad as it seems, that should give England a relatively easy side of the draw, with maybe a semi against the French, who seem to have lost their way entirely. It could be good. Don't hold out any hopes for Wales I'm afraid. I watched highlights of Llanelli, supposedly the best Welsh club team, playing Perpignan in the Heineken cup last night and they were dire, I mean really dire. Getting a player sent off ten

Ratadan 25

Ship laden (copper) Mare Carpativum – Mare Libycum
 Ship unladen Mare Carpativum – Mare Cypricum - Tyrus
 Bathhouses Treasury 7 mille

Rob Chapman - Republic Cities: Roma, Capital Cnossus
 Event: Storm in Oceanus Atlanticus dies away
 Ship unladen Cnossus holds
 Ship unladen Cyrene tries to buy horses for 2 mille but 6 mille too much
 Make pottery Roma for 1 mille
 Ship laden (pottery) Roma – Mare Tyrrhenum
 Art Dealer Pigaletto
 Viaduct,
 Sea tactics Treasury 2 mille

For all states next round will be a non-tax round.

Shortage Table

Alexandria	<i>Satisfied</i>	Narbo	Tin
Antiochus	<i>Satisfied</i>	Olisipo	Pots
Aquillae	Gold	Pelusium	<i>Satisfied</i>
Athenae	Silver	Pisae	<i>Satisfied</i>
Burdigala	Pots	Portus Magnus	<i>Satisfied</i>
Byzantium	Glassware	Portus Namnetum	<i>Satisfied</i>
Carales	Copper	Roma	<i>Satisfied</i>
Carthago	Copper	Sabrata	<i>Satisfied</i>
Cnossus	<i>Satisfied</i>	Saguntum	Timber
Corinthus	<i>Satisfied</i>	Salamis	Cattle
Cyrene	<i>Satisfied</i>	Salonae	Grapes
Genua	<i>Satisfied</i>	Sinope	Oil
Hersolyma	Hides	Syracusae	<i>Satisfied</i>
Hippo Regius	Tin	Tarentium	Salt
Leptis Magna	<i>Satisfied</i>	Tarsus	<i>Satisfied</i>
Lixus	<i>Satisfied</i>	Thessalonice	<i>Satisfied</i>
Londinium	Timber	Tingis	<i>Satisfied</i>
Malaca	<i>Satisfied</i>	Tomi	<i>Satisfied</i>
Massilia	Horses	Trapezus	<i>Satisfied</i>
Miletus	Slaves	Tyrus	Lead

Province Commodity List

Alexandria	Wheat & glassware	Cyrene	Horses
Antiochus	Silver & horses	Dacia	Wheat
Aquileia	Glassware	Epirus	Timber
Athenae	Pottery & cloth	Gallaecia	Lead & gold
Balears	Grapes	Genua	Fish
Burdigala	Grapes & wheat	Herosolyma	Cloth
Byzantium	Silver & horses	Hippo Regius	Slaves & horses
Carales	Silver	Leptis Magna	Oil
Carthago	Salt & marble	Libya	Slaves
Cnossus	Grapes & marble	Lixus	Grapes
Corinthus	Oil	Londinium	Tin & copper
Corsica	Timber	Malaca	Silver & fish

Mare Mediterraneum Bobus Monstrous

I have only received orders from Kevin and Andrew so I am repeating the last round as a reminder and giving everyone the chance to re-order. This is unfair to Kevin and Andrew but it seems the only way to keep it going.

Turn 11 (non-tax Round)

Philip Honeybone Cities Syracusae, Tyrus (capital) **NMR**

Army Antiochus

Ship laden (copper) Mare Sardoum

Ship laden (horses) Mare Libycum

Ship laden (grapes) Baleares

Ship unladen Trapezus

Cavalry tactics

Treasury 6 mille

From Andrew: "Can I buy some glassware for 3 mille please?"

Marcus Pratt - Republic Cities Athenae (capital) **NMR**

Event: Rebellion in Tingis. Athens fails to put down rebellion so Saguntom steps in and takes over city.

Ship unladen Tingis

Ship laden (cattle)

Ship laden (silver) Mare Creticum

Victory Arch

Treasury 9 mille

Martin Mills - Monarchy Cities Massilia, Saguntom (capital), Tingis

Put down rebellion in Tingis 3 mille

Ship unladen Thessalonice tries to buy gold but 3 mille too much

Ship laden (silver) Mare Cantabricum – Portus Namnetum, sells silver for 6 mille

Ship laden (timber) Mare Syrtis Minor – Mare Sardoum

Army Saguntom – Malaca

Hires artist 2 mille

Infantry tactics

Reitertaktiks

Markethall

Treasury 6 mille

Kevin Lee - Dictatorship Cities Alexandria, Miletus (capital), Sinope

Event: Storm in Mare Levantium dies away

Army Sinope – Pontus*

Army Miletus boards ship, Warship Miletus – Mare Creticum

Ship unladen Byzantium holds

Ship unladen Miletus – Mare Creticum – Mare Aegaeum

Hewn warehouse (slaves).

Treasury 0 mille

*You must have the un-amended map, there is another land state, Pontus, between Sinope and Trapezus

Andrew Whitely - Dictatorship Cities: Byzantium (capital), Carthago

Event: Pays 2m to put down rebellion in Carthago

Cavalry Byzantium – Tomi attacks and captures city.

Ship unladen Mare Sardoum – Carthago

minutes into the match isn't good, getting him sent off for kicking someone's head right in front of the ref, and missing! is even worse. Even then, they could have won, except that they couldn't take their own line outs, were regularly penalised for delaying throw ins, basically because they couldn't get their act together, and, in attack, resembled nothing more than a disorganised shower with a couple of good backs. Stephen Jones looked the business, but he was on his own. Wales need a miracle if they are to beat the likes of Tonga, let alone the big boys.

Rob

The internationals have moved on since you wrote this and England has conquered all, having said that New Zealand and South Africa have picked up steam since their defeats and even Australia improved in their last match against South Africa in Brisbane. My money is still on a Pom v Kiwi final in the world cup.

John

I'm sorry to hear that Richard is having "Pom" problems, but then this is Queensland that we are talking about, not the world's most cosmopolitan, reasonable people. (Sorry Susanne) I suppose he could try pointing out that his parents (well father) chose to come to Australia, rather than being brought there by force! On that basis, he's a better Australian than most of his classmates! I expect that he'll fit in pretty quickly, especially if the rugby team keep winning and he can put in a few good performances.

Rob

Richard seems to have got past the bullying phase (touch wood) and he seems to be settling now.

Laurence Parsons

Well, my short stint in Plymouth has come and gone, and now I'm back on the job-hunting wagon. Hey-ho, something will turn up. In the meantime, I seem to have a long list of things to do around the house. I'm looking forward to my day-trip to Baycon and hopefully this year, I'll be bringing the whole family. Only time will tell if that was a good idea.

Rob

I hope you had a good time I've heard very little about Baycon (take not Glen and Rob, a note might go down well!!!)

Laurence

Our Glorious Heroes have finally swept all before them, and won the Grand Slam. No banana skins this year. Looking forward to the World cup, to see if we can keep it up. I have a funny feeling that perhaps we have finally learnt how to win the big games.

Rob

I think you're right.

Laurence

Still no sign of any WOMD. That WAS why we invaded, wasn't it?

Rob

And because Iraq was a direct threat (within 45 minutes) to the UK and her interests. What a load of bollocks. Blair lied, he should be sacked.

Laurence

I seem to have 2 current addresses for you (so I've sent to both). Do you prefer Austar or Virgin?

Ratadan 10

- Rob Either, it doesn't matter, but ignore the previous message about changing from Austar to Eisa, that was a fuck up.
- Simon Bracegirdle I have managed to host a couple of play test sessions in the conservatory. Between us, Matthew and I have managed to keep Martin going with a venue.
- Rob Good fellows, you know he needs looking after.
- Simon I read with interest your comments on the Iraq war. I cannot see how there can ever be peace there. The US have just announced that they are having 4-bases in the country. I cannot see how any US installed regime, which agrees to that suggestion, can ever have any kind of popular support. I was against the thing from the start and now I am even more against it. Personally I have no problem in holding a position of supporting our troops in their mission and arguing that they should be brought home immediately.
- Rob The accusation that if you don't support the war you are letting the troops down makes me livid. As a recently former soldier I would want to know that people were arguing for and against a conflict, that's why we fight for democracy. That particular accusation is the lowest jibe that can be made, and people who are unable to win their argument by honourable means make it. Those that use it are below contempt and certainly unworthy to hold any form of office.
- Simon I really do not think that Blair has a clue what he has let himself be dragged into. I liked your analysis of the men behind the US administration. There has been a lot of sabre rattling towards Syria in recent days. It doesn't take a genius to work out what will happen next and who (as in which nation) will benefit most. It appears that what we have at present is no weapons of mass destruction; no Saddam and a US installed Head of state in waiting (err.. dictator). So much for liberation!
- Rob Syria, Iran, and North Korea, take your pick. The US seems to think it can manage all three at the same time.
- Nigel Gould-Smith Thanks for the Highworld stuff. I have enjoyed reading the bits about the cantons although it is making me feel the loss of Highworld more keenly! Have I told you that I have bought Pool of Radiance for the PC? It is a D & D game (I hope you can forgive me for that!) but at least it gives me a flavour of FRP and Highworld.
- Rob Not at all, it was D&D that started me off. I can thoroughly recommend Baldur's Gate I & II, and Icewind Dale I & II that are excellent RPGs for the PC.
- Nigel Not so sure about the Gaston Poinard. Its well written, but I haven't really got the flavour of it yet - do carry on though! I detect

Ratadan 23

At the Safe house Pompo had realised that the stranger had gone. Over the morning he had slowly approached the building from several angles and eventually entered but there was no sign of the stranger. The weapons had been replaced in the rack and the only evidence the man had been there at all was the gleaming copper circle outside, freshly raked and ready for use. Pompo helped himself to the sword and the trident and then headed homeward, a worried man.

Lastday

Although the rain had broken Horace still decided to take a break and gave his lads the day to sort out their equipment and to relax. Clement was less generous and took his lads into the Practise Hall in the morning but softened and gave them the afternoon off. Erk and Brett followed the lead set by Horace but whilst Brett joined the others in the Singing Hall Erk continued to work on his deadfall plan.

In addition to his rattrap he considered the concept of capturing baby rats and raising them as tame rats to help in hunting (he knew how rats fight). It had never been tried before. "What will be the major problems" he wondered "apart from capturing babies, which means killing the mother - very dangerous, and feeding and housing the babies". The other concept that arose in his fertile mind was rat farming - "has that been considered or tried?" He discussed it with the other junior Ratmasters but was a little dismayed by their response, which was less than approving. "You're bats" crowed Clement "We haven't even found a nest, we don't know where they breed so how are we going to catch a young'un". "I'd forget it," enjoined Horace, "its hard enough killing them without trying to catch them alive". Brett nodded sagely in agreement.

Undina had hoped to have started moving stores to the outpost by now but events had taken up more time than she had expected. Still, as she settled down for the night before the last days travel back to Haven she checked her kills and she had added five Chollakee pelts to her haul (+40 clacks), which would help her supply situation considerably.

Pompo had an uneventful day but had managed to trap a pair of Chollakees, which would make a fine meal on his return the next day, and Ordina would be able to exchange them for 16 clacks. What was more important was what to do about the stranger, people in Haven needed to know. They were no longer alone...

Update

Horace: -1 clubbing, -1 skinning, -1 shadow fighting
 Erk: -1 clubbing, -1 skinning, -1 mechanical perception, -1 shadow fighting
 Clement: -1 clubbing, -1 skinning, -1 shadow fighting, -1 charm, -1 yam
 Brett -1 clubbing, -1 skinning, -1 shadow fighting
 Nampach: -1 charm
 Pompo: -1 tracking, -1 agility
 Undina: -1 tracking, -1agility, -1 bow
 Qwaren: -1 clubbing

All apprentices will be healed and ready for action next week.

Your cash should be added up using the story, the new characters started with nothing, subtracting 1 for jugs of gafgang as mentioned. There are no other expenses unless mentioned.

The stranger appeared to be using a rake or a broom and with careful watching Pompo could see that the man had cleared an area beside the Safe house, uncovering a brass circle set in the ground. It was a challenge circle, identical to the circle in the centre of Haven. Pompo wasn't happy with the developing situation and was even less happy when the man finished his clearing up and began to practice with a sword and shield. The man went through a number of exercises, getting faster and faster as he danced with his blade. Pompo had no idea why this man was doing what he was doing, but the shock of discovering someone who wasn't from Haven wasn't enough to get him to try and engage this stranger with the lethal blade in conversation. Instead he waited and watched.

The pair of Glitterwings danced over the Gobletlike Vermiliots, feeding on their sweet nectar. Normally these gigantic insects were deadly, as their wings would glitter in the sun, blinding any who got close, but the day was cloudy and dusk was approaching. There had been a larger swarm but the pair's brethren had retired to their hidden roosts for the night, leaving the last two vulnerable. Undina didn't miss and two deadly crossbow bolts hissed through the cool air and brought both to the ground. She leaped forward to the grove and made to locate the carcasses, but was immediately met by a Channock boar, which had been disturbed by the fall of the Glitterwings. The large green skinned boar had deadly sharp tusks and was quickly trying to use them to disembowel her. The Seeker leaped towards the charging beast, somersaulting over its back and sinking in a pair of wicked spikes as she did so. By the time the boar had roared in pain and turned around Undina was on her feet and had reloaded her bow. The boar charged and Undina stood still taking careful aim. The beast charged closer and Undina released her shot. Thhhk! The quarrel struck home in the beast's broad temple, but it still charged forward. "Shit!" cursed Undina but she had no chance to do anything but get a blade out before the 300lb boar hit her hard.

Hard on her back with the weight of the beast upon her Undina struggled to free her blade and then stabbed it in the side of the neck, only to realise it was already dead. Its momentum had carried it the remaining few yards but her bolt had already done its work. She struggled out from under the beast and rubbed her aching body. That had been too close for comfort and it took a few moments for her to gain control of her body again. She concentrated on her breathing, in through the nose and out through the mouth, calming her nerves. Once steady she set about finding the Glitterwings and cutting out their wings, worth 25 clacks for each pair, and then sliced off an ample supply of boar for their supper and breakfast. When she returned the men said little but their open mouths were comment enough.

The man trained for more than two hours before rubbing himself down and moving into the Safe house. Pompo assumed he would be going to rest but within minutes he re-appeared with the cabled rope and began another practise session. "That's it, this stranger is not someone I'm going to take risks with" decided the outcast. He settled down to watch and once it was dark he slipped back to a site he had seen earlier where he could safely rest the night, but as a precaution against discovery by the stranger he ate cold and gave up the pleasure of a fire.

Sixday

The rain continued to hammer down and hunting was out of the question. In the wilds Undina had shown her outpost to Shenegar and Withy and they were heading back.

some echoes of another writer, but you always said that you were never too proud to plagiarise!

Rob

It certainly is adapted from a book by Anatole France. I am using it as vehicle to give you a view of Preyea and recent events from the Tidüllian perspective. If you remember Preyea and Tidül came under the single monarchy after Princess Aiva of Preyea married King Thomas of Tidül and this would have brought an influx of immigrants swapping countries in search of business. Gaston is one such immigrant and I shall be tying him into some 'famous' Preyea adventurers to reveal some of the culture, the likes and dislikes, favours and prejudices brought by the Tidüllian immigrants. With the Tidüllian High Steward and Vicars of Saex now running much of the southern cantons I feel this is important for the players to understand. Having said that I do realise that several 'Highworlders' don't care, as long as they are Duegar bashing they are happy.

Nigel

On the book front, I thought one of the plans for going to Oz was to get writing. OK you probably have a lot on your plate at the moment, settling in and planning the house, but you are going to have to get started sooner rather than later! I want to be able to read tales of Highworld, with at least some mention of the characters that we know and love, and in some cases, "love to hate".

Rob

Once my study is built I will begin.

Neil Hopkins

Apologies for the delay - I'd forgot to send these before our Easter hol, and have just realised that the deadline has passed. It's a shame that Clive and Mike have had to hang up their respective editors hats, but it is better to go before it becomes a chore that you resent. Ratadan is the only zine that I get now that Armistice Day has folded - perhaps the paper fanzine has had its day? I don't find the same sense of community with games websites though - I've played a few games through Mike Dean's Psychopath website, but it is not really the same as getting a tangible thing through your letterbox.

Rob

Perhaps it has had its day, but call me an old warhorse but I intend to stay with paper. Although Ratadan will be available in e-form it will continue to be printed for as long as I can do so, with special thanks to Nigel for helping me out.

Neil

As far as games go, I've picked up Heroclix as well - it's £4.99 for a box of four figures, which is pretty good for good quality painted miniatures, even though it is more expensive than Oz. The rules are simple and effective, and seem to represent super-hero slugfests effectively. I've only played with 100-point teams so far, and I imagine that it can get a lot more complex with more characters on the board. I wonder if it is suitable for PBM, perhaps with two moves per player and conditional orders?

Ratadan 12

- Rob Try 500-point team battles, far more difficult. I don't think it would work as PBM, too many dice rolls, but who knows, things have been adapted before!
- Martin Wallace Not the best Baycon for me - came down with a cold and spent most of the weekend in bed or shaking at a gaming table. Still managed to get some play testing done. Good job you weren't there since they have now banned smoking in the bar! Poor Kenders was most put out.
- Rob It had to happen.
- Martin Work continues on the latest Warfrog game - latest title is Princes of the Renaissance; hopefully I will not have to change it again. It is about as good as it is going to be but still not in the same league as AoS.
- Rob Different tastes, I'm confident it will prove to be popular.
- Martin Work has been interesting lately - the MEN ran a story on the school I'm presently at citing it as being at the centre of the SATs cheating scandal. Before the story appeared they phoned the school to say they would be running a story but would not say what on. The head thought it would either be the SATs or the year 6 kid just up in court over stealing a bike from another child at gunpoint! She was hoping for the latter, but was sorely disappointed. The situation arose because the head did do a few odd things during the tests and the year 6 teacher, (hired from a supply agency like myself), felt obliged to tell her he was not happy and that he would be reporting the matter to his union, basically to protect his own back. He did make the mistake of going over the top about the matter and the kids in the class knew something was not right, which meant it got back to the parents and so on to the local newspaper. The LEA investigated and decided she should not be suspended. A few days later the year 6 teacher was suspended - nobody knows why and we may never find out. All very odd and rather stressful, which is not what you need when you have HMI coming in four weeks time and threatening to put the school into special measures if they fail.
- Rob Sounds like you could dig out a good conspiracy theory amongst that lot.
- Martin Not much news on the games front. If you have seen the nominees for SdJ then you may, like me, be surprised at the games on it. Nothing outstanding. I've played Clans, Coloretto, and Paris, Paris. Coloretto is a nice filler but the other two games left me cold. I've also tried Amun-Re, which is good but not terribly original - lots of old bidding systems stuffed into a theme.
- Rob The SdJ continues to cause controversy.

Ratadan 21

In the far north Pompo had reached the Safe house. It was a strange structure, tubular in shape and about 3 metres in height by 5 in diameter. The walls appeared to be made of a silvery metal but it felt more like plastic or acrylic to touch. Entrance was through a door, there were no windows, and only made after swiping a card through a slot. Fortunately Pompo was one of the few people who had access to one of these cards, finding it in a mangle of bones and metal some miles to the east almost 5-years previously. Pompo swiped the card and listened, fearing it would no longer work and then jumping a little as the door slid swiftly into the wall. Inside a dull blue light seemed to glow from the walls. There was a single room, circular and centred on a round table. There were bunks, two tiers of three, on which lay clean blue mattresses. To one side there was a niche where, from experience, Pompo knew that there was a faucet and a second niche, which could be used to heat food using some sort of invisible energy. Pompo remembered Nampach theorizing that it was magnetic, but Pompo wasn't a scientist and simply accepted it worked. Pompo stepped in and inspected. The Safe house always seemed clean, he had been in it many times before, and he soon began to relax. He filled his water skin from the faucet and was enjoying its clear water as he sat on the lower bunk. He began to relax when he suddenly realised something had changed. The hair on his neck stood on end and his eyestalks twitched as he realised that the weapons rack, long since plundered, had been restocked. Lying in the rack were a sword, a trident, a spiked mace, a flail, a cabled rope and a whip. Hanging beside the rack a net and a pair of small shields. "What is this place?" thundered through his mind for the hundredth time.

Fivesday

The clouds were heavy and the scent of rain was on the air but it was generally felt it was unlikely to fall until the afternoon, it was agreed that a hunt of the upper level would be a reasonable risk so Horace, Clement and Brett took the opportunity and headed below leaving Erk in the Practise Halls. As predicted the rain held off until the afternoon and the mornings work was worthwhile. In the event it seemed that the scent of the rain had brought the critters up from the depths and Horace emerged with the skins of six rats and two greys (18 clacks) and Clement with an identical haul. Brett was less successful catching only four rats and a pair of felines (14 clacks) but was still satisfied.

To the south Undina was showing Shenegar and Withy the route to the outpost. They were still a day short but the weather was closing in so they found cover and set up their bivouac. "We should take time to set traps before it gets dark Withy" started Shenegar. The other man nodded and both began pulling snares from their packs. Undina wasn't surprised that she hadn't been included in the remark, she was used to being ignored by the male Seekers, although this time it rankled. They had agreed to join her and were following her main plan but she was quickly realising that they viewed her as a minor partner and were automatically assuming that they would eventually lead. Undina had other plans and loading her crossbow headed away from the camp.

Pompo had spent the morning setting traps around the area of the Safe house and was now returning to await results. As he approached he realised he was no longer alone. From a grove of gaffgang he could see there was a man beside the structure. He wore only leather breaches and soft boots, his tanned muscular torso bare to the elements. He stood tall and wore his long dark hair in a ponytail.

Pompo had a difficult day. He had managed to get a more secure and easier purchase on the rock but the climb down had proved difficult. At the bottom he had felt the familiar warmth of a rad dousing and had realised that he had run into a hot zone. His body absorbed more radiation as he found his way out and Pompo wondered whether it brought him nearer to another mutation or death, only time would tell.

Foursday

Another dry day and Horace was leading his team into the sewers. He was looking for loan rats to give 'live' training for his apprentices, but he was showing a deal more caution than their previous foray. Before going down he had spoken to Nim and Keroth trying to find out more about Brain Rats but the information was scant. It was known that they were capable of crafty tactics and it was suspected that they could communicate, but no one knew whether it was by their chittering or, as some suspected, by telepathy. They were occasionally found alone, but they seemed to hunt in packs. They appeared at intervals, for long periods they were only found in the lowest sewers and then with no apparent pattern they would appear in the upper tunnels in numbers, and in the last wave they had even left the sewers and attacked on the surface. When they appeared in these waves the Brain rats appeared to be accompanied by the larger Rogues, as well as the smaller species, all of which seemed to be under some degree of control by the Brain Rats.

Passing Brett at the grille Horace wished his new fellow good luck and led his team below. Brett was still doing final checks on equipment as Erk and his team passed him as well. This was Brett's first hunt as a master and he appeared to be leaving nothing to chance. By mid-morning virtually the whole community's hunters were down below and the shrill scream of dying rats was becoming rarer. The rats appeared to sense that they were facing numbers and seemed to steer clear. Word had it they were retreating into the lower levels where only the more experienced Ratmasters dared to tread.

The relative inactivity of the beasts allowed Erk to check out his trap site in detail. There was an inspection tunnel, man sized and without channels, leading between two main sewers near a northern cistern. Above the northernmost entrance to this tunnel several large pipes thrust out from the wall and headed out across the channel. These would support the weight of his deadfall and easily allow the ropes to be set. Further across the main channel was an alcove where the trapping team could wait without having to watch their backs. It seemed ideal, and to top it off there was a good deal of rat spore up and down the inspection tunnel indicating common use.

Brett returned content with his first expedition, the skins of four canines hanging from his apprentice's shoulders. The exchange value was only eight clacks but it was a sensible start and there had been no casualties. Horace appeared shortly afterwards, his lads carrying the skins and carcasses of two greys and a canine (8 clacks). They met at the grille and discussed the hunt. As they did so Erk's team appeared with only a single pelt, but it was that of a Great Bat. This silk smooth pelt would be worth 18 clacks at the Exchangerie or could be turned into a fine clothing item by the skinner.

- Martin Went to Beer and Pretzels, intending to go just for the Saturday - played a few games, went out for Thai, came back and found the car park locked! All day I had been careful not to drink and I ended up having to stay in a room overnight - a most expensive weekend. Had a good Sunday, though, went to see Peter Gabriel at the Nynex - most excellent, although it was disturbing that so many people stayed sat down during the show - we even had a security guard ask us to sit down as the people behind us could not see!
- Rob What! No swaying and general beat shuffling, that stinks.
- Martin Took the class to the latest addition to Manchester - Urbis. This is a museum about living in cities. It cost £30 million, mostly from the Millennium Fund. Contains a few broken video machines and a couple of curry cartons, (I kid you not). A perfect example of a modern museum, completely devoid of any interesting artefacts or information - just video screens that state the bleeding obvious. If I had had to pay to go in I would've been disgusted.
- Rob Now I had a completely different impression of the place. I thought that the building itself was stunning; especially the viewpoints that gave fragmented panoramas of the city to compliment the exhibits. I also enjoyed the way that they kept comparing life between the mega cities Tokyo, L.A., Sao Paulo and normal cities like Manchester. Admittedly I had time to look around it in peace, without a horde of kids, but I found the whole thing fascinating and would recommend a visit.
- Martin Not long now to the Summer break - hopefully I should be going over to Indianapolis for Gencon and WBC, although the price of the flights have gone up dramatically.
- Rob I'd have thought there would be some good bargains with all the trouble the airlines are supposedly in, still have a good time. I wish that I could afford to join you.

Tall Poppy

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Britain
 Japan
 France
 Germany
 White Russia
 America

Year of the Cock – Summer

Cash in hand at start of turn

Britain	\$135K	France	\$30K
Japan	\$120K	Germany	\$95K
Rasputin	\$75K	America	\$50K

Initiative America – Britain – Russia – Japan – France - Germany

Seasonal turn orders:

Shipping – 1 ship services Dock No 1.

Seasonal event: Bastille Day Bash, un-owned so nothing occurs.

Movement

America moves to the Buddhist Monastery
 Britain to the International Trading Banks
 Russia to Bamboo Trading Post
 Japanese hiding in consulates
 French hiding in Customs Swindle
 Germans to the International Consulates

Transactions

America – Sets up Racketeer in Monastery for \$30K
 Britain – has tea and makes deposit
 Rasputin – Hires coolie for Bamboo TP for \$10K
 Japanese – NMR
 French – NMR
 German – Buys passport for \$50K

Order Contractors – Germany hires a mugger to hit the Brit, but because the Brit was outside the International Community, at the Imperial Trading Banks, the mugger pocketed the \$30K and went home.

By dusk Clement and his ads had increased their tally to two greys and 4 rats, which after paying for Leno's arm to be sealed left them with 27 clacks. Erk had been similarly successful with a haul worth 28 clacks and more importantly he had found an arch near the great cistern where there were pipes that he felt could support his deadfall.

That evening there was a heated discussion in the Singing Hall. Nampach and Shenegar were discussing Undina's plans when Clement's mistrusts of Seekers kicked in. He argued against the use of resources saying that Seekers were not to be trusted and they brought more harm than good to the community. He argued that maximising internal self-sufficiency rather than chasing dreams across the Hotlands best served the community. "Look, I'm not anti-technology and will gladly use what the community has, I just think that the community relies too much on what is brought in from the outside rather than developing what we have. This trip to the tower is a big mistake, we shouldn't be wasting our time on it". Some of the younger Ratmasters were with him. He had already won support for his theory on the cause of the Brain rats attack, blaming that on the meddling of the Seekers as well, and was now on a roll. Unfortunately neither Shenegar nor Nampach were going to argue and they simply turned their backs on him. This was more embarrassing than losing an argument but there was little Clement could do about it, so grabbing the momentum again he returned to the subject of Brain rats and volunteered himself to join any hunting parties that were after them.

Threesday

Undina wanted to try to persuade Pompo to join her group as she realised that he was the individual with most experience of life in the wilderness. She had planned to argue that should they do find something worthwhile, then Nampach might look favourably on allowing him back into Haven. Undina planned to admit that they hadn't always seen eye to eye (taking care to avoid offence) - but would ask him to give this consideration. Ordina could stay in the Women's hall whilst they were away. Unfortunately by the time she met up with Ordina at the bluff Pompo was far to the north.

Erk was training his lads but his mind was on his trap. He had discussed his plans with the masons and they had come up with a plan for the dead weight, which could kill a rat, be moved to the site, hung, and withstand repeated drops without shattering. This was a tall order but with the help of the Mastersmith it was agreed possible, however, the weight would cost 60 clacks to be made. Erk was a little disappointed at the price but still felt it could be worthwhile.

Clement, Horace and Brett were training as well. Clement had purchased a small medipack (10 clacks) at the Exchangene and was running his lads through its operations. The medipack was solar charged and could be used to clean and seal wounds. The small pack held ten charges and took 12-hours to recharge it's power pack although further solar cells could be acquired. It was an extremely useful piece of equipment and had the added value of helping to maintain the confidence of the team.

Further north Pompo's eyes were swivelling on their stalks. He was trembling, blowing hard, and hanging from a ledge on small cliff. Several feet above him were a pack of Channock boar that had chased him into his current position. "Bitch, I hate those shitting pigs when they get in groups" he spat, jerking his arm abruptly to get a better grip.

then they would have to pay for the pulleys and rope, which would cost even more. Erk shook his head as he began to realise the costs his plan would entail.

Earlier in the day Pompo and Ordina had said their farewells under the sleeping furs, and now he was running out under a cloudless sky. He headed north, towards the Safehouse, and intent on exploring the surrounding area. He wanted to know more about the mysterious structure. Who had built it and why? Up until now no one had discovered anything about these strange structures other than the means of egress and their superficial contents. There was even disagreement over what they were made of as no-one had been able to rip off a piece to bring back to the healers for study. 'They should be called mystery houses' he thought as the land fell steadily behind him.

In Haven Qwaren attended another Masterhood ceremony and watched respectfully as Brett was given a prod, four wooden clubs, a pair of hide boots, a skinning blade and an inner tube. His new apprentices, Gaben, Mark, Terril and Daffyd, awaited their first orders with nervous eagerness. It wasn't long before they joined the others in the Practice Halls.

Twosday

The sky was still clear and so Clement took his lads hunting in sewers. Clement decided to take up post act as rear guard to try and give his apprentices more of a feel for the hunt, and so it was a nervous Leno, armed with an iron club that led the group into the subterranean gloom.

Undina was with Dr Nampach to see what equipment he might loan her for her expedition. "Life in Haven is fragile, we could have easily been wiped out by the brain rats, and who is to say that they won't return?" she argued. "You have a point" he nodded sagely and rubbed his chin, encouraging her to continue. "It's imperative for our survival that we find out more about this world - who built the tower, and what happened to them? Could the same thing happen again? I believe that the tower holds vital clues, and technology that may benefit us all." "And it could lead to the deaths of all three of you and the loss of some of our most valuable asset, our people" he countered. "We know the risks, we're not fresh out of the apprentice halls and we have chosen our path, but our chances will be improved dramatically if you could help us out". Nampach wasn't convinced that the risk was worth the potential rewards but he generally approved of reaching out and he found it hard to deny Undina and so the discussions continued for most of the morning, with the Keymaster and Healer eventually agreeing to supply her with two large medipacks, personal dosimeters, a pair of night goggles and a location beacon. Undina was pleased, she had gained more than she had expected.

Horace and Brett were working in the Practice halls, whilst Erk led Alf, Dave, Chaz and Burt into the tunnels. He planned to stick to upper levels and to look for a suitable place for their trap, and to check for any rat nests.

As Erk made his way north toward the cisterns Clement was hunting in the east. His attempt to have his apprentices leading had proved a problem, as Leno had neither a prod nor any armour, which made him vulnerable and so he had to take over the lead after Leno had gained a nasty gash in his arm from a surprised grey. Clement realised that he was going to have to improve his team's equipment before trying again.

Potential Revenue

Revenue comes at the start of the year turn (Winter phase begins the year) and your potential revenue at the moments is:

France	2x Trading Post (Noodle & Beer & TP)+Customs Swindle \$20K
Britain	U/S Factory Pyramid (Roof & China TP, Warehouse 4 at Dock 4, Chi-Chi's factory.) + Malay TP Total \$60K + French Town Casino + Shanghai Club
Germany	Serviced Warehouse pyramid (Lego & Plum TP, warehouse 2 at Dock 1) + 1x Trading Post (MalayTP). Total \$60K + Lido Nightclub
America	Serviced Warehouse Pyramid (Tiger & Heron TP, Warehouse 2 at Dock 3) + 4x Trading post (Moutsi TP, Kunfoo TP, Lotus & Space TP) + Currency Trader. Total \$90K
White Russia	Serviced Warehouse Pyramid (Hinge & Steel TPs, Warehouse 1 at Dock 1) + warehouse 1 at Dock 2 (no value alone) + Silky TP & Bamboo TP. Total \$70K + Great Orient Shipping Line
Japan	U/SFactory Pyramid (Tea & Tuktuk TPs, Warehouse 2 at Dock 2, Hung Kong factory) + 2x Trading post (McCricks & Fungus TPs) \$70K

NB. U/S = Un-serviced. Ships must visit the appropriate docks for warehouses to become serviced. Note it is warehouses that are serviced, not factories.

Next turn will still be year of the Cock

The Seasonal turn will be Autumn

Shipping – 1-2 ships

Seasonal event – Picnic Races. Japan has still not turned the racetrack into a racket so no effect.

Movement - orders please

Transactions - orders please

Contractors - orders please

Cash in hand

Britain	\$35K	Japan	\$120K
Rasputin	\$65K	France	\$30K
Germany	\$15K	America	\$20K

Money salted into international accounts will not be shown.

Questions & Answers

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FICTIONARY DICTIONARY

WAITING LIST NOW ALMOST READY FOR A NEW GAME, SEND IN YOUR NAMES FOR A NEW GAME START...

Current list: Neil Hopkins, Simon Bracegirdle, Glen Bird, Laurence Parsons, John Webley

Waiting Lists

Yellowbeard II	Philip Honeybone, Paul Ibbs, Tony Ellam, Andrew Whiteley
Fictionary Dictionary	Neil Hopkins, Simon Bracegirdle, Glen Bird, Laurence Parsons, John Webley
Mare Mediterraneum	Howard Bishop, Brad Martin
Maneater	Andy Tucker, Laurence Parsons, Brad Martin
Ratadan the Game	Tony Davies, Doug Rowling, Rob Chapman, Glen Bird, Nigel Gould-Smith, Howard Bishop, Neil Hopkins, Laurence Parsons, Simon Bracegirdle. Andrew Whitely, Doug Rowling
Diplomacy	List now open
Downfall Diplomacy	Brad Martin
Age of Steam	Brad Martin. Rules to be published soon, list now open

Guess who got allocated another 8 tickets to two of the quarterfinals of the Rugby World Cup in November... Oh yes, I'm a happy man!

RATADAN.....THE GAME

The Players:

Tony Davies is Pompo the Bug-eyed
Neil Hopkins is Undina the Seeker
Rob Chapman is Dr Nampach
Simon Bracegirdle is Clement the Ratmaster
Glen Bird is Qwaren the Ratmaster
Andrew Whitely is Erk the Ratmaster
Laurence Parsons is Horace the Ratmaster
Nigel Gould-Smith is Brett the Ratmaster
Doug Rowling & Howard Bishop, are creating.

The story continues ...

Firstday

She crouched on a stool, her long hair hanging straight as if dragged down by gravity. Undina hunched over a slate where she had been making her plans for the expedition. She had planned for a week to stock the outpost, a second to map the route to the tower and a third to gain egress. She had decided to set up a cache of stores at the outpost, a minimum of a week's supply of food and water, medipacks, weapons, torches and storage bags. These would cost clacks and neither she or Shenegar or Wityh had sufficient funds. She scowled, but determined to build up her funds by hunting, and hunting the dangerous Bueno Floaters whose scales could bring in the funds she needed quickly. Packing her slate away she headed off in search of her allies to seek their help, three against the floaters would make things far easier.

Clement, Horace and Erk were in the Practice hall working their apprentices. Horace was drilling his lads to attain cohesion as a team and simultaneously to improve their fitness. His schedules, developed after some discussions with the Apprentice Master, were gruelling, but he was pleased with the determination shown by his team.

After a similarly hard training session Erk released his lads for the midmeal and then brought them together for a brainstorming session. He was planning to trap rats. His first idea was for a large weight (log of wood?) to be hoisted to the roof of tunnel and held by ropes through pulleys. Bait would then be placed on floor of tunnel below the trap, and when the rat(s) were in place the log would be released to either crush them or hold them in place whilst the team clubbed them to death. This led to certain requirements, which included, equipment to build the trap, bait, some means to mask the scent of the trap, perhaps fungus? and a suitable place to set trap. The latter was immediately seen as a problem as the walls of the sewers were stone or concrete and fixing anything to hold sufficient weight would be difficult. There were some old pipes that ran along the ceiling in places but mostly directly over the central channel. They would have to make some reconnaissance trips to find a suitable spot. The second problem was the weight, wood gathered locally was from tall shrubs and whilst sufficient for small items would hardly be heavy enough for the intended purpose. Stone was more readily available and the masons could be paid to carve an appropriate 'rat hammer', but this would cost. And