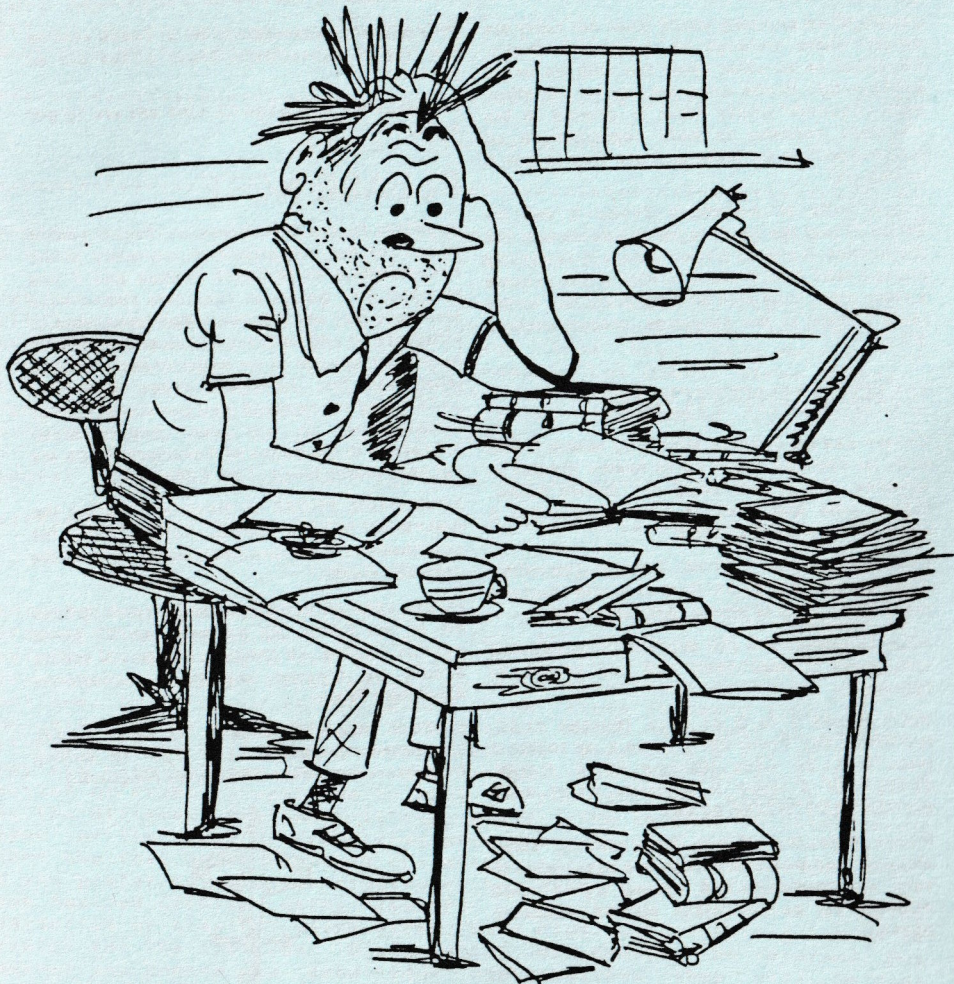


ADVENTURE PROBE



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VOL IV ISSUE III MARCH 1990 1:50



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Please send all correspondence, subscriptions etc to the Editor. All payments **MUST** be in pounds sterling. All cheques and postal orders should be crossed and made payable to Adventure Probe.

EDITOR: Mandy Rodrigues, 67 Lloyd Street, Llandudno, Gwynedd, LL30 2YP (If writing from overseas please add United Kingdom.)



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HALL OF FAME

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Sincere thanks to the following readers who took the time and trouble to send in contributions during this past month.

Hugh Walker, Jim Struthers, Chris Queen, Paul Cardin, Claudio Balzi, Bill Taylor, Clive Swain, Vicky Jackson, Sue Roseblade, Jackie Holt, Paraskevas Tsourinakis, Dorothy Millard, Anne Roy, Dave Havard, The Wayfarer, The Grue! Alf Baldwin, Antcrusher, Lol Oakes, Steve McLaren, Jill Carter, Clive Swain, Pete Simpson, Sandra Sharkey, Neil Shipman, Graham Wheeler, Kez Gray, Lorna Paterson, Bob Adams, Jim O'Keeffe, Keith Burnard, Tony Bevan and Nic Russey.

Special thanks to Brian Pell for this months cover picture.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions for Adventure Probe are always needed and readers are cordially invited to send in items for ALL sections of the magazine. Anything from a single hint or tip to a full blown article are all very welcome indeed. Probe relies on YOUR contributions to be able to continue. Don't worry if you cannot send items in ready typed up for inclusion in the magazine as handwritten items are just as welcome, although I must be honest and say that it does save a lot of time if they are nicely typed. If you send in contributions for more than one section of Probe it would be helpful if you could use separate sheets for the different sections. If you would like to send in items ready typed for the pages of Probe then please use A4 with a nice margin all round the text being about 70 characters across and 60 lines per page. If you prefer to send contributions on disc I am able to print out from Amstrad CPC6128 using Tasword or Protext, Commodore 64 using Easyscript or Atari ST using First Word Plus. Unfortunately I have no printer for the Spectrum. Discs will, of course, be returned. But however you choose to send your contributions they will be most welcome indeed.....Mandy.

EDITORIAL



Welcome to Volume IV, Issue 3 of Adventure Probe.

Well, what a busy month this has been. I must apologise for the poor quality of print in the last issue. I do hope it didn't cause you too much difficulty and I hope that we have the problem solved now. My apologies too for anyone who has had to wait a while for the solutions, back copies, cassette inlays, booklets etc that they have ordered but the photocopier broke down in the middle of the month and I had to wait over two weeks for the arrival of a spare part. (It probably caught a virus from Mike Brailsford's photocopier as he too has had difficulties with his copier this month!) This has meant that I am behind with everything and I do apologise if this issue arrives a little late and you are still awaiting a reply from me to your letter but I have a lot of catching up to do. You may also have noticed that I made one of my gigantic gaffs again in the Guess Who This Is? when I put the closing date for entries as 20th January instead of 20th February. It is almost as bad as putting the crossword grid on sideways! I don't know how you put up with me and my many mistakes.

If you remember, when I first moved to the new house I gave the postcode as LL30 2YP but, following a postcard from the post office, it was changed to LL30 2BN. Guess what? This month I received yet another postcard from the post office advising me that my postcode has been changed back again to LL30 2YP! Anyway, I have received quite a few more suggestions for suitable house names so next month I propose to print all the names and get you to vote on which one you like the best.

This month Probe gets a lovely mention in Adventure Coder magazine, thanks to the Editor Chris Hester for that. I also had a lovely surprise when The Balrog in Amstrad Action awarded me the very first honorary title of HBalg for my services to adventuredom! Thank you, Balrog, I am delighted and honoured that I should have been chosen.

In this issue we have a competition so, once again, I am asking everyone to take part as six lucky winners will each receive a signed copy of Mike Gerrards new book. My thanks to Mike for reserving these for Probe. Mike's book is a must for all adventurers, not just those with a Spectrum, so I want everyone to enter the competition and let's see if we can have a record number of entries this time. In this issue, too, I am airing some of my own views (if you can stand a three page article from moi) in this I also reveal some interesting facts and figures about Probe to keep you all up to date and we also reveal who the mystery lady was in the Guess Who? and who the lucky winner was who guessed correctly. All will be revealed on page 21. Due to lack of space the list of solutions available from Probe has had to be left out until another issue (also the final part of the serialised solution to Sorcerer which will be in the April issue) but if you would like a copy of the updated Solutions Available list before then, please drop me a S.A.E. and I will gladly send it to you.

I had lots of letters this month from readers saying how much they enjoyed the Diary of an Adventurous Mum. Quite a few people thought that I wrote it. No, it wasn't me but Anonymum would prefer her true identity kept a secret for the time being I'm afraid. I am sure she will be delighted to know that you enjoyed her writings so much though. Well I had better sign off now. I do hope you enjoy this issue and I will see you all again next month as usual. Bye for now,

REVIEWS



CHAOS STRIKES BACK

The sequel to DUNGEON MASTER By F.T.L. Shop around for the best price.
Reviewer CHRIS QUEEN played on Atari ST

The long-awaited sequel to Dungeon Master has arrived. Have the months of waiting been worth it? The answer is yes! It's brilliant! The "Chaos Strikes Back" packaging describes it as an add-on, which it is. The packaging also gives the impression that it is mandatory to purchase Dungeon Master. The answer here is "Yes" and "no". "no" because the game will stand alone. "Yes", because it assumes that the player has detailed knowledge about the infra structure i.e. how to manipulate objects and how magic works etc. The packaging includes two disks. The first is a Utility Disk which contains three main processes: the first is a pictorial introduction to the game, the second is a graphics package to enable you to tailor your warriors to your own liking and the third is a comprehensive "hint oracle".

Booting in on the Game Disk enables the player to enter the "Prison" or restart an existing game. Being a simple soul, I ignored all the instructions and entered the "Prison" option. There, frozen into portraits were 22 heros/heroines each having much stronger characteristics than those of Dungeon Master - but no possessions. My first instinct was to wonder why 22 and not 24 characters like Dungeon Master. I investigated and found the first of almost non-stop surprises. Having saved my selected band on a pre-formatted disk, I booted from the Utility Disk and built the file that is identical to a normal save file on a second pre-formatted disk. The third stage was to re-boot from the Game Disk. This time I used the "Restart" option and sat with mounting impatience while the program loaded.

Hitting the "OK" button, I realised that I was in the dark, under attack from God knows what and totally naked! Panic set in and, after standing on a hidden trigger (which released three more monsters) several times, my trustee band died a horrible death. Total playing time 1.25 minutes! Logic took over. There had to be a way. In the second game I lasted 2 minutes. Finally I completed my first room. Having found a chest in the centre of the room I eagerly expected to find armour or weapons - all I got was a taste of what was to come from the warped programmers mind - a chest of tattered shirts, shorts and sandals!

Unlike Dungeon Master which follows a level by level approach, each being completed before attempting the next, CSB is built on a vertical and random basis. It appears to consist of ten floors on which you start in part of level 5. For much of the game you are exploring one of four mazes of interconnecting rooms and passages. There are many illusionary walls and floors. Invisible transporters exist in quantity as well. In my first week of play I was never sure where I was or how to get back to where I had just come. Monsters exist by the bucket-load - many familiar, many new. Everything however, is much tougher than its Dungeon Master counterpart. (Two full-strength fireballs to kill a giggler thief!). Many objects too will be familiar to the DM addict.

I restarted CSB with the Utility Disk. I transported my team from Dungeon Master and was delighted that they came with their final attributes (but not their possessions). I then found that the Utility Disk contained a new set of portraits for each (to reflect their enhanced status). I always thought Wu Tse - Son of Heaven was a man

with a rather "iffy" chest. The enhanced portrait makes him/her look like an escapee from the Mikado. Wu Tse is definately female ... or a superb transvestite.

To sum up. Chaos Strikes Back is brilliant and should keep you occupied well into 1990. However, it is a tough game. If you haven't progressed beyond level 3 of Dungeon Master it will be very difficult to play. The puzzles are mind-bending but logical. It is possible to map the game but it is very, very difficult to do so due to the number of pits/transporters etc. If you enjoyed Dungeon Master then this is a must. If you haven't yet played Dungeon Master, then buy it even if it means that you have to buy an Atari ST or an Amiga to play it on!

=====

THE SLAUGHTER CAVES

Written by Mike Jessop for the Spectrum 48/128K+2
Available from Zenobi Software - Price £2.49
Reviewer ALF BALDWIN



Down through the years it has been the dream of many to negotiate the damp tunnels and twisty passageways of the "Slaughter Caves". Some had even plucked up enough courage to attempt it, but despite all their stalwart efforts, they had failed and the Dragon still stood guard over the fabled pile of treasure that had been the goal of them all. Now it is your turn to brave the terrors of the caves and to attempt to wrest the vast wealth from the grasp of the mighty scaled beast. Can you make your way past the pit of snakes or defeat the Guardian of the Temple door? Will you be able to solve the puzzle of the closing doors or discover the whereabouts of the magic talismans?

Sounds exciting, doesn't it? But there is little that is new in this adventure. It is as though the author has taken a number of stock situations from off the shelf and strung them together to make this new game. We have the familiar ploy of giving a bone to a vicious dog, and of giving water to a thirsty prisoner chained up in a cell. We meet Medusa and we are attacked by a mummy leaping out of a tomb. Then when we reach the Temple, guess what are the two magic words we must say to get the doors to open - no prizes offered. The only surprise is that when we finally meet the Dragon, we do not have to do battle and slay it in order to get the treasure. The Dragon merely poses a rather silly riddle, answer correctly and this fearsome beast very obligingly invites you to climb onto its back and flies you home with the treasure.

There are quite a number of sudden death situations in the game and you also have to survive constant attacks by giant beetles in a mushroom forest. It is disappointing, therefore, that the game does not feature RAMSAVE/RAMLOAD facility. If you want to save your position it has to be to tape, and when you do save the game you are penalised by having five points deducted from your score. The puzzles should not present any difficulty to an experienced adventurer. We have come across them all before in one form or another.

This is Mike Jessop's first adventure, and it does show some promise. The game is well written, there are few spelling mistakes and I only found two minor bugs which were not important. Perhaps, with a little more imagination and originality, Mike can go on to greater things.

=====

THE PAWNS OF WAR, 1 & 2
Written by Les Floyd for the Spectrum 48/128K+2
Available from Zenobi Software - Price £2.99
Reviewer ALF BALDWIN



These are text adventures, written with the aid of PAW, in which you play the role of a top MI5 agent. Both parts are separate and can be played independently.

PART 1

A new Nazi regime is threatening to launch a nuclear missile on London unless the British Government pays them ten billion pounds. Naturally, the Government is not going to submit to blackmail, so you are sent to do something about it. Your mission is to drive through the mountains to the Nazi base, defuse the missile and escape via a pre-arranged rendezvous with a helicopter. Unfortunately, your jeep is hit by sniper fire and you crash. Without transport, you must continue on foot. Nazi patrols are out looking for you and it is sudden death if you run into them, so it is advisable to use the RAMSAVE/RAMLOAD.

There are some aspects of the game which are a little hard to believe. You have a gun but it is not loaded and you have no ammunition. The means of escape from the stranded cable car would have taxed even James Bond and I was surprised that the panther would take what I had to offer it. Then, in the end, I had to fuse the missile to make it explode and destroy the Nazi base instead of defusing it.

PART 2

Deep in the rain-forests, on the Brazilian-Bolivian border, rebel forces have built a huge dam across the Madeira river to supply hydro-electric power to a nuclear missile factory. Your mission is to infiltrate the complex, destroy the dam and make good your escape. A canister of supplies has been dropped by your back-up team, but it won't be easy to locate in the dark water in the middle of the night. You have navigated your one-man submarine along the twisting river and you have arrived at the north wall of the dam, but your fuel has fallen dangerously low. You turn off the engine and wait for darkness to fall.

The dam is well guarded by rebel soldiers, so there are many sudden death situations. Once again, RAMSAVE the game frequently. You are wearing only a wetsuit and you are unarmed. I would have thought your team would have put a gun in the supply canister rather than a hand-grenade, but you have to rely on obtaining weapons from rebel soldiers as you make your way to the heart of the dam where you need to plant your explosives. Escaping, once you have done this, is the difficult part. You cannot return to the submarine, which is out of fuel anyway, and your only way out is through the water supply pipe to the generator. Finding the correct sequence in which to pull the levers to close the water gates is not easy. Quite a silly place to put it really.

Both the adventures are well written, there are few spelling mistakes and I only found one or two minor bugs. The problems are well thought out and I enjoyed playing both parts. For two quite good adventures I think the price represents good value for money and I recommend them.

=====



THE JADE STONE

(Marlin Games - now available from Zenobi Software)

Atari ST Version - price £7.49. Reviewer- MerC the Congealed

In common with many of us, Linda Wright was clearly fed-up with Interactive Fiction in which the Hero has to behave as though he had a biceps measurement bigger than his IQ. She came up with a storyline in which you play a Heroine, and provided you can overcome that hurdle, this neat little STAC adventure should prove very enjoyable. Since all aspects contribute to it, the atmosphere of a game is vital to its success, especially in a TV (text-plus-vignettes) structure, where spectacular graphics cannot divert attention from mediocre game-play. If bad taste and even worse spelling abound, many potential adventurers are put off. Jade Stone is excellent in this respect, though "artifact" is a rather unusual variant!

The game has a pleasant and relaxed feel to it, and there is no attempt at strained humour. About the only danger in the first section comes from having a lone female trudge through remote woodland, but you can travel with a protective man, or seek shelter. You progress by being bright, genuinely helpful, kind to (most) animals and all babies, pious, considerate, loyal and a downright good guyness. Later on you are, however, allowed a lapse or two. When needs must, you are expected to drive an obstructive snake into the jaws of a bear, and even to kill an enemy (but it is either him or you, so your conscience is salvaged). Even the arch-fiend is not vanquished by a direct assault. Towards the end things become a little more urgent, and if you don't get on with it you will not get the full score.

The task is the "traditional" collecting of useful objects. Problems are generally well-thought out and can be solved by logic, persistence (keep finding the pedlar!) and with the odd clue from objects or characters. Some objects have more than one use, and nearly all locations are involved in the plot. There are no mazes. There is a nugget of information in the novel, but not unless you broach the subject, as it were. Playing the Heroine, you must think like one (if you don't already). Remember you're not as rugged as some of the other characters and don't always shrink from kissing, chasing girls in the woods, baby-soothing, and general cooking and mending. Finally, when you have rescued your poor fiance, you get the reward you richly deserve.

It would be unusual if the game did not have its minor faults. There is the well-bred parser, which, instructions to the contrary, complains if you try to throw things, although eventually you HAVE to. I had a bit of trouble with the save/load system which kept locking out the mouse, so that I could only save under one name by using the RETURN key. Since the author has gone to the trouble of creating pictures, then surely they ought to contribute more than ornament. There are a couple of locations in JS where the picture gives a clue to your subsequent action, but this is a blanket comment, as in other locations the picture can be misleading. (I spent a lot of time trying to get into the "hollow" tree on the Plains of Vobran, but it isn't).

Jade Stone is a good illustration of what can be done with more than a little thought, good taste, and an emphasis on the finer things of fantasy. It can be thoroughly recommended, and is excellent value for money.

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DEAD END



By Martin Westwood. Available on Commodore, Spectrum and Atari ST.
Price £9.95 from Interactive Software, PO Box 146, Sheffield, S13 7YT.

Reviewer - CLIVE SWAIN played on Atari ST

Opening the package I was immediately impressed by the glossy manual with colour printing! I scanned the pages to learn that the adventure had been written using STAC and GAC and utilised most of my favourite controls such as Rmsave/Load, Dops, Forty/Eighty (text size) and Graphics on/off. Reading on first time users are taught how to interact with the game. Finally I came to the story introduction which really does set the mood, the excitement is about to begin. The year is 1942 and I must become that famous private eye Philip Marlowe in order to solve his latest case. So.....

I pull the wide brimmed hat further down over my eyes, draw deeply on the cigarette which dangles between my lips, lean forward and.....
switch on the computer.

The game loads quickly. I am in my office. The period atmosphere is further enhanced by the graphics which are well digitised screen shots from the 1944 film "Farewell My Lovely" starring Dick Powell. I find that my client has just left, leaving behind a photograph, the only clue to this murder mystery. I gather my belongings and try to leave the office to follow my lead. At this point my first criticism of the game becomes apparent. Whilst, for much of the time, it will carry out a series of actions from only one command it suddenly reverts, becoming pedantic, insisting on one word, the correct word and that word only before one can proceed further.

Rain lashes the windows noisily as a crack of thunder booms through. Outside the blackness of the storm grips Los Angeles like a vice, an ominous feeling of fear awaiting all who venture out into its rain. But out I must go to follow my lead and question all the suspects, so I leave the office and discover that I am immediately in my car! If I get out of my car, then, to my amazement, I am back in the office!! There is no lateral movement allowed in this game. Every location is a necessary one, so, you cannot explore at leisure but must follow the logical step from clue to clue. However, having said this, I soon become so wrapped up in questioning characters and examining evidence that any idea of swanning around the countryside on a sight-seeing tour had long faded into oblivion.

I must be honest and say that at the time of writing, I am nowhere near to completing this adventure, but, I have experienced enough to fully appreciate the mood, the gameplay and the puzzles. Nine out of ten for atmosphere because the text is pure Raymond Chandler and the graphics show the brilliance of Edward Dmytryk. Only seven for the puzzles and gameplay. There could be some improvement here but, all in all, a very out of the ordinary adventure, easy enough for a first timer but, with the addiction and content to keep even the most experienced player happy for days and days.

My recommendation is, buy it, now. I am going to try Martyn's "Dance of the Vampires" also available for the above computers at only £7.95.

=====

FUTURE WARS - TIME TRAVELLERS

Reviewer - THE GRUE! played on Amiga



Not many adventures start with you cleaning windows but in Future Wars that, believe it or not, is your occupation. It is the 43rd century and the earth is under attack from aliens, now to enable them to break through the earths defences they travel back in time to sabotage them before they have been built.

To relive the boredom of your mundane job you decide to play a practical joke on your boss, after which you stumble across a portal that transports you back to medieval times. Once you've got this far you should already have some opinion about the operating system, to say it is frustrating would be kind. I nearly threw my Amiga out of the window. Some of the items you're required to find in the game are so small you could mistake them for a speck of dust on the monitor, then once you've spotted the offending pixel you need the steady hand of a brain surgeon to click on it. The text pops up in little windows and if you should miss an important bit you can't re-read it unless you restore your position. Everything about the system is frustrating. You can't examine an item once you've picked it up. It is like eating spaghetti with your hands tied.

Oh well, after travelling to Medieval times you then travel far into the future where, once again, the stupidity of the system becomes apparent. You are required to examine various bits of rubble and you should find a few useful items but in the very next scene examining the rubble will not work, you must operate the rubble to find a manhole. How do you operate a bit of rubble, how come if you examine this bit of rubble you don't find the manhole??!

Enough of this, the game must have some good points? The music in the game is very good and atmospheric but the game itself doesn't generate any atmosphere. Then there are the graphics, these are nothing short of brilliant. Quite simply the very best I've seen in any adventure and that includes Magnetic Scrolls. The puzzle content of the game is also very weak, in fact, if you incorporated any of the puzzles into a text adventure you would probably solve it in about an hour. It is the operating system that causes you to take the amount of time to complete the game not the fact that you can't think of the solution.

I'm not really against graphic adventures (what a fibber!) but if you have played Shadowgate with it's operating system that really does work then you will understand that having nice music and brilliant graphics in this type of game is just not enough.

If you feel that you want a game that has a bit of everything then maybe Future Wars could be for you. It has Text (not enough of it), Graphics (the best), Music (atmospheric), Puzzles (simple) and even a shoot-em-up bit. The system of the 90's is how Delphine describe their system. If that is the case I'm buying myself a Speccy! For around £25 people deserve much more for their money than great graphics. This is a fine example of a software house putting so much into the presentation that they have completely forgotten about the game!



STRANDED!

Available for BBC B, B+, Master Series and Archimedes from:
Robico, 3 Fairland Close, Llantrisant, Mid Glamorgan, CF7 8QH
Prices from £17.95 (for BBC B version)
Reviewer - SUE ROSEBLADE played on BBC B

This adventure, written by Tony Heap of Hayley Software, has been extensively reprogrammed and refined for its recent re-release by Robico. It is available only on disk, and the Archimedes version includes graphics, full line editor, mouse functions, output to printer and several extra useful commands.

Bored with your adventureless existence on a peaceful planet, you decide to stow away in a small cupboard on the Starfreighter "Etoile", not realising that you have hidden in the pantry and will be discovered at teatime! The game begins as you are being held prisoner in a hold under sentence of death so obviously your first priority is to escape and somehow obtain control of the freighter.

At first glance this may seem to be yet another science fiction scenario very much like all the other spaceship-crashes-on-planet types of adventure, several of which readily spring to mind. However, after the first couple of puzzles the game quickly progresses from this format and you find yourself in a civilisation that is a mixture between the Roman occupation and the Dark Ages. In order to make progress it is necessary to work your way up through the ranks from slave to Baron, and to do this you must dispose of the person who already holds the next rank. At the same time you must collect together anything you might find that looks even remotely useful in the building of a spaceship, which you need to do before you can finally leave the planet.

As far as plot and atmosphere are concerned I found the adventure to be well up to Robico's usual high standards. The text is very detailed and amusing, though it does go a bit over the top in places in my opinion. For example, I couldn't quite visualize "a heap of coal sitting shyly in a corner," or "tunnels contentedly branching off." However, on the whole I found the descriptions excellent. There are over 220 locations, and almost 60 objects. The puzzles are mostly very good indeed, and although the start of the game seems quite easy, it gets much harder as you progress. Fortunately you are supplied with a superb cluesheet, written in the same format as the Level 9 ones are, and I don't reckon I could have finished without it. The cluesheet also includes some very funny red-herring type entries, and it is well worth reading it through after you have completed the game just for the jokes and groans.

One thing that is a pet hate of some adventurers is the necessity to eat and sleep in order to survive, and I'm afraid that in this game you must do both. What is more, in order to eat you must first report for work early each morning and then work all day to earn a food pass. All in the lower ranks must do this, so your adventuring has to be confined to the evening hours. Doesn't this sound a bit too much like real life?! I found it added to the atmosphere and it's not one of the things that bothered me too much but it does mean that you have to be very well-organised. Later in the game you can avoid sleeping and other sources of food will become available to you, which makes life much easier. The command SCORE will show you the time of day and your current rank as well as your actual score. In fact for the first half of the game my score seemed to be going down as often as it went up,

so I appeared to be getting nowhere fast even though my rank was improving. However, after I had become the Baron the score started to rise and I managed to finish with 710 out of 820 at the first attempt.

I had no problems with finding the correct input, even when having to build a spaceship step by step, but one big complaint is that for most commands only whole words are accepted. So for example EXAMINE CIGARETTE cannot be abbreviated, which becomes a bit of a drag. (Oh look what I just wrote!!) On the other hand the commands IT and ALL can be used, and this is a good way to avoid having to spell long words on many occasions. Other useful commands include OOPS to go back one move, BRIEF to get short location descriptions, VERBOSE to get the longer ones, DRIVE to select drive for saving to disk and the usual facilities are available for saving your position either onto disk or to memory. One more very handy command is WHERE IS (object), which will tell you the current location of objects and is most helpful to people like me who forget where they've left things! TAB will repeat your last command but be warned, if you press TAB don't press RETURN afterwards because it causes the keyboard to lock and all you can do then is start all over again which is a bit of a pain if you have only saved to memory recently and not to disk. Please forgive me if this is a well known occurrence because it hasn't happened to me before.

Incidentally be careful not to spend all the time using BRIEF mode as in some places you might miss something important. In the Hall of Riddles you won't be able to see the riddles! To finish with a full score you will need to be carrying some quite useless objects so don't leave anything in a place where you can't retrieve it. There is also a very unfair trick with the cigarette which I'll give away now. You have to try to crush it before finally using it for its true purpose, which gives you 20 points for moral awareness. That's a bit rotten I thought, because you lose the cigarette very early in the game and who on earth wants to replay the whole game just to do that?

My favourite bit in the adventure involved the use of a remote controlled dagger. Needless to say, a lot of gory carving up took place while I was trying to master the controls, together with suitable shrieks and other sound effects from me. The method of entry to the Northern Fort was also very novel, and the exit from the same was equally entertaining! There are lots of frustrating and ingenious puzzles in this game, but I don't like to spoil it by giving too much away.

I have no hesitation whatsoever in recommending "STRANDED!" to anyone with a BBC and disk drive. I thought it was amusing, and it kept me happy for a good few weeks even though I had a cluesheet with which to cheat! It is definitely a bit on the expensive side, but I was still quite happy with the hours of enjoyment that I got for my money. If you remember the review of AVON by Neil Shipman in December Probe, he points out that there are very few new releases for BBC these days, and I feel that the few software companies still prepared to write for BBC should have our total support. If you really can't afford it, then Robico usually reduce the prices of all their games after a year or two, so look out for some very good special offers. Either way, this one is well worth adding to your collection.

(If you have played an adventure that you would like to air your views on then send the review to Probe. Reviews for adventures on the less well supported machines are especially welcome.....Mandy.)



NO THIS ISN'T THE END

This may seem a very strange title for an article but, it is really in reply to an article/letter which I received this month from Jim Struthers, entitled IS IT THE END? In his writings Jim be-moans the lack of space devoted to adventures in the "Glossy" magazines and goes on to say, "... it appears that everyone is arcade game crazy. Nothing for adventurers on the horizon is a regular cry. Adventures are dead is another regular cry." Jim goes on to mention some past adventure game programmers who no longer write adventures and says, "Yes, it appears, reading through the glossies that adventures have seen their day and this is why I've often said that we MUST support the dedicated "home brew" programmers because if we don't buy adventures from these people I can see the whole adventure scene crashing around our ears."

Jim ends with asking me to answer these questions. "Are there enough small companies and "home brew" producers to keep us going. Especially for the two main contenders for adventures i.e. Spectrum and CPC although we already seem to have started to forget the CPC as far as programmers are concerned."

"Is Probe healthy? What is the current membership total for Probe compared to the membership total when adventures were in full swing, bearing in mind all computers are catered for. Perhaps this will give us an idea of how many true adventurers are left."

Now, I think it is time that we put everything into its true perspective. Perhaps my answers to the above questions and a few facts and figures will show that, far from it being all doom and gloom, there is a very bright future for adventures.

The current membership for Probe subscribers is over 400. Contrary to what Jim is inferring in his question, this is the highest figure so far for subscribers and the figure has been steadily rising since the beginning. As far as this figure shows, the peak hasn't yet been reached so perhaps adventures are not yet in "full swing"! Probe readership is still rather male dominated with 70% male readers and 30% female. Probe is very "healthy" and could, in fact, be properly called ADVENTURE PROBE INTERNATIONAL as we now have readers in Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., India, Greece, Oman, Italy, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Portugal, Sweden and Spain.

It seems to be a fact that youngsters do not become interested in adventuring until they average 17 to 19 years old (although there are some exceptions) and, as youngsters are getting into computers all the time and it stands to reason that they will sooner or later come across their first adventure and "become hooked", so we can expect a healthy new crop of adventurers every year. Adventuring is not a youngsters pastime as the following figures show. Probe readership (of those who give their ages) is as follows: Under 20 years 7.4% 20 to 30 years 20.9% 30 to 40 years 28.4% 40 to 50 years 25% 50 to 60 years 10.2% 60 to 70 years 4.7% 70 to 80 years 2.7% and over 80 years 0.7%

As far as your "main contenders" in computer adventurers go Jim, I am afraid you are wrong when you suggest that the main two are Spectrum and CPC. Spectrum is indeed way ahead of all the others with a massive 37.5% but then we have Commodore 18.7%, Atari ST 13.2% and Amstrad CPC with 8.7% and the other computers are Amiga 6.5%, BBC 4.1%, Amstrad

PCW 4.1%, PC 1.9%, MSX 1.2%, Atari XE 0.8%, QL 0.7%, Dragon 0.7%, Sam Coupe (hurrah, we've got some!) 0.7%, Vic 20 0.2%, Apple 0.2%, Lynx 0.2%, TRS80 0.2%, Sharp 0.2% and last, but not least, Oric 0.2%. I do sympathise with Amstrad owners and the lack of support for their machines but Commodore and BBC owners are suffering too and, worse still, consider the plight of adventurers who own MSX, Atari XE, QL, Dragon etc. One MSX reader recently told me that he is now playing his very LAST adventure which is Lancelot by Level 9. They were his ONLY source of adventures.

In the USA, Australia and New Zealand the main computers are Amiga and Commodore 64. Southern Europe seems to be mainly Spectrum, Commodore, Amiga and Atari ST although there seem to be a few Amstrad CPC's in Spain. Northern Europe is mainly Commodore, Amiga and a few Atari ST. It seems that Commodore and Amiga have the overseas market well "wrapped up" and the Atari ST hasn't taken off so well. Perhaps Atari, themselves are at fault here with a distinct lack of promotion of their machine. It is when we look carefully at these facts and figures that we see perhaps some explanation as to why the trend of some software houses seems geared towards the Amiga when trying to cater for the overseas market and also why American companies no longer support many of our 8 bit machines.

This leaves us in rather a difficult situation. Whether we like it or not, we have to admit that we adventurers are in a minority. Arcade addicts constantly demand improved sound and graphics and so they move more swiftly to the 16 bit machines. Adventurers, in the main, are quite content with screens of text and quite often turn off the graphics to speed up play, some even still use a monochrome television. The sales are becoming geared to 16 bit mainly due to the large arcade market and any adventures which are produced by the larger companies will be for these larger machines. So we find ourselves forced to upgrade if we want to receive all the newer adventures by the larger companies.

We then turn to the "Home Grown" adventure producers. Yes, I am certain that they will continue to provide us with our adventures for as long as there is a demand for them. In many cases "Home Grown" is rather an unfair title to give to these authors just because they prefer to do their programming at home. Many of their adventures are vastly superior to those that the larger companies offer us. One other fact, which is sometimes forgotten, is that these authors are also adventure players themselves and so they know exactly what we are looking for in our games. It is worth remembering, also, that many software houses who produce adventures such as Level 9 were once considered a Home-Grown company. Many of our "Home Grown" companies are the new Level 9's of tomorrow! I agree with Jim when he says that the future of adventures are in their hands. Of course they are, and in very safe hands too. All companies have to start in a small way and I am convinced that these companies are the larger companies of tomorrow. Are we, perhaps doing them a disservice in giving them this title which gives the impression of an amateur operation when, in fact, they are in most cases very professional in the running of their business? But, when we see the figures on computers owned, is it any wonder that, as authors produce their work on their own machines that there will be many more produced for Spectrum? When the money from their sales has to be invested in further computers, can we reasonably ask that they buy a computer which has insufficient support to justify the outlay and that resulting sales will perhaps not cover the cost of the initial investment? It is for this very reason that Probe has offered itself for a base in which authors and different computer

owners can be put in touch with each other to have their games converted to a wider format. So far a few have successfully got together and work is going ahead to convert many Spectrum adventures to the Amstrad and Commodore but, it must be said that, despite having received many offers from readers willing to do the conversions, I have had very little contact from authors to date.

Recently one or two of our "home-based" authors upgraded to the Atari ST and converted their adventures for this but were horrified at the poor sales of their adventures on this machine. It is just a thought but, could the reason for this be that many adventurers had already played those games on their 8-bit machines before upgrading? Perhaps when new adventures are written on the St by these authors they will see a corresponding difference in sales. Could it be, perhaps that most of the people who upgraded to Atari ST are arcade players or programmers and so are not interested in adventures?

Adventures are not dead at all, nor is the text adventure a thing of the past. One problem is that software companies are now concentrating on larger computers and withdrawing their support from the older 8 bit computers which we love so much. But how many of us can afford to upgrade to the larger computers so that we can continue with our hobby uninterrupted? The other problem is promotion of adventures. I blame that problem firmly on the high street shops. Many moons ago, someone decided, in their infinite wisdom, that software which didn't contain beautiful graphics could not, under any circumstances be displayed on their hallowed shelves. This, naturally, meant that adventures were pushed out of sight and arcade games reigned supreme in the shops. This, in turn, encouraged the adventure writers to turn to graphics so that they could get a foothold in the shops. We had to rely on mail order for our adventures but this meant that we missed out on a lot of very good adventures. How do new Amstrad and BBC adventurers ever get to hear about Topologika? You cannot browse amongst the shelves and come up with a copy of Dungeon Adventure in a high street shop. If a new adventurer doesn't happen to see that "wonderful review" in a glossy magazine one month, it is probable that he/she will never hear about it or see it. If adventures were regularly stocking the shelves then would it be unreasonable to suppose that many younger newcomers would discover the wonders of adventuring far sooner and life for adventurers in general would be easier?

New adventurers are appearing all the time. Each month I hear from people who say that they have just completed their first adventure and are avid for more. For most adventurers, those with machines considered "popular", the future is very bright. For others whose machines are not so well supported, Amstrad, BBC etc, they will have to go to a little more trouble to obtain their adventures and for those whose machines have lost, almost completely the support of the software houses, such as MSX, Dragon, Oric etc, their only recourse will be to look out for a second hand Spectrum perhaps or upgrade to a larger machine. Second hand Spectrums can be found for between £20 to £50. Last week someone I know found one in a jumble sale with all the leads, tape deck and manuals for the fantastic price of 40p! It needed a little attention and the repair cost £6.75. They are delighted with their fabulous bargain! Adventures are not dying at all, we are just evolving. As long as we adventurers are here, constantly demanding more adventures, doing our best to cut out piracy and supporting the "home based" producers then the future for adventures will be assured.

Mandy.

"GRUMPY ALF and The Landlord of The Rungs".

"One ladder to rule them all"

With especial thanks to Pete Gerrard
and to certain Probe regulars,
for the use of their leg.

Chapter One.



Grumpy Alf leaned back in his chair and surveyed the faces sitting at his table. The round face was talking incessantly. This was nothing unusual because she had been doing it all evening, ever since they had all met. Grumpy Alf closed his ears and tried to shut out the Welsh accent that was attempting to swamp his thoughts. His eyes wandered to the face on the left of the Welsh magazine editor and his gaze took in a large face with humorous eyes. The long side-burns had a slightly 'dated' look but the man obviously possessed a sense of humour. The "Way Fairy" as he was known, often took great delight in deflating pompous adventurers, especially Groo's and the like.

Suddenly Grumpy Alf sat bolt upright. The Groo! Why hadn't he realised it before? Where was he? He had confirmed last night that he was coming (motorbike permitting) to their meeting but as far as Grumpy Alf could tell, he hadn't arrived. The main problem for Grumpy Alf and the rest of the party was, that nobody knew what he looked like. He could well be here but so far, he hadn't announced himself. Typical, thought Grumpy Alf, the blasted fellow make's a nuisance of himself all year round but the very time when his help is needed, he doesn't appear.

The rest of the party having noticed Grumpy Alf's sudden change of posture, were now looking at him with raised eye-brows, which is a clever trick if you can do it. Also they had stopped chattering. Grumpy Alf cleared his throat, stood up, beat the table three times with a bent pool cue and called the meeting to order. The meeting then ordered eleven pints of lager and a glass of white wine. Grumpy Alf sat down again with a resigned look on his face. All along, he knew it was going to be a risk, asking these mere mortals to assist him in trying to save the world from the greatest threat that had ever had faced them but this was worse than even he ever feared. Just wait till I'm home and I can get my hands on that yuppie Dimply, he thought to himself. I'll have his hide for confusing my trusty staff for this twisted cue when we left that pub in Wigan. I wonder who is using it now? Now here we are in a pub again but this time down South, in an Inn by the name of "The Rungs."

Grumpy Alf shuddered inside when he thought of that name. The Rungs! It screamed around inside his head. All of his hundreds of years of experience told him that he must be in the right place. This is where "It" is going to begin. As to where it would end, was anybody's guess. He looked around the table once again. Happy smiling faces laughing, talking and drinking looked back at him. Not one of them has the slightest idea of the danger that faces them, he thought. I suppose I'll have to tell them soon. I need their help because on my own, my powers might not be enough. With them as well, we just may succeed but it is going to be very difficult.

Grumpy stood up again. Mandy was just finishing her pint and noticing him standing, shouted "speech Boyo, speech." Grumpy looked over his

shoulder for Boyo but couldn't see him, so he spoke instead. "Friends, thank you for attending our meeting tonight at such short notice and I am sorry for the long journey's some of you have had. This though is just the beginning and before our adventure is over, we will have travelled far further than any of you have travelled before." "Well I've flown to Portugal" said Mandy with a note of pride, "but it hurt my ears." Somebody suggested that she should travel by plane next time but this remark was lost in the general hub-bub. "I've been to the Red Moon" giggled a lady in a wheel chair, surrounded by telephones and solutions and with a computer on her lap. It was a Maurice Mk 5 Lap-top and was the envy of everybody present. It could even take photographs in black holes without needing a flash! Vicky decided it was about time that she said something. "Well I don't care where we are going, I just bet that I can get in without queueing or paying admission. I've done it before, haven't I, Bob?" Bob grinned but said nothing as usual, as he was a very shy and retiring sort of person.

Grumpy tried to restore order. "Thank you Ladies for your little jokes but I am trying to be serious." Mandy looked at her shoes and let out a little giggle. "How did that get there?", she exclaimed. I could add here that it was a Welsh sounding giggle but as they sound exactly the same as any other sort of giggle, it would only confuse the issue.

Joan's phone rang yet again. "Hello caller number 210897, who is this calling the JP Help-line?" "Oh hello Balrog, what's the problem? Oh you poor dear, you don't say, well I never. No no, dry those tears, here is what you do." The assembled meeting then heard Joan describe step by step, how to make a pot of tea. When she had finished, her audience were amazed and they all clamoured to know which adventure she had just been describing. "Oh he's not stuck in an adventure at all, he's just never had to make a cup of tea for himself before!"

Grumpy Alf tried to get the audience's attention once again. "Herrummph" he said loudly. He did it again and then wished that he hadn't, as his denture's went flying across the table and landed in Larry Forcefields pint glass. What then truly amazed everyone was when the false teeth drank the remaining half pint, climbed out of the glass and lurched across the table, back into Grumpy Alf's mouth. Grumpy Alf of course, pretended that nothing unusual had happened but he did wish that his teeth would stop hiccupping. Larry was not so impressed. "I'll give that one 6 out of 10" he could be heard muttering and adding "last time I ever ask Ekim to review one of my games. Think I'll just write adventures for the Amstrad from now on. At least they appreciate that you are trying to entertain them." Hic!

The Landlord of "The Rungs" walked across with a full tray of drinks and placed them on the table next to Mandy. "That's lovely isn't it" she said and promptly drank the lot. "Innkeeper" said Grumpy Alf and two people said "yes?" "Err no, I meant to say Landlord" mumbled Grumpy Alf. Why on earth do these adventure people have to give themselves such strange names, he wondered to himself? "Landlord, another round if you please and place the tray down over here next time". Mandy was now beaming at everybody. "You're all getting drunk" she slurred. "You must be, because all your faces are getting blurred."

Grumpy Alf sighed and once again tapped on the table with his make-shift staff. "Ladies and Gentlemen" he began, "I have invited you all here this evening to ask you to join me on a quest. A quest that..

CRASH! The window by which Grumpy Alf was standing suddenly disintegrated and a piece of paper hit Grumpy Alf on the head and he cried out in pain. The fact that a piece of paper could do so much damage was surprising. Perhaps it was the brick that it was attached to? Whatever the cause, there was no doubt that someone was trying to attract Grumpy Alf's attention and had succeeded.

Dimply looked at the piece of paper which had wounded his Master and noted that it was neatly folded. "Perhaps it's a message" he said. He then carefully unfolded the paper and read out aloud "Health Warning. Brick attached! Please turn over." Dimply then stood on his head and read the other side of the note. "It says, if there are any mentions of my characters "Stringbagger or Dumply or Wabbits that can't find their ars'e or such'like in this story, then you'll be hearing from my solicitor. Signed P.Gewwawd (little bruv of Big Ekim, so watch it!)"

Sandra giggled and then suddenly discovered that her glasses needed cleaning which was most opportune at that moment. It managed to put off everybody asking why she had giggled and did she have inside knowledge of this note arriving. Joan however was not so easily diverted. "I met this man once" she announced, "at some show or other. He was looking particularly depressed after being thrashed at pool by our Sandra here. The poor man, believing that his macho status was under threat, challenged me to a wheel chair race. Fine I said, name the time and place. Here and now he replied. Don't be silly, I said, this is a built up area with a speed limit of 30 Mph. How could I possibly race you at such a slow speed?"

"Well the last I saw of him was when he jumped into his Sinclair C5, put on his shades, selected woollens with a quick spin and peddled off straight into an Indian take-away, via the window instead of the door. He was eventually discovered beneath a mountain of poppadums and somehow these have become some sort of fetish for him. He can be found wandering around in an almost trance like state at times, muttering poppadums, poppadums, I want revenge, poppadums, etc etc. A very sad case." As Joan finished talking she then held everybody spell-bound, as she inserted another cigarette into the end of her 24 inch long solid gold cigarette holder. Grumpy Alf blinked an eye and the cigarette lit.

Just at that moment there was a disturbance at the entrance. "But I know these people" an angry voice could be heard saying. "I write to and phone them all regularly" he continued. "I'm Trevor!" In the blinking of an eye, the bar emptied.

Once the rumpus had died down, Grumpy Alf and his party emerged from beneath the table. Grumpy Alf rose up but was defeated before he began. "Who was that?" said Jim. "I've never heard of him before. Now as I've started I'll carry on first the good news I've now completed every adventure ever written for the Amstrad and it's only taken me six month's to do 'em and as I was feeling a bit bored I've now bought a Spectrum but please don't tell that Amster fellow as he's right touchy about that sort of thing Oh hi Bob er didn't see yer there like O heck." Jim's monologue was suddenly interrupted by two burly coppers marching into the bar, spying Jim and saying to each other "that's the smart ass over there, let's do him!" They then proceeded to belt Jim with their plastic truncheons. Lorna asked if she could help and belt him too but was denied. They eventually left, feeling very smug with themselves and saying "that'll teach him to go running around on the beach at 3am in the morning. What's he going to

invent as his excuse this time? Ha ha ha....."

Grumpy Alf had now definitely had enough. "Kneel" he said. Neil the Frob said "yes?" "Oh good grief" replied Grumpy Alf, "I'm so angry I could crush an Ant! Whatever is the point of me trying? Dimply!" he shouted, "we're leaving. Let us depart from here and leave these poor imbecile adventurers to what awaits them. I have tried many times tonight to warn them, but would they listen? No! So let them rot in their own manure. I have tried to tell them that if they don't change the course of history they will be doomed forever to playing graphic arcade type adventures, full of sound effects and music and with very little story line but would they listen? No! So come little yuppie friend, let you and I, return to the golden days of adventuring. We shall teleport back to 1985, when the world was full of text only adventures from Infocom, Level 9, and Magnetic Scrolls was just a rumour. The golden days when nobody knew what a Kylie Monogue was".

Dimply consulted his Filofax. "Do you realise" he said, "that in 1985, there were not any mobile phones, filofax's, or even Neighbours on the tele? If you think that I am willing to return to that sort of degradation, then you've got another thought coming! Mind you, it would take us back to before the Stock Market crash. I could make a killing! Okay, you're on. By the way, who's Stringbagger?" Grumpy Alf thought for a moment and then replied "Oh just some old fart who's never learnt to do magic by blinking his eyes." With that, Grumpy Alf blinked his eyes and they were gone, back to 1985 but via Wigan to collect an errant staff. A pool player, known as Master Peter, was suddenly startled by having his cue snatched from him. He cursed loudly but to no avail. "Just my rotten luck", he fumed. "As soon as I start winning, someone nicks my cue. Sandra will never believe me now."

The adventurers carried on drinking until they realised that their host had left and then they also left, to return to their homes and sleep off their hang-overs. The Landlord finished clearing up and was just about to lock the door, when he heard a motor-bike pull up outside, on one leg.

Bob Adams.

PERSONAL COLUMN

"Can I thank the mystery benefactor who sent me games on 7th Feb (postmarked London). He/she must read Probe. Whoever you are you have me guessing but the least I can do is say THANK YOU VERY MUCH!.....Jim Struthers. Blyth, Northumberland.

I would like to send a Thankyou to Neil Shipman of Bristol who kindly came to my rescue. I was tearing my hair out over Hacker II and Neil kindly went to the trouble of sending me the help page from a magazine which he had seen. So thanks once again, Neil, many thanks for the help.....Terry Checketts, Fittleworth, W. Sussex.

To the Snowfalcon in Iceland. Thank you for the disc. I couldn't understand much of it but it has a great, snazzy tune. I'll do my exercises to it as you suggested!.....Mandy.

THE ADVENTURE THAT GOT ME HOOKED

BY DOREEN BARDON

It all started way back in November 1983. I'd spent hours typing in listings of arcade type games like "Pipeline", "Shootout", "Quasimodo", "Grumpers", "Apple Thief", all from "Sinclair Programs, for my son.

Then I decided to try one called "Escape From Time", a 48K program by Mark Chapman, Bracknell, Berks. I'd read through the print out and had read comments like "I don't see a button", "You don't have any oil", "You stab the mummy and it disintegrates at your feet", "The grease washes off the floor making it clean", and other statements.

This was certainly different to the others I had been used to typing in. So after several hours I eventually came to the "Key Command" word RUN. I kept my fingers crossed and pressed RUN. Would it work? Would I get nonsense in basic etc - NO! Up on the screen came a message:-

"The object of the game is to escape back into your own time through a Time Machine. To fly the machine a programmed micro chip and the Crystal of Power are needed - Good Luck!"

Then came, "You are in a passage, you can go north, south or west."

This was definitely different to what I had been previously playing! I did have one or two minor bugs, but eventually after many hours of de-

bugging it, the "Escape from Time" (version 3) was eventually completed (my first adventure), and the crystal was found and I had returned to my own time.

Did I say my own time - No, I was hooked on finding and searching out torches, ropes, monsters to kill, rescue people, another time era which I cannot now leave.

I then went on to buy adventures such as The Hobbit, Knights Quest and the Arctic series A-G (The first two took well over one year to complete!! But I did it.

Just recently I acquired a game called Fuseman. I thought it was just another Quilled program but after several locations I realised it was the very same game I had started on "Escape from Time". It was revamped on the Quill - more puzzles and locations - but the idea was the same.

I would just like to say that after completing 398 adventures you would think I could do any adventure - I can't, I need help from other adventurers. Adventure Probe and Spellbreaker fill that gap enabling adventurers to get in touch for help etc.

May I use this opportunity now to say thanks to all out there who have helped me. THANK YOU.

Long live Adventure Probe and Spellbreaker for many years to come.

*** FIND THE NAMES & GUESS THE ADVENTURES ***

SIX lucky winners will each receive a SIGNED copy of MIKE GERRARD'S new book entitled ADVENTURES ON THE SPECTRUM which was reviewed recently in Probe. This great little book is invaluable to ALL computer adventurers - not just Spectrum adventurers so EVERYONE can join in. All you have to do is to complete the word search and then fit the names of the characters to the adventure that they appear in. The characters names are numbered so you should write a corresponding numbered list of the adventures that you think they appear in and send it to me to arrive by 20th March. All correct entries (or those who have the greatest number correct) will be put in the hat and six winners will be drawn out and the names announced in the April issue together with the answers. My thanks to DOREEN BARDON for compiling the wordsearch and competition.

F Y C N O B N O D R O M L I
 O R N K C U P O V N I W A Y
 R I I D O A N T M D O I S Z
 F S D T C E S I A U R R A E
 V R L H Z X A H L A L E L D
 N B E Z Q S K A M O G L E E
 I D O Y I M V O R E E R A S
 M N V R F H T A R T A T T M
 E M O A C H N F N J A R Q Y
 H B P P E A T A E N I X D G
 T N H P T D H T C P O M N L
 R L C I O C F S E D J O P A
 A V T P E R A I L A G A N R

- 1 Agaliarept
- 2 Arthemín
- 3 Ashmeard
- 4 Boris
- 5 Chantelle
- 6 Elrond
- 7 Eldin
- 8 Artax
- 9 Fats
- 10 Finn
- 11 Frey
- 12 Fritz Van Noon
- 13 Jared
- 14 Khadi
- 15 Mordon
- 16 Maria
- 17 Mallumo
- 18 Myglar
- 19 Nezzon
- 20 Pacheco
- 21 Pippa
- 22 Ramhotep
- 23 Stripe
- 24 Zaeger
- 25 Titan
- 26 Puck



LET'S MAKE THIS A COMPETITION WITH A RECORD NUMBER OF ENTRIES!!

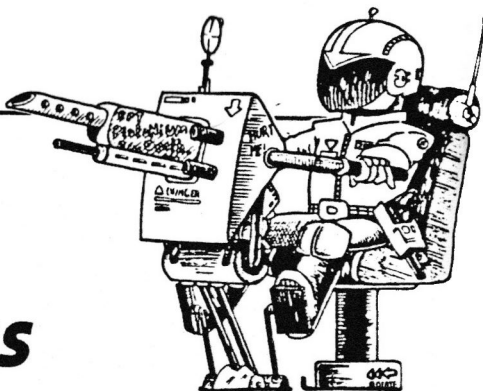
GUESS WHO THIS IS?

The subject of last month's Guess Who was... ME! So at last you all know what your editor looks like. Now you know I wasn't joking about the never ending diet! Quite a few of you were thrown by the Southampton football player clue but the "close overseas connection" was a bit of a give-away. Anyway, all the winning entries were put in the "hat" and the winning name drawn out this month was JANICE CHARNLEY! Congratulations, Janice, you win a free copy of Probe! Watch out for another Guess Who? soon!

Zenobi Software

COMPUTER GAMES

26 SPOTLAND TOPS,
CUTGATE,
ROCHDALE,
LANCASHIRE,
OL12 7NX



16-BIT GAMES

ATARI ST

***** LATEST ADDITIONS TO OUR CATALOGUE *****

'WHIPLASH and WAGONWHEEL'

Written by ULTERIOR MOTIVES, this game takes place in the America of the '50s and features some excellent graphics and very evocative text that both combine to portray a fine picture of the people and places of 'HANTSVILLE', the place where the story unfolds. Play the part of JONATHAN MASTERSON and see if you can discover the 'hidden' secrets of this small town.

'THREE OF THE BEST'

Written by JACK LOCKERBY, this compilation disk contains three of his best tales DOMES OF SHA, HAMMER OF GRIMMOLD and THE MUTANT. Adapted from the original Spectrum versions, these '16-Bit' versions have been greatly enhanced and are worthy of a place in any enthusiasts collection.

'THE JADE STONE'

Written by LINDA WRIGHT, this is a tale of love and friendship and of one woman's struggle to overthrow the evil forces that hold captive her one true love. Assist AMORA to locate the Jade Stone and thus find the means to destroy MALLUMO and in turn free GUY. Full of descriptive text and complemented with some lovely artwork, this game is a joy to play.

Available from ZENOBI SOFTWARE at the realistic price of £7.49p EACH (Inc. P&P)
Overseas orders please add an additional £1 to cover extra postal charges.
ALL orders to be forwarded to ZENOBI SOFTWARE at the above address and ALL cheques, postal orders etc to be made payable to ZENOBI SOFTWARE. All orders will be dispatched within 24 hours of receipt and all prices include for first-class postage and packing.

'MAKE A CAT VERY HAPPY AND PURCHASE AN ADVENTURE GAME FROM ZENOBI SOFTWARE TODAY!'



A NEW ADVENTURE FOR THE 48K SPECTRUM
THE MISER

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DISPATCHES



THE ADVENTURE PROBE LETTERS SECTION

Do you believe in a future for Level 9? Is your Spectrum truly Spectrum-compatible? Have you seen Larry Horsfield? Are there really Amstrad Infocom's available in America? Have you been machine converted yet? Are you The Helper, or do you know his whereabouts? How do you fancy a trip to somewhere really exotic? All this and other bits and pieces too! Read on for full details!!



Balrog Action

Firstly, I've got to say that it's great to see Ken Bond's games get such good reviews. They deserve it, especially as they are free! It's a shame that they are disk only (a decision of Gilsoft which I have never understood), as no access to the disk is actually made during play all the adventure code for THE ISLAND and THE BASE is stored in memory so there is no real reason why they shouldn't work on cassette except that CP/M is needed to load them!

It would be lovely if a machine code programmer could write a patch for PAW so that the games could be made available on cassette. All I think that it would require would be a routine to load the code into the correct memory location, and then PAW would take over. Any budding machine coders out there want to give it a try?

Obviously, the advantage of having them on disk is the quicker loading times, and also that PCW owners (and Spectrum +3 users with a CP/M emulator) can play the games. Perhaps, PAW would have been more successful on the Amstrad if it had had a cassette option. When Gilsoft decided that their system was going to be on CP/M (and

the only reason they did so was because the program was written, not on an Amstrad, but on a CP/M machine), they should have gone the whole hog and incorporated EXTERN routines for loading in graphics and accessing the disk drive. Then, they would have had an adventure creator to rival (almost) those of Infocom and Magnetic Scrolls. These tasks are not too difficult, all it needs is a good machine coder to sit down with the CPC and PAW, and he could have a real money maker on his hands!

I loved the Level 9 interview. I think I would have just lost my nerve with Pete he speaks absolute bullshit at times! I must agree with Paul Rigby, but would also like to add a few of my own points.

I have talked to both Pete and John Austin on a couple of occasions and found that, although Pete was reluctant to reveal the whole story, John was much more forthcoming.

RED MOON was Level 9's biggest seller and, since then, the profits on each of their games have slid downwards so much so that INGRID'S BACK almost made a loss. Hence the reason why SCAPEGHOST does not come with an accompanying thick

manual and all the other usual bumph associated with their later games the manual and box have been excluded in order to maximise profits.

I wholeheartedly agree with Paul Rigby about people buying second games the reason being that the newer Level 9 games are simply not as good LANCELOT was seriously bugged on some formats, and INGRID'S BACK was too cutesy for my tastes. SCAPEGHOST could have been much more atmospherically written. I felt that much of the scarier implications (which gave games like THE LURKING HORROR such an electric atmosphere) were sacrificed for the sake of a few awful jokes (a classic example being the "end of time" puzzle).

Both Infocom and Magnetic Scrolls have also dropped the 8-bit computers, but not the text adventure. Thus, no real fuss has been made about them. As far as I know Anita Sinclair's new system is still text based, and Infocom, although seeming to concentrate on RPG's, are still in the process of changing. Magnetic Scrolls are trying to become more like Infocom used to be, while Level 9 are trying to become the new Sierra-On-Line (as Sierra games make loadsamoney)!

The problem with this is that Sierra have been producing their type of game for several years now, and Level 9 cannot hope that their first Sierra-type game will be better than the present Sierra ones!

Anyway, enough moaning

Concerning the continuing debate about conversions of games from Spectrum to Amstrad. I would, of course, welcome this. If the game is written on GAC, Quill or PAW then it is more or less a straight port across. I will write in the next AMSTRAD ACTION for PAW users to step forward, and I will pass their names on.

I only really know of two at the moment Stuart Whyte and Ken Bond but I am sure there must be others too modest to step forth. Stuart and Ken are both converting games for LARRY HORSFIELD (Stuart MAGNETIC MOON, and Ken AXE OF KOLT). I look forward to reviewing both of these games when they are finished.

Bouquet Box

Stand up DICON PEEKE, and take a bow! Many thanks to you for that fabulous picture for the inlay of IT'S MAGIC! It's miles better than I had dared hope for!

SIMON MAREN

If Patrick Walsh, or anybody else, wants their games converted (especially if using PAW) then get in touch with PROBE and we will see what can be done.

I would also like to argue with JACK LOCKERBY's statement that "Amstrad PAW is not half as versatile as the Spectrum version". I wish he would explain this to me as, on using both versions, I prefer the Amstrad's facility to write everything on a wordprocessor. This allows me to spellcheck my adventure file, format, search and replace with ease as well as swapping blocks of text around. OK, it is disk only, but apart from that the CPC version is every bit as good as the Spectrum one In fact, it is better. It is so much easier writing an adventure on a good word processor as opposed to using a menu driven system!

THE BALROG, Amstrad Action,
Future Publishing Ltd, Beaufort Court,
30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2AP

A Bath Balrog! They do get around, don't

they?

Thanks for your analysis of the state of play regarding Level 9. It's nice to hear some of the background information which rarely gets to the ears of the average adventurer. We're not suprised that RED MOON was their biggest seller. We well remember all the fuss and nonsense which preceded the launch of the game. It was going to be big, it would have loads of characters, it would have a complex magic system, it would only cost £6.95 as well. As a result, adventurers flocked to it in droves. As it was, it turned out to be such a crap game (our opinion), that Level 9's reputation has never recovered fully from it, and adventurers have steadily deserted them with every game since.



Upgrading?

A few months ago, I replaced my 48k Spectrum with a 128k Plus 2. Now I find that a lot of my tapes, which loaded O.K. on the 48k computer, will not load on the 128k machine. This includes all COMPASS software, and about 50% of all GLOBAL GAMES and SOFTEL tapes, including some written specifically for the 128k Spectrum, amongst several others. However, all my ZENOBI and JACK LOCKERBY tapes load perfectly!

Have any other PROBE readers had this problem, and would anybody have any ideas as to how it may be rectified? At the moment, my only recourse is to borrow a 48k machine, when I can, in order to play the games which will run only on it.

**FRANK GRAY, 25 Richhill Crescent,
Belfast, N. Ireland, BT5 6HF**

There were in fact two different Spectrum +2's produced. The first, in a black box, was, more or less, fully compatible with the old Spectrum 48k. The second, in a grey

Appeals Box

I think it would be wonderful if FERGUS McNEILL could write a purpose-built adventure with TERRY PRATCHETT, so that the game did not suffer from the restrictions imposed on THE COLOUR OF MAGIC, whose need to follow the story laid down in the book made it more of a page-turning exercise than a game worthy of FERGUS' talents. The main problem would be convincing TERRY PRATCHETT (or his agent) and, if PROBE readers agree with me, then it would be rather nice if they would write a letter saying so, and send it to me for onward transmission to FERGUS.

HUGH T. WALKER

I am wondering if any PROBE readers can help me. Many years ago, when I first started playing ZORK, there used to be a club somewhere in Hampshire called the ZORK USERS GROUP. They sold all sorts of things to do with INFOCOM games, but folded a long time ago. I remember that one of the things they advertised was a full size colour poster depicting the whole UNDERGROUND EMPIRE of ZORK 1. I would really like to try and get hold of one. Does anyone know where I might buy one?

LIZ AHMEDZAI

box and issued not too long ago, has been christened the +2A and, (you guessed it), it is a lot less than fully compatible with the older Spectrums. As we understand it, there are an awful lot of Spectrum titles that will not run on this machine. Amstrad, to put it mildly, couldn't care less about this. Are we right in thinking that you've got a grey-boxed +2, Frank? If so, there is no cure that we know of for its incompatibilities. Sorry.

Personality Spotting

First of all, may I wish all PROBE readers lots of Happy Adventuring in the 1990's! Secondly, I would like to start a new award scheme, called "Personality Spotter Of The Month". I have decided to do this after reading the January PROBE (Vol 4 Issue 1), in particular the Letters Pages.

In a letter from none other than THE GRUE, he relates his furtive creeping around the COMPUTER SHOPPER SHOW at Ally Pally. Well, Sir GRUE, I suggest you get yourself around to the nearest optician as soon as you can and get that one eye of yours tested! (By the way, was that really you in the KRULL film at Christmas?). The reason for this sound piece of advice is that you stated quite confidently that you spotted me at the aforementioned SHOW. Only trouble is, dear GRUE I wasn't there!!!!

I had intended to go (apologies to Joan Pancott and Bob Adams, if you were looking for me), but my wife works at the weekend and I had arranged for someone to look after my three children for the day. Unfortunately, that someone let me down the very morning of the SHOW, and I was sadly unable to attend. So, it is with the utmost glee that I pronounce THE GRUE as "Personality Spotter Of The Month"!!

Mind you, I'd like to know who this chap THE GRUE saw is! I think he should be really congratulated for being so handsome! There again, if you could see me first thing in the morning, you'd probably offer the guy your condolences!

While I am tapping the keyboard ("computerspeak" for putting pen to paper), I'd like to thank all those people who have written to me to ask that I continue with my PAWS FOR THOUGHT articles. I will be doing some more, but my spare time has been very short over the past few months, and it's hard enough finding the time to

work on my adventures. I must say sorry to DAVE HAVARD and others who have asked for routines involving the EXTERN command, but the fact is that this involves knowledge of Spectrum Basic and/or machine code, and I am a complete moron when it comes to this side of computing! Future articles will appear on an occasional, rather than monthly, basis so please bear with me. I could still do with some ideas for topics to be covered other than EXTERN and graphics, which I don't use either!

Before I finish, apologies to all those Commodore owners who have seen my advert in PROBE and are eagerly awaiting the release of a C64 version of THE AXE OF KOLT. Unless there is a C64 owner out there who is willing to undertake the conversion, my games will NOT be appearing on that machine! I did buy a C64 with the specific intention of doing such conversions myself, but I have simply not had the time, and I doubt if I ever will have! In fact, I have now sold the computer rather than have it sitting at home doing nothing. So, if there is a C64 owner reading this, who can use THE QUILL or GAC, and would like to attempt converting my games, would they please contact me. The good news for Amstrad owners is that all my adventures are being converted for that machine at this moment (disk only, I think).

LARRY HORSFIELD. 40 Harvey Gardens, Charlton, London, SE7 8AJ

Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Poor old GRUE! It would seem that ancient age and senility are beginning to catch up with him! Those razor-keen eyes seem to have lost their piercing edge, and can no longer see beyond the end of his nose. Unless no, surely not unless there are actually TWO Larry Horsfields out there! But, that's too horrible a thought to contemplate!!

Quote Box

They unlocked another door, the rivetted padlock as big as Arthur's feet, which led into a children's hell. A place of ugly, subnormal youth which held beings and miseries such as we thought lived on into the twentieth century only in social history books. A rank odour of faeces, urine and polish; rows of dirty high-sided cots within whose confines, dreadful and dim (for the windows were small and high and seemed all to face north), lay lost living things, deranged and crippled children, unloved, forsaken, forgotten; cotted forever into an isolation that deprived them of touch or contact; their eyes staring out or staring in; some of their limbs and heads moving back and forth, back and forth, in the filth of their beds, which a later generation of medical workers would recognise as the movements of psychotic boredom.

Arthur, sitting twisted in the wheelchair they pushed him in, stared out at this infernal scene with a fear made worse by the sight of an empty cot, waiting at the far end of the ward. He stared at the inmates he passed and saw that some were his own kind - congenital idiots! - their limbs constantly moving in an uncontrolled roundel. Past sickening incontinence they took him, through cries and screams. Near monsters enough like himself to make a nightmare live; the bulbous set of their staring eyes ... the audible slaving of huge tongues and mouths that puffed out sput ... the red sores upon their legs and backs ... all real. They lived and stared at him from a world that he sensed would inexorably become his own.

As he passed them by, one only seemed to see him: the face yellow and long, the eyes staring, a hand reaching out towards him through the bars of a cot, and a noise that Arthur knew instinctively expressed interest and curiosity. Arthur would have shrunk away from that cadaverous hand if he had been able, but as its fingers touched his leg the nurse said, "Leave him, Frank, go on, get down. He's not interested in you." And Frank, named as a human it seemed, lay down like a dog.

Arthur's own grey eyes were the only mirror of his desolate, frightened mind, but none observed him with charity or kindness. The nurses took his shocked silence for indifference; his indifference for idiocy. So with no thought of offering comforting words or gentle touches, they brought him to that empty urine-smelling cot he had seen, raised him up and lowered him in. They had put him in his place in Back Ward. Then the worst thing of all: they walked away and left him.

SKALLAGRIGG by William Horwood, 1987. Published in paperback by Penguin Books at £4.50

Infocom-ing Again

Good news for CPC and PCW owners. On NIC RUMSEY's recommendation, I phoned up a company called COMSOFT in Coldstream, Scotland and asked if they had any Infocom titles in stock. They had sold out but "we're getting some more from The

States in a few months time". The guy on the phone told me that although CASTLE COMPUTERS bought out all ACTIVISION U.K.'s Infocom stock, you can still get CPC titles in the USA (which I find very hard to believe, but I pray he's right), but only in quantities of 500+ per title. I took this news with a pinch of salt! If they don't sell

Infocom games for the CPC in the UK, they're hardly likely to have stocks in America, where the machine never really caught on! But, I will wait a couple of months, and then get back to COMSOFT just in case!

If COMSOFT are wrong (as I suspect they might be), could I ask if the following is legal or not (I don't want FAST on me)! As I said above, it is more or less impossible to buy Infocom titles on the CPC, and yet, through SPECIAL RESERVE, I see such titles as ZORK and MOONMIST available for as little as £3.99 for the CBM64. If I bought the games as Commodore versions, then chucked the CBM64 disk out and replaced it with a CPC copy would this be legal? The reason I am asking is because I'm not strictly doing any company out of the sale of the game (as I have bought an original). Please could you tell me whether this is legal or not as I am seriously considering doing it if COMSOFT are wrong about being able to import titles.

Could I now ask for some assistance? As some of you may know I am converting Larry Horsfield's game MAGNETIC MOON to the Amstrad from the Spectrum 128k version (I was quite impressed that the 128k version fits into the 464). Anyway, I have come across a problem which is mentioned in the PAW manual:-

When accessing the Process tables, the word values are always matched. Therefore, you should not normally use word values in Process 0 and 1. This is a very important difference In the Spectrum version, words can be used as comments and to position entries within the table In the CP/M version they should not be used for those purposes they should only be used when the word value is relevant.

Could somebody explain this paragraph to me, as I haven't a clue what it means (and MAGNETIC MOON doesn't seem to work,

even though it is a, more or less, direct conversion)!

STUART J. WHYTE, The Gables, 53 Ridgeway Road, Timperley, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 7HL

Er, excuse us, Stuart, but was that second last paragraph actually English as we know it? We're totally confused by it! However, we are sure that there are others to whom it will be crystal clear and the answer will probably be winging it's way towards you before very much longer.

It may be that lots of Infocom titles were converted to run on the CPC in advance of the machines launch in the USA. When the machine failed to sell, the games also failed to sell. Result lots of Amstrad Infocoms sitting on warehouse shelves! It's a thought, isn't it?



Converters Co-Operative?

On the subject of conversion of adventures, as discussed in the letters pages, I would be more than willing to help with this. Unfortunately, I only have a 48k Spectrum (probably the best served machine for homegrown adventures anyway), but it all helps.

I have Gull, GAC and PAW, which I have never actually used in earnest. I have an adventure half-finished, but got bogged down trying to produce graphics! I could also have a go at converting BASIC programs (possibly to assembler in order to squeeze larger adventures into 48k.

I note from your comment that you retyped the data when you converted adventures previously, which surprised me. I had assumed, in my naivety, that the database could be transferred by the computer in some way when a utility such as GAC or

PAW had been used.

Could we not try to automate the process in some way? Or has this been tried and failed? Thinking about how to go about it, the following springs to mind.

I would think that the most sensible means of transferring data between different computers would be to use an RS232 link. The Spectrum allows 8-bit transfer, but I have a suspicion that other machines may not. We could get around this anyway. I should imagine that data, like room exits and so on, are held in coded form, which would entail converting the format where necessary. Text could simply be copied unchanged. Problem areas like screen control codes would have to be deleted, or marked for later manual editing.

If the adventure writing systems cannot read and interpret an ASCII file, we would have to write a utility to do the conversion work needed, but if it were written in, say, C this wouldn't take too long, and would be largely machine independent. It may even be practical to write it in BASIC, if the processes required are reasonably simple. The problem of having up to ten different conversion profiles (Spectrum to C64, Spectrum to Amstrad, etc.) would be avoided if we were to convert to a common exchange format first, and then re-convert to the required format(s).

Although this would take a certain amount of organisation and effort, and involve a fair number of adventurers, the adventure world as a whole would greatly benefit. Another plus would be that converted programs should need only minimal testing as directions allowed, spellings, etc. will all be copied faithfully from the original.

COLIN SHAPER, 112 Woodland Avenue, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex CM13 1HL

Holy Macaron! More English that we can't understand a word of. Somebody check out the cover of this mag and make sure we haven't picked up a copy of ADVENTURE CODER by mistake, will ya?

Seriously though, Colin, we're no experts but we tend to think the things you propose would be a lot more difficult to carry out in practice than you imagine. Older and wiser heads will no doubt correct us if we're wrong! As for converted games requiring only minimal playtesting you haven't been playtesting for Level 9 lately, have you?



Exotic Conventions

I have been interested to see comments about the ACL, and I'm very pleased that Henry Mueller has refunded Gordon Inglis' money. It's most interesting that references are still quite often being made to the ACL Awards Ceremony, where a good time was had by all. This leads me to wonder whether adventurers would welcome other opportunities to meet each other, or whether perhaps we would all prefer to maintain an air of mystery with regard to our respective ages and appearances! I must admit that Jackl and I attended the ACL thing with some trepidation, thinking that we would be the only people there who were over 25 and female! I'll name no names, but our fears were totally unfounded, as the only people who fitted our expectations were the crew from Level 9. As it was, they turned out to be so charming that I nearly forgave them for giving up on the BBC 32k, little knowing what was to come later. Anyway, back to the point, maybe we could have a PROBE Convention one day somewhere really exotic!

Finally, may I suggest that whenever attending any future computer shows we all wear large badges saying "LONG LIVE

PROBE", so that we can recognise each other, and another saying that "I AM NOT LARRY HORSFIELD" for the benefit of the one-eyed amongst us!

**SUE ROSEBLADE, 79 Ridgeway,
Eynesbury, St Neots, Cambridgeshire,
PE19 2RA**

We think that a PROBE Convention would be an absolutely smashing idea and we would love to see it happen! However, it would require a fair bit of organising and administrating in order to get it off the ground. Feel like taking it on, Sue?



Old Adventurers Never Die ----

It is a whole year since I did any creative writing (although from what I hear about myself, there are those who would argue that I have never written creatively about anything!) One friend did point out that as I seem to have had more adventure fanzines/magazines shot out from under me than John Wayne had horses, then it would be a kindness if I refrained from writing for PROBE as he rather likes it, and would prefer for it to continue!

Considering that the first review I wrote was for the April issue of MICROADVENTURER, in the year when Scott Press pulled the plug on it after the March edition, perhaps I should stop now? I'll tell you what I'll carry on, and you just close your eyes!

By the way, the adventure under review was CASTLE BLACKSTAR, and as it was a favourable review, and CASTLE BLACKSTAR hardly got a mention anywhere else, I wonder if it would have fared any better if MICROADVENTURER had managed to stagger on for just one more month? Anyone who hasn't played it, should try to get hold of a copy as it is an excellent game in the

grand tradition of text adventures, and is living proof that you do not need to "run carefully through the woods stopping only to pick all the yellow flowers except the buttercups" in order to become absorbed into a magical landscape where the cares of the real world pale into insignificance in comparison with the need to overcome well, that would be telling! Yep! Life is possible in adventuredom with only verb/noun input with neither an adverb nor a graphic in sight a point which I once had the temerity to make to Ms Scrolls on the one occasion that I met her. Oooh! She was cross! Well, it was at a PCW Show and she was showing off the wondrous plant potting parser and graphics of THE PAWN in its post-QL Atari ST incarnation and I was wearing a Press badge, so I may have appeared as a threat with my reactionary ideas that the gameplay and plot were more important. Anyway, 'tis all history now and we are all, of course, aware that THE PAWN is the best game since oh dear! since, say, LORD OF THE RINGS!

Although adventuredom has changed since I first stumbled into it by accident, armed only with my Spectrum, a love of fantasy and my Tolkien Society membership card (I really wanted to try roleplaying, but didn't know anyone else daft enough to try it with me and computers don't tell tales!), and I often feel like a dinosaur, overtaken by evolution and unable to come to terms with current trends, I am not a total Luddite. For example, I thoroughly enjoyed DUNGEON MASTER and BLOODWYCH, oh! and ULTIMA 4 and PHANTASIE 1, 2 and 3 and well, it's roleplaying, isn't it, and the graphics take on a new meaning, or rather, a new significance since they are essential to the game rather than (irrelevant) window-dressing.

**HUGH WALKER, 7 Burnet Avenue,
Burpham, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 1YD**

Comment Box

It may seem to you that this month's Quote Box has very little to do with adventures or adventuring. But there are two very good reasons for bringing it to your attention.

SKALLAGRIGG is a story about physically disabled people. About people who are full of life and full of fun. About intelligent minds trapped in bodies that won't obey their commands. About what it is like for such a mind to lay, bored and frustrated, for long, long days, just staring through the bars of a cot in the Back Ward of some monstrous Victorian sanatorium. About what it is like to be considered stupid because you can't get your mouth to say the thoughts that are in your head. SKALLAGRIGG is about these things.

SKALLAGRIGG is also about how computers can help the physically handicapped to better cope with the demands of everyday life to communicate more easily to express themselves more clearly to achieve goals and ambitions that would normally be impossible for them.

Furthermore, it is about how one handicapped young lady finds the means of expressing her thoughts, her feelings, her love of life through the writing of computer adventure games! Games that lift the player out of themselves and take them on fantastic voyages of discovery. Games that stimulate the player both mentally and emotionally. Smashing games, in fact. So, if you believe that life really is for living if you believe that computers can help to enhance the quality of that life and if you believe that the adventure game could become a form of art then you should read SKALLAGRIGG It will open your eyes It will make you feel ashamed It will make you feel proud It will fill you with joy It will make you weep with sadness. It's really a very good book.

The other reason for quoting from SKALLAGRIGG has to do with the text itself.

Back in the days when 8 bit computers were all we had and the text adventure was all the rage, game authors were always promising us wonderfully atmospheric games with reams of text description true interactive fiction, in fact just as soon as they had more memory to work with. Well, the 16 bit machines and high capacity disk drives have been with us for some time now but whatever happened to the wonderful text games we were promised?

Ah, times have changed, you say? Text isn't where it's at anymore. We'd have to agree with you but we still can't help longing for a good, meaty, atmospheric text adventure. We feel like we've been cheated by progress somehow. Just read the passage from SKALLAGRIGG does it adequately convey a description of a dark, forbidding Victorian asylum? Does it adequately evoke the feeling of hopeless desperation that the inmates of such places must have felt? Do you think that any kind of graphic game could convey the same meaning using just pictures alone? Could Sierra do it? Mindscape? Level 9? We don't think so!

We're not trying to turn the clock back far from it but we would like to see a little more balance. Full screen graphics and icon-driven command interfaces seem to

Well, we'll be danged! Welcome back to the world of the living. Hugh! It's good to see your name appearing in PROBE at last! Anyway, don't worry about PROBE going down the tubes there's about as much chance of that happening as there is of two Tuesdays occurring in the middle of next week! Even John Wayne eventually found a horse capable of carrying him off into the sunset, you know!

Now then about this writing interesting that you've played BLOODWYCH PROBE hasn't published a review of that yet and DUNGEON MASTER too now if there was an article comparing and contrasting the style and merits of those two games, we think we'd be very interested in reading it and PHANTASIE 1, 2 and 3 also well, it's been an awful long time since PROBE had a regular RFG column of any description!

Are you getting our drift, Hugh?



Comment Box (Contd)

feature in just about every single game issued these days. Surely, there must be a little room available in the market for the odd text adventure?!

Having said that, is there an adventure game author in existence who can write as emotively and lucidly as William Horwood has in SKALLAGRIGG? Are all game authors primarily programmers at heart, and therefore incapable of progressing beyond the trite phrase and the well worn themes? Is there such a thing as an artistically creative adventure author?

What do you think? Write in and tell us we're waiting to hear from you.

Reward Box

Each month, DISPATCHES will award a small prize to the sender of the letter which appeals to us most for whatever reason!!

The prize will be a free issue of PROBE or, if the winner prefers, the equivalent value in "full solutions" from Mandy's extensive archives.

A small token but, nevertheless, a heartfelt one!

It is therefore with great pleasure that we announce that the winner of this month's WRITER'S REWARD is SUE ROSEBLADE, for that lovely crack about "I'm not Larry Horsfield badges for the benefit of the one-eyed amongst us." Oh, how we did chortle and chuckle over that one! (And we're pretty sure The Grue did too!)

Congratulations, Sue and thank you!

(Be sure to let Mandy know which prize you would like).

A Writer Writes

I would like to express my thanks to those thoughtful PROBE readers who have recommended our adventures to the newcomers in our ranks. A special mention must go to DOREEN BARDON, JUNE ROWE, JOAN WILLIAMS, and, of course, our old friend JOHN BARNSLEY. There may be others that I haven't mentioned, but those named above are those that crop up the most in letters, telephone calls and, even, visits to the house!

During the time that Roger (Betts) and I have been turning out our modest efforts, there have only been a few occasions when the games went astray/got stolen, or we didn't get paid. The one time that a parcel

Apology Box

It has been brought to our attention that the reproduction of DISPATCHES in some of last month's issue of PROBE left a little to be desired. In fact, some passages were virtually unreadable.

We are extremely sorry about this. All we can say in our defence, is that, in their original A4 size, all the pages were perfectly legible. However, we failed to take adequately into account the effect that photocopied reduction to A5 would have on them. In fact, the published pages would have been even worse if Mandy hadn't carried out extensive "plastic surgery" to save them.

We do apologise most profusely to those whose enjoyment was spoiled. However, we have learned from our mistakes and presentation will be improved in future.

But, even as we speak, word is reaching us that the adverse reaction to last month's DISPATCHES goes beyond the poor readability. Comments like "harsh" and "opinionated" are coming through. Obviously, it's too late to discuss these points this issue, but please rejoin us next month for the full story!

of 8 games was never delivered in Portugal, I received compensation from The Post Office. I always get a proof of posting certificate when sending a parcel overseas. You can only use the Recorded Delivery service in the U.K.

Then I sent a parcel of 20 games to an address in London. After three weeks they hadn't arrived, so I immediately sent off another 20, and contacted The Post Office. The original parcel was sent back to me

three months later with an apology from The Post Office.

On the non-payment side, I received a plaintive cry from a schoolboy that the tape he had ordered had not arrived. Since I hadn't received an order from him, that was understandable. Anyway, I sent off the tape and six weeks later his postal order arrived.

Then, I sent off a parcel of games to a young lady in the Midlands area. Her cheque for £12.95 bounced and, in spite of 2 letters and a telephone call, she still hasn't kept her part of the deal. Have you, C.Y.?

So, all in all, I reckon that Roger and I have been extremely lucky in that our games are still finding a market, and to all those kind folks who buy our games - THANKS!

JACK LOCKERBY (River Software),
44 Hyde Place, Aylesham, Canterbury,
Kent CT3 3AL

We print your letter, Jack, in order to demonstrate to those who have yet to sample the delights of homegrown software, the kind of service which they can expect from our better adventure houses. If only more commercial enterprises could demonstrate such concern for the needs of the customer!

It would also be nice if we could embarrass C.Y. into coming up with the cash she owes you. What do you think, C.Y.?

Credits Box

DISPATCHES is produced on an Atari 520STFM computer, using Timeworks Desktop Publisher, 1st Word, Fontkit Plus 2, and a variety of public domain fonts and clipart. The finished product is output on a Star LC10 9 pin dot matrix printer.

DO NOT OPEN:



MONSTER INSIDE!

Official (Disk) Secrets

A warning to anyone currently thinking of joining OFFICIAL SECRETS/CONFIDENTIAL. I joined several months ago, only to find that they had recently changed their policy regarding cassette sales. They now only sell disks and, hence, part of the reason for my joining was lost (I own a 128k Spectrum). In addition, the magazine deals almost exclusively (in the 3 issues that I received anyway) with software for the 16 bit computers. So, although it is well written, and quite entertaining, it was not too relevant to me. Having said that, they were fair enough to return my subscription without any quibbles.

BILL TAYLOR, 68 Rosebery Road,
Norwich, Norfolk NR3 3NA

Thanks Bill! Some useful information for any 8-bitters who might have been tempted by those magazine adverts. Is this another sign that the commercial side of 8 bit software is beginning to die? Still, it was nice that they refunded your money "without a quibble". Perhaps some of the commercial enterprises are beginning to learn a little!

**MAILED IN
50,000 B.C.**



Who Was That Masked Man?

The long-since promised remix of STREET PATROLLER is now ready, and those who were due a free copy of this game should have received it by now. With one notable exception. Somebody who bought the original from me has since moved, and I'm not totally sure who it is. I would like this person to get in touch with me directly and claim their copy of the game. The person in question wrote for PROBE in its earlier days under the pseudonym THE HELPER, and moved to Scotland. That's all I know. Is this you? If so, you know what to do. No fibbers please, as I will be able to check up on you! Thank you.

SIMON MAREN, 81 Beech Road, Gillway,
Tamworth, Staffordshire B79
8QQ

THE HELPER!!! Now there's a real blast from the past! Who was he, and where did he go? Our curiosity is aroused!! Perhaps we could launch an appeal PROBE VOL 4: THE SEARCH FOR THE HELPER! Any persons having information, please get in touch.

Last Box

The best part of adventuring is the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences between fellow adventurers. This is how we get to know each other how we get to make new friends how we learn to overcome the rough spots! By pooling our resources, we add to the pleasure we each receive from our adventuring.

DISPATCHES is **YOUR** Letter Section in **YOUR** magazine! Without you, neither would exist. So, please, write in to us at the usual PROBE address.

HELP WANTED

"Could someone please tell me how to keep the hamster in WINTER WONDERLAND from running away when leaving the pet shop where I bought it? I need it for passing by the Wompra later in the game."

OLAV REINERT, Johs.V.Jensensvej 34, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark.

"To say I'm stuck is an understatement: Is there anybody out there who can help me with Dream Software's 1984 PUB QUEST. I have managed to visit the grand sum of 9 locations and haven't got a clue as to progressing any further (now I'm embarrassed). Any help, particularly with starting would be most appreciated. Alternatively can anyone suggest a more befitting fate than taking a flight to Lima and dropping it over the Andes?"

DAVID DOWDALL, 3 Edinburgh Mews, Tilbury, Essex, RM18 8EN

"Can someone help me to get out of the canyon in the desert in ACHETON. I've jumped off the cliff and filled the bottle from the spring?"

MARK WHITE, Smithy Cottage, Crocketford Rd, Milton, Crocketford, Dumfries, DA2 8QT.

"I completed THE HERMITAGE and now I am playing the newer two part version which doesn't finish at the cave with the Hermit, but goes on past there. It is almost the same up until that point except the chalk is not in the burning hut. There is a flint there instead and the book you get from the alcove is written in Runes so I presume you have to find a way to translate these in part 11. I haven't been able to get that far yet though as shortly after leaving the Hermit I keep getting killed. Can somebody please help me? Also in ROBYN HODE I have completed it but with only 70% There is a room in Nottingham Castle that I cannot get into. Can anyone help me there please. Perhaps a map of part two would help me if anyone has one?"

MARGO PORTEOUS, 1 Marina Drive, Sponden, Derby, DE2 7AF

"Please could someone give me some help (or a solution) for the following adventures that I am stuck on? ASHKERON (Spec 48k), BERMUDA PROJECT (Atari ST) and DEMON KNIGHT (Commodore 64)."

PARASKEVAS TSOURINAKIS, 85 Botassi Str, 18537 Piraeus, Greece

"Does anyone know of any disk adventures for the Spectrum, apart from Level 9 and Magnetic Scrolls games, I know of only The Hermitage and Jekyll and Hyde."

JIM FISHER, 43 Earn Cresc, Dundee, Scotland, DD2 4BS

ASK GRUE!

Worthy Grue, we all know that a Grue is coloured Black, Black, Black and Red and Black but which part of your anatomy is the Red part? I strongly suspect it is to the rear of your body but will, of course, take your word as gospel. Signed: Liberated of London

Dear Liberace. If you hadn't sold your Infocom collection you would realise that a Grue is coloured Black, Black, Black, Black, Black and Black and Black. I think that you must be getting yourself confused between a Grue and a certain primate's B*M, have you been on holiday to Gibraltar recently? If these hallucinations continue do not make any further visits to the zoo and take up meditation as a hobby instead of computing but with no Infocom games to play you probably have already taken up meditation, is the wall starting to become interesting yet?! Signed: The GRUE!

IN-TOUCH

BBC SOFTWARE FOR SALE: Loads of tape games available for the BBC, including adventures and arcade games, some of the Level 9 type. Very cheap prices. Please send S.A.E for list to JAMIE MURPHY, Bolahaul House, Llanguenor, Carmarthen, Dyfed

CITIZEN 120D PRINTER FOR SALE: Set up for Commodore 64. Only 9 months old. £75 plus postage. Please telephone if interested: JENNY GUTHRIE, Leeds 757332.

FOR SALE - NO LONGER REQUIRED: As I have now sold my last INFOCOM game I no longer require my Anti-Grue protection and can offer the equipment below at a very reasonable discount: Three Army Surplus (Ex World War Two) Searchlights. One Diesel Fuelled Electrical Generator for the above. One Sonic Switch tuned to a GRUE growl or belch. All associated wiring, mountings and instructions. Please write with offers to CLIVE SWAIN, 15 Bannister Close, Greenford, Middx, UB6 0SW.

AMSTRAD DISCS FOR SALE: Scapeghost £7. Time and Magik £7. Gnome Ranger £7. Driller £6. PETE SIMPSON, 5 Kelsterne Close, Levan Park, Yarm, Cleveland, TS15 9SX. Telephone 0642 781837.

AMSTRAD CASSETTES FOR SALE: Mindshadow and Seabase Delta £4 for both inc P&P. Write to JIM STRUTHERS, 112 Disraeli St, Cowpen Quay, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 1JB.

AMSTRAD ADVENTURES FOR SALE: Panic Beneath the Sea £1.99 tape £4.50 disc. City for Ransom £1.99 tape £4.50 disc. Project Annihilation £2.50 tape (text only) or £4.50 disk (with graphics). Write to JOHN PACKHAM, 60 Hightown Towers, Warburton Rd, Southampton, Hants, SO2 6HH

ATARI ST SOFTWARE FOR SALE: Joan of Arc (Graphic adventure - partly animated). Heroes of the Lance (V.Good RPG). Sundog (Graphic adventure). Carrier Command (Simulation/Strategy). Hostages (SAS simulation with animated graphics). All at £6 each plus £2 for packing and first class recorded delivery. Please telephone for availability to CLIVE SWAIN 01 864 7156.

LOST: One Rainbow Turtle. Last seen following a parlour magician up the stairs in a southern tower of the Castle of Krill. If found, contact Neptune, Overlord, Great Inland Sea, GEU1 FRD.

PROGRAMMERS NEEDED to work on a new strategy game on the Spectrum. Please contact GARRY SHORHOUSE, Telephone 09073 74764.

INFOCOM SWAP 'N BUY: STEWART WHYTE, 53 Ridgeway Rd, Timperley, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 7HL is looking for any Infocoms which may be available. Stewart doesn't mind duplications of adventures but is not interested in tape based as he has an Amstrad 6128. Anyone interested in selling rather than swapping please write as Stuart wishes to increase his collection.

FOUND: One Rainbow Smudge! Found under the hammer in the room of the Infernal Machine! If the owner would contact The Seeker Of The Name, Attempts will be made to unstick it from its current spot!

AMSTRAD CPC464 SOFTWARE WANTED: Gnome Ranger, Ingrid's Back, Book of the Dead, Snow Queen, Hunchback, Questprobe III, Jack the Ripper and Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less. Please write with price required to JIM STRUTHERS, 112 Disraeli St, Cowpen Quay, Blyth, Northumberland.

SPECTRUM TAPE SOFTWARE WANTED: Future Tense, The Raven (128K), Spy Trek, Time Thief, Project X. I will be willing to pay up to £3 each so please write to CLAUDIO BALZI, Via Monte Amiata 5, 20149 Milano, Italy

ATARI ST SOFTWARE WANTED: Football Manager 2, Super League Soccer, Iron Lord. (originals only) swap 1 for 1 from Beyond Zork, Blackscar Mountain, Robocop, Deflektor, Licence to Kill, Laser Squad. Please contact ERIC STEWART, 18 Vatisker, Back, Isle of Lewis, PA86 OJS

AMSTRAD CPC ADVENTURES WANTED: Adventureland, Al-Strad, Ashkeron, Book of the Dead, Brainless, Castle Dracula, Castle of Eagles, Circus, Corruption, Dark Sceptre, Dead-enders, Die you Vicious Fish, Jekyll and Hyde, Druids Moon, Federation, Fish, Flash Back, Hampstead, HRH, Ice Station Zero, Ingrid's Back, Island of Riddles, Jack the Ripper, Last Believer, Lost Legacy of Xim, Mad Jocks Family, Magic Sword, Magicians Ball, Malevolence, Mandragore, Mansion, Mayday, Mission One, Not a Penny More, Old Scores, Return to Doom, Rick Hanson, Royal Quest, Savage Island, Secret of St Brides, Shrewsbury Key, Snow Queen, Teacher Trouble, Treasure Tunnels, Videoworld. Also, has anybody got or knows of an emulator that allows Spectrum adventures to run on a CPC? Any information gratefully received. Please contact BOB ADAMS, 81 Uplands, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 7EH. Prestel Mbx:011156232

KINGS AND QUEENS OF THE CASTLE

PAUL HARDY, 33 Fir Tree Drive, Wales, Sheffield, S31 6LZ can offer help with BATTLETECH, BEYOND ZORK, EUREKA, IMAGINATION, INCREDIBLE HULK, INGRIDS BACK, JOURNEY, KENTILLA, KNIGHT ORC, KOBAYASHI NARU, RED MOON, RIGELS REVENGE, ROBO CITY, SEABASE DELTA, SPYTREK, TOWER OF DESPAIR, VELNORS LAIK, VENOM, WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH, ZZZZ also can offer some help on partly completed: ZORK ZERO, BARDS TALE 1, ELITE, SWORDS OF TWILIGHT, LEGEND OF THE SWORD, MYTH, ARTHUR, MANHUNTER - NEW YORK, FISH, SIN CITY and DUNGEON MASTER.



JACKIE HOLT, 13 Montague Street, Bulwell, Nottingham, NG6 8EU can offer help with ATLANTIS, BRIAN THE BOLD, THE BIMBLES, BASQUE TERRORISTS, CURSE OF THE 7 FACES, COUNTDOWN, COLDITZ, CRYSTAL OF CHANTIE, EXTRICATOR, FOUR MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT, GREEDY GULCH, INSP FLUKEIT, IN SEARCH OF ANGELS, JASON AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE, JADE STONE, L'AFFAIR VERA CRUZ, LABOURS OF HERCULES, MINDSTONE, MORON, MURDER OFF MIAMI, MURDER HUNT, PRIDE OF THE FEDERATION, PREHISTORIC ADVENTURE, PHAROHS TOMB, RIGELS REVENGE, RONNIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD, SERFS TALE, TO THE MANOR BOURNE, TWICE SHY, VALLEY OF THE KINGS, WIZ BIZ, ZZZZ.

MORE HELP WANTED

"In JADE NECKLACE can anyone tell me just how to get a credit card from the bank manager? I have the bankers draft which doesn't seem to help but I can't get a reference. In LIFEBOAT, how do I capture the 3 mice? The cat just keeps eating them. Where do I get a 2nd gold yenom to play the Lottery game? I have one from the Sandy Cove."

JENNY WHEELER, 115 Hythe Crescent, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 3TZ

AMSTRAD/XT INFORMATION

Mr MAURICE PANCOTT has kindly written in to make a point about the Amstrad problem which was mentioned in the Editorial last issue. Maurice points out that "Amstrad 1512 and 1640 are XT machines i.e. they use the Intel 8086 processor chip. PC's which use the Intel 80286 chip are usually referred to as AT machines. I would estimate that the home computer market probably carries more XT's than any other type of IBM compatible PC and I find it hard to believe that the game mentioned was produced for the AT only, it doesn't make sense economics-wise. I therefore suspect there are other reasons for not being able to run the game on the AMSTRAD/XT. Possibilities are:

1. Some slight incompatibility with IMB although Amstrad have always claimed almost 100% compatibility in the past.
2. The game is on a High Density (1.2 Mbyte) floppy disk, the XT only read Double Density (360 Kbyte) floppies.
3. The game has been loaded on to the Hard Disk - some will only run from the Floppy Disk drive.
4. Video monitor incompatibility - some games will only run satisfactorily on a colour screen - they do not like mono.

I would be very interested to hear if you get a technical explanation to this unusual problem."



GRUESOME BLUES

Are you Gruesome tonight?
Is your Grue suit too tight?
Are your trouser seams falling apart?
Do you constantly pray,
For an ever dark day?
So you can further still your black art?
Do the bones in your parlour
Seem empty and bare?
Are you viciously scratching
The fleas in your hair?
Are your eyes filled with pain?
'Cos it's daytime again!
Tell me Grue,
Are you gruesome tonight?



By Ant (The Pelvis) Crusher.
"Chew on that Grue baby!"

DOCTORS ORDERS

By JIM STRUTHERS

Just suppose your doctor was also an adventure player. What, do you suppose, would go through his mind while treating his patients? Perhaps a typical surgery would go something like this.....

- Doctor, I need a Tetanus injection / Red Moon.
Doctor, I'm having a nervous breakdown! / Aftershock.
Doctor, I'm run down / Fistfull of Blood Capsules.
Doctor, I'm pregnant and I'm not married / Don't Panic, Panic Now!
Doctor, I've developed a rash! / Virus.
Doctor, I've got foot odour. / Fish.
Doctor, I had a Chinese meal last night,
I think I've been poisoned. / Volcano of Raka Tua.

HINTS AND TIPS

ONE DARK NIGHT

BY MARGO PORTEOUS (Spectrum)

Don't examine the logs in the dining hall till you have finished visiting the maze under the winery and the chicken coop, as the mouse can't follow you back from the dark drab room when you pull the torch holder and you will need him near the end of the adventure.

AGATHA'S FOLLY

BY ALF BALDWIN (Spectrum)

Examine the window in the kitchen to see the hairgrip. When you fumble getting it, tear the bardboard box into strips to push it out from the gap between the sink and the wall.

Examine the hall to see the cupboard. Open it and look inside to find the boat and the notepad.

Examine the fireplace at the east end of the living room to see the bellows and the mantelpiece to find the house and car keys.

Feel the desk in the study to find the hidden button and press it to release the drawer lock.

Be ready to answer the door when visitors call. You will miss scoring points if you are not there to hear what they have to say.

Examine the ceiling on the landing to see the door to the loft.

Examine the wallpaper in the small bedroom, you can just make out some scribbles under the top layer. Examine the bath to find a sponge, wet it and soak the wallpaper. This will only remove a few pieces, so get the flat rock from the path outside the kitchen door, and scrape the rest of the wallpaper off to reveal the scrib-

bles.

DUNGEON MASTER

BY SANDRA SHARKEY, JASON DEANE and MANDY (Atari ST)

Using WARCRY helps to increase Priest Levels. It also scares away the water demons found on level 11. To tackle the Warplag Triffids on level 12 use the freeze life box and attack with Vorpai Blades. The Chaos Knights can be tackled if you adopt a fight and retreat method. They rarely follow you round a corner so back off and sleep to restore health etc before going back for more fighting. Use Vorpai Blades on the Fire Demons on level 13 but it is wise to use a Group Shield or Fire Shield before getting too close to them. The best method of killing the Dragon on Level 14 is to let him follow you to the stairs and then throw everything you have got at him in the way of magic and beat a hasty retreat up the stairs to recover before going down for another attack. Be warned that it could take a considerable amount of magic to kill him so save every now and then during the battle in case you get killed off and have to start over. To prevent the whole dungeon closing down when you have put the gem on the firestaff, throw the firestaff out of the door before you exit so the back stairs are open to allow you to fetch water and food when necessary.

DOMES OF SHA

THE MUD: Grunt will not walk through it, so you have to pick him up and carry him through. But before you can carry him he must be cleaned. Go to the well room and make sure that Grunt is with you. Now go and

find him and he will be clean enough to carry.

THE ENCHANTED COTTAGE

To pass the snake: Search the stranger to find a fob watch. CAST HYPNOTISE at the snake. To escape from the Troll in the same game, make sure that you are carrying the bag and just HIDE.

WITCH HUNT

To get the nails from the wet well, tie rope to rock, go down and wave bar, found in hut when going north from marquee. To get the boots, in the garden maze go north and up.

MAGNETIC MOON

BY ALF BALDWIN

At the start you must WAIT for the captain to leave then WAIT again until Mr Pocks leaves. Search the Filter for the backpack. Search the tools to find the headsheld. Wear it to avoid being recognised. When you hear voices at the end of the gangway, WAIT until Mr Pocks goes into the Engine Room.

In the equipment store, open the cupboard and search it. Also search the racks and the shelves. Objects needed are flashlight, forcer, cutter and short rope. Avoid the loading bay. In the hold you need only take the grapnel and the space axe. Tie the short rope and the rope on the grapnel together to make a long rope. Search the sickbay to find the oxygen bottle.

At the port lifeboat bay, PRESS HAND ON PANEL and SAY ERLIN INTO MICROPHONE to open the door.

RETARDED CREATURES AND CAVERNS

CHUNK OF STONE: Examine the door to learn of the stonework and then examine the stonework to learn of the loose chunk of stone - take stone. **LINTEL:** Examine the lintel above the door to learn of the lichen and then remove lintel or rub lichen to reveal the inscription. There is a random element built into the game here so if the spiders attack just try again until you manage to remove the lichen. **INSCRIPTION:** Read the inscription to learn how to open the door. The missing words are TAIL and ASS. Also read the name to learn who the head Stone-mason was. **SCRAPER:** Examine the scraper to learn what it looks like and then lift the tail to open the door. It is necessary to keep the tail raised in order to keep the door open, so use the chunk of stone to wedge the tail up.

GUILD OF THIEVES

BY DAVE HAVARD

At the temple, move the statue. Don't forget to drop it again when you would like to go in a different direction to it. In the temple basement, the route across the Rainbow Maze is as follows: From black square, SE, N, E, E, SE, S, SW, E. From the white square, NW, N, NW, E, SW, SW, NW, N. Once across the maze, the skeleton finger bone will unlock the sarcophagus. The item you find inside will be of use to feed a mynah bird. The Mynah bird will also require the snake skin, the heart, and the berries from the tree in the graveyard.

GETTING YOU STARTED

A GUIDE TO ACHIEVING BLOODWYCH

By JASON DEANE played on Amiga

Continued from last month.

Next locate the man and his pet crab. Singly they can be easy to defeat but if they come at you together they'll try to box you in. Avoid this and kill them. You'll notice at one point a hole in the ceiling. Mark where this is as this is where you'll land if you are careless and step into a pit in the floor above. There are three dropzones in the Keep and this is one of them. Around the next corner and through a wooden door you will find the first of many stairways with two ominous skulls for bannisters. Well, what are you waiting for? You came for adventure so be adventurous and climb the stair... only to come down again. But not before you notice a tantalizing passageway just waiting to be explored. The problem is it's blocked by a solid marble pillar. Oh well, it will have to remain a mystery for the present. No use trying to bribe or converse with the two skeletons or the meanie in the next chamber. Terminate them and the one that lurks behind the wooden door and the man that's behind the portcullis. This killing is getting to be fun - strictly necessary you understand. Beat the spinner in the mini-maze and find lots of goodies and the dragon key. This is guarded by one tough son-of-a-sorcerer so get him before he gets you and claim your prize. Likewise the Potion Seller. Don't waste money buying potions from him. At a touch of the grey button the wall slides away revealing a passageway leading to a whole storeroom of potions. Needless to say you have to first waste the Blue Centaur Guard-dog.

Save your position and go on a potion binge. You'll discover that Dragon's Ale puts fire in your fists and increases your hit points to maximum. Moon Elixir gives your spell casting potential a boost to maximum and Brimstone Broth brings all three status bars up by 50%. Now return to your save position, ransack the warehouse and ferry all your goods to the Dragon Door. Unlock it and quickly dispatch the three men behind. Explore and find the Blue Button. Press it if you want to visit your fellow Bloodwych as this is a shortcut back to the living quarters.

Now before you is a door that glows with all the colours of the rainbow - The Chromatic Door. Only problem is that it's locked and if you read the tapestry behind you, you'll find you need the Key of Hue so let's go and get it. Open one of the double wooden doors. Being careful that they don't surround or box you in, you have to kill the baddies. Either find the stairway down to the basement or - much quicker - drop into the pit and surprise the yellow character below. Send his soul to hell and pick up the bronze key. This opens the next door you come to.

The tapestry reads "A sword a bow this wall must go", so enter the portcullis and clean out the dungeon on your right to find first the iron key that opens the locked portcullis then the sword, the bow and finally the green button. Press this and when you return to the Entrance Hall you will find the tapestry and the wall have gone revealing the Serpent Door. Locked of course. Clean out the left dungeon to find not only the serpent key but a mysterious room with a strange shaped niche on the wall.....

IF YOU NEED HELP ON THIS GAME RING JASON (NUMBER ON HELPLINE PAGE)



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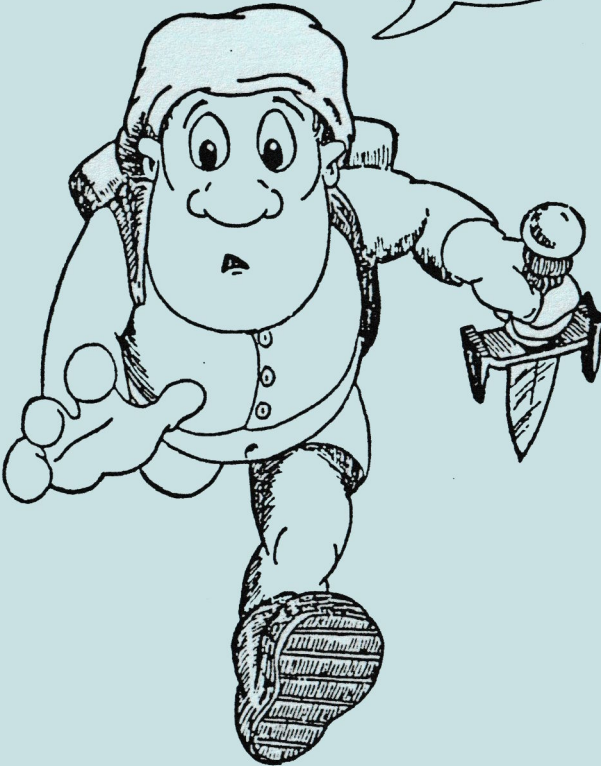
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