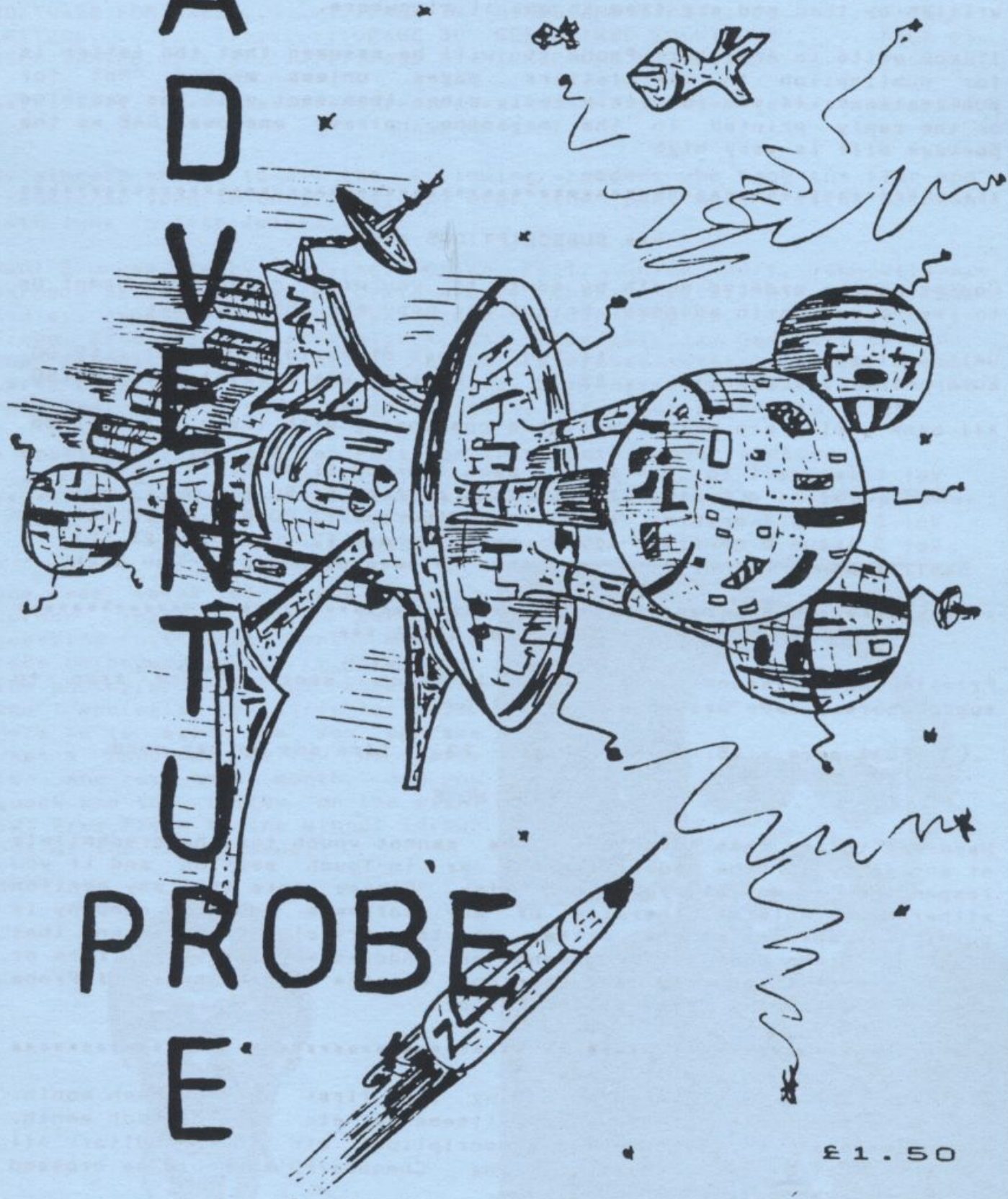


ADVENTURE PROBE



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***** HALL OF FAME

My sincere thanks to all the following readers who took the time and trouble to send in contributions over the past month. (i.e. between 14th June to 14th July.)

Paul Brunyee, Terry Roberts, Brian Pell, Chris Muff, John Wilson, Barbara Bassingthwaite, Craig Ryder, Chris Hester, Nic Rumsey, Sue Medley, Jackie Holt, The Wayfarer, Gordon Inglis, Tom Frost, Ian Brown, Eric Stewart, Andy Nisbet, Liz Ahmedzai, Jay Gee, Alf Baldwin, Joan Pancott, John Barnsley, Lorna Paterson, The Grue! Bob Adams, Larry Horsfield, Tony Bridge, Joyce Furlong, Sue Roseblade, Allan Phillips, Neil Shipman, Margo Porteous, Steve Lodey and Paul Rigby.

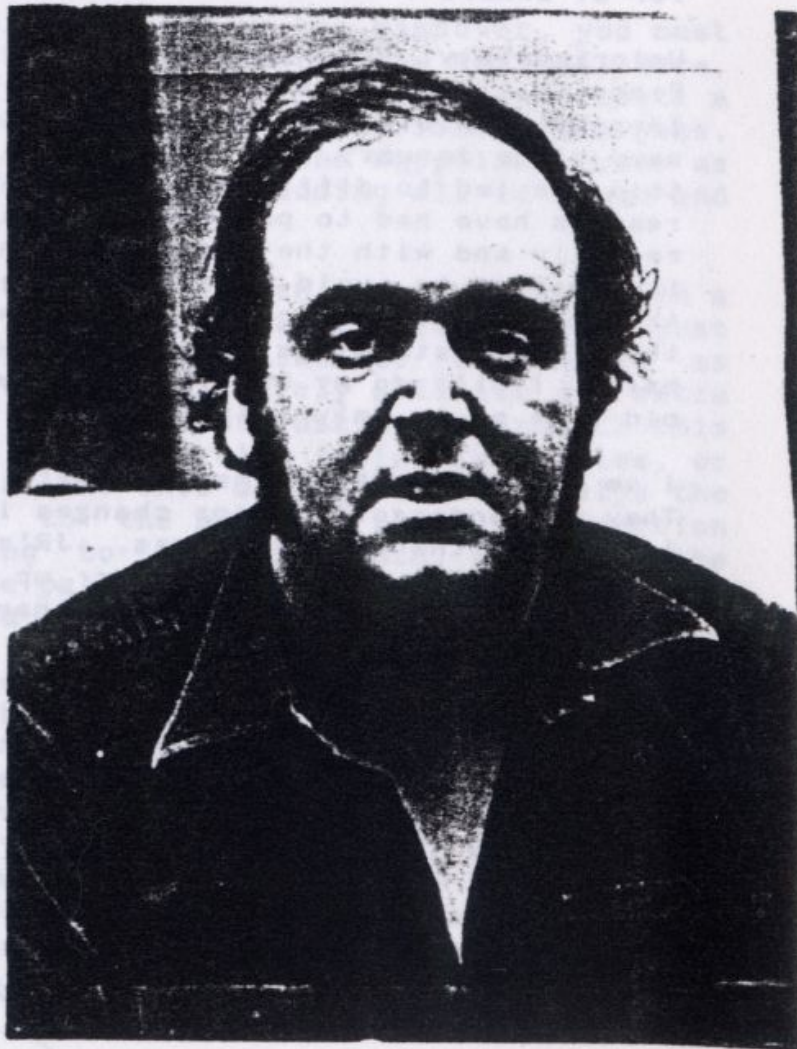
A special thanks to Brian Pell for this months cover picture.

***** GUESS WHO THIS IS?

One free issue of Probe goes to Gordon Inglis for correctly guessing that last months mystery face belonged to Larry Horsfield. The photograph came out rather dark and I apologise to Larry for this. Here he is again so you can see what a handsome fellow he really is. And for this month, can you guess who the fellow on the right is? Free Probe to the winner (drawn out of the hat as usual).



LARRY HORSFIELD



Editorial



Welcome to Volume 3 Issue 8 of Adventure Probe.

The heatwave has seen me flagging and drooping like a wilted flower these past few days. Children with their tongues hanging out are demanding a constant supply of liquid refreshment and I could happily murder the ice-cream van drivers who are costing me a fortune everytime they drive up outside with their jingle's blasting the eardrums. Strange thing is that we are all stripped as far as modesty will allow and there is hubby shouting for his jumper because he is cold! You would think that after 25 years he would have acclimatised but not so!

I was horrified to see that the adventure column did not appear in Amstrad Action this month (Issue 47 August). Joan Pancott immediately contacted the Editor to see what was happening and to ask why the column had been dropped without any warning at all. According to the Editor, if there is sufficient interest in this column he will be happy to reinstate it so please, please write to him and demand its return. All adventurers should band together to make certain that Adventure items are not neglected in this way. Even if you do not have an Amstrad I would be grateful if you could write and complain. The address is The Editor, Amstrad Action, Future Publishing Ltd, 4 Queen Street, Bath, BA1 1EJ. One never knows which adventure column will be the next to go if action isn't taken now.

I was sorry to hear from Sandra Sharkey that her magazine STING has folded. Sandra has taken a full time job and is no longer able to continue. I wish her well for the future but this will be a sad loss for ST owners.

Unfortunately, from the next issue I have had to increase the price of Probe to £1.50 per issue. I have held out against an increase for as long as possible but it is now unavoidable. The cost has remained the same since January 1988 but postal rates have gone up since then and this has led to difficulties. I am ashamed to say that one or two readers have had to pay excess charges on delivery of their magazines recently and with the magazine being over 40 pages I must now increase the postage to avoid this in future. As you all know, Adventure Probe is a non profit making magazine and it would be impossible to absorb the extra postage costs involved without Probe grinding to an abrupt halt. I will do my best to honour the existing subscriptions at the old rate as is only fair.

I am delighted this time to "eat my words". Infocom has not folded! They are undergoing major changes in their organisation but all is not lost. See the letters pages, JR's pages and the article Infocom A Fight For Life this issue for up to the minute information on the present situation. My sincere thanks for all the readers who took the time and trouble to delve and find the information for Probe.

Well that's about all from me for this month. I will now go and try to find a shady corner somewhere to cool off. To all readers who are setting off on their annual holidays this month, may I wish you all a really happy time, especially Allan and Anita and Tony Bridge who are going to my favourite places! I begged to be taken along with the luggage but my pleas fell on deaf ears (sniff, sniff).

See you all again next month.

Mandy

REVIEWS



The Plagues Of Egypt - Mike Young - £2.50.
Reviewer - Paul Brunyee - Played on a 48k Spectrum.

The Plagues Of Egypt is rather a different adventure to those that I have tried before. That is not to say that the game mechanics are changed. On the contrary, this adventure has been implemented using the PAW very well. It is the design of the adventure which instilled a certain curiosity.

The Plagues Of Egypt follows the life of Moses, or more specifically, the time Moses spent in Egypt. The adventure starts with the birth of Moses, and details how as a babe he was recovered from the basket floating on the Nile, and concludes with Moses leading the Israelites out of the Egyptian slavery as detailed in the book of Exodus - the second book in the Bible, as the author gently reminds us. The title relates to the plagues visited upon Pharaoh and his people by God during the times that Moses pleads with Pharaoh for the Israelites to be allowed their freedom. The Egyptians have grown prosperous by exploiting the Israelite people who build the houses and toil in the fields for a pittance.

After counsel with God, you, as Moses, must visit Pharaoh and request him to let the people go, that they may journey on to the promised land. But at each of Pharaoh's denials you call forth the wrath of God, each time more destructive than the last. It starts with a plague of frogs, and moves on through a plague of boils and a plague of locusts, to name but three.

Following the final plague, otherwise known as the passover, you must lead the people through the Etham desert towards the Red Sea. Here, with Pharaoh in pursuit, God intervenes to part the waters and create a passage along the bed of the sea through which the Israelites pass. Moses' final act is to watch the destruction of the Egyptian armies as they also pass by the sea walls which close up causing all to drown and be swept away.

The adventure portrays the epic battle between the two peoples in a descriptive and flowing manner. The location descriptions convey just enough detail about the surroundings, and include the exits as highlighted words. Even examining objects rarely solicits any extra information, for the bulk of the text is just lurking underneath this front, ready to emerge during an encounter with fellow Israelites, or Pharaoh, or another such interaction. This additional text helps the adventure flow from one puzzle to the next. At times the location description will change according to certain events. Following the plague of boils, for example, the palace guards look a pitiful sight, being covered in them, and urge you on to talk with Pharaoh.

The author has very sensibly elected to spread the adventure over two parts rather than shortening the text or omitting several puzzles. Approximately two-thirds of the adventure is in part 1, and as you finish this stage you are prompted to save your position which is subsequently reloaded into part 2. Once within part 2 the 'sudden ending' feature comes into play, but becomes rather tiresome when having to reload the same saved game time and time again. The adventure does contain the useful RAMSAVE/LOAD commands which were very welcome during a couple of sequences; namely the plague of darkness and the flight from Pharaoh.

REVIEW

The adventure is large - I counted about 110 locations, and the puzzle content is quite high. Careful attention has to be paid to the instructions and the book of Exodus otherwise your progress will all too probably be halted. Written using the PAW, the commands can be entered in the usual sentence style and most of the verbs are listed in response to a request for HELP. There a couple of quirks to the adventure. At one point the screen changes to a white background with cyan text and yellow command input. Although the situation called for something quite striking - the resulting combination was a little too garish for my liking.

At my first attempt, I managed to map most of the adventure without having to solve any of the puzzles, and was beginning to wonder where the puzzles were. In my haste, I hadn't gathered all the information necessary from the instructions which, together with the book of Exodus, pointed the way towards an interesting and absorbing adventure that held my attention very well. Even the presence of a couple of buglets, which I'm assured will be removed, didn't detract from the adventure for me. Upon finishing The Plagues Of Egypt I felt satisfied at having journeyed through a large adventure where the puzzles remained at a good, consistent level to the end.

Available from: Mike Young, 40A Carnarvon Road, South Woodford,
London. E18 2NU.

Blackscar Mountain - Titan Games - £7.99.
Reviewer - Paul Brunyee - Played on an Atari ST.



The kingdom of Zamora is one of the prosperous kingdoms in the civilised world, suffering only from the curse of Blackscar Mountain. This small mountain peak is situated just north of the village of Briarswood and takes its name from its appearance. An enormous chasm cutting deeply into the side of the mountain resembles a huge, black scar which runs the length of one side of the mountain.

Legend tells of a wizard named Sarazar who was intent on gaining the knowledge of immortality. The wizard believed it necessary to summon the demon Skairos with whom the wizard made a pact. In return for Sarazar agreeing to construct a magical, crystal skull which would be capable of permanently retaining the demon's life force, the demon agreed to bestow upon Sarazar the secret of immortality.

Sarazar made the skull and the demon transferred itself into the crystal with such force, the mountain itself was almost torn asunder. Sarazar never benefitted from the secret he longed for as he was betrayed by the evil demon and ended up a mindless zombie for the rest of his days - immortality of sorts.

Skairos then started spreading evil though the surrounding land by organising armies who spread terror wherever they went. Time after time, the royal army of the kingdom entered into battle with Skairos' legions and each time managed to defeat the demon. With the battle won, the search for the skull commenced, but it was never found.

It is believed that if this skull were found, the evil in the mountain could be eradicated. One brave adventurer must journey into Blackscar Mountain to retrieve this skull which is thought to exist in the Black Tower at the mountain top - but be wary, the mountain is inhabited by all manner of evil creatures.....

This traditional fantasy adventure places you as the daring hero in a quest to travel around this STACed adventure and return triumphant.

To describe the adventure as violent is possibly an understatement. I have been eaten alive, tortured, cooked (!) and otherwise gruesomely killed by literally dozens of creatures. The scenario is one such that a group of orcs are in one location, a group of goblins are a few locations away, and in one of the intervening locations is, perhaps, a stone statue which will spring to life, at a certain action, and crush your skull without even allowing you to draw breath.

This must be one of the first STAC adventures available at the moment. It boasts 87 locations, with graphics throughout which are quite vivid and mostly complement the description. The location text describes the environment in enough detail to see you by as opposed to presenting vastly atmospheric scenes.

A village store provides a starting point where the budding adventurer may purchase items from a sizable list of adventuring paraphernalia. The currency is the crown, and although you only start without around 45, you'll soon boost this to many hundreds and beyond as you start raiding the treasure collected by the mountain's inhabitants.

Although magic is cited as one of the features, it only concerns transportation and may be used if you learn the correct spell words.

The author has included a bestiary within the video cassette type packaging which details many of the creatures you will encounter. Ignore this at your peril as it offers helpful advice. Not all creatures will be hostile, in fact some may even be friendly, but if you want to live by the sword, then be prepared to take the consequences as even sleeping creatures can be aroused by your stealthy footfalls as you advance, sword in hand!

There are a couple of spelling and grammatical errors, but when you bear in mind the size of the text database, these shortcomings can (almost) be overlooked. The adventure contains a great many puzzles, some of which are still baffling me, whilst the 'help' facility can offer cryptic clues for a few choice puzzles. A random message element serves to enhance the text by periodically announcing events such as "...a gust of wind blows by, almost knocking you off your feet.." although at times these can seem a little inappropriate.

Blackscar Mountain is a challenging adventure with well laid out puzzles and a workable scenario. It contains useful features such as memory save commands and an OOPS take back command. The graphics may be toggled on and off and the text display size may be changed between 40 and 80 columns. There are adventurers to converse with, creatures to battle with and treasure for the taking. This is an adventure using the classical theme of wondrous caverns and Tolkienesque creatures, and succeeds quite well.

Available from: Terry White, Titan Games, 45 Windmill Lane, Worksop, Notts. S80 2SQ.

GOLD RUSH!

(Sierra On-Line)



Reviewed by John R. Barnsley - Atari ST

Gold Rush! tries to capture the hardship and adventure of California in 1848-49. You take the part of Jerrod Wilson, an East Coast city slicker, seeking fame and fortune. With your parents dead and your brother missing, you spend the early part of the game selling your Brooklyn home and preparing to head west.

There were, historically, three ways to get from the East Coast of America to the West in 1848, each with it's own set of perils. In the first fourteen minutes of *Gold Rush!*, you have to decide if you will attempt to make the treacherous journey overland, the long boat trip south around Cape Horn, or the shorter, but possibly even more dangerous trip to Panama and across the isthmus - that's a narrow strip of land between two larger land masses, folks!!

If you elect to take the overland route, careful timing is required to ensure that there will be plenty of grass on the plains to feed your animals. Hazards include steep mountainous terrain, long treks through the desert and, of course, Indians. The ocean trips take less personal planning, but you may be overcome by disease or storm as you sail the world's most menacing waters. You may even face food and water shortages before the long voyage is over.

If you decide on the shorter trip through Panama, there are natives and wild animals to worry about, not to mention quicksand and cholera. The choice of travel modes makes *Gold Rush!* almost three completely different adventures in one. I would advise you to take a shot at all of them just to experience the joy of dying in all it's myriad forms!!

One way or another, your travels should end at John Sutter's Fort. Once you reach the fort, you can search for clues to your brother's whereabouts, picking up gold along the way.

This is probably the last Sierra adventure you will see that was developed with the old AGI (Adventure Game Interpreter) system, used in the development of King's Quests 1, 2 & 3. Since the release of King's Quest 4, we have seen the impressive results of SCI (Sierra Creative Interpreter), that gives double-resolution graphics and enhanced sound and music.

As *Gold Rush!* has been under development for some time, it did not make economic sense to go back and re-do it with the new system. At first, I anticipated disappointment with regards to graphics and sound, but I was pleasantly surprised. Even though the resolution is clearly no match for SCI, the graphics are quite good. There is an almost excessive amount of spot animation, such as people and carts making their daily rounds in your home town, and the bustle of the little townsfolk when you reach Sacramento. Keep an eye out for other miners as you head out from Sutter's Fort, for they are liable to hang claim jumpers out there!

Musical sound is also adequate; each time your score advances, a few bars of 'Oh Susannah' are played, and you will hear 'Anchors Away' as you pull out of port. There are a couple of other musical interludes and several effects, but sound is generally rare.

Gold Rush! does have some serious weaknesses. The first is the tedious nature of all three of the trips to the West Coast of America. There is

an attempt to spice it up a little by breaking each of these long automated sequences into smaller segments, and by giving a running narrative of the hazards of the trip. Each of these segments is separated by mini-adventures that you have to actually control, but they are short and few.

In California, gold is found an ounce at a time, and there are 50 ounces to locate, with the closest being at least nine miles (screens) away from the fort. However, you only need a few hundred dollars in gold to buy some supplies (the rest is there for people who enjoy the thrill of discovery), and some screens offer up to five gold strikes, which speeds up the process quite a bit and emulates life, since gold wasn't just lying everywhere for the taking, even if it seemed like it!

Another personal criticism, being a mapping buff, is the wierd layout of some areas. Around Fort Sutter, you might walk off the screen going north. but when the new one is displayed, you find yourself going south, or even east! This was obviously done to increase the number of locations that could be squeezed into the fort, unfortunately, it just serves to confuse.

Included in the game packaging is a 90-page historical textbook entitled 'California Gold'. The primary reason for this is copy protection. When the game is first run you will be asked a question and directed to the section of the book where the answer can be found. Copy protection is always a bit of a pain, but in this case it is almost palatable because the question and answer is always interesting.

As usual, the Sierra sense of humour is never far away; answer the questions wrongly and you'll be presented with the hangman's noose! You don't have to read the book to play the game, but it conceals a few small hints that might make things easier. It is, however, very interesting reading and increases the educational value of the game considerably.

In conclusion, I would expect avid players of Sierra's games will not want to miss this one. As an educational value it is a clear success, even though it can be frustrating and tedious in places.

A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU ON YOUR WAY!

In Brooklyn: Close your account and sell your house.

If going by sea: Buy fruit.

Put flowers on your parents' graves.

Land Route: Unhitch the team and LOCK WHEELS on the steep hill.

Search abandoned wagon for food.

Buy mature mules.

Get the Bible from the man.

Cape Route: Get nothing BEFORE the storm.

(Then get pig meat, string, paper clip, pole, metal scraps and fish)

Don't forget that Bible!

Going West: You MUST leave the campsite at the RIGHT time!

(Too soon = Too muddy and Too late = Blizzard!)

To check on conditions, go behind the wagon

and walk north; when the plain's mud recedes,

SAVE GAME and then TALK TO CAPTAIN.

California: Pan ONLY in the eastern river; NEVER near anyone else!

ADLAN from GRADUATE SOFTWARE

Available from Roger Bankin, 14 Forrester Ave, Weston on Trent, Derbyshire, DE7 2HX. Price £30 - Available shortly for Amstrad.

Reviewer - JOHN PACKHAM played on Amstrad

You've heard of G.A.C., QUILL, PAW and possibly even GENISIS. All these adventure compilers had their advantages and disadvantages. Well now comes a new utility onto the market, courtesy of Graduate.

ADLAN, short for ADventure LAnguage, is as suggested, an adventure language rather than merely a compiler. It has been designed to be as flexible as possible, and does away with a lot of restrictions found in other packages. It is currently available for the Amstrad CPC's and comes on a ROM, and a disc is also included which contains examples of the various routines used. There is also a complete game on a disc called BARTREK, THE ADVENTURE GAME. I found that to be very amusing. A graphics program called PICGEN is included too, but the flexibility of ADLAN allows you to use any art package capable of producing standard screens. If you have Rainbird's ART STUDIO, you'll find a program on the Adlan disc called CONVERT. This is used to convert Art Studio pictures into the COMPRESSED format used in Adlan. Any pictures you may have in a game take up ZERO memory, because they're all held on the game disc and called up when needed. This obviously saves a huge amount of memory which can then be used for the game itself.

Using the COMPRESS command built into the rom, a standard 17K screen can be compressed down to about 2-3K. VERY complex pictures, down to about 6-8k. This is obviously useful for saving disc space.

The game itself can be written by either using a word processor such as Protext, or, if you haven't a word processor, then it can be created in BASIC. If using BASIC then each line of the program is preceded by a single quote (REM) character ('). The memory available is (or can be) ALL of your memory, because, if the program is too big to be compiled into memory, it can be split into sections onto disc and compiled in parts. This isn't nearly as complicated as it sounds. If you're compiling a Protext file straight into memory, it's simply a matter of typing ADLAN in command mode. If compiling from a file on disc (which must be an ASCII file), simply enter :Adlan,"filename". If compiling a BASIC file (which should have been saved using the ,a OPTION), simply type :ADL. All compiling takes about 30-40 seconds for about a 31K file. I have recently converted one of my GAC games to ADLAN format. The GAC version left very little memory. The ADLAN version leaves me with about 15K.

If you have other roms fitted, you'll find a ROMOFF command included to be very handy. There is also HELP available. The source file must contain in the correct order, the following sections...

OPTIONS. MESSAGES. WORDS. OBJECTS. PLACES. START (optional). BEFORE. AFTER.

The OPTIONS section contains things such as MODE, No. of variables, a sentence which is printed for trying to go in the wrong direction, and any control codes you may wish to use (more of that later). The number of VARIABLES is left to you and can be used for anything you like. They can also hold numbers from 1-32767. MESSAGES are simply that. Things that you want printed on the screen, although it's not the only way to print things. Again the number of

them can be up to 32767. There can also be 8 LETTERED messages. These are tagged on to the end of object names if necessary. For example...

O (full of oil.)

W (full of water.)

If you have a bottle in the game, it could be listed as 'a bottle'. If you put in the letter 'O' next to the bottle in the OBJECTS section, then it will be listed as 'a bottle full of oil' or with the letter 'W' 'a bottle full of water'.

The WORDS section contains the vocabulary that the game will understand (except for names of objects which are put in the objects section) and the number of them is left to you. You have to be careful here, because only the first 4 letters are recognised, although I didn't find this to be a great problem. You could always use a book to find different names for things. Words can be used as either VERBS or NOUNS. For example, you could have a bottle of oil. The word oil could then refer to the bottle of you could type in something like 'OIL THE GATE'.

The OBJECTS section is also left to you to decide how many. The PLACES section is where you put your rooms and their descriptions. Each location is referenced by a single letter and a number from 0-255. This gives you over 6000 possible locations. LOCAL conditions are also entered here, both BEFORE you type anything and AFTER. Very similar to the HIGH PRIORITY and LOCAL conditions found in GAC. There are also 3 special locations. These are LIMBO, CARRY and HERE and are self explanatory.

The START section is optional and deals with things that happen right at the beginning of a game. The BEFORE section covers all locations and deals with things that may happen before anything is typed in. The AFTER section deals with the players commands which can be very complex. You could for example have the game recognise something like... GIVE THE GOLD TO THE ELF AND TURN HIM UPSIDE DOWN (if you so wished). This could open up all sorts of possibilities.

There are also facilities for dealing with a Ramsave and Ramload. The Adlan commands are QUICKSAVE and QUICKLOAD, and they certainly are quick.

As I mentioned earlier, control codes can be put into strings and acted upon. They can be used for such things as colour control, inverting text, windows etc. An easier method of using windows is with the WINDOW command. This, as BASIC, allows a number of different windows to be used at one time for the display.

When setting colours in the game, there isn't any need to remember the colour codes. Simply type something like.... INK 1 RED INK 2 GREEN. Easy huh? Logical expressions are also catered for such as...

EITHER...OR...BOTH...AND...EQUAL...=...GREATER...THAN...NOT...WHILE... repeat block...IF...ELSE...

One thing I didn't mention. You can save a tape version of your game, although it would be a waste of time putting graphics in it. As for working on files from tape, I haven't tried it, so I wouldn't know.

All in all, if you have a romboard and disc drive then it's well worth the investment. At the time of writing this review there is no official release date. However, it is imminent and I can thoroughly recommend it.

=====

Domes of Sha, Hammer of Grimmold and Mutant - triple pack for Atari ST

River Software, 44, Hyde Place, Aylesham, CANTERBURY, Kent CT3 3AL

Three text adventures on one disc for £9.95.

Jack Lockerby of River Software is no doubt well known to many Spectrum and Commodore adventurers for his text adventures. With the aid of STAC he has now produced a disc for SI users comprising conversions of three of his Spectrum games, namely Domes of Sha, Hammer of Grimmold and Mutant. I had not played the Spectrum versions and so was pleased to have an opportunity to review the SI conversions.

MUTANT

The settings for the three are very different although similar puzzles turn up from time to time. The one which appealed to me most was Mutant which is set on a South Sea island where "the Bomb" was tested some 20 years ago. Things are returning to normal on the island with a few small villages appearing. However, something that gives off a hideous cry is lurking in the mountains and nobody has seen it and survived. Your task is to track down and destroy the Mutant.

Maybe as a result of Jack's engineering background, you find yourself at the start standing beside a Landrover with an oily rag and a dodgy battery that gives off a massive spark. On the Landrover seat are a pair of stockings and suspenders (!) and a map, and a quirk of this game is that if you EXAMINE an object it automatically becomes part of your inventory. It is important to realise this as you will carry objects, including red herrings, unexpectedly. In Mutant there are a number of tricky problems and it pays to RAMSAVE often, or save to disc. There are also humorous responses - try eating the snails! As you progress towards flushing out the Mutant you can see how to do away with him or her and progress towards the end.

HAMMER OF GRIMMOLD

Hammer of Grimmold is a different kettle of fish and in this adventure you are called by Grimmold, King of the Dwarves to recover that great symbol of health and virility, the Hammer of Grimmold. This has been stolen by one Valk, "an evil magician" and taken to his Citadel which is well guarded by Orcs. In the introduction to the game you are advised to say GRIMMOLD to whoever you meet and saying the King's name results in offers of help. For example, in the early stages saying GRIMMOLD to a woodsman with an axe prompts him to ask you to find his sharpening stone in exchange for his axe. (Finding the stone was not that easy, however). This is a "trolls and orcs" adventure with the odd vampire for good measure. Again, RAMSAVING regularly is recommended.

DOMES OF SHA

This game is set in a corner of the galaxy. Olaxas was once a thriving agricultural planet relying on the forests to supply all needs, and then came the Great War. The SHA tribe survived the war and continued to live and work in the Sha valley which is surrounded by dead and barren land. The SHA tribe could be the only survivors left on Olaxas. They know their planet is dying but the "Cold Fear" has prevented them

from moving out. Your task is to help them out. To help you I am delighted to tell you that you have the luxury of a pet Muqrat (?) called Grunt, described as a smelly but affectionate creature. He is a clever soul, though, and can do some superhuman things like walk on water - very useful.

I have to confess that due to the fantastic weather I have not completed Domes of Sha, but I hope you have a flavour of the game.

SUMMARY

A very neat feature of these games is that the character sets are different and the location description remains on the screen all the time. If the screen fills with input text, press a key and the screen clears after which the description returns. Typing HELP gives you Jack's address and telephone number but it is possible to display a list of verbs and nouns used. I found this particularly helpful on several occasions when I had trouble finding the correct input.

In summary, the disc contains three adventures with a "home - grown" feel about them which is available at a sensible asking price of £9.95. These are the first SI adventures from River Software and I understand that more are on the way with further improvements in presentation. I certainly believe that pricing is very important for this type of product and I would say that £9.95 is about right for three games of this type.

Reviewer : Terry Roberts

SPECTRUM SOFTWARE FOR SALE

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JACKIE HOLT, 13 Montague St, Bulwell, Nottingham, NG6 8EU

HELP WANTED

"I'm having trouble with MADCAP MANOR (graphics version). I can't find the Back Door Key anywhere, so if someone could tell me where it is and how to get it, I'd appreciate it."

JACKIE HOLT, 13 Montague St, Bulwell, Nottingham, NG6 8EU

INFOCOM - A FIGHT FOR LIFE

By PAUL RIGBY

I cannot think of any software house, past or present who has gained as much respect as Infocom, who has such an air of mystique as Infocom, who creates such atmosphere and excitement as Infocom or has such a loyal and devoted following as Infocom. The product of a legend, that legend being Zork. Infocom has been looked upon as the state-of-the-art, a gauge by which other adventures can be compared - giants of interactive fiction.

The knowledgeable readers of Adventure Probe, I have noticed over the months, have a particular affinity to Infocom. From the trials and tribulations of whether you could purchase Infocom adventures from Triton in the states, to the discussions about the "odd" Infocom releases (ie: Nord and Bert, etc), to the unnerving rumours of the final closure of the hallowed halls in Cambridge, Mass. What follows below are a few points of trivia and other information as well as my report, which will, hopefully, complement those produced by The Grue and John Barnsley as to the present state of Infocom. The former is included to fill in a few gaps which, while not being "hot" news, will, I hope, be of some interest.

1988 appeared to be a year of uncertainty for Infocom. Every new product appeared to cater for a different market: Plundered Hearts was aimed primarily at the ladies; Beyond Zork's RPG experiments (I wonder if such an experiment was considered viable because of the Zork connection which is a certain consumer attraction); Border Zone took a new perspective of shifting your personality from character to character and Nord and Bert was, well, different! Was Infocom, a company which has been consistently losing money for years - even under Activision/Mediagenic, looking for new markets to tap - or was desperation creeping in? Infocom, I am sure, must have been looking over their shoulder with increasing anxiety. The Magnetic Scrolls adventures with of course, graphics have been well received in the States. The increasing complexity and success of Role-Playing Games (RPG), the investment by many companies into the RPG genre and the general apathy (by other software houses) towards text-only adventure games must have led to disquiet, especially in the offices of Mediagenic (the official American name for the company - "Activision UK" in this country). In addition to which was the Nintendo console invasion, which has affected to different degrees, every leisure software house in the States.

One diversification was the notorious Infocomics. The first and to my knowledge the only releases were: Gamma Force No1 - Pit of a Thousand Screams; Lane Mastadon No1 - Lane Mastadon vs The Blubbersmen and Zorkquest No1 - Assault on Egredh Castle. With a comparatively small space allowed for dialogue and text, the Infocomics relied on pictures, animated scenes and sound effects to form the core of the story. Costing about \$12 each they were certainly not cheap. So when comparing them to ordinary comics you would expect appreciably more, a sort of Super-Comic in fact. Animation was the possible key to an Infocomic success, after all computer art struggles to compare with the atmospheric works found in the best comics. However, the rather simple line drawings were immediately frowned upon. It appeared that far from attempting to emulate the excellent "comic art", Infocom had not even bothered to try. There were interesting features though. For example, when the paths of two characters crossed you had the choice of staying with your chosen character or following the story of the other character. However, these path changes only formed a basis of

examining the characters past rather than following the character through the present story. No puzzles or interaction (except the simple button-press of "becoming" the character) were included so this was a simple reading exercise. A waste of the computer medium. The storylines were fair, but hardly inspiring. One Infocomic owner referred to the reliance upon the oldest plot in the book (Old Man: "I lost my daughter once, years ago, I suppose she's dead now." Young woman: "Can it be? Daddy!")

The best plotline was, apparently, Steve Meretsky's Lane Masterdon, a tale which did not take itself too seriously. The plot involved Lane taking steps to destroy the Jovian Enlarger Ray which is turning Earth animals into giants. The Infocomics look to be a failure, even in the States, where the high price and lack of sophisticated plotlines such as The Dark Knight (the "serious" Batman) series have not been resolved in time.

During mid-1988 America came alive with a variety of rumours and gossip concerning Infocom. One rumour said that Infocom had become a sort of "dumping ground" for unwanted Activision products. Infocomics had, apparently, been moved from Activision's attention to Infocom's supervision. Other suggestions pointed out that there was friction between Tom Snyder Productions (who were heavily involved in Infocomics) and Activision. Activision said that "A contract was originally signed between Activision under then President, James Levy, and Tom Snyder Productions for the two companies to develop the product which has become Infocomics. However a product development decision was made to move ALL story-telling projects to Infocom."

Apparently Tom Snyder Productions were happy with this arrangement because they are situated very close, less than a mile, from Infocom's HQ. Activision then said that, "Our relationship with Infocom is the best we've ever had with any publisher."

Bruce Davis, who succeeded James Levy as Activision President commented that "Nothing was shunted off on anybody."

Other reports that Infocom was being forced to work on Activision cast-offs was returned with, "Infocom is an A+ line, not a B line!"

Rumours that Activision was not happy with the Infocomics on publication were also denied.

Comments that the Infocomics had not been adequately tested received the following reply from Infocom, "We realised that the broad base of testers used to playtest our interactive fiction would not be useful in testing this new genre. This was because the testers had little in common with the target audience. Therefore, we had to build a new base of testers. Infocom's President at the time, Joel Berez, insisted that the products had been "extensively tested". Tom Snyder Productions added that, "We had to learn how to test a product of this nature."

Another rumour told that Infocom was being pressurised in producing a WIZARDRY clone (Wizardry is, along with the Ultima series, one of the most respected RPG series in the USA. It was the very first RPG to have an "on-the-ground" viewpoint made famous by The Bards Tale in this country and is currently up to Wizardry 5). Activision replied that, "Infocom's role in life is to become the master storyteller and that includes products begun on the West Coast."

The chances that Activision/Mediagenic had a prominent role in Infocom's release of BATTLETECH appears to be very high, therefore. Whether Infocom were forced to take the license is another matter. It is also unknown whether tension and bad-feeling lay present in the

Infocom/Activision relationship, even after Activision's assurances. Whatever the cause Joel Berez, Infocom President resigned late in 1988. He was not directly replaced. In fact, Joe Ybarra, Vice President of Product Development (formerly of Electronic Arts) and Michael Dornbrook, Vice President of Marketing for Infocom shared the leadership responsibilities.

Now we hear that Infocom cease to exist. This is untrue. However, the mistake was easily made. What actually happened is that Infocom have closed their Cambridge offices and have travelled to the other side of the Continent to move into the Mediagenic buildings. According to Infocom this move has taken place to ensure that Infocom survives as they have been a loss making concern for a number of years. Infocom assured me that their independence was intact. Infocom say that, with the move, they are now closer to the "corporate resources" such as sales, creative resources and testing procedures. While Infocom may benefit from these closer links there has been a great cost. Only half of the Infocom staff were invited to go to the Mediagenic offices - FIVE accepted. As far as game designers are concerned, Brian Moriarty (you may already know) has moved to Lucasfilm to work on a game called LOOM. Dave Lebling has left and so has Steve Meretsky. Dave may be working on a business product (I have heard reports that he needs a rest, he is tired of constantly developing new Infocom adventures, which is understandable if it is true) while Steve, apparantly, wishes to keep producing adventures but there are no details about who he would produce these for. It is possible that Steve and Dave may return to Infocom as outside developers. Mark Blanc (Zork, Enchanter etc) is still there, though, so a sequel to Journey is still on the cards. A new face by the name of Mike Moore, latterly of the board wargame industry, is working on a new game at the moment.

Incidentally, Amy Briggs (Plundered Hearts) left almost two years ago and has never been heard of since. Plundered Hearts was not well received in the States and I fear that she has taken it to heart and has become disillusioned which, if that is true, is a great shame. Infocom will never again be the same company, I'm afraid, that we all know and love. This could, of course, fall two ways. Infocom could steadily crumble into just a well-known name which sells Mediagenic products or Infocom the independent company may be going through an evolutionary process. Steve Meretsky and Dave Lebling may return to Infocom at a later date. However, even they were at one time green, new boys. Maybe new-boy Mike Moore will become the new Lebling. Infocom have to move into new technology to stay competitive. Obviously this requires large amounts of money which Infocom as a separate entity, does not have. Mediagenic, far from being the bad guys, may actually have been their saviours. Without them we may never have seen Beyond Zork, Shogun and so on. Even though Mediagenic have the cash, I still wonder about the internal politics and what possible harm they may have done to Infocom. The move has seemed to have signalled a mass exodus - why?

Finally, I asked about the support given to the C64 and the ST etc. The C64 will, unfortunately, receive little support (although Battletech did appear for it) because the games (Shogun, Journey, etc) are just too large. The ST is suffering terribly in the States (I lay the blame fairly and squarely upon the shoulders of Atari who have made a poor show over the ST's US promotion) but that does not mean that Infocom will disregard it. The European market is buoyant so Infocom may produce products for, primarily, the European market. Battletech will appear (in fact should be in the shops as you read

these words) for the ST. Apparently, the SOLE decision makers for the release of ST Infocom products in Europe is Activision UK. Activision UK believe that there is a market for Battletech so they requested a conversion from Infocom in the States. Infocom will not produce any more conversions for the ST UNLESS ACTIVISION UK GIVE INFOCOM THE REQUEST. So if you are a ST owner who wishes to see Shogun, Zork Zero or Journey on the ST then tell Activision UK that you want it, as there are no more conversions planned at the moment. Send letters, badger them via the telephone, form picket lines outside their offices - you know the sort of thing.

Finally, a quick plug, I am now writing the Adventure column (which includes RPG and Strategy games) for The Games Machine. I should be able to give a more detailed account of the Infocom conversation in a future issue, so please join me there. In addition, I will, also be writing a new adventure/RPG/Strategy column for ST Format (which will be preceded by a feature article highlighting one, particular aspect in adventure/RPG games which will be of interest to any adventurer, I'm sure). I would welcome any letters expressing your views on any topic be it on adventures, RPG's or strategy games in EITHER column (please address them to me via the respective magazine's addresses). Maybe you would like to talk about the graphics in Infocom games, artificial intelligence in strategy games or the state of puzzles in RPG's or whatever. In addition, I would be more than happy to review home produced adventures on ANY format (BBC, CPC, ST, Amiga, Spectrum, C64, etc, etc). It is about time that home-produced adventures were taken seriously. Let's face it, it is the only part of the software industry which consists of rational human beings! Finally, if Mandy can stand it, I'd like to contribute a few more ramblings to Probe. I'd better stop now before Mandy decides to edit out th...

REVIEWS:

Spacey adventures old and new will receive a full review in this issue. The review will come complete with screens, so you can actually see what the game is like!

KINGS AND QUEENS OF THE CASTLE



JACKIE HOLT, 13 Montague St, Bulwell, Nottingham, NG6 8EU

MORDONS QUEST, ORC ISLAND, 1942 MISSION, MOTORCYCLE CRAZY, PETER PAN, GOLDEN MASK, FUNHOUSE, THEY SAY THE WORLD WILL DIE IN FIRE AND ICE, APACHE GOLD, DANGER MOUSE, MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE, SPY TREK, PLAY IT AGAIN SAM, O ZONE, SMUGGLERS COVE, STT, SMASHED, FORGOTTEN PAST, SPY TRILOGY, LOST ORB, SERPENT FROM HELL, HARVESTING MOON, THE HOLLOW, QUEST FOR THE HOLY JOYSTICK, WOODS OF WINTER, GHOST TOWN, DENIS THROUGH THE DRINKING GLASS, DOUBLE AGENT, CURSED BE THE CITY, THE INNER LAKES, ORBIT OF DOOM, RINGS OF MERLIN, GOLDSEEKER, OPERATION BERLIN, SOAPLAND, BUFFER ADV, ALTER EARTH, MADCAP MANOR, SANDMAN COMETH.

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WHO WROTE WHAT?

A logic puzzle by June Rowe.

	Brayne	Wynne	Lott	Cann	Moon Buggy	Inner Ring	Big Search	The Field	Strategy	Sports	Adventure	Arcade
Betty												
Mona												
Ivor												
Willy												
Strategy												
Sports												
Adventure												
Arcade												
Moon Buggy												
Inner Ring												
Big Search												
The Field												

Brayne the adventure author is not Betty, and Mona who writes arcade games is not Cann.

Willy Wynne, the strategy game designer, did not call his game Inner Ring.

The exciting graphics of Moon Buggy would please any arcade game player.

In The Field there are lots of athletes.

Christian Name	Surname	Title	Subject

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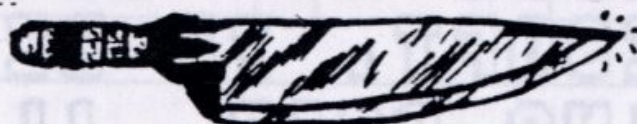
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SPECTRUM 48

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Reviewed in the July Adventurers Probe

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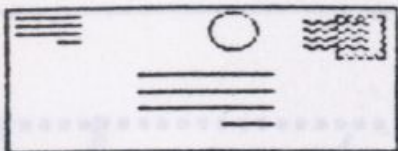
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Letters



Having taken June Rowe's advice to buy MAGNETIC MOON (Vol 3 Issue 4 letters page) may I just echo her praise of this adventure. I have been known to make sweeping statements such as "I don't like Science Fiction" and "I don't like interactive characters" (sorry, Tom) but I don't mind admitting when I'm wrong. Magnetic Moon is a very good adventure with some extremely tricky puzzles, but help will be given by Larry (or June, thanks) if required. At the moment I'm playtesting the sequel, STARSHIP QUEST and also Tartan Software's GORDELLO INCIDENT, two entirely different adventures but both excellent in their own way. Since the large software companies seem to be struggling to produce a decent adventure at the moment, can I urge Probe readers to support the home grown market. They'll certainly get value for their money.

What a surprise to see the haggis story in the letters page. I loved Don Macleod's letter so I thought you might like to have the enclosed postcard.

HAGGIS

1 Sheep's pluck (heart, lungs, liver) and bag.

2 teacupful toasted oatmeal

1 teaspoonful salt.

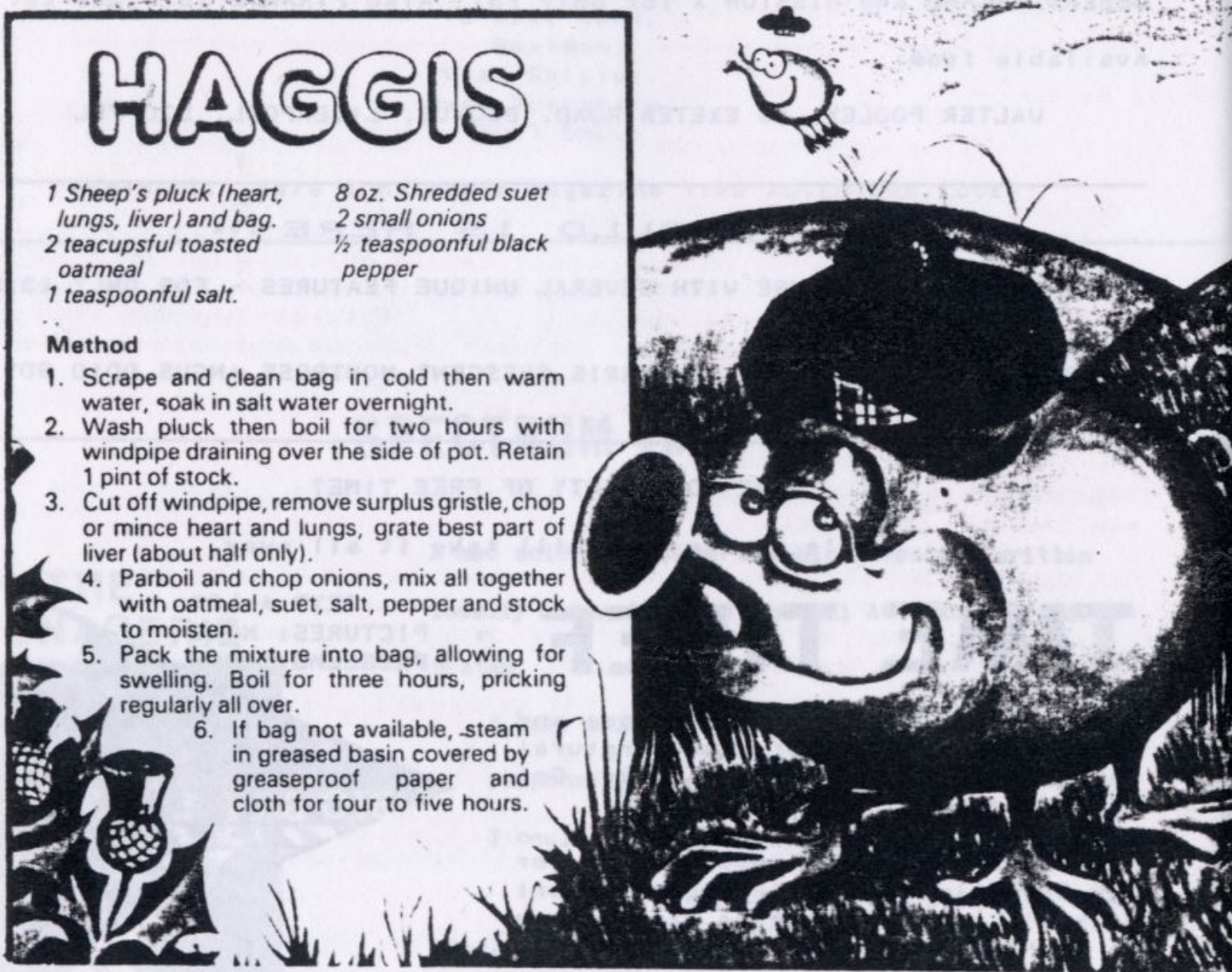
8 oz. Shredded suet

2 small onions

½ teaspoonful black pepper

Method

1. Scrape and clean bag in cold then warm water, soak in salt water overnight.
2. Wash pluck then boil for two hours with windpipe draining over the side of pot. Retain 1 pint of stock.
3. Cut off windpipe, remove surplus gristle, chop or mince heart and lungs, grate best part of liver (about half only).
4. Parboil and chop onions, mix all together with oatmeal, suet, salt, pepper and stock to moisten.
5. Pack the mixture into bag, allowing for swelling. Boil for three hours, pricking regularly all over.
6. If bag not available, steam in greased basin covered by greaseproof paper and cloth for four to five hours.



LORNA PATERSON, 17 Ochill St, Tillicoultry, Clacks, FK13 6EJ

=====

(The following letters, copies of which were sent to Probe, take us further into the realms of the rivalry between Frobs, Grue and we lesser mortals!.....Mandy)

TO THE GRUE!

I have read in the Adventure Probe that you are currently running a 'Frob of the Month' competition, which holds readers mistakes up to ridicule. I must say that I find the whole concept in flagrant bad taste, for reasons which I shall outline to you. My family, a noble brood mentioned repeatedly in "Burke's Peerage" and "Who's Who?", have been known as "Frobs" for the last 160 years. This nickname was earned on the fields of Eton and carried proudly through the trenches of both World Wars, where we poor fools fought for the freedom of young puppies such as yourself to denigrate the family honour and lampoon an old established trading name on the Stock Exchange. To allow this from a person who does not even sign his name!! What is a Grue, after all? The Oxford English Dictionary carries no reference. Thus I can only assume that it is a nom de plume to escape prosecution for using our company name in a way which should carry substantial damages in court.

I call upon you in the name of all my noble ancestors to cease and desist from this, why even our family motto (granted by Queen Victoria, on the insistance of The Prince of Wales) means "In Frobs We Trust", this being the English translation of "IN FROBAE FIDEMUS" which I could not expect a nameless and unprincipled lampooner such as yourself to translate for themselves.

I was fortunate to have a loyal servant, my chauffeur Nicholas Le Voyager, who drew my attention to your activities. If I do not see a retraction and apology in the next issue I shall be forced to look for a way fairer to deal with this insult. Perhaps I shall take it through the eight levels of legal representation, direct to the ultimate authority in level 9. When I decide you will surely know about it...if only by a High Court Writ.

I trust that I shall not have to write again, in conclusion to paraphrase your own saying.. "FROBS RULE... one does!"

THE HON. ALGENON PERCY XAVIER FFORBES-HAMILTON III, BA,BSc,Dip Law (Calcutta) 'the 16th Frob'. (Address supplied)

=====

The GRUE's reply!

I am astounded that you should find my Frob of the Month competition in bad taste, especially with a name like yours! You describe your family as a "noble brood" repeatedly mentioned in Burke's Peerage, I would have thought that Broody Burkes would have been a far better description.

As soon as you mentioned the fields of Eton and both World Wars in your letter, I realised exactly what sort of person I'm dealing with. You are obviously a southern upper-class twit, probably the Percy Sugden of Knightsbridge.

As for the Oxford English Dictionary, well that's about as much use as a copy of the Beano, you should invest in a copy of the Encyclopedia Frobizzica. Why you should refer to my name as a nom de plume, I don't know? Because I thought a nom de plume was a pidgeon with only one feather and I don't have any feather's on my divine body.

I bet you are one of those religious fringe types, probably a Jimmy Swaggart fan who thinks that magic adventure games lead people into dealings with demonistic realms. Next you'll be accusing me of being

a communist. What you don't know is that your loyal (?) servant Nicholas Le Voyager is non other than Leslie Crowther in disguise because people kept mistaking him for Nicholas Parsons. This person will, if the price is right, say anything for financial reward and even purger himself in court. It is also rumoured that he played the part of Parker in Thunderbirds.

I do not give a jot for your threat of an impending High Court writ. You are most welcome to go direct to the ultimate authority (L9), the trouble with that is their action is likely to be full of bugs and loopholes just like your chauffeur. So do what you may!!!

You might be interested to know that I also have a family motto, it is.. "UPUS YORS BUSTERUS".

PS. In case you haven't a copy of the Encyclopedia Frobizzica then a Grue is ... AN INSPIRED REPUGNANCE!

YOUR GRUELING, GRUESOME, GRUESOMELY, GRUESOMENESS.....GRUE!!!!

=====

You will have heard the old saying "The truth will out" and having read the July issue of Probe I now know why the Grue hides himself in dark places. He is in fact an escaped Haggis and fearing that some keen adventurer may discover his secret he has taken care not to be seen! It is too late to capture him now that he has had his operation, but one mystery remains, did he have the short leg stretched or the long one shortened?!

JOAN PANCOTT, 78 Radipole Lane, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9RS

=====

Thank you for the July issue of Probe. It was nice to read the commiserations from Mike Gerrard in his letter concerning The Adventurer's Club Ltd and I agree with Sue Roseblade when she says it is a great let down, especially as I had just paid a years subscription of £17.95 and had really enjoyed the first (and only) dossier that I received. Never mind I have found Probe now and will continue to subscribe for as long as it will be published, which I hope will be many years.

WENDY COCKBURN, 60 Porters Ave, Dagenham, Essex, RM8 2AG.

(With so many magazines folding it does tend to undermine the confidence of subscribers to magazines such as Probe. If anyone you know would like to subscribe to Probe but are hesitating because they have lost money with subscriptions please tell them that they can buy Probe monthly if they wish, to put their minds at rest. With the support which I receive from each and everyone of you, I fully intend to keep Probe going for years. As I have said before, providing the contributions for the mag are sent in then Probe will plop onto your doormat as ever.....Mandy)

=====

I sympathise with Mrs Grue (Letters page - July edition) as we too are thinking of getting a second Disk Drive for our A-500. As myself and Nicky (my dearest, darling, beautiful, good looking wife) it's O.K. she's gone now, she was looking over my shoulder as I was typing... As I was saying, we too are suffering with the well known disease, that

all single drive owners get.. "CHANGE-ITIS, ACHEYWRISTIES." We went to our local G.P. and I'm afraid the prognosis was not all that good. He advised us that we either stopped changing disks. Can you imagine that, not ever changing another disk during an adventure game, you'd have to keep on starting all over again, every time you made a mistake just because you were too ill to change disks. TERRIBLE!! The other pearl of wisdom he offered was to go out and purchase a second drive. Unfortunatgely they are not yet available on the National Health. I wish they were. Could you imagine it, walking into your local surgery, arm swathed in bandages, telling the Doctor that you were right in the middle of a new adventure game and never able to see it out to the conclusion due to the inordinate amount of disk swapping involved. You can just see him saying "Never mind Mr Frob, take one of these shiny new disk drives and use as requested in the instructions. SOME CHANCE! Mind you, I don't know what arrangements the private patient sector has, maybe the Doctor will come around on a home visit and start changing the disks for you. Perhaps it pays to go private after all. If anyone has taken pity on us lowly, single drive owners, perhaps there is someone out there in ADVENTURE PROBE land who feels the need to do a charitable deed. PLEASE, PLEASE (GROVEL, GROVEL) send any unwanted drives to the address below.... THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart (and swollen wrists)!

TERRY CHECKETTS.Tripp-Hill Farmhouse,Fittleworth,W Sussex.RH201ER

=====

I was extremely interested to note that Infocom's new releases are games not based on the text adventure theme but more on the RPG type of scenario. This to me, came across as conclusive evidence that even the major text adventure producers are beginning to push that style of game into the background in favour of the BARD'S TALE, SIERRA type of theme. A sad fact? I've recently spent a great deal of time thinking about this development and its results, and have come up with a form of game which I'll be very interested to see players reaction to. The two new projects I'm working on are text adventures which incorporate an RPG theme. In the first game the player controls a single character who must battle with Orcs, Trolls etc to complete the quest. Needless to say the game is based on combat and magic. (This will be available for Spectrum and Atari ST). The second game follows the same theme but develops it further where the player will have to control a party of adventurers each with individual characters. Again it will be a game based on combat and magic.

I feel this mixed blend of adventuring, first introduced to me by the excellent BEYOND ZORK, is a very enthralling scenario which opens many new doors to the player. I'd like to know how other readers feel about RPG's and their effect on the adventure market, and do readers class an RPG such as Bards Tale as an adventure game?

To finish off, can I wish the GRUE a quick recovery (even though the one I met in Beyond Zork certainly wasn't too friendly!) and ask him if JOURNEY will be available for the Atari ST?

ERIC STEWART,18 Vatisker,Back,Isle of Lewis,PA86 OJS.

=====

Many thanks for yet another enjoyable issue of Adventure Probe. I look forward to it every month and I can rely on the postman to

deliver it on the first day of the month without fail. You really put some of the professional magazines to shame by sticking to such a tight deadline. Are you really such a genius or do you have a little help from the Wizard of Frobozz and his magic wand?

I have just completed Myth, the freebie from Official Secrets. It was very enjoyable but very small, also one problem was a poor replica of one I came across in Beyond Zork - the Grue will know just what I mean if he ever gets to play it.

You may gather that I am an Infocom fan, well I would be if they would continue to support my machine. I am a very sad Atari ST owner who is destined never to delight in the wonders of Zork Zero, never to play a game of Double Fannuci or learn the origin of the famous white house in Zork I. I have read so many conflicting reports about Infocom's decision not to release any more games for the Atari ST that a few months ago I decided to phone and ask them myself - demanding to know why they should desert such a large group of users. They confirmed that they had taken this decision because the Atari ST is not such a popular machine in the USA. But, said I, this is not the case in Europe, it is one of the more popular models so would you please please reconsider as your decision will result in a lot of very unhappy people over here. Sadly my pleas fell on deaf ears and they said they had made the decision and were going to stick to it. My only hope now is to await a box of tricks called PC Ditto II which will hopefully turn my machine into an IBM - they said they always release an IBM version. However, that is not all - the other day I phoned them again to ask about compatibility with IBM emulators only to be greeted with an answer machine routing my call to the West Coast, it seems Infocom have been taken over by Mediagenic. They moved the Infocom staff over to California, but unfortunately some of their authors declined to go and so I assume they have lost their band of imaginative writers. Does this herald the end of an era for adventuring? Will people like Dave Lebling and Steve Meretzky continue to produce masterpieces under a different label? I can only hope so, otherwise it would be a sad loss for the adventuring world. Still, maybe Mediagenic will rethink the decision to stop supporting the ST, and maybe that was a pig I just saw flying past the window! Who knows?

LIZ AHMEDZAI (address supplied)

=====

About the recent demise of Infocom. Well, it now seems that any rumours are not true. I had heard of these rumours and other people had read it on bulletin boards. I myself thought it might have been true as the last time I tried to phone them I kept getting an unobtainable tone but I lived in hope. Then just the other week I tried again and got through, yes they were still going but they appear to be having some financial problems. They will no longer be sending out copies of the Status Line and the amount of machines they are supporting is to be cut back. The new game ARTHUR will only be available on the Amiga and PC compatibles, no other formats are envisaged at the present time. Activision Consumer Services also tell me that they have no immediate plans to convert QUATERSTAFF from the Macintosh to any other machine as yet.

This situation could possibly change if the new games start to sell as they should but this is only conjecture. So there you have it, Infocom have not gone to the wall!

PS Is it true that Chris Jester is due to become the new poet laureate?

THE GRUE, 64 County Road, Ormskirk, West Lancs, L39 1QH
So Matthew Wilson thinks the review was unfair and that there was nothing basically wrong with his game. Hmm. Over the last two years, I have playtested etc. for a friend, enjoying every single minute of it, but have been constantly amazed at the number of bugs, spelling mistakes, faults etc that were still in the submitted finished article. All these were noted and a list of the criticisms was sent to the writer so that they could hopefully be actioned. When I wrote my own game recently, I asked a very, very experienced playtester to find everything he could that he felt needed amending. He did a thorough job. I actioned ALL of them whether I agreed or not.

Perhaps Matthew did not operate a similar system. If he doesn't, maybe he ought to give it a try, or else GIVE CAKE TO REVIEWER - Exam Cake - It appears to be laced with a large quantity of Ecstasy.

IAN BROWN, 1 Amanda Road, Glen Parva, Leicester.

=====

Thanks for the latest Probe - Langley (home of the Elf, and, I notice in the ad on page 26, of Mental Image, they can't be all bad!) is sweltering in the low '80's at the moment, so sitting in front of the computer is out, and Probe makes a very welcome substitute. Old mate Mike Gerrard has just returned from Greece (he's an expert on the place, look out for his articles in The Telegraph and Grauniad), and I'm just about to jet off to the Hellenic Paradise - if any Probers are in Skiathos in the latter half of August, look out for a sunburnt Elf and say "Have a drink"!

My favourite pages of any magazine are the letters pages - as well as making a welcome change from all that journalistic waffle (words mean money, lads), the size and subject matter are good litmus tests of the health of the magazine in general.

In the July issue, there are one or two (or three) good discussions brewing up - two of them ("Women computer gamers" and "The Demise of the Text Adventure") were adequately covered by Linda Wright, Mike Gerrard and others, so I won't waste any more space on those old favourites. The third subject that caught my attention was the "My program's better than what your reviewer reckons, he hasn't looked at it properly" argument.

After several years (eight, in fact) of reviewing adventures from all sources, let me say that I sympathise with both points of view (what me, sit on the fence...). Yes, the reviewer DOES have to meet a deadline, and therein lies the very dilemma of adventure-reviewing - a program that is specifically designed to test the mental agility of the player and keep him/her amused for weeks/months/(years in my case) can not and should not be assessed within just a few days. So the software company must provide all the help IT FEELS APPROPRIATE in order that the reviewer should get to see more than just the first location.

This may seem obvious, but I've lost count of the number of adventures that have been sent to me that offer no help at all - and these are

usually the ones that require the player to type "pick up the second stone from the right and rub while pronouncing the magic word SYZYGY" in order to make any progress!

With a desk full to overflowing with adventures to be reviewed, it's no wonder that some get better write-ups than others. If you're worried that your full solution might make things too easy for the reviewer, then point out some of the interesting little cul-de-sacs, sub-plots and red herrings that you have written in to the main story. In fact, the more info supplied with the program tape or disk, the better - after all, if the author can't take the trouble over his program, why should any one else?

Mention of this almost made me launch into one of my favourite "bore the knickers off 'em" subjects - oh hell, why not? One of the things that has really turned me off adventures over the past few years is bad spelling and grammar. In fact, layout and style in general - as I said before, if an author can't be bothered to present his masterpiece properly, then why should we bother to invest in it? And if the author knows that spelling and grammar is a weak point, then get someone else to look at the adventure and spot the silly bits.

Now, what about H Mueller and the ACL? This is a very sad story, and I feel quite ashamed after promoting it so strongly over the years. Obviously, no-one could know what was going to happen, but I still feel responsible in part for the fact that so many people joined and, ultimately, were duped.

I haven't been able to discover much about what happened, and what I have found is public knowledge. First, the hotel at which the ACL Golden Chalice Awards were held, the Sherlock Holmes Hotel, has now put the matter of the unpaid bill for the evening into the hands of their legal department. Second, we were told that any money left over from the evening would go to a worthwhile charity, the Great Ormond Street Wishing Well Appeal. I called them a few weeks ago, and they have no record of receipts from ACL, although the donation could, they say, have been made anonymously.

And that's all I know - I've left messages for Henry and, like Mike Gerrard, have written to him asking for some enlightenment. As yet, I've heard nothing, and quite frankly, don't expect to. What you do if you have just renewed your subscription, I can't say - is there a lawyer out there who can suggest something?

Finally, may I say thanks for all the help I've had for Ultima IV? I've been rather too busy to devote much time to it since I asked for help, but now that John Wildey, Jim O'Keeffe (with copious hints) and Don Macleod (with just about the full solution, with reams of maps) have very kindly come to my aid, I am determined to set aside a few hours and have another go at it.

Happy adventuring and never forget Tiananmen Square --

TONY BRIDGE



If anyone has a solution to NOT A PENNY MORE - NOT A PENNY LESS that they could send in to Probe it would be appreciated. This is needed for the helpline urgently.....Mandy.

"I was wondering if anyone has any idea how to get out of the cell in SOLARIS. We have found the fire-extinguisher under the seat but can't do anything else. Please could someone help?"

JOHN & ANTHONY CURRAN, 14 Cranbourne Rd, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, M/C21 2AP

"Please could some kind reader help me on the SIDNEY AFFAIR? I cannot get into the Diamond Computer."

MRS LEACHMAN, 98 Connaught Ave, London, E4 7AP

"Please could someone help me on TWICE SHY? Here is a list of my problems. What do I do at the school gate? What do I do at the Gilbert's house? What do I do at the caravan site? How do I get to Norwich? Help on any or all of these would be appreciated."

CHRIS MUFF, 49 Renway Rd, Rotherham, S.Yorks, S60 3EU

"Help wanted please on SECRET SAM 1 - how and where do I find the SCREWDRIVER? And on SECRET SAM 2 - How do I get the drawer open in the desk in the Plush Flat (or is it a red herring?) and how do I open the window in the Dusty Room? Please write or telephone.."

BARBARA GIBB, 52 Burford Rd, Liverpool, L16 6AQ. Tel: 051 722 7631



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=====

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=====

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ERIC STEWART, 18 Vatisker, Back, Isle of Lewis, PA86 0JS

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These adventures are accepted on the understanding they are ORIGINAL and with all packaging, and advertised for ONE month only. No responsibility can be accepted by either Probe or Nic Rumsey for any which are either copies or damaged. It is up to the individual to check that the swap will run on their machine. Lists are sent on a SAE basis only.

This months offerings:

MR NICK PAGE, 90 Claybury, Bushey, Herts WD2 3ET (01 950 9183). Nick would like to purchase a copy of Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy.

That's all for this month Infohunters, more next month if received.

If you would like to take part in the Swap'n'Buy then write to Nic Rumsey, 167 Eastbourne Rd, Lower Willingdon, Sussex. BN20 9NB

Bugs And Amusing Responses

FISH by NEIL SHIPMAN played on Atari ST

Want to get the stool out of the pub? Just put it in the bag. You can then empty the bag and sit or stand on the stool anywhere you like. If you try to get it again you still get the response "Don't do that," says Steve, "Or I'll ban you." - even when Steve's nowhere to be seen! Put it in the bag again if you want to continue carrying it around.

=====

VILLAGE OF LOST SOULS by JOAN PANCOTT played on Amstrad

In the buttery I forgot to get the mallet out of the sack before typing "tap third barrel with mallet", the response was "Hams are strung from the rafters" which is actually included in a location description earlier in the game.

=====

TRACER SANCTION by JOYCE FURLONG played on Commodore

Take CIA man's glasses..... Slap man.....Punch man.....
In cartographers - Take globe..... Take chart..... Kiss woman.....

ZORK III by JOYCE FURLONG played on Commodore

Put waybread in chest!

Fishing For Red Herrings

VILLAGE OF LOST SOULS by JOAN PANCOTT played on Amstrad

Alter cloth, candle (in ashes), cleaver, crock, cushion, diamond, dock, doll, glowing flower, groats (in pouch), hoe, kindling, lamp, leather, looking glass, paint brush, pouch, rock, saw, shears, sword, table cloth, teddy bear and vestments.

I'll start off this month by issuing a warning! If you have the PAW 'PTM' User Overlay tape, you should take care when using PAW-PHOSIS, especially the COPY and TRANSFER facilities, as in certain circumstances, an error can cause the whole program to crash, and your computer will reset itself. I found this out the hard way after a whole morning's work, one weekend. I was transferring the entries from one process table to a new one, when, to my utter dismay, the whole lot crashed! Of course, muggins 'ere hadn't saved the database - not imagining for one second that this sort of thing would happen, and I lost the lot! However, as I ALWAYS write down all that I input into my databases, all I had to do was retype the whole lot again. This is time-consuming, but not half as bad as trying to remember what I'd done if I hadn't've written it down! So, the moral is to be VERY careful when using this aspect of PAW-PHOSIS!

I should point out that I have otherwise found PAW-PHOSIS and PAW-TEL invaluable when using PAW to write my adventures. I mostly use PHOSIS to save whole process tables to tape and then load them into the database of the next part of the adventure. PAW-TEL is great for checking what flags you've used - or haven't used - and what entries they're used in. If you haven't already upgraded your early version of PAW, I really recommend that you do so now.

Those of you that have played "Magnetic Moon" will have noticed that there are a couple of "real-time" situations where if you do not do anything for a certain amount of time in a particular location, then - as in the first situation - you're killed! These situations were set up using TIME and TIMEOUT to produce the time lapse, in conjunction with an auto-decrement flag to allow you only one move before the event is triggered. The only trouble with TIME/TIMEOUT is that whatever period you set it for, it is zeroed when you make any move, hence the need to combine it with a flag countdown to produce a true-to-life situation. The best way to show you how TIME/TIMEOUT works is to set up a tiny adventure of just two locations. The scenario is that you are hunting an assassin, and when you enter a room, you unexpectedly come face-to-face with him. You are both armed but you both freeze in surprise. We will set it up so that you have just over 10 seconds, or just 1 move, to FIRE GUN before he shoots you.

Load in PAW, and first of all alter Location 0 to read: "You are in a corridor leading to a darkened office, west.". Then Insert location 1, which will be: "You're in a darkened office, with a door leading east into a corridor.". Alter Message 0 to read "You come face-to-face with the assassin - you both freeze in surprise!". Now insert these additional messages: 1: "He fires his gun and shoots you dead!"; 2: "You raise your pistol and shoot him first!"; 3: "You turn to escape, but he shoots you in the back!"; 4: "You have no weapon!". You'll need three objects: Obj.1: "A pistol"; Obj.2: "An armed assassin"; and Obj.3: "A dead assassin". Now insert the following words into the vocabulary: KILL (verb 40), SHOOT (verb 41), FIRE (verb 42), MAN (noun 21), ASSAS (noun 21), GUN (noun 50), PISTO (noun 50). The Obj.Word table should be amended so that Object 1 is the PISTO, and the object start location table should have Object 1 at 254 (i.e. carried), and object 2 at location 1. The connections table, where locations 0 and 1 will already be present, should be amended so that it looks like this: Loc'n 0: W 1; Loc'n 1: E 0; Lastly, either delete SYSMESS 35 (which is printed on TIMEOUT), or alter it to read "You're too slow!!" O.K., having done all that, you will need a total of 7 response table entries, and four in the process tables. First of all, though, Begin a new process table (from the main menu, press "P" (enter) then "B" enter) which is process table 3. In this table, we need to make three entries:

```

* *
AT 1
PRESENT 2
ZERO 5
LET 5 2
PAUSE 50
MESSAGE 0

```

```

* *
AT 1
PRESENT 2
EQ 5 1
MESSAGE 1
TURNS
END

```

```

* *
AT 1
PRESENT 2
TIMEOUT
MESSAGE 1
TURNS
END

```

In Process Table 2 there's just one entry, to call process table 3 every move

```

* *
PROCESS 3

```


The response table entries will be as follows:

* W
AT 0
ISAT 2 1
GOTO 1
TIME 8 6
DESC

* E
AT 1
PRESENT 2
MESSAGE 3
TURNS
END

The first entry takes the player into location 1, and as long as Object 2, the armed assassin, is present, TIME is set to 8 x 1.28 seconds, about 10.25 secs. The second entry covers the player trying

to go back east without having shot the assassin first. The way PAW works is that it scans the response table BEFORE the connections table, so that if it finds an entry concerning movement that it can implement, then it will do this and will not proceed to check the connections table. The other five entries will deal with actually shooting the assassin. Note that I am making use of the ability to modify the current logical sentence (LS). This is dealt with on page 52 of the PAW introduction manual, but basically we're altering the values held in flags 33 and 34 so that you can allow the player to type KILL MAN, SHOOT MAN, SHOOT GUN or FIRE GUN. As ASSASSIN has the same word value as MAN, we only need type this latter word in the entries. The entries required are as follows, and must be entered in this order:

KILL MAN
LET 33 42
LET 34 50

SHOOT MAN
LET 33 42
LET 34 50

SHOOT GUN
LET 33 42

FIRE GUN
AT 1
PRESENT 2
CARRIED 1
MESSAGE 2
TIME 0 0
ANYKEY
SWAP 2 3
DESC

FIRE GUN
NOTCARR 1
MESSAGE 4
DONE

The first three entries modify the logical sentence to the fourth entry, FIRE GUN. If all the conditions are met, then message 2 is printed, TIME is zeroed and the prompt "Press any key to continue" is printed. On the keypress, the assassin is swapped for the dead one and the location is redescribed. The way we have set up the process table entries, if you have not typed in an entry and pressed Enter, the TIMEOUT occurs and you're shot. If you are not carrying the pistol, message 4 is printed. This, of course, uses up your one move and you're shot. You could expand this scenario by having a KNIFE, obj.4, which you could throw at the assassin. You'd need another message, e.g. "You throw the knife and it pierces his heart!", and a response table entry, similar to FIRE GUN, thus:

THROW KNIFE
AT 1
PRESENT 2
CARRIED 4
MESSAGE 5
TIME 0 0
ANYKEY
SWAP 2 3
DESC

This entry is fairly self-explanatory. Incidentally, you MUST include the line "TIME 0 0" otherwise the TIMEOUT will otherwise the TIMEOUT will continue to operate. To illustrate this, try leaving out this line when you have done all the rest and tested it.

You don't have to use TIME/TIMEOUT only in life-or-death situations. In part 2 of "Magnetic Moon", I've used these actions to produce a sequence in a puzzle that would happen in real life. A character walks up to a door and performs the first of two actions. The second action happens on the TIMEOUT triggered by the first. If you do not do the right thing at the right time, the second action occurs, and you've lost your chance! It's not as hard as it sounds, as I'm sure those who've played the adventure will vouch for. If you want to find out WHAT this puzzle is, buy a copy of "Magnetic Moon", now! (End of plug!) If you have a problem with PAW programming, write to me at the following address:

PAWS for Thought, 40 Harvey Gardens, Charlton, London, SE7 8AJ

Don't forget to enclose an SAE! See you next month!

J. R. 's PAGES

The Atari Show (Ally Pally - June)

As one or two people know, I ventured into the eerie chambers of Atariville for the weekend last June - collared to help on the Page 6 stand! Must say I was a bit disappointed from what heard previously about these shows. Anyway it was worth it for the chance to meet Sue Medley, Dave Barker and Mike Woodroffe.

Now then, Jim O'Keefe and Sandra Sharkey!! Was I really that bad from a distance?! Next time I'll get Security to drag you over to the Page 6 stand!

Although it was supposed to be the last Atari-specific show, I have it on good authority that there is a 95% chance of yet another next year. Of course the old PCW will be held as usual, and the Computer Shopper Show will be catering for ALL micro formats. I'll try and make it to both - as a visitor - so I might bump into some of you, so there!! I'll be wearing a "Who's Jim O'Keefe and Sandra Sharkey Anyway" badge!!!

Yes, I saw you Linda Wright! Running down the aisles shouting "Please buy Jade Stone or I'm not playing anymore!". (Only joking, Linda.....I've just finished hiding from Mike Gerrard's solicitors!)

Now for matters more adventurous. What's going on at Infocom? Well, according to Joe Ybarra, vice-president in charge of Activision entertainment software, The Great Underground Empire has NOT been shut down. What's happened is this. They are in the process of relocating to the West Coast of America mainly for financial reasons. They are also making changes in ZIL (Zork Implementation Language) and many of those changes are to get object-orientated graphics, animation and sound effects into the code. A lot of this was already ongoing at Mediagenic on the West Coast, so rather than have a 3,000 mile difference between the places where the programming was going on, it was a lot more efficient to put it all under one roof - Activision changed its corporate name to Mediagenic in 1988, keeping the Activision name for its entertainment line.

Infocom will remain a separate business unit inside Mediagenic. Marc Blank is working on an Infocom project right now, from his home, but it is not clear whether Dave Lebling and Steve Meretzky will stay - mainly because they don't wish to move to the West Coast of America. Another 'old boy' - Michael Dornbrook - remember the Dornbeast?? - is currently contemplating starting a mail order business.

Finally, it is still NOT clear as to which machines Infocom will support in the future. I was given to understand that no more products would be forthcoming in ST format, yet Battletech turned up unannounced the other day!! I'll do my best to keep you posted on this subject.

Did you hear about the Japanese businessman - not a velly clever one - who paid one million yen at a recent London auction, for an ACL Dossier, shouting "This is indeed a rare artyflact!"....."Oh, there go a lovely bunch of coconuts.....!"

GETTING YOU STARTED

DEJA VU II - (Lost In Las Vegas)

General Notes.

- (1) Take and wear the pants and trenchcoat immediately, since the bedroom door will lock behind you.
- (2) From time to time, one of Malone's thugs will appear to warn you how little time you have left; take one of the cigar rings that he drops.
- (3) Before going outside, visit the Casino and play blackjack at the table of your former sparring partner. To play blackjack, select all of your chips (with the shift-click method if using the mouse), then click on 'operate' and the table. Your friend will then deal the cards. If your card total is close to 21, click on 'Hit' and then the table; otherwise, click on 'Hit' and then the 'Self' button. Ordinarily your former partner will let you win. When he is replaced, use 'Shift-click' to select all your chips and drag them to your inventory immediately. Otherwise the new dealer may confiscate your chips.
- (4) Going South from the desert-related locations often leads to getting lost in a desert maze.
- (5) Once you have enough money, head directly for the train station.
- (6) Do not wander around the Las Vegas desert, or you will be bitten by snakes.
- (7) You should only travel East and West from the entrance to the Lucky Dice Hotel/Casino.
- (8) You will need to travel to and from Chicago by train; boarding trains for other destinations will get you killed.
- (9) In Chicago, you can travel to different locations by cab but will have to SHOW addresses to the Cabbie, since he cannot hear you.
- (10) Wear the Police uniform only for the Morgue, and change back to your regular clothes before leaving Chicago.
- (11) In places where you must wait, make time pass by double clicking on objects (to examine them).
- (12) Ignore the bag lady near Joe's Bar, as well as all food, bottles and the references to cigarettes, since these are not connected with winning the game.
- (13) Turn your printer on before the finale!

THE SOLUTION

Bathroom.

TAKE PANTS - WEAR PANTS - (Operate pants on self) - TAKE TRENCHCOAT - (Operate trenchcoat on self) - OPEN DOOR - N.

Bedroom.

TAKE CIGAR RING - TAKE TRAIN SCHEDULE FROM DRESSER - OPEN HOTEL ROOM DOOR - EXIT BEDROOM.

Corridor.

OPEN CASINO DOORS - GO CASINO DOORS - (entering Lobby) - EXAMINE PICTURE - W.

Cashier's Room (First time).

OPEN PANTS - OPEN WALLET - OPERATE \$10 BILL ON CASHIER - TAKE CHIPS - W - W - W.

Blackjack.

EXAMINE DEALER - OPERATE FADED CLIPPING ON DEALER - (he recognizes you and will let you win) - PLAY BLACKJACK UNTIL DEALER IS REPLACED - TAKE CHIPS - E - E - E - E.

Cashier's Room (Second time).

OPERATE CHIPS ON CASHIER - TAKE MONEY - E - (to Lobby) - OPEN OUTSIDE DOORS - S - (to Casino Entryway) - E.

HELPFUL HINTS

THE GORDELLO INCIDENT (PT 1) by LORNA PATERSON played on Spectrum

Don't WAIT around for things to happen, go in SEARCH of the key to your problem. LAYing objects down neatly when you have finished with them will produce results, as will careful timing. It might be necessary to STEAL something useful and RUN in the appropriate direction past the enemy.

On the other hand, WEARing the appropriate clothing will help you to blend into the background, although that may be easier said than done at first. Again you must STEAL to make progress, SEARCHing will throw light on the situation and LOWERing something may provide an escape route.

=====

ESCAPE FROM KHOSHIMA by CHRIS MUFF

At the start: W, S, E, S, TAKE CIGARETTES, E, TAKE CAN, W, N, W, N, N, E, N, E, GIVE CIGARETTES, W, TAKE MEAT, S, E, S, UNLOCK BOX, TAKE BOTTLE, DROP KEY, N, W, W, S, W, OPEN DRAWER, TAKE KNIFE, E, S, W, TAKE CARROTS, EAT CARROTS, E, S, INTO JUNGLE.

=====

FISH by EMMA HEGGIE played on Amiga

To complete the game Shutdown, change the fourth letter to Y, change the second letter to X, change the third letter to S, change the second letter to A, change the last letter to R and then change the first letter to W.

To shut down the power station, turn off the protocopier and the light switch in your apartment before turning the big switch off.

To get the radio case, leave your flat door open and your fishton will be stolen. Buy the fishton back from Steve and the radio case will be delivered by mistake.

=====

GOLDEN MASK by JOAN WILLIAMS played on Spectrum

Sid is in the opening at the edge of the forest.

Fix boat with cork.

Pull cross to open door.

Kill demons.

Smash door twice with battleaxe.

Call Sid to the giant, then dig S.E.

=====

LEISURE SUIT LARRY II by MANDY played on Atari ST

To leave the plane: Give Ken the pamphlet to read, take the Airsick bag, walk to rear of plane and go to bottom of screen (with just Larry's head showing through cut in fuselage), wear parachute, pick lock with bobby pin (taken from meal at airport), pull red lever to open door. You get sucked out and DON'T FORGET TO OPEN PARACHUTE!

SERIALISED SOLUTIONS

AMAZON

(Trillium)

(John R. Barnsley - Coomodore C64)

This is a small maze of no great difficulty. Just go North, North, North, East, and you'll be in a clearing. North again brings you to Macuma. North once more, and you're on the slopes, pretty high up. It's a trifle chilly, so wear your parka. Now keep going up until you reach the snowstorm.

Here, you can't go further without help, so turn on the computer. Enter the emergency code. As before, NSRT will guide you safely out of the storm (provided you have the map, etc). Then go north and enter the lava tube. Have another night's sleep (I wonder how Paco managed to survive the freezing cold?). In the morning, continue north until you're back in the jungle.

North again (the favorite direction in this game!), and you come to a clearing, where you see a crate floating down from the sky. Go east until you come to the drop site. Open the crate, and get the rifle. Also take the parachute. Leave the raft and oar, because they are both useless (the raft has a hole, and the oar is broken. So is the rifle, but you won't need to fire it). Then head north to the river.

Ok, so now you're at the river. It's dark again, so wear your goggles. Aha, there's a hippo feeding at the river. Just wait until he leaves, then go west until you come to the native boat. Examine the boat, and you notice that there's a small hole in it. "Use parachute", and that will plug the hole. Now go south, and you'll find a handy paddle.

Go back north to the boat. You're almost ready to cross, but first you have to do something about the water-phobic parrot. "Shoot Paco", and he will collapse into your arms. Get into the boat, and "cross river".

Part of the way over, alligators will appear. Your rifle is useless for shooting, but you can use it as a club. This is a tricky one, because "hit alligators" won't work. Instead, you must say "use rifle" (silly, but that's what will work). If you are playing the Explorer version, the alligators leave, but come back. When this happens, "use paddle", and you will row fast enough to make the shore before they get to you.

This is a good time to save the game. A totally purposeless and extremely frustrating arcade sequence is coming up. There is no way to avoid it, alas, and you may lose your patience with it the first time around. Ok, you're across the river, and you'll be too tired to turn on your computer. So you might as well just sleep.

In the morning, you'll find that monkeys have stolen everything except the computer. NSRT will try to guide you to the monkeys, but they move too fast. Here is where the arcade sequence begins. You will have to move your little dot (using either the N-S-E-W or the I-J-K-M keys) after the dot that represents the monkeys with the pack. This is not easy, but, believe me, it can be done, even if it seems to take forever!!

Once you have the pack (and saved the game so you won't have to go through this idiocy again), go east to the bridge. Paco will not want to cross, but you can persuade him by saying: "use gun". Do NOT "shoot Paco", because he'll have convulsions. Just the threat is sufficient to get him to cross over.

About half-way across, the bridge starts to collapse. Just continue east, and you'll make it safely over. From there, go south until you come to the Tree of Skulls, and go west from there. Aha! The entrance to the Lost City! However, don't get carried away just yet!

First, turn on your computer, and enter the regular code. Don't worry about the tape of the massacre that is transmitted; it is not of the least importance to you. Once transmission is completed, go south to the campsite. This is another good place to save the game, because yet another tedious arcade sequence is about to happen.

The Huni will be attacking soon, so wear your goggles. Then turn your laser on. The Huni will now attack. This night, there are, fortunately, only three of them to kill. Use the left and right arrows to maneuver the laser (which looks like something left over from "Space Invaders"), and use the space bar to fire (you stop automatically when you shoot). Once you've gotten rid of the Huni, you can get a good night's sleep.

In the morning, go back north to the Lost City. Continue going north until you come to the storeroom. Ignore the fruit (not important) and go east. This is a temple with a large statue. The statue is not important. Go north to the wall and push it. A lever appears! Pull the lever, and a set of stairs is revealed.

Go down the stairs. The entrance closes behind you, but don't worry about it. Go west to the end of the passage, then up to the vast hall. West again will bring you to a tiny room, and north to the wall with the key. Take the key and go south and east back to the hall, then north to the door.

Unlock the door. You'll find a piece of paper on the floor. When you try to read it, you'll see that it's in code. Your computer will beep, so turn it on. NSRT will tell you what the paper says. Now is another good time to save the game, in case you make a mistake later. You will have to enter the Antechamber and open the doors in the proper sequence. One wrong move, and you're dead.

Ok, go west. Here are the three doors that must be opened. The sequence is: Open 132. If you're playing the Explorer version, you will have to open a second set of doors, but the code is the same. How about that! You found the emeralds at last!


However, Macuma is about to blow its top. In fact, the whole place seems to be coming down! Fortunately, the rest of this is almost automatic. Go south, and continue south until you come to the soft volcanic earth. Here, you go up into the pit room, and then west out of the city.

The lost city crumbles before your eyes, but don't despair! A helicopter appears at the last moment, taking you and Paco to safety. Congratulations! You've just finished your first mission for NSRT!!!!

THE PRICE OF MAGIK Part 3 of the Time and Magik Trilogy by Level 9
By THE WAYFARER played on Commodore 64

Continued.

Map of the Mists of Time

Mists Of Time (start)	 and then DOWN to the room shown in the square (eg: S, E, D takes you to the Ante Alcove)			
(clock) Entrance Hall	(Red Moon) Ante Alcove	Morgue	No D Exit N to reach map bottom row	North Tower
(snow) Cold Store	(Misty Plain) Stone Arch	Winding Drive	Strange Rock Formation	(Stonehenge picture) Standing Stones
Herb Garden	Triangle Room	River Bed	Misty Room	Temple by Altar
Cloth Store Room	Pantry	Grotto	Dry Gallery	Palatial Portico
Ominous Chamber	(Misty Plain) Stone Arch	Grassy Plain	Hall of Statues	Winding Corridor

Very basically they are a magical shortcut to parts of the game which are key areas, but be forewarned, over use of them will result in you not performing all actions and not gaining a full score. Also every time you cast a spell or use magic in any form, you age 1 year. You have only two chances to rejuvenate, so be wary of using magic over much.

CAST SEE N and a secret room is revealed (1 point for casting See), N and you are in a Priest Hole, where you can see the word Det. CAST DET (and gain 2 points), S, SE, S, S, W to the bone chamber, S, SE to the werewolf, SW, SE to the first entrance hall, W, W, NW to yellow river, N, N, N, U to the stairway with the cold banisters, E, SE, S to the white wood corridor, NW to an old salts room. This old seafarer had a secret. SW and you have found it. There are a number of different coloured chests here. One contains a useful item, the rest will explode on opening. The original version had a random selection of the chest but the trilogy version is a little more restrictive and uses the same one each time. The problem is to find the right chest. You can do this by trial and error however the correct way to find it is to CAST DOW AT BLACK CHEST (followed by brown etc) until the pendulum swings from side to side. A circular motion will get you killed. I found that in the trilogy version which I played that it always seemed to be the brown chest. OPEN BROWN CHEST (successfully gains you 1 point) and LOOK IN CHEST. You find a bag of salt. GET SALT.

To be continued.....



HELPLINE

TELEPHONE HELPLINES

ALF BALDWIN	0452 500512	MON TO SAT 10AM TO 5PM	Spectrum.
JACK HIGHAM	0925 819631	FRI TO MON 7PM TO 10PM	Spectrum.
WALTER POOLEY	051 9331342	ANY REASONABLE TIME	Various.
DOREEN BARDON	065 382 509	SUN TO SAT 6PM TO 10PM	Spectrum.
MIKE BRAILSFORD	0592 757788	SUN TO SAT 10AM TO 10PM	Various.
MERC	0424 434214	ANY REASONABLE TIME	Atari ST.
JASON DEANE	0492 622750	ANY REASONABLE TIME	Amiga.
JOAN PANCOTT	0305 784155	SUN TO SAT NOON TO 10PM	Amstrad.
ISLA DONALDSON	041 9540602	SUN TO SAT NOON TO 12PM	Amstrad.
NIC RUMSEY	03212 2737	SUN TO SAT 6PM TO 9PM	Various.
REG LILLEY	0392 215521	TUE TO SUN 6PM TO 11PM	Commodore
BARBARA			
BASSINGTHWAIGHTE	0935 26174	SUN TO SAT 10AM TO 10PM	BBC.
BARBARA GIBB	051 7226731	ANY EVENING FROM 7PM	BBC.
DAVE BARKER	01 732 1513	MON TO FRI 7PM TO 10PM	Various.

THE INNKEEPERS HELPLINE

The Innkeeper, together with his slave Allan will help struggling adventurers on a rota basis. Telephone 01 462 6209 times as follows: (Spectrum and Commodore.)

INNKEEPER	ALLAN
MON 8PM TO 10PM	TUE 8PM TO 10PM
WED 9PM TO 10PM	THU 8PM TO 10PM
SUN 8PM TO 10PM	SAT 4PM TO 6PM
	& 8PM TO 10PM

Please do not ask the Innkeeper or Allan for full solutions.

* * * THE ULTIMATE INFOCOM HELPLINE * * *

If you need help with an Infocom adventure then who better to help you than A GRUE! Ring GRUE on 0695 573141 between 7:30pm to 9pm Mon to Fri. Or write to 64 COUNTY ROAD, ORMSKIRK, WEST LANCs, L39 1QH. Please note that GRUE will give help on INFOCOM ONLY!

MANDY'S HOTLINE

If you need to contact Probe please telephone 0492 77305. I will be available at all reasonable times but please try to telephone between 10am and 10pm.

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU ONLY RING

AT THE TIMES SHOWN

