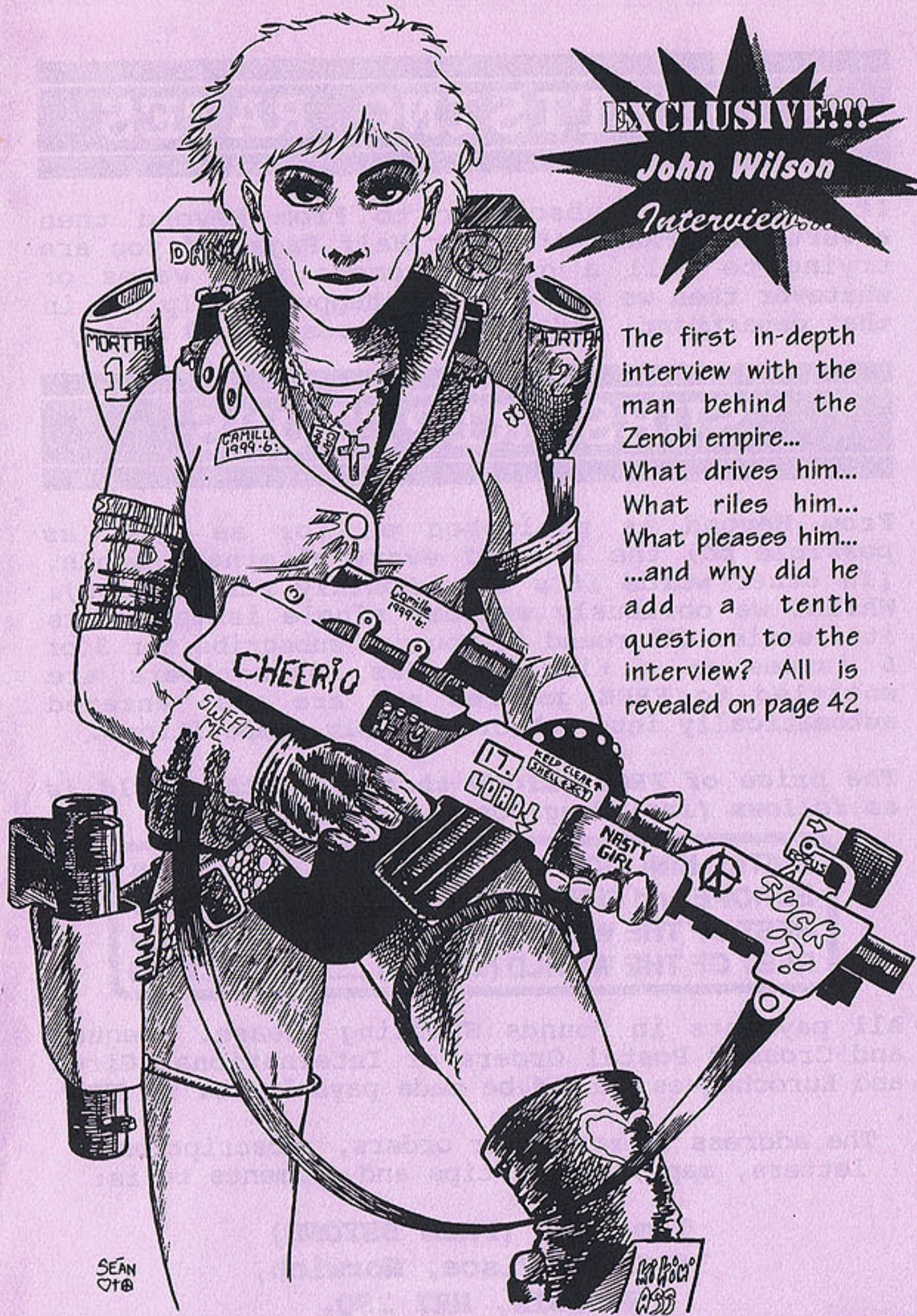


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Interview...*

The first in-depth
interview with the
man behind the
Zenobi empire...

What drives him...
What riles him...
What pleases him...
...and why did he
add a tenth
question to the
interview? All is
revealed on page 42



FROM BEYOND • No. 14

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER • 1992

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If you are a subscriber to From Beyond then adverts are FREE! (Full or Half Page) If you are trying to sell a game, promote your wares or whatever then we are only too happy to help out in that department. (Ad's normally cost £5.00 each!)

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From Beyond is published on (or as near as possible to) the 15th of every alternate month. (In other words it's a Bi-Monthly Publication). Whilst we obviously welcome single issue orders it's easier all round if you can subscribe for 3 or 6 issues at a time. Besides, subscribers are entitled to FREE goodies and are also entered automatically into subscriber only competitions.

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The address to send your orders, subscriptions, letters, maps, hints, tips and comments to is:

**Tim Kemp (FROM BEYOND)
36 Globe Place, Norwich,
Norfolk, NR2 2SQ.**

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FB ISSUE 14 • SEPT/OCT 1992

The following people can give themselves a pat on the back for helping to make this issue of FROM BEYOND such an okay-ish one...

Paul Neale, E.J. Pettit, Scott Denyer, June Rowe, Barbara Gibb, Tony Collins, John Wilson, Les Floyd, Terry Brawls, The Hit Man, The Jester, STORM

Stupendous cover art by:
Sean Doran.

Special Notice:
From Beyond would be a right load of old rubbish without input from you, the readers. So, buck your ideas up a bit and get something right smart-like bashed out, and send it to us. Take a look at this issues letters and news pages and see if there's not something in there to stir you to put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboards. Your views on anything that's remotely adventure-like would be much appreciated. Tim.

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EDITORIAL

PROBE RETURNS, WILSON TALKS

- 10/8/92: I've had a surprising number of letters from people commenting on my little piece in the last editorial (FB13) where I rambled on about the reasons why FB is hardly likely to 'fold', 'collapse' or 'disappear' without warning. Some of you out there seem to find it hard to believe that FB is non profit making and is done, more or less, as a labour of love. Okay, perhaps that's a bit too much to believe... but it's true. I can promise you that there's no way I'm going to spend all my time (spare or otherwise) doing something I don't like. I've tried to think of reasons that would force me to stop doing FB, but I can't think of any. Actually, the only reason to stop as far as I'm concerned would be if I didn't enjoy doing it any more. I've said it before and I'll say it again (for those of you who don't believe me) FROM BEYOND will appear as long as you want it to appear, as long as I enjoy doing it and as long as I don't lose money producing it!

- 1/9/92: Big news this issue is that there's an interview with John Wilson on pages 42-46. Three reviews had to fall by the wayside so I could print it, but I think it was worth dropping them to squeeze it in. I even changed the font, size and page layout to enable it to fit into the space. Strategic 'beeps' are courtesy of J.W. himself. Read the interview, and if you want to respond we'll naturally print your letters next issue.

- 5/9/92: The sew-on patches that were to be given away with the next FB are 'on ice' again. I've lined up another FREE gift for next issue which will more than make up for the non appearance of the patches. What is this subscriber only (naturally) FREE gift? You'll just have to wait till next issue to find out. Needless to say it will be groovy and will boost the page count of FB 15 to somewhere in the region of 72 pages! I'd love to get all technical and tell you why the patches have been delayed, but it's a boring story and I've got to leave space for another editorial entry...

- 9/9/92: You'll all know by now that Adventure Probe has made a comeback and is now edited by Barbara Gibb. A price rise and page cut has been implemented (only for the early issues as far as the page cut goes I believe?) so buy it and see what you think. Somewhat sad news has just reached my ears inasmuch as Your Sinclair is being forced to cut its page count to 52, with the result that the adventure column is now down to one solitary page. What can be achieved in that small space I don't know? Looks like it'll end up as a news / new product / coupon corner / address list from now on. Adventure producers (large and small) might care to write to me to try to help me work out just what can be done with one page. Well, that's all for now. See ya! *Tim*

NEWS ROUNDUP

ADVENTURE NEWS AND STUFF!



• As mentioned in the editorial, Barbara Gibb has taken over as editor of Adventure Probe. The price per issue has risen to £2.00 and the page count for the first few issues will be around the 40 mark. The new address is: Adventure Probe, 52 Burford Road, Liverpool L16 6AQ.

SAMCo: R.I.P.

When the SAM Coupe first appeared on the scene it looked to have a rosy future. High specification for a very low cost should have helped establish it as the best entry level computer ever! Sadly, after making a strong comeback after going to the wall once before (as MGT), SamCo has gone bust. Reports abound of a second coming (third coming?), but I fear that no one will be willing to support a company or machine that constantly teeters on the edge of extinction. I thought Amstrad would have been odds on favourite to take over the production and marketing of the machine after MGT initially went to the wall, but according to reliable sources they were not interested at all. In fact Atari were the likely (unlikely) saviours at one stage. More news will appear as and when I get it. Till then, keep your Coupe and do your best to enjoy it.

• The Northern Underground are taking over the marketing, duplication and distribution of many ex-GI GAMES adventures. See the enclosed 'flyer' in this issue for more details of that.

SAM SPECIFIC COMPASS GAMES:

Jon Lemmon has been working hard on SAM conversions of his best selling Spectrum titles. The entire Compass back catalogue will be available by the time you read this. Needless to say these SAM versions don't have to be converted by you before they work on the SAM. You also get the added bonus of being able to save the game positions to your SAM disk! For further details see the Compass Software advert elsewhere in this issue.

Dave Ledbury, workaholic brains behind 101 schemes (most of which do actually come to fruition), has informed me, in a kind of informal way, that he's got a new project on the go which is a co-venture between Square One and ZAT fanzine, called TNT. Apparently it's going to be an adventure programming mag combined with a playing tips mag. It'll only cost a quid and it will either appear bimonthly or quarterly. It will also be an 'all formats' 'zine. Contributors are needed! Hopefully the first issue will be ready for the Probe convention in October. There's also the possibility that Dave will find himself once more as the editor of the official (?) SAM newdisk. More news as it happens. Meanwhile, here's an address where you can get more info:

TNT / QUEST SOFTWARE: C/O Martin Scholes, 5 Beacon Flats, Kings Hays Road, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire. TF1 1RG.

THE REVIEWING SYSTEM

THE FB REVIEW SYSTEM EXPLAINED

Despite having a plethora of categories to take note of when you eventually come to the scores at the end of each review, the FB ratings system is quite simple to understand. It operates on a sliding scale of 0 to 10 - 0 being the lowest score, 10 being the highest. All categories use this scale and scoring system - except the difficulty level which has 4 possible entries...

- Beginner • Intermediate
 - Experienced • Advanced

Those categories refer to the type of player that the game seems to be aimed at. The rest of the ratings all use the 0 - 10 system...

- **Storyline:** It's always nice to see the game come with a story which could detail important pre-adventure events, useful info., handy playing hints, or just something that sets the scene or helps create an atmosphere.
- **Packaging:** This rating is here to show how much effort has gone into the packaging side of the game, including Cassette Inlay design, do you get a separate info / storyline sheet etc.
- **Opening Play:** This category gives you an indication of the strength of the opening problems, the way the game starts. Has it got a well produced intro, or are things too tough to start with. We all know what it's like to be stuck in a game after only a few moves because it's far too difficult to play past the first few locations.
- **Problems:** This is worked out over the entire game and we mainly take into account the number of problems, the type, how original they were, etc.
- **Location Text:** How detailed was the location text, how imaginative was it, how lengthy etc.
- **Parser:** This one's important in that it shows you how easy it was to type in your

commands and how flexible it was.

- **Game Design:** How well was the game designed? Was it something new, did it flow, did it all come together nicely? (Or not?)
- **Difficulty Level:** Overall was the game suitable for - Beginner, Intermediate, Experienced or Advanced adventurers?
- **Playability:** This is also an important category. Low marks = you won't bother finishing, high marks = you won't want to stop playing!
- **Personal Rating:** This is where your impartial and friendly FB reviewer sums up their feelings about the game under review!

And there you have it... Quite simple when all is said and done! The following are lists of the resident FB reviewers fave games of all time.

- **Games We Like:** *This is the kind of thing the FB reviewing team like... Yes, what a normal bunch we are!*

THE JESTER:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. The Hobbit | 2. Aura-Scope |
| 3. Heavy on the Magik | 4. 5 on a Treasure Isl. |
| 5. Terrors of Trantoss | 6. The 'Bulbo' trilogy |
| 7. The Axe Of Kolt | 8. Captain Kook |
| 9. Phoenix | 10. Laurence C. games |

STORM:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Velnor's Lair | 2. Golden Apple |
| 3. Mutant (River) | 4. Mordon's Quest |
| 5. Lords Of Time | 6. Faerie |
| 7. Quann Tulla | 8. Earthshock |
| 9. A Harvesting Moon | 10. Magnetic Moon |

TIM:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The Hobbit | 2. Adventureland |
| 3. Dungeon Adventure | 4. Tower Of Despair |
| 5. The Golden Apple | 6. Colossal Adventure |
| 7. Impossible Mission | 8. Espionage Island |
| 9. Velnor's Lair | 10. Lords Of Time |

ADVENTURE REVIEW

THE SECRET OF ST. BRIDE'S

Reviewed By: The Jester

One of the batch of GI GAMES currently being distributed through Zenobi Software (or possibly now through The Northern Underground... see news pages for more details).

I've seen this game described in the past as a 'classic' - so, not having played it before, when it arrived from Tim for review I was looking forward to it. How quickly one's expectations can be shattered...

STORYLINE:

You've just arrived at St. Bride's - a girls' school in Ireland; but something is strangely wrong - all the mistresses and the girls think they're living in the 1920's. Why? That's your job - to find out!

THE ADVENTURE:

The game starts with you in your dorm, having got out of bed and put on your uniform. You're carrying only a satchel, containing just a pencil and rubber. Cynthia and Fiona, two fellow students, are asleep nearby. Obviously, the first thing to do is wake them up - having done so, you find that they, too, believe it to be the 1920's. With these two for moral support, you can now set off exploring.

Moving east out of the dorm, you are immediately greeted by the sombre strains of the well-known 'funeral march' - ominous! And rightly so -

it's a warning! Unless you quickly find and wear the gown, as worn by the school mistress, you will be caught and 'indoctrinated' into becoming a 'model pupil' - heaven forbid!

Once you are wearing the gown, you can move around at leisure - but slowly. Slowly, because most of the rooms and corridors have their own graphic representation, which aren't the quickest to draw.

Corridors all look the same, as do the rooms, with the odd door and window in a different place. In fact, throughout the game, I felt that the graphics, done as they were with the Illustrator, added nothing whatsoever (the so-called trees later on are awful) - but there doesn't seem to be any way of turning them off (not that I found, anyway).

Before long, you will find yourself in the Trunk Room. Although you're not told so, there is a trunk here - you must OPEN TRUNK to find what's inside. However, if you OPEN TRUNK again, the same item is re-created - over and over again; and this is not the only time in the game that this kind of thing occurs!

Once you succeed in locating objects, you will find out nothing else about them - throughout the entire game, I found only ONE object which elicited a response when I tried to examine it - the rest just gave the response 'I cannot see anything special!'

THE SECRET OF ST. BRIDE'S

Your next major problem will be to open the 'forbidden door' - there is a simple way of entering the room, one seen in many old films, but finding the right phraseology; the game is very 'picky' in its recognised inputs (by the way, Tim, the solution you provided didn't work here - I had to work it out myself). Once you've found the right words to enable you to open the door, an object you should find yourself in possession of is not in your inventory despite being told you now have it and it's not lying around either. Something else I found annoying.

It's now 'dark corridor' time - so, lamp to the fore! And it soon starts flickering ('funeral march' again), so beware! This is where I met my next problem - whilst trying to explore, the lamp went out, and I was plunged into darkness. Having not, at this stage, yet saved my position, my only option, as I thought, was to QUIT and start again. Easier said than done! The program does not recognise QUIT, STOP, FINISH, END (or any other four letter words which I frustratedly typed in)! I was stuck, and had no option but to clear the machine and re-load the game! For the benefit of FB readers, the solution to this problem will be given later!

The old elephant/mouse routine will get you through another door; but the next is a bit more tricky. To reach the required key, you must eat the 'magic mushroom' found earlier, which makes you taller. However, having unlocked the door, you're then too tall

to pass through it! What to do? because of the obscure wording needed, I'm going to give the input in full (as given in the solution provided) - EAT OTHER SIDE OF MUSHROOM. All that is actually needed is EAT OTHER - hardly an input which springs readily to mind! (That is a bit savage isn't it? Ed!)

Shortly afterwards, you will learn of the AMULET, which is actually the object of your quest; you will encounter an old lady who promises help if you can find a cat; in your search for the cat, you encounter a Fir Bolg (whatever that is) who demands magic before you can pass. An everyday schoolboy / girl activity involving paper and rubbers will do the trick, though why this should be considered magic is beyond me! You will also encounter a 'mini-maze' of fields, hedges, plains etc - to progress from here, you must TURN GOWN AROUND, which instantly transports you to another location! Completely illogical : why should reversing the gown whisk you off somewhere else? (Beats me, Ed.)

I must confess that at this point I lost patience with the game, and played the rest through to its conclusion using the solution provided, instead of trying to work out the inputs for myself, whilst dutifully mapping it out and, at times, making vain attempts to EXAMINE things.

To cut the rest very short - you must re-enter the school to find something;

THE SECRET OF ST. BRIDE'S

impersonate someone; take a train journey; undergo a 'guided tour' of Dublin; and visit Miss Maria Merlin. She will set you a riddle which, if you answer it, finishes the game at 50%. If you ignore the riddle, you can continue with the search for the Amulet, which means taking another train ride back to school. Along the route you will encounter many instances of what I term 'out of the blue' inputs - using a telephone when you're not told there is one; having to ask for string, when no indication is given that it's available; getting a magnet from out of something when, again, you're not told it's there; and so it goes on.

When I'd finished 'playing' the game, I looked into the program (shock, horror) to see if it was me who'd been missing getting up informative messages (it wasn't); and it was whilst doing so that I found the answer to the QUIT problem. The input needed to 'quit' the game is EXEAT!! OK if you're a student of Latin - but hardly an input that most people would immediately think of! Maybe this was explained when the game was originally released, but it seems that no instructions are now supplied with it.

GOOD POINTS:

I'm thinking, Tim, honestly... It's a big game, with plenty of problems - and cheap.

BAD POINTS:

Basically, it's just not 'player-

friendly'. Too many obscure and illogical inputs, giving rise to numerous 'You can't' responses; lack of response to EXAMINE inputs; bad programming in places (items re-created etc); several spelling mistakes; no HELP facility whatsoever; need I go on? (Er, no! I think you'd better stop right there Jester! Save some non-superlatives for another game! - Ed.)

CONCLUSIONS:

It must be acknowledged that the game was written in 1985, before sophistications like the 'Press' etc were available to enhance a Quilled game. If you're a masochist, you'll find much here to keep you happy!

• THE SECRET OF ST. BRIDE'S •

The Northern Underground

Top Floor

17 Fisher Street

Carlisle

PRICE: £2.00 (tape)

Outside UK please add 50p per order
or £1.00 for airmail.

RATINGS:

PACKAGING	2
STORYLINE	5
OPENING PLAY	5
PROBLEMS	5
LOCATION TEXT	4
PARSER	3
GAME DESIGN	4
DIFFICULTY	EXPERIENCED
PLAYABILITY	4

PERSONAL RATING 3

ADVENTURE REVIEW

VIRUS

Reviewed By: STORM

Here we have a game from Delbert The Hamster Software - this time it's not by Gareth or Scott, but it's a re-release of an adventure by Global Games...

STORYLINE:

Your name is Dr. Goo, a Time Lord and you're hot on the heels of Mr. X, a renegade Time Lord, who has created a dastardly machine with which he intends to infect all Spectrum adventures with a deadly virus. SHOCK. HORROR.

THE ADVENTURE:

As mentioned in the intro this game was originally released in 1988 by William Young / Global Games for £2.99 with a chance of winning a Spectrum computer. It is now available for £1.99 from Delbert. History lesson over so off we jolly well go.

You start in a small park on the planet of Alinam next to a statue and your time machine, and carrying your sonic screwdriver that strangely is missing its power pack. I say strangely because a clever Dr. Goo must know something to leave the Tardis on a strange planet and hope he will find a suitable power pack but Dr. Goo has overcome many obstacles in the past so who knows?

To the east is an inn with Serim in

charge and with a spare room upstairs to rent. To the west is the general store with Davros and with an adventure section that has some boots and gloves at 5 crowns each. Shame you haven't any money. To the north is a hairy mechanoid next to a cave with a chest secured by straps that have knots too tight for untying. Around about here this is also an unclimbable cliff with an eagle that doesn't appreciate your presence. At least there is a hut to provide shelter from its beak, claws and guano. To the south there is another cave but this is guarded by a stubborn creature which refuses our friendly inputs. Some of these problems are inter-connected so what to do first? Possibly some finances might help you, so search a few motionless objects. The contents of the chest will be needed elsewhere so perhaps something sharp might help you overcome this one. Perhaps the hardest problem to solve is the stubborn creature. Perhaps something edible.

Once you have sorted things out around here it is time to wave goodbye and nip off to the cold side of the planet. There is a skull in the graveyard and to the east is a Fish and Chip shop!! What! Yes, that's what I thought as well. At least it is a logical location to find some salt and pepper. Fairly soon you will arrive at Mr. X's secret room. Don't forget to RAMSAVE around here because you will only have 3 moves to get him

VIRUS

before he gets you!

£1.99, possibly worth a look.

GOOD POINTS:

All the usual PAW features. Easy to map. Most problems are overcome using logical inputs. There are also, thankfully, no red herrings. (A feature becoming more widespread!)

BAD POINTS:

The means to bypass the stubborn creature was not signposted (or I didn't see it). There are also only about 30 locations. A somewhat unfriendly parser spoils the flow of things, and there are too many instances where you get the message 'Dr. Goo decides there is nothing special about that.'

CONCLUSIONS:

Not really up to the same standard as Scott's own games but even so, at

• VIRUS •

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Beds., MK45 1LF

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RATINGS:

PACKAGING	6
STORYLINE	5
OPENING PLAY	6
PROBLEMS	6
LOCATION TEXT	7
PARSER	5
GAME DESIGN	6
DIFFICULTY	INTERMEDIATE
PLAYABILITY	5
PERSONAL RATING	5

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

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Turn to page 52 for more details...

ADVENTURE REVIEW

K.K.K. and GRUE-KNAPPED

Reviewed By: STORM

Another game from F.S.F. or to be more precise two games, though not written by the Big L. I've reviewed 'em one after the other with the ratings appearing at the end of the complete review...

STORYLINE:

Kes is kidnapped by the Salford Art Saboteurs and held in Kilmoore Castle on Mystery Moor. You as Kris, the dog have to get her out.

THE ADVENTURE:

Before you start there is a disclaimer from Larry Horsfield, who programmed it, that if you are offended by anything, to take it out on Kez and not him. A typical highly offensive remark is 'You've been on X silly walks and you're worth ** out of 250 doggy dos.' The reviewer later sent the tape to Mary Whitehouse, hence the reason we haven't heard from her recently. Anyway...

You start before a formidable looking oak door with the wind whistling round the ramparts and your bumparts (TOLD YOU). Entry is fairly straight forward and I was in the entrance hall. A bit of searching and examining things wasn't that productive so I went east into the living room with the statue of Prance. To the east of this location is the kitchen and then the pantry with the infamous locked cupboard. A bit of thorough work here

and later is very rewarding. Downstairs in the cellar is definitely worth a search. By now I had a few objects but no idea where I was supposed to go next. Surely there were more than 5 locations in the castle. Another look around produced nothing so I had a cup of coffee (with caffeine) and a think. Inspiration. Remembering that Larry had programmed it, and remembering Castle Coris, I returned to the computer. SUCCESS. If you read my review of it you'll know what to do. If you didn't... ha.ha. What a shame.

Off I went again along a corridor with an inviting window to the dead end with the undertakers. Oh, I forgot. There is also a Dr. Wot and Joe the Jazzman to have a chat with nearby. Talking of Joe reminds me that there is a tricky input required here. Without some help I don't think I would have cracked it. It is the old story of not what you do but the way that you do it.

Remembering that I am a dog, I had to do something but the adverb that went with it almost contradicted this.

Later on I had the means to do some vandalism and came across a tied up black horse (as in the ad.), Nick outside the church, an emotional Lanky Larry, a fisherman, assorted guards, the Infamous Ekim, Sean Doran, a Princess to name but several before I eventually rescued Kez.

K.K.K. and GRUE-KNAPPED

GOOD POINTS:

Lots of assorted problems to tackle and people to talk to. Everything works as it should do.

BAD POINTS:

Having to use the word CLOSELY when examining things. I can understand having to examine an object that's created after examining another object, but surely closely examining items that examine failed to work on is a bit much. End of moan.

Full ratings for K.K.K. are at the end of this double review. Being a two game cassette we'll plod on with the next review, namely Grue Knapped...

GRUE-KNAPPED:

STORYLINE:

You and a friend are touring Ormskirk when you discover an unmapped cave system. Out pops the Grue, who eats your friend and dumps you in the cave while he has a kip before returning to have another meal. You.

THE ADVENTURE:

I started in Grue's hovel only able to go east as the Grue is behind the locked door. A thorough examination and search of the surrounding area got me to the washing area and the kitchen containing an oven. Elsewhere there is the smallest room and the colossal room with its axe and cage. The multi-coloured slop shop is worth a visit even if the object found isn't working at present and a magical cave at the other side of a maze (SHOCK HORROR.

Quite easy to map), should be visited. Getting the means to escape will take a while though as basically you need to have got two things and done something.

GOOD POINTS:

Not as large as K.K.K. with just over 30 locations but containing lots of problems. A good game for mapping.

BAD POINTS:

Nothing springs to mind.

CONCLUSIONS:

I would describe both these games as humorous although the styles are totally different. With K.K.K. there are masses of assorted humorous location descriptions and messages but sadly only one (a message regarding a window) raised a smile for me. On the other hand, Grue-Knapped had me laughing out loud. I loved the kitchen description, the exits from the questionable room and that excludes the cricket. In short I loved Bob Adams (the original author) humour but others might prefer Kez's, because not everyone has the same sense of humour.

K.K.K. is the larger of the two games, and definitely the harder but I got a lot more pleasure from Grue-Knapped even if it was smaller and easier.

Overall I would say that the 2 games are good value for money and should easily keep you busy for many evenings, especially K.K.K. The problem for me anyway is they have totally different styles of humour.

K.K.K. and GRUE-KNAPPED

One worked for me while the other didn't. Bear that in mind when it comes to the ratings.

• KRAZY KARTOONIST KAPER & GRUE-KNAPPED •

F.S.F. Adventures
40 Harvey Gardens

Charlton, London SE7 8AJ

PRICE: £1.99 (tape) £2.99 (+3 Disk)

RATINGS:

KRAZY KARTOONIST KAPER:

PACKAGING	6
STORYLINE	7
OPENING PLAY	6
PROBLEMS	8
LOCATION TEXT	7
PARSER	8
GAME DESIGN	7
DIFFICULTY	EXPERIENCED
PLAYABILITY	7
PERSONAL RATING	6

GRUE-KNAPPED:



PACKAGING	6
STORYLINE	6
OPENING PLAY	8
PROBLEMS	6
LOCATION TEXT	6
PARSER	8
GAME DESIGN	7
DIFFICULTY	INTERMEDIATE
PLAYABILITY	9
PERSONAL RATING	9

• Those people who decide to write to FB for any reason usually end up telling us the kind of games they like and dislike. Invariably it's humour in adventures that is the biggest turn off. Very few of you, it appears, are great lovers of spoofs. What's funny and what's not varies from person to person. On the whole the FB reviewing team don't like funny games. Take a look at page 6 to see what a straight-faced, humourless bunch we are...Tim

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ADVENTURE REVIEW

DRAGON SLAYER (128k)

Reviewed By: *Tim.*

A new author, a new game, a new company... sounds promising! Let's see...

STORYLINE:

A long time ago man began pushing back the barriers of his world, and came across Goblins! Goblins had long been rulers of the world - they'd been around since the beginning of time and were (in my opinion) right to be a bit narked at mans intrusion. Naturally enough WAR broke out.

Rexel, a Warlock, formed the 'Circle of Nine' a medallion was created from a range of elements (fire, water and the like) and gave the wearer protection from most anything - a useful tool for the humans to have. However, should the Goblins get it... Then, one day, you reach maturity (?) and are given your legacy. It turns out to be a letter telling of your fathers death. You learn that an alliance has been formed between the Silver Dragon and the Red Goblins... the medallion was stolen and now you must kill the Silver Dragon. You must succeed! (Thank's dad, nice legacy!)

THE ADVENTURE:

DRAGON SLAYER comes in all formats. 128k, 48k (2 parts), PLUS D disk, +3 disk. There's no instructions with the packaging. Loading takes a bit of time on the 128 speccy (tape naturally) and is only punctuated by a brief 'scrolly' screen effect (game name) early on,

which then disappears to leave you staring at a blank loading screen. When the game finally loads you are greeted by a screen of credits, a picture of a red goblin face (I presume?) and the authors name etc. The press of a key flicks to another page of info telling you that you must battle wolves, goblins and serpents on your travels - then confront the Silver Dragon. You are also told that typing STORY will give you some background info, VOCAB will list the VOCABULARY (Really?) and INFO lists some INFO. My excitement began to rise when I read that typing START shows a map. True enough, typing START did show a small map detailing the Start location (with an S in one of the map boxes showing the start position) and a few other locations detailed on the map. Great, a neat 'automapping' feature a-la some of the later Infocom titles. WRONG. The problem with the map is that all it ever shows is the start locations. Hmphhh! A missed opportunity there for an added and interesting feature. Still, no matter, what of the game. Well, it all begins with on a dusty path. A ledge above you is out of reach, and the path only runs east. Going east gets you further down the track with only a few grassy growths here and there to provide you with a change of scenery. The STARTing map shows all the first locations, except for the ones that you can climb up. There's a cave to the north which, when you enter, is black... except for the screen-full of

DRAGON SLAYER (128k)

eyes that pop up. Dark cave eh? Wonder if I need a lamp? To the south there's a vicious goblin guarding a bridge. There's only one way to deal with him, and that involves finding a rope and another item. You can only go so far in the first section of the game, and everything you need, from Lamp to Rope can be found between the physical boundaries of these few starting locations. A word of warning, both EXAMINE and SEARCH can and need be used on several occasions. Sometimes I found that certain actions had to be done before other actions would work - i.e. things occasionally need to be done in sequence if they are going to work out properly. Try examining the leaves on the ground, then search them. believe it or not there's more to be done with them too, so think up a few more choice commands - you'll get nowhere if you can't uncover more here.

When things start happening for you you'll be surprised to see a bit of animation (!) where the ledge is concerned. This, I hoped, would be the first of many such unusual events...

Half an hours play saw me conquer the first section of the game. The bridge / troll problem is easy enough to get past, though there's more to do here than you first realise. Choice of command words is a bit strange, and the main challenge when it comes to doing anything major is selecting the right words to use. Still, try as many as you can think of and you'll get there in the end. Info on the kind of input the computer likes best is readily available from within the game its

self. In best adventure style the game then starts to open out before your very eyes. Actually that's not quite true as everything is done in a step by step fashion. Each time you get to a certain point you know that the barrier (or whatever is blocking your progress) will need to be removed before you can venture on. Once again it's a case of getting all the objects from each 'section' of the game and then journeying on. There's nothing wrong with that, and this game doesn't lose marks for taking that approach to adventuring. In fact a lot of the game seems to be so traditional in its use of objects, parser, solutions to problems etc., that undoubtedly you'll recognise things from many other games - or at least feel the influence of many 'older' games.

As you progress you'll see tunnels, caves, stagnant pools, spirits, torchlit passageways and the like. You'll also notice that the main location descriptions are very, very short and to the point. There's no fancy waffling prose telling you of your surroundings. That's not a bad thing, and makes a change from having to read through loads of text telling you what's to the east, what's to the west etc. An intelligent use of minimal descriptions I think!

It won't be hard to work out what object does what and where in the game as object descriptions and messages tell all. Sticking with the objects for a minute... they are all traditional (save a few) and their very shape, size and general

DRAGON SLAYER (128k)

appearance suggest their uses. Later in the game there are a few more characters to meet and greet and help, and before long you'll find yourself in the last section of the adventure. It was in this end section that most of my problems seemed to begin. Pesky guards need to be avoided then dealt with and there's a maze too! I was a bit disappointed at reaching the end so soon without the game actually taking off as it had threatened to do much earlier.

GOOD POINTS:

Exploring is reasonably easy. The presentation is good, the little odds and ends of special effects and special features are also most welcome. Shame they didn't go further though.

BAD POINTS:

Despite being 128k it certainly only seems like a 48k game. I couldn't see where the extra memory had been used, and to include the mapping and animation effects in the game, yet not expand on them only helped make them an interesting though ultimately pointless addition. Some of the verb / noun combinations were a bit strange too, though as mentioned you can work them out - eventually.

CONCLUSIONS:

Had the games promising start been carried through into the middle and later stages, and had the vocab and problems been expanded somewhat then a much higher personal rating would have been awarded. It would have taken just a few more days

programming and thought to improve every aspect. We'd have then seen 'Dream World Adventures' arrive with a bang. As it is they have arrived with a bit of an okay game which seems to borrow heavily from traditional adventures and adventure related sources. A proper auto-mapping system is, I'm sure, within the authors reach, as is an expansion of the animated sequence... get to it Martin, and the promised sequel to 'Dragon Slayer' will be far more complete in every way.

• DRAGON SLAYER •

Dream World Adventures

Martin Freemantle.

10 Medhurst Crescent,

Gravesend, Kent. DA12 4HL

(Cheques etc. To: M. Freemantle)

PRICE: £1.99 (48k tape)

£2.49 (128k tape)

£1.99 (48k PLUS D disk)

£2.49 (128k PLUS D disk)

£3.49 (+3 disk)

Overseas add £1.00 to cover extra postal cost.

RATINGS:

PACKAGING	6
STORYLINE	4
OPENING PLAY	6
PROBLEMS	5
LOCATION TEXT	4
PARSER	5
GAME DESIGN	7
DIFFICULTY	BEGINNER/INT.
PLAYABILITY	6

PERSONAL RATING 6

ADVENTURE REVIEW

PAROLE (128k ONLY)

Reviewed By: The Hit Man.

Listen up punks. From the rappin' on the door I figured that the postman had more than just a letter to deliver. I checked the peep-hole and saw that the guy had a package in his clammy mitts. I just hoped, as I began to open it, that it was 'Parole' by The Northern Underground, and not a present from Don Antonio. After doing a four stretch in the slammer for a crime I didn't commit, the last thing I wanted was to find this parcel ticking... Luckily it was a game!

MOBSTER STREET-SPEAK:

A glossary of terms:

- Heater - Gun
- Blade - Knife
- Jacknell - Your Character
- Dig - Understand, comprehend
- Dude - Guy, Chap, Man

STORYLINE:

No one double-crosses the mob and gets away with it. Jacknell copped a 6 stretch when the Law found 2 kilos of white powder at his pad, planted courtesy of Don Antonio de Forenzo. He played it smart and was out on parole after 4. If he'd been smarter, maybe he'd have walked away but Jacknell figured the Don has something coming, especially after what he'd done to his family.

THE ADVENTURE:

This is how it went down. Kane

Conway was under a contract from the new boy up north to produce the goods. Took a while but the PAWed games got style and it's out now so if you've got the money, honey, try Parole.

Jacknell started up town in central Detroit, a hard man released from the joint, with only his jeans, trainers and a wallet containing \$31. He looked around the lobby in which he found himself standing at the man in the suit but also the sign. No sweat. Soon he was out on the street looking to make things right. A taxi cab was just outside the station. maybe later. First Jacknell wanted to walk without bars getting in the way. An alley led north to a black business man. Death! That's the business. Young or old, if a dude has the price for his vice, then he'll be nice. Jacknell tried being stupid and paid for it the hard way... with his life. The guy in the shade had a blade and wanted to be paid. Dig?

Next time Jacknell checked out the sidewalk. The worktent looked interesting but the guy who was floating elsewhere said no way, Jose. Time for a ride, Clyde. But where to? Possibly to visit Elvis. Possibly not. Help is here so have no fear. Soon everything started coming together and he found himself out on the ledge with the birds and with nowhere to go... except eventually down. Later he wisely decided to check out a familiar looking apartment block, one that

PAROLE (128k ONLY)

contained his own pad. Too bad. It also contained a stiff. By now, if you were still green, the streets were real mean. Too many Mafiosi trying to waste Jacknell. If he was going to survive he'd need a piece, a heater, a rod, an iron... or even a gun! Kayman gun shop was close but he was 100% honest Joe. Tough on Jacko.

Time for a drink and a think at the coffee house before taking another ride, this time the subway to another part of the concrete jungle. Another dude with a bad attitude tried to cremate our mate, while yet another face has some serious firepower. Just what was needed... later. The door along the corridor needed opening but it took Jacknell quite a time (6 repeat inputs), before he got to the electric lock on the other door. November 5 came early. More punks had to be wasted before Jacknell got near the Don and... Hey, what am I telling you for. If it's all the same, you play the game, then you can take the blame or you can take the fame. Dig?

GOOD POINTS:

The amount of locations (70) in this game is a good amount, and the descriptions are a good length, as are the messages. It's easy to map too. Most obvious inputs work and are catered for and there's an unexpected finale.

BAD POINTS:

Jacknell gets wasted LOTS of times so RAMSAVE frequently. Sometimes he only has a short time to do the correct

input before it's too late. You have to repeat certain commands over and over again on some occasions which is a bit of a drag. The final little niggle is that there is no SCORE so you have no way of assessing your performance or your position in the game as you play.

CONCLUSION:

A new name from a new company. Jacknell took a lonely walk in search of revenge, so why not make the Don of the Northern Underground an offer he can't refuse. All horses heads and fish wrapped in bulletproof vests I'm sure would be appreciated but if you've a mind to be kind, send a cheque that is signed to...

• PAROLE •

The Northern Underground

Top Floor,

17 Fisher Street,

Carlisle.

PRICE: £2.49 (128k tape only)

Outside UK please add 50p per order
or £1.00 for airmail.

RATINGS:

PACKAGING	6
STORYLINE	8
OPENING PLAY	7
PROBLEMS	6
LOCATION TEXT	7
PARSER	6
GAME DESIGN	6
DIFFICULTY	INTERMEDIATE
PLAYABILITY	7
PERSONAL RATING	7

ADVENTURE REVIEW

DOOMSDAY (128K ONLY)

Reviewed By: Tim.

Before I begin this review I'd like to issue a warning to those of you of a nervous disposition, or those who are easily upset: This game is very powerful inasmuch as it uses strong language to convey the horror that you are faced with in the game. The subject matter is highly emotive, dealing, in part, with subjects such as animal experimentation in the name of a corrupt government. There is a 'tame' version of the game included, but to get the full effect you'll have to play the 'strong' version at some time. You have been warned.

STORYLINE:

Doomsday: A Sign of Things to Come? (Hope not!). Doomsday is set in the not too distant future, where you are a virtually anonymous citizen of the Socialist Republic of England and Cornwall. The government imposes harsh restriction on the people - even going as far as urging children to 'inform' on their parents. The ever present, all seeing 'police force' are also there to deal with trouble makers and lawbreakers.

Man is one of the only intelligent life forms left on earth, as pollution, hunting and various other disasters (both man made and natural) have wiped out most of the other life-forms. Civilisation has reached its end... there is only one thing you can do, and that is put it out of its misery.

The way to do this is to start a nuclear war! That, believe it or not, is your aim in the game!

THE ADVENTURE:

THE 'STRONG' VERSION: After a lengthy wait while the game loads, and you have endured a blank screen, a picture appears. It's the title page. After a bit of scene setting text and credits you find out that the author, Graham Burtenshaw, has a few words of warning for you concerning the games content. After that it's on with the game...

You find yourself working in the main dissection room of state vivisection centre No.6. The blood spattered ceiling and walls should tell you what's been going on in here. No dribbles of red-coloured liquid, no anaesthetic swabs here. No way! Full blown horror from the word go. If you don't believe me take a look around you, examine the objects in the room. Gruesome! No wonder you've decided that you must destroy mankind!

On the vivisection table lays a live Labrador - fully conscious... aware of what's happening... in chains - awaiting god knows what torture. Oh, before going any further I must say that this game has graphics. Fortunately, from what I saw, they are not as detailed as the mental pictures you'll imagine after reading the text. They appear in a small box, placed at the top quarter (not third) of

DOOMSDAY (128k ONLY)

the screen, and are flanked by information regarding the time, turns taken, score, and weight carried. But I digress... back to the game.

Rooting around in the first few locations actually proved to be a bit too gory for me. The characters (both human and animals) that you meet are portrayed in all too convincing and realistic style. From even this early in the game I couldn't help thinking that it is very similar, in sentiment and feel, if not content, to George Orwell's 1984. It's all pretty doomy and gloomy. That's why I've taken the extraordinary step of passing the game on to STORM for a re-review which I'll print next issue. I really want to get someone else's opinion and see what they have to say. I found that by the half way (ish) mark things had gotten very depressing. It's not that the game is bad. It's good! It's just that I really found myself getting depressed about the whole situation that my character found himself in. Worst of all though was the fact that I'm sure that this game does represent a vision of the future! Twist it around a bit and you can all too vividly imagine what it must be like to be ruled by a despotic, corrupt and thoroughly uncaring government. It was then that I realised that in more ways than one we've already got that! Replace the words 'Socialist Republic' with 'Uncaring Capitalist Dictatorship' and say hello to Domsday!

Picture a Jack-booted foot stamping on a human face forever...

GOOD POINTS:

Not many games, if any, have ever sent a shiver down my spine. This one did. It is 100% guaranteed to get you thinking about the future of the world and the part that mankind has played so far in its downfall. There's lots of descriptive text to read, and the author has done well to make the problems context sensitive - i.e. most problems are relevant to the subject matter.

BAD POINTS:

For bad points it depends on your point of view. You could say that the good points are the bad points. There was one point right at the beginning of the game that I couldn't understand. I had to 'Activate Device' (I think?). What device and why? It isn't, as far as I could see, made clear what that is all about and was only made clear what you had to do in the HELP-SHEET.

CONCLUSIONS:

If you can stomach the 'Strong' version then give it a go. Like I said it'll make you think. On the other hand there is a 'mild' version of the game which you could probably quite easily entertain the Vicar with. You also get a bonus freebie called 'The Cell of Ridges' which I'd love to tell you about but I couldn't get it to load. PLUS you also get 'ALCH-NEWS' which is a tapezine. The packaging of the game is excellent being of the large see-thru double size cassette (or disk) box variety with blood red inlay sheet featuring excellent artwork and an instruction sheet containing plenty of

DOOMSDAY (128k ONLY)

background details, command words etc. +D disk versions of the game come with Leotrope (a difficult sci-fi adventure) too!

Anyone else who has already played the game might like to drop me a line (preferably for inclusion in a forthcoming FB) so I can see what you thought of it. I'd certainly advise everyone to buy it, even though it is a bit more expensive than usual, otherwise you really won't know what to think about it. It has to be seen to be believed. Take that as you will. Like I said, I'll see what STORM thinks of it, then perhaps we'll begin to build up a full picture of the game.

You could argue that the author offers his honest opinion of a future society... and that it's only a game. On the other hand you could say that it was a mistake to go as far as he did - possibly just gore for the sake of

being gory? I can't make my own mind up about a personal rating - hence the UNDECIDED rating. (X rated perhaps?)

• DOOMSDAY •

Delbert The Hamster Software

Scott Denyer,

9 Orchard Way, Flitwick

Beds. MK45 1LF

PRICE: £4.50 (128k tape)

Cheques etc. to S.P.Denyer.

RATINGS:

PACKAGING	10
STORYLINE	8
OPENING PLAY	5
PROBLEMS	6
LOCATION TEXT	9
PARSER	7
GAME DESIGN	7
DIFFICULTY	EXPERIENCED
PLAYABILITY	7
PERSONAL RATING	UNDECIDED

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

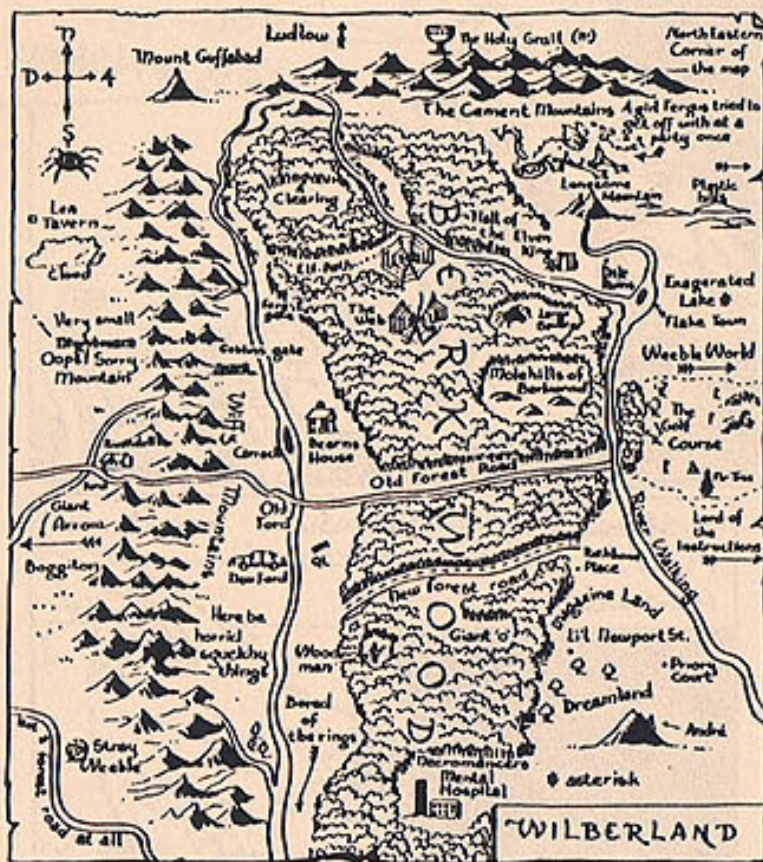


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Zenobi Software ADVENTURES



The Story So Far

In a hole in the ground, there lived a BOGGIT. It was not a particularly nice hole, nor indeed, a particularly warm hole, but a hole it was none the less, and to the little Boggit it was home.

The hole was in the Shire, a particularly retarded area of western middle-earth at the time of the 'third-age' or somewhere thereabouts. The BOGGIT was called Bimbo, Bimbo Faggins, and he was a lazy, fat Boggit whose only purpose in life was to blow rings and watch the pretty Elven girls go swimming down at the old mill pond.

Being contented with his lot, he vowed never to become part of those 'adventures' which seemed to be growing more and more fashionable. Thus when he began to notice bad omens - a black sunrise, a six-headed rabbit and Gandalf, the meddling old conjurer, crawling from the bushes at the bottom of his garden, he bolted the door and decided to spend the rest of the day indoors.

But fate cannot be that easily cheated !!!

The Quest

This is the quest in which Bimbo Faggins sets the ball rolling for the events chronicled in 'Bored Of The Rings' and as such is split into THREE separate parts. It will be necessary to save data from each part in order to continue the next part and thereby progress through the game. However this data can also be used to move BACKWARDS as well as FORWARDS through the various parts.

Commands can be typed in English, (e.g. OPEN THE ROUND GREEN DOOR) but may be shortened to a simple NOUN + VERB format in most cases (e.g. OPEN DOOR).

To Talk to a character simply enter the command TALK TO (name of character) followed by HELLO or whatever profound utterances you feel would be appropriate.

Some useful commands are RAM SAVE to save a game position to MEMORY, RAM LOAD to restore a game position which has been stored in MEMORY, GRAPHICS ON and GRAPHICS OFF (wonder what they do?), TEXT which redescribes a location without redrawing the picture and QUIT which does the obvious.

Credits ... Written by DELTA 4 with the aid of 'THE QUILL' and 'THE ILLUSTRATOR', without which the likes of FERGUS McNEILL would have been in the deep you-know-what. (Sh*t - Balrog)



The Boggit

Ar! That be the place —
roight there ahead o' Yer, Sire!



Thanks friend!

— Another intrepid fool!
Well, oi sez 'Good Luck' to 'im...



...he'll NEED it — so 'e will!

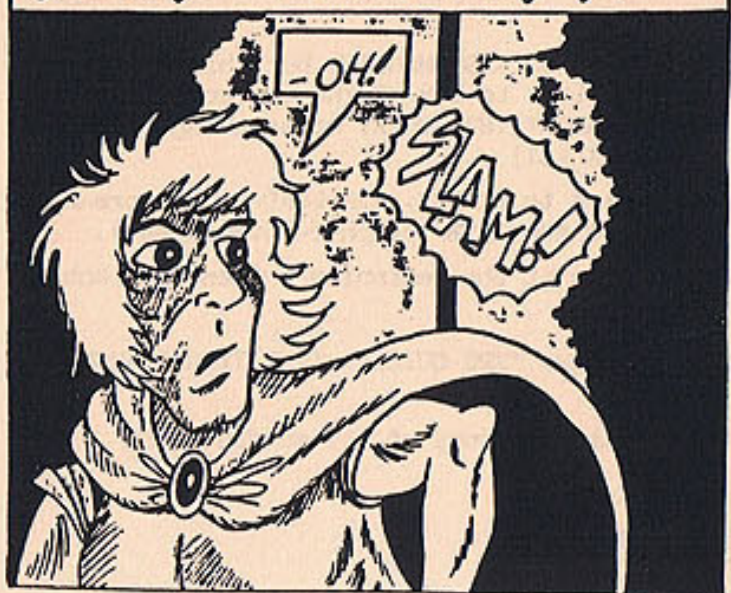
It's dark.... but it's not the
dark that frightens you —



— it's what's HIDING in the
dark that you must fear!



Doors close — hindering your
journey... disorientating you....



... talismans of magic? — what
use be they — if any?



your way is barred by many dangers - many enemies



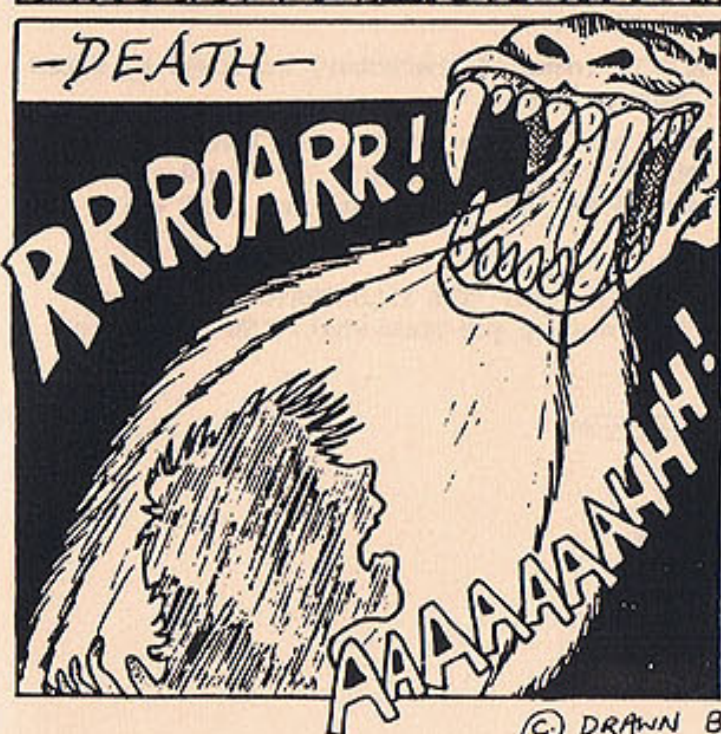
... and even if you sight your goal, brave adventurer



... should your answer to the riddle be incorrect, the penalty is -



-DEATH-



Cry not for the dead they suffer no torment, anguish, nor pain - unless of course they fell victim to



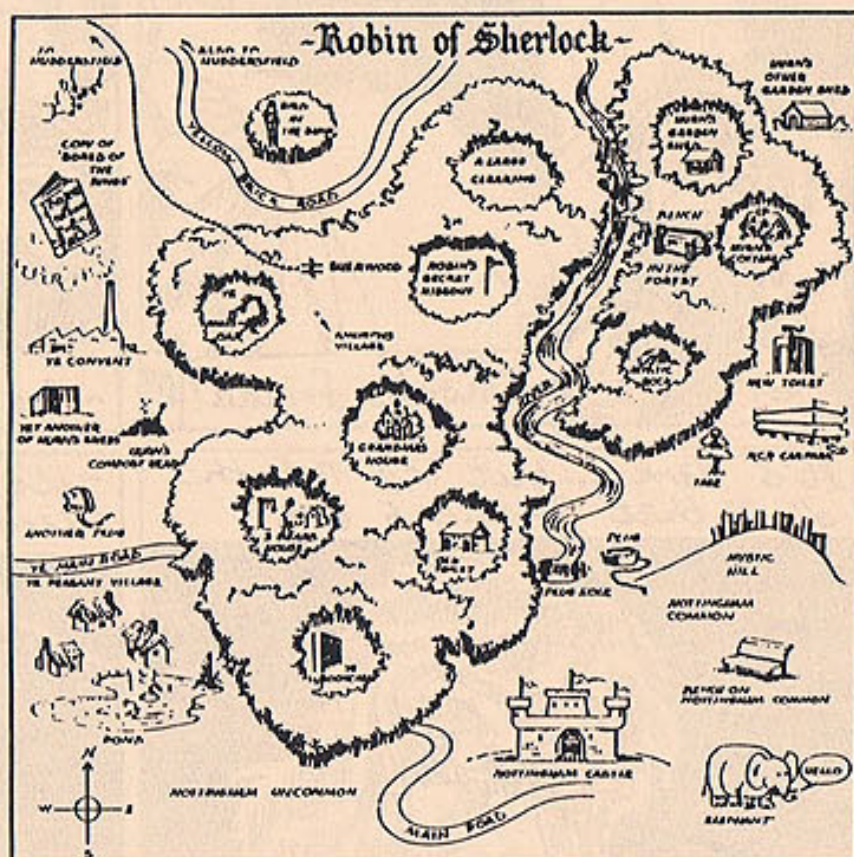
"THE SLAUGHTER CAVES"

Zenobi Software ADVENTURES

.... I leant back against the hard lamp-post, surveying the busy rush of traffic along Sherwood boulevard. It had been a hard day at the forest and not one to reflect on. First, there had been the Dorothy kid bushwacked on her way to visit the Wizard of Huddersfield, her dog held to ransom. Then there was the anonymous tip-off about the convent and its link with Godfather Smurph. When his name crawled out of the files it always meant some sort of racket. I smelled a rat, and one using Brut 33!

Jerking myself away from the cold security of the streetlight, I went down a dim alley to where I knew I could get a cab and it wasn't long before Al pulled up. Al had always been a good cabbie but that night I couldn't help noticing something odd about him, or rather his cab. It had been stolen!

Yet another mystery in one day! Something had to be going down and I figured I had better go and check out Marian and see if she was okay. It looked like being a tough week !!



The Quest

Your quest is set into THREE separate parts and you can move freely from one part to another and back again if you wish, along with anything you happen to be carrying with you at the time. When you are about to leave a particular part you will be prompted with a 'DO YOU WISH TO SAVE?' message. If you do wish to move to another part of the quest then simply save your game to cassette at this point and then load in the appropriate part of the quest. Once this has loaded just re-load the saved game and continue your quest. This works equally as well when moving BACKWARDS as well as FORWARDS.

The game will accept commands in English (e.g. LEAN OVER AND KISS MARIAN) but this may be used in a simpler NOUN + VERB format (e.g. KISS MARIAN). To talk to any of the characters just input TALK TO (name of character), followed by TELL ME ABOUT THE DONKEY or anything else that you wish to discuss with them (e.g. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ALIBI)

Some useful commands are ... RAM SAVE to store a position to MEMORY, RAM LOAD to restore a game position, GRAPHICS ON and GRAPHICS OFF (for those of you who HATE 'graphic-adventures').

Please note that game positions can only be saved to tape at the beginning and end of each part and not as you would normally expect, during the game.

Credits ... Written by DELTA 4 using, amongst other things, 'THE QUILL', 'THE ILLUSTRATOR' and an HB pencil and some little bits of paper.

The 'RANSOM NOTE' is NOT important ... so you ain't getting a copy of it, so don't ask .. okay!

READERS WRITES

THE FROM BEYOND MAILBAG



When your FB subscription expires you get a little scrap of paper requesting that, should you not want to re-subscribe, you at least let us know why. This isn't there for fun. If you tell us where you think FB is going wrong then we can endeavour to put things right. Recently I spotted a letter in Phil Glover's Sam Coupe Adventure disk magazine from a Mr. E.J.Pettit claiming that he'd had Adventure Probe, From Beyond and Red Herring and he'd settled on Red Herring as it was by far the best. That was quite a sweeping statement so I sent E.J. a free copy of FB and asked for his reasons for not subscribing to From Beyond... This was his reply (printed with his permission).

• Hi Tim, Thanks for your concern, & the enclosure of issue 12 of your magazine. Well, where do I start? As for my reasons for not liking your magazine, it comes down to several, over-all effects. Let me explain, it is somewhat like going into a pub for a meal, some pubs have an excellent atmosphere, yet others, you can not wait to get out of, it is somewhat like that for me, with your magazine. The 'feel' of the magazine does not ride easy with me, as I said, it is not one particular point, but a combination

of several things that spoil it for my taste.

(A). With Red Herring, the review system 'flows',... but, in the case of FB, the review system is very bitty, what with packaging, playability, good points, bad points, conclusions etc, all going to make for a very broken up effect.

(B). The binding, & over-all look of the magazine, Red Herring has that 'Professional' look about it, with the spiral binding, plain, clear black text, on a white background gives a better look, rather than bright colours, and mixed text styles, as with From Beyond.

(C). Then there is the over-all 'teenage-fanzine' feel about the magazine. Myself, being 41, like something a little more direct, & serious in nature.

(D). Also, there are the adverts. I know adverts bring in cash (See my comments about this, Ed.) & cash mean continuing the magazine (see my comments about this too, Ed.) but with Red Herring the adverts, what there are of them, are kept to the rear of the magazine in general, but with From Beyond they tend to be spread throughout the magazine.

All in all it is not one point, but a combination, as I said that gives it the 'wrong' feel for me, no disrespect to your fine efforts, & the best of luck to you in the future,..... but it is just not for me.

E.J.Pettit
Weymouth, Dorset

THE FROM BEYOND MAILBAG

Well, I got what I asked for didn't I? In reply I'd only just like to say that 1: Red Herring is undoubtedly a quality magazine (not a fanzine you note!) and I like it very much. The advert pages in Red Herring are not numbered and can be ripped out leaving a magazine with nothing but adventure reviews etc. in it. However, they do appear throughout the magazine, just like From Beyond's do. The reason FB's ads appear in this way is to break up the magazine rather than plonking them all in one place. It's a bit like adverts appearing in the middle of programmes on ITV and CHANNEL 4. If all the ads appeared at the end of the programme who would bother sitting through them till the next prog. appeared? The reason they appear in pastel shades is to let you know where they are and give them a bit of emphasis. Another point is that Red Herring's binding is a very big plus point, though is far too costly for me to even contemplate doing on FB. Two staples through a folded FB spine costs nothing! As far as printing methods go... Red Herring is produced on a Laser Printer while FB comes out of a Ink-Jet printer. It's then photocopied for the master pages and then the masters are used to do the actual copies of FB. There's bound to be a slight degradation in print quality after that process is over and done with! We are always looking to improve, and a laser printer is top of the FB 'wants' list. If only E.J. Pettit had seen the first few issues of FB, eh folks!

The FB review system is hardly

'bitty' surely? From start to finish the reviews tell you about the games and simply finish up listing the good points etc. The rating system is there for you to get a quick idea of how the game scored on several key points - it's all subjective and that's why the personal opinion of the reviewer is given at the end. Finally, bright colours and mixed text styles are there because white covers are utterly drab, and a 'one font' publication looks very, very dull. I've tried it in the past, believe me it is boring to look at! Here rests the defence of FB. Anyone else care to join in?

Here's a letter from **Ron Guest** who has something very interesting to say about mazes, and comes up with something that is possibly even more pointless...

• Dear Tim, Ignoring the mental stress and strain brought about by these fiendish authors cunning attempts to trap us in exit-less locations, I still have to dispute your theory that no one comes to harm playing adventures. I am very often on the receiving end of a well aimed missile, not to mention the occasional surprise blow to the head for failing to notice my tea is getting cold or that my wife is talking to me while I am absorbed in some interesting adventure. The trouble is the more engrossing the adventure the more blows I receive. However I am pretty well hardened to this treatment as I was often in the same danger from my

THE FROM BEYOND MAILBAG

mother when closely studying the Beano at teatime.

Now on to your claim that mazes are the least liked items in adventures. It is true that many reviewers seem to dislike mazes but this does not necessarily mean that most game players dislike them. A good maze in the right context is an asset to and an enjoyable part of the adventure - the goblins dungeon in *The Hobbit*, the witches maze in *Twin Kingdom Valley* and the lake in *Castle Blackstar* to name a few. I admit that once a maze is mapped it can be a bit tedious to keep going back through it and a short cut is handy, but this is also true of other multi-move problems such as the safe combination and bracelet problem in *Jinxter*.

I think the worst fault in games is too many red herrings, some games have so many it smells susfishily (groan, Ed!) as though the author is trying to disguise a lack of substance in the game.

**Ron Guest
Sheffield.**

*I suppose I've really got nothing major against mazes when all is said and done. However, there are those that are there for no other reason than to annoy you. A few authors still conform to the old school of adventure writing and insist that their adventures have a maze because that's a traditional element of an adventure. One valid maze that I was partly responsible for was the haystack in *Project X: The Micro Man*.*

As you were a three inch high guy in that game the needle you find in the haystack has a purpose and links in with the object that forms the main part of the maze (namely the haystack). If a maze has a point then it's okay by me, just as long as they are not too big I suppose I can live with them. As for red herrings, well, I think they are becoming a thing of the past. I like the use of intelligent red herrings. What do I mean? Say you find a troll guarding a bridge. You have in your possession a Haddock. The fact that it is a fish may be a clue as to it being a red herring, but if the player can use it, say to slap the troll around the head with, even if it has no effect on the troll, then at least the player gets some extra pleasure from using the item, and perhaps scores a few bonus points for finding a way of using the red herring. I hate wandering around in a game carrying an armful of useless things, don't you?

Next up we have an extract from a letter sent in by Paul Neale who says...

• Dear Tim, I don't mind telling you this was the most difficult crossword I've ever completed in my life!! (The one in issue 13) If I don't win this competition I'll never look at another dictionary in my life. The compiler Paul Cardin seems to have fooled himself into thinking Spectrum adventurers have a brain the size of a planet. I think we should use Paul as a crossword then stick him sideways in a bucket of stoat droppings!

THE FROM BEYOND MAILBAG

By the way, I thought the interview with Jon Lemmon was a wicked idea, now I know computer programmers aren't just some faceless whizzkids. I'll bet you can't get 'The Balrog' to sit a serious interview. Anyway, hope to see more of the same in FB14. All the best.

**Paul Neale
Barrow-In-Furness
Cumbria**

I did the rounds of adventure author interviews in earlier issues of FB. Jack Lockerby, Laurence Creighton, Jon Lemmon, Larry Horsfield etc. Once you've got their opinions it's hard to get them again as normally they still hold the same beliefs and ideas, and I don't want to get repetitive do I? I've asked 'The Balrog' about an interview... he's agreed as long as the questions are controversial and he can swear a lot! (as you will see, the interview with JW starts on page 42). As for the crossword... I only had 5 entries within a month, but judging by most peoples comments it was a hard one. Missing the bottom right black square off probably didn't help much. Oops! Sorry!

I had several letters about the demise of Adventure Probe. None of them unfortunately were marked 'For Publication', so I can only guess that you are a coy bunch and don't want your points printed. Fair enough I suppose, though some of them would have given the new Probe editor, Barbara Gibb, some useful pointers

as to where the old Probe went/was going wrong. Having said that, the interview with John Wilson has some words of wisdom on just that subject.

Well, looks like we've come to the end of the letters for another issue. I've now literally got zilch to print for next issue. I've mentioned elsewhere in this issue (I think) that all you need do is mark your letters 'FOR PUBLICATION' and they will be published. If there's nothing in this issue you can feed off then use your imagination. Send in your top ten adventure list, the best game you've played this year, your thoughts on red herrings in games, (or mazes) anything you like really, just send some letters! Don't force me to write them myself! Oh look... here's a letter from Tim Kemp

• Dear From Beyond, Will you be going monthly? Will the page count increase? How about colour photos of games in action? What about printing more maps? What about printing more help-lines... Your's... Tim.

Dear Tim, nice to hear from you again. Well, I've decided that a monthly FB, though being welcomed by most people would be difficult to do. Not enough hours in the day - especially as page layouts and DTP-ing in general takes a fair old slice of time. Increase in pages? Almost certainly! Colour - NOPE! (not impossible to do though...) More maps. YES - keep them coming in my mappers! More help? Well, hmmm, I don't know about that? **TIM.**

ADVENTURE REVIEW

AURA-SCOPE (128k ONLY)

Reviewed By: *The Jester.*

Square Peg is, I believe, a husband and wife team, and "Aura-Scope" is their first publicly-released game. If this is a first attempt, then I, for one, can't wait for the follow-up.

STORYLINE:

Together, the twelve constellations of the Zodiac form the great Cosmic Wheel, which controls the very destiny of mankind. To ensure that this destiny was kept safe, a custodian, known as the Celestial Wheelwright, was appointed to look after the Wheel, and to keep all its forces in balance.

A strange gnome-like creature called Nub was the present Celestial Wheelwright, and for untold centuries he had tended the Wheel with the need for only the slightest adjustments.

Then, mankind started to disbelieve the ancient forces; the age-old values were lost - this caused a violent ripple round the heavens, which threw the Great Wheel out of sync, and shattered the Zodiac. In desperation, Nub was forced to enlist the help of a mortal, YOU, to collect the twelve 'tokens' to rebuild the Zodiac.

THE ADVENTURE:

Have you got a full issue to spare, Tim? (no) There's so much in 'Aura-Scope' that, to do the game justice AND give the reader a full picture, it's necessary to 'prattle on' a bit - so,

where to start?

Well, first impressions are always important - and the impression given by 'Aura-Scope' is of a game carefully and meticulously produced by the authors. The presentation is undoubtedly first-class - a fine example of just what CAN be achieved with the PAW when in the right hands.

The top third of the screen is given over to the graphics, which are superbly presented. To the left is a box containing the eight compass points, arrows for UP/DOWN, and GO IN/OUT, which flash to show available exits at a glance. The right-hand box shows which 'sphere' you are in - i.e. 'Sphere of Jupiter', 'Sphere of Ursa Major', and is accompanied by a graphic representation of the planet, or an accurate star-map of the particular constellation you're in. Also in this box, you'll find varying numbers of the astrological Zodiac symbols - more about these later!

The graphics can be switched off if you wish, but as they contain invaluable information, it's not advisable. Beneath the graphics are the location descriptions and the game-play area. So, let's play the game:-

You begin in the hall of the Celestial Wheelwright, surrounded by Nub's astronomical paraphernalia. The direction indicators flash for 'UP' and 'GO OUT'. Going out will see you in a

AURA-SCOPE (128k ONLY)

screen full of stars, with the message 'There are no directions in space!' - so, back inside. Going up, through the Hall of Heavenly Tapestries, you come across 12 plinths in the Great Hall of Celestial Symbols - a depository for the 12 tokens once you've found them. A little examining and 'housework' will help you venture safely outside.

Immediately outside Nub's Hall, you come across what is described as a 'celestial fruit machine', with a convenient bank full of coins next door. Inserting a coin, and pulling the lever, will bring up a message; and you will soon realise that this is a novel 'HELP' routine. There are some 12 messages (naturally) in all, and they appear randomly. Some are obvious while others are cryptic. For example, what would you make of 'The Centaur used to be a cowboy on the range'? As you play the game, a little thought will make them clear.

From here on, the problems present themselves thick and fast. North from the fruit machine is the Northern Arch, which carries a cryptic poem. A little further on is Auriga, the charioteer (the celestial taxi-driver) - a bit of a miserable **** he is, and needs cheering up before he'll take you anywhere. Further North are mountains, guarded by the fire-breathing dragon.

Travelling eastwards, you will encounter the god Mercury, who's feeling rather sorry for himself - 'I'b got a code add I'b bislaid by.....' Just

WHAT he's 'bislaid' is lost in a huge sneeze - something else to be found!

Further east, past the lost puppy which runs away if you try to catch it, and the home of Bernice, whose bed has something warm to offer (NO, not that, you crude lot!), is the quaint village of Aurora - complete with village pond and musicians on the village green, one of whom has broken his lyre. If you can manage to mend it, it will resound to the strains of Brahms' Lullaby - appropriate, in view of its later use!

Here also is the home of the goddess Venus, who appears to be a throwback to the flower-power era - singing 'all you need is love', and quoting such phrases as 'Peace Brother' and 'Hang Loose'.

Nearby, too, is the god Jupiter - a 'dypso' it would seem, as he wants some mead from you. Hanging around in the wings is a foxy little character willing to tell you one of the secrets of the Zodiac in exchange for a tasty morsel. Beware, this character is not as honest as he might be.

Westwards now, and the first character you meet is Perseus, frustrated because 'I'm supposed to rescue Andromeda from the sea-monster Cetus'. He has a chest, which contains something that will help - but it's locked by a magic spell (wouldn't you just know it!). Also in the area is the shepherd Bootes, who needs something to protect his flock from the dragon of the north.

Next comes the castle of Cepheus and Cassiopeia, who are at home but don't

AURA-SCOPE (128k ONLY)

seem to want to know you - hang on thought, aren't they Andromeda's parents? Maybe undertaking Perseus' mission will get them 'on side'? In rooms at the top of the castle you will find the god Pluto, who appears to be the original Paul Daniels, and who is intent on showing you a card trick. As you can see, 'tasks' are mounting up.

So far, we have not ventured south - that is because some routes are closed to you until certain actions, or tasks, have been carried out. Once open, however, a whole new world is available to explore.

Along the Great Southern Highway, and Western Bypass, is the great metropolis - with its huge clock in Time Square (the work of the god Saturn), and where 'tempus fugit'; there's the cathedral (what secrets does that hold?); the University with its students' the home of the mystic Uranus; the Library; it even comes complete with its own vandals and hooligans.

To the west of Metropolis is the ruined city, with its broken-down buildings and dis-used dockyard - it is here that you must re-build the legendary ship, Argo. having done so, you can then sail the waters of the River Eridanus and the Great Eastern sea, overcoming obstacles en route, and visiting nearby islands etc.

As if all that weren't enough, you must also undertake a crossing of the Burning Desert of Desolation (more about that later) to reach the many secrets of the jungle beyond.

Throughout your travels, it becomes obvious that whatever 'sphere' you are in, that is what you'll find there - i.e. a puppy in Canis Minor, dragon in Draco or grizzly bear in Ursa Major; but what would you expect to find in the spheres of Ophiuchus, Apus or Dorado (no, not 'El')? If your Latin's not up to much, typing "CONSTELLATIONS" will give you a list of the Latin names and their English equivalent. The naming of the spheres also serves another purpose - but I'm not saying what that is!

To return now to the astrological symbols mentioned earlier - these appear in the graphics at the top right of the screen, and are printed in either red or cyan. If you don't know what they mean, typing "ZODIAC" will again bring up a list.

You can use the signs as a guide in solving puzzles. How? It wasn't until I'd retrieved about 9 tokens that I twigged, so I'll leave you to find out for yourselves. Just remember the colours of the symbols.

You will no doubt have gathered by now that the game is big - and by 'big' I mean HUGE! There are some 240 visitable locations - and that doesn't include the desert! The desert itself is a maze (sorry, Tim, but it's easy) - or, to be more precise, it's an illusion. It appears to have been programmed a la 'Bounty Hunter', whereby a handful of PAW locations give the impression of many game locations - in this case about 55! And EVERY single location in

AURA-SCOPE (128k ONLY)

the game has its own graphic representation - no mean feat in itself!

The whole thing is a mapper's paradise. When complete, the map is quite logical - but have PLENTY of paper handy. As more routes open up to you, you will inevitably find that your map needs 'opening up' - that new locations fit inside those already mapped, where no space has been left. There's no scoring system, but there's a rating system based on the elements of Air, Earth, Fire and Water.

Although this is already a big review, I have only scratched the surface of the game! There are many more places to see - take a boat ride to the Western Isles; visit the roadside cafe where you can indulge in a cup of fermented weasel pee (if you fancy it!); or swim with the fishes to their underwater home. There are many more characters to meet - the love-sick lynx; Pegasus - can you give him back the will to fly; or Hercules who, tricked by Atlas into carrying the world, has an irritating itch in a very awkward place! There are anagrams to solve, and many, MANY more problems to overcome! The possibilities seem endless.

GOOD POINTS:

Well researched and lovingly produced - the authors obviously take pride in their work. I particularly like the way the mythological characters have been skillfully interwoven with their astronomical counterparts. It's literally packed with puzzles and

problems of varying degrees of difficulty, and so should cater well for most levels of ability. It's great fun to play, and I found it totally addictive.

BAD POINTS:

None.

CONCLUSIONS:

In my top ten list at the front of FB, you will see 'Aura-Scope' at number 2 - it would undoubtedly been at number 1, were it not for the fact that 'Hobbit' was the first ever game I played and completed, and as such HAD to be put at the top of the list.

To anyone who does not have this game in their collection, I can only say one thing - IT'S YOUR LOSS!!

• AURA-SCOPE •

Zenobi Software

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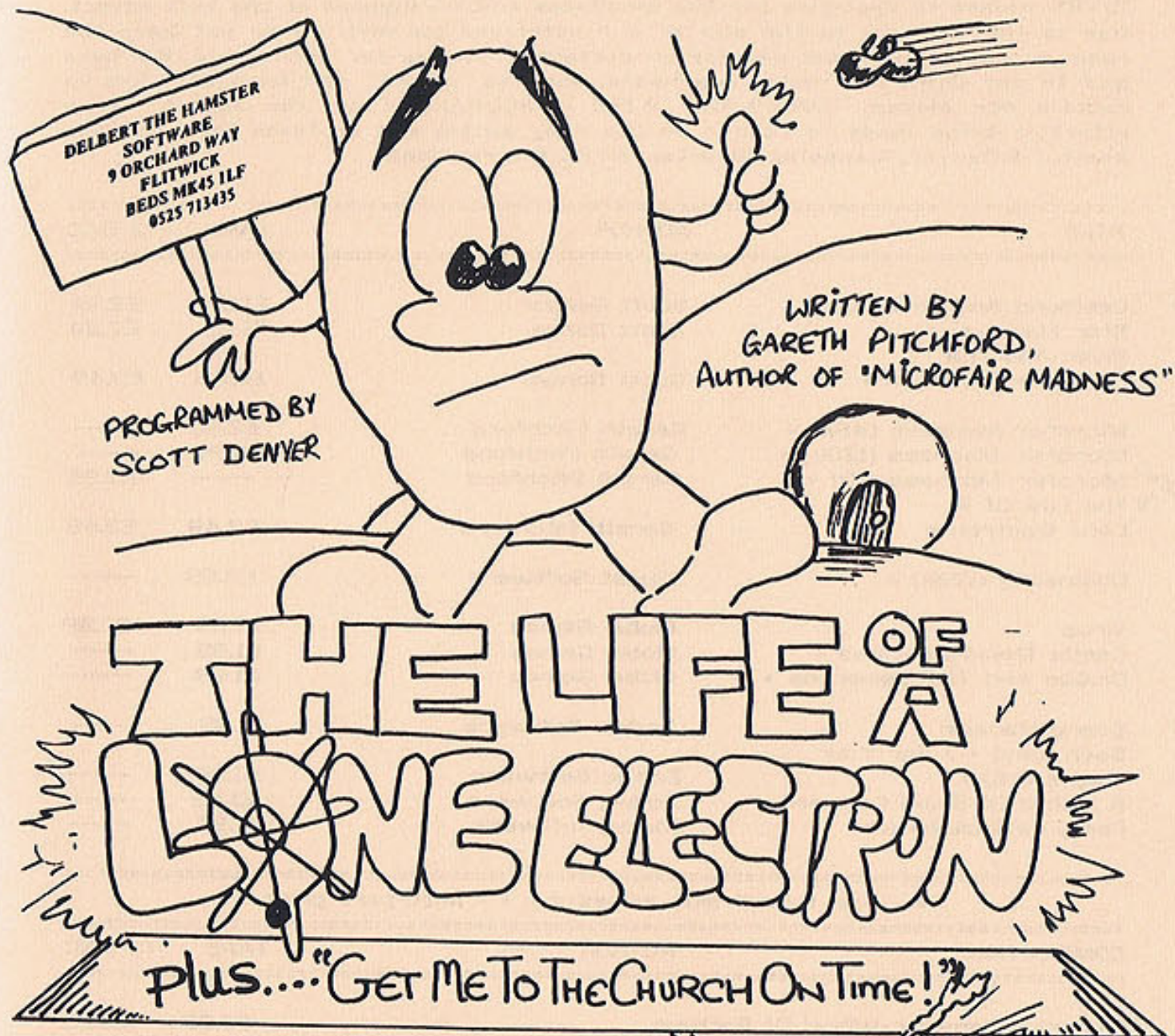
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	PROBLEMS	10
	LOCATION TEXT	10
	PARSER	8
GAME DESIGN		10
DIFFICULTY	INTERMEDIATE/EXP.	
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ADVENTURE REVIEW

AZTEC ASSAULT

Reviewed By: Tim.

Fighting the fearful forces of evil that had invaded the village of Finvarra was the first task I undertook as 'Phoenix' - the Traveller in black. The next game was all about saving an island and its voodoo-practising inhabitants. Now we've reached the third game in the series... This time there's a whole civilisation under threat - maybe even the world?...

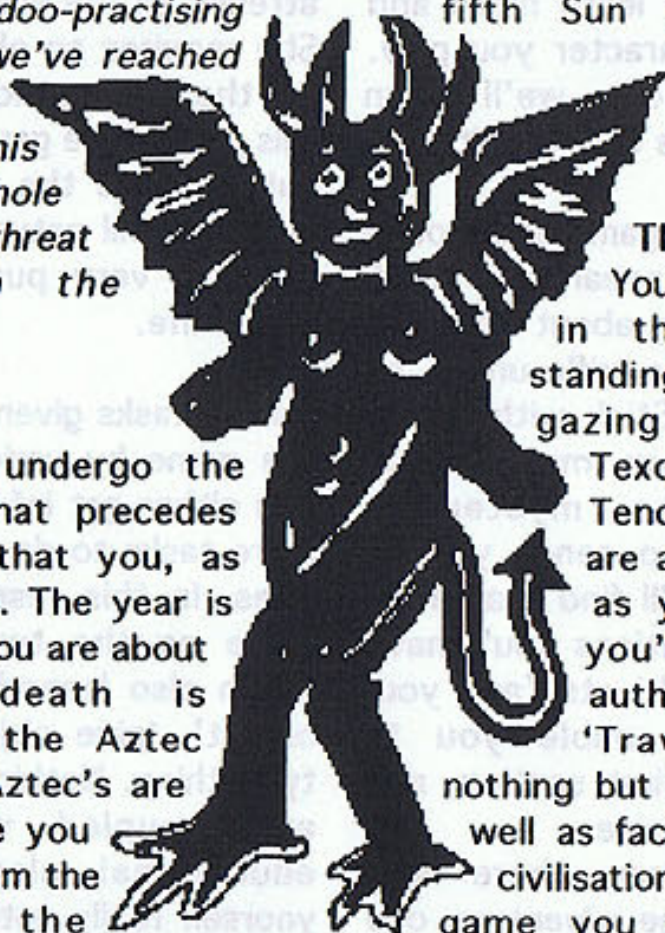
STORYLINE:

Once more you undergo the painful 'rebirth' that precedes every adventure that you, as Phoenix, undertake. The year is 1519 a.d., and as you are about to discover death is commonplace in the Aztec empire. Yes, the Aztec's are the race of people you are sent to save from the clutches of the abomination. Though wait... there's an even more fearsome foe to fight this time. The worst thing about your mission this time round is that the Aztec's tend to embrace death with open arms. It's an integral, nay essential, part of their lifestyle. This means things are going to be tough! Within hours of breaching the time/space continuum the forces of evil overrun and control the magnificent city of Tenochtitlan.

Sacred ashes of past rulers are stolen, Cuicoatl, the snake-woman is possessed or transformed, and demons roam the religious centre, killing as and when they please. But more importantly, human sacrifice is no longer possible and without it, the fifth Sun will surely occur. (That's very, very bad according to the Aztec's!)

THE ADVENTURE:

You make your entrance in the Aztec empire standing by some reeds, gazing out over lake Texcoco at the city of Tenochtitlan. Yep, they are accurate names, and as you play the game you'll find that the author, the mysterious 'Traveller' has used nothing but accurate names, as well as facts about the Aztec civilisation. By the end of the game you will have a good knowledge of all things Aztec. There's only one way to go from the starting location, and that is South. After hardly lifting an eyelid in examination or getting yourself puffed-out by walking to far you'll meet a tired looking priest. What better time to practise the age old art of saying "Hello". All the characters in the game respond best to the simple yet effective: SAY TO (character) "HELLO". It won't win any prizes for



AZTEC ASSAULT

use of the parser or interaction, but it is simple and works without fault.

This first character you meet will set you off on the first of many quests, and armed with a certain bit of info, or after a certain number of moves or actions you learn a bit about 'Phoenix' himself. As this series of adventures has progressed you learn more and more about the character you play. Hopefully before long we'll learn about his true origins and identity.

Anyway, back to the game. It's around about now that you appear to be killed. If you know anything about 'Phoenix' then that will seem a trifle unfair, to be killed so early. Stick with it and you'll find out even more about yourself and the mysterious 'Chronos' fellow who sends you on these missions. You'll find that after about 10 or so locations you'll have examined enough objects (and your surroundings) to enable you to progress past the first section, and on, deeper into the game.

As mentioned before, there is a learning aspect to the adventure, one which doesn't force you to learn, rather it explains the Aztec's way of life, everyday tools and practices, dwellings and technology in simple terms. For instance, you find yourself in one of their humble abodes. You are informed, in the location description, that the building is constructed in a certain way, and that the mattress on the floor is what they used to sleep on (rather than a bed). In one of the houses (there are several) you even

come across an Aztec woman going into labour. It's not very realistic wandering in there and saying "HELLO" - that's where the SAY "HELLO" convention fails to reflect the situation that you find yourself witnessing somewhat (that happens on several occasions), but saying "HELLO" brings the midwife who attends to the woman into the game. She requires an object that will bring on the contractions! Presumably, if this part of the game is as detailed and authentic as the rest, the object in question will actually have been used for this very purpose in everyday Aztec life.

Do the tasks given to you throughout the game by various characters and you either get information, objects or more tasks to do in return. And so it goes. In this respect it's much the same as the two previous games which also leaned towards the 'find object', 'give object = get reward' type thing. Nothing wrong with that, and coupled with the strong educational element you'll find yourself really getting into this Aztec culture thing.

But wait a minute... what of the evil entities that you have come to duff-up? They are there, and as you progress, doing tasks etc., you'll find that you attract a few helpers who take part in cleansing the area of demons and the like. At the Centre of the city lies the gateway to the Primal Darkness. This is where all the baddies flood in and goodies are flushed out! Having gotten used to

AZTEC ASSAULT

battling the Abomination, it came as a surprise to find that The Chameleon is his evil replacement, sent to oversee the destruction of innocents. Actually, the Chameleon is hard to spot - naturally enough, and I suspect that it won't be till the next 'Traveller' tale that we get to see some more of him, it or whatever.

On your travels around the city you'll partake in quite a bit of ritual sacrifice. Hearts ripped from chests and skin flayed from living victims is quite commonplace. However, it's all tastefully done, and taken in context of a learning experience you find yourself getting quite carried away. Heck, I started enjoying myself so much at one point that I got upset when I ran out of victims!

You'll have to travel through most of the games locations to find the mostly hidden items. Straightforward 'examine' throws up more than a few useful objects, though there aren't all that many to actually find and use - certainly few (if any) red herrings come to light so you don't need worry too much about wandering the city with the wrong items.

I felt, as always, the end came too soon. The end game is a nice surprise - well, sort of. If you know a bit about the ultimate fate of the Aztec's then the ending works out to be doubly surprising.

GOOD POINTS:

Too numerous to mention. Overall, the best thing about 'AA' is that you'll learn about all aspects of Aztec culture. The learning process

complements the basic elements of what is a good adventure.

BAD POINTS:

Can't really think of any! A few sound effects might have fitted in nicely, as would a break from the rather plain (though very legible) White text on Black background. A dozen more 'menial' tasks to do would have been appreciated.

CONCLUSIONS:

Not a very hard game, thus ideal for novice adventurers to play. The way the 'real' objects are used as they were used in reality makes things interesting to say the least. Another fine effort from 'Traveller'.

• AZTEC ASSAULT •

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	LOCATION TEXT	7
	PARSER	8
	GAME DESIGN	10
	DIFFICULTY	BEGINNER
	PLAYABILITY	10
	PERSONAL RATING	9

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

JOHN 'BALROG' WILSON

• An interview with 'The Rochdale Balrog' was something I never thought I'd see, so it was with some surprise that I received a letter from John Wilson saying 'Okay' to the idea of an interview... but, only if the questions were controversial, he could swear a lot and the whole thing was reproduced in full. Well, the questions are hardly controversial, but they did leave lots of 'spaces' where this notorious adventure software mogul could rant, rave and elaborate on his philosophies. Some of the language is rather colourful, though as I said, the proviso for publishing the interview, as stipulated by the man himself, was that it reaches you 'uncensored'. Naturally enough anybody wanting to have their say after reading it should write to me at the usual address.

Question One: Let's start off with something nice and light and fluffy shall we? What got you started writing adventures, then publishing them, then publishing other peoples. And what did you do before doing that?

J.W. a) I started writing adventures because I thought it was a simple and quick way of getting all the stories in my mind down onto some sort of medium, thereby allowing greater access to the 'tales'... how wrong I was. The 'tales' keep filling up my head and it takes me months to get an adventure anywhere near half-decent.

b) I started publishing them because I needed a larger 'turn-over' from which to generate a regular income and selling only my own games was totally incapable of producing the desired result... the only way to achieve the large 'turn-over' was to sell more titles, so I decided to publish the works of other authors as well as that of my own.

c) This is really the answer to part B of your question, I got mixed up a bit there. I started to publish adventure games because having been out of work for some time I found it necessary to attend a 'what are your plans for the future' interview at the local Job-Centre and in the course of the interview I replied... 'Run my own software house' - to a question about what I would like to do. Having committed myself I had to follow through the idea or risk having my benefit stopped. Either that or having to take any job they offered. So Ann and I held a family conference and the result was the formation of Zenobi Software.

d) Prior to all this I had held a number of different positions in life... I left school at 18 and joined the ROYAL AIR FORCE, serving as an Aircraft Electrician for five years. On leaving the RAF I spent the next ten years in the building trade. First as a QUANTITY SURVEYOR and then as a CONTRACT MANAGER, before being made redundant and finding myself on a 'TOPS' course. I did a twelve month 'RADIO and TV' servicing course, obtaining my 'City and Guilds' with a distinction and a credit. Then I spent the next FIVE years working and as an ENGINEER with Rediffusion before they closed down. The rest, as they say, is history. Wrote my first game in '86 and have been chained to the keyboard ever since.

Question Two: Er... let's go a bit deeper now... what did you expect to 'gain' from starting up Zenobi Software - did you have any specific hopes or fantasies? I know when Jon Lemmon and Myself started Compass Software we expected 20 orders a day (yep, we were mad) so I was kinda wondering what you wanted, and what the reality turned out to be in those early 'formulative' days? Also, did you ever have any dealings with the likes of Mastertronic, Melbourne House, or any other software house who showed interest in adventures at the time?

THE JOHN WILSON INTERVIEW

J.W. a) I had no hopes or fantasies when I first started ZENOBI other than to earn a living at it and to provide my family with the little comforts that they required... like a roof over their heads and some food on the table. The reality of it all was that there were weeks when a 'turn-over' of £50 was a major success and cause for celebration. How we actually survived in those early days I will never know.

b) Mastertronic turned down a couple of my early games but Alternative Software actually wanted to publish a couple... as did SMART EGG. The latter wanted to put together a compilation of my 'SEEKER', FUDDO & SLAM' and 'BULBO' games and put the whole lot out as a package, complete with nice little booklet etc. In fact I still have the signed contract in my possession. However their rate of royalty payment was ridiculous and was one of the driving forces behind my decision to branch out on my own. I decided that I would give the authors of this world a fair crack of the whip and allow their hard-work to be given an airing whilst at least bringing them in a couple of bob in royalties. This has always been the guidelines behind ZENOBI and always will be.

Question Three: Sticking with the early days of Zenobi, did you ever envisage becoming as big as, say, Level 9? Did you have a solid 'plan' of any description, and if so what did it look like?

J.W. Never had and plans to become a 'super-power' or even in fact to make any sort of dent in the computer market. All I ever wanted to do was to get through each day as it came and to be able to hand over the 'house-keeping' at the end of the week and pay the rent when the man came for it. I have NO 'ambition' and there is nothing in this life that I WANT to do, so I am very easily satisfied. I am 46 years old and still don't know what I want to be when I grow up.

Question Four: Going all 'light and fluffy' again, have you got a favourite game - either a self-penned one, a Zenobi one or another by some other publisher? And... (changing the subject somewhat) what pets have you got and what pet would you most like to own?

J.W. a) Speaking as somebody who has not actually played a game in over four years... well not for any personal enjoyment anyway... all my favourite games are just fond 'memories', though I suppose I could shock everyone and say that my 'all-time' fave is 'AXE OF KOLT' but then I would be lying through my back-teeth, so I won't!!! However I do have a fondness for the likes of... TERRORS OF TRANTOSS, WARLORD, SHADOWS OF MORDOR & a lot of the very early stuff like... 'KNIGHTS QUEST' & 'THE QUEST'. One author who has given me a lot of pleasure (and you can take that as you will!) is CLIVE WILSON. I always liked his early stuff and still do.

b) Pets... my favourites are and always have been CATS. Over the years I must have had dozens of the little sods and every single one of them has brought me a great feeling of well-being and contentment. At present I have TWO... MOLE a tomcat aged 6 and ZENOBI a female aged 7.

c) The pet I would most like is a TIGER... it would be a complete travesty if this noble beast were to become extinct because of man's ill-regard for its natural habitat. At the start of this century there were more than 100,000 tigers roaming this earth and now there are less than 8000... that is a disgrace! So if keeping one as a 'pet' meant that at least one such member of a proud race could still stalk the land, then there is nothing that would give me greater pleasure.

Question Five: Okay, fluffiness over for a while... When your name crops up in my conversations with people, I've found that they tend to find you hard to pigeonhole. Mainly they find your up-front comments, and downright bluntness on occasions hard to appreciate. You seem not to mind shaking

THE JOHN WILSON INTERVIEW

things (and people) up... is that fair comment or not?

J.W. In my world there are no 'greys' only simple 'black' and 'white' ... therefore there is ONLY right or wrong, not a degree of rightness or an element of wrongness. With this in mind I am often accused of being harsh and critical but I see no reason to hide my feelings. If you are WRONG then I will chastise you and if you are RIGHT then I will praise you. This approach alienates me with an awful lot of people and there are very few members of the community that actually 'LIKE' me... members of my own family included. However I do not NEED to be liked by anyone other than my Ann and as long as she likes me I have nothing to worry about. My greatest fear is not 'death' (and god knows how I abhor the thought of that !) but of the inevitable fact that one day my Ann and I will be parted... the thought of that scares the shit out of me.

Maybe I don't have the compassion for others that I should have but then again maybe I just show it in a 'different' way. Throughout the SIX years that ZENOBI has been in existence I have always placed the authors and their 'rights' first. It has always been the policy of ZENOBI to give the authors the best deal possible and always at MY own expense. Out of the last TEN games I have published not ONE of them has exceeded its advance sales-figures and until they do I do not stand to retrieve/recoup my original cash outlay. However I have, and will continue to do so, paid out 'advance' payments on EVERY game that I have ever published. If ZENOBI publish your game then you get your money 'up-front'. You do not have to wait months before being told that you have not sold enough games to warrant payment. You get paid and I worry whether I am ever going to recoup that cost. ZENOBI also cover the cost of any play-testing, advertising, leaflets, conversions etc. none of these costs are ever met by those who write games. For the past twelve months ZENOBI has been running at a loss and yet the various authors have all received their respective 'advance' payments and any further 'royalties' that are due them. They NEVER have to ask for them, they are sent out regularly and in full. This is MY way of showing I care and a way that I feel is a lot more worthwhile than a hastily-scribbled couple of words or some 'tongue-in-cheek' comments down a phone. I show my concern for you with good hard cash and a lot of time, sweat and effort expended by me on your behalf. For this I think I am entitled to be as 'blunt' as I want to be.

Question Six: Most people will have charted the Zenobi story from the start to the present day. Where do you plan to go next, what do you plan to do? Or, do you have any plans for the future of any sort? Naturally you must have some because Zenobi is your way of making a living. Any thoughts on that?

J.W. Just because ZENOBI is my 'living' does not mean that I naturally have some plans for the future... I treat ZENOBI the same as I treat my life and that is to deal with it as each day comes along. I have NO idea what the future holds for me or ZENOBI, or if indeed there is a future for either of us. That is all down to 'fate' and the weave of the cloth. I am quite content to get through each day and emerge into the next... that is enough for me and I see no reason to spend my future before I even get to it. Plans and wishes are only there to be broken, so I am quite content to play it as it comes. The PAST however is another thing and that should be enjoyed to the full. I place great store by my 'MEMORIES'.

Question Seven: I'm sure most 'sane' people out there realise that the Spectrum adventure scene, while providing them with a hobby (both writing and playing adventures) will not survive

THE JOHN WILSON INTERVIEW

indefinitely... How will the end come do you think... and more importantly perhaps, when? Perhaps the end has come and gone already, but we refuse to see it?

J.W. Having spent the last SIX years doing nothing else apart from watch the state of the adventure market, you can take it from me that the 'end' has come and gone already. new games, even those written by the 'darlings' of the software pundits such as Laurence Creighton and 'The Traveller In Black', are not exceeding their 'advance' figures and it is common practise for a game to peak well before they would have done say TWO years ago. When ZENOBI first started it was quite feasible and common, for a new game to sell in FOUR FIGURES. Not one game has done that in the last THREE years!!! These days a game is a major success if we manage to sell one quarter of that. Whilst things have never been quite as bad as this, we have heard of certain circumstances where sales of 20-30 copies of a game were regarded as a commercial success. F*****g hell! I send out more than that in review copies alone.

We all love the little black-box called the SPECTRUM but surely our love cannot be that blind that we can continue to regard ourselves as major software suppliers when our total sales for a week can be counted on the fingers of one hand. ZENOBI needs to sell at least 200 games per week, 52 weeks of the year, in order to survive and in the past couple of months that figure is becoming uncomfortably commonplace and that despite the fact that we have expanded our catalogue four-fold in the last year or so. We still sell enough to get by but where once that figure was attained with sales of only a dozen different games, it is now reached with sales of over 70 different games. That can only serve to highlight just how the market has shrunk and there is NO way it is ever going to grow again... at least not for the SPECTRUM anyway.

So I guess it is time to 'bite the bullet' and admit that it is a case of being a large fish in a f*cking small puddle.

Question Eight: *You probably won't like this question as it is purely hypothetical and wholly irrelevant, but what, given a second chance, would you do differently. Is there anything you have done that you have regretted doing or just something you should have done when given the chance that you didn't do? Have you made any major mistakes over the years?*

J.W. a) There is nothing I would do any differently to how I did it in the past because I honestly believe that I have been fortunate enough to have succeeded with I have tried. A lot of that success was due more to good fortune than any careful planning, but all the same the end result is what I aimed for and for that I am extremely grateful.

b) My ONLY mistake was in publishing Mike Gerrard's 'ONE OF OUR WOMBATS IS MISSING'... not because it was a bad game or for any reason like that, but simply because it provided a lot of 'back-stabbing' twats with an opportunity to insert the knife and twist it. Mike wrote the game in all good faith and aimed it at the 'beginner' end of the market. It was his FIRST effort and should have been judged as such. But certain people saw it as an excuse to get in some very caustic and hurtful remarks and generally cause a fair bit of ill-feeling. All I can say to them is... 'It was the last game to sell in anything that I would consider to be 'reasonable' quantities, and I still sell at least a couple of copies of it every week.' (purely as a point of interest, I have sold EIGHT copies of it in the last TWO days!)

c) My only real regret in life is that I was born with a complete 'lack' of ambition (join the club,

THE JOHN WILSON INTERVIEW

John). There is nothing I wish to achieve with my life and no driving force to push me on to better things. I tend very much to just drift with the current and to 'colonise' wherever fate decides to beach me. It must be nice to be 'ambitious'.

On a slightly more 'caustic' note I regret never having attended the first PROBE convention... but only because it meant that I missed out on kicking the crap out of one or two idiots that deserved it.

Question Nine: Finally, if you were producing a fanzine what would it look like, what would the contents be like? Any thoughts on fanzines in general?

J.W. a) This may sound very condescending but if I were producing a fanzine I would like it to appear like 'FROM BEYOND'. I actually LIKE the way that looks and feel comfortable reading it. There are one or two bits about the mag that get up my nose but then I have a big nose and most things tend to get up there every once in a while.

b) Initially when I first started reading 'fanzines' it was for the tips and help that they all USED to contain. However as I played less and less adventures and thereby needed less and less help I started to look towards these publications to keep me informed of the 'comings and going', 'toings and froings' of the adventure scene. I have very little chance of a good gossip because most people are too afraid to reveal any really saucy information to me in case I do my usual trick and announce it to the world in general, so the fanzines are/were my only source of such information... albeit in a watered-down form. So ideally for me their contents should keep me abreast of all new releases, all future plans etc. and keep me updated on all the hot 'scandal'.

c) My only thoughts on fanzines are this...

i) I hope that the NEW version of PROBE does not degenerate into the hotchpotch of ideas that the old one did... who wants 'horoscopes' and crap like that?

ii) Also that the NEW version of PROBE avoids the pitfall that the old version seemed to fall into, of virtually every issue turning out looking like the last... there were times over the last couple of months where I was never sure if I was reading this month's issue or re-reading last month's. (even though Mandy had struck me off the 'free-subscription' list I still have my source of supply and would like to thank the person(s) concerned for lending me their copies)

iii) Will the next person who sends me a copy of a proposed new fanzine to evaluate please have the decency to enclose a stamped SAE with which I can send it back to them. I am getting a bit sick of having to fork out my OWN cash for something that has nothing to do with me!!! (I get a couple of 'forthcoming' fanzines sent to me each month and the postage bill soon mounts up.)

Question Ten: (This is a question that John himself has asked, mainly because all interviews should, according to him, have at least TEN questions...). "Do you really hate Larry Horsfield, Tony Collins, Mandy Rodrigues etc. as much as public opinion would have us believe you do?"

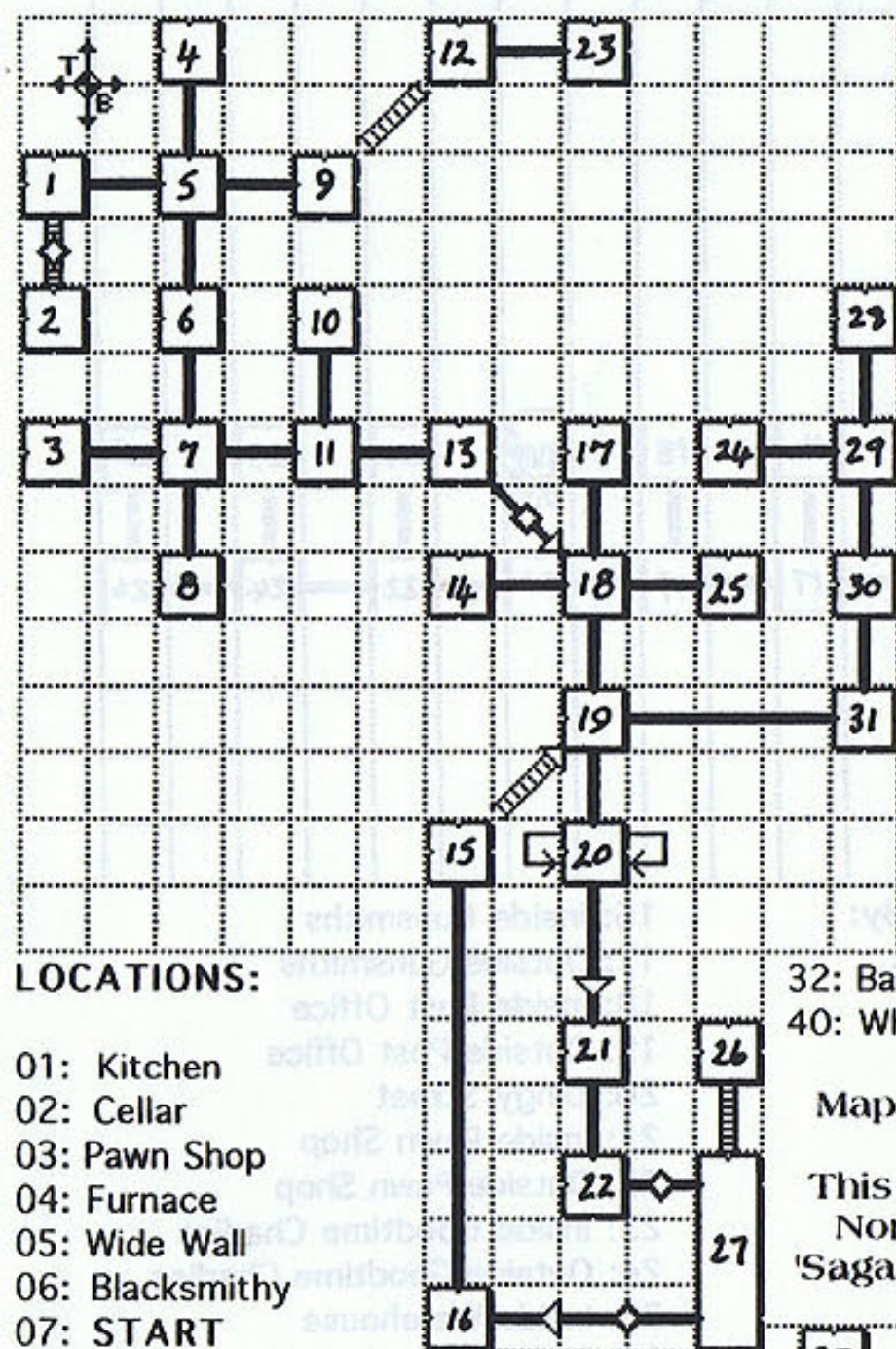
J.W. The answer to this is simple..... NO... but then again I do tell a f*cking good tale when I want to!!!! The true answer is that I have NO bad feelings for any of them... they are all *BEEP* and have double-crossed me at one time or another in the past but as recent events have proved, I am perfectly willing to lend a helping hand to any of them... is that not true Mandy?

Now that Tim is what I call an 'interview'... print this and be damned, don't print it and bring down the wrath of a Balrog upon your head... it's your choice!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

• There you go! One revealing Mr. Balrog interview. Hopefully this will help put flesh and bone on the mythical figure that IS (was?) John Wilson!

MAGICAL MAPS

CONMAN THE BARBARIC (PT. I)



LOCATIONS:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 01: Kitchen | 09: Stairs |
| 02: Cellar | 10: Estate Agent |
| 03: Pawn Shop | 11: Lane |
| 04: Furnace | 12: Bedroom |
| 05: Wide Wall | 13: Wagon |
| 06: Blacksmithy | 14: Lock-smith |
| 07: START | 15: Dark Passage |
| 08: Weapon Shop | 16: Dark Pass (2) |
| 09: Stairs | 17: Castle |
| 10: Estate Agent | 18: Market |
| 11: Lane | 19: Grate |
| 12: Bedroom | 20: Trees |
| 13: Wagon | 21: Misty Place |
| 14: Lock-smith | 22: Tower |
| 15: Dark Passage | 23: Toilet |
| 16: Dark Pass (2) | 24: End of Path |
| 17: Castle | 25: Job Centre |
| 18: Market | 26: Princess |
| 19: Grate | 27: In Tower |
| 20: Trees | |
| 21: Misty Place | |
| 22: Tower | |
| 23: Toilet | |
| 24: End of Path | |
| 25: Job Centre | |
| 26: Princess | |
| 27: In Tower | |

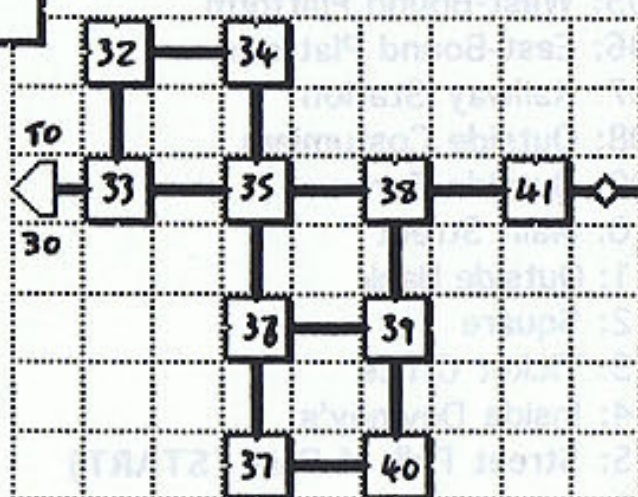
- 28: End of Path
 29: Path
 30: Lane 31: Lane
 32: Golf Course (1)
 33: Trees
 34: Golf Course (2)
 35: Trees 36: Lane
 37: Lane 38: Lane
 39: Lane 40: Gnome
 41: Dungeon Master

Location of OBJECTS

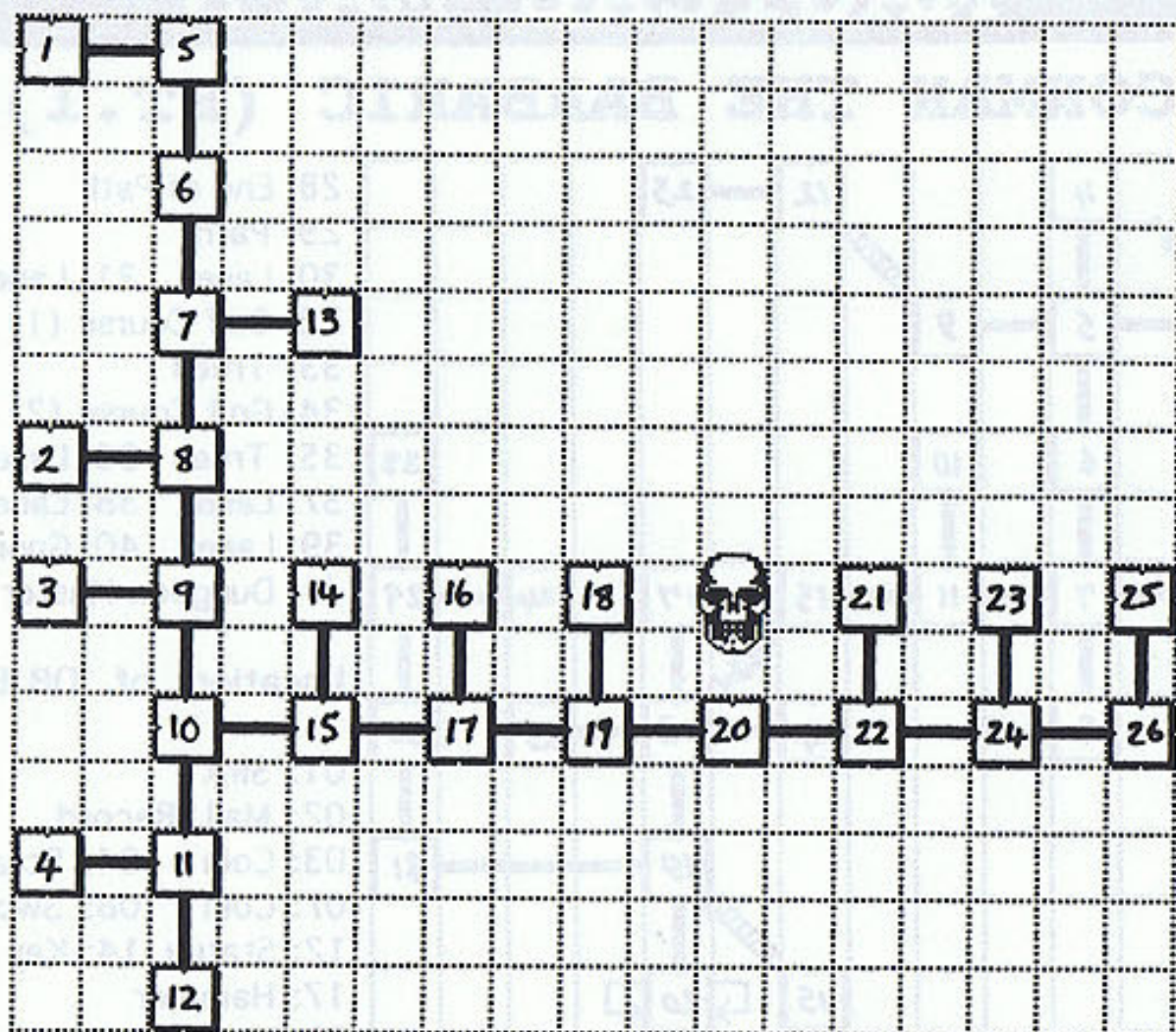
- 01: Sink
 02: Mail, Record
 03: Coin 04: Scrap
 07: Coin 08: Sword
 12: Statue 14: Key
 17: Hammer
 19: Cake 23: Pass
 28: Helmet
 32: Bagpipe 34: Pendant
 40: Whistle / Skull = Flute.

Map supplied by: Terry B.

This is the first part of The Northern Underground's 'Saga'. Full solution next iss.



BUGSY (PT. I)



Map Supplied By:
Tony Collins.

LOCATIONS:

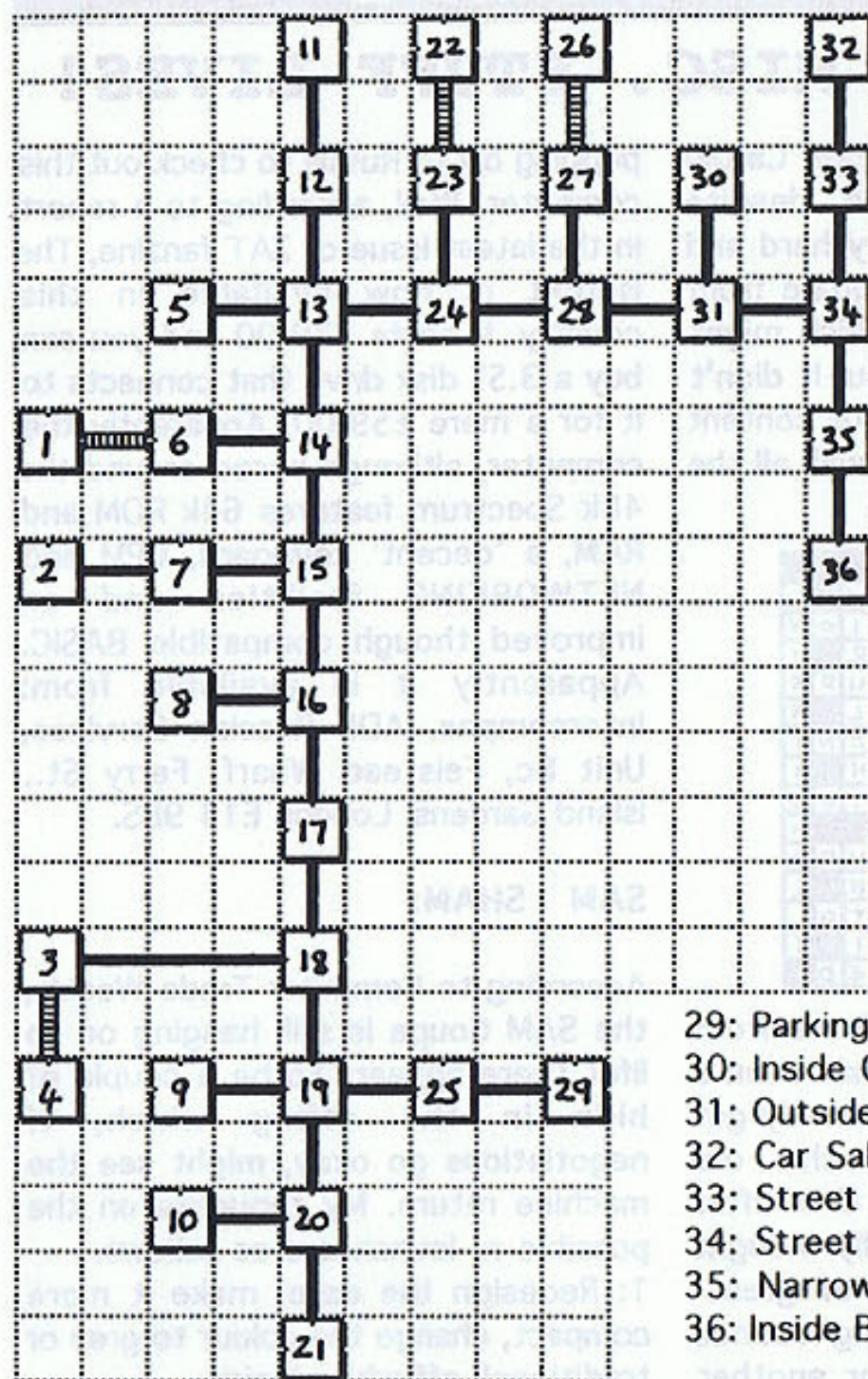
- 01: Station
- 02: Inside Costumiers
- 03: Inside Barbers
- 04: Inside Bank
- 05: West-Bound Platform
- 06: East-Bound Platform
- 07: Railway Station
- 08: Outside Costumiers
- 09: Outside Barbers
- 10: Main Street
- 11: Outside Bank
- 12: Square
- 13: Ticket Office
- 14: Inside Deviney's
- 15: Street Full of Bars (START)

- 16: Inside Gunsmiths
- 17: Outside Gunsmiths
- 18: Inside Post Office
- 19: Outside Post Office
- 20: Diny Street
- 21: Inside Pawn Shop
- 22: Outside Pawn Shop
- 23: Inside Goodtime Charlies
- 24: Outside Goodtime Charlies
- 25: Inside Warehouse
- 26: Outside Warehouse

Look For Interesting Stuff At:

Costumiers, Barbers, Bank, Station, The Square, Deviney's, Gunsmith's, Post Office, Pawn Shop, Goodtime Charlies and the Warehouse... What, you want more? Okay, turn the page for BUGSY part two...

BUGSY (PT. II)



- 07: Inside Police H.Q.
- 08: Inside Hilton Plaza
- 09: Inside Metropole
- 10: Inside Gaumont
- 11: Hijack Black-Spot
- 12: Long Road
- 13: Outside Casino
- 14: Main St. Outside Ritz
- 15: Outside Police H.Q.
- 16: Outside Hilton Plaza
- 17: LOOP!!!
- 18: Outside Four Deuces
- 19: Outside Met. Hotel
- 20: Outside Gaumont
- 21: Garage Forecourt
- 22: Dance Room
- 23: Inside Tib Bar
- 24: Outside Tib Bar
- 25: Alley
- 26: Bugsy's Rm. START
- 27: Foyer Grand
- 28: Outside Grand Hotel
- 29: Parking Lot
- 30: Inside Gym
- 31: Outside 'Big Mick's' Gym
- 32: Car Sales
- 33: Street
- 34: Street Corner
- 35: Narrow Alley
- 36: Inside Bookshop

BUGSY Pt.II - Supplied By:
Tony Collins (naturally).

LOCATIONS:

- 01: Bubsy's Suite (H.Q.)
- 02: Commissioners Office
- 03: Inside the 'Four Deuces'
- 04: Cellar
- 05: Inside The Casino
- 06: Ritz Carlton Foyer

Find Some Interesting Things At

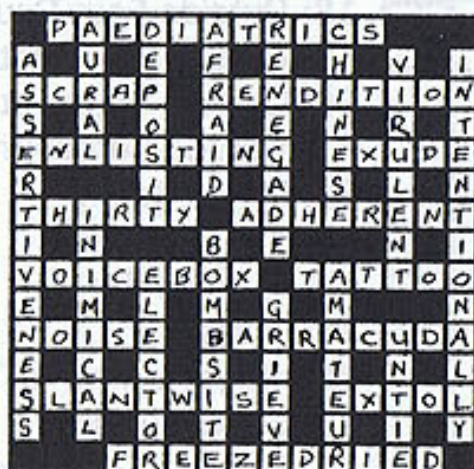
Commissioners Office, Cellar, Casino, Metropole (die!!!), Hijack Black-spot, Dance Room, Tib Bar, Bugsy's Room, Parking Lot, Inside Big Mick's Gym, tha Car Sales and Inside the Bookshop.

Many Thanks to Tony Collins and Terry Brawls for submitting maps. More please!

LOOSE ENDS

WHERE THE MISC. STUFF LIVES!

• Good response to the Paul Cardin crossword from last issue, despite the fact that it was a: very hard and b: I'd missed off a black square from the bottom right corner which might have confused a few of you. It didn't have much of an adventurous content but it seemed to go down well all the same. Here's the solution:



And the winner is... June Rowe from Launceston, Cornwall who has been a winner before, but when you only get three CORRECT entries the old familiar names will crop up time after time. The prize? Hadn't really thought about it... Ten quids worth of great Adventures of her choosing sounds reasonable... Dare I ask for another crossword of similar dimensions Paul?

THE HOBBIT:

Apart from being a really smart book, film and brilliant adventure, it is also a Russian Spectrum clone. Yonks ago all the Spectrum mags (blimey, must have been yonks ago if there were loads of Speccy mags about) were

popping off to Russia to check out this computer. Well, according to a report in the latest issue of ZAT fanzine, The Hobbit is now available in this country. It costs £79.00 and you can buy a 3.5" disk drive that connects to it for a mere £59.00. Apparently the computer, although based around the 48k Spectrum features 64k ROM and RAM, a 'decent' keyboard, CPM and NETWORKING facilities and an improved though compatible BASIC. Apparently it is available from: Intercompex. ADB Russian Services, Unit 8c, Feistead Wharf, Ferry St., Island Gardens, London E14 9BS.

SAM SHAM:

According to Computer Trade Weekly, the SAM Coupe is still hanging on to life! There appears to be a couple of bids in the offing which, if negotiations go okay, might see the machine return. My thoughts on the possible re-launch are as follows.

1: Redesign the case, make it more compact, change the colour to grey or traditional off-white/beige.

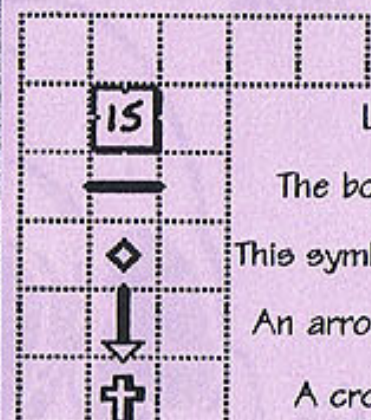
2: Commission all the best software houses to produce their best games for it. Lemmings, Kick Off 2, International Karate etc., etc.

3: Drop the 'Super-Spectrum' nickname - promote it on its own merits. Mention the 'spectrum-emulatability' as an added bonus not the main sales point.

4: Drop the price to £125.00. There you go. A sure fire winner!

Mapping System Explanation

The FROM BEYOND mapping system is so easy to follow that this explanation is hardly justifiable. However, just so you know exactly what's what, here's a quick rundown of the various symbols you'll encounter when trying to read a FROM BEYOND map.



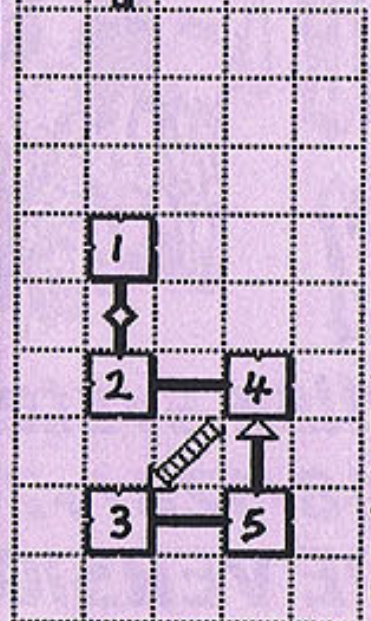
Locations are represented on the map by boxes.

The boxes are linked together by these direction lines.

This symbol = blocked or limited travel between locations.

An arrow symbol = travel possible in direction of arrow.

A cross near a location box means death lurks here!



LOCATIONS:

- 1: Stonehenge
- 2: On a Hilltop
- 3: In a Valley
- 4: East of a Hilltop
- 5: Rocky Pathway

As most people have their own way of adding special symbols to their own maps there may be times when we have to explain what does what at certain locations. Notes appear in the list of locations when this is the case. The map on the left shows just about all the elements we use. Location 1 has a line running south to location 2. This line is blocked meaning there's something to be done before you can move south to Loc.2. From Loc.2 you can freely move east to Loc.4 - and back again (west) from 4 to 2 as the connecting line shows no reason why you can't move freely between these two locations. However, at Loc.4 apart from going west you can only go DOWN (that's what the ladder represents - up and down movement). When you get to location 3 you see that there is a way east to Loc.5 but as the ladder that took you from Loc.4 to 3 only goes down you can't go back up that way (hence the arrow on the end of the ladder). East to 5 is no problem, and west again from 5 to 3 is also okay. North is the only way to go from 5 to 4 (hence the arrowed line) and there you go. Simple or what?

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