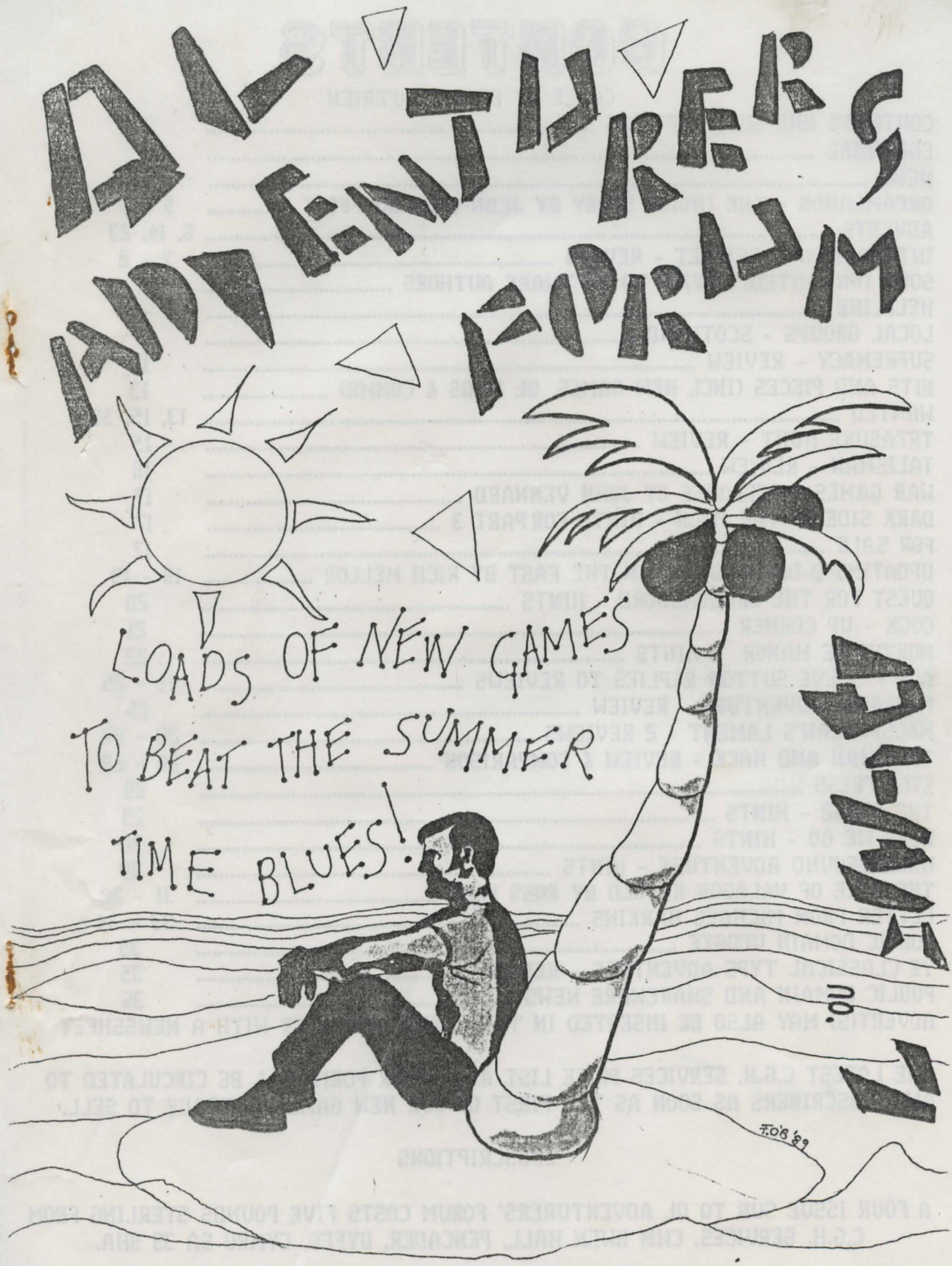
ADVENTURERS FORUM
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ADVERT(S) MAY ALSO BE INSERTED IN THIS ISSUE, TOGETHER WITH A NEWSSHEET

THE LATEST C.G.H. SERVICES PRICE LIST AND ORDER FORM WILL BE CIRCULATED TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS AS SOON AS THE FIRST OF OUR NEW GAMES IS READY TO SELL.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A FOUR ISSUE SUB TO QL ADVENTURERS' FORUM COSTS FIVE POUNDS STERLING FROM C.G.H. SERVICES, CWM GWEN HALL, PENCADER, DYFED, CYMRU SA 39 9HA.

QL ADVENTURERS FORUM IS EDITED BY RICHARD ALEXANDER, WHO ALSO, TRADING AS C.G.H. SERVICES PUBLISHES AND PRINTS IT.

EDITORIAL

O.K. This issue is a little late. The delays being due to my fracturing a little finger and needing to have my left hand bandaged up for a month while the finger mended itself and then the photocopier people not doing a very good job of servicing the machine, whereby it had to go to Brum twice before coming back in working condition. Many thanks to Rich Mellor for helping out with the repairs. (Free life subscription to QLAF for Rich!)

Once again our thanks to Francis O'Brien for his cover for this issue. We would have also used a couple of Rozynna Jaffer's drawings that were originally commisioned for the Dreamlands and Valagon manuals, but space was too tight, maybe next time.

I've included Ross Best's version of the background to "From the Tower of Valagon", and there may well be more short pieces from Ross in the next issue. Do let us know if you like this sort of item in the magazine.

This issue does not have a mega-article (or two) like the previous issues, instead there is an entertaining combination of letters, hints, reviews, and so forth. I haven't printed a map for one of the adventures this time as I haven't received any up to the standard of Malcolm Smith's efforts with Zkul.

The deadline for the next issue of QL Adventurers' Forum is October 1st 1989, with a publication date within a month of that. (We live in hope!)

We welcome, no we depend on, your contributions to the magazine. These contributions can take the form of articles, reviews, letters, hints & clues, grafix, money, whatever you like. I'd especially like some objective reviews of CGH Services games, in particular I'd like to know how people are getting on with Dreamlands and Grey Wolf. Already received are some hints for MacSporran's Lament and a substantial amount of the solution to Fantasia Adventure.

We've still not had much feed-back on Nemesis - apart from a note to the effect that some copies, at least, have a tendency to crash or West - although the ubiquitous Rich Mellor has been busy with this amongst all his other tasks. The Prawn seems totally neglected, despite my enthusiastic comments last year, although I did meet some people at the London Alternative Microfair who said that they were getting on with it. Martin's other games - Funfear and Horrorday also seem to be neglected by our readers which is a big shame as they're very good.

Quite a few subscriptions fall due with this issue. We need these to be renewed promptly to maintain the flow of the magazine. If there is something you don't like about the magazine do write in. Unless you tell us, we can't do anything about it.

Our sister publication, QL Technical Review is almost ready for printing. Rich Mellor and Michael L. Jackson have both submitted some excellent articles and I have chipped in with a couple more. All subscribers will be notified when this is ready - and also when we have more new games. (Or send an s.a.e. for our latest price lists and order form.)

Elsewhere in this magazine you'll find a plea from Alan Pemberton for people to join a Scottish QL Users Group, which I'd like to endorse. If anyone else would like to get together with other QL Users in their area let us know. I'd also like to suggest THOR and Networking groups to pool information on these topics.

Rich Mellor has completed his ultimate upgrade to D-Day MkII, which includes such facilities as units being hidden when under cover, and a faster pan and scroll routine. If you already have a D-Day MKII you can upgrade to v2.00 for £2.00. Rich also tells me that it should be possible to redesign units, unit specifications and the map. In short the system can be adapted so that you can play whatever wargame you like. If anyone would like more details contact myself or Rich Mellor (don't use the Liverpool address, write to him at 26 Oak Road, Shelfield, Walsall, West Midlands WS41RQ). If you can design four scenarios we could market them.

See P.D. update for the latest news on the P. D. front, including Alan's latest Quill utility and on Fantasia Adventure.

Thanks to John Vennard for help with the Nth Sinclair Show and to Rich Mellor and Jean-Yves Rouffiac for attending on our behalf. Next one isn't until December. We should also be at the Stafford show.

Richard

NEWS

Summer is traditionally a quiet time for software, even among the mainstream machines, so you can imagine how quiet it gets on the QL scene. Very quiet!

CGH Services

We hope to continue our "policy" of averaging a new game every month as commercial releases.

We are now handling Tony Woolcock's The Blag2. Tony is progressing well with the ST version of the Blag, but there is no chance of "The Blag3" coming out for the QL.

Oliver Neef's "Grey Wolf" is available, on disk and microdrive, for machines with at least 256K. This u-boat simulator is quite complex and provides a long playing time. Well I presume so, it's just I keep forgetting something when I dive! Very pleased that mdv_ users can now play this game, but it does require 2 mdvs so it costs more than the disk version.

Nick Ward's "Wreck Dive" will be our next release. This is an unusual combination of graphic movement and text commands. It takes place on board a sunken ship and you have to guide your charatcer around the screen in and out of the 140 or so rooms in search of "buried" treasure. However these are not all just lying around to be picked up, there a few puzzles to solve and only a limited amount of air. A game for mappers and puzzlers. Watch out for the eel and the clams!

On its way: Alan Pemberton's mega-adventure, "The Voyage of the Beano". Frances O'Brien is doing the graphics for this, but was delayed by a dodgy Eye-Q, which has now been replaced. This features more of Alan's humour and if Francis' graphix are as good as the one we've seen so far, then this will be a beaut.

Further news on the Oliver Neef games is good as he sent us the Basic source code for Return to Eden so that Rich and I could correct the English, and we have sent the revised versions back for compilation. "The Final Conflict" and "The Open Golf" we are currently being tested, and I hope to have them available very soon once the manuals are printed. All of these are for expanded QL's only and 85 column screens would be an advantage.

Nigel Holder

Following our price-busting tactics, Nigel Holder is issuing QL games at even cheaper rates. His first game, International Cricket, comes in 128K and 256K versions. With good on-screen graphics (even if all the players are a uniform PINK - even Gladstone Small) it allows you to take on the Australians. You can have either a 1 or 2 player game, single day or test matches and so forth. See John Baylis' review in this issue for details. Highest score so far: 42 all out. International Cricket is available from Nigel Holder, 25 Beightons Walk, Healey Gardens, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL12 6EA. Nigel tells me that his golf simulation will be out shortly at a cost of £5.99, with additional courses to follow, and that he has other games in the pipe-line.

Impact Entertainments

Andy and Phil, after investing a lot of time and money in the QL scene with, amongst other things, their "Here We Go" text adventure, using ACT, have decided to call it quits and are moving over to the Amiga - once they can program it. I hope to arrange some means whereby their products remain available to the next generation of QL users. We wish them well with the Amiga.

John Miller

John, another Bristol QL owner, sent the latest version of his game, QL War, to us for comment. I'm not sure quite what John intends doing with it as it currently contains the Quanta pipes prog for connecting QL's in the two player version. It also needs Toolkit 2. However it plays well so I hope we can arrange for distribution. Any similarity between this and Complex Data System's games is purely coincidental.

Sansom Software

I have totally failed to get any response from David Baylis to find out what is happening to QL King. So I'm afraid it looks like it's curtains for that one until we hear otherwise, which is a shame as I, for one, was looking forward to getting a non-crashing version of the game. In the meantime Kingdom lovers can play "Shire" from our P. D. library.

Richard.

DREAMLANDS - THE INSIDE STORY

By Jean-Yves Rouffiac.

It was during the long dark nights of January 1988 that I first began work on Dreamlands, though not on a QL - the machine I programmed on was the Amstrad CPC 6128, a good computer in its own way, but totally unsuited to my needs, providing as it does only 40K for BASIC programs. Fortunately, help was at hand in the form of the QL, which I bought via QL World's Special Offer (what was I doing reading QL World whilst owning a CPC you might ask - it's a long story). Here at last was real computing! 128K, twin drives, a truly excellent BASIC. Who could ask for more? I promptly set out converting the Amstrad program to SuperBASIC, a task which did not take long for it consisted of little more than the parser and verb table.

Now it has been said time and time again that to write a good adventure you must first of all sit down and plan the whole lot on paper. Not so with the JYR approach! I wrote the location search routine and promptly started to input location data on the spot, beginning with the stone pillar (many will recognise it as similar to the one in the Thomas Covenant Chronicles), and stretching out south to the forest - almost all of Dreamlands' many locations came about in the same unplanned manner. No doubt the professionals will not be impressed, but then I have never claimed to be the world's greatest programmer, I simply do it for the sheer fun of computing, and in particular for my love of adventures.

The setting is pseudo-fantasy, that is to say that whilst the overall feel is one of a 'magical' land, peopled by elves, ogres, dragons and other such folk, you will also come across some slightly out of place objects and circumstances, though I will not 'spill the beans' as to what they are just yet. I am aware that this type of setting is not to everyone's taste, but I have been unable to stop myself creating imaginary worlds since reading JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings for the first time at the age of thirteen (I'm now on my eleventh re-read!).

I have tried to include puzzles which gradually become harder as one progresses further into the game, and judging from the reactions of friends who have kindly play-tested Dreamlands, I think that the balance is about right, though of course this will depend on the individual. If you are having difficulties at the start, bear in mind that the answer to the first problem lies within the forest and on the beach (I hope this helps any distraught adventure novices!), and that there are many clues to be found if you just persevere and follow sensible advice...

The choice of SuperBASIC as the method of writing the adventure was made because of the versatility and freedom it allowed me whilst designing the game, though of course I did have to write my own parser, which very nearly led me to give up early on! I had originally intended to have an advanced parser such as the one used in The Pawn by Magnetic Scrolls, but eventually settled on one which could recognise up to four words, on the assumption that most players wouldn't try anything more complicated, (and besides, it was so much easier to write!!!)

The problem with BASIC, and especially when I am the one doing the coding, is that it does tend to take up a lot of space, and I eventually found that I was going to exceed the 88K limit set by the standard QL. This did not bother me much at the time, for I had invested in a 512K SuperQboard, and I was not intending the game to be released to the QL public in any form - it was primarily an exercise in programming my new computer, albeit a very enjoyable exercise, and I did not think anyone other than myself and a few friends would be playing it. The result I'm afraid is that the main file now takes up about 115K plus any overheads needed for the numerous variables, and hence will not fit on a 128K machine. Attempts to reduce the size of the program were unsuccessful, though I did manage to change the display from 85 columns to one that fits onto a television screen, at Richard's request.

DREAMLANDS - 2

Upon discovering QLAF, I sent off a copy of the adventure for evaluation, and was pleasantly surprised to find that Richard liked it! What followed was several months of disks and mdv_s being sent back and forth between Richard and myself, as he and his playtesters found a multitude of bugs and suggested numerous changes, and I endeavoured to cure all the problems. It's amazing the number of bugs which can go unoticed by a programmer when developing a large program. Thanks must be given to all those who spent their time ensuring that the final program is one that works correctly.

It was at about this time that Alan Pemberton first compiled the program with Qliberator, the first of many such compilations. The speed increase of the Qlib'd program was phenomenal, and thankfully no insurmountable problems were encountered. Alan has been most helpful in the final stages of the Dreamlands creation saga, and has ensured that the compiled version works properly. (If you want a fuller list of those who helped make Dreamlands possible, type 'credits' when playing - disk version only). Turbo could not be used because of computed RESTORES which are used extensively throughout, and which the DP compiler cannot deal with.

Dreamlands was written over a period of over a year, during which time I had to come to grips with a new computer and new BASIC (though experience of the Beeb and the Spectrum helped), had to put aside coding during studies, work, and a three month trip abroad. As a result, it was nearly abandoned several times, had to have many structures and procedures completely rewritten, new and (hopefully) imaginative puzzles thought up, and the whole lot made to work properly.

I would recommend writing an adventure to anyone who is remotely interested in them - the hours of enjoyment gained from such a venture make it very worthwhile. It does not matter if you write in SuperBASIC, Quill, ACT, or anything else for that matter, the important thing is that you will have fun, and provide fun for others at the same time (hopefully!).

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On loading you are presented with a menu screen:

Start Game	
Opponent	CPU or another human
Team names	Default - Australia(CPU) and England(you)
Skill Level	Low, Par, High or Tops
Match duration	4 to 60 overs
Outfield speed	Slow, fast or normal
Outfield bounce	Low, average or high
Quit	

As well as being able to alter the names of the teams involved you may fill the sides with players of your own choosing.

You can play single games or a series. It appears that a series can be as long or as short as you require. It sounds like a good idea - wait until I'm in front and then finish the series! In practice that would probably never happen, but I'll come to that in a moment.

Whether you are batting or bowling the screen layout is similar. The left hand two thirds of the screen shows the action using some excellent graphics. You can see the backs of the bowler, umpire and non-striking batsman, all of the facing batsman and half of the stumper. On the right of the screen is the scoreboard showing total score, wickets down, overs remaining, and the names and scores of the two batsmen. The batsman facing the bowling is shown first. Underneath the scoreboard is a picture of three stumps and under that is an indicator showing how high the ball is once struck by the batsman.

Bowling and Fielding

When you are ready to bowl you will see at the bottom of the scoreboard two indicators, one above the other. The higher of the two shows the direction and amount of swing (movement in the air) available for this ball and the lower indicator shows the direction and amount of seam (movement off the pitch). If you want to change your field you press F2 and then you are shown the position of all the fielders and one or all of them may be moved. When you are happy you return to the main screen. You may bowl a short pitched ball to take advantage of any seam or one of fuller length to utilize any swing. Any of the three stumps may be aimed at giving you a choice of six different types of delivery. Your choices are made by pressing a combination of keys as the bowler releases the ball.

Assuming the batsman hits the ball (and he almost always does when I am bowling!) the screen shows the view from above with the fielders represented by yellow markers. The fielder in the best position to stop the ball is shown in red if the ball is moving too fast for him to stop it and blue if it has slowed enough for him to field it. If you disagree with the choice of fielder you can overrule the computer by pressing space and the game will pause whilst you select a different one by pressing space until your chosen man is highlighted. Press esc or enter to continue. You use the same up, down, left and right keys as before to move your fielder. The ball can only be fielded when it is below a certain level so you need one eye on the height indicator. Once the ball is gathered it is thrown to the nearest set of stumps.

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

Batting

When you are ready press space to activate the bowler. You have six shots at your disposal and you again choose by pressing a combination of keys at the correct moment. If you hit the ball you are shown the view from overhead and you must decide whether to attempt a run by pressing the left or right key. If you succeed in a run and the ball still hasn't been fielded you may press the left or right key again to go for a second run.

When a batsman plays the wrong shot and is bowled, the ball breaking the wicket is quite realistic (and so is the expression on the batsman's face!).

The Game in Action

Well enough of the mechanics, how did I get on?

Not very well.

I managed to improve my bowling and fielding, although quite regularly my choice of type of ball didn't seem to be reflected on screen. Not once did I manage to keep the Australians under 100 runs in a 10 over match, and my best haul of wickets was only 2.

Batting remained as difficult as it was at the start. As the instructions say "Timing is absolutely vital if your team is to accumulate a large total" or, in my case, any sort of total. My highest score was only 20 runs. Almost every time that I hit the ball I was caught. The majority of my runs in every game came from extras. The longest innings that I managed was 5 overs and during that time I amassed 8 runs - all extras! In that innings I had adopted a defensive strategy just to see how long I could last.

Is it me or is it the program?

In theory the level of control seemed right but, unfortunately, certainly in my case, the odds were weighted extremely heavily in favour of the computer.

I found the game very frustrating. The atmosphere generated and the graphics were very good and I kept having just one more go but I didn't manage to improve significantly with practice.

The Two Person Game

I have only managed to play the two person game a couple of times. However, I must say that, apart from the cramped hand positions, and the confusion caused by one person having to use the opposite hand for each direction, the contest was much more evenly and enjoyably fought.

Conclusion

I very much wanted to write a complimentary review and I feel that with a little adjustment this could be a game that I, and probably many other cricketers, would return to time and time again.

John Baylis

Nigel Holder has sent us a revised version of the game in response to John's review but I haven't received any further input from John. From my own experience, the revised version is slightly easier. Certainly Nigel feels the difficulty level is about right and he regularly beats the Australians when playing.

Richard

SOME ADVICE TO SOFTWARE AUTHORS

As a, albeit small-scale, publisher, I thought it might be useful to aspiring games writers to give some hints not so much on the programming side but on "how to avoid hassles with your publisher". No names will be mentioned in the course of this article, but the "guilty parties" will be able to recognise themselves. Next issue: "Hints to Publishers - the author's revenge".

1) HOUSEKEEPING

One of the biggest problems I have found, is keeping track of the progress of a game and doubtless authors suffer from this too. The "easiest" (though very time-consuming) way to avoid problems in this area is for authors to document the changes they make in a program, and to differentiate each version with both a date, and version number. Putting this in a boot prog makes life even easier. Thus the publisher can see at a glance which is the latest version of a game. I usually keep a copy of the previous 2 or 3 versions, just in case what seems to be an improvement causes more problems than it solves. If you can keep an "upgrade_doc" file going with the prog this also helps.

Another bane of my life are file names. It would be appreciated if authors could clearly label each file that comprises a full program in such a way that it can be seen that they all belong together. e.g. don't use "readme_doc" - on a compilation disk only one will get copied. It is better to use namegame_doc. Similarly extensions should show which prog they belong to, "toolkit_cde" can be called "namegame_extns", although many progs can use the same extns and in this case they can share the same filename.

Media. Do clearly label your disks and mdvs with both the name of the prog enclosed and your name and address.

2) PROGRAMMING

O.K. I said I wouldn't touch this, but there are some points that really do need repeating. Again, not all programmers are "guilty" of these "sins", but those that are do make life more difficult.

Screen Size. Always make sure that your default screen size is TV mode and not Monitor mode. Not every one can afford a monitor, and to use every pixel of the monitor screen means that a large percentage of users will have difficulty playing your game or whatever. If you must use the full screen then don't put anything of any importance outside of the default TV screen area.

Copyright. Always make sure that the version of any utility or toolkit that you supply with a program is a run-time version that the manual explicitly says you can commercially distribute. Even Public Domain utilities cannot necessarily be utilised by commercial games, although I can't see any problem with non-commercial ones. It should go without saying that you make sure that the program is your own work, if it is to be marketed commercially.

If you are improving existing software the situation is more complex. Code that cannot run without the original, i.e. add-ins, are O.K. provided you acknowledge the original's copyright, trade marks etc. Improved versions that are stand alone should not be issued without the permission of the current copyright owner, except as "upgrades", where proof of ownership of the original is given before purchase or distribution.

Be careful that you read any rights agreements you sign with publishers and abide by them, unless you are prepared to legally indemnify any distributor of products that breach your contracts.

Debugging. Although this is never as much fun as the actual writing of the program, you will have to be prepared to do as much work when a program is "finished" as before hand. We try and exhaustively test programs before selling them, but inevitably some bugs slip past.

To help you debug your progs, a clear programming style is preferred, with procedures, data and code all clearly laid out and seperated from eachother. Similarly, well-thought out code, complete with flow-charts, lists of variables, procedures, not to mention a complete print-out of the code, will help make debugging a pleasure.

It will also help if you can make the source code available, so that errors can be sorted out by other people too.

More hints next issue.

Richard Alexander

HELPLINE - 1

THE ADVENTURE (ABERSOFT)

M.J. Edwards writes to say that you don't need to go SW from the Mountain King's Hall to get the rug from the dragon - which is just as well, because you can't go that way on his version, even on alternate attempts.

ADVENTURE PLAYTIME (P.D.)

Rich Mellor, along with a couple of other people, says that the answer to the "Eye of toad, wing of bat ..." puzzle is to say "just that". (Nice one Alan!)

ARGONAUT 471 (MICRODEAL)

Mike Tuppeney has written in asking about this one. Like myself he has got as far as the "graphic" maze and keeps getting caught by the androids (painful!) If anyone has got beyond this could they send us the saved position so we can get on with the rest of this one. Puzzles is one thing, but daft "arcade" sequences is quite another.

YE CLASSICAL TYPE ADVENTURE

Nigel Prested (16 Broomside Lane, Belmont, Durham, DH1 2QR) has written asking for help in getting started in this one. As this looks like being a hardy perennial the best advice I can give is to read the sign on the way into the forest and find a tree-like object which looks set for the chop. Removing the mark will give you the helping hand you require to getting into the next stage of the adventure.

Harris Lucas has written in with the solution to the "margana" puzzle. Read backwards it is "anagram". Thus to go to the "cave" or the "well", just type them in backwards.

Thanks to Mike Tuppeney for a complete solution as well for this one. No excuses now for misleading you.

FANTASIA ADVENTURE (P.D.)

Rich Mellor has asked for help getting started on this one, in particular:

How to get past the guard in the Temple?
Where is the lamp?
How to get out of the hedge maze?

O.K. I've got a bit further than Rich at the moment, so can help those struggling at the beginning of this one.

The guard needs the answer to the very simple anagram which is on the scroll.

Once past the guard you can get the lamp, which lit by the light source in the room with no wind.

The hedge maze has me defeated too. There is a way in and out from the bandstand which leads down to the room with the safe but this only leads to the river bank where your boat is either on the other side or (if you've used it) has gone. There is an exit down to the cliff near the area north-west of the start but it is a sudden death one. Finally if you wander around the maze you'll come to an exit only to have it close on you. I suspect that this really is the exit but you have to fulfill certain conditions first before you can exit.

Dave Fullerton has now got further than me and says the exits to the hedge maze seem to remain open if you're carrying the axe, only we can't remember where the axe is to be found. He also mentions that if you wander around the hedge maze you'll possibly find yourself in the other big maze of twisty passages. To exit from this you'll need the pass. (Mapping this latter maze is made more difficult by the fact that some of the paths change from visit to visit.)

Final hint: type NUM in a location to get the location number.

IMAGINE (DIGITAL PRECISION)

Once again Rich Mellor has come to our rescue. Regarding the "nagging wife" there is a hint in her nagging, if you can stand it long enough. You need to "show" a properly executed legal "document"! .i.e. sign it and show it. (The document is behind the fireplace, as far as Rich can remember.) Now how about that larder ....

John Vennard, (5 Highfield Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 6NS) has also been battling away at this one. He writes: "I think I have solved the problem of the boat. It would appear that you have to read the boat before it will move and you may have to do this each time you return to the beach.

HELPLINE - 2

I haven't worked out what the doll does yet. How does one make sense of the holes? It would appear that braille is involved. Perhaps one needs to go somewhere else to see it.

I have managed to get myself into the grim passage and through that little complex. My next real problem is to find a way to remove the rock. I think I should need to cause an explosion but have not worked out a way to do this yet. Pressing the lighter outside the rock seems to cause an explosion but you lose everything bar the torch. As the explosion is in the distance, I am not sure what blows up.

I may be missing something in the second of the mazes. I went straight through the first time.

I have found a novel way of getting rid of the gobbler. Feed him the pill and throw him down. This puts him out of harm's way for the rest of the game without resorting to fisticuffs."

(More from John on this one next time.)

MORTVILLE MANOR (PYRAMIDE)

A previous QLAF had a clue about the wooden ball. This object can be found on top of the bureau in the attic. Mike Tuppeney has written asking if anyone has actually finished this one? In answer, all I can say is that a German ST magazine has begun splilling the beans on this, but which one I don't know. In the meantime it would be helpful if one could devise ways of stopping Max throwing one out.

QUEST FOR THE DRAGONSWORD (BYTEBACK)

Rich Mellor writes asking for help on this one. He would like to know how to get into the dwarf's house and to get the rats to follow him. Also how to get out of the church/kill dracula? Also how does he get back from the mountains without hindrance from short-sighted pigeons? Ian Foot's clues in this issue should help here.

THE QUILL ADVENTURE SYSTEM

Alan Pemberton is offering his services to help anyone who needs help with the Quill. Write to him at 16, Comiston Terrace, Morningside, Edinburgh, Scotland. Alan is also a dab hand with QLiberator.

Richard

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SCOTLAND
EH10 6AH

There are certainly enough QL users in Scotland to justify a separate group, so if we club together now, we can keep the QL going north of the border for quite a few more years to come.

Ideally, this will be a Quanta Sub-Group, but we would not like to exclude any non-Quanta members who might wish to join - so please write.

Meetings will probably take place somewhere in the central belt, the location dependent on the wishes of members.

Here are some of the benefits of Scottish-based meetings:-

* Save upwards of 20 hours travelling to and from Microfairs
* Help and advice on all aspects of QL computing avaiable locally
* Try out expensive software before you buy without feeling pressurised (NO piracy!)
* Ideal forum for swapping Public Domain programs
* Share resources, e.g. colour printers, etc.

WRITE NOW AND GET THE BALL ROLLING !

START YOUR OWN GROUP !

If you would like to start a QL user group in your locality, open to all QL users, please send in your name and address, and what area you'd like to cover and we'll print it in the next issue. Thanks to QUANTA and QLAF members, it looks like Bristol is getting itself together.

Richard

SUPREMACY - REVIEW

PRICE : £1.00 + media from CGH Services
WRITTEN BY : Fraser Harkins.

Firstly when getting this game you should read the Quill doc file. It helps with the begining stages of the game. Personally I found this doc file rather badly worded and quite confusing. I reckon that if you just load the game and blunder on, you'll get to know how it works quicker. To make things easy I'll describe the game as its played.

First you have to choose a scenario code number, rangeing from 0001 to 9999. This dosen't seem to affect the game much at all. Thus I type in the first number that comes to mind. (I believe it determines the distribution of the countries, so that if you use the same number you should get the same distribution. Ed)

Then you have to choose whether or not you would like sound. There is little imagination in the sounds, i.e. just a bleep when you do something. Then again there's not a lot a sounds you could use for this type of program. I find it easier with sound off. Helps you to think.

Now you must choose the computer deployment number. This controls the number of units presented by the computer at the start of the game. i.e. 3-6.

Then you choose the comtinental status number. Which to be perfectly honest I haven't a clue what it does. (I think this controls the number of extra armies you get for having a complete continent. Ed)

We now tell the computer how many people are playing, this must include computer players as well. There are 4 types of player availble:
1 Human.
2 Neutral.
3 Reinforced Neutral.
4 Naive Computer.

You control a human player and can fight against one or more of the above. At this stage the rather brief doc file information can help. It lists the 4 types of player and explains their purpose. I will explain briefly though.

HUMAN:- Controlled by a person and is best off being the first player. Your strength at the start is determined by the nummber of people and types playing. You always start with one unit in each of your regions and are then given more to place where you please.

NEUTRAL:- This player is not allowed to attack human or computer players.

REINFORCED NEUTRAL:- The same as a neutral player but a lot stronger.

NAIVE COMPUTER:- Basically the same as you (HUMAN) and is out to grab as much of the world as possible. (The game has a sort of demo mode if you play 2 naive computer players against each other - very fast. Ed)

I like to play HUMAN against NAIVE COMPUTER the most. It is a simple one to one combat. Best version to start with and get aquainted with the game.

The game can take from 30mins to 3 hours depending on how good you are and what you're up against. It is great with 6 players but can take a long time in the deployment of troops or units.

The lay out of the game is quite simple. You are presented with a map which is rougthly divded up into regions. Each player is given an equal amount of regions which are scatterd around the world. Each player is given a colour as well. Player 1 is green, 2 red, 3 white, 4 violet and so on. There is also this rather odd looking face in the bottom right corner which serves no purpose what so ever, apart from acting as a distraction.

At the top of the screen are the names of the continents i.e. North America, Europe. You move the indicator to the continent you want with ← → keys. To get a region list you move the curser down, then choose the region with the space bar.

All in all a very enjoyable game. Which can get those old brain cells working overtime. There is also a review of this game in Computer Shopper November 1988.

B.B.F.N. ROSS "D" BEST.

If you can improve any aspect of Public Domain games, including the doc files, please send in your improvements. We'll keep people posted in OLAF.

Richard

BITS AND PIECES

I've recently come across two new adventures for the QL, and have written to the publishers' to see if we can get a review copy of each of them. If you get a copy and can review it before Sept 30th please let us know what they are like.

First is a text adventure called "The Fugitive", published by Di-Ren, 43 Davids Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 3EP. Should run on any QL and is available on mdv and 3.5" disks. Cost is £9.95. Access and Visa orders can be phoned in on 01-654-8329.

Second is an adventure called "The Crown of Sorkinem". This is published in Germany by Martin Florichs of Qlympic Systems and is available in the UK from TK Computerware for £17.50. Don't know if there are any memory requirements etc on this one. TK have this listed under games, but Martin described it as an adventure. TK are at Stone Street, North Stanford, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6DF. Access and Visa orders can be phoned in on 0303-81-2801.

The Wacky World of QL magazines

QL World, according to the August issue, is not to go subscription only, presumably because too few people decided to subscribe despite their "wonderful" offer of a free issue. Certainly cheaper to subscribe than get at the newsagents, but there is also the feeling that Focus might pull the plug on it, like they did on Dragon User, also edited by Helen Armstrong. Not that I have any grumbles with QL World, especially after all the nice reviews and editorial mentions we've been getting lately. (I hear they pay very well for reviews !)(HINT!!!!!!!)

QUANTA seems to have sorted itself out after its recent upheavals. The August issue is very neat and features a special offer on Jan Jones' book on QL SuperBasic for £8.00 (plus £2.00 p&p). As this follows hot on the heels of the Tandata modem offer (nearly all gone) I reckon QUANTA to be damn fine value. QUANTA is also reorganising its library along the lines of the CGH library, i.e. by subject. There are 4 adventure/strategy disks currently available at a mere 50p a disk (plus media, p&p etc.) Contact Phil Borman, 15 Grosvenor Crescent, Grimsby, South Humberside, DN32 0QJ to join.

QLSUB have also burst into print with Issue 3 of their periodical. It still has far too much text set using the default QL font, which is simply unreadable. Coloured paper does not help legibility either. On the plus side the mag has some good articles and the review and use of Text87 (v2.00) is excellent. Whether it is value for money I'm not certain - probably not if all you want is the mag and occassional bit of software - but definitely so if you can get substantial savings on some hardware products. Also they are the only people to support Tonto and One-Per-Desk users. Contact at PO Box 3, Shildon, DL4 2LW or their viewdata bulletin board on 0388-773737 (1200/75 or 300/300) if it's working.

Communications

Talking of comms, I've availed myself of the QUANTA offer and bought a Tandata unit. Very good it is too but setting up the software was none too easy. The original software, Q-Connect only works on a 128K machine, but comes with a res128K prog. Only the reset then prevents you from using your disk drives upon which you have the rest of the prog. Luckily Qualsoft have their terminal prog on the disk and this works fine with expanded memory, disks etc. Only point is that it looks for a directory called Qconnect - which is the name of the main file for Qconnect. Edit this to Qualsoft and away you go. Anyone like to nominate a QL board for us to chat on about adventures ?

Also on the comms side of things, I had a letter from Hilary Snaden of Bristol asking for amateur radio progs for the QL. Nothing in my P. D. library remotely resembled ham radio progs so we've been reduced to going to PDSL for some PC progs in GWBasic in the hope that they are simple enough to be converted into SuperBasic and then compiled. If anyone can help Hilary (and any other QL radio amateurs out there) please get in touch.

Wanted

Philip Coomes has asked if anyone has a copy of "Omega" that was written by Mike Weaver and published by Caret Computing of London. Philip is prepared to pay a tidy sum for this (but not too much!) Contact him at 9 Tower Heights, Hoddeston, Herts, EN11 8QU. If you can contact the author or publisher - even better, so that we can get it re-released. (This applies to ALL out-of-print QL progs.)

Richard

NEW FROM CGH SERVICES:

GREY WOLF

u-boat simulator

by

Oliver Neef

flp: 9 quid

mdv: 11 quid

needs 256K+

85col screen

TREASURE HUNT - REVIEW

PRICE £1.00 + media from CGH Services.

Yes this is another blundering about finding totally useless objects type adventure but one of the better ones. In the begining you find yourself in the middle of nowhere, next to a large boulder. Instantly you are faced with a key problem and what wood help you! (I couldn't resist doing that, there'll be more clues no doubt.)

Anyway, you can only make progress in small spurts before you find you need another treasure. Anything you find will be needed. You will also have to do a lot of back tracking which can sometimes be confusing. A map is highly recomended. There are also some wild goose chases which usually result in going to prison but this is very easy to get out of.

It is also wise to make sure that when attacking an orc you type attack soldier, sentry, guard, and not orc. (Don't type "kill sentry")

The layout of this game is easy to understand. Commands are simple and done in three word sentences. Movement is controlled using the first letter of the word. To take in your surroundings you type Look. There is no examine command. There is little contact with other characters in the game or rather I've had little contact but I have only managed to get 47% so far. There is also a help command which gives useful tips. At some stages you have to use it to find out extra information. There's a missing H in a clue. So brush up on your spelling!

I think that the information doc file could tell you more about commands. I often get stuck not on puzzles or problems but command words. Which can vary so much from game to game. Which can be very frustrating. Thus here are some tips on commands in Treasure Hunt.

To attack something you must say what you're attacking with e.g. Attack dragon with sword. This can also be shortend to ATTA DRAG WITH SWOR.

When taking an object you can use TAKE SWOR or GET SWOR.

To leave an object say DROP FLASK.

When filling a container simply say FILL FLASK.

To climb a tree or ladder use CLIM TREE or UP in some cases.

Oh, don't go climbing in armour you'll break something. Then again it may stop you being blown away!

There is a limit to the amount of objects you're allowed to carry so make sure you've only got what you need!

There have been some problems with this game but Rich Mellor has cured virtually all of the bugs. There are still some problems, so see Cock-up Corner.

Well there's not much else I can say. This game is very enjoyable and extremely well thought out. The problems are the kind which you can be thinking about for ages. A true brain teaser. 21 out of 20.

HAPPY ADVENTURING ROSS "D" BEST.

WANTED

Jean-Yves Rouffiac has written in asking whether anyone has copies of the following two programs for the QL:

1) Space Trek - originally published by Swansoft, 164 Vicarage Road, Morriston, Swansea, Cymru. SA6 6DT. This was advertised in QL World in May 1985 and came in two versions - text and graphics. According to the ad it was "A real-time adventure set in the distant future. Navigate and explore the galaxy, seeking out and boarding alien spacecraft while trading with friendly planets for weaponry and supplies."

2) Quest used to publish a game called "Pirate(s)", but as the company went bust we can't track them down.

Harris Lucas has written in asking for a copy of the "QL Classic Adventures" as they are no longer available commercially. Contact: 6 Bromford Close, Hurst Green, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 9JF. This was written by Abersoft and published by Sinclair Research Ltd.

THE TALISMAN - REVIEW

Published by PCBS,
£19.00 from TK Computerware. (needs expanded memory)

There you are standing at the entrance to Jardon, a huge complex of caves, in search of the long lost (yes you've guessed it) Talisman. Why do this at all when you could be home playing Starplod on your QL? One good reason is that the land of Albaran is ruled by an evil sorcerer Kalnac and it is believed that the Talisman could lead to his downfall.

As you can see the plot is nothing new and the game itself is based on the famous board game "Dungeons and Dragons". You can select the type of person you are from: warrior, rogue, mage and warrior priest. All of the above have certain advantages and disadvantages. However, the rogue is a good place to start, as he is able to move without being seen by the monsters and so can explore the dungeon without fear. Do not get too clever though, as after a while you are bound to trip, and the monsters will come in force.

Whatever character class you choose, you have a few thousand gold coins to spend on armour, weapons and various magic items. It is essential to choose wisely. Think of protection first, as a dead warrior with ten magic swords is not a lot of use. The first selection should be armour and a weapon. These are fairly to chose and if you are lucky you may purchase a magic one. I would also advise a few potions of healing or a staff, as well as a wand of magic missiles or, even better, lightning bolts. Finally sell any spare equipment you were given free at the start as I have found no reason for having two swords etc.

Next you descend into the dungeons and appear on a blank screen as a stick man. The walls of the room are only shown as you move near to them, as it is assumed to be dark except for your torch. The areas explored do remain on the screen so you can be sure you've covered all of the level. The monsters are represented by letters, (e.g. G = Goblin) which is at first disappointing, but the game soon takes over and you become absorbed in exploring and fighting.

The character's movement is controlled by keys 1 - 9. To perform other actions the keyboard is used in both upper and lower case. The keys relate to the action in a roundabout way. For example, Q = quit and q = quaff a potion, and my favorite is z = zap a wand! Apart from monsters, you can meet a travelling salesman who will buy any item you find on your travels. This enables you to increase your gold stock and then purchase better equipment. There is plenty of information available at the touch of a key, including character status, an inventory of possessions and information about the monster (letter) you are fighting.

At the end of the game the scores are saved to microdrive and so a record is kept of your progress. The one strange feature is that if you save a game it forces you back to generating your character and also, the saved game can only be loaded once. Thus once dead you have to start from scratch.

The map is different in each game and so a map of each level is not possible. However, the levels usually consist of nine rooms, one of which dominates the others, and all are linked by corridors of varying width. The monsters are found in the rooms but will pursue you into a corridor if you make a run for it.

I have only reached level three of the dungeon where I died of thirst! As you can imagine after killing every monster I had met with ease, having attained fifth level, to die of thirst was a blow. I have learnt from my experience and always purchase potions to quench both thirst and hunger. (Why one can't buy normal food is beyond me but I suppose a potion costs more!)

At first I thought that at fifth level I was invincible, however since then I have met Balrogs and Golems both of which killed me (3rd and 4th level) in one blow. I have also met a poisonous frog which once it has bitten you the words: "You have been bitten, the poison has no effect YET!" appear. There are ways out of this no doubt, but on the two occasions I have read those words I didn't live long enough to find out how one dies or how quickly.

I would say it is the best "Dungeons and Dragons" simulation on a computer that I have played. It is, of course, the only one on the QL. The price of £19 is perhaps a little steep, but it is a unique game on the QL and so for a little variety, it is worth every penny.

Philip Coomes.

WAR GAMES - RESPONSE

I have read with interest the review of the three war games "War in the East", "Squadrons" and "D-Day MkII". I would like to add my comments on these games.

"War in the East" is indeed a fine simulation but it has the usual computer defect of being able to cheat. My version actually allowed the Russians to have reinforcements from a city that the Germans were occupying. These Russian troops promptly destroyed the German unit, mainly by surprise, I would estimate. The program also seems to allow multiple attacks from various units of the Russian Army on German units without allowing the same privilege to the Germans. The game is obviously pro-Russian.

My version gives a totally unreadable output when the game is over. Whether it is in Russian or some other obscure language I don't know, but it would be nice if a translation were available in English at the end of the program.

The "Squadrons" program is one that I have had the most difficulty playing as I usually react too late to do any good even at the lowest level. I also found that whoever installed the radio equipment in the various aircraft was incompetent as most of the time radio messages were lost due to faulty communications. God help this country if the same guy works for the modern RAF. Even so a good game to play if you have a day or so to waste.

"D-Day MKII" is, in my view, the best of the three in that it not only provides a wider range of scenarios but has the potential for even better development if a user-defined computer v human facility were allowed. The computer has the limitation that it does not understand hit and run tactics. Not easy to arrange in a computer program. Though the Chess program by Psion disproves this theory as it can play a very mean attacking game.

John Vennard

See Rich Mellor's article on upgrading both D-Day MKII and War in the East to see how far we have got towards solving the problems with these games that people have raised.

Richard

DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

HINTS FOR PHASE 3

The first move inside the base is to REMOVE the helmet then WEAR the paint. You can then proceed, in disguise, to the decontamination chamber. Once in there WEAR the helmet (as the paint is cleaned from your face) and go into the Opium den (NE, I think from the decontamination chamber.) Then TAKE the matches.

You will pass through trial procedure and different methods will lead eventually to the death cell. Here you TAKE PIPE and when gas starts up, LIGHT gas. When guard comes to take away your body, HIT guard with PIPE. You can then take his ERASER.

To rescue Lefty type LIFT Lefty when Robbie is around and he will eventually do it for you. The time bomb is hidden in the clock and can be defused by typing REMOVE detonator.

You can then leave the base and ENTER crater to get inside the alien craft. After you have tracked down Chief Chinka, when he has fought with Admiral Cola, EXAM Chief will reveal a Glass Key to unlock the cabinet. There is a syringe and a phial which can be used twice. When you have reached the entrance to the alien craft, INSERT DETONATOR INTO CLOCK and drop clock and leave. INVEwill tell you how much bomb time you have left.

David Colyer.

FOR SALE

For Sale: Supercharge Special Edition. (D.P.) Yours for £15 from Jean-Yves Rouffiac, 31 Hampstead Hill Gardens, London NW3 2PJ.

For sale: Turbo v2.0. (D.P.) Yours for £50 from Michael Harkins, 1A Forrester Place, Airth, Falkirk, Scotland. FK2 8LB.

If you would like to have a similar advert printed in the next issue of QL Adventurers' Forum please send it in by September 1st. Small adverts are free to subscribers to QL Adventurers' Forum.

UPDATING D-DAY AI

D - DAY MKII (Games Workshop)

When Richard first sent me a copy of this program to investigate the possibility of updating, I was rather astounded by the lack of speed in the program all-round (and the fact that it was totally incompatible with my Trump Card). But, never one to turn away from a challenge, I accepted it gratefully and began by QSAVing the main files. It was here that I realised that if the program was to be at all playable, it would need compiling. Luckily I had recently purchased a copy of DP's Turbo at a knock-down price (many thanks to DP for their offer), and so ran the program through it.

The result was a load of rubbish on screen, since the program expected the screen window to be the BASIC channel #1 which was not possible whilst a compiled version was running. So, thanks mainly to QJUMP's QMON and several late nights, I managed to get the program up and running. The only problem now was that with all of the extra code there was no way the program would fit a standard QL (the program now stands at over 120K when up and running).

So after quite a few more delays due to odd little bugs and incompatabilities between QL ROMs, the first version of my program came out, just in time for Strongs (who had in fact commissioned the upgrade by now) to be able to sell it at a microfair. The only major problem with this version was that it was slightly too big to fit snugly onto two microdrives and so led to a few errors in the copying process. My humble apologies to all those who experienced problems with this.

Within about a week, a new version was written which used up less space on microdrives, and could run happily from disk. At this stage, due to help from Malcolm Smith, the program was also made compatible with the THOR XVI.

Since then, unforunately for Richard, me, users (and of course the postman), the versions started to come out thick and fast. There were a few minor bugs removed (one major one which I'm still unsure why I couldn't get it to happen on my QL), and many little added extras as they were suggested by users.

Some of the added extras, which only serve to make the game more as it was originally intended, are: the ability to play games by mail (each person making one move); a command to turn the sound on or off; the ability to either load or save a game at any stage; the ability to move as many bridge layers as you want on every turn; and more importantly, the ability to use Lightning or Speedscreen alongside the program (thanks to Steve Sutton for his help here).

Around July, a brand new version should be released, version 2.00. Already on its way to completion are home-made SCROLL and PAN routines which should be about 30 - 50% quicker than the native QL routines. I have also implemented a better routine for computer controlled play, which lets the computer move - fire - move, so BEWARE!! Also, due to complaints by one of my more mature correspondants, an overall map is now displayed on screen whilst the computer moves, so that as the screen moves about, you have some idea where abouts the units are that being moved or shot at.

Some further ideas to be implemented in this version are improved computer intelligence and the possibility of user defined games against the QL (with some restrictions at present).

If anyone out there has any further suggestions, please do not hesitate to either contact me, or CGH, and I (we) will do our best to develop the game as users would like.

FINALLY

If you do come across any further bugs in the game then please contact CGH Services immediately, and we will attempt to correct them (normally within 7 days). Indeed, some users have been so astounded at the speed with which a minor fault was fixed that we have been accused of keeping the bugs to ourselves in the hope that no-one would spot them.

Please accept our apologies if you do not feel that the game is quite as it should

be, but the development of a fully debugged, updated version of D-DAY hasn't been as easy as we thought it would be. The problems encountered are mainly due to the unpredicatability of the QL operating system, since the program has always (well, nearly) functioned perfectly on the development rig, but not on all other machines.

However we are quite confident that the current version of D-DAY is relatively bug-free, so we hope that you have hours of fun with the program.

WAR IN THE EAST MKII (Sharp's Inc.)

After John Shaw's reviews in QLAF #6, I decided I might like to tackle this as my next updating project. From all accounts, it was a task which many people were unwilling to take on, mainly due to some very obscure BASIC programming (how many people refer to loops over a hundred lines from the NEXT loop command? - no END FOR loop lines in this one). I have only recently started to update this program, but have already supplied John with a QSAVEd copy, which overcomes the main problem with the game (loading time).

Most of the program needs a complete re-write, but, exams permitting, I have already converted around one half of it to pure SUPERBASIC (no GOTOs or GOSUBs). Indeed this is already beginning to show, since although QSAVing a program adds quite a bit to the actual file length, it is now much shorter in length than the original!

I have used my own FONT routine now on this program, since the program relied on the machine code being loaded to a certain location in RAM, which is never a good thing for those of us with extra memory. I have also added the ability to Save or Load a game at any stage during the player's turn and tidied the display somewhat.

Planned alterations are currently as follows: the ability to move your armies in whatever order you choose (to prevent boxing yourself in); TURBO compiling the program; ensure that the map scrolls as you move your units, so that they may be moved off screen; remove the attack phase altogether since this moves so quickly it is impossible to know whose armies are defeating whose; and the slowing down slightly of the computer's moves.

I could even add the option of a two player game quite easily, but I do not feel that a user defined game option should be added, since this would defeat the realism of the actual game.

At the moment however, these are only in the planning stage, and therefore I would welcome your views on these suggestions, and indeed any new suggestions. At the moment, it looks as if CGH will end up distributing the game as an update only to existing purchasers, since I have received no word (as of 25th June) from Sharp's as to whether or not they would be willing to commission such an upgrade.

FINALLY

One final word of thanks to Alan Pemberton, Malcolm Smith, John Shaw, John Vennard and Richard Alexander for their many hours of bug-testing and suggesting improvements.

Also one special mention to Steve Sutton (author of Lightning) for his help and encouragement in producing an improved SCROLL and PAN routine.

Also thanks to all of the QL suppliers whose products have helped to make both projects feasible (Metacomco - Assembler; DP - Editor, Turbo, Lightning; QJUMP - QMON II, TK2; Liberation - QLOAD, QREF; Stack Software - Supertrace).

Rich Mellor
26 Oak Road, Shelfield, Walsall, West Midlands, WS4 1RQ

A demo version of D-Day MkII v2.00 (or at least the latest development of v2.00) is available from CGH Services as a Public Domain program. This will indeed run on 128K machines, but is only a limited scenario version. As it is Public Domain we will not be supplying a manual, but as most of what is happening is explained on-screen, you won't be losing too much. V2.00 of D-Day MKII will not be a free upgrade to existing owners of D-Day, due to the large amount of extra work that has gone into it. Price to be announced.

QUEST FOR THE DRAGONSWORD - MORE HINTS

Following my plea in the last isuue of QLAF, Ian Foot kindly has sent in more help for those people still struggling with Quest for the Dragonsword. It isn't a full solution by any means as there are lots more puzzles in the first part of the adventure which he has not mentioned and which aren't so important. Indeed some were only put in for the fun of it or to occasionally help the adventurer. So what follows is a brief solution which answers most of the possible enquiries about the game, up to the third stage.

The game falls roughly into three sections:

1) Exploring the island and entering the house.

2) Exploring the house and finding the sword.

3) Finding the dragon's lair and killing it. (Plus rescuing the girl.)

Exploring the island is easy enough, although there are a few puzzles which might cause difficulty. The main one of these is the rats. The key to the trapdoor in the church is in the rats lair and can only be found once the rats are dead. To kill the rats you need the short sword and the wand. The wand will be useful on reflection which will allow the sword to finish one off. However don't hang around just yet, wait until the rats have finished off what you have started. Thus the key is re-covered.

The mountains provide another simple puzzle. There is only one easy path among them. Cross the bridge over the ravine and then go immediately East followed by North. This takes you onto a mountain path. Any other direction takes you into the mountains. These appear to be a maze but they are not. The only way out is to wander around until the computer decides to let you find the exit (on average about 100 moves).(Or simply quit and restart from a saved position!)

Once on the mountain pass, your best move is to liberate a monkey from the evil clutches of the giant. The giant lives in a cage to the East of the pass and is impervious to force. His only weakness is greed. He will eat the tastiest thing that you have (normally you!) If you are carrying the packed lunch from the fisherman's hut, then he will eat that instead. To kill him, find the bottle of poison in the mines and drug the packed lunch by typing typing "Poison Food". It will help to hang onto the empty bottle.

Once the giant has eaten the poisoned food and died, open the cage to release the monkey, who will then sit on your shoulder for the remainder of the game for the remainder of the game, and may even give you some help.

To fly the hot air balloon you need something to feed the hungry seagull, or else you'll reach the ground a little faster than intended. This is a red herring. Perhaps this somewhere where you should put Descartes before the horse? (or seagull?)

Entering the house is another difficult problem as the front door is locked. Fortunately there is a secret passage from the Church to the house. Alas, it is guarded by a Vampire. To get into the crypt you need the key, found earlier, to unlock the trapdoor. There you'll find a coffin (surprise!) which has to be approached to be examined. To avoid a fate worse than death (undeath!) you'll need a mouth-wash of traditional vampire repellant. This, of course, is found some way away and the drink wears off quickly, so that poison bottle should be used for transporting the water. Having breathed all over the vampire, you descend into the secret passage. Once you have entered the church there is no turning back.

So that just leaves you the problem of solving the puzzles relating to the house. Well almost, as Ian says that there are still many more puzzles in the later stages of the game (such as how to feed hungry skeletons?) which should keep you all going for some time yet.

If you're still stuck you can always write to the Helpline, as I'm sure that the clues above should help one of you to the finish of the adventure. Failing which a letter to Ian Foot at 205 Hawton Road, Newark, Notts, NG24 4RQ with an s.a.e. and some dosh might produce some results.

If you'd like a copy contact ByteBack Software, 6 Mumby Close, Newark, Notts NG24 1JE. Only £10.00 to QLAF readers.

Richard

This, unfortunately, looks like being a regular feature in QL Adventurers' Forum. This is where we admit that the progs you've shelled out for don't quite work as we had originally intended and, more important, how far we've got in solving the problems.

THOR POINTS

Thanks to the patience of Malcolm Smith and Alan Jerry we are now in a better position to find out why our progs don't run properly on Thors. We also had a very kind offer of a loan of a Thor I from a Scottish reader, who lives near to Alan Pemberton.

Currently Starplod, Grey Wolf and The Blag2 don't work correctly on these machines. For some reason Starplod crashes on Pakora. MacSporran (v2.00) used sound which messed things up on the Thor. Please note, all future ACT adventures should make the use of sound optional at the very start of the game, or else they lock-up the machine. (Cured with v3.00.) Grey Wolf has also come a cropper on the Thor XVI. We're not sure why yet. Ditto Blag2, where the text comes out double-spaced in the text window.

Alan Jerry very kindly sent me an extract from the THOR manual which may be germane: "Many programmes use a SuperBasic boot file, which sets up the video format of the machine before loading a block of binary code which is called to start the application. Usually this in turn sets up a larger block of binary code, which may be called or exec'ed. Often this sequence breaks the programming rules over the allocation of memory for the code (fixed addresses), and often arbitrarily allocates the input and output channels to be used by it (disables the standard channels and re-allocates the numbers). This process must be modified to only use memory allocated by QDOS, and to allocate channels coherently. It is preferable that a boot file contains more than "ex-this-application", as the application should be written to be executable at any time, in the multi-tasking environment".

CGH Services products (on the QL):

D-Day MKII (v1.46): Rich thinks this has sorted out most bugs, but this is such a complicated game that it is possible that your set-up/version combination still gives rise to the odd problem. If it does do let us know so we can solve it. (v2.00 is an even-more improved version which is still being tested.)

MacSporran's Lament: V2.00 of this was issued with some annoying bugs, including monsters that were shown as alive and dead, (when dead), invisible iron rings and straw, misleading directions in abbreviated location descriptions. Once these had been isolated copies were issued with a update_doc which listed known bugs. Subsequently Dave Watson brought out an improved version of the game which appears to cure most of the bugs. This is v3.00 and if you'd like a copy then return your master, with an s.a.e., and we'll upgrade it for you.

Grey Wolf: JM ROM QL's overwrite the position in the chart mode with the distance ocassionally - due to a ROM bug. "B" and "N" are transposed in some manuals but you've probably sussed that one out already. (Has anyone managed to sink more than 3 ships?)

Public Domain

Unlike CGH Services products, these are sold "as is", but bugs in these can still cause problems and hopefully be cured.

Treasure Hunt has an alarming tendency to crash if you try and "kill" the guards. Don't, is the simple solution.

Fantasia Adventure: We received a QLib'd version of this and may have supplied one or two before realising that it contains a couple of serious bugs. If your copy does not allow you to listen to the mumbling man then return it and we''ll replace with the QSave'd version. (See also P.D. update.)

Other games, such as Cavern Frenzy, need to be run on clean machines, that is without front ends, ICE ROMS etc. So if a PD game doesn't work, power-off, disconnect everything and start with as simple a set-up as you can. And if you can solve the problem, do write in to "Cock-Up Corner", firstly to alert people of known bugs, and secondly to let us know of any "work-arounds", bug-fixes etc.

Let us know of any other bugs (and cures) you find in our's and other people's progs.

Richard

MORTVILLE MANOR - HINTS PART 2

Well, we have all got around and found lots of objects, but what to do from there? I don't really know, I'm sorry to say, all I can suggest is that you try to use Richard's hints to get somewhere and then send in any information you possess so that QLAF can assimilate it all and hopefully someone out there will be able to crack the program.

So, here's my contribution for those of you out there who want it:

1. There are several parchments lying around the house which are supposedly useful clues. See QLAF #4 for details of the one in the bureau.

There are another two I have found which elicit the following information:

a) The one in Leo's room -
'The mountains are the fangs in a monstrous mouth opening on the infinity of a celestial orgy, grinding the stars as we grind our teeth into dust. You will drop your chord of stone at your feet. The laugh of silence at the highest pitch, and in your right hand, the measure of genius. Thus will you pass between the two crescents beyond the abyss of the wall of silence. The key to the melody is within your grasp. It suffices to find the note that clashes.'

This is definitely referring to a secret passage in the cellar (note the symbols on the pillars) but as for the rest of it, it doesn't really make much sense, unless the flute is involved somehow. - Has anyone ever managed to PLAY it?

b) The one in Julia's room -

'Take your prayers as you would to the holy place. From the pillar of wisdom, bring the sun to his knees. Thus will it show you the place to offer alms of another kind and like young Arthur, open the way of darkness. White is your colour, golden your hearth. So advance with caution Orpheus and light your way unto the sad virgin. Offer the circle of the man with three faces. That he may regain the world and turn with it to its original glory'

This certainly refers to the chapel, but how is one to pray in there? Having a bible seems to make no difference. The man with three faces is Guy I believe, since this would seem to fit in with some of Richard's clues. As far as I can tell you are supposed to kneel in front of the alter and then the entrance to the passage will reveal itself, only I haven't managed to find out how to kneel yet!

2. By now you must be wondering how I managed to get in to Julia's room, since it is always locked. Well, if you go in to Leo's room and LIFT his pillow, you will find something to help you with this problem.

3. I had assumed that the photo in the attic was of Julia, but try asking Guy or Max about 'The photo in the attic'. I in fact believe that the person in this photo is the 'virgin' referred to in the parchment above.

4. Back in Julia's room, there is another photo and Max can tell you about this.

5. If anyone can get into Luc's room (I've only managed it once!), take a look in the left hand side of the cupboard. There is a letter here, but I unfortunately did not get a look at it, so if anyone knows its contents, write and let QLAF know! Also let me know via QLAF what else is in this side of the cupboard.

Well, I'm afraid that's all that I know at the moment, but still how many adventures can claim to have many people still stuck and sinking fast in the home-made mire, nearly four years after its release!!

Rich Mellor

COMING SOON !

FROM

CCH SERVICES

RETURN TO EDEN

VOYAGE OF THE BEANO,

FINAL CONFLICT,

WRECK DIVE

UNCLE LOONIE'S LEGACY

OPEN GOLF

ACT - STEVE REPLIES

I thought I would add my 2 penny worth to some of the comments about ACT that have been made in the two recent reviews in QLAF. Some of the quirks of the system are the result of the way it was developed and in fact arise out of the limited hardware I had available when I first started to write it.

ACT (or APT as it then was) was originally designed to be compatible with un-expanded QL's, in fact virtually all of the system could still be operated in this way, it would be quite possible, with care, to produce a game on an unexpanded machine that would use up most of the base memory (about 85K normally free on unexpanded machines). About the only components that wouldn't operate without extra memory are the Graphics Designer program (this WILL work OK if it's dataspace allocation is reduced) and the program compiler (this only needs a few simple mods to allow it to work).

This is the main reason why the system is split into so many separate small utilities, doing it this way allows the maximum amount of memory to be free at each stage of the development of a game which in turn is the prerequisite to allow big games to be developed on unexpanded machines.

So, I originally made the decision to make SuperBASIC act as the editor for the development of the two game programs, the obvious advantage is that this involves no extra memory overhead, provides a degree of automatic syntax validation, but is unfortunately very slow once the programs become very big. To this end the use of QLOAD/QSAVE is a very good solution to the problem, alternatively there is nothing to prevent the use of almost any text editor when developing the programs. I used DP's EDITOR when writing IMAGINE, however I could equally have used the editor provided with the HiSoft assembler which I use extensively, either will work fine and provide the added advantages of string searches etc.

Rich Mellor mentioned in his review of ACT (QLAF No.5) that he thought that the graphics package showed signs of being added after the main text part of the system was written. This is indeed the case and goes some way to explaining the few wrong name references within it. The development of ACT was spread over quite some time and during it various influences came and went. Rather than 'prune' the system as it developed I tended to keep all options that were ever implemented, the result is a system that is very flexible but unfortunately the price to be paid for this flexibility is that it is fairly involved.

If ever an ACT 'special edition' is produced then I'll probably take some steps to reduce the overall complexity of the system. To this end any further ideas or comments that users might make would be welcome. In the meantime I have one or two ideas for a few simple additions to the system to improve on a couple of areas.

First in my mind is a method to allow the player (of an ACT game) to specify the filename of the SAVE/RESTORE feature. I will forward such additions to QLAF (if you don't mind) in the hope that they might be made available to anyone who would like them, I'll start the ball rolling with the new SAVE/RESTORE modification which I've enclosed. The file is SAVE_REST and the quill document NOTES_doc gives instructions on how to implement it. (Now added to the Public Domain library, available from CGH Services. Thanks Steve.)

Now, on to a problem. It was reported to me some weeks ago by Thor XVI user Malcolm Smith that there appeared to be some problems with using ACT or ACT generated games on this machine. Unfortunately I didn't have access to a Thor XVI at the time of hiw writing and so was not able to comment, however, I now have access to one of the latest Thor's and so I have been able to check the system out on it.

I confirm his comments, the fault is to do with the use of sound within a game. The problem actually lies with the Thor, it simply doesn't produce sounds in the same way as a QL. For example, the following three commands will produce three notes of progressively lower pitch on a QL, but each will be of more or less the same length (about 2 seconds).

```
1)   BEEP 32760,0
2)   BEEP 32760,100
3)   BEEP 32760,150
```

On the Thor XVI I tested this on the results were:

1) produced a much higher note than the QL but which lasted less than 0.5 seconds.

ACT 2

2) produced a note roughly the same pitch as the QL but lasting about 7 seconds.

3) produces a very low note that lasts about 30 seconds.

If attempts are made to use sounds of lower pitch than this then very very long durations result.

If sounds are used with ACT then the sound generating routing only returns control to the game once the current sound is finished. What is happening on the Thor is that sounds that work quite correctly on the QL (or earlier versions of the Thor) simply last for a long time (like hours!) and so the game hangs up waiting for them to stop.

There is nothing I can do to get round this except to warn ACT users to try to avoid using sounds with pitch numbers greater than about 100. Users of IMAGINE will find that there are some sounds within this game that will cause problems, so to avoid a hang-up they can simply use the NOISE command as soon as they start the game, silence is better than a hang-up.

I would stress to ACT users that the starting set of sounds that is provided with the system contains some sounds that will cause problems. The Thor I used for the checking was version 6.40 with version 1.07 I/O processor.

Thor users might try taking this problem up with CST, at least they should be able to provide a clarification of how the BEEP (and the underlying TRAP call) is supposed to work on the latest machines.

Steve Sutton

Further to Steve's comments, I'd also like to thank Malcolm Smith and Alan Jerry for their patient testing of CGH Services software on his Thor XVI. I'm afraid that MacSporran's Lament has yet to be modified to deal with the Thor problem. In future we'll try to get all our progs tested on Thors before releasing them.

Is anyone else out there using the ACT system ? Or is Dave Watson the only person actually writing progs using it.

Richard

Fantasia Adventure

AUTHOR: STEPHEN BELSEY
PRICE: £1.00 + Media from CGH Services

As a public domain programme, it cannot be faulted. For £1.00 you have a very good adventure with clues that you should be able to follow or work out.

I am not one of the world's greatest adventure players, but even I could at least get started with this one!

After half an hour though, I ended up with a headache, mainly due to the "background colour" and every few seconds getting a scrolling message "press the space bar" to continue.

At two locations (so far visited) you end up with a cacophony of noise and even with a "sonicprobe" I couldn't silence the computer. If anyone out there has found the solution to this problem (apart from re-setting and starting again) then please pass it on, before I run out of "Nurofen" tablets or cotton wool ! (Problem solved - for at least one location - ed.)

To start, the adventure has a few locations where you can go without the obligatory "lamp," but you will not get far. Finding the solution to the "One across" clue on the scroll (easy for budding "Sun" cross-word doers) will allow you to pass a Guard, get the lamp (unlit) and continue. You also get a book which contains a further clue or problem to be solved.

I have not yet delved into the depths of this adventure, but if it continues as it starts out, I can see many hours of entertainment forthcoming (only if I can stop the cacophony of noise !)

Dave Fullerton.

Since Dave sent in the above review, he and I have managed to get quite a long way into this adventure. And before saying any more about it, I'd like to congratulate the author Stephen Belsey for writing an excellent, if somewhat devious, adventure, and thank him for making it Public Domain. I'd also like to thank those of you who sent in copies and Alan Pemberton for QLiberating it. The difference is astonishing in both loading times and speed of execution. Hints next time folks.

Richard

MACSPORRAN'S LAMENT - REVIEW

MacSporran's Lament
Authors: Dave and Ann Watson
Price: £8.00 (mdv or disk)
Available from CGH Services
Runs on all QL's but not Thor-compatable at present.

It was with great pleasure but some trepidation that I received a review copy of this new adventure for the QL. Trepidation? Well I suppose I must admit to having some connection with MacSporran since it was written using ACT which I have more than a passing connection with.

So, I am obviously a little concerned that I should be as unbiased as possible. Pleasure? Well I'm happy to have any excuse to spend some time looking at an adventure, so when I get one 'out of the blue' to explore it is a double bonus. OK, having made my position quite clear lets get on with MacSporran....

At first I thought that this was going to be something of a historical adventure. The game includes an A5 size set of instructions that I recommend be read before starting to play, as well as setting the scene there is at least one useful clue hidden within. Although it is set in the year 1745 near the village of Inversnoddie below the High Bens it soon became apparent that there are many of the more traditional features of adventures to be found.

Your objective is to save the Fair Maid of Inversnoddie from the evil clutches of Mad Roy who, rumour has it, has imprisoned her in the Castle MacSporran.

You enter the scene outside the castle. Exploring outside doesn't immediately seem to be too useful so I quickly decided to risk entering the forbidding walls...

I think first impressions of a game are very important. In this respect MacSporran is very well thought out, there are several, easilly found rooms to explore in the castle, and also numerous objects ranging from the inevitable lamp to a haggis, a kilt, a sporran etc. (what else could you expect to find in a Scottish setting?).

Also, the game is illustrated and the pictures have obviously had quite some effort and a lot of thought behind them. This all goes towards establishing the right atmosphere and succeeds very well to this end.

The layout of the game is very nicely done. At each location there is a clear indication of which routes are accessible and this makes the task of exploring very simple and leaves the mind free to ponder the inner secrets of MacSporran. It took only a few minutes to map out the initial locations in the game but then I had some hard thinking to do since it became obvious that to get any further I would have to find solutions to some problems.

There are more than enough of these to think about, a locked door, a jammed cupboard, a broken bellpull etc all obviously need suitable tools to solve them. Trouble is that there just doesn't seem to be the right objects to be found, I must be missing something...

I must confess that I managed to solve one puzzle by a simple cheat. Anyone who is familiar with ACT will probably have little trouble in figuring out how to open the safe. I'll be passing on an idea to Dave and Ann to make the trick that occured to me more difficult to use (what a spoil-sport!). I still haven't found the correct way to open it, or maybe my cheat was what was intended ??

Well I'm afraid I'm not going to give anything much away except to say that after a little thought the (first?) concealed entrance came to light and I then began to realise something of the size of the game. The first monster, a sea-lizard called the Cantraip, stummped me for a long time, in the end it was pure luck that I discovered how to dispose of him (or have I missed a clue somewhere?). I must add though that I was given some useful encouragment by some of the things I tried that didn't quite work. Yes there are sometimes clues to be had from the wrong ideas!

So far I've managed to clock up a score of 30%, this being after a few hours of play. I do have lots of ideas on how to proceed though so I hope to be able to improve on this quite quickly now.

MacSporran is well thought out and a very logical game. I think it would provide a very good introduction to the world of computer adventure programs but also contains quite enough meat to keep more seasoned players busy for some considerable time. There are numerous

MACSPORRAN'S LAMENT - REVIEW EXTRA

humerous touches to the game and the descriptions are well thought out and imaginative.

One feature of the game that I particularly like is that there are some encouraging glimpses into the parts not yet solved. For example, it is necessary to find some wool to solve one problem. The wool is easilly located but catching the natural owner, a sheep, is more tricky. The clue on how to do this is quite direct (no prizes for guessing you might need a sheep-dog) but where do you find one? Well, the answer to this is also easy since you can see the dog in the rear garden from the window of one of the rooms, the real problem is getting access to the garden...

Is there anything I didn't like about it?

Well, I do have one or two gripes. Firstly there are the enevitable collection of words used within the description that the games parser simply doesn't know. This is almost to be expected to a certain extent but I did find a few that should really be included within the vocabulary. Also there are some logical slips that I have noticed, however, I would add that none of these would actually detract to any great extent from the enjoyment of the game.

At £8 (disk or microdrive) I would say that MacSporran represents very good value for money and is sure to be a success. I hope Dave and Ann receive the encouragement that they fully deserve from this product and that they will go on to produce other similarly high standard games for the QL. Many thanks for the opportunity to be amongst the first to explore MacSporran.

Steve Sutton

At the time of writing, I've passed onto Dave a list of a dozen things that he might consider changing in the game, including a NOISE OFF option. (Not just for Thor owners either.) So far we haven't heard of anything that stops you finishing the game but there are one or two which are rather misleading. One concerns the back door of the castle - the abbreviated desription omits the exit west; and having cut your way through some grass, it doesn't tell you of the new exit, south.

Richard

by Dave and Ann Watson
Published by CGH Services
Price £8.00 (mdv or disk)

Apart from the obvious "spelling" mistake (or two) and a number of rather peculiar "features" (commonly known as "bugs") I thought that this was rather an entertaining game. The graphics and music certainly add to the "atmosphere" of the adventure and if that is a preview of what can be accomplished with "ACT" then I think that there will be many "good" adventures in the not too distant future.

It reminds me a lot of "Mortville Manor" but is much quicker in re-drawing screens and locations. It is a pity that Dave and Ann didn't spend a little more time in correcting the obvious "bugs". In particular it is possible to increase your score by 10% every time you go to the secret room NE of the Dining Room.

My only other main criticism, for what it is worth, concerns the "slimy passage maze", or rather the lack of it. Once entered it matters little as to what you input, the resulting message is constantly the same and you do not travel anywhere. It seems a shame and a complete waste of time seeing how you can enter the maze from two different locations. A simple maze would suffice.

The humour concerning the monster and how you kill it was very good. The musical death appealed to my sense of humour.

Dave Fullerton

Dave kindly added a useful collection of hints for people playing this adventure but you'll have to wait until next issue for those. Dave also pointed out a list of "bugs" that I've passed on to Dave Watson in case he feels like sorting them out.

I do however think that Dave Fullerton has made an error in his complaint about the "slimy passage maze", as when I was testing this (yes I did test it and report quite a number of bugs for Dave Watson to correct) there were two locations and you could escape from the maze. But you did have to look carefully at the location descriptions and maybe a new bug was introduced in the final version?

Richard

The Talisman by PCBS and Hack by W.Soken

I previously reviewed 'Hack' in QLAF #4. It is from the Quanta library and is very similar to a large extent as The Talisman by PCBS, and so in this review of The Talisman, I'll incorporate a few comparisons between the two games.

Before I start, I must admit that I was a little disappointed with Talisman in that it crashed as soon as I attempted to load it. Nearly ready to send it back, I realised that something must be up with the font routine, and therefore checked the machine code extensions which the program loads. Lo and behold I found out what the problem was - the font extension was 190 bytes long, but the program was trying to load it into a reserved space of only 150 bytes. Once this was altered, the game loaded and ran with no problems and soon had me quite hooked.

To ensure that your copy does not suffer from the same problem, please ensure that the boot file contains the line:

```
a=RESPR(190)  : LBYTES flp1_tal_ext_2, a: CALL a
and not:
a=RESPR(150).....
```

Admittedly it was easy enough to fix, but a new comer to the QL scene would not have been too impressed that a brand new program fails to load first time.

So, onto the game.

When you run the game, the main difference from Hack is obvious straight away, since the program uses user-defined characters for your character and the items around the maze (although the monsters are still unfortunately represented by letters).

Like Hack, the Talisman is essentially based upon a graphical adventure set underground, where, as you move around the screen in the dark, a little of the underground layout is revealed to you step by cautious step. There are lots of different characters for you to choose to represent yourself and the ability to choose what your character carries to begin with help give the game more variation and also helps make it more enjoyable than with Hack.

As you move around the screen, you will find that you encounter different sorts of monsters who want to fight you, unless of course you have opted to go around as a Rogue who is able to disguise himself to look like the local people (in which case everyone will ignore you unless you take any agressive action).

The idea behind the game, as in Hack, is to find an item of jewelry (here the Talisman) which will enable you to escape from the land in which you are trapped and to destroy the evil maniac who has control of the area. However this is not as easy as it might first seem, since besides all of the monsters, there are also a large number of levels for you to move through, and unlike Hack, there is no way back up to a higher level!

There is no little dog to keep you company in the Talisman, but then I only found this an annoyance in Hack, since it would keep getting in the way, and the only way there seemed to get the dog to follow you down to a lower level was to get it to go over a trap door, which caused it to turn against you on the next level! By the way, that is another difference, there do not seem to be any traps in Talisman, which makes the game infinitely more playable.

Unfortunately, the game is slower than Hack for two reasons:

1) It is in QLiberated BASIC (I wonder if TURBO would speed it up?)

2) The whole of a room is not revealed to you when you enter it, unlike Hack, which means that the program has to spend time checking what objects and walls are around your character as you move about.

There is certainly plenty to do in both of these games, especially with the added extra that as you move about the maze and do battle, your experience points increase and allow you to fight better and understand a little more about magic and the maze itself. I must admit that Talisman has got me hooked, it is more addictive than Hack, probably due to the use of user defined graphics. It is worth having a look at, but I think that the £19 asking price is rather excessive.

FINALLY one or two words of warning -

As with Hack, the game is set up to run on a monitor and I do not believe there is a

TV version. But this is not too much of a handicap, since you can see the whole playing area (at least on my TV) except for the far left and right borders, although it does mean that some of the writing is lost.

Also the Talisman also requires expanded memory, since it is nearly 200k in length, so at least 64K expansion will be needed.

Just one or two extra notes -

1) In my version the save game bug noted by John Shaw in QLAF #3 has apparently been fixed, although I am not too sure about the game deleting your last saved position when you have load it into the game. It all adds to the fun I suppose.

2) I have now managed to get Hack to run from disks without having to use FLP_USE mdv. However after using the Editor on Hack, the game is no longer EXECutable (why?) but this can be overcome by using the commands:

```
a=respr(291510):lbytes flp1_hack,a
delete flp1_hack : sexec flp1_hack, a,
291510, 10*1024
```

Rich Mellor

STOP PRESS

MORE NEWS FROM DI-REN

Robin Barker has very kindly sent me a review copy of "The Fugitive" - which is, incidentally, set in Russia, and in which you have to escape to the British Embassy in Poland. He has also sent news of a major new piece of QL Software that Di-Ren will be releasing shortly entitled "Fleet Tactical Command". This a real time 3-D naval strategy game written entirely in machine code. It is designed to be played between 2 computers linked via network, serial or modems (although single player mode is also available) and looks as though it can be played on standard QL's. It comes with charts, navigational aids etc. There will also be a User Club which will issue newsletters, supply new charts etc. Optional extras include a sweatshirt. Cost £49.95. Contact Di-Ren at 43 Davids Road, London SE23 3EP.

The following hints have been sent in by Dave Fullerton who has actually completed this adventure.

1) You need the Note Book and Pencil to record the information.

2) You will need the Police Helmet to make a friend and obtain some vital information.

3) Search the desk to reveal the Police Dog's name.

4) The truncheon is needed to get rid of the Police Dog's cousin. (A ferocious beast.)

5) The keys are needed to save wearing your shoes out and getting "nowhere" fast.

6) When you are checking vehicle registrations on the Police Computer, you have to permutate the possible registration details until you find "a red mini".

7) The plastic bag is needed to "wrap" something.

8) The Police Dog will safely guide you through the woods using the correct "order" and will find something to wrap in plastic.

9) Answer "yes" to Bobby Stratton (provided you have something for examination).

10) Don't enter property without a Search Warrant.

11) Loose floor boards are suspicious and need investigating.

12) Gambling slips are worth a lot.

Dave adds that the game was very enjoyable to play, similar to "Fourth Protocol" on the Speccy. The game proceeds in a logical order, is not as hard as "Sherlock Holmes" but worth playing. The layout of the screen is superb and he liked the idea of knowing exactly what you have, where you are and the exits without "inventory", "look" or trial and error directions.

The Blag2 is now available from CGH Services at £8.00. Blag3 will only be available for the Atari ST, I'm afraid.

Here We Go Hints

HINTS ON REACHING THE FA CUP FINAL

These are the first hints sent in by one of our readers, and who else but our super sleuth, Rich Mellor, who has completed the adventure. Rich says it is rather anti-climactic at the end.

1. Can't get in shed? There's a key lying around in the hall.

2. Want to water the flower? Forget it, you're in too much of a rush to bother about others.

3. Can't get past the large gates? You need a pass!

4. Need some money? Use the bank. 'HELP' will tell you how to operate the cash machine. The card can be found just lying around.

5. Keep getting drowned or stuck in the mud? You need some boots and an umbrella.

6. Can't open the till? You need some oil.

7. Can't get across the toll bridge? You need something from the till.

8. Buried treasure is not always worth much, but it may still be the be all and end all.

9. Fallen tree in the way? A cut here and there might help.

10. Can't operate torch? Use 'SWITCH ON' or 'SWITCH OFF'.

11. Smells affecting you? You need something to keep out those unwanted gases.

12. Want a jumper? It's up to you to use the raw materials.

13. Sheep giving you trouble. Don't ever let go.

14. Need a power source? There's one in the farmhouse.

15. Nothing to knit the jumper with? Well there's an old saying about a haystack.

Rich Mellor

Underground Adventure

1. Light torch as soon as possible.

2. You need to wave a wand to cross chasm.

3. An axe will clear a way past the tree.

4. Stuck on the brink of a deep drop ? Drop rope and then climb it.

5. Drop the dynamite before you light it.

6. The bear will be your friend for life if you FEED BUN to it.

7. Panthers detest bears.

8. What ! Another great chasm ? Drop the plank and be daring.

9. Before you make a ladder, do ensure that the wood is already hewn a bit. (Chop plank.)

10. Pestered by gargoyles ? Knives aren't the only things that can be thrown. Try an axe.

11. Why not go up the incline ? You'll need a ladder.

12. Liquids run through your fingers ? Why not use a bottle.

13. Reflect the light to get past the shimmering curtains.

14. Curtains and mist do not mix.

15. Rusty tracks ? A spot of oil might help.

16. Spiders are nothing to fear. Why not be a brave little hobbit and stab that which frightens you.

17. Flies about ? You need a fly spray.

18. A ghost is not the only type of spirit. Spirits do not mix.

19. Doors giving trouble ? Throw some mortar at it.

20. From door: N,W,W,GET STONE,S,E,E

21. Too big for the crack ? Hold onto the stone and light your way. But anything else will make you pay.

Rich Mellor

THE TALE OF VALAGON RETOLD - 1

A darkness decended over the once fruitful city of Hirin. Its great walls were now in disrepair. The ruler had become a precocious, condesending, patronising old man. Beside him lay a mere sample of the citys riches. Around the palace walls stood peasant shacks. The people moved slowly. Their bodies weak from hunger. The event fortold by the oracle was soon to happen.

Valagon mustered his advisers around him.

"The King has fallen into a pit of selfishness. (Messy!) Taxes are raised and our people starve. No longer will he listen to my warnings. Today is the day that he shall repent his evil. For when the sun begins to sink into the distant lands, I shall start my revolution. Today is a day that shall go down in history. Today I will change our King's misguided self-righteous ways. We can give freedom to our people and all will be equal. But now he calls us to his court and we must go. Until sunset we must still be his servants." There was a sparkle in the mystic's eye as he spoke.

Hurriedly, the ageing advisers moved. Their long flowing robes swept the cold, grey, stone floor. They entered the great inner chamber of the palace. A long wooden table ran the length of the room. (Very energetic these tables!) At its head sat a plump conceited old man, a lavish crown resting upon his head. Food was strewn all around his chair. Half pigs which he'd started and never bothered to finish were beginning to rot under his feet. Distant cries shot up from the palace gates below as the guards fired another volley of arrows into a protesting crowd. Valagon glanced and tried to hide the growing hatrid in him.

"Ah! Valagon, you old piece of dung. You took your time getting here. I see that you've brought your club of wrinklies with you. My, aren't you ugly these days," said the King.
"Sire, I was delayed only slightly and I give you my humble apologies." Valagon gripped his robes. If he made the slightest objection it would mean instant death. At such a critical time he could not risk this.
"Yes....Well I'll have to dock your pay for being late."
"But Sire, I don't get any".
"Oh, what a shame. You'll have to do a forfeit then. Guards! Bring me a chamber pot." A large clay pot was brought in. Inside it lay the obvious contents.
"Come here Valagon." A hesitent Valagon was thrust forward by the two guards.
"Now I'm going to give you a present". The King emptied the chamber pot over the mystic. "Guards! Call in all my subjects. Don"t move an inch Valagon unless you wish to die".

One by one the King's subjects entered, instantly laughing at what met their eyes. Only the court advisers did not.
"Why do you not laugh old men? Do you not like my jest? Now, Valagon, I must tell you something of grave importance. I may need your advice. My spies tell that there is a revolutionary group being formed by members of my court. What do you think I should do?"

Valagon stood silent, unable to answer the question. His heart beat faster. Had the King found out about his plans?
"You do not answer. I wonder why?" Suddenly the King raised his bulbous body, throwing a chicken carcas at his advisers in the process. His eyes were ablaze as he turned to Valagon. " Do you think I'm blind? Do you think I can not hear? My loyal subjects, I shall tell you why he can not answer. It is because he is the leader of this murderous plot. He plans to undermine the hierarchy of Hirin, which can only lead to discord among us. He is an aging fool. No longer will I need his poisoned advice. Guards! Have this creature and his mongrel followers dragged through the streets and placed on large poles via a suitable oriface."
Valagon was dragged from the court but not before vowing vengence.

THE TALE OF VALAGON RETOLD - 2

"I shall return. You have not defeated me yet. Armies are already gathering in this land. They're my armies. All that is needed is my word and your realm will be crushed".
"Be silent or I shall have your tongue removed, even if I have to do it myself" cried the King.

However, so corrupt was the fabled city of Hirin, that the guards holding him were secretly bribed into releasing him. Thus Valagon was rapidly sneaked out of the city.

The sun rested high in the sky. It was midday and there was still time to start the plan. Valagon and his comrades met in the tower on Mount Perethil. There the Orcan Generals waited. Final adjustments were made and red armbands were donned as the sky turned a deep, rich, red. There was an eerie silence in the air as if everyone was holding their breath. The calm before the storm as many would say.

Suddenly trumpets blared. Martial drums rolled their dooming beat across the lands. Thousands of war frenzied orcs poured into the nearest village. Cries of pain, maddened shouts of sadistic joy and horrific sounds of agony came from every side. Only a small shack by the river was left standing in the now desolated village of Elak. The smokey darkness was lit with an orange glow as fires raged all around.

The city of Hirin lay encircled by an army tens of thousands strong. The few soldiers still loyal to the king marched onto the great plain, the worn violet banners of Hirin against the crimson red banners of Valagon's army. For so long had Hirin's army rested on it laurels that it was unprepared for combat. The Hirin army moved in unorganized, slouching ways. Within minutes all opposition to Valagon was crushed. The city's people who revolted inside the walls of Hirin opened the great western gate. The orcs rushed in. The people readied themselves to welcome their liberators. But to Valagon's horror the frenzied orcs were still killing everything in sight. His commands to halt this holocaust were drowned out by confused screams. Orcs rampaged the city killing anything they found, from people to pigeons. Nothing could stop them.

All fell silent once more as a severly beaten King was dragged down the street. Orcs spat, kicked and struck the King as he passed them. Four tall poles were erected in the court yard. Valagon took his revenge. With a large rusty sword he twice dissected the King. The four quarters hung from the poles. Fighting turned to merriment as the orcs began to feast on the bodies of the dead.

Valagon sat on the large throne, planning on how to run his city. The conflict had put a great strain on the treasury. There was many an orcan General to pay. Also the grain stores had been damaged in the battle. Thus the taxes were raised to even higher levels and the few people who were still alive worked harder. The old tyrant had gone but now an even more terrible murderer had gained power. This tyrant would not be so easily removed.

In the demolished village of Elak a young person drifted aimlessly. No one was left, only rubble and corpes. Where could he go? What could he do? All his friends and family had been killed in the fighting or eaten alive. He packed his holdall with what he could find and moved to a forest clearing.

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS LITTLE STORY AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE IN QLAF THEN PLEASE LET ME KNOW. I WRITE FANTASY NOVELS AS A HOBBY AND RICHARD HAS KINDLY ALLOWD ME TO PLACE THEM IN QLAF. ALL I WANT TO KNOW IS DO YOU WANT THEM??? IF YOU DO! THEN TELL RICHARD OR MYSELF.
YOU CAN CONTACT ME BY THE FOLLOWING:-

ROSS."D".BEST. 7 BURTREE AVE, SKELTON, YORK, YO36YT OR TEL YORK 470929

LETTER FROM MICHAEL HARKINS - 1

1A Forrester Place,
Airth,
Falkirk
FK2 8LB
19th April, 1989

Dear Richard,

I enjoyed reading the QLAF 'War Games Special' that you sent me. I particularly enjoyed the 'Beginners Guide To QL Adventuring' which seemed aimed just at my level. I'm not really an adventure fan. I've played 'The Hobbit' more or less to completion but in most other adventures I have not lasted more than a couple of minutes before meeting a dismal end or just a dead-end. Far from playing for hours, I can kill off a character about six times in half- an-hour before getting bored with it. I've tried 'Nemesis' and 'Zkull' on the QL and Level 9's 'Snowball' and 'Hobbit' on the MSX (remember MSX?). I've three other adventures which you have kindly sent me: Valagon has been fun and, time permitting, I'd like to get back to that one. Alan has a sense of humour which makes the game much more entertaining.

I tend to lose interest in adventures when logical actions seem to be impossible (because the programmer cannot forsee all possible outcomes of the interplay of characters and objects). My gripe with Valagon at the moment, for instance, concerns Edmund and the Troll. Edmund has a slingshot but no ammunition. I give him the coin which he refuses to use as ammo when (obviously!) it could be. I tried to get the Troll to kill Edmund but he keeps asking for money. When I try to give the coin I'm told that 'You cannot give a coin'. Illogical, perhaps I can give two coins, supposing I find another (I've no time for that). There seems to be no way for the Troll to be told that Edmund has money, kill him and take the money; and while he is busy doing that I cross the bridge. I've tried dropping the money at his feet, he takes no notice and I can't seem to throw the money to distract the Troll and while he fetches it, cross the bridge. All of these actions should be possible at the very least, although I can understand that killing Edmund might not be a sensible thing to do. The action taken in adventures seem to me to be either the correct ones or illegal. There is no middle ground. Either the programmer thought of it and the action will succeed or you get the usual "I don't understand . . .","You cannot . . ." type messages after a few minutes of which I lose interest.

I was in a similar situation in Nemesis where I was beside a river where tall reeds were growing: trying to swim led to drowning but try as I might I could not find the words to cut down the reeds and make a raft. Now, no doubt, the reeds served some purpose but the natural act of cutting the reeds to make a raft did not seem to be a programmed response. I have friends who like to play D&D and it is this sort of limitation which leads them to pour scorn on computer adventures. I realise that it is not yet possible to recreate D&D on the computer but adventurer programmers should be very careful about objects or situations which they add and which naturally lead to unforeseen complications-even with only three characters and a coin!

What is happening to the QL market? I hear that many adventurers seem to be deserting to the ST/Amiga machines. The QL is excellent for many purposes, one of which I number as adventuring. I am using a QL with 640K of memory and a green screen monitor and the whole thing has cost me no more than £200, including most of the software. My only sizeable expense has been £40 for Digital Precision (DP) 'SuperFORTH', of which more later. I have seen some excellent second-hand expanded QLs for sale, so adventurers could pick up some real bargains. (Of course, someone has to write adventures to fill all that memory!). I prefer text only adventures myself and the speed of the QL is not really a problem - the main determinant of speed in adventures is how fast the person can type and how quickly they can think of something to type. I think that the QL has some life in it yet. It is an excellent hobbiest machine and any fears of its imminent demise and/or replacement by the ST or Amiga are probably unfounded. Users of older machines always tend to fear the worst for their machines future.

LETTER FROM MICHAEL HARKINS - 2

Which brings me to my 'Adventure Writing System'. I intend to write an adventure creation system and am writing to see what interest there might be from QLAF. I know from your columns that DP produce ACT but at £50 that seems to have come to the market too late to be profitable. I have also heard of the 'Quill' and would be grateful for any comments from QLAF readers on either of these two systems.

What I would like to do is develope an adventure system and get QLAF readers to test it out on the public domain and see what improvements they would like. Feedback from users will allow me to develope a better system. Increasing the sophistication of the program will allow more adaptable adventures to be created but will bring increased complexity in its use (and also increase the time in writing it). At the moment, I am looking for a major project to write in FORTH and a text adventure system seems to have presented itself. I am, naturally, using the QL but, no doubt will move on to an ST/Amiga in due course. A text adventure system written in FORTH would be relatively easy to convert to either of these machines. In the public domain on the QL, I can develope a better system, reach a larger audience (on account of the software being free) and also, most importantly, get some feedback from users. For, as I have said, I am not particularly an adventure fan.

I am writing this in the very early stages of writing the adventure sytem in order to ascertain the level of interest in it. I have spent the last three weeks writing FORTH 'words' which BASIC users probably take for granted, like LEFT$, INSTR, MID$, etc. Due to the extensible nature of FORTH these words can be easily added-I just took the BASIC words, gave them the same name in FORTH and made them do the same sort of things. (This is a blessing as the two library books I have on adventure writing are both geared to BASIC on the Amstrad!). I have now only to add words which will be useful in creating adventures!

Never having tried a major project like this in the past it is difficult to estimate how long it will take. However, given that FORTH is fast (to write and to run!) I intend to be well on within 8 weeks. (Is that laughter I hear? Perhaps you know better than I how much work is involved. These things have a tendency to grow and grow, I know.) Anyway, given that there is interest in the project I would like to be finished some time in July.

Incidently, since it is the nature of FORTH to interpret words it is much easier to write an adventure system in FORTH using the FORTH interpreter itself to do the work. If anyone is interested, FORTH is an excellent language (for everything!) for adventure writing. Suffice to say at the moment that if anyone is planning on developing a QL adventure FORTH may be a better bet than 'ACT'. Both require the learning of a new 'language' although ACT will be limited only to adventures whereas FORTH, due to its extensible nature will be able to tackle any problem which the QL can handle.

I could say lots more on the benefits of FORTH but I think that this letter is long enough already. I shall end by saying that if anyone is determined to stick to SuperBASIC that I can sell them a copy of 'Turbo v2.0' for only £50 (half-price), or Metacomco Pascal for £30. All reasonable offers considered. I don't program in BASIC or Pascal any more, so I don't follow the 'edit-compile-link-run-crash-edit' cycle. Be pleased to hear any reaction to this letter.

May the FORTH be with you!
Michael Harkins

P.S. The two books I mentioned are:

"Adventure Games for the Amstrad CPC 464" by A.J. Bradbury
and
"Exploring Adventures on the Amstrad CPC 464" by Peter Gerrard

P.D. UPDATE

Two quite important pieces of news arrived whilst this issue was waiting for the photocopier to arrive. The first concerns Fantasia Adventure and the other The Quill Adventure Writing System.

In a recent issue of Micro Computer Mart - which I can recommend for bargains - there was a plea for QL contacts and software from a C. Sully of Newport, Gwent. The address seemed familiar as it was almost the same as that used by New Horizons Software a few years ago. Anyway I sent off a copy of the CGH Services price list and enquired about New Horizons.

In response Christopher Sully informed that he was, indeed, New Horizons (who some of you may remember were responsible for "Treasure Hunt" - which was sold to Sinclair Research Ltd). Treasure Hunt being on our Public Domain list didn't bother him. What did bother him was that we were distributing "Fantasia Adventure". Why did this bother him, you may ask, as Stephen Belsey, the author, had given his permission in writing? Well, according to Christopher Sully, Stephen sold him the rights to the program and therefore he should have told us that when we enquired. I have written to them both to ascertain the details of the transaction. Christopher is also interested in us distributing other New Horizons software. More news when we have it.

Alan Pemberton has been very busy recently, turning his attention to The Quill Adventure System produced by Gilsoft. Beside letting us have a "cheat" utility, he has now developed a system whereby users of the Quill can incorporate graphics into their adventures. The procedure, basically, is to create your adventure on Quill, run it through the utulity to convert it to SuperBasic, edit the SuperBasic to allow for graphics, then compile the resulting code with Qliberator or Turbo. Alan has included in the package a demo adventure to illustrate how easy it is to use. I wonder if Alan is also giving us a foretaste of his next adventure, this time with a Mediterranean setting? All this lot needs is 2 mdvs or a disk and £2.00 (plus 10% postage etc). More details in the next issue. Looks an easier option than learning to use ACT or doing the whole thing in Superbasic.

Richard

Ye Classical Type Adventure

Public Domain, available from CGH Services, £1.00 plus media & postage

This adventure was produced by using "The Quill" from Gilsoft, (price £20.00 from QL Sub, £16.30 to members) and has kindly been put into the Public Domain by Alan Pemberton.

After playing this game I bought my own "The Quill". I was so motivated by Alan's high quality that I'm going to produce / write out some games. Yes, you may see some games from me. I hope!

Back to the review now. I found this game harder than Valagon. I may be wrong but I think it has more locations as well. The range of vocabulary is very limited and only two word commands can be entered, due to the limitations of The Quill.)

You should find a readme_doc on the tape which I would advise you to read as it contains some useful information.

In the actual game you can go around stealing, sorry taking, 10 treasures from the Fabled Caverns. You can also kill rare species of lizard and show off a bit to young ladies. Alan has clearly put a lot of thought into this one. E.g. swearing will get you somewhere?

Yes that was a hint to those sensible people who have already bought this game. No, it is more than just a game!

Ross T. Best

WANTED

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*****************************************
* WANTED:                               *
* ANY AMATEUR POETS, NOVELISTS OR ARTISTS*
* INTERESTED IN EARNING A BIT OF CASH ? *
* CONTACT:-                             *
* ROSS "D." BEST                        *
* 7 BURTREE AVENUE                      *
* SKELTON                               *
* YORK                                  *
* YO3 6YT                               *
* YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT HIDDEN TALENTS YOU *
* MAY HAVE UNTIL YOU TRY.               *
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PUBLIC DOMAIN AND SHAREWARE NEWS

Thanks to the sterling work of Martin Jarosik and Agnes Waitt, plus some input from myself and Rich Mellor, we now have a considerable amount of the German Public Domain software translated and functioning resonably well.

The following titles are now available (with the title of the German original in brackets):

Maths (Rech): a set of maths routines
Cyborg War (Cyborg War): a text hybrid of "Kingdom" and a 5 country "Risk"
Shire (Berg): a more traditional "Kingdom"
Look and Show (Look&Show): these originate from SPEM in Italy and are used to display graphics
Skat (Skat): a colourful version of this popuular German card game
Calender (Kalendar): some useful calender routines to work out day of week, number of days between two dates and date of Easter
QD Shell (Qshell): Peter Symanski's shell for QDOS - works very nicely
Chess (chess): R.D. Lorenz implementation. Not bad but it does allow invalid moves!
Eliza (Eliza): R.D. Lorenz version of this computer classic
Ship (Schiff): A battleship game, converted from CP/M - plays very well
Vardump: a utility which will list all the variables used by a SuperBasic prog
Munich Draw (md): a simple drawing program
WindowsUM: A utility to allow control over various windows in SuperBasic
Fonts: Creates Bold and Italic fonts on the QL

In addition to these we now have over 15 graphix demo progs on the graphix mdv, complete with menu.

Amongst the general utilities that we now have available are: weiss_utilities, tiny toolkit, ftool and jtool (all toolkits); loader, kill, res, wipe, and flusher (all clever functions); open and font - two utilities from Rich Mellor; cad - a circuit designer prog.

On the adventure utilities side we have 2 Quill adventure "utilities", one for reading Quill adventure files (!) and the other for changing the default windows. Steve Sutton has added some useful routines for the ACT system.

Agnes Waitt has donated a copy of the Usborne adventure "Haunted House", and hopefully Tony Wells may finish off a couple more for us over the Summer.

Alan Pemberton has also been at work at the demos available to ST owners. Once we have an ST down here we'll be making ST PD available via CGH Services, like our PC service. In the meantime, we have two screens of Clipart (as a screen), a version of the Mona Lisa, plus several of Byteback's ST PD art screens have been converted for the QL. Very nice too! We have a PD ST - QL file transfer prog and Alan and Rich Mellor have been working on an ST - QL screen transfer utility for Public Domain, which is now available.

Demo Versions. I have to admit to being a bit slow in following this aspect of things up, but we can, at least offer a demo version of D-Day MkII v2.00. The demo runs in 128K so those of you who so far have been unable to access this program can have a chance to play around with it. See Rich's article in this issue for more details of this upgrade. We also now have a demo version of Revisor available.

Shareware. Nick Ward has kindly decided to make his game, Worm_Germ, offered in the last issue, a Shareware product, where the consumer sends some dosh straight to the programmer if they like the program. So if you'd like an implementation of a classic arcade game (centipede variety), send off for a copy today from CGH Services. Jason Vicinanza has supplied his Personal Finance Manager. As this has a 15 page manual you'll have to register with him to get it - but you'll get upgrades as well.

Newly arrived from Martin Jarosik in Austria is a copy of XLISP. According to Leon Heller, this is quite good, but backspace delete does not work properly. It is, however, the easiest way to investigate LISP and is the same as Public Domain versions on other machines, such as the PC, I believe. There may be memory restrictions on this too.

If you know of any other software that we could add to the Public Domain/Shareware library here at CGH Servcies do drop us a line, preferably including the progs. N.B. we have to be very careful with Microdrive Exchange stuff not to infringe copyright.

Richard