

Q L

ADVENTURERS' FORUM

Issue 1

Edited By Richard Alexander

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Happy reading and happy adventuring.

Richard.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of QL Adventurers' Forum. The first of many, I hope. Each issue will include reviews of new games, hints for those awkward problems, discussion on the various adventure writing systems, how to go about solving adventures, small ads (no pirating please), Uncle Dick's "Agony Column", maps - if they're small enough, ads (if we get any), etc.

We intend to cover text and graphic adventures, arcade adventures, serious simulations (I'm not sure about games sims, we'll see), wargames and any other leisure software that involves more than zapping, dodging and mapping. We welcome any software for review or evaluation that people would like to send in. Please indicate whether the software is a finished production copy or pre-production. We will be establishing a panel of reviewers and evaluators - which if you'd like to join please let me know.

As you may gather from some of the articles it was my original intention to do this as a magazine, but my plans to go on the Enterprise Allowance Scheme fell through, and to be honest, I couldn't see a way of making this a commercial proposition and didn't want to throw away £100's of pounds on printing a magazine that didn't sell. So QLAF will only be available on microdrive and 5¼" disc from me (see below). As for subscriptions, these depend entirely on 1) postage costs, 2) cost of media, 3) whatever I feel will reflect the time and effort I put into putting this all together (not a lot!). If you can supply the media and a stamped addressed envelope (in U.K.) then the sum of 50p will cover my costs. Beyond that I'm not sure, we'll see how we go.

The address for all correspondence, review copies, ads, etc is: RICHARD ALEXANDER, CWM GWEN HALL, PENCADER, DYFED, CYMRU, SA39 9HA.

Another reason why this isn't even photocopied print-out is that neither Peter Chamber's "Front Page Extra v2.00" or the latest issue of Dilwyn Jones "Page designer", excellent as they are in their own way, proved sufficiently adaptable to my requirements, especially regarding using pre-existing text files. Front Page insisted on chucking in spurious line feeds, especially at the start of second columns, whilst Page Designer's very versatility in column width proved a nightmare when trying to get two columns of text on an A4 page, in the right place! As it was, I was taking 2-3 hours to work out an entire page on each of them and with about 24 pages to do, it would have taken a couple of weeks to complete,

working full-time - which I haven't got. I haven't given up on these progs yet (and consider Dilwyn's package superb value at £6.00 from Quanta) and you may well find future QLAF's having supplements in the form of maps, print-outs of loading screens, etc.

If you have difficulties with the microdrives let me know. I've got two QL's now and will check all carts on both of them before sending them out. If anyone reading this can copy onto 3½" disks let me know, I'll put your name and address as the contact point for users with these drives.

Volume 2 of QLAF is already in preparation and will have a review and subsequent correspondence with Javid Systems on "Dark Side of the Moon" - I'd like to know what you think of it - entitled "Dark Side of the Moon"; continuation of the Mordon's Quest clues; clues for Horrorday; Nemesis: a plea for help from Sweden (and probably the editor!); letters from you (hopefully); and perhaps some reviews of the various adventure writing systems. If you've written an adventure you'd like reviewed, or even distributed via QLAF let me know.

Thanks to John Shaw, Linda Callum-Brown and Shane MacGarvey for their contributions and Ian Bruntlett and Martin Hopkins for their help.

Please feel free to distribute these texts near and far, unless explicitly copywrited, and let's be hearing from you.

Richard Alexander

(Editor and Publisher)

NEWS

DECEMBER 1987

DISKS

"Mert", the author of Horrorday, has just completed another adventure "Funfear", which is previewed in this issue and will be reviewed properly in the next. He also has another in the pipe-line, this time a 3 parter called "The Praun". Not surprisingly this latter game is a spoof of "The PRAWN". Again a quick preview in this issue (based on a 75% complete version), to be followed by a full review once it's available commercially. Unlike its predecessors this won't have passwords between each section so you'll be able to roam freely throughout the land, taking your goodies with you, although you will need to have saved a position first from part one to access parts two and three. Like the previous two, this will also be written using the Quill adventure system and "Mert" has promised to write an article or two on using this for those of us considering writing our own adventures. I suspect we might see more of the qualities of the Quill in the Praun, as Martin had been using an early, somewhat underpowered, version of the Quill, unaware that it has been upgraded!

PCBS, who published "Heart of Gern", have three more games due out soon: "The Fate of The Oracle", a follow-up to "Heart"; "Desolation", which is partly a quest and partly an investigation; and "Talisman", a strategic role-playing simulation (only on expanded QLs).

David A. Bayliss, of Samson Software, has mentioned that he has a version of Connect 4, written in Pascal at beta-stage. It searches up to 20-ply and has 10 skill levels. It takes 30 secs per move at SL3 and uses A.I. so will get better the longer you play it, storing results on a microdrive. I must admit that I can't even beat the Connect 4 in the QUANTA library, so I don't know if there will be a market for an even cleverer version. Let David know if you're interested. If it is released we may run a review or article explaining how it is written.

David is also working on a simulation of a Kenyan safari park. "It is novel in that it uses a little beastie called a finite state automaton to handle spatial simulation. This means that the simulation is far more accurate", he says. Hopefully I will be able to get David to explain what a finite state automaton is for the next issue of the magazine.

Richard.

One of the banes of most QL users, if not THE bane, is the unreliability of microdrive cartridges. A popular way around this problem has been to fit disk drives. However it would appear that this has barely penetrated the collective skulls of the QL software publishing world. Result - many frustrated QL users.

QLAF will try to indicate in every review how easy it is to port software over to disk and also, incidentally, whether it is compatible with expanded memory.

Amongst already existing software, I can relate that the following adventures and simulations can be transferred to disk:

Talent: ZKUL
WEST
HORRORDAY
FUNFEAR
NEMESIS
TYPE 22

The first two may cause problems if you have early issues. Send the original back to Talent and ask for a version suitable for disk use. The next two transfer O.K. but due to the way that Quill compiles its files the writer has to specify the default load/save within the database - although this can be flp_ or fdk_ - but once compiled this can't be easily amended. Only solution is for software houses to provide disks for each format (or at least mdv_s with the relevant default). Obviously this would seem to add to costs but in the long term may reduce the numbers of returned mdv_s (especially if all software was available on disk in the first place). And finally NEMESIS and Type 22. Both of these ported over O.K. and will run with a little fiddling with the boot. Type 22 can also use RAM-DISKS which make it so much quicker in operation than reading from mdv_s. Even when they are ported, you'll still need a security copy in mdv2_.

Microdeal: AQUANAUT 471
LANDS OF HAVOC

These can transferred without too much trouble, but you will still need to have the master mdv_ in drive 2. In terms of speed, this is not a great penalty, but it would be very irritating if drive 2 packed-up when everything else was still functioning properly.

Sinclair: CLASSIC ADVENTURE
MORDON'S QUEST

I had no trouble porting these over to disk, and do not require any security mdu_s. A slight amendment to the boot was all that was needed.

Samson: QL KING

No problems whatsoever, copied first time and caused no problems in converting to disk usage. No security check either.

BYTEBACK: QUEST FOR THE DRAGON SWORD

Again no problems on this one, but will need a security copy in mdu1_.

PYRAMIDE: MORTVILLE MANOR

An interesting problem arose here. My FCopy utility for my disk drive couldn't cope with the huge number of files on mdu2_. I needn't have bothered as the game comes with its own efficient clone prog. Backs up much quicker to disk than to mdu_!!! Runs very smoothly thereafter with only a minor amendment to the boot necessary.

JAVID SYSTEMS: DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

I haven't really got it in for these people BUT this four-part adventure needs to be run from reset for each of the four parts. And they take an age to load even from disk. I have written a very simple boot prog for my disk to allow me to autoboot and then choose which phase to play at the touch of a key (well two actually). Having said that the game does work O.K. from disk. You'll need the usual key copy in mdu2. Actually you'll need a different key copy depending on which phase you're playing.

IMPOSSIBLE:

Sinclair: THE PAWN

As far as I can tell it is practically impossible to have this working from disk. Luckily my mdu_s still work, although I've had to re-copy once or twice, but really this is a nightmare. Whilst I'm griping, anyone fancy trying to persuade Magnetic Scrolls to put "Guild of Thieves" out on the QL. Or perhaps someone would like the licence.

If you have further comment to make on this subject, from either the publishers', writers' or users' point of view; in the form of advice or your own experiences please let us know, as this is, I feel, one of the crucial areas for the

continued survival for QL software. It is, of course, a pity that the QL wasn't issued with a disk drive in the first place and there seems little prospect of it having a long term future, but the length of its "active service" will be greatly prolonged if disks are properly supported. Also the Thor will need to be supported, although this has 3½" drives and many of us (i.e. me!) have 5¼" drives. Which again multiplies the problems.

One solution for publishers not wishing to produce these different versions themselves is to authorise/ licence their software to third parties for them to issue in the various formats. Obviously precautions would need to be taken to prevent piracy but I don't believe that would be insurmountable. Indeed I'd quite happily offer my own services, but not until I've cleared it with the publishers.

DO NOT SEND ME ANY DISKS UNTIL YOU HEAR OTHERWISE.

Please note that the above experiences I have had may not be duplicated by you, as most QL software goes through upgrades, and it is quite possible that the problems (or lack of them) may not apply to the versions currently available or which you bought some time ago. Also I am not the world's best Superbasic programmer, so you may find conversions either than me, especially if you have a prog or toolkit that will automatically change a particular string in a program.

Richard.

REVIEW

Horrorday

This is a likeable adventure, featuring a somewhat inebriated dwarf, Dennis, and is, in a way, the QL's answer to the Boggit and other spoof adventures. In fact spoof adventures are becoming a genre in their own right. It loads in two parts and you can't start part two until you know the password. Unlike some software this transfers to disk very easily as there are only 3 files to contend with, and it also seems tolerant of added memory (512K in my case). As there are so few files one doesn't have to go searching through the program looking for possible changes to make. (Although as the game is Quilled there doesn't seem to be anyway of saving positions to disk, only mdv_.)

It's a relatively simple adventure to play, without too much in the way of difficult vocabulary or inter-action with other characters. I have yet to discover any graphics, apart from the colourful screen. Thanks to Martin Hopkins, the author, I've managed to get to the end of part one. Some of the puzzles are rather awkward - but then again this isn't a "serious" adventure. (According to Martin, Talent had an irate letter from an adventurer who had completed the game in two days and was quite upset at how easy it was. You just can't please some people!) If you're stuck in this one I've put a few clues in the Hints Columns. Mapping should not provide any problems, as even going up and down won't require 3-D mapping. I haven't encountered any bugs (at least I don't think so - I'm not too happy about doors and heavy metal grills that are described but which aren't there, if you see what I mean! Also Esmerelda is sometimes called Emerald. Apparently these bugs should not be in the production copies from Talent, neither should Martin's name and address. If you've got a copy with these bugs return it and demand a proper copy. Wake up, Talent!)

Having said all that I can recommend this adventure, and look forward to making further progress with it. The problems are not so silly as one might expect, although a degree of lateral thinking comes in handy. Suffice to say without Martin's help I'd still be floundering around in part one, instead of floundering around in part two. And if you can help in solving this adventure we'd all like to hear from you. Or if we're very lucky Martin will write in with the solution - but don't worry we won't print it all - just use it to provide those tantalising hints that annoy all adventurers.

Richard.

Heart of Gern

Let me say before I start to tell you about the theme of this adventure, that it is well produced, professional and most absorbing. So much so, that I found it very difficult to stop thinking about it, even when I wasn't at the keyboard. You see, the clever part is that a lot of the puzzles can be taken away to think about. It's not one of those programs where you go round and round picking up and dropping things. It is a continuous journey, with many obstacles in the form of problems to overcome ... and there's not much going back. (Hidden clue there!)

The whole thing comes in a presentation pack with the instructions for loading and copying fully explained for the learner. In addition there is a map and glossary of terms. (The scenario is set in the times of "Runes, Spirit Wolves and Seers", you see.) There is also a very important prologue, given in the form of a comic strip. It is absolutely essential that this is read (three times to be certain) as you will not even set off on your quest unless you pick up your first clue from the text.

The Quest I mentioned is simple enough. You just have to find "The Heart of Gern" (Gern being an evil spirit) which has been encased in a jewel and placed in a secret vault somewhere in a mountain. Your mission is to get it before the "Brotherhood" (some pretty nasty characters!!). Clues? Well the authors give you some in the form of a cryptic rhyme as envisaged by Doral the Seer, but the best I think I can give you, is that the Composer has a B.Sc.! So you are up against some pretty tough opposition.

All the usual features are there, i.e. saving and loading of position and single keystroke movements, so that there is little frustration in the actual playing. The solving, though, is another matter. The scenes are described beautifully and fully. When you die your end comes in the most picturesque and gruesome fashion! (And that happens pretty frequently to those who are less than meticulous in their reasoning and calculation.)

I have now, sadly, reached the end and recovered the "Heart". Sadly, because it has been such an enjoyable journey, with a real sense of satisfaction at the final curtain. But low ... What is that message? ... P.C.B.S. who have produced this have brought out a sequel ... "The Fate of the Oracle" ... I can tell you, I shall be amongst the first to buy it !!!

John Shaw.

P R E V I E W

Funfair

Although this has yet to be released, I understand that TK Software will be bringing this out on their Talent+ label. I have written a review of this, the second episode in the Dennis the Dwarf saga, based on a pre-production copy. This time the scene is a circus, rather than a Hammer film-set, slightly reminiscent of the old Spectrum adventure "Circus" - although this should not be thought of as a direct spoof of that title.

This is another two part text adventure, which runs happily from disk, coming, like Horrorday, with its own boot prog that allows you to choose which part you want to play. The vocabulary is O.K. so far, although it is always difficult to say until one has solved all the adventure, as it can sometimes be the case that puzzles and interaction with other characters is easier than one realises if you haven't sorted out the way to do it.

Unlike the earlier adventure, Dennis is this time accompanied by his friend, 'Enry Elf, who apparently has wings. Exploring the funfair is quite straight-forward, allowing one to be lulled into a false sense of security, until one stumbles upon the off-duty Freaks. However this is not a sensible adventure - although I think the reviewer in QL World was overstating it when recommending leaving one's brains behind when playing this - as brains will indeed be required to solve it, especially if you haven't been sent a complete solution and map to help review it. Like Mert's earlier game this looks like being sensible geographically, and the problems are "realistic" even if some of the objects are a little silly. Still when was the last time you saw a dwarf (i.e. a mythological creature, not a person of diminished stature) and an elf walking round a funfair?

As this game has yet to be released I won't be giving any hints in this issue, especially as I have yet to finish it. However, I can recommend this game to all QL adventurers, unless they are offended by the idea of an elf throwing up on the Big Wheel.

If, by any chance, you complete this before the third issue of this magazine comes out, I'd like to see any maps you draw, and if you find a way of getting past the trapdoor in the Crazy House I'd appreciate it. (I wonder why the three foot bath plug doesn't cover it?)

Richard.

L E T T E R

Zkul

One of the first letters I received when I had a letter published in Sinclair QL World came from Linda Cullum-Brown, asking for help in ZKUL, the adventure from Talent. I shall reprint her first letter, below and then select from her second letter some hints - which will help those of us who haven't even got as far as Linda has. I would reproduce a map of Zkul, but as Talent say it has a huge map, which to reproduce clearly would take nearly the whole mdv_. To make matters worse, the game plays differently each time you play it, relocating some of the objects and re-doing the maze. If you can assist Linda and the rest of us, please write to the usual address.

"My problems are manifold! I can't solve the first maze, NE of the long hall. Once my husband found a crown and some paraffin in there, but I never have. (I've found some tongs left by one of the dwarves - ed.) Naturally there is only so far you can go on one load of paraffin and a box of matches. I am able to get through the maze if necessary.

Also, although I can take the lead bars and the tongs to the tank of green liquid, I can't seem to get the right commands to put the lead into the tank with the tongs to turn them into gold, and then get them out again.

My best score was 388. I haven't found: Paraffin, Jewelled Crown, Diamonds, Emerald Amulet; and as far as I know, haven't visited: Bottom Ledge, Chasm Bottom, Heart of Mountain, Second Maze (God forbid), City, Scroll Room."

Linda kindly enclosed her map but unfortunately it isn't quite clear enough to be reproduced, so I'm afraid you'll all have to find your own way around!

If you can help Linda, and myself, on this one, or, having read the hints, still need help getting as far as we have, then shoot us a letter at QLAF. Please hurry as Linda and her hubby are emigrating to Australia early in the new year and would appreciate an answer a.s.a.p.

Richard.

HINTS

Zkul

O.K. as promised in the comment on Linda's letter, I've extracted some clues for those adventurers who are struggling with the early stages of ZKUL. Perhaps once you've got this far you'll be able to help our progress further.

We'll assume that you've mapped out the forest to the south of the mountain, and found the hut. It helps to do this as you'll be coming in and out of the caves quite frequently. Also it pays to visit the river to re-fill your bottle and I've even found some food there on occasion. Shame it was poisoned.

Once you've pushed your way into the cave you pick up the lamp and can light it with your matches. Next you should find the rope, although if you're playing this from scratch you may prefer to spend the first couple of lives just roaming around, mapping. Another useful object to locate is the crystal bottle (to re-fill with water) and this is to your west as you enter. The rope has two possible locations: one is above the cave mouth in one of the eyes, the other is beyond the tapestry (why do so many adventures have tapestries in them?). Whilst exploring up in the Zkul, you should find a mirror, which you'll need later on. Next, (although I advise collecting all the bits and pieces you come across, as and when you find them - and getting them out), you have to tie your rope to the trisk, and then you should have access to a digging instrument. From here you can either return up the rope or unlock the pool-room door, which'll make life a little easier, later on.

From the pool-room you can descend to the Pentangle and here get the cossat, which requires some back-speak to get it and swiftness to avoid a crushing experience. From the southern room of the Pentangle you should now go up, and utilise your shovel enough times to uncover a useful exit and the way forward to the next stage of the adventure.

Once you can get in and out again without any trouble, and have taken the advice of the wanderer who will tell you what word to use to get you to the exit, you'll need an axe that comes whizzing past you to get beyond the drawbridge. To the north east of the long hall lies the first maze - and the best of luck to you. I'd recommend saving before entering the maze. You'll need plenty of food and water and paraffin. Only trouble - you first have to find it! I'd make a rapid exit if I

found it and place it near the exit so as to be easily accessible.

However if you go to the east you should come to the Colossal Cave. Now if you've had any treasure stolen from you it'll be in a room NNW from here (sneaky direction!). To the west there's a way further into the caves and to get over the rope bridge you'll need to N, jump N, step N and the same to come back again, using S instead of N. Beyond the bridge you should find an Ock, which is a paddle (although we haven't found a use for it yet!). Up from the oval room you should encounter a horn, which'll get you lots of points, but if you blow it a wizard takes it away.

Returning over the rope bridge carry straight on and up to a network of rooms, down from which is the torture chamber. Here you will need the ivory mirror to defeat Medusa. If you explore further down here you should come across the little tree which is very sensitive to heat; so "toobee" quickly.

Well that's as far as Linda got and even with her map and notes I've usually run out of paraffin in the maze before getting any further. Whilst you're in the caves you can do battle with the denizens and, provided you're strong enough, can defeat them, getting useful treasure and weapons.

I haven't given a "guided tour" of the caves as much of it is straight forward. If you've got any more problems in the adventure so far, drop us a line and we'd be especially pleased to hear of any maps of the mazes and how to reach the places Linda mentioned in her letter, that she hadn't come across.

Richard.

REVIEW

QL King

Tucked away in the back of Sinclair QL World one month I saw an advert for this program. As it seemed reasonably priced I sent off for it and was pleasantly surprised to find on receiving it not just a mdv_ cart, but also a neat 7 page manual. So far so good. What is it?

King is another variation on the "kingdom" theme in which you have to juggle your resources, feed your serfs, gather grain but most importantly screw as much money out of everyone as you can whilst keeping them fed and happy; i.e. the classic feudal set-up. However this is a more advanced version in two major ways: 1) not only do you start out as a knight and have to make your way up, through Marquis, Earl, Baron, Duke, Prince to King but the program allows for several players to take part and do battle with each other for land; and 2) There are more options than simply getting land and taxing everyone - you can pay to set-up markets, craft centres, castles, armouries etc. All in all this makes for a much more interesting game and one that will hold your attention until you become King or are demoted to the peasantry.

Obviously the world of computer simulations is not one that can encompass everything and there are certain factors of the medieval economy that King does omit. For example, one of the major factors by which the rich got richer (and the poor got robbed) was by marrying into wealthier families. It would have been a nice touch - although none too easy to "realistically" program - to allow for the marriage to heiresses (the program does not cater for dowagers or widows or any women come to that!). Another factor by which the nobility gained power was through holding office - a system by which one could hold office and make even more money - or worse, subsidize the king - this would be quite interesting too. Not to mention foreign wars and crusades. In many ways the persona you inhabit in this game is very much a proto-capitalist one, where buying and selling is all important, with little regard for prestige and holy favour. Plagues, another endemic feature of the period (14th century), are handled indirectly by having rats eating your grain stores and thus causing serfs to leave or die.

Within the game play itself, the first 30 - 50 years are the most interesting as one struggles to maintain a balance between food and mouths, but once you get the balance right (investing in craft

centres is the way to make money) your fortunes suddenly escalate. In the most recent game I played, for example, it took 49 years to become a Marquis, then another 13 to become an Earl, another 6 to achieve Baron, another 10 to become a Duke and arrived at Prince in 1384. However three years later I hit the final barrier - no I didn't die - you live forever in this game - and no I didn't become King - I simply had accumulated so much money that the QL couldn't handle it. In this game once your fortunes start multiplying they increase exponentially.

Other minor grumbles (and don't let these put you off buying it!) include having ten times as many merchants - due to paying out for 100 craft centres at a time near the end - than I had serfs. Indeed on previous occasions I've virtually killed off all the serfs but still succeeded through having so many soldiers and merchants. I presume there's a moral there somewhere. Also to use up money I bought lots of soldiers - they become very cheap when you're wealthy - only to have them go off and get themselves killed on unauthorised raids. On the other hand if you don't have soldiers other people can steal your land.

I haven't had the opportunity to properly test the multi-player option on this game. You can play several people at the same time but this takes the element of unpredictability and interaction out of it. I'd be glad to hear from anyone who has got some friends together and played this.

Anyway if you want a copy they were available from Samson Software, c/o H.C. Billington, Neunham College, Cambridge. They were also interested in hearing from other writers doing simulations and when I get round to my Wars of the Roses simulation they can have it.

Richard.

HINTS

The Pawn

This is probably one of the oldest QL adventures still available (beside the Talent ones), and few people have yet successfully completed it without other people's assistance. Luckily for us, Spectrum User has been printing the full solution and I have also been sent Neil P. McCulloch's copious notes culled from the Twilightzone Bulletin Board by James Methley, to whom thanks. However I shan't be reprinting the full solution as I feel it would spoil it for those of us still struggling with it. Also most of the fun with The Pawn comes from doing the "wrong" thing as the program is very wittily written. However, below are a selection of useful hints for those still trying to solve the game.

The first and very important thing to do is when you meet Kronos. Do not "Say to Kronos" tell me about the wristband" as he just flies off. Instead "ask Kronos ..." as this produces your way of eliminating the adventurer. Looks like a bug to me, as they amount to the same thing - but adventure writers are known sadists and pedants and will claim that the subtle difference is quite legitimate. Oh yes, do locate the item you're carrying about your person before seeing Kronos.

After that, you can take the note to the guards and visit the shed. I haven't found a use for the pot plant yet, as I haven't found a suitable pipe! (Actually you'll need it to do a little light gardening.) Anyway you should know about the guru and the wristband, but you can avoid all the hassle with the hoe, the rake and the shirt by simply climbing the guru. (Another bug methinks - possibly left in from development stage?) Mind you if you want full points then you'll need the hoe and the rake... Having returned with what the guru wants (Q: anyone found a use for the rice yet? A: you can feed the alchemists with it instead of the rations if you like) have a look in that tree stump in the forest and remember what colours make up the "colour" white.

Now you can visit the depths of the tree house - providing you do so in some privacy! Way underground you should find the requisites for getting some "lumps". Here a degree of patience is required. Also remember how lift doors are opened in "real" life. The lumps will need a little digging up, so take a little digger.

Right, you can now purchase some goodies from Honest John, (you did look under the cushion and

in the fountain, didn't you?). Whatever you do, don't just give John the "money" and then expect him to cough up something useful. "Buy...with..." is the required way of doing business with "Honest John". What to buy - well, if you've already done some exploring in the mountain you should know what the porter wants, if not you'll have to find out! Another hint - it's cheaper to strip the adventurer than shell out for another suit.

O.K., we can now venture forth into the colder regions, using the colours again to get past the snowman. Inside the tower is the princess. Now here one realises that if you let the adventurer rescue her, and you'll meet him carrying her on horseback if he does, that he must have got the blue key from under the pedestal and that it vanishes when you open the door to the princess's room. Therefore get to the adventurer before he gets to the pedestal or you'll be disenfranchised. To get the blue key means dropping everything but if you have the horse with you you can avoid breakages by putting everything on the horse. Alternatively leave voting until after you've done everything else. However check the tower, as those boots will come in handy. The prism does to what prisms usually do, which is handy if you've got your colours muddled up.

A visit to the caves is now called for, and that "white" serves the same purpose as in the tree. Give to the alchemists what they ask for - but not all at once as they are an untrustworthy lot. Casting a spell over the tomes reveals some useful information and then it's over the rickety bridge. A cupboard will reveal a handy place to hang the rope from. Avoid the dragon at this stage and again use a little patience when confronted by the porter - who appreciates a drop of the hard stuff. Jerry Lee also likes a tipple!

Right, I'm going to leave you there - partly because, like in Mordon's Quest, I don't want to give the game away in one go (so you'll have to buy the next issue) and partly because haven't quite finished off the blessed game myself yet.

If you still can't get this far either sneak a look at the September, October and November Sinclair Users or write in with your specific problem to our "Agony Column" where "Uncle Dick" will try and answer your queries without being too patronising!

Richard.

REVIEW

Type 22

One of the latest pieces of software for the QL, is Type 22, published by Talent, a naval warfare simulation, based around the Royal Navy's Type 22 class frigates. These are quite versatile warships, carrying Exocet (surface - surface missiles), Sea-Wolf (surface - air missiles), Mk32 Torpedoes, and a Lynx helicopter, itself armed with Tigerfish torpedoes, carrying sonar and able to guide Exocet over the horizon. They seem to lack any conventional weaponry - a shortcoming that the Falklands' War revealed with great loss of life, and which one hopes the Admiralty will correct if they have not done so already. Perhaps the designer of the game thought them irrelevant.

The game converts to disk very easily and can utilise RAM disk very effectively. Indeed I'd say that RAM disk is essential. The manual is very informative and covers all that one needs to know about the game including extensive notes on the Soviet aircraft and warships that are relentlessly thrown against one. Luckily one can freeze the game whilst playing it to consult these notes and the ship also has on-board data files. The problem with accessing these lies in the time it takes to zero in on the "target", time which is at a premium due to the scale of attacks one faces.

Although I dare say that one can become quite expert at this game, I found it a frustrating experience. Perhaps this is indicative of the "real life" situation, as these ships are not designed to single handedly take on large numbers of enemy units and planes. Suffice to say that I got sunk quite rapidly on several occasions, once within a few minutes by three planes that launched missiles outside Sea-Wolf range simultaneously whilst I was being torpedoed and bombed.

Whilst I appreciate that game designers are always looking towards making their games exciting to play and not too easy, I feel this game has one doing too much at one time, having as one does, to play the role of captain, radar operator, missile aimer, torpedo aimer, Lynx controller, etc. Not only this but one has to keep a track (pun not intended) of incoming torpedoes when the telex says they're 17kms away on a particular bearing, with the implication that you face away from them and run (some hope).

I tried this game with both keyboard and joystick control and feel that it's best left to individual players to decide which of the various controls

are used with these devices, as some are somewhat sticky on keyboard and others awkward on joystick. The actual mechanics of the game are fairly quickly mastered, especially if one uses the training mode. This is great fun as one is invulnerable to all incoming missiles etc. The only constraint here is that one's supply of torpedoes is so limited. Given that this is one's most effective long-range weapon, having only 8 is disappointing, as it is so easy to use them up against surface targets only to find oneself surrounded by submarines that one can't sink. Naturally in the "real life" game I never get as far as seeing the subs, or even, sometimes within range of any of the surface craft.

As for hints and tips for playing, well I'd like to hear from people who've mastered it. My best advice is to run like hell away from surface craft, keep chaff up whenever you find you're trying to hit planes that are too high, stay with the Sea Wolf screen as default, send the Lynx low towards the enemy surface craft, dipping sonar on the way, and pray that you don't have to face a situation like this for real!

Type 22 will not appeal to arcade or adventure freaks, but those people who like a fast moving strategy game, with plenty to keep them occupied, will find this a compelling game. Probably one to try out first before you buy it, but having said that, how does one do that unless you can get along to Microfairs, as most QL software is bought mail order. The other alternative is to keep your eyes peeled for the bargains in Micro Computer Mart.

Richard.

FEATURE

WARGAMES

As someone who enjoys playing wargames - a hang over from a mis-spent adolescence, when large-scale wargames were a preferable alternative to rugging on winter afternoons - I am really surprised at the lack of decent and cheap wargames on the QL. As far as I can tell there has only been two released: D-Day by Games Workshop and War in the East by Sharps in the U.S.A. Of which the former was withdrawn from the market-place soon after release, and the latter got some rather unfavourable reviews and is very expensive (£39.00 for the complete set).

So, I'd like to set a challenge to our readers: come up with a workable wargame for the QL. The basic algorithms have been discussed in several articles in the Sinclair and other magazines and the QL can support real and virtual windows (see the progs in the QUANTA library, which can allow large maps to be drawn up). The Spectrum, with its limited facilities supports some excellent games, especially those by R. Smith: Vulcan, Desert Rats and Arnhem; so the possibilities for the QL - with expanded memory and disks - should be much greater. If you don't feel up to doing it all by yourself, I'm sure that a co-operative effort isn't beyond our collective capabilities - someone to do the graphics, another to do the historical research, another to work out the program and so on.

If you are interested, and I am for one, please write stating your preference for role, period etc and we'll get the show on the road. In case anyone thinks that wargames, of necessity, glorify war and killing, and that they shouldn't be made, I'd just like to say that I'm a anti-militarist and that I find that playing war-games gives one an insight into the military mind.

Also I'd be interested to hear from anyone with a copy of either of the two games mentioned above who would like to write a review, or hints on playing, either of them or who would like to sell me a copy (no pirating please).

Richard.

P.S. I haven't mentioned "Warship", a military strategy game from Complex Data Systems due to three factors: 1) they haven't sent me a review copy and nobody who has contacted me so far has a copy; 2) from the appalling review in Sinclair QL World I am loathe to spend my £20.00 on the game; 3) I couldn't tell from the review or the ads whether it qualifies as a wargame or is more like an enhanced version of "Risk". Elucidation welcomed !!!

HINTS

Caveman

By SHANE MCGARVEY

THERE must be more profitable ways of spending your time than wandering around a cave - but they're not half as much fun! There have been times, though, when I wished my computer-controlled adventurer was safely tucked up in bed instead of trying to get the better of a wizard (in The Pawn), a man-eating plant (in Mordon's Quest) or an angry snake (in the QL-updated Classic Adventure).

I must confess that to date I have not been very successful with The Pawn and have only scratched the surface of Mordon's Quest. But I have managed just under half (100 points out of 210) of Classic Adventure. Of course, telling you exactly HOW I got that far would spoil the fun for you - but a few pointers in the right direction; well, that's a different matter altogether, isn't it?

The first obstacle I came across was that aforementioned aroused snake (a hyper-viper?) which is lying in wait to put the bite on unwary victims. Now all the best adventurers know that snakes don't like birds - but this one has developed a taste for them and will certainly eat yours unless you can calm him down a bit first. So keep your bird safe in his/her cage (this is an equal opportunities adventure) and THINK. Some sort of musical interlude is needed here to put a brake on the snake.

The one object I've used more than most is the bottle of water - although not always with the H2O in it. It certainly came in useful when I found a pathetic little plant whimpering for water. High above the plant is a hole in the wall. Well, what's good for Jack and the Beanstalk is good enough for me, so here goes.... But of course, one bottle is not enough. The trouble is that the bottle is now empty. Now where did I see some water?

I finally made it through the hole in the wall, only to be confronted by a rusty door that wouldn't open, another blocked passage (which I still can't penetrate) some writing on the wall (careful with that) and (success) some more treasure in the shape of a nest of golden eggs. Unless you have a can of WD40 in your pocket, you are going to have to think of something else to get that door open. But there wouldn't be much point in exploring a cave unless everything you need is reasonably near at hand. Oh well, back to the two-pit room!

It would be too easy if all you had to do was wander around picking up treasure to 'win' the

game. The snake guards it, the door guards it and the bottomless chasm guards it too. But this is a magic cave and could that rod with a rusty star just be a magic wand? Another treasure guardian is a clam (or oyster) which may reveal its secrets if only you can get it open. But unless you get the door open you won't get the clam open either.

Which just about brings me to my limit. This is where I'm stuck too. I can't make any headway with the shadowy figure across the pit and I can't make any progress through the dark corridor past the emerald. And if you have managed to unblock any of the blocked passages, I'd be grateful to know about it. But here are two absolute giveaways. Find the 'Plugh' room when you have any treasure worth taking back to base and try saying it. You'll be surprised at the result. Saying "Y2" can get you out of trouble if you've gone the wrong way in the 'Plugh' room. I still haven't found a use for the magic word XYZY - or is it a code?

Finally, draw a map as you go along - it will help you find your way around the trouble spots. And do save your game regularly, especially when you're not sure what the outcome of a particular action might be.

Happy adventuring.....

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Mordon's Quest

This adventure is one of the two in the Sinclair Classic Adventures pack. It is an identical implementation of the Melbourne House version for the Spectrum. So, luckily, we can apply the clues and solutions for that to the QL version. If anybody knows of any differences - please let me know.

It isn't the policy of QL Adventurers' Forum to print complete solutions to any adventure, but rather to print hints and clues to solving the game. So don't expect a complete solution to Mordon's Quest here. For those of you who find that even with the following tips (all tested on the QL I hasten to add) you still get stuck in the game, a complete solution was printed in recent editions of Sinclair User.

Well, as anyone who has played Mordon's Quest knows, there are some pretty illogical problems set, especially in the first section, almost as if the writers were deliberately trying to put people off. Before you can get started on the adventure proper, beyond the fog, you will need to have a look at the bathroom from the outside, because if you fail to do that Mordon doesn't appear. (Why I don't know!). And I may as well tell you now that the newspaper is needed later on, much later on.

Anyway assuming you can make your way into the jungle you'll very soon come across some quicksand, with the usual properties. To get past this it needs blanket coverage, and I don't mean the newspaper! Beyond this, gathering all the bits and pieces laying around, you'll eventually come to two "dead ends": the cannibalistic pygmy and the carnivorous plant. Now, a moment's reflection should lead to the conclusion that you need to feed the former to the latter, and to do so means killing the little chap. Well you should have in your hands the wherewithal, and all you need do is make the obvious instrument and use it.

Beyond this little problem lies, or rather stands a riddler in a loin-cloth. To answer his question you need to have drawn a pretty accurate map of the jungle, and to do that you need to go exploring further. Nothing too difficult left in this section, but if your hands are getting too full you have to transport the goodies back to the house. Here, I'm reliably informed, we have a wee bug: the game transports the machine parts, not to the house but to limbo, meaning that you can't actually finish this adventure!!! Having explored everywhere in this section, and mapped it (and could those lakes be eyes, and the carnivorous plant a mouth?) make your way to the altar with the king of the jungle and sacrifice it there.

This allows access beyond the waterfall into the cylinder and some other chambers. Explore the chambers as far as you can, heeding well the notice, and send back the goodies. Return to the cylinder where you can answer the phone, again taking note of the answer when you Dial 1611. (Again I'm none to clear why - but it works!). All that remains is to activate the plate and step out into a new world, or perhaps an old one - as there are 4 different worlds to investigate, and you'll need some of the objects in one to solve a problem in another.

Well I don't want to give away too much in this first article, hopefully this will have helped you enough to return to the game if you didn't finish it last time. And if you have finished it - well you can always send us your name and we can let other people contact you for more personal assistance.

Richard
(with just a little help from Sinclair User 8/87)

REVIEW

Quest for the Dragonsword

This is a brand new adventure, issued by Byteback, the well-known mail order firm. The three authors hail from Newark, Nottinghamshire, which might account for their warped sense of humour. The scenario for the adventure is, to say the least, juvenile. The hero of the quest is called Claire but is male. Ha Ha Ha. He is sent on his quest by Kikiz Eddin. Ho Ho Ho. The brave dragonslayer of yore is Sir Lilipoo. He He He. Pathetic! Why not have a female protagonist instead of a male with a female name. And why the gratuitous insult to gay men? Not an auspicious start to the adventure.

Fortunately the adventure itself isn't so bad. Indeed I'd say it plays very nicely. There's no problem getting it to run from disk, although you will need the original in mdv1_ and copes with both normal and expanded memory. The loading screen is quite attractive and the loading time, from both disk and microdrive is quick. All in all a welcoming piece of software.

As for the adventure itself, it's a very easy one to get started on. The input is standard, as far as I can tell, and quick. And if I'm not mistaken is QUILL generated. There are no graphics, again as far as I have got, but until Gilsoft issue a version of the QUILL with that capability, there's not a lot we can do about that. Mapping is relatively straight forward, but do leave plenty of room around the start locations, and it's probably best to map each section seperately. The guided tour of the mine appears to be circular, but doesn't take in all the interesting locations. My advice would be to follow it, mapping away, until you've got the basic layout, then go round following up the routes the tour misses. There's a handy supply of goodies ready for the taking within a move or two of the start, which'll help most adventurers on their way, although where you're going to use them is going to take a while to sort out.

One nice feature is that there is a language puzzle, which is easy to solve, and which lets you know what the wand is for. The missile scroll can only be used the once and this may apply to other magic items, so be careful how you use them. You're usually warned of sudden death situations, and, who knows, there may be ways of avoiding death in those locations too! Don't expect too much in the way of help though, this is given "once in a blue moon". Location descriptions are to the point, and repeated in full each time you

visit a place. No prizes for literature here, but they do their job efficiently, and give one a hint of atmosphere.

I'm a long way from completing this, I haven't found any bits of the sword or the shield yet, and where the Dragon-Witch is, I haven't the foggiest. This adventure must have a large number of locations, as I've visited 60 so far, in an hour's playing time, and there's plenty more leads to follow up. The adventure loads in one go, unlike earlier QUILL manifestations, which, due to a bug in the QUILL, could only cope with a 32K database. So, no passwords or other fuss. Saving and loading would appear to be straight forward, and allows one to specify the file name of the saved position. This is a great improvement on those adventures which either give you a number (eg Pawn), or automatically generate a name which you can't alter, thus having only one saved position per cart or disk, (eg Mortville Manor, Dark Side of the Moon).

Despite my comments on the scenario, I think this adventure will appeal to most mainstream adventurers. The humour isn't overwhelming, the geography is believable and the problems are not too easy! The vocabulary seems adequate for the job, i.e. better than most!, allowing one to get on with the game and not having to spend ages trying to find the right word. (Which just shows how different reviewers can see a piece of software - Sinclair QL World didn't think much of the vocabulary, a mere 200 words. Mind you I haven't found a way of talking to other characters yet either !)

Look forward to some hints and clues in the next issue of QLAF. If you solve this let us know, it's unlikely that I'll solve this before the next issue unaided. (Some people would say that I'm unlikely to solve ANY adventure unaided!!). For starters, how do you get out of the church once the door slams (and why can't you pull the ropes ?), a good antidote to rats would be handy and is there any benefit from wandering around the minefield if you're not feeling suicidal ?

Richard.

REVIEW

Mortville Manor

I have recently taken advantage of the offer in Sinclair QL World to purchase Mortville Manor from Pyramide at the bargain price of £10.00. Although this has been on the market for some considerable time I had previously been put off buying it due to both the price and the nature of the programme. However having got the carts and transferred them to disk (copying to mdv_ takes about an hour due to the number (90) of files on the second cart ! Disk is very quick by comparison and very easy to do.) the game worked with both expanded and normal size memories.

Mortville Manor is not a text adventure, neither is it an illustrated adventure, but uses the graphic screens - incidentally very nicely done - as enormous icons, allowing one to point to objects that one wishes to manipulate. But to manipulate something you first have to type in the requisite command. Pyramide give a list of the necessary verbs, but only with their initial letters. Part of the fun of this game is to work out what all the commands are, and if anyone has done so I'm sure that other readers of QL Adventurers' Forum would like to see a complete list. Likewise when one wants to talk to other characters one has to use the "talk" command and then give the subject of the conversation. Here a list is given, but some of the entries are spurious.

Well, what it's all about. You play the part of Jerome Lange, (no jokes about which part please) private eye, and you have been called to the Manor to by Julia, an old friend, who appears to be in desperate straits. Which is an understatement, as she has died by the time you arrive. What follows has echoes of the Sherlock Holmes game on the Spectrum, in which one has to interrogate the suspects, find motives etc. The game plays quite well, but, inevitably, there are quibbles including the lack of a "drop" command - although you can "put" provided you've got something in your hand, which is not the same as having it in your possession. I also found myself on occasion going round in circles trying to get out of a particular situation and was once locked out of the programme altogether. (Of course they may not necessarily be the fault of the game itself!)

I haven't really got far enough into the game to be able to give any specific clues, indeed I did so badly I was told to pack my bags by Max, the servant, half way through the second day, due to

my lack of discretion. One little problem that I've found lies in the fact that the other people in the room with you are given at the top of the screen, in monitor mode, which means those of us with T.V.s have problems reading the names, or even realising that anyone's there.

So, all you budding detectives, let's be having hints and clues on how to solve this mystery. And a good place to start would be a list of all the commands that are understood by the game, what to ask the various characters, when to visit the various locations. This looks like being a complicated solution, so let's be hearing from you. And if you haven't got the game, get it from Sinclair QL World at the cheap rate of £10.00. It's a bargain.

Richard.

SMALL ADS

If you have any software or hardware that you would like to sell, buy or swap please send the details to the Small Ads Dept. QL Adventurers' Forum, Cwm Guen Hall, Pencader, Dyfed, SA39 9HA, Cymru.

Please note that this magazine does not condone piracy and requests that anyone being offered copied software does not accept it. However it is not possible to check all adverts appearing in this section and so we leave it up to our readers to be vigilant and honest. The only exception I will make is for people with corrupted masters who require back-up copies.

D-DAY, WAR IN THE EAST: The editor would dearly love to get hold of originals of these two CHEAPLY. Offers to Richard Alexander, Cwm Guen Hall, Pencader, Dyfed, SA39 9HA, Cymru. (tel: Pencader 574)

Due to the amazing efficiency of the editor the remaining small ads for this issue have already been satisfied. Advertise here, you know it makes sense. (Unlike most of the articles!)

Thank you.