QL ADVENTURERS' FORUM

new look

WAR

GAMES

SPECIAL !

F.ÖB

CONTENTS

COVER BY FRANCIS O'BRIEN

ADVERTISEMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR CGH SERVICES, TONY WOOLCOCK AND IMPACT

MAP SUPPLEMENT: ZKUL PART 3.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

AS YOU CAN SEE, THIS ISSUE OF QL ADVENTURERS' FORUM IS EVEN BIGGER THAN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE. THE COVER PRICE HAS REMAINED THE SAME. HOWEVER FROM NEXT ISSUE THE COVER PRICE WILL RISE TO ONE POUND AND TWENTY PENCE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL BE FIVE POUNDS FOR 4 ISSUES. EXISTING SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL BE HONOURED OF COURSE. THE PRICE RISE IS DUE TO EXTRA EXPENSES THAT WILL BE INCURRED AFTER MARCH 1989 IN RELATION TO BANKING AND OTHER CHARGES. AS SMALL CHEQUES, UNDER FIVE POUNDS, ARE UNECONOMICAL TO PUT THROUGH MY BUSINESS ACCOUNT, IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THEY WERE EITHER LEFT BLANK WERE THE PAYEE IS STATED OR MADE OUT TO RICHARD ALEXANDER AS I CAN PUT THIS THROUGH MY PERSONAL ACCOUNT AT LESS COST.

ALTERNATIVELY CASH (STERLING) MAY BE USED AS PAYMENT.

CHEQUES SHOULD BE SENT TO CGH SERVICES, CWM GWEN HALL, PENCADER, DYFED, CYMRU, SA39 9HA.

RETAIL SALES

I HAVE JUST RECEIVED DIGITAL PRECISION'S DEALER'S PRICE LIST AND IT LOOKS AS THOUGH I SHOULD BE ABLE TO OFFER 10% DISCOUNT ON THEIR RETAIL PRICES, BUT ONLY IF I CAN GET ENOUGH ORDERS FOR EACH PRODUCT. SO IF YOU ARE INTERESTED PLEASE SEND A LIST OF D.P. SOFTWARE YOU'D BE PREPARED TO BUY.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 6 of the QL Adventurers' Forum. The mixture is similar to previous issues, with plenty of reviews, clues, news and features on the QL Adventuring and related scenes.

Firstly, the cover has been drawn by Francis O'Brien. It relates to the article by John Shaw reviewing 3 QL wargames. Francis would like some good drawings of orcs and trolls and similar denizens of the more traditional adventure domains for the cover of QLAF 7. Any help via the Editor please. (I can photocopy drawings and return them to you.) Francis' forte is Science Fiction so look out for the cover of QLAF 8. Thanks Francis.

Prices: You will probably notice an increase in the prices of some of the C.G.H. Services products. This is due to the fact that I will no longer be getting Enterprise Allowance money after April 1st. Also my year of free banking will be ending then so, if I'm to continue in business, you'll have to pay for the privilege I'm afraid. See the enclosed price list for details. In particular I shall be charging extra for multi-mdv versions of games, as the media is more expensive than disks. Also I've removed the cut-price offers to QLAF readers as virtually every game I sell is to QLAF readers. (To whom thanks for buying them.)

Products: C.G.H. Services, thanks to the sterling efforts of Jean-Yves Rouffiac and Dave & Ann Watson, will be publishing two new adventures shortly. Hopefully they will be ready for release in April. They have been written and are, as I type, being tested by our team of experts. We hope to QLib Dreamlands to speed it up.

We should also soon be selling four of Oliver Neef's games from Germany, once we have sorted out the manuals and play tested them.

QL Technical Review: This is rather embarrassing. Three months ago, I'd accumulated 12 pages of articles on technical software. Oh good I thought I can start another magazine. Several of you obviously thought it was good idea too as you sent in some money for the first issue. BUT nonbody has sent in any more articles. I was hoping to get at least one MS-DOS emulator for review but it looks like I'll have to buy one before I can

review it. So if you want QL Technical Review to happen you'll have to do some more writing. Very disappointing and apologies all round.

Other People's Product: I am seriously considering retailing QL software. I have received D.P.'s and Liberation Software's price lists and a 10% reduction in their R.R.P.'s looks quite feasible. Only problem is that they'll need money up front before I get the goods and 5 (for example) Solutions is quite expensive. So, send in your wants list from these two firms and if you trust me send the R.R.P. less 10%. If there are enough orders I'll send off for the goods. Otherwise I'll refund (or not cash) the cheques you send. O.K. It's a bit messy but any other way and someone might get their fingers burnt.

Next Issue: Ross T. Best has promised a short story. Shane will do a thorough write-up on Here We Go and continue his explorations in the (Cave) Adventure. Rich Mellor has some more hints for Mortville Manor. Held over from this issue are also some hints for Dark Side of the Moon, Phase 3. A review or two of PDQL's Domination may be on the way. But most of it has yet to be written – so let's be hearing from you. Deadline is June 1st.

We also need more maps. I'd be interested to hear which adventures that we haven't yet covered you'd like maps for, or which you can provide. We could also do with hints & solutions to: West, Nemesis, Quest for the Dragonsword, The Prawn and Funfear.

This issue is even bigger than last time due to the quantity of material sent in – thanks to the advertisers for making it feasible. But my costs are increasing, see above, so future issues will be £1.20 each, and subs 4 for £5.00. (n.b. this amount does not include any of the additional charges that may be necessary, i.e. 10% extra for overseas to cover postage and £1.00 to cover banking and other charges on all cheques/p.o.'s made out to CGH Services.) Existing subs will be honoured of course.

See Public Domain and Shareware News for the latest developments there. If you have enjoyed Cavern Frenzy don't forget to send Fraser Harkins some dosh at the address in the readme_doc.

Richard

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All is not doom and gloom on the QL front, although judging by the number of companies we have lost recently you might think so. GAP Software have gone out of business so don't write to them regarding The Blag. If I hear any more news on this I'll let you all know. Strongs have withdrawn from the software retailing side but are continuing with QL hardware. It seems that only TK and QLSUB are continuing with a comprehensive range of mail-order QL software.

Regarding The Blag2, Tony Woolcock is continuing to make this available, but further upgrades will be for the ST. This is a shame, but, as Tony explains in his letter, you lot out there just haven't bought enough to make it viable. See his advert for details.

Right the good news now.

Freddy Vachha, of D.P. has made Imagine available seperately from ACT. Cost is £20.00, which is a little steep, but at least it should mean that Steve Sutton gets a decent royalty cheque. It comes on either a disk or two mdvs. Freddy also mentioned that the Special Edition of ACT will be available to purchasers of Imagine for £20.00 which seems quite reasonable. See Steve's letter for more news on Imagine.

Just received, "Here We Go", written by Andy Cserbakoi and Philip Jones and published by Impact Entertainments, 1 Holden Fold, Darwin, Lancs, BB3 OEL. (Tel: 0254-873705). Cost is £14.00. The program is a text adventure written using ACT and is about your character's attempts to get to the F.A. Cup Final. Shane has done a quick write-up of this game for this issue. More next time.

Jean-Yves Rouffiac has completed his text adventure "Dreamlands". For expanded QL's only. Written in SuperBasic this still needs QSave/Qlib'ing as I type. Hopefully the finished item will be available in April.

Dave and Ann Watson have completed writing McSporran's Lament, a crime adventure, produced using ACT. Unlike Here We Go, this has graphics as well as text. Like Dreamlands, it is finished and only needs testing and debugging before you lot can get your maulers on it. Will

run on all QL's. Again this should be out in April.

Alan Pemberton has been working on The Beano, a text adventure. A text version should be ready for testing soon, and a mega graphix version later. I should also correct my misleading description of Ye Classical Type Adventure. This was based on only a few locations. It is NOT a simple version of Colossal Cave but an entirely new text adventure, done using The Quill, and well worth getting, especially as it is public domain. See the review in this issue.

Alan is also doing his best to keep me at the keyboard on our Lords of Midnight type game. This has been delayed due to the problems we have had with D-Day, getting this mag out and testing the two adventures.

Also new is a wee snake game called "Worm" by Nick Ward. O.K. it isn't an adventure but it's quite a fun little game. Yours for £7.50. See his advert in this issue. Nick is also working on an adventure for the QL.

D.P. tell us that their PC Emulator is now available - and if enough of you want a copy I'll be supplying them. The Ant Computing PC Emulator has so far received a right panning. I await independent reviews of D.P.'s product (for QL Technical Review.) Also D.P. inform us that their CP/M emulator is absolutely triff whilst the Sandy one isn't worth getting. QLSUB reckon the Sandy CP/M is easier to use. I haven't tried either - reviews for QL Technical review please.

The 2nd Alternative Micro Show will be held on April 1st in the New Horticultural Halls, Victoria, London. C.G.H. Services will be having a stand there. If anyone wants us to sell their games etc there, contact us as soon as possible.

QL World have apparently had to delay their planned move to subscription only sales as they haven't had enough subs in yet. I can also recommend Computer Shopper and New Computer Express as they both have regular QL columns.

CGH Services should be represented at the Northern Microfair courtesy Michael L. Jackson, to whom thanks.

Richard

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO QL ADVENTURING

Introduction

This article has been written primarily for beginners, as an introduction to the world of computer adventuring. With ever more sophisticated adventures being devised, the newcomer is often overlooked. The "manuals" for some games consist merely of the words: "The usual rules of adventuring apply". Therefore, I hope to explain here, amongst other things, just what those rules are.

A brief history of computer adventures

Computer adventuring began in the mid' 70's, when Crowther and Woods wrote their "Colossal Cave" adventure, which ran on a large mainframe computer. This game, not surprisingly, is set mainly in an immense complex of caves, which the player must explore, gathering treasure along the way. However, this is not quite as easy as it might seem, with all sorts of problems and traps to beset the unwary adventurer. Some of the problems are straightforward, but others require a lot of lateral thinking, and have kept many adventurers scratching their heads well into the wee sma' hours.

When the microcomputer revolution happened in the early 80's, it was natural that similar games would start to appear for the new micros. Some software houses, like Level 9, took advantage of the fact that Crowther and Woods had not taken out copyright on their creation, and produced near-identical clones. Level 9 also achieved the commendable feat of compressing the entire adventure into 32K of code, so that it could run on the BBC, Spectrum, C64, and many others, though not, unfortunately, the QL. Nevertheless, since then at least two versions of "Colossal Cave" have been written for the QL, and they can be recommended to anyone who has not yet played the game. These are the Cave Adventure by Abersoft, part of their Classic Adventures package, with Mordon's Quest and the version of Colossal Cave in the Quanta Library.

Variants on the "Colosssal Cave" theme have also appeared, the most successful being Infocom's "Zork" series. Although there are no QL versions of these programs, they may soon be available for the QL via the forthcoming PC emulators. If you can't wait that long, or don't want to upgrade to disks, there is a very good alternative in Talent's "Zkul". There are plenty of mazes and problems to keep you on your toes, and as a bonus, it comes with a useful beginners' guide.

Computer adventuring received a great boost when Melbourne House released "The Hobbit" for the Spectrum, C64, and many others, but again, not for the QL. Not only did the program allow the player to converse with the computer in sophisticated sentences and interact with realistic characters, but also many of the locations were illustrated with colourful graphics. It was undoubtedly the inclusion of graphics that gave the program its mass appeal, making "The Hobbit" probably the most-played adventure in the UK.

Subsequent text adventures have aspired to the sophistication of Melbourne House's system, and games such as "The Pawn" by Magnetic Scrolls, are now among the most advanced now available. The latter can understand, and indeed gives five points for, the command: "Plant the pot plant in the plant pot with the trowel"!

What is an adventure?

A computer adventure is a game where the player must explore a varied landscape, avoiding traps and solving puzzles, with the eventual aim of completing some pre-ordained mission. The settings for adventures are many and varied: from "Dungeons and Dragons" and "Middle Earth" fantasy settings, to outer space, to the Wild West, with lots more inbetween. The missions are equally diverse, such as toppling an evil dictator, becoming a big city slicker, or simply collecting lots of treasure. A related genre is the detective/mystery adventure such as The Blag and Mortville Manor.

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Although adventuring themes may at first appear to be very different, the way they are played remains more or less the same. So, the more adventures you play, the easier it is to get into a new one.

The computer acts as a window onto the imaginary world of the adventure, keeping the player informed as to what is going on. This information takes the form of text printed on the screen (hence the term "text adventure"), which will include a description of the surroundings and a list of the objects and other characters that can be seen.

e.g You are in a long, dark tunnel which runs north-south.
    You can see a gold nugget.

This example is fairly minimalistic, but the trend in recent games is to give much more detailed "location descriptions", which can add tremendously to the atmosphere of an adventure. Once the location description has been displayed at the start of the adventure, the computer displays a cursor, and waits patiently for the player to input his/her first command. The command may be a verb, or a short phrase, entered from the keyboard, which tells the computer what the player wants his/her character to do next.

e.g. GO NORTH

To which the computer might reply:-

    You go north.
    You are now standing in a gigantic cavern.
    A spring bubbles gently in the centre of the cavern, and the water flows out
    through an opening in the east wall.

At this stage, the computer will wait again, for another command to be entered.

As you can see, there is a constant interchange of information between the player and the computer in a text adventure. The most difficult aspect of learning to play adventures is deciding what commands to use. Try to imagine yourself in the location described on-screen, and think what you would want to do next.

e.g. You might wish to scoop up a handful of water from the spring and have a careful look at it.

Now, reduce that to the simplest language possible and type in the command. In this example, you might try:-

    EXAMINE SPRING or
    EXAMINE WATER or
    LOOK AT WATER

It is important to keep the commands as simple as possible, because some programs only recognise a maximum of two words in any command.

Commonly-used commands

This section, broken down into a few logical categories, gives a run-down of the most useful commands for use in all adventures.

Movement

All the major compass directions are usually catered for:
i.e. NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST, and these can also be abbreviated to N, S, E, W.

Note that if you wish to go NORTHWEST, most programs will understand only the abbreviation, i.e. NW. Likewise, the same applies to NE, SE, and SW.
Vertical movement is also often encountered, e.g. UP, DOWN, CLIMB UP, etc.

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Occasionally, as in the case of spacecraft, you may be required to choose from FORE, AFT, PORT, and STARBOARD as directions for travel. Iconic writers may also use ASCEND and DESCEND, instead of up and down.

Another set of useful commands concerning movement are IN, OUT, ENTER and GO. If you are having difficulty accessing an adjacent location it is always worth trying these.

Finally some adventures expect you to describe your movement, e.g. SWIM, RUN, CROUCH or to qualify it, e.g. RUN SILENTLY.

Manipulating objects

There are a few standard verbs you can use to deal with the various objects you might come across in an adventure:-

e.g. TAKE	(or GET), as in	GET SWORD
DROP		DROP LAMP
EXAMINE		EXAMINE OBELISK
WEAR		WEAR CLOAK
REMOVE		REMOVE TROUSERS
OPEN		OPEN BOX
CLOSE		CLOSE DOOR

Now and then, depending on the object, you may need to use some more specialised verbs:-

e.g. LIGHT LAMP
     UNTIE ROPE
     INSERT COIN

If you need a reminder of what you are carrying, the word INVENTORY should be used. This can often be abbreviated to INV or I. A list of the objects carried will then be printed.

To get a description of the current location again, assuming it has scrolled out of sight, type LOOK or REDESCRIBE.

Magic words

In games of the "Middle Earth" genre, there are often spells to be discovered and used. The most common spells take the form of magic words which, when uttered, will teleport you to some distant location. Certain spells will only work if you are standing in a particular location, or carrying a particular object.

Recognising magic words is usually fairly easy - they are normally found as strange inscriptions or graffiti on walls. Just try saying the word:-

e.g.   SAY TOOBEE

but if that doesn't work, don't give up: try saying it backwards, for instance.

Coping with characters

There are not many adventures that require no interaction with other (computer-generated) characters. However, the extent and depth of interaction needed varies tremendously between games, and is often a sticking point for novice and experienced adventurers alike. For example, if your path is blocked by a troll (and believe me, it often is!), two different programs might require two very different levels of response. This could mean the difference between using KILL TROLL and SAY TO TROLL "YOUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE".

Therefore, you should read carefully what the documentation that comes with the game has to say about character interaction, and the format it takes.

If your adventure caters for conversations with other characters, always try the following "gambits":-

SAY TO CHARACTER HELLO
(or CHARACTER, HELLO - read manual for exact format)
-this might be enough to elicit some useful information.

SAY TO CHARACTER FOLLOW ME
(or CHARACTER, FOLLOW ME)
-they just might, and you never know when they could come in useful.

You could also try asking the character about other objects/characters/concepts in the adventure:-

e.g. ASK INNKEEPER ABOUT BEER
ASK PEASANT ABOUT TAXES

If you have one or more characters following you about, you might want to use them as pack-animals, perhaps carrying an object which is too heavy for your character to lift:-

e.g. ASK SAMSON TO TAKE CANNON

As you can see, there is a virtually infinite amount of things you can ask of other characters, but in reality, games will only allow a limited range. So, when "interacting" with characters, be guided by commonsense and the context of the adventure in deciding what to ask.

Other useful commands

Besides interaction with characters and using objects, adventurers sometimes have to make their impact on the world they are in. This can take several forms, and different writers have different styles in this matter. Some dislike violence so you won't be able to BREAK, SMASH or KICK objects. Other games cannot be completed without minor (or even major) acts of vandalism. Similarly if there is any rubble or sand around it is usually an invitation to DIG - provided you can find a shovel or spade. If you're stuck don't forget that many objects can have multiple uses, not all of them obvious.

Coming to grief - we all have to go sometime

Unless you are very careful, or very lucky, there will be times when your character will, sadly, meet their demise. Whether it be suddenly, by falling down a pit, or slowly, through starvation, the end result is the same: GAME OVER. When this happens, you will need to start all over again, from the beginning.

However, there will be other times when it would be desirable to start again, say if you were lost in a maze. In such circumstances, the commands QUIT or RESTART can be used.

Frequently, when you have progressed quite far into an adventure, you will need to turn off the computer and do something else, such as eat, sleep, go to work, etc. To save you all the bother of having to retrace your steps when you next decide to play the game, you may save all the details of your current position as a file on microdrive, by entering the command:- SAVE.

Then, when you reload the game, you can type: LOAD (or sometimes RESTORE) to reload all the previously saved details, and start again where you left off.

It is also prudent to use SAVE as an insurance measure before you try something dangerous. If the plan backfires, your character gets killed off, and you are sent back to the beginning of the game, all you need to do is type: LOAD, and you will be returned to just before your downfall.

Whilst all adventure games should have SAVE and LOAD facilities, a few also provide RAMSAVE and RAMLOAD, which work just like SAVE and LOAD, except that the game position is saved in memory rather than on tape or disk. This is useful if you don't have a microdrive to hand, and it also works a lot quicker. The only drawback with RAMSAVE/RAMLOAD is that saved positions will be lost when the computer is switched off — so do remember to SAVE your position at the end of every session.
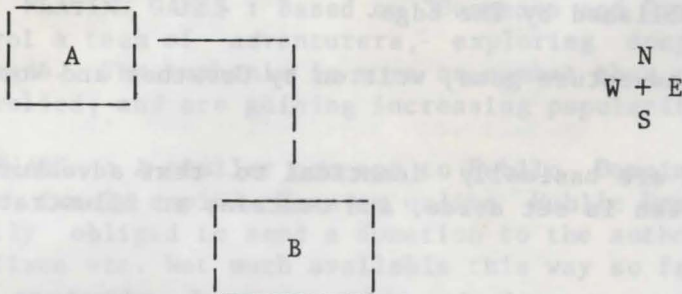
Tactics

Large adventures, and things like mazes, can often appear daunting, but they can be tamed by using some of the following tips.

Mapping

It is always helpful to draw a map of your progress, including details of the objects present, and possible exits, at each location. If you find yourself completely stuck at any point, have a close look at your map to see if there are any exits from any location that you have not yet explored — these are very easy to overlook if you haven't drawn a map.

Some adventures make things difficult for mapping by including "bendy" paths. Look at the section of map below:-

```
 _____                    _____
|       |                  |
|   A   |        |          N
|_____|        |       W  +  E
                 |          S
                 |
             ____|____
            |         |
            |    B    |
            |_____|
```

i.e from A to B you go EAST
     from B to A you go NORTH

Also don't assume that all directions are reversible.

Collecting objects

The number of objects that can be carried at any one time is often strictly limited (sometimes as few as 4), so after a while, you will find yourself running backwards and forwards, getting and dropping objects. One way to cut down on all this travel is to earmark a particular room (preferably one you can magically teleport to) as a central "cache". Then you will know exactly where something is when you find you need it. But beware of thieves!

Mazes

Mazes are the bane of adventurers' lives, and can take many shapes and forms. Of these, the "maze of twisty little passages, all alike" is the most difficult (and tedious) to solve.

At each location in this maze, the description is identical, with no indication of the possible exits. The best way to solve this type of maze is to drop one object at each new location encountered, so that the rooms can be differentiated by the objects present. Then the maze can be mapped in the normal way, ensuring that for each room, every exit has been found. Equally tedious are mazes that are randomly drawn at the beginning of each game, making mapping over several attempts practically useless.

General tips

SAVE often.
EXAMINE everything.
Don't make any unwarranted assumptions.

And if you get totally stuck on one problem, try typing HELP. If that doesn't do the trick, leave it and try another. If you get totally stuck on everything, try writing for help - some software houses provide hint-sheets, or join QLAF (see GLOSSARY).

Glossary

ADVENTURE CREATION TOOL (ACT) : A set of utilities enabling the creation of sophisticated adventures, with or without graphics. More complex than the QUILL. Disk only. Published by Digital Precision.

ADVENTURE PROGRAMMING TOOL (APT) : Now renamed ADVENTURE CREATION TOOL.

ARCADE ADVENTURE : An "arcade-style" game, calling for joystick skills in moving a "man" about the screen, exploring rooms, collecting keys, etc. A good example of this genre is "Fairlight" on the Spectrum, published by The Edge.

COLOSSAL CAVE : The very first computer adventure game, written by Crowther and Woods. Now available for every micro.

GRAPHIC/ILLUSTRATED ADVENTURES : These are basically identical to text adventures, except that a certain portion of the screen is set aside, and contains an illustration of the current location.

ICON CONTROLLED ADVENTURES : Commands are issued in this type of adventure by positioning a cursor over a picture (ICON) representing the desired command. The cursor is normally moved using a mouse or joystick.

INTERACTIVE CHARACTERS : Realistic characters, found in advanced adventure games, with whom it is possible to carry out conversations, and who may be persuaded to perform various tasks.

MAZES : Found in almost all adventures. Have a pencil and paper handy, and be prepared for some serious mapping.

MULTI-PART ADVENTURES : Some adventures are so big that they cannot fit into a standard 128K QL's memory. They are therefore split up into several parts. Typically, after completing the first part, the player is either given a password for the second part, or a special game position is saved, which permits entry into the next part of the adventure.

PARSER : The part of a text adventure program which scans the individual words input by the player, and converts them into a form that the program will "understand".

PAWN, THE : The most sophisticated text adventure available for the QL. Written by Magnetic Scrolls, who have since pulled out of the QL market.

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PUBLIC DOMAIN: Software which can be freely copied, although the original author may still keep the copyright. Although it is American machines that are more heavily supported by this free software, CGH Services and QL SUB are trying to promote this is in the U.K. for the QL. Normally you only get charged for the media, post and packing and a nominal copying charge. You can then distribute yourself. It is an excellent way to start adventuring as several of the available P.D. games are very good. Send off for a list to find out what is currently available. (See also SHAREWARE.)

QL ADVENTURERS' FORUM (QLAF) : Lively fanzine for QL adventurers, with news, reviews and tips for all QL adventure games. Also offers its own range of adventure games, some free (public domain).

QUANTA (QL USERS AND TINKERERS ASSOCIATION): Excellent QL users group, has many adventures in its library, together with a host of useful utilities for writing them. The software is nearly all FREE, but costs £14.00 for U.K. residents to join, £17.00 overseas. Also has several thriving local members groups. You also get a monthly newsletter for your money. Contact: Phil Borman, 15 Grosvenor Crescent, South Humberside, DN32 0QJ.

QUILL ADVENTURE WRITER : A very user-friendly utility for the production of "home-made" adventure games. No programming experience is necessary, but an ability to plan ahead is useful. Published by Gilsoft.

RAMSAVE / RAMLOAD : Commands which save and restore game positions in memory.

ROLE PLAYING GAMES : Based on "Dungeons and Dragons", these games allow the player to control a team of adventurers, exploring dungeons, learning spells and fighting monsters. The emphasis is more on combat than problem solving. RPGs are normally icon controlled, and are gaining increasing popularity on mouse based computers.

SHAREWARE : A similar concept to Public Domain, whereby authors allow their software to be freely copied. However unlike Public Domain, users who enjoy the software are morally obliged to send a donation to the author. This may entitle users to upgrades, bug-fixes etc. Not much available this way so far for the QL.

TEXT ADVENTURES : A very enjoyable way of passing the time!

UTILITY : A program which helps in writing other programs. see ACT and QUILL ADVENTURE WRITER.

VERB – NOUN PARSER : A parser which looks for a maximum of two words in each command. Therefore, most commands will tend to consist of a verb followed by a noun, e.g. GET SWORD, KILL TROLL, etc.

ZKUL : One of the very first QL adventures, and the last entry in this glossary. Published by Talent.

Alan Pemberton

Well there you have Alan's introduction to QL Adventuring. I hope that those readers who are new to the adventure scene find it illuminating and the rest of you will at least be entertained by Alan's stylish text. We shall be including the above article as a _doc file with disk versions of Alan's commercial and public domain games and possibly other progs where we have room. If you'd like to expand on any of the points Alan has raised or want to discourse on matters not yet broached - QLAF is your forum and we welcome healthy debate. Let's be hearing from you.

Richard

Dark Side of the Moon

I have received this letter from David Colyer in response to my enquiry concerning the problems involved in marketing adventures for the QL.

Dear Richard,

I have already bored enough friends and family with the stories of our trials and tribulations during 2 years of preparing this game that I'm now rather drained on the subject. It must be familiar to many users on the question of hours work being lost on bad or changed medium (a nightmare phrase!) One night, Jaspar and I were working on a problem for about five hours, until around two in the morning, when a lodger popped his head round the door to say "Goodnight" and inadvertantly pulled out the plug for our 2 QL's, thereby losing 5 hours work.

I think the main hazard, apart from buying your QL; is marketing the product. We understood around 100,000 QL's had been sold and QL World intimated that their circulation was in the region of 40,000. From this, we didn't feel it would be impossible task to sell about 1000 games through advertising in QL World.

Unfortunately, by the time we were finished, Smith's and Boots were no longer stocking QL software, so the possibility of sales through those outlets was cut off. To get a discount on printing costs of the manuals and colour insert for the cartridge packs, we ordered 2000 copies to be printed. So far, after over 2 years on the market, we have only sold 160 games worldwide, including Australia, USA, Pakistan, Norway and Sweden, and one in New Zealand.

We tried to give value for money, but formed the opinion that there just weren't that many QL users interested in Text Adventure Games. Plus thinking back, we may have made the game too hard, as people tend to lose interest if they can't solve problems and get on to the next bit. I don't know of anyone as yet, who has even reached Phase 3 and would be happy to supply hints to anyone who may have been put off by too many difficulties.

I still can't understand your original criticism of there being no grid in the

game for mapping purposes. The space ship is very simple; a corridor runs down the middle with rooms at each side. For example if you go west into the canteen, to leave you simply go east back into the corridor. I enclose a map showing how to get to the Moonbase from the space ship and should be obliged if you would print this, as a hint to readers who might be lost. I trust you will agree this is fairly straightforward map, with correct compass points etc..,

Yours faithfully,

David Colyer, Javid Systems, 15-17 Duke Street, Glasgow, Scotland, G4 0UL.

Dark Side of the Moon is still available at £16.00 from the above address.

EDITORIAL COMMENT.

Concerning the mapping of the adventure, my complaint referred to Phase 2, rather than Phase 1 (on ths space ship.) Looking at the map I tried to construct compared with David's map I can see that my problems were due to trying to use blocks for mapping (ie each block constitutes a dsicreet location, and that, on an assumed grid basis, each block is the same size, unless the location descriptions tell you otherwise.) Consequently one has problems if you count 5 locations across the north of the map including the space to the north of the space ship and the mirror cliff, and then try and fit in 7 locations in the "line" below, including the space ship and the disused mine. And so on down and across the map.

The problem raised here is, I think of some importance, at least as far as the micro world of computer adventures is concerned. And that is how to represent spatial distances without either interspersing interesting areas with "blanks" or disorienting the player.
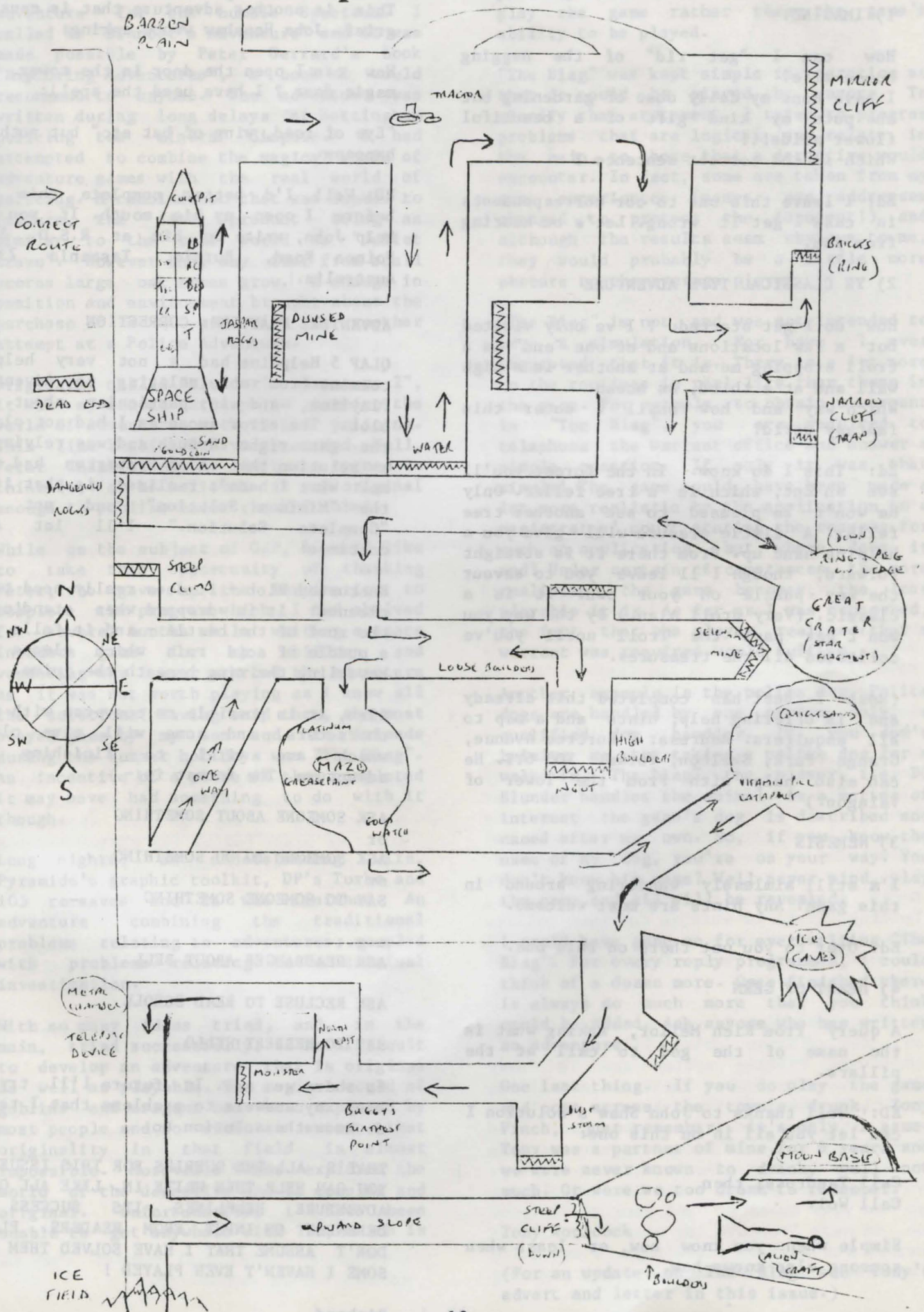
Again the choice of setting is important. A cave system with its discreet caves and passageways is a terrain that players are familiar with. Similarly the analagous layout of houses, castles etc. But as soon as one moves into a surface without discreet boundaries one inevitably comes up with this problem of representation.

Thoughts on this for QLAF7 please.

Richard.

Dark Side of the Moon
Map for Phase 2

BARREN PLAIN

MIRROR CLIFF

MAGMA

CORRECT ROUTE

COCKPIT

BUNKS (RING)

DEAD END

DISUSED MINE

JASPAR ROCKS

SPACE SHIP

SAND GOLD COIN

NARROW CLEFT (TRAP)

WATER

DANGEROUS ROCKS

(DOWN)

STEEP CLIMB

RING PEG ON LEDGE

GREAT CRATER (STAR FRAGMENT)

N
NW NE
W E
SW SE
S

ONE WAY

PLATINUM

MAZE GREASEPAINT

GOLD WATCH

LOOSE BOULDER

SELENITE MINE

QUICKSAND

HIGH BOULDERS

VITAMIN PILL CATAPULT

METAL CHAMBER

TELEPORT DEVICE

NORTH EAST

MONSTER

ICE CAVES

BUGGY'S FURTHEST POINT

DUST STORM

UPWARD SLOPE

MOON BASE

STEEP CLIFF (DOWN)

BOULDER

ALIEN CRAFT

ICE FIELD

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HELPLINE

1) IMAGINE.

How can I "get rid" of the nagging house-wife?
I have done my daily dose of gardening but she puts my kind gift of a beautiful flower aside!!!
Which is the correct sentence ?

Ed: I leave this one to our correspondents in case I get it wrong. Let's be hearing from you.

2) YE CLASSICAL TYPE ADVENTURE

How do I get started ? I've only visited but a few locations and at one "end" is a troll stopping me and at another is a high wall and at a third, an ocean.
Which way and how shall I enter this fantasy world?

Ed: This I do know. In the forest you'll see an Ent, which is a tree feller. Only he won't be pleased to see another tree feller. A little erasure will give you a helping hand up. From there it is straight forward, though I'll leave you to savour the key puzzle on your own. It is a classic. (Very droll Alan.) By the way you won't get past the Troll until you've collected all the treasures.

(Ross T. Best has completed this already and is offering help, hints and a map to all enquirers. Address: 7 Burtree Avenue, Grange Park, Skelton, Yorks. YO3 6YT. He can also help with From the Tower of Valagon.)

3) NEMESIS

I'm still aimlessly wandering around in this game. Any hints are most welcome.

Ed: Over to you out there on this one.

4) HEART OF GERN

A query from Rich Mellor, asking what is the name of the god to call at the pillars.

ED: Well thanks to John Shaw's solution I can let you all in on this one:

Call Yandross, then
Call Wol.

Simple when you know how, or least when someone else knows how.

5) ADVENTURE PLAYTIME

This is another adventure that is causing grief. John Henshaw wrote asking:

How can I open the door in the tower, the magic door ? I have used the spell:

"Eye of toad, wing of bat etc" but nothing happens.

ED: Well, I'd better complete this one before I open my big mouth. If you can help John, write to him at R.S.D. 349, Poimea Road, Burnie, Tasmania 7320, Australia.

ADVENTURE PLAYTIME: CORRECTION

QLAF 5 Helpline had a not very helpful comment from moi relating to Adventure Playtime, and in particular about the blob. The error arose as I had not played the game right through and was relying on a solution that Alan Pemberton had sent me. What I hadn't realised is that it is the "Minimum Solution" and not the "Complete Solution." I'll let Alan continue:

Encrusted Blob - it does really need to be cleaned: it is dropped when standing on the roof of the castle - and it falls into a puddle of acid rain which cleans it, revealing the ring beneath the grime.

Also, it is possible to converse with most characters, and some will give clues, which are vital to finishing the adventure. The format is:-

ASK SOMEONE ABOUT SOMETHING
or
ASK SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING
or
SAY TO SOMEONE SOMETHING

e.g.:
ASK HEADBANGER ABOUT BELL

ASK RECLUSE TO READ SCROLL

SAY TO HERBERT HELLO

So there we are. In future I'll try and keep my answers to problems that I really do know the solution to.

THAT'S ALL THE QUERIES FOR THIS ISSUE. IF YOU CAN HELP THEN WRITE IN. LIKE ALL OTHER ADVENTURE HELPLINES ITS SUCCESS IS DEPENDENT ON INPUT FROM READERS. PLEASE DON'T ASSUME THAT I HAVE SOLVED THEM ALL. SOME I HAVEN'T EVEN PLAYED !

Richard

WRITING "THE BLAG"

In 1984 I wrote my first detective adventure for the humble Spectrum. I called it "Blunder's Adventure" and it was made possible by Peter Gerrard's book "Exploring Adventures", a book I would recommend to anyone. The adventure was written during long delays at Nottingham policing the miners' dispute. I had attempted to combine the magical world of adventure games with the real world of policing. A combination that was doomed to failure, the final product being as similar to the real world as "Juliet Bravo". However they say that from small acorns large oak trees grow. A change in position and environment brought about the purchase of a QL and with it another attempt at a Police Adventure.

Originally called "Blunder's Adventure 2", it was my second attempt to combine the world of adventures with that of policing. This time I think I have succeeded. Well, Peter Chambers of GAP Software seemed to think so, as he believed it was original enough to publish under the GAP label.

While on the subject of GAP, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Peter, who gave me the inspiration to complete the program which I had shelved for several months while writing a space invaders game for my children and wondering why I ever started the adventure as it was not worth playing as I knew all the solutions! Having said that, the most played game by my son and his friends during the summer holidays was "The Blag". An incentive of a prize if they completed it may have had something to do with it though.

Long nights, an understanding wife, Pyramide's graphic toolkit, DP's Turbo and 105 re-saves and it was finished. An adventure combining the traditional problems relating to adventures, coupled with problems relating to a criminal investigation.

With so many ideas tried, and, in the main, tried successfully, it is difficult to develop an adventure that is original as well as playable. The magical world of goblins and dragons has been explored by most people and to such an extent that originality in that field is almost impossible. Mortville Manor explores the world of the detective and is complex and original. Unfortunately, I have been unable to get anywhere with it, which is probably a reflection of my ability to play the game rather than the game's ability to be played.

"The Blag" was kept simple in operation so that it could be played by anyone. To clarify that statement, I tried to program problems that are logical and relate, in the main, to those that a detective would encounter. In fact, some are taken from my own experiences (names and addresses changed to protect the innocent!) and although the results seem obvious to me, they would probably be a little more obscure to the average player.

"The Blag" is not, and was not intended to be, a simulation. Nor have I ever suggested that it is. There is a lot more to the routines in real life than those in the game. For example, to obtain a warrant in "The Blag", you are required to telephone the warrant office and answer a simple question. If only it was that simple! The game could have been made a lot more realistic by the application to a magistrates' court stating the reasons for such an application, but where does it end? Under certain circumstances, the more realistic the game becomes, the less playable it is. As far as I was concerned, the fact that the player realised that a warrant was required would suffice.

Another example is the police dog. Police dogs are handled by one person only, a qualified dog handler. If you don't beleive me, try taking a police dog for a walk! In "The Blag", the player, i.e. DC Blunder handles the animal. As a matter of interest the game's dog is described and named after my own. So, if you know the name of my dog, you're on your way. You don't know his name? Well never mind, play the game and all will be revealed.

I could have gone on for ever writing "The Blag". For every reply programmed, I could think of a dozen more. Once finished there is always so much more that you think could be added. Ask anyone who has written an adventure.

One last thing. If you do play the game and come across the town's drunk, Tony Finch, just remember, it's only a game. Tony was a partner of mine for 6 years and we were never known to drink, well not much. Or were we too drunk to remember.

Tony Woolcock

(For an update on The Blag see Tony's advert and letter in this issue.)

REVIEW:
YE CLASSICAL-TYPE ADVENTURE

Ye Classical-Type Adventure
By Alan Pemberton
Public Domain, costs £1.00 from CGH
Services plus media and postage.

I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that Alan Pemberton could, if pressed, produce a computer adventure from a empty Fairy Liquid bottle, several old toilet rolls and the contents of a small boy's pocket (a half-sucked gobstopper, two conkers, a 1949 penny and a length of string).

His latest brilliant offering is Ye Classical-Type Adventure which brings together a demented dwarf called Sporrin (no kilt jokes here, please) and a variety of other characters who either escaped from or were thrown out of other people's adventures. You know, a dragon, a wizard, a princess, a troll and a doorman who bears a passing resemblence to a jobsworth at my office. Not to mention the tall ent (I said not to mention the tall ent!).

The commands structure is quite simple so keep your instructions simple too. Take sword, kill elephant, that sort of thing. Stringing a few commands together doesn't work (I read that in the instructions so I haven't actually tried it. I'm gullible that way). The instructions, for what they are worth (not a lot) are included on the mdv or disk on a quill file called readme_doc and you'd better read them or else. Richard (Call me Murdoch) Alexander has latched on to electronic advertising and included plugs for his magazines and adventures on the end of the instructions. I wonder how long it will be before those mucky phone numbers start appearing... Teasing Troll is waiting for your call... Wizard Wanda spells it out, etc. Sorry, I got carried away then. Now Back To The Adventure.

Ye Classical-Type Adventure (YCTA from now on) was written using Gilsoft's Quill Adventure Writing system and is Jolly Good. You are dumped next to a building and first have to find Sporrin who tells you what your quest is. If you can't find Sporrin in about 10 seconds you're wasting your time in this adventure, mate. Anyway, we'll assume you've found him and off you go on your quest to get your grubby paws on as much treasure as possible, without regard for anybody's feelings. I was quite impressed until I found out that the only

way to score in YCTA is to GIVE the treasure to Sporrin. Adventurers must be an unworldy lot to hand over booty to a dwarf and settle for points!

Alan Pemberton's (warped) sense of humour comes through well in YCTA as you'll soon find out when you start wandering about the place. He has included the obligatory maze and has thoughtfully provided a doorman to guide you through it safely (if you don't mind missing Something Important). I found it but couldn't work out how to operate it. Wassit for then, Alan? I suspect it is a Magical Device to save you legging it between the cave and the dwarf everytime you have to return with armfuls of treasure, but since I managed to complete YCTA without using said artefact I didn't lose much sleep over it.

I thoroughly enjoyed YCTA — even more than "From The Tower of Valagon". I might even have enjoyed it more than "Imagine" but since I'm stuck outside the larder I'm hardly in a position to judge. A.P. has certainly got the hang of this adventure writing lark and I hope he continues. But I do find it a bit disconcerting that he can write adventures faster than I can solve them.

The great thing is that he has now found a publishing house — CGH Services— that is more concerned about promoting the art of adventuring on the QL than about making lots of money (usual fee please Richard!) and long may this unholy alliance continue.

Mark out of 10....11.

Points to ponder, 1. There is a toilet in this adventure, so wash your hands.

Points to ponder, 2. I lied about the elephant.

Points to ponder, 3. If anyone investigating "The Blag" is looking for a bag of used fivers, Alan Pemberton's got it stashed in this adventure. Signed, A Friend.

SHANE McGARVEY

(Obligatory editiorial comment that adds nothing to the review. Ed.)

STARPLOD
by ALAN PEMBERTON
Cost £8.00 from CGH Services, £6.50 if you
supply the media and postage.

"THESE are the voyages of the Starship
Boobyprize; its five year mission, to
boldly plod where everyone with any sense
has gone by four!" Starplod is, as you
might have gathered, a space adventure and
has absolutely nothing to do with
policemen (think about it!).

Not a lot of people know this, but when
the makers of Star Trek finished their
five-year mission, back in the sixties,
they dismantled the set and threw all the
bits away. By the time they realised that
ST was a cult hit all over the universe
and went out to retrieve the stuff, it was
too late.

Alan Pemberton had been rummaging through
the dustbins looking for likely material
for a new adventure, having exhausted his
supply of used toilet rolls, empty Fairy
Liquid bottles etc (see my review of Ye
Classical-Type Adventure) and had made off
with a used space shuttle, an obsolete
space station and various minor members of
the cast, leaving behind a pair of pointy
ears, Lt. Uhuru's headphones and half a
tree trunk (the Captain's Log).

He threw all the stuff into a QL and what
came out was an adventure like wot you
have never seen before - STARPLOD (roll
credits, cue loud space epic-type music
and fade to a distant part of the galaxy,
two million years hence. Scene 1. A
Well-Used Space Base).

You were one of the lucky ones to be
ejected into space A Long Time Ago on a
spaceship built to save mankind when the
Earth was dying. Unfortunately just after
you left scientists solved all the
problems and also built a new type of
engine that would help man conquer space.
So they all overtook you, colonised space,
ruined it for everybody else and then
left. Now your ship has got where it was
going but is running out of moronium, the
stuff that has been keeping you alive by
running the life-support system. You have
been chosen to pop out and get some more.

Now you've got the picture, well half of
it anyway. Because the system you're in is
mostly occupied by baddies and a further
complication is that you can operate this

adventure only by pressing buttons. That's
right, you tell the computer what to do by
aligning the cursor over any one of 20
symbols and pressing The Spacebar (what
else?).

If it's getting a bit tedious using cursor
keys to zoom up and down the icons (posh
word for pictures) then connect up the
joystick (the one you don't use because
YOUR QL isn't a games machine) and you'll
find life a lot easier. L,R,U,D operate as
expected and simply press the fire button
to execute your instructions. If you find
yourself halfway through an instruction
and change your mind, just press ESC.

Alan Pemberton has also thoughtfully
provided Ramsave and Ramload, as well as
the more conventional save to and load
from an mdv.

As I said, Spaceplod is an adventure like
wot you have never seen before and the
unusual way of giving instructions takes
some getting used to. It does speed up the
adventure because you don't have to work
out what the computer undertands. On the
other hand it can be frustrating because
your options are limited. Until you get on
to Alan Pemberton's wavelength you may
struggle. But then if you've had a go at
Adventure Playtime, Tower of Valagon and
Ye Classical-Type Adventure, you will
quickly get the hang of this one.

Whenever I get hold of an adventure by AP,
I sometimes feel I must be a failed
critic, cos I can't find anything nasty to
say about it. But I've come to the
conclusion that it is simply because the
first thing AP does when he's written an
adventure is pass it over to Rich Mellor
to play with and it comes back with all
the bugs removed.

As far as price goes, I've forgotten how
much Starplod costs, but I'm sure Richard
will enlighten you at the start of this
review. Suffice it to say that Starplod is
almost a giveaway compared with other
adventures on the market. In my case it is
a giveaway since RA sent me a free one to
review and still managed to sell me a
couple of other programs!

SHANE McGARVEY

(n.b. Shane completed this without either
the manual or the hints sheet. So no
excuses from the rest of you if you get
stuck.)

A hard ACT to follow ?

Asked to write about THE ACT CREATION TOOL or ACT after reading Rich Mellor's excellent and exhaustive review in QLAG Issue 5, one is faced with some task. He has left very little unsaid. After (almost) completing my first adventure using ACT, I find myself agreeing with all the points he makes in his article. This said, I thought that perhaps I could relate my initial experiences with the package in the hope that I can pass on advice about some of the pitfalls that I jumped into with both feet.

I have written computer adventures for some years, first on the antique ZX81. Moving up to the Spectrum, I made much use of the QUILL from Gilsoft. However, on graduating to my beloved and trusty QL, I was most disappointed with the QUILL's much inferior application for my new machine. With the addition of graphics and sound, ACT seemed just the ticket.

But the much greater flexibility that ACT offers over QUILL also means that the program is much less user-friendly. It will take a good bit of time and work to really become acquainted with the suite of programs and the possibilities they offer. The manual is good - everything's in there somewhere - but it does become a pain having to constantly refer to it. If, like me, you abandon the small tutor program early and get tore into your own Super-Adventure straight away, the odds are that, like me, you will come to grips with ACT mid-stream. You'll realise then that ACT is not really as straight-jacketing as QUILL and you will want to take advantage of the much greater freedom on offer. So the Super-Adventure will be discarded to begin work on the Mega-Super- Adventure. This is the point where you really should put your QL in a bank safe for a fortnight and work things out on paper.

Writing to the Player and Event program is easy enough, as Rich suggests. But beware the variables as numbers. The listings become very opaque and it's difficult to avoid confusing integers and variables. Mis-typing ACT's keywords can often be spotted if you notice they don't change from lower to upper case when the new line is entered. For this reason it's a good idea to put new procedure names in caps and enter program lines in lower case. Subsequent entries of the proc name will then revert back to caps showing that the name is entered correctly. The secret of the system is to build upon the routines provided by ACT until you have a tried and tested library of your own to draw on. With little change these can be easily tailored to your latest Supa-adventure.

The program Compiler will pick up most errors but with a near-completed game we're talking of a heavy time penalty for mistakes. Rich mentions using QLOAD and QREF and I purchased them in the hopes they could speed things up a bit. I was amazed at the improvement. I now consider the two programs indispensible for anyone using ACT seriously. Below are timings which show how expensive errors can become in processing time. They also demonstrate how QLOAD can dramatically improve the situation.

Using 3.5 NEC floppies on a near completed adventure:

		QLOAD
LOADING PLAYER PROG BASIC	4,45	0,16 !
SAVING PLAYER PROG BASIC	0,36	0,32
LOADING EVENT PROG BASIC	0,4	0,14
SAVING EVENT PROG BASIC	0,5	0, 6
LOADING BOOT	0,26	
ASSEMBLING SYSTEM PROGS	11,11	
LINKING MODULES	2,32	
TOTAL	19,30 minutes!	

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ACT 2

Note however that I have found with my set-up that QLOAD and QREF clash with the ACT's Compiling programs. The routine to overwrite an existing file will not read the response 'Y'. The only escape is to call the file something else. For this reason I load Qload only with PLAYER and EVENT.

Rich complains of the beeps on the Program Compiler but I find them reassuring evidence that something is still going on within the machine. I would prefer a similar beep on the Message Compressor. On large files it goes away about its business leaving the TV screen to display the moire patterns that suggest the horrid idea that your machine has crashed. Patience! With much relief you at last see a prompt for the output file. While mentioning the Program Compiler, there is quite an important point worth noting. If you define the output file for errors as SCR and go away for a cup of tea while the QL gets on with it, any mistakes you have made will be displayed on screen. There is a warning buzz as errors come up, but if you're using the Captain, it will clear the screen and return to the main menu. If you're absent at this point, you will miss any errors displayed. So if you plan to give your long-suffering family the benefit of your company while compiling, output your errors to a file that you can check on return or send them to the printer.

As Rich mentions the Compressor offers no defaults for requested files. It becomes very tedious typing in the four filenames. eg. Flp1_locn_msg. My solution using Toolkit-II is to define single Alt-key presses in the boot program. Without a toolkit you might consider re-naming the data files to something shorter. eg. Flp1_lmsg. Make sure you note the new filenames. In ACT there are files enough!

A small point to note is that Object filenames contain the abbreviated form OBJT. eg. Flp2_OBJT_msg. On the other hand in the basic programming Object keywords contract further to OBJ. eg. READ_OBJ. It's a small confusion worth avoiding.

As I hinted before, things really become difficult with ACT when (like me) you embark on writing an adventure, cheerfully ignoring the advice to plan things on paper first. If you subscribe to the school of thought that reckons thorough planning stultifies the creative impulse - programming by the seat of the pants in other words - then believe me you're heading for trouble using ACT. On the QUILL it's much easier to sustain bad programming habits. There, it is relatively simple to consult or amend message and data files - find the crucial Object number of the Zappa-Blaster Proton Gun or the Location number of that ubiquitous Forest Clearing. With ACT however, unless you have this information planned and tabulated, you're in for a lot more time loss. A simple example is the fact that ACT (unlike QUILL) does not allow for synonyms in the Word data - except for user-defined groups like Swearwords. It makes for easier programming therefore if you group synonyms together. ie. 1 N, 2 NORTH. The synonyns can then be accessed in increments of one to the end of the synoym block. But that takes planning. Nothing stultifies imagination more than loading the Word Data file for the hundedth time because you can't remember a word number or you've forgotton to input such necessary verbs as 'Attack','Kill' and 'Exterminate'.

As an inveterate bottom-up design programmer, I wrote some small routines to inspect or print out the files quickly. Location, Object and General Messages are easy to access as they are simple string files. The Word data however is code and has to be loaded and peeked. I find these routines invaluable, though if my program were properly thought out on paper first they ought not to be needed

One very necessary requirement however is proper housekeeping of your files. I finally got onto this, having twice lost my very latest program, forcing me back to earlier versions. Though I know the ideal to be three, I now use two discs for program files. I update the version number with every change and back-up onto the second disc when I have proved any amendment works. To this end I included in my utilities a routine to Format in Flp1_ and back-up all files from Flp2_.

I work similarly with the Picture files. With regard to these, I sometimes found the manual a little difficult to follow, especially on the creation of a Command file

ACT 3

needed when compressing the pictures. When I did finally get the hang of it, I wrote a routine that creates the Command file for you, with little or no trouble.

Another simple program included with my utilities is one to create a scratch file from your backup of the ACT package. The manual asks you to do this at the start of the tutorial. This utility simply saves doing it manually. This selects and copies only those files needed on your working data disc. Like the backup program it formats the disc first – so do be careful!

Finally I customised the Boot program to load these utilities and also the other disparate ACT programs: The Sound Editor, the Picture Compiler, the Picture Compressor, ACTfont, the Qfill2 Tutorial. It also loads both Player and Event program. The advantage of this is that all the programs are drawn under one roof and can be accessed at a keystroke.

Richard informs me that a Special edition of ACT may be appearing. I can't say if this will include any of the sort of facilities I've developed. Nonetheless, I pass on my poor offerings to the great and good Mr Alexander, who will make them available to anyone who can use them.

Armed with these small improvements – I cannot recommend Qload and Qref too highly – I am about to embark on my second adventure. This time from the top down. Pass the paper and pencil!

Dave Watson

Dave and Ann Watson's adventure "MacSporran's Lament", written using ACT should be available from C.G.H. Services by the time you read this. The prog is up and running, all that is needed is some more testing and the manual writing. Cost will be £8.00 for disks and £10.00 for mdv versions. (Difference in price due to 2 mdvs being required, but only one disk. Deduct £1.50 from prices if you are sending media and postage. Overseas please add 10% for additional postage.)

Dave's utilities and boot progs for ACT are in the CGH Services Public Domain library.

One final point. We've discovered that due to the different way that JM and JS ROMs handle the command, one has to exec_w dev$_adventure, rather than just exec dev$_adventure. Otherwise the cursor misbehaves terribly. Thanks to Rich Mellor for sussing this one out.

Richard.

Small ads

John Shaw has written in to say that he has the following for sale:
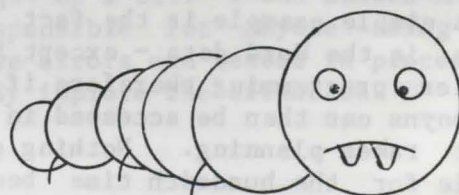
Speedscreen ROM   : £15.00
ICE ROM   : £10.00
Mortville Manor (original) : £7.50

If you're interested write to John Shaw, 3 Barn Owl Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol.

Also for sale from the Editor are the following origianl pieces of software:

Front Page Extra 2 : £15.00 (needs expanded memory)
Front Page   : £10.00
Dungeons (2 mdvs) : £4.00

Cheques payable to Richard Alexander as they are a private sale.

WORM-GERM
A Worm-Germ needs food; but no self respecting cell is going to let itself get eaten. Battle it out in an attempt to become LETHAL!

Price£7.50

Only from NICK WARD
Seale Cottage, Worth Matravers, Swanage, Dorset. BH19 3LQ

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HERE WE GO...HERE WE GO...HERE WE GO

HERE WE GO
From Impact Entertainments
Price : £14.00

A NEW adventure dropped through my letter box recently - too recently in fact to write more than a brief review in time for this edition of QLAF.

Here We Go is the first published adventure using ACT by someone other than ACT creator Steve Sutton - as far as I am aware. It involves getting to the FA Cup Final and at first glance I thought this was a role-playing adventure with a football manager winning rounds of the Cup. Wrong. You are a fan who has to perform various tasks to be able to see your team play at Wembley.

What! No Orcs, dragons, trolls and stuff? No chance. So far the only two living creatures I've found are a sheep and a football fan who will trade something you want for something he wants.

There has been a lot written in QLAF already about ACT but as the acid test of any product is when someone wants to use it (proof of the pudding etc) I had a chat with Here We Go authors Andy Cserbakoi and Phil Jones. They forked out the readies to buy ACT and are otherwise known as Impact Entertainments.

"I found ACT tedious to use at first because of the different modules you have to use. With Quill it's all in one," says Andy C, who programmed Here We Go. Phil Jones wrote the scenario.

"So I found the programming heavy going at first, but once I got going it was fine. In all, Here We Go took between two-and-a-half and three months from scratch, learning about ACT along the way".

Getting back to the action, you start in your house and have to find your way out, resisting the urge to sit down on your comfy sofa in case you miss the match. After that you're on your own because it's far too early to give any hints!

I will tell you to watch out for the maze though. It's cunningly disguised but when you're standing outside it there is a big clue to what it's disguised as! And the adventure has a nasty habit of dropping

you right in it when you're least expecting it.

At £14, I think it is reasonably priced, compared to Imagine (also written with ACT) which costs £20. It's unfair to compare it with some of Alan Pemberton's adventures which are a lot cheaper and shorter.

This is Impact's first go at adventures and I am sure they will get more adventurous (sorry) as they become more familiar with ACT. Andy C describes HWG as "more logical than Imagine" and what it lacks in imaginative scenarios it makes up for in other ways.

The authors have given the items in the adventure size AND weight, which sets a realistic limit on what you can carry around at any one time and that is either a good test or tedious, depending on which way you look at it. The amount of stuff you are allowed to carry around in Dragonsword borders on the ridiculous - all that gear AND a large bed!

I have certainly done enough so far to be intrigued by Here We Go and I shall be getting back to it as soon as possible.

SHANE McGARVEY

LETTERS:

STEVE SUTTON

Dear Richard,

Thanks for the copy of QLAF5. The review of ACT is almost as big as ACT. Basically I think the comments are quite fair and the article is obviously on a sound (and quite long) look at at the system. My thanks go to Richard Mellor.

I'm still thinking that I would like to produce a second version of Imagine. You may recall my mentioning this to you some time ago asking if you knew anyone who might be interested in helping in such a project ? Well, I wonder if it might be worth a brief mention in QLAF ?

What I have in mind is that I would be willing to release certain source material used in IMAGINE and also to provide some programming/testing backup. If anyone thinks they would like to develop a game either along the same lines as IMAGINE or even on quite different lines then they are quite welcome to contact me to sort out ideas.

Just for the record, a game like IMAGINE involves several months of work so such a project would require some degree of dedication. I'm afraid that I simply don't have the time to undertake such a task by myself - too many other interesting software projects to do! Anyway, I think adventures are probably better written by more than one person.

If anyone wants to volunteer please contact Steve Sutton at 42 St Johns Road, Westcott, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3PW. Sounds interesting.

ADVANCED D & D

Ian Bruntlett has written in to say that he is getting his AD&D world reorganised after a five year retirement. He continues:

"Due to the tender loving care taken in setting up a scenario, I don't want it destroyed by eight Conan the Barbarian clones. As well as that it is an "intelligent" scenario in which stupidity could lead to the decimation of the player character party.

So I have a player recruitment problem. Where to find between 4 and 8 players who have a reasonable background in swords and sorcery and who don't charge around killing every living or undead thing in sight. The scenario is "The sinister secret of Saltmarsh" and is full of of double dealing, treachery and plots.

I usually Dungeon Master in real-time soa postal campaign would be an innovation. To give the players a chance to settle down a bit, we'll have a practice adventure before getting into the main campaign. I also have some paperbacks of short stories based in AD&D adventures - mainly about Krynn, the Draconian menace and the Dragon Lords which could give the adventurers a bit of street wise knowledge.

Players & DM will communicate by post about once a week. The ultimate prize in AD&D is to enjoy a good game."

So, if you are interested contact Ian Bruntlett, QL Forum, 25 The Broadway, High Barnes, Sunderland, SR4 8LP.

The Blag2 : Update

LETTER FROM TONY WOOLCOCK

Dear Richard,

I am working on a much improved version of the Blag, called Blag3. (You would never have guessed!) It is much nearer the real thing, with authentic search warrants to complete, more than one crime to be solved, a scoring system and graphic screens. It was to be held on 2 microdrives and cost around £9.00.

Unfortunately this project has been shelved due to the lack of interest in Blag 2.

My thanks to Michael Jackson who reviewed the original game, and to you for supporting the QL. I myself am deserting to the ST. With a friend, I am continuing with the Blag 3 for that machine.

Before the lynch party is sent to my address, I am still programming on the QL and copies of the Blag 2 are still available from me for £7.00.

AW Woolcock, 30 Lyndhurst Road, Ashurst, Southampton, SO2 2DU.

COCK-UP CORNER

STARPLOD

Eagle-eyed readers of Quanta will have noted that their reviewer spotted an error in Starplod. This looks like being down to Publisher error rather than a programming mistake. I should have made sure I was sending out the correct files. Strangely nobody else has spotted the mistake. So, if you want to use the TV icon set on Starplod, send your master copy back and we'll correct the mistake for you.

D-DAY MKII AND STARPLOD

Not being owners of Thor machines, the CGH Services production team, had not realised that the Thor XVI handles its screen differently to the QL. Apologies to Thor XVI users for this. Malcolm Smith is trying to sort this one out. We hope to have an article on the Thor/CST situation in QL Technical Review #1. Any Thor users who feel they've been mislead are fully entitled to a refund, although none of CGH Services products are advertised as being Thor compatible. When we get them to work, we'll advertise the fact.

(And I wonder why we don't sell many copies of our games.)

D-DAY MKII

As some of you found out after the ZX Microfair, copies of the upgrade that Strong Computer Sytems were selling failed to load properly due to errors in the copying process. I am still getting the fall-out from this. Luckily we have got a single disk version that works so we are replacing all the duff versions with working ones.

Well, we hope they are working ones, as there are 32 possible scenarios in the game and it would take all week just to play them all. Also there are differences between the QL ROMs that can play havoc with programs. Of the 20 or so sent out this year, only one has been notified as faulty, and I expect that will be sorted out by the time you read this. But if people do have problems with D-Day or any CGH Services products — we'd like to know so that we can sort them out for you.

Richard

Review: Starplod

Published by C.G.H. Servcies, cost £8.00 (£6.50 if media and postage is supplied by purchaser)

Starplod is an icon driven space adventure set in the year AD 2,002,088. That is the mission started in the year AD 2088 and you have now been woken up after a 2,000,000 year voyage. The problem is however that the Base Ship was hit by an asteroid shortly after leaving Earth, the life support system was damaged and most of the backup fuel lost. Because it has got more exciting everybody has woken up, making your job more difficult. With ten thousand people awake the remaining fuel for the life support will only last a week. Your task is to find some more moronium(fuel).

The game comes with a very helpfull manual, which explains just about everything from making back up copies to how to use the icon system.

At first glance there didn't seem to be enough icons and some of the more familiar commands have been changed, 'utilise' instead of 'use' and 'ascend' instead of 'up' and so on, but once into the game it wasn't so bad, the apparent lack of commands made the game more interesting, also a joy stick can be used, something not possible with conventional text entry systems. One thing I particularly liked about the programme is the ability to save the present position in ram rather than on mdv. (ram save), saving a lot of time if like me you get killed quite regularly.

Playing is fairly straight forward, with you starting in a GAL-FED exploratory craft in orbit round the Space Base. Then using the icon commands you can pilot the craft around the solar system transporting down to planets to search for clues and anything else that may be of use. Your craft is armed so you can even get involved in somebody elses fight.

To go into more detail would spoil the game but one thing I will say is "mountains can not be moved, but banks can".

I enjoyed the game and at the price of £8.00 including mdv it has got to be good value.

Dave Cook

JEWEL ADVENTURE

1. You must treat the scorpion with kid gloves, else it will sting you.

2. Deserts soon make you thirsty, so make sure you are carrying some water with you.

3. The troll likes to eat mushrooms, even if they do look a bit suspect.

4. If you 'search' the rabbit hole, you will find a lever, which when pulled, will reveal some steps down.

5. The kettle in the kitchen is related to a certain famous magic lamp.

6. Pour the cornflakes into a bowl to find a 'free gift'.

7. Balloons are very handy to carry gas around.

8. The rock is a sturdy anchor for a rope.

9. The giraffe will follow anyone for a handful of leaves and is very good to reach high places.

10. Gas will explode when lit to create holes in walls.

11. Penknives are very good at opening old safes.

12. Dogs enjoy chasing after sticks.

13. Scorpions kill off any enemies whom you can't convert into friends.

14. WHEN YOU ENTER THE COMMAND SAY (word), MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO NOT USE QUOTE MARKS OR ANYTHING ELSE BETWEEN THE TWO WORDS.

15. Old Dracula movies found a very good use for stakes, although you will not need a hammer.

16. You need a pair of pliers to cut wire.

17. Try 'potting' the snooker ball.

18. Funny things lie hidden in the trunks of trees.

19. A snooker cue will extend your reach.

Rich Mellor July 1988

Mortville Manor clues?

The following tips are from an Atari ST mag, (we're not proud) so I can't be certain that they actually apply to the QL version. Check 'em out.

The wooden rod has to be put in the wooden ball on top of the cupboard.

To enter the secret passage in the cellar, get the knife from Bob's room and put it in the diamond shaped opening.

Place the ring from Guy's room in the bowl and turn it to pass the disused trap

Forget the well.

The "wall of silence" refers to the coat of arms.

In the secret chamber search the body and use the item you find in the attic.

Richard

Review:

FROM THE TOWER OF VALAGON

Published by CGH Services, price £8.00 or £6.50 if you supply media and postage.

First of all I'd like to say that I thought this was a great game. Especially as it is only £8.00, although there could have been a little more background to the story line.

One thing that puzzles me about Alan's style is that I can't decide if these are spoofs or serious adventures. I say this because jokes come up as we travel in his world. These jokes are usually totally irrelevant to the situation but I think we can forgive him as their sheer adventurability overrides them.

The main adventure is quite difficult. In other words anything you find must be needed, even oven-ready orcs!!!

You also get an eight page booklet. This gives you useful tips when typing in your text. For a mere £8.00, it is a bargain. For £6.50, it is an absolute giveaway.

(Computer Shopper 9, November 1988, has a review of this game which gives more technical detail.)

Ross T. Best

WARGAMES REVIEWS

WAR IN THE EAST : PRICE £39:00 (available from TK Computerware)

SQUADRONS : PRICE £13:00 (available from TK Computerware)

D-DAY MKII : PRICE £12:00 (disk), (£15.00 on mdv) (available from CGH Services)

REVIEWERS QUALIFICATIONS:

Air Training Corps. (Many years ago!)
Very Keen Chess Player
Stayed in Normandy for a holiday.
Have read Field Marshal Montgomery's Autobiography

Although the above may seem a little flippant, I thought it important that I should state
my level of expertise before you read my Review. So often in Magazines, writers give bad
criticisms of, for example Adventures, and when you buy them you find that they were
excellent. The Reviewer clearly wasn't an Adventure player. I, as you can see, am not a
War Games Player. Indeed, the main reason for getting the Software was to try and learn
something about the strategies involved in these types of simulation. I must confess it
has been a stimulating exercise.

WAR IN THE EAST

At £39:00 this is the most expensive of the War Games. There is the cut down version at
£19:50, but as this only covers the first of three large scenarios it probably represents
poor value for money. What then do we get for our money? Well, lets look first at the
Instruction Manual.

THE MANUAL

This sets out quite clearly the purpose behind the Simulation.

You play the part of the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army in the Summer of 1941. You
have been given instructions to defeat Russia in three months. The first scenario covers
Operation Barbarossa. Phase Two takes you on to Stalingrad in the summer of 1942 and
Phase Three sees you in 1944 on the retreat as you desperately try to hold on to Warsaw.
The computer plays the part of the Russian Commander. (It is not possible to swap roles.)

The manual goes on to tell you that the first part takes a maximum of twenty 'Turns',
with the warning that, in order to simulate weather conditions, 'Turns' 1 to 13 are
considered 'Summertime' and conditions for you are good. 'Turns' 14 to 16 are in the
'Rainy' season and all attack strengths and movements are cut by half. This, however,
does not apply to the Russians, who being used to the conditions suffer no setbacks. With
'Turns' 17 to 20 'Winter' sets in. The map turns white and your attack strength is
further diminished. Again the Russians are unaffected.

As if this wasn't enough, Victory conditions only will exist if by the end of the 20
'Turns' you have captured the cities of Moscow, Kiev, Lenningrad, Stalingrad, Rostov,
Odessa, Minsk and Kovno. If less than seven cities are occupied, then this is considered
to be a Russian victory. Similar stringent conditions apply for the other two Scenarios
including, in the final one, further impediments to account for the lack of morale in the
German side!

It doesn't take much of a intellect to realise that the odds are pretty well stacked
against you as indeed they were in the Summer of'41, and that speed is of the essence.

The next problem you have to deal with is the nature of both Armies. You have eleven
different types of troops. There are 'Infantry' Brigades and Divisions, 'Panzer'(Tank)
Brigades and Divisions, 'S.S'. Infantry and Panzers (The Elite), and finally Hungarian,

Rumanian and Italian Infantry Divisions. Each has a different 'Fighting' and 'Movement' potential. For example, the S.S. Panzer Division has a 13/8 fight/move rating, whereas an Italian Infantry Division has only a 2/4. The Russian Army has similar notation, but they are restricted to six different fighting Units including Partisans.

The 'Terrain' on the map varies too, from 'Mountains' which have a travelling difficulty of 4, to the 'Clear Plains' which allow a restriction of 1. Mountains are easier to defend, plains are not. In between these we have 'Forests', 'Swamps', 'Cities' and 'Rivers'.

The Manual then goes on to describe how to move the Troops and some complex 'Attack Chart Ratios' which show you how the outcome of various types of battles are resolved.

Right then, so far so good ... lets start the Program up.

THE PROGRAM

The first menu which appears is one which asks you whether you have a standard Q.L., a 128k, 256k or 512k memory extention fitted. I, fortunately have a Trump Card with Disks, so I opt for the final category and press key no. 4, a German Flag appears on the screen and after a wait of two minutes exactly (it's mostly in Basic), the options appear .... do I want phase 1,2,3 or a saved game? (I note that a game can only be saved after 3 rounds has passed), I go for no.1.

The display appears.

The top two thirds of the screen is taken up with a yellow map of the Battle Area. On the map, quite clearly are displayed two parallel rows of opposing armies. The Germans are in black, the Russians in Red. The whole thing is very impressive (on my colour monitor) and most professional. A Unit flashes at me.

On the lower third of the screen there are various prompts i.e. The type of unit flashing (ready for movement), in my case a German Infantry Division 6/5. The terrain they are marching on, River/Coast; how may moves they have left in that turn, 5. and the number of the turn, no.1. A box also tells me what phase mode I am in i.e. Movement ZC. (The ZC means I am in a Zone of Combat çnear the enemy¾ and I must decide whether to Fight, Retreat or Stay.)

Well, as Montgomery said in his Memoirs, "Know your enemy", so I think I'll go into 'View' Mode and look around the Map. I press the letter 'V' and use the cursors. The map scrolls and pans its way across the screen in a very jerky fashion (due presumably to it being written in Basic).

I count up my Forces, 66 varying Units; the Russians have 88 ... but of course mine are better trained and equipped?! I decide, to hold the Northern front and attack in the South where the Russians seem weaker (Who was this guy Rommel anyway!)

I press 'M' and return to 'Movement' Mode, The German Infantry Division flashes at me, it seems to want to Fight! Opposing it is ... now let me see, a Russian Infantry Division 1/4, the odds seem in my favour, lets attack. I press the figure 5 which indicates that I want to fight what is in front of me, and the screen pans on to my next fighting Force, a German SS Panzer Brigade 13/8..... and so on right through all 66 of my Units.

At no. 66 I look at the Clock, 40 minutes have passed since I took over command ... this is going to be a long evening! I enter my instructions for no.66 and the Mode automatically changes to 'Attack' Phase. The computer shows the results of my initial strategy ... a few poppings occur and Russian Units vanish from the screen. (Zees is a peez of Cake mien friends!)

The Russian Movement phase then takes over, 88 pans and scrolls occur, I then learn that the original programmer put this phase in so that you could make a cup of coffee, mow the lawn and make love to the next door neighbour! Regrettibly it takes a minimum of 10

minutes to occur, much more in the later stages as more Russians appear out of the woodwork to reinforce their comrades. I found this the weakest part of the whole thing, for it is totally unwatchable and occurs too fast for you to follow what is happening. If only this phase had been designed to have occurred instantly ... are there ony good programmers reading this?

So, on we go through two more 'Turns' until I can save my position ... two hours forty minutes have now passed and I am suffering from Battle Fatigue! I tuck my trusty QL. up for the night knowing that I have another 57 'Turns' to go before the end is nigh! C'est la Guerre! (That's War!)

CONCLUSION

This is a very professional simulation and, as far as I can tell, extremely accurate in its detail. The display is good and easy to follow.

The 'Scrolling' and 'Panning' graphics are poor and I strongly recommend the use of 'SPEEDSCREEN' or 'LIGHTNING', I used the former for a much improved effect.

The 'wait' whilst the Russian Forces move, is tedious and distracting.

I estimate that it is going to take me about one month, at two hours a night to complete the War. That is , if I am not defeated before then, which seems quite probable. I can then, of course, start all over again with a different strategy, having learned from my mistakes.

Finally, I must say it is most definately, designed for a 'Purist' who is prepared to spend a very long time thinking about the types of strategies and tactics to employ . Not forsomeone with little patience or love of deep planning.

SQUADRONS

This Game got a bit of a 'Thumbs Down' from our Founder when he reviewed it in on of the very early Mdv-Qlafs. However, when I bought it and ran the program I was pleasantly suprised. I found it very playable, but not in the same category as 'WAR IN THE EAST'.

THE MANUAL

Provided with this program is a very comprehensive 18 page book. The introduction sets the scene ... "The time is 0600hrs. on a summers day in 1940 during the Battle of Britain...." It continues in the same vein describing how you are an Area Controller responsible for defending Southern Britain. Your job is to deploy fighter aircraft at your disposal from designated airfields to intercept and destroy incoming enemy Fighters and Bombers.

You have control over the Aircraft scrambled, the composition of the Squadrons by number and the Airfield they come from. You decide on their flying height and direction. Too high and they miss their target, too low and the enemy have a distinct advantage.

The game is played at about five times Realtime, a clock being permanently displayed. This is quite an important feature as the Sun's path is automatically computed and losses are incurred if your Squadrons are attacked 'from out of the Sun'.

The time is also important in as much as your Fighters have only a limited 'Airtime', ... run out of fuel and more losses occur.

Radar stations are sited around the coast and if they are allowed to be bombed, the appropriate part of the display will be 'Blind' to enemy aircraft until repaired.

WARGAMES 4

You also must warn Cities of impending attack to minimise casualties and remember to sound the all-clear so as to cut down on the loss of Factory production. Anti-Aircraft guns situated near Airfields must be alerted if enemy aircraft are near, but care should be taken because they will not discriminate between friend or foe, and you could lose your own aircraft.

So, there we are then, quite a few things to be thinking about; now lets have a look at the display.

THE DISPLAY

Once the program is Booted up (there is protection on the cartridge, by the way), the display shows a very good picture of a Wellington(?) Bomber over a landscape. Soon you are asked which skill level you require (1 to 5). On pressing the appropriate key, the program checks that the original Mdv. is in place.

The screen then clears and you are presented with a very good outline of Southern Britain, the type of display you might see if you were watching Radar. This is one of seven possible screens, all switchible via the (F) keys. You are able by means of these to call up the 'Help' commands, the main battle plotting table, the detail of all enemy aircraft in the area, flying times and directions of all your own craft, and finally, all the status detail of the Airfields.

Now, at this point I had better explain one of the main criticisms which were highlighted by Richard in his previous review; i.e. the accuracy of the simulation. You see, on the main battle display map, the 'Fighter ' Airfields chosen are Filton (near Bristol), Tangmere (near Hampshire), Lympne (near Dover), Northolt (W. London), Debden (N. London) and Exeter (in Devon). Now the problem here is that quite a few of these were not 'Fighter' Stations and therefore are not in the true spirit of simulations.

I do not subscribe to this view. The Airfields are so designated in the game, because they were far enough apart to pose problems with the deployment of your available resources. (One of the main objects of this simulation), i.e. You have to weigh up the pros and cons of say, bringing a Squadron from Exeter to reinforce your existing Fighters, taking into account the long flying time and the defence of Exeter. Landing your Exeter squadron at Filton for refuelling will result in losses because the pilots are landing at a strange airfield. This, however, can be counteracted by allowing them to circle the 'field for a while before they land. I trust you are getting some idea of the many decisions you have to make during the progress of the Battle.

A Game may start by your Radar spotting enemy aircraft coming across the Channel from Normandy. The Radar image tells you the it is a Medium force, composition as yet unknown. Ninety of your 480 fighters are at Tangmere, so you decide to deploy 50 Fighters initially to take on the 'Bandits'.

You therefore say " Airfield Tangmere Scramble 50". You actually type A T S 50. A reply flashes on the screen "Squadron A airborne".

You continue "Squadron A climb to 30000 feet." You type S A A(ngels) 30 , a reply is flashed, "Roger"

As the invasion is coming from the South you continue by saying "Squadron A fly on a bearing of 180 degrees" - you type S A V(ector) T(o) 180, again "Roger" appears on the display.

The higher the level you try, the more Enemy squadrons appear from all directions trying to attack England, and thus you soon find your time very taken up moving Squadrons in for the attack, watching their airtime and fuel reserves, warning cities of an impending bombing, alerting Gun emplacements and groping for your Vallium!

Success is more likely to occur if you attack with the Sun behind you, at a greater height and with superior numbers.

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As time passes, one of the Enemy 'blobs' on the Radar screen suddenly splits into two. This is the 'Fighter' escort returning to France. (All very convincing stuff!) a tip here - do not try and chase them - they are as fast as you and anyway they can't do any damage to Cities or Radar.

When you decide to end you press 'Q'(uit) and quite an amazing summary of your achievements in the form of a report appear, even signed by the Group Captain! He will either praise or chastise you, depending on your ability and skill level.

SUMMARY

I found this a most absorbing and entertaining strategy game, with the emphasis on Strategy rather than Simulation.

Although there is a pause key, generally the only proper way to play it is by letting the clock tick away without interruption. Then you begin to feel all the pressures of your Fighters running out of fuel, warning signals appearing that Cities are being devastated because you didn't warn of invasion (where did those Bombers come from?) and many other variables.

Dogfights and Bombdrops are realistically displayed by the Radar blip flashing and the whole thing is very convincing and exceptionally professional by any standards.

D-DAY MKII

I must confess than when I bought this Game from STRONGS, I was bitterly disappointed with the Graphics. So much so that I declared it unplayable and promptly discarded it to a bottom drawer. What I did not realise was that it had been released unmodified in its early form. Now with some judicious Pokes etc. What a transformation! (Congratulations and many thanks to Rich Mellor). (Actually Rich has practically re-written the main program - Ed.)

This Simulation, if anything, falls between 'War in the East' and 'Squadrons' in its format.

It is a versatile Strategy Game allowing the following Play formats:

a. One player against the computer.
b. Two players against each other.
c. Choice of Role play. i.e. Germans or Allies.
d. A random 15 or 50 Unit battle scenario.
e. (In the two player mode), a User-defined Army of between 10 and 50 Units.
f. Four screen scenarios.

THE MANUAL

Provided with the Game is a useful, well written 14 page Manual. It contains nearly all the necessary instructions including drawings of the four scenario areas. (It omits any descriptions of the terrain. Ed.) As Richard has suggested that some of us might wish to try Postal War Games, I shall confine this appraisal to a description of the 'Two Player - (F5) 50 Unit' variation of the game as I feel that this is the only one suitable for this type of application. I shall refer in more detail to the Manual as Battle commences.

Here we go then, Disk in ....

THE GAME

The first message to appear on the screen is the question, "Do you want a saved game?" On pressing "N", the screen changes and we are presented with a picture of a Tank.

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This is followed by "1 or 2 Players?"

Entry of the figure 2 moves the menu on to request " Do you want a (F1)(15) unit or a (F5)(50) unit or a (User Defined) Army?

I call up the (F5) version. The four Scenario Options then are displayed:

THE LANDING: BREAKING OUT: TO ARNHEM: ARNHEM INVASION:

Well there is only one place to start... at the beginning:

THE LANDING

Taking up approximately half of the screen is the Map Window. This seems to cover about one tenth of the whole scenario area.

Below that is the Information Window. This provides the Action Menu.

Along side that is the Clock, together with a Bar representation of the Army strength levels.

Dotted across the Map are many symbols. By moving my cursor across each one and then pressing (F1) their identity is revealed. A quick glance at the Manual reveals their potential.

Now, lets see what we have? ... A 'Cromwell Tank', Attack 70, Defence 60, Movement 12, Gun range 14. A 'Mortar', Attack 75, Defence 20, Movement 0, Gun range 16. and so on, through Shermans, M4-75's, Bridgelayers, Howitzers, Infantry and many more, including the German Forces.

A press of (F5) brings up a picture of the whole scenario in miniature, and it enables you to evaluate your overall strategy plan.

Movement of Units is quite simple, just position the cursor over, say a Tank, and the press (M). You are then asked if you require Automatic movement (in a straight line) or Manual. The directional cursors then enable you to reposition your Forces.

A similar procedure is followed when you wish to Fire at an apponent. You choose you Unit to fire and then the Target, a keypress then sends a realistic gun-type noise and on the screen a line between the two units simulates the trace of the missile. You will be rewarded by a message "Target Destroyed", or" Damaged". If you are over ambitious, then you receive the warning "Target out of Range" or "Out of line of fire"(ie. Obstructions in between).

The programming also caters for close combat, thus by directly putting your Unit on the square occupied by an enemy one, the strength difference is calculated and the winner decided by the computer.

You then continue Moving and Firing until you are out of movement and firing points. The opposition then takes over.

Following his turn you are given the option of 'Saving' the position.

CONCLUSION

This is a well thought out and adaptable program. The manual is very clear and the Simulation is very playable in all of its Modes.

I particlarly enjoyed the User-Defined Mode which allowed for a great deal more thought to be put into the 'War Effort". It suffers, as does 'War in the East', with the Q.L.s poor scrolling ability. Both need the services of 'Speedscreen' or 'Lightning'.

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A COMPARISON OF ALL THREE

WAR IN THE EAST:

FOR: This is the most extensive and accurate Battle simulation of all three Programs. Its gets as close to real conditions as it is possible. I was particularly impressed with the effect of the simulated Seasonal changes which have to be taken into account for a successful completion of the War.

AGAINST: The price of this program at £39:00 puts it out of the reach of all but the most meticulous and enthusiastic 'Wargamers'. It is very tedious in parts, and months rather than weeks must be contemplated when considering completing the whole thing. Turbo'ing or QLib'ing the prog could produce a much quicker game.

Reduce the price to say, £20:00 and it would represent excellent value for money.

SQUADRONS

FOR: A good visual representation, plenty of realtime action and much to think about. It can be played in in an hour or two, depending on level and whim. Very addictive for 'Chess Types' and is very good value for money.

AGAINST: Not by strict definition, a War Game. It does not have a 'Save' facility or the facility for you to swop sides. A 'single player' game only.

D-DAY

FOR: Very versatile with its many Modes. The only one of the three, suitable for 'Postal' Gaming. The player has a choice of 'Short' or 'Long' games and I never found it to be tedious. This one gives you the feel of War Games without the feeling of 'Overdraft'! Very good value for money.

John Shaw

EDITORIAL NOTE:

D-Day MkII now also has a 4 page insert in the manual giving details of changes to the original manual together with a brief description of the terrain.

We should also make it clear that the turbo'd version is only suitable for expanded QL's and that a colour monitor or TV is really preferable as the terrain is in colour. The upgraded version is also best run from disks, but can be run from mdv_s. (See also Cock-up Corner for details of any problems we have found with this program.)

Fantasia Adventure writer, Stephen Belsey kindly wrote to say it was O.K. to make his adventure Public Domain. Thanks to Ron Peach and Malcolm Smith I now have a copy. N.B. it takes ages to load and at least one of the variables conflicts with the THOR. Volunteers please to improve this.

Martin Jarosik has sent me a complete disk full of German Public Domain software in exchange for a disk load of British stuff. A good deal all round. Now there are some items amongst this disk load which can be used with no problems, including a puzzle prog called "Slider". I haven't had time to thoroughly investigate the contents of the disk but if you can translate from German into English, there are several games and utilities there which could be fun. I've discovered a Kingdom type economics game and a text based Risk type game. Plus a host of utilities, including QLCAD, 2 shell progs, a drawing package, a maths prog, toolkits etc. If you can do any translation work please send us the results and we can put English versions onto our games and utilities disks.

Thanks also to Ultrasoft in Germany for kindly sending their VT100 Terminal Emulator program to add to the Public Domain library. I've sent them some juicy games in exchange. The onscreen commands are mainly in English, although the _doc file is, understandably, in German.

Alan Pemberton has now QLib'd his early text adventure "Adventure Playtime". This will go into the P.D. library alongside his SuperBasic version so that people can inspect the code. Note that this is only available on disk as QL World have the rights to the mdv_ version.

Other adventures that have been given a spring cleaning are : Treasure Hunt and Werewolf and Wanderer. The latter now has improved error-trapping and has been Qsaved. It hasn't been compiled as it runs quite quick enough as it is.

On the utilities front, Dave Watson has sent in his Boot Prog and Utilities Prog for use with the ACT system. We hope that more people can send in similar utilities.

Rich Mellor has agreed to put his Config_ bas prog into the Public Domain. This allows you to set-up your Psion Progs as you like them.

Ian Bruntlett has donated his universal boot progs, as used in his disk based QL Forum. Ian will be more than willing to help people who want to use these progs. We shall probably be using them on our...

Super Compilation Disks. We are rapidly approaching the situation where we can have disks full of adventures etc. At present there are 3 Disks: Adventures, Games, Utilities. Each will have all the available progs (in English) under those headings.

We have also started mdv_ compilations. These bring together short progs and utilities onto one mdv_. So far we have mdv's of graphics demo's, utilities and several not-too-serious progs. Space on these for more!

If you have either a CP/M or MS-DOS emulator, then you'll know of the Public Domain libraries for these operating systems. I can offer about 20 PC adventures if you want them. If you can add to these collections please do. I am quite happy to swap copies of P.D. software so that we can have the largest possible library available to us.

Just in: Fraser Harkins' Four Game compilation. Nothing too fancy – but you might enjoy them (or your kids.)

Rich Mellor and Tony Wells have got the QL Adventure Designer package working and compiled. Have written to Tony Bridge for his comments on making it P.D.

Michael L. Jackson has completed work on his version of Andrew Nelson's adventure "The Aftermath of the Asimovian Disaster".

Oliver Neef has allowed us to include his card game simulation "Black Jack" in the P.D. library. Thanks.

Please note that this software is offered in good faith. We will of course withdraw any software that may have been included in this disk in error, i.e. which is still copyrighted in U.K.

We are also starting a register of P.D. software on the QL to clarify the status of progs.

Prices: see enclosed price list.

Richard