

One more for the archives, Walt! (U.S. rates will be 15¢ plus postage) 1-1

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November 1st 1974 P.J.Birks Prop. Print Run 50

GREATEST HITS is somewhere between the tenth and twentieth NGC zine, and is produced by Pete Birks, 39 Handforth Road, London, S49 6LL. Its cost will be 50p plus postage, but ~~this issue is free.~~

Right, that's got the boring introductions over with; now we can get down to the interesting bits. This first issue will mainly be devoted to the true story of SCOTDIECUB IV, entitled,.....

TO BEU AND BACK

At around 1.00p.m. I wandered soberly into the Lamb (advt), expecting to meet 'Tricky Dicky' Sharp and Druncan 'two-faced' Morris. Imagine, then, my joy when none other than Steve Doubleday caught my eye. Overcoming my surprise at seeing Steve stoop to drink with a crook like Duncan, I cannily timed my entrance so that Morris had little option but to buy me a drink. Thus began a weekend of total inebriation.

Within ten minutes Sharp showed his balding pate, and Morris forced me to show my wallet. Upon glancing his eyes on a fistful of 25 notes, he suddenly remembered that he 'needed' some money. 'How much?' I asked, trying not to show pain at the arm-lock he had me in. 'Oh, I should think that a tenner would do, you squirt.' By now I was doubling up in agony as a result of one of Duncan's playful kicks to the groin, so I was in no mood to argue.

~~Eventually we decided to get under way.~~ Sharp offered me 3 to 1 odds that he would have a parking ticket. I naturally accepted, winning 50p as a result. The truth can now be revealed about Sharp's car. Yes folks, Richard's Volks-Wagen is a variant! I suppose one could say that about the owner as well.

It was not until 5.50p.m. that we arrived in Nottingham to collect Ian Noble from a Nottingham pub. We left the town at seven, Sharp having regained 20p of the 50p he owed me by finishing on double 18 in three darts. Grrrrr. The journey north now became a little boring, and even more cramped. It was not until 10.30p.m. that we arrived in some obscure town near Lancaster called Galgate, kind of a cross between Colgate and Calvary. Upon entering the local imbibing house, it caught our eye that the local peasants threw at a dartboard from six feet, as opposed to the eight feet thrown in London, and, as it turned out, Scotland. Determined not to be put off, however, Sharp and I soundly trounced one pair, and were only just beaten by the best two players in the town. We had to decline an offer to play in their local league on the following Wednesday, stating that 'travel commitments' made it impossible. During the time that we were playing, Steve enquired of the barman, 'Have you got any pies?' Unsuspectingly, the barman replied, 'Well, there's three or four left....' 'Right, I'll have them', said Steve.

~~Dumbfounded, the poor man served up three fair-sized pies, one of them huge.~~ Steve gave the remaining two to the four of us looking on in amazement.

Eventually we staggered out, only to be accosted by some northerner, who insisted that we direct him to Lancaster. My reply is not printable. The journey continued. In Carlisle we stopped at the house of one of Duncan's ex-University friends. These charming people insisted on stuffing us full of food. Nobody objected, and Sharp paid my bill, thus cancelling out his debt.

And so, at 4.30a.m, thirteen unbelievable hours after we had set out, starry-eyed, from London, we arrived at Wink Thompson's abode. Immediately Wink demanded 60p, and got it. Walking into the lounge, we perceived messrs Berd, Sherrad, Walsh, and others playing Formula One. Sharp immediately started what was to be a long series of sarcastic digs. 'Oh look!' he said, 'Children playing games!' which seemed a good point to fall asleep, so I did.

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I would like the opportunity to say the space-filler will not be used in this zine.

Next morning I slowly emerged from unconsciousness, only to be shanghaied into a regular Dippy game. Preference lists were used, so I of course gained France. Sharp got England, Dave Allen Germany, Doug Wakefield Italy, Steve Doubleday Austria, Richard Donaldson Russia, and I just cannot remember who got Turkey. Sharp, of course, moved to the English Channel in Spring 1901, thereby violating our agreement. This was the beginning of his downfall, since I immediately allied with Dave Allen, and thus eliminated Sharp by 1903. While all this was going on, Austria and Italy were dismembering Russia and Turkey. By 1905 it became clear that my alliance with Germany and Steve's alliance with Doug were both, of necessity, permanent. A stalemate line was set up, and the game ended as a four-way draw. I obtained my second consecutive equal first, and Sharp gained his second consecutive seventh. His comment at the end of the game was, 'What about my rating?'

Meanwhile, Waldie, Morris, and the other kiddies were playing Formula One. Heavens! I haven't mentioned Brian Yare! Yes, this archaeological remnant of the jurassic era was indeed present! Somebody actually spoke to him, one can only assume that the poor soul was not aware of Yare's identity.

Lunchtime finally came, and Wakefield, Allen, Noble, and I visited a local inn. Their pies were unbelievable (on the good side) and the spirit measures were 50% more than English ones! This is the one good thing about Scotland that I can remember.

About an hour later, and somewhat less sober, we returned to Doug Wakefield's car. Doug immediately proceeded to drive the wrong way up a one-way street. His excuse was, 'So? I'm only going one way!'

Finally returning to Lineside Walk, the meeting got down to business, and the poker game started. The players were Richard Sharp, Brian Yare, Ron Fisher, Duncan Morris, Dave Allen, and myself. Stakes were nowhere near the last meeting at Amersham, where losses and gains were in excess of £100, but there were still some exciting moments. Sharp immediately started winning, and Dave Allen seemed to be losing. Yare and I were progressing quietly. After about an hour, I was six or so pounds in the black, as was Sharp. Then came a hand of 'Silly Buggers' an incredible game where one places one's card on one's forehead, so that everybody can see your card, except you. The highest card takes the pot. Well, there were six players, and the highest card I could see was a seven! Naturally I thought that I was on to a good thing, and started pushing up the pot. Finally there were three of us left, me, Yare, and Fisher. Fisher went two pounds, Yare raised to six and I called. Ron stacked, and I looked at my card, which only had to beat a seven to scoop a £15 pot. What was my card? The two of clubs! Ah well, easy come, easy go. The game never seemed the same after that, and I came out about £5 down. Sharp won £15, Yare about the same, and Ron Fisher around £7 or £8. Dave Allen lost about £19, and Morris about £13, which he paid in the form of a cheque to me.

That night we played the locals at darts, and Sharp raked off yet more money. Colin Bennett kept on about how playing poker was a sin against God. On being asked what money was for anyway, he replied 'Drinking, (hic)'. So much for Godliness. We finally returned home, (as it was beginning to become) and I, to my immense surprize, won first prize in the raffle, i.e. a single bed!

Needless to say, I immediately retired to my well won sleep, only to find that Willy Haughn had stolen my pillow. I just didn't have the heart to wake him up, since I might have disturbed his teddy bear, so I made use of a blanket.

Next morning, I was wangled into a game of Mercator, Doug Wakefield's great new thirteen player variant. I got Argentina, and Sherrad got Brazil. Presuming (quite correctly as it turned out) that these two countries should always ally. Sherrad thought otherwise, and I achieved my greatest ambition, that of coming ~~13th in a Diplomacy game! This lasted until it was time to go home, with Sharp, Wright, Doubleday and Morris all stabbing each other on the last move. So~~ typical, I thought.

That, you might think, was it. We set off from Rhu to multitudinous waves and abuses, at about four o' clock. Morris had somehow persuaded Sharp to drive back via Ochel Hills, so that we could pick up his duplicator and transport it to London. The road from Rhu to Kinrossshire takes you right across Scotland, and we did not arrive until seven. Sharp and I soundly trounced Doubleday and Morris in a game of team chess, quite a victory when one considers that Sharp was trying to drive the car at the time (trying being the operative word). Doubleday's excuse was that 'his bladder failed him!'

Arriving in Sir Alec Douglas-Home's constituency (or should I say ex-constituency) I could not help but notice the slight difference between the acres and acres of farming land the slums of Glasgow, but one mustn't let that prejudice one. We had a marvellously enjoyable meal at Duncan's fiancée's parent's house. (notice that my typewriter has an acute. Other unique goodies will be shown later) and it was not until about 8.30 that we were ~~let out~~ allowed to leave.....

And so the great trek home continued, or should I say started, since our journey to Duncan's had taken us yet further north! The road south from Edinburgh was unspeakable, and we only just managed to reach England in time for a drink. Morris, of course, thought we were still in Scotland, which says a lot for his geography. I was under the impression that everybody knew what country Otterburn was in. It was in this pub that we started our game of 'Mental Diplomacy' a new variant. Since only four of us were playing, we took Austria (Steve), Russia (Richard), Turkey (me) and Italy (Morris). No board was used, and the largest player gave his moves first (largest in terms of pieces, that is) and so on. We got up to Spring 1905, when victory was ceded to Sharp, with Steve second, me third, and Duncan fourth. If you think that the game sounds difficult, you should try playing it.

It was on this short run that many secrets were revealed; Ian Noble's bladder is the weakest in England (and Scotland) and Duncan Morris...no... ..I can't say it. It's just too cruel. By midnight, then, we reached Newcastle, and luckily found an Indian restaurant with a Chinese waiter, that actually served booze. The other four all chose exotic Indian dishes, unpatriotic sods, but I, in a fit of Sharpian patriotism, had Steak and chips, and delicious it was too.

Eventually, about six pints later, we got going again, and the rest of the journey was relatively uneventful. We dropped Ian Noble off at his doorstep at a mere forty miles an hour; he seemed uninjured though, and at 5.30a.m. we staggered into 27 Elm Close for about two hours deserved sleep.

Tiptoeing up the stairs so as not to awake the children I collapsed onto the bed.

I was disturbed after what seemed to be about ten seconds, but was in fact nearer two hours, by Richard yelling 'Mr Birks, sir, this is your early morning call.' 'Fiss off!' I replied, only to be forcibly ejected by a well placed boot. I struggled into sanity and my trousers and we prepared for breakfast, only to discover that it was no longer being served.

By nine we were on the London train. Sharp and Doubleday polished off the Times Crossword, while Morris was beginning to look decidedly ill. Thus we came to Baker Street, and 'The Breaking Of The Fellowship' to quote Shakespeare, took its final turn. I returned home, Sharp went to Red Lion Sq, Steve returned to sunny Staines, and Morris went to the lavatory. A fitting end to an unfitting weekend.

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Well, that's it. Comments, denials, etc would be appreciated and unexpected. Needless to say, I have manipulated certain facts, and I apologise in advance if anybody was thinking of issuing a writ for libel. I'm going to use the rest of this page to outline my plans and policies, which could well be described as being as mad as Sharp's and Haven's combined.

My house rules will be basic NGC with a few exceptions. First, I intend to follow the rulebook where it states that 'An order that is badly written, if unambiguous, must be followed.' This could apply in a number of cases, so people who deliberately miswrite orders had better make sure that they are ambiguous! My deadlines will be four-weekly, and I intend to carry ten regular NGC games. I do not like variants, so I won't be running any. One game, I hope, will be a non-NGC game and will be an 'invitational' game on the Diplomacy World Demonstration game lines. I hope to get some pretty famous names in this game, and to have a commentary after each move. This, I feel, will make the zine more interesting for non-players. Other such features, and hopefully some articles, will combine to make this one of Britain's bigger zines, and certainly the largest NGC zine besides DOLCESTOSS.

The present batch of NGC zines, although well-GMed and interesting for players, just do not tend to attract non-players. What NGC zines, for example, run wargaming articles like those in Hannibal, ratings articles and brilliant pre s like in Mad Policy, articles such as 'Squibs With Foreign Stamps On' in 1901.a.a.t., or give the insane incoherence that one gets in bellicus?

It is stuff like this that makes one look forward to many of the non-NGC zines, and not to NGC stuff. Now I wouldn't like anyone to think that I don't like NGC zines. I love them all (grovel grovel) but I think that I can be a bit more ambitious.

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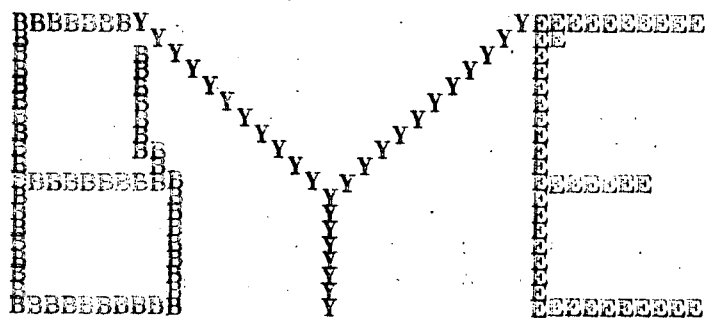
Just time for a short spacefiller to explain the strange characters on my typeface. It was once possessed by ~~the/let/ll~~ a translator of English into Spanish and French. Hence the ñ, ñ, ñ, ñ, ñ. Quite spectacular, what?

And so I get to the last page. God knows what it will be like when I have to type twenty or so pages. This last page will be used to put my newly-found communicative power to good use. (What's it like now that the boot is on the other foot, Figgott?). Having read such a lot of bullshit about the Calhauer Awards, I intend to add some of my own.

The sides can perhaps be summarised as follows. On one side are those who feel that Sharp's actions were justified in 'guiding' inexperienced NGC members on how to vote. They include Richard Sharp, Andy Davidson, and Duncan Norris. On the other side are those who feel that Richard's actions were 'jingoistic', and would inevitably lead to a final split between the States and Britain. On this side are Hartley Patterson, John Figgott, and Nigel Sloan, although the leader is undoubtedly Hartley. He has already written to Richard, stating that it would be Richard who would be made the scapegoat in his articles in Diplomacy World and Diplomacy Review. This presumably means that Hartley is going to try and patch things up by making excuses. I fail to see why this is necessary. Politics (and any interaction of human communication can be called Politics) and Democracy do not ask why a person votes as he does, merely who he votes for. It is probably undeniable that many British voters voted British simply because they were British, and it is this that Hartley criticises. He is trying (as have some others) to state what a person's vote should be based on, i.e. not on nationality, but on quality. Such a high-minded moral attitude is not only impractical, it is indefensible. If I want to vote for Richard Walkerdine because he is a friend of mine I shall bloody well do so, even if Calhauer himself was standing for the award! Prejudices are part and parcel of everyday life, and to attempt to tell us that our vote should be completely objective is as undemocratic (I take that word back. Please substitute 'insane') as telling a person who voted Tory because he liked the colour of Mr. Heath's tie that he should not have voted because his vote was not 'objective'. Come to think of it, that is exactly what Haven has been doing. The latest Bellicus had him stating that people who were not aware of all the zines should not have voted (even though they were entitled to do so) So much for that factions belief in democracy. It looks as though the IDA will enforce a split of the awards next year, just to ensure that such a calamity never happens again. It is undeniable that, in a sense, Richard did use his power to influence the vote of the election. My claim is that such an act is quite common in nationwide politics. Richard may not be God, but a lot of new members think so, and his influence probably won the elections for the British candidates (rather than for Britain). The election was, however, democratic. People voted of their own free will, and, in my view, the best (with possibly one exception) candidates won. To put it in Sharp's words on his last questionnaire 'They were rigged, but the other way'.

Well, that was it. I hope people understood my point. I certainly didn't. The latest 'crooks only' game, E&O2, run by Norman Nathan, is, to quote Doug Wakefield 'an unthinkable mess'. I have Italy, and have received at least two letters from everybody (except, of course, Andy, who never writes to anybody) and so far it seems that France intends to go for me (Germany's letter), or Germany (England's letter) or England (Russia's letter). Similar attitudes are appearing in every one of the fifteen letters I have received (and it's not yet Spring '01). Personally, I intend to go for.....

That seems to be the end of everything. Next issue will appear fairly soon, hopefully with a couple of game starts (are you out there, RJK?). If any of you select people want to play in GREATEST HITS then just let Walkerdine know. Best to get in on the ground floor of what could be the best/worst zine in Diplomacy. I can tell you one thing, though, it won't be mediocre!



'OK mmm, you can use the typewriter now. I've got the bloody thing over with at last. I'm bugged if I'm gonna do this much more. Maybe I'll just rip off a few quid and disappear. What? I'm still on the....air? Oh Christ!