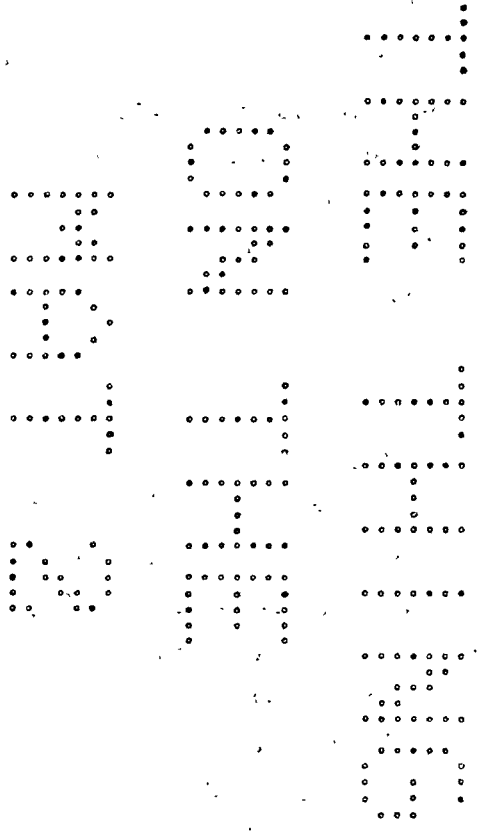


Special Golden Edition
Dons Menzies



Subscription - 20p inc VAT

(yes, I know I don't pay any - I'm waiting for my number)

Waiting lists

...now open for

Reg Dip: JWilman, JSnepley

Railway Rivals: AFarr, hJW

Abstraction II: JSnepley

1829:

The Maya: Billeness(?)

... all gamefees largely nugatory

-1.00, 0.50 inc map, 0.75, 1.00, free.

Peter Doubleday

302 Lordswood Rd

Harborne

West Midlands

B17 8AN

Deadline

Friday 18 Dec.

I can then pocket the money and claim your issue got lost in the post!

Editorial address

Either "Sir", "Hey you up there", or more simply eek see above

Does anybody want to buy a stamp collection?

Yes, the grand takings after Thing 1 come to £5.37 and £14.00 of assorted British definitives. Look chaps, I hate to complain, but apparently the Post Office no longer accepts stamps back for cash on the nail. If you don't want to pay extra for a Postal Order, why don't you open a Giro account? Cheques are free as long as you're in credit, and it saves your poor editor from standing at the street corner selling stamps at a discount. Ta!

Productorial

This 'orrible offering will be circulating at Midcon, in order to save the management of the Angus four or five bog-rolls. The editor will also be circulating, unless he is paralytic, in which case please don't buy him another drink. Just subscribe to the tune of about five quid, and he can then go back and drink in the comfort of Oxford. Do please engage me in conversation if you're there and can think of anything to say; insults will be gratefully accepted. You can't miss me, since my head will project about nine inches above the crowd - I may even bring my basketball for further identification. Failing this, I will be the one ostracised in the corner. Editors in general are easily recognisable; they will be the ones nearest the bar who talk about anything rather than games and drink weird concoctions like Jamesons and American (I of course will be sticking to my usual Hobart Muddy). And while we're on the subject of drink, don't touch the beer if it's Ansells or M&B. I once went on a business trip in the days when I worked as opposed to studying History - all the way to Clydach in south Wales it was, and after a relaxing morning's work we retired to the picturesque little pub nestling in the toes of the local mountains only to find: Ansell's Mild! This is akin to going to a three star French restaurant and being offered limp cod and greasy chips. Except that I quite like fish and chips... Perhaps I could start a trend by suggesting the Con drink - the Dirty Boiler, comprising one part whisky, three parts vodka and milk and ice. You'll have to mix this one yourself, because if you order it at the bar it will be a con drink in more ways than one. However, it does have the desired effect of making you totally slarney in a very short time, at which point your aesthetic capacities will have been dulled sufficiently to walk, or more likely crawl, over to the bar where you can engage the editors in talk of Northern Ireland, independant nuclear capacity for seal pups, etc. Or if this doesn't grab you, have another Dirty Boiler (they even start to taste quite pleasant after the first). And so on. All this could make the con rather interesting. Stick with me, kid, and I can make you famous - or at least very, very ill.

I may even bring several ready-mixed bottles along and have fun spicing people's drinks up - how about a bilious Billeness? Or a Northcott and screwdriver?

Well, thank god that stupid productorial is finished. In an effort to break the mould of contemporary zine production, I shall now continue warbling about nothing in particular without putting an article 'reading of any kind down. This is no longer the productorial; it is now an anarcho-syndicalist blow at the rotten core of the System. ((just what is anarcho-syndicalism, anyway? Answers on a postcard, please, to...)) So, "Radical Young Liberal Anarchist with establishmentarian tendencies" a joke, eh? I'll show you, Birks. Now, what was I on about? Yes, this non-article. I've always been amazed by editors who claim that the 'image' of a zine, as represented by the contents, is all-important. I've put that badly, but I'm not going to change it now. What I'm getting at is that, no matter how startlingly original the subject matter may be, the iron rigidity of zine format is always there. Every zine has a cover; every zine has an editorial; most have a letter-column; most finish with games. The inelible Rob Chapman and others have twisted this structure a bit by throwing the last three and a pot-pourri of articles in an untidy heap, but you're still left with a rectangular blob that festers on your doormat like any other.

So, this burble connects neatly with what I wanted to talk about on this page, which is to say the Thing image. As I've said, I have already made a radical departure by junking the old 'article' concept. Yes, the magazine of the avant-garde brings you a mish-mash which runs into itself, goes round in circles and gives up in disgust. Now, if only I could turn my stereo down so that I could hear the bell at the end of the line, I'd really be going places.

Yeah, the Thing image. Gosh, I have so much to say on this and so many other matters, but most of it will have to wait for later pages, because I'm typing this up way ahead of the deadline. Future issues of Thing may well look completely different, but they will all have two things in common. The first is the games, assuming I can get any started (and while on the subject, did you know that according to Outposts 8 the Thing is the only magazine with a current waiting list for Abstraction?). The second is my appalling style of writing. I have been accused of verbosity. I have also been accused of sheep-buggery, casual genocide and general tastelessness; only some of this is true, and I plead Fifth Amendment. Verbose I am, but in future the pressure of space (with games) and time (you try typing this up in a weekend at University in a room which acts as a magnet to parasitic drunkards) will constrain me. However, until then I feel bound to offer you value for money: an issue of Thing is cheaper than a packet of sedatives. Remember that this will always reach you at a fixed price, no matter what size it reaches. OK, so the price may go up, this is no gonzo charity, but any of this shit I write comes free after you've paid your first instalment. However, within my appalling style of writing you may well find anything appearing in these pages. Much of it will be games-oriented, since I retain a broader interest in boardgames in general than many; but much of it will be whatever comes into my head at the time.

Other aspects of the image may well change. You may have noticed that the previous page was printed either very high or very low on the paper. This is because I am not sure whether the machine I shall be using is a Gestetner or a Ronco, and indeed if it's a Rex the top two lines will be excised completely. Oxford has no shortage of duplicators, but in order to find value for money I may have to shop around a bit. None of this matters a dicky-bird to you, does it, so why don't I just get on with discussing the games?

This will not be a press magazine. If you want to conduct your diplomacy at my expense, get lost. However, I shall be happy to print cogent and reasonably long game-related comment, while reserving editorial discretion; after all, if you have to put up with my verbal diarrhoea, don't see why I shouldn't have to put up with yours. Witty press is very difficult to write, but it will be especially welcome.

Nor will it be a games magazine as such. I don't want Thing to disappear under a flurry of games reports. If necessary, and if I have time, I may produce some games on independent photocopy; but this is unlikely. For one thing, with the current glut of zines on the market, I am unlikely to be besieged by requests for games. And in order to overcome this problem, I have evolved a scheme. This is called forethought, and what the forethought is is this. Any trader and any subscriber with £3 in credit can enter one waiting list free. Until I stop this scheme and start to ~~make my pile~~ break even, said person can have one more free game for each extra pound he is in credit. Railway Rivals is, I'm afraid, excepted, since you're already getting a free map for your 50p. If enough people enter this scheme my credit balance will be so healthy that I can retire to Argentina!

Come back, I didn't mean it.

I expect this rampant flippancy is beginning to grate rather. Well, I'm sorry, but I don't seem to be able to maintain a serious front while typing. However, it does bring me on to another point, the CGS. How? Er... ah, yes. Apparently I don't qualify for inclusion on Tom's list for this until I manage a non-CGS gamestart. To quote Tom, 'it would be unfair for the CGS players to possibly get 'lumbered' with an, as yet, untested GM/zine.' Well, I'm quite willing to accept Tom's point of view on this, since I am not only untested but also rather erratic of late. However, I feel that the argument doesn't really make sense, and may damage other, less culpable GMs than me. I should first point out that any editor peaks in enthusiasm soon after commencing to publish his zine; by the time he has 'proven' himself with his first gamestart, he may be close to folding. Secondly, and consequently, the players in any zine may find a 'reliable' editor chucking them out in mid-game, because after all Diplomacy games take up to two years of real time. Just when is an editor 'safe'? Obviously he has to have GMed his game(s) for some time, but for how long? There is obviously no hard and fast rule, and the CGS arranger will have to take the editor on trust at some point. Naturally the CGS games are there for

the benefit of newcomers to the hobby above all else, but it has been general practice to use the service to pad out new zines - as Tom says, "normally new zines requesting a game go to the top of the list", but inherently there need be no difference between a new zine running one game already and one not doing so. I'm not asking to be excepted from the current practice, merely pointing out that I think it's faulty.

What else can I report on about as regards contents? Well, this issue should include rules and a map for The Maya, for which I need volunteers urgently. If you are interested in the game but not in the Thing, please tell me and I'll ~~tip/you~~ ~~add/off/at/the/r/pts~~ put you on the list but only send you the game report each month. If you're interested in variants, please have a look, since the game does at least have some novel concepts such as the conditions for victory. I can't really do much more in the way of promotion save pay you to play in it, if no one offers themselves as guinea-pig I shall back off into a corner and cry.

I may also enclose postal rules for Railway Rivals, but this is largely a waste of space since most will already have them. If you're even remotely interested, I'll send them on request; further details and/or maps are available from the inventor David Gwyn Watts, 102 Priory Rd, Milford Haven, Dyfed SA73 2UD who also publishes an endearing little zine on the subject and many others, Rostherne Games Recorder. 1829 postal rules are also available on request, as are Abstraction rules. That covers everything.

I have now half a page to practice my verbosity in. I shall not be printing any articles as such this issue, for the very good reason that they take time to think about and write; for the same reason you're not going to read anything of earth-shattering significance in many issues produced while at University. However, I have several ideas for subjects that I can deal with while I'm at home, so next issue and the one after that should have a little more meat in them. Don't complain; it would be a lot worse if I was at a real University with terms of more than a laughable eight weeks! On the other hand, I can probably get you begging for thin, University issues again.

Well, to finish as I began. The layout of Thing will be completely boring and ordinary, since I have no artistic pretensions whatsoever, and even if I had I wouldn't be potty enough to sit for hours working my retinae out scribbling on a stencil, for god's sake. Stunts your growth... The other feature of layout of which I am acutely aware is the terrible tedium of pages of turgid text without relief. In future I shall do something about this in the way of linear separators, but the main problem is the neat, tiny typeface. ~~pp/notes~~ Dave Thorby accuses me of double-spacing in order to pad the issue out, but really I do so in order to preserve the eyesight and sanity of my readers. Game reports may be single-spaced, but not copy.

I must make more typing errors. When they told me that editing was addictive, I didn't understand their meaning; after using stencil correcting fluid, I'm hip. I shall retire to a private place and sniff solvents.....

Nominations for those are due in by 10 November after which the dreaded voting procedure comes into action.

Unfortunately I seem to be eligible for numbers 2,5,7,9 of those; with luck no-one will commit the solecism of nominating me for my own award, but even then I may get landed with 6 and possibly even 10, depending on my performance at Midcon. I'm counting on the fact that I'm a new editor and fairly anonymous anyway to save me.

LETTERS

Under this somewhat grottilly typed heading it is only natural, I suppose, that young Billeness should take shame of place:

Simon Billeness (Surrey) " I can see you receiving many letters on the basis of your first issue, but I hope I'm wrong. With no provocative or tasteless articles (guess which rusty bolt I nominated you for?) ((Oh God, the rush has started)) everyone who writes in will just say how good they think the zine is ~~unlike the first issue~~."

Yes, well, what is this man talking about? First he wishes me luck, then he hopes he's wrong. In fact all those who have written in have expressed more or less qualified approval, probably precisely because I have not included such articles. However, since these respondents total one motorbike freak, one games freak, three mental defectives and a frog, I don't feel this is very encouraging. And no, Simon, I may be desperate, but even I don't intend to fill out my letter column with things I've written to myself. I can do it quite well enough like this. Guess which rusty bolt I nominated you for?

The problem of tasteless articles is tricky. I seem to have built up something of a reputation for these, as readers of GH will know. However, once you've, er, brought up the subject of vomit, there isn't much else you can do. Curiously enough, other bodily secretions are not a tasteless topic of conversation as much as a nauseating one. Any ideas?

Richard Walkerdine (Surrey) " Having read the zine I was amazed and delighted to find that at long last the hobby seems to have turned up an editor who can claim to have some slight knowledge of English grammar! You appear to know not only how to construct a sentence, but how to string a number of them together to form a reasonably cohesive paragraph. You may think that I am joking, but I assure you that I am doing no such thing. Compared with the majority of zines today, the standard of literacy in yours shines forth like a beacon in the darkness. Long may you continue to raise standards in this way!"

Now, confronted by this from any other pen than that of RJW, one would purr softly and admit supreme self-confidence. As it is, however, this letter is very worrying. I was not especially impressed by the standards of my literacy in issue one; and certainly, compared to the vast majority of zines I receive, it was not spectacularly superior in this respect. I am impressed by standards in the hobby generally, and I am prepared to bet that a statistical check would reveal a majority of zines up to the level of this rag. Indeed, I would have commenced publishing earlier save for the suspicion that my English was not quite adequate. Whenever I feel too self-confident. I just haul out my back-issues of Dolchstoss, and this soon makes me feel inferior again. Still, that third sentence worries me. I suspect that Richard has been taken in by the overblown rhetoric of my first page of productorial, which is probably not representative of the Thing as a whole.

Paranoia is a wonderful feeling; if only it didn't attract so much attention!

It was a cold and windy night

and obergruppenfuhrer Brute shivered as he read the next entry on his hit-list. The team were almost out of castor oil, and he was glad to see that this would be the last part of call that night. Checking the case-history of the subject, he mused to himself "A real degenerate ve haff here" (owing to a birth defect, the poor fellow found himself compelled to think with a slight Bavarian accent). The subject was known to have practiced subversion as a mole within the Oxford University Conservative Association, forming a ring of complaisant hacks and the other undesirables who were unfortunately necessary for smooth functioning of the System. Only this term, he had penetrated the security of the 'Birthday Party', taking the audacious step of crashing the black and white party in mufti, and under cover of feigned drunkenness molesting the hideous Olga in order to disrupt the distribution of details of the Plan. His last known action had been the publishing of obscene Communist propaganda in the Newsletter, alleging that it was mere propaganda to call the Labour party socialist. But the swine had over-etched himself this time; he had libelled the great leader himself, and denunciations from outraged party members had flooded in to central Hq. This vicious bastard deserved everything that the SadoSquad could throw at him. Yes, for vile dregs like this maniac only napalm was enough. Ten minutes and another pecker would be in the pocket of the Oberst.

As his minions booted the pathetic Yale lock of Doubleday's door to smithereens, the Oberst opened the nozzle of his napalm thrower and yelled
"Pinko scum, it's lampshade time!"

... —————

Indeed. Well, I was conned into joining OUCA by liberal application of my own sherry, and since Magdalen is a focus of activity for this sordid little bunch, I should take advantage of the opportunities presented, shouldn't I? The opportunity in question is the OUCA newsletter, edited by a friend of mine, so I submitted an article on the Labour Party (I should point out that the newsletter, though it has a circulation unparalleled in Diplomacy circles, is so horribly tedious that the only twits who read it are the budding hacks, or political activists (political, ha! Hacks never get the chance to do anything of substance outside OUCA, not that many of them would be capable of this. Anyway, back to the main sentence)). Unfortunately I got rather carried away, and described Cecil Parkinson (chairman of the Party) as a defective freak. Actually, this is quite accurate, as it has to be for an acolyte of the dreadful Hen. However, I have been reported to Central Office, and rumours of writs for libel are current. So if your beloved editor disappears in the middle of the night, you know which barricades to man!

... —————

This page has been typed on single spacing as an experiment, so if you can't read the excellent story above without your eyes crossing, blame Dave Thorby. It looks OK to me, but who am I to say?

Just space to publicise Ken Bain's Rusty Bolt Awards, which are very silly but should be a good wheezew. As you read this at Midcon it will be your last chance to nominate someone, so look Ken up (he'll be where no. 10 suggests!)

1. The Chris Tringham Nearly Famous Award for Upstart of the Year
2. The Fordens Epitaph Award for the most eagerly awaited fold
3. The Chris Bishop Award for the player you would most like to see as a neighbour in your next gamestart
4. The Fete Doubleday Award for the least welcome subscriber to your zine
5. The John Piggott Award for the most unpleasantly bigoted editor
6. The Richard J. Walkerdine Award for the most boring topic of correspondence
7. The Deathless Prose Award for services to verbosity
8. The Steve Doubleday Award for the most unplayable variant
9. The Mike Jervis Award for tastelessness
10. The Ken Bain Award for drunkest Con attender

malcolm Smith (Cleveland) "I enclose with this letter a copy of Bonemifon Rhapsody, the mega-zine that is shaking my cactus to its very roots."

This man is of course mad. However, since the cost to the NI of keeping a lunatic for a week is £214.30, I suggest that you subsidise him by subscribing to the excellent ni, available from Malcolm at 14 King Edwards Square, Middlesborough, Cleveland. ni is devoted to heavy metal, Diplomacy and spelling mistakes in roughly equal proportions, and Malcolm shows a phenomenal energy that I can never hope to emulate.

I've just tried to clean the keys on this rotten device with an old toothbrush, and made the interesting discovery that alcohol dissolves the plastic handle of toothbrushes. Never believe what the woman in the shop tells you. I also seem to have caused terminal damage by dropping the typewriter on the floor.

Pete Tamlyn (Middx) "Please put me down for a game of Postal Correspondance. I wish you luck with your commercial ambitions, though from a point of view of copyright I feel that I should warn you that a very similar game called Postal Vitriol was published in a 'zine many years ago. I believe, however, that this game was slightly different, in that it was down to the other players to do the tearing to shreds and personal abuse rather than the GM"

Oh dear, another brilliant idea down the spout. I shall just have to earn my pile by more socially acceptable methods, such as wiping the bottles of poodles for rich old ladies. The problem with allowing the players themselves to tear each other apart is that they may be the rainest of amateurs in this respect, whereas I practically spend my whole life at Magdalen in such matters. However, should anyone wish to try their hand they will be most welcome in these pages...

1/2/70 aaa aaa 000 !!! !!! 000 aaa aaa 1/2/70

As separators go, that one isn't going to be too legible. Not that this matters too much with separators. Damn, I'm double-spacing again. Much of this page is going to be illegible, unless the duplicator performs miracles. I've given the two reasons for this above; since then I've spent something like half an hour trying to repair the typewriter. Now, this should be relatively easy; just a matter of adjusting a few screws here and there. However, typewriter manufacturers are adept at setting up maintenance work for themselves, and the relevant screws are hidden safely behind the plastic body. So the only way I can find of repairing the motherfucker is to bend the chassis, which is rather thick metal. Jeez! I hope this bit is more legible, because if it isn't then I've given myself arthritis of the hands for nothing. I may actually have to smuck out moolah for this thing. And do you realise how bad my bank balance ~~is~~ is!

A few more lines to cover before I can put the Thing to rest. Apparently the number of gamestarts is slackening off at the moment. This is a bad scene, since I have a fairly heavy need for playing subscribers. At the moment this can only marginally be called a diplomacy zine (well, it's a magazine, but no matter); what I need is street credibility (and a new typewriter). My thanks to those who have put their names down already, and can I have some more, please?

House rule 11 has been drawn to my attention as slightly ambiguous. What I meant was that the abbreviation for the Norwegian Sea is 'NWG', not 'nor' which is Norway. 'NIII' or something similarly incontrovertible is the abbreviation for the North Sea. I suggest that players in any zine stick to these, since these three areas can easily be confused if the player is not careful. If there's anything else controversial about the house rules please let me know as soon as possible.

exits stage left, looking for a duplicator...