

Dear Diary...

The diary of an adventure writer. (Pt.I)

Scott Denyer has just released his first game 'Desmond & Gertrude' (reviewed on P.13) on his own label called 'Delbert the Hamster Software'. This diary tells how Scott got into adventures, then into writing them and now into the publishing side of things too! Follow his exploits from the ground level and we'll see what mistakes he makes, how well his first (and subsequent) games sell, and what he ultimately learns from his experiences...

THE DIARY OF AN ADVENTURE WRITER PART I: 'How it all began...'

I hadn't been overly thrilled when my best friend had asked me at school, "Have you ever heard of Zenobi Software?", to which I could only reply, "Eh?". He then proceeded to tell me of a game he

had purchased from a special Your Sinclair coupon, and he offered to let me borrow it off him. So as not to hurt his feelings, I accepted. I went home and loaded the game (Behind Closed Doors) up, and for the first time in my life, I found an adventure FUN!!!

I soon found a copy of 'Bulbo and the Lizard King' on a Sinclair User cover tape, and found that game even better. I quickly unearthed the coupon my friend had used, and ordered every single one of John Wilson's games. I had become well and truly hooked.

Shortly afterwards my friend said to me, "So, you gonna write an adventure then? I bet I could write a better one than you!" Never one to pass up a challenge, I accepted and wrote a game in BASIC, as did my friend. As the deadline for the bet

neared, I noticed an advert for the P.A.W., purchased it and quickly churned out (don't you mean lovingly crafted - Ed?) a game called 'Arnold The Adventurer.' If the game was good enough to sell myself, maybe it was good enough to sell to Zenobi. Zenobi accepted it, and the game is available on 'Balrog's Box of Delights'. (free plug!) It was while waiting for the Zenobi playtesters' reports and while sitting in an absorbing computer studies lesson at school, that I thought of writing a game that centred around two main characters, and with the player having to control both characters during the game. Sitting next to Richard, we drew up the initial designs of what eventually came to be 'Desmond and Gertrude'. ➔

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I programmed it, with moral assistance from Richard, during the long summer holidays of 1990, as well as a mini-adventure too! I had planned to sell 'Des and Gert' to Zenobi also, but I keep striving for higher things (doesn't everybody?), and decided it would be a challenge to release it myself, on my own label. It would be something much more demanding than simply writing adventures and I looked forward to the challenge.

In the meantime, I had written 'Star Flaws', and yet another mini-adventure. However, by the Christmas of 1990 I was still no nearer setting up my label than before I had written 'Desmond'.

During January 1991 I wrote yet another mini-adventure, and on the 15th of February, I finally decided to pull my finger out and launch my label.

I wrote 'Arnold the Adventurer' under the name 'Delbert the

Hamster', so I decided to name my software company that too! It's certainly original! It may work against me in the long run, as it doesn't have a very serious 'feel', but at the moment it suits the style of my games perfectly.

The first release is 'Desmond and Gertrude' - complete with free mini-adventure on the B-side which was written around the same time as 'D&G'.

My biggest mistake so far was leaving the launch so long, as I now have a backlog of some five games. I'll either have to release all the games in quick succession (which would take the emphasis off each individual games release) or stop writing games for the next year or two. (Which wouldn't please me as I enjoy writing games tremendously).

It was now the start of March 1991, and I went up to my 'work experience' place (they

had said 'Do please come back whenever you need to use something. The fools!) to start on the documentation. I completed the first drafts and sent the game off to my three playtesters (whose names had been advertised in YS). These reports came back and they all seemed to have liked the game, and they said it should do well. Being a perfectionist (not that it shows!), it wasn't until the end of April that I finally finished the game and sent it off for review to Your Sinclair and Adventure Probe. During the months of March and April I had also programmed another game called 'Larry the Lemmings Urge for Extinction' (Another cryptic title!), and another mini-adventure. A few days later, the latest YS came out, and in it was a section on fanzines. One of these was called 'From Beyond' and, liking the

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look of it, I promptly sent my game off to them for review also. Along with it I ordered the latest issue, and when it arrived I thought it was great! (Just great? - Ed.) (I would say 'buy this mag', but as you obviously have there's no need!). Obviously I have yet to see whether my game is well received by either YS, Probe or FB, and as yet await my very first order. I've yet to go through the

monotonous duplicating of the tapes, the sticking down of the jiffy bag stamps, and all the other things that adventure publishers have to do. I sit back and wonder whether I'll receive loads of orders, or only half a dozen, and whether or not I'll receive many faulty tapes to be replaced. We shall wait and see... As I sit here writing this first diary installment, I glance over at the hamster who is gnawing the bars of his

cage in a very noisy fashion, and think to myself, 'It's been bloody hard work so far, and I haven't sold a single copy yet!!!'...

Well as you can see, Scott is now up and running and awaiting his first order/s... Next issues 'Diary' will show how things are going, 'sales-wise' and what Scott thinks of the various reviews that 'D&G' receives. (If it gets reviewed elsewhere that is....Tim)

**ALL SPECTRUM
ADVENTURES BOUGHT!**

**NONE
REFUSED**

**CLEAR THOSE SHELVES! ALL SECONDHAND SPECTRUM
ADVENTURES BOUGHT! NONE REFUSED!**

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Dear Diary...

The diary of an adventure writer. (Pt.II)

Scott Denyer of Delbert the Hamster Software kicked off his 'Dear Diary' feature last issue... He had hoped for fame, money and reviews of his game. Did he get them? Read on and find out...

DIARY OF AN ADVENTURE WRITER PART II : 'Mum's on the warpath!'

3rd June:
I send off my diary for inclusion in the next issue of 'From Beyond'.

6th June:
I have agreed to write a game which will be designed by a fellow adventurer (hereafter known as Gareth). I receive his initial designs for his game called 'Microfair Madness'. It's set in a... wait for it... Microfair! Let me say now it's going to be the most amazing, brilliant, rip-tooting, etc., game ever

9th June:
Tragic day. My mother confiscates my

computer so that I will do some 'last minute' GCSE exam revision. (I was going to anyway, of course!)

21st June:
Having received most of the text for level 1 of 'MM', I can now finish programming it. I send Gareth a demo.

24th June:
Gareth writes back to say he thought the demo was brill! But... modesty forbids me to boast. I think I'll encounter memory problems though, as I've a whole level 1 mini game to incorporate, and I've only 4 bytes free.

28th June:
Another sad day. 'Your Sinclair' arrives and they've cut the adventure section down to 2 pages. (Tell me about it - Ed!) I wear a black arm-band and pace around the house quietly weeping, to everyone's amusement. I decide that 'Microfair Madness' will have to

be in 48k and 128k versions, as loads of Gareth's brill text won't fit into 48k. I also decide that the 'official' release date will be at the 'Adventure Probe Convention' on October the 26th. Therefore, I'll send it out to the mags around the end of September for a review in the November issues.

5th July:
I write and explain the memory problems to Gareth, and he promptly sends me more text for inclusion in the game. Sometimes the poor lad just doesn't understand. In the second post comes the 'Probe' review of 'Desmond & Gertrude'. Sadly the review isn't that good, but at least it didn't get a 'reet slaggin'. My hopes of becoming a millionaire overnight crumble into a fine powder.

8th July:
I sit by the letterbox anticipating the

The diary of an adventure writer. (Pt.II)

arrival of the greatest adventure journal of our time, but 'From Beyond' arrives instead (chortle, chortle). The 'D&G' review is much more complimentary than the 'Probe' one, and things look up. My diary also makes a dramatic entrance onto the scene. Sitting unnoticed on the table is another envelope, which I open and it's my first order!!! (Scott faints and has to be revived with the smelling salts). But... every silver lining has a cloud. The cheque is made to DTHS. A quick scan of the 'Probe' review shows that it forgot to mention who cheques should be made payable to. However, a quick phone call to the customer sees another cheque dispatched, and Mandy at 'Probe' promises to put a note in the next issue.

14th July:

I have set myself till tomorrow to send another demo of 'MM' to Gareth. Unfortunately, there's more programming to be done than I thought. My mother comes

bursting in shouting 'Get that computer off.' I don't understand it... 12.30 am is a perfectly reasonable time to be programming away!?

15th July:

I get up at 7.00am to program the 'MM' mini adventure called 'The Search For Smok'! Yep! You've guessed it! It's a parody of... 'The Sound of Music'. No, just kidding my little tinkers! Anyway, I get the demo finished and sent off.

18th July:

Gareth sends me all the text for level 2 of 'MM'. He comments on the latest issue of 'FB', and of the exceptionally poor standard of 'Dear Diary Pt.I'. (Cheeky Monkey!)

20th July:

I have 2 Delbert and Gertrude tapes returned as faulty, which I promptly replace. (Service with a smile.)

21st July:

I phone Gareth for the first time and we discuss 'Microfair Madness', the universe,

and everything. The call is prematurely ended by my Mother complaining about the phone bill.

25th July:

I don my 'maniac photocopier' guise, and visit the place where I do my documentation. I make a zillion (and 5) copies of everything and leave in a puff of smoke. My second game release, 'Star Flaws', is sent off to the playtesters.

29th July:

I receive one playtest report of 'SF' (Blimey, that were quick -Ed.) and it seems to go down quite well!

3rd August:

The second playtest report arrives and is a very different story altogether. While the playtester enjoyed it they thought the game was very 'risque', and unsuitable for younger gamers. To avoid complaint, I edit (censor!) the game and send it off to the various mags.

16th August:

Over the last week →

The diary of an adventure writer. (Pt.II)

I've been working on 'Arnold the Adventurer II', which I'm hoping to sell to Zenobi Software (if it's good enough.)

EPILOGUE:

As the diary draws to a close for another issue, I can say that 'Microfair Madness' should be finished within a few weeks, and therefore should go as scheduled. 'Star Flaws' would be reviewed in

this issue of 'FB' (No chance - Ed). So, until issue 9, stay easy!

NEXT ISSUE:

Scott starts the 6th form, and prepares for the 'Probe' convention. How will he cope...?

Well, Scott didn't sound too disappointed about response from reviews of 'Desmond and Gertrude' so presumably things went

quite well. If you bought the game please let Scott know what you thought of it. It might also be a good idea to drop me a line to see how the 'FB' review compared with your thoughts on the game. Next issue will indeed see another installment of Scott's diary, and his new game, 'Star Flaws' will be given a good going over by the 'FB' reviewing team.....Tim.

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DEAR DIARY...

The diary of an adventure writer. (Pt.III)

Well, Scott Denyer of Delbert the Hamster software is back again with yet another installment of his Dear Diary feature. Things are looking hectic in the Denyer household as Scott prepares for the terrors of the Probe convention and does his best to write some 6th form essays too!

DIARY OF AN
ADVENTURE WRITER
PART III : "Duplicating
cassettes IS fun!"

20th August:
D.T.H goes international as I sell a game to a bloke in Germany. It's quite a milestone (for me at least!).

22nd August:
Programmed most of the 128k version of *Microfair Madness*. I must confess that converting a 48k version into 128k is rather tedious when you have to copy out all the 48k text first, before adding the 128k goodies.

26th August:
Something happened today that'd stop any programmers heart. Having been programming for 4 hours we had... horror of horrors... a power cut. Aaargh! I think I should invest in a disc drive for quick and easy saving. (Having seen *Datels PLUS D* disc drive and interface in action I'd certainly recommend it to any serious user / adventure writer - Ed!)

2nd September:
The first 'Arnold the Adventurer II' playtest report arrives from 'huggable' John Wilson at Zenobi. It seems to be quite good! I decide to sample the opposition by buying a batch of games and forcing myself to play them all day. It's a hard life for some.

3rd September:
'From Beyond' arrives but...Wot! no 'Star Flaws' review. An apologetic letter from Tim (that's me isn't it,

Ed?) says it's because the issue was packed to the brim. nice one, Tim! (Snarl!).

5th September:
YS comes and Tim redeems himself with a favourable mention of DTHS. Thanks Tim! (Un-Snarl!).

7th September:
I get the text for another Gareth Pitchford game called 'First Past The Post'. I'm going to put it on a compilation called 'Delbert's Hamster Wheel of Fortune' which will also include another 'GP' game and two games by me. it should be out around Christmas.

15th September:
I make the masters for 'Microfair Madness' which is more difficult than it sounds as, due to memory problems on the 48k, some of the text is included on the loader, and called up via the 'extern' command. The games are then duly sent to the playtesters. ➤

Dear Diary... *Diary of an adventure writer (Pt.III)*

17th September:

I receive a phone call from each playtester telling me that Microfar Madness won't load. I send off more copies, and quietly pray that they are not faulty this time.

19th September:

For the record, I am 17 today. (Many happy returns, Scott. - Ed.) Unfortunately I'm not a true male adventurer yet as I haven't got a beard!! The only adventurous present I got was a copy of the 'Famous 5' game.

21st September:

Today I began copying a load of 'Desmond and Gertrudes' for my Probe convention stall. Tragedy strikes when I realise my master was damaged, and therefore so were all the subsequent copies.

22nd September:

Today was a very hectic day. Re-copied 'D&G's' for the convention, amended 'Arnold the Adventurer II' for Zenobi, plus sending an advert to Probe. I also have to send 'Star Flaws' to

Tim as the original copy wouldn't load.

24th September:

I think it's dawned on me that DTHS is about to become HARD work. Having 6th form essays to write every night makes it more than difficult to run, but I'll do it as I am super human (and modest, too!).

29th September:

Over the past week or so I've been programming a game set in a ghostly castle (Title 'held' at the moment).

1st October:

Spent tonight sorting out stuff for the convention. You know, tapes and instructions etc. I found out I have about 5 copies too few of everything that needs photocopying. Just excuse me while I weep quietly in one corner!

7th October:

Spent half the afternoon photocopying etc. loads of stuff for the convention. I'll need to go up again to get posters and stickers done, though.

12th October:

It's going to be amazingly close as to whether or not I'll get 'MM' to the convention in time. It's still being playtested, and I have to get 50 copies run off - a time consuming task if ever there was one!

15th October:

Had a talk on the phone with Barbara Gibb (playtester) and if I can get an amended tape of 'Microfair Madness 128' to her by Saturday (the 19th), she can playtest it by Monday, giving me exactly 4 days to amend it and duplicate 50 copies. It's gonna be close...

NEXT ISSUE:

Will Scott get to the convention in one piece? Can he copy fifty games in just four days? Can he grow a beard to prove his (adventure) manhood? Will he remain on good terms with me after reading Bessie's review of 'Star Flaws'? The answer to these, and other thrilling questions will appear in the next epic installment of 'Dear Diary'.....Tim.

PROBE REPORT

Scott Denyer attends the 2nd Probe convention

I couldn't make it to the Probe Convention, but Scott Denyer of Delbert the Hamster software did, and this is what he had to say about it...

A Conventional Day!

I manage to skive the day off school the day before the convention to travel up to relatives in Wolverhampton. That way, I arrive at the convention at 9.00am in the morning, still wiping sleep out of my eyes! It was difficult to find and I enter a hospital thinking that it is the hotel. How embarrassing! I then manage to walk into several people while struggling up to the second floor with 200+ games for my DTHS stall, and enter the suite where the convention was taking place. Not many people were there yet, and I decided to use the table next to my door for the stall (for a quick getaway if need be!). I proceeded to stick up posters and WOW software (Amstrad) ask if they could film my hands with their film camera for their official video of the day. I gladly oblige, and rush off for a quick manicure before hand. As my stall is right next to the door, I get to see everyone who walks in. I soon shake hands with 'Lanky' Larry Horsfield and spend half an hour asking everyone if they have any Blu-Tak for my posters (as I was afraid that sellotape may tear the wallpaper

when it needed removing). Finding some Blu-Tak proved more difficult than completing 'Axe of Kolt'

I notice that I forgot to wear a belt, and people give me suspicious looks as I walk around with my hands permanently in my pockets. I was just trying to keep my trousers up, okay?!!!

DTHS' only other writer, and personal pal, Gareth 'gazza' Pitchford arrives, and I rudely ignore him as several people decide to swamp my stall. I forgot my calculator, so I have to rush over to Allan Phillips' computer to work out the total prices.

At 11 o'clock, Mandy, knees knocking an' all, reads the welcoming speech, and to her dismay the microphone picked that very moment to break down. The awards ceremony starts at 1 o'clock, but I won't tell you who won as I'm sure the winners are printed somewhere else in the mag, plus the fact that I can't remember. I can remember though, that Larry Horsfield was chuffed to win a few awards, and a certain Tim Kemp won the best PD library. Well played lads!

An excellent Balrog tee-shirt is raffled off (and quite brill it was too) but unfortunately I don't win it. I've forgotten who did!

Scott Denyer attends the 2nd Probe convention

June Rowe was there with a copy of *'Jesters Jaunt'* for us all to play, Tom Frost had a copy of the Amstrad *'Lost Dragon'*, while Larry had (from what I saw) a copy of the forthcoming *'Run Bronwyn, Run'*. Needless to say, I still manage to miss having a go on those and all the other demo's on view. Colin Jordan was there with a SAM Coupe and a copy of *'Five on a Treasure Island'*, and is also seen loading an... horror of horrors... arcade game!!! Other stalls include Jack Lockerby's, featuring his newie *'The Ellisnore Diamond'*, Mandy's *Atlas Software*, *ZAT magazine*, *WOW software* and *The Adventure And Strategy Club*, among others.

This years MEGAPOINTS competition is quite a surprise, as I somehow managed to win. The game was a chopped up level 1 of *'The Spectre OF Castle Coris'*, 48k version, which is a forthcoming release from F.S.F.

I manage to ambush Jeremy Smith's computer (someone who is even younger than me), and load level 1 of my *'Microfair Madness'*, and I don't mind saying that it attracts quite a crowd. Well, three people actually!

A representative of *'CRASH'* was there (Ian Osborne perhaps? Ed.) and I gave him a quick interview as well as flogging him a review copy of *'MM'* and letting him put a money-off coupon in a forthcoming issue as well. The

'YOUR SINCLAIR' guy didn't bother to show, though nobody missed him (chortle, chortle!).

I enjoy meeting my number one customer, Norman D. Haigh, the only fool... I mean person, who has bought every version of every DTHS game, er... that's six in total. I chuckle to myself as I spot a mass migration to the TV room as half the convention go to watch the Rugby semi-final (England Vs Scotland).

One thing new for me is being able to talk to people about P.A.W and adventures, and having them understand me - at home when I discuss PSI's my mum tell's me off for swearing!

Afterwards we all go for a meal. The party leaves the hotel with 20 people and, after scouring the streets of Birmingham, we lose the others and I'm left in a party of 7. We have a curry (eventually) and go back and sit in the hotel bar. Unfortunately I'm only allowed Coke (bah!) and I talk to Roger Betts for ...erm, quite a while about adventures until he retires and goes off to bed. The group gradually recedes and when I go to bed at 3:30 the group is down to about a dozen people. I oversleep the next morning (I wonder why?) and therefore don't get to say goodbye to everyone. So "Goodbye!" to everyone who I didn't say goodbye to.

One thing I've come away

Scott Denyer attends the 2nd Probe convention

feeling, is that now I send games to other people, instead of just names on a piece of paper. I'm glad that people are playing and (hopefully!) enjoying my games. I just wish there was a convention more than once a year... maybe once a week!

Scott Denyer.

THE Convention RATINGS

(Ratings!!? Are you mad?)

PACKAGING8

Well advertised, planned and arranged.

PROBLEMS2

Finding the place was a snag.

STORYLINE9

Everything went well.

LOCATION TEXT9

Birmingham was a logical choice.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL1

No difficulties for me.

OPENING PLAY9

People wandering around with name badges on helped break the ice.

PARSER9

I didn't feel younger than anybody else.

PLAYABILITY10

Thoroughly enjoyable.

PERSONAL RATING10

Top class.

• *Just in case you don't buy Probe or couldn't make it to the convention, here are the Probe award winners (8bit).....Tim*

Best / Most Helpful PD Library:
FBCPD (Spectrum): Run by ME!

Best Utility / Hardware Add-on:
HATRACK II Amiga Adventure Writing Utility.

Most Helpful Adventurer of '91:
BARBARA GIBB

Best Text Only 8bit Adventure:
AXE OF KOLT by Larry Horsfield of F.S.F. Adventures.

Best Graphics / Text 8bit Game:
BLOOD OF BOGMOLE by Jon Lemmon of Compass Software.

Best 8bit RPG:
HERO QUEST.

Most Helpful Software Company:
F.S.F. Software / Larry Horsfield.

Most Promising Author:
BOB ADAMS.

Honourable Member of Adventure Probe '91 Award:
JOAN PANCOTT of WOW Software.

• *And there you have it! Seems that a thoroughly enjoyable time was had by one and all at the Probe Convention. Maybe I'll be able to attend next year. Though as I haven't got a crystal ball I can't guarantee it!Tim*

DEAR DIARY

The Chronicles of DTH Software

• *Scott Denyer of Delbert The Hamster Software continues to send in his diary - despite me paying him not to. Nah! Only joking. It's one of my fave sections of FB!Tim*

25th October:

The impossible has been done. Over the past week I have sat up till four in the morning making copies of 'Microfair Madness' for the Probe convention tomorrow.

26th October:

To find out what happened today see probe convention report on page 32!

29th October:

I am straight back to a hot Speccy polishing up my latest game, 'Grabbed by the Ghoulies!' As to when it will be released I've not yet decided, but watch out for it!

4th November:

"From Beyond" arrives and 'Star Flaws' is reviewed. Well, it goes down about as well as a strippogram at a vicarage tea-party... to coin a phrase. Oh well, such is life. You win some, you lose some! Always look on the bright side of life an' all that! Tim sheepishly apologises (*surely I boldly apologised? Ed!*) wholeheartedly as I aim an atomic sunflower seed at Norwich. (*I might have apologised but I still printed the review! Publish and be*

damned - and I was! Ed.)

6th November:

On a programming side, disaster strikes (ouch!) when I discover 'MM' is not compatible with the +3. It's all to do with the +3 version of PAW being different to the tape versions. A +3 version is soon made.

7th November:

I receive a letter from Jill Carter asking if I would like to write the game for next years Probe Convention 'Megapoints' comp. I ask ya, of all the adventurers on offer she asks me?! Oh well, I'll give it my best shot! She probably only asked me so I don't spookily win it again like I did this year.

8th November:

I find the funds (i.e. mum) to buy a printer and DTP package to improve the general presentation of DTHS.

10th November:

I am in the process of designing a... I don't believe it... a serious game. I'm going to spend a long time designing it & not start programming it till well after X-Mas. This should mean improved puzzles and gameplay. So far it's got everything from murder to puppy dogs to mythical beasts. It will be (at least) a three parter. I should be able to chronicle the games development in future 'dear diary' instalments!

DEAR DIARY: *Chronicles of DTH Software*

14th November:

On 'MM' level 2 there is a mini-game called 'The Quest for the Holy Snail'. Gareth has greatly expanded it and when programmed I will donate it to Tim's PD library. Don't tell Tim though! It's a surprise!

20th November:

DTHS is to have a face-lift. It's economically forced! Instead of 2 A4 sheets all info will be included on individual inlays. They're quite well done, though!

25th November:

Silly me! Barbara 'No.1 playtester' Gibb rings to say that she can't complete her playtest version of 'Brian and the Dishonest Politician'. It was probably something to do with the fact that I'd forgotten to put some of the needed objects in the game! What a silly Billy I am readers, eh?!

13th December:

As it would be impractical to mention in the diary every time I have a programming stint on the computer I will mention major programming events by the week, or whatever? Therefore, over the past month or so I have been programming another Gareth Pitchford' (MM) game called 'First Past the Post'. Needless to say, with my programming abilities it'll be worth buying. What's that? Scott's head is so big it will never fit through the door? Never! It's so bleedin' cold outside it took my little fingers about six hours to

thaw out after doing my paper round before programming again.

Before I go, I'd just like to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and an adventurous new year!

Scott Denyer (DTHS)

• And a merry Christmas to you too, Scott! As you will see from this issue (p.9) I really rather liked 'Microfair Madness' and am now eagerly awaiting more releases from the Delbert stable! As for the bad review of 'Star Flaws'... well, what can I say? Bessie didn't get a lot out of it, and now STORM has also had a look at it and didn't like it either. Star Wars & Spoof fans may really love it though.

I'll be printing a list of the the kind of games that STORM, BESSIE and MYSELF like the most in the next issue of FB. That way you can match our comments of any games with our likes and dislikes and then dismiss whatever comments we make concerning games that aren't on our 'favourites' list. I must stress that we do always try to be objective and fair in our reviews.

*Still, one must try to take the rough with the smooth and bounce back with good games to prove that you've got what it takes. Judging by 'Microfair Madness' DTHS looks like it'll be big in '92**Tim***

DEAR DIARY

THE CHRONICLES OF DTH SOFTWARE

• *Here's Scott Denyer of Delbert The Hamster software to tell us what's been going on... yes, it's another instalment of Dear Diary...*

25th December:

Christmas Day, in case you had forgotten! I didn't do much programming over the holiday because, on Christmas eve when I was getting a neighbours Child's new bike which had been hidden in our garage, I smashed my toe, and spent the next week in agony. To add to that, I fell ill with a bug (a bit like my games, some would say!) and that sidelined me as well. Ho 'flippin' ho!

2nd January:

Crash arrives in the shops with a fandabbydozi 'Microfair Madness' review. Wahaay! Yippee! etc., etc. I send Ian Osborne his fiver! A money-off coupon also appears. I hope I get loads of orders.

5th January:

I optimistically record 10 copies of 'Brian and the dishonest politician' in case coupons come flooding in! I also send copies to all the various magazines.

14th January:

Both 'AP' and 'FB' arrive, and both include super reviews of 'MM'. So, the 6 months of solid programming and hard work was worth it, eh? Unfortunately the day is soured when Wimbledon lose 1-0 to Bristol City.

16th January:

Gareth rings and we have a good chuckle about the 'MM' reviews! He is quite pleased about them too. Bless him!

23rd January:

I receive a 'complementary' (cough) copy of 'Arnold II' from Zenobi. It's really good, why not buy it? Only £2.49 etc., etc.

30th January:

Having programmed and sent off 'First Past The Post!' and 'The Quest For The Holy Snail', I receive the playtester reports from Barbara '6 games at once!' Gibb. I correct the games in accordance to her reports, which are as thorough as ever.

1st February:

Last issue I mentioned my programming a serious game. From now on it will be referred to as my 'EPIC' (due to its size). Anyway, I started programming some of it today.

2nd February:

As Gareth is to take his A-Levels soon, I realise that I need to recruit another playtester. Larry 'a smile, one bang and a Londoner' (*What - Ed?*) Horsfield suggests Sharon Harwood. I tentatively write to her, and after a bit of creeping, she agrees to! Fanfare etc. I'd just like to mention how 'nice' adventurers are. If there's any new adventurers out there who are

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tentative about writing or phoning any of us (I can say 'us' now, as I am one of the ranks!) then don't be. We are all helpful and won't bite yer head off. After all, we're all in this together!! You can't help but make loads of friends in this 'hobby'. *(Spoken like a true adventurer - Ed!)*

5th February:

Your Sinclair arrives, and a whole page is devoted to an 'MM' review. Obviously, Tim still likes the game. Obviously, he hasn't met his computer counterpart in it! *(Oh yes he has - gnash, snarl, grinding of teeth etc. - Ed!)*

6th February:

I see an ad in the local paper, and purchase a 2nd hand +3. Well, blow me down! I then phone Larry, Gareth and others and persuade them to send me some +3 stuff. They all comply with my pleas to show once again just how generous adventurers are!

8th February:

After a few 'deals' (well, phone calls) DTHS is now exploding multi-format. Tony 'Guild' Collins is converting all my games, which'll be released on his Guild Label. Wait a minute... you don't wanna hear about that, you're all Speccy users! For all you lot, I've arranged a +D compilation (of my games) to be done, (available from DTH, soon) plus 'MM' is to be converted to the SAM coupe (which I know a few of you have!) *(And what a fantastic machine it is! why not write off to SAMco for more details - Ed!)*

13th February:

I send my +2A off for repair as it doesn't work with my printer. Hopefully, the old warrior will be back soon, sob!

20th February:

Due to the fact that my +2A is off for repair, I can't make a master of the game that I'm sending to Tim for PD distribution. Sorry Tim, you'll have to wait a while. (snigger)

25th February:

The 'Adventure Probe Video' comes. I'm on it twice (thrills!), but see how many people collecting their awards, and the ones being interviewed, are wearing (free) gold DTHS stickers! FREE advertising, I love it! I'm caught on the video unawares, chomping on a marshmallow sandwich. *(I wondered who that drippy looking young chap was - Ed!)*

27 / 28th February:

Well, it's 05:45am, and I've just finished programming part 1 of my 'EPIC', which I've been working on all week, and it is sent off to Sharon H. I was up till 02:00 last night! I go to bed for 4 hours, get up and do my paper round, then I'm going back to bed... for a month. See you then...

• Well, tune in again in two months when Scotty 'Marshmallow' Denyer will have emerged from hibernation, and should have a few more games on the verge of release. See this issues NEWS page for a DTHS 'what's in the pipeline' report! Tim

DEAR DIARY

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• This is the last in the 'Dear Diary' series from Scott Denyer. Over the last few issues we've seen his trials and tribulations in trying to establish the Delbert The Hamster Software name. With college rapidly approaching Scott signs off with one final instalment...

5th March:

I receive a playtester report from Barbara about 'Larry the Lemming', a game I've written which is available on my soon-to-be-released compilation. Surprisingly, even though it's a mini-game, she liked it a lot, and seems to be the most positive report I've ever had from her. Maybe she'd just won the pools or something, as she must have been in a very good mood when writing it!

7th March:

I receive the report from Sharon regarding my 'Epic'. With statements such as "You've done a great job!" and "I can't wait to play part 2", I figured that maybe she'd won the pools recently as well. She'll have to wait for part 2 though! I've no idea when I'll get round to writing that, as I've so much other stuff to do at the moment.

10th March:

I receive a report for yet another game I've got in the pipeline, 'Grabbed by the Ghoulies!' and Barbara seemed to really like this as well, as she thinks it'll be a popular adventure.

What!?!?! One of my adventures... popular!!!! I peruse over the fact that surely it's impossible for one woman to win the pools twice!

28th March:

I take the day off from DTHS (and schoolwork of course!) and travel up to Liverpool to watch a football match. I had intended to flatter Barbara Gibb with a visit, but unfortunately I have no idea where the road she lives in is!

19th March:

I get a letter from Ian Osborne to say that Crash has ceased existence, and tells me that had it not, then 'Brian And The Dishonest Politician' would have got about 79% in the next issue. Laugh? I almost wet myself. I spent most of the night ignoring a pressing essay to program the text of Gareth Pitchford's next game (if I write it before any of his numerous others!) 'The Life Of A Lone Electron'. It's the first real programming I've done in about three weeks! Some new jiffy-bag and envelope labels arrive too!

20th March:

"FB" arrives (about time!) and 'Arnold II' gets 7/10. Not bad, sonny! One of the comments is that "there's nothing wrong with it, everything works fine" etc. Having spoken to many people at the 'Probe' convention last year, they all seemed to say that 'Arnold' had been their favourite of my games. So I wrote 'Arnold II' as something similar to 'Arnold I' - no-

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nonsense, no-frills, just the same sorts of puzzles and gentle humour that had made 'Arnold I' quite a success. I didn't want to include all my acquired expertise (cough!) as that would make the game different to 'Arnold I', and therefore not very similar to its predecessor. Enough said!

21st March:

Having now got my printer to work with my +2A (the original fault) I print off some contracts and send them to Gareth.

26th March:

I prepare the inlays for my 'Wheel Of Fortune' compilation, only for the person who does my photocopying to ring up and say that he won't be able to do it anymore. Fab!

28th March:

I am awoken at 8:30 (on a Saturday!!!!) by an irate mother, who is also angry at being woken due to a postman delivering a recorded delivery. Thanks Dave... snarl! In the package was the prototype +D compilation of my games. However, as I don't have a +D I can't test them. I package it off to Larry H. to have a look at it for me!

1st April:

Did the inlays at school today. I had 230 sheets printed for only £4. Not bad, except that the Ogre who runs the photocopier at our school says that I can't do any more of that quantity.

2nd April:

I send out a newsletter to all my customers, including a special offer on the 'Wheel Of Fortune' compilation. Hmmm, it costs me over a tenner. Hope I get some orders back! Gareth sends me a game he has actually programmed... shock, horror, etc. It's Part 1 of a game called 'The Search For The Nether Regions' (chortle chortle) and it looks quite swish!

11th April:

I travel to London for an adventurers gathering, and meet Sue Roseblade and Jackie Bennett off the train. We get a taxi to the wine-bar, only to find it closed off due to the bomb yesterday. We find everyone in the station nearby, and walk a few miles around the underground to Charing Cross, where Larry suggests a small pub on that station. When I say small, I mean SMALL! The pub itself was smaller than the men's toilets!!!! We retrace our steps to a larger pub we saw while walking through London. I could write pages and pages about what went on that day but to summarise, I spoke to Sharon about Arnold Swarzenegger films, Larry about the disk I sent him, and Larry's wife about cockroaches!!!! Many other people turned up, but I haven't got enough room to list them all. Hello again, everyone!

13th April:

Spent tonight making +3 versions of all my games. Well, I bet ya really wanted to know that, eh? (*Er, not really, but if you want to tell us about it then feel free - Ed!*)

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14th April:

Spent all day programming the rest of 'Electron' and debugging 'Grabbed By The Ghoulies!'. Boy oh boy! Did that take a long time or what?!

16th April:

I decide to play a game for once, and continue playing part 1 of 'The Spectre Of Castle Coris' by FSF. What an absolutely appalling game! Only joking, Larry. I somehow manage to complete part 1, though that was with phoning Sharon for help, and cheating by loading the database into PAW and having a look around inside it.

Well well. That appears to be it! It's been fun writing this regular column for "FB", and I hope all you readers have enjoyed this little insight into an adventure company. Just think, when I started writing this exactly a year ago, none of my games had ever been reviewed, and now look at DTHS. Possibly the most innovative

software house around (ahem!). Should there be a public outcry for this column to continue (not very likely) then I will gladly continue writing it. It's bloomin' hard work running a company which is expanding as much as DTHS, and all my spare time is taken up by it. (What's spare time? Ed!) Once of these days I might start doing my school essays again! Before I go, can I just thank ALL my customers for their support over the last year, you've all been great. I love you all... (Scott bursts into tears and has to be helped away from the podium having just won 'Software House OF The Year 1992')

• *I enjoyed Scott's diary - it was a nice contribution to look forward to each issue. FB 13 should hopefully see an article on some special PAW overlays that Jon Lemmon of Compass Software has just obtained. After that...? Let me know what you want to see as a permanent feature. Tim.*

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

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