

# The Quill (and AdventureWriter)

## Reference Guide

### Version 1.0

*Collated by Gareth Pitchford / 8bitag.com / May - October 2020*

#### **Background**

The Quill was created by Graeme Yeandle in 1983 and was published by Welsh software house Gilsoft. Various support programs were created over the years (e.g. The Illustrator) which added extra features on selected platforms. The Quill was the first in what is sometimes referred to as the "Gilsoft family" of adventure systems which includes the PAW, the SWAN, and DAAD.

Localised versions of The Quill were published by Norace in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, all on one disc/tape.

In the USA, the tool was sold under license as AdventureWriter by the publisher CodeWriter who included their own graphics system for some of the formats. CodeWriter "grey imported" a French language version to Europe.

Gilsoft's Quill was available for ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, BBC Micro & Acorn Electron, Sinclair QL, and Oric 1/Atmos. An Atari 800/XL version was developed but may not have been released.

CodeWriter's (US & French) version of the system was available for Commodore 64; Atari 800 and XL series computers with 48K; Apple II (II, II+, IIc) / Franklin Ace 1000; and IBM-PC (MS-DOS). The C64 and Apple/Franklin version had support for graphics.

Although The Quill only had a two-word parser, a special four-word version was created by Gilsoft for CRL. (The use of this version in a published game has not been confirmed) For hobbyist programmers, support for four word inputs could be added to Spectrum games by the use of the third-party The Fix program that was marketed by Kelsoft.

In addition to the commercial games produced using the Quill, several games used the system as a prototyping/development tool (such as Dodgy Geezers and Terrormolinos). There were also games released using (often uncredited) heavily modified versions of the Quill such as Rigel's Revenge and The Serf's Tale.

## **Purpose of this document**

This guide is intended to collect together information about the various versions of the Quill. It is a work-in-progress.

This document is not a replacement for the excellent Quill manual or third-party programming guides, such as Simon Avery & Debby Howard's book. Familiarity with at least one version of The Quill is presumed.

The document may be of particular use to adventure writers looking to produce a Quilled adventure targeting more than one platform, or those porting their existing games.

## **A note on serial numbers**

Most releases of the Quill have serial numbers beginning with A.

The serial numbers of non-English versions start with a B.

The Spectrum version of the Quill was released in two distinct versions: Serial A and Serial C.

The early Serial A version of the Spectrum Quill had a basic level of CondActs (compared to the later versions that appeared on other platforms) and other restrictions, such as not being able to customise the system messages. For example, Serial A on the Spectrum did not have the advanced object-related CondActs (AUTOD, AUTOG, AUTOW, AUTOR) or word assignment for items, so authors had to manually code GET/DROP responses for each object.

Version C for the Spectrum was a major upgrade and is highly recommended as the version to use, particularly as it integrates with the other optional support programs.

Version C was available both as an upgrade from Gilsoft, with a supplementary booklet detailing the major changes, and also in an edition with a fully revised manual. A converter program was provided for Spectrum users to convert a serial A database to a serial C one.

## **Copyright**

The Quill and associated software products are still covered by copyright. If you are producing adventures using the system (particularly if you plan on selling them) then you are encouraged to obtain an official copy of the software or make a donation to Tim Gilberts (<https://www.paypal.me/timgilberts>) .

## The Quill/AdventureWriter – Version Comparison

### Available Memory\*

|                        | Platform                 | Serial                              | Available Memory*                        |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>The Quill</b>       | ZX Spectrum <sup>+</sup> | A03, A06, A08                       | 30553                                    |
|                        |                          | C02 <sup>+</sup> , C04 <sup>+</sup> | 29831                                    |
|                        |                          | C05 <sup>+</sup>                    | 29431                                    |
|                        | Amstrad CPC              | A00, A01                            | 28283                                    |
|                        |                          | A04                                 | 27995                                    |
|                        | Commodore 64             | A06, A06.4WD                        | 31754                                    |
|                        |                          | B02 ( <i>Norace</i> )               | 29769                                    |
|                        | BBC / Electron           | A00 Tape ( <i>on BBC 32K</i> )      | 17493                                    |
|                        |                          | A03 Disk ( <i>on BBC 32K</i> )      | 21588                                    |
|                        |                          |                                     | (Electron version has 7K less available) |
|                        | Sinclair QL              |                                     | ?????                                    |
|                        | Oric 1 / Atmos           | A03                                 | 27686                                    |
|                        |                          |                                     |  |
| <b>AdventureWriter</b> | Atari 800/XL             |                                     | 22923                                    |
|                        | Atari (French)           | A01F                                | 22923                                    |
|                        | Apple II / Franklin      | A01                                 | 21760                                    |
|                        | Commodore 64             | A02                                 | 31754                                    |
|                        | IBM PC                   |                                     | 58841 (40 columns)<br>58065 (80 columns) |

\* approximate value (for now), with the default database loaded... value as shown through “memory/bytes available” menu option... deletion of the default location, object & message text would create additional space.

<sup>+</sup> without accounting for The Press compression or the extra 6938 (C02) / 7338 (C05) bytes made available when using The Expander.

Note: the BBC version features built-in text compression.

## Screen Resolutions

(Usable screen area)

(Note: work in progress...)

|                        | Platform            | Characters per line          | Lines per screen |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>The Quill</b>       | ZX Spectrum         | 32                           | 22               |
|                        | Amstrad CPC         | 40                           | 23               |
|                        | Commodore 64        | 40                           | 23               |
|                        | BBC / Electron      | 40                           | 25               |
|                        | Sinclair QL         |                              |                  |
|                        | Oric 1 / Atmos      | 38* ( <i>variable size</i> ) | 26               |
| <b>AdventureWriter</b> | Atari               | 40                           | 23               |
|                        | Atari (French)      | 40                           | 23               |
|                        | Apple II / Franklin | 40                           | 23               |
|                        | Commodore 64        | 40                           | 23               |
|                        | IBM PC              | 40                           | 24               |
|                        |                     | 80                           | 24               |

## Additional Version-Specific Features

(Note: work in progress...)

|                              | SPE      | CPC      | C64      | BBC              | QL  | ORIC | ATARI | APPLE | C64 | IBM |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| Graphics Support             | +Illustr | +Illustr | +Illustr |                  |     |      |       | Yes   | Yes |     |
| Inverse Text                 | Yes      | Yes      | Yes      |                  | Yes | Yes  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes | Yes |
| Flashing Text                | Yes      |          |          |                  |     | Yes  |       | Yes   |     |     |
| Individually Coloured Text   | Yes      | Yes      | Yes      |                  | Yes | Yes  |       |       | Yes |     |
| Double height text           |          |          |          |                  |     | Yes  |       |       |     |     |
| Compression                  | +Press   |          |          | Yes*             |     |      |       |       |     |     |
| Ramsave/Ramload              | +Patch   |          |          |                  | Yes |      |       |       |     |     |
| Four Word Input              | +Fix     |          | (4wd)    |                  |     |      |       |       |     |     |
| Customisable System Messages | C only   | Yes      | Yes      | Yes <sup>x</sup> | Yes | Yes  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes | Yes |
| User's own machine code      |          |          |          | Yes              |     |      |       |       |     |     |

\*BBC compression routine acts on lower case letters and spaces for approximately 32% reduction

<sup>x</sup>In the BBC version the standard bank of messages are used by the system.

See list of CondActs for other version-specific elements.

## The Quill & AdventureWriter - List of CondActs

### Common Conditions

|         |                      |
|---------|----------------------|
| AT      | <i>locno.</i>        |
| NOTAT   | <i>locno.</i>        |
| ATGT    | <i>locno.</i>        |
| ATLT    | <i>locno.</i>        |
| PRESENT | <i>objno.</i>        |
| ABSENT  | <i>objno.</i>        |
| WORN    | <i>objno.</i>        |
| NOTWORN | <i>objno.</i>        |
| CARRIED | <i>objno.</i>        |
| NOTCARR | <i>objno.</i>        |
| CHANCE  | <i>percent</i>       |
| ZERO    | <i>flagno.</i>       |
| NOTZERO | <i>flagno.</i>       |
| EQ      | <i>flagno. value</i> |
| GT      | <i>flagno. value</i> |
| LT      | <i>flagno. value</i> |

|           |                |     |
|-----------|----------------|-----|
| NOTEQ     | <i>flagno.</i> | BBC |
| DESTROYED | <i>objno.</i>  | BBC |
| CREATED   | <i>objno.</i>  | BBC |

### Machine-specific Sound Actions

|        |                         |           |
|--------|-------------------------|-----------|
| BEEP   | <i>duration pitch</i>   | SPE       |
| SOUND  | <i>pitch duration</i>   | BBC       |
| SOUND  | <i>duration pitch</i>   | CPC, QL   |
| SOUND  | <i>frequency timing</i> | APPLE     |
| SOUND  | <i>v p d vol</i>        | ATARI-ADW |
| SOUND  | <i>register value</i>   | C64-ADW   |
| SID    | <i>regno. value</i>     | C64       |
| MUSIC  | <i>note duration</i>    | ORIC      |
| VOLUME | <i>value</i>            | ORIC      |

### Machine-specific Display Actions

|        |                    |   |
|--------|--------------------|---|
| BORDER | <i>value</i>       | SPE C, C64, CPC, QL, ATARI-ADW                            |
| PAPER  | <i>value</i>       | SPE C, C64, ORIC, QL, <u>not</u> C64-ADW                  |
| INK    | <i>value</i>       | SPE C, C64, ORIC, QL                                      |
| INK    | <i>value value</i> | CPC   |
| SCREEN | <i>value</i>       | ATARI-ADW, C64-ADW, IBM-ADW                               |
| TEXT   | <i>intensity</i>   | ATARI-ADW, IBM-ADW  |
| CLS    |                    | SPE C, BBC, C64, CPC, ORIC, QL, APPLE, ATARI-ADW, IBM-ADW |

### Common Actions

|         |                      |
|---------|----------------------|
| INVEN   | <i>or INV (BBC)</i>  |
| DESC    |                      |
| QUIT    |                      |
| END     |                      |
| DONE    |                      |
| OK      |                      |
| ANYKEY  | <i>or KEY (BBC)</i>  |
| SAVE    |                      |
| LOAD    |                      |
| URNS    |                      |
| SCORE   |                      |
| PAUSE   | <i>value</i>         |
| GOTO    | <i>locno.</i>        |
| MESSAGE | <i>mesno.</i>        |
| REMOVE  | <i>objno.</i>        |
| GET     | <i>objno.</i>        |
| WEAR    | <i>objno.</i>        |
| DROP    | <i>objno.</i>        |
| DESTROY | <i>objno.</i>        |
| CREATE  | <i>objno.</i>        |
| SWAP    | <i>objno. objno.</i> |
| SET     | <i>flagno.</i>       |
| CLEAR   | <i>flagno.</i>       |
| PLUS    | <i>flagno. value</i> |
| MINUS   | <i>flagno. value</i> |
| LET     | <i>flagno. value</i> |

|         |                      |   |
|---------|----------------------|---|
| DROPALL |                      | SPE C, BBC, C64, CPC, ORIC, QL, APPLE, ATARI-ADW, IBM-ADW |
| PLACE   | <i>objno. locno.</i> | SPE C, BBC, C64, CPC, ORIC, QL, APPLE, ATARI-ADW, IBM-ADW |
| AUTOG   |                      | SPE C, BBC, CPC, QL                                       |
| AUTOD   |                      | SPE C, BBC, CPC, QL                                       |
| AUTOW   |                      | SPE C, BBC, CPC, QL                                       |
| AUTOR   |                      | SPE C, BBC, CPC, QL                                       |
| MES     | <i>mesno.</i>        | BBC   |
| STAR    | <i>mesno.</i>        | BBC   |
| SYSMESS | <i>sysno.</i>        | QL  |
| ADD     | <i>flag1 flag2</i>   | BBC   |
| SUB     | <i>flag1 flag2</i>   | BBC   |
| JSR     | <i>lsb msb</i>       | BBC   |
| PRINT   | <i>flagno.</i>       | BBC   |
| RAMSAVE |                      | QL  |
| RAMLOAD |                      | QL  |

SPE C = Spectrum Serial C version,  
 C64-ADW CondActs same as C64 except where otherwise indicated,  
 IBM-ADW entries included found by experimentation (no manual archived)

## The Quill – System Flags

| Flag:         | Standard Quill/ADW Usage  |  | QL Usage                                  | BBC Usage   |
|---------------|---|--|---|---|
| Flag 0        | zero ( <b>light</b> ) – notzero ( <u>dark</u> )                             |  |   | zero ( <u>dark</u> ) – notzero ( <b>light</b> )   |
| Flag 1        | count of objects carried  |  |   | count of objects carried  |
| Flag 2        | decreased when location described   |  |   | current location number   |
| Flag 3        | decreased when location described & dark                                    |  |   | Flags 3 – 46<br>standard single byte flags [BBC]<br><br><i>(Note the differences between flags 3 – 10... authors should use their own routines in the status table to replicate the behaviour of the flags on other platforms, if required)</i> |
| Flag 4        | decreased when loc <sup>n</sup> described & dark & object 0 absent          |  |   |   |
| Flags 5 – 8   | decreased each turn   |  |   |   |
| Flag 9        | decreased each turn when it's dark  |  |   |   |
| Flag 10       | decreased each turn when it's dark & object 0 absent                        |  |   |   |
| Flag 11-24    | ordinary flags  |  | Flags 11 – 59<br>(ordinary flags)<br>[QL] |   |
| Flag 25       | ordinary flag   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> word in C64-4wd  |   |   |
| Flag 26       | ordinary flag   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> word in C64-4wd  |   |   |
| Flag 27       | ordinary flag   | splitscreen, start of text line number (SPE + Patch)                             |   |   |
| Flag 28       | ordinary flag   | screen, sound & ramsave/load controls (SPE + Patch)                              |   |   |
| Flag 29       | ordinary flag   | picture control in Illustrator (C64, CPC, SPE)                                   |   |   |
| Flag 30       | holds the score   |  |   |   |
| Flag 31       | holds turn count LSB  |  |   |   |
| Flag 32       | holds turn count MSB  |  |   |   |
| Flag 33       | Do not exist as user accessible flags for Quill (SPE, CPC, C64, ORIC, etc.) | hidden (most Quill versions) diagnostic flag (ORIC, CPC & ADW) – parsed word1    |   |   |
| Flag 34       |   | hidden (most Quill versions) diagnostic flag (ORIC, CPC & ADW) – parsed word2    |   |   |
| Flag 35       |   | hidden (most Quill versions) diagnostic flag (ORIC, CPC & ADW) – location number |   |   |
| Flag 36       |   | ???  |   |   |
| Flags 37 - 46 |   | Flags 37+ Hidden flags storing object number                                     |   |   |

|                       |  |   |                               |  |
|-----------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Flags 47 - 63         |  | locations (used with SPE + Kelsoft's FIX) |                               | Flags 47 – 63<br>double byte flags<br>(PLUS, MINUS, ADD, SUB and PRINT all act as 16-bit calculations i.e. act on flag and next highest flag)<br>[BBC] |
|                       |  |   | 60: holds the score [QL]      |  |
|                       |  |   | 61: holds turn count LSB [QL] |  |
|                       |  |   | 62: holds turn count MSB [QL] |  |
| Flags 64 - ...<br>*** |  |   |                               |  |

\*\*\* Note the pseudo-flags 64+ are only used by the third-party extension for the ZX Spectrum version of The Quill; Kelsoft's The Fix.

## Object Start Locations

The following values are used to denote the start locations of objects (usually in menu option F). Note that the BBC version uses different values.

| Value | Regular Quill | BBC Quill   |
|-------|---------------|-------------|
| 252   | not created   |             |
| 253   | worn          | carried     |
| 254   | carried       | worn        |
| 255   |               | not created |

Regular Quill values match up with the later equivalents in the PAW and DAAD where 252 (not-created), 253 (worn), 254 (carried), 255 (current location)

## System Messages

Default system messages vary by serial and platform. Note: In early versions of The Quill (serial A) for ZX Spectrum the system messages could not be altered. A supplementary "you" file was used to define the player's perspective.

In most versions, the system messages are only used by the Quill interpreter itself. The QL version allows the user to add additional system messages and to use the CondAct SYSMESS to print them (mirroring how that conduct would be later used in the PAW).

Note: The BBC version does not have separate bank of system messages: the standard messages 0 – 19 are used by the system itself.

0: [dark message]

1: I can also see:-

2: [What next? prompt]

3: [What next? prompt]

4: [What next? prompt]

5: [What next? prompt] \*\*spare + Patch (SPE)

6: Sorry, I didn't understand that. Try some different words.

7: I can't go in that direction.

8: I can't.

9: I have with me:-

10: (worn)

11: Nothing at all.

12: Do you really want to quit now?

13: [end of game message & try again? prompt]

14: Bye. Have a nice day.

15: OK.

16: [press any key to continue]

17: You have taken

18: turn

19: s

20: .

21: You have scored

22: %

23: I'm not wearing it.

24: I can't. My hands are full.

25: I already have it.

26: It's not here.

27: I can't carry any more.

28: I don't have it.

29: I'm already wearing it.

30: Y

31: N

Note: #30 & #31 are the system yes/no replies

### C64

32: Disc or Tape?

33: [Saving prompt – Type in name of file]

34: Start the tape

### CPC

32: [Saving prompt - Type in name of file]

### ORIC

32: [Saving prompt - Type in name of file]

33: Use SLOW cassette speed?

### Adventure Writer – Apple, Atari

32: [Saving prompt – Type in name of file]

### Adventure Writer - C64

32: Disc or Tape?

33: [Saving prompt – Type in name of file]

34: Start the tape

### Adventure Writer – IBM

32: [Saving prompt – Type in name of file]

33: Enter disk drive:



## Official Expansion Programs

### **The Illustrator (Gilsoft) – SPE, CPC, C64**

The Illustrator, by Tim Gilberts, was available for the ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC platforms. It allowed authors to add graphics to their text adventures. Graphics were vector/line-and-fill style. A separate editor program was used to design the graphics and combine them with the completed adventure database.

C64 graphic modes included full screen picture (hi-res, 24 lines), full screen (with press any key message), split-screen picture & text, and scrolling text mode.

Spectrum & Amstrad CPC users were initially limited to full screen pictures using the Illustrator. Split screen modes were unlocked on the Spectrum via The Patch, and on the CPC via The Splitter.

### **The Patch (Gilsoft) - SPE**

The Patch, by Phil Wade, allowed Illustrator split-screen pictures to be incorporated in Spectrum text adventures. This facility was controlled with flag 27 (as it was in the C64 Illustrator). The Patch also provided a collection of other special effects, routines and features by utilising flag 28 with the PAUSE command. A small routine was also provided which replaced the printer routine in the Illustrator with one that saved the screens out to tape.

- Split-screen pictures
- Sound effects
- Switching between two typefaces/character sets
- Screen wipe effect
- Dynamic object limit
- Super-Quit and Crash features
- Different key-click options
- Dynamic replacement of system message 1
- Ramsave/Ramload

## **The Press and the Expander (Gilsoft) - SPE**

The Press and the Expander were written by Phil Wade for the ZX Spectrum Quill. The Press offered text compression and the Expander allowed larger text-only adventures beyond the usual top limit. By using both utilities, text-only adventures bigger than "40K" could be produced.

The Expander gives the user 6938 bytes extra on version C02 and 7338 bytes extra on version C05. The manual states that with good compression this could mean the equivalent of about 11K extra for an adventure.

## **Characters (Gilsoft) - SPE**

A simple character designer for the ZX Spectrum supplied with 20 premade character sets.

The font editor was created by Kevin Maddocks\* of Sigma-Soft, and the included fonts had been available previously as Sigma's Character Set Collection. (Kevin was also the author of the Quilled adventure Dwarfs Domain/Elfindor).

*\*note, his name is misspelled Kevin Madocs on the Characters packaging*

## **The Splitter (Gilsoft) - CPC**

The Splitter was an official Illustrator support program that allowed split screen graphics to be added to Quilled adventures on the Amstrad CPC.

The Splitter gave the user the following options for images...

1. Full screen pictures (Illustrator default)
2. The picture to remain on the screen
3. The picture to be removed at the 'More...' prompt

The space allowed for an illustration in split screen mode could be from 1 to 21 lines.

## Other Third-Party Expansions

### **The Fix, Mini-Fix, The Fix+ (Kelsoft) - SPE**

Produced by Gerald Kellet of Kelsoft (who also made extensions for the GAC and PAWs), the Fix programs provided some interesting extra commands for Quill programmers on the Spectrum. By using a quirk in the editor, Kelsoft were able to add a series of pseudo-CondActs that were implemented using the OK action.

- four word parser
- multiple STATUS table passes
- flag operations (add two flags, subtract two flags)
- forced synonyms/event equivalents
- additional directions in vocab
- full screen pictures in Patch-ed adventures

Mini-Fix was a cheaper, cut-down version of The Fix with just the improved parser. It's unclear if The Fix+ was ever released. Currently, the only known copy of The Fix is in the Gilsoft company archives.

### **QUAID and the Replicator (Kelsoft) - SPE**

Also produced by Kelsoft, the QUAID ("Quill Aid") was a debugging tool for the Quill. The Replicator was a utility designed to assist in the duplication/publication of Quilled adventures. Neither utility is currently archived.

### **The Enhancer (Bob Pape) – SPE [Never released]**

Referenced in Bob Pape's book *'It's Behind You! – The Making of a Computer Game'*, The Enhancer was an expansion to the Quill that Bob produced which included features such as his own graphics routines. It was never released or made available to others.

## **Unofficial versions of The Quill**

There is a utility called Ballpoint in several of the Spectrum online archives. No details accompany it.

Although the menu is invisible in this program it follows the menu structure of serial C Spectrum Quill.

We believe this may be an early version of one the unofficially “hacked about” Smart Egg versions of the Quill.

For reference, the Ballpoint shows as having 28896 bytes of memory available.

## Known Quill & Illustrator Archived Versions

See official repository <http://8-bit.info/the-gilsoft-adventure-systems/> for downloads  
Platform-specific download sites (for other archived versions) listed below...

\*work in progress – do you have any versions not listed?

| Format          | Serial       | Archived? | Platform-specific download site<br><i>(for other versions not included in the official repository)</i>  |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Spectrum</b> |              |           | World of Spectrum <a href="https://www.worldofspectrum.org/">https://www.worldofspectrum.org/</a><br>Spectrum Computing <a href="https://spectrumcomputing.co.uk/">https://spectrumcomputing.co.uk/</a> |
| Quill           | A03          | YES       |   |
|                 | A06          | YES       |   |
|                 | A08          | YES       |   |
|                 | C02          | YES       |   |
|                 | C04          | YES       |   |
|                 | C05          | YES       |   |
| Illustrator     | A00          | YES       |   |
| <b>Amstrad</b>  |              |           | CPC-Power <a href="https://www.cpc-power.com/">https://www.cpc-power.com/</a><br>CPCrulez<br>* A00 version bugged?  |
| Quill           | A00 Tape*    | YES       |   |
|                 | A01 Tape     | YES       |   |
|                 | A01 Disk     | YES       |   |
|                 | A04 Disk     | YES       |   |
| Illustrator     | A01 Tape     | YES       |   |
|                 | A02 Disk     | YES       |   |
| <b>C64</b>      |              |           | Gamebase64 <a href="http://www.gamebase64.com/">http://www.gamebase64.com/</a>  |
| Quill           | A06 Disk     | YES       |   |
|                 | A06.4WD Disk | YES       |   |
|                 | B02 Disk     | YES       |   |
| Illustrator     | A00 Disk     | YES       |   |
| <b>BBC</b>      |              |           | Stairway to Hell <a href="http://www.stairwaytohell.com/">http://www.stairwaytohell.com/</a><br>* some bugs? (e.g. destroy object/object counter)   |
|                 | A00 Tape*    | YES       |   |
|                 | A00 Disk*    | YES       |   |
|                 | A03 Disk     | YES       |   |
| <b>Oric</b>     |              |           |   |
|                 | A00 Tape     | YES       |   |
| <b>QL</b>       |              |           |   |
|                 |              | NO        |   |
| <b>Atari</b>    |              |           |   |
|                 | Released?    | NO        |   |

## Other Observations & Notes

### **Oric & BBC table entries**

Both the Oric and BBC versions use an \* (asterisk) in their tables rather than an \_ (underscore).

### **Object type**

The characteristics of an object (whether it can be worn & not just carried) are set by its associated word value in the vocabulary table.

12 < object vocab word < 200 : not-wearable (GD only)

199 < object vocab word : wearable (GDWR)

The initial Spectrum edition of the Quill (serial A) did not include such a distinction. If you are porting adventures from that version of the Quill then you will need to amend the vocabulary entries accordingly.

### **Word types**

Unlike in the PAWs & DAAD, words are not categorised into word types, such as verbs, nouns & adjectives. Words in the vocabulary table can be used as both verbs and nouns. Words can even be used twice in the same input, such as IRON IRON. Authors porting Quilled games to later Gilsoft-family systems, such as the PAW will need to think carefully about how they transfer across these sorts of entries.

### **Differences between GET and DROP CondActs in The Quill and PAWs/DAAD**

Although most CondActs behave very similarly in the Quill and the PAWs, making it very easy to port a game to later Gilsoft-family systems, care should be taken regarding the GET and DROP entries.

GET and DROP in The Quill are silent. They do not broadcast their effects.

However, in the PAWs, the GET and DROP CondActs trigger system messages 36 and 39, namely “You now have the...” and “You’ve dropped the...”

If you convert across an adventure to the PAWs, particularly if you wish to use the PAWs own object handling routines, then you will need to adjust the code accordingly. PLACE can be used in the PAWs in many cases where a silent GET or DROP is required.

Some clever Quill authors will have used the silent nature of the GET and DROP CondActs as a way of checking whether an object is carried and automatically generating a “You don’t have it” message if it’s not.

For example...

**LIGH LAMP DROP 1 GET 1 SWAP 1 0 OK**

If the player doesn’t have the lamp (object 1) then the DROP 1 will produce the message “You don’t have it” and stop processing the entry. i.e.

**> LIGHT LAMP**

***You don’t have it.***

If the player has the lamp, it’s dropped and picked up silently, before the rest of the entry is processed (swapping an unlit lamp with the lit lamp) and printing the “OK” response. i.e.

**> LIGHT LAMP**

**OK.**

In PAWs, the same line would generate the output...

**> LIGHT LAMP**

***You drop the lamp.***

***You pick up the lamp.***

**OK.**

## **MES, MESSAGE and SYSMESS**

The standard Quill CondAct MESSAGE prints the contents of the specified message followed by a newline.

On the BBC, the additional CondAct MES prints the message without a new line (similar to the equivalent CondAct appears in PAWs & DAAD).

## **Use of External Machine Code Routines**

The BBC Micro version features the CondAct JSR which allows the user to trigger their own machine code routines. The example included in the BBC manual is an automatic exit routine.

## Useful Web Links

Gilsoft

<http://www.gilsoft.co.uk/>

Tim Gilberts

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/timbucus/> Paypal: <https://www.paypal.me/timgilberts>

The official authorised Gilsoft repository, run by Stefan Vogt

<http://8-bit.info/the-gilsoft-adventure-systems/>

Graeme Yeandle's Text Adventure Pages

<http://graemeyeandle.atwebpages.com/advent/index.html>

8bitAG.com – This document and other resources...

<http://8bitag.com/info/#quill>

AdventureWriter:

Apple: [https://archive.org/details/Adventure\\_Writer\\_Master\\_Disk](https://archive.org/details/Adventure_Writer_Master_Disk)

Atari: [http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-adventurewriter\\_126.html](http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-adventurewriter_126.html)

C64: <http://www.gamebase64.com/game.php?id=15332&d=18>

IBM: <https://www.myabandonware.com/game/adventurewriter-2gv>

Mocagh archive (documentation):

Gilsoft related:

<https://www.mocagh.org/loadpage.php?getcompany=miscgame&npp=25&whatsnew=0&start=0&series=Gilsoft>

CodeWriter related:

[https://www.mocagh.org/loadpage.php?query=\[publisher\]CodeWriter](https://www.mocagh.org/loadpage.php?query=[publisher]CodeWriter)

The Illustrator manual (for C64) translated into Spanish by Igor Errazking

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UNsL4Cp1naVJsZjTsshmafbuG7wNrdXO/view>



Spectrum Microdrive Patch (Crash Play Tips Supplement, April 1986)

<https://worldofspectrum.org/archive/magazines/robin-candys-playing-tips-special/27#24>

\*link updated July 2020

## **Ported Quilled adventures & useful resources for specific formats...**

Devwebcl's Atari Quill site... Quill adventures ported to the Atari...

<http://devwebcl.atarionline.pl/quill/quill.html>

Andy Ford's Spectrum to BBC ports...

<http://www.retrossoftware.co.uk/wiki/index.php?title=SGAP>

Auraes' Quill to Z-Machine project...

<https://gitlab.com/auraes/zquill>

## **Tools for extracting Quilled databases...**

unQUILL (*Spectrum/CPC/C64 plus separate program for BBC databases*)

<https://www.seasip.info/Unix/UnQuill/>

unPAWS (*Spectrum databases only*)

<https://github.com/Utodev/unPAWs>

Various Quill related tools & downloads on the Interactive Fiction archive:

<https://www.ifarchive.org/indexes/if-archiveXprogrammingXquill.html>

PAWmac (Windows) Quilled adventures to Spectrum PAW via inPAWs

<https://retro.pagasus.org/pawmac/>

## Tips for Quill authors...

Simon Avery & Debby Howard – Using the Quill: A Beginner's Guide

<https://digdilem.org/freesoftware/text-adventures/>

Adventure Coder fanzine by Chris Hester

<https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Chris+Hester%22>

## Quill interviews & articles...

The Digital Antiquarian article on The Quill

<https://www.filfre.net/2013/07/the-quill/>

...with Graeme Yeandle

[http://solutionarchive.com/interview\\_graeme/](http://solutionarchive.com/interview_graeme/)

...with Tim Gilbert

8-bit info: <http://8-bit.info/2017/01/22/the-gilsoft-legacy/>

Classic Adventurer (Issue 2): <http://classicadventurer.co.uk/>

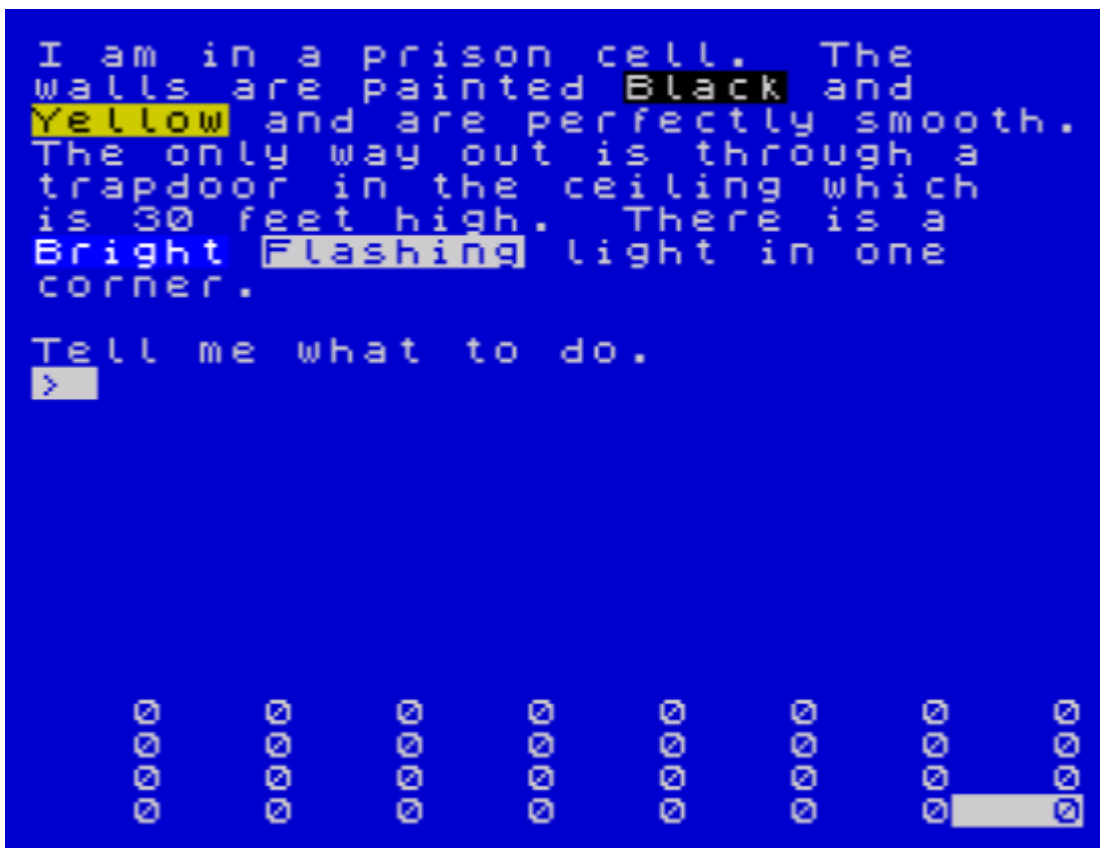
Appendix:

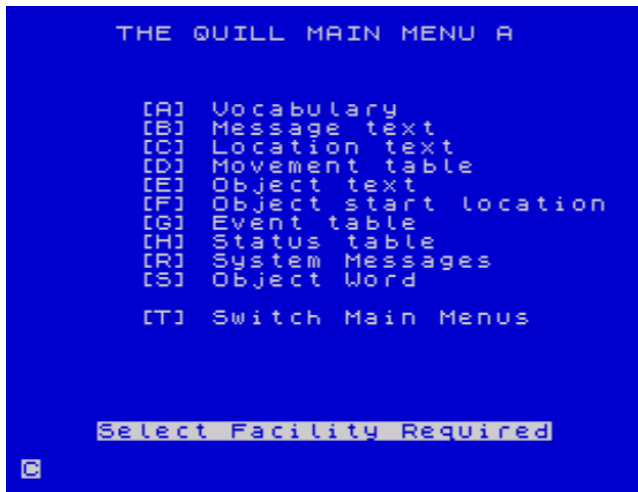
Screenshots of editor & test mode with default database

ZX Spectrum A08 editor...

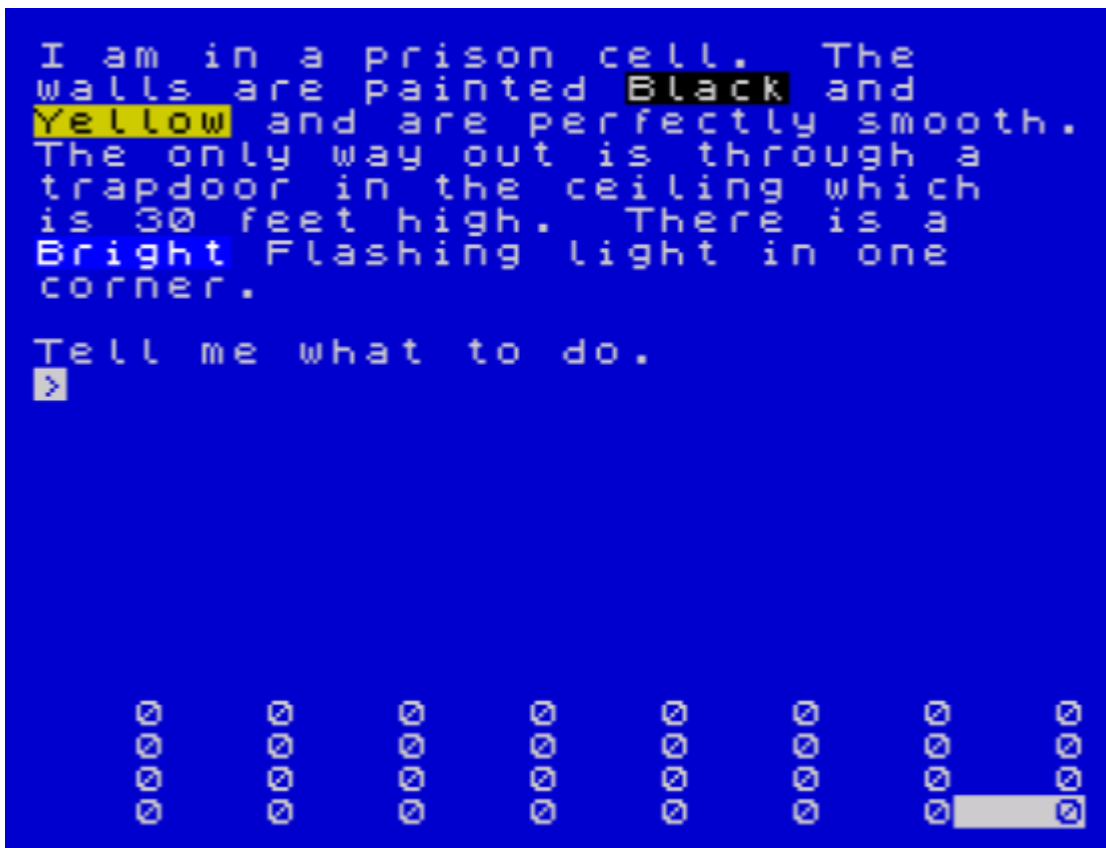


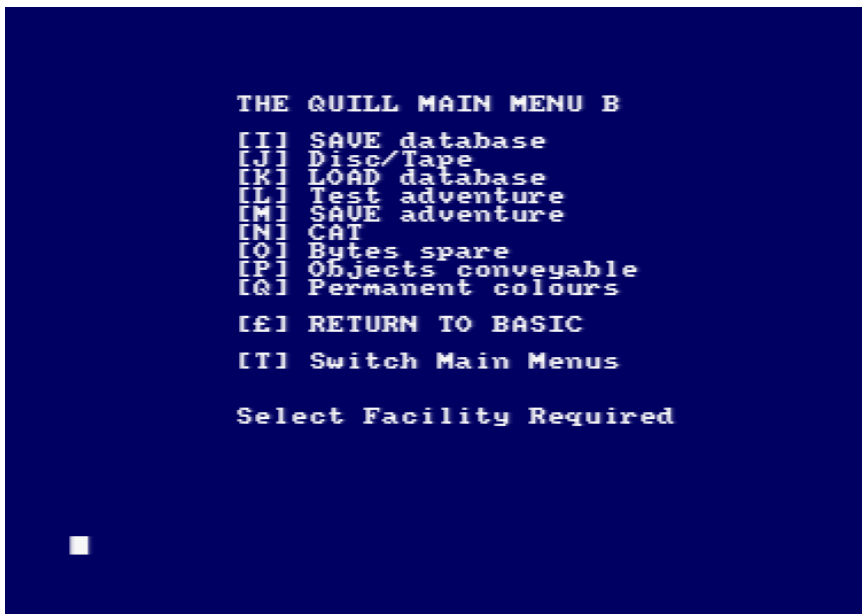
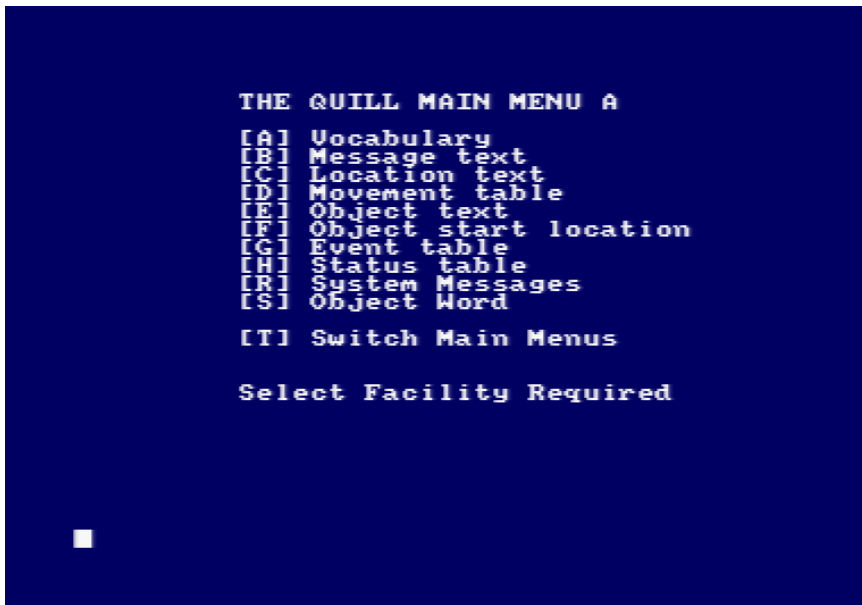
ZX Spectrum A08 test mode with default database...



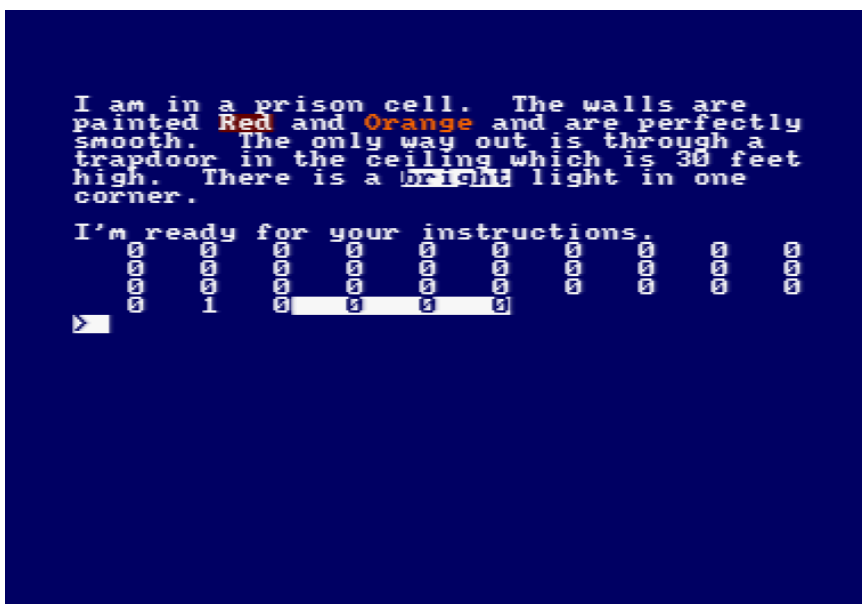


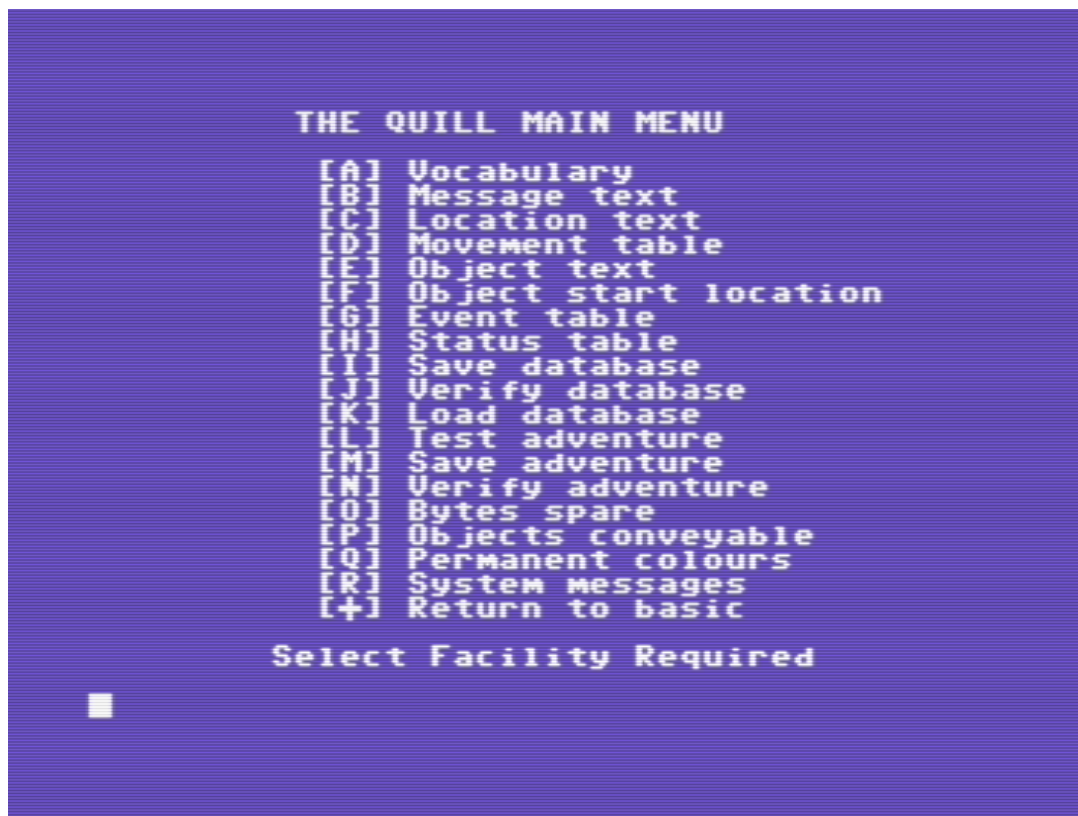
ZX Spectrum C05 test mode with default database...





Amstrad CPC A04 test mode with default database





```
                The Quill
              (C) Gilsoft 1985
            by Neil Fleming-Smith

A...Vocabulary
B...Messages
C...Locations
D...Objects
E...Object words
F...Object start
G...Movement
H...Event
I...Status
J...Load database
K...Save database
L...Test adventure
M...Save adventure
N...Objects conveyable
O...Bytes spare
P...Star commands
```

BBC Model B test mode with default database

```
255 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 0 255 0 0 0 0 0 0

Undefined location.
?_
```



Test mode (default database) with diagnostic overlay...

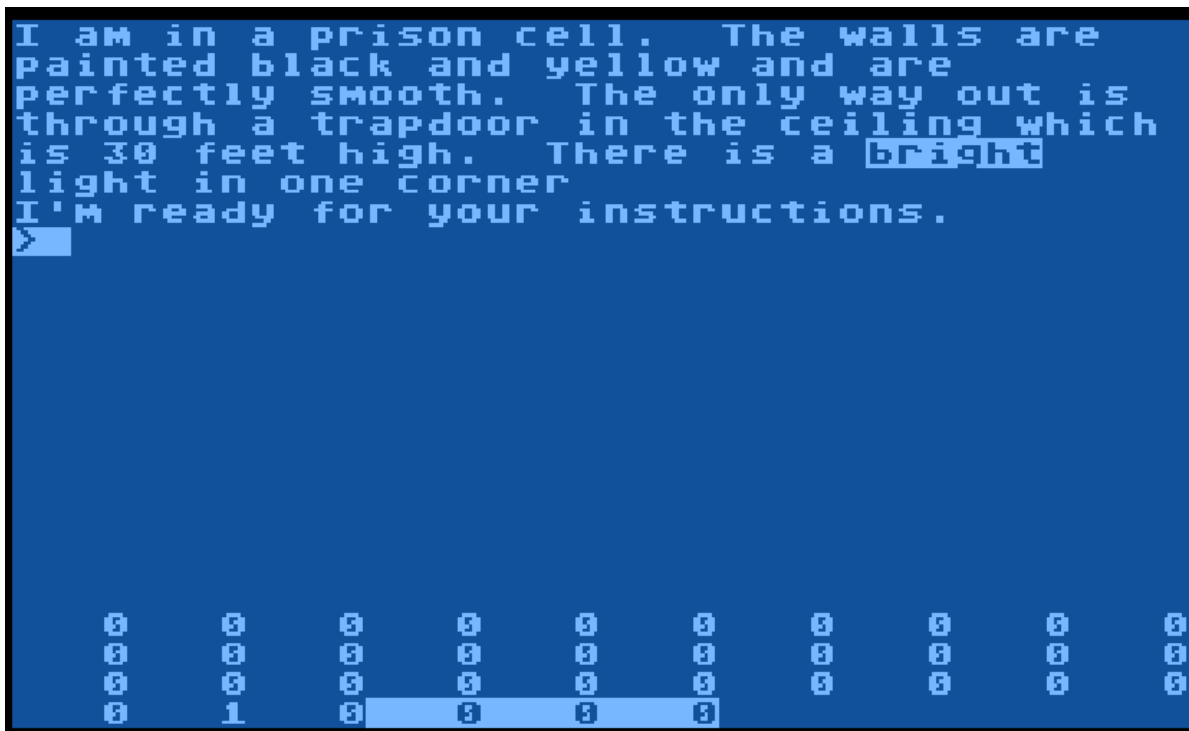


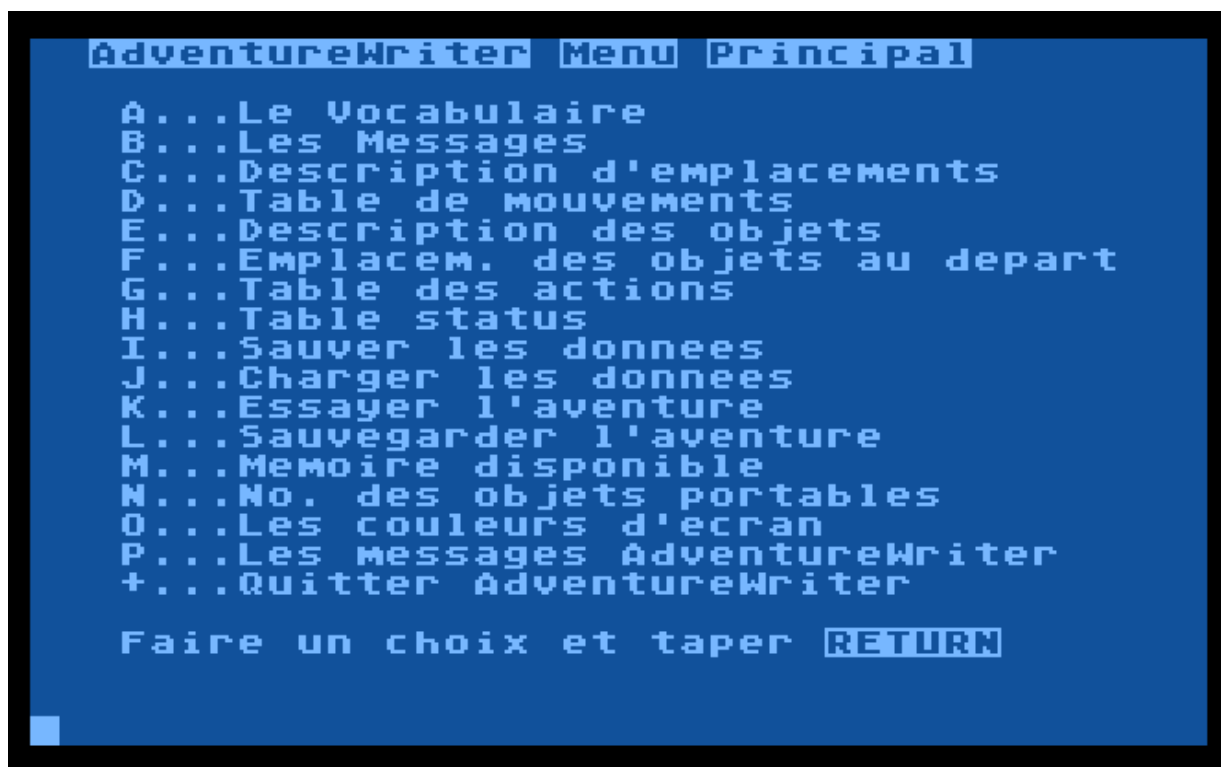






AdventureWriter Atari in test mode with default database...





AdventureWriter – Atari French language version in test mode with default database...



```
AdventureWriter Main Menu
A ... Vocabulary text
B ... Message text
C ... Location descriptions
D ... Movement table
E ... Object descriptions
F ... Object starting locations
G ... Vocabulary action table
H ... Status table
I ... Save a database
J ... Load a database
K ... Test this adventure
L ... Save this adventure
M ... Memory available
N ... # of portable objects
O ... Set display colors
P ... AdventureWriter messages
+ ... Exit AdventureWriter

Select an Option and Press RETURN
```

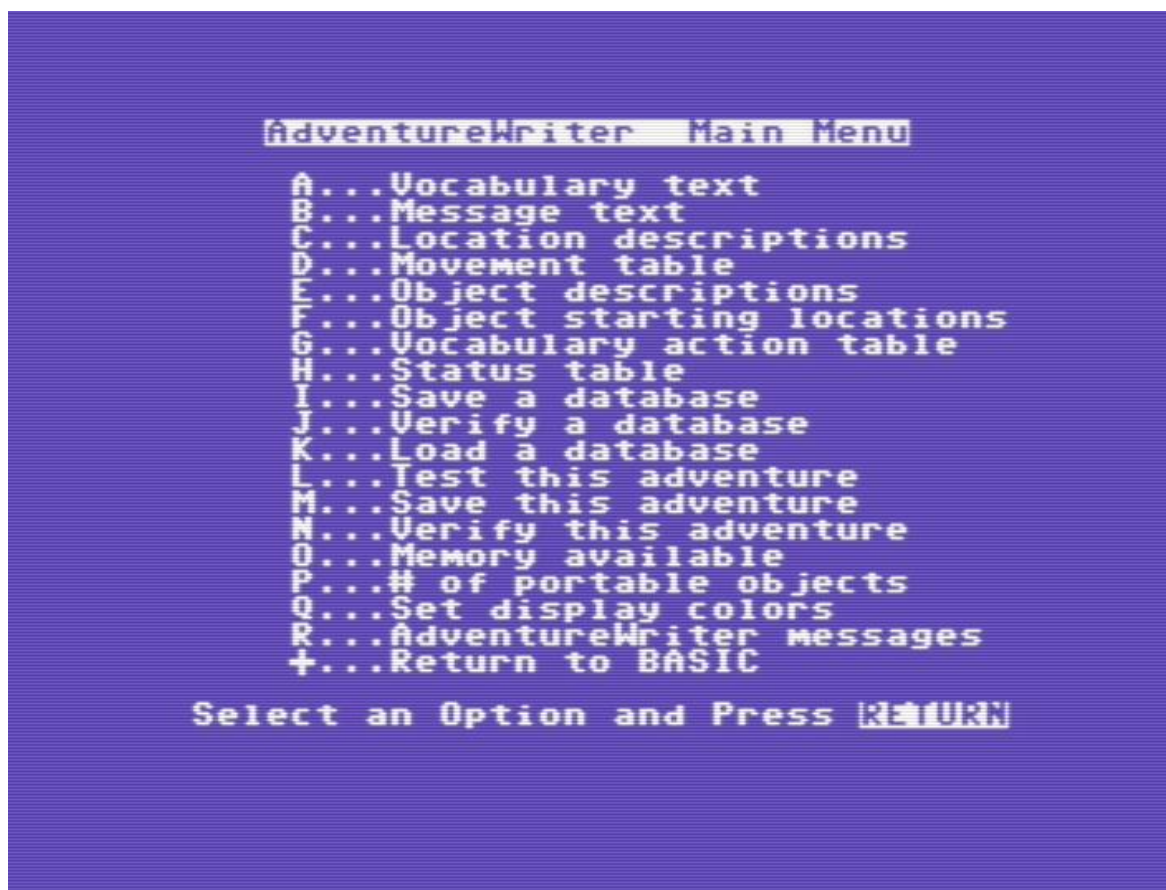
(80 column editor)

```
AdventureWriter Main Menu
A ... Vocabulary text
B ... Message text
C ... Location descriptions
D ... Movement table
E ... Object descriptions
F ... Object starting locations
G ... Vocabulary action table
H ... Status table
I ... Save a database
J ... Load a database
K ... Test this adventure
L ... Save this adventure
M ... Memory available
N ... # of portable objects
O ... Set display colors
P ... AdventureWriter messages
+ ... Exit AdventureWriter

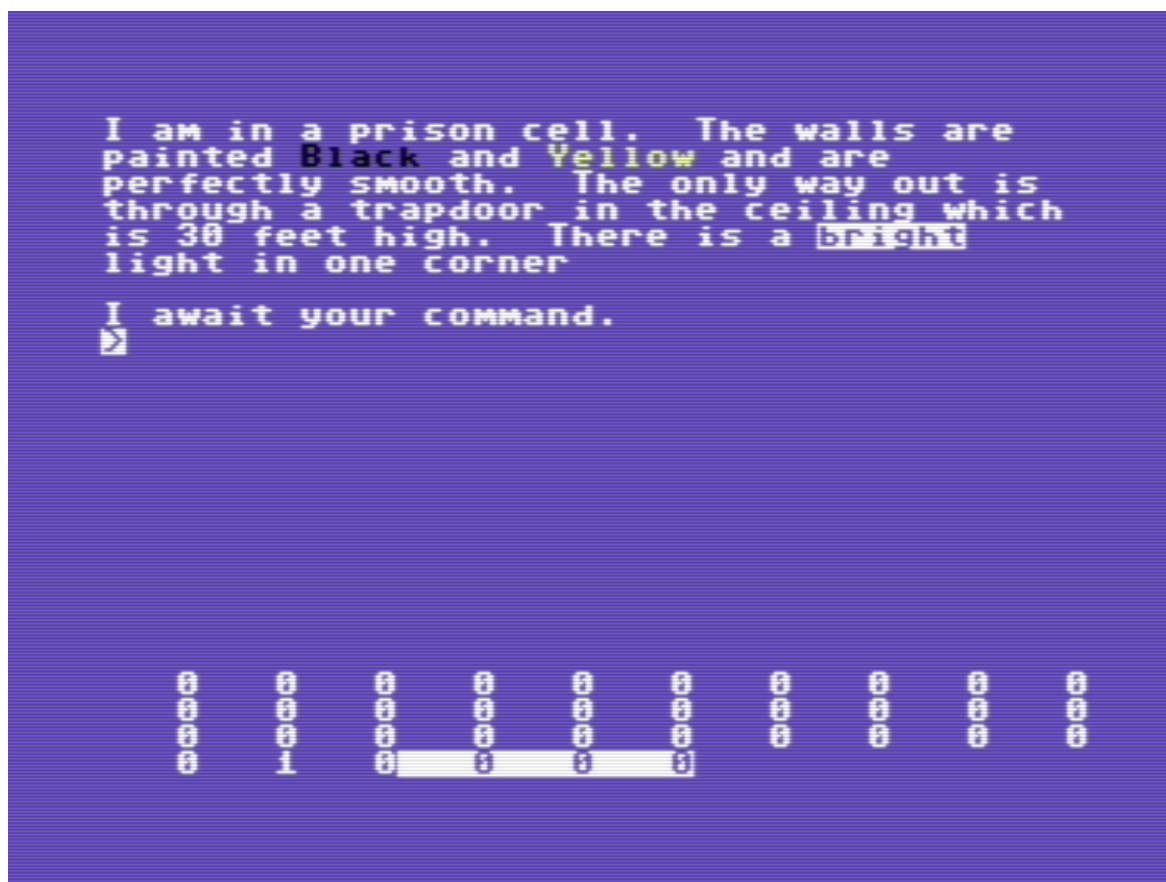
Select an Option and Press RETURN
```

(40 column editor)





AdventureWriter C64 test mode with default database...



Some advertising examples...

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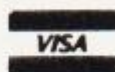
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**SWEDEN:** RIKO DATA, Box 2082, S-230 41 Bara, Sweden  
**DENMARK:** QUALI-SOFT, Vesterbrogade 127 E Mz Tv, 1620  
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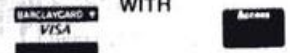
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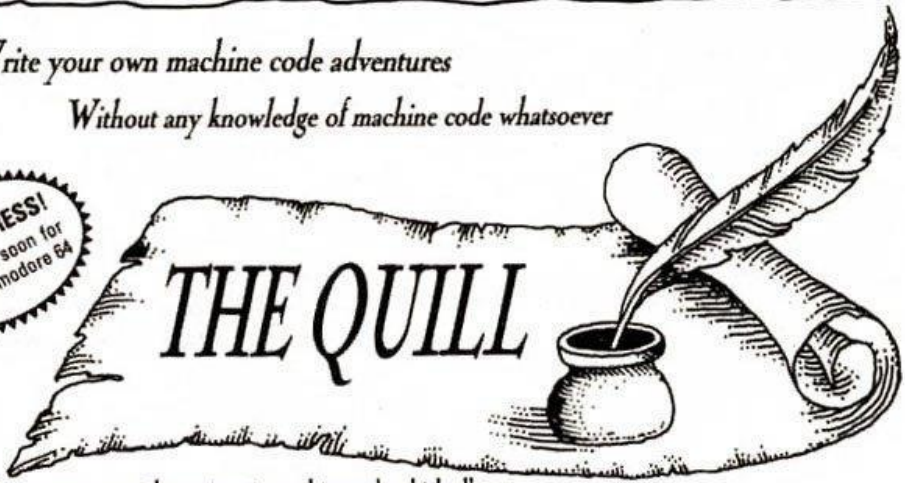
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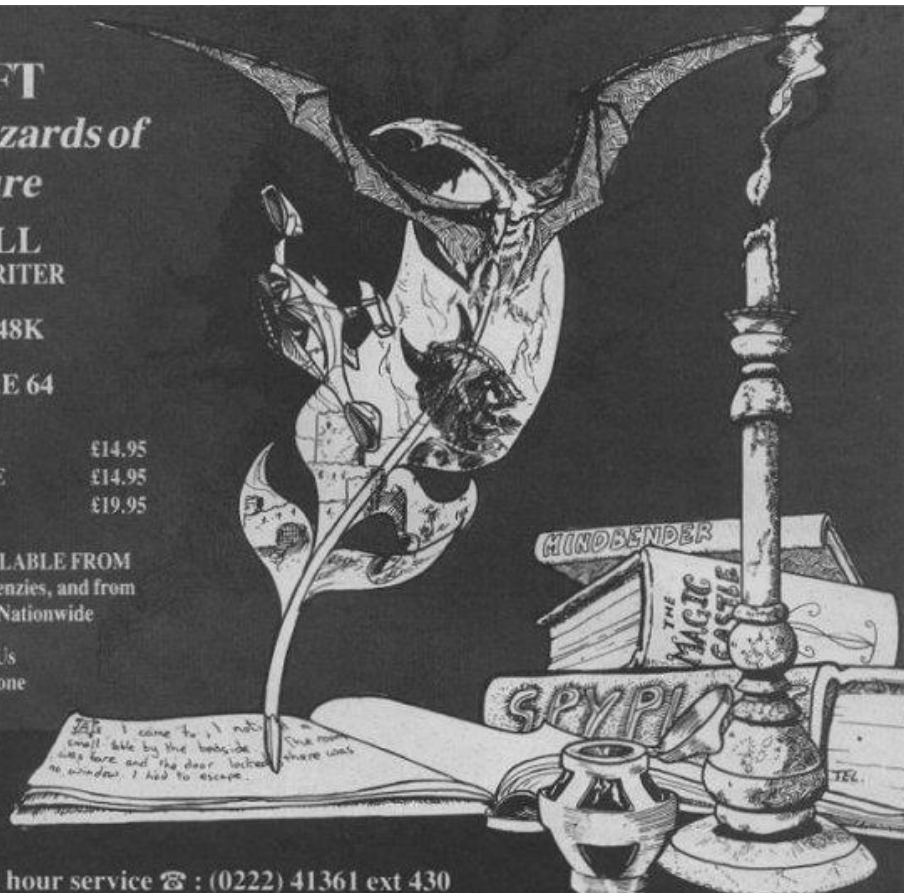
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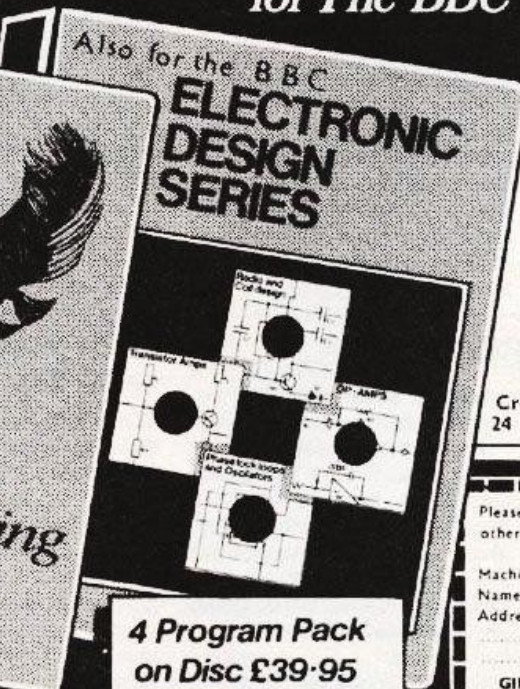
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The Quill – originally created by Graeme Yeandle

Oric 1/ATMOS version by Tim Gilberts

BBC/Electron version by Neil Fleming-Smith

Sinclair QL version by Huw H.Powell

The Illustrator by Tim Gilberts

The Patch, The Press & The Expander by Phil Wade

Characters by Kevin Maddocks

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(see links section)

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