

COINTEXTS

QL

ADVENTURERS' FORUM

Issue 3

Edited By Richard Alexander

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by Adrian Phillips

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And Thats All Folks !!!!

See you in a couple of months time,
please keep the letters, articles, reviews, hints,
etc coming in.

Richard.

Editorial

Welcome to the third and last edition of QL Adventurer's Forum on microdrive. From number 4 onwards we shall be printed, A5 size. I'm not sure how many pages each issue will consist of, probably 32 - 36, but this depends on contributions. The scope of the magazine will remain the same: adventures, simulations, strategy and wargames - although I may extend it to include educational software as well. The cost of a four issue subscription will be £4.00 sterling, which I think is reasonable. Cheques etc payable to C.G.H. Services, which is the name I'm now trading under. QLAF will only be a small, but important part of my business empire (Robert Maxwell look out!).

C.G.H. Services will also be publishing adventures etc. for the QL market (and the PC one if anyone cares to write them). We have got one definite title lined up, but we really need more. There is one proviso, conversions of Public Domain software should be added to the QUANTA library. Make that two provisos: games must be original, e.g. don't nick the scenario from a book - people pay big money for licences and won't appreciate you doing them out of some money. But by all means nick it and then change the names, geography and add puzzles etc. Otherwise, let's be having them! They can be Superbasic (preferably compiled), Quill or APT generated, text or illustrated. The retail price I hope to keep as low as possible, between £5.00 - £8.00, to encourage sales, but don't expect to get rich on the royalties. I certainly don't!!!

As you may have read in Steve Sutton's letter, Shadow Games have had problems which have prevented them from making "Imagine" and APT system available. I hope that this problem is only temporary. For more details contact Steve. Another firm who seem to be having problems are PCBS, who brought out "Heart of Gern" and lately "The Talisman". I sent them a copy of QLAF#2 but it was returned marked "Gone Away". If anyone knows where to contact them please let me know.

If you're thinking of contributing articles etc. to the printed QLAF, then send them in as before on mdv_ (or 1440 sector flp_) or alternatively, if you've got an NLQ printer (or better) then pages of A4 text and graphics can be handled. Please use Elite typefaces if possible as the text will be reduced to A5 and condensed is likely to be too small. Another option is to use either "Front Page Extra2" or "Page Designer2" and you can have the layout as you wish. If you're doing this please make submissions as near as possible complete A4 pages. This'll save me lots of time trying to

reassemble them.

A technical note. This issue has been put together with the aid of SPELLBOUND in on-line mode and a Speedscreen ROM. Therefore if you see any hats, "^", in the text, please ignore them, it simply means I've forgotten to do a "Replace" on them. One thing I don't like, although it is in the manual and implicit in the software design, is (apart from littering the text with hats) is the need to turn SPELLBOUND on again every time one back-spaces. (Also that dreaded whooping noise.) The Speedscreen ROM seems to work very nicely with Quill - although how much faster things go I'm not sure. I was also hoping to incorporate an option to use the Speedscreen fantasy font in a loading boot for those of you who've got Speedscreen. But I can't get it work properly. Even when I get the blessed thing running properly if I save the amended SuperBasic prog, when it's reloaded it scrambles the text output again. Very tedious. I suspect the problem is easily cured, if so do let us know!!!!

WARGAMES: UPDATE

Confession time. Not a lot of progress here, due a variety of reasons. One is that researching Wars of the Roses battles isn't as easy as I thought when you're stuck miles from a decent library. Secondly I've been playing with the Universal Military Simulator on my PC. And forget the reviews, it's useless. I won't list all the bugs, suffice to say, terrain is a terrible mess. You can't define roads or rivers, walls or hedges, indeed anything which only goes along a single hex side. All features have to cover an entire square - and even then the effect of the terrain varies, depending on whether one travels along the north or south square. It makes recreating a battle such as First St Albans impossible. There is also the fancical scaling system. User-defined it says. That's fair enough you can cover any distance with the map. But when it comes to movement you have to give all units a speed in miles per hour. And if you're not careful, that can mean 800 yards takes 6 hours to cross. Nowhere is there any indication of the relation between hex and speed. Enough of that. Meanwhile I'm investing in some minatures rules to see if they can help.

Richard.

Article

Superbasic Adventure Writing

In the previous article, I described the operation of a BASIC parser, which tries to make sense of the player's input. That's all very well, but it's not a whole lot of good by itself.

However, I now intend to describe a few other essential ingredients in an adventure system, and present a working listing, which could be expanded into a full-blown adventure.

People and Places

The program must obviously hold information on the objects and locations you will encounter. There are many ways of doing this, but I will just suggest one.

Locations

Each location has a unique number, a location description and a list of possible exits. If you look at lines 8000 - 8005 in the listing, you will see how it is done: for each location there is a data line, i.e.

```
8000+location DATA "Description",north exit, south exit, east exit, west exit
```

The exit numbers in line 8001 (i.e. for location 1) are 2,0,0,0 meaning that the north exit is to location 2. The 3 other zeros indicate that there are no exits to the south, east, or west.

Note that there is no actual location zero. This is reserved for your inventory (see below...)

Objects

Each object has a number, and its name is found in the dictionary with value 100+object number. e.g. The word "LAMP" has value 102, and refers to the object "the magic lamp", which has object number 2. This may sound rather complicated, but it does make things simpler later on. Also, each object has a location, found in the array object%().

e.g. if object%(2)=3, that means that the lamp is in location 3.

if object%(2)=0, that means the lamp is being carried by you.

If you want an object to disappear, set its object%() number to a location that does not exist, e.g. 255.

Flags

Throughout an adventure, the program will often have to decide whether or not you can do what you asked in your input, depending on what has gone before. e.g. If a hairy green monster is guarding the entrance to a cave, you may only be allowed to go in if you have previously splattered it with your blunderbuss. The program could keep the information in a variable called "splattered_hairy_green_monster_with_blunderbuss", which would be initially zero, but set to 1 after splattering. If the program finds the variable to be 1, it will let you pass, otherwise not.

Since there will be many such circumstances throughout an adventure, it will get cluttered up with all sorts of variables, which is where the idea of flags comes in useful. You could simply state that flags%(14) represents whether you have killed the monster or not (and keep a note to that effect on a piece of paper). If you keep other important information, such as current location, number of turns taken, score, etc. in flags, then it makes it much easier when writing a "SAVE" routine.

Getting it Together

The heart of the listing is the lines 160 - 200

```
160 REPEAT game
170 get_words
180 assign_values
190 if word1=0 and word2=0 THEN PRINT
"Pardon???:ELSE actions
195 PRINT
197 independent_actions
200 END REPEAT game
```

The parser section was described in the last article, so the important procedures now are "actions" and "independent_actions".

Actions (1400 - 2020)

This is, in its simplest form, just a series of SELECT ON's and IF...THEN...ELSE...ENDIF statements. If you look at the listing it should be clear how it works. The main problem with this is that when the SELECT list has got quite large, it becomes difficult to find the place if you want to go back and alter something later.

There are other more concise (but more complicated) ways of doing it - see "Adventure Playtime" and "Tower of Ualagon" for examples (plug, plug!!!).

Article

Independent actions (4000 - 4080)

Some things in the adventure must go on, regardless of what you do. The simplest is that the number of turns taken must go up by one, after each turn. Another example from the listing is that if you have been holding the lamp for too long, it will burn your hands. This depends on the number of turns you have been holding the lamp, not on your input, so the appropriate code goes into the independent_actions procedure.

Using the Listing

As you can see, I have not described the listing down to the last semicolon, but it should be fairly self-evident. To create a full-size adventure you could easily expand the vocabulary, add more objects and locations, and make appropriate additions to the actions and independent_actions procedures.

And if you think SuperBASIC runs too slowly for your liking, I can report that the listing QLiberates without any alterations, and runs very fast indeed!

You will probably have some ideas which can't be realised with the system as it stands. No problem, just customise the system to your own requirements - that's the beauty of SuperBASIC.

Alan Pemberton

```
100 REMark SIMPLE ADVENTURE SYSTEM
110 REMark ALAN PEMBERTON
120 :
130 dictionary=9500: translations=10000
140 CLS: CLS#0
145 initialise
150 location_description: PRINT
155 :
160 REPEAT game
170 get_words
180 assign_values
190 IF word1=0 AND word2=0 THEN PRINT "Pardon???":
ELSE actions
195 PRINT
197 independent_actions
200 END REPEAT game
210 :
220 DEFINE PROCEDURE get_words
230 DIM words$(15,4):start_slice=1:no_words=0:
last=32
240 INPUT sentence$
250 sentence%=sentence%:" "
```

```
260 FOR num=1 TO LEN(sentence$)
270 letter=CODE(sentence$(num))
280 IF letter=32 AND last<>32 THEN
290 no_words=no_words+1
300 end_slice=num-1
310 words$(no_words)=sentence$(start_slice TO
end_slice)
320 start_slice=num+1
330 ELSE
340 IF letter=32 AND last=32 THEN
start_slice=num+1
350 END IF
360 last=letter
370 END FOR num
380 END DEFINE get_words
390 :
400 DEFINE PROCEDURE assign_values
410 REPEAT ass
420 word1=0:word2=0
430 FOR num=1 TO no_words
440 RESTORE dictionary
450 found=0
460 REPEAT loop
470 READ dict$,val
480 IF dict$=words$(num) THEN found=1:
EXIT loop
490 IF dict$="!" THEN EXIT loop
500 END REPEAT loop
510 IF found THEN last_found=num: IF word1=0:
word1=val: ELSE word2=val
520 END FOR num
530 EXIT ass
540 END REPEAT ass
550 END DEFINE assign_values
560 :
570 DEFINE PROCEDURE ok
580 IF word2=0 THEN
590 IF word1>100 THEN PRINT
"You can't do that to ";trans$(word1)\: RETURN:
REMARK - NO VERB RECOGNISED
600 PRINT "You ";trans$(word1)\:
REMARK YOU DO SOMETHING
610 ELSE
620 PRINT "You ";trans$(word1)!trans$(word2)\:
REMARK YOU DO SOMETHING TO SOMETHING/BODY
630 END IF
640 END DEFINE ok
650 :
660 DEFINE FUNCTION trans$(x)
670 LOCAL x$
680 RESTORE translations+x
690 READ x$:RETURN x$
700 END DEFINE
710 :
800 DEFINE PROCEDURE initialise
810 DIM object%(100), flags%(100), exit_(4)
820 no_of_objects=3:object_data=900
```

Article

```
830 RESTORE object_data
840 FOR num=1 TO no_of_objects
850 READ object%(num)
860 END FOR num
870 :
899 REMark object start location data
900 DATA 1,2,4
910 :
920 current_location=1:flags%(1)=current_location
930 END DEFINE initialise
940 :
1000 DEFINE PROCEDURE location_description
1010 LOCAL num, objects_here, description$, name$
1020 RESTORE (8000+current_location)
1030 READ description$
1032 PRINT description$
1035 PRINT\ "You can also see..."
1037 objects_here=0
1050 FOR num=1 TO no_of_objects
1060 IF object%(num)=current_location THEN
1070 RESTORE (10000+100+num)
1080 READ name$
1090 PRINT name$
1100 objects_here=objects_here+1
1110 END IF
1120 END FOR num
1130 IF objects_here=0 THEN PRINT "nothing."
1150 END DEFINE location_description
1160 :
1200 DEFINE PROCEDURE movement (direction)
1210 LOCAL dummy$
1220 RESTORE (8000+current_location)
1230 READ dummy$, exit_(1), exit_(2), exit_(3),
exit_(4)
1240 IF exit_(direction) <> 0 THEN
1250 ok
1260 current_location=exit_(direction):
flags%(1)=current_location
1270 location_description
1280 ELSE
1290 PRINT "You can't go that way."
1300 END IF
1310 END DEFINE movement
1320 :
1400 DEFINE PROCEDURE actions
1420 SELECT ON word1
1430 =1 TO 4: movement (word1)
1440 =11: REMark *** take ***
1450 SELECT ON word2
1460 =101 TO 102:
1480 IF object%(word2-100)=current_location
THEN
1490 ok: object%(word2-100)=0
1500 ELSE
1510 PRINT "But it isn't here."
1520 END IF
1530 =103: REMark "GET GOBLIN"
1540 PRINT "But he's too heavy."
1550 =REMAINDER :
1560 PRINT "Sorry, take what?"
1570 END SELECT
1580 =12: REMark *** examine ***
1590 IF word2<101 THEN
1600 location_description
1610 ELSE
1620 IF object%(word2-100)=0 OR
object%(word2-100)=current_location THEN
1630 SELECT ON word2
1640 =101: ok: PRINT "It is sharp."
1650 =102: ok: PRINT "It is bright."
1660 =103: ok: PRINT "He is hideous."
1670 =REMAINDER : ok
1680 END SELECT
1690 ELSE
1700 PRINT "But it isn't here."
1710 END IF
1720 END IF
1730 =13: REMark *** drop ***
1740 IF word2<101 THEN
1750 PRINT "Sorry, drop what?"
1760 ELSE
1770 IF object%(word2-100)=0 THEN
1780 ok: object%(word2-100)= current_location
1790 ELSE
1800 PRINT "You don't have it."
1810 END IF
1820 END IF
1830 =14: REMark *** attack ***
1840 IF word2 <> 103 THEN
1850 PRINT "You can't attack that."
1860 ELSE
1870 IF object%(3) <> current_location THEN
1880 PRINT "But he's not here."
1890 ELSE
1900 IF object%(1) <> 0 THEN
1910 PRINT "But you have no weapon."
1920 ELSE
1930 ok: object%(3)=255
1940 PRINT "You scare him away."
1950 END IF
1960 END IF
1970 END IF
1980 =15: REMark *** inventory ***
1990 inventory
2000 =REMAINDER : ok
2010 END SELECT
2020 END DEFINE actions
2030 :
3000 DEFINE PROCEDURE inventory
3010 LOCAL item_count, name$
3020 item_count=0
3030 PRINT "You are carrying..."
3040 FOR num=1 TO no_of_objects
3050 IF object%(num)=0
```

Article

```
3060 RESTORE (10000+100+num)
3070 READ name$
3080 PRINT name$
3090 item_count=item_count+1
3100 END IF
3110 END FOR num
3120 IF item_count=0 THEN PRINT "nothing."
3130 END DEFine inventory
3140 :
4000 DEFine PROCedure independent_actions
4010 flags%(2)=flags%(2)+1
4020 IF object%(2)=0 THEN flags%(3)=flags%(3)+1
4030 IF flags%(3)=5 THEN
4040 PRINT "The lamp burns your hands."
"You drop the lamp."
4050 object%(2)=current_location
4060 flags%(3)=0
4070 END IF
4080 END DEFine independent_actions
8000 REMark **** location data ****
8001 DATA "You are in a damp cave, with an opening
to the north",2,0,0,0
8002 DATA "You are at a crossroads.",3,1,4,5
8003 DATA "You are on a long north-south road.",3,
2,0,0
8004 DATA "This is a dead-end.",0,0,0,2
8005 DATA "You are walking along an east-west
passageway. A rockfall blocks the path to the
west, and the crossroads is to the east.",0,0,2,0
9500 REMark **** vocabulary ****
9510 DATA "nort",1
9515 DATA "n",1
9520 DATA "sout",2
9525 DATA "s",2
9530 DATA "east",3
9535 DATA "e",3
9540 DATA "west",4
9545 DATA "w",4
9550 DATA "get",11
9555 DATA "take",11
9560 DATA "exam",12
9565 DATA "look",12
9567 DATA "l",12
9570 DATA "drop",13
9572 REMark - You can have as many synonyms as you
like.
9575 DATA "kill",14
9580 DATA "atta",14
9585 DATA "slay",14
9590 DATA "murd",14
9595 DATA "muti",14
9596 DATA "i",15
9597 DATA "inve",15
9599 REMark - Names of OBJECTS have values 101 -
200
9600 DATA "swo",101
9605 DATA "lamp",102
9610 DATA "gobl",103
9615 DATA "orc",103
9770 DATA "!",0
9999 :
10000 REMark **** translations **** This line must
be 10000
10001 DATA "go north"
10002 DATA "go south"
10003 DATA "go east"
10004 DATA "go west"
10011 DATA "take"
10012 DATA "examine"
10013 DATA "drop"
10014 DATA "attack"
10015 DATA "inventory"
10101 DATA "a sharp sword"
10102 DATA "the magic lamp"
10103 DATA "the hideous goblin"
```

Review Letter/Reply

Dear Fearcrow,

Firstly I would like to thank you for replacing the faulty copy of Squadrons so quickly. I have been able to successfully load and run the programme from disk, although I still need the original in mdv2, which is a reasonable way to prevent copying.

However I would like to comment on the programme. As a game it is very interesting to play and has provided me with many hours of entertainment. The programme plays very neatly once one has mastered the relevant keys but after playing the game a few times I have still some reservations about it. These can be contained under two headings:

- 1) historical accuracy
- 2) game-play

1) Historical accuracy.

I must admit to being somewhat mystified by the choice of airfields. Whilst it may have made for a more cluttered screen, I feel greater effort should have been expended on getting the British airfields correct. I am basing my comments on Alfred Price's book "The Hardest Day, 18 August 1940", which gives a detailed listing of all operational squadrons and their bases on this day. As far as I am aware this did not change substantially throughout the period, allowing for the rotation of squadrons.

According to Price, neither Filton or Lympne were used as Fighter Command bases in this period. They should therefore be replaced by other bases that were. The most obvious omissions are Biggin Hill, Kenley, Middle Wallop, Duxford and North Weald. These were all Sector airfields with two squadrons operating from them. These at least should be represented by any half-way decent simulation. The following stations could also be included: Martlesham(2), Rochford(1), Manston(1), Gravesend(1), Westhampnett(1) and Croydon(1). Figures in brackets represent the number of squadrons based at each location. Hawkinge, West Helling and Wattisham were also used if necessary. However the total number of aircraft available (about 490) seems quite reasonable.

Regarding the Luftwaffe forces there would seem to be too many available. Having on three occasions destroyed over 1000 aircraft in a single day (and been told this was a dismal performance!) it would seem that the game gives the Luftwaffe almost unlimited resources. Price indicates a different picture. The combined forces of Airfleets 2 & 3 give approximately, 750 Bf109s, 200 Bf110s, 275 Ju87s, 800 Ju88s, Do17s & He111s. Yet I have on several occasions destroyed over 800 bombers in 12 hours (DISMIL?). Obviously there is something very seriously wrong here. Related to the above figures is the exceedingly high kill ratio enjoyed by the British fighters. Whilst I may have achieved better results than average in my interceptions,

the highest recorded total of Luftwaffe losses in a single day (18 August 1940) was only 69: 17 Bf109s, 16 Bf110s, 19 "Twins", 17 Ju87s. Quite clearly the game needs to reduce German losses by 90% to provide reasonable figures. On the same day the RAF lost 35 fighters. On both sides there were further planes "damaged" to a certain extent but these were repaired after varying lengths of time. My RAF losses in combat were of this order but by far the biggest losses were sustained by squadrons, usually Squadron "B", losing radio contact at a vital time and then proceeding to continue in the last ordered direction until crashing in Wales or France. I am unaware of any such losses being sustained during the Battle of Britain, especially to "wings" of 97 aircraft!

2) Game play

Following on the last point, there is a distinct lack of (artificial) intelligence shown by both sides. As mentioned above squadrons of planes simply did not lose themselves in the way just mentioned, which is not to say a single plane might not thus suffer. This sort of accident could be obviated by an immediate return to base when at the limit of endurance, similarly they should return to base when ammunition is exhausted. Another annoying feature is that planes have to be told to reduce height (Angels 1) to land. I would have thought it obvious that if a squadron was ordered to "pancake" it would reduce height, but apparently not. Another feature is that planes have to be directly overhead an airstrip before being ordered to land, surely having been ordered to pancake and sent in the right direction they shouldn't need telling twice.

Another aspect that could be improved is a colour-coding of those cities and airfields where gun-crews have been told to stand-by. This could save much lost production and losses of friendly aircraft if one could see instantly which were on stand-by. Similarly squadrons out of radio contact could also be colour-coded (red).

Having said all this, please don't think that I regard this game as a turkey. If one looks upon this as a game without regard for verisimilitude, then it is very well presented and produces moments of intense action. One gets some feel for what it may have been like to control Fighter Command during such tense and exiting times. In addition to the comments above it would have been more enjoyable if one could save/load games in progress, especially if a realistic simulation of rotating squadrons, replacement rates, repair rates etc. could be worked into it, enabling the action to proceed over an extended period. Certainly the screens look very realistic and controlling the squadrons becomes quite easy once you've mastered a few elementary principles: i.e. pancake as soon as you can, spread the fighter force as evenly as possible to avoid congestion at

Review Letter/Reply

key airfields, attack in concentrated forces, leave the fighters alone, keep everything away from your airfields if you can, and if you can't, scramble everything out.

Looking forward to your comments,

Richard Alexander.

This is the reply I received from Peakcrown Ltd, 4 Beeby Road, Scraptoft, Leics. LE7 9SG.

Dear Mr. Alexander,

Thank you for your comprehensive letter, commenting upon the Peakcrown game "Squadrons". In reply we would like to emphasise at the start that "Squadrons" is a game and was never intended to be educational. However considerable research was carried out to ensure that the result is as realistic as is practical.

In the main we agree with your comments upon historical accuracy, but would point out that any variations are due to the twin factors of:-

- limitations imposed by the QL,
- producing an interesting game.

The game fully utilises the QL's capacity and its not practical to add additional features, which would require both additional data and computing capacity. Of course it is a matter of opinion whether the factors we have selected are the best, but we are reassured by the numerous letters informing us of the pleasure given, over many playing hours.

To increase game interest, the whole of Southern England (Groups 10 and 11) was selected as the playing area, which is not unrealistic if one considers the Battle of Britain period as a whole. Price's "The Hardest Day" covers only one day and consequently a more limited area, within No11 Group. This Group contains the airfields that you have listed whereas to produce a practical game, airfields are necessarily spread over the whole game area. To provide additional airfields is impractical as:-

- additional QL capacity is not available
- more displays would result, and we consider that the existing four are already somewhat excessive!

As regards the number of Luftwaffe aircraft, the first game prototype had a limited number of German aircraft built in, as you imply. This was subsequently considered undesirable for several reasons, typically, after several intensive games, the controller would know approximately how many aircraft he was up against. In actual fact, of course, he has no idea! In addition should all Luftwaffe aircraft be destroyed or non-operational, no further raids would develop and

the player is left wondering when something will happen.

The point made about planes returning to base when ammunition or fuel is low, is, of course, correct in real life. However it is essential in a realtime game to keep the player occupied. We suggest therefore that it enhances the game if the time of flight etc has to be kept in mind by the player. This factor also covers the point - re gun crews, squadrons out of radio contact, directing the squadrons back to base etc. In other words we aimed at a challenging and not an easy game.

We also concur that a whole squadron losing contact was hardly a daily real life event. However again we consider that it adds game interest. For it to happen, say every 50 games, would, we suggest, be pointless.

You appear to be achieving high enemy losses by flying large British squadrons, i.e. "97 aircraft". The loss of such a number is of course significant. As you will be aware, it is not realistic, in that the RAF did not fly squadrons of this size during that period. It is one of the penalties that you, the player, risk, when flying large squadrons! (game interest).

As regards squadrons crashing, following loss of radio contact and subsequently disappearing off the screen, the controller need only direct them on a reciprocal bearing (their data being continuously updated) as soon as radio contact is re-established.

We can also assure you that there is no built in British highkill ratio. British and enemy fighters have the same "kill" potential depending on the usual factors (see page 14 of the handbook).

It is difficult to comment upon the Commanding Officer's report being "dismal", as we do not have all the factors, i.e. destroying 800 bombers is, of course, good, but it may be largely offset by very high production losses for instance. The concept being that the war effort has been put in jeopardy. British fighters lost through negligence, also carries a high penalty in this respect.

We trust that you forgive our lengthy response, but we have assumed you prefer lengthy answers. Once again thank you for your letter and we trust you will continue to have many enjoyable hours controlling.

Yours sincerely,

L.R. Johnson
on behalf of PEAKCROWN Ltd.

Letter

3 BARN OWL WAY
STOKE GIFFORD
BRISTOL
BS12 6RZ
Tel 0272-793029

1/4/ 1988

Dear Richard,

Many thanks for QLAF2. I thought I might just put finger to keyboard and give QLAFollowers some thoughts on matters you have brought up in the last issue.

DARK SIDE OF THE MOON: Javid Systems

Here I agree greatly with what you said about the Adventure. It seemed to start well enough, but having got through the airlock I found I lost a lot of interest in the scenario. I seemed to be wandering around, not totally sure of what I was doing or why I was doing it. The other reason was because I made the fatal mistake of which I thought I was cured ...I had a peep at another adventure which I had sent for (Just to make sure it loaded properly, of course!!!) and that was it, I was hooked, the new Adventure had grabbed me from line one! The name of it ...Playtime. (ED: The scenario of Dark Side...is even more stupid than I originally mentioned. Ice caves on the Moon. (And how are caves created - wind, rain and water on suitable geological formations. Of which the Moon has none of any. And Ice where the atmosphere is practically non-existent!!! Bah, humbug!!!)

ADVENTURE PLAYTIME: by Alan Pemberton.

I must confess, right from the start, I found myself taking to this exceptionally well composed Adventure. It seems to contain all the proper ingredients for a good program.

1. The characters are full and interesting. (Flying doors, talking Rabbits, frustrated foreigners and many more.
2. The locations are colourful and imaginative. (The compulsory Maze and the Maze Bypass!)
3. You get rewarded as you progress through the Adventure. (Having solved a problem, the text tells you that you hear a bell toll... which in its turn corresponds to another clue in the game.)
4. There are problems which require a fair bit of thought to solve (off the keyboard).(How do you communicate with the Foreigner?)
5. When you 'save ' your location you get presented with a directory of all previous

'saves'.

6. The humour is present at the right level; (try examining the Chest in the Library!)

An excellent Adventure, by an obviously talented and imaginative writer.

Thus, having successfully completed 'PLAYTIME', there was only one to move on to.....

FROM THE TOWER OF VALAGON: Alan Pemberton.

This has the feeling of being another excellent program. I have only achieved 20% so far, (The program shows your progress percentage) so my thoughts are only interim, but already I find myself absorbed in the scenario of Oracles, Trolls, Dwarves and Protective Trees! (Is Alan Pemberton the pseudonym for Enid Blyton??). There are a few 'extras' which weren't in Playtime, namely "RAM SAVE", a very useful way of saving your position temporarily (No need for a Ramdisc). Also you tend to get pursued, (a little disconcerting for those with slower brainchips), but not to the extent of exasperation.

So, there we are then, another cracking Adventure with many 'Plusses' and few 'Minusses' (i.e. The weak of will can break into it, as it is written in Basic. Protect us from ourselves, please, Alan! ... This also makes for a slow 'Load').

Conclusion: Buy it, load it and then lock the door for a few hours...you are in for a treat! (C.G.H. SERVICES hope to have this available within the next few weeks - look for more news in the next QLAF!!!! Ed)

TALISMAN

This is a vey complex Dungeons and Dragon game on two Mdvs and with enough interesting variables to ensure that your Computer will probably give out before your interest does. I found it very absorbing and well produced. (It is by the same team which made Heart of Gern). One problem though, you should be able to save your position, but despite following the instructions to the letter, I keep getting an error. I'm writing to the Authors for advice.

Conclusion: Despite the bug, a very worthwhile program for your collection. Well worth buying.

Yours sincerely,

John Shaw

Book and Adventure Review

Writing Adventure Games - Part Two

A review of the book "Exploring Adventures on the Commodore 64" by Peter Gerrard, published by Duckworth 1983, price £6.95. And a review of the game "Underground Adventure" by Van Loenen, available (to members) from the Quanta software library.

Having read the first paragraph, many of you might be wondering what use a book on writing adventure games on the Commodore 64 would be to someone owning only a QL. In the first place, the book is quite a good introduction to adventures in general, and gives useful hints on creating scenarios and setting problems. The author has had several games published for the 64, and offers a few useful storylines for anyone to use in their games.

In addition, there are program listings for three games, one of which is "Underground Adventure". Gerrard starts by giving details of some of the aspects of CBM BASIC which he uses in the programs, and the descriptions of what he is trying to achieve should help QL programmers find the Superbasic equivalents. Then he examines each chunk of the program in turn, devoting a section to each major command or object used in the game. The short program listings are accompanied by a line by line description (in English!) of what they do and what should happen.

I will not pretend it looks easy to convert the programs to Superbasic. The listings include such apparent garbage as:

```
315IFNO=10RNO=30RNO=60RNO=90RNO=110RNO=17THENPRINT  
"DON'T BE STUPID!";GOTO210
```

Insert some spaces and it begins to make sense. (I never had a Commodore 64, and after reading the listings do not regret it.)

If you just want to play the main game in the book, then get the version in the Quanta library. (The subscription is £14 p.a. but you can get free software that would cost you ten times that.) Mr Van Loenen has done the hard work of getting it running in Superbasic. He doesn't credit Gerrard, but I don't know whether he converted the game directly from the book or via some intermediate source. Once you have completed the game, it should be instructive to compare the QL listing

with that in the CBM book. It might help you convert the other games for the QL if you do.

"Underground Adventure" kept me occupied for quite a while. It has some similarities to "Colossal Cave/The Adventure", but isn't as big or as difficult. Again the action is in a series of caves and mines and much of it may seem familiar - ropes, planks and axes, etc. No ramsave, but you can save good positions to cartridge. You can be wiped out and if you do foolish things with some of the objects you will be unable to complete the game. Don't drop the mirror before you dispose of the shimmering curtain! Don't drink the whisky. There is no scoring system with this. The game demands all or nothing - you either succeed or fail, no half measures.

Having finished the game at last, I aim to use it as a test for The Quill. The result should load faster and have a better screen layout than the Superbasic version, which does not work well on televisions. I hope it will also be available free through Quanta, but it might be a few months before it appears in the library.

Peter Gerrard says a few things in his book which may have been a severe restriction on the Commodore 64 in 1983, but began to be overcome after the arrival of the QL in 1984.

ON ADVENTURE GAMES WITH GRAPHICS:

"If this book is rewritten in ten years time, maybe we'll be talking about graphical games, but until then...!"

ON BIG ADVENTURES WITHOUT DISC DRIVES:

"If you haven't got disc drives, forget it! This game (The Adventure/Colossal Cave) relies almost entirely on disc-based mode of operation, and would require an awful lot of memory before it would function on a micro that was sans discs."

I, of course, have the benefit of hindsight - and a QL!

Michael L. Jackson

Letters

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15-March-1988

Dear Richard,

I thought I ought to send you a cartridge and SAE ready for the next copy of QLAF. However, I might as well kill two birds with one stone by bringing you up-to-date with how my APT and IMAGINE are progressing.

As I mentioned to you, on the phone, Shadow Games are being a bit slow in handling both products owing to various problems that have occurred for them. I am expecting, in the near future, either to have another company deal with APT and IMAGINE or to get the situation with Shadow games improved, but in the mean-time I can supply the game to QLAF readers at the discount price of £15.

I hope the 'hints' I sent you about IMAGINE arrived OK, and also that the reviewer hasn't had too much trouble with the game after I sent him the hints! I must say, I didn't think that I had made IMAGINE difficult, but then I suppose nothing is difficult when you know the solution.

I have it in mind that I might well write an article(s) for QLAF in the near future on adventure writing, obviously with a slant towards APT. If you still feel that this would be worth doing then perhaps you could let me know your thoughts on what sort of format/contents you think might be most appropriate? I could probably aim towards producing something within the next 2 months or so.

Anyway, I'll be looking forwards to seeing QLAF 3, and I hope the review of IMAGINE isn't too critical.

Steve Sutton

Letter from Ian Bruntlett

Dear Richard,

I hope you are well. Thanks for QLAF#2...

My QL is O.K. now. Around Dec 87/Jan 88 I sent a £35 cheque to Ron Massey, of Shadow Games, for APT. I thought its non-arrival and the lack of adverts meant it wasn't ready. QLAF#2 put paid to that! I phoned Steve Sutton and he was surprised. So he said he would send a copy of APT. (I

understand that Ron has had problems which have prevented him from publishing APT, indeed he has contacted at least one other software house to see if they could handle it for the time being, but I haven't heard any more about this. Let's hope Ron can settle his difficulties soon. Ed.)

There is a mistake in the QLForum#3 article. The prices for Forum are: #1 - 50p; #2 - 50p; #3 - £1.00.

"Girls" was included on #3 to display drawing techniques. I thought it was pretty tame and the "girls" looked something out of a bad sci-fi film.

In a lot of adventures violence is used as a cop-out when the author is unable to or couldn't be bothered to find a way out. This time it is the maturity of the human race in question. To get "true" artificial intelligence and real interaction, you need people. So why not a variation on the Play by Mail games advertised in White Dwarf?? i.e. in a Role Playing Game (RPG) the Dungeon Master usually has a thing called "imagination". A solution would be computers looking after the table crunching (and mapping - how many of Tolkien's characters lost their way due to a main's spike?). Digital mapping for the Dungeon Master would be a breakthrough. The trouble is how to store so much data. Even in two dimensions (although I'd like 4) the problem of vast areas needing very low-res mapping and small areas needing intensive detail is hard. But 3-D is needed for caverns, underground cities and lakes.

Back in reality. Do you have any need for a database application? If the hints were stored as text files and/or in paper files then all a database would have to hold is their location/filename and a bit of info about it, e.g. game name, problem description. (I've let Ian know that whilst I feel his offer is a generous and useful one, I personally haven't really got time to key in the necessary data. If any QLAF readers would like to work with Ian on this project then write to him direct. Ed.)

Ian Bruntlett
25 The Broadway, High Barnes, Sunderland, England,
SR4 8LF.

P.S. I'll help with the programming of the wargame, if you want. (TA!!! - see wargames update in editorial. Ed)

Adventure Review

Adventure Playtime by Alan Pemberton

This text adventure is available from Sinclair QL World's Microdrive Exchange (see any recent issue) or directly from the author, which is probably cheaper and quicker (see QL Adventurers Forum no. 2 for details). I started playing the game before reading QLAF 2 so didn't know the details as to the price/marketing. As the game has quite a professional look to it in many respects, I had assumed that it would be sold at a typical professional price. However, the game is virtually a give away and must be considered value for money.

To start with, a few details QL World tends to ignore in its software reviews. Adventure Playtime is in MODE 8 and should appear well on a TV screen or monitor, in monochrome or colour. The cartridge is configured to load from mdv1_, and save and load game positions from mdv2_. There is no clone program, but it should copy to disc using BASIC COPY, TK2 WCOPY, etc. To run from disc, FLP_USE MDU should work, but for complete conversion one or two changes need to be made to the boot and main program. List these and change any references to MDU to FLP or FDK as appropriate. The game is written in BASIC, and takes a while to load. If it was being marketed professionally I would have suggested compiling it or using a fast loader such as Qload. I tried compiling it with Q_Liberator, but this gave an 'internal error' message at runtime, suggesting a compiler problem. Readers might have more luck with Turbocharge if they want to speed up their copies of the game. But keep a copy of the BASIC listing to examine after you have finished the adventure, as together with the author's article in QLAF 2 the program could provide a useful insight into adventure game writing.

The game itself involves an interesting 'trip' into a fantasy land where you will meet fascinating characters such as the questor, the foreign tourist, the headbanger and the urban guerrilla. The 'parser' is quite sophisticated, allowing you to communicate with most of the characters. Some will give you useful information, others will obey your requests. Unfortunately, if you input certain word combinations which do not make sense to the parser then you will get garbled responses (some are amusing). The result is less than perfect, but more is achieved than in games produced using The Quill.

The land is quite interesting, lacking caves but having dunes, mountains and a castle, not to mention the public convenience. As usual, making a map should help, but after a little wandering you should begin to remember where things are (assuming you get out of the first location).

Most of the solutions to the problems you encounter are fair, though one required knowledge of the uses of graphite which escaped me for quite a while. You might have to resort to consuming dishes you would otherwise turn your nose up at, and doing socially unacceptable things with your nose, in order to leave home and return again. (*) Though there is a maze you don't have to roam in circles for weeks in order to finish the game. However, it is a maze not to be missed. In general, be bold or you won't get very far. Talk to strangers (and some strange objects). But you can use the RAM SAVE and RAM LOAD feature if you are a little wary of some of the locations.

It is hard to fault a game which offers such good value. Most players should get a few evenings entertainment from it. I look forward to seeing Alan Pemberton producing bigger adventures.

Michael L. Jackson

* Some aspects of the game might be considered 'subversive'. If a cinema film, it might carry a PG certificate. Bear this in mind if you let youngish children use your QL to play adventures (they might not spot the solutions!).

Letter

FROM KURT JOHANSSON

Dear Richard,

I have got the first issue of "QLAF" and let me say that it was very complete with a lot of reviews etc. Thanks. I really wish you good luck and progress with QLAF.

I do have some questions to you though?

1) Have you decided which adventure we shall pass through together "where to go next" as mentioned in earlier QLAF correspondence? I intend to buy it and join in.

(I don't actually make any conscious decision to follow through an adventure, rather I wait and see which adventures people want help with or those which I find absorbing enough to want to play through to the end. I would certainly like to finish off "Zkul" and make a start on "West" as these have been around for a long time and many people must have started them but never finished them. Personally I'd like more help with "Quest for the Dragonsword" as that appeared to be fun to play. Also "Heart of Gern" might be good if only I can get started on it!!! I'd recommend you getting "FunFear" by Martin Hopkins as that looks like it'll be interesting to play and when you see it advertised (see Steve's letter in this issue) "Imagine" is a puzzler worth getting to grips with. Ed.)

2) May I pay for one year in advance? You see I have to pay a "fee" for more than £2.00 to get a Eurocheque and would like to do it once a year only. Of course I will send you a formatted mdv_ as requested, but no money this time but the next. (As from QLAF#4, this magazine will be printed and available on subscription which will cut out a lot of problems - except one - ease of producing this 'zine!!! See Editorial in this issue for further details.)

3) Will it possible to buy copies of solutions of completed adventures? An adventure club here in Sweden for Commodore/Spectrum owners has this facility.

(Yes, provided the authors/publishers agree, we will provide complete solutions - perhaps waiting 6 months before releasing them to give people the opportunity to solve them the hard way.)

4) How about printing the name, address and phone number of people who have completed "their" adventures and are willing to help the "wandering" rest of us?

(Yes, we already have a policy of doing this - only it does depend on people letting QLAF know!!! (Subtle hint!!!)

5) I know it is difficult to have a "ranking" amongst adventures reviewed but it is very common in other mags. It's a way to promote good adventure and simulation writing since we tend to buy games with good "marks".

(Personally, I wouldn't know where to begin in giving marks for adventures. As you can see from the correspondence I've had with other writers, my views on what I like in an adventure or simulation are not shared by other people. I think that the standard of the reviews in QLAF is good enough, however, to give readers a reasonable indication as to whether a game is worth buying. And given the lack of QL software, virtually ALL adventures and simulations should be supported (depending on one's budget naturally!).

6) Would it be possible to state names and addresses of the adventure selling companies? It would be of great help when buying a game and could the reviewer also mention the price? If so one can buy a Eurocheque and send it together with the order without contacting the companies first. (Yes we should be doing these things, and in future will try to incorporate them into the reviews. There is a problem in that sometimes we get pre-release software that hasn't got a definite publisher or price and then we don't mention one. Also, in Britain many of the games are available from shops at a price below the normal retail price. Also QL Super User Bureau can get you goods cheaply. Once QLAF becomes better known and sells more copies we hope to get advertising from companies themselves and hopefully special offers.)

I hope all these questions haven't put you off! (Not at all, they gave me the opportunity to think more clearly about what QLAF is supposed to be doing and hopefully we will improve the standard of QLAF as a result.)

Kurt Johansson, Södra Läget 149, 136 53 HANINGE, SWEDEN.

Preview

The Prawn

Some time ago Martin Hopkins sent me a preview version of the Prawn and recently I gave myself the opportunity to give this a thorough play test. And what a jolly jape it is too. Martin has also informed me that he has signed a contract with Talent to have this published shortly. (TK Computerware, who now market Talent software, are currently advertising this for £15.00, the same as Horrorday. Address: Stone Street, North Stanford, Ashford, Kent, England. TN25 6DF.)

To put it in a nutshell this is another cracker. (Oh please yourselves, nut.... cracker!!!) If you enjoyed playing Horrorday or Funfear this will be right up your street. As you can guess, this time Martin has taken on that doyen of the QL Adventuring scene "The Pawn" and written a mighty spoof of it. And having spoofed it, he has gone on to make a much larger game. The Prawn has been written using Gilsoft's "Quill" and loads in three parts and one can journey between each part by saving a position (but only at the junction of the three parts) and loading the required part you wish to explore next. As you'll be needing objects found in one part in the others this can become a bit of a fag, so I'd recommend that when playing this you should explore as much of each area as possible before loading another zone.

The three zones are: King's Keep, The Ancient City of Laros and The Badlands. You start off in King's Keep and without giving too much away unless you have a rest very soon after starting you'll not get started on your quest - although having said that, I managed to visit 100 locations and get 30 blisters without realising it!!! You can regard King's Keep as the direct spoof of "The Pawn", with many of the same, well similar, features. There's a philosopher, an itinerant salesperson, a magician who arrives on a giant pop top, a castle with gardens to explore, a mountain with a cave and an Ice Tower guarded by a snow shrimp, a dismal forest etc. Even a tree stump.

One splendid feature, although, perhaps not to every one's taste, is Martin's wry sense of humour which suffuses the entire text. Exactly how much of the humour will be apparent to people who haven't played "The Pawn" I'm not sure, but adventurers beware! Martin hasn't forgotten to include a difficult set of problems in the game, so do read those location descriptions carefully.

If you haven't guessed already, you play a prawn, a prawn with a copper tailband around his tail.

Being a prawn does have certain difficulties, e.g. not being able to do things. However this particular prawn can lift mighty weights (manhole covers), climb ladders (to haylofts), even remove jewels from the backs of large chairs with a screwdriver, so my advice is: do not underestimate the prawn's powers. One feature of the game is the inclusion of day and night. I managed to roam for a long time without realising how to get light (being dim!) and until you can catch your light-source, night-time will be extremely tedious. A word to Martin though. I hope you can exclude the sewers etc from the day/night routine as it's a bit daft being told you can no longer see when it's night-time when you're underground. Perhaps a "dark unless light-source carried" routine is needed, but still incrementing the time flag?

Martin has added a city for you to explore in his game, and here day and night control access to the various shops etc. I must admit I have found interacting with the shop-keepers a little difficult, but being a prawn that's hardly surprising. One amusing touch is the inclusion of two familiar faces from Martin's earlier adventures. I'd also like to know when the Palace gates open, perhaps access will become apparent when the Alchemist's laboratory reveals its secrets.

I haven't had much success in the Badlands as yet, although there's a grateful donkey in a field and an ashtray in a sooty nook. How to get beyond immigration control I don't know, although some money would help with the photo-booth. Another touch that adventurers will be grateful for is the prawn's prowess at carrying items. At the last count I had 13 items in my tally, which cuts down the problems regarding deciding which objects to get and which to leave. Very sensible as, with having to re-load when moving from one section to the other, a limitation on carrying would have been very inksome.

To summarise, I reckon that this game is going to give whoever buys it a lot of pleasure, initially because of the humour, and then on account of the puzzles that Martin has set us. One feature that please me is that you can roam over a large area without solving any puzzles, thus allowing one to get a feel for the geography of the area, and allowing one to get really involved with the game, unlike other adventures where a difficult puzzle in the first few locations can totally stump one.

Richard.

Helpline

ADVENTURE PLAYTIME

Alan Pemberton has kindly sent me a copy of the complete solution to this adventure (available from Sinclair QL World's Microdrive Exchange or the author - see QLAF#2) and a map, so if you need any help - let me know! I've also got the map and solution to Alan's From the Tower of Valagon, but you're not having any clues on that until it's been out a while!

FARCE

Ian Bruntlett, the author of Farce, has given the following tip for Farce.exe on QLForum#3 (available for £1.00 from Ian)

Start, then SWIM, E, N, EXAMINE SIGN, GET KEY, S, W, GET WOOD, W, GET LASAGNE, E, N, N, NW, NE, W "You are in a small barusti hut". I hope it's right. I must have forgotten to put a READ SIGN in. Oh, and while you're at it, have you typed SCORE or WF_ yet?

HORRORDAY

Thanks to Martin Hopkins, who has patiently held my hand so that I can journey safely through his imagination, sorry game, I've nearly completed Horrorday. Part two's solution starts with a close look at Esmerelda's boy-friend. Thence it's east (I hope I get this right as I haven't quite completed it!), to get some gardening tools and then return past the courting couple. Don't drop anything just yet, they may come in handy later. Have a look inside another hut and then dispose of the unfriendly ghoul. Then examine the grave. Opening the crypt utilises one of your new-found possessions. Once inside you can go west to have a close look at the statue - using one of the "gardening" tools. On returning to ground level give the horn a tug, which should reveal some hidden depths to the room.

O.K. Off to the east to a church vault wherein you'll see some purple liquid. Very tasty it is too but there's a real gem of a surprise if you can discover the right object to drop in the liquid. Your little piece of treasure looks like it might fit into a handy piece of jewellery located to the north of the main entrance. To the east there's a Centurion, brave but undecorated, and beyond him a ticket seller needs a small bribe too.

Assuming you've got as far as the tomb, the Mummy would like to replace his rotten vestments,

which'll gain you access to the real monster, rather than his statue. However a suitable disguise will make him welcome you as a long-lost relative. And as a reward you'll get a parchment giving directions around the maze. (By the way - do give the maze a visit if you have plenty of time, before getting the map. There is a way out, honest!)

Right, assuming I've got it right so far, you can now, indeed, take the map and safely negotiate the maze. (See if you can find a use for the compost - or anything in the greenhouse or fountain.) This is where I'm stuck. From Part One you'll be carrying some leaves for a mad scientist (I do hope no-one has made the mistake of calling a monster by his creator's name!!!), and in return for this you'll get a Veggie-Burger. (Ho, ho ho. I like veggie-burgers but these I feel would be too much like cannibalism.) Dracula wants his teeth back, and why not, only he does insist on killing me when they're returned to him. I've tried the garlic, making a cross, stabbing him through the heart, there's no running water or bible handy, and so, dear readers you'll have to wait 'til the next exciting installment of HELPLINE to find out how to complete the adventure (providing Martin tells me!!!)

Richard

NEMESIS, ZKUL

Still no response to the pleas for help on these. If you can help do get in touch and put us out of our misery!!!

Hints

Mordon's Quest: The Final Clues

Well, here it is, the last episode of the Mordon's Quest saga. I hope those of you who have been playing this are finding these hints helpful.

If I remember correctly I left us about to re-enter the futuristic area. O.K. Off we go to the east, dropping the geiger counter on the way, as that's of no use to us now, and by way of the library we arrive, to the SE, at an invisible barrier. To make it visible a quick squirt with Spidey's gift will get you past and keying in the number given will reveal another device. Re-trace your steps to the junction and then head south and transport the ingot you find. Again re-trace steps to the end of the corridor and then head west as far as you can, then north and east to the repair droid which is in need of the battery we found earlier.

Once the droid is activated it will take up its station in the reactor whilst you guide its progress from the control room. The correct sequence of "presses" on the numerical control depends on whether you've already been here before. The general idea is to seal off the reactor with the droid inside and seal off the control room. Then activate the droid until it reports that it has repaired the reactor. It may not do this first time. Whatever you do don't leave the room until it is safe to do so. If you do get killed you'll probably get re-incarnated and be able to continue. Also a save at the start of the sequence wouldn't go amiss.

Once the reactor room is safe, go through it and beyond to the lift. Up and follow the way NW. In this area you'll find an orb to transport, a cigar to smoke LATER, and once you've keyed in the word at the keyboard that you were given in the dim chamber, SW from the cave, you can get another machine piece to transport. Now simply retrace your steps all the way back to the cylinder. (If you haven't picked up the coins to the S of the ante-room do so now.)

Now return to the cylinder and activate the plate until you're back in the Roman area. From here it's a steady march northwards to the arena. Go north as far as you can and pick up the weapons. Facing the impending ordeal is obviously a Hamlet moment. Your reward for coolness is an escape hatch down which you'll find the catacombs. Now

these are evil. There's no difference in the locations, paths everywhere and any objects you drop to mark your progress are disappeared for you. S S S W W N NE gets to the Minotaur. Sorry if that's giving the game away, but you'd be lucky to find it by accident and to have got that far and been stuck would be so annoying!!!

Right faced with the Minotaur you can slay him. Inside the belly of the beast is the final piece of machinery. At which point I found I only had got 100 out of 110 treasure points, and there's no way out of the catacombs. So, clever clogs, can you find where the final 10 points of treasure are lurking. While we're at it, the Spectrum adventure has, according to the slightly inaccurate articles in Sinclair User, an Adventure Development area accessible from the cylinder. Has anyone found this on the QL version? Also it claims that you can reach the cylinder from the Waterhole in the forest area. Again I haven't found this to be the case. Anyway, as I mentioned in an earlier episode, all those machine parts we have so lovingly transported have disappeared into limbo due to a bug in the program so there's end to this game on the QL. Anyone fancy re-writing it so that it works properly?

Richard (with lots of help from Sinclair User (8/87, 9/87).