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ISSUE 89 MAY 1987

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We’re giving away £2000 this issue. Well, sort of giving away £2000. On the centre pages you’ll find the details of what has to be the biggest and best competition that White Dwarf has ever run. £2000 worth of Citadel Miniatures (the winner gets £1000 worth of models; four runner-up get £250 worth each) will almost certainly return a small pack elephant. But go on, have a go at the Ravening Madness Giveaway! You’ll have to provide your own pack elephant to take the prize away though. And we don’t want to hear about how the winner managed to balance the whole lot on the top of a Thud...

And now for something completely different. Next issue, White Dwarf changes. It’s our tenth birthday, after all, and a small celebration is in order. ’Yipee’! That’s enough for now.

Anyway, WD90 will be larger: an extra 16 pages of articles, features and adventures! Cool.That’s 25% bigger than at the moment, and all of it about games, which has to be rather spiffy news, what?!

The less spiffy news is that the cover price has gone up to £1.25. But, as I’m sure the statisticians among you will realise, 80 pages means you get a whole lot more magazine for your money - and who knows what extra bits we’re going to be including in the future...

Mike Brunton

The Editor and publishers of White Dwarf would like to apologise unreservedly to Greg Costikyan and West End Games for the tone and content of remarks made in White Dwarf 87 concerning The Price of Freedom.

CONTENTS
Open Box 2
Rogue Trooper, Judge Dredd RPG, Traveller 2300 and more 6
Awesome Lies 6
Every word the purest truth... straight up, guv... honest
Critical Mass 8
Once upon a time there was a book, with Dave Langford
Thrud 11
Barbarism from the epiteme of Good Taste, Carl Critchlow
Be Afraid... Be VERY Afraid... 12
EEEK! Things to terrify in Call of Cthulhu from Carl Sargent
Do Troubleshooters Dream of Electronic Killer Sheep 18
Baa baa black sheep, have you any clones... by Marcus Rowland
Derek the Troll 22
Trolls have all the luck when drawn by Lew Stringer
On Ealden Bergen 26
'Robin Hood, Robin Hood, riding through the glen;
Robin Hood, Robin Hood, with his band of Graham Staplehursts...'
The Great Ravening Madness Giveaway Competition 32
Win £2000 worth of Citadel Miniatures! It’s Easy!
Friends in High Places 34
And with such friends, who needs enemies?
Simon Nicholson explains 'Eavy Metal 40
Painting Miniatures The Phil Lewis Way
Onwards and Upwards 44
Graeme Davis explains character careers in Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay
Illuminations 46
The art of Brett Ewins
Arcana or Errata? 52
I never wanted to be a barbarian anyway... criticisms from Allan Miles
Letters 60
Pen and Sword in accord
Classifieds 62
All the small print you could want

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Games Workshop Limited 1987
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Each player controls a Genetic Infantryman (which is represented on the board as a rather nice 25mm plastic figure). The object of the game is to be the first player to unmask and kill the traitor. At the start of the game, each player equips his GI and is allocated a number of Bio-chips. Helm, Gunnar and Bagman are an important part of the strip and equally important in the game. Basically, each GI has an implanted bio-chip which records his memories and personality. If a GI is killed the bio-chip can be removed and his experience and skills can live again, so the bio-chips handed out at the start are NPCs who give assorted combat bonuses. However, your GI also has his own bio-chip, which, once he's dead, can be picked up by another GI and plugged into a piece of equipment. You get the chance to live again - and go for a joint victory as someone else's Gunnar or Bagman! Dying does prevent you from winning a full victory, but it makes sure that all the players are involved until the last die roll rattles away...

Play starts with each GI in a random drop (start) zone on the map (showing the whole of Nu-Earth and Milli-com), with a mission to complete. Each Mission card (only one of the 283 cards in the game) lists the type of mission and a location. Getting to the right place is half the battle, as virtually every area has encounters of one sort or another. Players can meet up with companions (the gorgeous Venus Bluegenes, for example) or find useful equipment, but more usually they will end up in a fight.

Once the mission is over, the player can draw a clue to the traitor's identity, and then it's off on another mission across Nu-Earth after the next piece of information. That assumes, of course, that another player doesn't play a Rogue card (a kind of joker in the pack) and stop you dead in your tracks on a particular mission. Eventually, though, players will have all the clues to the traitor's identity and then all they have to do is track him down and kill him. As the traitor is nearly as tough as the GIs, this isn't as easy as it sounds. He also has the disconcerting habit of escaping certain death just as someone catches up to him.

That, in essence, is the way the game works, but there are many more options in Rogue Trooper. The mix of encounter, mission and equipment cards allows the comic strip action to be mirrored in the game, even down to a player having to track down and marry one of another player's companions (such as the gorgeous Venus Bluegenes). Rogue Trooper is slightly more complicated than say, the Judge Dredd boardgame, it's fun, can be played to a finish in 2-3 hours and all the players are involved right up to the end. C'mon Gunnar, we've got a traitor to find...

Rogue Trooper, a boardgame by Richard Halliwell, is based on the comic strip in the 2000AD comic. Set on Nu-Earth, a world devastated by the war between the Norts and the Southerners, the strip concerns the struggles of a Genetic Infantryman, the Rogue Trooper of the title. He is trying to discover and kill the traitor who sent his unit into a trap at the 'Quartz Zone Massacre'. As a Genetic Infantryman, Rogue is no ordinary soldier, but a bio-engineered fighter designed to live in the poisoned hell of Nu-Earth and win the war for the Southerners...

Jervis Johnson

SLAUGHTER MARGIN
Judge Dredd Supplement
Games Workshop £9.95
Available End May 1987

TRAVERLLER 2300
Roleplaying Game
GDW £15.00

HEROES FOR WARGAMES
Painting & Collecting Miniatures
Paper Tiger £7.95
Players are going to have trouble working out who is doing what, given some of the connections that are there to be made. The intention was to get away from the kind of linear plot that draws the players along in only one direction. And then there’s these vengeance crazed types from Nip-Cit… But perhaps that’s a red synthi-herring to throw you off the trail. There is, however, a lot of detective legwork for the players: nothing more than accurate shooting is just going to get them vaporised.

There are also lots of player handouts to help the feel of Slaughter Margin: messages from the Sector House and Justice Department records on almost everyone in the case, guilty or innocent - but then, is anyone really innocent?

I wanted Slaughter Margin to be the kind of adventure which would capture the comic strip’s movement. The floorplans allow players to adventure over huge chunks of the city, never repeating the same location twice. They also look excellent. Right, I’m off to finish off Block Mania, which makes this look like a Sunday School outing…

Richard Halliwell

There is very little information on adventures. This was lacking in original Traveller, and ten years later nothing seems to have changed! This is also evident in the provided adventure: vast chunks are left for the GM to develop – a daunting task for most. And then there’s the fact that this kind of cross-planetary chase has been done before by GDW…

On the plus side, Traveller 2300, has a lot going for it. The basic system is an improvement on the old, the animal encounter system is good, as are the tinkering with starships rules. On the other hand, in interstellar travel the game dives into the murky depths of multiple formulae calculator madness.

If you already play Traveller, there are some good ideas here, but the new game does not sit well with the old system (nor, to be fair, was it designed to do so). Traveller 2300 is certainly more complete than Traveller and has a realistic flavour, but I would prefer simpler mechanics and a more exciting background. Still, these are early days and further supplements may well see Traveller 2300 turn into a very full and rounded SF system.

Jim Bambra

The sections on making figures - the concept sketches and production of miniatures - probably hold most interest for anyone who reads White Dwarf. The other particularly useful section is probably the one where 'Master Painters' talk about how they achieve their results. However, if you think of this as an extended series of 'Easy Metal' you’ve got the right idea about its subject matter and style.

This may not be the ultimate book on figure painting, but it’ll do until the ultimate book turns up. Heroes For Wargames is probably ideal as a way of interesting someone in figures. A present for a younger brother, perhaps?

Mike Brunton

Heroes For Wargames feels like a coffee table book. The impression is reinforced by the gentle wander through roleplaying games and fantasy wargaming at the start. Nothing startlingly new for White Dwarf readers here, but it does explain the hobby for beginners, grannies and the like. It has some utility, but the writer obviously expects that many picking up Heroes will be first timers attracted to the idea of miniature figures, and through them roleplaying games, by the prolixity of photographs and artwork.

And it is all very attractive. Paper Tiger have done a very sumptuous production job. The photographs are sharp and clear, the artwork (much of it familiar to White Dwarf readers) an improving adjunct to the text. There are enough words to interest the casual reader and to give some real meat to the more knowledgeable: a coffee table book, but none the worse for that.

In the wake of Twilight 2000 comes Traveller 2300, GDW’s new science fiction roleplaying game. Traveller 2300 is not just an updating of the old Traveller system, but a continuation of Twilight 2000. The background explains how humanity has recovered from WW3 and colonised the stars. It is fairly detailed and makes somewhat tedious reading.

However, Traveller 2300 has much to recommend it. The character generation system is a great improvement on original Traveller. Characters can now progress through their prior service careers without getting killed before the game starts; skills are gained in a controllable way, so it is possible to create a character without fiddling the dice; and characters may select services. The primary skills of a service are relatively easy to gain, secondary skills more difficult and general skills are very expensive.

The skill system is well designed and works very smoothly. To make their way in the universe, characters are called upon to complete various Tasks. These are rated according to various levels of difficulty. The character’s skill modifies the chance of completing the task and the level of difficulty combine to show how long the job will take and whether or not a character succeeds. All in all, the system is neat and elegant. Unfortunately this is let down by the lack of an experience system. Even now (and after the experience system in Twilight 2000), GDW seem intent on characters’ abilities staying the same. This is a great pity as it could have been grafted on to the system with no effort.

Combat is much more complete than in the original rules. Its is, however, slow compared to the rest of the skill system. Great emphasis has been placed on hardware - there are enough weapons described here to satisfy even the most ardent gun nut. Aliens also seems to have been an inspiration behind the gun designs, as many of the illustrations testify.

Starship combat is not as good as it could have been. No doubt GDW decided they got it wrong in the past, but I prefer the old system. Space combat does not flow very well and is potentially very fiddly once the missiles start flying.

Jim Bambra

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Jim Bambra
WYRDWORLD 2 -
Wordestley
Generic Adventure
Strange Acorn Games
£4.95

Wordestley follows on from Wintersfarne, reviewed in DW4. Physically, it’s about the same - a 32-page Ad booklet with a card cover. The cover on this one is in colour, which is a welcome development, although the colour is somewhat wasted on the illustration. Inside, the adventure is typeset on a word-processor, with hand-drawn illuminated-manuscript-style letters at the beginning of each paragraph. Interior illustrations are sparser than in Wintersfarne, but maintain the quality-fanzine level of production.

Wordestley is set in a town of that name, which is mapped with key locations described in reasonable detail. While not an artistic triumph, the town map is perfectly adequate, and the same can be said of the building plans. There are also two rather nice street and alley plans. The main thrust of the adventure concerns a stolen idol and an evil cult, and like Wintersfarne the accent is on thought, investigation and role-playing rather than open-the-door-kill-the-monster-count-the-treasure. And as with Wintersfarne, the setting can be re-used in future adventures; obviously the GM will have to add detail as the players explore the town further, but the material in this adventure should give you a reasonable start. As the adventure is systemless, the GM will have to do a certain amount of preparation before it can be used, but an experienced GM will have no trouble and there are notes in the back of the booklet on using the adventure with AD&D, RuneQuest and Rolemaster. There are no difficult monsters to convert to whatever system you use, and there should be little fighting if the players handle things properly.

Not one for the hack-and-slay brigade, but like Wintersfarne, worth a look if you happen to like thoughtful investigative adventures with the accent on roleplaying and problem solving rather than all-action dungeon bashing. It’s a shame about the price, which will put many people off, and the price is the only reservation I would have in recommending the Wyrwdworld series to anyone - although I would think that you would get as much game time and enjoyment out of this small (but perfectly-formed) adventure as you would from many professionally-produced adventures on sale for the same price or more. If you see it in a shop, give it a look and decide for yourself. But do give it a look.

Graeme Davis

XII - SAGA OF THE SHADOW LORD
Expert D&D Adventure
TSR Inc £7.50

Saga of the Shadow Lord is an Expert D&D adventure for levels 5-9. Physically, it is a 64-page booklet in a three-section wraparound cover, with maps and monster/NPC statistics on the inside of the cover and the middle 8 pages given over to more maps and eight pregenerated characters.

XII is actually two linked adventures rather than one continuous one, making up a mini-campaign. The first instalment, Elvenstar, has Our Heroes trying to steal a magic item from the Shadow Lord in order to thwart his invasion of a peaceful neighbouring kingdom. It is designed in a very old-fashioned style, with a series of fixed but random-seeming encounters along the way to a dungeon where the serious business takes place. Without giving too much away, there is a village packed with adventurer-types (of up to 7th level!), and a Cloud Giant in the smallest castle I’ve ever seen (an agoraphobic Cloud Giant?), among other things. An interesting encounter with the Shadow Lord is that it tightens the otherwise fairly uninspiring zoo-dungeon journey, until the adventurers reach the Shadow Lord’s lair for the really serious dungeon-bashing. The final encounter has some good aspects, notably the way that the baddies’ possible tactics are outlined and the notes for the DM on what to do next if the PCs win, lose, or miss the object of their quest.

The Halls of Drax Talien, the second adventure, has the Shadow Lord returning, more powerful than ever, after his first brush with Our Heroes. His undead minions are searching for another magical item, which will give him immense power (hmm, sounds familiar...), and the PCs are called upon to find it before he does. A re-run of the journey from the first part of the adventure then follows, with some additional encounters that are no more inspired than the first lot, and then it’s into another dungeon for another final showdown. An appendix gives details of four new magic items and three new monsters - again, nothing staggeringly inventive or exciting.

If you like the style of D&D adventures as they were produced five years ago, then you will like this one. The simple plot, lots of encounters and plenty of action, all very firmly in the original tradition of the game, I was disappointed by it, as it gave me the impression that no developments had taken place in the hobby in the last few years, but it does what it sets out to do perfectly adequately, and if an action-packed, blood-and-thunder adventure without too much emphasis on plot and justification is your kind of thing, Saga of the Shadow Lord is worth looking at.

Graeme Davis
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All offers subject to availability • Irish (usual c.p.) prices will differ from those quoted above; however all discounts offered will be accepted in our Dublin branch.
Use the Force, Luke...
Yes, it's finally happened. Arguably the longest- awaited role-playing game licence, Star Wars, has been obtained by West End Games, producers of Traveller, Ghostbusters and the controversial The Price of Freedom. The Star Wars RPG is scheduled for release in the autumn - watch this space for further developments.

Work in Progress
Owing to overwhelming demand, the Blood Bowl Expansion Set is under way, with new teams, enough extra counters for a complete Halfling team, expanded rules for intercepting, rules for magic, and a 'completely awesome' campaign system allowing you to build up your team through the course of a whole season. You get money for winning games, and with what you have left from paying your players and buying new ones, you can bribe the opposition and indulge in all manner of dirty tricks. Coach Jervis Johnson declined to comment on a release date.

Good Publicity...
It's easy enough to find people willing to write gamers off as cranks and devil-worshippers, so it's nice to find some good news. After last month's mention of an A&D marathon in support of Childline, we hear that on March 1st, Heaton Role-Playing Club near Newcastle held a games auction, raising £100 for a local Mencap project. They didn't have to sacrifice a single chicken in the process... And then there's a D&D marathon game in Wolverhampton in support of the PDFA. If you want to know more or help, call Mr I Taylor on (0902) 21200, any Sunday between 31 May and 21 June, 2-7pm.

... And Creeping Respectability?
Word has reached the WD office that a body called the International Simulation and Gaming Association is holding a conference on Simulation in Education and Training in Venice on September 15th-18th. It's nice to know that someone realises that our hobby can be useful as well as fun, although the idea of distinguished academics from all over the world jumping up and down yelling 'I fireball the [insert] in several languages is still somewhat beyond me. Still, I don't suppose it will be long before I realise it's likely in the autumn; any chance of a couple of complimentary tickets?

Zap!
Following the item on Laser Big last month, we have received a cutting from an American local paper about Photon, a live-action setting which uses this kind of equipment. Thanks to Lt Col Lemon for the cutting. There are apparently 18 such 'facilities' in the US and Canada, and the price of the equipment being what it is, the only sensible way forward seems to be through commercial set-ups hiring the equipment out and providing the area. How? I wonder, before fantasy live-action games use a similar thing for determining spell effects? Or even a portable version of the electronic equipment used in competition fencing to determine melee hits? It must only be a matter of time.

HI! This is Eddie, your shipboard computer...
GDW have released three computer programs for Traveller, for use on the Apple. Trader is a simple goods trading and exploration game, the Traveller Word Generator can apparently handle Asian, Vurgr, Droyne, Vilani, K'kree and Zhodani, among others, and the Beastiary (sic) seems to be a computerised version of Animal Encounters.

The Further Adventures of EGG
Since leaving TBR, Gary Gygax has formed New Infinities games with fellow ex-TSRs Frank Mentzer and Kim Mohan. Four Gورد the Rogue books have been announced, continuing the Greyhawk novels, while the Grandmaster series of game aids will apparently include four adventures and four 'Fantasy Role Playing Settings' - a town, a castle and so on. Also in the pipeline, according to Ni Inc's literature, are a new rpg, Cyborg Commando, which sounds like Twilight 2000 meets The Terminator, four boardgames by Tom 'Snits Revenge' Wham, and a monthly magazine, Realms of Adventure, 'for the Adventure Gamer to support and enhance his total gaming experience'. Like, er, yeah...

Rambolnd 1
Out in July, as we told, is the revised Top Secret, with two adventures and three sourcebooks before the end of the year, plus a linked series of gamebooks with tasteful titles like Blatt Out in Lebanon and Viet Rampage. Seems they're trying to take the game out of the James Bond mould; the question must be whether this revision will be any more than the 'revisions' of D&D: Diplomacy, Risk, Monopoly, and Axis & Allies; 'mixing elements of such classic games as BattleTech: The Succession Wars, a boardgame 'mixing elements of such classic games as Diplomacy, Risk, Monopoly, and Axis & Allies'; BattleForce, robots in mass combat; The Galtor Campaign, House Karitas, DropShips and The Mercenary's Handbook, sourcepacks; Star Trek: revised Klingons and Merchant Captains and Merchant Princes, sourcepacks; The Strider Incident, adventure; Orions, Orion Ship Recognition Manual and Star Fleet Intelligence Manual, sourcepacks.

Blood Bowl Competition Winners
Well, I hope you're satisfied. It was only a few days ago that coach Jervis 'the Microwave' Johnson finally dug his way gibbering from the mountain of entries. He's only allowed visitors for a few minutes a day to prevent the cracking of screams whenever anyone mentions the competition. You can imagine the fun and games we had getting the results out of him. Some of the entries were very funny indeed, but we can't print them, so here are some others: the Slann Francisco Slimers (featuring the Gorgeous Eusacht Cheerleaders), the Mortor Muricans, the Centaur Forwards (groom), the Bad News Taxidermists... I could go on, but what have you done to me. Anyway, without further ado, here are the winners, Bob...

1st - Simon Whiteley, Charfield; Gloss, 2nds - N Richardson, Leigh, Surrey; S Stamp, Barton-Upo-Humber; Graham Lloyd, Birmingham; Toby Duke; Helden Bridge; Pete Coulson, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne; Rowan Capell; Mr Ball, Kendrew; Karl D'Mello, Battersea; Sean Harte, Middlesborough; Matthew Bowen, Newport; David Groves, Sedbury; Gwent; Kevin Murphy, Durham; Woody Macdonald, Cambridge; J Siegfried, Vienna; Neil Landsell, Norwich; Justin Ives, London; Simon Tipp, Worthing; Simon Bowen, Southport; Matthew Barnes, Plymouth; Christopher Bailey, Holt; Norfolk; Simon Halford, Kidderminster; Ross Styles; Cambridge; Daniel Grant, Harlow; and JP Weston, Reading.

RuneQuest Takeaways...
Pass! Yes! You look like a RuneQuest player to me. You are! Great. Come over here then, into the shadows, and listen very carefully... How would you like a FREE pad of RuneQuest II Character Sheets? You see, the Gnomes of Workshop have found some lurking at the back of the warehouse. This is very nice for the Gnomes, and even nicer for you... 'Why?' I hear you cry. Simple. If you want a pad of RuneQuest II Character Sheets you can have one for the price of a large SSAE (w/4p postage). Stocks are very limited and this giveaway is on a first come first served basis. It's probably a good idea to include an extra SSAE so that we can send back your 4p envelope if you're not one of the first... And Finally... the 'News'

MERP:: Havens of Gondor, campaign module; Pirates of Pelargir, Sea-Lords of Gondor, Gates of Morordor, adventures; Robin Hood, supplement for MERP, Rolemaster and Fantasy Hero. Traveller: Durrins, alien module. Traveller 2300: Energy Curve, Kafer Down, Beansstalk, adventures.

AN EPIC CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MINIONS OF CHAOS

On the surface, the Old World is a vast and fertile place, filled with teeming cities, Elf-haunted forests, and the lofty crags where Dwarf’s battle with Goblins and their kin. But the Old World is divided and unwary; men choose to fight with each other in ignorance of the true danger, while Chaos gnaws at the edges of the world and spreads like a disease within Human society. For a few adventurers, the true nature of the danger that face the whole of Humanity will become clear enough, but is there anything they can do to prevent the subjugation of the whole world?

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay offers a unique character system with over 100 career backgrounds, and more than 130 skills. The game mechanics are fast and easy to play, while capable of great flexibility and detail. The 368 page hardback rulebook contains all the necessary rules, with detailed sections for players and for the GM, plus a Bestiary for the Old World and detailed notes on the world itself - its nations and cities, its gods and its history, and an illustrated appendix giving typical buildings. Also included in the book is a fully-detailed starter adventure, The Oldenhaller Contract, with four pregenerated characters allowing play to start almost immediately.

The Enemy Within is the definitive guide to the mighty Empire of the Old World - with background information on its history, geography, politics and religions - and contains the first adventure in The Enemy Within campaign series: Mistaken Identity. Also in the package are an A1 colour map of the western part of The Empire, plus 8 pages of player handouts and ready reference information.

Shadows over Bögenhafen is the second adventure pack for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, continuing the campaign started in The Enemy Within. It comes complete with an A2 colour map and gazetteer of the market town of Bögenhafen. An accident at the annual market and fair of the Schattenfest leads to evidence of a dangerous cult within the town, with pawns at the highest levels. The consummation of an evil plan draws ever nearer - can the adventurers save the town?

Available from all good game stores or in case of difficulty contact Games Workshop, Chesswood House, Bill Hay, Eastwood, Nottingham, UK (customers contact: Games Workshop US, 8920 Route 108, MD 21045, USA.)

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SHOW & TELL

Sometimes I receive stories from hopeful authors who don’t realise that my influence on Dwarf policy is equivalent to King Canute’s on the tide. Send fiction to Ye Editor instead: he, unlike me, has limitless time to read it (Huag - T). Assuming your masterpiece passes the space test (wide margins, double-spaced lines… and remember that not putting spaces after commas etc will brand you as one of the damned) and isn’t unbelievably clumsy in spelling, syntax or diction, the editorial comments are likely to involve such elitric jargon as ‘Show, not tell.’

The point is that an SF/fantasy author usually needs to convey the background of an invented cosmos. Clumsy authors simply tell you by bringing the story to a shuddering halt for a lecture starting ‘Twenty years ago, the ships of the Federation had…’ and taking 2000 words to explain that (say) everyone’s nose is now internally tattooed with a bar-code ID by order of fandish DHSS galactic overlords. Less clumsy authors skip the lecture and, as part of the action, show you someone on the supermarket checkout, worrying about catching flu from the bar-code reader which has already been up 500 noses that morning. Every rule of thumb has exceptions. If you can write a scene-setting essay as good as that opening Bester’s ‘Tiger! Tiger!’ go right ahead.

In Cuckoo’s Egg (Methuen 319pp S2.95), C J Cherryh is initially telling very little. Thorn, an evidently human boy, is ragged; in isolation by a humanoid called Duun, furry, clawed and scarred, wielder of some mysterious authority. The master-pupil relationship is the core of the book, and very nicely done. Duun is training Thorn as a banati, something involving physical and mental ordeals, and games of bluff: ‘There’s a pebble in the pot’ translates as ‘Symbolically I’ve poisoned your food, har har’. The banati are impresive, being also that they’re very much off-the-peg… Zen warriors with fur. Even their Guild HQ has interior decor suspiciously like the Sand Garden at Kyoto. Why is Thorn the only human on this world? The book is not entirely sure. It entains background ‘telling’, but by then Cherryh’s worked hard to make you want the answer to each riddle. A good read.

Frederik Pohl’s The Coming of the Quantum Cats (Gollancz 243pp S9.95) also employs the show-not-tell technique of throwing you in at the deep end. It opens in a 1983 America where prices and interest rates seem curiously low; beer is illegal, but the cats can form shoplifting. Arab interests dominate the country’s finance… There are some skewed Americas in this novel of interacting parallel Earths, given a veneer of intellectual respectability by ‘Many-Worlds’ quantum theory and the uncertain status of Schrödinger’s cat: hence the title, a bit twee for a classy and straightforward SF thriller. ‘Real’ people appear: in one America, Reagan is a forgotten actor; in another he’s First Gentleman alongside President Nancy. Militaristic Americas invade peaceful ones with a view to blinding-the-scenes assault on parallel Russias. I could proceed with an inventory of worlds, any required deus ex machina just has to be out there somewhere! But Pohl, a reliably thoughtful author, goes one better than his semi-happy finale. As with nuclear wea-pons, the crosstime technology can’t be uninvented, while there’s an infinity of potential new inventions.

I’m afraid Jack Williamson’s Lifeburst (Sphere 271pp S2.95) begins with wodges of ported history, explaining how the 22nd century’s space-dwelling elite have sunspots tattooed on their cheeks as badges of superiority. Easy to fake, you think? Someone tries. The tattoo… peels off. Williamson has been publishing SF in the pulp tradition since 1928: his style has improved a bit over the decades, but his plots still involve utterly invincible threats (here a giant, nuclear-powered, ship-eating, space insect) countered by incredible last-ditch weapons (courtesy of friendly aliens). Crazed megalomaniacs command space-dreadnoughts and kick-start the plot by opening fire on peaceful contact ships. A brilliant scientist works alone to develop the first fusion reactor, which is carried around in a cardboard box. Black holes lurk coincidentally towards the Solar System, sucking up loose plot threads like a cosmic Hoover. No character in this farrago comes to life except, briefly, the giant space insect herself Emerson had written a historical warfare in mainstream SF that she could win. This book will take you right back, probably to before you were born.

One time-honoured solution to the background problem is to drop an ignorant visitor into your future society: he’ll naturally ask questions after being told ‘You have slept exactly one hundred and thirteen years, three months, and eleven days’ (Edward Bellamy, Looking Back, 1888). Sun’s End by Richard Lupoff (Graf ton 348pp S2.95) adds extra fillips. The hero has been rebuilt into a bionic superman by the time he wakes in 2089, 80 years after his accident. He’s also the richest man in the Solar System (cf Wells’ When the Sleeper Wakes, 1899), and for no apparent reason develops telepathic powers. But though life is good in space colonies, it’s grim and slummy on Earth, where the stormy Sun will erase life in mere centuries. One slim hope is offered by evidence of super-aliens on Mercury (traces only). Titan (traces only, but there’s a jolly good race to get there before the devilish Russkies) and Zimzim. The last is a new, extra-solar planet into which our hero plunges in a final ecstatic, cosmic light-show (cf 2001). And, well, it’s Lupoff poses a problem: how to save 26 billion people from dying as the Sun overheats? He and his hero simply turn their backs on the question. Thumbs-down to both of them.

With Princess of Flames by Ru Emerson (Unicorn 327pp S2.95) normal fantasy service is resumed, right down to the routine enthusiastic plug from Anne McCaffrey. Decadent King Lear? His vile brother Hycan are fighting the unspeakable Pegze sisters, horde. Knowing that among the allies lurks sister Elfrid, the Bastard Princess, waiting to revenge the overthrow of her sisters. Easy to fake, you think? (not his actual name, but the mad scenes were awfully reminiscent). The villains come to a sticky end and the princess gets her man. References to holograms, nicotine and coffee help weigh the story down to earth: indeed, it’s curiously unfantastic. The smelly Pegze do some half-hearted shape-shifting, and upper-class characters grip with royalist auras or emit kingly fire (lending ambiguity to lines like ‘a curse that blistered the air’) but none of this seems vital to the tale. It’s as though Emerson had written a novel of semi-historical warfare and was advised to ‘fantasy it up a bit’.

Privateers by Ben Bova (Methuen 385pp S2.95) stretches back to 1928, the USSR space-smuggling with a heavy propaganda message and, to quote an American critic, ‘a worn-out adventure-fiction cliché in the first four pages’! Ghost Train by Stephen Jaynes (Sphere 343pp S2.95) is a rather more horror novel. ‘Looming Sungs, an unspeakable abomination. A horror buried so deep in his psyche he can remember not a single detail of what has been done to him. He stands in the railway station and shudders uncontrollably…’ I’ve felt that way myself after British Rail bacon sandwiches. The Black Ship by Christopher Rowley (Century 310pp S10.95) looks like entertaining stuff: volume 2 finishes in a trilogy, but hasn’t seen volume 1 – so far, Century… The Dragon Lord by Peter Morwood (Century 318pp S10.95) was reviewed here in paperback but is now reissued for rich readers who found that edition too cheap.

Finally, Brutal Classified Pulp Nasties (Sphere 311pp £1.95) is ‘in Literature as the demented abstractions of New York subway graffiti is to Art’ (publicity flyer, si). Scanning these very short stories (eg 18 words) in very large print with very many exclamation marks (the B-word uses 21), I decided the anthology wasn’t quite right. In fact this work is to Literature as a pool of vomit outside a pub is to Haute Cuisine.

Dave Langford
"'Ullo! This is Freddie, the Mail Order Troll 'ere. I'd like to remind you that ordering games from us at the Games Workshop Mail Order Service is, like, dead easy. Oive got all me bruvver trolls 'ere in the caverns just itching ta get on wiv the work and send you your games. In fact, wiv out any orders ta send out they dunno what ta do wiv themselves. Any 'ow we've got all these great games what you can buy from us, just sitting 'ere! 'Ere's the list for the most recent lot... and some uvvers you might be interested in!'
THE OFFICIAL WARHAMMER
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RAVENING HORDES

Ravening Hordes is the latest rules supplement for the bestselling Warhammer Fantasy Battle game, and contains a set of competition army lists for Elves, Dwarfs, Goblins, Undead, Dark Elves, Chaos, Skaven and the human races of The Empire, Nippon and Northlands. For the first time, Warhammer players can fight no-holds-barred competition games, using the strict provisions and points values given. As well as providing players with competition lists from which to assemble their own battle-winning forces, Ravening Hordes presents a complete up-date on the Warhammer Fantasy Battle Rules system, including new rules for assassins, leadership, cauldon, forcehouses, spearcharge, and many more.

Ravening Hordes will form the basis for the proposed Warhammer League and National Championships, arrangements for which are already underway.

Ravening Hordes, by Richard Hallidie, will be available in April, as a perfect-bound, 72 page book, containing a host of new ideas for the Warhammer Fantasy Battle Rules. It will be copiously illustrated — including colour — clearly laid out, essential for all Warhammer Battle. Players and non-players alike may order at only £4.95.

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Er, excuse me, man...

Well, maybe... Anyway, man, we're off to do our set now.Sorry, you out later, OK.

Me, beer!

Oh, man, Warrior Time!

Krash!

Sounds better than when they were making it anyway!

Me, beer!
'Hideous, slavering tongues, slicking around my legs... drooling, obscene mouths, gibbering, hot with slime. The snickering of many mouths, the dribbling of snake-like tongues. Attttteeeee!!'

'Yes, yes, Mr Smith. I understand that you have been through some kind of traumatic experience. By just what has this to do with you being afraid of driving gloves?'

Phobias play an important part in Call of Cthulhu, and most intrepid investigators should develop at least one major psychological quirk during their careers. Phobias will appear as a result of temporary insanity and are frequently found even in the permanently insane.

To make the most of phobias, therefore, keepers should be looking to develop personality disorders as a result of what their investigators experience. It is clear, as urged in the CoC rulebook and in many of Lovecraft's own tales, that the form of phobias should reflect the forms and/or principles of the Mythos horrors which drove the afflicted person insane. In other words, whatever it was that the poor investigator experienced ought to be a major part in the phobia he or she develops.

The CoC rulebook and Companion (recently printed together in a hardback format) list many phobias, but keepers can always do with more. What is fear of slime called, a phobia relevant to Cthulhu if ever there was one? What is fear of solitude? The CoC Companion claims that it is monophobia, but it's wrong, since this is fear of one thing. So, seeing as I know a little bit about phobias, and since I have developed three or four as a result of dealing with White Dwarf editors, this article reveals many useful secrets for keepers to introduce. If your players have read everything in the book about phobias, surprise them with a few of these. Most of them have been selected because of their obvious relevance to Call of Cthulhu, but one or two are included because they're rather odd, and one at least because it's very silly. In fact, let's start with the silly one...

**BATRACHOPHOBIA**

Fear of Reptiles

Cold-blooded creatures seem to have an obvious affinity with all sorts of creeping, oozing horrors like Serpent People and Hunting Horrors and even more unimaginable scaly, cold, eldritch creatures with huge teeth and forked tongues and vast humanophagic appetites. Even garden lizards, stupidly dismissed as harmless by most fools, are watching, watching...

**ALEKTOROPHOBIA**

Fear of Chickens

I kid you not. We all know that chickens are Shantak birds hiding inside chicken suits, don't we? All that stuff with clucking and laying eggs is just a front. Chickens are heavy duty. You should always blow them away on the off-chance.

**AMYCHOPHOBIA**

Fear of Being Scratched

Things have claws. Things scratch you with that nameless, unspeakable inner resonance that means your soul is lost to the Great Old Ones or one of the many clawed, scratching abominations of the Mythos. A scratch is an intimation of the nature of damnation. Auto-amychoephobia means you'd sooner feel that itch for the rest of your life than scratch it yourself... But then, what if it isn't an itch?

**BLENNOPHOBIA**

Fear of Slime

Show me a Cthulhu campaign that won't benefit from the introduction of this one! Everything in the Mythos is slimy (well, almost everything). And it won't stop with slime; viscous oils, jellies, the signs of the passage of Mythos creatures are everywhere. To make this playable, it might be restricted to organic slimy types like the horrible mess you get in the oven tray after roasting a Shantak bird... sorry, I mean chicken, of course.

**CARNOPHOBIA**

Fear of Meat

How can you be certain where this stuff comes from? Butchers look at you in such an odd way... they're almost
Fear of Solitude

with the implicit promise that you will never be alone again. Because you will never be anything again...

ERGASIOPHOBIA

Fear of Surgery

Doctors are mad; this ought to be obvious to anyone. They have many years of intensive study which puts them under severe stress. And they are learned men and they read books. Dangerous books, perhaps. Worst of all, they are interested in medicine, and that means life, life-forces... It's obvious we're talking serious Mythos involvement here. So, doctors are sick, dangerous fanatics and surgery is the worst thing of all because you are anaesthetized and helpless as they perform their profane operations and extract God knows what fluids and organs from you or insert some slithering, licking obscenity... You know the feeling, you're helpless but not insensitive. Everyone knows someone who has had out-of-the-body-experiences during surgery, who have been helpless but aware, railing impotently at the dreadful acts of the demented medics. Surgery? Death is infinitely preferable.

HAPHEPHOBIA

Fear of Being Touched

If it can touch you, it can eat you, infect you, flay your skin away, and/or cover you with acidic paralyzing slime which will slowly eat your flesh away. And those are just the easily-imagined possibilities. Of all the senses, touch is undoubtedly the most disgusting, because it is so primal, so primitive, just like the undifferentiated blobs of protoplasm, the Spawn of the Deep Ones, reaching out with their blind, mindless, touch... Squirmmmmmmmmm.

LYSSOPHOBIA

Fear of Insanity

Fear of losing one's mind is to some extent universal and fairly rational, but there is a difference between a rational...
Fear and a phobia which dominates much of a person's waking life. The lissophobe is obsessed by insanity, terrified of it. Are you going mad? Perhaps you are... how would you know? And what are you going to do about it when it happens? I don't see how you can go on being an Investigator.

A variant problem would be to modify this phobia to be a fear of insanity. This is even more rational than a fear of madness today. In the 1930s with the prospect of lobotomies, primitive shock treatments and real snake-pit conditions.

**ODONTOPHOBIA**

**Fear of Teeth**

Teeth bite and inject venom. There are some which are sharp for rending flesh and some which are for chewing flesh. Some are barbered and snagged and some drip ichorous fluids which digest or paralyze or inflict pains beyond knowing. Above all, monsters have teeth and they frequently use them even when no provocation is offered. You cannot negotiate with teeth operating at full speed. Disembodied teeth, perhaps still attached to some necrotic, gulping gullet, are the worst. They can appear at any time, anywhere...

**OMMATOPHOBIA**

**Fear of Eyes**

You can be seen. There is nowhere to hide. Flee wherever you choose, but the divinational eyes will always seek you out. At first, you will only notice occasional, unusual gazes, eyes which look the other way when you turn, the one person in a hundred who gives the game away... But as you grow to realize the universality of their sadistic scrutinies, you will see also that what appeared at first to be merely physical organs, were actually point-projections of an idiotic, blasphemous, all-seeing awareness. The eyes have it all after...

**PHTHIRIOPHOBIA**

**Fear of Parasites**

Parasites invade the body, so a phthiriphobe shares some concerns with cnidophobics (see above). But parasites are worse, for they will remain with you and sap your stamina, reducin- being unable to breathe as some gibbering, slime-covered unmentionable occludes your nose and mouth - that is horrible beyond endurance. You know it is worse than anything else you can imagine (and you brood on this a lot), because of the arcane knowledge the Horrors have of you. Pneuma, wind and breath, is soul and spirit. By trapping your breath and your dying shriek inside you, the dread nameless ones trap your soul. They may feast on that for all eternity. Smothering is the promise of an endless dying, shrieking on and on throughout aeons.

**POGONAPHOBIA**

**Fear of Beards**

Men with beards have three outstanding attributes. First, they are fanatics, possibly cultists and almost certainly mad. Sec-ond, they are sexual deviants of one sort or another. Finally, they read lots of books, generally the sort of books which should not be read. This combination makes them dangerous (especially if you're a female investigator). Beware of men with beards. They are knowable, dangerous, and mad.

**SCIOPHOBIA**

**Fear of Shadows**

The vampire, a terrifying thing to many, is greatly feared. Quite rightly too, if you know what I mean. And what clue did this unholy demon reveal, to show that it was not delivered of any nature we know of? It cast no shadow. A terrible, unnatural creature with an equally unnatural lifeless attribute. But, far more than dreading the creature which casts no shadow, the phrophobe knows that there exist an even more ultimate horror of gibbering and eldrich illusion - The Shadow Where There Is No Creature...

**SIDERODROMOPHOBIA**

**Fear of Railways**

And not just BR's Killer Staph'n'Kidney piles either. This is fairly odd, but tunnels and embankments add to a theme of claustrophobia, and everyone knows you can't escape from a speeding train. However, taking everything into account, the Buffet is still probably the best bet as the place for some seething, nameless horror to appear.

**SIDEROPOPHOBIA**

**Fear of Stars**

Even someone with only nominal Mythos knowledge knows where the Outer Gods and almost all the Great Old Ones came from, and the nature and names of at least a few of the monstrousities which make their way between the nightmare worlds in the firmament. A starlit night is a window on the true horror of existence. Stars are abomination factories.

**TAPPHOBIA**

**Fear of Graves**

Let's face it, going anywhere near a grave is suicidal. Even assuming that the grave hasn't got an Undead occupant, you're sure to find a bunch of demented cultists armed to the teeth with firearms and summoning spells, or else a flock of ghosts who are going home from the pub and fancy a quick takeaway. If you get really lucky and avoid all of this, the grave will contain some awful item which will blow your SAN to bits or else a book (which is much the same thing). Graves make you shiver. Fear is a man's best friend, here.

**TRISKAIDEKAPHOBIA**

**Fear of Having Thirteen At Table**

The Apocalypse. Should you ever be one of thirteen to table, the storm will grow in, lightning will flash and thunder roar, and the very fabric of the heavens will be torn asunder like Old Ones materialize. Numinous chanting will grow to unbearable volumes as the Deep Ones surface, and the End of the World will definitely be nigh. Your own fate, of course, will be especially appalling...

One last note if you want to go totally over the top on phobias. A fear of everything is not, as CoC claims, panophobia. That, of course, is the fear of having to attend dreadfully boring theatrical events in December or January. Pan-, or Panto, phobia is the correct term.

Carl Sargent
Hey, we're a game!

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Well, ain't that cozy!

- There's a board of Nu-Earth and Milli-com, with encounter cards...

Yeeehal Blow 'em away!

- Synth out, Gunnar. As well as Norts, we can meet useful companions...

Like Venus Bluegenes?

- Yeah, yeah. K. for Ken, too.

...And as we go, we pick up clues until we can run the Traitor to ground...

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mystery is solved. Something that can tear a robot apart can do unspeakably terminal things to a High Programmer. He has an ordinary (and that means very secure) apartment elsewhere in Alpha Complex.

...and yourselves hadn’t you? Why do we struggling writers bother...

2: Someone else can solve the mystery. Guess who...

Brief the team about a mission to the sewers. Make this sound as disgusting, repellent and confusing as possible. Plumber’s Helper in Acute Paranoia is confusing, nauseating and repellent, but that’s close enough. Equip the Troubleshooters with every possible device that might be used in a sewer, plus a few that are ludicrously inappropriate: dinner jackets and armoured spats? Jet boots? Parachutes? Automatic open-on-scream parachutes? If (that’s an optional ‘if’) you’re feeling mean some of the last lot have been sabotaged by Com- me Mutant Traitor Scum, and are open-on-whisper or open-on-p unquestionably appropriate: dinner jackets and armoured spats? Jet boots? Parachutes. Neat, eh? Send a few Vultures to intimidate, sorry, escort, the team to the sewer entrance. Send a few Warbots and Blue Int-Sec troopers to escort the escort. Kill anyone who objects.

As the Troubleshooters are frog-marched down the final tunnel towards the sewer, it fills with white mist. Everyone collapses: escorts, escorts’ escorts, any spare guards who happen to be about, Troubleshooters, and robots. Mutants go down as well, no matter what their brand of pervomutation.

Remember The Prisoner? The Troubleshooters wake up on a grassy lawn near a charming thatched cottage, under a clear blue sky. The sky and landscape seem to stretch out forever. Faint baa-ing noises can be heard from the far side of the hill. Describe all this in terms appropriate to Troubleshooters who may have never seen the sky, grass, hills, cottages, or sheep. Remember that The Computer has forgotten about this area. At the moment the Troubleshooters aren’t being monitored for numerous utterances and behaviour. Well, not by the Computer, anyway... Internal Security agents are all around. I mean, do you trust anybody these days?

Anyone who has never been Outside should now make a sanity roll. Anyone who has been Outside before should eventually realise that there’s something wrong. The air doesn’t smell clean enough, the sunlight isn’t as hot as it should be, and the grass is made of

DO TROUBLESHOOTERS
DREAM OF
ELECTRIC SHEEP

Illustrated by David Stevens
plastic. The Troubleshooters will also discover that all weapons and equipment, apart from laser pistols, melee weapons, and open-on-whatever parachutes have disappeared.

While the team are beginning to absorb this information, the sky is rent in twain. Remember, Alpha complex automated Past-U-RAL is a High Programmer. A huge hand, fifty or so metres long, appears through a black 'opening' in the sky, surrounded in clouds that cloak it as a white garment. It points down at the team. A booming voice says 'Go Thou and Guard My Sheep, My House, and My Servants. Thou Shalt Safeguard Them, Even At Risk Of Thine Own Lives, Or Thou Shalt Answer Unto Me. And Mighty Shalt Be Mine Displeasure!'. Anyone who answers back, fires weapons, or asks any questions is struck by lighting. Very traditional, but satisfying, all the same, n'est pas? Use damage column 15 and chuckle a lot. Actually, it's a plasma pulse from a ceiling mounted projector that retracts behind a thick steel plate when it isn't in use, but knowing that somehow takes the romance away.

The hand withdraws into the sky, which neatly closes again. A bot appears over the brow of the hill, says 'This way, please', and leads the way into the cottage.

*The Green, Green Grass of Home*

The warehouse is only 300x400m, with a 15m high ceiling, but it gives the impression of having limitless horizons. Anyone walking far enough in any direction will eventually walk through the 'horizon' and into a wall. The walls and ceiling are covered in acoustic tiles which, combined with the treated synthetics which lack the normal sex suppressant drugs.

There's nothing of any great significance in the cottage, apart from the body of a robot lost in a far-away pool (its brain and left arm have been ripped from the torso) and various items of contraband.

If the Troubleshooters examine the cottage closely they will discover that the chimney stack is made of concrete while the other walls are made of lightweight foamed plastic blocks painted to look like bricks and timber beams. The thatched roof is also fragile plastic. The walls can be destroyed by a blow, and bullets and laser blasts don't find them to be a barrier. Let the Troubleshooters find this out for themselves later on. They'll thank you for the pleasure that this discovery will bring.

The chimney stack conceals a lift (entered through a secret door in the lounge) and a delivery chute. The lift is Past-U-RAL's route to his office. Needless to say, (so why am I both looking to the rear on the lift and raised and the shaft is guarded by automatic lasers. The delivery chute is part of the Alpha complex automated supply system; if a clone is killed a uncouncious replacement will eventually be delivered to the kitchen.

Right, back to the plot (again). The robot in the pool was MELIO-RS-340, the sheep-herd and handyman. There are three other robot servants, all standard humanoid types:

**JEE/V-ES-229** is the butler. Its programming includes an Aggretainer personality module: 'You smell? And other what? I'm not a file reader. Why do you ask? Or have you just woken up?'

**JEE/V-ES-340** is the roofer. He's a 'horizon' beyond it, but won't be much. He's an expert at hiding behind it, such as a sheepbot. It's easy to spot the pillars themselves once you know they are there.

Past-U-RAL has built an impressed cottage on a low hill in the middle of the warehouse. The simulated wood veneer plastic sign identifies it as 'Rose Cottage'. There are master and guest bedrooms, with bathrooms, a big lounge and recreation area, a gymnasium, a kitchen and servants quarters.

All the rooms are luxuriously furnished in white, with white-on-white decorations. All rooms are fitted with concealed cameras and microphones, linked to Past-U-RAL's desk console. Most Troubleshooters will have difficulty identifying the furnishings, since they are totally unlike normal Alpha Complex fittings. For example, the main bedroom has a water bed with water pumps, the door of the room has a bar and a jacuzzi, and all floors are carpeted. The kitchen contains 'real' foods for Past-U-RAL's occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional occasional 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numbers. All that bleating and looking helpless is just a front. As in the first option, don't describe the attackers until someone survives, then make multiple attacks on the entire group.

The sheepbots are small, unarmoured and as a group they have 45% melee skill. If all the sheepbots concentrate they can generate a strong ECM field. The mental link will collapse when eighty or more sheep have been destroyed. Optionally, the group mind can increase in power to take over the other bots, as described below.

This is a bit obvious for Paranoia, which means that the players will think of it first. However, because this is Paranoia they will dismiss the idea as too obvious which means you can use it anyway. But then they know that the obvious is never what it seems. You know that they know. Look, just consider this alternative and damn the logic...

One of the domestic robots has Gone Frankenstein and is responsible for the attacks, which were practice for attacks on humans. An ECM jammer is concealed somewhere in the servants quarters. The killer robot is shielded and immune and has a concealed data cartridge containing Laser Pistol-7 and Melee-7 programs.

If the killer is JIF-I-FI-433 it will try to avoid using its lasers, preferring a strangling wire (stylish, but not terribly French) and other melee attacks.

Optionally, all the robots have Gone Frankenstein. One altered the circuits of the other domestics, and gave them copies of its secret programs. They killed MEL/O-RS-340 because it didn't want to join them. They are lying about the deactivation.

The killer or killers will put on human clothing for the attacks, and should only be described when someone has survived an attack.

When Past-U-RAL has identified the killer(s) he'll take whatever action seems necessary. Necessary means sending in a few really big warbots to pacify Rose Cottage. These warbots are fairly stupid, and will probably account for several Troubleshooters during the clean-up operations. Why bother stuffing a brain into a warbot-sized warbot? Don't let the Troubleshooters escape through the entrance used by the warbots.

As the survivors survey the wreckage, the sky is rent in twain again. A huge eye stares down at the team, and a rumbling voice conducts a more or less standard debriefing. All traitors are given short but dramatic missions as lightning conductors. When Past-U-RAL is sure that he knows exactly what happened, the Troubleshooters are given the white-mist-and-wake-up treatment. This time they have been stripped naked and are floating gently downstream in a rubber raft in one of the main Alpha Complex sewers. The Computer demands a mission status report (even sewers have terminals for The Computer). Since they won't have accomplished their official mission, the Troubleshooters should be executed as traitors. Pathetic attempts to escape by describing an imaginary cottage to The Computer may make The Computer decide that the team have been driven insane and should be sent for reindoctrination and routine therapy instead. Any gibbering wrecks that survive this ordeal should be sent back to the sewers to complete the mission as they should have done in the first place. Thank you for cooperation.

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DEREK was having a run of bad luck (since he'd been born!)

LADIES SAUNDERS!

PUSH OFF SMELLIES!

OOO! BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS A CHIP SHOP!

Booming!

IT'S TOUGH TO BE A TROLL! COR! LOOK WOT SOMEBODY'S CHUCKED AT! THAT'S 'ANDY!

I COULD BE A GREAT WARRIOR WIV THIS! NOBODY WOULD GET CANY OF ME THEN!

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BLIMEY! WOT NEXT?

HURRAH! I'VE INVENTED A FORM OF MOBILE TRANSPORT!

Strewth! I've stepped into the trap of a fierce troll-chomper! 'Ere - I ain't gonna be yer lunch am I?

Nah!

You're me breakfast!

You're typical.

Y'see I was out with the lads last night, so I was a bit late getting up this morning.

Hence the late breakfast. Burp!

Wot a day! All the worst of it is there ain't even a copy of White Dwarf in 'ere to read!

Don't worry readers - the troll-chomper won't be able to stomach Derek for long! (Vomit!)
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Can you save New York? Remember— you only have one hour!
Robin Hood is a new development in the world of roleplaying games: something more than a supplement — a new game for which you won't have to learn a book full of rules. The book, published by ICE, is an attempt to bridge the gap between new games with new rules, and campaign or adventure supplements which are wholly 'systemless' and need a good deal of work before they are usable.

You won't need Robin Hood to use this adventure. Part of the idea behind the book is that it should be a generic (i.e. universally useful) work of reference for gamers interested in the early mediaeval period and in the concept of a roleplaying game involving a band of outlaws. Although restricted in the number of roleplaying games it can actually mention, Robin Hood is conceived to be used with games ranging from Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay and Middle-earth Roleplaying to Advanced Dungeons & Dragons and Fantasy Hero.

**Some Conventions**

Robin Hood uses terms and conventions with which you may not be familiar. Included in the book are various standard characters and encounters which may be lifted out and used directly in a game. These include various types of soldier and commoners, along with merchants, priests, nobles and the like. Robin Hood is set in a version of ClI-13 England, so there is no provision for magic-using characters. However, the book has an optional 'mystical' element, based on the premise that any unusual event might have two interpretations: it might be the work of magic (be it deviltry, the Holy Spirit or white magic) or it may have a simple and rational explanation. There is a very blurred line dividing the natural and the super-natural which only you can clearly perceive.

The historical setting is supposed to be exactly that. You and the players have knowledge of the period concerned to help build a realistic atmosphere. Historical persons such as King Stephen and King Richard move through the land and there is a continuous catalogue of events outside the characters' influence: wars with France and Scotland, Crusades, national and inter-national politics, changes in the Church and the people in power, even changes in laws and social life.

Two campaign ideas are detailed in Robin Hood: one set in the Forest of Dean Cl140-1155 and the more traditional one of Sherwood Forest in the time of King Richard and King John, 1189-1216. It is to the latter that you are now invited, to pit your wits against Sir Guy of Gisburne...
On Ealden Byrgen: Plot Outline

The characters in this adventure are assumed to be a known group of outlaws, acting outside the law, either for their own ends or to help others whom the law cannot protect. As such they are a thorn in the side of the local authority. Hopefully this adventure will illustrate how you can easily adapt an idea to your own game. Here the authorities are represented by Robert, Sheriff of Nottingham and his henchman Sir Guy of Gisburne. In your own game you may use suitable equivalents for them and any other characters (or places) mentioned.

The adventure is set at any time between 1189-1216 and takes place in the south central stretches of Sherwood Forest, some miles northeast of the town of Nottingham. The dense wood is home to the characters, and it provides them with sanctuary and base from which to operate. And yet there are areas within the Forest where even they dare not go — one such being the Ealden Byrgen, low rolling hills topped with mysterious stones and barrow mounds, by turns misty and eerie or driven with howling winds.

Sir Guy has been frustrated in the past on numerous occasions when he attempted to capture or deal with the outlaws. They always have managed to evade him or upset his plans whilst carrying out outrageous crimes against the rich and powerful. Now he as a new plan to trap them in an ambush on the Ealden Byrgen, with a false rumour of buried treasure hidden from all but the 'Lord of the Forest' — a title designed to both flatter and trick the leader of the character's band. However, there are chances for the characters to avoid the certain deadly fate that Gisburne has prepared for them.

Ultimately the characters stand to profit from the adventure. This is because Gisburne's plan has a fatal, subconscious, flaw. His bait for the ambush, the treasure on Ealden Byrgen, actually exists, whereas he thinks it is something only in his own imagination. His lure, the Lay of Ingelstane, is a half-remembered fragment of an old Anglo-Saxon poem adapted immediately after the Norman conquest, when the English looked forward to a time when they would be freed from the yoke of the new lords. Some ancient combination of the spirits of the repressed people and their Forest has worked a power and truth into the legend... a power that might take expression through the characters and their actions. On the other hand, the events related below might just be coincidence...

The Man In The Stag

The adventure starts in daytime. The time of year is unimportant although an autumn setting might be most appropriate. The characters are in the southern or central area of Sherwood Forest. They might simply be out hunting, or on some mission.

Sherwood Forest, like other Royal Forests of the time, is subject to special laws in order to preserve the trees and wildlife as good hunting land for the King and a privileged few he grants the right to hunt there. The Forest Laws are enforced by the Verderers, a hated band of men under the overall command of a Warden — currently the Sheriff, although the duties are generally carried out by Sir Guy of Gisburne. For day-to-day purposes, the Verderers report to Foresters-in-Fee at four places in Sherwood, the centres of its four Leets or divisions. There are also Foresters...
in Sherwood, but they are concerned more with tending the game than enforcing laws and troubling the people, which is what the Verderers enjoy. Their cruelty is renowned.

Suddenly, out of a leafy brake, a group of Verderers on a path meet the characters (or those who are visible). These are four of the Sheriff's men, together with two peasant woodcutters. The Verderers are not immediately recognisable, for they do not wear a uniform, but by their aires and bearing are obviously Normans or puffed-up Englishmen lording over their less dominating brethren. Each Verderer carries an oakleaf badge as a sign of their authority. They wear leathern jerkins beneath thick homspar cloaks and leggins. Each also carries a pick-like weapon hanging from a belt, a sure sign of a man with a position in society. Two of the men have light crossbows, the other two had spears. These have been put to another use — they are supporting a stag slung by its hoofs, carried by the two woodcutters. The peasants are dressed very roughly and have no weapons.

Anyone looking carefully at the stag (make an easy Perception/Observe check) will see that it is only a stag's skin. A man's bloody head protrudes from the neck of the beast and the rest of him is bundled up inside the hide. It appears that the Verderers have captured some poor man driven to poaching to feed his family, and the characters will hopefully attack the Verderers to rescue him. If they don't the Verderers may well challenge the party and/or recognise one of them as a wanted outlaw and give chase. Statistics for the Verderers are given in Robin Hood and at the end of this adventure. They are moderately competent but overconfident and will at first rely on their authority to try and make the characters cower. If any are killed or seriously injured, the others are like to flee. The peasants will flee during any fight, having been pressed into service by the Verderers against their will. They play no part in the adventure.

The fight with the Verderers should take place in a small woodland glade. There is plenty of room for the participants, and also the chance to sneak through the trees and undergrowth to surprise the opponents. A clever party should be able to see the Verderers off without suffering any loss.

Robert FitzOoth

Having despatched the Verderers, the characters will be left in the glade with the body wrapped in the skin of the stag. The hide has been roughly stitched together with thongs, and is very fresh. It can be easily cut open with a knife or other blade. The man inside is obviously in a bad way, covered in the blood of the stag and beaten and cut about. He is apparently exhausted and unable to say much until he has had some rest and, hopefully, a refreshing wash. The characters do not have to travel too far to find a decent stream or woodland pool suitable for this. Once cleaned up a bit, the man can be seen to have fair hair and a handsome face, if somewhat pinched, face.

When he is able to speak, he gives his name as Robert FitzOoth. His name comes from his Norman paternal grandfather, but he was brought up in an English village with nothing other than his name to support him. He spent a little while as a soldier, more time wandering as a peddler and singer on the continent, then worked hand-to-mouth in England. Recently he came to a large village near Sherwood and started courting a pretty young girl. Her father got drunk and attacked a guardman one night and was imprisoned, leaving her mother and the girl herself with no means of support. Rumours spread by a vicious guardman led to the family being shunned by the rest of the village. Soon they had no food and were starving, only just able to live on what little Robert could bring home. In the end he decided to go into Sherwood and try poaching. After one successful raid, someone in the village reported his activities to the Verderers who trapped him the second time he went into the Forest. After they captured him, he heard them say that the girl and her mother had been taken by the Sheriff's men and hung for eating poached venison, and no-one in the village raised a hand to help them.

Hopefully, the characters will take an interest in the poor man's story and ask him back to their camp. He will resist any idea that they should go to the village, even to take revenge, saying that he has no reason to return, and its people are in a bad enough situation without trouble from other outlaws. Whilst they travel or wait to prepare a meal, Robert will sing a few snatches of song about grieving lovers and the like. Hopefully this will encourage the characters to ask him to sing them a proper song later that evening. He will make every attempt to sing for them the Lay of Ingelestone:

Robert can explain this lay to anyone who is interested: it is an old ballad about a standing stone (the lonelie stane) on the Old Barrows (Ealden Byrgen) of Sherwood. In the barrow beneath the stone is the treasure of a bold and strong supporter (the trowe thegn) of one of the old English Kings from the time before the Normans came. The lay tells that the treasure may be claimed by one man only, he who would be the thegn and hlaford (thane and lord) of the Forest. The man who claims the buried golden hound must also be very mighty...

Robert also says that he heard the lay from an old local man who claimed that he knew where the Ingelsane was. This old man described the stone as a tapering dark column about 12' high (eanth cubites = eight cubits; 1 cubit = 18"), The stone can be seen if one follows a tributary of the stream which flows down from the hills through Sudwelle to the Trent. The tributary is marked out by a great clump of overhanging willows at its confluence with the stream, and by numerous large reddish-grey boulders in its bed.

Robert is of course a rogue, charlatan and mischief-maker. Trapped while trying to steal from the wily Sheriff, he exchanged a dismal road for an opportunity to work and spy for his captor. He is an
accomplished liar and trickster with a silver tongue. If offered a chance to join the group, he will readily accept, and shows himself to be familiar with a sword, though not bows. Robert's statistics are given at the end of the adventure.

If Robert is not invited to join the characters, he will ask. If they refuse him, he will depart after bidding them farewell and saying he will go north and see if his luck will change. If he does leave, he will actually stay in the area and try to spy on the characters so that he can warn Gisburne of their movements. Hopefully they will be tempted to leave for the Ealden Byrgen.

A Warning

This section deals with the journey to the Ealden Byrgen. Much of the hills are open and bleak, cut with narrow streams and interspersed with stretches of dangerous bogs. Some valleys are filled with stunted trees and sprawling clumps of gorse, heather, broom and bramble. It is very easy to lose ones way as low cloud can descend suddenly onto the hills — this will necessitate a very difficult Navigation/Orientation check. Characters seeking a sensible approach to the Byrgen may therefore follow the advice of Robert's old man and find the brook flowing into Sudwelle's stream.

You may wish to have some chance encounters on the characters' path to the Ealden Byrgen. If they keep to the woods, they will avoid contact with other people for the most part, but might have some difficult moments, such as crossing a fast stream. There are also other hazards, such as the odd wild animal or hunters' snares to trap the unwary.

On their way through Sherwood, they have to cross or follow a path between Oston and Farnesfield. The path is a simple track linking the two villages, used by peasants and the monks of Gresham Abbey (who have estates in both settlements). As the characters reach the path, they should make a Perception/Observation check to realise that someone a little up the track is watching them. The stranger is cloaked in a dull green-brown cloak that blends with the foliage around him. When the characters notice him, he will lower his enveloping hood to reveal a shock of black hair and intense eyes. If they pass by him, he will call out one of their names. The man is some yards away, and if anyone attempts to approach him he holds up his hand with the palm towards them. He then addresses them in a loud, roughly accented voice:

**Men of the wood beware!**

- Step not in the shadow of the stone
- With not in the teeth of the gale
- Cuning bow and sharp sword
- Old opponent seeks your wyrd
- Climb not on the barrowmound alone
- Hark not on the teller but the tale; Men of the wood take care!

These are the only words that the man speaks. During the last few words, the characters should be asked to make a hard Perception/Observing check. Anyone succeeding hears hoofbeats coming along the path from the north.

Three Radechenistres

The sound is that of three radechenistres or roden, landmen who are partly free but owe certain services to their lord, including riding duties, hence their name. They are obliged to keep a horse and riding gear, and to use them for a number of days each year. One of these men is Sheriff's messenger from Farnesfield, the others are guardsmen. The riding men should be sufficient to distract the player character's attention away from the mysterious figure who, having uttered the warning, disappears into the Forest. Any attempt to search for a part of the figure is doomed to failure.

How the characters react to the approach of the radenmen is up to them. The messenger has a small casket bound in sackcloth on his saddle. This contains a number of valuables taken from the house of Sir Geoffrey d'Aincourt including three silver collars, a silver cup and a lady's brooch clasped with gold and set with small pearls and tassels. He also carries a number of letters taken from the house, addressed to Sir Geoffrey from the Bishop of Lincoln. These suggest he go on Crusade and leave his estates to the Church in the event of his death. Sheriff Robert is seeking ways to claim the estates of the missing Sir Geoffrey for himself, and the letters are strong evidence to dispute such a claim.

None of the men will fight to the death. They each have a small amount of money (a total of 24 silver pennies), along with their equipment: the messenger has a leather jerkin, a small sword and neat, if plain, clothes; the guardsmen have chainmail, broadswords and tabards showing their allegiance.

On Ealden Byrgen

The landmarks related by Robert Fitzooth are not too difficult to find. Once the brook joining the Sudwelle stream is found, there is a change in the weather. A cold wind noticeably springs up, blowing clouds from the northeast. Soon the sun is obscured by the dirty white clouds and the landscape assumes a dull, bitter hue. The hills of the Ealden Byrgen loom up all around. There is little birdsong or other sign of animal life and even the gurgle of the brook seems muted.

Although barrows can be spotted on the broad backs of the upland here, there are no stones to be seen. The wind whips at the struggling, dark clumps of plants, shrubs and trees. If it is autumn there will be flurries of damp brown leaves whisked about as well. All the characters should make a medium Perception/Observing check. Those succeeding glimpse (or think they glimpse) a group of shadowy figures the brow of a hill, between two outcrops of stone. The figures do not reappear, and if the characters investigate the place, they will find nothing. If they search hard, they can discover some old bones in a niche in the bare, split rocks.

You should pick one or two of the successful characters and inform them of additional sightings (or half-sightings) as the journey continues. Their perceptions differ: there is a single, tall figure; there are several
small, pale creatures; the figure(s) are still or move quickly; they bob into sight from behind rocks and copes. After the third such occurrence, those afflicted must make a Fear check or refuse to go on. A long rest, such as for a meal, will calm them down sufficiently to proceed but very shortly they will start seeing the figures again and must make another, harder, Fear check.

The land here, being broken, patched with marshy swaths and impenetrably tangled thicket makes for very slow progress. The day wears on and the light becomes very poor and the way even harder to see. You may require the characters to test various skills such as their knowledge of rough terrain, pathfinding and so on. If they fail they may get lost or trapped, or may give up if they fail an Ego Roll/Willpower check. They may also have some difficult Movement rolls/Risk checks to make.

If you wish you could have the group encounter a starving, solitary wolf or sick wild cat, springing out from behind cover at the smallest or least protected character. Note also that a number of mildly poisonous plants grow in this area, so if any character tries gathering anything for a meal there could be problems!

The Ingelstane

By this time the wind has risen to a gale against which the characters have to battle in addition to all their other problems. However, they are unlikely to wish to spend the night on the Old Barrows, and will in all likelihood press on. It is OK for you to casually remind them of the many tales of the way that most of them gory—of what happens to anyone on the Ealden Byron at night.

Then, as the characters round a twist in the valley, they see the narrow tooth-like stone protruding from a mound atop the next hill. If any character asks to make a Perception/Observe check, there is a small chance that they spot a couple of figures dodging out of sight. These may be put down to the same source as the shapes seen earlier, but they are a good deal more solid.

The hill of the Ingelstane is unremarkable, but its far side is covered in scrubby trees. They are darkly shadowed in the fading light. Rain begins to fall in large, cold drops as the hill is approached. The mound on which the stone stands is about thirty feet broad and ten feet high, and obviously raised by the hand of man. Wiry grass covers the hump which stands out from the heather and bracken.

The stone itself is over twelve feet tall, slightly flattened, and broader at the base than at the top. It bears no inscription or other markings. Its base is firmly embedded in the mound, but if the plant growth there is removed and some of the earth scraped away, it can be seen that the stone is supported by a ring of stones within the mound, the tops of which can be discerned. Unfortunately, the characters will not have the chance to investigate any further at this point. If they heed the warning, they may have prepared themselves, but they are suddenly faced with a column of men coming up the west side of the hill from the gloomy woods. At their head is the mounted figure of Sir Guy of Gisburne.

As it is, the group dictate when the soldiers are spotted. At about this time, the sun breaks out from beneath the sunken, grey bands of cloud to shed a thick red light across the scene before it sets. It glints off the soldiers' polished steel helms and casts bloody shadows before them. There are more than twenty men-at-arms, well armed and armoured, cloaked against the cold rain and eager to have at the outlaws. Gisburne shouts encouragement to his men and mocks the player characters.

The men-at-arms engage the characters as soon as they can and will not worry about casualties initially. If the characters look in disarray, Gisburne may chase after one or two himself. He is not afraid to cross swords with them, being a skilled fighter and the veteran of many tourna-ments. The top of the hill is slowly encircled and the player characters forced to retreat towards the barrow and the Ingelstane. Allow two guardsmen per character and have the rest rush around to surround them.

The Stone Falls

In the midst of the fighting there is a terrific clap of thunder almost directly overhead. All those fighting pause momentarily, then a strong gust of wind rushes past. At this point it is necessary that someone is fighting at the top of the hill by the stone, for there is a terrible grinding sound that trembles through the earth. If anyone looks up at the Ingelstane, they will see it gradually tilt to one side and then gather, momentum, falling away, is about four feet wide and ten feet high. The stone itself is over twelve feet tall, here and obviously raised by the han Ingelstane, they will find only the six stones in the mound, but if the plant growth there it sets. It glints off the soldiers' polished steel helms and casts bloody shadows before them. There are more than twenty men-at-arms, well armed and armoured, cloaked against the cold rain and eager to have at the outlaws. Gisburne shouts encouragement to his men and mocks the player characters.

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Lightning forks down several times as the men-at-arms look on aghast. The characters may take this opportunity to launch an attack on the stunned guards. After the Ingelstane falls, it is only a matter of time before the men-at-arms begin to flee. Gisburne rides around frantically, trying to rally his men, but they are afraid of the things which have been awakened to guard the characters.

With victory slipping from his grasp, the young knight decides to withdraw and rides off at a gallop, quickly outdistancing the characters. It is important to have an opponent who returns again and again to cross swords with the characters.

After the stone falls, the storm begins to die down. By the time all the men-at-arms have fled, there is no more lightning and the wind and rain has lessened. However, darkness is rapidly approaching and if the characters are to do any more investigating they should do so immediately. If they wish to seek cover, there is shelter to be found amongst the trees where Gisburne laid his ambush, as well as wood for a fire if they should desire it.

Anyone mounting the barrow mound after the fight should make a Perception/Observe check. The last rays of the setting sun shine through the dwindling rain forming a rainbow arching from the Ealden Byron to the edge of the Forest proper. A successful check will bring the viewer's attention to a great oak tree at the foot of the rainbow. The tree has been sheared off by a bolt of lightning and its huge wound reflects whitely, the wet, fresh wood pointing like an arrow down into the earth.

If the characters look at the base of the Ingelstane, they will find only the six stones set deep into the earth. They cannot be uncovered or moved without a major digging operation. There is no treasure to be found here—not surprisingly, since Gisburne invented the flag.

Truestone

If the characters did not see the blasted tree the night before, they should be given a chance to spot it if they travel back towards the eaves of Sherwood in the morning. Otherwise they will have missed it entirely. As the tree is not difficult to overlook, about a quarter of its branches have been struck down and the gash, where the wood split and fell away, is about four feet wide and ten feet high, making it easy to spot. The blast has also caused the tree to be wrenched somewhat from the earth, as the characters discover when they arrive. On one side a number of branches have been dragged into the air. Beneath is a curious pale stone, with the glitter of quartz scattered in it.
on ealden Byrgen

On closer inspection, it is obvious that the stone has been laid here purposefully. It is carefully carved into an oval shape, and there is an inscription on its surface, easily discernible if the earth is brushed away. The stone cannot be moved, nor can anyone see how thick it is.

The inscription on the stone is in old Anglo-Saxon runes. It reads:

The helm of the Geats.
His life’s full of portion paid out, said
His men of battle build me a tomb.
So did his well-loved shieldsmen,
whose courage did not crumble
When called to defend his well-tempered chief. (A)mbrosh. This slaughter-bed raised for
Wiglaf Wexszam’s son
His life’s journey wise and full of years

It requires special knowledge to be able to read the runes as they are no longer used for writing. A character skilled in English or Norse may have some chance to read them. Other language skills might also be of use. If the words ‘Helm of the Geats’ are pronounced over the stone, it can be easily lifted at any point thereafter by anyone present when the words were spoken.

Anyone with knowledge of folklore, legends, lays and so on may have a chance to know something about the inscription once revealed. The Helm of the Geats is the title borne by Beowulf. Wiglaf was the only son of his brave enough to join Beowulf in the king’s last fight, against a Dragon. Beowulf ruled the Geats (or Weather-Geats) for many years, bringing them great prosperity, but left no son. Soon after his death in fighting the Dragon, Beowulf’s kingdom was overthrown and its people fled. Some, led by Wiglaf, are said to have come to England where many other Germanic tribes already dwelt.

In the tomb are Wiglaf’s charred bones, now turned to dust, along with three items: a helm, a shirt of ring-mail and a large sword. All these pieces of war-gear were left no son. Soon after his death in fighting the Dragon, Beowulf’s kingdom was overthrown and its people fled. Some, led by Wiglaf, are said to have come to England where many other Germanic tribes already dwelt.

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Non-Player Characters

VERDERERS

The Verderers are given as standard character types in Robin Hood, for Fantasy Hero, MERP and RoleMaster. Statistics are given here for:

WARHAMMER ROLEPLAY

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<th>M</th>
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Dex | I | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
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34 | 1 | 28 | 33 | 38 | 28 | 25 |

Skills
- Concealment
- Rural
- Gamekeeper
- Militiamen
- Spot Traps
- Set Traps
- Hunting

Skills Careers
- Blather
- Gamekeeper
- Conspicuous
- Militiamen
- Set Traps
- Hunting

Conspicuous

MEN-AT-ARMS

The men-at-arms are standard character types from Robin Hood.

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<th>M</th>
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Dex | I | Ld | Int | Cl | WP | Fel |
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44 | 1 | 36 | 30 | 28 | 27 | 30 |

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- Gamekeeper
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- Militiamen
- Spot Traps
- Set Traps
- Hunting
We're completely mad, you know. And this is your chance to take advantage of our crumbling mental state!

We're giving away £1000 worth of Citadel Miniatures as a first prize - just like that! Well, almost just like that!

£1000's worth! That's 6072* plastic skeletons! Or 4608 snottlings! Or 168 dragonet Or... Look, it's a lot of figures.

There's even more madness: we're offering four runners-up £250 worth of miniatures as second prizes!

BUT WAIT! THERE MUST BE A CATCH!!

Well, yes, there is. But it's only a little one. All you have to do is...

Write us a Warhammer Battle scenario featuring two 2500 points armies chosen from the Ravening Hordes Army Lists. That's all. The winning entries will be published if we think they are suitable.

We are looking for interesting, enjoyable entries. It doesn't have to be particularly complicated or involved, but your scenario should present challenging tactical problems and leave room for careful planning by the players. In fact, your entry should be everything you would want from a Warhammer Battle scenario. You can opt for the format used in the published scenarios, or you can invent a system of your own, in any case the emphasis must be on playability, elegance and fun!

How big your make your scenario is up to you. You should include all the diagrams, maps and details that you think are necessary - and if you use any buildings or special features include details of how to make the cardboard models or doorplans. If you can type your entry, so much the better! It should be double spaced (one blank line between lines of type) and on one side of the paper only (A4 sheets, if possible). Handwritten entries are OK, but remember that just because you can read your handwriting doesn't mean that we can. If your entry can't be read it is unlikely to get a fair judgement. The other thing to remember is that your entry should be presented in such a way that it is easily understood, even by novice players.

Your entry should reach us by 3 August 1987. That gives you about three months to complete your masterpiece. Go on then, START! One last thing. Sorry, but we are going to be unable to return any entries, so please make sure you keep a copy of your scenario.

Send your entries to:

Ravening Madness Giveaway Competition
c/o White Dwarf
Games Workshop Design Studio
14-16 Low Pavement
Enfield Chambers
Nottingham NG1 7DL

* Did you know that 6072 plastic skeletons, packed base-to-base, can fit on a 3' x 3' tabletop for 1000 point games? Which means there's no room on an average wargames table for...


**Friends in High Places**

Deception and Intrigue in Roleplaying Games

by Simon Nicholson

The noble lady who weaves lies as if they were silk... The cunning priest who schemes beneath his smile... The treacherous double-dealing of high-ranking officials, struggling to stay at the top... The plots and counterplots of ambitions Courtiers, vying for the King's favour...

These ideas are common in literature: the reader becomes involved with the characters by following the plans they carry out. Although roleplaying games have their roots in such fiction, they rarely employ the theme of intrigue to any great extent, preferring the typical 'great quest'. This article discusses some common intrigue plots, and explains how they can be used to create a more challenging and stimulating game.

Game worlds can differ greatly, but there is always a ruling class or group. Most fantasy worlds use the medieval feudal system, with all power originating from a monarch or Emperor. Inventive Gamemasters can always create their own strange governmental forms, or steal from fantasy novels. It is amongst the most powerful people in the land that intrigue and conspiracies are common: disagreements can cause revolutions, and words can stop armies. Naturally, you can have a lot of fun plunging your players into the deep end of an imaginary society.

High Society

How your players become involved with such eminent people depends upon your game and campaign. It is unlikely that the player characters are noble, but they may have performed some service or duty which deserves reward.

Acquiring power is one thing: holding on to it is another. Consider the position of a nobleman at Court. There are always inferiors, rivals and social climbers who would love to be in his shoes. He knows that someone must be plotting his fall - how will it be? A scandal? Will they implicate him in some real or imaginary act of treason against the King? Or will they conspire with other, more powerful courtiers? If the nobleman is actually involved in some secret intrigue - an affair with the Queen, for example - then he has all the more to worry about. A natural reaction would be to plot against his enemies, hoping to destroy them first. And he should plot against his superiors too, just in case. All these secret plans will require dark deeds, spying, assassination, scapegoats. And the player characters characters will do nicely for the last item: he's heard of their exploits, and he might just be able to persuade them...

Although the nobleman will treat the PCs with politeness and dignity, he will almost certainly consider them expendable. Rewards of money or power are small, the noble does not want the PCs getting any ideas above their station. However, while in his employ they live well, eat well and dress well. He will give them temporary positions of power as servants or minor officials, perhaps even pretend they are 'distant relatives' or 'long-lost cousins', so that they may infiltrate the Court and carry out his instructions. Clever PCs may use this support to scheme, but the nobleman should expect just such a move and prepare against it.

Not everyone at Court is a paranoid megalomaniac. Good, loyal nobles may ask the PCs to undo the damage of an evil courtier or foil the plans of a usurper. The archetypal and eponymous swashbucklers *The Three Musketeers* became entangled in the intrigue of the French Court in this way.

Lowly adventurers may be a little out of place amongst the aristocracy. For a start, they are probably unfamiliar with social etiquette or diplomatic protocol. This could be embarrassing and potentially dangerous. It's all very well being able to decapitate a dragon with one blow, but what about dancing a minuet? The PCs may find themselves expelled, demoted, imprisoned or executed simply because they did not bow correctly to a foreign ambassador. If they are insulting, they may be challenged to duel. It should not take them long to discover that a Court can be deadlier than a dungeon...
Yes, Minister...

You don’t need to be of noble birth to enjoy wealth and power. A good education and a few connections can get you into the right places. It is the ministers, merchants and officials who really run a country. They must deal with matters which are considered too petty or too important to be handled by aristocrats, and they do their utmost to ensure the nobility never interferes. A typical shady minister is Grimr Wormtongue in Lord of the Rings, although why King Theoden ever listened to a councilor called Wormtongue.

Business and ministerial organisations have similar structures of rank and privilege. Just as courtiers engage in a subtle struggle for fame and power, so the clerks and officials fight for promotion through bureaucratic channels. Of course, there are many organisations, and this can lead to external, as well as internal, intrigue.

The Guild system, for example, can provide endless plot ideas. Historically, Merchants’ Guilds first appeared in the seventh century; they became so powerful that Craft Guilds were set up in opposition, and inter-Guild struggles became common.

Consider the relationship between two common game world guilds, the Merchants’ Guild and the Thieves’ Guild. The merchants trade and travel while the thieves rob the merchants, so they are enemies. It needn’t stop there, however. Perhaps the merchants’ Guild hires adventurers to spy on the Thieves (not a pleasant prospect) and report future robberies or discover names. Perhaps a merchant is really a mole for the Thieves’ Guild. The Merchants’ Guild may pay protection money, or a master thief is being bribed to discourage his colleagues. When you consider the internal wrangling that goes on, it is feasible that certain reputable merchants may ‘grass’ on rivals to the Thieves’ Guild, thus destroying their competitors.

Obviously, ideas like these can be much more interesting than the usual ‘You are hired to protect a merchant caravan, and can add a lot of depth to a game. Think one step further than usual, and you can create much better adventures.

Motivation

How do you get the players interested in the affairs of Kings and Ministers? Rather than making them feel obliged to take part in your intrigue scenario, you can motivate them through the use of character ties and loyalties. Some typical devices are:

**Individual Aims** - All characters wish to achieve something, even if this is only the acquisition of wealth, love and knowledge. They may also have a personal code which governs how those aims are achieved. A knight, for example, would seek fame and recognition through his personal code of chivalry. Regular *White Dwarf* readers will already know how to create character backgrounds and goals. Use the PCs’ aims to involve them more deeply in a situation.

**Allegiance** - The character obeys the commands of a king, noble, ruler or superior. This can be interesting when the character is ordered to do something against his personal moral code and a crisis of conscience arises as a result. Or the PCs are given opposing orders by different superiors, with heavy punishment for failing to obey either. They should have a tough time deciding which allegiances would be to the monarch first and foremost, they may feel a greater loyalty towards his mistress.

Surely it won’t hurt to...? And besides, anyone who tells the King that they think his mistress is a traitor deserves to be executed.

**Rivalry** - The characters have a rival in some task or mission, or they compete for love, attention or responsibility. Rivals needn’t be enemies - they probably have the same goals and morals, but that doesn’t stop them trying to outdo each other.

**Enmity** - The character has a sworn enemy. Arch enemies have become very popular in roleplaying games, but don’t ignore the other possibilities. A close friend may really be plotting the character’s downfall, or feeding him false information. Simply by supporting somebody, the PCs will make enemies and allies. Allies may quickly become enemies if the PCs lose power or influence. Supporting the underdog is laudable but only if you can afford to do so.

The best enemies are clever and resourceful. They use subtlety and intrigue to achieve their ends. Morgana in Arthurian legend is magically powerful, but doesn’t blast her enemies with fireballs. All that wasted energy! A word here, an untruth there, and enemies are too busy fighting each other to worry about her next move...

**Responsibility** - The character holds a position of power which requires certain actions and beliefs. In RuneQuest, for example, characters can join one of a number of cults. They are expected to uphold the aims and beliefs of the cult, even if this means personal risk. Members of rival cults are automatically enemies.

Personal aims can conflict with responsibilities. In Gene Wolfe’s *Book of the New Sun*, Severian the Torturer falls in love with a ‘client’ and lets her die. He is exiled by his guild because the woman was supposed to die slowly and painfully. The honour of the Torturers’ Guild is stained by his actions.
This is a difficult one to run, as it depends heavily on the roleplaying ability of your players. The love affair of two NPCs can have interesting repercussions, however, as in Romeo and Juliet. Perhaps a noble, desperate to impress a young lady, hires adventurers to fake kidnappings and holdups. The noble naturally 'comes to the rescue' every time...

Tradition - Its own raison d'être, tradition continues because it is traditional. Strange laws and customs may be invoked for no reason other than that they have always been invoked. Mervyn Peake's Titus Groan, Gormenghast and Titus Alone describe a vast castle-realm so steeped in tradition that it crumbles under the weight: the young ruler inevitably rebels.

If somebody were to break with a strong tradition they would be blamed for all subsequent evils and disasters that befell the kingdom, regardless of the real reasons. Michael Moorcock's Elric is normally beyond your control. Perhaps 'it is written that' one of the King's High Counsellors must be a commoner, or even a bad actor to roleplay them convincingly. Simply calculate what they would do in the situation and, like the characters in books, they will become real through their actions.

Obviously, there are some games more suitable for intrigue than others. RuneQuest has its cults and guilds, and there is a chance for PCs to be nobles. Pendragon is about King Arthur's court, and naturally lends itself to intrigue. Paranoia has the characters belonging to service groups and secret societies while trying to serve the Computer and please High Programmers! Considering it is only a 'fun' game, Paranoia has a lot more going for it than some serious games.

So, you have managed to involve your players with the plots and counterplots. Now they have to start dealing with important matters - staying alive, for example. If the matter is of an intimate nature then a noble with contacts can ask the Thieves' or Assassins' Guilds to undertake a mission. For a percentage, the Guilds will accept missions on behalf of members. And then there are always these ways of dealing with 'important matters':

Spying - The PC must discover and report on the actions of another. Nobles will pay good money for rumours and secret information... that is, unless they can hire some adventurer for a pitance. Usually, the spy will be expected to find some evidence that leads to blackmail or imprisonment. The spy will spend time gaining the victim's confidence, but it may be necessary to trick the victim to obtain information. Perhaps a foreign envoy is passing through Court, carrying important documents of negotiation. The spy might try to drug the envoy's drink, in which case he will have to beware the tables are not turned - perhaps literally, as a clever envoy might switch the drinks...

Rules will have their own secret police organisations, watching out for spies. Very insecure rulers may call in adventurers to spy on moles in the secret police.

There is no limit to what spies must endure. The Chevalier D'Eon, Louis XV's favourite spy and an expert swordsman, was required to spend much of his life dressed as a woman! In the course of duty he was tricked, ridiculed, betrayed, poisoned with opium, and accused of insanity. He found it necessary to keep eight pistols, four muskets and two sabres in his room...

Impersonation - The PC must impersonate somebody important and use the attendant power to someone else's ends. A disguise might be necessary, but the PC could still be unmasked by proof of the deception, a close friend, or the PC's lack of knowledge. In the 18th century a man turned up in Moscow calling himself Montmorency, the French King's minister. He lived well for several days before it was discovered he was...

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Spying - The PC must discover and report on the actions of another. Nobles will pay good money for rumours and secret information... that is, unless they can hire some adventurer for a pitance. Usually, the spy will be expected to find some evidence that leads to blackmail or imprisonment. The spy will spend time gaining the victim's confidence, but it may be necessary to trick the victim to obtain information. Perhaps a foreign envoy is passing through Court, carrying important documents of negotiation. The spy might try to drug the envoy's drink, in which case he will have to beware the tables are not turned - perhaps literally, as a clever envoy might switch the drinks...

Rules will have their own secret police organisations, watching out for spies. Very insecure rulers may call in adventurers to spy on moles in the secret police.

There is no limit to what spies must endure. The Chevalier D'Eon, Louis XV's favourite spy and an expert swordsman, was required to spend much of his life dressed as a woman! In the course of duty he was tricked, ridiculed, betrayed, poisoned with opium, and accused of insanity. He found it necessary to keep eight pistols, four muskets and two sabres in his room...

Impersonation - The PC must impersonate somebody important and use the attendant power to someone else's ends. A disguise might be necessary, but the PC could still be unmasked by proof of the deception, a close friend, or the PC's lack of knowledge. In the 18th century a man turned up in Moscow calling himself Montmorency, the French King's minister. He lived well for several days before it was discovered he was...
really a wig-maker from Saint-Honore.

Many stories have been based on the idea of a doppelganger, a person who looks exactly like somebody else. Maybe Wilmost Croak, a thief, bears a remarkable resemblance to Prince Edgar - and Edgar's arch-enemy has found out. Something along the lines of The Man in the Iron Mask is based on fact...

So you have managed to involve your players with the plots and counter-plots. Now they have to start dealing with important matters like staying alive.

**Framing** - It's all very well spying on somebody, but what if they are innocent? The PC will just have to perform some foul deed, leaving enough incriminating evidence of someone else's misdeeds. A noble might hire adventurers to attack him, making it look like the work of an enemy.

**Slander** - Though not as drastic as falsely implicating someone, slander can just as easily destroy a person's reputation. Spreading rumours is the best way to start. No matter how petty or ridiculous they may sound, they will sow the seeds of doubt. A lie or three in the right ears will ensure that the doubt spreads. People will always believe what they like to hear. With a little Machiavellian precision, the victim will lose so many friends and allies that he will no longer pose a threat. The extent of a such a campaign of whispers will depend on the ruthlessness of the perpetrator(s).

**Dueling** - As a method of settling arguments duels do not require strenuous logic or reason. Depending on the mood, courage and stupidity of the participants, duels can be fought to the death or to first blood. In the latter, the winner was the first to inflict a wound on his opponent. Duels are serious matters, and have to be carried out with strict observance of the rules. The original duel was of course the joust, which had its own rules. Jousts could even be fought in somebody's name - to uphold the honour of a lady, for example.

First a challenge is issued by the injured party and to turn this down is a certain way of losing honour and respect. The injured party also has choice of weapons. Each duellist appoints a second, who fights if the duellist is taken ill. The authorities are informed - duelling was legal for a long time - the place and time arranged, and a qualified referee and witnesses agreed upon to ensure fair play.

It is likely that a PC could be tricked into duelling with an expert swordsman. Perhaps a nobleman will appoint a capable PC as his second, then feign illness! Remember that the more powerful ministers and aristocrats are above the suspicion of dishonour, and anyone who challenged them would be laughed out of Court.

**Violence** - Assassination, robbery, torture, abduction: all of those things at which adventurers excel. They might be fighting to help somebody, of course, or performing the routine rescue missions. If, like D'Artagnan, they are trying to put right some evil perpetrated by a High Counselor, they might find them-selves

In the course of duty he was tricked, ridiculed, betrayed, poisoned with opium, and accused of insanity.

accused of treason and chased by the King's Guard. There just isn't any justice in the world.

**Intrigue And Magic**

Magical divination and detection spells take on a new importance if you consider how they might be used at Court. Aristocrats would carry charms of protection and resistance, and all important business would have to be conducted in 'magic proof' chambers. If magic was very common then magicians might be employed specifically to protect the nobility. The King would have to be resistant to magic to defend against an attack from afar.

Religious magic is another problem. Kings are said to be chosen by the Gods, so perhaps the nobility are naturally magic-resistant. The Churches would certainly support this claim - if the King is a mortal chosen by the Gods, he must be made head of the Churches. With a King at their head, Churches would gain much more power over the land, of course since the King would be subject to Church rules...

**Conflict**

For a game to be challenging, there must be conflict. The most common form of roleplaying conflict is combat, where the possibility of character death provides the thrills. Although exciting, combat can become boring if used repeatedly.

This article should have given you some ideas for non-violent conflict. If their characters become involved in intrigue and make (and carry out) decisions, the players are encouraged to roleplay. Let them acquire fancy titles, and get them to write letters of intrigue to other characters. Don't, on the other hand try to come up with the game equivalent of Graves' I, Claudius or Peake's Titus Groan, or your game will collapse under a pile of sub-plots. And don't try anything unless you think it's going to be fun!

I know you'll agree with me. You see, I know all about you and - oh please, call it persuasion... Blackmail is such an ugly word.

Simon Nicholson
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From the pages of DRAGON™ Magazine, SNARFQUEST™ The Book is the epic comic-strip tale of a quest for wealth, power and all that other good stuff, written, conceived and illustrated by Larry Elmore. This mighty volume follows the adventures of Snarf as he embarks upon 'The Quest for the Crown' – a quest that takes him from his quiet home village of Zeetville and through a strange fantasy world populated by time-jumping mages, gagglezoomers, vegetarian death leeches and polymorphed princes.

Snarfenja De’Gottago (Snarf)

AC by armour type; MV 12"; 4th-level fighter; hp 23; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA revolver; SD +2 on all saving throws from extraordinary luck, surprised on 1 in 6 due to keen hearing and sense of smell; S 12, I 14, W 10, D 13, C 12, Ch 12; AL N.

Snarf is a particularly clever Zeetvah, one of a unique race of demi-humans with large ears shaped like bat wings and a long snout. His basic goals in life are to get wealth and power. Snarf has a backpack of holding that functions as a bag of holding of the largest size. His usual adventuring gear consists of scale mail armour and a long sword. He also has a six shot revolver which he acquired from the castle of Suthaze. Snarf uses the revolver in desperation only. Finally Snarf owns a small interstellar spaceship of undefined power.
This Month: Phil Lewis - Painting His Way

Ever get the feeling that lots of 'Eavy Metals start in the same sort of way? Just to keep with the tradition I thought that here was as good a place as any...

The figure starts, almost invariably, with a black undercoat. This is because I tend to paint up to any joints and creases in the figure and leave a 'ready made' black lining. I use enamels quite a lot. Their slightly thicker consistency gives a better covering over the black undercoat. If you use white as an undercoat you're almost certainly better off with acrylics.

As I find that drybrushing gives a better contrast in photographs, the next stage is to pick the largest area on a model that's going to end up being one colour. On Skrag the Slaughterner, this is obviously the bulk of the armour. In this instance almost the entire model was drybrushed with an aluminium enamel and left to dry overnight. When dry, the axe handle and parts of the head were then 're-blacked' with an acrylic paint. To give a little more interest to the armoured finish, a wash of brown ink was put over it, leaving the chainmail and collar the original aluminium shade. The axe head was also given an ink wash - although in this case
one of lime green. This left just the axe handle to be drybrushed brown, the studs to be picked out and, finally, the face. This was painted using a blended mixture of flesh, dark brown, yellow and white acrylics.

Bagrian posed a different challenge as I wanted the figure to look something like the picture on the front of the Spring ’86 Citadel Journal. To get the shading in the red robes and cloak I began with a chestnut brown enamel over all the relevant parts of the figure and, once this was dry, a wash of brown ink (I like brown ink). It took quite a few coats of drybrushed red to build up an acceptably ‘bright’ finish and once this was complete the real fun began. The bags, chain, gloves etc were picked out in black (again) and a combination of drybrushed enamel and ink/acrylic was used to finish these off. Brown ink is very useful stuff.

Looking at the cover I then made a small plasticine model of John Blanche and stuck pins in it. The checks on his original illustration were a bit of a problem. Eventually a series of black oblongs done with a technical drawing pen over stripes of yellow enamel seemed to do the trick. The ‘stars’ were spotted using the end of a sharpened cocktail stick.

A totally enamel painted figure - and probably my favourite - is the Samurai: Jade’s Warrior. Most of this figure was done in ‘semi-drybrushing’. If you don’t wipe all the paint off the brush first but leave it slightly damp and then drybrush you can get some interesting effects. This does take a fair bit of practice as it can result in a very streaky finish if it goes wrong.

The skeletons were rather different; they actually started off with a white undercoat! The bone effect is a mixed wash of yellow and (you guessed it) brown ink. An off-white enamel was drybrushed over this and the eye sockets were picked out with black. The shields were done with acrylics over a white base and took about five times longer than the rest of the figures!
As to the photographs... I use two 75 watt photoflood bulbs to give the main lighting. These are positioned at roughly 45 degrees either side of the model, and the background is lit by a 150 watt photoflood. This is angled a little so that some of its light falls on the top of the model. Photofloods give a slightly 'whiter' light than an ordinary household bulb, which is why I use them. A meter reading is taken from a Kodak grey card at the point where the model will stand. Even with the photofloods white light, I still use a colour correction filter to reduce any yellow 'cast' in the photograph itself. To get close enough to the figure I also use an extension tube which allows the camera to focus within 6-8 inches. Normally, the closest a standard lens will allow you to get is 15-18 inches - this is too far away to be of much use for either a single figure or a small group. The camera itself is set up on a tripod and the shutter is operated by the self-timer. This stops camera shake which would blur the final result.

Finally, I know some of you have been asking how our famous 'Easy Metal' artists achieve some of the colours we use. The Games Workshop figure painters, like John Blanche and Colin Dixon, have been using the following colour chart for Citadel paints. I'm sure you'll find it useful too.

And all that, just for an 'Easy Metal'...

Phil Lewis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLOUR REQUIRED</th>
<th>BASE COLOUR</th>
<th>COLOURS TO WASH WITH</th>
<th>COLOUR(S) TO DRYBRUSH WITH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bright Red</td>
<td>Red Gore</td>
<td>Imperial Purple-Blood Red Mix</td>
<td>Red-Gore-Sunburst Yellow or White Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimson</td>
<td>Blood Red</td>
<td>Imperial Purple</td>
<td>Red Gore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Hobgoblin Orange</td>
<td>Blood Red or Swamp Brown</td>
<td>Hobgoblin Orange Sunburst Yellow Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Yellow</td>
<td>Sunburst Yellow</td>
<td>Sunburst Yellow Hobgoblin Orange Mix</td>
<td>Sunburst Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Sunburst Yellow</td>
<td>Sunburst Yellow + Slight Touch of Swamp Brown</td>
<td>Sunburst Yellow + White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Skull White</td>
<td>Skull White + Elf Grey or Bronzed Flesh</td>
<td>Skull White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>Elf Grey</td>
<td>Ghoul Grey</td>
<td>Skull White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Chaos Black</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Skull White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple</td>
<td>Imperial Purple</td>
<td>Imperial Purple + Moody Blue</td>
<td>Skull + Woodland Enchanted or Ghoul Black + Green or Blue Grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright Green</td>
<td>Bilious Green</td>
<td>Woodland Green</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Woodland Green + Moody Blue</td>
<td>Bilious Green</td>
</tr>
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<td>Goblin Green</td>
<td>Woodland Green + Swamp Brown</td>
<td>Goblin Green + Skull White or Sunburst Yellow</td>
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<td>Bronzed Flesh</td>
<td>Swamp Brown</td>
<td>Bronzed Flesh + Skull White</td>
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<td>Chainmail</td>
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<td>Rich Brown</td>
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<td>Swamp Brown + Chaos Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dull Brown</td>
<td>Bestial Brown</td>
<td>Bestial Brown + Chaos Black</td>
<td>Bestial Brown + Skull White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Worlds of adventure and excitement in the role-playing system of the future.

The gigantic worm shaped creature drunkenly slithered forward, dripping toxic slime as it reared its tentacled head towards Father Vicente. A deep throbbing sound came from it, followed by the translator’s metallic voice: “Explain to me again exactly what it is you mean by immaculate conception, priest-human.” Father Vicente stepped back, trying to avoid the noxious amonia vapours the thing was releasing; he had been given poor assignments by the New Vatican cardinals, but never quite so bad. Nevertheless, alliance with these creatures would give the Holy Empire enough power to defeat the imperial cities of earth, and free thousands of star systems. He somehow had to convince this alien monster that Pope Catherine represents God in the universe, and siding with her would mean glory not only in this world but in heaven; Father Vicente struggled to find the right words. “It’s something like that, the Holy Spirit is...” Father Vicente never finished his sentence, as the salvo of nuclear missiles hit his ship vaporizing him and the Outworlder ambassador. Thousands of miles away, aboard a strike cruiser of the imperial city of Tucsan, an officer grinned as the sensors reported a direct hit. There would be no negotiations this time; New Vatican would have to fight alone against the might of Imperial Earth...

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CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT IN WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

GRAEME DAVIS

Along with Fate Points (discussed last issue), character advancement seems to be the area of the Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay rules which people have some trouble coming to grips with - at any rate, we've had more letters about character advancement than any other rules query. This is an attempt to clarify matters.

Characters collect experience points, which they trade in (normally in blocks of 100 EPs at a time) to buy skills and characteristic advances from the advance schemes of their current career, or to change from their current scheme to a new career. I'll go through this bit by bit, covering the most common questions that we've had.

- EXPERIENCE POINTS -

Awarding Experience Points

Experience Points are the basic currency which makes the character advance system work. A number of people who have had trouble working out how many experience points to award in any given situation, in the absence of any hard-and-fast mechanical system like the xp values in D&D. When we were designing the game, we deliberately steered away from this kind of mechanism for two reasons:

First, we wanted to allow the GM the freedom to reward good roleplaying and bright ideas, rather than having experience tied inextriably to combat;

Second, we wanted to avoid the kind of situation which we had all seen in other games, where a character thinks 'Hmm. I need 10 experience points to reach the next level. Where's my sword? If experience is too firmly linked to combat, then people will tend to prefer violent options because they don't get experience - or not as much experience - for anything else.

Following the notes on pp90-91 of the WFRP rule book and using published adventures such as The Enemy Within, Shadows Over Bogenhafen and Night of Blood (WD 87) as examples, you should have little trouble in breaking your own adventures down into major and minor objectives, and from here it is fairly straightforward to decide how many EPs to award for each objective. In addition to experience awarded for achieving objectives, you should never be afraid to award a few extra points for good roleplaying and good ideas along the way, or to deduct a few for acting out of character or making idiotic mistakes. After a couple of games, you will soon develop a 'feel' for how much experience to award in a particular situation.

Spending Experience Points

Experience Points in WFRP can be used for four things: characteristic advances, acquiring skills, changing careers, and - in the case of spellcasters - acquiring spells.

- THE ADVANCE SCHEME -

One of the things a character can do with experience points is increase a characteristic on his current advance scheme. An advance costs 100 EPs, and the scale of the advance depends on the characteristic involved.

Characteristics which are on a percentile scale - Weapon Skill (WS), Ballistic Skill (BS), Initiative (I), Dexterity (Dex), Leadership (Ld), Intelligence (Int), Cool (Cl), Will Power (WP) and Fellowship (Fel) - are increased 10 points at a time; 100 EPs buys a 10-point increase.

Other characteristics - Movement (M), Strength (S), Toughness (T), Wounds (W) and Attacks (A) are increased 1 point at a time; 100 EPs buys a 1-point increase.

A characteristic must be on the advance scheme for the character's current career before it can be increased.

Problems arise with multiple advances for a single characteristic in more than one career. Clem Shirestock (the sample character used all the way through the rule book) gets +10 WS as an Outrider. If he becomes, say, a Scout later on, the advance scheme has +20 WS. Does he have to pay 100 EPs again for the +10 before he can take the +20? The answer to this is no. A character only pays for advances which actually increase a characteristic. Similarly, if a character moves into a career whose advance scheme includes an advance which has already been taken (for example, the +1 S in the advance schemes for both Outrider and Scout), the characteristic cannot be advanced further in this career, and the character does not spend any EPs on that characteristic.

Having got +10 WS from his Outrider career (taking his WS score from 28 to 38), Clem becomes a Scout, which has +20 WS on the advance scheme. Does this mean that he can increase his WS by 20 points in this career? Again, the answer is no. The figures on the advance scheme represent the maximum increase over the starting score which can be gained by following that career. So, as a Scout, Clem can increase his WS to a maximum of 48.

- SKILLS -

A character starts the game with all the skills listed for the first career. Like the free advance, this reflects the fact that the character has been in this career for a while, and has already gained some of the benefits from it.

Skills from the second and subsequent careers must be bought with EPs, at the cost of 100 EPs per skill. The time spent training to acquire a skill is up to your campaign. According to your style of play, you may decide that a character can learn a skill between adventures, or that he must spend several weeks of game time learning and training. Choose whichever suits you and your players best.

A character doesn't have to obtain the skills for a career before he moves into it. The trappings are another matter. Skills are acquired during the career in the same way as characteristic advances. They are not obtained beforehand like trappings. It's a matter of common sense really - you need blacksmithing tools in order to become a blacksmith for example, and you can't work as a blacksmith without them. On the other hand, you will only pick up the relevant skills as you work at the job.

- TRAPPINGS -

In order to move to a second or subsequent career, a character always has to acquire the necessary trappings. In some cases, the listed trappings can take quite a bit of effort to obtain - a ship and crew for the Sea Captain, for example, or trading capital of 2500 Gold Crowns for the Merchant. In these cases, you may (as the GM) rule that it is not necessary to obtain all the trappings, although a character may have trouble making a living as a Sea Captain without a ship! As
always, you can alter or ignore any rules you like to make the
game fit with the group's style of play.

**CAREER CHANGES**

You always pay 100 EPs to change a career. The only
exception to this is in the case of spellcasters, who are
covered later on.

In some cases, you have to complete the career (ie take every
advance from the advance scheme and acquire all the listed
skills) before you move on to another career. In others you
don't have to stay in a career any longer than it takes you to
earn the 100 EPs necessary to move on. As a rule of thumb,
where the second career is a logical extension of the first (eg
Artisan from Artisan's Apprentice, Sergeant from Soldier or
Mercenary, Physician from Physician's Student), it is necessary
to complete the first career before moving on to the second.
In other cases, such as moving from Boatman to Outlaw, it is
not necessary to complete the first career; the character can
move on as soon as he has acquired as many skills and
advances as he wants and accumulated the 100 EPs necessary
to change careers.

There are four options open to a character who wishes to
change careers:

1. Take one of the listed Career Exits for the current career
   (this may involve completing the old career first);
2. Move to a basic career of the player's choice within the
   same career class (Warrior, Ranger, Rogue, Academic);
3. Make one roll on the Career Chart (WFRP p18) for another
career class of the player's choice.
4. Choose a basic career from another career class — this
costs 200 EP.

**NOBLES - A SPECIAL CASE**

The inclusion of the Noble in the list of basic careers has led
to a couple of problems. In theory, it should be a basic
career, since it is possible for a character to be born into a
noble family. However some special rules are needed to cover
non-noble characters becoming Nobles. At present, any
Warrior may become a Noble at a cost of 100 EPs - even a
Labourer or a Pit Fighter - and it seems more reasonable to
suggest that Nobles should be an exception to options 2 and
3 above. Using option 2, a Warrior character may not choose
to become a Noble, and in option 3, a result which indicates
that a character has moved to the Noble career should be
rerolled.

I would suggest that characters who are not born into the
nobility (ie those who don't have Noble as their first career)
cannot later become Nobles unless they are elevated to the
nobility by the Emperor, the local Grand Duke or someone in
a comparable position of authority. This should happen only
rarely, and only in recognition of great deeds.

**SPELLCASTERS**

Spellcasters are also a special case, and pay more to ascend
the various levels of their profession (see the tables on WFRP
pp136/149). In addition to skills and career changes, spell-
casters also spend EPs on learning spells, as explained on
pp136-7/149. The notes on acquiring spells are fairly self-
 explanatory, and do not need expanding on here. In all other
respects, character advancement for spellcasters is the same as
for other careers.

Career advances are just a matter of common sense. And, as
with all the rules for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, you are
free to come up with any amendments or additions to the
rules you like. If you end up with a system that you're happy
with, and that your players are happy with, that's all that
matters at the end of the day.
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The changes made to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* in the *Unearthed Arcana* volume are now definitely affecting the way the game is played. Even though most reactions to *UA* are negative and critical, the rules changes are altering game play - thus, one of my own GMs thinks the book is a real stinker, but he still allows players to use new spells in the book. My experience is that bits and pieces of *UA* rules are affecting almost all *AD&D* campaigns these days. Add to this the fact that TSR's modules and game accessories will now be tailored to fit *UA* rules changes and it's plain that the book cannot be ignored any longer.

Without doubt some *UA* revisions are badly thought-out and obviously destructive to game balance. So, on the reasonable assumption that no-one plays *AD&D* by all *UA* rules in the books (for example, I've never seen any group use the rules for adjusting different weapon 'to hit' rolls as a function of opponent AC), I'm going to try to isolate the key problem areas more easily. The new spells, new magic items, new weapons are too good an AC, I'm going to try to isolate the key areas of change, and give suggestions for dealing with them.

Listing the *UA* elements which are mostly OK helps us to see the key problem areas more easily. The new spells, new weapons and the like are mostly fine. If there is a problem, it's surely with the introduction of the new field plate and full plate armour types. It's now possible for a character without any magic items to have an AC of −4, and that is surely far too good an AC - quite a bit better than your average major devil, in fact. The general description of *UA* tries to tug off this book by stating that such stuff is rare and usually used by adventurers and paladins, and that it is 'only rarely' done by adventuring barangiers and clerics. Why? These Armour types weigh little more than ordinary plate mail, are actually less bulky and, while very expensive, they are affordable. Ideal for a dungeon bash, and especially in a campaign should fancy protection this good and strive to get it. Cavaliers and paladins notwithstanding, GMs would be well advised not permit field or full plate in campaigns. Without question, GMs should never allow PCs to get their gauntleted paws on any magical armour of this type.

However, balancing the odd glitch like these in the rules is beyond the scope of this article, which makes sense. These can now wear any armour type; armour better than leather will incur penalties to thieving functions. Still, the new system makes good sense, and if you can get it, the superior AC protection afforded by elfin chain is probably worth the penalties to some thief abilities. I'm concentrating on *UA* problems here, but this shouldn't get too one-sided. *UA* lifts an illogical restriction on thieves and gives clear rules for their use of diverse armour types.

Progressing beyond this kind of fine tuning of *AD&D*, where there is nothing which significantly alters game balance (save for the armour problem), we find that almost everything worrying in *UA* concerns characters, and it starts at the very beginning, when you grab those six-siders.

**Roll Up! Roll Up!**

*Arcana* lists a new method for generating human PCs (the notorious 'Method V') in which you just select the PC class you fancy, roll lots of dice, and if you've some chance you don't get any minimum statistics you need, don't worry! You can have them anyway! So, goodbye to being delighted that you find the best three of 9d6 for Strength, 8d6 for Constitution, and 7d6 for Dexterity! You even get the best three of 6d6 for Charisma, for heaven's sake. In the long run this is going to be very destructive to the game; when every human PC has a string of 17/18 scores, no-one is special. Or perhaps they might be...

...because very close to the beginning, *UA* tabulates demi-human PC class level limits as a function of prime requisite scores - in the tables these scores are listed up to 22! But don't feel inhibited by that. The book says that under exceptional circumstances, they can go higher than this. This will unquestionably stimulate certain players into pressurising their GMs to let their PCs have outrageous ability scores - and don't forget that, as *Lengends and Lore* makes clear, scores of 19+ mean immunity to certain spells, regeneration of hit points, and similar over-powered consequences. What *UA* has done is to incite the PC to emulate the蒙特·哈乌尔 in the realm of ability scores. This is a disaster. GMs should not allow 19+ ability scores - characters who achieve the same may attract the attention of demigods or worse who may be very offended by such hubris. Perhaps just one 19 should be allowed for a very high-level PC who has performed some great service for a deity at great personal risk. Let's face it, if 18 is no longer a clear limit and can be exceeded by mortal magic, then the only possible limit now is 25. We'll have PCs with the ability scores of gods. *Arcana* is positively inviting this.

Yet *UA* also introduced the 'minimum starting hit points' rule, so that a first-level PC has at last the average (rounded up) hit points for the first hit die. Many GMs have done this sort of thing before, of course, but it's good that it's official. It bewilders me that one can find this sensible rule right after the gross Method V. On the other hand, surely GMs should stick with best-three-of-4d6 and allow players to rearrange scores as desired, which is common.

And finally, we now have some extra dice to roll, for the pointless new attribute of Comeliness. This ultra-superficial attribute is only of real significance with regard to the rules pertaining to the fascinate-like effect of high or even mediocre (14+) Comeliness scores. The rules for applying this are too vague (for deciding how long the effect lasts), the threshold for the effect is too low, and the rules ignore the fact that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and that exceptionally handsome people can arouse reactions of jealousy and dislike in others rather than fascination. Comeliness only confuses the issue of Chonality further - this has always been an amalgam of beauty, charm, and forcefulness of character. *Warhammer Fantasy Role Play* surely got matters right here with the distinction between Leadership and Fellowship (general social skills) scores, and something like this is surely what *AD&D* needed. GMs should really ignore Comeliness, and base initial NPC reactions to PCs on Charisma and even more on what PCs say, how they say it, and the circumstances of the encounter.

**Cavaliers and their Chums**

Having dealt with the new races in an earlier piece (WD85) I'll only deal with the new character classes here. There are many problems with them, some of which are by no means obvious. Although the barbarian has attracted most criticism, the cavalier class arguably creates more problems.

The general description of the cavalier class appears sound (if over-specialized) save that the minimum statistics needed are rather high - for the paladin, now a sub-class of the cavalier, they are very high indeed. And
they will get higher, because alone of all classes the cavalier can improve ability scores. As each level is gained there are fractional improvements to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution which eventually accumulate into integral improvements. I think it’s a shame that only cavaliers got this bonus, and it would have made sense to allow all characters to improve key statistics like this. Admittedly, the cavalier has to exercise, drill, etc, to get this benefit but surely the poor old fighter might have been allowed to do this as well. Why can’t other fighter-types learn these exercises? Anyway, be that as it may, where this system completely falls down is in allowing ability scores to rise to 18/00 - even is this violates race and sex limits. A female elf as a fighter is very restricted in maximum level attainable and can have only a maximum Strength of 16. As a cavalier the same female elf can reach any experience level and attain a Strength of 18/00. This is ridiculous and offers ‘fantasy logic’ as well as any sense of realism. How come using a lance and esposing the code of the cavalier suddenly gives our lady elf this unlimited expansion over her potential as a fighter? Is it reasonable that this willowy five-stone elf can attain the physical strength of a Schwarzenegger? Daft, isn’t it? The cavalier also comes equipped with a range of special abilities and protections which seem very arbitrary, for which no kind of justifying explanation is offered, and which seem overall to place emphasis on the unique ability of cavaliers of good alignments to stay conscious, treat their wounds, etc, at negative hit point totals when other characters would be out for the count. The many problems raised by this one ability suggest that the implications of this were never thought through. first, why only good cavaliers? Why should alignment affect what looks on the face of it, to be a clearly physical factor of toughness and if it isn’t, why doesn’t UA explain this talent? Second, UA states that the negative hit point limit at which the cavalier can stay conscious corresponds to hit point total at first level, and states that this is 4-13. Actually, it’s 4-17 if one takes possible Constitution bonus into account. In any case, this goes beyond the normal limit at which characters die - at -10 hit points! Now this really is rather extraordinary, and UA doesn’t discuss it. I’d hazard a guess that the authors simply overlooked this, but it really does give the cavalier a phenomenal defensive edge. Why? Cavaliers get other benefits too. They radiate protection from fear 10’ radius and are themselves immune to fear. If UA is to be believed I think that is rather overdoing it and that the effect on those around them might well have been restricted to certain battle situations. They save at +2 vs. illusions (though the rule really is pulling a rabbit out of a game designer’s hat) and have an over-powered 90% resistance to many forms of mental magic (surely 50% would have been generous). Balancing all this is the cavalier’s code of conduct - death before dishonour, be a male chauvinist pig, that sort of thing. Some of the strictures are disadvantageous, like armour being a sign of rank and forcing the cavalier to stick with his plate mail in preference to the +5 chain mail he finds. The GM is rightly urged to debit xps if the code of conduct isn’t adhered to. It seems clear the idea is to balance the class against chivalric restrictions. Sadly, it often doesn’t work like this; players bend the rules and the code only gets lip service. And since some of the cavalier’s commandments verge on the suicidal all the stuff about charging the most powerful monsters on sight - it’s hard to be harsh on a player who doesn’t observe all the strictures. After all, he might fancy gaining a level or two and developing the character...

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay... surely got matters right... with the distinction between Leadership and Fellowship...

What we see with the cavalier is a largely needless class, peppered with piecemeal abilities added on with little apparent concern for game logic or balance, some of which have implications for the whole AD&D game system. Some of these are not discussed at all, and threaten to make a pig’s ear of the game. In the unlikely event that I would permit a cavalier in a campaign, I’d not permit ability advancement, functioning at negative hit point totals, and I’d have to rethink the saving throw bonuses, etc. Other GMs may decide for themselves, but one point is worth keeping in mind. If you introduce the cavalier into a campaign, when the special abilities are explained any thinking player will ask, ‘Why?’ And all you’re going to be able to say is ‘Because the book says so’ there certainly isn’t any game logic involved here.

Pass the Quiche

The barbarian class has attracted a lot of criticism, much of it based on the prototype version published in Dragon and magazine. The criticism concerned the fact that the class was too powerful, although because of the very slow level advancement this point may have been overstated. Checking the statistic bonuses again shows that the class isn’t overpowered. Dexterity bonus isn’t really so bad since it only applies if non-bulky armour is worn, which effectively means leather (I don’t think elfin chains comes in the barbarian size). What is really at fault, though, is the monstrous doubled-up Constitution bonus, on top of the uniquely high basic d12 for hit points. A better compromise would have been +2 points per die for 15 Con, +4 for 16, +5 for 17, and +6 for 18. GMs might consider this modification for their own campaigns.

The alignment restrictions on barbarians - no Lawful alignments seem to betray only the prejudices of the AD&D authors, with their apparent predilections for applying a largely romanticized ‘American frontiersman’ psychology to the barbarian. In fact, most cultures like those of barbarians as described in UA and the World of Greyhawk tend to be highly cohesive, with strong leaders, powerful taboos, and rigid systems of rules, rituals, and regulations. Chaos is a luxury of self-indulgence unaffordable by folk living in harsh and hostile environments, even if individuals are self-reliant, hunter-gatherer types. Barbarians should be of a non-Chaotic alignment or, perhaps, unrestricted.

Rather like the cavalier, the barbarian has a range of special abilities and talents, but at least in this case one can see why. Not that some of them aren’t distinctly unbalanced - like being able to hit creatures which can usually be hit only by +5 or better weapons. This does seem to be the case, but the major problems are actually to do with NPC barbarians. First, a PC barbarian when dealing with other barbarians has an effective Charisma equal to his normal Charisma plus his level of experience. This is highly implausible and unbalanced.

It’s unbalanced because there appears to be no upper limited to this effective Charisma, and indeed UA discusses an example where this is 23 or more. God-like statistics again. It’s implausible that this effect should influence any NPC barbarians, especially if they are the enemy of the PC and are wholly indifferent, or even hostile, to the PC’s tribe.

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The alignment restrictions on barbarians - no Lawful alignments seem to betray only the prejudices of the AD&D authors, with their apparent predilections for applying a largely romanticized ‘American frontiersman’ psychology to the barbarian. In fact, most cultures like those of barbarians as described in UA and the World of Greyhawk tend to be highly cohesive, with strong leaders, powerful taboos, and rigid systems of rules, rituals, and regulations. Chaos is a luxury of self-indulgence unaffordable by folk living in harsh and hostile environments, even if individuals are self-reliant, hunter-gatherer types. Barbarians should be of a non-Chaotic alignment or, perhaps, unrestricted.

Rather like the cavalier, the barbarian has a range of special abilities and talents, but at least in this case one can see why. Not that some of them aren’t distinctly unbalanced - like being able to hit creatures which can usually be hit only by +5 or better weapons. This does seem to be the case, but the major problems are actually to do with NPC barbarians. First, a PC barbarian when dealing with other barbarians has an effective Charisma equal to his normal Charisma plus his level of experience. This is highly implausible and unbalanced.

It’s unbalanced because there appears to be no upper limited to this effective Charisma, and indeed UA discusses an example where this is 23 or more. God-like statistics again. It’s implausible that this effect should influence any NPC barbarians, especially if they are the enemy of the PC and are wholly indifferent, or even hostile, to the PC’s tribe.

This problem is exacerbated when one adds the effective Charisma of the barbarian to the ability of these NPC barbarians. Some of these are not discussed at all, and threaten to make a pig’s ear of the game. In the unlikely event that the barbarian class was too powerful, although because of the very slow level advancement this point may have been overstated. Checking the statistic bonuses again shows that the class isn’t overpowered. Dexterity bonus isn’t really so bad since it only applies if non-bulky armour is worn, which effectively means leather (I don’t think elfin chains comes in the barbarian size). What is really at fault, though, is the monstrous doubled-up Constitution bonus, on top of the uniquely high basic d12 for hit points. A better compromise would have been +2 points per die for 15 Con, +4 for 16, +5 for 17, and +6 for 18. GMs might consider this modification for their own campaigns.
this. But the whole idea is preposterous in any case. Got a tiresome adventure? Don't bother, just send out for Rent-A-Monster and use Battlesystem. Pointless, isn't it?

The special talents of the barbarian (running, animal handling, etc) seem OK, although they could do with being integrated into the proficiency system of the Survival Guides in the long-discussed rewrite of the AD&D rule-books. What isn't alright is the way in which restrictions on the barbarian have been relaxed in the UA version of this character class: the use of magic and associating with characters who use it. These restrictions originally gave the barbarian class a meaningful cultural identity and balanced the major advantages barbarians had over ordinary fighters. The piecemeal, judging way in which these restrictions are lifted is testimony to the failure of the original concept of the class, which was a pretty obvious anyway - what future is there for a character class suspicious of clerics and openly hostile to magic-users? Even the revisions are badly thought-out: at 10th level, barbarians can use 'most magic items available to fighters'. Presumably this means usable by fighters. What does 'most' mean?

Which ones can't be used? Slack attention to detail - we deserve better than this.

The barbarian class is a stinker, a real disaster. Barbarians make good NPCs for sadistic GMs setting up fights because you can have them hit point totals, but that's about the limit of their usefulness. Mind you, GMs are going to need this sort of 'monster', when we see what weapon specialization has done to the game.

Thieves and Acrobats

Without any comment on the change, UA slipped in a radical rules change for thieves. Their alignment requirement is altered from any neutral to any non-good. You missed this? See page 7. This is psychologically implausible and bad for the game. If thieves had to be neutral or good, they are Lawful Neutral (the least credible alignment imaginable) whilst eliminating the last possibility for 'a thief from the rich, give to the poor' type, i.e. Neutral Good. It's bad for the game because thieves have always been objects of suspicion in many parties anyway and this will only make matters worse, making co-operative role-playing the much to be desired. A compromise (and much better) convention used by many gamers, which UA would have done well to make official, is that thieves be Lawful Neutral or Lawful alignment. That would leave Neutral Good and the obvious Chaotic Good options available. Result: more co-operative gaming.

Incredibly little to say about thief-acrobats, other than to suggest that the abilities of the thief-acrobat hardly warranted the creation of a new subclass. They could surely have been added on as extra thief skills; they're previously the average damage per playing bad, unbalanced, rules revisions.

Good and the obvious Chaotic Good now is 4.50 hp, fully 2348% of the old version. Got a tiresome adventure? Even the revisions are badly excluding all sub-classes'. very quickly. In Dragon 66 NPCs fighters'. Presumably this means usable good for game balance and a tolerable logic and consistency. Frankly, if there was a character class which hardly needed any more advantages, it was this one;

But how much difference does weapon specialization actually make? Lots. To show how much, we need a simple example - a first-level fighter trying to hit one enemy of AC5. We'll assume that the fighter has 17 Strength and 16 Dexterity (these assumptions inform the reader how the concept originated in discussions between himself and Len Lakofka, but in issue 104 - probably before the ink had dried on the Additions pages for UA - Lakofka was penning his suggestions for watering down the weapon specialization rules. One of these is that if you are going to experiment with weapon specialization, introduce the change a little at a time. There's the character class suspicious of example? 'Therefore, weapon specialization applies only to fighters, excluding all sub-classes'.

If there hadn't been so over-the-top, this would have been good for game balance and a tolerable rational which could have been given. Cavers, rangers and barbarians all have diverse secondary abilities and skills which need practice, leaving the fighter more time for the intensive training which weapon specialization obviously requires. So, the whole point about weapon specialization was that it was for fighters only. The UA rules promptly permitted cavaliers and paladins weapons of choice (a weak version of weapon specialization) and gave the full benefits of weapon specialization to fighters and rangers. So much for logic and consistency. Frankly, if there was a character class which hardly needed any more advantages, it was the fighter.

The specialization rules - particularly those pertaining to bows, which are now much more dangerous than anything so puny a longbow could be - are very differently unbalanced and, if a more sensible version of them is developed, it should be for fighters only. After all, wasn't this originally the whole point of weapon specialization?

Unearthed Arcana is surely a tremendous disappointment for discriminating AD&D gamers. What was useful wasn't desperately needed, and the new races and classes and so much else are not only unnecessary but very destructive to game balance. It's very good to see that most players and GMs reject the bulk of UA rules and we don't have to suffer too many characters prepared by the availability scores of 18 and up, using weapon specialization to dump on everything in sight. In the end to use an analogy, English is not what's in a dictionary but rather the lived language of most people. Writers of dictionaries are eventually forced to accept this and rewrite their books. If they won't, that's their problem - but gamers shouldn't be playing bad, unbalanced, rules revisions.

\[Allan Miles\]
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As always, things went wrong last month. Help start an innocent discussion about elves, budgerigars and their respective heredity patterns, and...

Nigel Cole (the real one), Perth: This must be a new achievement: getting a letter in WD that I didn't even write! The letter in W688, supposedly from me, is a fake...

Alex Whittaker, apprentice geneticist: Oh horridness. Not only do you completely fail to put my name on my letter, you go the whole hog and put the name of the person with whom I was disagreeing. Ha. Would that you were a man that I might take you into the street and mete out your deserts.

J Adams, Hucknall, Notts: Stuff genetics. This game is fantasy!

See what I mean? Reduced to a 'horridness' for a simple not-so-little mistake. The letter in W688 from Nigel Cole of Perth was, in fact, from Alex Whittaker. Apologies to all concerned for the error. Seppuku is the only way out.

Robin Newton, Cambridge: Should White Dwarf have anything to do with boardgames? I don't mind if GW churn out formula boardgames in the manner of Waddingtons, but WD is a roleplaying magazine, and one of the original ideas of roleplaying was to escape from the restrictions of traditional boardgames.

I can't see what the 'formula' of such diverse games as Railway Rivals, Judge Dredd, Kings & Things*, Warrior Knights, Blood Bowl and Chainsaw Warrior might be. Unless having boards counts... But wait, there's more in a similar vein:

John Hannen, Swinton, Manchester: A quick glance at the front of your turgiversatory periodical informs me that White Dwarf is a 'roleplaying' magazine. This is a foul and misleading lie. Looking through the pages I see adverts for boardgames (roleplaying?) and wargames (roleplaying?). There are also adverts for lead miniatures that could only be used in roleplaying as the product of some perverse and overactive imagination. Wargames involve no roleplaying at all. The only aims of the games are wholesale slaughter and mass genocide. Roleplaying games have been criticised for involving gratuitous violence but a blind eye has been turned to wargaming.

My main fear is that decent people will be turned away from roleplaying by this and that an undesirable element will be drawn to roleplaying by the mindless violence, thus killing off any hope of making the hobby acceptable to the British public.

Tergiversatory, eh? Hmm. Rushing off to the Chambers 20th Century Dictionary was partially enlightening. White Dwarf has always carried the occasional feature about boardgames: even WDI had a feature about a boardgame called Warlord (later to reappear as Apocalypse). I don't think White Dwarf has turned its back on roleplaying. We still publish the odd piece on the topic, you know. Not too many, of course, but then that might upset the people who read White Dwarf for all the features about motorbikes, windsurfing, photography and hi-fi...

I have to admit that I don't subscribe to the distinctions made between boardgames, wargames and roleplaying games. They are all games, and all can be enjoyable in different ways. It depends on whether I'm winning or not. You've obviously never played Jundo and had attacks of 'OK, Gringo...' accents if you believe that boardgames and wargames don't bring out some serious roleplaying. However, to castigate wargamers for mass genocide sounds suspiciously like casticating roleplayers for devil worship - a prejudice getting the better of an argument.

If you pick up a wargames magazine after it has included anything to do with fantasy or roleplaying you get a feeling of deja vu. Similar arguments are trotted out against the 'undesirable element' that is seen to be creeping up on decent historical wargamers - the dreaded roleplayers!

As to being acceptable, roleplaying has made it. Another perfectly good way to be nonconformist blown, I'm afraid. And then:

Robin Newton, Cambridge (again): It said in the Open Box review of Open Box (W688) - an editorial in disguise - that (and I quote): 'By definition if GW publish a game or an adventure, or produce a figure (or three), it's because we think it's a good quality item.' Does this mean that if GW had been advertising a game for sale before it was ready or had paid IPC a large sum of money to produce some game, GW would just drop the game because they felt it was not of high enough quality? I think not, somehow. OB reviews of GW products are so obviously biased that I doubt if anyone would buy the products as a result. GW products may be good, but the reviews make them out to be perfect in every way, suitable for every gamer in the country.

S J Andrews, Carterton, Oxon: HA, HA, HA. You're joking, right? Well, it's still funny. You don't honestly expect us to believe, that because a game designer feels his game is the best thing since Narcissus that it must be true. If this is what you believe then why not ask other companies' designers to review their own products in the name of quality.

Of course you wouldn't be making games if you didn't think they were profitable... er sorry, 'worthwhile' - but then neither would anyone else! Rather than self-congratulatory slobberings, shouldn't a game review enable potential buyers to gain an impression of the game's theme/mechanics or adventure plot?

Why not have a second opinion from someone who is adversely disposed to the product. If both reasons for liking and disliking a product are represented, however biased they are, then the potential buyer would benefit - ever heard of informed choice? Scary, huh? But then if your goodies are as fab as you think they are then there is nothing to fear.

Well, I've just reviewed your letter and I think it's of extremely high quality, but then I'm biased... in favour of quality, of course.

I detect a note of sarcasm there.

The whole purpose of the 'editorial' was to explain the policy behind White Dwarf's reviews. The point was that reviews of GW products would no longer be seen as 'reviews' in the traditional sense, but as designer's and developer's notes on the product. They obviously think that their work is good, and usually they have something interesting to say about it. The Chainsaw Warrior (W688), Rogue Trooper and Slaughter Margin reviews (this issue) all try to make valid points. However, they do so without the hypocrisy to appear 'independent' (whatever that means in this context). The intent was to say, in effect, 'This is our product, here's what we think makes it good, this is what's different about it...' which is surely the purpose of a review. We can't make independent quality judgements about our own work, so why bother? Reviewers usually get paid for their work, so by accepting money do they automatically become independent? Independent reviews still come under the editorial blue pencil at one stage or another. Surely it's better for us to actually stand up and say that we're biased, rather than pretend otherwise? Or maybe honesty isn't the best policy after all...

As to the other point, GW - and all other sensible game companies - do abandon and rework projects that don't come up to
LETTERS

scratch. One bad product can ruin reputations, while it takes several good ones to make a reputation.

But sometimes we please some of the people some of the time. The rest of the time:

Niall Chetwood, Tewkesbury,
Gloucestershire: In recent issues of the magazine (ie. 84-88) there have been two articles on AD&D and one adventure. This is despite the fact that it was the most played adventure system in the recent Readers' Poll. I can’t believe that there is a lack of adventures for AD&D (or is there?), so I can only assume that it is an oversight on the part of the editorial team. Could anything in the line of an AD&D adventure be put in the Dwarf soon?

See the next issue.

Richard Adshead, Stockport, Manchester: As a roleplayer of many different games I hesitated at the thought of buying Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay. The reason for this was because of the fact that I have the mass combat rules. I feared the roleplaying system would be far too simple and thus leave out far too much detail which, in the past, I have found a good thing.

After purchasing the game I was impressed by the contents. The background to the world was more than sufficient for my needs. Overall when I bought the game I was satisfied that, at last, I had got value for money from Games Workshop.

Waddysame at last?

Then came the nasty surprise when I purchased The Enemy Within. I found that this pack contained yet more background info rather than adventure material, about ten times more. Because of the system itself, I still rated it overall as quite good, so yet again I put my money where my mouth is and bought Shadows over Bögenhausen. This one too had been deprived from the first pack left me feeling happy and content, and hoping that the standard of Death on the Reik will be better still.

Then came WD’s own attempts at scenario aids for WFRP, the first of which I immediately called mediocre. But yet again, the second time an attempt was made I was left feeling satisfied to say the least. Night of Blood (WD87) was a simple idea that could be expanded beyond the normal encounter. A huge thanks to WD, a neat little idea. In future I would like to see a fully planned adventure from WD and a reformating of adventure production from Games Workshop.

Among other things, there are a couple of large WFRP adventures going through the system as this Letters Page is being collated. The boost in the size of the magazine to 80 pages (haven’t you read the editorial yet? I don’t know why I bother) also means extra flexibility in the pattern of contents. Larger adventures are just one of the possibilities, and Jim Bambra and Phil Gallagher (two-thirds of the WFRP team) are already working on a 16 page something or other. They won’t tell me what it is, though. Hmmm.

Sheenagh Antonis, Larne, Northern Ireland: Why? Why are men in fantasy art allowed to wear plate armour, chainmail, etc, when women are only allowed the most improbable of metal plates which are too miniscule to make a tin tuck? I can suffer their totally exaggerated anatomy (after all, look at the men’s muscles), but the armour is totally illogical.

The Voice of Doom, Glasgow: I’d just like to say that the main reason many females don’t take up roleplaying is the image which you present. Imagine you were a female and you saw an enormous man woman carrying a giant sword plastered across the front of a scatter RPG magazine. You would probably be disgusted and put off by this image of women as the pawns of men. Is this really up to date with modern ideals?

Philip Nichol, Thornton Heath, Surrey: I am pleased to see the cover of WD88 is graced by the presence of a lady almost totally covered in metal armour. Now who said White Dwarf didn’t cater for minority tastes?

One of the problems with overseas distribution is that it is often a month or two before the rest of the world finds out what has been annoying/provoking the British readers:

Alan Clark, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: On reading the letters Page of WD86, I was slightly disturbed to note that a number of English gamers take the view that a Spetsnaz platoon parachuting into my back yard would be poetic justice. I understand and share their disgust with games such as The Price of Freedom, Delta Force, etc, but the backlash is going a bit far. These games (and they are only games) were not produced by the Americans to propagate alarmist political views among RPG players; they were produced by companies that believed that the games would sell. If everyone ignores them, these games will quietly go away, and we Americans can stop baying at the moon.

Raymond J Foldhazi, Taylors, South Carolina: I must express a degree of distress over certain opinions your readers have been shown to hold by their vitriolic tirades not only against certain role-playing games but against the peoples of the US. I must now state for the record that I am an American of mainly Hungarian/German/Polish decent, that I am not a deep-South redneck, and that I am proud to be a member of my much maligned society. I am also proud to be an Anglophil.

There is much to admire in many nations, but our allies of two world wars enjoy a special admiration. Therefore it saddens me to hear and read the currently fashionable anti-Americanisms from both the UK and France, and it is ironic that Germany and Japan, our erstwhile foes, seem to hold us in higher regard.

Thomas Exposito, Norristown, Pennsylvania: I was quite surprised by the uproar that The Price of Freedom elicited from your readers in WD86. None of the people who wrote in to complain seem to have played the game. Most seem to be horrified that such a game should simply exist. The question I ask is: Why?

I myself am an American conservative. I never would have considered buying Price if it wasn’t for all your anti-American balderdash disguised as distaste for a single game.

I would like you to know that we, the American people, are not as you describe us. We are very stupid. We all sit around drinking moonshine whiskey and picking our toes. We believe that the Rooskies are going to invade tomorrow (maybe the day after). We all follow everything our President tells us. We are very stupid. We are all political reactionaries and religious fundamentalists. We are very, very stupid.

We are all buying The Price of Freedom. We are playing it until the Rooskies invade and we can play it for real. Yes, being an American is like playing Paranoia with real bullets.

Now, please, having balanced the books by printing these letters, no more on this subject...

And almost to finish:

Mark Lewis, Luton, Beds: Keep up the witty/offensive comments after the letters - it makes the Letters Page more interesting to read, and people who make stupid comments that can only do bad things for gaming deserve to be slated off.

Douglas Thomson, Upper Smidseye, Aberdeen: In WD87 the Letters Page raises the point of your comments about letters. I think Richard Bourke must be among the minority of your readers. I for one sometimes enjoy reading your comments more than the letters. If I had any say in the matter, then I would rather read most of your comments and get rid of the totally stupid letters which babbles on about balancing figures and such like. If you think letters like these are humourous and provide a good interlude, then you must have a very weird sense of humour. Surely it would be more worth your while printing decent comments about the hobby that people could argue over...

Unfortunately, there’s no real skill in being offensive. Anybody can do it - as the mailbag proves every month. As to the general point of comments, letters are chosen so that there is something that needs a reply. That’s the sum total of editing the Letters Page each month.

I think we’ve had this next bit before, about Judge Dredd.

Michael Dever, Brentwood, Essex: Lately White Dwarf has been like a scratched record, the same old thing almost every month. ‘What is it?’ you may well ask. ‘It’s Call of Cthulhu!‘

Why do I get the feeling that you can’t please some of the people some of the time, let alone anything more ambitious...

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