THE CELESTIAL DRAGON #19

Some people think I've got a toad in here. Really? If they knew me, they'd know I wouldn't have a toad in here. I can't abide toads.

THE CELESTIAL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE #49

HERE BE DRAGONS #82 / HERE BE DRA #1

SUBPAR #19

THE TANGERINE TERROR #89 /

I AM THE KURIOUS KUMQUAT #19

DEADLINE: Friday 2nd October 2026

THE CELESTIAL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

Track no. 49

richard530smith@btinternet.com

17th August 2026

A wee update on the magnolia plant - it has produced one small purple flower (woo-hoo!), but still looks sickly. I'm told it may be due to the soil being too alkaline.

The front cover picture and the picture above are both products of my continued cheapskate existence, waiting for my pension to be paid. Still not a brass farthing has come my way. Whilst cleaning and tidying the kitchen I found an almost out-of-date bag of *Asda Basics Batter Mix* in one of the cupboards, and some "forgotten" sausages in the freezer. So I decided to make some toad in the hole. My oven is broken but I have two air fryers, both of which are "doubles" that can be made into a single large compartment.

I did need one egg though, and they're not cheap these days. The following is not necessarily the best method, but it's what I did. Andy York will be hiding behind the sofa.

Take a small baking tray and brush it with a *little* sunflower oil. Part-cook the sausages on the baking tray inside the air fryer "megazone" for 8 minutes at 180C. This releases some extra fat for the batter. Whilst the sausages are cooking, put 200ml water and one egg in a bowl. Whisk the egg into the water and add the batter mix in stages. Open the air fryer, arrange the sausages and pour the batter mix over. Cook for 15 minutes at 180C, then turn the sausages (if possible) and cook for another 5 minutes at 190C to crisp the batter.

The other piece of cheapskatery was setting up a stand for my synthesizer in my "music zone". I already had a keyboard stand, and it works with the DeepMind 6 when standing up, but for seated playing the keyboard is not wide enough to sit on the struts (a DeepMind 12 would be). Installing the cube units (see last issue) meant the demise of an old shelf - aha! Just whack it on top and I even have some space for headphones or other nick-nacks.

My mum's 96th birthday was also a low-cost affair, with none of myself, my sister and my niece being flush with money, we ended up going to an open-air play at Exbury Gardens. It was *The Three Musketeers* performed by a 6-strong troupe called Illyria. The tickets were a modest £21 and we brought our own wine and sandwiches. Weather was perfect and the show was very well done - quite faithful to the original story and I was impressed with the sword-fighting choreography. It did make me think of *En Garde!* and I'm sure *Guy Zaquisse*, *Rene Camembert* and *Pierre Stazapharte* would all have approved.

My problem with the fitness watch touch screen was cured by letting the battery run down, but it didn't have to drain to nothing. When it got to about 40% the screen started working again. Duck Assist said: *"A smartwatch touch screen may start working again after the battery drains partially because the device can reset itself when the battery is low, clearing temporary software glitches."* Hmmm.

On TV I really enjoyed *The Rapture* (BCC thriller, hot on the heels of *The Capture* series 3) which featured a fake emergency government text message sent to everyone's phones by a group of climate activists. Not long after broadcast of that episode, we got a real one telling us not to start wildfires with barbecues or cigarettes. I also enjoyed The Traitors Canada series 3, but couldn't get into the US one.

An interesting little article on the BBC website https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn0njd4e2evo caught my eye. It indicates that most people, if offered £50K for sure or a coin-flip for £1m would take the £50K. Imagine *Deal or No Deal* down to two boxes, 1p and £100K. You would expect the banker to offer quite a bit less than the average £50K, but an offer of £5K would surely be rejected. Multiply the prizes by 10, and given you only get one go, £50K is harder to refuse.

On the games front, we have had quite a few signups this time. I was hoping to get 12 players for *By Wordley Demand*, though with a longer (8 rounds) game I might still pick up a couple more. I have written most of the "steps" for *Bridge of Lies*, probably something I would not have had time to do when I was working, ready for a game start next issue.

UK GAMES ZINE POLL 2026

a) WHO MAY VOTE? Anyone who sees at least one eligible zine, whether as an editor or a subscriber. Editors may vote for their own zines.

b) WHICH ZINES ARE ELIGIBLE? Any zine published in the British Isles which has produced an issue in 2026 (up to and including the Poll deadline); is distributed by post, as an e-mail, as an attachment to an e-mail or as a download from a website; and runs games we would recognise as 'postal' ones (e.g. Diplomacy, Railway Rivals, 18xx, En Garde! or United, among many others). Please note: the zines should be UK ones, but the voters may come from anywhere in the world -- all that matters is that you are a regular reader.

c) HOW TO VOTE. List the eligible zines that you see and mark each one between 1.0 (low) and 10.0 (high), to one decimal place if you wish. Votes should be e-mailed from the voter's own account to alex.bokmal@googlemail.com.

The Poll deadline will be SATURDAY 31ST OCTOBER 2026. Results will be e-mailed to each voter and published in Obsidian, as well as maybe one or two other zines after that.

THE LETTERS BIT

BOB GINGELL

A quick response to your news that you have been watching *Rise of the Merlin* on Prime - I have been doing the same and remember reading some of the books it is based on many years ago. An interesting take on the Arthurian myths. However, I hate that it has no subtitles. Nowadays a key criterion on whether I watch (or continue watching) any film or series is whether or not there are subtitles. Lucky you that your hearing is still good enough to follow everything without such aids.

I was wondering if I might have read the books in the past, but I don't think I did. Anyway it was enjoyably different to other Arthurian stories, though I wasn't too keen on Merlin becoming homicidal maniac driven by vengeful rage - I tend to think he should be doing magic and not getting his hands dirty with killing.

Separately I have just finished watching *The Burroughs* on Netflix - an enjoyable exploration with sf overtones of elderly residents of a care community showcasing the excellent Alfred Molina and a number of other older actors not seen much recently.

Sounds intriguing.

STEVE HAM

I hope you are well. I've finished work though finding it hard to consider myself retired. While kids are around it's difficult to imagine, let alone, live a retirement lifestyle. While the students are away the UEA have a very good value deal to use their sports facilities over the summer and I'm trying to reverse some of the damage of years of sitting at a desk. No obvious signs of success yet but I have signed up to the Turf app which is quite fun and involves a lot of walking. I currently "control" 65 separate areas of Turf, across Norwich and its suburbs. There seems to be plenty of available "Turf" in Portsmouth and Cosham, but none in Denmead unfortunately.

I may (or may not) give Turf a go. I am lucky where I live that there are lots of nice walks right on my doorstep. Gardening and DIY are alternative forms of exercise though I do have to watch my heart rate when attempting anything strenuous.

PAUL EVANS

Thanks for the latest and congrats on two years - plenty more in the tank, I'm sure.

Variable Pig lasted for 36 years and 200 issues with Jim as editor (208 in total), which may actually not be enough to get it into the "zine longevity top 10". Its offspring, The Celestial Dragon is still a baby at 19 issues in 2.2 years, but so far so good in terms of reliable production, having settled into a regular 6-week cycle (4.5 players, 1.5 GMs). Like the Pig it sits on the cusp of being a Railway Rivals zine and a general games zine, with plenty of variety. Note that the Pig did have another offspring, Tom Howell's back-of-the-envelope which has reached 62 issues as a standalone zine - previously the on-the-shelf subzine. Great to have Howard back in business with TTT going the other way from zine to subzine (the dual title serves for it to be restored to a standalone zine if he gets the urge / time). Here Be Dragons, which largely features John's own creations, used to be a subzine in TTT, so I guess it's all a bit incestuous!

Sign me up for Bridge of Lies, please - my wife insists on watching the TV show, which means I see it too. :-)

I have already started putting some questions together. The themed Individual Crossings in particular require a lot of research. I dare say I could ask ChatGPT to do it for me, but that would spoil my fun.

STEVE GUEST

Hope there is further progress with the pension. We (in the research councils) were supposed to be transferred to CSPS about 10 years ago and it still hasn't happened. Most of the delay was due to the terms being found illegal under age discrimination grounds. Then the transfer was supposed to be this October, now it's delayed again for at least a year due to the scheme "performance". I actually took most of my pension over 3 years ago by part-retiring, might be an argument to fully retire before the remainder gets transferred.

Somewhat ominously, the FAQ page on the Civil Service Pensions Hub now has an entry for "what happens if I die before my pension is paid?"

JIM READER

Some early orders again this time as we're planning to drive up to the Saint Lawrence river bordering New York State and Canada for some sightseeing and a change of scenery. We will also visit Lake Champlain and cross into Vermont for the first time to add another state to our visited list. This is in place of our planned trip to Germany which we cancelled due to my foot.

I never really thought of crossing off the 50 states as you visit them, like the 92 football league clubs. I expect you're well ahead of Brendan.

I do keep a count of the States we've visited (also countries), but my rules are that we must do something in the place and not just pass through. This when my colleague drove me from Austria through Liechtenstein to board a train in Switzerland, I couldn't count Liechtenstein as visited. However, as we stopped for a coffee and pastry just on the Liechtenstein side of the border, I now claim to have visited said country. I also walked over the border to the station (no crossing or guards).

My list is pretty small, though in a similar vein I think we visited Luxembourg briefly during the 1998 Crets holiday to Belgium

The States we have visited are:

Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine.

I have seen Kansas across the bridge from Kansas City, Missouri. Hannah has been to Alaska and Jacqueline to Mississippi, crossing over from Memphis Tennessee for a donut. I've also used Salt Lake City (Utah) and Denver (Colorado) airports but these don't count. The last 'new' state I visited was Maine, but we should add two more to the list this year - Vermont (Friday, the last state on the East side we haven't visited) and Alabama in October.

Of the others, the highest on our wish list is Utah (stunning desert scenery and National Parks) and New Mexico, followed by South Dakota (badlands), Wyoming (Yellowstone) and Montana. I really should have gone to Mississippi given all the relations I have with the University of Southern Mississippi via the Waterborne Symposium, but I never visited their campus in Hattiesburg. Lowest on the wish list would be Iowa (flat and boring) and Nebraska, although I suspect that Alaska or Hawaii will be the last we get to.

Yes, that was my thought that Hawaii and Alaska are the hardest ones to bag. Somewhat different clothing required for each!

The foot is recovering and I have now progressed to walking with only a cane, so am a lot more mobile. I can also drive again and will hopefully be able to remove the protective boot next week. The physio is going well and is now focused on increasing the range of motion in the left ankle and also increasing its strength. Hopefully, I should be walking almost normally by the Crets and can hopefully play Kubb, although I might be more cautious about frisbee. I'll also need to ask about bowling when we get back after Cropredy.

I guess any mountain climbing activities will be limited to gentle routes. Although I take a walk most days it has to be gentle for me too!

BOB PITMAN

I enjoyed your games Kallax picture, several games in there brought back the urge to want to play a game just for fun! So much so I suggested Linie1 at a recent games session, but we had to play Metro instead, and it was an entertaining evening with Machi Koro (minus the expansion set that ruined it), plus a Groo! I was always a fan of Kremlin, Attika, Killer Bunnies and Mississippi Queen, those were great to play. A lot of the recent games seem to fall into heavy duty "engine building" with some luck thrown in on the cards drawn. I like Wingspan but it's kind of gameplay set in aspic.

I had to Google "Kallax" - not a planet in a sci-fi story, rather Ikea's cube storage brand name. Some older games age better than others, and of those you list, Kremlin can be a very long game (depending on waving success) and you can be effectively out of contention quite early on. Great theme though. Killer Bunnies is considered a bit rubbish by many (only rated 5.5 on BGG) though I thought it was quite fun.

My Kallax's are not bracketed to the wall, one. Long axis on the floor, serves as a drink cabinet and has our ceramics, one large picture and other small art bits displayed on top. The other is serving as a record cabinet, standing up and sans brackets. I live dangerously as I pullout, put in or generally sort out the 5 slots currently housing vinyl.

I had to fix my cube storage to the wall being a 2x2 group of four 3x3s rather than a single unit of 6x6. The danger of the upper level tipping over and crushing the cat was too great for me.

I have a cataract in my right eye, it can be very annoying but isn't a static annoyance as it varies from looking through a light mist to hardly there at all. It's not bad enough to qualify me for the NHS treatment yet. I looked into Optegra private eye treatment last year but didn't take it further yet, but Noel has been over for an appointment to see whether they can relieve her of her glasses by lasering her eyeballs. In short they can but it's not cheap, but that's got to be balanced against a) the cost of future glasses purchases - my 2009 lasering has saved me an absolute fortune in specs purchases, and b) the amount of activities and life opportunities that open up to the glasses-free - for me it's been loads of risky activities I wouldn't have done whilst wearing specs.

I'm in "last chance saloon" with my CSR, and if it's still there on September 4th, I will require laser surgery. I don't know if they can correct the short sightedness "whilst they're in".

My Garmin Fenix 3 cost about £400 about 7 years ago and hasn't let me down yet, although I have annoyingly paused it a few times after falling and pressing a button with my wrist then carrying on only to find I have missed recording several miles!

Just looked on the internet and Garmin Fenix 8 costs £700! I'm sure it's superior to a £35 cheapie in many ways but 20 times the price? Having a Google I see there are lots of web pages discussing why you should or should not go for an expensive one.

Sadly, Farage got back in, beating Count Binface by 12,000 votes. Happily, the Parliamentary investigation into his bungs from billionaires has restarted. I do wish a few of his fantasy threats were slightly more serious and tangible than assault with a milk shake, but I guess our Walter Mitty wannabe PM will carry on avoiding taking responsibility for himself, his limited company party, or his inflammatory Mosleysque/Powellesque language. Someday he and his minions will be made to be accountable.

I did notice that there are now quite a few UK Politics themed computer games around, including a Fantasy Parliament game - not sure if Farage would be a good buy?

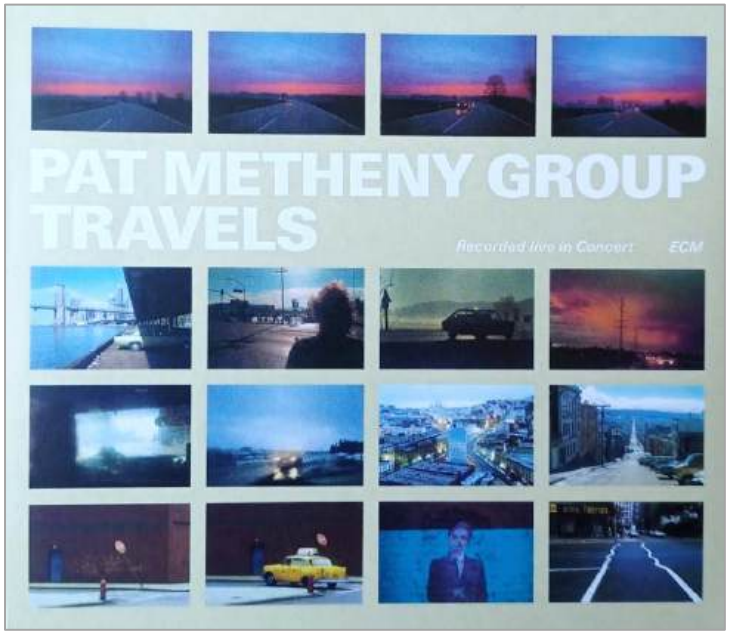
Today at last it's been cool rather than pavement melting... no rain but not heavy heat. Small mercies. We could smell the smoke from the Isle of Wight fire a few weeks ago and the smoke from this week's New Forest fire made the sky look a very strange, browny orange, like it was full of Sahara sand. Climate change is here and I think it's far too late to avoid the worst of it, indeed with the fires, the floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions it's feeling a bit like the planet is trying to forcibly evict us. I suppose that somehow the Trump crime family will find a way to turn a profit from global heat death, I wouldn't mind betting the Trumps and suckups are somehow making a mint out of Iran's Hormuz closure until trump is gone.

I managed to get stuck in the queue for the M27 junction 2 (where all traffic must leave because of the fire) when visiting my sister recently. Whilst I was crawling along several fire engines went past.

ALBUM REVIEWS

As I hinted at last time, with no new CDs being bought I am reviewing a couple of discs I bought in 2022 and have recently been listening to. Both albums were ones I played a lot on vinyl but didn't replace with a CD or download, so there were many years between listens, and I may have rose-tinted eardrums.

Pat Metheney Group - Travels (2CD) (1983 / 2022 Reissue)



They say that rock and roll is a group playing three chords watched by a thousand people, whilst jazz is a group playing a thousand chords watched by three people.

So what about a mixture of the two? Jazz-rock and Fusion are both popular genres with different flavours.

I have always been a fan of Brand X and Weather Report, and also Pierre Moerlen's Gong that was namechecked last issue. For solo artists, I like French violinist Jean-Luc Ponty and Norwegian guitarist Terje Rypdal. Also Allan Holdsworth - another great jazz-rock guitarist who, along with Metheny, pioneered the use of the guitar synthesizer.

I played my vinyl copy of Travels a lot, much more than any of Pat Metheny's other records. He is, without doubt, an absolutely brilliant guitarist, and has collaborated with many excellent musicians (such as virtuoso keyboardist Lyle Mays) but I've found some of his output to be a little too "smooth" for my tastes.

Travels was recorded in 1982 and released in 1983, long before his more commercial albums such as *Still Life Talking* and *Letter From Home*. So its 11 tracks represent a "best of" his earlier material. The tracks are not performed with much urgency, definitely more jazz that rock (apart from the first track) but with a big smile and plenty of soloing for all the performers, not just the lead guitarist. Note that Rick Beato recently praised the guitar solo from *Song for Bilbao* on YouTube, but struggled to play it :-)

Tracklist

1. Are You Going With Me? (9:19)
2. The Fields, the Sky (7:46)
3. Goodbye (8:16)
4. Phase Dance (8:03)
5. Straight on Red (7:26)
6. Farmer's Trust (6:25)
7. Extradition (5:45)
8. Going Ahead-As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls (16:22)
9. Travels (5:03)
10. Song for Bilbao (8:26)
11.San Lorenzo (13:35)

Musicians

Pat Metheny: Bass, guitar, guitar (12 string), guitar (synthesizer), guitar (classical), guitar synth

Steve Rodby: Bass, bass (electric), bass (acoustic), synthesizer bass

Naná Vasconcelos: Percussion, drums, vocals, voices, berimbau

Dan Gottlieb: Drums, drums (snare)

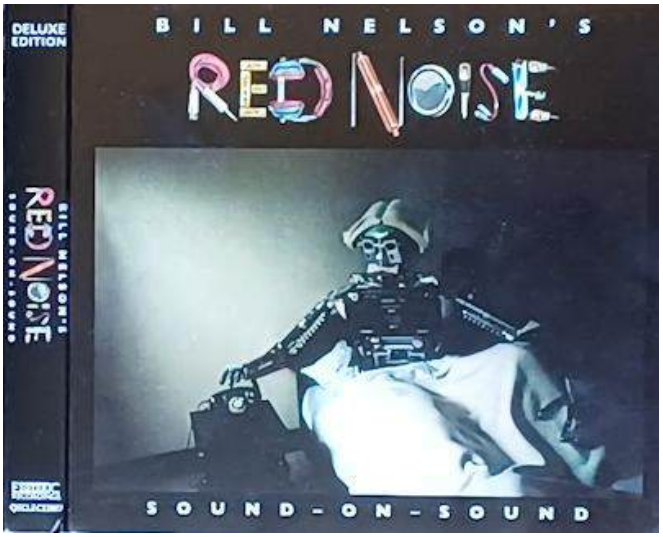
Lyle Mays: Organ, synthesizer, piano, autoharp, keyboards, synclavier

YouTube Vids:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4jIbLYE3gQ Are You Going With Me?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwBLC0WKuS0 Phase Dance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCPfKzIK6Wo Song for Bilbao

Bill Nelson's Red Noise - Sound of Sound (2CD) (1979 / 2022 Reissue)

Sound on Sound was Bill Nelson's take on late 70s new wave. The album was not a commercial success. Some compared it (unfavourably) to Talking Heads and it was also described as a cross between Be Bop Deluxe and Devo, whilst being unlikely to appeal to fans of either.

Devo's only other link to prog rock was that Brian Eno produced the 1978 album *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo,* which is the only Devo album I own. My favourite Be Bop Deluxe album at the time was *Modern Music* whose melodic and proggy tracks (sample link below) couldn't be more different to the spiky attack of Sound on Sound.



Despite the lack of melody, the frenetic rhythms, and very few guitar solos, the songs are all really good (IMHO). Some of them quite catchy too, though definitely still rock rather than pop. This despite the use of keyboard and saxophone arrangements reminiscent of *The Selector* and *Madness* on some tracks. Neither of the singles *Furniture Music* nor *Revolt Into Style* made the top 40 (#59 and #69).

Time has been kind to the album in that many now think quite highly of it. For example, in the CD booklet Steven Wilson describes how influential it was for him. Not everyone agrees though and reviews of the album vary widely.

The 2CD version sports two version of the album from 2022. Disc 1 is a remaster of the original mix, and Disc 2 is a remix by Stephen W Tayler. The remix arguably suits the music better as it loses the "politeness" of the original making it a more intense aural assault.

For bonus tracks, disc 1 has two from the B-side of the Furniture Music EP, and disc 2 has the same two remixed, plus one unreleased track and early versions of tracks that would appear on Bill Nelson solo records, recorded at the Red Noise Sessions, RAK Studios, May 1979

YouTube Vids:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPV7jEyTvtY Don't Touch Me / Furniture Music / Stay Young
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOcj4fhcZII Revolt Into Style
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4aMHI4MMx0 Down on Terminal Street (Be Bop Deluxe)

CHOICE - SUPPENKASPER VARIANT – ROUNDS 4-6

https://variablepig.org/rules/choice.html

As per the standard game (not using Dane's improved rules), except that only **7 Würfels** are allowed, and each player has 6 special cards that can be played once per game (maximum 1 card per round):

- FdH: Remove any two numbers from the five, leaving one pair plus 1 possible Würfel
- Null: Do not take a Würfel this round
- KUR: Take a Würfel but no numbers this round
- -1: Refuse all the numbers this round
- -2: Refuse all the numbers and decrement the count of one of your Würfels
- Suppen-Kasper: Create an extra round from your leftovers plate

Scoreboard:

Player	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6
Steve Ham	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 w6	(3+4)=7, (5+5)=10 w6	(1+3)=4, (1+6)=7 w6
Chris Hibbert	(1+6)=7, (6+6)=12 w1	(3+4)=7, (6+5)=11 w5	(1+3)=4, (6+6)=12 w1
Kevin Lee	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 Null	(4+6)=10, (5+5)=10 w3	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 w3
Dane Maslen	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 w6	(3+6)=9, (4+5)=9 w5	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 Null
Michael Pargman	(1+6)=7, (6+6)=12 w1	(4+6)=10, (5+5)=10 w3	FdH 1,1 (6+6)=12 w3
Roger Trethewey	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 w6	(3+4)=7, (5+5)=10 w6	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 w3
John Walker	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 w6	(4+6)=10, (5+5)=10 w3	(1+6)=7, (1+6)=7 w3

Player	Score	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Würfel	Würfel	Würfel
Steve Ham	-800			1			4		4	3			11-----	2------	666----
Chris Hibbert	-1200			2		2	2			2	2	2	11-----	44-----	55-----
Kevin Lee	-800					1	4		3	4			11-----	33-----	5------
Dane Maslen	-350					2	4		6				2------	55-----	6------
Michael Pargman	-740					1	1		1	6		2	11-----	33-----	44-----
Roger Trethewey	-600					3	5	1		3			3------	44-----	666----
John Walker	-600			1		2	4			5			33-----	44-----	66-----

Player	FdH	Null	Kur	-1	-2	Sup	Leftovers Plate
Steve Ham							
Chris Hibbert							
Kevin Lee		x					6
Dane Maslen		x					3
Michael Pargman	x						11
Roger Trethewey							
John Walker							

Unsurprisingly given the rolls, 7s got a bit of a pounding this time, with 8s and 5s yet to see much action (most players still on four numbers). Chris is boldly collecting 11s and 12s, and Michael 12s - in this variant I think the extreme numbers are a bit more viable.

New Rolls:

R7: 2,4,6,6,6
R8: 1,3,4,5,5
R9: 1,3,3,4,4

BY WORDLEY DEMAND (NEW GAME) - ROUND 1 OF 8

Rules on the VP website have been slightly updated https://variablepig.org/rules/bypop.html#Wordle

Words must be valid according to this site https://scrabble.collinsdictionary.com/check/

There will be 8 rounds this time so double-wordling is more doable, and players are less likely to overly benefit from an "easy" Wordle. Note that plurals are now allowed, but target words will not be plurals, will not contain duplicate letters, and will not contain the letter X.

The game could do with 1, 2 or 3 more players but will work with 9, albeit the Wordle scores are likely to be greater than the BPD scores. The stats for the last game with 11 showed BPD points a bit higher.

New players will start on the lowest score, currently 9.

A new set of random 5-letter words have been allocated. Whilst some are perhaps a little "easier" than others there's not a great deal in it. Unsurprisingly, not many Wordle points were scored this round but getting a valid word helps narrow the options for next time.

The theme for round 1 was **Drugs**.

1) A large pharmaceutical company (Pfizer 3)
2) A painkiller (Aspirin 4)
3) A disease that has a vaccine (COVID, Influenza, Tetanus 2)
4) A popular recreational drug (Cannabis 3)
5) A famous song about drugs (Heroin 2)

Of course there are very many songs about drugs, so good for Wordle, bad for BPD. "Cocaine", "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds", "Golden Brown", "Ebeneezer Goode", "Sweet Leaf" are just a few I could name.

Scorecard

Player	Pharma	Painkiller	Vaccine	Recreational	Song	Score	Tot
Steve Ham	**P**fizer [3,0]	**A**spirin [4,0]	**T**etanus [2,2]	**C**annabis [3,4]	**H**eroin [2,0]	[14,6]	20
Bob Gingell	**P**fizer [3,0]	**A**spirin [4,2]	**R**ubella [1,2]	**T**obacco [1,0]	**S**ister Morphine [1,0]	[10,4]	14
Steve Guest	**S**inopharm [1,0]	**A**spirin [4,0]	**M**easles [1,0]	**E**cstasy [3,4]	**L**ucy in the Sky with Diamonds [1,0]	[10,4]	14
Roger Trethewey	**P**fizer [3,0]	**I**buprofen [2,0]	**T**etanus [2,2]	**C**annabis [3,0]	**H**eroin [2,0]	[12,2]	14
Bob Pitman	**A**straZenica [2,0]	**D**iamorphine [1,0]	**I**nfluenza [2,4]	**E**cstasy [3,0]	**U**nder the Bridge [1,0]	[9,4]	13
Mike Pollard	**R**oche [1,0]	**A**spirin [4,0]	**C**OVID [2,0]	**E**cstasy [3,0]	**S**ex and Drugs and Rock and Roll [1,0]	[11,0]	11
Charles Raymond	**A**straZenica [2,2]	**P**aracetamol [2,0]	**P**olio [1,0]	**L**SD [1,2]	**Y**oung Homie [1,0]	[7,4]	11
John Walker	**E**li Lilly [1,2]	**P**aracetamol [2,0]	**I**nfluenza [2,0]	**C**annabis [3,0]	**S**weet Leaf [1,0]	[9,2]	11
Chris Hibbert	**N**ovartis [1,2]	**I**buprofen [2,0]	**C**OVID [2,0]	**H**eroin [1,0]	**E**cstasy Song [1,0]	[7,2]	9
GM Picks (non-scoring)	**A**straZenica	**P**aracetamol	**P**olio	**A**mphetamine	**L**ucy in the Sky with Diamonds		

The theme for round 2 is **World Leaders**.

Note that for Wordle purposes it is the surname, or whatever name is the equivalent in eastern names (usually the first). If there is doubt I will accept any choice. The potential leader must not be the current incumbent, but could be a former incumbent making a comeback (you know you miss Boris, don't you?).

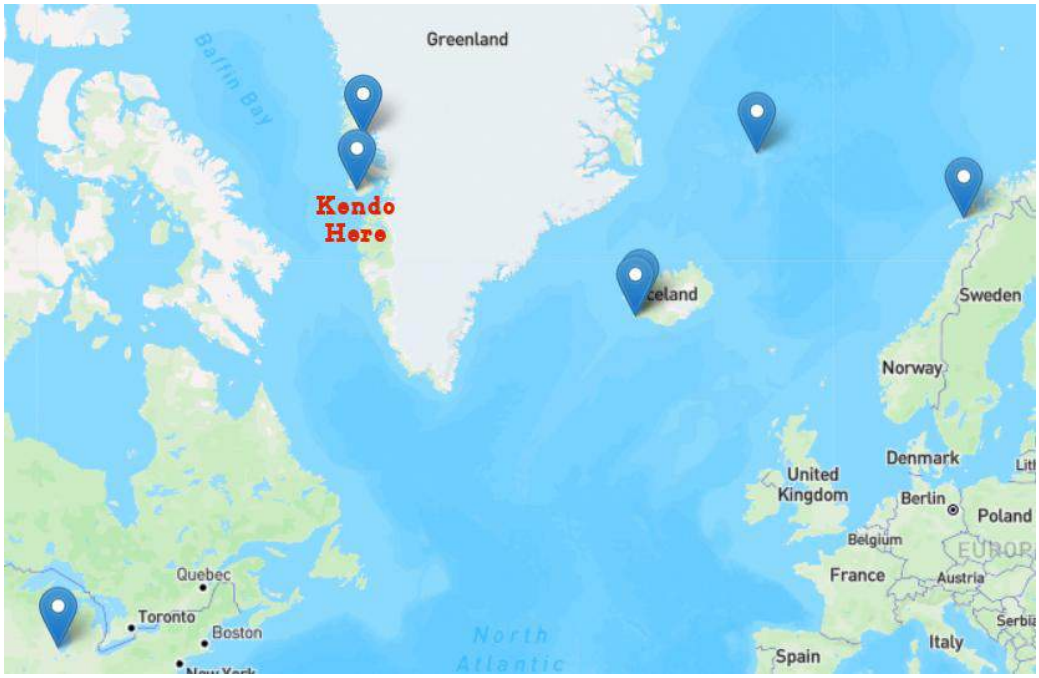
1) A UK prime minister, past or present
2) A US president, past or present
3) A leader from any other country, past or present
4) A possible future leader of any country
5) A leader considered to be evil, past or present

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS KENDO NAGASAKI - DESTINATION X - ROUND 8

Destination X is available now on the BBC iPlayer (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0024pz8).

The Kendo game is only loosely based on the TV show, with just the elimination element in play (no clues, not limited to Europe). At the end of rounds 1-3, nothing happens. At the end of rounds 4-6, whoever's transmitter is furthest from Kendo gets their guess blanked out from the turn report, and they receive a *yellow card* (two yellows means elimination) from ~~Rob Brydon~~ the GM. At the end of rounds 7-9, it's the same except they now get a *red card* meaning elimination from the game.

We have a winner! Congratulations to Chris Hibbert!



My money was on Dane up to this point as he was the first to identify Kendo, and was looking in the right area. Chris did survive an early yellow card to get a handy nearest in R6 with Anne Wibble (who sounds like a Monty Python character), and later spotted the *Disco Island* and *Kanga Look* wordplays.

I don't print everyone's workings but I have added an explanatory note for each round, and I've reinstated the red and yellow card guesses (also restored to the tester page). As you can see it was always the most southerly that was furthest until R7, where it was the most easterly.

Game end comments are welcome and preference for the next game. I am going with another Destination X, but that could be changed after the R1 guesses are in. A regular game would be fine, as would another Temperature Control (hot, warm, cold) which works well with my tester page.

Round 8:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	Maggie Beer (1945-)	Reykjavik, Iceland	64.145833	-21.9425
Steve Guest	Marilyn Renfree (1947-)	Olonkinbyen, Jan Mayen, Norway	70.922	-8.715
Chris Hibbert	**Marilyn Renfree (1947-)**	**Kangerluk, Disko Island, Greenland**	**69.484444**	**-53.94861**
Dane Maslen	Marilyn Renfree (1947-)	Nuugaatsiaq, Greenland	71.535	-53.2125
Bob Pitman				
Jim Reader	Helen Garner (1941-)	Lofoten Archipelago, Norway	68.333333	14.666667
Martin Walker	Marilyn Renfree (1947-)	The Blue Lagoon, Iceland	63.88	-22.448056
Brendan Whyte	Maurice White (1941-2016)	Chicago, USA (escapes red card thanks to final whistle)	41.881944,	-87.627778

Renfree is famous for studying marsupials. So it would be appropriate for her to hide in "Kanga Look" (groan!) There are other towns in Greenland with Kanga in the name but not on Disko Island.

Round 7:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	Maggie Beer (1945-)	Mack Brewery, Nordkjosbotn, Norway	69.2174	19.5583
Steve Guest	Bear Grylls (1974-)	Bear Island, Norway	74.44	19.0475
Chris Hibbert	Marilyn Renfree (1947-)	Uunarteq, Greenland	70.418889	-21.972222
Dane Maslen	**Marilyn Renfree (1947-)**	**Qikiqtarjuaq, Nunavut, Canada**	**67.554722**	**-64.02805**
Bob Pitman	Juliet Batten (1942-)	Santa Claus Village, Finland Red card – furthest away	66.543333	25.8475
Jim Reader	Helen Reddy (1941-2020)	Piteå, Sweden	65.316667	21.483333
Martin Walker	Robyn Davidson (1950-)	Hammerfest, Norway	70.6634	23.6821
Brendan Whyte	Jacinta Ardern (1980-)	Kirkenes. Norway	69.726944	30.045556

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

There is water between your transmitter and my hiding place, which is on a land mass where you might find earth, wind and fire?

=> A poetic, cryptic crosswordy clue which uses the "classical" elements as a surface.

Ice permitting, you can travel from Qikiqtarjuaq to Kangerluk across the water.

Kangerluk is sited on the western edge of Disko Island, where Earth, Wind and Fire can be experienced, and Summer is the queen.

Round 6:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	Germaine Greer (1939-)	Oulu, Finland	65.014167	25.471944
Steve Guest	Michael Vick (1980-)	Örnsköldsvik, Sweden	63.290833	18.715556
Chris Hibbert	**Anne Wibble (1943-2000)**	**Vik, Iceland**	**63.419444**	**-19.00972**
Dane Maslen	Marilyn Renfree (1947-)	The North Pole	90.0	0.0
Bob Pitman	Margaret Court (1942-)	Tromsø, Norway	69.6517	18.9556
Jim Reader	Patricia Margaret Selkirk (1942-)	Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, Norway	78.925	11.922222
Martin Walker	Suzanne Mubarek (1941-)	Oulo, Finland	65.014167	25.471944
Brendan Whyte	Peter Lorre (1904-1964)	Malmo Yellow card – furthest away	55.605833	13.035833

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

I was born just a few years after you but over 15,000 kilometres away. You have sited your transmitter in a place that has a larger population than where I am hiding.

=> Kendo born approx. 1946-1950 somewhere that is more than 15,000km from Stockholm (Brisbane is just over this distance). Vik has a small population (Wikipedia says 750 and World Population Review says 706 for 2026) and the latest figure available for Kangerluk is 4!

Round 5:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	King Charles III	Sarajevo Yellow card – furthest away	43.856389	18.413056
Steve Guest	**Philip Pullman (1946-)**	**Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway**	**78.22**	**15.65**
Chris Hibbert	Monica Zetterlund (1937-2005)	Bergen, Norway	60.389444	5.33
Dane Maslen	Jocelyn Bell Burnell (1943-)	Luleå, Sweden	65.584444	22.153889
Bob Pitman	Angela Merkel (1954-)	Vienna, Austria	48.2083	16.3725
Jim Reader	Suzanne Cory (1942)	Skara Brae, Orkney Islands	59.048714	-3.34175
Martin Walker	Debbie Harry (1945-)	Kiel, Germany	54.323333	10.139444
Brendan Whyte	Maddy Prior (1947-)	Budapest, Hungary	47.4925	19.051389

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

We were born less than a year apart, but in different years and on opposite sides of the equator. We have the same number of children, but little else in common.

=> Kendo born between 20th October 1945 and 18th October 1947 in the southern hemisphere. Kendo has two children, but not much else in common with Pullman.

Round 4:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	Al Pacino (1940-)	Palermo, Sicily	38.111111	13.351667
Steve Guest	Brian Eno (1948-)	St Petersburg, Russia	59.9375	30.308611
Chris Hibbert	Karch Kiraly (1960-)	Corinth Yellow card – furthest away	37.938611	22.927222
Dane Maslen	Ursula von der Leyen (1958-)	Riga, Latvia	56.948889	24.106389
Bob Pitman	Mona Makram-Ebeid (1943-)	Dieveniškės, Lithuania	54.194444	25.625
Jim Reader	**Betty Meehan (1933-)**	**Nordkapp Municipality, Norway**	**70.978056**	**25.974722**
Martin Walker	Greta Garbo (1905-1990)	Stockholm, Sweden	59.329444	18.068611
Brendan Whyte	Paris Hilton (1981)	Valetta, Malta	35.898333	14.5125

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

We were born in the same country. You were born before me. Our occupations differ, but not if you use a "broad brush" to categorise us.

=> Kendo was born in Australia after 1933 (Wikipedia entry does not give Meehan's exact date of birth) and is not an archaeologist or anthropologist but may be some other kind of scientist (a zoologist).

Round 3:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	Keith Richards (1943-)	Tripoli, Libya	32.887222	13.191389
Steve Guest	Madonna (1958-)	Madona, Latvia	56.8542	26.2206
Chris Hibbert	Johannes Kepler (1571-1630)	Vilnius, Lithuania	54.687222	25.28
Dane Maslen	Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)	Szczecin, Poland	53.4325	14.548056
Bob Pitman	Judi Dench (1934-)	Copenhagen, Denmark	55.676111	12.568333
Jim Reader	**Julie Walters (1950-)**	**Jyvaskyla, Finland**	**62.241667**	**25.741667**
Martin Walker	Patrick Moore (1923-2012)	Barcelona, Spain	41.383333	2.183333
Brendan Whyte	Diana Rigg (1938-2020)	Wake Island	19.295278	166.631111

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

We are the same sex, and reside on the same side of the Pearly Gates. Our occupations are unrelated, though I share a forename with a notable practitioner of your profession

=> Kendo is female, alive and is not an actress, though she has the same forename as a famous actress (Marilyn Monroe)

Round 2:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)	Beijing, China	39.9075	116.39723
Steve Guest	Richard III (1452-1485)	Cape York, Australia	-10.6667	142.5333
Chris Hibbert	Michael Caine (1933-)	Diego Garcia, Indian Ocean	-7.319500	72.422859
Dane Maslen	Shirley Bassey (1937-)	Beijing, China	39.9075	116.39723
Bob Pitman	**Mary Tamm (1950-2012)**	**Odesa, Ukraine**	**46.485722**	**30.743444**
Jim Reader	Evonne Goolagong Cawley (1951-)	The Gabba, Brisbane, Australia	-27.484831	153.036166
Martin Walker	Robert De Niro (1943-)	Cairo, Egypt	30.06263	31.24967

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

We are the same sex, and whilst your transmitter is nearest to my hiding place, another's is sited close to my birthplace.

=> Kendo is female. She was in fact born in the same city as Jim's transmitter, but presumably not inside the cricket ground.

Round 1:

Player	Who	Where	Lat	Lon
Bob Gingell	Tony Blair (1953-)	Jerusalem	31.778889	35.225556
Steve Guest	Bob Marley (1945-1981)	Ganja, Azerbaijan	40.682778	46.360556
Chris Hibbert	Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887-1920)	Guatemala City	14.641667	-90.513333
Dane Maslen	Michel de Nostredame (1503-1566)	Worlds End, Hampshire	50.9	-1.0999
Bob Pitman	**Peter Thornley (1941-)**	**Lewisham Town Hall**	**51.4452**	**-0.0208**
Jim Reader	Patrick Andrade (1993)	Praia, Cape Verde Islands	14.918	-23.509
Martin Walker	Mother Theresa (1910-1997)	Agra, India	27.18	78.02

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

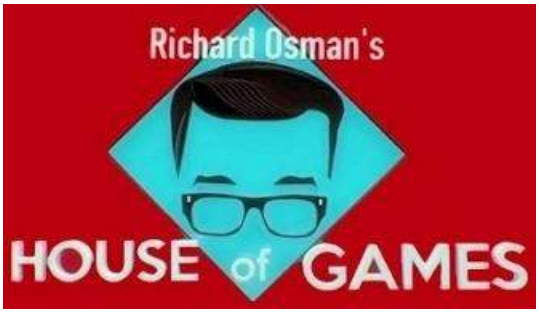
We were born less than 10 years apart.

=> Kendo born between 20th October 1931 and 18th October 1951

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS KENDO NAGASAKI - DESTINATION X(?) - NEW GAME

Please send in your initial guesses. I am going with another Destination X, but that could be changed after the R1 guesses are in.

HOUSE OF GAMES - NO RESEARCH VERSION - ROUND 3 OF 5



A third (five-round) outing for the rather fun "guessing" version of (Richard Smith's) House of Games. All the games are ones where you have to take a punt, rather than resorting to Google or ChatGPT.

For "Thursday" I have replaced *Half-Arted* with a round of *Bits of Hits* - will grotty guitar playing be an upgrade on dreadful drawings? We shall see / hear.

The BBC has announced series 10 of House of Games will air in November, and *Michael Sheen* is taking over from Richard Osman. I think he'll be great.

New players start on the lowest score, currently 12.

Bob Pitman and Steve Guest pull clear of the chasing pack.

Distinctly Average: The number of moons is higher than most people would think, though there was one very high guess. The Joe Root one is tough for those who don't follow cricket, but he was in the news recently for reaching 14,000 runs, the second most in history and closing in on Sachin Tendulkar's 16,000. The number of fish in the ocean is of course an estimate, with 3.5 trillion being the current best guess. As with the moons, the average was skewed by one very large guess.

I'm Terrible at Dating: I think these were a bit harder to guess than usual. One can envisage crude eyeglasses being around 1000 years ago, and the cosmic rays must be 20th century. Complex numbers anywhere in between.

Where Is Kazakhstan?: Three players actually knew where the stadia were!

You Spell Terrible: The Motorhead lyric is moderately well-known, with a number of ways to go wrong on the spelling. The board games one is also moderately well-known and even harder to spell. Onomatopoeia (I also accepted Onomatopoeic) is the only one I would have spelt correctly if I was playing.

Half-arted: House of the Dragon would have been a gimme with a better drawing. Bridge of Lies was made easier with the postal game about to be run - 8NT is an impossible contract at Bridge, so must be a lie! I think the Traitors picture should really have had a drawing of Claudia Winkleman or perhaps the round table, as there are other TV shows that feature treachery and backstabbing.

Answer Smash: You needed know your Burnhams from your Barnums this time. The Andy Burnham one is a little apt as he is often pictured out jogging, trying to reduce the size of his moobs. I think the Boston Red Sox are pretty well known in the UK despite being a baseball team.

SCOREBOARD:

Player	PTS	Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40	Q41	Q42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
Bob Pitman	35(17)	200	10000	**2tn**	1500	**1500**	1970	**P10**	**L18**	**W7**	**2**		**2**	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑
Steve Guest	34(15)	79	**14000**	8tn	**1320**	1720	1950	**P10**	F16	**W7**	**2**		**2**		☑	☑	☑		☑
John Walker	23(10)	187	11000	500bn	1745	1843	**1965**	V4	G16	B5	**2**	**1**	**1**	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑
Steve Ham	22(8)	9500	34800	8bn	1780	1848	1991	L11	G16	A24	**1**		**2**	☑	☑	☑		☑	☑
Jim Reader	20(10)	35	20000	**2tn**	1470	1820	1921	**P10**	L17	**W7**	**2**	**2**	**1**						
Bob Gingell	18(5)	242	2030	40bn	1603	1680	1926	P15	C12	B3		**2**	**2**			☑			
Mike Pollard	13(4)	18	7800	**10tn**	1525	1785	1925	C5	J14	A24			**2**				☑		
Chris Hibbert	12(6)	**250**	2000	250tn	1620	1680	1952	Y7	J17	X12			**1**				☑	☑	☑
Answer		**293**	**14114**	**3.5tn**	**1290**	**1545**	**1962**	**P10**	**L18**	**W7**									
(Average)		*1314*	*12704*	*34tn*															

R3 (Wednesday) Answers:

R3: Distinctly Average

The player(s) closest to the correct answer get a point and the player(s) closest to the average of ALL players get a point. It is possible to get two points.

37) As of 17th June 2026, how many confirmed moons does Saturn have? **293**
38) As of 1st July 2026, how many test match runs has Joe Root made? **14,114**
39) What is the currently accepted best estimate for the number of fish in the ocean? **3.5 tn**

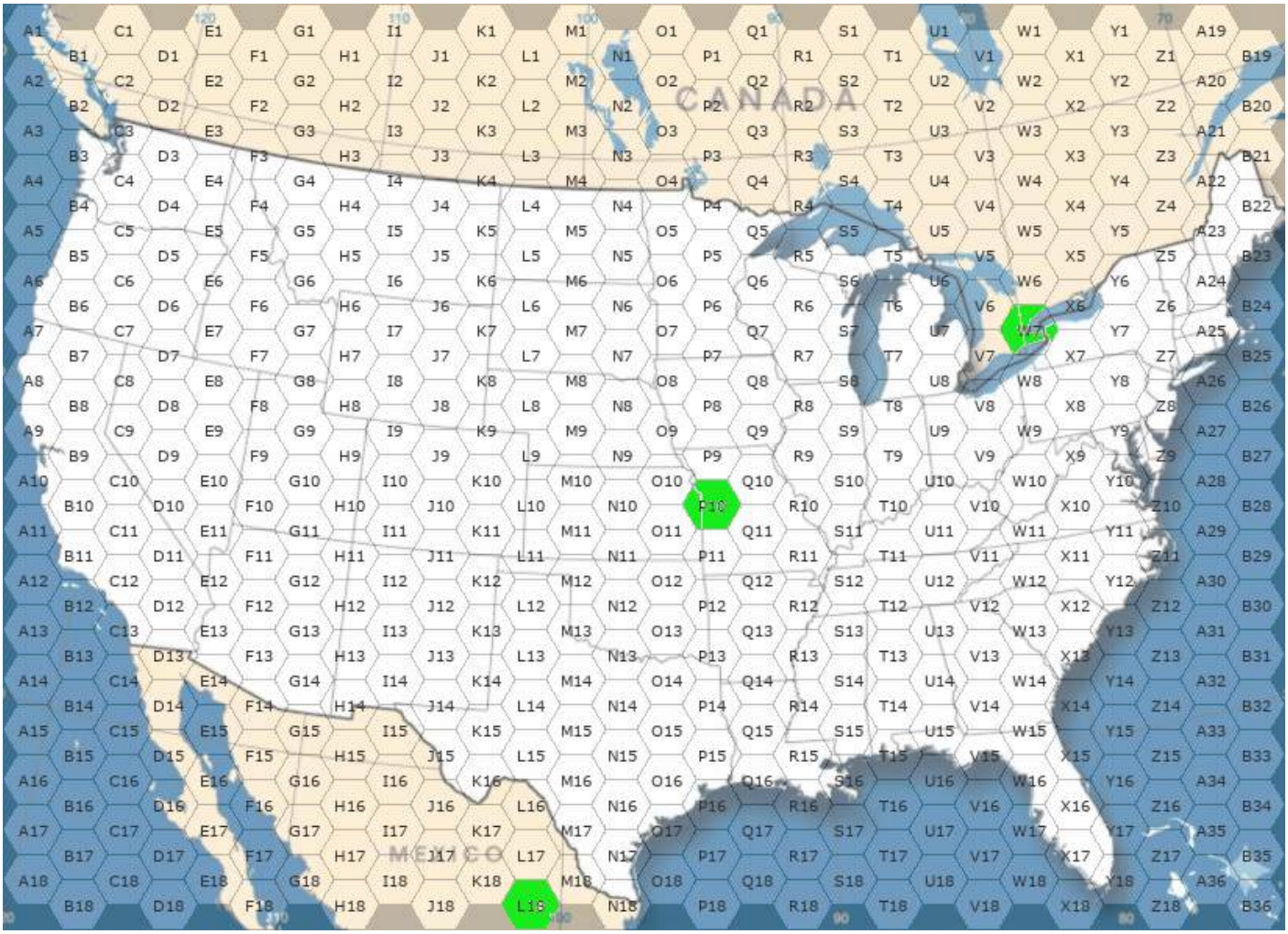
R3: I'm Terrible at Dating

2 points if exact, otherwise 1 point for nearest player(s). There is an Italian science theme this time.

40) In which year were eyeglasses invented? **1290**
41) In which year did Italian polymath Gerolamo Cardano discover complex numbers **1545**
42) In which year did Riccardo Giacconi and his team discover cosmic X-rays? **1962**

R3: Where is Kazakhstan?

2 points for anyone getting the correct hex, and if no-one does, the player(s) the least hexes away get a point. Our map today is World Cup 2026 venues:



43) Which hex contains Arrowhead Stadium? **P10 (Kansas City)**
44) Which hex contains Estadio BBVA **L18 (Guadalupe)**
45) Which hex contains BMO Field? **W7 (Toronto)**

R3: You Spell Terrible

You are asked three questions, each of which has an answer that is tricky to spell. You get one point for getting the answer right, plus an additional point if it is spelt correctly (without recourse to spell-checkers or the internet).

46) The song *Motorhead* by Ian "Lemmy" Kilmister is unusual in that it mentions what particular shape in its lyrics? **Parallelogram**
47) Klaus Teuber's 1990 board game *Hoity Toity* is also known as *Fair Means of Foul*, and what two-word German name? BGG gives two alternative spellings for this name, either will be taken as correct. **Adel Verpflichtet or Adel Verplicht**
48) What is the word for the formation or use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to? **Onomatopoeia**

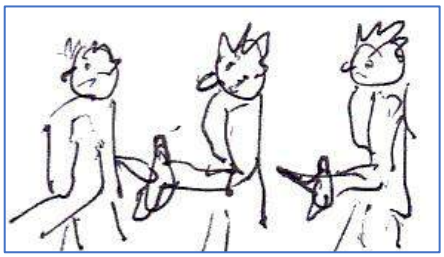
R3: Half-arted

On the TV show three players all add to a picture which the fourth person has to guess what it is (usually a film, TV show, famous person etc.) For the postal game you just get one crappy image hand-drawn by the GM. 1 point each. This time all three are TV shows, the first from the USA, the second the UK, and the third has versions in many countries (including UK and USA).

49) **House of the Dragon**

50)

Bridge of Lies

51)  **The Traitors**

R3: Answer Smash

"Smash" the answers to the two clues together (so the end of the first is the start of the second, so "President of the USA / old-fashioned euphemism for sex" would be DONALD TRUMPY-PUMPY). 1 point for a correct answer, and unlike the TV show, you *don't* lose a point for a wrong guess.

52) Baseball team from Boston / military intelligence or deafening silence, for example **RED SOXYMORON**
53) Milk-producing exocrine / former Manchester mayor replacing Keir Starmer **MAMMARY GLANDY BURNHAM**
54) World's no.1 AI tool / 19th century American dubbed "The Greatest Showman" **CHAT GPT BARNUM**

R4 (Thursday) Questions:

R4: Distinctly Average

The player(s) closest to the correct answer get a point and the player(s) closest to the average of ALL players get a point. It is possible to get two points.

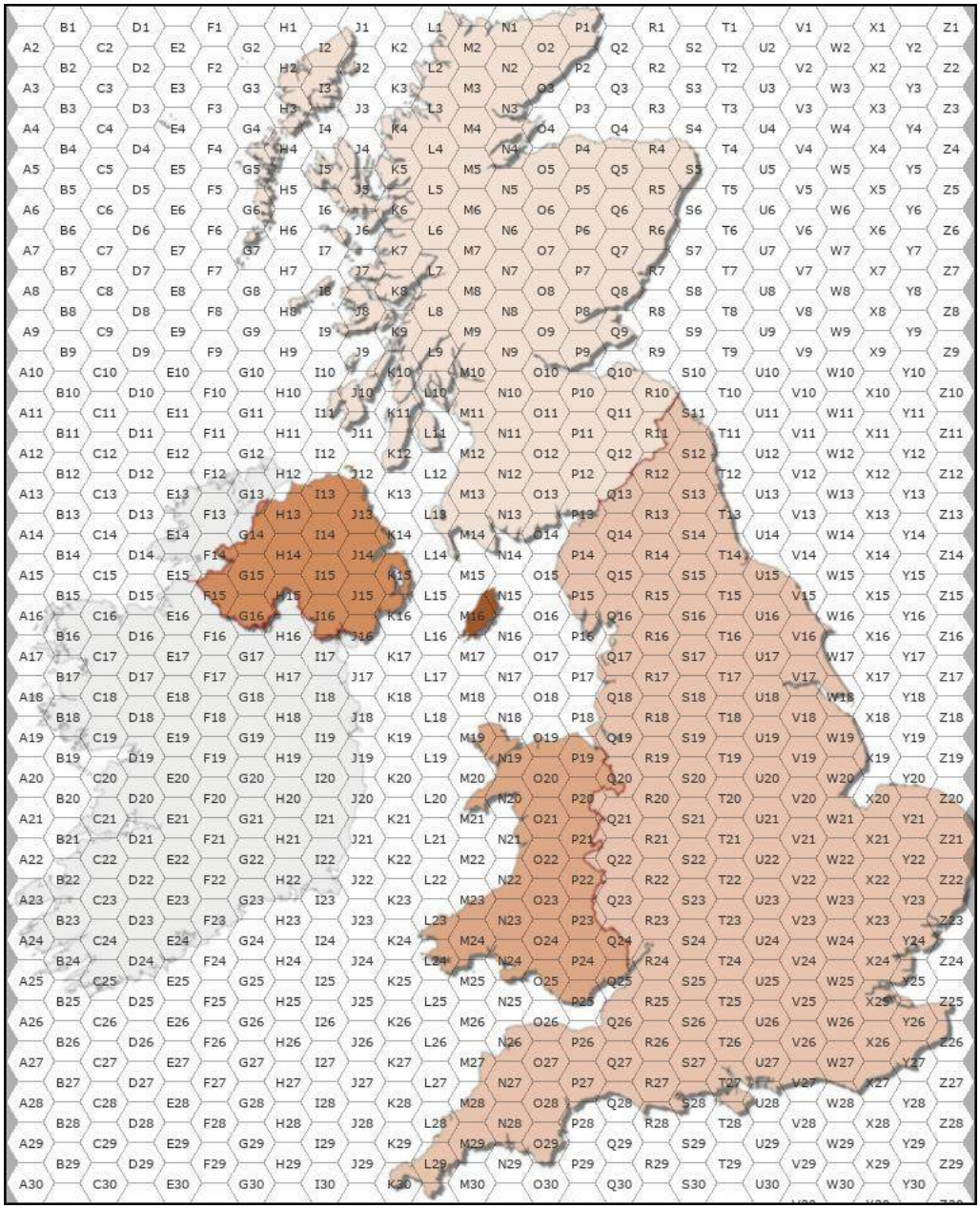
55) According to a recent (March 2026) study, how many sexual partners does the average French male have in his lifetime (rounded to 1 decimal place)?
56) According to the Pet Population Survey of 2026, how many pet snakes are there in the UK?
57) How many railroad deaths were there in the USA in 2025?

R4: I'm Terrible at Dating

2 points if exact, otherwise 1 point for nearest player(s). Democracy theme this time.

58) In which year did women (some, not all) first get the right to vote in the UK?
59) In which year did democracy originate in Athens under Cleisthenes? *(two adjacent years are commonly cited, either will be taken as correct)*
60) In which year was the Trades Union Congress (TUC) founded in the UK?

R4: Where is Kazakhstan?



2 points for anyone getting the correct hex, and if no-one does, the player(s) the least hexes away get a point. Our map today is UK heritage sites associated with kings:

61) Which hex contains Arthur's Seat?
62) Which hex contains Berkely Castle (where Edward II was allegedly murdered with a red-hot poker up the bum)?
63) Which hex contains Sutton Hoo (where King Raedwald of East Anglia is believed to be buried)?

R3: You Spell Terrible

You are asked three questions, each of which has an answer that is tricky to spell. You get one point for getting the answer right, plus an additional point if it is spelt correctly (without recourse to spell-checkers or the internet).

64) Who won the men's 5,000m gold medal in the 2026 European Athletics Championships?
65) Which American actor played Elwood Blues in 1980 and Ray Stantz in 1984?
66) What is the common name for the metamorphic amphibole with formula $(Mg,Fe^{2+})_2(Mg,Fe^{2+})_5Si_8O_{22}(OH)_2$, first identified in Massachusetts?

R4: Bits of Hits

On the TV show players try to guess the song from a 1-second clip. If they choose not to take a punt they move on to a two-second clip, and again if they do not want to guess, a final, three-second clip is played. The player(s) getting the right answer with the shortest clip get a point.

In the postal game, I play the introduction from three songs on the acoustic guitar, performed in one take (with possible mistakes). Players need to listen to the mp3s and try to identify the three songs.

This time they are all rock songs from the 1970s, the first two very famous, the third one more obscure. The first one is played on an electric guitar on the record and sounds slightly different. The second and third ones are played on an acoustic guitar on the record, though no.2 is actually recorded in "drop C" tuning rather than "drop D" that I played it in.

67) https://variablepig.org/music/question67.mp3 1972
68) https://variablepig.org/music/question68.mp3 1972
69) https://variablepig.org/music/question69.mp3 1978

Although this is a no research game, I tried the files with *Aha Music* - it was wrong on all three!

Duck Assist said: *Music identifiers can struggle with acoustic guitar due to the instrument's complex sound and nuances, which may not be as easily recognized as those from more electronically produced sounds. However, advancements in technology are improving their accuracy with acoustic music over time.*

R4: Answer Smash

"Smash" the answers to the two clues together (so the end of the first is the start of the second, so "President of the USA / old-fashioned euphemism for sex" would be DONALD TRUMPY-PUMPY). 1 point for a correct answer, and unlike the TV show, you *don't* lose a point for a wrong guess.

70) First black male Dr. Who title role actor / Mr. Creosote's nemesis
71) British politician who defeated Count Binface in Clacton / band who had the 2009 Christmas number 1 single in the UK following a campaign against The X-Factor
72) Country whose women's cricket team was banned in 2021 / daily agile "ceremony", usually performed in the morning

CRYSTAL BALL 2026 - TENNIS ELBOW

- Both Sinner and Alcaraz missed the US Open warm-up tournament through injury. Sinner is expected to be fit for the US Open but Alcaraz is still struggling with a wrist injury. Update - Sinner withdraws with a knee problem.
- Although the US Open starts in August (with the mixed doubles) it doesn't conclude until 13th September, albeit Alcaraz may be out sooner than that.
- The Solheim cup won't have been concluded when the zine goes out, unless the zine is late.
- LA Dodgers are currently the bookies' favourite for the World Series.
- In the F1, McLaren's upgrades have seen Lando Norris bagging quite a few points and he's now only just behind Russell and Hamilton, but Antonelli still has a big lead.
- If the tie-breaker is needed, Steve, Martin and Jim are all close to the opinion poll average of 23.8% on 12th August. The "Burnham Bounce" is having an effect as is the emergence of the even more extreme right-wing Restore Britain party.

No	Sport	Event	Date	Richard Smith	Steve Ham	Martin Walker	Jim Reader	John Walker
1L	Tennis	Australian Open - Women's	Jan	Sabalenka [1]	~~Swiatek~~	~~Swiatek~~	~~Swiatek~~	Sabalenka [1]
2L	Winter Olympics	GB medals total	Feb	3	2	2	4 [1]	2 (JOKER)
3L	American Football	Super Bowl	Feb	~~Buffalo Bills~~	~~Eagles~~	~~Packers~~	~~Buccaneers~~	~~Buffalo Bills~~
4L	Rugby	6 Nations	Mar	~~England~~	Ireland [1]	France [2]	France [2]	France [2]
5L	Cricket	World T20	Mar	~~England~~	India [2]	India [2]	~~Australia~~ (JOKER)	India [2]
6L	Athletics	London Marathon (men's)	Apr	Mutiso	Sawe [2]	Aseefa	Nageeye	Sawe [2]
7L	Golf	US Masters	Apr	Scheffler [1]	McIlroy [2]	De Chambeau	Fleetwood	Scheffler [1]
8L	Snooker	World Champion	May	~~Trump~~	~~Wilson~~	~~Trump~~	~~Williams~~	~~Trump~~
9L	Football	FA Cup: Highest placed non-Premier League team	May	Southampton (JOKER) [4]	~~Norwich~~*	~~Millwall~~	~~Ipswich~~	~~Coventry~~
10L	Football	World Cup winner	Jun	~~England~~	~~England~~	Spain [2]	~~France~~	Spain [2]
11L	Cycling	Tour De France	Jul	Pogacar [2]	Pogacar (JOKER) [4]	Pogacar (JOKER) [4]	Pogacar [2]	Pogacar [2]
12L	Tennis	US Open (men)	Aug	Alcaraz	Sinner	Sinner	Sinner	Alcaraz
13L	Golf	Solheim Cup	Sep	Europe	Europe	USA	Europe	USA
14L	Baseball	World Series	Oct	LA Dodgers	Padres	Seattle	Cleveland	LA Dodgers
15L	Formula 1	Champion Driver	Nov	~~Russell~~ Anotnelli*	Verstappen	Norris	Verstappen	Norris
TB	UK Politics	Reform opinion poll %	Dec	15%	26%	23%	22%	35%
SCORE				8	11	10	5	11

** free change*

RAILWAY RIVALS TOGO & BENIN (RR2576TB) - ROUND 0

GM: Bob Gingell

The popular start location was Djougou, but only one could start there and Jim won that.

GM note|: A reminder about the special border rules. It costs +1 from build allowance to build across the border between Togo and Benin until Round 10. There is no similar administration/pip cost for building across other international borders. At present it also costs 4 points paid from treasury to the bank to build across the border; this reduces to 2 points in Rounds 4-6 and to 1 point in Rounds 7-9. It also costs 1 pip and 1 point to run each race across this border in Rounds 7-9 and this applies to each border crossing if the race crosses the border more than once. There are no extra build or race costs in Rounds 10-12.
To clarify river locations, there is no river adjacent to Djougou (but two rivers have their sources nearby) and a river runs West of Porto Novo. There is only one crossing point into Niger, over the Niger River at Malanville.

Richard Smith, Great Outdoors Train Operators (GOTO)
Colour: Red; Start: Lome

Jim Reader, Bloody Useless Management (BUM)
Colour: Yellow; Start: Djougou

Brad Martin, Benin Energy Negates Togo (BENT)
Colour: Blue; Start: Cotonou

Steve Ham, Fancy Efficient Travel Itineraries through Southern Heartlands (FETISH)
Colour: Brown; Start: Cotonou

Round 1 build allowances: 5, 4, 4

Map at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/TogoBeninRR.pdf

RAILWAY RIVALS UZBEKISTAN (RR2587UZ) - ROUND 0

GM: Richard Smith

(hmm I wonder if https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahrisabz should have been on my map?)

```
John gets Tashkent (2nd)
Bob gets Jizzakh (1st)
Brad gets Nukus (1st)
Steve gets Koson (3rd)
Jim gets Namangam (1st)
Score = 12
```

The equitable starts generator, fed some widely different selections, gave the results to the left (three 1st, one 2nd and one 3rd). The only other combination to score 12 points was [John gets Nukus (1st), Bob gets Jizzakh (1st), Brad gets Koson (3rd), Steve gets Tashkent (2nd) and Jim gets Namangam (1st)] with Brad getting the unloved Koson start instead of Steve.

Nukus seems to polarise opinion. The player starting there gets the west to himself but then has to use some of those nice 6 UZS bonuses to bulldoze into the crowded east to get near the 50s and 60s. The test I did seemed pretty even between all the starts. If I had to choose one, I would go for Namangam, but Jizzakh has the most options so could be a winner, or perhaps just a "kingmaker".

John Marsden Old, Dry, Enervating (ODE) Colour: Green Start: Tashkent	**Bob Gingell** Bob's Underground Steam Trains (BUST) Colour: Black Start: Jizzakh	**Brad Martin** Steam Trains Encourage Perfect Passenger Enjoyment (STEPPES) Colour: Blue Start: Nukus	**Steve Ham** Locomotives And Network Distribution Linking Oasis Corridors, Kazakhstan and other Eurasian Destinations (LANDLOCKED) Colour: Purple Start: Koson	**Jim Reader** Wily Engineers Solve Terrible Headaches Everywhere And Develop Systems (WESTHEADS) Colour: Yellow Start: Namangam

Map at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/uzbekistan.html

Rolls for Round 1: 1a) 6 1b) 3 1c) 4

BUS BOSS YNIS MON (BB423MON) ROUND 7

GM Bob Gingell

MARS only enters three races but wins them all, while ROGER has a comparatively less successful round and drops back to third place (with the advantage of being first to make the next purchases). CACHU just manages to enter Race 6 with a route length exactly double the shortest entry. For new routes Beaumaris proves to be popular, MARS sticks to the coast and ROGER goes to the seaside while CACHU hoovers up four short routes.

GM notes:
1). As a clarification, so long as part of the route is over your own track you can enter any race – it does not need to be your track at the start or end of the route.
2). Each change of colour at a junction or town adds +1 to the pip length and counts when determining whether an entry is prohibited for being more than double the shortest route.
3). Players were notified of an error in the Round 7 report: in Race 9 town 7H was Llangefni.
4). There are now 6 races to unconnected destinations so those will be reoffered in Round 9, but with no increase in the maximum number of race entries allowed.

Press: Richard Smith (CACHU) - I think this is the first time I've ever done a "four-oners" build. *GM: I don't think I have seen this done in any previous game.*

Races for Round 7 (max 6 entries, ties = *):

1. (2D–JC): CACHU [9+1 = 10] 15* -3r +2 = 14; ROGER [9+1 = 10] 15* -2c +3 = 16.
2. (QH–7D): MARS 30.
3. (7S–QD): MARS [15+1 = 16] 12* -2c +5 = 15;
   CACHU [17+1 = 18] 13* -2m +7 = 18; ROGER [16+2 = 18] 5 -3m-5c = -3.
4. 4D (Wylfa) – JD (Moelfre) *[Not possible – reoffer]*
5. 5C (Penrhos) – 6C (Trearddur Bay) *[Not possible – reoffer]*
6. (2C–5H): ROGER [11] 20 +3 = 23; CACHU [20+2 = 22] 10 -3r = 7.
7. (6H–KH): MARS [11+1 = 12] 16 -6c +10 = 20; CACHU [11+1 = 12] 7* -5m +6 = 8; ROGER [15+1 = 16] 7* -5m = 2.
8. AC (Ferry to Ireland) – 5S (Caernarfon) *[Not possible – reoffer]*
9. (TS–7H): CACHU [8+1 = 9] 20 -2r = 18; ROGER [8] 10 +2 = 12.

Scores and purchases:

CACHU, blue (Richard Smith): 27 +65 -12 = 80
Cemaes - Wyfla; Bull Bay - Amlwch - Penysarn; Penrhosgarnedd - Snowdonia.
[1+2; 1+2, 1+2; 1+2 = 12]

MARS, orange (John Marsden): 28 +65 -12 = 81
Menai Bridge - Beaumaris; Newborough - Maltraeth. [4+2; 4+2 = 12]

ROGER, green (Roger Trethewey): 32 +50 -12 = 70
Valley – Trearddur Bay; Menai Bridge - Beaumaris [4+2; 4+2 = 12]

The in-game map is available at https://variablepig.org/maps/bb/ingame/BB423MON.jpg.

Races for Round 8 (enter any 6):

R4. 4D (Wylfa) – JD (Moelfre)
R5. 5C (Penrhos) – 6C (Trearddur Bay)
R8. AC (Ferry to Ireland) – 5S (Caernarfon) *[Not possible - reoffer]*
10. 9C (Llanfachraeth) – 8S (Bangor)
11. 4H (Gwalchmai) – 6D (Amlwch)
12. 3H (Maltraeth) – 7C (Rhoscolyn) *[Not possible – reoffer]*
13. 3S (North Wales Coast) – 9D (Llanerchymedd) *[Not possible – reoffer]*
14. 3D (Cemaes) – AD (Llanfaethlu)
15. KS (Llangoed) – 9S (Llanfair PG) *[Not possible – reoffer]*
16. JH (Llangaffo) – JS (Beaumaris)
17. TD (Penysarn) – KC (Rhosneigr) *[Not possible – reoffer]*
18. 2H (Bodorgan) – AH (Aberffraw) *[Not possible – reoffer]*

Bid order for Round 8: Roger, Richard, John.

BUS BOSS YNIS MON (BB424MON) ROUND 7

GM Richard Smith

Five races were not possible, with each company being able to enter three of the remaining four. I really like the map and it does look small, but probably should be 4-5 players rather than 3-4. Nevertheless the three-player game with building likely to continue right to the end will still be interesting.

For the builds, everyone got first choice, with Snowdonia and Beaumaris now both connected. TAFF's build to Maltraeth gets them in the south, BAA being partly blocked from that area.

	BAA Bob Gingell Green	**NYE** Brad Martin Blue	**TAFF** Jim Reader Yellow
1. (2♠) Snowdonia – (3♦) Cemaes	race not possible		
2. (K♠) Llangoed – (Q♥) Dwyran	race not possible		
3. (J♠) Beaumaris – (9♣) Llanfachraeth	race not possible		
4. (J♥) Llangaffo – (K♦) Benllech	15 [16] -8	15 [17] +8	
5. (10♥) Newborough (Niwbwrch) – (4♣) Llaingoch		10 [24] -5 +6	20 [22] +5 -6
6. (Q♦) Brynteg – (8♣) Vally (Y Falli)	5 [21] +5 +5 -1	12 [15] -5 +1	13 [15] -5
7. (Q♠) Llandonda – (5♠) Carenarfon	race not possible		
8. (7♥) Llangefni - (A♥) Abberfraw	race not possible		
9. (3♣) Holyhead (Caergybi) – (8♦) Rhosybol	15 [21] +7 -5		15 [21] -7 +5

Last Turn	28	28	29
Points from Races	38	42	40
Builds	-12	-12	-12
Points Total	54	58	57

BAA Green Bob Gingell	Menai Bridge - Beaumaris; Penrhosgarnedd - Snowdonia; Amlwch - Bull COST: 4+1+1+2+2+2 = 12
NYE Blue Brad Martin	Menai Bridge - Beaumaris; Bangor - Snowdonia; Bangor - North Wales Coast COST: 4+1+1+2+2+2 = 12
TAFF Yellow Jim Reader	Llanfair PG - Menai Bridge; Rhostrehwfa - Maltraeth COST: 6+2+2+2 = 12

Races for Round 8, enter up to 6 (including reoffers):
R1. (2S) Snowdonia – (3D) Cemaes
R2. (KS) Llangoed – (QH) Dwyran *(race not yet possible)*
R3. (JS) Beaumaris – (9C) Llanfachraeth
R7. (QS) Llandonda – (5S) Carenarfon *(race not yet possible)*
R8. (7H) Llangefni - (AH) Abberfraw *(race not yet possible)*
10. (9S) Llanfair PG – (5D) Bull Bay
11. (4S) Caernarfon – (8H) Pentraeth
12. (6S) Penrhosgarnedd - (JC) Bryngwran
13 (6H) Llangenfni - (4D) Wyfla
14. (5H) Rhostrehwfa - (7C) Rhoscolyn *(race not yet possible)*
15. (AD) Llanfaethlu - (10C) Bodedern
16. (6D) Amlwch - (2D) Church Bay *(race not yet possible)*
17. (KC) Rhosneigher - (5C) Penrhos *(race not yet possible)*
18. (3S) North Wales Coast - (KH) Brynsiencyn

In-game map at https://variablepig.org/maps/bb/ingame/BB424MON.jpg

Bid order for Round 8: Bob, Jim, Brad

RAILWAY RIVALS - SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA (RR2557SG) - ROUND 9

Race 15 was a gimme for FAR, and in race 16 BEAR was first to the gold. Race 17 was a three-way sprint with LIONS being slow out of the blocks (first two dice 2 and 3).

In race 18, FAR's more efficient line was the difference, then LIONS squeaked a very close one for race 19 (a one-pipper).

Race 20 was another close one with the totals at 29-28-30 after 8 dice. BEAR ended up with no points but had they won would have remained 1st overall.

The in-game map is available at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2557SG.jpg

	BEAR Kevin Lee Black	**FAR** Brad Martin Blue	**LIONS** Jim Reader Yellow
15. Guinea (Sp3) - Kaolack (33)		20 [19] -1	 +1
16. Janjanbureh (65) - Minerals (Sp5)	20 [13 Au]		10 [16 Fe]
17. Dakar (23) - Foundiougne (32)	15 [10] -2	15 [8] +2	0 [8]
18. Koumpentoum or Velingara (51) - Richard Toll (12)	10 [23] -4 +4	20 [19] -4 +4	
19. Sainsoubou or Saraya (45) - Sedhiou (54)		10 [23] -4 +1	20 [24] -1 +4
20. Kedougou (46) - Dakar (21)	0 [31] -2	15 [30] -1	15 [31] +2 +1
21. Bassa Santa Su (66) - Louga (14)	10 [26] -3		20 [23] +3

Last Turn	197	176.5	162.5
Points from Races	48	77	75
Builds	-	-3 +1	-6 -1
Points Total	245	251.5	230.5

BUILDS:

BEAR: No builds
FAR: (Saint Louis) --- E7 {Mauritania}
LIONS: (D9) --- C9 {Mauritania}; (D14) - - - G16 [-1 blue]

Races for Round 10: Enter up to **5** races and build up to 4 points of track

22. Matam (42) - Louga (14)
23. Town on Gambia River (Sp6) - Podor or Lagbar (13)
24. Joal Fadiout or M'bour (31) - Bignonia or Dai'aba (52)
25. Mauritania (Sp1) - Goudin or Kidira (43)
26. Kolda (53) - Thies (25)
27. Kaolack (33) - Bassa Santa Su (66)
28. Thies (26) - Janjanbureh (65)

RAILWAY RIVALS SYRIA (RR2566SY) ROUND 8

A great round for BOOMS with three wins and a second. Not much to shout about for the other companies.

Race 10 was a rare 3-way tie for second place, and the F2F rules do actually cover this example, it's 4-3-3 with the 4 going to the poorest company at the time of the race.

ROGER was the only company running a service to Iraq in race 13, whilst race 14 reminded me that the combination of a large-scale map and real dice is a slow one.

Al-Malikiya has now been connected and BOOMS and ROGER managed to supply identical builds.

The in-game map is available at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2566SY.jpg

	BOB Bob Gingell Black	**BOOMS** Jim Reader Orange	**SKR** Brad Martin Blue	**ROGER** Roger Threthewy Green	**SHIT** Michael Pargman Purple
8. Aleppo (16) - Latakia (23)		10 [17]	20 [9]		
9. Historic Site (Sp6) - Afrin (12)	20 [11] -1 -6		10 [11] +6 -5	0 [20] +1 +5	
10. Damascus (63) - Salamiyah (53)	3 [14]	20 [14] -3 -2	3 [15] -3 +2		4 [15] -4 +3
11. Deir ez-Zor (34) - Al-Hazakah (43)		20 [10]		10 [11]	
12. Tartus (26) - Raqqa (33)		 +2 +1	10 [25] -1 -5	 +5	20 [21] -2
13. Homs (55) - Iraq (Sp3)				20 [29]	
14. Damascus (62) - Qamishli (45)	0 [51] -2 +4	20 [43]			10 [44] +2 -4

Last Turn	86	63	65	51	85
Points from Races	18	68	37	41	29
Builds	-10 -1 +1 +1 +1	-10 -1 -1 +2	-10 -2 -2 -1	-10 +2 -1 -1 +1	-10 +6 -1 -1 +1 +1 +1 +1
Points Total	96	121	87	83	112

BUILDS:
BOB: (T15) - - - W14 - - Al Thawrah; (W14) - - - Z15 - - B52 [-1 purple]
BOOMS: (N10) - - - - - S8 - Manbij - T6 --- T5 [-1 purple, -1 black]
SKR: (K42) - --- M43 - N42; (H54) - I55 - - - I58; (F13) - F14 [-2 green, -2 orange, -1 purple]
ROGER: (N10) - - - - - S8 - Manbij -T6 --- T5 [-1 purple, -1 black]
SHIT: (Q41) --- - - AL-MALIKIYAH; (Q15) - - - - Q19; (R40) - R39 {Turkey E} [+6] [-1 green, -1 black]

Races for Round 9: Enter any 4 and build up to 8 points of track.

15. Douma (61) - Kobani (11)
16. Hama (51) - Maarat al-Newman (22)
17. Al-Thawrah (31) - Palmyra (56)
18. Damascus (64) - Deir ez-Zor (35)
19. Manbiij (13) - Ras al-Ayn (41)
20. Al-Malikiyah (46) - Turkey West (Sp1)
21. Idlib (21) - Turkey East (Sp2)

RAILWAY RIVALS BHUTAN (RR2550BT) ROUND 12

A comfortable win in the end for BUTT, though YETI top scored to finish second. That was in part down to ROGER choosing not to pay 2 to BUTT in race 39. The first rolls were BUTT: 2 ROGER: 5 YETI: 4 (wins), followed by BUTT: 4 ROGER: 3 - tie. Had ROGER paid they would have won the race with YETI second, and finished just ahead of their yellow rival.

With shorter lines in the last two races, BUTT got a first and a tie, though even two seconds would have been just enough. I have a GES below from Bob and Roger, Jim might send one for next time.

	BUTT Bob Gingell Black	**ROGER** Roger Threthewey Green	**YETI** Jim Reader Yellow
36. West Bengal / Arunachal Pradesh (Sp2) - Daga (42)	10 [27]		20 [16]
37. Phuntsholing (26) - Trongsa (34)		20 [23] -7	 +7
38. Monasteries (Sp6) - Pemagatshel (65)	10 [23] +4	20 [16] -4	
39. Thimphu (14) - Punakha (31)	5 [4] +2	5 [6]	20 [4] -2
40. Laya (11) - Samtse (23)		 +6	20 [30] -6
41. Gelephu (45) - Samdrup Jongkhar (55)	15 [13] +2		15 [14] -2
42. Panbang (53) - Trashigang (63)	20 [9] +2		10 [11] -2

Last Turn	366	331	312
Points from Races	70	40	80
Builds	-	-	-
Points Total	436	371	392

Game End Statements:

Bob: Crucial to me was building with expensive parallel build payments through the pass from Trongsa to Nubding. Worth it! I can see that leapfrog is not necessary for 3 players but would suggest that it is recommended for 4 players given in particular the shortage of West to East routes but also the narrow passes elsewhere.

Thanks to Richard for good GMing and a challenging map. I do not like the spurious and largely inactive Chinese claims to "disputed areas" as a special and believe that if China claims such areas there should be access from and to China through them. Two specific connection points may be accurate currently but not in combination with "disputed areas".

Thanks to Jim and Roger for the competition.

Roger: Congratulations to Bob on the win. There was no way to catch him, and he made good routes, taking control of the east. A good game, and thanks to Richard for keeping us under control.

The in-game map is available at: https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2550BT.jpg

RAILWAY RIVALS BHUTAN (RR2551BT) ROUND 12

GM Bob Gingell

HAPPY coasts to a win, helped by one sole entry and two wins over slightly longer routes. BOTI is the biggest scorer, overtaking a flagging HEART which had only four race entries.

GM note: The Round 11 report wrongly stated players could only enter up to 4 races. As in previous rounds players could enter up to 5 races and all were notified of this correction. Additionally, Race 42 rightly excluded I22 but for the wrong reason – it is not in Assam.

Press: Steve Ham (HEART):- Only 4 entries - I don't think there is a 5th one that will benefit me vs Happy.

Races for Round 12 (max 5 entries)

36. (14–#5 both Paro): BOTI [3] 20 +2 = 22; HAPPY [3] 10 -2b = 8.
37. (25–33): BOTI [19] 20 -1ht =19; HEART [20] 10 +1 = 11.
38. (36–65): HAPPY 20.
39. (44–12): HAPPY [20] 20 -3ht-3b +1 = 15; HEART [18] 10 -1hy-5b +5 = 9;
BOTI [19] 0 -2ht +8 = 6.
40. (51–46): HAPPY [21] 20 -1ht-5b +3 = 17; HEART [20] 10 -4b-3hy +1 = 4; BOTI +9.
41. (61–56): BOTI [17] 20 -6hy +3 = 17; HAPPY [17] 10 -3b +6 = 13.
42. (#3–24): HEART [16 from T22] 20; BOTI [29 from Y22] 10.

Scores and no builds:

HAPPY, blue (Brad Martin):	390 +73 = 463. 1st
HEART, purple (Steve Ham):	362 +44 = 406. 3rd
BOTI, red (Richard Smith):	352 +83 = 435. 2nd

Leaps: HAPPY - 1 over BOTI, 1 over HEART.

The in-game map is at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2551BT.jpg

CONGRATULATIONS TO BRAD MARTIN (HAPPY)

End Game Statements

Richard Smith (BOTI - 2nd and map designer): I think this map works well with three players, as there are three pretty even starts, and the size of the map means most towns are connected by the end of R6. I don't think it really needs leapfrog, and the reason for this is the "thinning" of the mountains. Quite a lot of the open hexes on the map are really smaller mountains. I like the idea of the monasteries being a special and all of them being at elevation, which they mostly are in Bhutan, though surprisingly only one got connected in this game (B32 might have been profitable for Brad or Steve).

I chose Phuntsholing for my start town as you can be first to Thimphu and have a bit of a monopoly in the southwest. The downside is the other two companies will have established east-west lines (along the south coast and the crucial "short cut" through Nubding, Trongsa and Jakar) before you get there. Congratulations to Brad, assuming he holds on, though I expect the final scores to be pretty close.

Bob Gingell (GM): It looks as if in both games in CSL the Eastern starter has done well, and building the route from SE to NW has played a big part in that. The mountain pass at Nubding does seem to be very important, as is Thimphu which all players connected to. I think that HEART was disadvantaged by having two parallel West to East routes whereas the other companies were able to rely on only one. Leapfrog was rarely used so I agree with Richard that it does not seem necessary on this map, at least with 3 players.

RAILWAY RIVALS DURHAM 1826 (RR2570DH) ROUND 5

Three towns and three specials still to connect, though all unconnected towns are in the Pennines with only DIADEM in shooting distance.

However, PUFFING BILLY, LANCHESTER and GEAR all making westwards progress. LANCHESTER also claimed the northern dead-end town of RYTON (man!)

Not much use of the line upgrades. I am beginning to think this was an unnecessary complication, or could have been done in a simpler way (e.g. pay £50 to upgrade all line at the end of round 9).

PUFFING BILLY Jim Reader Yellow	5a. [6] (Q53) - - - - - - HARTLEPOOL 5b. [4] (Durham) - G52 - - E51 - D51 5c. [5] (D51) - - - - - Y18 BANK: 37 +6 -1[LANCHESTER,E51] -1[DIADEM,F51] -1[DIADEM,Y18] +1[GEAR,Q64] = 41
LANCHESTER Brendan Whyte Blue	5a. [6] (Bishop Auckland) --- - - - Witton-le-Wear 5b. [4] (E41) - --- E39 5c. [5] (E39) - - - RYTON; (H39) - Gateshead; (N64) - O65 BANK: 49 +6 -1[DIADEM,Y20] +1[DIADEM,F62] +1[DIADEM,G65] = 56
GEAR Kevin Lee Green	5a. [6] (E46) - D45 - - - - Lanchester - Z11 5b. [4] (Z11) - - - - V13 5c. [5] (V13) - U14 - - Wolsingham; (O64) - P63 - Q64 BANK: 31 -1[PUFFING BILLY,Q64] = 30
DIADEM Steve Ham Purple	5a. [6] (Y24) - X24 - X25 - - STAINDROP; (Shildon) - C61 (upgraded) - D61 5b. [4] (D61) - - - G63 - G64 5c. [5] (G64) - G65; (Stanhope) - - - - L11 BANK: 50 +6 +1[LANCHESTER,Y20] -1[LANCHESTER,F62] -1[LANCHESTER,G65] +1[PUFFING BILLY,F51] +1[PUFFING BILLY,Y18] +1[LANCHESTER,E51] - 0.5[upgrades] = 57.5

The in-game map is at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2570DH.jpg

R6 Rolls are 6a) 6 6b) 5 6c) 2

RAILWAY RIVALS SOUTH TYROL (RR2572ST) ROUND 8

GM: Bob Gingell

Everyone has a sole entry this Round, although Race 14 could also have been entered by NIR from Cortina on a slow route. A stonking round for STYLE makes up for a poor showing last round and sees it roaring into the lead. STYLE even scored most in a race between the two other companies thanks to them both making significant rental payments. WIERER spent a lot renting STYLE's lines, which certainly helped STYLE's success this round. NIR's weak showing compared to the others results in a trailing position, but the game is still young.

GM note: Back to a maximum of 5 entries this Round.

Races for Round 8 (max 6 entries):
R3. (34–23): STYLE [17] 20 +7 = 27; WIERER [16] 10 -7s = 3.
R7. (#5 [B23]–11): WIERER [27+1 = 28] 20 -10s-1n = 9; STYLE [30+1 = 31] 10 +10 = 20; NIR +1.
8. (16–24): STYLE 20
9. (25–62): NIR [25+1 = 26] 20 -7s-2w = 11; WIERER [34] 10 -6s +2 = 6; STYLE +13.
10. (32–53): STYLE [19+1 = 20] 20 +1 = 21; NIR [37+1 = 38] 10-1s = 9.
11. (42–13): WIERER [8] 20; NIR [10] 10 -2s = 8; STYLE +2.
12. (52 –#3 [Cortina]): NIR 20.
13. (65–44): WIERER [22+1 = 23] 20 +4 = 24; NIR [29+1 = 30] 10 -4w = 6.
14. (#6 [Canazei]–31): WIERER 20 -5s = 15; STYLE +5.

Scores and builds (max 10):
WIERER, purple (Steve Ham): 127 +77 -9 = 195.
(K18) - - - - - - - D14 - - - Reschen [-1s]. [-10 -1 +2 = -9]
NIR, blue (Brad Martin): 121 +55 -10 = 166.
(P16) – O16 – N16 [-1s]; (C43) – D42 – D41 – Brenner; (M45) - L44 – L43 – M43 – Sand in Taufers; (M43) - N42 [-1w]. [-10 -2 +2 = -10]
STYLE, red (Richard Smith): 102 +108 -11 = 199.
(X22) - - - - --- - D53 [-2n-1w]; (B23) - Bormio; (Reschen) - D10. [-10 -3 +2 = -11]

The in-game map can be found at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2572ST.jpg.

Races for Round 9 (enter any 5):
15. 14 (Leifers) – 33 (Schlanders)
16. 26 (Naturns) – #1 (Nord Tirol: ~~Landeck~~ / Innsbruck)
17. 36 (Reschen) – 43 (St Ulrich)
18. 41 (Welschnofen) – 22 (Lana)
19. 56 (Kiens) – 15 (Kaltern)
20. 63 (Prettau) – 55 (Vintl)
21. #2 (Osttirol) – 66 (Toblach)

Round 9 build allowance: 8 points excluding payments to others.

RAILWAY RIVALS SOUTH TYROL (RR2565ST) ROUND 8

No entries for the Innsbruck race (STINK could've run for 6 to ROGER) and the big west to east run in race 8 was done via XRP (not a JR) so lots of dice to roll for me. After 15 dice, BUST were just ahead but the 16th fling favoured ROGER and it finished B52 - R51.

A decent haul for most companies except for STIFY whose woes continue. They would have won the final race had STINK not paid them to shave off one pip. One would think 7 vs. 7 is a quite likely draw.

STINK decided expensive builds to the west may not be economically sound, whilst BUST paid 12 in fees to get to Mals, which I think could well be recouped. ROGER established a Swiss connection and possible entry to R1 (at a cost of 9, but could be a net 3). STIFY also made it over the Swiss border - a great escape perhaps?

The in-game map is available at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2565ST.jpg

	BUST Bob Gingell Black	**ROGER** Roger Threthewy Green	**STIFY** Bob Pitman Red	**STINK** Michael Pargman Purple
R1. St Leonhard (25) - Landeck or Innsbruck (Sp1)	no entrants			
8. Osttirol (Sp2) - Reschen (36)	XRP 10 [53] +12 -12	XRP 20 [51] +12 -12		
9. Vintl (55) - Lana (22)		10 [21] -3 -3	0 [24] +3	20 [21] +3
10. Bruneck (61) - Eppan (13)	15 [21] -3		0 [25] +3 +3	15 [23] -3
11. Welschnofen (41) - Canazei or Cles (Sp4)	20 [13]			
12. Toblach (66) - Brixen (51)		20 [17] -6		10 [18] +6
13. Leifers (14) - Schlanders (33)	20 [19] -2	10 [20] +2		
14. Terlan (21) - Sarnthein (45)		 +1	15 [7] +2	15 [7] -2 -1

Last Turn	116	98	42	144
Points from Races	60	51	26	63
Builds	-10 -7 -5	-10 +7 -1 +1 +1	-10 +5 -1 -1	-1 +1
Points Total	154	147	61	207

BUILDS:
BUST: (L19) - K20 - - - - G18 - F18 - F19 [-7 green]; (F18) - E18 - - Mals [-5 red]
ROGER: (Reschen) - D10 - - B9 {Schweiz}; (B45) - --- B43 [-1 purple]; (D21) --- C22
STIFY: (Mals) - E17 - - - B18{Schweiz}; (E17) - - - E20 [-1 green]; (C45) --- B45 [-1 green]
STINK: (W21) - Terlan

Races for Round 9: Enter up to 4 races and build up to 8 points of track

R1. St Leonhard (25) - Landeck or Innsbruck (Sp1) 15. Schweiz or Lombardia (Sp5) - Welsberg (65)
16. Meran (24) - Trafoi (34) 17. Cortina d'Amprezzo or Agordo (Sp3) - Franzensfeste (52)
18. Meran (23) - Prettau (63) 19. Bozen (12) - Brenner (54)
20. Corvara (44) - Mals (35) 21. Bozen (11) - Klausen (46)

BAG OF DUNGEON - ROUND 9

Game rules were printed in TCD8 and are available at https://variablepig.org/rules/bagofdungeon.html

All of the dungeon has now been discovered, and the exit, guarded by the Dragon revealed. The Ring is now in play (and Sirrus has it). Adventurers are now permitted to attack each other.

See also F2F rules PDF for the rules for the "old spikey" trap that is blocking the way to the exit https://variablepig.org/rules/bod/bodrules_v3.pdf

Remember also that if the ring bearer escapes from the dungeon, the other characters have one turn to do likewise before the dungeon collapses.

Report for Round 9:

Turn order: Sirrus, Torvok, Alendra

Sirrus picks up the Acme Insurance certificate, and holding it in his shield hand moves two spaces to the south (2AP) to wait for the other adventurers by the trap. He is happy to swap items around as needed and suggests the Acme Insurance might be a good one to feed to the trap.

No item swapping was ordered for Round 9, but it can be done at the start of round 10 at no AP cost by adventurers on the same square. And of course we need to know how Torvok gets on with the chest…

Torvok decides to risk opening the chest (1AP). On a 1-4 he sets off the trap and gets 5 damage, on a 5-6 he opens it successfully and gets two items…
… (GM rolls a 3) Bang! He gets reduced to 3 health so decides not to try opening the chest again. It remains where it is and can either be ignored in future rounds, or another attempt made to open it.
He moves 2 spaces to the south (2AP) and joins Sirrus by the trap.

Alendra moves to the Healing Pool and uses its last heal. The rules require adventurers to end their turn at the pool, so she cannot move south yet. She can reach the space next to the trap next time, after Torvok's move but before Sirrus - so she could take an item from Sirrus but Torvok would need to drop something for her.

Round 10 Actions:

Turn order: Torvok, Alendra, Sirrus,

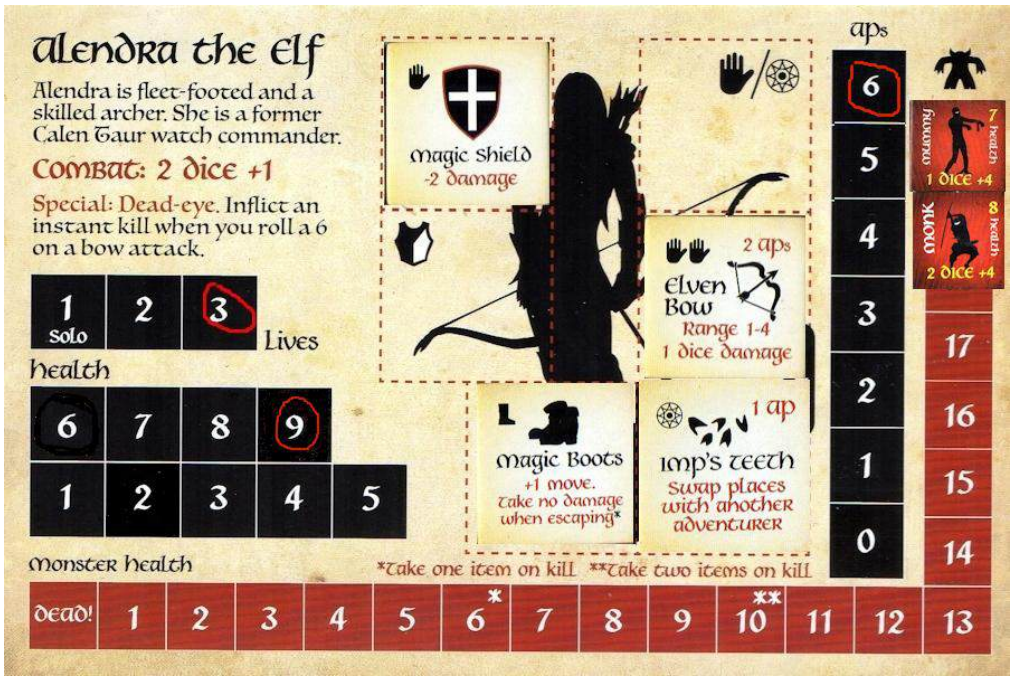
Inventory: Characters may rearrange items (no AP) cost, and characters can also swap items and this requires conditional orders from both, unless they are on the same square at the start of the turn.

Move, Collect Items, Use Items, Combat: Characters can use some or all of their remaining APs moving to known tiles. Collecting items does not cost an AP, but using items usually does (cost on tile). Combat is always the last action but remaining APs can be used to deploy items and / or escape.

Note that there is a monster waiting on the other side of the trap, which the first character to go through Old Spikey will have to engage, unless it is killed by magic. I am assuming that you *can* send a fireball or a bomb through the trap as the spikes are open. They only close on a 1 or 2 as an adventurer passes through.

Player: Jim Reader

Character: Torvok the Barbarian



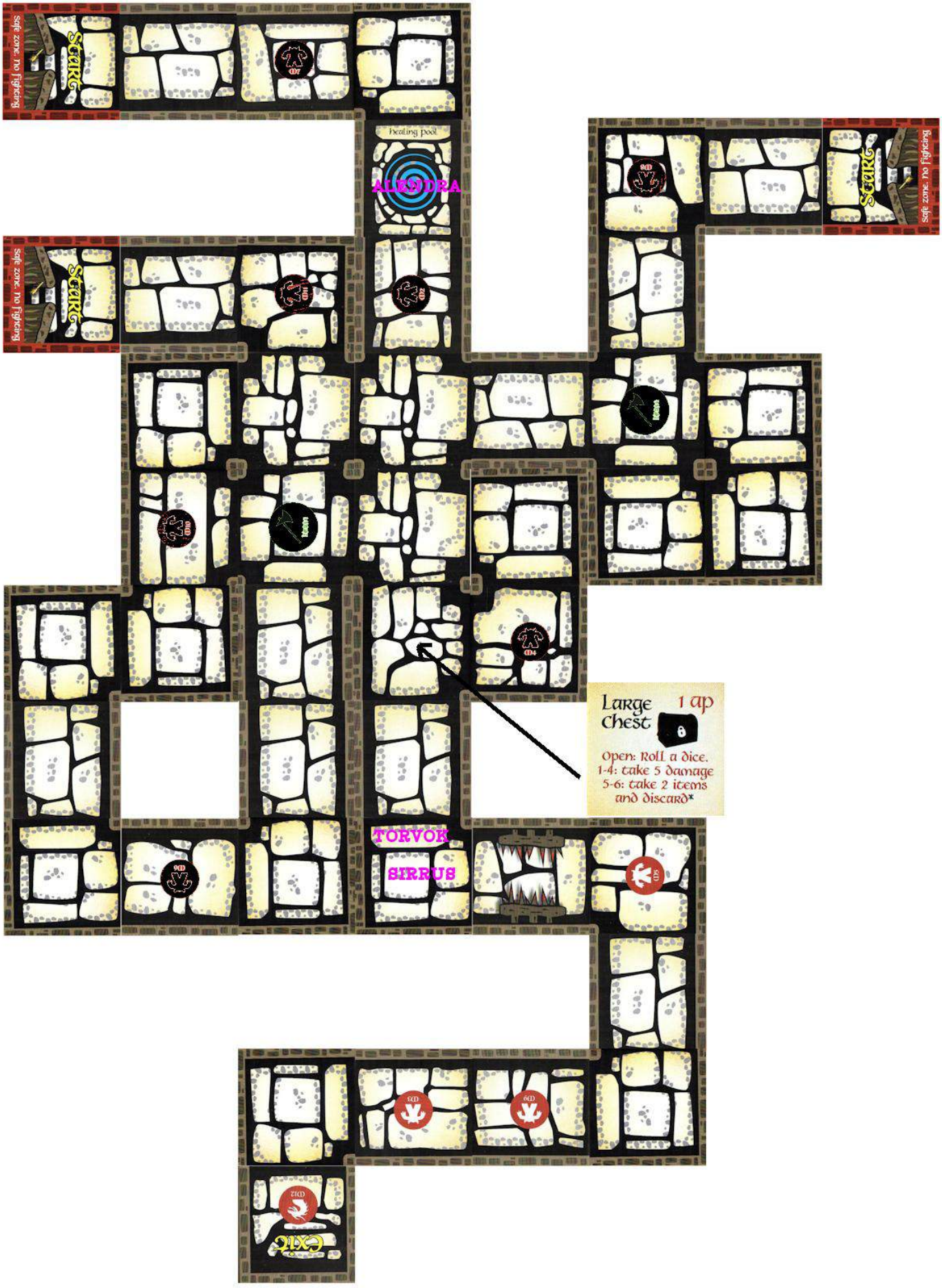
Player: Chris Hibbert

Character: Alendra the Elf

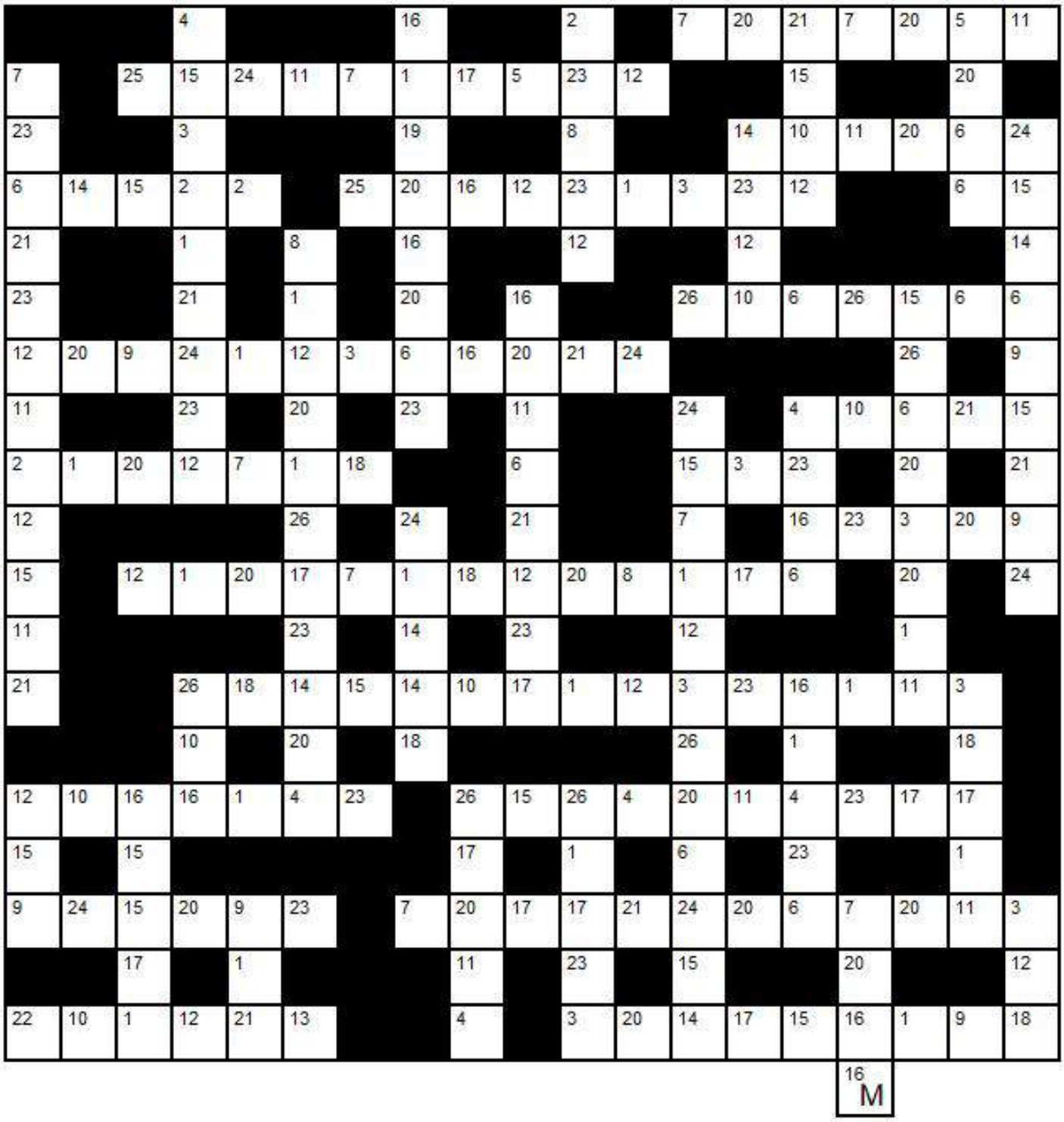
Player: Bob Gingell

Character: Sirrus the Fighter

Dungeon Map:


Safe zone. No fighting
SCARG
Healing pool
ALEXNDRA
Safe zone. No fighting
SCARG
Safe zone. No fighting
SCARG
Large Chest
1 ap
Open: Roll a dice.
1-4: take 5 damage
5-6: take 2 items and discard*
TORVOK
SIRRUS
EXIT

ZINES, GAMES AND GMS CODEWORD PUZZLE



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 M	17	18	19	20	21	22	13	24	25	26

Each of the words in the puzzle is the name of a zine (past or present), the name of game popular in zines, the name of a GM, or a non-theme word (n.b. proper nouns and names are allowed in codewords). I did originally provide a colour-coded grid, but this made it far too easy! Also being a bit mean, there is only one start letter given (instead of the usual 3) and the one filled in for you isn't even in the grid!

HERE BE DRA

Serpents Gambit – GM roll = 3

Bob acquires an item, Richard puts his Rolls of Silk up for sale for 2 gold, Likewise Chris puts his rolls of silk up for 2 gold. Chris also puts a silver dagger up for sale for 2 gold.

Players need to pick one of the three options below. In addition, you may also challenge Richard's and Chris' sale prices.

1 **Acquire**: You attempt to acquire a common or rare, good.
Example Order: "**ACQUIRE Common.**"
GM Action: The GM draws a new card for you, which will be sent to you if its value is equal or less than the GM dice roll.

2 **Sell Goods:** You attempt to sell one or more cards from your inventory.
Order: "**SELL for x**"
For any card you choose to sell, you can choose to bluff and say the card's value is higher than it is. The GM announces your intention to the other players, revealing only the bluff value.
Bluffing: Other players can challenge your value. If no one challenges you, you get your declared gold. If you are challenged, the GM reveals the card's real value. Challenges do not count as an order.
If your value was false: You get nothing for the sale and pay a penalty of 3 gold to the challenging player.
If your value was true: You receive the full value, and the challenging player pays you a penalty of 3 gold.

3 **Gain Skill Card:**
Order: "**Gain Skill**."
If the GM roll is 2 or higher, you gain the skill card, which will be sent to you.
Some skill cards will be revealed once they have been used.

Any sales are processed before the players' orders. So, any skill obtained will not affect last turns sales/challenges.

Winning the game
The first player to accumulate 25 or more gold wins the game. Bob has 13 gold (after selling his Griffin feathers unchallenged). Richard has 10 gold. Chris has 12.
If 2 or more players achieve this on the same turn any player with the most gold will win.

Lyrics 3 of 5 – no theme this time.

1 I wonder / I wo-wo-wo-wo-wonder why / Why, why, why, why, why / She ran away (1961) **Del Shannon – Runaway** (Brendan Whyte (song only), Jim Reader (song only), Richard Smith, John Hopkins, Bob Pitman)
2 Every other day (Every other day) / Every other day, every other day of the week is fine (Fine), yeah (1966) **Monday Monday - Mamas and Papas** (Brendan Whyte, Jim Reader, Dane Maslen, John Hopkins, Bob Pitman, Steve Guest)
3 Jeremiah was a bullfrog / Was a good friend of mine / I never understood a single word he said (1970) **Three Dog night – Joy to the World** (Brendan Whyte (song only), John Hopkins (song only), Bob Pitman (song only))
4 You were humming to yourself and softly strumming your guitar / I could hear the distant drums / And sounds of bugle calls were coming from afar (1976) **Fernando – ABBA** (Brendan Whyte, Jim Reader, Richard Smith, Dane Maslen, John Hopkins, Steve Guest)
5 She's precocious, and she knows just what it / Takes to make a pro blush (1981) **Bette Davis Eyes – Kim Carnes** (Brendan Whyte, Jim Reader, Richard Smith (song only), Bob Pitman, Chris Hibbert (singer only))
6 I hold on to your body / And feel each move you make / Your voice is warm and tender, a love / That I could not forsake (1984) **The Power of Love - Jennifer Rush** (Brendan Whyte, Jim Reader)
7 Don't tell me / It's not worth fightin' for / I can't help it / There's nothin' I want more (1991) **Everything I do** – **Bryan Adams** (Brendan Whyte, Jim Reader, Richard Smith, Bob Pitman, Steve Guest)
8 Dale a tu cuerpo alegría Xxxxxxxx / Que tu cuerpo es pa' darle alegría y cosa buena / Dale a tu cuerpo alegría, Xxxxxxxx / Hey Xxxxxxxx, ay (1993) **Macarena – Los Del Rio** (Brendan Whyte (song only), Richard Smith (song only), Steve Guest)
9 Underneath the starlight, starlight / There's a magical feeling so right / It will steal your heart tonight (2000) **Can't fight the Moonlight – Lyann Rimes**
10 Ring, ring, ring goes the telephone / The lights are on, but there's no one home / Tick tick tock, it's a quarter to two / And I'm done, I'm hanging up on you (2005) **Hung Up - Madonna**

Jim Reader 21+11=32
Richard Smith 20+8=28
Brendan Whyte 13+13=26
Steve Guest 19+7=26
Bob Pitman16+9=25
John Hopkins 14+7=21
Dane Maslen 13+4=17
Martin Walker 16+0=16
Chris Hibbert 2+1=3

Brendan 1 My little runaway / Bobby Gale 3 Joy to the world / Jethro Tull 8 Macarena / Dos Locos
Jim – 1 Runaway by Dion 8 Bailamos by Enrique Inglesias 9 wow I can sing this even to the first part of the chorus, but can't get the title or singer 10 - Tick Tock by Kesha?
Dane - 1 I think I recognise this. I strongly suspect I won't remember what it is.
2 Every other day (Every other day) / Every other day, every other day of the week is fine (Fine), yeah (1966)
MONDAY, MONDAY but I can't remember which American band it was by. THE MAMAS AND THE PAPAS? Seems unlikely given that I don't recall any female voices in the song.
4 FERNANDO by ABBA. The only thing that would have stopped me shooting myself if I'd failed to recognise this would have been the absence of a gun.
6 Perhaps I recognise this, but I'm certain I won't identify it.
Bob - 3. Jeremiah was a bullfrog – 3 Dog Night I think this was the title so bit surprised to see it as the lyric… so I'm probably wrong!
9 Dancing in the Moonlight – Toploader *GM Close, the moonlight was in there somewhere.*

Lyrics 4 of 5 – no theme this time.

1 Yeah, you should see my little sis / You should see my, my little sis / She really knows how to rock (1960)
2 Gimme a ticket for an aeroplane / Ain't got time to take a fast train / Lonely days are gone, I'm a-goin' home (1967)
3 But that's not how it used to be / When the jester sang for the king and queen (1971)
4 Night is young and the music's high / With a bit of rock music, everything is fine (1976)
5 So many times it happens too fast / You trade your passion for glory (1982)
6 I want to feel your body / Your heart beat next to mine / (This is the night) 1986)
7 You can tell the world you never was my girl / You can burn my clothes when I'm gone / Or you can tell your friends just what a fool I've been / And laugh and joke about me on the phone (1992)
8 Never fading with the sunset / When the rain set in / And your footsteps will always fall here / Along England's greenest hills (1997)
9 Guess who's back / I've created a monster / 'Cause nobody wants to see Marshall no more / They want Shady I'm chopped liver (2002)
10 In anticipation for precipitation / Stack chips for the rainy day / Jay, Rain Man is back (ayy, ayy, ayy) / With Little Miss Sunshine (ayy, ayy, ayy) (2007)

Sprint Finish 3 of 8 – Chris is hoping Josh will make a move soon but is currently happy letting the others do the work. Unfortunately, Josh has much the same idea and keeps Chris boxed in.

Lane 1	Bob	Cole	Jacob	Cameron	Richard	Steve	Chris
Lane 2							Josh

Steve feels it's time to pay closer attention and moves near the front

Lane 1	Bob	Steve	Cole	Jacob	Cameron	Richard	Chris
Lane 2							Josh

Richard reacts to Steve's move and tucks in behind him.

Lane 1	Bob	Steve	Richard	Cole	Jacob	Cameron	Chris
Lane 2							Josh

This in turn sparks Cameron who nudges ahead of Richard.

Lane 1	Bob	Steve	Cameron	Richard	Cole	Jacob	Chris
Lane 2							Josh

Jacob gets into a better position and moves alongside Cole, blocking Cole's intended move. Bob is a little unsure on what to do but is still leading

Lane 1	Bob	Steve	Cameron	Richard	Cole	Chris
Lane 2					Jacob	Josh

Players may only select one of the cards listed under their name, that have not been crossed through. The * indicates the card played this turn.

Richard Smith	Bob Gingell	Chris Hibbert	Steve Ham
Overtake 3	Overtake 3	Overtake 3	~~Overtake 3 *~~
~~Overtake 2 *~~	Overtake 2	Overtake 2	Overtake 2
Overtake 1	Overtake 1	Overtake 1	Overtake 1
~~Save Energy~~	~~Save Energy *~~	~~Save Energy *~~	~~Save Energy~~
Hold Line		Hold Line	Hold Line
Increase Pace		Increase Pace	Increase Pace
Move Alongside		Move Alongside	Move Alongside
Refresh Card		Refresh Card	Refresh Card
		~~Dip~~	Dip
		Joker	

Cole Hocker	Cameron Myers	Josh Kerr	Jacob Ingerbrigtsen
Overtake 3	~~Overtake 3 *~~	Overtake 3	Overtake 3
~~Overtake 2~~	Overtake 2	Overtake 2	~~Overtake 2~~
Overtake 1	Overtake 1	Overtake 1	Overtake 1
Save Energy	Save Energy	~~Save Energy *~~	Save Energy
Hold Line	Hold Line	Hold Line	Hold Line
Increase Pace	~~Increase Pace~~	Increase Pace	Increase Pace
~~Move Alongside *~~	Move Alongside	Move Alongside	~~Move Alongside *~~
Refresh Card		Refresh Card	Refresh Card
		Dip	Dip
		~~Joker Save Energy~~	

1. Overtake 3 (can only be played on turns 2 to 5)
2. Overtake 2 (cannot be played on the last turn)
3. Overtake 1
4. Save Energy (add one to next card e.g. Overtake 2 becomes Overtake 3)
5. Hold line (cannot be played on last turn)
6. Increase pace (Must be in the lead, tied or otherwise). Players need one extra to overtake. Does not affect move alongside)
7. Move alongside
8. Refresh Card (can only be cards that you have played i.e. in your discard pile)
9. Dip (Played on any turn but used on the last turn. Will win any ties on the last turn. If two dips used the winner will be the player on the inside. If a joker/refresh dip is used along with a card dip, this will out dip a single dip)
10. Joker (Can be played as any card)

Hold Line cards played first then the cards are processed from back to front, inside to outside.

If the game does not get eight players, the remainder of the runners will be made up of NPCs, who will select a random number of initial cards from 7 to 10, then will randomly play one of their cards each turn.

Anyone attempting to overtake someone who has played hold line would need an extra overtake i.e. if they played overtake one, instead of moving ahead they would move alongside.

6-Nimmt – Game start (Kevin Lee, Steve Ham, Jim Reader, Richard Smith)
The game will consist of 4 tables using a standard 104 card deck. Cards will be sent out by email.

Start Cards	Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4
	41 43 47 49	41 43 47 49	41 43 47 49	41 43 47 49

Devil take the hindmost – A Breaking Away variant.
Overview – You manage a team of 4 cyclists, scoring as many points as possible over a 10-lap race. You play one lap each turn.

The set up and replacement adjudication is the same as Breaking Away

Where the game differs is from turns 2 to 10 the rider(s) on the lowest hex are eliminated (these riders are included in the replacement card calculation). Scoring is also different. On turn three players score double the number of cyclists they have remaining. On turn seven players score triple the number of cyclists they have. On turn ten riders score according to their position the track. 10 points for first place 8 for second down to one for eighth. Tied positions are averaged.

I am looking for 5 to 6 players. You are welcome to send me your team set up as per the Breaking Away rules on the Variable Pig website: Main Rules and Variants.

Postscript – I still need a player for snakes and ladders, although someone has suggested players could play two positions. Would anyone prefer not to do this? The pros are we could get the game started and give you a lot more information. The cons are it would double your workload and make it more difficult to avoid trapdoors.

THE TANGERINE TERROR #89/I AM THE KURIOUS KUMQUAT #19
The "A Year Of Reading Dangerously" Edition

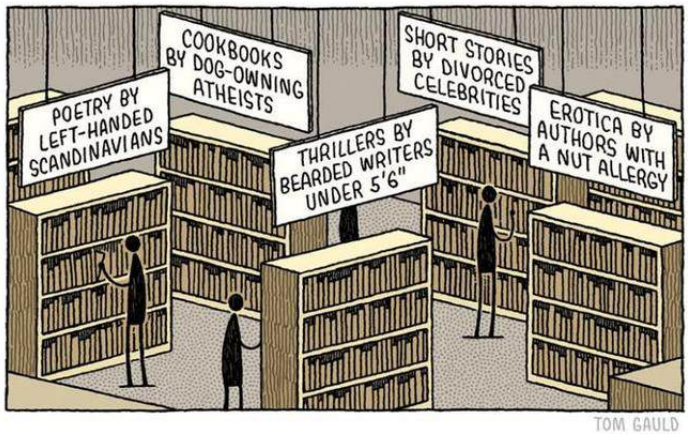
Idiotorial

I love the sound of a gauntlet being tossed disparagingly to the ground. Every year I do a few reading challenges, partly to tackle the embarrassingly massive TBR mountain here at Bishop Towers, partly to read outside my comfort zone, partly because there's nothing like ticking off items in a list. The BookRiot Read Harder challenge has been my main event; 24 categories with prompts like "Read a sports book by a woman, trans, or nonbinary writer" or "Read a YA book by a Latine author". Great fun trying to find books to fit the categories, especially given the limited stock at our library. If all 24 categories were "Read a book ghost written by James Patterson" then I would have been quids in. This was all just about manageable, until a library colleague of mine ambushed me with the mother of all reading challenges. It starts in July, runs for a year, with 150 different categories. The hardcore version is one book per category with some nasty tweaks, or you can go easy on yourself and use each book for two different prompts (so a minimum of 75 books). That wouldn't be so bad if I wasn't already waist deep in other book-type shenanigans.

So, of course I said to her, "Sounds great Izzy, but that's just madness, maybe another time", but what she actually heard was "Sure, why not, sounds like a load of fun, how do I sign up?".

I'm two months in and what started as "fun" has now become a full-time obsession. If I'm in a charity shop, I'm now looking for books with snow on the cover, or a number in the title, or where the author of one book is the name of a character in another book. I think it's bordering on out of control

Send help, and if you can't send help, send books.



DEAD LETTER OFFICE

Jim Reader (on previous domiciles)

The cover picture of the fires on Saddleworth Moor was a little worrying. We used to visit there quite often when we lived in Stalybridge.

Auntie Tangerine

Blimey. Very close to where we lived then. Did/do you still have family there? If so, do you ever get to visit?

Richard Smith (on family visits)

Just One orders reminded me I was looking for new game to inflict on the family at Christmas. My nephew likes poker so I was drawn to Hell Of A Deal and the video looks great, but 2 hours gameplay time? Naaah.

Auntie Tangerine

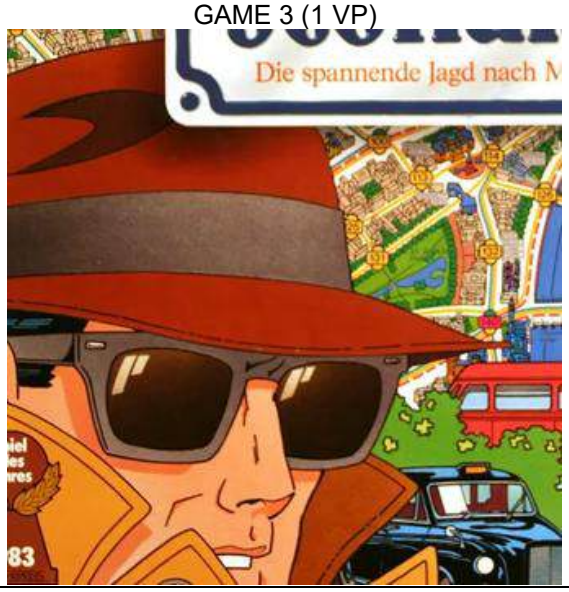
Two hours, too long? Once you have the family in your gaming grip, you must never, ever let them go.

NG Ogle — THE NAME OF THE GAME — ROUND 3

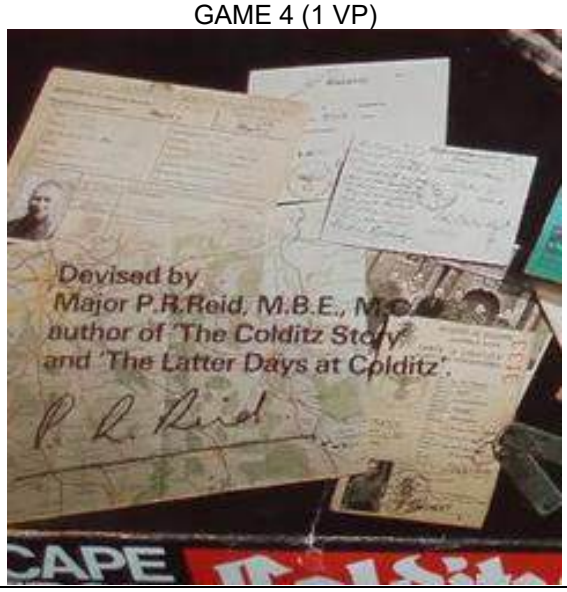
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Paul Evans	2	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Allan Stagg	2	1	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Richard Smith	2	2	3	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Jim Reader	2	2	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Brendan Whyte	2	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9

You're all either getting too good at this, or I'm getting soft in my old age and making the clues too easy.
Game 1 was **Ludo,** Game 2 was **1830**
Game 4 is NOT ***Wing Commander***
Game 5 is NOT ***Subbuteo Table Football***
Game 6 is NOT ***Source Of The Nile, Outdoor Survival***

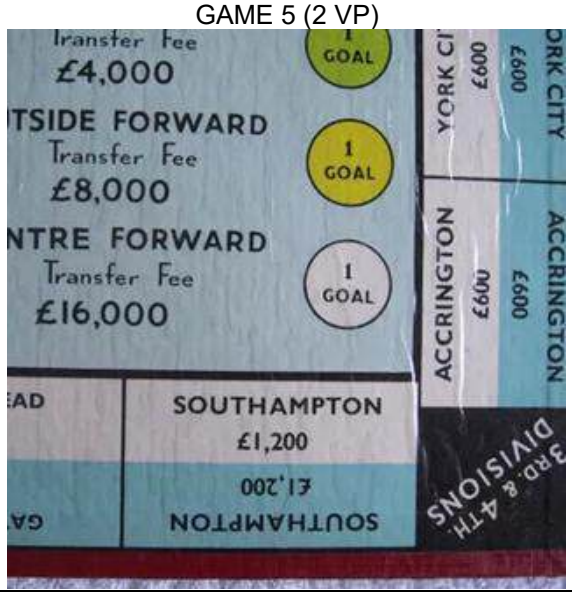
GAME 3 (1 VP)



GAME 4 (1 VP)

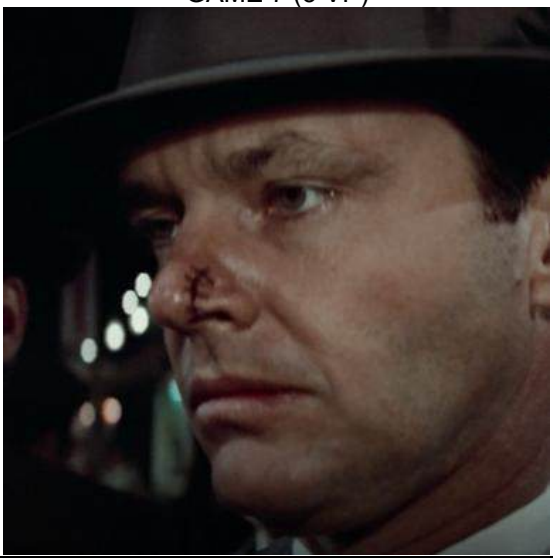


GAME 5 (2 VP)

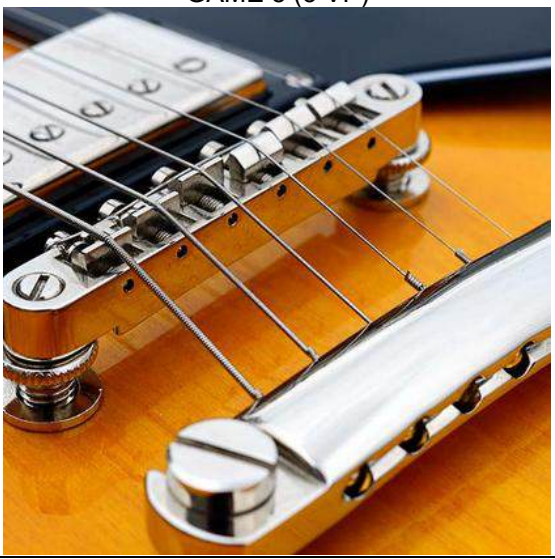


GAME 6 (2 VP)

GAME 7 (3 VP)



GAME 8 (3 VP)



JO Pett — JUST ONE — ROUND 2B/3A

	Category	Richard	Allan	Jim	Bob	Chris	Guess	Score
Richard Smith	FOX		~~VIXEN~~	HOUNDS	~~VIXEN~~	VULPINE	FOX	1
Allan Stagg	PEANUT	~~ALLERGY~~		~~ALLERGY~~	~~ALLERGY~~	GOOBER	PEANUT	1
Jim Reader	BUTTON	~~PANIC~~	~~HOLE~~		~~HOLE~~	~~PANIC~~		0
Bob Gingell	NUCLEAR	~~ATOMIC~~	FUSION	FISSION		~~ATOMIC~~	NUCLEAR	1
Chris Hibbert	ROOT	BATSMAN	~~VEGETABLE~~	~~VEGETABLE~~	CANAL			0
							Total	**3**

A good effort again. Jim had nothing to go on, and Chris was stuck with just BATSMAN and CANAL. Unless you know your cricket that's always going to be an impossible job. 7 out of 10 possible points so far.

FUTURE SHOCK

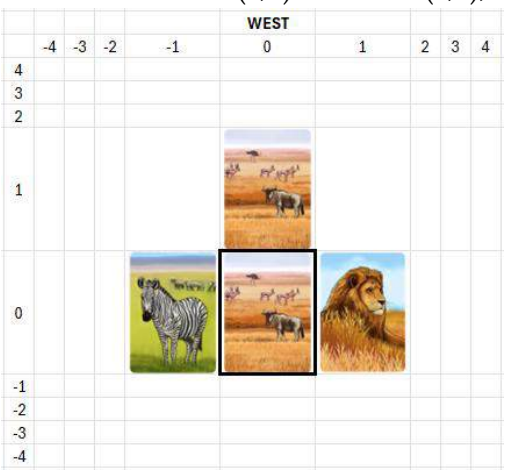
The Name Of The Game All readers can enter at any time. More games to follow hopefully.

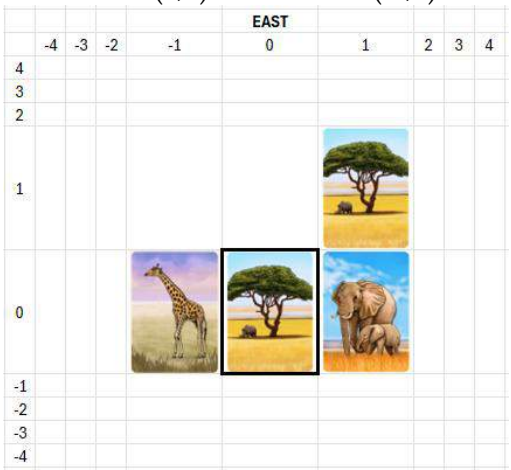
ES Quigley — ECOSYSTEM SAVANNA — ROUND 2

Some different strategies evolving here. Richard going for a largely Giraffe based economy. Diverse portfolios elsewhere. Chris first to invest in Hyena futures. Let's see if he's still laughing at the end. Groan. Please check how I've interpreted your orders. Mistakes have probably been made.

Dane

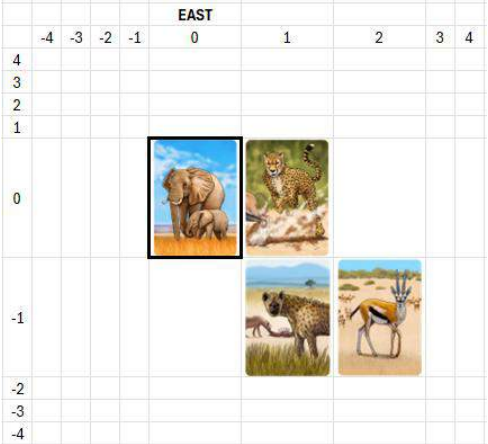
West – Grassland (0,1) and Lion (1,0); **East –** Tree (1,1) and Giraffe (-1,0)





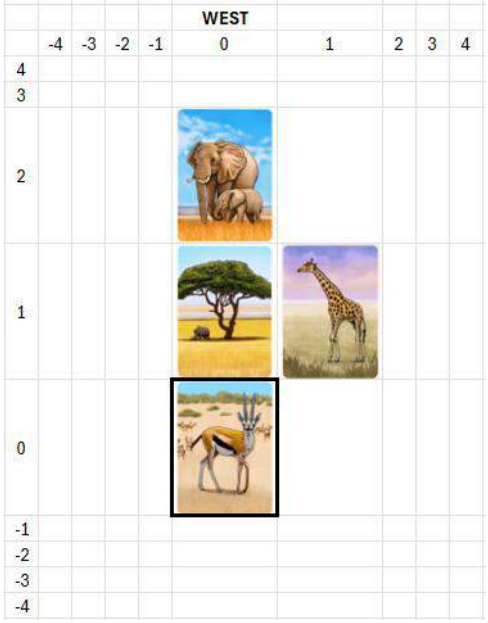
Chris

West – Zebra (0,-1) and Gazelle (1,-1); **East –** Hyena (1,-1) and Gazelle (2,-1)



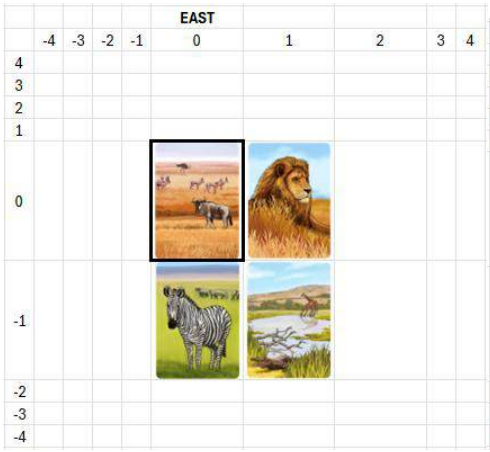
John

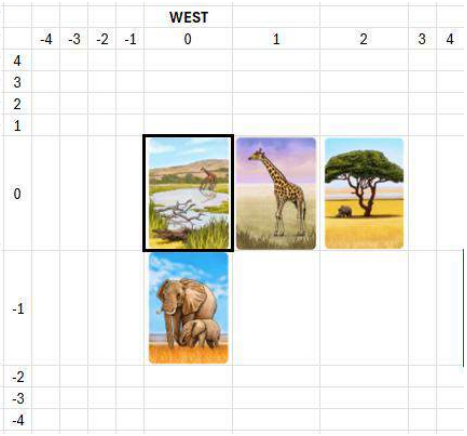
West – Giraffe (1,1) and Elephant (0,2); **East –** Elephant (0,2) and Watering Hole (0,3)



Kevin

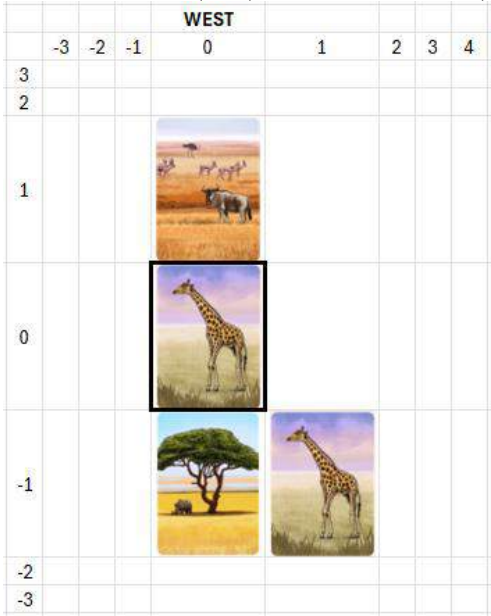
West – Giraffe (0,1) and Tree (0,2); **East –** Lion (0,1), Watering Hole (-1,1)

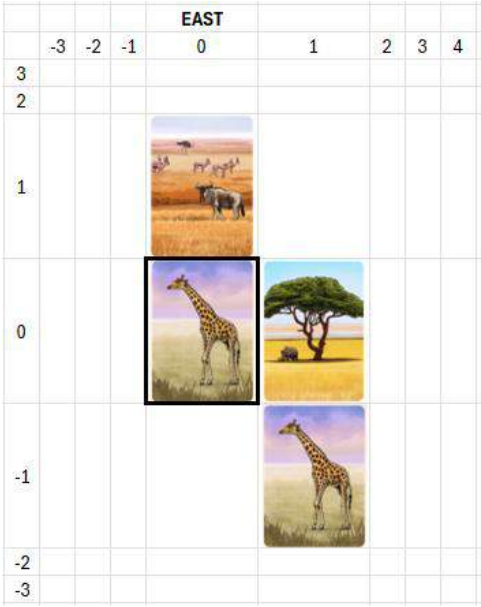




Richard

West – Giraffe (1,-1) and Grasslands (0,1); **East** - Giraffe (1,-1) and Grasslands (0,1)





SubPAR 19

Pennsylvania Ramblings

On the Border We cancelled our planned trip to Germany this year as I was sure that my leg was not ready for the Bavarian Alps, so instead we decided to go to upstate New York and the border country along the St. Lawrence River. We stayed in Plattsburgh on the New York / Vermont state border and began the trip taking the ferry across Lake Champlain into Vermont for our first visit to the aptly named Green Mountain State. We then took a beautiful, scenic drive North to visit the Haskell Library and Opera House that straddles the Vermont / Quebec border. I first read about this in Breandan Whyte's 'Damn the Consequences' many years ago. This was built in 1904 as a gift from the Haskell family to commemorate the friendship between the US and Canada. The border literally runs through the building (the picture shows my boot in Canada and sandal in the US) and the opera house above. Sadly, the friendship between the two countries is a little strained right now, and a new entrance has been made on the Canadian side and visitors must leave via the entrance they came through. The road running beside the building that crosses the border has also been blocked with bollards; it is possible to still walk across the border, but we didn't see anyone try.

The next day we drove to Alexandria Bay in the heart of the 1000 islands region of the river. It was a depressing drive from Plattsburgh to Massena Springs where the border becomes the river, but much nicer once we could follow the river. We finished the day at the local drive-in. The next day it rained so we contented ourselves with a couple of winery tours and a visit to the Cornwall Brothers Museum, built in an 1866 General Store, which was very enjoyable. The rain cleared the next day, and we enjoyed a boat cruise around some of the islands, finishing at the picturesque Boldt Castle, before the ferry back to the mainland. It was a very enjoyable trip.

Total (Partial) Eclipse of the Heart We didn't cancel our trip to the UK as I could now get around without the boot on even terrain. We were a little surprised by the scorching weather and how parched the land was. It was a relaxed trip visiting Jacqueline's sister Wendy and her family, including a visit to Avebury Manor which I hadn't visited before. It was very nicely laid out with a great history about the standing stones and how they were preserved.

The day before Cropredy was the partial eclipse and we had a lot of fun watching this in Mark and Nebby's garden, aided by one set of eclipse glasses (the other was borrowed), a pinhole camera and various devices to direct the sun's reflection onto a wall or floor. Practical physics in action. The heatwave meant we had great viewing conditions.

Walk Awhile Packing for Cropredy was a little different this year with no need to pack the Sou'westers and arctic survival gear. I bought some lightweight trousers and a thin long-sleeved shirt to protect myself from sunburn and Jacqueline was similarly prepared. We didn't camp this year due to concerns about my foot, and I also rented a mobility scooter from Event Mobility that worked very well. Hook Norton's regular bitter, Hooky, was the preferred drink along with plenty of water. The festival capacity was again limited to 6500 and this worked well. There was plenty of good music to enjoy, including Banter, Hayseed Dixie and the Spooky Men's Chorale.

The Analog Kid The first rock concert I went to was to see Rush at the Stafford Bingley Hall in 1981 on the 'Moving Pictures' tour. I didn't know much about Rush at the time but enjoyed the gig and later bought the 'Signals' album which got me hooked. Some 45 years later and more than 10 years after the death of their original drummer, Neil Peart, Rush were on tour again and we went to see them in Philadelphia. It was a great concert. The new drummer Annika Niles was great, and they have a keyboard player supporting them, rather than Geddy Lee (singer) playing bass pedals and keyboards. Geddy has talked about how they select their playlist for each concert based on location, so we weren't sure what songs they would play, beyond the big hits. I was very happy to hear both "Subdivisions" and "The Analog Kid" from the 'Signals' but missed "Vital Signs" and "Distant Early Warning".

Railway Rivals (Senegal and Gambia) – RR2556SG

Round Eleven

	COUER Steve Ham *Purple*	**SETI** Richard Smith *Blue*	**ROGER** Roger *Black*	**BOGGER** Bob Gingell *Brown*
29. Mali (Sp2) - Joal Fadiout or M'bour (31)			10	20
30. Dakar (23) - Minerals (Sp5)	10	20		
31. Bignona or Dai'aba (52) - Bassa Santa Su (66)	10 - 2 + 1		 + 1	20 - 1 - 1 + 2
32. Foundiougne (32) - Dakar (22)	10 + 3	0	20 - 3 - 1	 + 1
33. Banjul (63) - Saint Louis (11)		20 - 1	10	 + 1
34. Sedhiou (54) - Tambacounda (44)			10 - 1	20 + 1
35. Tiebo (15) - Goudin or Kidira (43)		10		20

Points from Last Round	215	190	221	229
Points from Races	32	49	46	83
Builds	- 3 - 2		- 6 + 2	- 3 - 1
Correction	*None reported this round*			
Total	242	239	263	308

COUER: (J8) - I8: (P12) - Q13: (V15) - U15.
SETI: No builds
ROGER: (Salde) – E19 - D18 – D17 – D16 - D15 – Podor.
BOGGER: (Q8) - P7: (S9) - T9 - Farafenni.

The sixth and final set of races is

36. Richard Toll (12) - Kolda (53)
37. Thies (25) - Farafenni (64)
38. Touba (35) - Podor or Lagbar (13)
39. Banjul (62) - Touba (34)
40. Salde or Bakel (41) - Dakar (21)
41. Mauritania (Sp1) - Koumpentoum or Velingara (51)
42. Town on Gambia River (Sp6) - Sainsoubou or Saraya (45)

Enter up to 4 races, and good luck everyone

In-game map at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2556SG.png

Railway Rivals (Bhutan) – RR2552BT

Round Seven

	ROGER Roger Trethewey *Black*	**BUDDHA** John Walker *Red*	**Dzong** Chris *Yellow*
1. China (Sp1) - Tendu (22)	+5	20 - 5	
2. Samtse (23) - Thimphu (15)		20	
3. Dungkar (51) - Mongar (62)			20
4. Nganlam (54) - Gelephu (46)		20 - 6	10 + 6
5. Sarpang (44) - Jakar (35)	20 + 5		10 - 5
6. Airport (Sp5) - Thimphu (14)	15	15	
7. Punakha (31) - Sakteng (64)	+ 3		20 - 3

Points from Last Round	63	72	73
Points from Races	48	64	58
Builds	- 14 - 1 + 5	- 11 + 1	- 14 - 5 + 1 - 1
Correction	*None reported this round*		
Total	101	126	112

ROGER (H32) – H33 – H34 – H35 – H36 – H37 – H38 - Mongar – H40 – H41 - - - H42 – H43 – Nganglam.
BUDDHA (Chhukha) - - - M17 - - - - - N16 - - - O17.
Dzong (Jakar) - A33 - - - B42: (Gelephu) *leap* - U19 - T18 - S19 - R19 - - - Q20 – P20 - O21: (Sandrup Johgkhar) - L45 / Assam.

The second set of races is

8. Samdrup Jongkhar (55) - West Bengal (Sp2)
9. Laya (11) - Pemagatshel (65)
10. Thimphu (16) - Damphu (43)
11. Ha (21) - Wangdue Phodrang (32)
12. Disputed Territory (Sp4) - Trongsa (34)
13. Samdrup Jongkhar (56) - Phuntsholing (26)
14. Chhukha (41) - Trashigang (63)

Enter up to 5 races and build up to 12 points, not including payments to other players. There have been 2 leaps so far – both Dzong over ROGER.

In-game map at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2552BT.png

Railway Rivals (Durham 1826) – RR2571DH

Round Six

Correction

Richard has noticed that I forgot to change the die rolls for round 6 of this game. The corrected die rolls are 6a) 6, 6b) 3 and 6c) 6. All players were notified by email although the total build was kept the same so I could adjust orders if needed.

COP	6a) 6. (G45) – G44 – H43 – I43 - J42 – Washington - L42, *all track upgraded*
Brad Martin	6b) 3. (L42) – M42 – N42 - O43, *all track upgraded*
Blue / Light Blue	6c) 6. (O43) – P42 - Q43; (P63) – P64 - P65; (M42) – N41 - O41, *all track upgraded*.
	Bank: 25 – 15 (HAB) – 4 (DUST) – 7.5 (upgrades) = - 1.5
DUST	6a) 6. (Stockton) - S64 - - - Middlesboro: (L53) - K53 - J52, *all track upgraded*
Richard Smith	6b) 3. (Eaglescliffe) – O68 - N68 - M68,
Red / Pink	6c) 6. (J52) – I52 – H51 - - - Durham, *track upgraded*: (M68) - L67.
	Bank: 15.5 + 4 (COP) + 1 (HAB) – 7 (ROGER) – 5.5 (upgrades) = 8
HAB	6a) 6. (Washington) - L42 - M42 - N42 - O43 - P42 - Q42, *all track upgraded*
Bob Gingell	6b) 3. (F62) - G63 - H63 - I64
Green / Light Green	6c) 6. (I64) - J64 - K65 - L65 - M66 - N66: (J40) - K40 *upgraded*.
	Bank: 49 + 15 (COP) – 1 (DUST) – 2 (ROGER) – 3.5 (upgrades) = 57.5
ROGER	6a) 6. (M13) – L12 – K12 – St. JOHNS WEARDALE: (I63) – H62 - Aycliffe: (I52) - H51
Roger Trethewey	6b) 3. (H51) - - - Durham
Black / Grey	6c) 6. (U17) - - - Wolsingham: (P14) - - - Stanhope.
	Bank: 28 + 6 + 7 (DUST) + 2 (HAB) = 43

The first set of races is

1. St. John's Weardale (12) - Hartlepool (55)
2. East Yorkshire (Sp2) - Aycliffe (46)
3. Northumberland (Sp4) - Castle Eden (54)
4. Yarm (64) - Wolsingham (14)
5. North Shields (35) - Eaglescliffe (63)
6. Barnard Castle (41) - Chester-le-Street (24)
7. Durham (26) - Gateshead (34)

Enter up to 4 races and build allowance for next round is 12 points not including payments to rivals.

Reminder - track can be upgraded to fast track at a cost of 10/- (or 0.5) per half hex. The first color listed for a player is for their track that has not been upgraded. The second color listed is their upgraded track. During races, a roll of 5 will be treated as a 4 on regular, not upgraded track. The minimum race length is 5 hexes. Note, Richard has changed the rules for fast track in his game, but I have chosen to leave them as originally stated for this game as the game had started. The map states that upgrade tokens “must be applied to track as it’s built”. I interpret this to mean that previously built (or purchased) track cannot be upgraded. Special 3 is Westmoreland or Cumberland and these will be treated as a single destination, so either a connection on Westmoreland or Cumberland can be used for both races.

In-game map at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2571DH.png

Railway Rivals (Togo and Benin) – RR2575TB

Round Four

Correction: I forgot to update players bank totals at the end of round 3, so here they are.

TOBE:	BANK: 62 + 3 + 3 = 68
TB:	BANK: 34 + 3 + 6 + 3 = 46
ROGER:	BANK: 24 + 3 = 27
FLAG:	BANK: 24

TOBE	4a) 5. (H15) - - G15 - F14 - E14 – MANGO,
Bob Gingell	4b) 4. (E14) - D13 - - - C13
Black	4c) 5. (C13) - B12 - DAPAONG; (M17) - N16; (N28) - N29 - Savalou.
	BANK: 68 – 2 (border) + 6 + 6 + 4 (FLAG) = 82

TB Richard Smith Blue	4a) 5. (Savalou) – M30 - - L29 – K29 - J28, 4b) 4. (J28) – J27 – J26 - J25: (B90) - C90 4c) 5. (J25) - - - J24 - Sokode; (C90) - D89 / Nigeria. BANK: 46 – 2 (border) – 1 + 2 (ROGER) = 45
ROGER Roger Trethewey Green	4a) 5. (K17) - J16 – Natitingou: (M30) – Savalou: (Bohicon) - Q36 - R36, 4b) 4. (R15) – A65 – B64 – C64 - D63, 4c) 5. (D63) – D62 – D61 – D60 – D59 - KANDI. BANK: 27 + 6 + 1 – 2 (TB) = 32
FLAG Steve Guest Orange	4a) 5. (H17) – KANDE – G16 - G15: (J19) - - K19, 4b) 4. (L37) - - - - Dogbo-Tola, 4c) 5. (G15) - F14: (Dogbo-Tola) - N38 – Lokossa: (K19) – L18 - Djougou. BANK: 24 – 4 (border) + 3 – 4 (TOBE) = 19

The build allowance for the fifth round is 5a) 3, 5b) 4, and 5c) 6.

The cost for crossing the border between Togo and Benin is 2 in rounds 4 –6 (post war rail expansion) and 1 in rounds 7 –9 (post WW II). These are paid from the player's bank. There is also a 1 pip administration cost that applies throughout the game. The bank costs apply to both racing and building in rounds 7, 8 and 9.

In-game map at https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2575TB.png

Bus Boss (Farnham and Aldershot) – BB422FAL

Round Nine

The Shepherd and Flock roundabout, where the A31 meets the new bypass and the local roads from Hale and the A325 bypass, is enormous and encircles several houses and the Shepherd and Flock pub. The pub has been inside the roundabout for as long as I can remember, but Jacqueline and I visited this for the first time last month. They do a very nice line in home-made pies.

	FAB Richard *Blue*	**FEAR** Kev *Red*	**BANG** Bob *Black*	**ROGER** Roger *Green*	**CHAMPS** Brad *Brown*
19. Lido (QS) – Aldershot Station (3S)	+ 1	15 - 3 - 2	15 - 1 + 3 - 2	+ 2 + 2	
20. Farnham Town Centre (5H) – Hale (KH)	11 - 4 + 2 + 2 +2	4 + 4 - 2	5 - 2		10 - 2
21. Ewshot (AD) – Heath End (8D)	15 + 4			15 - 4 - 2	+ 2
22. Compton (QC) – Frensham (KC)		10	10 - 5		10 + 5
23. Farnham Park (8H) – Bentley (4C)	13 - 3	5	+ 1	6 + 3 - 1 + 2	6 - 2
24. Weybourne (6D) – Aldershot Town FC (4S)	16 - 4 + 1	7 + 4			7 - 1
25. Fleet (5D) – Farnham Castle (7H)	15		15		
26. Tongham (6S) – Waverley Abbey (JC)			9 + 3 – 2 + 3 -2	16 - 3 + 2 + 5 - 3	5 - 3 + 2– 5 + 3

Bank	120	171	113	126	148
Points from Races	71	42	50	40	37
Builds	- 10	- 11	- 12	- 11	- 10
Corrections	*None reported this round*				
Totals	181	202	151	155	175

BANG: 6th Form College - Tilford; Farnham Station - William Cobbett
FAB: Shepherd and Flock - Farnborough
ROGER: Tweseldown Racecourse - Church Crookham: Tongham - Ash Vale
CHAMPS: Shepherd and Flock – Farnborough
FEAR: Aldershot FC - Ash Vale - Ash

The fourth set of races is

27. Beacon Hill (2D) – Aldershot Town Centre (2S)
28. Ash (KD) – The Sands (8S)
29. Farnborough (JD) – Tweseldown Racecourse (4D)
30. Folly Hill (9H) – Dippenhall (6H)
31. North Town (QD) – Rural Life Museum (8C)
32. William Cobbett (AH) – Runcorn (5C)
33. The Rec (QH) – Hogs Back Brewery (7S)
34. Farnham Station (3H) – Ash Vale (5S)
35. Shortfield (6C) – Charles Hill Forest (10C)

Enter up to 5 races. The build order for round 10 is Bob, Roger, Brad, Richard and Kev.

In-game map at https://variablepig.org/maps/bb/ingame/BB422FAL.png

Bus Boss (Pays Cathar) - BB426PAY

Round One

Bob Gingell
Company Name: Plentiful Upheaval in Rural Environment (PURE)
Colour: Purple
Build: Carcassonne - Conques sur l'Orbeil - Mas Cabardes: Conques sur l'Orbeil - Peyriac Minervois
Bank: 120 – 12 = 108

Brad Martin
Company Name: L'Occitane L'Autobus (LOLA)
Colour: Blue
Build: Lezignan Corbieres – Ginestas – Narbonne – Gruissan
Bank: 120 – 12 = 108

John Marsden
Company Name: Mountains Are Rearing Sheep (MARS)
Colour: Orange
Build: Quillan – Tuchan
Bank: 120 – 13 = 107

Kev Lee
Company Name: Belpech Expressways Are Rampant (BEAR)
Colour: Black
Build: Alzonne - Carcassonne - Lagrasse
Bank: 120 – 12 = 108

Michael Pargman
Company Name: Busses Of Cathar (BOC)
Colour: Green
Build: Mouthoumet – Esperanza - Quillan
Bank: 120 – 12 = 108

Note that the routes SW from Narbonne go to Lagrasse and Durban Corbieres and there is no direct route from Narbonne to Mouthoumet. Similarly, the two routes northwest from Mouthoumet also go Lagrasse and Durban Corbieres.

The build order for round 2 is Bob Brad, John, Kev, Michael, and Bob.

Please note that for round 6, the richest player (i.e. who has built the least amount of track) will go first, followed by the second richest player and so on. Normal Bus Boss rules will apply to build order during the racing stages.

In-game map at https://variablepig.org/maps/bb/ingame/BB426PAY.jpg

THE CELESTIAL DRAGON #19

Deadline for all games: Friday 2nd October 2026

Website: Still using the Variable Pig URL: https://variablepig.org

The Celestial Steam Locomotive	**#49**	**Richard Smith**	richard530smith@btinternet.com

Waiting List / Notes:

BAG OF DUNGEON - game 2: John Walker, John Hopkins 1 or 2 more wanted. Note- PBM rules under review!
GOLDEN STRIDER Tarnished Variant (8 or 10 runners, 2 per team) – Steve Ham, John Walker, Jim Reader 1 or 2 more wanted
HOUSE OF GAMES (no research) – light-hearted all-reader game continues, more can join
RAILWAY RIVALS Wheel of Time fantasy map, Jim Reader, Richard Smith, Kevin Lee 1-2 more wanted.
BY WORDLEY DEMAND – 8-round game continues, anyone can join anytime, a couple more players would be great to "balance" the scoring.
BRIDGE OF LIES – TV game show conversion, Paul Evans, Jim Reader, Steve Ham, John Walker room for 2 more, will start next issue with 4,5, or 6.
NEW! WHERE IN THE WORLD IS KENDO NAGASAKI? New game starts now, guess away!

Here Be Dragons	**#82**	**John Walker**	hbdragons”of”btinternet.com

Waiting List / Notes:

NEARLY THE BEST GAME IN THE WORLD – Chris Hibbert, Richard Smith, 3 more wanted
LYRIC QUIZ – game continues – anyone can play except Mr. Google.
WORLD RECORD 9.762 - Richard Smith, Chris Hibbert, Steve Ham – 2-5 more wanted
SNAKES AND LADDERS - Richard Smith, Bob Gingell, Chris Hibbert, Martin Walker – at least one more wanted.
SECHS NIMMT – Kevin Lee, Steve Ham, Jim Reader, Richard Smith - GAME START INSIDE
DEVIL TAKE THE HINDMOST - Richard Smith, Steve Ham, Jim Reader, Chris Hibbert - 1 or 2 more wanted.

The Tangerine Terror **I Am The Kurious Kumquat**	**#89** **#19**	**Howard Bishop**	laticsexile@outlook.com

Waiting List / Notes:

ORIGINS OF WW2 - Brendan Whyte, John Marsden - 3 more wanted
DOS DE MAYO – 2 wanted
NAME OF THE GAME – continues, new players can join.

SubPAR	**#19**	**Jim Reader**	jim_reader”of”hotmail.com

Waiting List / Notes:

BUS BOSS - Shikoku (BB418SHI) - Brad Martin, Kevin Lee, Michael Pargman, Steve Ham - game start next issue and room for 1 more.
BREAKING AWAY – Richard Smith, Chris Hibbert, Allan Stagg - 3 more wanted.