

INSIDE

ADRIFT

(... being the newsletter of the ADRIFT community...)

Issue 30
July/August 2006

CONTENTS

Editorial	4
Hot Off The Press [ADRIFT On Vista; One Room Competition; A Place In The Interactive History Books; Reviews Exchange Issue 9; Summer Comp Results; The Hourglass Comp; Drifter Birthdays; Recent ADRIFT Releases]	5
ADRIFT Forum Digest	11
Musings On The IFComp by David Whyld	13
101 Things You Love & Hate About IF	16
And Then There Were (100)0 by David Whyld.....	21
View From A(n Almost) Newbie by AndrewF	25
Drifters' Think About	27
In The Hot Seat [Interview with Robert Street]	28
In Progress:	
"Divine Harbour" by C. Henshaw	35
"Scarlet" by David Whyld	37
Dead But Not Lovin' It by David Whyld.....	39

Reference..... 42
Word Search [answers to issue 29] 44
Contributions 46
Looking Ahead 47

Editorial

W elcome to the Big 30!

Yes, issue thirty of the newsletter and the second with yours truly at the helm.

(“Yay, ma, made it! Second issue! Top of the world!”)

The last issue seemed to be a reasonable success and hoping this one will be the same. It’s a little slimmer than the last issue (though the novelty hasn’t begun to wear off *quite* yet ☺) but I’m sure there a few things in here that might catch your fancy. Ever wondered what the most popular and unpopular things in IF games are? Well, this issue we have 101 of them so there ought to be a few things in there to include, or not as the case may be, in your first game.

David Whyld

HOT OFF THE PRESS

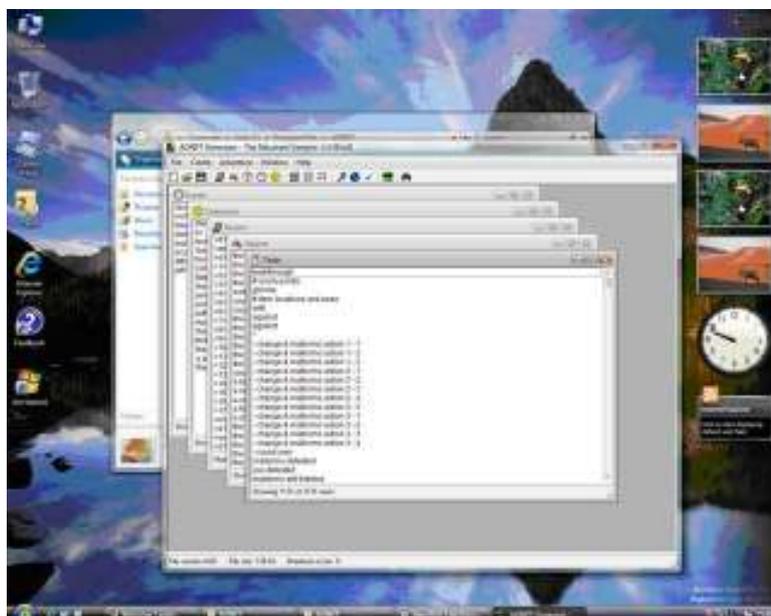
(... being the latest news from the big wide world of interactive fiction...)

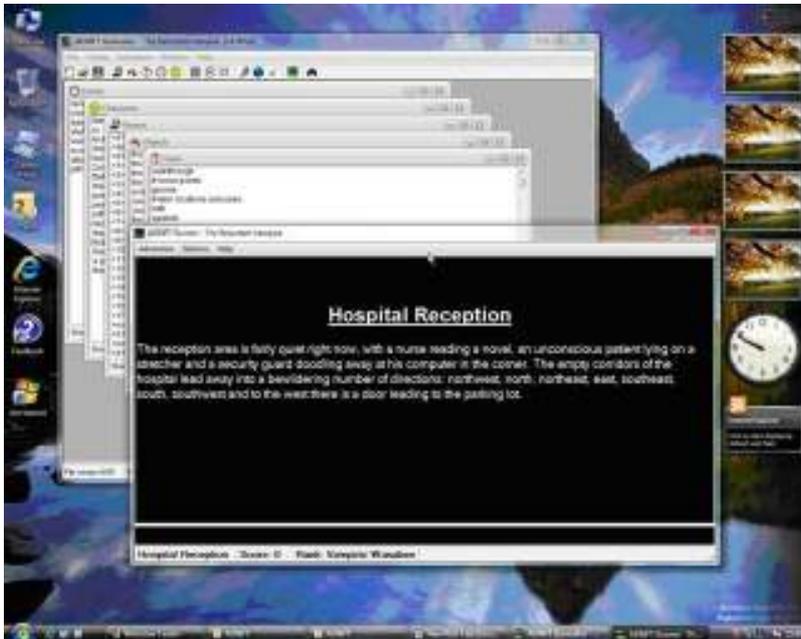
ADRIFT On Vista

As an experiment, I recently downloaded a beta of the new Microsoft version of Windows, and installed ADRIFT on it. Aside from a few slowdown issues*, it ran fine so any qualms about whether or not ADRIFT would work properly on Vista have been put to rest. Although with Microsoft's ever-sliding release schedule for Vista, we might well be on ADRIFT 10 before it materialises...

* Of course, pretty much everything I did on Vista suffered slowdown issues to some degree, so whether there are any actual slowdown issues with ADRIFT on Vista or just *everything* on Vista is difficult to tell at this stage.

The ADRIFT Generator under Vista...





...and the Runner.

One Room Competition

The results of the One Room Competition have been announced at

<http://www.avventuretestuali.com/orgc/orgc-2006-eng>

There was a single ADRIFT entry out of the nine games, although as seven were in Italian the competition was of limited interest to those of us (myself included) who don't speak the language.

The results in full:

- 1) **Final Selection** by Sam Gordon
- 2) **Lo sforacchiato giallo** by Veronica Aurette
- 3) **Il diavolo a Venezia** by Lorenzo Carnevale
- 4) **Forma Mentis** by Paolo Maroncelli
- 5) **Galeotto fu il canotto (tre modi per buttare l'ancora)** by Andrea Rezzonico
- 6) **It's Easter, Peeps!** by Sara Brookside

- 7) **Lazy Jones e l'ultima crostata** by Gabriele Lazzara and Carmelo Paterniti
- 8) **De Reditu** by Massimo Corso
- 9) **Frankenstein III** by Corvo di Odino

A Place In The Interactive History Books

"Let's Tell A Story Together: A History Of Interactive Fiction" by SPAG editor Jimmy Maher is available from

<http://home.grandecom.net/~maher/if-book/index.html>

While certainly an interesting read, its coverage given to ADRIFT (the easiest to use IF system, and the one that produces the most games per year) is sparse to say the least. Unfortunately it seems that while ADRIFT might not have the terrible reputation it once had in its early years, it's still a long way from being considered a viable alternative to TADS or Inform for most of the IF community.

Reviews Exchange Issue 9

Issue 9 of the Reviews Exchange is available from

<http://adrift.sitesled.com/>

A little slimmer than previous issues due to the recent sparseness of new ADRIFT games, it still managed a total of twelve reviews.

ADRIFT Games Reviewed

For Love of Digby - reviewed by Robert Street

The Potter and the Mould - reviewed by D.L Sun, David Whyld and TDS

It's Easter Peeps! - reviewed by David Whyld and TDS

SERE (Survive, Evade, Resist, Escape) - reviewed by David Whyld and TDS

The Warlord, the Princess and the Bulldog - reviewed by Lumin

Non-ADRIFT Games Reviewed

The Reliques of Tolti-Aph - reviewed by David Whyld

Damnatio Memoriae - reviewed by David Whyld

Pantomime - reviewed by David Whyld

Summer Comp Results

The ADRIFT Summer Competition 2006 is over. Although the rules originally specified a minimum of four entries, the organiser (KFAdrift) graciously decided to go ahead with the comp even though only three entries were received. The results in full:

1. **The Reluctant Vampire** by David Whyld
2. **Pestilence** by Richard Otter
3. **Spooked** by TDS

The voting was as follows:

Pestilence by Rotter 4 2 4 4 - 5 4 Av=3.83

Spooked by TDS 2 3 2 3 3 3 3 Av=2.71

The Reluctant Vampire by David Whyld 5 - 3 5 5 4 5 Av=4.50

The Hourglass Comp

No sooner has the last ADRIFT Comp finished than a new one is underway. This is slightly different in that competitors have to write an entire game within a three hour time limit (the 3x hourglass comp?)

Full details:

<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5450>

Drifter Birthdays

The following drifters are celebrating a birthday over the next couple of months:

July

29 jonrock (53)

August

- 2 Schoolsinger (22)
- 4 outsider (19)
- 5 gigabyteman/Corey Arnett (37), Floyd (37), The Angel Gibreel (28)
- 7 Splink07 (26), loki88 (40)
- 8 Lena1975 (31)
- 10 djchallis (17)
- 11 mjbstein (37)
- 15 Coolkid (18)
- 17 jujoensu (24)
- 18 rocksockm (29)
- 20 Chenshaw (30)
- 21 Bacchus (38), malleus maleficarum (33), Scarlettechi (20)
- 22 Teno (21)
- 23 Woodfish (18), Damien/damien8000uk (20), White Divine/Mickey Crocker (22), red assassin (16)
- 26 Starstream (61)
- 27 re_volvo (33), Filthy Bill (35)
- 30 bdenon (35), Scarecrow (35)

September

- 1 Astridian (23)
- 4 RansomDchs (49), cewilson (47), Lailokken (50), Generic User Again (19)
- 5 Campbell (30), Keeling (31)
- 10 Lycaon (23), brucehum (35)
- 11 Rabbinical College of Cordova (63)
- 13 Chaos (21)
- 16 M3K0 (21)
- 17 Mystery (34), lyonstomb (27)
- 18 Psyleid (19), ifjames (18)
- 20 ondre (28)
- 24 Jacqueline/Lumin (23), V.A. Spatski (36)
- 27 MadTom (20)
- 28 kolya (29), highways (63)

Recent ADRIFT Releases

- 21 07 06 **The Haunted Horror House** by TDS
- 02 07 06 **Pestilence** by Richard Otter
- 02 07 06 **The Reluctant Vampire** by David Whyld
- 02 07 06 **The Wonders Of Science** by TDS

- 16 06 06 **The New Superstud** by Richard Deckmaster
11 06 06 **S.E.R.E. (Search, Evade, Resist, Escape)** by Skypig
15 05 06 **It's Easter, Peeps!** by Sara Brookside
24 04 06 **Resident Lust** by Night_Owl
07 04 06 **The Clairvoyant** by Priapus Rex
07 04 06 **A Dream Come True** by Purple Dragon

ADRIFT FORUM DIGEST

by Shuarian

The last month was characterised by a rather low activity on the forum; it seems the heat and the World Cup have taken their tolls. Yet still a few interesting threads appeared on the forum:

Programming Help

- Comparing Variables

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=4;t=541>)

Shows a simple way of comparing two numeric variables.

- Conversation, stopping and starting

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=4;t=5381>)

Details how to set up a conversation system so as to reflect different conditions and situations within an ongoing conversation.

Game Design

- Serial IF

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5343>)

The idea behind serial IF is to separate a bigger story arch into smaller episodes. All in all, people seemed to like the idea, although it was pointed out that each episode preferably should be self-contained in some way.

- Do you like writing descriptions?

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5352>)

How complete should the descriptions of rooms and objects be? What can a writer do in order to avoid boring or useless descriptions?

Player Preferences

- Font Sizes

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5325>)

What font sizes and styles do people use for the Adrift runner?

- Get if off your chest

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5321>)

MrToad asks what the other forum members dislike about IF games, and gets many interesting and helpful responses.

Competitions

- Competitions good or bad?

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=5372>)

KFAdrift is wondering what influences competitions have on the release of new games. Do people specifically write games for comps, and which amount and what kind of competitions are reasonable?

Miscellaneous

- Hey, who wants to hear a really dumb idea?, ... A collaborative game.

(<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/iB/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=6;t=5327>)

The idea Sprite had is to create some kind of game lobby from which on players can enter other short games, all written by different authors. The idea was welcomed very positively, although the project is currently on hold until Adrift 5 is out.

MUSINGS ON THE IFCOMP

by David Whyld

It's that time of year again: the IFComp – the *big* comp of the interactive fiction world – is looming. Although a while off yet (it should start around the time the next issue of the newsletter is out), for anyone planning to enter the comp, it's probably approaching way too quickly for their liking.

As far as competitions go in the IF world, the IFComp is THE comp. The IF equivalent, if you will, of the Oscars. It even carries a decent cash prize for the first place and an abundance of prizes for those who don't fare as well (I came 23rd in 2004 and got a nice prize). IF itself might not be a commercial prospect any more, but the IFComp is the one guaranteed way of ensuring you get *something* for your trouble. (Of course, it's worth mentioning that if you're writing a game purely for the prizes, you're missing the point. Aside from anything else, the sheer amount of time and effort that would be required to write a game capable of winning a decent cash prize wouldn't be worth it on a cash-per-hour-of-game-writing basis. You'd be better off getting a part time job where you *definitely* get paid at the end of it, instead of writing a game where you only get paid *if* you do really well.) There are other comps out there – the numerous ADRIFT Comps, the Spring Thing, the One Room Comp, the Intro Comp, the Art Comp and so on and so forth – but none of them carry anything like the same kind of impact as the IFComp, both from the way the comp is perceived and the amount of feedback you tend to receive for games entered in it.* Which isn't to say that the comp doesn't have its own problems.

* The ADRIFT entries in the IFComp 2005 gained around ten or eleven reviews each; the ones in the Spring Thing 2006 only three.

For one, while there are undoubtedly a few genuinely brilliant games entered every year, and quite a few others that are way above average, there are also a good deal of entries that no one, probably not even their own authors, would try to claim were genuinely brilliant. Or even above average. Some games are just plain bad:

not been tested, written by people who don't seem to know what they're doing, some even by people who don't speak the English language well enough to make themselves understood let alone write a game in it. You can often tell a true stinker straight off from the poorly written introduction (generally littered with more spelling mistakes and/or grammatical errors than you could shake a stick at) which, being the first thing potential players see, should be as close to perfect as it's possible to make an introduction.

Then there are the joke entries. And the IFCOMP, being the biggest comp around, tends to attract more than its fair share of joke entries. Why is something of a mystery, but then I guess every community attracts its fair share of idiots along the way.

Sometimes it's difficult to tell a genuinely bad game written by someone who doesn't have a clue from a deliberate joke game. Take the notorious Paul Panks, he of *Westfront PC* fame, who holds the unique, though hardly sought after, record of coming last in the IFCOMP for two years running. His entry in 2004 was called *Ninja* and it finished at the lowest placed position in the comp. He re-entered the game (a breach of the comp rules surely?) with a very minor change the following year, now calling it *Ninja 2*, where it again came last place. Were they joke entries? Or just remarkably bad games? Judging from the usual kind of games Panks writes, and self-promotes to a painful degree on the RAIF/RGIF newsgroups, it's hard to say for sure.

Some games are obvious joke entries and don't pretend to be anything else. One of the ADRIFT games last year was called *PTbadsixandoneighth or Have You Seen The Muffin Man? He Is Quite Large*. Thankfully everyone realised it was a deliberately bad game (a goal it achieved very well, I might add) and didn't knock ADRIFT for the quality of this game it had produced.

This year will hopefully see a stronger ADRIFT showing than ever in the comp. While I doubt very much we'll see an ADRIFT game finishing in first place, or even in the top five, it's possible one might crack the top ten for the first time since *The PK Girl* in 2002. Last year we came close – games at 11, 12 and 14 – so hopefully this year we'll do even better.

As to whether an ADRIFT game is ever going to win the IFCOMP, I really couldn't say. As it's my chosen system (and this *is* the ADRIFT newsletter after all), I'd like to say yes... but at the same time, if I'm going to be perfectly honest, my actual response would more likely be no. The stigma of ADRIFT's early years, when it produced countless terrible games and gained for itself a terrible reputation as a result, might finally be dying down, but there's still a long, long way to go before it achieves the same kind of recognition as Tads and Inform have*. Maybe ADRIFT 5

will change all that, although only having a few glimpses of what it will be like, and no experience of using it, it's difficult to say. Hopefully in a few months, and certainly by the IFCOMP 2007, we'll see just what ADRIFT 5 can do, and then we'll be able to tell whether it can hold its own against the big boys.

* Although it's worth mentioning that the worst games in the IFCOMP for the past two years haven't been ADRIFT games.

So will an ADRIFT game win the IFCOMP this year? No. Not a chance. Next year? No. In five years time? Ten years?

Who can say...? But it'll certainly be interesting seeing how things stand in another five years.

101 THINGS YOU LOVE & HATE ABOUT IF

A couple of recent threads on the ADRIFT forum attempted to list a 101 things that people love and hate about interactive fiction. It didn't get to *quite* a 101 in either category but a fair total was reached. Thinking on writing a game? It might be an idea to check out the following lists:

Things People Love...

I like humour where it is appropriate, so if I was playing a game based on Red Dwarf.... I'd expect to see a lot of humour.

I like to see good english composition.

I like puzzles or problems, appropriate to the situation in the game, with logical solutions - preferably with more than one way to solve it.

Games with interesting storylines.

Twists in the plot that make me think "wow! I wish I'd written that!"

Puzzles that make sense (i.e. you solve them and you understand them afterwards).

Games that make sense (i.e. you don't finish them and sit there wondering just what they were all about).

Games that have been spellchecked and grammar checked.

Games that aren't buggy.

Fully implemented scenery. If there's a great big tree in front of me, I want to be able to examine it and get more than YOU SEE NO SUCH THING.

Horror games that are actually creepy as opposed to "oh, *more* blood and *more* guts and *more* dead bodies. Ho hum."

Fantasy games that don't fall into the cliché of sticking a goblin, orc and zombie in every other location.

Games that don't have mazes in them.

Puzzles that make sense. If there's a puzzle in the game, make sure it makes sense or don't include it.

A proper introduction. None of this "let's just dump him in the first location and he can figure out the storyline for himself".

NPCs who haven't been cut from cardboard.

Lots of location, but only if those locations have something worthwhile to do in them. If there are 1,700+ locations in your game and 1,500 of them are empty, why not chop out the empty ones and just leave me with the ones that make a difference?

I like Noir, so I like the idea of Noir endings - a victory, but always a slightly hollow one. I have an epic game that, if I ever finish it, will be something like that (as it's Noir).

...and hate

Games that are set in an ordinary suburban house / school / college / office (with one or two exceptions) ie games that are set wherever the unimaginative author is most familiar with, usually with badly implemented bathroom / kitchen furniture that doesn't really do anything but which he/she put it in anyway because every house has a bathroom, right?

Games of the above type that start off in a bedroom. Just because you're writing the game in your bedroom doesn't mean the game has to take place there.

Games with dozens of non-interactive cut-scenes. Just write a short story, for crying out loud!

Games that look like games but which turn out to be completely on rails from start to finish.

Generic fantasy settings. Even humorous generic fantasy has been done to death now.

Locks and keys. Yes, I admit, I have them in my games, but I'm intending to avoid them in future.

Generic sci-fi settings with lots of corridors and doors that open with passes etc. And robot guards with lasers. And computer terminals.

Games which exist solely to put across some kind of moral or message, and do so in a very heavy-handed way.

Any game with a bland, generic hero as PC. The PC is a character; even James Bond has likes, dislikes, quirks and a sense of humour. Too often you get the feeling this hasn't been thought about.

Mazes. Yes, I hate mazes. I don't care if the author likes them because I don't and it's a fair bet the only person who doesn't hate them is the guy who puts them in his game.

Mazes. So bad they deserve two whole points to themselves.

Lack of hints. I always get stuck and my initial reaction when getting stuck is to type HELP. If HELP doesn't produce a decent response, you can bet your bottom dollar the next thing I'm typing will be QUIT.

Pointless puzzles. Like the player is wandering through a featureless landscape and comes across a set of building blocks that he has to arrange into a set order to progress to the next stage of the game. Why does he have to do this? Er... because the writer felt like putting this puzzle in a game.

Games that don't implement descriptions for things you can see.

QUOTE

You are in a field. You can see a tree and a bench here.

> x field

You see no such thing.

> x tree

You see no such thing.

> x bench

You see no such thing.

> quit

If they're there, they need a description.

Serious games that have jokey bits in them. Don't put jokes in a serious game. It just spoils the mood. Particularly if you're writing a horror game.

Item carrying restrictions. If there are fifteen items in the game, then I want to be able to carry fifteen. Is this realistic? No. But I don't care.

Games littered with spelling mistakes bad and grammar and punctuation in the wrong place'. And Lots Of Words Starting With Capitals That Don't Need Capitals. These are text adventures, so if you don't have a good grasp of the English language, don't write a game.

Adrift games that haven't had the default "talk to" response overridden. It never fails to annoy me whenever I talk to an NPC and get told to "use ask Alice about subject instead". C'mon, people. It breaks mimesis*, for crying out loud!

Bugs. The worst offender. Every bug lowers my opinion of a game and the more I come across, the more I wonder why I don't just give up and find some other less buggy game to play. Yes, bugs are difficult to get rid of completely but with careful testing you can eliminate the worse offenders.

Bugs - so many things too numerous to go into that can go wrong and get you stuck

Mazes (most of them) - for obvious reasons

Bad room descriptions/map layouts - where you have to go through so many identical corridors, rooms in a building, paths through a forest, etc.

Bad NPC implementation - everytime you encounter an NPC they say/look like/do the same thing all the time

Not describing things - reading 'You see no such thing.' over and over and over (I mean substantial objects in a room description, not every tiny thing). At least have a new stock phrase, like, 'I don't have time to inspect every last thing.')

Really difficult puzzles, GTV issues, etc. - I don't like to spend too much time in a

location or having to go back and forth through the same rooms to try to solve something, at least not unless there are interesting things happening the whole time and/or I seem to be making lots of progress whilst doing it.

My pet peeve is puzzles which don't give a good connection between obstacle and solution beforehand, doubly so if the connection is not clear after the fact.

For an example of the first, if an npc is blocking my way, and to get past, I have to "GIVE MACGUFFIN TO NPC", then I should have a good reason to expect that the npc would react to the macguffin.

For an example of the second, in *_Temple of the Orc Mage_*, there are a number of objects where: If you try to pick it up while holding a particular second object, you will succeed with no hint anything was unusual. If you try to pick it up any other time, the attempt will simply fail. Worse, the walkthrough gives no clue why this sometimes works and sometimes doesn't.

I can't stand overly long mazes, or adventures with a million locations and a grand total of three objects. And games where I have to open it in the generator to see what the heck I was meant to do irritate me.

Also, for some reason I can't get through any game that starts on a spaceship. I don't know what it is, I like sci-fi, but for some reason it's a real turn-off.

One thing I CAN'T STAND in IF is the verb USE.

Personally I find particularly young player characters in games not as engaging as an older character simply due to the fact that it makes things more difficult to relate to. For me, if an author really wanted to use the perspective of a child to play the game with, it would be preferable if it was only for a small section.

1. Mazes - I rarely play a game with a maze through to its conclusion.
2. Bugs
3. Bad story
4. Boring Puzzles
5. Bad writing and description - This is a killer. So many games had really bad room descriptions it almost makes no sense.

I also dislike when the fourth wall is broken to be used as a crutch for poor game design.

AND THEN THERE WERE (100)0

*A Musing On Populating Games With Huge Amounts Of NPCs
by David Whyld*

Most games feature NPCs. They're one of the inescapable factors about writing an IF game (or a non-IF game for that matter). NPCs are everywhere.

But games seldom have anywhere near enough of them to be realistic.

Take your average village. How many people, roughly, would you say live there? A hundred? Two hundred? Say three hundred. Assuming you were to write a game set in that village, how many NPCs would you put in your game? Certainly not three hundred. It would take forever. Just writing descriptions for each of them would take weeks, or even months, in itself. And as for dialogue for each of them...

I've thought a time or two over the years of creating a huge game world, with literally hundreds of locations, hundreds of objects, hundreds of NPCs. The main issue that's always stopped me is that it would require such a vast amount of time and effort, and take such an age to finish, that I've pretty much quit working on it before I've even begun. The very idea of creating separate personalities, descriptions and conversation dialogue for hundreds of NPCs has just left me cold.

Recently, though, I've been playing the much-heralded *Elder Scrolls 3: Morrowind* and its expansion packs *Tribunal* and *Bloodmoon*. Despite containing some remarkable gameplay flaws (wandering along a wind-blasted wasteland for an hour is *not* fun, nor is accidentally killing your ally when trying to strike an enemy because they moved in the way of your attack), it's also been a very interesting game, and some parts of it, namely the way it handles NPCs, has got me wondering about the huge game world idea in an IF game again. *Morrowind* itself is populated with literally hundreds of NPCs, maybe even thousands. A mammoth task, even considering that this is a game designed not just by a single person (as

is the case with the majority of today's IF games) but by a whole production team. Read the credits list at the back of the manual for an idea of just how many people worked on the game. Lots and lots and lots of them. But *Morrowind* has a neat trick as far as its NPCs are concerned: it has a central store of questions that the player can ask them about, and the responses from any one of a hundred NPCs might be the exact same thing.

Now, that might not seem like a huge amount of fun, and you'd probably be forgiven for thinking it must get very repetitive speaking to the eleventh NPC in a row and getting the same responses as you did for the last ten. In a way, you'd be right. But at the same time, when there are so many NPCs in the game that can be spoken to, if every single one had a unique set of dialogue options, it would be pretty impossible to get anything done. There would be so much choice that finding one of the NPCs you actually *needed* to speak to would be a nightmare. So in those circumstances, when you have hundreds of NPCs but only a percentage of them have anything worthwhile to say, it becomes much easier to find the unique ones. It also gives the game a degree of believability in that it *seems* much more like a real world. Every house has an NPC, every street has a few of them wandering along. Most of them don't play an important part in the game, or even do anything but just add up the numbers, but including them gives the village more credibility than it would have if the only NPCs around were the two you actually needed to speak with.

Apply the same idea to an IF game. Take the village mentioned earlier with three hundred NPCs. Clearly three hundred is too many, but let's assume we had one hundred. Give them a central pool of information that each of them have the same answers to. Make some of them, maybe a dozen in total, have different dialogues. It would be achievable.

Of course, you're still faced with the descriptions for a hundred different NPCs which would be a lengthy process in itself. But then it depends what level of detail for the descriptions you go for. You could always go with a generic description for almost every NPC in the game (and if you have a game with a hundred NPCs, it's unlikely that players are going to want, or even expect, a full length and varied description for each of them), or just base their descriptions on a set of variables, thus making each of the NPCs different in appearance every time you play the game.

The conversation pool would be an easy enough thing to set up, with a brief mention at the start of the game of precisely how it works to clue players in on what it is they're expected to do. It would still take a while to complete, but overall it would be considerably less time consuming than creating a separate dialogue for each NPC. A typical conversation might go along the lines of:

> talk to bob

"Hi," says Bob. "What do you want?" (politics/weather/sports/bob/his wife/his family/his job/me)

> politics

"I'm not one for politics," says Bob. "Ask me about something else."
(politics/weather/sports/bob/his wife/his family/his job/me)

> me

"I barely even know you," says Bob. (politics/weather/sports/bob/his wife/his family/his job/me)

> his wife

"Keep your eyes off her, stranger," says Bob, with a hard look in his eyes.
(politics/weather/sports/bob/his wife/his family/his job/me)

Now the conversation topics "politics" and "me" would be general conversation topics (i.e. ones that just about NPC in the game would have). The "his wife" conversation topic would be unique to Bob (unless you want it so that every NPC in the game responds unfavourably to questions about their wife :))

It would even be possible to vary the responses. "politics" could be a variable and, together with the ALR, you might have:

> talk to bob

"Hi," says Bob. "What do you want?" (politics/weather/sports/bob/his wife/his family/his job/me)

> politics

politics%politics% (politics/weather/sports/bob/his wife/his family/his job/me)

In the ALR:

politics0|"I'm not one for politics," says Bob. "Ask me about something else."
politics1|"Interesting subject," says Bob. "I've always liked that sort of thing."
politics2|"I doubt I could care less if I tried," says Bob.

Of course, varying the conversation topics in this way for every NPC in the game would probably be almost as time consuming as writing out individual conversation topics for each of them. Or you could have it that each time you question an NPC about a specific subject, a variable is determined and the answer based off that. The positive side to this is that you'd have different responses from different NPCs

without having to program multiple responses for each of them. The negative side is that you'd get wildly varying responses from the same NPC when asked repeatedly about the same subject.

While hardly an ideal conversation system, this is at least a way of doing one that could handle hundreds, even thousands (if you wanted to go that far), of conversations with NPCs. If you're going for the huge game world idea, and intend to populate it with enough NPCs to make it seem like a real place, it's certainly an idea to think about.

VIEW FROM A(N ALMOST) NEWBIE

by AndrewF

Ok, I may not actually be the newest Newbie on the proverbial block, but I only started using ADRIFT the second week of March '06, so I'm not really an old hand either (despite what some people might say about my age).

Back then, when I first thought about trying my hand at writing IF instead of stories, I had a quick search around the net for an application to help me with the setting up and writing process. I wanted something that would be quick and easy to pickup and would also do a lot of the background work for me (tying rooms together, controlling objects, etc.)

I had a brief look at TADS and INFORM as well as ADRIFT and found that ADRIFT was the only one that would let me setup a series of rooms and put something in them almost instantly with no need to touch the manual. That boded well for what I wanted to try so off I went creating and testing my theories.

After only a day or so of writing, I encountered the limit on the free demo version. "Arrgh!" I thought... "I can't stop now!" So with a swift mouse click or three, I purchased my registration (at a very reasonable price I might add) and continued on from where I had been interrupted.

So far in my experience, writing in ADRIFT has been both easy and frustrating, strange as that dichotomy may sound.

There have been times when creating locations, objects and tasks seemed to flow as smoothly as water. When my intent has translated into my game with little or no resistance and has even worked first time.

There have also been times when what I was trying to achieve had seemed impossible, and that there was no way to bend ADRIFT to my needs.

But even in my darkest hours, I knew that there is a community of ADRIFT experts who are willing to offer support and guidance even for the most impossible-seeming tasks. A community of writers from many varied walks of life who are willing to put aside their own tasks and apply their own unique combination of talents to helping each other.

DRIFTERS THINK ABOUT...

The IFComp 2006

KFAdrift

The IF Comp remains, as should it should be, the highlight of the IF year. If for no other reason than being the one time when people will try systems that they otherwise avoid it is very important, which is also a problem if the systems fail to work simply.

While I doubt that, as things stand, an Adrift game could win the comp, I do think that Adrift games performing well is important to the profile of the system. Games that finish in the upper reaches of the annual comp will have an attraction for players coming to the IF community as they have the stamp of approval. What happens next year if Adrift 5 is with us, and is a much more powerful system, then we might see a break through. Of course we could also be back at square one so far as compatibility with other operating systems is concerned.

IN THE HOT SEAT

Interview with Robert Street



And this month we have an interview with prolific ADRIFT (and Inform) writer Robert Street, aka Rafgon, now the editor of the Reviews Exchange. Let's see what he has to say for himself.

Q

First of all, who is Rafgon/Robert Street? Tell us a bit about yourself.

A

For a few basic facts, I'm Australian, 23 years old, and beginning a career in the financial industry. I only discovered IF at the start of 2004, so I'm a relative newcomer to the scene. I hadn't even heard of Infocom until I started reading the various IF forums/newsgroups. I've always read a lot of books, and liked the graphic adventure games, whilst not being a fan of action or strategy games. I guess I started playing IF, as after discovering a few sites, it seemed like a good source of free interesting games I could download from the Internet.

If anyone is wondering where the name Rafgon came from, it was just a random word I made up at the time I joined the forum. I didn't want to use my real name initially in case I made a mess of my first IF games. I could then have taken the coward's route by abandoning the name and pretending that I was a newcomer again later. I didn't end up needing to change my name, as it went much better than I had expected.

< ----- >

Q

Why did you choose ADRIFT to write your games with? You can use a programming language (more about that in the next question), so what was it about ADRIFT that made you choose it?

A

After the IF Comp in 2004, I wanted to try writing some games, so I entered the two competitions that were on, which were the Inform C32 minicomp and the ADRIFT 3-Hour comp.

After having tried out these two languages (and I had a quick look at TADS and Hugo as well), I found that ADRIFT was just easy to use and I could focus on the writing side rather than the programming. This is a hobby with limited time, not a job, and I want to focus more on the writing, which I find more fun.

< ----- >

Q

In 2005, you entered an Inform game in the IFComp and came 6th, a remarkable achievement. Why did you choose to write your IFComp entry in Inform – specific problems with ADRIFT or did Inform just seem 'right for the job'?

A

The main reason for writing an IFComp game in Inform is really that I wanted to see if I was capable of writing a game in the language. I always like a good challenge.

< ----- >

Q

Also, do you think you'd have done as well if your game had been written with ADRIFT?

A

No, and it isn't a simple reason such as people don't like ADRIFT. The first problem I see is that Scare is not a good substitute for ADRIFT on non-Windows systems. I appreciate the effort put into Scare, but it never seems to work fully as intended. I worry that people who play through Scare are going to find issues that don't appear on the normal ADRIFT, and cannot be easily fixed.

I think it is also just difficult to get a polished game in ADRIFT. It is easy to get a solid game programmed, but it is very difficult to get to the polished stage. By polished, I mean that all the commands entered by the player receive reasonable responses. It's the little things that are important.

Whenever you play ADRIFT, you tend to get strange responses with inappropriate default messages (such as the ever annoying response to punching items) and where not every variation of a command is covered. Using the alr, synonyms and tasks you can fix these issues to a certain extent, but I find it difficult to fix it completely, whilst not introducing in new problems in the process.

In Inform it is a lot harder to get to the solid stage of writing a game, but it is a lot more polished when you get there, as Inform has a stronger base than can be customised more effectively.

< ----- >

Q

What aspect of Inform do you wish ADRIFT had? Is there anything you've ever tried to do in ADRIFT that can't be done, but is easy enough to achieve in Inform?

A

I guess from my response above I would prefer a lot more control over a default response to any given verb.

In Frustrated Interviewee, I also had a lot of trouble implementing in some more mechanical puzzles with carrying the tree trunk and putting the sticks in the holes. ADRIFT is not really made for complicated if-then structures, and these puzzles needed a lot of tasks. In Inform, I find mechanical puzzles, with lots of cases and variables, are much easier to implement. I have to admit a few times in ADRIFT I've just given up and changed the puzzle to something that can be implemented more easily.

I know you can implement in a CYOA style system of choices for conversation in ADRIFT, but it is not easy to do right. It was difficult to figure out initially, but the gtalk addin I used in Inform gave me a lot more flexibility once I understood how it worked.

< ----- >

Q

You've turned a few of your smaller works into full size games in the past. Any plans to turn either "Take One" or "Too Much Exercise" (or either of your Intro Comp entries) into full games?

A

Probably not in either of these cases, as I can't see a good way to extend the games whilst keeping the premise interesting. I may borrow some of the same ideas in later games, but I have no plans to do this at the moment. Generally, I'm not a huge fan of writing sequels or series, as I find that I like working on different ideas in each game. I only wrote the expansions for Must Escape! and Veteran Knowledge when I had a lot of new ideas.

< ----- >

Q

Which IF (ADRIFT or otherwise) games have you played lately and which would you recommend?

A

I haven't played many ADRIFT games recently, which is mainly due to the fact I have played most of the good ADRIFT games previously and unfortunately not many new games have been released so far this year. For non-ADRIFT games, I have been playing through some of the Robb Sherwin games, which I really enjoy. I always like a good action IF game (and I mean by this that lots of action occurs, not that there is a combat system).

< ----- >

Q

What are your hopes for ADRIFT 5? What killer features do you wish it had?

A

I'm really not sure what I want from ADRIFT 5. Probably more of the same as ADRIFT 4, except with a greater ability to customise and fewer limits. An example of a limit is that you can only copy tasks, not for example objects or events, and you can only move dynamic, not static objects. Both of these limits should be removed. There are a lot of minor design issues like this that could be improved to make the program even more user friendly. I'm happy to wait and see at the moment.

< ----- >

Q

Where do you see your game writing going? Bigger games in the future? More ambitious works?

A

I have noticed that my game ideas are becoming more ambitious, as I get more experience. I started off with medium size games, but my games have been steadily getting larger in size. I think I just feel more confident now that I will actually finish writing a larger game. At first, I didn't want to risk aiming for too much, becoming bored, and never finishing.

< ----- >

Q

"Veteran Knowledge" and "Veteran Experience" were both set from the viewpoint of an anti-hero, an unusual approach. Do you think it's important for the player to associate himself with the main character in a game? If so, why choose to write a game from the 'villain's' viewpoint?

A

I think it is more fun for a game author to write from the 'villain's' viewpoint than it is for a player to play as a villain. It is easy for the author to get into writing a villain, but it can often not connect with the player. This

depends on whether you want to write a popular game, or one you will enjoy writing. Of course, you can do both at the same time, which is probably a better option. In hindsight I think I went a bit over the top with the character.

< ----- >

Q

Which of your games so far do you think has been your best work and why? What would you say sets that game above all the others?

A

I think I get better with every game, as I learn from my previous mistakes. I liked "The Potter and the Mould", as I felt it had a far stronger storyline than my previous games, whilst maintaining large areas to explore and reasonable puzzles.

< ----- >

Q

How many of the games you start reach completion?

A

Most of them actually. For all of the games I've really started work on, I've eventually got around to finishing them. I admit some games have been abandoned very early on, when I realised that I couldn't make the ideas work in that format. For example, there were too many holes in the plot where it just didn't make sense. Often I've used the best of these ideas in a later game.

< ----- >

Q

What are your IF plans for the future? Continue to use ADRIFT? Switch to Inform? Or something else?

A

I'm going to stick with ADRIFT for the time being. I've had a quick look at Inform 7, and whilst it looks interesting, I just don't have the time to learn

a new programming language right now. It might be easy to use, but it will still take too much time and effort to figure out.

< ----- >

Q

What are you working on now? Tell us a bit about your works in progress.

A

I'm working on an ADRIFT game, but I don't want to give out any details yet in case I want to enter it in a competition. I don't have as much time to write now as I did last year, so it is coming along very slowly.

Robert Street is the author of seven ADRIFT Games:

23 11 04	1) Veteran Experience
11 02 05	2) Veteran Knowledge
17 04 05	3) Frustrated Interviewee
21 08 05	4) Must Escape!
25 09 05	5) Take One
18 03 06	6) Too Much Exercise
31 03 06	7) The Potter & The Mould

and one Inform game:

01 10 05	1) The Colour Pink
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“Veteran Experience” came 2nd in the second Three Hour ADRIFT Comp in 2004; “Frustrated Interviewee” was joint 1st in the ADRIFT Spring Comp 2005; “Outline” came joint 4th in the ADRIFT Intro Comp (2005) and “Must Escape!” came sixth; the full length version of “Must Escape!” came 4th in the ADRIFT Summer Comp 2005; “Take One” came 2nd in the Finish The Game Comp (2005); “The Colour Pink” came 6th in the IFComp 2005; “Too Much Exercise” came 2nd in the Writing Challenges Comp (2006); “The Potter & The Mould” came 2nd in the Spring Thing 2006.

He runs a website at <http://adrift.sitesled.com/> which is the current home of the Reviews Exchange.

IN PROGRESS

Works in progress from members of the ADRIFT community. How many will ever get finished? Only time will tell...

Divine Harbour

By C. Henshaw

You are a young woman who lands a job at a private mental institution called 'Divine Harbour'. It's small, exclusive, and friendly. The patients are very easy to deal with. Too easy, in fact. Very quickly you begin to wonder if these people have any real problems at all, and why the assistants of Dr Baedika, the director, mindlessly worship the ground he walks on. What is going on here? And what are these strange suspicions that the patients know you as well, or better, than you know yourself? All is obviously not as it seems, and you realise that no one except yourself can do anything about it.

This is a medium-sized, 17 room game, of the drama/thriller genre, due for release in autumn 2006.

Introduction

The interview

'Miss Ishaque, thank you so much for coming. Welcome to Divine Harbour.'

Self-consciously leaning over the table between you and the three interviewers, you shake the hand of the trim moustachioed man in the middle. 'Thank you for inviting me,' You say with a smile. The man wears a waistcoat over his flowing white shirt and his eyes twinkle at you. On his right sits a demure young woman with red hair, pulled back in a severe knot, and on his left a bright-eyed young man with sideburns.

'And you are... what... Pakistani?' He asks, peering from your job application to your blond curls.

'Well, no,' You say, a little taken aback, 'I'm Bangladeshi and Persian, actually.'

The three mumble a bit, along the lines of, 'Oh, you sound so British,' and 'Very interesting mix,' etc. You've heard this kind of thing before and decide to take it in a positive way - maybe you'll stand out a bit from the other applicants...

So begins your very first job interview in the field at which you have worked so hard: abnormal psychology. This hardly counts as a first job, being merely an internship of only one month. But so far you've had little luck elsewhere. Too many Oxford graduates, bespectacled brunettes and ambitious people with good connections. One old doctor even patted your hand and said you were too beautiful to be doing this kind of work - that it would distract the patients.

'Now, tell us a little about yourself, and why you want to work in this field...' the man begins.

The interview finishes, and you step out of the room. You managed to refrain from tossing your hair and remembered to look *through* your fake glasses, not over or under them. Although you refused to dye your hair for this interview, you did leave off washing it for a few days so that it would look a bit darker and stringier, and kept it off your face with a simple alic band. You have mixed feelings about the irony of being Asian with naturally blond hair and blue eyes - the cause of numerous requests for marriage from friends and relatives 'back home' with eligible sons.

Smoothing your long shapeless cardigan over a knee-length pleated skirt, you wait outside in the corridor. Suddenly the door opens, and the handsome older man (who, you learned, is Dr Baedike, and runs the facility) reaches out again to shake your hand. 'Miss Ishaque, you're hired.' He twinkles at you and bustles off down the corridor. The other two follow him out. They are, you have learned, Dr Carstone and Dr Minan. 'See you Monday' they call out as you leave.

First day...

Monday morning, promptly, you arrive at the front entrance to Divine Harbour and the receptionist lets you in. She remembers you from your interview the previous week.

'Welcome Miss Ishaque. Richard will be here any minute. I'm Tia Holdyne, by the way.' You shake her manicured hand. 'I think you'll find Divine Harbour a wonderful place to work. It's a shame you'll only be here for a month!' She smiles in a dreamy way, and settles back down in her seat.

Entrance Lobby

Divine Harbour's entrance is a large room of glass with a row of black leather chairs

positioned artfully between potted palms. The receptionist's desk is tubular steel and a giant artwork in pinks and greens dominates her corner. A set of spiral stairs in polished wood leads up to the first floor, and a metal door leads south. The large glass doors leading north to the outside are locked and can only be opened by holding a staff keycard to the lock, or by the receptionist pressing a button near her chair.

To be continued...

Scarlet (*How Suzy Got Her Powers*)

by David Whyld

Introduction

“La-dddyyyyyyyyy!”

You blink. Jeez, that was *loud!* Does the kid have a pair of loudspeakers in his lungs or something?

“Lady, *he-llllllllllllllp!*” the kids screeches.

You're more inclined to cover your ears to block him out, but instead you find yourself (cursing your ever helpful nature as you do) saying to him, “what’s the problem, kiddo?”

The kid – is it a boy? A girl? Something different? – points towards a building at one end of the parking lot. Smoke is rising in thick clouds (how come you didn’t notice that before?) from the building and there's what looks like flames licking at one of the upper windows.

“My mummeeeeeeeeeeee!” the kid wails, apparently not one for keeping his/her voice down when he/she has the opportunity to screech instead. “She’s *inside!*”

Your usual response at this point would be to say, “yes? *And?*” but you stop yourself. There's someone trapped in a burning building. There's you and that someone’s kid here. And, as sheer bad luck would have it, the rest of the parking lot is empty.

“*He-llllllppppppp!!!*” wails the kid, tugging at your hand and trying to pull you towards the burning building when every instinct is prompting you to run like hell in the other direction.

< ----- >

How Suzy Got Her Powers is the first part of a larger work, a superhero (or superheroine actually) game which has the working title of **Scarlet**.

I've written a superhero game before – **A Day In The Life Of A Superhero** (entered in the IFCOMP in 2004 where it came a lowly 23rd) – but **Scarlet** is intended as a more serious game. Which isn't to say it *is* a serious game, just that it won't feature the kind of over the top and outlandish humour that **Superhero** did. **Scarlet** is more down to earth, the villains more villainous, and the setting not quite so silly. Think the first X-Men film as opposed to Superman wearing his underpants on the outside.

Scarlet is intended as a big game. And by big, I mean *huge*. I've been meaning to embark on a truly huge game for a while now, but many of my recent games haven't really had a lengthy enough storyline to justify it. While the option is always there in any game you write to just add extra sections onto it, this is never really a good idea. Some games are best as short games, and trying to stretch out a small idea into a huge one is sure to fail as you inevitably end up with an idea adequate for a short game taking up something five times the size.

But **Scarlet** *feels* like a big game. Or a huge game. Or maybe even an epic game. I haven't plotted out just how big it will be yet, but there are expected to be half a dozen supervillains, each with their own cronies and base, scattered across a city of perhaps three hundred locations. There'll be other areas as well – an island base, a cloud castle, maybe even somewhere deep underground depending on how it all pans out – not to mention several flashbacks and extras thrown in to add background and depth to the storyline.

How Suzy Got Her Powers is one such extra, detailing what happened one day when Suzy Loman – AKA Scarlet – crosses a parking lot on her way to work, has an encounter with something completely unexpected, and winds up with powers that she never even wanted. But which she has all the same. As Peter Parker's uncle once told him: "with great power comes great responsibility." And in a world inhabited by Krusher, the Vortex and Fyreball, great responsibility is going to be thrust upon little Suzy whether she wants it or not. After all, *someone* has to stop them...

DEAD... BUT NOT LOVIN' IT

by David Whyld

A game of mine that is now every bit as inactive as the subject matter...

A Day In The Life Of A Grave Digger

(...introduction...)

A grave digger's lot is not a happy one. There's the rain for a start, and the snow, and the sleet, and the mud, and the people who aren't *quite* as dead as they ought to be, and the mourners, and the body snatchers, and the local police who come snooping from time to time to make sure you're not burying hidden treasure, and the packs of wild dogs, and the...

But it's an easy enough job. Sure, you don't get much in the way of conversation what with the only people you meet being somewhat on the dead side, and the chances of you scoring with any hot chicks aren't helped by the fact that you always smell of death and decay (for some reason, the hot chicks find it a bit off putting), and the pay – 50p per corpse buried, 75p per really fat corpse buried – isn't great. Still, it's a job and you *do* get your very own grave digger's hut *and* as many personal belongings as you can steal from the corpses that their loved ones have missed. It's not a bad life...

But now everything seems to be changing. As explained by Smigg, the head of the Graveyard Division at the last Annual Grave Diggers' Association Meeting: "the government's getting computerised, lads. And that means bad news for us honest grave diggers. They're bringing in computer-operated spades and coffins that *crawl* into the graves and they might even splash out on soil that digs itself."

"What we gonna do then?" someone asked. It might have been you but you can't remember.

"We're gonna work harder is what we're gonna do," said Smigg, slamming his fists down on the table. "No three hour coffee breaks, no leaving corpses out in the sun to dry, no chucking several of 'em in the same hole so as you don't need to dig *another* hole, and no swiping headstones to sell on the black market." His beady eye fixed on you as he said that and you felt something – probably your bank balance – wince at the prospect. "We're gonna show them computers what we're made of, lads. We're gonna show 'em who digs the graves around here."

It was quite an inspiring speech. Afterwards, several of you got drunk and went for a swim in the local river. Then, after being fished out by the river police and charged with polluting the river with your bodies, you got down to the business at hand.

Today, it seems, is the day when the graveyard inspector is going to come and pay your graveyard a visit. Today, you've got to be sharper than sharp. Today, for perhaps the first time in recorded history, you're going to have to do a full day's week.

And, by God, you're going to enjoy it as well...

Yes, this was a silly game. A downright silly one. I'm not sure where the idea came from but I started it not long after I'd written another comedy game – *A Day In The Life Of A Superhero* – and I felt like doing another game with "A Day In The Life..." in the title. Several discarded ideas later (one of them – *A Day In The Life Of A Pirate* – I actually made quite a bit of progress with before losing interest) and I came up with *A Day In The Life Of A Grave Digger*. It was the silliest of them all.

In tone, this game would be similar to *Paint!!!* Lots of bizarre things happening, but this time spread out over five locations instead of just one. It was also intended as a big game (or as big a game as it's possible to get in five rooms anyway), with locations changing depending on what had happened in other locations. There would also be random elements to the game – characters showing up in one game that didn't in another, puzzles solved in different ways each time you play it – lending to lots of replay value...

...and lots of trouble to write it.

Grave Digger went quite well at first. I wrote the locations out in one afternoon – the grave digger’s hut (the “centre of operations”) and then the four ‘rooms’ which comprised the graveyard itself. I made a few NPCs – a zombie who would wander about the graveyard at random, a little girl looking for her doll which she’d lost, a man who had been buried alive and wasn’t happy about it – and spend some time thinking up puzzles. The random side of things I would leave, I decided, until the rest of the game had been written, and then once all the easy stuff (i.e. all the non-random elements) were done, I’d go and randomise everything to my heart’s content.

All went well until I found myself liking the idea less and less the more I tried to write it. At first I thought the five room limit I’d imposed was too restrictive – when you’ve got as few locations as that, and 80% of them are composed of rooms full of gravestones in them, you’re inevitably going to end up with some similarity between the locations. But at the same time, I wasn’t really sure that adding extra rooms was the answer. Aside from anything, *Grave Digger* was intended as a game that takes place in a small number of locations. Making the graveyard itself larger was an option, but then how many locations do you really need in a graveyard? Once you’ve described one grave, you’ve described ‘em all.

Stuck for ways to make any further progress, I pushed the game to one side with the intention of taking a short break from it and returning to it at some later stage, hopefully when I’d found fresh inspiration and knew how to proceed, but I guess it wasn’t to be. Nearly two years after I originally came up with the idea, *A Day In The Life Of A Grave Digger* holds no more appeal for me now than it did when I gave up working on it.

REFERENCE

Who's Who & What's What

(...being a list of individual sites within the ADRIFT community...)

<http://www.adrift.org.uk>

The main ADRIFT website.

<http://www.thephurroughs.com/projects/atts>

The ADRIFT Tutorial. (Written for ADRIFT 3.9 but mostly still relevant.)

<http://web-ring.freesevers.com/cgi-bin/webring?showring=K5G14H>

The ADRIFT Webring.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/jasea>

The homepage of jAsea, a program that allows people on non-Windows systems to play ADRIFT games.

http://www.geocities.com/legion_if/scare.html

The homepage of SCARE, a clone of jAsea which allows ADRIFT games to be run on non-Windows systems.

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<http://bbben.aifcommunity.org/> - "BBBen? Yes!"

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Hanadorobou's website [home of the ADRIFT game **The PK Girl**].

<http://adrift.sitesled.com/> - "Reviews Exchange"
Rafgon's {aka Robert Street} website.

<http://www.shadowvault.net> – "Shadowvault"
David Whyld's website.

WORD SEARCH

Issue 29 contained a word search in which were hidden the names of twenty different ADRIFT games. How many did you find?

Here are the answers.

Adrift Maze
Akron
Fire In The Blood
House
Humbug
Lost Mines
Old Church
Regrets
Saffire
Shadowjack
Shuffling Room
Test
Time
Undefined
Unravelling God
Vagabond
Vendetta
Wheels Must Turn
Woods Are Dark
Wreckage

A	V	A	G	A	B	O	N	D	I	O	P	L	F	R	F	E	E	G	I
W	O	O	D	S	A	R	E	D	A	R	K	G	S	F	F	T	R	B	A
B	T	Y	Y	T	L	Y	U	H	G	N	B	G	A	E	Y	B	T	G	D
H	Q	T	U	A	O	E	E	U	I	G	G	E	F	E	F	T	T	J	R
B	J	K	L	X	S	W	E	F	A	E	B	N	F	B	S	R	G	G	I
E	Q	B	S	E	T	G	L	V	E	H	U	I	I	R	D	U	I	T	F
V	A	G	U	B	M	U	H	N	E	N	T	H	R	F	F	T	O	T	T
R	S	F	G	U	I	H	U	U	Z	S	T	Q	E	T	Q	T	I	H	M
T	R	C	T	Y	N	K	H	M	K	H	Z	V	G	H	G	U	I	P	A
O	F	T	W	H	E	E	L	S	M	U	S	T	T	U	R	N	I	M	Z
C	I	H	G	G	S	D	E	N	I	F	E	D	N	U	N	R	M	N	E
V	E	N	D	E	T	T	A	T	O	F	S	D	R	B	A	N	R	U	M
S	R	X	Y	U	N	R	A	V	E	L	L	I	N	G	G	O	D	T	N
H	H	H	E	Q	D	E	Q	R	S	I	X	T	G	J	T	R	S	S	H
A	T	S	Q	D	J	K	D	O	I	N	I	T	U	T	G	K	S	S	G
D	U	T	T	T	F	I	N	G	U	G	V	B	B	S	G	A	I	N	G
O	I	G	E	E	Y	U	X	T	Y	R	B	G	T	R	T	U	U	Y	R
W	O	T	Y	Y	R	T	Y	I	O	O	Q	E	Z	S	T	G	B	T	E
J	P	W	Q	R	E	G	U	U	O	O	A	D	F	G	E	O	C	I	Q
A	O	P	S	S	D	T	E	L	I	M	X	F	T	Y	U	T	J	C	X
C	X	E	G	A	K	C	E	R	W	G	H	C	R	U	H	C	D	L	O
K	I	Q	W	E	G	F	I	R	E	I	N	T	H	E	B	L	O	O	D

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LOOKING AHEAD

If everything goes according to plan, the 31st issue of the newsletter should be out on 30th September 2006.

Have any ideas for articles/features for it? Let me know: dwhyld@gmail.com