

# The Queen's Lane Advertiser

(Incorporating Convention News)

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Issue Number 12

Printed in DERBY

May 2005

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Edited by Jeremy Tullett



## **Editorial (Jeremy Tullett)**

Welcome to the issue 12 of The Queens Lane Advertiser, a 'zine of the postal games hobby that has, in fact, rarely discussed it at all.

This 'zine first appeared in 1978, so you can tell that it isn't a very regular publication.

For this I charge nothing at all, because it is now being funded by a consortium of three of the UK's boardgames conventions.

I see that the last issue of QLA appeared in 2000, just after I had finally settled into my own house in Derby. Five years further on, I am still here, and still working in the same job, although I have achieved what may be described as promotion. In the meantime, my employer has had a rather rough year, and we about to say good-bye to around 170 volunteers for redundancy. As this is about a third of the workforce in the Derby office, the place is shortly going to feel very empty.

Anyway, this venerable publication has risen wraith-like from its resting place for a particular reason, as explained by the equally venerable David Norman.

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## **Introduction (David Norman)**

In recent years, games conventions in the UK have seen a decline in the number of attendees. There are many reasons that have been suggested as to why this is, but one of the main ones is almost certainly the level of advertising.

In the past, the games hobby was heavily supported by the postal 'zine hobby. All of the major 'zines would carry news of upcoming conventions, and reports from recent conventions. The conventions became a place for people to meet others whom they otherwise only knew through the zines.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the number of zines has declined dramatically. And with it has gone one of the major methods by which conventions can get in touch and stay in touch with their core audience.

Rather than commiserate with each other over the loss of the 'zines, a number of conventions have decided to get together and create their own 'zine – this one.

In some ways, QLA is very different to a traditional hobby 'zine. There are no games. The Internet has brought much more convenient ways to play games (and made it much less work for the Game Master to run the game). There is no subscription fee - it is entirely funded from the conventions' advertising budgets. But what it does bring to you is convention information: news of upcoming events, results from recent conventions, reports, and anything else the convention organisers can think of to write.

QLA is part of a larger plan to increase the level of cooperation between the different games conventions in the UK. In future issues, we hope to bring news of other initiatives on which we are currently working.

But in the meantime, welcome.

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## **Convention Report: Midcon 2004 (Jeremy Tullett)**

**MidCon** has been running since around 1980, and has had a number of changes of organizing committee, including a spell under the management of a professional games organization. It is currently in the hands of a group of dedicated amateurs.

During the 1980s, Midcon was focused on the National Diplomacy Championships. In those heady days, attendance was around 200 with perhaps a third taking part in the Diplomacy tournament. Today, about 100 people attend, with only about 20 people playing Diplomacy. People are generally playing shorter, lighter games than they used to.

### **Overview**

Attendance in 2004 was just under 100. This was about the same as attended in 2003, but only about 80 people attended in both years

Behind this lies a reduction in the UK postal Diplomacy hobby which once supported dozens of 'zines that formed a pool of readers interested in attending games conventions. Declining readership has led to a fall in the number of people that a convention committee can reach – and many of those with whom we retain contact have more pressing matters to attend to now that they have grown up – like families.

For Diplomacy players in particular, but for other new convention goers, the email hobby would appear to be a natural target. Limited success in drawing in email Diplomacy players has been achieved, but they have mostly disappeared again. We may have had others arrive more anonymously by different routes, but such of these as maybe here have certainly not made up for the continuing loss of convention players in general. Given the number of email Diplomacy players that there must be active in the UK, it is disappointing that it seems to be so hard to entice them in. If anyone has the answer to this conundrum, please let us know!

### **How it Went**

Rarely a year goes by without some administrative problem with the hotel. However, this year was better than most.

In 2003, there were a number of complaints about the dilatory service at the bar, and the appalling delivery times on ordered food items and beverages. In 2004, these problems seemed to have been addressed to some extent, although there were periods when service was hard to obtain.

### **The National Diplomacy Championship**

The Diplomacy tournament was disappointingly quiet. Mark Wightman, the Tournament Director was at least able to get in a couple of sessions of his favourite wargame whilst keeping an eye on matters.

Posn.	Name	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total	Best Country
1	Dan Lester	37.93	49.18		87.11	France, Turkey
2	Vick Hall		22.81	45.90	68.71	Russia
3	Keith Smith	12.07	31.58	0.00	43.65	England
4	Doug Massie		24.59	16.39	40.98	Austria
5	John Stratford	25.86	1.64	13.11	38.98	Italy, Germany
6	Mark Hancock	6.90	19.30	0.00	26.19	
7	David Norman	15.52	9.84		25.35	
8	Robin Walters	1.72	8.77	16.39	25.17	
9	Toby Harris	0.00	15.79		15.79	
10	Jeremy Tullett		13.11		13.11	
11	Eve Smith		1.64	8.20	9.84	
12	Markus Wellbourne		1.75		1.75	
13	Mark Wightman		0.00		0.00	
13	Danny Collman		0.00		0.00	

Although the games appeared to be closely fought, a total of 14 players hardly merits a competition being called the National Diplomacy Championship, and if the title is to have any meaning at all, we need a serious increase in the number of players in 2005.

### **The MidCon Quiz**

Dan Lester kindly ran a **MidCon** Quiz on Saturday night. It was in a new format that offered those without encyclopaedic memories a chance to compete on a more equal footing with the usual clever-clogs who win it.

In fact the usual clever-clogs still won it, but it was a much a closer event than usual, and particular thanks are due to Dan who pulled the whole thing together at virtually nil notice with much emailing and downloading of files.

There was no music quiz this year, but I promise that one will be held in 2005.

### **Other Games**

As usual, there was a band of gamers who spent most of their weekend playing various of the 18XX railway games, but there were also numbers of people playing the latest purchases from the games fair at Essen, as well as their favourites from previous years.

These are usually the German boardgames such as Puerto Rico, Settlers of Catan, Ave Caesar, Metro, Carcassone, Elfenland, Taj Mahal, El Grande, etc., etc.

### **Next Year**

We have a contract with the Birmingham Thistle Hotel to host **MidCon** on 11-13 November 2005. Room rates are agreed at £47 per single room per night and £75 per double or twin room per night, to include English breakfast.

The Convention fee is to be decided, but will be about the same as in 2004.

## **Convention Report OxCon 2005 (James Rogers)**

2005 saw another very successful year for OxCon. The Mitre public house on Oxford high street once again provided an excellent venue, and attendance for the centrepiece events of the convention, the Diplomacy and Settlers of Catan tournaments, was comfortably high - we hope to have even more people in future years!

The pre-convention events on Friday evening started with a visit to Laserquest. This was followed by a hugely enjoyable curry at Jamal's, one of Oxford's many Indian restaurants. These were well attended and set us up for a great weekend. After the curry, most people returned to Richard's house for an evening of gaming.

The convention proper started on Saturday, with the Diplomacy tournament being the main event of the day. Surprisingly Austria-Hungary, often seen as the whipping boy of Diplomacy, seems to have been the country of choice this year, with both of the top two places going to players who drew it. Congratulations must go to Peter Clarkson, who was crowned champion for 2005, with Dave Wreathall a close second and Vick Hall coming in third. Best student went to Warren Lodge, and Doug Massie walked away with the TD's award for finishing exactly where he started - Turkey's three home supply centres. A big thank-you to Phil Gardner for directing this for us and to Dave Norman for the use of his laptop.

Saturday evening, after the Dip had finished, saw the ever-popular Lost Cities and Fifteen-to-One competitions taking place. Fifteen-to-One saw the three Phil's - Gardner, Hannay and Williams reach the final round, with Phil Williams eventually taking the prize. While these were going on, other people took the chance to relax and play some more casual games.

On Sunday the big event was the Settlers of Catan tournament, one of the largest in the country. Many thanks to James Pinnion for once again organizing this for us superbly. A new system on trial this year saw the field of thirty-six separated into higher and lower tiers after the first two games and I think most people seemed happy with the idea. The top spot was claimed by Marcus Wellbourne, with Gordon Robinson taking second place and Rob Edwards third.

Next year, OxCon will be taking place on the 21st and 22nd of January and once again the venue will be the Mitre pub. More information will be available soon on our website <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~diplo/>. Anyone who wants to know more should email [diplo@herald.ox.ac.uk](mailto:diplo@herald.ox.ac.uk) with their questions.

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## **Convention Report: MasterCon 2005 (David Norman)**

MasterCon has changed a lot over the years.

It started off as a Diplomacy Convention, with up to five boards of Diplomacy players, including players from all over Europe, competing for one of the major titles in the UK hobby. Of course, where there's a Diplomacy tournament, there are always people who want to play other games. Initially just the Diplomacy players filling in time between rounds, then a few 18XX players started coming along, playing in one corner. And so the non-Diplomacy side grew.

Despite the Diplomacy Tournament steadily declining in size, the convention carried on strongly. The number of non-Diplomacy players grew, playing pretty much all the games that

are seen at every other convention. But by last year, the size was starting to drop, mainly because the Diplomacy Tournament was down to seven players playing a single game.

But ultimately, the convention has now hit the problem that seems to be common in the hobby at present. The Diplomacy Players have stopped coming, because the tournament is not big enough to get their interest, and there isn't the support in numbers for Diplomacy that there used to be. And a lot of non-Diplomacy players don't come because they think it's a Diplomacy convention.

This year, the number of Diplomacy players was so low that there was no Diplomacy at all. But 17 gamers did get together, and played a number of different games. 18XX being the most common, but also various others - and a good time was had by all.

The convention also wasn't helped by Keith and Eve Smith having to drop out at the last moment. Unfortunately Eve has not been well, and has been prescribed two weeks of complete rest - definitely not the state to be running a Convention in - and Keith also had to stay home to look after her. Our best wishes for a speedy recovery go to Eve.

There was one tournament - Danny Victor ran an 18XX tournament. Lyndon Gurr beat David Smith for first place by a small margin. Ian D Wilson came third, with Tony Wheatley fourth, an ultra-thin margin ahead of Stephen Webb in fifth.

Where MasterCon goes from here is open to suggestions. One thing is for sure - it will be under new management next year, as the illness problems of this year have prompted Keith and Eve to decide that they can't reasonably continue to run it.

Beyond that, it's open to suggestions. If people want a convention of some form, then MasterCon will happen. If they don't, then there's no point having a convention without any attendees.

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## Forthcoming Conventions

Beer and Pretzels

14-15 May 2005

Burton-on-Trent

[www.spiritgames.co.uk/bnpdetails.php](http://www.spiritgames.co.uk/bnpdetails.php)

StabCon

8-10 July 2005

Manchester

[bookings@stabcon.org.uk](mailto:bookings@stabcon.org.uk)

ManorCon

15-18 July 2005

Birmingham

[www.diplom.org/manorcon](http://www.diplom.org/manorcon)

TringCon

24 September 2005

Tring

CastleCon

23 September-7 October 2005

Roch Castle

Pembrokeshire

MidCon

11-13 November 2005

Birmingham

[www.midcon.org.uk](http://www.midcon.org.uk)

OxCon

21-22 January 2006

Oxford

[diplo@herald.ox.ac.uk](mailto:diplo@herald.ox.ac.uk)

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Please contact the coordinator if:

- You run a convention and would like to be a part of the 'zine.
- You run a convention and would like to be included in the upcoming conventions list.
- You would like to offer to help out in some way.
- You are not on the mailing list for this 'zine, but would like to be.

The coordinator can be contacted at [david@ellought.demon.co.uk](mailto:david@ellought.demon.co.uk)

The next issue of QLA will be out in early July.

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