

The Queen's Lane Advertiser

(Incorporating Convention News)

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Edited by Jeremy Tullett



Editorial (Jeremy Tullett)

Welcome to the issue 13 of The Queens Lane Advertiser, a 'zine of the postal games hobby that now carries news of various games conventions occurring around the country. For this I charge nothing at all, because a consortium of three of the UK's boardgames conventions is now funding it.

Rather looking back at last year's conventions, this issue carries news of future events, into 2006. Before that, here is a contribution from the estimable Nick Kinzett on the problem of balancing the time spent in a Diplomacy tournament against all of the activities available at a games convention.

The Dilemma of Convention Tournament Diplomacy (Nick Kinzett)

Having refereed far more tournament rounds than I've actually played games, I might be the wrong person to comment on the decline of playing convention Diplomacy and the effect that this might have on convention attendance. On the other hand, my swift shift to playing only occasionally for the sake of the game may not be *that* atypical. It would certainly explain why I and a few other diehards persist in playing Diplomacy by post, and why the apparently vast hordes that play it by email, by and large stick to playing it by email.

The key here is opportunity cost in convention time.

Diplomacy has never been a good face-to-face game because of the risk of being reduced to impotence for hours, or, alternatively, to involuntary permanent elimination. In other words, it perversely delays eliminating those who want to be eliminated but knocks out those who don't.

At conventions, the latter is not taken as seriously as it might be, because those eliminated can, in theory, go off and play something else, but in practice this is remarkably difficult, many other attendees having already settled into their gaming groups for the session.

Multi-round Diplomacy tournaments are thus asking gamers, several times over, to partake of a lengthy exercise in which there's a fair chance of doing nothing half the time. Add into the equation that non-locals are in effect being charged anything from thirty to fifty quid per day for this dubious privilege and it's obvious what the problem is¹.

There are not many solutions to this dilemma. No one beside me seems interested in the most direct method: modify the game such that involuntary permanent elimination is impossible, either via a game-ending or via a meaningful-participation-in-exile rule, whilst voluntary permanent elimination becomes more achievable i.e. honourable resignation becomes an acceptable option, as in Chess.

This leaves us with letting convention Diplomacy die of its own perverse design weakness or trying to minimize its opportunity cost.

¹ On this financial point: I've seen it argued that fifty quid per night is cheap for a hotel room that would "normally" be charged at twice that. This is a red herring. No normal-income person in their right mind would shell out £100 each for a hotel room – their firms do that for them. In a games convention context, even fifty quid is steep for a facility scarcely used beyond a quick shower and a little sleep.

One way of doing the latter, used in some countries, I believe, is to cut the games very short, around the sixth or seventh game year². The trouble being that, while this might attract back the odd casual player, it would certainly put off the keener type who knows how unbalanced, invariable and unsatisfactory such an enforced short game can be.

The other way is to retain an extended cut-off, but to reduce the number of rounds thought necessary for a meaningful tournament.

In this context, I note that for years both MidCon and Manorcon (including the first WorldDipCon) got along fine with two rounds. The latter day phenomenon of a Friday night round has always struck me as an unnecessary imposition that has put off more people than it has attracted.

With today's drift away from Diplomacy in general, and the face-to-face game in particular, I am now wondering if it is time to bite the bullet, admit that our conventions have become general games events, and reduce the formal Diplomacy content to a single centrepiece round, as per OxCon.

The more I think about this, the more attractive it seems. There are a number of occasional players, including myself, who would cheerfully participate on Saturday if it meant no pressure to do the same on Sunday. What is more, everyone – whether or not interested in the tournament trappings – could play as near to a normal game as the cut-off allowed, precisely because there would be no “other round” tournament considerations. Those who came to the convention only to play Diplomacy would, of course, be free to organize their own informal games at other times. (There might be beneficial attendance feedback here: more people might come and play Diplomacy, but for less time, booking a Friday night room only.

The counter-argument that a one-round event would be statistically meaningless is invalid, because it is based on a false premise and ignores why most people play games at all³.

In any tournament, for any game, we are never going to find out who is “best”, whatever that means, merely who is judged to have performed best over a given period. There is no reason why the given period should not be one day and one session, especially for a game as long as Diplomacy.

In a manner of speaking, ManorCon already demonstrates this, since its team round has always been more popular than the ancillary individual rounds. To my mind, ManorCon could easily continue as a general games event with its Diplomacy as a team and individual tournament on the Saturday only.

MidCon could do similarly with the National Diplomacy Championship as a Saturday centrepiece. MasterCon would need to move again, to a venue more accessible to public transport, before doing the same (or surviving at all).

In all cases, the notion is that the very multi-gaming options in and around the Diplomacy centrepiece may make that centrepiece somewhat more attractive.

² Popular in Europe with the C-Diplo scoring system, Ed.

³ Them's fighting words, stranger. Ed.

Frome Gamescon 2005

Frome, Somerset, UK, July 10th 2005 £1

This years Frome GamesCon will be taking place at the Cheese and Grain Building in the Market Yard in Frome on Sunday July 10th from 10am 'till 5pm.

There will be lots of free games to play, tournaments, competitions, talks, displays, prizes, CCG's, RPG's, fantasy artwork, manufacturers, games for sale, games authors, miniatures, wargames, free parking, well you know the sort of thing and of course there will be food and drink available all day!

The main attraction of course is to share space with like-minded people, play games, meet new friends and have fun!

Also there will be a specially commissioned real ale for the event called, appropriately enough, "WassAle".

There will be 30 plus explainers helping out and the whole event should be a bit of fun.

Frome is in Somerset in the UK between Bath and Glastonbury and this event is one of the very few in the area during 2005. Various clubs will also be present, so this is your chance to come to Somerset and have fun!

The event is being held as part of the Frome Festival (www.fromefestival.co.uk) to give you more reasons for travelling to Somerset to attend. There are over 140 events spread over ten days, so why not make a weekend of it and see Van Morrison the night before or stay on at the venue after the GamesCon and see Arthur Lee and Love.

The Frome GamesCon is being jointly run by Wassail Games and Iksentrik Models, both of Frome. For further information on the GamesCon, please call Pete on 01373 469946 or use the e-mail link here on this site.

Website: www.wassailgames.com

PsychoCon 2005 (Mike Dean)

2pm Friday 21st to 6pm Sunday 23rd October 2005 in Harrogate!

The Event

A Board Games convention open to ALL! Tournaments to include: Diplomacy, Settlers of Catan, Puerto Rico, Formula De, Acquire - more to be announced, all with prizes!

Other games: Well... please bring any favourite games with you, there is bound to be opportunity and players available to participate. The more the merrier! This year's PSYCHO CON will be bigger and better!

Registration Fee

£8 per day, or £15 for the weekend if booked before 31st July 2005.

£10 per day or £20 for the weekend if after 31st July or paying on the door.

Children under 7 are FREE. Children 12 and under are half price.

If not booking for the weekend, please specify which day(s) you will be attending.

A downloadable booking form is available from <http://www.psychozine.co.uk/psychocon>

The Venue

The Crown Hotel, Harrogate

Accommodation

You must book your own accommodation directly with The Crown Hotel! The Hotel is holding some rooms for us for a limited period! Please book as soon as possible!

The rates we have negotiated are: £30 pppn B&B for a twin or double room, £37.50 pppn B&B for a single room.

Please call reservations on: 0845 602 6787 or 0870 609 6115 and Quote: Group 1392

More information about The Crown Hotel and directions can be found on it's website. These rates are only available until 31st August 2005! The Hotel is very close to the town centre and convenient for local restaurants, shopping and Harrogate's many attractions!

Catering & Bar Facilities

The Con Bar will be available from 11:30 to 14:30 and 17:30 to 23:00 each day, with the Hotel bar available outside these hours. Teas and Coffees available (£1 per cup) throughout the day. Bar snacks will be available either from the Con Bar or from the Bronte bar until 10pm. Dinner will also be available in the Hotel restaurant. A plethora of restaurants is available only a few minutes walk from the Hotel!

Latest PSYCHO CON information can be found on the psychopath website: <http://www.psychozine.co.uk>

Midcon 2005 (Jeremy Tullett)

11th – 13th November 2005

Thistle Birmingham City Hotel

MidCon takes place in a comfortable hotel in the centre of Birmingham from Friday afternoon (4pm) to Sunday evening (6pm). It features:

- the opportunity to play boardgames⁴ with like-minded adults⁵
- the National Diplomacy Championship
- the **MidCon** quiz for teams of 4 on Friday evening
- the chance to buy even more board games

⁴ including some new ones straight from the Spiel games fair in Germany

⁵ though children welcome as well!

MidCon is primarily about playing games and meeting people – whether you participate in the National Diplomacy Championships or play any of the number of games people have brought along with them, which may include spending the weekend playing 18xx or Civilisation. People have even been known to stay up late, drink too much and lose the shirt off their backs– but we don't recommend it.

Attendance at **MidCon** costs £15-£18 for the whole weekend (day rates of £8/£10/£8 for Friday, Saturday and Sunday) and accommodation is available in the Thistle Hotel at reasonable rates. The hotel is reachable by public transport and there's an adjacent car park.

If you would like to join us at **MidCon**, please write, with the convention fee of £15 a head (goes up to £18 on 1st November), to: Jeremy Tullett, **MidCon**, 7 Midland Place, Derby, DE1 2RR, or by e-mail to **bookings(at)MidCon.org.uk**. For an electronic version of the booking form, see the website, **www.MidCon.org.uk**

OxCon 2006 (James Rogers)

Next year's OxCon will be taking place over the weekend of the 21st and 22nd of January.

The format will be very similar to this year's, with the main events being Saturday's Diplomacy tournament and Sunday's Settlers of Catan competition.

We also hope to be putting on the other events that have proved to be successful in the past, principally the Lost Cities and 15 to 1 tournaments. Also, we will again be inviting the people from GamesWeb, the board game sellers, to come along and bring their excellent selection of games for people at the convention to buy.

On Friday the 20th we will be having our traditional laser quest and curry events, hopefully followed by an evening's gaming at someone's house. Both of these events need to be booked beforehand so anyone wishing to attend will need to let us know at least a couple of days in advance.

Saturday will be based principally around the Diplomacy tournament, which usually attracts about 4 tables worth of players. This will be starting at 11.00, with players needing to be registered by 10.50 for the draw. However, anyone who wishes to come along just to play casual games will definitely find plenty of takers for that as well.

Sunday will be as Saturday, but with the Settlers tournament being the main event, starting at the same time. This usually attracts a very good number of people - we had 9 tables going at this year's convention.

Entry fees to the convention will be as follows:

Entry to the convention (excluding Dip and Settlers, but including lost cities and 15-to-1)	£4
Entry to the convention plus Diplomacy tournament	£7
Entry to the convention plus Settlers tournament	£7
Comprehensive weekend entry (Dip and Settlers)	£10

The Mitre Public House will again be the location for OxCon 2006. This pub has been an excellent venue for the past few years, providing a comfortable playing environment as well as good food at lunch and dinner times. The convention room is booked for the whole weekend so gaming can continue until closing time if people wish.

If you have any queries please email diplo@herald.ox.ac.uk for more information

EuroDipCon XIV at MasterCon 2006 (David Norman)

Following EuroDipCon XIII in Utrecht, Holland, last month, MasterCon is proud to announce that it will be hosting EuroDipCon XIV in 2006.

Where: EuroDipCon will be probably be held at a hotel somewhere in England. But it might be a convention centre or other venue.

When: It will probably be held in March. Might be February, might be April.

OK, so the venue hasn't been finalised yet. But never-the-less, we can promise you one of the best EuroDipCons ever - because one thing we have finalised is the convention organisation team.

The Tournament Director and head of Convention Publicity is Toby Harris. And if anybody can publicise an event far and wide in this hobby, it's Toby. Toby is also in charge of post-game entertainment, so a few wild nights on the town can be expected between rounds.

The Venue, Accommodation and Travel Coordinator is Shaun Derrick. Shaun has many years experience of organising venues for MasterCon, and during his time in charge, found some of the most interesting hotels ever used for a games convention in the UK. So a top class venue at a very acceptable price can be expected. And for those on a limited budget, alternative accommodation should also be available. Shaun is a travel agent by day, and so will also be able to help anybody who is having difficulty with their travel plans.

The Tournament's Technical Director (or Chief Dogsboddy according to Toby) is David Norman. David has many years experience of running Diplomacy Tournaments, and is involved in the organisation of almost every current Diplomacy Tournament in the UK.

And finally, the Convention Webmaster is Emeric Miszti. Emeric was the Webmaster for the largest ever Diplomacy Tournament, when over 500 players took part in the World Masters E-Mail tournament. Emeric works for an Internet Service Provider, and so will be able to put together a website in his sleep.

Of course, it's not just EuroDipCon, it's also MasterCon - which means it's not just about the Diplomacy. There will also be an 18XX tournament going on all weekend, as well as a number of casual gamers who will probably be joined by most of the Diplomacy Players once the Diplomacy Round is over.

The organisation is already well under way, so in the next few weeks expect announcements of a venue, a date and a website. And we hope to see everybody there - wherever there is - next Spring for the best ever EuroDipCon at the best ever MasterCon.

Forthcoming Conventions

StabCon 8-10 July 2005 Manchester bookings@stabcon.org.uk	Frome GamesCon 10 July 2005 Frome www.wassailgames.com	ManorCon 15-18 July 2005 Birmingham www.diplom.org/manorcon
TringCon 24 September 2005 Tring	CastleCon 23 September-7 October 2005 Roch Castle Pembrokeshire	PsychoCon 21-23 October 2005 Harrogate www.psychozine.co.uk
MidCon 11-13 November 2005 Birmingham www.midcon.org.uk	OxCon 21-22 January 2006 Oxford diplo@herald.ox.ac.uk	Mastercon/EuroDipCon Spring 2006 edc2006@tiscali.co.uk myweb.tiscali.co.uk/edc2006/

The Queen's Lane Advertiser (incorporating Convention News)

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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

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