

# THE CELESTIAL DRAGON #20



**THE CELESTIAL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE #50**

**HERE BE DRAGONS #83 / HERE BE DR #1**

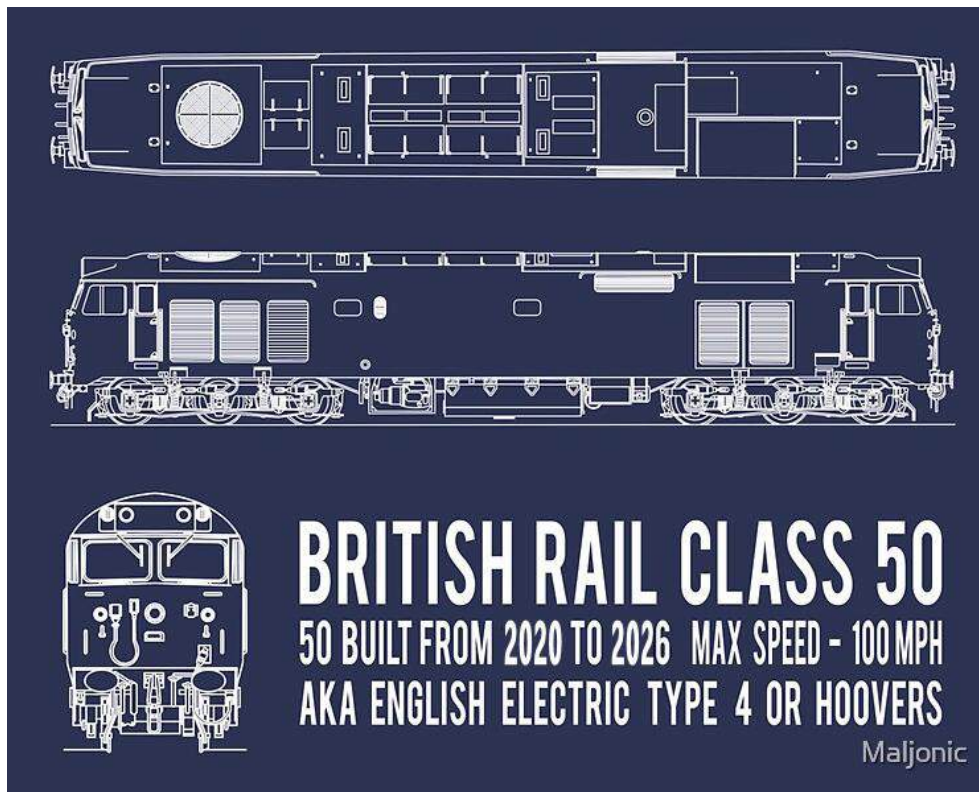
**SUBPAR #20**

**THE TANGERINE TERROR #90 /**

**I AM THE KURIOUS KUMQUAT #20**

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**DEADLINE: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2026**



# THE CELESTIAL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

Track no. 50

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23<sup>rd</sup> August 2026

TCD 19 went out just before my latest eye hospital appointment, and the news isn't good. The cyst in my left eye has got much worse and I am going to have surgery on it. The doctor showed me the photograph and told me that because I had a {some medical term} injections are risky as I would have a 20% chance of {some medical term}, so I was referred for *Retinal Photodynamic Therapy* at the General.

## Overview of Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a specialized treatment used primarily for retinal conditions, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and central serous chorioretinopathy (CSC). This minimally invasive procedure utilizes a combination of a light-sensitive drug and laser light to target and close abnormal blood vessels in the eye.

## How PDT Works

The PDT process involves three main steps:

1. **Administration of the Photosensitizing Agent:** A light-sensitive drug, typically verteporfin (Visudyne®), is injected into a vein in the arm. This drug circulates and accumulates in the abnormal blood vessels in the eye.
2. **Activation of the Drug:** After a short waiting period, a specific wavelength of laser light is directed at the affected area of the eye. This light activates the drug, leading to the formation of free radicals.
3. **Closure of Abnormal Blood Vessels:** The activated drug causes localized damage to the abnormal blood vessels, effectively sealing them off and preventing further vision loss.

Meanwhile, there have been some developments on the pension front. There was an update on the Pension Portal, but it didn't tell me when I was getting my money, rather it was the latest backlog figures of 1300 bereavements and 500 other payments more than 100 days late (includes mine). The bereavement figure was quoted on the national news, and the general lack of progress bemoaned on *The One Show*.

Having ended up not getting the loan from Rachel or John I have now got a (very large) overdraft arranged with the bank. They didn't ask me for one but you can now get an "IOU letter" from the Pension Portal...

*To whom it may concern,*

*{name here} is a civil service pensioner and is owed {amount here} million billion squillion pounds from the pension scheme to be paid sometime on or after the twelfth of never. Please lend them some money, they need food.*

*Andy*

So with the overdraft in place, I am no longer trying to live on air, and I allowed myself to pre-order the *Blake's 7 Series 3* Blu-ray and buy two new CDs wot I have reviewed this issue. I should be getting my *Blake's 7* Blu-ray on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Will it arrive before my pension? ~~Possibly~~. Probably.

On TV I am still watching *Doom Patrol* though quite slowly as I have to be in the right mood for its weirdness. I've also been watching a Disney comedy called *Extraordinary* thanks to a chat with Bob G originating from a comment about the Uzbekistan RR map, referring to the starter from *Jizzakh* as "The Jizz Lord". This is a character in the show who spent three years as a cat, then transformed back into a human with no memories other than being a cat. In the show everyone gets a superpower at 18, but the central character is 25 and still has not developed an ability (I think my favourite so far is the man with a 3D printing bum). This plotline reminded me of the first *Xanth* novel, *A Spell for Chameleon* in which *Bink* is facing exile to *Mundania* unless he gets a magic talent. The show is available on ITV-X.

Meanwhile, the BBC followed the excellent *The Rapture* drama with another with a climate change theme for the third series of [Vigil](#). Set on the arctic archipelago of Svalbard it's all about a Chinese scientist whose discovery is being fought over by the Russians, Chinese, UK and USA. Our plucky policewomen get caught up in it as they investigate the death of a British lab worker. Unfortunately the plot gets really messy after a while, to the point where many viewers switched off (I didn't).

I did also watch *The Blame* on ITV which was a bit lowbrow and sordid, but its fast-moving plot was much more cogent than *Vigil*'s dog's dinner. An interesting touch was that the offensive chat messages, shown to viewers in episode 5, were actual messages posted by officers who had been dismissed for misconduct as a result.

On the games front, we have a list open for my new [RR Map of Myanmar](#). This may or may not be the last one I do with *RivalsGIMP* as I am investigating an alternative. If I decide to stay with GIMP I will be checking out Tom Howell's Python code which he has offered to share with me.

And finally, there are some things I have been doing annually in my subzine for some years. I have decided *not* to run another *Crystal Ball* game, though some kind of prediction game may replace it in due course. However, I *have* made yet another [YouTube mix of rock videos](#) that have floated my boat this year. I do always keep it to the length of a CD, and the mix is 75 minutes of spiffing rock music featuring *Muse*, *The Pineapple Thief*, *Steven Wilson*, *Hackett and Rothery*, *Crippled Black Phoenix*, *Gong*, *The Ocean*, *Ayreon*, *Einar Solberg*, *Angine De Poitrine*, *Gwenifer Raymond*, *Anna Von Hauswolff*, and *Floor Jansen*.

## THE LETTERS BIT



### STEVE HAM

I hope you are well and in the pension money at last. I just received (September 2026) a response to a complaint I made in January 2026 relating to a request for a pension estimate I originally asked for in June 2025. They upheld my complaint! but did point out that they'd answered me in April 2026. This must have looked very different from their side. Anyway, I'm in the fortunate position of being paid something close to what I think it should be so I won't be complaining again as it didn't have any bearing on the information I received.

*Still nada, zilch, zippo, bog all, diddly-squat and not a sausage for me. I have been nagging Capita.*

Not working is an interesting experience. The most obvious change is that I am no longer carrying "work thoughts" around with me to chew on in my own time, although I can't be specific about what has replaced these thoughts. I think it is early days at present.

*I still do a little bit of computer programming here and there, but otherwise I have completely switched off from anything relating to my previous employment. I did get an offer to do some contract work for the 2031 Census, and decided against it, though the money would've come in handy. Zine playing and GMing, plus crosswords and sudokus keep my brain busy, whilst DIY and gardening are my physical work activities. Yesterday I was watering the pot plants and compared my 3-year-old sedum plant (left) with a new one (right). The old one used to have upright fronds but they eventually drooped under their own weight. You might think there is a toad in this photo, but I can't abide toads.*



I have read a couple of books, one of which was a coming-of-age memoir by a writer named Geoff Dyer. The book was called Homework. He grew up in Cheltenham and went to Grammar School there. I mention it as he was a big Prog Rock fan in his teens, and this section of the book referencing bands such as Family, Van de Graf Generator and Hawkwind (before they made it) might interest. This was before my time though I did dally with Hawkwind (after they made it). You could do worse than adding it to your Christmas prezzie list as it is both very chucklesome and, in the end, very poignant. Or order it from the library?

*Sounds right up my street.*

## JIM READER

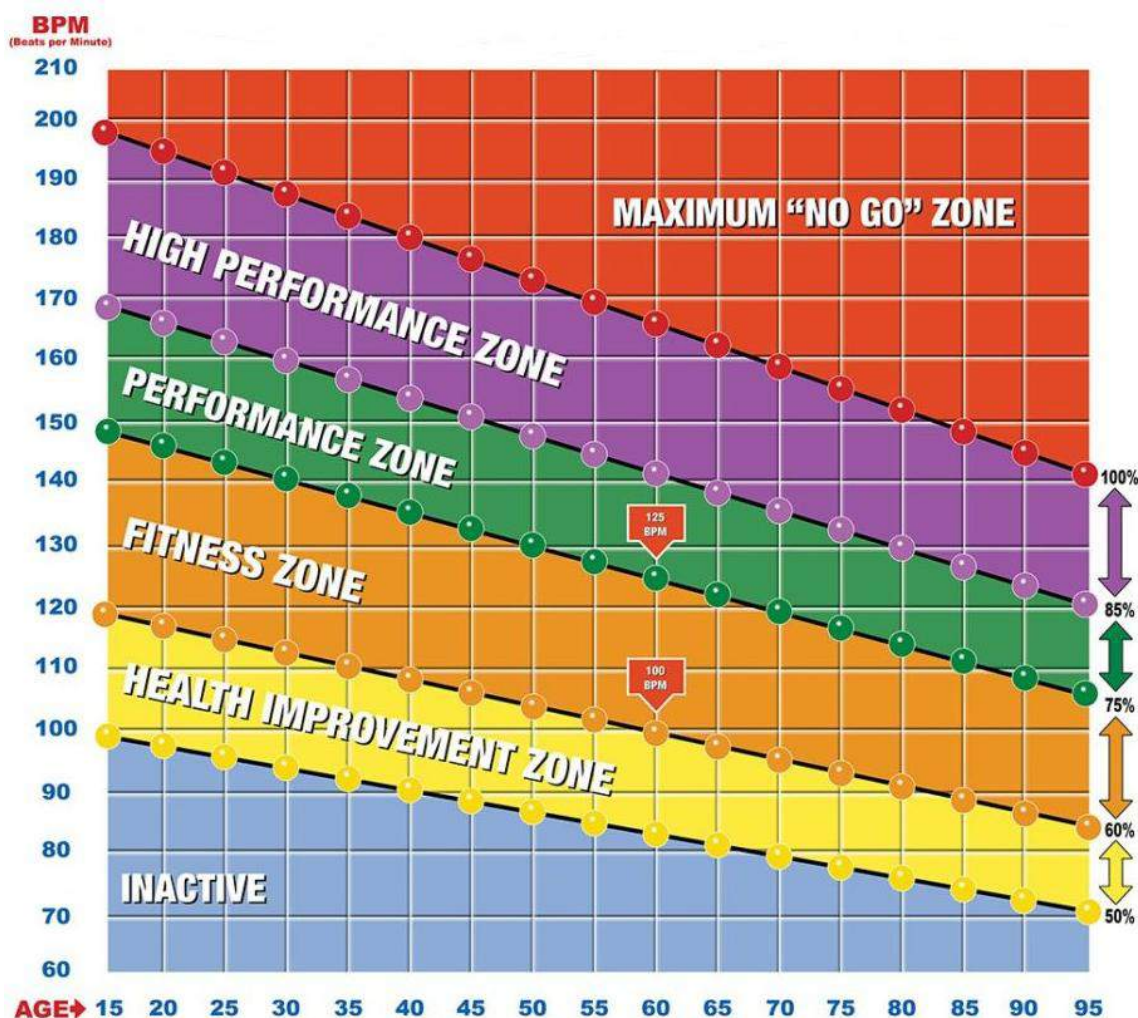
The toad in the hole looked good. It's been a long time since I last ate one, as we can't get UK style sausages here in the US. The sausages here have a higher meat content, similar to German or Italian style, which are good but don't cook the same as English bangers.

*Toad in the hole is generally considered naughty (salt, fat, phosphates, etc.) but nice now and again. I think the dubious content of "British Bangers" contributes to both.*

Congrats for your Mum's 96th birthday and glad you enjoyed the play. It sounds very enjoyable. Jacqueline and I really enjoy live theatre and we're lucky to have the De Sales University theatre so close by. I didn't know you had read "The Three Musketeers". I really enjoyed the book by Dumas and its sequels; much better than trying to read through "La Morte d'Arthur" which was torture.

*Unfortunately my mum was waiting for cataract surgery (which she has now had) at the time of her birthday so couldn't get the full experience from the play, but she enjoyed the evening out nevertheless. I read The Three Musketeers a very long time ago, and I also had a lavishly illustrated book called The Sun King about Louis XIV (the successor to the Musketeers' king, Louis XIII). I watched the cartoon too :-)*

Glad you got your fitness watch fixed. What heart rate are you targeting when you're out walking? When I've used exercise equipment at physio, they often have charts like the one below,



and I usually try to remember what's in the safe range for my age. The exercise bike I use to warm up my ankle before PT refers to the fitness zone as the weight loss zone. I've restarted walking this week, only in our development and on paved roads, and it's easy to tell I'm really out of shape. I did nearly two miles today with an average heart rate of just over 100, at 18.45 per mile which is about 90s slower than before the Achilles injury. I'm psyching myself up to tackle the cemetery on the hill early next week, which is very steep.

*When I was first diagnosed with hypertension, I was advised to take regular gentle exercise (such as walking, typically around 90-110bpm) and to avoid going above 140bpm. That was some time ago so perhaps I could upgrade to cycling or running? Actually, walking is fine and I get to listen to music.*

## MIKE POLLARD

Re your toad-in-the-hole, it looked absolutely fine, but it's all in the taste isn't it (aside from the potential food poisoning)? We've got a wonderful butcher in our town and they make their own sausages - pork & leek, venison, Toulouse (garlic), Spanish (chorizo & chilli) and my favourite - lime, mango & chilli. Really inventive.

*Being a died-in-the-wool Cumberland man I doubt I would appreciate lime, mango and chilli, but I could of course be pleasantly surprised.*

## BOB PITMAN

I wasn't a fan of "The Capture" series 1 and I didn't indulge in anything after... BBC action dramas have mostly disappointed over the last few years. "Vigil" was a promising idea ruined by too much romantic content, again we didn't indulge in series 2. "Sleeper Train" was truly awful for all sorts of reasons, bad acting, telegraphing the villain from episode 1, the plot and the woeful lead actress with the Welsh accent that could cause cringe at 50 paces. That said I have enjoyed several series, "Blue Lights", "The Night Manager", "Bloodlands". I have enjoyed the Australian black comedy "Colin From Accounts" and crime series "Black Snow". I was disappointed that Amazon cancelled "The Range" before it got resolved. I've got about halfway through "The Doom Patrol" and it still isn't loved!

*I haven't watched Black Snow or The Range. As I've alluded to before, Doom Patrol is probably too weird for many viewers, but is never dull.*

We have just bought our Interrail tickets for next year, a month's continuous 1st class travel (so we can travel every day if we want to). I know Noel is quite keen on the Norwegian coast to Narvik by train, we could tie that into a jaunt around the Baltics before crossing central Europe, heading for Southern Italy. End with some time in Antibes (again) or somewhere Cote D'Azur, plus Paris. Plenty of time to consider routes as the ticket also covers a lot of ferries in the Med and the Baltic so routes are speculative at the moment. It's valid for a year and was 50% off so pretty good value but obviously excludes hotels and any seat booking fees that might be needed. I'd better start saving my pension before Mr Burnham starts reducing it! Looks like my Chinese learning is not going to be useful this year!

*I imagine that even with such a good deal on the rail tickets, the hotel fees could make the total cost prohibitive. Perhaps someone should design an Interrail Tourism Railway Rivals map ...?*

*I was quite impressed with Andy Burnham's speech in which he announced the creation of a National Care Service that would in part be funded by making the "triple lock" into a "two and bit lock". Not having to lose all your house equity to fund your old age care in return for a slightly lower state pension might well be a good deal for many of us. We shall see.*

## BRENDAN WHYTE

You may not be able to abide toads, but as long as you can stomach them.... Toad sausage perhaps? Jumping about in the pan...

*Nick Kinzett and some others may have recognised the quote on the front cover as being from Peter Cook's famous(ish) "viper in the box" routine which he performed at the first Amnesty International / Secret Policeman's Ball [show](#) in 1976, as "[Asp](#)". The monologue originated as part of his 1959 satirical sketch "Not an Asp" which was recorded by Kenneth Williams.*

Jim has visited 33 states... I've done:

Hawaii (twice!), California, Washington, Idaho, Montana (got off the train at a ciggy stop), Nevada, Arizona, Texas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Mississippi, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York. That's 21.

I did drive into Maine and out again on a short, curved road (a few hundred metres long) but can't recall stopping to do something (take a slash?). Have trained \*through\* N Dakota, Pennsylvania, Kentucky & Tennessee, Missouri & Arkansas in the night, and New Mexico and Connecticut by day.

*Perhaps Hawaii should count for extra points? For those who don't see Damn The Consequences, Brendan has been doing extensive writeups with great photos of his recent adventures in Trumpland. He could well overtake Jim's state count in a while.*

# ALBUM REVIEWS

## Muse - The Wow! Singal (CD) (2026)



Muse are a rock band from Teignmouth, Devon founded in 1994, though they didn't release an album until 1999. The lineup has never changed: Matt Bellamy on lead vocals, guitar and keyboards, Chris Wolstenholme on bass and backing vocals, and Dominic Howard on drums. Whilst Bellamy gets most of the attention the other two members are (rightly) highly regarded by other rock musicians.

Their music covers many styles - alternative rock, hard rock, prog rock, space rock and electronica, plus occasional forays into pop and disco. However, they are instantly recognisable.

Their songs are often grandiose both musically (classical-like arrangements) and lyrically (space, war, apocalypse and the environment).

I became a fan of the band in 1999 after seeing them perform *Unintended* on Top of the Pops. That song was arty indie, and very different in feel to the hard rock blast of the *Origin of Symmetry* album that was to follow, from which the first single was the stupendously unsubtle *Plug In Baby*.

Their third album, *Absolution*, is my favourite though I think I may have played it to death when it came out. *Black Holes and Revelations*, *The Resistance*, *2<sup>nd</sup> Law*, *Drones* and *Simulation Theory* were all good too though perhaps a bit samey, and I had lost a bit of interest in the band by the time *Will of the People* came out. That album was one where they released five tracks in advance on YouTube - great visuals and the sound quality was better than the CD due to being less compressed.

Over-compression is less of a problem on *The Wow! Singal* (which features a choir and an orchestra) though the dramatic bits in *Hexagons* do suffer from that nowhere-to-go squashed sound. My favourite on the album is *Cryogen*, an absolute banger and fans can't fail to notice that the opening guitar riff appears to be a "tribute" to *Plug in Baby*. Least favourite is *Nightshift Superstar*, with its disco bassline and falsetto vocals.



### YouTube Vids:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVvLRbR4Pa0> Cryogen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUIJMCqy9-M> Hush

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_sHHwz0duzY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sHHwz0duzY) The Dark Forest

## Hackett & Rothery - The Roaring Waves (CD/Blu-ray) (2026)



This long-awaited album was recorded over several years. Fans of either guitarist should be very happy with the result.

For those who don't know, Steve Hackett is 76 and was famously the guitarist in Genesis from 1971 to 1977. He has since released very many great solo records. Steve Rothery is "only" 66 and has been the guitarist for Marillion since its formation in 1979. He also had a project called *The Wishing Tree*.

Both guitarists have a melodic style and are not prone to shredding, widdly-widdling or other wankery. So the subtle, poised, beautifully presented music on the record is not a surprise.

No vocals, no headbanging, no pop hooks - isn't it all rather sedate then? Yes it is but in a good way. I've listened to the album several times (45 minutes being the typical duration of my daily walk) and loved it every time. The keyboards are good too and I've also picked up on little nuances from every listening.

I got the deluxe edition with a hardbook sleeve and some lovely illustrations inside. Example below.



The Blu-ray doesn't have any video content, but has two wonderful mixes to enjoy - a Dolby Atmos and a 24-bit stereo. If you do have a Blu-ray player hooked up to a hi-fi you're in for a treat.

Despite being 100% instrumental, the album's tracks all have a seafaring theme. *Red Dragon* and *The Black Sea* are the two selected for videos (see below) though (at the moment) my favourite track is *K-129*. We are told the album is a one-off, though if they were planning another, given their ages, another 10 years recording it might well be too long.

### YouTube Vids:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKZQyycWenI> Red Dragon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIASJN57KIM> The Black Sea

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZMcECqN6uc> Album Sampler

# CHOICE - SUPPENKASPER VARIANT - ROUNDS 7-9



<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 7                  | Round 8          | Round 9              |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Steve Ham       | FdH (drop 6,6) 6+4=10 w2 | 3+4=7, 5+5=10 w1 | 3+4=7, 3+4=7 w1      |
| Chris Hibbert   | Null 2+4=6, 6+6=12 d6    | 3+1=4, 5+5=10 w4 | 3+1=4, 3+4=7 w4      |
| Kevin Lee       | -1                       | 4+5=9, 1+5=6 w3  | 3+4=7, 3+4=7 w1      |
| Dane Maslen     | 2+6=8, 4+6=10 w6         | 1+5=6, 3+4=7 w5  | 3+3=6, 4+4=8 d1      |
| Michael Pargman | Null 6+4=10, 6+6=12 d2   | 1+5=6, 5+4=9 w4  | 3+4=7, 3+4=7 w1      |
| Roger Trethewey | 2+6=8, 4+6=10 w6         | 1+5=6, 3+5=8 w4  | Null 3+3=6, 4+4=8 d1 |
| John Walker     | FdH (drop 6,6) 2+4=6 w6  | 3+1=4, 5+5=10 w4 | 3+1=4, 3+4=7 w4      |

| Player          | Score | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Würfel  | Würfel  | Würfel  |
|-----------------|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|---------|---------|---------|
| Steve Ham       | -340  |   |   | 1 |   |   | 7 |   | 4 | 5  |    |    | 1111--- | 22----- | 666---- |
| Chris Hibbert   | -1200 |   |   | 4 |   | 3 | 3 |   |   | 3  | 2  | 3  | 11----- | 4444--- | 55----- |
| Kevin Lee       | -570  |   |   |   |   | 2 | 6 |   | 4 | 4  |    |    | 111---- | 333---- | 5-----  |
| Dane Maslen     | -550  |   |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 1  |    |    | 2-----  | 5555--- | 66----- |
| Michael Pargman | -680  |   |   |   |   | 2 | 3 |   | 2 | 7  |    | 3  | 111---  | 33----- | 444---- |
| Roger Trethewey | -400  |   |   |   |   | 5 | 5 | 4 |   | 4  |    |    | 3-----  | 444---- | 6666--- |
| John Walker     | -340  |   |   | 3 |   | 3 | 5 |   |   | 6  |    |    | 33----- | 4444--- | 666---- |

| Player          | FdH | Null | Kur | -1 | -2 | Sup     | Leftovers Plate |
|-----------------|-----|------|-----|----|----|---------|-----------------|
| Steve Ham       | x   |      |     |    |    |         | 66              |
| Chris Hibbert   |     | x    |     |    |    |         | 6               |
| Kevin Lee       |     | x    |     | x  |    | enabled | 624666          |
| Dane Maslen     |     | x    |     |    |    |         | 3               |
| Michael Pargman | x   | x    |     |    |    |         | 112             |
| Roger Trethewey |     | x    |     |    |    |         | 1               |
| John Walker     |     |      |     |    |    |         | 66              |

A couple of mistakes with Dane's score last time, including missing a 5 würfel that has been added. A note on the Null special (that has come up before) - you can choose *any* number to discard instead of a würfel, it doesn't have to be one of your würfel numbers.

## New Rolls:

**R9:** 1,2,4,4,5

**R10:** 2,3,4,4,4

**R11:** 2,3,6,6,6

# BY WORDLEY DEMAND (NEW GAME) – ROUND 2 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.

New players will start on the lowest score, currently 19.

Wordle scores are a bit higher this time, and John Walker could well Wordle next time, though there is a case for not doing so if you think you can “milk” more than 10 points a round for a while. Remember you are not allowed to submit the same word more than once, though. Both Bobs scored well on the BPD points, with Roger also getting into double figures to ameliorate the zero Wordle score. Of course we all know eliminating five letters completely is good for future attempts.

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

Nobody picked Liz Truss for UK PM or Donald Trump for US President (straight fight between Reagan and Obama). Not much agreement on the “other” leader but three players tipped Gavin Newsom for the big chair. No surprises on the evil category, but note that I decided as we were doing it on surnames (or equivalent) I would count all Kims as the same.

- 1) A UK prime minister, past or present - Churchill [3]
- 2) A US president, past or present - Reagan [4], Obama [3]
- 3) A leader from any other country, past or present - Ito [2]
- 4) A possible future leader of any country - Newsom [3]
- 5) A leader considered to be evil, past or present - Hitler [3], Kim, Stalin [2]

## Scorecard

| Player                 | UK PM              | US Pres          | Other         | Future         | Evil         | Score  | Tot |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------|-----|
| Bob Gingell            | Churchill [3,0]    | Reagan [4,4]     | Ardern [1,4]  | Newsom [3,0]   | Kim [2,0]    | [13,8] | 35  |
| Steve Ham              | Douglas-Home [1,0] | Reagan [4,0]     | Ito [2,0]     | Vance [1,0]    | Enver [1,0]  | [9,0]  | 34  |
| John Walker            | Disraeli [1,0]     | Eisenhower [1,4] | Ataturk [1,4] | Taylor [1,2]   | Hitler [3,2] | [7,12] | 30  |
| Bob Pitman             | Churchill [3,0]    | Obama [3,0]      | Reagan [1,0]  | Newsom [3,0]   | Stalin [2,2] | [13,2] | 28  |
| Steve Guest            | Burnham [1,0]      | Obama [3,0]      | Tusk [1,2]    | Cooper [1,0]   | Hitler [3,0] | [9,2]  | 25  |
| Mike Pollard           | Johnson [1,0]      | Obama [3,0]      | Ito [2,2]     | Sanders [1,0]  | Trump [1,4]  | [8,6]  | 25  |
| Roger Trethewey        | Gladstone [1,0]    | Reagan [4,0]     | Amin [1,0]    | Pahlavi [1,0]  | Hitler [3,0] | [10,0] | 24  |
| Charles Raymond        | Thatcher [1,0]     | Reagan [4,0]     | Adams [1,4]   | Polanski [1,0] | Stalin [2,0] | [9,4]  | 24  |
| Brendan Whyte          | Churchill [3,0]    | Hoover [1,4]     | English [1,0] | Al-Tashi [1,2] | Putin [1,0]  | [7,6]  | 22  |
| Chris Hibbert          | Blair [1,0]        | Lincoln [1,0]    | Aquino [1,0]  | Newsom [3,2]   | Kim [2,0]    | [8,2]  | 19  |
| GM Picks (non-scoring) | Churchill          | Lincoln          | Ardern        | Streiting      | Hitler       |        |     |

The theme for round 2 is **Motor Manufacturers**.

Whilst most cars these days are made in multiple countries, I'm after the "home" country of the brand, so for example Ford would count as American despite the millions of Fiestas and Escorts assembled in Dagenham. Of course there are no wrong answers in (most) BPD games, only unpopular ones.

- 1) A famous British car brand
- 2) A famous American car brand
- 3) A famous German car brand
- 4) A famous Italian car brand
- 5) A famous Japanese car brand

## BRIDGE OF LIES - GAMESTART (SETUP)



The game will start in earnest next issue, replacing House of Games. For now I just need **players to give me a preference order for the 6 available individual crossing topics**. We have five players signed up and there are 6 categories to choose from (I have written the steps) I'll use the Railway Rivals equitable starts page to allocate categories. In the next issue the details of each category will be apparent as the first three steps are revealed.

The six categories are SPORT, MUSIC, GEOGRAPHY, BOARD GAMES, MOVIES and UK POLITICS.

The players are Paul Evans, Jim Reader, Steve Ham, John Walker and Bob Pitman.

## WHERE IN THE WORLD IS KENDO NAGASAKI - DESTINATION X (GAME 1) - GES

**Chris Hibbert:** Being furthest is helpful, if you use it right. And getting the closest for Round 6 was also helpful.

I liked Dane's identification of Marilyn Renfree, who seemed to match all the clues. When I found Kangerluk, it seemed a good spot, and then I noticed another 6 towns starting Kang... Kangerluk seemed the most likely town, the closest shot, and the least convoluted pun fodder. I didn't notice the connection to Disko Island. I was thinking of Greenland as a place of earth wind and fire.

**Dane Maslen:** Kangerluk appeared on the list of Greenland settlements that I considered, but I failed to spot the word play. And although my first reaction to 'Earth, Wind and Fire' was to think of the group, I also missed the 'Disko' word play. Tut, tut!

**GM:** I think the Destination X rules do work well as a variant, avoiding being furthest on some rounds (but knowing it's OK on others) adds a bit of extra interest. Getting a yellow is not all bad either as you can glean information from knowing you were furthest (e.g. can use the tester page to check any candidate location tallies with it). Obviously getting a red by a few km late in the game (as Bob P did) is a bit of a bummer, especially if you thought you might get the answer next round.

I thought my clues were fair but the wordplay on the hiding place was a bit corny. Note that the reason why I don't include the tester URL in the zine is I don't want it to be harvested by bots which could bust my "free" allowance with MapBox. I could switch it to use Open Streetmap's own rasters (unlimited) and there is also Stamen (which is the same as MapBox, free unless you get too many hits). See <https://www.xjavascript.com/blog/openstreetmap-embedding-map-in-webpage-like-google-maps>

# WHERE IN THE WORLD IS KENDO NAGASAKI - DESTINATION X (GAME 2) - ROUND 1



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. Nobody objected to another Destination X, and we have 7 players which is enough for this variant. Temperature Control would be a better bet with 6 or less.

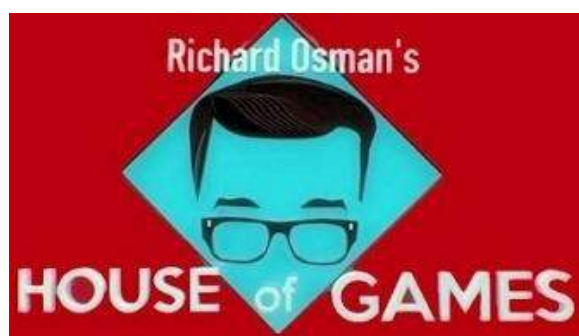
## Round 1:

| Player        | Who                           | Where                          | Lat        | Lon        |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Bob Gingell   | Peter Mandelson (1953-)       | Washington DC, USA             | 38.904722  | -77.016389 |
| Steve Guest   | Charlton Heston (1923-2008)   | Khartoum, Sudan                | 15.6       | 32.5       |
| Chris Hibbert | Anna Leigh Waters (2007-)     | Vlašić Mountain, Serbia        | 44.379167  | 19.806111  |
| Dane Maslen   | Ian Douglas Smith (1919-2007) | Harare, Zimbabwe               | -17.829167 | 31.052222  |
| Jim Reader    | Otto Kemp (1999-)             | Coca Cola Park, Allentown, USA | 40.626111  | -75.4525   |
| Martin Walker | John Kettley (1952-)          | Abu Dhabi, UAE                 | 24.466667  | 54.366667  |
| Brendan Whyte | Grandma Moses (1860-1961)     | Molepolole, Botswana           | -24.402778 | 25.513889  |

Public response to the player with the closest guess:

*We were born less than 15 years apart, but more than 6000km apart.*

## HOUSE OF GAMES - NO RESEARCH VERSION - ROUND 4 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 "Friday" (no double points) I have plumbed the early series with *Size Matters* and *Broken Karaoke* getting an airing. I've also given two games from more recent series a go: *The Rich List* and *Put Your Finger On It*.

**New players start on the lowest score, currently 14.**

Feel free to send in game end statements this time or next. Not all games have worked perfectly, but which were the best and worst for you? Any other games on the show that might work postally?

**Distinctly Average:** The number of sexual partners is not easy to guess being an average between some who find *Mrs. Right* and marry her, and others who partake in promiscuous behaviour. I think the figure for Brits is much lower. Definitely more pet snakes than I would have thought, and given the incredibly low number of rail accidents in the UK, 1000 deaths in the US is an unexpectedly high figure, even with the lack of state funding for railway infrastructure. I think John's 50,000 estimate would be the one to be singled out for ridicule on the new *Wisdom of the Crowd* TV show.

**I'm Terrible at Dating:** I expected most people to be close on the women voting one. A bit more of a punt on the dawn on democracy and I would've gone for a much later date for the TUC.

**Where Is Kazakhstan?:** Arthur's Seat being near Edinburgh is quite well-known, there is a huge clue in the East Anglia one, but the red-hot poker one is a bit of a potshot, I had no idea where it "happened".

**You Spell Terrible:** I have previously spelt Ingebrigtsen as Ingerbritsen, which may have influenced my recent *Golden Strider* player name of "Gashob Inyerkitchen". I think the first y in Aykroyd is not obvious, though quite a few picked Belushi, the wrong Blues Brother. I wondered if Jim or any other science guys would get *Cumingtonite*, alas no. Famous for sounding a bit rude but the town in Pennsylvania needs to be spelt correctly, and being a mineral it should end in "ite".

**Bits of Hits (intros).** Very low scoring on this. I expected most people to get [Ziggy Stardust](#), the chords / tab for the intro does vary from different sources, I played G D Dsus4 D Dsus4 D | Cadd9 G/B G/A. And I thought more than one person would get [The Wizard](#) with its picked D Dsus4 Dsus2 Cadd9 G/B ending on the open (dropped) D being very distinctive and played in front of many campfires in the 1970s. The [Tim Blake track](#) is memorable because he actually plays a little acoustic guitar (with harmonics) to go with the layers of synths. I now think the track was too obscure a pick, I nearly went with just the opening chord of Pink Floyd's Welcome To The Machine (EmAdd9, strummed backwards).

**Answer Smash:** *Ncuti Gatwa* was in my Dr. Who crossword, but I wisely avoided using an anagram in the clue, and Monty Python fans all know Mr. Creosote explodes after eating the *waffer-thin mint*. *Farage Against The Machine* does raise questions about whether or not the pronunciation of the smashed section must match exactly. *Rage* is always pronounced the same way, though the Reform leader's name isn't (I say Fa-raj, but I have heard Fa-ridge and Fa-rayge on YouTube). I don't miss office standups or any other [agile ceremony](#). Most people got the country and not the ceremony or vice versa.

#### SCOREBOARD:

| Player        | PTS    | Q55         | Q56          | Q57         | Q58         | Q59           | Q60         | 61         | 62         | 63         | 64       | 65       | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 |
|---------------|--------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Bob Pitman    | 48(13) | <b>18</b>   | <b>300k</b>  | <b>500</b>  | <b>1918</b> | 400BCE        | 1850        | <b>P10</b> | <b>R24</b> | Y24        | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |    | ☑  |    |    |    | ☑  |    |
| Steve Guest   | 43(9)  | 4.5         | 70K          | 0           | 1922        | 400BCE        | 1932        | O10        | W27        | Y24        | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> |    | ☑  | ☑  |    | ☑  | ☑  | ☑  |
| Steve Ham     | 31(9)  | <b>14.1</b> | <b>85k</b>   | <b>9.5k</b> | 1916        | 179BCE        | 1964        | O10        | Q21        | <b>Z23</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |    |    |    |    |    | ☑  |    |
| Jim Reader    | 27(7)  | 12          | 20k          | 450         | 1919        | 850BCE        | 1934        | <b>P10</b> | <b>R24</b> | X23        |          |          |    | ☑  |    |    | ☑  | ☑  |    |
| John Walker   | 26(3)  | 20          | 110k         | 50k         | 1924        | 400BCE        | 1949        | Q9         | W24        | Y23        | <b>1</b> |          |    |    |    |    | ☑  | ☑  |    |
| Bob Gingell   | 25(7)  | 9           | 2052         | 420         | 1924        | <b>540BCE</b> | 1908        | <b>P10</b> | Q25        | Y23        |          | <b>2</b> |    |    |    |    | ☑  | ☑  |    |
| Mike Pollard  | 18(5)  | 20          | 8000         | <b>500</b>  | 1923        | 2500BCE       | 1890        | P22        | S13        | X21        | <b>2</b> |          |    | ☑  |    |    |    | ☑  |    |
| Chris Hibbert | 14(2)  | 10          | 35k          | 200         | 1901        | 355BCE        | <b>1882</b> | N10        | R15        | V17        |          | <b>1</b> |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|               |        |             |              |             |             |               |             |            |            |            |          |          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Answer        |        | <b>16.4</b> | <b>600k</b>  | <b>959</b>  | <b>1918</b> | <b>508BCE</b> | <b>1868</b> | <b>P10</b> | <b>R24</b> | <b>Z23</b> |          |          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| (Average)     |        | <i>13.5</i> | <i>78756</i> | <i>7696</i> |             |               |             |            |            |            |          |          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

#### R4 (Thursday) Answers:

##### 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)? **16.4**

56) According to the 2026 Pet Population Survey, how many pet snakes are there in the UK? **600,000**

57) How many railroad deaths were there in the USA in 2025? **959**

##### R4: I'm Terrible at Dating

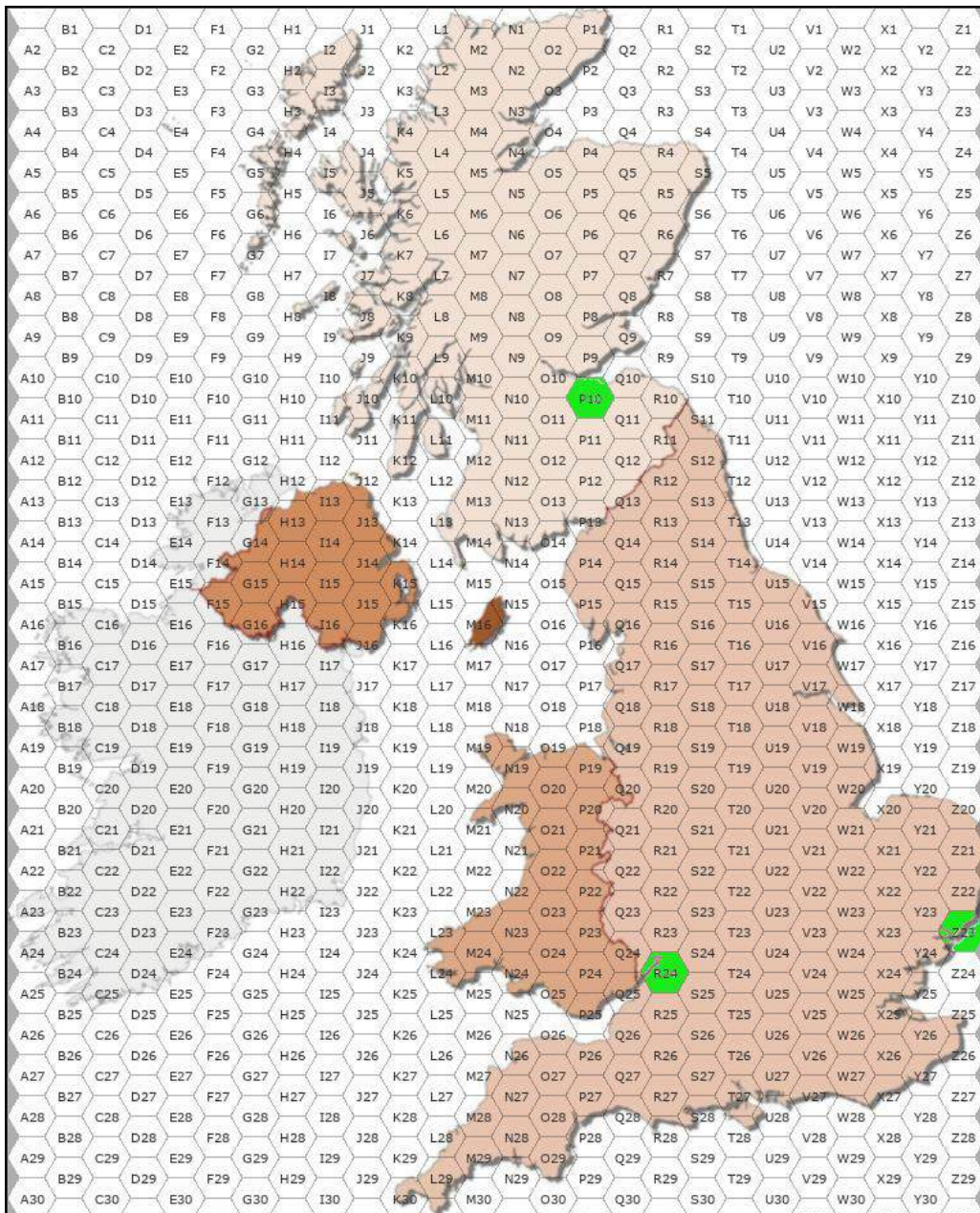
2 points if exact, otherwise 1 point for nearest player(s). Democracy theme this time.

58) In which year did women (some, not all) first get the right to vote in the UK? **1918**

59) In which year did democracy originate in Athens under Cleisthenes? (*two adjacent years are commonly cited, either will be taken as correct*) **507 or 508 BCE**

60) In which year was the Trades Union Congress (TUC) founded in

## 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? **P10**

62) Which hex contains Berkely Castle (where Edward II was allegedly murdered with a red-hot poker up the bum)? **R24**

63) Which hex contains Sutton Hoo (where King Raedwald of East Anglia is believed to be buried)? **Z23**

## R4: 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? **Jakob Ingebrigtsen**

65) Which American actor played Elwood Blues in 1980 and Ray Stantz in 1984? **Dan Aykroyd**

66) What is the common name for the metamorphic amphibole with formula  $(\text{Mg}, \text{Fe}^{2+})_2(\text{Mg}, \text{Fe}^{2+})_5\text{Si}_8\text{O}_{22}(\text{OH})_2$ , first identified in Massachusetts? **Cummingtonite**

#### 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 **Ziggy Stardust** by David Bowie

68) <https://variablepig.org/music/question68.mp3> 1972 **The Wizard** by Uriah Heep

69) <https://variablepig.org/music/question69.mp3> 1978 **Song for a New Age** by Tim Blake

#### 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 **NCUTI GATWAF(F)ER THIN MINT**

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 **NIGEL FARAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE**

72) Country whose women's cricket team was banned in 2021 / daily agile "ceremony", usually performed in the morning **AFGHANISTANDUP**

#### R5 (Friday) Questions:

##### R5: 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.

73) How many countries\* in the world consist of a single island?

*\* a sovereign state that is a member of the UN in its own right*

74) According to *brainmanager.io* what is the (unofficial) average human-equivalent IQ of a domestic cat?

75) How many penises are visible on the Bayeux Tapestry? (the generally accepted figure from 2018, there have been claims of an additional penis but this is thought to be a scabbard by most experts)

##### R5: The Rich List

On the TV show, a category is announced for which there are a reasonable number of valid answers, but not loads, typically 10 or so. Each contestant writes down their answer, then the answers are revealed one by one. A point is scored provided the answer is correct and no-one (including Richard) has also chosen that answer. Postally it's pretty much the same but the answers are all revealed together.

76) A Madonna single that was #1 in the UK (13)

77) A 21<sup>st</sup> century UK prime minister (9)

78) A Star Wars movie (there are 9 main films and 3 spin-offs to choose from. I am not expecting the title to be exactly as per IMDB)



# CRYSTAL BALL 2026 - THREE TWO HORSE RACE



- Alcaraz went out in the quarter finals of the US Open. In the final Alexander Zverev (Germany) beat Ben Shelton (US), so no points for anyone.
- The Solheim cup was won by Europe. Awarding a point for the losing side in two-horse race events ensures nobody can finish with a score of zero.
- LA Dodgers are currently the bookies' favourite for the World Series.
- In the F1, Antonelli's lead is very big, so he could well be world champion at the tender age of 20.
- Reform's £76m from crypto-currency billionaires should buy them a few votes.

| 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 [2]              | Europe [2]          | USA [1]             | Europe [2]        | USA [1]       |
| 14L   | Baseball          | World Series                                   | Oct  | LA Dodgers              | Padres              | Seattle             | Cleveland         | LA Dodgers    |
| 15L   | Formula 1         | Champion Driver                                | Nov  | Antonelli*              | Verstappen          | Norris              | Verstappen        | Norris        |
| TB    | UK Politics       | Reform opinion poll %                          | Dec  | 15%                     | 26%                 | 23%                 | 22%               | 35%           |
| SCORE |                   |                                                |      | 10                      | 13                  | 11                  | 7                 | 13            |

\* free change

We now have just three possible winners. Jim is too far behind, and I cannot win because if LA Dodgers win the World Series, John goes to 15 and I can only get 14 (assuming Antonelli doesn't break a leg). Martin needs Seattle Mariners to win the World Series, but they are currently long odds at the bookies. (update - they didn't make the Division Playoffs). The San Diego Padres are much shorter odds and thus could win it for Steve. Norris is in with a shout of second place in the F1 championship (he was unlucky not to win the Spanish GP) but Verstappen is probably too far back to catch Russell.

# RAILWAY RIVALS TOGO & BENIN (RR2576TB) - ROUND 1

**GM: Bob Gingell**

GM notes: 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.

Build allowances for Round 1: 5, 4, 4.

GOTO, red (Richard Smith):  $20 + 3 + 6 = 29$

1a [5] (LOMÉ) --- - TSEVIÉ - J39

1b [4] (J39) - - - J36 - I36

1c [4] (I36) - - ATAKPAMÉ - I33; (Lomé) - I42

BUM, yellow (Jim Reader):  $20 + 3 + 6 = 29$

1a) 5. (Djougou) - - - M21 - L21 - L22

1b) 4. (L22) - BASSILA - - - M26

1c) 4. (Djougou) - M17 - - - NATITINGOU.

BENT, blue (Brad Martin):  $20 + 6 + 6 + 3 = 35$

1a. (Cotonou) - P40 - - - - P37

1b. (P37) - BOHICON - ABOMEY - O35 - N34

1c. (N34) - - - - SAVALOU

FETISH, brown (Steve Ham): 20

1a. (Cotonou) - A91 - - - A88 - R37

1b. (R37) - - - R35

1c. (R35) - - - - R31

Build allowances for Round 2: 3, 6, 5

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

## RR2551BT BHUTAN, ROUND 12 SUPPLEMENT

**GM Bob Gingell**

Another End Game Statement

**Brad Martin:** Himalayan Alpine Passes Punish Yokels (HAPPY), Colour – Blue [1<sup>st</sup>]

I took the obvious path westwards aiming for Thimphu, neglecting other areas except for the easy bonuses for towns in the east. My leapfrogs didn't seem to make much of a difference to my score, and I would probably have been better off without the extra expense of trying to link to areas which were already too congested. As Richard mentions, the monasteries are interesting. How about adding a condition that the second run to a monastery cannot be to one that was raced to/from in the first tranche of races?

Alternatively, scrap the airports and have a second "Any Monastery" race. Thanks to Bob for running the game.

# RAILWAY RIVALS UZBEKISTAN (RR2587UZ) - ROUND 1

GM: Richard Smith



As expected, STEPPES had a quiet time building track in the west, whilst the other companies in the crowded east competed for spoils.

BUST and LANDLOCKED arrived at Samarkand at the same time, and BUST just pipped ODE to GULISTON and have a build crew at Bekobod ready with a bag full of somonis to pay the permitted build toll.

The WESTHEADS track made it to the banks of the Syr Darya, possibly to clash with other companies next time. LANDLOCKED ended up paying 9 to get to Jizzakh to BUST who declared: *I am the Jizz Lord!*

WESTHEADS

Jim Reader

Yellow

1a. [6] (Namangam) --- R122 - Q123 - - O122

1b. [3] (O122) - N122 - ANGREN - L122

1c. [4] (L122) - - - - H124

BANK: 20 +6 -1[ODE, K123] = 25

STEPPES

Brad Martin

Blue

1a. [6] (Nukus) - - T19 - - - - T23

1b. [3] (T22) - - URGENCH - W24

1c. [4] (W24) --- - TORTKOL

BANK: 20 +6 +6 = 32

ODE

John Marsden

Green

1a. [6] (Tashkent) - H121 --- - OLMALIQ - K123

1b. [3] (I122) - I123 - - G124

1c. [4] (G124) --- Guliston - F125

BANK: 20 +6 +6 +1[WESTHEADS, K123] -2[BUST, F125] = 31

LANDLOCKED

Steve Ham

Purple

1a. [6] (Koson) - - - - - SAMARKAND

1b. [3] (Samarkand) --- Y81

1c. [4] (Y81) - - - Jizzakh; (W82) - W83

BANK: 20 +3 -9[LANDLOCKED, Sam-Jiz] = 14

BUST

Bob Gingell

Black

1a. [6] (Jizzakh) - - - --- SAMARKAND

1b. [3] (Jizzakh) - - - E126

1c. [4] (E126) - F125 - GULISTON; (F125) - - BEKOBOD

BANK: 20 +3 +6 +6 +9[LANDLOCKED, Sam-Jiz] +2[ODE, F125] = 46

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

**Rolls for Round 2:** 2a) 5 2b) 4 2c) 6

## BUS BOSS YNIS MON (BB423MON) ROUND 8

GM Bob Gingell

Press: John (MARS) – (1) Only 6 possible runs - I can see a big pile-up by the end.

(2) I can recommend the Trearddur Bay Hotel at Bull Bay!!

GM – I can recommend good walking on the island as well as great views.

A great round for CACHU which enters 5 races, two of which are sole entries and one an unexpected tie. MARS drops back to third place with only two entries this round. MARS links to two new destinations but the other companies link to existing ones, CACHU completing its northern loop and ROGER challenging MARS in the south west.

Seven races to as yet unconnected towns are going to be carried forward into Round 10: slowly but surely connections are being made but players may be spoilt for choice in the second set of rounds.

Races for Round 8 (max 6 entries, ties = \*):

- R4. 4D (Wylfa) – JD (Moelfre): CACHU [11+1 = 12] 15\* -5m +6 = 16;  
MARS [11+1 = 12] 15\* -6c +5 = 14.
- R5. 5C (Penrhos) – 6C (Trearddur Bay): ROGER [6] 15\* +4 = 19;  
CACHU [6+1 = 7] 15\* -4r = 11.
- R8. AC (Ferry to Ireland) – 5S (Caernarfon) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
10. 9C (Llanfachraeth) – 8S (Bangor): ROGER [21+1 = 22] 15\* -3m +2 = 14;  
CACHU [25+1 = 26] 15\* -2r = 13; MARS +3.
11. 4H (Gwalchmai) – 6D (Amlwch): CACHU [17 +1 = 18] 30 -4r = 26; ROGER +4.
12. 3H (Maltraeth) – 7C (Rhoscolyn) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
13. 3S (North Wales Coast) – 9D (Llanerchymedd) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
14. 3D (Cemaes) – AD (Llanfaethlu): CACHU [5] 30.
15. KS (Llangoed) – 9S (Llanfair PG) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
16. JH (Llangaffo) – JS (Beaumaris): MARS [14 +2 = 16] 20 -5r -3c = 12;  
ROGER [20] 10 +5 = 15; CACHU +3.
17. TD (Penysarn) – KC (Rhosneigr) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
18. 2H (Bodorgan) – AH (Aberffraw) [*Not possible - reoffer*]

Scores and purchases:

- MARS, orange (John Marsden): 81 +29 -10 = 100.  
Maltraeth – Aberffraw; Beaumaris – Llangoed [3+2; 3+2 = 10]
- CACHU, blue (Richard Smith): 80 +99 -11 = 168.  
Penysarn – Moelfre; Penrhosgarnedd – Bangor [5+2; 2+2 = 11]
- ROGER, green (Roger Trethewey): 70 +52 -12 = 110.  
Rhostrehwfa – Maltraeth; Llangaffo – Dwryan [6+2; 2+2 = 12]

Races for Round 9 (enter any 6):

- R8. AC (Ferry to Ireland) – 5S (Caernarfon) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
- R12. 3H (Maltraeth) – 7C (Rhoscolyn) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
- R13. 3S (North Wales Coast) – 9D (Llanerchymedd) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
- R15. KS (Llangoed) – 9S (Llanfair PG)
- R17. TD (Penysarn) – KC (Rhosneigr) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
- R18. 2H (Bodorgan) – AH (Aberffraw) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
- 19 AS (Mid Wales) – QS (Llanddona) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
- 20 8D (Rhosybol) – 8C (Valley)
- 21 4S (Caernarfon) – TC (Bodedern)
- 22 5D (Bull Bay) – 9H (Pentre Berw)
- 23 2S (Snowdonia) – KD (Benllech)
- 24 TH (Newborough) -- 6S (Penrhosgarnedd)
- 25 3C (Holyhead) - QC (Llanfaelog) [*Not possible - reoffer*]
- 26 4C (Llaingoch) -- 8H (Pentraeth)

Bid order for Round 9: John, Roger, Richard.

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

# BUS BOSS YNIS MON (BB424MON) ROUND 8

GM Richard Smith



Of the races that were possible, quite a lot involved northern towns which restricted NYE to four races and they went from first to last in the scoring. A 30-pointer in the last race, where they were the only viable entrant, lessened the damage. BAA's lack of southerly penetration may well see them at a disadvantage in later rounds.

All three companies got their first choice of builds. There's still quite a few unconnected towns, but three of the 6 reoffers are now possible. Unfortunately four of the new races are to towns yet to be connected.

|                                               | <b>BAA</b><br>Bob Gingell<br>Green | <b>NYE</b><br>Brad Martin<br>Blue | <b>TAFF</b><br>Jim Reader<br>Yellow |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| R1. (2♠) Snowdonia – (3♦) Cemaes              | 20 [25]<br>+1                      |                                   | 10 [27]<br>-1                       |
| R2. (K♠) Llangoed – (Q♥) Dwyran               | race not possible                  |                                   |                                     |
| R3. (J♠) Beaumaris – (9♣) Llanfachraeth       | 5 [33]                             | 9 [24]<br>+4                      | 16 [20]<br>-4                       |
| R7. (Q♠) Llandonda – (5♠) Carenarfon          | race not possible                  |                                   |                                     |
| R8. (7♥) Llangefni - (A♥) Abberfraw           | race not possible                  |                                   |                                     |
| 10. (9♠) Llanfair PG – (5♦) Bull Bay          | 20 [21]<br>-2 +5                   |                                   | 10 [27]<br>+2 -5                    |
| 11. (4♠) Caernarfon – (8♥) Pentraeth          | 16 [15]<br>-6                      | 7 [17]<br>-6 +5                   | 7 [18]<br>-5 +6 +6                  |
| 12. (6♠) Penrhosgarnedd - (J♣) Bryngwran      |                                    | 10 [22]                           | 20 [12]                             |
| 13. (6♥) Llangenfni - (4♦) Wyfla              | 15 [17]<br>+1                      |                                   | 15 [19]<br>-1                       |
| 14. (5♥) Rhostrehwfa - (7♣) Rhoscolyn         | race not possible                  |                                   |                                     |
| 15. (A♦) Llanfaethlu - (10♣) Bodedern         | 15 [4]<br>+1                       |                                   | 15 [5]<br>-1                        |
| 16. (6♦) Amlwch - (2♦) Church Bay             | race not possible                  |                                   |                                     |
| 17. (K♣) Rhosneigher - (5♣) Penrhos           | race not possible                  |                                   |                                     |
| 18. (3♠) North Wales Coast - (K♥) Brynsiencyn |                                    | 30 [27]                           |                                     |

|                   |     |     |     |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Last Turn         | 54  | 58  | 57  |
| Points from Races | 91  | 59  | 90  |
| Builds            | -12 | -12 | -11 |
| Points Total      | 133 | 105 | 136 |

**BAA Green**  
Bob Gingell

Llanfaethlu - Church Bay; Penrhosgarnedd - Caernarfon  
COST:  $2+6+2+2 = 12$

**NYE Blue**  
Brad Martin

Penrhos – Valley; Bryngwran – Llanfaelog - Rhosneiger  
COST:  $2+3+1+2+2+2 = 12$

**TAFF Yellow**  
Jim Reader

Bryngwran - Llanfaelog - Aberffraw  
COST:  $3+4+2+2 = 11$

### Races for Round 9, enter up to 6 (including reoffers):

- |                                                    |                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| R2. (KS) Llangoed – (QH) Dwyran - <i>NP</i>        | 20. (8S) Bangor - (9H) Pentre Berw                   |
| R7. (QS) Llandonda – (5S) Carenarfon - <i>NP</i>   | 21. (AS) Mid Wales - (2C) Holyhead - <i>NP</i>       |
| R8. (7H) Llangefni – (AH) Abberfraw                | 22. (4H) Gwalchmai - (9D) Llanerchimedd - <i>NP</i>  |
| R14. (5H) Rhostrehwfa - (7C) Rhoscolyn - <i>NP</i> | 23. (2H) Bodorgan - (6C) Trearddur Bay - <i>NP</i>   |
| R16. (6D) Amlwch - (2D) Church Bay                 | 24. (JD) Moelfre - (AC) Ferry to Ireland - <i>NP</i> |
| R17. (KC) Rhosneiger - (5C) Penrhos                | 25. (7S) Bangor - (7D) Almwch                        |
| 19. (10S) Menai Bridge - (10D) Penysarn            | 26. (3H) Maltraeth - (QC) Llanfaelog                 |

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

Bid order for Round 9: Brad, Bob, Jim

## RAILWAY RIVALS SOUTH TYROL (RR2572ST) ROUND 9

### GM: Bob Gingell

WIERER scored highest this Round, pushing STYLE into second place. NIR came last in every race but luckily no-one challenged it in Race 21. STYLE and WIERER continue building with WIERER reaching Osttirol and STYLE reaching Brixen.

#### Races for Round 9 (max 5 entries):

15. 14 (Leifers) – 33 (Schlanders): STYLE [22]  $20 + 2 = 22$ ; WIERER [23]  $10 - 2s = 8$ ;  
16. 26 (Naturns) – #1 (Nord Tirol: Landeck / Innsbruck): STYLE [25+1 = 26]  $20 + 6 = 26$ ;  
NIR [43+1 = 44]  $10 - 6s = 4$ .  
17. 36 (Reschen) – 43 (St Ulrich): WIERER [34]  $20 + 4 = 24$ ; STYLE [40]  $10 - 1n - 4w = 5$ ;  
NIR +1.  
18. 41 (Welschnofen) – 22 (Lana): STYLE [16]  $20 - 5n + 3 = 18$ ; WIERER [14]  $10 - 7n = 3$ ;  
NIR [18+1 = 19]  $0 - 3s + 12 = 9$ .  
19. 56 (Kiens) – 15 (Kaltern): WIERER [20]  $20 + 1 = 21$ ; NIR [24]  $10 - 1w = 9$ .  
20. 63 (Prettau) – 55 (Vintl): WIERER [12]  $20 + 4 = 24$ ; NIR [15]  $10 - 4w = 6$ .  
21. #2 (Osttirol) – 66 (Toblach): NIR 20.

#### Scores and builds (max 8):

STYLE, red (Richard Smith):  $199 + 71 - 9 = 261$ .  
(D53) - - F52 - --- - Brixen; (E53) - F53 [-1w]. [-8 -1 = -9]  
WIERER, purple (Steve Ham):  $195 + 80 - 7 = 268$ .  
(V28) - U28 - --- Salurn; (Prettau) --- R40 {Osttirol}. [-8 +1 = -7]  
NIR, blue (Brad Martin):  $166 + 49 - 0 = 215$ . No builds. [-0]

#### Races for Round 10 (enter any 5):

- |                                        |                                                |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 22. 16 (Salurn) – 62 (Sand in Taufers) | 26. 56 (Kiens) – #6 (Ski Resort:               |
| 23. 24 (Meran) – 43 (St. Ulrich)       | Bormio/Canazei/Cortina d'Ampezzo)              |
| 24. 32 (Latsch) – 15 (Kaltern)         | 27. 64 (Antholz) – 53 (Sterzing)               |
| 25. 44 (Corvara) – 31 (Schnals)        | 28. #4 (Trentino: Canazei) – 25 (St. Leonhard) |

Round 10 build allowance: 6 points excluding payments to others.

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

# RAILWAY RIVALS SOUTH TYROL (RR2565ST) ROUND 9



The passengers waiting to be taken to Innsbruck are getting pretty restive. ROGER could have done it for 9 (or JR with STINK) but had other ideas and rattled off a hat-trick of wins in the next three races.

Following a narrow 1-pip win for BUST in race 18, ROGER's 100% record went in race 19 when STIFY's decision to pay an extra 2 to STINK meant they finished just ahead of them. STIFY were then comfortably beaten by BUST in the next race, only win the crap shoot in 21.

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

Correction: STIFY+1 ROGER -1 for junction at B43 last round.

|                                                            | <b>BUST</b><br>Bob Gingell<br>Black | <b>ROGER</b><br>Roger<br>Threthewy<br>Green | <b>STIFY</b><br>Bob Pitman<br>Red | <b>STINK</b><br>Michael<br>Pargman<br>Purple |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| R1. St Leonhard (25) - Landeck or Innsbruck (Sp1)          | no entrants                         |                                             |                                   |                                              |
| 15. Schweiz or Lombardia (Sp5) - Welsberg (65)             | 10 [48]<br>-5 -3                    | 20 [49]                                     | +5                                | +3                                           |
| 16. Meran (24) - Trafoi (34)                               |                                     | 20 [16]<br>+1                               | 10 [20]<br>-1                     |                                              |
| 17. Cortina d'Ampezzo or Agordo (Sp3) - Franzensfeste (52) |                                     | 20 [19]<br>-8                               |                                   | 10 [20]<br>+8                                |
| 18. Meran (23) - Prettau (63)                              | 20 [35]<br>-2                       | +1                                          | +2 +1                             | 10 [36]<br>-1 -1                             |
| 19. Bozen (12) - Brenner (54)                              |                                     | 0 [24]<br>-6                                | 20 [21]<br>-3 +6                  | 10 [23]<br>+3                                |
| 20. Corvara (44) - Mals (35)                               | 20 [37]<br>+3                       |                                             | 10 [39]<br>-3                     |                                              |
| 21. Bozen (11) - Klausen (46)                              | 5 [8]<br>-2 -1                      |                                             | 20 [8]<br>+1                      | 5 [8]<br>+2                                  |

|                   |       |           |         |     |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|---------|-----|
| Last Turn         | 154   | 147-1=146 | 61+1=62 | 207 |
| Points from Races | 39    | 48        | 68      | 49  |
| Builds            | -8 -1 | -5 +1 +1  | -8 -1   | -   |
| Points Total      | 184   | 191       | 121     | 256 |

## BUILDS:

BUST: (Mals) - D15 - - - D12 [-1 green]; (Leifers) --- - Kaltern

ROGER: (C22) --- C23 - - Bormio

STIFY: (Kaltern) - - V28 - U29 - --- Salurn; (F15) - E15 [-1 green]

**Races for Round 10:** Enter up to 4 races and build up to 6 points of track

- |                                                   |                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| R1. St Leonhard (25) - Landeck or Innsbruck (Sp1) | 22. Lana (22) - Schanls (31)             |
| 23. Osttirol (Sp2) - Meran (23)                   | 24. Brenner (54) - Canazei or Cles (Sp4) |
| 25. Schlanders (33) - Prettau (63)                | 26. Kiens (56) - Bozen (12)              |
| 27. Welschnofen (41) - Sand In Taufers (62)       | 28. Bozen (11) - St Ulrich (43)          |

# RAILWAY RIVALS - SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA (RR2557SG) - ROUND 10



Not much between the companies going into the final two rounds. BEAR have their noses in front thanks to two unopposed races and a good roll (17 on 4 dice) in race 28.

Races 24 and 26 were both coin-flips between FAR and LIONS, one win each. Then LIONS paid to win race 27.

Will anyone go for a 2-point build? Being a small map I did 10-8-6-4-2 instead of the usual 12-10-8-6-4.

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

|                                                            | <b>BEAR</b><br>Kevin Lee<br>Black | <b>FAR</b><br>Brad Martin<br>Blue | <b>LIONS</b><br>Jim Reader<br>Yellow |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 22. Matam (42) - Louga (14)                                | 20 [16]                           |                                   |                                      |
| 23. Town on Gambia River (Sp6) - Podor or Lagbar (13)      | 10 [20]                           | 20 [17]                           | 0 [22]                               |
| 24. Joal Fadiout or M'bour (31) - Bignonia or Dai'aba (52) |                                   | 20 [12]<br>-2 -1                  | 10 [12]<br>-2 +1                     |
| 25. Mauritania (Sp1) - Goudin or Kidira (43)               | 20 [37]                           |                                   |                                      |
| 26. Kolda (53) - Thies (25)                                | 0 [20]                            | 10 [14]                           | 20 [14]                              |
| 27. Kaolack (33) - Bassa Santa Su (66)                     | +4                                | 10 [16]                           | 20 [12]<br>-4                        |
| 28. Thies (26) - Janjanbureh (65)                          | 15 [17]                           |                                   | 15 [15]                              |

|                   |     |       |       |
|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|
| Last Turn         | 245 | 251.5 | 230.5 |
| Points from Races | 69  | 57    | 60    |
| Buils             | -   | -3    | -     |
| Points Total      | 314 | 305.5 | 290.5 |

## BUILDS:

BEAR: No builds

FAR: (Lagbar) - - G19 - Salde

LIONS: No builds

**Races for Round 11:** Enter up to 5 races and build up to 2 points of track

29. Sainsoubou or Saraya (45) - Dakar (21)

30. Dakar (24) - Guinea-Bissau (Sp4)

31. Banjul (63) - Tiebo (15)

32. Mali (Sp2) - Foundiougne (32)

33. Salde or Bakel (41) - Sedhiou (54)

34. Touba (35) - Saint Louis (11)

35. Banjul (61) - Ziguinchor (55)

# RAILWAY RIVALS SYRIA (RR2566SY) ROUND 9



No big winner this time, with the spoils shared fairly evenly apart from ROGER who had no viable races. With no connection to the 60s, the other five races need to fall reasonably favourably, which they didn't.

SKR and SHIT suffered the ignominy of a zero points JR (that never feels right to me), though SKR then went on to win three close short races.

BOOMS and ROGER built to Raqqa whilst BOB headed for Iraq.

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

|                                           | <b>BOB</b><br>Bob Gingell<br>Black | <b>BOOMS</b><br>Jim<br>Reader<br>Orange | <b>SKR</b><br>Brad<br>Martin<br>Blue | <b>ROGER</b><br>Roger<br>Threthewy<br>Green | <b>SHIT</b><br>Michael<br>Pargman<br>Purple |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 15. Douma (61) - Kobani (11)              | 15 [30]<br>+1 +2                   | 15 [32]<br>-2                           | JR 0 [34]                            |                                             | JR 0 [34]<br>-1                             |
| 16. Hama (51) - Maarat al-Newman (22)     |                                    | 10 [5]<br>+1                            | 20 [4]<br>-1                         |                                             |                                             |
| 17. Al-Thawrah (31) - Palmyra (56)        | 20 [14]<br>-4 -2                   |                                         |                                      | +4 +4                                       | 10 [17]<br>-4 +2                            |
| 18. Damascus (64) - Deir ez-Zor (35)      | +4                                 | 20 [28]<br>+1                           |                                      |                                             | 10 [37]<br>-4 -1                            |
| 19. Manbij (13) - Ras al-Ayn (41)         | 10 [15]<br>-2                      |                                         | 20 [15]<br>-1                        | +2                                          | +1                                          |
| 20. Al-Malikiyah (46) - Turkey West (Sp1) | +1                                 |                                         |                                      |                                             | 20 [37]<br>-1                               |
| 21. Idlib (21) - Turkey East (Sp2)        | 5 [14]<br>+3 +3 -3                 | 5 [15]<br>-3 -1                         | 20 [14]<br>-3 -2 +1 +3               | +2                                          |                                             |
| Last Turn                                 | 96                                 | 121                                     | 87                                   | 83                                          | 112                                         |
| Points from Races                         | 53                                 | 46                                      | 57                                   | 12                                          | 32                                          |
| Builds                                    | -8 -1 -1 -1<br>+1 +1               | -8 +1 -2                                | -8 +1 +2 -1<br>-2 +1 -1              | -8 +1 -1 -1<br>-1                           | -6 +2 +1 -1                                 |
| Points Total                              | 140                                | 158                                     | 136                                  | 85                                          | 140                                         |

## BUILDS:

BOB: (A53) - - - - - I57 [-1 green, -1 orange, -1 blue]

BOOMS: (T6) - - - - - Y9 - Y10 [-2 blue]

SKR: (P8) - - N7; (G44) - - - J45 --- Al-Hasakah [-1 black, -2 purple]

ROGER: (B55) - - - - - B49 [-1 purple, -1 black, -1 blue]

SHIT: (K27) - - - - - K32 - J32 [-1 blue]

**Races for Round 10:** Enter any 4 and build up to 6 points of track.

22. Daraa (66) - Aleppo (16)

23. Al-Hazakah (43) - Maarat al-Newman (22)

24. Jordan (Sp4) - Damascus (62)

25. Tartus (26) - Palmyra (56)

26. Homs (55) - Raqqa (33)

27. Al-Hazakah (42) - Al-Thawrah (31)

28. Turkey West (Sp1) - Aleppo (14)

# RAILWAY RIVALS DURHAM 1826 (RR2570DH) ROUND 6



DIADEM are no longer in control of all three unconnected Pennine towns, one of which was drawn in the first set of races. They chose to build line towards Stockton instead, allowing PUFFING BILLY to nose ahead for Middleton-in-Teesdale.

LANCHESTER also connected to Stockton and made inroads to the west.

GEAR made a connection for the developing towns special, but I belatedly spotted that I had to disallow the second connection to Yorkshire East over the Tees.

I'm still considering changing the track upgrade rule for future games. Either get rid of it completely, or perhaps the idea I mooted last time - a blanket £50 to upgrade all your track at the end of round 9 (tie-break losers on the initial bid getting a discount).

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PUFFING BILLY<br>Jim Reader<br>Yellow | 6a. [6] (Y18) - - - - U20<br>6b. [5] (U20) - - - R21 - R22; (X18) - Witton-le-Wear,<br>6c. [2] (Q64) - Q65; (R22) - Q22.<br>BANK: 41 -1[LANCHESTER, W19] -1[DIADEM, R22] +1[LANCHESTER, Q64] +1[GEAR, Q43] +2[GEAR, Q64] +1[DIADEM, E46] +1[DIADEM, P65] = 45                                      |
| LANCHESTER<br>Brendan Whyte<br>Blue   | 6a. [6] (Witton-le-Wear) - - - V18 - V17 - U17<br>6b. [5] (Shildon) - - - - X26<br>6c. [2] (O65) - - Q64<br>BANK: 56 -1[GEAR, O64] -1[PUFFING BILLY, Q64] +1[PUFFING BILLY, W19] +1[DIADEM, O66] = 56                                                                                              |
| GEAR<br>Kevin Lee<br>Green            | 6a. [6] (Lanchester) - - - X9 - Consett; (H66) - Darlington - F67<br>6b. [5] (Q64) - Stockton (replaces F67 --- E68); (Washington) - - M42 - - O43<br>6c. [2] (O43) - P42 - Q43<br>BANK: 30 -1[PUFFING BILLY, Q43] -2[PUFFING BILLY, Q64] +1[LANCHESTER, O64] +1[DIADEM, E46] +1[DIADEM, N66] = 30 |
| DIADEM<br>Steve Ham<br>Purple         | 6a. [6] (F46) - E46; (G63) - - - - L65<br>6b. [5] (L65) - - N66; (Barnard Castle) --- O26 {Yorkshire W}<br>6c. [2] (N66) - P65<br>BANK: 57.5 -1[GEAR, E46] -1[PUFFING BILLY, E46] -1[GEAR, N66] -1[LANCHESTER, O66] -1[PUFFING BILLY, P65] +1[PUFFING BILLY, R22] = 53.5                           |

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

**Races for Round 7:** Enter any 4 and build up to 12 points of track

1. Yorkshire East (Sp2) - Newcastle (33)
2. Washington (22) - Stockton (65)
3. Wolsingham (14) - Durham (26)
4. Harwood (11) - Yarm (64) *{race not possible}*
5. German Ocean (Sp5) - Barnard Castle (42)
6. Sunderland (52) - Gateshead (34)
7. Shildon (45) - Seaham (53)

# BAG OF DUNGEON - ROUND 10



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](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 10:

**Turn order:** Torvok, Alendra, Sirrus

**Torvok**, being a big bold brave barbarian decides to run through the trap (2AP) and engage the monster on the other side with his 3D6+4 attack (2 for the sword, 2 for being injured).

GM rolls for Old Spikey, it's a 5, the trap does not fire.

GM pulls a monster from the bag. It's a giant snake, health 13, attack 2D6+6. Note that Torvok has not asked to be tagged.

| Torvok Roll         | Snake Roll | Torvok Health | Snake Health | Notes      |
|---------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
| 16                  | 11         | 3             | 8            |            |
| 40 (6,6,6 critical) | 13         | 3             | 0            | snake dies |

Torvok's second mighty blow cuts the snake completely open and out pops (GM rummages in bag) an *ice staff* and a *health potion*.

**Alendra** passes the chest on her way to join the others by the trap (5AP+boots), she's tempted, but decides not to open it.

**Sirrus** greets Alendra and starts planning for the forthcoming assault.

## Round 11 Actions:

**Turn order:** Alendra, Sirrus, Torvok,

**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.

The adventurers are now close to completing their quest. They have a number of magic items that can help and have so far remained loyal, and resisted any urges caused by the evil power of The Ring.

### Barbarian

Your barbarian is a savage, mighty-thewed, and masterless warrior.

**Actions:** 5  
**Combat:** 3 D6

**Special:** +1 to combat roll for every 3 points below maximum health (+1 at 7, +2 at 4, +3 at 1).

|      |   |   |       |  |
|------|---|---|-------|--|
| 1    | 2 | 3 | Lives |  |
| Solo |   |   |       |  |

|   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|----|
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5  |

health

Monster health

dead! 1 2 3 4 5 6\* 7 8 9 10\*\* 11 12 13

\*Take one item on kill \*\*Take two items on kill

**Items:**

- Magic Sword: +2 to CBt roll. View adjacent monster\*
- Bomb: 1 ap, 1 use. Range 0-4. 2D6 dmg to all in 0-2 tile radius\*
- Strength potion: 1 ap, 1 use. +1 dice to CBt for one fight

**Cannot use:** [Shield icon] OR [D6 icon]

**aps:** 5 4 3 2 1

**Character Stats:**

- Health: 10 (2 Dice +3)
- Armor: 10 (2 Dice +3)
- Strength: 12 (2 Dice +1)
- Agility: 13 (2 Dice +6)

Player: Jim Reader

Character: Torvok the Barbarian

### Alendra the Elf

Alendra is fleet-footed and a skilled archer. She is a former Calen Taur watch commander.

**Combat:** 2 Dice +1

**Special:** Dead-eye. Inflict an instant kill when you roll a 6 on a bow attack.

|      |   |   |       |  |
|------|---|---|-------|--|
| 1    | 2 | 3 | Lives |  |
| Solo |   |   |       |  |

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

health

Monster health

dead! 1 2 3 4 5 6\* 7 8 9 10\*\* 11 12 13

\*Take one item on kill \*\*Take two items on kill

**Items:**

- Magic Shield: -2 damage
- Elven Bow: 2 aps, Range 1-4, 1 Dice damage
- Magic Boots: +1 move. Take no damage when escaping\*
- Imp's teeth: 1 ap, Swap places with another adventurer

**aps:** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

**Character Stats:**

- Health: 7 (1 Dice +4)
- Armor: 8 (2 Dice +4)

Player: Chris Hibbert

Character: Alendra the Elf

### Sirrus the fighter

Sirrus is a skilled warrior and renowned blademaker, brave and capable in battle.

**Combat:** 2 Dice +2

**Special:** Lethal Blow. Once per game you may double your combat roll result.

|      |   |   |       |  |
|------|---|---|-------|--|
| 1    | 2 | 3 | Lives |  |
| Solo |   |   |       |  |

|   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|----|
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5  |

health

Monster health

dead! 1 2 3 4 5 6\* 7 8 9 10\*\* 11 12 13

\*Take one item on kill \*\*Take two items on kill

**Items:**

- Morning Star: +2 to CBt roll
- Steel Armour: -1 damage
- Acme Insurance: 1 use, Keep items on defeat\*
- Vampire teeth: 2 aps, Drain and gain 5 health from any adventurer\*
- Fireball: 2 aps, Range 1-5, 3 Dice damage to all on tile

**aps:** 5 4 3 2 1 0

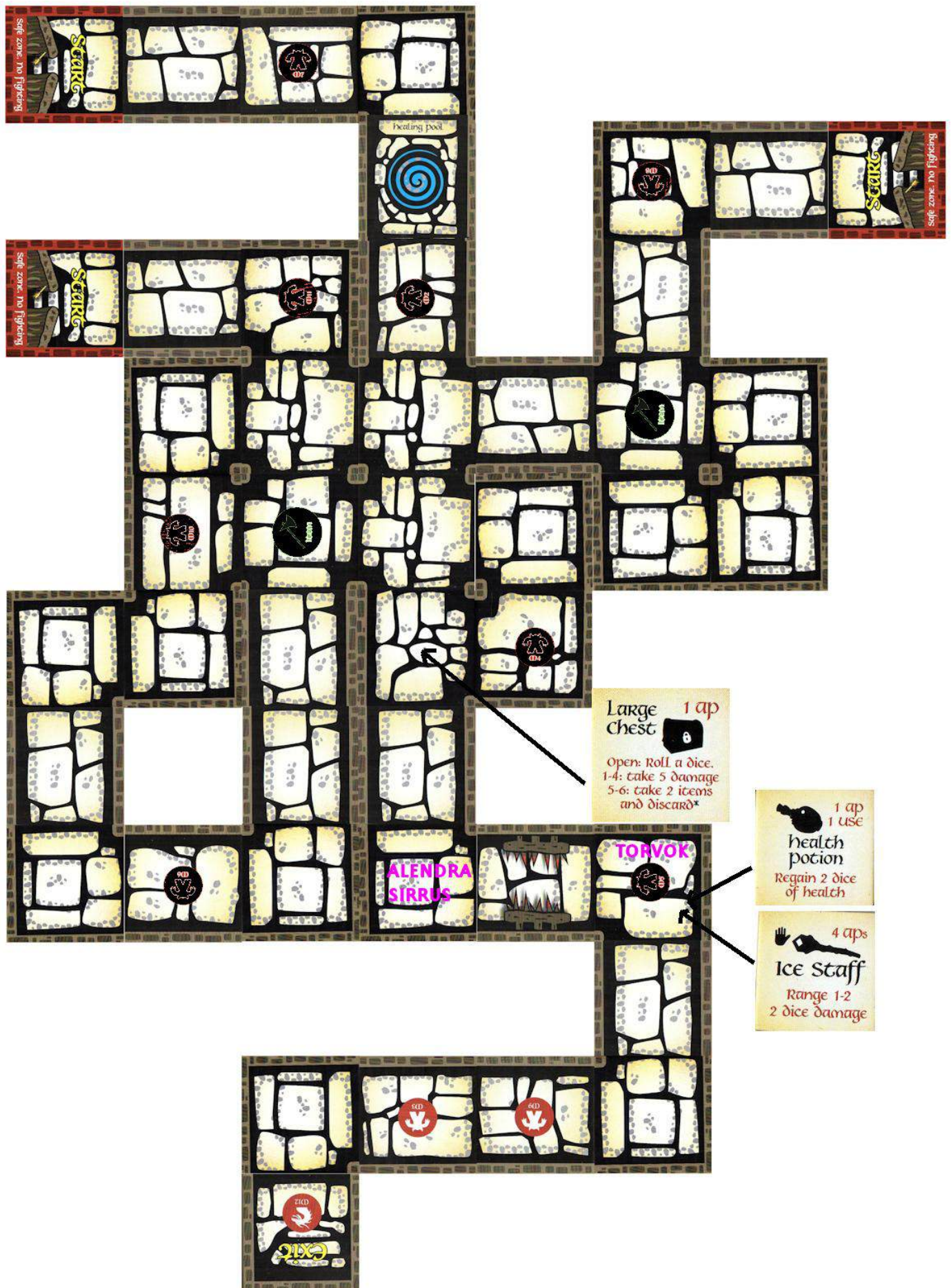
**Character Stats:**

- Health: 9 (2 Dice +2)
- Armor: 10 (2 Dice +4)
- Strength: 10 (2 Dice +4)

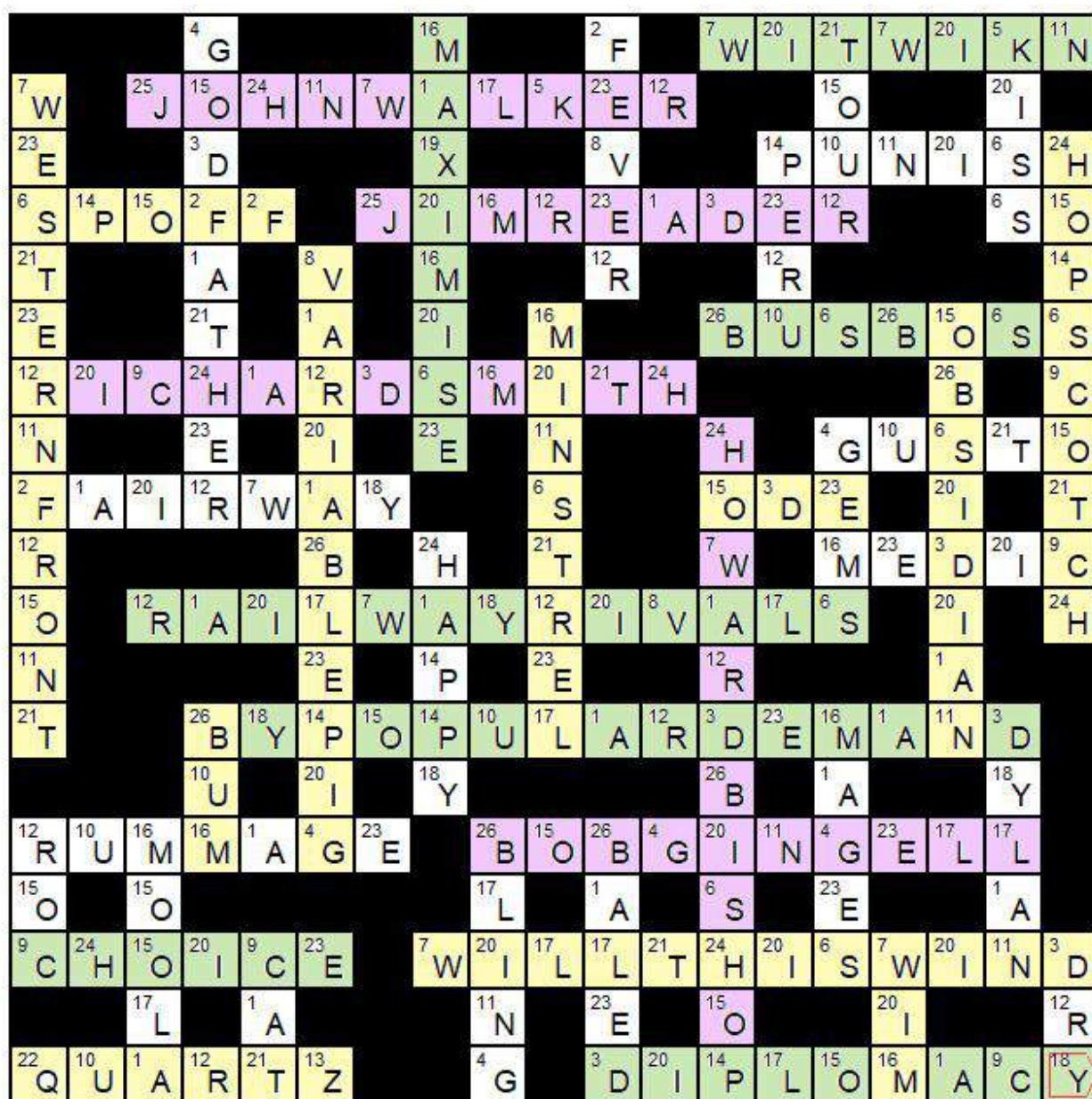
Player: Bob Gingell

Character: Sirrus the Fighter

## Dungeon Map:



## ZINES, GAMES AND GMS CODEWORD PUZZLE - ANSWERS



<sup>16</sup>M?

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| A  | F  | D  | G  | K  | S  | W  | V  | C  | U  | N  | R  | Z  |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| P  | O  | M  | L  | Y  | X  | I  | T  | Q  | E  | H  | J  | B  |

Rummage and Fairway are both games but as far as I know have not been played in zines. Maximise has only been played once (in HBD) but I needed an X!

There are 23 Is, 20 As and just 17 Es in the puzzle.

Steve Guest (solution photo supplied but not included this time), Roger Trethewey and Chris Hibbert all cracked the puzzle.

I did wonder if there being more Is than Es might cause trouble, or WITWIKN not being an actual word, but no.

## HERE BE DR



**Serpents Gambit** – GM roll = 1

**Bob challenges the sale price of the Rolls of Silk with mixed results. He is successful against Chris but fails against Richard. Richard gains a skill whereas Chris fails.**

**Players need to pick one of the three options below.**

**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. If 2 or more players achieve this on the same turn any player with the most gold will win. Bob has 13 gold. Richard has 13 gold (+3 unsuccessful challenge). Chris has 11 (+2 for silver dagger -3 for challenged sale).

**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) **The Twist - Chubby Checker** (John Hopkins, Bob Pitman)

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) **The Letter - The Box Tops** (John Hopkins, Bob Pitman (song only), Dane Maslen (song only just), Martin Walker (song only))

3 But that's not how it used to be / When the jester sang for the king and queen (1971) **American Pie - Don Mclean** (John Hopkins, Jim Reader, Richard Smith, Chris Hibbert (song only), Brendan Whyte, Bob Pitman, Dane Maslen)

4 Night is young and the music's high / With a bit of rock music, everything is fine (1976) **Dancing Queen - by Abba** (John Hopkins, Jim Reader, Richard Smith, Brendan Whyte, Steve Guest)

5 So many times it happens too fast / You trade your passion for glory (1982) **Eye of the Tiger- Survivor** (John Hopkins, Jim Reader, Martin Walker, Steve Guest)

6 I want to feel your body / Your heart beat next to mine / (This is the night) (1986) **Touch Me (I Want Your Body) - Samantha Fox** (Richard Smith)

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) **Achy Breaky Heart - Billy Ray Cyrus**

8 Never fading with the sunset / When the rain set in / And your footsteps will always fall here / Along England's greenest hills (1997) **Candle in the Wind 1997 - Elton John** (Jim Reader, Richard Smith, Brendan Whyte (singer only), Bob Pitman, Steve Guest)

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) **Without Me – Eminem** (Jim Reader (singer only), Richard Smith (singer only), Brendan Whyte (singer only), Bob Pitman, Martin Walker (singer only), Steve Guest)

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) **Umbrella - Rihanna**

Jim Reader 32+9=41

Richard Smith 28+9=37

Steve Guest 26+8=34

Bob Pitman 25+8=33

Brendan Whyte 26+6=32

John Hopkins 21+10=31

Dane Maslen 17+3=20

Martin Walker 16+4=20

Chris Hibbert 3+1=4

Jim - 1 something by Little Richard? 6 - Self Control by Laura Branigan? 9 - The Real Slim Shady by Eminem  
Chris - 3 American Pie. Jim Croce?

Brendan - 1 Chuck Berry 8 Goodbye Norma Jean (or the version he changed for Princess Di)/ Elton John

Dane - This looks like a poor round for me. One that I know, one that I recognise but can't identify the title, and at least a couple ringing very vague bells. 2 I definitely recognise it. The title's not something like MY BABY JUST WROTE ME A LETTER, is it? 4 Hmm. Maybe I vaguely recognise this. 5 And this one is ringing vague bells. But vague bells are not much use. 6 It's not impossible that this is also ringing a vague bell, but 7-10 definitely aren't.

Martin - 3. Elton John?

### Lyrics 5 of 5 – no theme this time

1 Oh, please, say to me / You'll let me be your man (1964)

2 Don't carry the world upon your shoulders. / For well you know that it's a fool who plays it cool / By making his world a little colder. (1968)

3 Where will it lead us from here? / With no lovin' in our souls / And no money in our coats / You can't say we're satisfied (1973)

4 And that sweet city woman, she moves through the light / Controlling my mind and my soul (1977)

5 I dream at night, I can only see your face / I look around, but it's you I can't replace (1983)

6 Who's that lady coming down the road? / Who's that lady? / Who's that woman walking through my door? (1988)

7 And some days I pray for silence / And some days I pray for soul / Some days I just pray to the God of / Sex and drums and rock and roll (1993)

8 When everything feels like the movies / Yeah, you bleed just to know you're alive (1998)

9 Used to have a little, now I have a lot / No matter where I go, I know where I came from (from the Bronx) (2002)

10 You tell me that you need me / Then you go and cut me down, but wait / You tell me that you're sorry / Didn't think I'd turn around, and say (2007)

### Sprint Finish 4 of 8 – At the halfway point the runners are starting to jockey for position.

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

Chris can finally start doing some damage as Josh opens a path. Cole was hoping to make a big move, but is unable to, as Jacob boxes him in.

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

Richard makes a surge tucking in behind the leader. Cameron and Steve hold onto a nice rhythm, preparing their next moves. The front runner Bob remains unchallenged.

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

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                 |
| <del>Overtake 3</del> * | Overtake 3             | Overtake 3                | Overtake 3                |
| <del>Overtake 2</del>   | Overtake 2             | Overtake 2                | Overtake 2                |
| Overtake 1              | Overtake 1             | Overtake 1                | Overtake 1                |
| <del>Save Energy</del>  | <del>Save Energy</del> | Save Energy               | <del>Save Energy</del>    |
| Hold Line               |                        | Hold Line                 | Hold Line                 |
| Increase Pace           |                        | Increase Pace             | Increase Pace             |
| Move Alongside          |                        | Move Alongside            | Move Alongside            |
| Refresh Card            |                        | <del>Refresh Card</del> * | <del>Refresh Card</del> * |
|                         |                        | <del>Dip</del>            | Dip                       |
|                         |                        | Joker                     |                           |

|                           |                          |                              |                           |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cole Hocker               | Cameron Myers            | Josh Kerr                    | Jacob Ingerbrigtsen       |
| <del>Overtake 3</del> *   | <del>Overtake 3</del>    | Overtake 3                   | Overtake 3                |
| <del>Overtake 2</del>     | Overtake 2               | <del>Overtake 2</del> *      | <del>Overtake 2</del>     |
| Overtake 1                | Overtake 1               | Overtake 1                   | Overtake 1                |
| Save Energy               | <del>Save Energy</del> * | <del>Save Energy</del>       | <del>Save Energy</del> *  |
| Hold Line                 | Hold Line                | Hold Line                    | Hold Line                 |
| Increase Pace             | <del>Increase Pace</del> | Increase Pace                | Increase Pace             |
| <del>Move Alongside</del> | Move Alongside           | Move Alongside               | <del>Move Alongside</del> |
| Refresh Card              |                          | Refresh Card                 | Refresh Card              |
|                           |                          | Dip                          | Dip                       |
|                           |                          | <del>Joker Save Energy</del> |                           |

There were a couple of queries concerning the refresh and save energy cards; I've amended the rules below, which hopefully makes things clearer

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 played on the following turn 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 (You take a card from 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.

NPCs, (Cole, Cameron, Josh and Jacob) 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

Table 1

|    |     |     |     |  |  |   |
|----|-----|-----|-----|--|--|---|
| 1  |     |     |     |  |  | 1 |
| 43 |     |     |     |  |  | 1 |
| 47 |     |     |     |  |  | 1 |
| 49 | 100 | 102 | 104 |  |  | 5 |

Cards Played 1 41 43 47 49 100 102 104

Kev takes 41 for 1

Table 2

|    |    |    |    |     |  |    |
|----|----|----|----|-----|--|----|
| 41 |    |    |    |     |  | 1  |
| 43 |    |    |    |     |  | 1  |
| 47 |    |    |    |     |  | 1  |
| 49 | 50 | 59 | 99 | 102 |  | 10 |

Cards Played 41 43 47 49 50 59 99 102

Table 3

|    |    |     |     |  |  |   |
|----|----|-----|-----|--|--|---|
| 41 |    |     |     |  |  | 1 |
| 43 |    |     |     |  |  | 1 |
| 47 | 51 | 100 | 104 |  |  | 6 |
| 1  |    |     |     |  |  | 1 |

Cards Played 1 41 43 47 49 51 100 104

Jim takes 49 for 1

Table 4

|    |    |    |    |     |  |    |
|----|----|----|----|-----|--|----|
| 41 |    |    |    |     |  | 1  |
| 43 |    |    |    |     |  | 1  |
| 47 |    |    |    |     |  | 1  |
| 49 | 50 | 55 | 99 | 102 |  | 16 |

Cards Played 41 43 47 49 50 55 99 102

Totals Kev Lee1 Jim Reader 1

**Devil take the hindmost** – I'll be starting this game next issue, so can Jim Reader and Chris Hibbert please send me their team set ups, which can be found on the Variable pig website. If anyone else wants to join please send me your set up. I've amended the elimination rule added a tiebreak, detailed below.

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 on the lowest hex is eliminated (this rider is included in the replacement card calculation). **If two or more riders share a hex the lowest ranked rider will be eliminated. If they have the same rank, the rider playing the lowest card will go. If they are still tied, no rider will be eliminated, but two will be eliminated on the next turn.** Scoring is also different. On turn three you score double the number of cyclists you have remaining. On turn seven you score triple the number of cyclists you have. On turn ten you score according to your position the track. 10 points for first place 8 for second down to one for eighth. Tied positions are averaged.

**Postscript** – Ever fancied playing a game which is a cross between Roborally and Phantoms of the Ice. No, well I'm looking for at least two warriors (albeit vicarious), to playtest a game of **Olympic Roboxing**. Maybe the name could do a bit of working on, anyway here it is.

**Overview.** You are competing for a gold medal, in the robotic boxing Olympics. You have entered a programable robot.

**Set up** – You have 10 points to allocate to your robot's strategy: Attack, Defence and Adaptability. These are set for the whole game.

You also have 15 points to program skills: Counter, Feint and Combination. Each further skill of the same type costs twice as much as the previous one. (1,2,4 etc) Players receives 1 of each skill free of charge.

**Game mechanics** - Each round you have seven slots which you must allocate attack or defence. You may also allocate one skill to any of these slots.

Each slot is compared to your opponents

Attack v Attack. Both attacks are scored, equal to their attack stats.

Attack v Defence. The attacker will score points equal to their attack minus 2 x their opponent's defence.

Defence v Defence. No points are scored.

Counter and Feint skills, replace attack slots and remain in place unless they are reprogrammed before a round. The combination is a one-off attack and does not remain in place for the next round.

If a slot contains a counter skill, points are scored equal to the robots attack only if their opponent is attacking. Their opponent would not score any points.

If a slot contains a feint skill, points are scored equal to the robot's attack, only if their opponent is counter attacking. Their opponent only scores points, if they are attacking.

The combination skill is only of use when played on a populated attacking slot (attack, counter or feint). The combination skill doubles the points scored for any successful attack.

After every round a player may amend as many of their attack and defence slots equal to their adaptability skill. They can also use any skill cards they have remaining.

Extra rules. Any robot that has not attacked within 3 slots will be docked 5 points for the round. Any robot that suffers 10 or more points in a slot, has their last slot voided. If a slot is already voided the next one back is also voided.

At the end of the game, the robot winning the most rounds will win. If the rounds are equal, the robot with the higher total points will win. If still equal the robot with the best score in round 4 will win, followed by round 3 and so on.

This table gives the result of how slots are compared

|         |         |                                                                                         |
|---------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attack  | Attack  | Both attacks are scored, equal to their attack stats                                    |
| Attack  | Defence | The attacker will score points equal to their attack minus 2 x their opponent's defence |
| Attack  | Counter | The counter scores points, equal to their attack stat                                   |
| Attack  | Feint   | The attack scores points, equal to their attack stat                                    |
| Attack  | Void    | The attack scores points, equal to their attack stat                                    |
| Counter | Defence | No points are scored                                                                    |
| Counter | Counter | No points are scored                                                                    |
| Counter | Feint   | The feint's attack value is scored, equal to their attack stat                          |
| Counter | Void    | No points are scored                                                                    |
| Feint   | Defence | No points are scored                                                                    |
| Feint   | Feint   | No points are scored                                                                    |
| Feint   | Void    | No points are scored                                                                    |
| Defence | Defence | No points are scored                                                                    |
| Defence | Void    | No points are scored                                                                    |

Example turn.

Slugger = Attack 7 Defence 3. Skills Combination x 4 (7 points) Counter x 4 (7 points) Feint x 1

Sugar = Attack 4 Defence 4 Adaptability 2 Skills Combination x 4 (7 points) Counter x 3 (3 points) Feint x 3 (3 points)

Round 1

| Slugger             | Slugger | Sugar   | Sugar | Points     |
|---------------------|---------|---------|-------|------------|
| Attack              | 7       | Defence | 8     | None       |
| Attack Combination  | 14      | Feint   | 8     | Slugger 14 |
| Attack              | 7       | Counter | 4     | Sugar 4    |
| Counter             | 0       | Defence | 8     | None       |
| Counter Combination | 14      | Defence | 8     | None       |
| Counter             | 7       | Attack  | 4     | Slugger 7  |
| Attack              | 7       | Void    | 0     | Slugger 7  |

Round score Slugger 28 Sugar 4

If anyone can spot any problems or other queries, please contact me.

# SubPAR 20

## Pennsylvania Ramblings



**Cwm Rhondda** This year's Crets holiday was our first in Wales for 15 years, unless you count our brief walk over the border to Skenfrith in 2016. I also hadn't visited in all that time, so it was a pleasure to be back in the Brecon Beacons. Richard couldn't make the holiday this year and we missed him. The house was excellent with a beautiful valley view from the back and a great spot for exploring the local area. We visited the scenic ruins of Carreg Cennen Castle and Neath Abbey, as well as a lovely walk along the Nant Llech gorge and the Henrhyd Waterfall. My heel is still recovering but Simon and Dave helped me over the tougher sections to complete the hike. I passed on the 6-mile trek to the Iron Age fort above Brecon though. We also enjoyed day trips to Hay-on-Wye and Brecon town and its lovely Cathedral.

**Achilles Last Stand** I had a final assessment on my Achilles before I left for the holiday where I estimated that it was about 80 – 85% healed and the Physio agreed. Much of the movement has returned but it still lacks strength compared with my right heel. This can be easily demonstrated by single foot heel raises, as I can barely lift the left heel off the ground. However, the surgeon was very pleased with my progress and cleared me to restart bowling, although harder sports should wait until the New Year.

## Railway Rivals (Senegal and Gambia) - RR2556SG

### Round Twelve

|                                                            | <b>COUER</b><br>Steve Ham<br><i>Purple</i> | <b>SETI</b><br>Richard Smith<br><i>Blue</i> | <b>ROGER</b><br>Roger<br><i>Black</i> | <b>BOGGER</b><br>Bob Gingell<br><i>Brown</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 36. Richard Toll (12) - Kolda (53)                         | 10<br>- 5                                  | 0                                           | 0<br>+ 3                              | 20<br>- 3 + 5                                |
| 37. Thies (25) - Farafenni (64)                            | + 1                                        | 20                                          | + 1                                   | 10<br>- 1 - 1                                |
| 38. Touba (35) - Podor or Lagbar (13)                      | 20<br>- 1 - 2                              | + 1 + 5                                     | + 2                                   | 10<br>- 5                                    |
| 39. Banjul (62) - Touba (34)                               |                                            | 20                                          |                                       |                                              |
| 40. Salde or Bakel (41) - Dakar (21)                       | 20                                         | 10                                          |                                       |                                              |
| 41. Mauritania (Sp1) - Koumpentoum or Velingara (51)       | + 1                                        | + 2                                         | 10<br>- 1 - 2                         | 20                                           |
| 42. Town on Gambia River (Sp6) - Sainsoubou or Saraya (45) | 10<br>- 3                                  |                                             | 20<br>- 1                             | + 3 + 1                                      |

|                        |                                 |     |     |     |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Points from Last Round | 243                             | 239 | 262 | 308 |
| Points from Races      | 51                              | 58  | 32  | 59  |
| Correction             | <i>None reported this round</i> |     |     |     |
| Total                  | 294                             | 297 | 294 | 367 |

## Congratulations to BOGGER (Bob)

### Game End Statements

BOGGER, Bob Gingell (1<sup>st</sup>): The final round might see an upset, but it looks good for me. I wanted a NW to SE route and I got it, but that meant abandoning Banjul and the SW. Getting a reasonable link to the Dakar area, albeit from the South, also helped given that all the 20s were concentrated there. Two players starting at Dakar made sense, but they ended up fighting over the same races which reinforces my dislike of multiple players starting in the same town. Both built the costly Senegambia Bridge, which I doubt delivered enough of the benefits they were hoping for - is it too expensive? Roger's start in Banjul gave him a good base in the South but weaker routes to the North. Thanks to all for the good game and to Jim for the map and GMing.

SETI, Richard Smith (2<sup>nd</sup>) Lots of interesting features in this map, particularly the way The Gambia and its river had to be tackled. I decided to prioritise N-S building at first, then head east later, though some of the builds may or may not pay off, for example the direct route from Touba to Bakel. I expect a close finish but Bob must be favourite.

ROGER, Roger Trethewey (3<sup>rd</sup>): Congratulations to Bob for a very effective game plan. It is a good map and enjoyable to take part. Thanks to Jim as GM.

COUER, Steve Ham (3<sup>rd</sup>): It looks as though this will be a comfortable win for Bob even though my Round 12 score should close the gap a little. I hope I can hold Richard off to avoid coming 4th. Apologies to everyone if my early mess up around the Senegambia bridge had any bearing on the result. I think it would have been more advantageous to Roger if he had built across it but I guess we'll never know. As Richard and I look destined to fill the third and fourth places it seems that the double start at Dakar may not be advantageous. Although I was fine with the Dakar start I didn't really see a good strategy in this game for this start. Congratulations to Bob for the win and thank you for designing the map and running the game.

JIM READER (GM): Congratulations to Bob for a comfortable win, but the other three places were very close. The comments about the 2 Dakar starts are interesting although I would like to see the results from other games before making a change. The blue and purple lines that started from Dakar are quite different in their coverage and routes after reaching the Senegambia bridge. Bob's brown line is probably the most different and I think he gained the most in the early races. Roger's black line is beautiful and straight south of the river but is less direct North of the river. Thanks to everyone for playing.

(final) In-game map at <https://variablepig.org/maps/rr/ingame/RR2556SG.png>

## Bus Boss (Shikoku) - BB418SHI

### Game Start

We have another game start as we finally kick off the list started in Polar Pig. The four players are Brad Martin, Kevin Lee, Michael Pargman and Steve Ham. Please can you send your company names, colour preferences and first round bids for next issue. The build order for round one is Michael, Brad, Kev and Steve. Please note that for rounds 5 and 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.

# Railway Rivals (Bhutan) - RR2552BT

## Round Eight

|                                               | <b>ROGER</b><br>Roger Trethewey<br><i>Black</i> | <b>BUDDHA</b><br>John Walker<br><i>Red</i> | <b>Dzong</b><br>Chris<br><i>Yellow</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 8. Samdrup Jongkhar (55) - West Bengal (Sp2)  | + 6                                             |                                            | 20<br>- 6                              |
| 9. Laya (11) - Pemagatshel (65)               | + 3                                             | + 6                                        | 20<br>- 3 - 6                          |
| 10. Thimphu (16) - Dampchu (43)               | 20                                              | 10                                         |                                        |
| 11. Ha (21) - Wangdue Phodrang (32)           | 20                                              | 10                                         |                                        |
| 12. Disputed Territory (Sp4) - Trongsa (34)   | 20<br>+ 7 + 2                                   | 10<br>- 7                                  | 0<br>- 2                               |
| 13. Samdrup Jongkhar (56) - Phuntsholing (26) |                                                 | 20                                         |                                        |
| 14. Chhukha (41) - Trashigang (63)            | 20<br>+ 3 - 2 - 4                               | Offer JR to Dzong<br>+ 8 + 2               | 10<br>- 3 - 8 + 4                      |

|                        |                                 |     |             |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|-------------|
| Points from Last Round | 101                             | 126 | 112         |
| Points from Races      | 95                              | 59  | 26          |
| Builds                 | - 12<br>- 7                     | 0   | - 12<br>+ 7 |
| Correction             | <i>None reported this round</i> |     |             |
| Total                  | 177                             | 185 | 133         |

ROGER (R11) - - - R10 / Monastery: (Sarpang) – T21 - S22 – R21 - - - Q21 - P21 - O21: (H43) - I44  
 BUDDHA No builds  
 Dzong (O21) - N21 - M21 - - - L20 – Gedu: (S12) – Nubding: (Sandrup Johgkhar) – L44 – M44 – N43 – O43 - P42. *Build allowance was only 12 so build cut short.*

The third set of races is

15. Zhemgang (36) - Paro (13): 16. Nubding (33) - Lhuntse (52): 17. Phuntsholing (25) - Daga (42)  
 18. Assam (S3) - Gelephu (45): 19. Gasa (12) - Panbang (53)  
 20. Gedu (24) - Trashiyangtse (61): 21. Jomotsangkha (66) - Monastery (S6)

Enter up to 5 races and build up to 10 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 Seven

### Corrections

There were several minor corrections in the original report for last round, although these were all corrected in the online zine soon after publication. However, I will document these below for completeness.

1. COP built to N42 and not N43 as reported in turn 6b. The in-game map was correct.
2. DUST built Eaglescliffe - O68 (not O67 as reported) - N68 in turn 6b. which is not possible so N67 should be N68. Again, the online map was correct.

3. DUST correctly paid 7 to ROGER for the same turn parallel build in 6c for hexes I52 and H51. This is because I calculate payments a little differently to others as discussed in previous issues of Variable Pig. This is consistent with my way of calculating. 1 for the connection at L67, 1 for the connection at I52, 3 for the same turn parallel build I52 – H51 and 2 for the same turn parallel build H51 – Durham.

Race 2 was possible this round with connections to East Yorkshire at Yarm and Middlesborough. Yarm is explicitly stated in the legend.

|                                                 | <b>COP</b><br>Brad Martin<br><i>Blue / Light Blue</i>                   | <b>DUST</b><br>Richard Smith<br><i>Red / Pink</i> | <b>ROGER</b><br>Roger<br><i>Black / Grey</i> | <b>HAB</b><br>Bob Gingell<br><i>Green / Light Green</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. St. John's Weardale (12) - Hartlepool (55)   | <i>No entrants. HAB did offer a JR to DUST but this was not ordered</i> |                                                   |                                              |                                                         |
| 2. East Yorkshire (Sp2) - Aycliffe (46)         |                                                                         | + 2                                               | 20<br>- 2                                    |                                                         |
| 3. Northumberland (Sp4) - Castle Eden (54)      |                                                                         | 20                                                |                                              |                                                         |
| 4. Yarm (64) - Wolsingham (14)                  |                                                                         | + 2 + 2                                           | 10<br>- 2 + 2                                | 20<br>- 2 - 2                                           |
| 5. North Shields (35) - Eaglescliffe (63)       |                                                                         | 20<br>+ 2                                         | 10<br>- 2                                    |                                                         |
| 6. Barnard Castle (41) - Chester-le-Street (24) | 10<br>- 3 + 9                                                           |                                                   |                                              | 20<br>+ 3 - 9                                           |
| 7. Durham (26) - Gateshead (34)                 | 10<br>- 4 + 1                                                           |                                                   | 10                                           | 10<br>+ 4 - 1                                           |

|                        |                                                                  |                 |                 |                 |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Points from Last Round | - 1.5                                                            | 8               | 43              | 57.5            |
| Points from Races      | 23                                                               | 48              | 46              | 43              |
| Builds                 | - 12<br>+ 1 + 2                                                  | - 12<br>+ 1 + 1 | - 12<br>- 1 - 1 | - 12<br>- 2 - 1 |
| Correction             | <i>See above – corrections made online in last turn's report</i> |                 |                 |                 |
| Total                  | 12.5                                                             | 46              | 75              | 85.5            |

COP (Lanchester) – Z10 – Z9 – Y9 - Consett: (Q43) - - - Sunderland:  
(L61) – L60 - Sedgfield: (G44) – F43 – E43 - Tanfield.  
DUST (L67) – K68 - J68 – I68 – H67 - Darlington – F66 – E66 – D65 – C65 – B64 – A64 - Z27.  
ROGER (K49) – L48 – M48 – N47 – O47 – P46 - Q46: (U24) - - T24 - - S25 - R24:  
(O67) - Eaglescliffe  
HAB (N66) – O66 – P65: (G63) – G64 – G65:  
(U27) – T26 – S26 – R26 – Q26 – Barnard Castle:  
(D45) – C46 – B46 – Lanchester

Nobody ordered any track upgrades this round.

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

The second set of races is

- |                                                                   |                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 8. Witton-le-Wear (16) - Washington (22):                         | 9. - Tanfield (21) - West Yorkshire (Sp1) |
| 10. Middleton-in-Teesdale (15) - Westmoreland / Cumberland (Sp3): |                                           |
| 11. Sedgfield (56) - Darlington (62):                             | 12. Bishop Auckland (44) - Newcastle (33) |
| 13. Sunderland (52) - Ryton (31):                                 | 14. Darlington (61) - Shildon (45)        |

Enter up to 4 races and build allowance for next round is 10 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. 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.

# Railway Rivals (Togo and Benin) - RR2575TB

## Round Five

### Corrections

There were also several minor corrections in the original report for this game last round, although these were all corrected in the online zine soon after publication. However, I will document these below for completeness.

1. FLAG correctly paid TOBE 4 last round (for G15 and F14), but TOBE only received 1, so TOBE was credited with an extra 3.
2. TB had already built Porto Novo - B90 in 2a, so he was able to build further towards the Nigeria connection. His corrected builds were

|               |                                                         |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| TB            | 4a) 5. (Savalou) – M30 - - L29 – K29 - J28,             |
| Richard Smith | 4b) 4. (J28) – J27 – J26 - J25: (B90) - C90             |
| Blue          | 4c) 5. (J25) - - - J24 - Sokode; (C90) – D89 / Nigeria. |

3. FLAG ordered a build (J19) - - K19, but this was wrongly marked on the in-game map as (J18) - - K19. This has been corrected.
4. Hex Z10 is in Ghana – for some reason I was unable to color this hex.

|             |                                                          |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TOBE</b> | 5a) 3. (N26) - O27 - P27 - P28,                          |
| Bob Gingell | 5b) 4. (P28) - Q29 - - - R29,                            |
| Black       | 5c) 6. (R29) - R30 – <u>SAVE</u> : (R30) - - - R31 - R32 |
|             | BANK: 79 + 6 = 85                                        |

|               |                                                                     |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TB</b>     | 5a) 3. (Sokode) - - - H23,                                          |
| Richard Smith | 5b) 4. (H23) - - - G23 – Bassar,                                    |
| Blue          | 5c) 6. (Bassar) – F21 – F20 – F19 – Niमितougou: (F20) – G20 – Kara. |
|               | BANK: 45 + 2 (FLAG) = 47                                            |

|                 |                                                                           |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ROGER</b>    | 5a) 3. (Kandi) - D57 – E57 - F56                                          |
| Roger Trethewey | 5b) 4. (F56) - G56 – G55 - <u>MALANVILLE</u> : (A65) – <u>BEMBEREKE</u> , |
| Green           | 5c) 6. (Malanville) - - - H53 / Niger: (M25) – N24 – O24 - P23.           |
|                 | BANK: 32 + 3 + 3 + 1 (FLAG) = 39                                          |

|             |                                                          |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>FLAG</b> | 5a) 3. (Lokossa) - O40 – O41 - Ouidah,                   |
| Steve Guest | 5b) 4. (N38) - O39 - - - P39,                            |
| Orange      | 5c) 6. (P39) - Q40 - R39 - A90 - A91: (F14) - F13 - E13. |
|             | BANK: 19 – 1 (ROGER) – 2 (TB) = 16                       |

The build allowance for the sixth round is 6a) 5, 6b) 4, and 6c) 4. 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 (Pays Cathar) - BB426PAY

## Round Two

|             |                                                                      |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>LOLA</b> | Ginestas – Olonzac: Lezignan Corbieres – Capendu – Peyriac Minervois |
| Brad Martin |                                                                      |
| Blue        | Bank: 108 – 12 = 96                                                  |

|                                               |                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MARS</b><br>John Marsden<br><i>Orange</i>  | Tuchan - Durban Corbieres - Port la Nouvelle<br>Bank: 107 – 11 = 96 |
| <b>BEAR</b><br>Kev Lee<br><i>Black</i>        | Carcassonne – Limoux: Alzonne – Castelnaudry<br>Bank: 108 – 12 = 96 |
| <b>BOC</b><br>Michael Pargman<br><i>Green</i> | Axat – Quillan - Belcaire<br>Bank: 108 – 12 = 96                    |
| <b>PURE</b><br>Bob Gingell<br><i>Purple</i>   | Peyriac Minervois - Ginestas - Cuxac d'Aude<br>Bank: 108 – 12 = 96  |

The build order for round 3 is John, Kev, Michael, Bob, and Brad. 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>

## Bus Boss (Farnham and Aldershot) - BB422FAL

### Round Ten

|                                                   | <b>FAB</b><br>Richard<br><i>Blue</i>    | <b>FEAR</b><br>Kev<br><i>Red</i>                   | <b>BANG</b><br>Bob<br><i>Black</i> | <b>ROGER</b><br>Roger<br><i>Green</i> | <b>CHAMPS</b><br>Brad<br><i>Brown</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 27. Beacon Hill (2D) – Aldershot Centre (2S)      | 5                                       |                                                    |                                    | 13<br>+ 4                             | 12<br>- 4                             |
| 28. Ash (KD) – The Sands (8S)                     | 12<br>- 4                               | <i>Race not valid – &gt;2x shortest</i><br>+ 4 + 3 |                                    | 5<br>+ 4 – 3 + 4                      | 13<br>- 4 - 4                         |
| 29. Farnborough (JD) – Tweseldown Racecourse (4D) | <i>Race not valid – &gt;2x shortest</i> |                                                    |                                    | 30                                    |                                       |
| 30. Folly Hill (9H) – Dippenhall (6H)             | 10<br>- 3                               | 10<br>+ 3 + 5 - 4                                  | 10<br>- 5 + 4                      |                                       |                                       |
| 31. North Town (QD) – Rural Life Museum (8C)      | + 3                                     | 10<br>- 3 + 3                                      | 20<br>- 3 - 3                      | + 3                                   |                                       |
| 32. William Cobbett (AH) – Runcorn (5C)           | + 1                                     |                                                    | 10<br>- 1 - 1                      |                                       | 20<br>+ 1                             |
| 33. The Rec (QH) – Hogs Back Brewery (7S)         | 7<br>- 1 + 2                            |                                                    |                                    | 7<br>+ 1 – 2 + 4                      | 16<br>- 4                             |
| 34. Farnham Station (3H) – Ash Vale (5S)          |                                         | 7<br>+ 1                                           | 16                                 | 7<br>- 1                              |                                       |
| 35. Shortfield (6C) – Charles Hill Forest (10C)   |                                         | 9<br>- 6                                           | 16<br>+ 6 + 6 - 4                  |                                       | 5<br>- 6 + 4                          |

|                   |                                 |     |      |     |     |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|
| Bank              | 181                             | 202 | 151  | 155 | 175 |
| Points from Races | 32                              | 42  | 71   | 76  | 49  |
| Builds            | 0                               | - 4 | - 11 | - 5 | 0   |
| Corrections       | <i>None reported this round</i> |     |      |     |     |
| Totals            | 213                             | 240 | 211  | 226 | 224 |

BANG: Badshot Lea – Runfold: Wrecclesham – Bentley  
ROGER: The Sands - Guildford  
CHAMPS: No builds  
FAB: No builds  
FEAR: Ash Vale - Guildford

The fifth set of races is

- 36. Church Crookham (3D) – North Camp (10D)
- 37. Lido (QS) – Heath End Secondary School (7D)
- 38. Shepherd and Flock (10S) – Guildford (KS)
- 39. Rowledge (2C) – Wrecclesham (3C)
- 40. Runfold (9S) – Farnham Town Center (4H)
- 41. Alice Holt Forest (AC) – Compton (QC)
- 42. Ewshot (AD) – Tilford (9C)
- 43. Aldershot Station (3S) – Sandy Hill (10H)
- 44. Upper Hale (JH) - Farnham Town Centre (5H)

Enter up to 5 races. The build order for round 11 is Bob, Richard, Brad, Roger, and Kev.

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

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## SPACEFILLER QUIZ - OH NO NOT ANOTHER TOTES EMOJI!

The subject this time, is cities. Answers to Richard.

- 1)   
- 2)   
- 3)  
- 4)  
- 5)  
- 6)  
- 7)   
- 8) 

## THE CELESTIAL DRAGON #20



**Deadline for all games: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2026**

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

|                                       |            |                      |                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Celestial Steam Locomotive</b> | <b>#50</b> | <b>Richard Smith</b> | <a href="mailto:richard530smith@btinternet.com">richard530smith@btinternet.com</a> |
|---------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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

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.

BRIDGE OF LIES – TV game show conversion, Paul Evans, Jim Reader, Steve Ham, John Walker and Bob Pitman. *Game start inside.*

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS KENDO NAGASAKI? Game in early stages, more can join.

NEW! RAILWAY RIVALS [Myanmar](#), new map for 3-4 players, will run two games if demand.

|                        |            |                    |                                                                        |
|------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Here Be Dragons</b> | <b>#83</b> | <b>John Walker</b> | <a href="mailto:hbdragons@btinternet.com">hbdragons@btinternet.com</a> |
|------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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.

DEVIL TAKE THE HINDMOST - Richard Smith, Steve Ham, Jim Reader, Chris Hibbert - 1 or 2 more wanted, game will start next time with 4,5 or 6.

NEW! OLYMPIC ROBOXING - new game for playtesting, at least 2 wanted.

|                                                                |                          |                      |                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Tangerine Terror</b><br><b>I Am The Kurious Kumquat</b> | <b>#90</b><br><b>#20</b> | <b>Howard Bishop</b> | <a href="mailto:latixse@outlook.com">latixse@outlook.com</a> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|

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.

|               |            |                   |                                                                    |
|---------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SubPAR</b> | <b>#20</b> | <b>Jim Reader</b> | <a href="mailto:jim_reader@hotmail.com">jim_reader@hotmail.com</a> |
|---------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|

Waiting List / Notes:

BUS BOSS - Shikoku (BB418SHI) - Brad Martin, Kevin Lee, Michael Pargman, Steve Ham - *game start inside*

BREAKING AWAY – Richard Smith, Chris Hibbert, Allan Stagg - 3 more wanted.