

That would be enough

This has been issue 260 of *To Win Just Once*, published 20th December 2025. It incorporates *Les Petites Bêtes Soyeuses*, a game of *En Garde!*. Issues are published ten times a year, roughly every five weeks. © Paul Evans 2025

Deadlines

Orders for *Railway Rivals* to Mike by Friday 2nd January 2026.

Orders for *LPBS* and *Fictionary* Dictionary votes and definitions to Pevans by Friday 9th January 2026.

(Next deadlines: 6th/13th February, 13th/20th March.)

Waiting lists

En Garde! new players are always welcome in *Les Petites Bêtes Soyeuses*. You will need the rules to *En Garde!* in order to play: www.engarde.co.uk

Railway Rivals – There's a game under way, but Mike can run a second four-player game if enough people are interested. So far that's Mike Dyer, Anthony Gilbert and Peter Jenkins. (Plus Mark Cowper once the current game has finished.) "Only one more needed for a game of *Railway Rivals*!" (Working map and rules provided).

Star Trader – The list for the next game starts with Pevans, Mike Dyer, Mark Cowper and Anthony Gilbert. At least two more needed – and room for up to eight. (Rules provided)

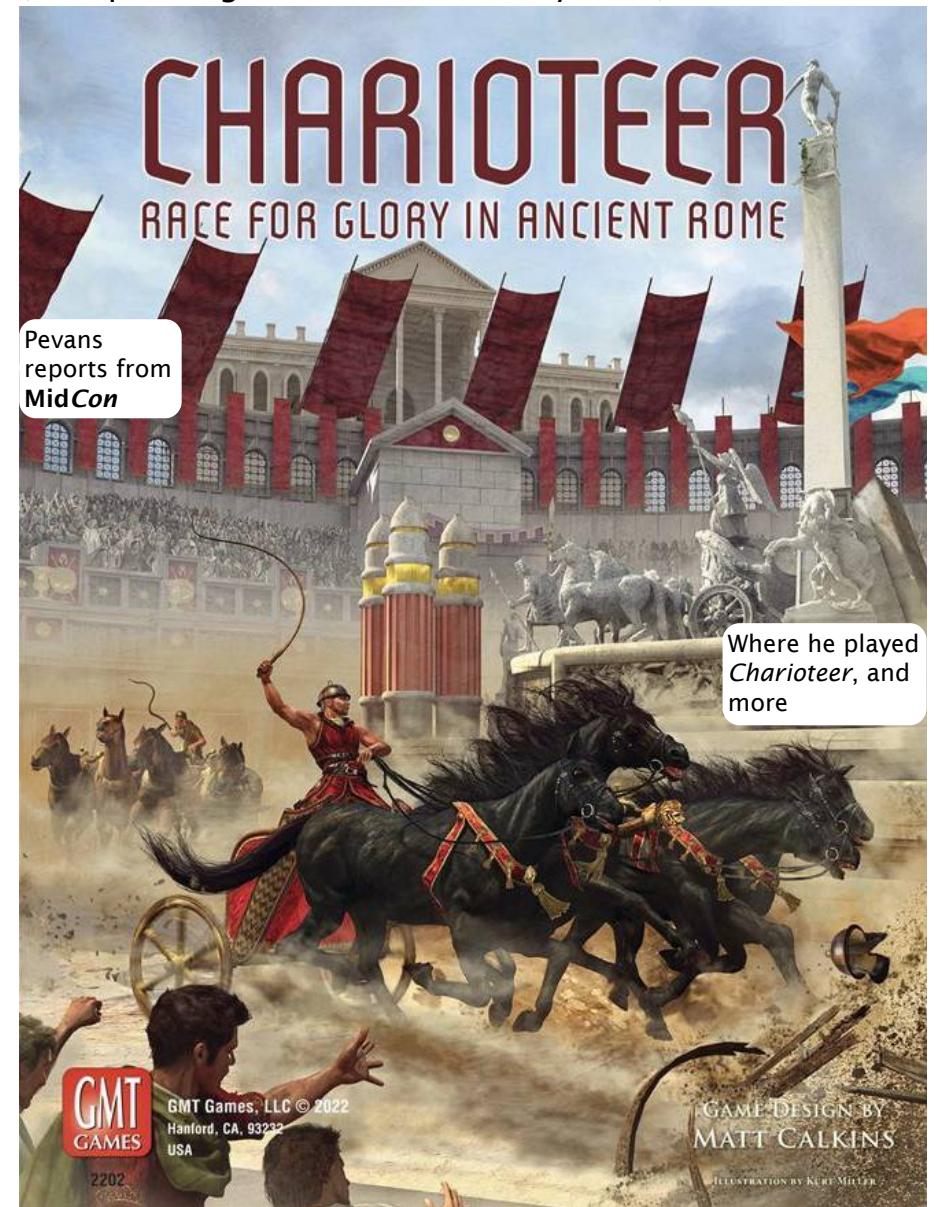
Credits

To Win Just Once issue 260 was written and edited by Pevans with contributions from Mike Dommett. The *LPBS* masthead (page 20) is by Lee Brimicombe-Wood, as are the drawings on pages 22 and 27. The illustration on page 32 is by Nik Luker. Game and book artwork is courtesy of the publisher. Pevans took the photos, except where noted, and played with Photoshop.

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To Win Just Once

(incorporating *Les Petites Bêtes Soyeuses*)



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(LPBS 397: March 1677)

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ID	Name	SL	SPs	Cash	Rank, Regiment/Appointment	MA	Last seen	Club	ECPlayer
TCdS	Thibault Chanson de Skye	13+ 43	Poor		Bdr-General/4 F Brigade Maj.	6	Katy	Both	5 Bill Hay
CS	Con Stantinople	12 33	Comfy	Lt. Colonel QOC/HGds	Brigade Maj.	6	Anne	Hunt	1 Pam Udwoviczenko
EIF	Sir Eroi le Flingue	12 31	OK	Lt. Colonel GDMMD		7	Lucy	Both	4 Daniel Racke
FdB	Francois de Blanchefort	12 23	OK	Colonel CPC		5	Freda	BG	4 Peter Farrell
PPuf	Sir Percival Puffington	12+ 48	Comfy	B.Bdr-General PM/1 F Brigadier		6	Viv	Hunt	5 Tony Taylor
HS	Hugo Serre	11 F	Comfy	Captain KM		6		Hunt	3 Paul Murphy
AH	Arent Hayes	11+ 36	Poor	Lt. Colonel CPC		4		Hunt	3 Mark Cowper
MD	Maurice Danseur	10+ 34	Poor	Major GDMD/Drgn Brigade Maj.		6	Belle	Hunt	5 Andrew Whiteley
CPL	Sir Charles PiedLuminaire	10+ F	Comfy	B.Bdr-General PLLD/2nd Div Adjt		8		F&P	3 Nick Tyrrell
PDT	Pierre De Terre	9 28	OK	Major GDMD/LtGen's Aide (2nd		7	Sal	BG	2 Manoj Nair
AA	Armand Alsace	9 20	Poor	Bdr-General		11		Hunt	4 Sebastian Emde
CdF	Chemin de Fer	9+ 35	Comfy	Major RM/1 F Brigade Maj.		5	Jenny	BG	3 Rod MacDonald
JS	Justin Saad	7 20	Poor	Captain GDMMD/BdGen's Aide (LSD)		3		F&P	3 Gerry Sutcliff
SDS	Steve De Sade	7+ 36	OK	Captain GDMMD/BdGen's Aide (LSD)		5	Thomasina	F&P	5 Jon Dean
BT	Beau Taux	7+ 23	Poor	Captain 53F		4	Angelina	F&P	4 Paul Robbins
CE	Charles Efteevor	7+ 22	OK	Captain 13F		3		F&P	4 Andrew Kendall
SBC	Sebastiane Blanc-Chevaux	6 10	OK	Captain 53F		1		RP	2 Peter Card
VdF	Vaux de Fon	6+ 55	Poor	Captain CPC		1		F&P	4 John Cooke
BC	Barthélémy Chifflet	6+ 26	Comfy	Major PM		5			4 Hunter Charest
DJA	DeeJean Aise	5 F	Comfy	Lt. Colonel PLLD		5			3 Jovan Bogdanovic
MdpP	Maximilien de Piquemaire	5+ 23	Poor	Captain GDMMD		6		RP	2 Max Pieksma
HDF	Henri De Flection	4+ 25	Poor	Captain 13F		6	Violet	RP	4 Peter Jenkins
BdV	Beaumes de Venise	4+ 15	Poor	Private 27M		6		RP	6 Jeremy Tullett
IP	Ignace Pardaillon	3 1	OK	Subaltern GDMMD		5		RP	3 Grégory Meurant

An F under SPs means that the character was at the Front, RIP that he died. Ret that he retired.

+ against SL means it went up this month, - means it went down.

Cash: Poor = <500, OK = 500-1500, Comfy = 1500-5000, Wlthy = 5000-10000, Rich = 10000-25000, Filthy = 25000+

Last seen is the lady the character was last seen with in public.

EC is Endurance Class: 1 = <60, 2 = 60-90, 3 = 91-120, 4 = 121-159, 5 = 160-200, 6 = 201+

The Greasy Pole

ID	Name	SL	SPS	Cash	Rank, Regiment/Appointment	MA	Last seen	Club	ECPlayer
GdB	Count Greg de Bécoeur	24	64	Withy	B.General/1st Army Commandr	1	3 Bette	Flr	5 Anthony Gilbert
BeV	Count Ben 'e' Volence	24	62	Rich	B.General/2nd Army Commandr	1	1 Lotte	Flr	3 Ash Casey
HDS	Count Henri DuShite	24	51	Flthy	Bdr-General	1	16	Flr	4 Dave Marsden
RS	Earl Rick Shaw	23	66	Rich	General/State Min.	3		Flr	6 Charles Burrows
BdLS	Count Bernard de Lur-Saluces	22	61	Flthy	Lt-General/Prov.Mil.Gov	20		Flr	3 Rob Pinkerton
TC	Count Terence Cuckpowder	22	F	Withy	B.Lt-General/Gds Brigadier	7		Flr	6 Mike Dommett
CdP	Earl Camille de Polignac	22	F	Comfy	B.Bdr-General RFG/War Minister	6		Flr	4 James McReynolds
LSD	Marquis Louis Severin Descartes	21	44	Rich	Bdr-General/Min w/o Port	6	Edna	Flr	1 Chris Schotmann
jJT	Count Justin Thyme	20	31	Rich	B.Bdr-General QOC	18	Guinevere	Flr	2 Gerald Udowiczenko
FXC	Earl Frank X Change	20	F	Comfy	B.Bdr-General CG/Justice Min.	11		Flr	4 Nigel Monaghan
ZUT	Marquis Zavier Ulric Turenne	20	F	Withy	B.General	4		Flr	1 Bob Blanchett
ZvT	Baron Zeold von Tu	19	43	Withy	B.Lt-General/1st Div Commandr	8	Morgane	Flr	3 Tim Macaire
JH	Sir Jacques Hatt	18	46	Withy	B.General/3rd Army Commandr	4	Cath	Flr	3 Joel Halpern
LR	Marquis Louis Renault	18	24	Withy	Lt-General/2nd Div Commandr	3	Maggie	Flr	4 Roy Bleasdale
CdN	Baron Claude de Nord	18	F	Rich	B.Bdr-General KM	4		Both	4 Andrew Lander
IdG	Court Jacques de Gain	17-	4	Flthy	Fld Marshal	24		Both	6 Ben Brown
BS	Earl Balzac Slapdash	16	24	Rich	B.Bdr-General DG	21	Thérèse	Both	5 Matthew Wale
NM	Baron Neville Moore	15	F	Rich	Major RFG/Capt.K's Esc	1		Hunt	2 Cameron Wood
CA	Marquis Come Asiouar	15	F	Comfy	Lt.Colonel CG/FMSh!s Aide	9		Both	4 Jacob Andersson
MdG	Martin de Garnache	15	F	Comfy	Lt.Colonel RFG/1st Div Adjutant	3		Both	4 Bill Howell
TTT	Sir Tiny Thierry Toothpick	15+	47	Comfy	Major DG/CPs	6		Flr	1 Jason Fazackarley
FS	Baron Felipe Savant	14	F	Rich	Captain RFG	5		Both	4 Brick Amundsen
BLC	Botte Le Chimiste	13	34	OK	Colonel GDMD/Cav Div Adjutant	2	Eve	Both	4 Tym Norris
HF	Hugo Furst	13	29	OK	B.Bdr-General 13F/2 F Brigadier	5	Ella	Both	2 Graeme Morris
MHD	Sir Marcel Hatch Dupree	13	20	Comfy	Lt.Colonel RM	6		Hunt	4 Graeme Wilson
ID	Sir Ian Dediette	13	17	Comfy	Major QOC	3		Both	2 Nik Luker
HJ	Baron Hugh Jeneaux	13	F	Rich	B.Bdr-General ALC/Chancellor	9		Hunt	3 Bruno Giordan
HWB	Sir Hector William Boone	13	F	Rich	Major RFG	8		Both	5 Paul Wilson

Chatter

First off: a very merry Christmas to all my readers and best wishes for 2026.



Yes, the Solstice is almost upon us and it's feeling much like winter (cold, grey, wet...). So here's a photo of the autumn colours, snapped at the local cricket club (the trees separate the first and second pitches) a couple of months ago.



I feel like I've been pretty busy since the last issue – not least as nephew is back in residence. First there was **MidCon** – report coming up – and then I made it to this year's Saw Doctors concert.

This month's earworm

A medley of Saw Doctors songs, the most prominent being the one they started the show with, World of Good.

The sky at night and the open sea,
Soft refreshing mountain breeze,
Tir na nog and Robin Hood¹,
I wish for you a world of good.

'Tis the season

Which? has reported its annual mince pie taste test and at the top are Waitrose No 1 Brown Butter Mince Pies with Cognac. They scored a respectable 78%. Just behind, at 74%, were the M&S Collection Mince Pies. Of those I've tried, the

¹ Evidently the Saw Doctors don't subscribe to the Fred Wedlock view of Robin Hood as a "thievin', robbin' ratbag".

Sainsbury's mince pies were described as "Fairly average ... and pricier than most" and the Asda ones were "unbearably sweet [and] had a slightly synthetic flavour".

However, our local bakery chain, Wenzel's, has its own mince pies on the shelves. Hooray! But then, oh dear. First off, they are deep, as they were last year, and properly filled. However, this year there is a thick crust of brown sugar on top of the pastry lid. Mince pies don't need extra sugar! Well, not this much. The pastry is fine, but the mincemeat filling has a nasty metallic aftertaste. And, despite being billed as 'home baked', they've clearly been cooked and packaged centrally. I don't think you find ingredients like "Polyglycerol Esters of Fatty Acids" in home kitchens. I think I'll have to try the Waitrose ones.

For the time being, though, my favourites are the Sainsbury's bakery mince pies. With less packaging than the mass-produced boxes, these are ordinary little mince pies. The pastry's decent, the filling is tasty and not too sweet, there's just no alcohol. I'll cope.

Beery Advent



I went for Beer52's (www.beer52.com) advent calendar again this year and then had to resist starting on it as it arrived mid-November. Now that December's under way, I've made a start. And the first thing is a nice Beer52-emblazoned beer glass. Though it's not quite big enough to hold a 330 ml can of beer – and some of them are 440 ml cans. (I've never understood this size of can. Why 440 millilitres, not 450? Which would be close to the size of an American pint – 16 fluid ounces – and would make some sort of sense.)

Anyway, on to the first beer. Oh look, it's a pale yellow, hazy pale ale with a strong aroma of hops and a lively head. The second one: in contrast it's a pale yellow, hazy IPA with a strong aroma of hops and a lively head. Of the first ten cans, six contained pale yellow, hazy and hoppy beers. They were all decent, but nothing special.

The first exception to the general rule was Obsidian Owl (5.5% alcohol-by-volume), a black IPL (?) from Hyllie Bryggeri (www.hylliebryggeri.se) in Malmö, Sweden. It was dark brown in the glass and not too fizzy. There was an interesting mix of roast and hops on the nose and a really rich taste. That's an 8/10 from me.



Femmes Fatales

No	Name	SL	Attr	Lover	Reg	CG	KM	DG	OOC	ALC	CPC	RM	GDMDPM	13F	PLLD	53F	27M	4A	69A	Gscn
66	Morgane Le Fay	24	B	ZvT	Col	CdP	FXC	CdN	BS	JiT	HJ	FdB	N6	BLC	PPuF+	HF+	CPL	N8	N6	N3+
67	Justine Caisse	22	I		LCol	MdG	CA			CS+		AH	N2	PPuF+	HF+	DJA	N3	N6	N3+	N5
65	Therèse Le Vert	21	B/W	BS	Maj 1	HWB	N1	N1		ID		MHD	N6*	PPuF+	HF+	CE	N1	N4	N2*	N5
7	Chris Pacquette	19			Maj 2	NM	N6	N3*		TTT		EIF	N2	PPuF+	HF+	SBC	N1	N5	N4*	N6
61	Bette Noire	19	I/W	GdB	Capt 1	FS	N4	N4				MD+	N6	PPuF+	HF+	N4	N4	N4	N4	N4
64	Edna Bucquette	18	W	LSD	Capt 2	N4	N2					BC	N6	PPuF+	HF+	N5	N5	N5	N5	N5
3	Kathy Pacific	17	B		Capt 3	N2*	HS	N3	N4			BT	N6	PPuF+	HF+	N4	N4	N4	N4	N4
54	Madelaine de Proust	17			Capt 4	N1	N2	N4	N4*			SDS	N2*	PPuF+	HF+	N5	N5	N5	N5	N5
35	Katy Did	16	I	TCdS	Capt 5	N5*	N4*					Mdp	N1	PPuF+	HF+	HDF	N1	N6	N3*	N3*
42	Maggie Nifisent	16	B	LR	Capt 6	VdF														
55	Jacky Tinne	16																		
52	Guinevere d'Arthur	15	B/W	JiT																
10	Frances Forrin	14	B																	
48	Fifi	14	B/W																	
62	Alison Wunderlandt	14																		
11	Laura de Land	13																		
26	Ella Fant	13	B	HF																
27	Lucy Fur	13	B	EIF																
45	Cath de Thousands	13		JH																
8	Lotte Bottle	12	B	BeV																
17	Henrietta Carrotte	12	I/W																	
28	Vera Cruz	12																		
31	Bess Ottede	12	I/W																	
1	Sue Briquet	11	B																	
4	Anne Tique	11	W	CS																
23	Agnes Sorel	11	I/W																	
40	Sheila Kiwi	11																		
63	Carole Singeurs	11																		
20	Emma Roides	10	I																	
38	Pet Ulante	10	W																	
43	Di Lemmere	10	I																	
53	Angelina de Griz	10	B	BT																
6	Viv Ayschus	9		PPuf																
59	May Banquet l'Idée	9																		
19	Jenny Russe	8	W	CdF																
32	Sal Munella	8	W	PDT																
47	Eve Ningalle	8	I/W	BLC																
34	Freda de Ath	7	W	FdB																
39	Thomasina Tancenjin	7	I	SDS																
5	Belle Epoque	6	B/I	MD																
24	Violet Bott	6	I/W	HDF																
25	Lois de Lô	5	B																	

Mistresses in Paris. Attr(ributes): B=Beautiful, I=Influential, W=Wealthy. Lover only if seen together in public this month.

This table shows the ten senior positions in the 17 regiments by rank. Entries are Character abbreviations, N (+MA) for NPCs, blank for vacant. * shows the regiment adjutant; + indicates the reserve position of a character assigned elsewhere due to their appointment or brevet rank.

Regiments

Reg	CG	KM	DG	OOC	ALC	CPC	RM	GDMDPM	13F	PLLD	53F	27M	4A	69A	Gscn
Col															
CdP															
LCol															
Maj 1															
HWB															
Maj 2															
NM															
Capt 1															
FS															
Capt 2															
N4															
Capt 3															
N2*															
Capt 4															
N1															
Capt 5															
Capt 6															

Frontier Regiments

	F1	F2	F3	F4	RNHB	(Assault for Mar-May)
Colonel	N4	N2	N1	N3	N4	
Attached	ZUT					
Also at the Front						
Guards Brigade (Royal Foot Guards, Cardinal's Guard, King's Musketeers)						
Archduke Leopold Cuirassiers						
Princess Louisa Lt Dragoons						

This table shows the Colonels of the Frontier regiments ("N" + MA for NPCs), together with the volunteers for the season.

Battle Results

Guards Brigade: 2	Frontier regiment 1: 5
Royal Foot Guards: 2	Frontier regiment 2: 3
Cardinal's Guard: 3	Frontier regiment 3: 5
King's Musketeers: 2	Frontier regiment 4: 3
Archduke Leopold Cuirassiers: 3	RNHB regiment: 3
Princess Louisa Lt Dragoons: 1	

Other Appointments

King's Escort: Ensign N	Captain NM
Cardinal's Escort: Ensign N	Captain N
Aides: to Crown Prince N	to Field Marshal CA
Provincial Military Governors: BdLS/N/N/N/N	
City Military Governor N	Adjutant-General __
Inspectors-General: of Cavalry N	of Infantry N
Commissioner of Public Safety TTT (until end June 1677)	
Chancellor of the Exchequer HJ (until end August 1677)	
Minister of Justice FXC (until end May 1677)	
Minister of War __	
Minister of State __	

Shows who holds appointments outside military units (except Aides): ID for Characters, "N" for NPC, __ for vacant, "CPS" for extra posts held by the CPS

#IPA (5.9% abv) from To Øl (toolbeer.dk) in Denmark. Yes, it's a pale yellow, hazy IPA, but a cut above the others. There's some citrus hoppiness in the aroma and in the taste. However, it's nicely mellow and I could see this being a session beer – if it wasn't for the alcohol level! Another 8/10.



A complete surprise was Fifty Shades of Ginger (7%), a Gingerbread Porter from Brass Castle Brewery (www.brasscastle.co.uk) in Yorkshire. Dark brown and almost flat in the glass, my nose was tickled by the ginger aroma – reminding me of the ginger beer I drank as a youngster. The taste melded ginger beer, roasted malt and oats/vanilla – more like stout than porter (though the two terms are often used interchangeably). This was gorgeous, though I don't think I could drink much of it. 9/10 for this one.

And there's a lot more to come.

Spiderwatch

Number of large, spindly spiders that have taken up residence by the fibre broadband connection: 1.

Online stats

TWJO 259 saw the light of day on 17th November (aka my brother's birthday) and the PDFs were downloaded 128 times in the rest of the month. The previous issue, 258, attracted 63 downloads, to make 223 in two months. And TWJO 257 was downloaded 32 times for a total of 253 since publication.

Letters

Tim Macaire:

I am not trying to get into the comments yet again, but you might like to know that "Release the Pigs!" is far from a joke in this part of the world: there are so many acorns (poisonous to horses) this year that the pannage season (when pigs are turned out to eat them) has been extended both at the start and at the end, and those who have the right to turn out such an animal have been reminded that it is in fact compulsory...

Jonathan Palfrey has also come across wild pigs and had the same misconception about Bob Marley's song.



We get wild boar around here; someone recently passed me amateur video of three of them interrupting a football game. They wander into towns sometimes. Years ago, a friend of my wife ran into one on the road to Andorra.

I never paid much attention to "No Woman, No Cry", and I always assumed it meant "If you have no woman, you have nothing to cry about". But, checking out the lyrics, I see I was wrong.

Grame Morris is finding the season difficult.

"Rage, rage against the dying of the light!" Literally! Why does it have to get so dark so bloody early every day?

And don't start going on about celestial mechanics and axial tilt, those excuses just don't wash any more... Thank goodness for excessive and gaudy Christmas lights (oh, and Christmas - have a good one by the way).

Pam Udwoczenko agrees on mince pies.

I share your consternation re the mince pies. It seems that the earlier they hit the shelves, the weirder they taste, plus the more chemicals they contain. I'm seriously contemplating making my own.

Go for it, Pam!

MidCon 2025

A weekend playing games in near Derby

I arrived at the **MidCon** venue on Thursday evening, as usual, so that I was there for the official start on Friday morning. I actually drove up this year, which allowed me to join in the grumbles about our terrible journeys with everybody else. (My mistake was avoiding the M1 and getting stuck on the M42 instead...) It also meant I could bring a few games for the Bring 'n' Buy. I actually sold a couple, which is better than I've done before (if you want to see the eclectic mix of secondhand games I still have for sale, my list is on BGG: boardgamegeek.com/geeklist/310151). And I managed not to buy anything.

Thursday evening was spent with old gaming buddies Mark and Marianne. After dinner in the hotel's restaurant (hearty food – and portions!), they introduced me to *Age of War* – a Japanese-themed dice game designed by Reiner Knizia. The aim is to collect cards representing medieval Japanese clans. Players roll dice, trying to match the set of symbols on a card. There are, of course, restrictions on what dice you roll and retain, which is where the game gets tricky. Each card is worth points, but can be stolen by another player. However, getting all the clans in a group makes those cards safe -- and adds bonus points. It took me a while to get the hang of it, but it's an interesting little game (originally published by Hasbro as *Risk Express*, I see). Marianne won handily, by the way.

Justin Thyme versus Claude de Nord.

Terence Cuckpowder versus Tiny Thierry Toothpick.

New Characters

None!

Tables

Army Organisation and 1677's Summer Deployment

First Army (Field Ops)	GdB/N/N5/N ZvT/N/MdG
First Division (Field Ops)	
Guards Brigade (Field Ops) - RFG CG KM	
Dragoon Brigade (Field Ops) - GDMD PLLD	
Cavalry Division (Field Ops)	N1/N/BLC
Horse Guards Brigade (Field Ops) - DG QOC	
Heavy Brigade (Field Ops) - ALC CPC	
Second Army (Siege)	BeV/N/__/N N1/N/N3
Frontier Division (Siege)	
Frontier Regiments (Siege)	
Third Army (Defence)	JH/N/N3/N LR/PDT/CPL
Second Division (Defence)	
3rd Foot Brigade (Defence) - 27M 4A	
4th Foot Brigade (Defence) - 69A Gscn	
RNH Regiment (Defence)	
Third Division (Defence)	N2/N/N3
1st Foot Brigade (Defence) - RM PM	
2nd Foot Brigade (Defence) - 13F 53F	

Organisation and Deployment for the Campaign Season

with Army and Division posts (Commander/Aide/Adjutant/QMGS)

Entries are ID for player characters, "N" (+ MA if needed) for NPC, __ for vacant

Brigade Positions

Guards Brigade	TC/N/__
Horse Guards Brigade	N2/N/CS
Heavy Brigade	N3/N/N3
Dragoon Brigade	N6/N/MD
First Foot Brigade	PPuf/N/CdF
Second Foot Brigade	HF/N/N4
Third Foot Brigade	N3/N/N4
Fourth Foot Brigade	TCdS/__/N3

Current CO/Aide/Brigade Major of each Brigade; entries are ID for player characters, "N" (+ MA if needed) for NPC, __ for vacant

Botte Le Chimiste (with LSD, gains 1 Exp) beat Beau Taux (with ID).

Beau Taux declined to meet François de Blanchemfort as he was under half Endurance.

Beau Taux declined to meet Hugo Serre as he was under half Endurance.

Claude de Nord didn't turn up to fight Frank X Change and lost SPs.

Frank X Change (with LSD & GdB, gains 1 Exp) beat his enemy Hugo Serre.

Grudges to settle next month

Barthélemy Chifflet (Rapier, Seconds PPuf, 1 rests) and Beaumes de Venise (Rapier, adv.) have mutual cause as neither stood down over Lois.

Charles Etfeevor (Rapier, Seconds HDF) has cause with Hugo Furst (Sabre, Seconds HDF, adv.) as he's not Noble but higher SL.

Arent Hayes (Sabre, Seconds FdB) and Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Beaumes de Venise (Rapier, adv.) and Henri De Flection (Rapier, 1 rests) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID) has cause with Botte Le Chimiste (Sabre, Seconds LSD, adv.) as he's not Noble but higher SL.

Balzac Slapdash (Rapier, adv.) and Con Staninople (Sabre, Seconds JS & TCdS, 5 rests) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Balzac Slapdash (Rapier, adv.) and Justin Thyme (Sabre, Seconds RS, 5 rests) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID, adv.) and François de Blanchemfort (Sabre, Seconds AH) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID) and Vaux de Fon (Sabre) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Louis Severin Descartes (Sabre, Seconds JH & ELF, adv.) challenges Tiny Thierry Toothpick (Dagger, Seconds MD).

"adv." shows who (if anyone) has the advantage of higher Expertise: his first duelling sequence need only contain six actions.

Challenges to be voted on

Louis Severin Descartes challenges Tiny Thierry Toothpick for "his ridiculous accusations."

Justin Thyme challenges Claude de Nord for "arresting me and making me miss weapons practice."

Terence Cuckpowder challenges Tiny Thierry Toothpick for "his vendetta against me (I'll tie one hand behind my back.)"

All duels listed above (including any to be voted on) must be fought next month (unless held over). Orders conditional on a challenge being voted cause are acceptable.

Duels held over to June

Charles PiedLuminaire versus Henri De Flection.

Paul and Veronica from my local games group joined me over breakfast on Friday morning, but had their own plans. I joined Mark and Co again, making a sixth for *Charioteer*. As a veteran of Avalon Hill's *Circus Maximus*, I was keen to try this. It is, of course, a race game. Three laps of the oval course and the furthest past the finish line wins.

It's driven by card play, your chariot moving according to the matching symbols (colour and number) on the (2-3) cards you play. Add any bonuses and subtract any damage on your chariot and that's how far you move. Though the colour of the symbols you use may also have an effect – causing or repairing damage or moving faster around the corners. Or you can stop dead to repair your chariot (no, really!). While I can understand this in game terms, it makes no sense thematically that I can see.



Almost the end of the first lap and I've taken the lead. Note the cards in the middle – you can use the current one as part of your set that turn.

took us a while to get back up to speed with the game. While the three of us explored the tundra, Phil built up cards and then won by miles. I should have taken my own advice from our first game.



Rounding the first corner and it's a three-way fight at the front.

There are a few more wrinkles, but that's essentially the game. It's a clever game with part of the challenge being making the most of your cards. A sequence of good cards meant I romped round the first lap in the lead. However, the damage was building up and the cards were not nearly as good for the second and third laps. We finished the race in two groups – the three who'd played before ahead of the rest of us. That's a provisional 7/10 on my highly subjective scale.

After a bite of lunch, I met up with Paul and Veronica again to play *Expeditions* – see my first impressions in TWJO 258. Starting to set up the game gained us a fourth player, Phil Hannay, in no time. It



Expeditions in play – our Mechs have explored everywhere.

Old friend Peter Card joined us for dinner at the local Turkish restaurant. For such a small place, Mickleover village has several decent places to eat. This was clearly a family friendly establishment with some decent food for us grown-ups. Though no booze – drinks were all non-alcoholic and tea was a clear favourite. I'm sure we played something else when we got back to the hotel, but memory has faded and I have neither notes nor photos to jog it.

Saturday morning saw the four us reconvene to play *Firefly* – just the base game (though we did have the Artful Dodger and the Big Damn' Heroes cards). We played the first to \$15,000 wins scenario and I finally abandoned my strategy of having Mal as my captain and the Serenity as my ship. The problem with Mal is that he's moral, which does slightly limit what jobs you take on. Instead



My *Firefly* towards the end – look at all those Warrants I've acquired. Good job they don't affect my final score!

Louis Severin Descartes had no defence witnesses and +12 from favours used. Still nothing from the prosecution, so that's a 23 required!

The Jacques As Memorial Stakes will take place in week 4 of April. This is a horse race sponsored by Prinny in memory of the late Minister of State. The prize pot will be 5,000 Crowns this year. If in doubt, check the Horse Race rules in the LPBS house rules.

Absent friends

Grégory Meurant (IP) continues to be floated.

No orders from Bob Blanchett (ZUT) – 2 turns missed, so sent to a Frontier regiment. (But not for long.)

Notes

The *En Garde!* rules are available to LPBS players at a reduced rate: see any month's Points Arising page at www.pevans.co.uk/LPBS.

Reminders: It is worth sending orders in even if they're late: I may be able to action the orders and should be able to use any press. It also reassures me that you're still there.

Orders (and press) should be emailed to lpbsorders@pevans.co.uk – you'll get an automated reply when the message arrives in my mailbox. Please give your name and your character's name and specify actions in full detail. If you want a query answered before the deadline, please use LPBS@pevans.co.uk instead.

Announcements

All characters may use Influence (and/or a bribe) for or against these actions.

Charles PiedLuminaire applies for Brigadier of Dragoon Brigade

François de Blanchemort asks NPC Major 1 of Crown Prince Cuirassiers to resign

Louis Severin Descartes asks NPC Brigadier of 3rd Foot Brigade to resign

Louis Severin Descartes applies for Brigadier of 3rd Foot Brigade

Tiny Thierry Toothpick asks NPC Brigadier of Horse Guards Brigade to resign

Duels

Results of March's duels

Terence Cuckpowder (gains 1 Exp) beat Zeold von Tu (with CA).

Charles PiedLuminaire (with DJA & LSD, gains 1 Exp) beat Barthélemy Chifflet (with PPuf).

Rick Shaw (with JiT, no Expertise) beat Balzac Slapdash (under half Endurance, losing 8 extra SPs).

Martin de Garnache didn't turn up to fight Claude de Nord and lost SPs.

Steve De Sade (gains 1 Exp) beat Dee Jean Aise.

I visited the Maître's salle, one afternoon
And to my surprise, found both
Cuirassier and Dragoon.
I came expecting Tibault's work to
discuss,
But not with a sabre or a cutlass.
And yet, the Maître d'Armes chose to
start
And give an introduction to the true
art.
He demonstrated different grips and
stance,
And how to use the right angle for both
attack and defence.
Afterwards, the Major, a Dragoon, I
did enquire:
What now do you think of the rapier?
I swear, this thing is not for me
With all these circles and geometry!
When on my horse and in the fray I
ride
With enemies to either side
The only skill I need to know
Is how to cleave a man from head to
toe.
I gave him a jovial slap, saying, Let's
to my club and raise a glass
To all who wield a blade: the rapier,
sabre, or the cutlass.
It matters not for us who Mother
France do serve

Points Arising

Next deadline is 9th January

I'm pleased to say that I've now heard from Bob Blanchett (ZUT) and he's "in rehab [following] a fall". Get well soon, Bob. And ZUT will be floated as needed.

Whether our blade is straight or comes
with a curve.
Later, beholding by the wine maybe,
the Major stood up to declare
It is clear to see my hefty sabre is
superior to any pointy, flimsy rapier.
The Major's pronouncements left me a
little bemused
Unless a rapier with a practice fencing
foil, he has confused.
My rapier is a most solid, balanced
blade, and comes with an edge.
When she's sharp, it takes no effort to
cut through limb or even hedge.
† LR

Greg de Bécqueur's testimony in
defence of LSD:
If treason be the reason we stand in
court today,
The time is come for rhymers, with
hand on heart, to say:
There's poetry in justice, and all of us
can see
This man is just not guilty, so let him
now walk free.

And in defence of JiT:
He didn't do it; he wasn't there.
He didn't want it; he wouldn't dare.

Here are some mechanical details from the trials. Justin Thyme had three witnesses in his defence and +4 from influence. With nothing from the prosecution side, this made the die roll required for conviction 18. Not going to happen on 2d6.



Our *Firefly* game – we’re staying away from the Reavers (red) and the Alliance cruiser (grey), but Veronica (yellow) is dealing with Niska.

I went with Corbin (always need a mechanic) and tried the Artful Dodger as my ship (bigger engine, more crew, less cargo space).

Off we went, into the black, looking for profitable jobs. Not to mention siccing the Reavers onto each other... I found some synergy between my jobs -- I even took on one from Niska -- and the Artful Dodger extra movement came in handy. As usual, Veronica started Misbehavin' at an early stage. This time she was not as lucky as she has been with the cards she drew and killed off most of her crew!

I thought I was racking up a decent profit, but the game went to Paul, who was first to hit the 15k. Taking incomplete jobs into account, Veronica ended up negative, while Peter did okay (in a game he'd not played much).

After lunch, Peter and I set up *Dune: Imperium – Uprising* (see my review in TWJO 256 for an introduction) with the *Bloodlines* expansion and quickly had a full complement of players. We were joined by new-to-MidCon couple Tom and Kathy, who'd played the game before, but not with this expansion.

Another familiar game that I do enjoy playing. Peter took his namesake, Piter De Vries as his leader, and had fun with his own deck of Intrigue cards. I went for the Emperor, Tom for Lady Fenring and Kathy took smuggler Esmar Tuek. As often happens, my early lead (I concentrate on increasing my influence with the Factions early on – entertaining when you're the Emperor cosying up to the Fremen) petered



The end of *Dune: Imperium – Uprising* and Tom (blue) hits the winning 10 points with second place in the last battle.

“The little orange buggers are everywhere. I had to upend the one following me into a midden before I arrived,” sighed Arent Hayes, wiping his boots clean with a stick.

“Yes, the DOMINION is getting bolder. They control the King’s Musketeers, the CPS and are making headway in the Royal Foot Guards. This month they are targeting loyal Frenchmen like Thyme and Severin Descartes. Even ladies of the court are at risk. I think “Tiny” may have overstretched himself with that one; my sources tell me that he is a small man in the bedroom as well as in stature,” mused Sammy Phipps. “How did you get on at the front?”

“It was as you expected. We followed “Tiny” to that secret meeting in Utrecht with his Spanish handlers. They are planning something big in the Summer campaign. My men are on the case,” said Hayes.

“Cuckpowder?”

“He seems to have calmed down with the medication – I don’t think he can be viewed as a threat any more.”

“Chanson de Skye?”

“I don’t know. I have no idea why he went for me unless he was instructed to do so. He seems to be trying to curry favour with the others by hosting parties – I originally suspected he was trying to get some more “male friends”. He was very “limp-wristed” in our duel. Eight others supported his trumped-up allegation, so maybe DOMINION is making headway into recruiting others to its cause.”

“Well, it looks like the game is well and truly afoot,” Sammy concluded. “Stay frosty and keep up the good work, Arent, old friend.”

Du Nord,
Thank you so much for answering your own question with your treacherous deeds.

† Marquis Louis Severin Descartes

Poetry Corner

(All signed poetry submissions gain their author at least 1 SP)

A small man with small hands and a fragile ego,
He likes orange things that go where he goes,
Supported by his questionable friends
Who help him towards his questionable ends,
Doing things that are very shady,
Often abusing a vulnerable young lady,
We can thank God it's not too late,
To get a dependable Minister of State

A Prayer for France

Where there is poison, let us bring purity;
Where there is doubt, let us bring surety;
Where there is devilry, let us be human;
Where there is discord, let us bring union;
Where there is darkness, let us bring light;
Where there is wrong, let us bring right;
Where there is despair, let us bring hope;
Where there's a loose cannon, let us bring rope.

† FXC

Social

Officers of the Third Army are requested to join me at my club during week 2 to discuss our strategies for the coming summer campaign. Other officers and gentlemen who wish to contribute to the discussion are welcome to attend.

During the discussion Miss Nifisent will entertain their ladies; all refreshments at my expense.

Unfortunately, this invitation does not include members of the Archduke Leopold Cuirassiers due to their differences with my aide, Captain Pierre De Terre.

† Marquis Louis Renault

** Easter Egg Hunt – April Week 3 **
Join me in Le Jardin de Tuileries in April Week 3 for an Easter Egg Hunt. Open to social level 7 and above. Bring your ladies!

There will be a prize for the most eggs found and another for the lady with the most attractive Easter Bonnet.

† Con Stantinople

Jacques As Memorial Stakes

His Highness the Dauphin is pleased to sponsor the sixth annual horse race in memory of the late Minister Jacques As. This takes place in week 4 of April and the Crown Prince is pleased to offer a prize fund of 5,000 crowns. **Those taking part in the race** are welcome to Toady to His Highness afterwards with their ladies.

Personal

Anyone who is capable of getting themselves made Commissioner of Public Safety should on no account be allowed to do the job for a second term.

To Baron Hugh Jenneaux,
Sir, please allow me to salute you as a man of courage and honour. Last month, you faced 3 members of my regiment, the Grand Duke Max's Dragoons, on the Field of Honour. You lost all three duels, of course, but I must commend you for being willing to face us all. You show yourself worthy of a better regiment than Archduke Leopold's Cassowaries. I hope you will permit me to buy you a drink at some point.

Your servant,
† Major Maurice Danseur of Grand Duke Max's Dragoons

Monsieur Dee Jean Aise,
My apologies for our recent petite dispute over the fair Thomasina. No offence meant – all is fair in love and war, as they say.

Yours,
† SdS

Cher Jacques Hatt, mon ami,
Your Third Army needs capable officers, and it is my pleasure to serve. Let us serve together again as we did in the old days in the GDMD.
While I am a man of horses, commanding infantry will be a good new experience for me.

For the honour of France,
† Marquis Louis Severin Descartes



Power Grid: Outpost as purple triggers the beginning of phase 2 when we can start building into each other's networks. You can see a shelter (yellow) card and a technology (blue) in the auction row.

out mid-game. Particularly as, after my early success, the others started winning the end-of-round battles. And then some fool blew up the Shield Wall!

A strong showing by Tom in the latter stages of the game saw him with a comfortable win. And we finished just in time for dinner. Taking Kathy and Tom with us, we joined Paul and Veronica at the Binary Bar. This has been a great hit for the last two years, but they've now changed the menu to serve only tapas dishes. This gave us plenty of choice, but wasn't the food we expected. (And the espresso martini wasn't as good either.) Still, we had a decent meal (and drinks).

By the time we got back to the hotel, it was too late to join the quiz – Giles was running it this year and had an early start at 8:30! Instead, six of us settled in to play *Power Grid: Outpost*. Paul, Veronica and I have played this once, but it was new to the others. And then we discovered Kathy and Tom weren't familiar with *Power Grid*! Some teaching required.

The aim is to supply electricity to the outposts established on a new planet – hence the geography is abstract, rather than earth-bound. You buy power plant cards in an auction and expand your network of connected outposts. The number of outposts you can supply is the lower of what your power plants produce and the number in your network. So far, so *Power Grid*. Here, though, you need workers for your power plants rather than fuel. And workers are seasonal – they go home at the end of each round. However, you can also buy shelters in the auction and these will accommodate workers between rounds. You can buy Technology cards, too, and

these provide bonuses – such as cheaper workers or robots instead of workers (that's definitely something from the original *Outpost* game).

The auction starts each round, then players expand their network and hire workers. As well as placing the wooden houses that show you're supplying power to that outpost, you can place power plant and shelter pieces. You take these from your personal board, freeing up a space where you can place a power plant or shelter card, respectively. And your plants and shelters must be deployed like this before you can use them – though you can swap other cards you hold in and out as needed (there's no limit on how many you can hold).

The number of outposts you power gives you income at the end of the round. The game end is triggered when somebody (hi, Veronica) connects the nth outpost (depending on the number of players) to their network. And, at the end of the round, it's whoever can power the most outposts that wins. Yep, Veronica again!

If you've played *Power Grid*, you'll recognise most of that description. And, just like the original game, you need to get the timing right so that you have what you need to power the most outposts at the point that the game ends. With six players, and half of them new to the game, this did take us three hours to play (including teaching time). However, everybody enjoyed it and surely a 1 am bedtime is normal at a convention!



Battle is joined at Stalingrad, Russians on the right, Germans to the left.

On Sunday morning I passed on Mark's *Epic Commands & Colors: Napoleonics* game this year (I was Wellington at Waterloo last year) to play an *Overlord Memoir '44* game. This is the same idea as the Epic game, only faster-moving/less subtle and not taking as long. The format is a double-sized board and a team of four players on each side – a commander in chief giving the orders (cards) to their three field generals, each in charge of a section of the battlefield. We played the Battle of Stalingrad on a pre-printed map, though with a few tweaks (snipers are usually a single figure, but we had an elite sniper – referred to as "Jude Law" throughout).

I drew the German side and took the centre position. CinC Richard gave me an "Assault" card to start with and I took this as a hint, launching a strong

Press

Announcements

I despair of finding any stout fellows willing to take on the Tangerines in public. Will no one rid me of this turbulent pest?

A change of tack: offer a bounty of 3,000 Cr should the chief midget meet with an unfortunate accident whilst swimming in the Seine, carrying rocks on his person labelled "Morgane" and "Lois".

Brave soldiers of France, let us to the enemies of his bountiful Majesty King Pevans take our swords. I will lead the Guards Brigade. Follow me!

† Cuckpowder

Official Arrest Warrant-in-Waiting, in lieu of a formalised full Warrant until His Majesty, King Pevans, has bestowed full office and powers upon His current Commissioner of Public Safety, Major Tiny Thierry Toothpick, that allow him to arrest AND sentence.

You are, in the interim, urged to hand yourself in to the Public Safety Ministry, C/o The Bastille, where you will be held pending trial, all charges to be made clear in good time. Voluntary self-surrender to this warrant will be looked upon favourably and may help to reduce future charge(s) and sentence, although no guarantee can be given dependent upon the level of your adjudged crime(s).

† His Majesty's Commissioner of Public Safety
Major Tiny Thierry Toothpick

** Join the QOC **

Gentleman of Paris, if you are new to the city or are looking for a new Regiment, then you can do no better than join the Queen's Own Carabiniers.

Please contact me for more details, and some financial help is available.

† Count Thyme

To the members of the 2nd Foot Brigade

I'm bored with Paris. It's no fun any more. It's full of lawyers and devoid of parties!

What's more, I'm fed up with not having a title to my name.

Be warned that I may just pack the whole bally lot of us to the front early this year just for a bit of action.

Speak up if that's a problem (though be warned, I am VERY bored).

† Hugo Furst CO 2nd Foot Brig
PS anybody fancy being an Aide or Brigade Major?

B. Gen le Marquis Camille de Polignac requires an aide. Volunteers are requested to send their applications so that the chosen candidate can be hired by April.

** Aide Required **

I am looking for a competent aide. Please contact me with your credentials

† (Brevet) Bdr-General Count Thyme

If This is Rock and Roll, I Want my Old Job Back

And so to the Low Countries, where the French forces begin an offensive against Spanish holdings. Led by Brigadier Terence Cuckpowder, the whole Guards Brigade is there to assault fortifications around Valenciennes. While not hugely successful, the Brigade does manage plenty of looting and Terence takes over two thousand crowns' worth for his share. His active approach to command – flitting between the regiments and advising their commanders on their best tactics – earn him two Mentions in Despatches ("He's everywhere." "Yes, and full of it.").

The Royal Foot Guards do well, with new Earl Camille de Polignac in command. There are two Mentions for him as well, but he gets less than two thousand crowns' worth of booty. Lieutenant-Colonel Martin de Garnache picks up slightly less loot, but is also Mentioned. No MiD for Major Hector William Boone, but his share of the loot goes over the two thousand mark. There's the same amount for Captain Neville Moore, but he has to spend some of it on the two horses he needs to go with his promotion to Major. Felipe Savant remains a Captain and can only manage just over fifteen hundred crowns' worth of loot.

The Cardinal's Guard aren't quite as successful as the Foot Guards, but there's still loot to be had. A close encounter with a Spanish sword brings Colonel Frank X Change promotion to (brevet) Brigadier-General, a MiD ("that was close") and the best part of fifteen hundred crowns in plunder. An Earldom comes his way as well. Lt-Colonel Come Asioura dodges a musketball, hits fifteen hundred crowns with his booty and also finds himself Mentioned ("It just parted his hair!").

Victory for the King's Musketeers sees Colonel Claude de Nord brevetted to Bdr-General. There's a Mention in Despatches ("Great success!") and over two and a half thousand crowns' worth of loot into the bargain. Captain Hugo Serre does even better, plundering his way to almost three thousand crowns revenue. It's worth a minor Mention ("That's a lot of booty!").



The cavalry regiments chase down any escaping enemy soldiers, something Princess Louisa's Light Dragoons do better than Archduke Leopold's Cuirassiers. ALC Colonel Hugh Jeneaux is another who's brevetted to Bdr-Gen. Loot comes his way – to the tune of 1,600 crowns – as does a MiD.

PLLDR commander Charles

PiedLuminaire is already a Bdr-Gen, but he is Mentioned and collects the round sum of fifteen hundred crowns in loot. The MiD brings a Knighthood. Lt-Col Dee Jean Aise would have been Knighted, too, had he been higher in society. Still, a pat on the back is not to be sniffed at. Over a thousand crowns' worth of booty is also a decent reward. ♦



The centre of the battle at the end with German tanks on the hills and a lone German figure in the Red October Factory near the top.

attack on the Russians in front of me. Cue a right old ding-dong between me and Alan, my opposite number. My initial success was beaten back by his tanks. I attacked again, while JP on my right attacked the Russians holding the railway station. When I lost all my armour, JP scooted a unit across from his command, giving me some flexibility to go after Alan again.

Eventually, I cleared a big hole in the Russian lines and turned left as the two sides finally engaged seriously on that flank (Kevin, leading that section, was the one suffering when JP and I got cards from Richard). JP's attack on the railway station ran out of troops as the Russians defended doggedly and the action on that flank moved further right. With the Germans holding Mamaev Kurgan in the centre (there are loads of victory medals for geographical objectives in this scenario), Kevin and I forced the Russians out of the Red October Factory (a major objective) for a German victory 20 medals to 15.

I do enjoy the Overlord/Epic games, in part for being in a team and this one was great fun.

Paul and Veronica having made their goodbyes (they had nearby relatives to visit), I joined some more old friends for an introduction to *Rainbow*. This is an entertaining little card game that I'm sure is aimed at children (it has a flying unicorn on the cover as well as the rainbow!). And, while it seems simple, there is a bit of thinking needed.



The start of the Railway Age and I've already built some railways. There's beer (white barrels) and coal (black cubes) on the board and my own board on the right shows where I've got rid of some low level industries.

Each trick involves playing a run or set from your hand (or a single card). When everybody's played, these are ranked and players take scoring cards from the centre. The cards played then become the scoring cards for the next hand. The game ends when at least two people are out of cards and most points wins. It's light fun and we enjoyed it so much we played a second game!

I finished off my **MidCon** with something much heavier: *Brass: Birmingham*. Now I've played a lot of the original edition of *Brass* (*Brass:Lancashire* in its second incarnation), but the Birmingham game only once. It adds pottery kilns and breweries to the game, along with the need to use beer when you do some actions (those workers are thirsty!). My feeling was that these are just unnecessary complications to an already complex game.

Still, I was happy to give the game another go – and I haven’t had the chance to play *Brass* for quite a while (six years, according to my record on BGG). It took me a while to get into the swing of things again, but I did remember to take massive loans and develop low-level industries away. I started the Railway Age (the second half of the game) by splashing out on railway building, as I would do in Lancashire, but then stalled as I tried to build more industries and cash in on shipping stuff.

At the end of the game, I was well off the pace, which surprised the other players as much as me. There just weren't enough points in my impressive network. Clearly *Brass: Birmingham* needs different strategies from the original. I may have to play it again to get a better handle on it.

After which, it was just a matter of saying goodbye to those that were left and chancing my arm on the motorways to get home. I stuck to the M1 this time and wasn't too badly delayed. Expect next year's **MidCon** (the 47th) early in November 2026 and keep an eye on the website for details: www.midcon.org.uk

Who was where - round and about

Where	Who was where - round and about			
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	
Practising	FdB - Sabre JS - Rapier BS - Rapier JdG - Rapier BdLS - Foil LR - Rapier	SBC - Rapier HDS - Cutlass JdG - Rapier BeV - Sabre GdB - Rapier ID - Sabre SDS - Sabre BdLS - Foil	FdB - Sabre CE - Rapier BS - Rapier AH - Sabre HDS - Cutlass BLC - Sabre JdG - Rapier Mdp - Sabre LSD - Sabre BeV - Sabre GdB - Rapier ID - Sabre MD - Sabre BdLS - Foil	FdB - Sabre BS - Rapier JIT - Sabre ZVT - Rapier MHD - Cutlass SBC - Rapier BT - Rapier AH - Sabre HDS - Cutlass BLC - Sabre JdG - Rapier BC - Rapier EIF - Sabre LSD - Sabre GdB - Rapier CS - Sabre ID - Sabre MD - Sabre BdLS - Foil LR - Rapier
Regimental Duties	BdV	BdV IP	TTT	
Up to something...	TTT	TTT	TTT	
Shows everybody else: Weapon = Weapon practised with; For those doing nothing: -club = not a member of a club; -Cash = insufficient funds; -SL = insufficient Social Level; ??? = Toadying to unknown host.				

Who was where – with the ladies				
Where	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Angelina	BT succeeds			
Di	SBC at home			
Guinevere	Out			
Henrietta				
Kathy	HDS fails			
Lois's doorstep	BdV BC			
Therese	RS fails	Out	RS fails	
Violet	HDF fails		HDF succeeds ex-CPL	Out
Viv	Out	Out	Out	Out
	AA fails			

Shows who was with a mistress or on a doorstep: Out = Mistress with current lover; I = Indiscreet (+ mistress name); ex-ID = Pinched from former lover; st.down = stood down to rivals.

Games Events

It looks like Stabcon is back: 2nd-4th January 2026 at the Guildhall in Stockport. This was always fun when I attended, so I have every expectation it will still be. It's open gaming and mostly board games, but with some CCGs, RPGs, wargames and others. I can't find a website, but there are references on other sites.

Aaroncon (9th-11th January 2026 at Lancaster University) is "a boardgame convention organised by a guy called Aaron". It appears to be an open gaming event backed by a game library. Plus a bring 'n' buy. Details at aaroncon.projectboo.co.uk

Swiggers: games club that meets on Wednesday evenings (co-ordinated on WhatsApp) upstairs at The Shipwright's Arms, 88 Tooley Street, London SE1 2TF (next to London Bridge station) – though without me these days. For more info, see www.pevans.co.uk/Swiggers or the BGG Guild at boardgamegeek.com/guild/1672

UK Games Expo: 29th-31st May 2026 at the NEC. This is a public event that showcases games of all sorts with a huge trade hall plus demonstration and participation games and guests. For gamers there are lots of tournaments and open gaming space. For details see www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk

Spiel: the board games event of the year. 22nd-25th October 2026, at the Messe (Exhibition Centre) in Essen. Contact Merz Verlag, Huyssenallee 105, 45128 Essen, Germany or see www.spiel-essen.de/en

MidCon: early November 2026 at the Derby Mickleover Hotel in Mickleover (two miles from Derby city centre). **MidCon** is a friendly board games convention, now in a comfortable modern hotel. It's largely open gaming, but the new website allows games to be scheduled in advance – useful if you want lots of players for something. There's also a Bring 'n' Buy and a quiz on Saturday night. See midcon.org.uk

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Fictionary Dictionary

I was re-watching the first season of *The Sandman* TV show when Morpheus suddenly used the word 'vavasor' (referring to Fiddler's Green in episode 7). Well, blow me down! I didn't expect to meet a word I'd used in this game in real life.

Round 9 scores

Epicarp is the outermost layer of the skin (pericarp) of fruit such as peaches and grapes.

While a rostellum is a term in biology for a beak-like shape, like the outgrowth from the stigma of an orchid.

Colin Bruce extends his lead by a couple of points, while a stonking score of 7 for his definition of Rostellum (number 7 in the list) takes Graeme Morris into third place.

Pam Udwoczenko does a "Dommett" and tries to vote for her own definition of Epicarp!

The scores		
Player	This round	Total
Colin Bruce	2	34
Mark Cowper	0	15
Mike Dommett	0	14
Anthony Gilbert	1	20
William Hay	0	17
Andrew Kendall	3	17
Andrew Larder	0	8
Nik Luker	0	29
Tim Macaire	2	17
Nigel Monaghan	0	1
Graeme Morris	7	25
Jonathan Palfrey	4	20
Mike Pollard	2	17
Pam Udwoczenko	4	12
Bruce Whitehill	0	3
Andrew Whiteley	0	2

Round 10 definitions

Here are the proposed definitions for the next two words. All you have to do (whether or not you submitted anything) is let me know your favourite definition for each word.

Hemipode

1 6" (half a foot)

2 An animal that can be sliced in two and both halves regrow into a separate creature.

3 Archaic term for a measurement of exactly six inches.

4 A cephalopod mollusc similar to the octopus, but having only four tentacles.

The biggest event, Louis Renault's reception, draws the biggest crowd. Which leads, of course, to fallings-out. The new member of the 53rd Fusiliers, Beau Taux, discovers his regiment's traditional enemies in the persons of Arent Hayes, François de Blanchemort and Vaux de Fon – all Crown Prince Cuirassiers, of course. This is clearly not enough confrontation for him as he also picks a fight with Maximilien de Piquemaire, a guest of Zeold von Tu, but regarded as riff-raff by Beau. Maurice Danseur is vocal in his appreciation of "Tiny" Thierry Toothpick's absence (and "the tasteless tangerines").

Zeold von Tu's gathering may be small in contrast, but is deeply involved in tactical discussions for the forthcoming summer campaign. First Division commander Zeold is particularly concerned about "how to keep Bordeaux in good condition when being carried in a charge."

Dragoon Guard Balzac Slapdash exchanges words with Con Stantinople and Justin Thyme of the Queen's Own Cuirassiers. Finally, enemies Beaumes de Venise and Henri De Flection spot each other at the party and issue challenges.

Parties in the later weeks are in the lesser clubs. Con Stantinople serves "plenty of fruit punch" at his, which is not quite what his guests were expecting.

Alone in Hunter's one week (okay, Viv is there as well), Percival Puffington lays some bets. At 200 crowns a time, he keeps going even after losing four in a row. He wins his fifth wager and loses the sixth, but almost redeems the week by winning three on the trot. That's a loss of crowns, but kudos from the gamblers in Paris.

Steve De Sade is altogether more anxious in his betting. Placing 20-crown wagers at the Frog & Peach, he gives up after losing twice.

In the courting stakes, Chemin de Fer and Henri De Flection show the value of persisting with their intended – though his eventual success does bring him a duel.

There's another duel provoked when Barthélémy Chifflet and Beaumes de Venise (who's "spoiling the gal" with his gifts – which turn out to be much the same as Barthélémy's) turn up on the same doorstep.

Henri DuShite can't understand why his gifts of "of jewellery and dresses," which "match her beauty" are not accepted...

And Sébastiane Blanc-Chevaux is ready to challenge anyone who shows while he's visiting his mistress.

Now, what is our Commissioner of Public Safety up to? He and his tangerine entourage skulk around Paris for most of the month, apparently looking for something. And then they all retire to the Bastille at the end of March. The end of the month is also when particularly nasty fire breaks out, completely demolishing a rather substantial building. This will be bad news for Guards Brigadier Terence Cuckpowder – that's where he lives. Or lived, anyway.

Who was where – in the bawdyhouses

Where	Who was where – in (or outside) the other clubs			
Where	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Bawdy houses	MHD + FC	CE + FC	VdF + FC: Mug 0	JS + FC: Mug 0
Bothwell's	HF + Ella*	HF + Ella*	HF + Ella*	HF + Ella*
Frog & Peach	TCdS + Katy	TCdS + Katy	TCdS + Katy	TCdS + Katy
Red Phillips	. CE	. CE	. CE	. CE
	. PPuf + Viv	. PPuf + Viv	. PPuf + Viv	. PPuf + Viv
	. PDT + Sal	. PDT + Sal	. PDT + Sal	. PDT + Sal
	. CdF	. CdF	. AA	. AA
	. MD + Belle	. MD + Belle	. SDS + Thomasina	. SDS + Thomasina
	CS + Anne	PPuff(G) + Viv	CS + Anne	AA
Blue Gables	PDT + Sal	. JS	. JIT + Guinevere	. JIT + Guinevere
	MdP	. MHD	. MHD	. MHD
		BT + Angelina	SDS(G) + Thomasina	SDS(G) + Thomasina
		HDF + Violet	HDF + Violet	HDF + Violet
* playing "the Yawn game – every time somebody yawns –everybody has to down a cognac. " ** playing "a friendly game of Italian Tarot"				
Shows who was in or outside a club: . = Toadying to character above; (G) = Gambled; CP = Crown Prince; (id) = expected host; bold = first visit to new club; <u>underline</u> = first time mistress seen in public with this beau.				

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5 An early version of an iPod that never caught on due to its large semi-circular design that was easy to drop.

6 The hemipode is the brief moment of quiet between a 'tick' and its subsequent 'tock'. Although neither has any actual substance it differs fundamentally from the aphertine (i.e. the quiet between a 'tock' and a 'tick') in a way that is obvious to the listener but which, in objective terms, is essentially indefinable.

7 An insect with feet on only one side of its body.

8 Nickname (amongst collectors) for the short-lived budget range of teacups and saucers produced by Spode of Stoke-on-Trent in the Victorian era, to tap into the urban working class market. Each cup and saucer were produced in the usual way, but then sliced vertically in a special machine to produce two half-examples, which could be sold for half the price.

9 One of the many weapons that can be fitted to Lady Penelope's Rolls-Royce, as immortalised by Parker: "Shall I get out the 'emipode, milady?"

10 One who sews with his/her feet

11 A person with a passion for exact shares

12 A Scotsman who is somewhat
hesitant about first-footing

Zizith

1 An ancient musical instrument, predecessor of the zither.

2 The extinct alien race which invented the Pan-Galactic Gargle-Blaster. The exact moment of extinction is disputed among scholars and historians, but is widely suspected to be moments after drinking their 3rd PGGB (about twenty past five on Tuesday afternoon).

3 The last sound an electrician hears when accidentally cutting through the 'wrong' wire.

4 Lilith's waspish half-sister.

5 Perfection of Ziz philosophy.

6 The player of the Persian three-stringed bass.

7 The sound of a Zulu throwing spear as it heads toward you, much feared by British Redcoats during the 1879 Zulu War.

8 The time of day when the wasp nuisance is at its peak.

9 A very cheap form of semi-precious stone.

10 The zenith of sleep.

11 The zenith of unconsciousness.

12 The Zizith Test is a Hebrew tongue-twister, commonly used to test for drunkenness in Israel before the introduction of the breathalyser.

What's this all about?

This game is open to all readers and I guess most of you will have come across some variation of it. Each issue I will put up a couple of obscure (or not) words. Anybody who wants to participate writes in with a fictional definition for each word. (For example: "Geranium: a ceremonial dagger used by Aztec priests for human sacrifice.") I publish the definitions, anonymously.

All readers (not just those who contributed) vote for their favourite/most plausible/most amusing definitions (any vote for yourself will be ignored). Players score points for the number of people who choose their definition. (In other versions of the game, the definitions include the correct one and players get points for spotting it. However, the internet makes this too easy, so I've left this bit out.)

We'll run this for 10 rounds. The winner will be the player with the most points.

**Send your votes and definitions to Pevans at
180 Aylsham Drive, UXBRIDGE UB10 8UF or
to TWJO@pevans.co.uk by 9th January 2026**

Brat's Hill (*Railway Rivals* game 19 – RR2559LD)

Turn 6

Welsh Interstate Train Service built into the north, paying for parallel construction by swapping costs with Seaside Railways coming the other way. Locomotive Observation Steam Train Company slowly continued its builds south, crossing more mountains. Cart and Barrow connected into west coast towns and built towards the south elsewhere. Races start this turn.

WELSH INTERSTATE TRAIN SERVICE (WITS), Mark Cowper – Red

Starts: Whitehaven

Builds:

- a)(J4) – Silloth;
- (J3) – Aspatria – L4
- b)(L4) – N3 – Wigton; (2 to SR)
- (N3) – A43
- c)(A43) – A42 – B41 – Port Carlisle;
- (Harrington) – D9 – Distington;
- (Whitehaven) – B11

Points: $70 - 2 + 5 = 73$

SEASIDE RAILWAYS (SR), Rob

Pinkerton – Blue

Starts: Carlisle

Builds:

- a)(C46) – B45 – Wigton – A44 – N4;
- b)(N4) – M5 – L4 – Aspatria; (5 to WITS)
- (Wigton) – C44 – C43;
- c)(C43) – Port Carlisle;
- (M33) – N32 – A73 – B72 – C73 – D72

Points: $89 + 2 + 8 - 5 = 94$

Rick Shaw rocking in the Dail

The big news in Government circles is the appointment of a new Minister of State. Camille de Polignac's application is quickly dismissed as he simply does not meet the minimum requirements for the job. Rick Shaw, on the other hand, is not only qualified, but has the backing of notable Parisians such as Greg de Bécqueur and Louis Severin Descartes. Already a Minister, but without a portfolio, His Majesty is pleased to hand Rick the State ministry. While he might not be a suitable Minister of State, Camille is suited to the position of Minister of War. Calling in a couple of favours, he is able to persuade the King to entrust him with this portfolio. And elevate him to an Earldom.

In military circles, Hugo Serre is keen to advance to the rank of Major in the King's Musketeers. First, though, he must persuade the incumbent to quit. He uses his influence in an effort to do this, only to find that "Tiny" Thierry Toothpick has put his weight behind the current Major, who stays in place.

Wishing to start a military career, new arrival Beaumes de Venise applies to join the 53rd Fusiliers. Much to his surprise, he is turned down. However, the 27th Musketeers are very pleased to sign him up. He remains a Private.

In contrast, another fresh face, Henri De Flection, is immediately recruited to the 13th Fusiliers by Hugo Furst. He buys himself a Captaincy.

The Grand Duke Max's Dragoons is the target of the third to arrive in Paris, Maximilien de Piquemaire. Botte Le Chimiste is happy to accept him and his nice new loans let him become a Captain.

Finally, as already seen at the trial, "Tiny" Thierry Toothpick has quit the Royal Foot Guards to join the Dragoon Guards, courtesy of CO Balzac Slapdash. He quickly becomes a Major in his new regiment.

Where's the party?

There are plenty of parties going on this month – with quite some competition in the Fleur. Louis Severin Descartes is one of the first to welcome people and guest Steve De Sade is particularly boisterous in leading toasts to his host's freedom. Terence CuckpowderdS's impromptu event in his new club, Bothwell's, gathers a decent number of guests and is the first where there is some contretemps.

Charles Etfeevor spots the Hugo Furst is also in the club and is affronted to find this non-noble there. A challenge is issued. And repeated later in the month when they encounter each other again.



Who was where – in (or outside) the Fleur				
Where	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Fleur de Lys	JiT + Guinevere	ZvT + Morgane	ZvT + Morgane	BeV + Lotte
	ZvT + Morgane	. BLC + Eve	. LR + Maggie	. VdF
	LSD + Edna	. Mdp		
	. BLC + Eve	. LR + Maggie		
	. Elf	. FdB + Freda		
	. SDS + Thomasina	. JS		
	BeV + Lotte	. BdV		
	. VdF	. BS + Thérèse		
	GdB + Bette	. TCdS + Katy		
	JH + Cath	. JiT + Guinevere		
	. VdF			
	. MHD			
	. BT			
	. AH			
	. HDF			
	. BC			
	. Elf			
	. RS			
	. CdF + Jenny			
	. LSD + Edna			
	. CS + Anne			
	. MD + Belle			
Outside Fleur de Lys	JH (GdB)	JH (GdB)	JH (GdB)	JH (GdB)
			SBC (L_R)	

Shows who was in or outside a club: = Toadying to character above; (G) = Gambled; CP = Crown Prince;
(id) = expected host; bold = first visit to new club; underline = first time mistress seen in public with this beau.

LOCOMOTIVE OBSERVATION STEAM TRAIN COMPANY (LOST),
Gerald Udowiczenko – Black

Starts: Port Carlisle

Builds:

- a)(L19) – J20
- b)(J20) – Coniston;
(N20) – Windermere – N22;
(Ullock) – E11 – Distington
- c) (N22) – N23;
(Distington) – D12 – Egremont

Points: 34 = 34

CART AND BARROW RAIL (CAB),

Chris Rudram – Green

Starts: Barrow in Furness

Builds:

- a)(H21) – Coniston; (+6)
(E15) – D14
- b)(D14) -- C14;
(Carnforth) – M31 – L31 (8 to SR)
- c) (C14) – Egremont – D12 – D11 – Distington

Points: 49 +6 -8 = 47

Next turn's races

Race	From	To	
1	13	Port Carlisle	31
2	26	Whitehaven	34
3	61	Carnforth	41
4	46	Grange over sands	22
5	52	Appleby	14
6	65	Ingleton	56
7	S5	The South	45

GM Notes

Players can enter up to five races each round. Make it clear if you're using Joint Running, or Exchange of Running Powers in your orders.

Builds up to 12 points after races (including payments to other companies on top of builds – so you could pay a lot more if building parallel).

Order layouts: Your Name, Company Name, Company Colour.

You cannot build over bodies of water, only rivers.

**Orders to Mike Dommett, 12 Watton Park, Bridport DT6 5NJ
or by e-mail to mike_dommett@yahoo.co.uk
by 2nd January 2026**

Les Petites Bêtes Soyeuses

Being a correspondence game of *En Garde!* run by Pevans since April 1986 and now published as part of *To Win Just Once*.

New players are always welcome. If you'd like to play, you'll need to subscribe to *TWJO* (see page 15). You will also need (access to) a copy of the published rules to *En Garde!* (see www.engarde.co.uk).

**Orders for April 1677 to Pevans at
180 Aylsham Drive, UXBRIDGE
UB10 8UF, UK or
lPBSorders@pevans.co.uk
by 9th January 2026**



March 1677 (397)

Technically, March is the beginning of Spring, but you wouldn't know it from the cold weather in Paris. Still, some brisk action with their preferred weapon will soon warm up duelling Parisians. First up, Terence Cuckpowder takes on Zeold von Tu. There's little doubt how this will end: the beefy Terence is at full strength while medium-sized Zeold has old injuries hampering him. On top of this, Terence has superior skill and wields a sabre against Zeold's rapier. At least Zeold has a second, Come Asiouar, to back him up. Terence's second, Zavier Ulric Turenne, is indisposed. Terence's expertise is evident as he parries Zeold's initial lunge, pinks him with the riposte and then dodges a cut. Zeold surrenders before things can get worse.

In another part of the forest, there's another rapier-sabre match-up. This one looks a bit more balanced as it is the larger man, Barthélemy Chifflet, who has the rapier and less expertise. Percival Puffington seconds Barthélemy while Dee Jean Aise and Louis Severin Descartes back up his opponent, Charles PiedLuminaire. The start of the duel is remarkably similar to the other one: Charles parries a lunge, ripostes (it's just a scratch!) and jumps aside from the cut. Barthélemy doesn't give up easily, though. Not even when Charles hits him with a slash. He responds with his own slash, but concedes after Charles's second slash hits home.

Elsewhere, Rick Shaw is hovering just round the corner from his appointed meeting place. When his second, Justin Thyme, appears he takes a deep breath and pushes forward to face Balzac Slapdash. Rick's nervousness is odd as he decidedly the bigger of the two, even if he's not as skilled. And Balzac has some nasty injuries from last month's bouts. Only when they cross swords does Balzac

more in one campaign than Sir Toothpick has managed in a lifetime of trembling behind curtains.

"Treason? A curious charge to be thrown by a man who has never dared show his face within ten paces of danger—unless the danger is a mirror, in which case he flees at once.

"Perjury? My Lord, to accuse me of falsehood is to accuse day of being night. Every letter of my service record contradicts him. Every witness of my conduct contradicts him. The only perjurer in this farce is the man who mistook his envy for testimony and presented both to the court.

"My record, my service, my works for France speak louder than any slander. This court knows me. His Majesty knows me. Even my horses know me better than Sir Toothpick knows truth. And, as for my accuser, let it be entered into the record that today, beneath oath and scrutiny, he has produced not a single fact, not a single witness, and not even the faint scent of credibility. Only envy, shaken nervously in a paper-thin hand. Therefore, Your Honour, I request no mercy—only clarity. Let the court see that these accusations collapse upon the slightest touch, just like their author.

"I stand as I have always stood—for France, for honour, and for truth. And now, with your permission, I would like this farce concluded so that I may return to serving His Majesty while Toothpick returns to whatever hole he crawled from."

Louis has a very similar list of witnesses as further support. Rick Shaw is mercifully brief: "He cannot be guilty—he throws some of the best parties in Paris." Steve De Sade less so: "Ladies and Gentlemen of the court, the charges against Brigadier General Descartes are a disgrace; there is something sinister and grotesque happening right under our very noses [I don't mean your moustache, your grace]. Witchcraft? Treason? Perjury? Preposterous. Here is a man of finance, a man of God, a man so French he oozes garlic and has red wine running through his very veins. The Brigadier General is innocent. Innocent, I tell you!"

Before the Minister can pronounce his verdict, others in the court insist on being heard. Maurice Danseur announces, "I am a supporter of Marquis Louis Severin Descartes who appointed me to the post of Brigade Major and is a thoroughly decent chap. I regard Baron Claude de Nord as having shown appalling taste in arresting the two gentlemen at Marquis Louis Renault's party. I just hope he does not reinforce his bad behaviour by attending the trial in an orange outfit!" Terence Cuckpowder attacks the CPS, pointing out "his swollen ankles, his skin diseases, and his wandering tirades."

Relieved that it's all over, the Minister declares that he has never seen such a travesty. A fine upstanding citizen such as Louis should not have been incarcerated in the Bastille and have such slanderous accusations levelled at him. "He should leave with his head held high for he is clearly innocent."

Jean Seine. On that occasion it was Count Cuckpowder on trial. Then in January Count Thyme also spoke in defence of Mlle Morgane le Fay. On both occasions Count Thyme spoke the truth, there was no perjury."

Turning to the dock, he continues, "Perhaps it would help if I tried to sum up for you the measure of both the man in the dock, and his accuser. Count Thyme is one of our unsung military heroes. He has led his regiment for many years, content to be there for his subordinate's benefit. Indeed, it is his military prowess that has driven his rise through the nobility. There is no treason in bravely and nobly leading a premier regiment of France. He is also a man who defends the weak in their time of need – as demonstrated by his defence of Morgane Le Fay. This was not witchcraft, it was gentlemanly conduct."

Moving on to the prosecutor, Frank continues, "Your Honour, I believe that the prior witness statements of Count Thyme became the motivation behind the arrest and current trial. Perhaps I should say a few words about the Commissioner of Public Safety as context for this arrest. It has been the case that I have been able to closely observe the accuser of the Commissioner of Public Safety, first in the King's Musketeers and then more recently as a member of His Majesty's Government. The Commissioner, despite his many limitations, is fully devoted to undertaking his duties to the maximum of his ability. They say that justice is blind. The Commissioner is so dedicated to his cause that he goes beyond that, when it comes to justice the Commissioner of Public Safety is blind deaf and dumb. He will leave no stone unturned to find guilty those who stand in his way."

Sensing the Minister is running out of patience, Frank wraps up. "You will be aware, Your Honour, that the flurry of recent arrest warrants has exhausted the supply of parchment to the Commissioner's Office. I think that the Commissioner has been so dedicated to the cause that he has overwhelmed himself with work and needs a good long rest. Somewhere with a soft bed where he and the rest of us can rest easy while he gets the care he deserves in return for his actions. Your Honour, my evidence demonstrates that Count Thyme is not guilty of the charges brought against him, and the Commissioner of Public Safety has misjudged the situation. Hopefully the latter will soon realise the error he has made."

As soon as Frank sits down again, the Minister sighs with relief and quickly announces: "No case to answer. Next!" And next is Louis Severin Descartes, who presents his defence.

"My Lords, Your Honour, and assembled witnesses of common sense. I rise not to defend my honour, for that stands taller than any accusation tossed at it today. I rise only to sweep aside the pathetic debris left by one Sir Toothpick—whose name, by Providence, suits him well: thin in stature, thinner in intellect, and utterly devoid of substance."

"Witchcraft? If victory on the battlefield, loyalty to His Majesty, and the admiration of Paris are now sorcery, then perhaps I am guilty—guilty of achieving

realise how poorly he is and promptly surrenders. However, Rick has already started a furious lunge and Balzac can add a lunge to his list of wounds.

Dee Jean Aise versus Steve De Sade is a duel of sabres. Steve is the bigger of the two, which may give him an advantage, and neither has a second. They start by dodging imaginary blows before Steve smacks Dee with a slash, unimpeded by Dee's parry. A second slash hits before Dee gets in a lunge – not the best attack with a sabre. And a cut from Steve finishes the fight in his favour.

Beau Taux and his rapier have several duels lined up and choose to face Botte Le Chimiste first. This would be an even match-up if Botte wasn't a sabre-wielder. Ian Dediette seconds Beau with Louis Severin Descartes seconding Botte. Botte expects a furious lunge and dodges it, but Beau hits him with an ordinary one. A slash from Botte is followed by a slash from Beau. Beau jumps back from Botte's next slash only to be hit by the following cut. He surrenders. And is now sufficiently injured that he doesn't need to face his other duelling opponents, François de Blanchefort and Hugo Serre.

This just leaves Claude de Nord's two duels. However, he doesn't show up to meet Frank X Change, nor Martin de Garnache – though there's no sign of Martin either. Apparently, he's "just realised that Cuckpowder has sent me to the front!"

Villains?

And so to the trials of the latest (and last) subjects of "Tiny" Thierry Toothpick's warrants: Justin Thyme and Louis Severin Descartes. To a fanfare of trumpets, well little ones anyway, Commissioner of Public Safety Major Toothpick makes a decidedly audible entry into this month's double trial hearing at the imposing judicial Court of the City of Paris. Surrounded by his entourage of diminutive orange-uniformed 'Tangerines', still blasting away at their trumpets, and held aloft by two 6' + Tangerines the Commissioner cuts a peculiar sight. In addition to his commissioner's robes and golden sash, he now sports a bejewelled gold crown as, in a barked retort to several overheard voices from the public gallery, "It's because I am very important person, a Minister of the Crown and so I should at least wear one to reflect such!"

Our seemingly impatient Commissioner wastes no time with niceties or preamble launching himself straight into the role of Public Prosecutor for today's two cases, Count Justin Thyme and Marquis Louis Severin Descartes. Stepping up onto a box that is placed before him by several of his Tangerines, Commissioner Toothpick takes a brief look at the two prisoners before turning to directly address the latest interim Minister of State who sits to hear the proceedings.

"Your Grace, may I first begin by sincerely apologising to you for the fact that the current laws of our fair land require you to waste your time in attending today. There should be within our legal framework a sub-section or two that grants full authority to me, as France's most esteemed Public Safety Commissioner, the right

to arrest, try and sentence those wretches who I array upon His Majesty's behalf. A man of your busy schedule should not need to dally around in a Court room and be forced to hear any far-fetched pack of lies that prisoners such as these two standing in the dock are likely to conjure up in a desperate bid to evade the rightful justice coming to them! NOOOOO... it's utter nonsense... ludicrous... by the Almighty, it makes me so incensed!! The same goes for any traitorous upstart that seeks to give evidence in their defence. My faithful Ministry employees here," he says, nodding towards several tables packed with members of his Tangerine entourage, scribbling away furiously with quill upon parchment, "They will be taking the names of anyone who speak up for the accused. All the names go into my 'Special Book' for future reference!"

"In fact, if you wish to leave now to attend to more important matters, I'm more than happy to have you just sign these two Guilty scrolls that I have here already prepared... you just pop your name next to the bits where it says 'Verdict – Guilty' and 'Sentence – Death'. I can sort the rest out... Your Grace...?" Toothpick looks towards the Minister, raising a pair of parchments into the air. The names of the prisoners, with the words Guilty and Death are quite visible in bold lettering.

However, the Minister is unmoved by Thierry's harangue and suggests that the prosecution should provide some evidence.



TRAITORS... TRAITORS TO CROWN AND COUNTRY! Well, I'll not be having it, you know. Don't think you can outsmart me. Cuckpowder thought he'd done that this month by despatching the Guards Brigade off to the Front, but what the fool failed to realise is that, if someone is no longer a part of the Guards Brigade, then they can't be sent!! I've outwitted him, look..." With that Toothpick pulls open his commissioner's robes to reveal the uniform tunic of the Dragoon Guards below it. "AH HA, see, got him! He can march off with the Guards, but I'm going nowhere except to the barracks of the Dragoon Guards to continue my investigations and actions against the raft of miscreants currently infesting our city."

"I shall be requesting a private audience with His Majesty, prevailing upon him to grant me unlimited arrest warrants along with either combining the posts of State Minister and Public Safety Commissioner or to have the law changed to allow me the role of CPS for life PLUS... PLUS... the right to both prosecute and

sentence. That'll soon get this country sorted out for the better! I care no more for this sham of a court room with its blatant Cuckpowder-inspired corruption! Gentlemen, I bid good day to you all. Do as you will, for what you evade today will catch up with you soon enough once the King is on my side. Until we meet again..."

With that, Toothpick clicks his fingers towards his Tangerines, who spring up, clear their tables and once more raise trumpets to lips for their march out of court at the heels of their boss.

As chatter immediately begins amongst those in the public gallery and various court ushers and minor officials confer as to what happens next, seeking guidance from the Minister of State, the doors to the court burst open again and Toothpick and his entourage reappear...

"Oh, I almost forgot," he says. "Tsk, tut, silly me. I've a little something for each of you here today, everyone in this mockery of a court. These, to be precise... lads, dish 'em out!"

The Tangerines disperse amongst the Court and proceed to give a scroll to every person present, sealed with the official CPS emblem in bold red wax, before departing once more. To those that open what they've just been presented with, they are met with the words "Official Arrest Warrant-in-Waiting". (See Press)

The departure of the prosecutor before opening his case is unprecedented. After discussions with the clerks, the Minister asks the two accused to present their defence. Justin Thyme is first to address the court.

"Excellence, I am totally confused as to why Sir Tiny has brought these charges of witchcraft, treason and perjury against me and my co-defendant Marquis Descartes," begins Justin. "I have been nothing but loyal to his Majesty and his Government, so am speechless as to where these charges have come from. At first I assumed it was petty jealousy, Tiny only being a Sir, whereas Louis is a Marquis and I myself am a Count, but that cannot be the case, as surely he couldn't be that petty, could he? So this must just be a case of mistaken identity."

Count Thyme calls witnesses to refute the charges. "I call my Aide, Sir Ian Dediette, as my first witness," he says. Ian is in court, but looks confused. So does Justin. "I know I wrote the letter," he mumbles, scratches his head and pulls out the 'letter'. "Ah..." he continues, "I really need an Aide..." Justin's other witnesses are prepared. That's Con Stantinople, Frank X Change, Greg de Bécqueur and Rick Shaw. Rick is brief: "he is of noble character and a good bloke. Innocent."

Frank X Change may be over-prepared. Reading from extensive notes, he declaims, "Your Honour, I, Marquis Frank Xavier Change, Colonel of the Cardinal's Guards and Minister of Justice, swear that the evidence I shall give is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Count Thyme is well known to Parisian society and myself as a military man of honour. In October in this courtroom, he gave a very fair and balanced report on the duel that led to the death of Count Beau Reese