

That would be enough

This has been issue 269 of *To Win Just Once*, published 28th October 2026. It incorporates *Les Petites Bêtes Soyeuses*, a game of *En Garde!*. Issues are published ten times a year, roughly every five weeks. © Paul Evans 2026

Deadlines

Orders for *Railway Rivals* to Mike by Friday 13th November 2026.

Orders for *LPBS* and By Popular Demand entries to Pevans by 20th November.

(Probable next deadlines: 18th/25th (!) December, 29th Jan/5th Feb 2027)

Waiting lists

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

Railway Rivals – Ash Casey is first in line for the next game. (Working map and rules provided).

Star Trader – The list for the next game starts with Pevans, Mark Cowper, Anthony Gilbert, Jovan Bogdanovic and Ash Casey. And has room for another half a dozen. (Rules provided)

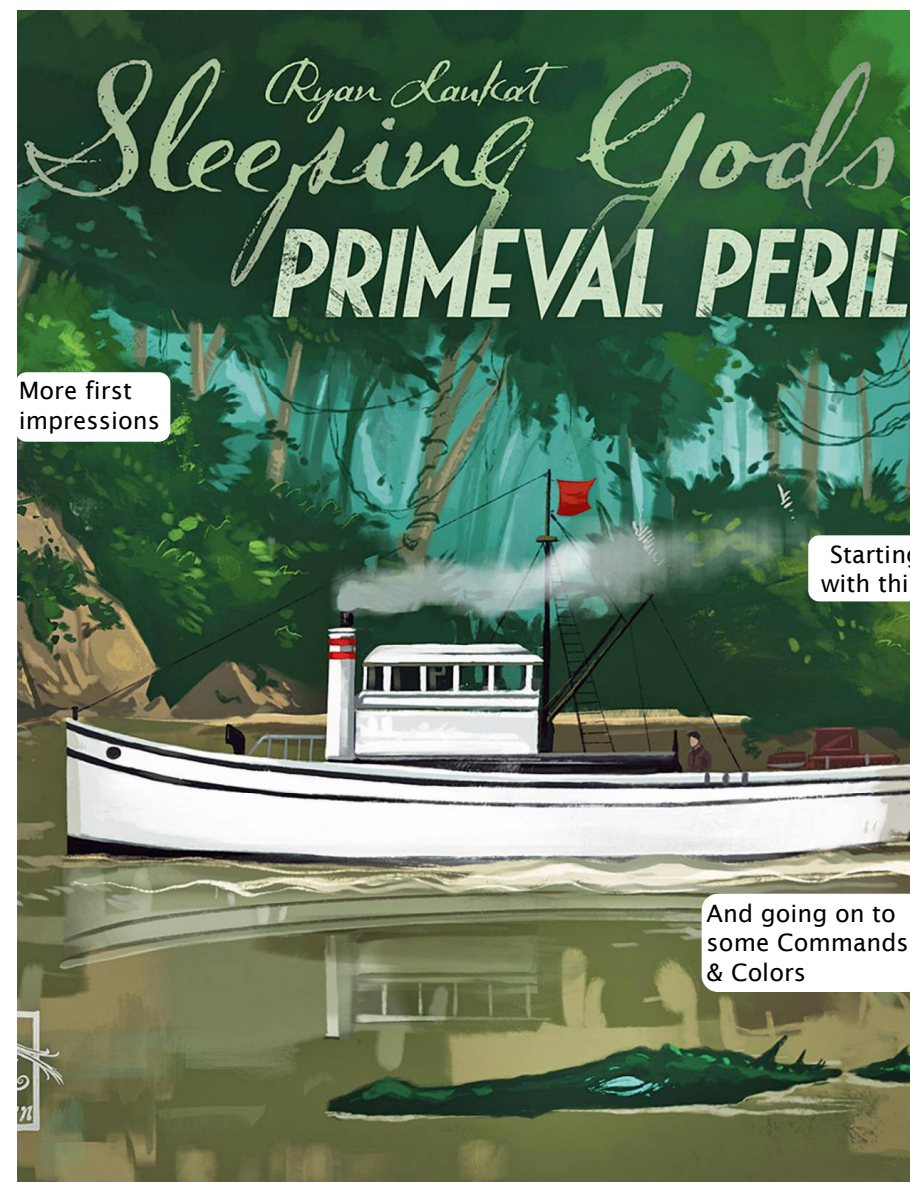
Credits

To Win Just Once issue 269 was written and edited by Pevans. The *LPBS* masthead (page 21) is by Lee Brimmicombe-Wood as are the drawings on pages 22, 25, 29 and 32. Game and book artwork is courtesy of the publisher. Pevans took the photos and played with Photoshop.

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To Win Just Once

(incorporating *Les Petites Bêtes Soyeuses*)



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(LPBS 407: January 1678)

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Here's the obligatory 180° panorama of the view from our apartment (stretched across two pages). On this side you have the village running along the Antrim coast road and the edge of the bay. Beyond that are the headlands between the Glens heading north.

ID	Name	SL	SPs	Cash	Rank,	Regiment/Appointment	MA	Last seen	Club	EC	Player
ID	Sir Ian Dediette	14	27	Comfy	Major	QOC	4		Both	2	Nik Luker
MHD	Sir Marcel Hatch Dupree	14	23	Wlthy	Colonel	RM	8		Hunt	4	Graeme Wilson
HJ	Earl Hugh Jeneaux	14	F	Rich	B.Bdr-General	ALC	12		Both	3	Bruno Giordan
CPL	Saron Charles PiedLuminaire	14+	45	Wlthy	B.Lt-General/2nd Div	Commandr	9	Agnes	Both	3	Nick Tyrrell
AA	Sir Armand Alsace	14+	42	OK	Bdr-General/1 F	Brigadier	14	Pet	Both	4	Sebastian Emde
AH	Arent Hayes	13	31	OK	Lt.Colonel	CPC/FMshl's Aide	6		Both	3	Mark Cowper
CdF	Chemin de Fer	12	32	Comfy	Major	KM	5	Henrietta	Both	3	Rod MacDonald
SDS	Sir Steve De Sade	12+	48	Comfy	Major	GDMD/Gen's Aide (JH)	7	Laura	Hunt	5	Jon Dean
SBC	Sebastiane Blanc-Chevaux	10	32	OK	Colonel	PM	2	Sue	Hunt	2	Peter Card
VdF	Vaux de Fon	9	29	Poor	Major	CPC	2	Belle	Hunt	4	John Cooke
CE	Charles Etfeevor	9+	47	Comfy	B.Bdr-General	13F/2 F Brigadier	4	Di	F&P	4	Andrew Kendall
DJA	Dee Jean Aise	8	24	Wlthy	B.Bdr-General	PLLD	5	Lotte	BG	3	Jovan Bogdanovic
BdV	Beaumes de Venise	8	F	OK	Captain	CG	6		BG	6	Jeremy Tullett
MAD	Marc-Antoine Descartes	8	F	OK	Major	DG/LtGen's Aide (2nd	5		BG	2	Chris Schotmann
BT	Beau Taux	8+	27	OK	Colonel	53F	5	Angelina	BG	4	Paul Robbins
CBL	Claude B'Limey	7+	36	Poor	Captain	GDMD/BdGen's Aide (BLC)	6	Violet	F&P	2	Peter Jenkins
HdB	Henri de Boudeille	7+	24	OK	Major	PLLD	6		RP	4	Eric Henderson
PAM	Pierre Aux-Manique	7+	21	OK	Colonel	Gscn	6	May	F&P	2	Peter McNamara
LAL	Lance A Little	6	F	Comfy	Lt.Colonel	PM	1			4	Manoj Nair
DBT	Dwight B'Tard	6+	31	OK			4		RP	1	Gerry Sutcliffe
AdO	Achille d'Orbigny	5-	5	Poor	Captain	CPC	4		RP	3	Oscar Stanley
MdP	Maximilien de Piquemaire	5	RIP								Max Pleksma
PL	Pierre Lapin	3+	38	Poor			5			4	Mike Bird
GG	Gilbert Grumiaux	2	F	Poor	Subaltern		6			4	Hunter Charest
PN	Pierre Newkirk	2	F	Comfy	Captain	PM	3			3	Wayne Clingman

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, Flthy = 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	EC	Player
BeV	Count Ben e'Volence	25	75	Rich	Fld	Marshal/Chancellor	11		Flr		3 Ash Casey
GdB	Count Greg de Bécqueur	25	69	Withy	General/Fld Army	Commndr	13	Bette	Flr		5 Anthony Gilbert
TC	Count Terence Cuckpowder	25	52	Withy	B.Lt-General/1st Div	Commandr	10		Flr		6 Mike Dommett
FXC	Count Frank X Change	25+	90	Rich	B.Bdr-General	CG/War Minister	14	Edna	Flr		4 Nigel Monaghan
CdP	Viscount Camille de Poignac	24-	23	OK	B.Bdr-General	RFG/Fld Army QMG	8	Therèse	Flr		4 James McReynolds
RS	Earl Rick Shaw	23	58	Rich	General/State	Min.	3	Justine	Flr		6 Charles Burrows
JH	Marquis Jacques Hatt	21	52	Withy	General/Min	w/o Port	4	Cath	Flr		4 Joel Halpern
JdG	Count Jacques de Gain	20	56	Fithy	General		24		Flr		6 Ben Brown
JiT	Count Justin Thyme	20	37	Rich	Colonel	QOC	19		Flr		2 Gerald Udowiczenko
ZvT	Baron Zeold von Tu	19	43	Withy	B.General		8	Morgane	Flr		3 Tim Macaire
CdN	Earl Claude de Nord	19	39	Rich	B.Bdr-General	KM/CPS	5	Jacky	Flr		4 Andrew Larder
LR	Marquis Louis Renault	18	45	Comfy	Lt-General/Insp.	Gen.Cav	5	Maggie	Flr		4 Roy Bleasdale
CA	Viscount Come Asiouar	18	F	Withy	Lt.Colonel	CG/Justice Min.	12		Both		4 Jacob Andersson
MdG	Martin de Garnache	17	36	Comfy	Lt.Colonel	RFG/1st Div Adjutant	3	Chris	Both		4 Bill Howell
PPuf	Baron Percival Puffington	17+	53	Comfy	B.Lt-General/Insp.	Gen.Inf	9	Viv	Both		5 Tony Taylor
HF	Sir Hugo Furst	16	43	Comfy	B.Lt-General/Adjutant	Gen	6	Ella	Both		2 Graeme Morris
HWB	Baron Hector William Boone	16	36	Withy	Major	RFG	9		Both		5 Paul Wilson
NM	Baron Neville Moore	16	28	Rich	Major	RFG	1	Vera	Hunt		2 Cameron Wood
TCdS	Sir Thibault Chanson de Skye	16	22	Comfy	B.General		8		Flr		5 Bill Hay
TTT	Marquis Tiny Thierry Toothpick	16	F	Withy	B.Bdr-General	DG	9				1 Jason Fazackarley
BS	Viscount Balzac Slapdash	15-	13	Rich	B.Lt-General		24				5 Matthew Wale
MD	Maurice Danseur	15	36	OK	Major	DG/HGds Brigade Maj.	6	Madeline	Both		6 Andrew Whiteley
CS	Sir Con Stantinople	15	27	Withy	Lt.Colonel	QOC/2nd Div Adjutant	6		Both		1 Pam Udowiczenko
FdB	Sir François de Blanchefort	15	22	Comfy	B.Bdr-General	CPC	6		Both		4 Peter Farrell
FS	Baron Felipe Savant	14	40	Rich	Captain	RFG/Capt.K's Esc	5	Fifi	Both		4 Brick Amundsen
EIF	Baron Elroi le Flingue	14	39	Comfy	Lt.Colonel	GDMD/Cav Div Adjutant	9	Lucy	Both		4 Daniel Racke
HS	Sir Hugo Serre	14	36	Withy	Lt.Colonel	KM	7	Kathy	Both		3 Paul Murphy
BLC	Sir Botte Le Chimiste	14	28	OK	B.Bdr-General	GDMD	2	Eve	Both		4 Tym Norris

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Chatter

My relaxing September break was, as usual, at the Holiday Apartments in Ballygally (just up the road from Geraldine’s home town of Larne) in Co Antrim, Northern Ireland. We get there by driving to the ferry port in Scotland (nowadays it’s at Cairnryan, a few miles along the sea loch from the old port at Stranraer), stopping overnight along the way. The ferry takes us to Larne, once the main port but now over-shadowed by Belfast.

As the ferry nudged up to its berth in Larne’s port, we noticed a train waiting in the Harbour station (Larne actually has two train stations: Harbour and Town, separated by at least half a mile). As is traditional in these circumstances, the train then pulled out before the ferry could finish docking and disembarking its passengers! A quick stop for supplies and we headed north.

As always, the view across the bay and North Channel (where the Irish Sea connects to the Atlantic Ocean) is terrific. Accessorised by bright white (apart from their black wing tips) gannets wheeling over the water and then plunging in when



From right to left you have Ballygally Head, Scotland hidden behind clouds and the North Channel. The car park is popular with people photographing their cars (no, really) and with tourists taking selfies with the Ballygally Bear.

they spot a fish. In contrast, black cormorants zip across the water just above the waves and then settle down before disappearing under water for 20+ seconds.

Other attractions of the view are the frequent rainbows as rain squalls scud across the bay. We get to see swimmers (the sensible ones wear wet suits), surfers, paddle-boarders and the boats of the local crab and lobster fishermen lifting or replacing their pots. We have had a school of dolphins crossing the mouth of the bay in the past, but there was no sign of them this year.



One of the Ballygally Bear’s more interesting visitors this year (photo’s a bit blurry as it was taken from the apartment). And I’m sure that car was one of the Airfix models I made as a teenager...

And one of the things I do on holiday is play games (solitaire and with nephew Tom), so there are some reports coming up.

Which? (the UK consumers’ organisation) has published their list of best games for 2027 (it’s only October!). (I’ve a feeling they do this every year.) The list of board games for adults isn’t bad: *Quoridor*, *Last One Laughing The Board Game* (the only one I don’t know and it’s a spin-off from the TV show of course), *Azul*, *Heat: Pedal to the Metal*, *Quacks*, *Carcassonne*, *Ticket to Ride* and *Pandemic*. The list of card games for adults isn’t so interesting. It does include *The Mind* (mind-melting in my experience), but also *Exploding Kittens* (it’s not a game!).

Seasonal fare

Yes, mince pies are back! First up were the Co-op Bakery’s offerings. They look homemade, which I like, but there’s a bit too much pastry – or too little filling. Taste is fine, though rather sweet. 6/10 as a benchmark for this year.

Femmes Fatales

No	Name	SL	Attr	Lover
66	Morgane Le Fay	24	B	ZvT
67	Justine Caisse	22	I	RS
65	Therèse Le Vert	21	B/W	CdP
7	Chris Pacquette	19		MdG
61	Bette Noire	19	I/W	GdB
64	Edna Bucquette	18	W	FXC
3	Kathy Pacific	17	B	HS
54	Madelaine de Proust	17		MD
35	Katy Did	16	I	
42	Maggie Nifisent	16	B	LR
55	Jacky Tinne	16		CdN
52	Guinevere d'Arthur	15	B/W	
10	Frances Forrin	14	B	
48	Fifi	14	B/W	FS
62	Alison Wunderlandt	14		
11	Laura de Land	13		SDS
26	Ella Fant	13	B	HF
27	Lucy Fur	13	B	EIF
45	Cath de Thousands	13		JH
8	Lotte Bottle	12	B	DJA
17	Henrietta Carrotte	12	I/W	CdF
28	Vera Cruz	12		NM
31	Bess Ottede	12	I/W	
1	Sue Briquet	11	B	SBC
4	Anne Tique	11	W	
23	Agnes Sorel	11	I/W	CPL
40	Sheila Kiwi	11		
63	Carole Singeurs	11		
20	Emma Roides	10	I	
38	Pet Ulante	10	W	AA
43	Di Lemmere	10	I	CE
53	Angelina de Griz	10	B	BT
6	Viv Ayschus	9		PPuf
59	May Banquot l'Idée	9		PAM
19	Jenny Russe	8	W	
32	Sal Munella	8	W	
47	Eve Ningalle	8	I/W	BLC
34	Freda de Ath	7	W	
39	Thomasina Tancenjin	7	I	
5	Belle Epoque	6	B/I	VdF
24	Violet Bott	6	I/W	CBL
25	Lois de Lô	5	B	

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

Regiments																
Col	Col	RFC	CG	CG	KM	DG	QOC	ALC	CPC	RM	CDMD	13F	PLLD	53F	27M	4A
LCol	CdP	FXC	CA	HS	CdF	MD+	ID	N3	AdO	N5*	N3	N1*	N2*	N6*	N6*	N6*
Maj 1	MdG	CA	HS	CdF	MD+	ID	N3	AdO	N5*	N3	N1*	N2*	N6*	N6*	N6*	N6*
Maj 2	NM	N5	N2	N4	N5	N6	N3	N1*	N5*	N3	N1*	N2*	N6*	N6*	N6*	N6*
Capt 1	FS	N4	N5	N2	N4	N5	N6	N3	N1*	N5*	N3	N1*	N2*	N6*	N6*	N6*
Capt 2	N2	N6	N4	N5	N6	N3	N1*	N5*	N3	N1*	N2*	N6*	N6*	N6*	N6*	N6*
Capt 3	N1	N2*	N4	N5	N6	N3	N1*	N5*	N3	N1*	N2*	N6*	N6*	N6*	N6*	N6*
Capt 4	N4*	N2	N6*	N5	N3*											
Capt 5	N2	BdV														
Capt 6																

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.

Frontier Regiments

	F1	F2	F3	(Defence for Dec-Feb)	
Colonel	N5	N4	N2	F4 N5	RNHB N5
Attached			1 Bn CG 1 Bn PM		GG
Also at the Front		Dragoon Guards Archduke Leopold Cuirassiers			

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

Battle Results

Dragoon Guards: 2
Archduke Leopold Cuirassiers: 1
Frontier regiment 1: 3
Frontier regiment 2: 3
Frontier regiment 3: 4
Frontier regiment 4: 4
RNHB regiment: 2

Other Appointments

King’s Escort: Ensign N	Captain FS
Cardinal’s Escort: Ensign N	Captain N
Aides: to Crown Prince N	to Field Marshal AH
Provincial Military Governors: N/N/N/N/N	
City Military Governor N	Adjutant-General HF
Inspectors-General: of Cavalry LR	of Infantry PPuf
Commissioner of Public Safety CdN (until end August 1678)	
Chancellor of the Exchequer BeV (until end August 1678)	
Minister of Justice CA (until end May 1678)	
Minister of War FXC (until end October 1678)	
Minister of State RS (until end February 1678)	

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

New Characters

Max Pieksma gets the Bastard son of a wealthy Merchant: Init SL 2; Cash 225; MA 4; EC 3 (X1).

Then I got in some Waitrose No 1 Brown Butter and Cognac mince pies. First thing I noticed was no egregious sugar granules smothering the top. The pastry is short and flaky; the filling is fruity and spicy – though a bit heavy on the cinnamon for my taste. They work well cold or heated up (with a dollop of clotted cream – if it’s Christmas, I’m not counting calories). Definitely 8/10.



Babylon 5 re-watch

The climax of season 4 is the liberation of Earth from the increasingly autocratic usurper, President Clarke. It just needs a large fleet in orbit for the politicians to grow one. A board of inquiry sort of exonerates Captain Sheridan of mutiny/treason, provided he resigns from Earthforce. And Earth is invited to join the new Interstellar Alliance – the Minbari, Centauri and Narns along with the former League of Non-Aligned Planets – under its first President, John Sheridan! As a bonus we see the last of the irritating Marcus Cole character. Okay, yes, he dies heroically saving the life of another.

With the cancellation and then reinstatement of the fifth season, the episode that wraps up the whole five-year show shifted from the end of season 4 to the very end (as is obvious from the fact that it’s the season 4 cast in this episode). Hence the final episode of season 4 is a bit of an oddity. A look back at the history of Earth and the Interstellar Alliance from the far future. Entertaining, though.

And that leaves season 5. Which must include some of my favourite episodes as they haven’t appeared yet...

Spiderwatch

Hmm, it’s quiet. Too quiet for Autumn...



Talking of seasonal: someone’s ready for Halloween! (I think they’re American.)

Online stats

I published *TWJO* 268 on 14th September and the PDFs were downloaded 143 times in the rest of the month. There were 123 downloads of *TWJO* 267 across September. That’s a total of 232 in five weeks or so. And *TWJO* 266 was downloaded 89 times in September, which is 517 since publication.

Letters

Eddy Richards chips in with some Reading Matter.

My reading recently has included a re-read (after more than 20 years I should think) of a 6-volume epic future SF series, Amtrak Wars, by Patrick Tilley. There are some exciting scenes – he does battles very well – but there is a bit too much exposition and, without giving the game away, the ending is very weak.

Not a series (or writer) that was on my radar. And you’re not making it sound attractive, Eddy. Charles Burrows has a book recommendation.

A book to consider is The Stranger Times by C K McDonnell: dry humour and a reasonable plot.

Looking this up, it does seem interesting. It’s another story of ordinary people discovering that the weird and supernatural is real (and is recommended by Jodi Taylor). I see it’s also the first volume in a series...

Nik Luker’s response is to the games.

Glad the holiday was nice and relaxing! Glad also that you’ve finally managed to play Container... I have a first edition copy of this, bought when it was released at Spiel 20-odd years ago. Agreed, it is an odd game but that’s why I like it (although I’m not very good at it – never seem to get my pricings right). There’s nothing else out there quite like it and I guess the fact that it’s still in publication attests to its appeal to the gaming community. Interestingly, I was taught to play it at Spiel by the then reigning Miss Canada International, Alesia Fieldberg. Can’t remember how Valley Games persuaded her to demo and play at the show, but she was a most charming yet formidable gamer!

I can enlighten you a bit on that, Nik, as I was in the same hotel (?? RIP) – we were all part of the Warfrog/Treefrog group booking. Valley Games was a sponsor of the model who became Miss Canada (I believe because she was a gamer). Part of the sponsorship deal was that she join them on their stand at Spiel. My memory is that she was tiny, pretty and accompanied everywhere by a chaperone.

Jonathan Palfrey has been doing a lot of reading.

Since I last wrote to you a month ago, I’ve read 17 books, but 10 of them were rereads, including the 3 volumes of The Lord of the Rings (conceptually one

Ian Dediette (Sabre, Seconds GdB & BT, 3 rests) and Maurice Danseur (Sabre, adv.) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

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

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 March

Beaumes de Venise versus Pierre Lapin.

Tables

Army Organisation and 1678’s Summer Deployment

Field Army (Field Ops)	GdB/N/N6/CdP
First Division (Field Ops)	TC/N/MdG
Guards Brigade (Field Ops) - RFG CG KM	
RNHB Regiment (Field Ops)	
Second Division (Field Ops)	CPL/MAD/CS
1st Foot Brigade (Field Ops) - RM PM	
2nd Foot Brigade (Field Ops) - 13F 53F	
Third Division (Field Ops)	___/___/NI
3rd Foot Brigade (Field Ops) - 27M 4A	
4th Foot Brigade (Field Ops) - 69A Gscn	
Cavalry Division (Field Ops)	___/___/EIF
Horse Guards Brigade (Field Ops) - DG QOC	
Heavy Brigade (Field Ops) - ALC CPC	
Frontier Division (Field Ops)	___/___/NI
Frontier Regiments (Field Ops)	
Dagoon Brigade (Field Ops) - GDMD PLLD	

Organisation and Deployment for the Campaign Season
with Army and Division posts (Commander/Aide/Adjutant/QMG)
Entries are ID for player characters, “N” (+ MA if needed) for NPC, ___ for vacant

Brigade Positions

Guards Brigade	___/___/___
Horse Guards Brigade	N6/N/MD
Heavy Brigade	___/___/NI
Dagoon Brigade	___/___/NI
First Foot Brigade	AA/N/___
Second Foot Brigade	CE/N/NI
Third Foot Brigade	___/___/NI
Fourth Foot Brigade	___/___/NI

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

Duels

Results of January's duels

Chemin de Fer (with CdN & MHD, gains 1 Exp) beat Beau Taux (with ID).

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

Beau Taux declined to meet Maurice Danseur as he was under half End.

Beau Taux declined to meet Vaux de Fon as he was under half Endurance.

Frank X Change (gains 1 Exp) beat his enemy Chemin de Fer (with CdN & MHD).

Frank X Change (no Expertise) beat his enemy Claude de Nord (with CdF & HS, under half Endurance, losing 10 extra SPs).

Frank X Change (gains 1 Exp) beat his enemy Hugo Serre (with BeV).

Maurice Danseur (gains 1 Exp) beat his friend Steve De Sade.

Grudges to settle next month

Achille d'Orbigny (Sabre, 1 rests) and Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID, adv.) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Con Stantinople (Sabre, Seconds TCdS, 3 rests) and Maurice Danseur (Sabre, adv.) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Justin Thyme (Sabre, Seconds ZUT & RS) and Maurice Danseur (Sabre) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

Charles Etfeevor (Rapier, 3 rests) has cause with Chemin de Fer (Cutlass, Seconds CdN & MHD, adv.) as he's not Noble but higher SL.

Charles Etfeevor (Rapier, 4 rests) has cause with Maurice Danseur (Sabre, adv.) as he's not Noble but higher SL.

Steve De Sade (Sabre, Seconds CBL, 4 rests) has cause with Maurice Danseur (Sabre, adv.) as he's not Noble but higher SL.

Ben e'Volence (Foil) has cause with Dee Jean Aise (Sabre) for Lotte.

Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID) has cause with Chemin de Fer (Cutlass, Seconds CdN & MHD, adv.) as he's not Noble but higher SL.

Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID, 3 rests) has cause with Maurice Danseur (Sabre, adv.) as he's not Noble but higher SL.

Beau Taux (Rapier, Seconds ID) and Vaux de Fon (Sabre, Seconds HS, adv.) have mutual cause as enemies.

Chemin de Fer (Cutlass, Seconds CdN & MHD, 3 rests) and Frank X Change (Rapier, Seconds GdB, adv.) have mutual cause for enemy regiments.

Claude de Nord (Sabre, Seconds CdF & HS, adv.) and Frank X Change (Rapier, Seconds GdB, 2 rests) have mutual cause for enemy regiments.

Frank X Change (Rapier, Seconds GdB, adv.) and Hugo Serre (Rapier, Seconds BeV, 4 rests) have mutual cause for being in enemy regiments.

novel), some *T. Kingfisher* and Ben Aaronovitch fantasies, and sf from S. M. Stirling. Books I read for the first time:

1. *Daggerbound* (T. Kingfisher, 2026), which I like slightly less than *Swordheart*, the preceding novel. Each of her novels has a romance in it, and they're all quite similar romances; although in this case it's a man-man romance. I'm not really keen on any kind of romance in fiction, it seems to me a distraction from the plot. I can sympathize somewhat with man-woman and woman-woman romances (as I find women attractive), but it's more difficult for me to sympathize with man-man romances, as I don't find men attractive. 3½ points out of 5.

2. *Paladin's Grace, Paladin's Strength, Paladin's Hope, and Paladin's Faith* (T. Kingfisher, 2020–2023). Mostly 3½ points each. Fantasies set in the World of the White Rat, as are *Swordheart*, *Daggerbound*, and the earlier *Clockwork Boys* and *The Wonder Engine*. In practice I quite like some aspects of the World of the White Rat, although I disapprove of it in principle because it's wild fantasy: phenomena occur without rules or limitations. Also, each book features a standard Kingfisher romance.

3. *Castle Hangnail* (Ursula Vernon, 2015). Ursula Vernon is the real name of T. Kingfisher; she uses her real name only when writing children's books. I can sometimes enjoy children's books, but this one is probably better suited to actual children. Advantages: no romance, no sex.

4. *Moss'd in Space* (Rebecca Thorne, 2026). The title is, I think, supposed to rhyme with "Lost in Space". It's science fiction, and the starting situation is rather similar to that of *Take Back Plenty* (Colin Greenland, 1990). A young woman has spent all her savings on a bottom-priced crappy-looking second-hand alien spaceship, and sets off in it all by herself on a futile quest. She discovers that the ship is inhabited by intelligent moss (?) that functions as a life-support system, and she talks to the moss, which has a character of its own. The book is marketed as cosy, and also as a romance, but the (woman-woman) romance is mostly in the background, and I have read cosier stories than this. There are difficulties and dangers here, and stressful experiences. All difficulties and dangers are overcome, one way or another, and there are no serious casualties along the way, so I'd call it relatively gentle sf, but I think giving it label of cosy is not quite right. 3½ points for now.

When I think of cosy, I think of Travis Baldree's *Legends & Lattes* (2022), about a female sword-wielding orc who decides to retire from adventuring to build and run a coffee shop in a fairly standard fantasy environment. The whole book is like a computer game about coffee-shop management, hardly anything else happens in it. There's a brief scare about a protection racket, but that's easily resolved.

P.S. Yes, I know I'm reading too much fantasy and not enough sf. I get rather fed up with reading so much fantasy, but it's so difficult to find any new books

that I'm willing to read, and these days it seems slightly easier to find acceptable fantasy than to find acceptable sf.

And all female writers, I notice. Mark Cowper has been playing some games.

I recently tried Labyrinth Chronicles by Awaken Realms and published by Ravensburger It's quite unique as you shift the Labyrinth tiles (literally) to open up new pathways to gain treasures and defeat the goblin looters and wardens!! It's one of those games where you open numerous boxes and reveal new quests and cards, which is a big Pfafl, but we really enjoyed it once [we] got playing.

Looks like this is a new version of Ravensburger's perennial *The Amaz(e)ing Labyrinth* (first published in 1986, according to BGG). The one Mark is referring to has tiles with little walls and can be played co-operatively.

Primeval Peril in Northern Ireland

Or, what I played on my holiday

As I've already mentioned, I take games with me on holiday and some of them get played. And first to the table this year was *Primeval Peril*.

This has been waiting for me to try it out for some time now. It's a 1-2 player game set in the same fantasy world as *Sleeping Gods/Distant Skies*. According to designer Ryan Laukat's notes it was originally a Kickstarter add-on for *Sleeping Gods*, but the boxed version has been expanded and uses elements from *Distant Skies* – notably the combat system.

As with the other games, you are mysteriously transported to a fantasy world and must complete a quest, involving the sleeping Gods, to return to your own. In this case you are the crew and passengers on fishing boat Harpy in foggy San Francisco Bay. You've just fished a couple of people out of the water when you're suddenly surrounded by rain forest and one of the passengers is seized by a giant flying lizard. Your mission is to rescue him.

You have an outline map of the network of rivers that you're on and are told that you have to work your way upstream, collecting 'bloodflowers' along the way. You start with your boat, some resources, the characters' initial abilities and the first page of the map-book (see next page). This shows you that there are things you can visit/encounter on this stretch of the river. One of these will involve fighting the creatures on the opposite page of the book. But which one...?

Each round starts with a random Event card. My experience is that these usually damage a character or the boat, but also provide a resource. Then you have a certain amount of 'time' to take actions. Actions such as travelling, exploring, repairing the boat (very necessary after a while) and resting. Resting lets characters recover, but also crosses off one of the 'moons' on your log sheet. When the last moon goes, you have three turns to complete the mission or lose.

Particular thanks to Charles Burrows, Jason Fazackarley, Andrew Larder, Tym Norris, Daniel Rack and Chris Schotmann for their contributions to the trial report.

To resolve the chess tournament, I will seed players by their Military Ability and bracket them together by ability. Each game is resolved by a roll on the Battle Results Table: better BR wins; ties mean a re-roll; and the winner progresses. Until we have a final winner.

Rick Shaw's term as Minister of State finishes at the end of February. Anyone wishing to apply for the job should do so with their February orders (to be resolved early in March).

Absent friends

Pam Udowiczenko (CS) asked to be floated.

No orders from Peter Farrell (FdB) – 1 turn missed.

No orders from Hunter Charest (GG) – 1 turn missed.

Announcements

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

Claude B'Limey asks NPC Captain 1 of Grand Duke Max's Dragoons to resign

Elroi le Flingue applies for Aide to Crown Prince

Gerald Udowiczenko (JiT) asked to be floated.

No orders from Max Pieksma (MdP) – 4 turns missed, so sent to a Frontier regiment.

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.

Hugh Jeneaux applies for Minister without Portfolio

Tiny Thierry Toothpick applies for Commnr. of Public Safety

Tiny Thierry Toothpick applies for Minister without Portfolio

Not one word was spoken, not one
dared to stir,
For beauty like that leaves the wisest
man’s blur.
Chorus
3 So I’ll drink to them both from my
post in the mud,
One brave as the cannon, one fair as
first blood.
A King worth the following, a Queen
worth the sigh —
Long may they both reign, and long
may I try.
Chorus
Written still at the Front.
† Bt. Captain Pierre Newkirk,
Picardy Musketeers, at the Front

“The Cardinal’s Tailors”
1 Oh the Cardinal’s Guard cuts a
fine, pretty figure,
All scarlet and gold, with a
permanent snigger.
They strut about Paris like peacocks
on parade
And swear that it’s THEM who won’t
be outplayed.
Chorus:
But a uniform’s cloth, and a
uniform’s thread
Won’t parry a blade aimed square at
your head.
So polish your buttons and comb out
your curl —
We’ll see how you fare when the steel
starts to whirl.

Points Arising

Next deadline is 20th October

Several people got their orders in very late, despite having had several weeks to organise, write and send them. So

2 Frank X Change talks tall of his
rapier arm,
While Hugo goes down like a sack on
a farm.
They bicker, they challenge, they
swap the same blows —
Three times this month, and still
nobody knows.
Chorus
3 So here’s to the Guard, in their
finery fine,
May your tailors stay rich and your
surgeons stay kind.
For a Musketeer’s steel don’t care
whose coat’s red —
We’ll leave you as pretty, and just as
well-bled.
Chorus
Written still at the Front, unbothered
by fashion.
† Bt. Captain Pierre Newkirk,
Picardy Musketeers, at the Front

Tarragon has almost no scent.
Thyme by contrast smells of mint.
Turmeric can be drunk as tea –
I find that is not for me.
Sage can be used medically:
Eat, drink or stuff it as you see.
Vanilla arrives in long thin pods,
Its cost reflects food of the gods.
Lavender, confusingly, is tarragon
that is smelly.

let me remind you all that you can
always send draft/interim orders and
amend/replace them later – I’ve had
people send four versions before now.



Here’s the start of the game: the team’s all here, everybody’s at full health, including the boat, and they all have their three stamina tokens. Shall we go left or right? Knowing that visiting one of those circles will mean fighting the three crocodiles shown on the right-hand page. This is, of course, the circle I chose.

I decided to head upstream with all due haste and avoid fighting as much as possible. I blew the latter on my first turn! Creatures duly defeated, I then rested my battered team before getting under way again. Hmm, at this rate I’ll run out of moons before I get to the head of the river... Still, at least I’ve refreshed my knowledge of the combat system.

Avoiding combat is not necessarily a good idea as there are rewards when (when!) you win and these could include bloodflowers. For quite a while I just didn’t have the resources to take advantage of the non-combat encounters. You can’t explore a cave without a torch, for one thing. However, resources eventually built up and I arrived at my destination loaded for bear. But not enough bloodflowers.

I tried all the encounters in this space and found nothing. Except for damage to the boat that crossed off my last moon. With three rounds left, there was nothing I could do except have fun exploring a bit more. And that was a loss. On the ‘Normal’ setting.

A key element of the game is that you face challenges that require the characters’ skills (plus a die roll) to succeed in. The temptation is to throw every character with the appropriate skill into each challenge. However, this means spending a ‘Stamina’ token from the characters involved. And they only start with three. Hence getting Stamina back is a reason for taking a rest action, alongside recovering from a fight.

I think I was just too inefficient in my game. Pitching in enough characters to have a good chance of success in a challenge meant I burnt through Stamina quickly

and thus had to take rest turns too often. So, next time I need to make better use of my team. And collect more bloodflowers.

A week later I was back aboard the Harpy and transported to the world of sleeping Gods once more. This time I took a different direction into the river network with the intention of heading for another potential end-point. However, I picked up a passenger/quest that meant heading for the same place as last time. I travelled slowly, trying to pick up bloodflowers at every opportunity and not deliberately avoiding fights. And yet I found very few of these. And, by the time I did, my crew had some pretty impressive weapons. Clearly, this was the way to go.

I had an entertaining start to the game, rolling '1's and thus losing my first several challenges. Hence I needed a Rest early on. But then I started rolling '6's and acing challenges! I made some diversions and even back-tracked a few times in my efforts to collect bloodflowers. I also picked up some cards with 'Keywords'. These trigger in later encounters, giving different options.



Here's the game in progress. The Captain has plenty of stamina left, but is Frightened and Weakened and been bitten by something venomous! Time for a rest.

It was over halfway through this game that I suddenly realised there is a 'Stamina' icon on 'Meat' resource tokens. They can be turned in to add Stamina to a character, thus reducing the need for Rests. And guess which resource I had coming out of my ears (so to speak)? Yep, lots of Meat on my boat (see above)!

I reached one head of the river – the same one as last time – in decent shape, but there was no victory here. So the journey continued. However, I neglected to take time to repair the boat and it lost its last damage (re-set to 1 and cross off one of

the boat fell into the water from 20", creating a Tsunami. There is no way we can get the seats dry in time, rebuild the ship or shore up the stage, so it's Final Curtains."

SY: "Is Sammy Phipps OK?"

AH: "Not really! He ended up in the Upper Gallery after surfing the big wave on the Ship's Figurehead when it came loose. He has retired to the country to recuperate!"

SY: "Is the end of the career for AH?"

AH: "Yes, I'm not going through that ever again. Back to the day job at the Field Marshall's Offices. The Archives are full to bursting, with cobwebs running from floor to ceiling, and spiders so large that I will only go in there with my sabre drawn to fend the buggers off. Time for a big clear out."

Poetry Corner

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

If Botte le Chemist could devise
Something that could make our spies
Harder to detect, or see,
Or make the spies of our enemies
Easier for us to identify,
Then I think that maybe I
Could put a word in his defence,
Despite his scandalous offence
Of peddling worthless useless
remedies

For those weighed down by maladies.

† FXC

A soft Parisian dawn adores her grace,
Lois de Lô, the fairest in the city's
light—

Her beauty drifts like lace across the
Seine,

A quiet wonder blooming in the night.

Even the stars lean low to see her
pass,
For none in Paris shine as bright as
she.

† Pierre Lapin

January is cold with icy winds;
Let us seek good company at home
And raise a glass to our shivering
friends

Who guard our King's frontiers from
harm.

The winter is a silly time to fight;
If only our King's foes would but
agree.

Oh Lord, let them but see the light,
The summer is the fighting time for
me.

† Major Maurice Danseur of the
Dragoon Guards

*"His Majesty's Sword, Her Majesty's
Grace"*

1 They speak of the King as a man
without fear,
Who rides where the shot falls the
thickest and near,
No throne-room's soft cushion could
tempt him to stay
While his soldiers stand bleeding an
ocean away.

Chorus:

So here's to a King who leads, not
just reigns,
Whose courage runs hotter than
blood in his veins.

And here's to a Queen whose mere
glance lights the room —
A rose among thorns, and the Court's
brightest bloom.

2 They tell me Her Majesty walked
through the hall
And silenced the chatter of courtiers
all —

Personal

TTT

'You can run but you cannot hide from justice.'

Do you want me to send the court action to anyone else?

To: The People of Paris

It's time to take to the streets; our government is corrupt and lauded over by that arch-villain Earl Shaw, his strings being pulled by that evil puppet master Cuckpowder, with the two of them protected by the witchcraft of Le Fay.

We can't stay silent, sit back, and do nothing, watching France and Paris fall into the unholy grasp of the terrible trio! Stand with me and my Tangerines, fight back, raise your own troops, rally your regiments, march upon the halls of government and seize them! I can lead you, men: place your trust and faith in me and I shall reward the true patriots amongst you. Thierry Toothpick remembers his friends and those friends will remember his generosity! Posts, money, favours, women they're all to be had and all you need do is send me your pledge, then await the call for action!

Death to Shaw... Death* to Cuckpowder... Death to Le Fay!

† Marquis (should be Count) Thierry
Toothpick
TRUE Commissioner of Public Safety
Bvt Brigadier General, His Majesty's
Dragoon Guards

* A worse death than the one Shaw will get, and that one will be nasty!

Good Ladies, Nobles and Gentlemen of Paris,

I present myself, a lowly but ambitious young Frenchman in search of a patron to guide me through the difficulties in the glittering social life in this fair city.

I have little to my name save my woollen blue jacket with brass buttons and a good pair of trousers and stout brown shoes but hope to do well to send to my dear Mama and my three sisters at least some funds as my father was savaged to death by a farmer's rabid hound.

I wish you bon chance in the hope that you will take me under your wing.

Yours, † Pierre Lapin

Gentlemen of Paris,

I trust everyone views with alarm the recent arrest of Sir Botte Le Chimiste – a fine upstanding member of the community – on NO Charges.

I understand that subsequently some very minor issues have been identified in an attempt to hide the gross miscarriage of jurisprudence that the original action indicated. I urge the Minister of State to dismiss the case forthwith.

The Play What I Wrote

Our roving theatrical reporter Monsieur Sy Cophant caught up with Arent Hayes, director, producer and writer of *Diable et L'Eau Sombre*.

SY: "Oh dear, you've had to close early, what happened?"

AH: "Firstly, I would like to apologise to all the customers in the front 14 rows of the stalls which got thoroughly drenched when the ropes failed and

the moons that trigger the end of the game). And then took another damage and there goes my last moon!

Three turns to win the game! This was not quite enough to get me to another end-point. And the boat had taken more damage and was probably no more than a collection of floating wood by this point! On top of that, I still didn't have enough bloodflowers. So, another failure – though I failed 'better' than last time. Still on Normal difficulty.

After playing twice, I'm now wondering how many times I can play this. I've visited well over half the maps and dealt with most of what's on those pages. So a lot of my next journey will be in familiar territory, meeting familiar challenges... *Primeval Peril* still gets 8/10 on my highly subjective scale.

Sleeping Gods: *Primeval Peril was designed by Ryan Laukat and is published by Red Raven (www.redravengames.com). It's a story-telling exploration game for 1 player (though there are rules for 2 or 4 players), aged 13+, and takes 2-4 hours to play.*

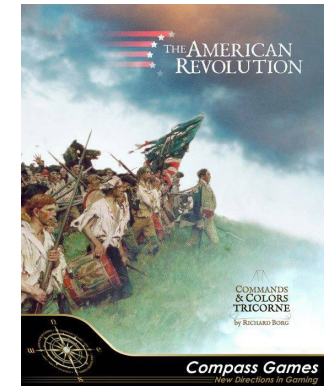
Continental and Crusaders (Part 1: Continentals)

The next game to hit the table was *C&C Tricorne: The American Revolution*. This is the American War of Independence (aka American Revolutionary War) game in the "Commands & Colors" (C&C) family designed by Richard Borg. I missed it when it was published (back in 2017), but recently acquired a copy – expensive, but not extortionate. This is a war I know little about, so the game may educate me.

However, the first question is how it differs from other C&C games. And the first answer is the combat dice. One face for a hit on each type of unit (infantry, cavalry, artillery), one general hit and two (retreat) flags. So there'll be twice as much retreating in this game compared to any other. Which makes sense given that a lot of the troops will be militias and citizen armies. Less so for the regulars.

Then I spotted the Rally rule. A unit that retreats may rout, leaving the battlefield and giving the opponent a victory banner. Again, it makes sense for the setting. And the fewer casualties the unit's taken, the less likely it is to run away. It's a clever rule, even if it does involve rolling more dice.

The dice also mean that there's an equal chance of hitting each type of unit. And then every unit has four blocks, so they're all equally hard/easy to kill. (In other C&C games it's harder to hit artillery, say, but those units have fewer blocks/figures so need fewer hits to eliminate.)



The types of unit are what you'd expect (infantry in several flavours, light cavalry and light artillery) and regular troops are more robust than the provincials and militias. Having said that, there are some novel rules here. I'm used to units rolling fewer dice if they move before firing. But here there's a reduction if they move into melee as well. The extra die when a full-strength unit attacks is neat – somewhere between the roll-as-many-dice-as-blocks and the roll-the-same-number-of-dice-regardless-of-casualties approaches in other C&C games.

Units move one or two hexes, but infantry has a range of three (and artillery further). Thus an attack is going to come under fire well before it can close in. However, gunfire is generally only one or two dice, so it doesn't do much damage.

Leaders are particularly influential in this game: bolstering units against retreat but also adding a die in combat. They also allow an attached infantry unit to make a second attack if the first is successful (as cavalry units do). Another aspect that I suspect reflects the setting.

The Command cards (for ordering units) seem to be pretty much standard. There are also Combat cards (special actions/abilities usually for a single unit on the turn played). These are the equivalent of Combat/Tactic/Tactician cards in other C&C games, but here there is a separate deck for each side. This adds a bit of flavour to differentiate the two sides.

The types of terrain are much the same as in other games, but their effects can be different. For example, infantry can still battle when moving into forest or buildings. Rather than reducing the number of dice rolled against a unit in a forest/building, the unit can ignore a hit. Thus forests and buildings are less of an obstacle to attacking and yet provide better protection.

Physically, the game is very similar to what I've come to expect from C&C games, albeit this one is published by Compass – the other games with "Commands & Colors" in the title come from GMT. A solid box, mounted board, thick cardboard terrain tiles and coloured wooden blocks for the troops. The stickers for the blocks look a little blurry, compared to the crisp drawings GMT produces. I think the idea is to make them look more like photographs than line drawings. I felt the colouring of the terrain tiles was muted, but they work perfectly well. And the blocks are slightly larger than GMT's. It's all very good.

There are enough things in *Tricorne* to make it rather different from what I'm used to (*C&C Napoleonics* is my touchstone here). Having run through the rules, I settled down to try the game. As I was on my own, I fished out the *CDG Solo pack #2* and used the *Napoleonics* rules to give me some 'fog of war'.

The first scenario is "Bemis Heights" from October 1777 and has a British/Hessian force holding the only hills on the board and facing a rather larger Continental force in and around wooded areas. There's no cavalry and the British have the only artillery – two units.

With Battalions of the Cardinal's Guard and Picardy Musketeers attached, Frontier regiment 3 should do better. Though the lack of opponents may be a factor. Be that as it may, there is still a MiD for CG Lieutenant-Colonel Come Asiourar and promotion for Subaltern Beaumes de Venise. This is not as good news as it sounds for Beaumes as he's no longer in First Battalion under Come. There's no reward for PM Lt-Col Lance A Little, but brevet Captain Pierre Newkirk has his rank confirmed. ❖

Press

Announcements

I am shocked to see the senior Captain of the GDMD cannot read a military map, let alone get words of command out to his subordinates. The man is an incompetent idiot and should resign his commission as soon as possible before he gets his valiant troopers killed.

Arent Hayes announces that the annual spring clean of the Field Marshall Offices will commence in January 1678. Please note that this may result in delays in processing any requests or organising ad-hoc appointments, although regular planned meetings with the Field Marshall will be unaffected. We apologise in advance for any inconveniences.

Social

I, Ben e'Volence, will be hosting a party in my club for all four weeks of February.

Dress as a season of the year (optional) and bring your good ladies and best of friends.

All are welcome and the cost is mine to bear.

All gentlemen and ladies of Paris are invited to attend my annual chess tournament at my Club week three of February 1676. 1000 crown first prize, 500 crown second prize, 250 crown third prize, refreshments provided for competitors, guests and mistresses. Best of luck, gentlemen!

Gentlemen of Paris,
During week 2, Miss Nifisent and I extend our warmest invitation to you and your ladies for an evening of conviviality at my club. We have arranged for the club's eminent cooks to prepare one of my most cherished childhood delights, poularde au cidre et aux pommes. It would bring us great joy to share a truly memorable meal in the company of dear friends.

I'm in! Though Her Majesty dislikes the very idea of fruit with meat...
† Le Roi

Blatant brown-nosing

Vive Le Roi!

May his radiance shine into the dimly lit streets of Paris and illuminate our fair city.

† Pierre Lapin

Who was where – round and about

Where	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Practising	TCdS - Rapier JdG - Rapier BeV - Sabre DJA - Sabre TC - Sabre AdO - Sabre	TCdS - Rapier MHD - Cutlass AH - Sabre JdG - Rapier BeV - Sabre JH - Sabre TC - Sabre AdO - Sabre	NM - Rapier CE - Rapier TCdS - Rapier HS - Rapier VdF - Sabre SBC - Rapier BT - Rapier AH - Sabre FXC - Rapier CBL - Sabre BLC - Sabre JdG - Rapier EIF - Sabre TC - Sabre CdF - Rapier BeV - Sabre ID - Sabre CdN - Sabre MD - Sabre JH - Sabre SDS - Sabre LR - Rapier AdO - Sabre	NM - Rapier FS - Rapier TCdS - Rapier HS - Rapier VdF - Sabre SBC - Rapier BT - Rapier AH - Sabre FXC - Rapier CBL - Sabre BLC - Sabre JdG - Rapier EIF - Sabre MdG - Rapier TC - Sabre CdF - Rapier BeV - Sabre ID - Sabre CdN - Sabre MD - Sabre JH - Sabre PL - Rapier HdB - Sabre LR - Rapier AdO - Sabre
Attending their command performance	CPL	FS CPL	FS RS	RS
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; ??? = unknown host.				



Here's the view of the starting positions from behind the Continentals (light blue blocks). They definitely outnumber the British (red, plus Hessians in dark blue), especially with those reserves at the bottom of the photo. However, the orange strip along the bottom of the blocks shows that these are Militia – and you can see two more towards the right of the front line.

An interesting feature of these battles is the “Opening Cannonade”. Before anything else happens, both sides fire their artillery, which can then retire behind friendly units. This represents the historical practice of lining up the artillery in front of the infantry and bombarding the enemy before the infantry advances, leaving the guns behind. In this case, only the British have artillery and the opening cannonade removed a block from a Continental Regular infantry.

Initial shooting from the Continentals caused damage and disarray amongst the Hessian Regulars in the British centre. Then the Light and Rifle infantry on the Continental left opened up on the British Light. Just a single hit, despite their firepower (augmented by a “Ranged Bonus” Combat card). After these turns, I realised how few dice were rolled for ranged attacks. Time to go hand-to-hand.

The British used a “Bayonet Attack” card for the Hessians centre-left (led by Generals Acland and Burgoyne) and hit the weak link in the Continental line – the Militia.



Here are the Hessians making that attack. Boy, do they look outnumbered!

The Grenadiers forced the first one to retreat (undamaged, it rallied). As they had been joined by a Leader, the Grenadiers made a Bonus Attack and eliminated the second militia unit. Then it was Regulars on Regulars. The first Hessian got three hits on its target. The second three hits and a flag. Forced to retreat, the

remnant of the Continental unit failed to rally. The Hessian Regulars also had a Leader and their Bonus Attack wiped out what was left of the first target. Suddenly the score is 3:0 to the British as the dice do them a favour.

The Continentals had a “Counter-attack” and used this to hit the Grenadiers in return. The first Regular unit to attack did no damage, was unable to retreat from the battle back and was wiped out. The second got a hit on the Grenadiers, but was likewise eliminated. The third unit was the surviving Militia (I was expecting the Grenadiers to be more damaged by this stage). The Militia got a hit and survived. But, after more good dice, the score is 5:0 to the British. One more banner needed.

The Hessian Grenadiers then tried to finish off the Militia, but a “Retire and Reform” Combat card saved them (just). However, Regulars in the centre blew away General Learned, quietly minding his own business, for a British win.

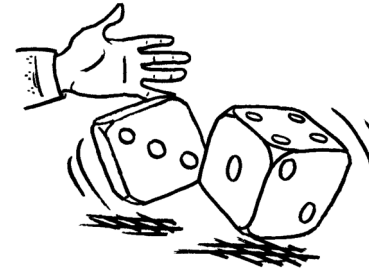


The Hessians are poised for that final attack – Gen Learned is on his own in the middle.

That was over quickly: just six turns. It still took a good hour to play, though – there was a lot of referring to the rules to make sure of the details. The *CDG Solo Pack* worked well, despite this not being the game it was intended for.

It's a bit early to draw many conclusions about this game, given the British luck with the dice and the lack of cavalry in this scenario. However, I still think ranged fire isn't going to do much damage, so closing into melee is important. What ranged fire does do, in removing the odd block from units, is stop units gaining the extra die in combat for being at full strength. I look forward to exploring more scenarios.

Commands & Colors: Tricorne: *The American Revolution was designed by the one and only Richard Borg and is published by Compass Games (www.compassgames.com). It is a simple wargame for two players, aged 12+, and takes 60-90 minutes to play. It gets a provisional 8/10 on my highly subjective scale.*



a row. He keeps going, though, and wins two more bets to end flush – but with some esteem. He can't work out whether he's drinking to drown his sorrows or to celebrate a change of fortune.

Dee Jean Aise completes his month with a flutter at Blue Gables to impress his new lady friend. He's disappointed to be restricted to the house limit of 150 crowns and even more so when he loses the bet.

Steve De Sade is at the tables in Hunter's – with Laura – and wagers 50 crowns a time. After winning three times, he's brought down by losing one. However, another two wins restore the sparkle to his smile as he ends well in profit.

Not to be outdone, Henri de Boudeille takes some extra crowns on his visit to the Bawdy houses. Betting 10 crowns a time, it takes five losses (and only two wins) for him to give up.

In the courting stakes, we have two winners and one loser. The latter being Balzac Slapdash, who doesn't seem to get the message that Therèse is out on the town. One of the winners is new arrival Pierre Lapin. He's quickly got into the swing of things in Paris, attending parties and then going courting with “roses galore, and a bottle of good Languedoc”. Just a little rapier practice needed to complete his first month. All paid for from his nice new loan. Not to mention an unexpected gift from Claude de Nord. Louis Renault continues his giving to the needy, but in much smaller amounts.

Among those maintaining a low profile this month is Hector William Boone, though he does manage to buy a couple of Fleur bonds before hosting Marcel Hatch Dupree for half the month.

All quiet at the front

With French troops on the defensive this season, “Tiny” Thierry Toothpick's Dragoon Guards are patrolling the border. Thierry continues to interrogate “obviously Spanish” peasants that his patrols encounter. His reward is a few hundred crowns of ~~backhanders~~ fines and a Mention in Despatches (“But he **isn't** CPS”). The regiment's new Captain, Marc-Antoine Descartes, is zealous and promoted to Major immediately. His ‘earnings’ are almost enough to buy the extra horses his new rank requires. Luckily, he has the balance to hand.

Hugh Jeneaux has summoned his regiment, Archduke Leopold's Cuirassiers, to get him out of a Frontier regiment. They, too, are on patrol and a victorious encounter with an Imperial force brings their commander almost a thousand crowns' worth of loot. He is Mentioned twice (“Sound move, that” “And very profitable”).

Who was where – with the ladies				
Who	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Lois			PL succeeds ex-BdV	
Lotte		DJA succeeds ex-BeV	Out	Out
Morgane	ZvT at home	Out		ZvT at home
Pet	AA at home		Out	
Thérèse	Out BS fails	Out BS fails	Out BS fails	Out BS 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.				
Who was where – in the red light district				
Where	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Bawdy houses	MHD + FC: Mug 0 HWB + FC AH + FC ID + FC		DBT + FC: Mug 0 HdB(G 40) + FC	
Shows those indulging: FC = Female Companionship; Mug n = Mugged & amount lost; (G) = Gambled				

Reading Matter

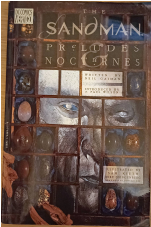
My latest retro reading has been an omnibus of several of Fritz Leiber’s “Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser” books, specifically the first three: *Swords and Deviltry*, *Swords Against Death* and *Swords in the Mist*. Each of these is, in turn, a collection of short stories about the two swordsmen-thieves, including the best-known *Ill Met in Lankhmar* – the story of how the two mis-matched ‘heroes’ met and bonded.

Now my memory of these stories is that they all take place in the city of Lankhmar itself. Back in the day, they provided inspiration/background for some of my *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures. So I was surprised how many of them are actually set in other parts of Leiber’s fantasy world, Nehwon, including lengthy ocean voyages. Fafhrd, it turns out, is something of a sailor. Towards the end of the third volume there are even a couple set in our world. All due to the machinations of the pair’s wizard sponsors, Ningauble of the Seven Eyes and Sheelba of the Eyeless Face. (Hands up all those who think Leiber had a thing about eyes.)

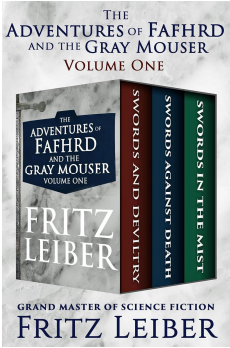
Reading them again, I’m not sure what to make of these stories. For a start, they are darker than I remember. Fafhrd and the Mouser are not just a couple of entertaining rogues boozing, whoring and fighting their way around the city. One of the things that binds them together is the murder of the women they love just after the four first meet. And they go through some harrowing experiences in their adventures – as well as fun ones.

Some of the stories certainly outstay their welcome, too. The very first, *The Snow Women*, is Fafhrd’s origin story: growing up in the icy north (he’s essentially a Viking), falling out with his family, escaping the life planned for him by the women of the tribe, defeating their magic and heading south with his woman for the bright lights (ahem) of the great city. It drags. Interestingly, the Mouser’s backstory is limited to a few paragraphs: he’s a failed magician’s apprentice.

So I’m glad I’ve (re-)read them, but I don’t think I’ll be going back for more.



Since watching the second season of the *Sandman* TV series (first season: great – I rather liked having the Corinthian as the power behind Dream’s misfortunes; second season: not so much), I’ve wanted to re-read the comics (okay, graphic novels). So I was very pleased to spot an archive box labelled “Magazines” and “Sandman”. I’ve now worked my way through all ten volumes, which are now slightly yellowed and smelling musty.

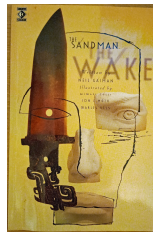


One of the first things I realised was that I glance at the pictures and read the text. I guess I'm not really a comics person. And I'm probably missing things by not looking more carefully at the art – some of it is very arty, though. The stories are brilliant, of course. Gaiman does a tremendous job of creating his own mythos around the Endless – anthropomorphic personifications of the eternal, whose names all begin with D. Not to mention interweaving them with Ancient Greek myth (where their names don't begin with D).

I guess the over-arching story is a tragedy as we move inexorably towards the inevitable death of Dream (aka the Sandman, Morpheus, Lord of Dreams, Oneiros et al) at the hands of the ~~Furies~~ Kindly Ones. How can a personification of an aspect of the Eternal die? Well, it's more that one particular avatar ceases and another takes over (cf Delirium, who was once Delight – I blame humanity).

Within that framework there are a lot of wonderful stories, some of which hardly involve Dream at all. As a cat person, I particularly like "The Dream of a Thousand Cats" – an animated segment in the TV series with the bonus of David Tennant as a nasty kitten-drowner. Then there's Dream as Shakespeare's inspiration, the bet between Dream and Death that means Hob Gadling doesn't die, Gaiman's version of Orpheus and Eurydice, the Baghdad of Haroun al Rashid and the whole sequence of stories told at The World's End inn (reminds me of the Floating Vagabond).

One other thing about these books is that they make good bedtime reading. As each volume is several issues of the original comics, you can read the equivalent of one issue before nodding off. Even at this rate, it's only taken me a few weeks to get through all ten volumes (I may have managed several issues a night). And I am very pleased to have re-read them all. Highly recommended.



Games Events

Very last call for the next HandyCon: 30th October-1st November at the Staverton Park Hotel in Daventry. See www.handycon.co.uk

And then it's **MidCon**: 6th-8th November 2026 in its new venue: the Holiday Inn in Kenilworth. (This has the advantage for me of being a shorter drive.) Expect three days of open gaming, a highly-organised (it's all online) Bring 'n' Buy and the **MidCon** Quiz. I've got a mammoth game of *Commands & Colors: Napoleonics* scheduled with Mark B, so I'll no doubt be telling you about that in next issue.

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

and Thérèse Le Vert to look forward to the coming year – with the added attraction of "those little shrimp canapés that everyone likes". They clearly go down well with Maurice Danseur and Madelaine, as they make a point of complimenting their host on his choice of canapé. Canapés aside, Sebastian Blanc-Chevaux is a little awed to be "rubbing shoulders with the quality".

The other party in the Fleur is Louis Renault's latest get-together with Maggie Nifisent, following his fencing seminar. There should be a third, but Zeold von Tu's apologetic invitation seems to have fallen on deaf ears as no-one shows up. Well, not when he and Morgane Le Fay are actually hosting, anyway. Botte Le Chimiste is a week early and Martin de Garnache is week late! That's after Martin made a premature attempt to Toady to Camille. At least he got in to Louis's bash.

Cardinal's Guard commander Frank X Change makes the mistake of being in the Fleur at the same time as the parties. King's Musketeers Chemin de Fer, Claude de Nord and Hugo Serre break away from Camille's do long enough to exchange challenges. Within the party Ian Dediette (Queen's Own) and Maurice Danseur (Dragoon Guards) have words with each other. At the other bash, Beau Taux and Vaux de Fon find they have cause with each other (53rd versus Crown Prince's). And Beau renews last week's challenges to the riff-raff – now at Camille's shindig.

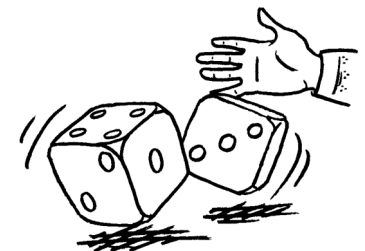
Pierre Aux-Manique continues his gambling at the Frog & Peach. This time he limits himself to just three 100-crown wagers after he wins two of them. He's gained just enough kudos for this month.

Roll them bones

That's it for parties this month, sparking a migration to the gyms for sword practice – Elroi feels he needs it "in case Hugh Jeneaux was at a party" (which seems unlikely given Earl Jeneaux is n action this season). Arent Hayes makes a point of telling everyone that he's only practising "after long hours in FM Office". Who knew being Aide to the Field Marshal was so demanding?

Meanwhile, the big draw in the theatres is Minister of State Rick Shaw's latest, The Multicoloured Coat. Having profited from backing Rick's "D'Artagnan", Pierre Aux-Manique is happy to re-invest his money in the new play. The production also benefits from the three big hits each being closed in turn for their command performances in the Louvre. So dedicated is the Minister to his new play that he only remembers to attend on His Majesty when members of the King's Escort turn up to, um, escort him.

However, gambling continues – though not by Pierre. At the Fleur, Zeold von Tu slaps down 500 crowns a time. Buoyed up by winning his first wager, he continues. Only to lose three in



Who was where – the other clubs

Where	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Bothwell's	HF + Ella PPuf(G) + Viv	HF + Ella	HF + Ella HWB . MHD PPuf + Viv AA + Pet CPL + Agnes	HF + Ella HWB . MHD PPuf + Viv AA CPL + Agnes SDS(G) + Laura
Hunter's	NM + Vera . CE + Di . FS + Fifi . HS + Kathy . VdF + Belle . CBL + Violet . DBT . EIF + Lucy . CdF + Henrietta . MD + Madelaine . SDS + Laura . PL . HdB . LR + Maggie SBC + Sue . CdN + Jacky			
Blue Gables	BT + Angelina		DJA + Lotte	DJA(G) + Lotte
Frog & Peach	PAM(G) + May	PAM(G) + May	PAM + May	CE + Di PAM + May DBT
Red Phillips				

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

UK Games Expo: the biggest UK event is 4th-6th June 2027 (a few days later than usual) at the National Exhibition Centre. It has huge trade halls, lots of tournaments (continuing into the night), organised events, demos and plenty of space for open gaming. www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk is where to find out more.

Spiel: *the* board games event of the year. 22nd-25th October 2026, at the Messe (Exhibition Centre) in Essen, Germany. Publishers from around the world show off their latest games and, importantly, let people play them. And buy them. See www.spiel-essen.de/en

MidCon: 6th-8th November 2026 at a new venue: the Holiday Inn in Kenilworth (Warwickshire). **MidCon** is a friendly board games convention. 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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By Popular Demand

Turn 8 answers

I said that sport is an area I know little about and I was immediately challenged on whether I meant ‘sport’ or ‘event’ for the Olympic categories. That is, “Athletics” is a sport; “800 metres race” is an event in that sport. Not having realised there was that distinction, I’m just accepting everything. In fact, that’s my guiding light for this game: “accept everything”. As long as it begins with S this round.

So, first up was a club that is or was in the Premier League. And I really know nothing about football, so my choice was based on what Wikipedia could tell me. And the rest of you? Looks like the rivalry between the Sheffield clubs cost a couple of people a point. John Watson went for Southampton as “it’s the closest”.

At least Roy Bleasdale is with me in ignorance: “Apart from the Olympic sports, I had to Google the team names. I am not a sports fan. Though I could name many of the Aussie Rules teams. Knowledge of football, as opposed to ‘soccer’, is almost compulsory when living in Melbourne.”

Cricket County	
Somerset	4
Surrey	12
Sussex	4

Moving on, how about an English County Cricket Club? (Thus not letting me pick Glamorgan.) There are only three beginning with S, so which one would come out on top? Surrey wins again. (My choice as I have actually seen them play at the Oval. Once.) John Watson went for Surrey as “the most London-centric”.

I expected more variety in Rugby Union teams, but Saracens all but swept the board. John Watson has his reasons again: “No brainer here. The team I grew up with in north London – Saracens. I used to watch them play in one of our local parks for free. Just walk across the park and stand on the touchline. I dread to think how much a ticket is these days.”

Winter Olympics	
Skeleton	2
Ski jumping	7
Ski salmon	1
Skiing	5
Snowboarding	2
Speed Skating	2

The Winter Olympics must provide more scope and here we are. Tim Macaire defends his choice of “Ski salmon” (I thought it was predictive text ‘helping’) thus: “Surely you have seen the Freshwater Fish Downhill?” Well, no. Though that may describe my attempts at skiing (many years ago).

Mike Pollard tried to hedge his bets: “The winter Olympics could easily be speed skating, snowboarding or some sort of skiing.” Before plumping for the skeleton.

Premier League club	
Sheffield United	1
Sheffield Wednesday	1
Southampton	8
Sunderland	8
Swansea	1
Swindon	1

Rugby Union club	
Sale Sharks	1
Saracens	19

No new Ministers

The Minister of State has some other tasks this month: dealing with the applications of Hugh Jeneaux and Thierry Toothpick for Ministers without Portfolio and from Thierry to be CPS. The last is easy as there’s no vacancy and the Minister takes no time in refusing the other two. To his annoyance, the pair re-submit their applications straight away.

Marc-Antoine Descartes resigns from the Grand Duke Max’s Dragoons to apply to the Dragoon Guards. He is accepted by the regiment’s CO, Thierry Toothpick, and buys a Captaincy before setting off to join the regiment in action. There is then some confusion as Second Division commander Charles PiedLuminaire tries to appoint him Divisional Adjutant. Marc-Antoine is not qualified for this position, but retains his place at Charles’s Aide.

Before leaving Paris, Marc-Antoine asks the Crown Prince’s Aide to resign, but the influence he brings to bear is not enough to persuade the incumbent to go.

Charles Etfeevor, on the other hand, removes the Lieutenant-Colonel of the 13th Fusiliers by calling in a favour.

The King’s Musketeers gets a clear-out with Chemin de Fer using his influence to remove the junior Major and Hugo Serre persuading the Lt-Colonel to quit. The resulting vacancies provide room for Hugo to buy the rank of Lt-Col and Chemin to become Major.

New Year, new parties

The place to be at the start of January is clearly Hunter’s club where Neville Moore and Vera Cruz are hosts. Guests Chemin de Fer and Maurice Danseur come in for some stick from those who consider themselves of the nobility and are provoked by this duo’s superior social standing. Thus Charles Etfeevor challenges both Chemin and Maurice while Steve De Sade slaps Maurice.

Claude de Nord eschews Neville’s invitation to escort Jacky Tinne and join Sebastian Blanc-Cheval and Sue Briquet in another part of Hunter’s. This was intended to be for Picardy Musketeers, but Sebastian is the only one there. Still, the four of them have a suitably boozy introduction to the New Year.

Chancing their arm on the gaming tables this week are Percival Puffington and Pierre Aux-Manique. In Bothwell’s, Percival places a single 1,500 crown bet that he wins. This does his purse and status a world of good. Pierre is in the Frog & Peach and bets 100 crowns a time. He only wins one after he’s lost four on the trot, but keeps going. He loses the next, wins another and loses another two to end up well out of pocket, but gaining a little kudos.

So, after Neville’s party, what next? The answer is (mostly) the Fleur de Lys, but partygoers are split between two parties. The first is hosted by Camille de Polignac

Who was where – the Fleur				
Where	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Fleur de Lys	FXC + Edna RS + Justine GdB + Bette CdP + Thérèse JH + Cath	ZvT + Morgane FXC + Edna GdB + Bette CdP + Thérèse . HS + Kathy . SBC + Sue . CBL + Violet . BLC + Eve . DBT . AA . EIF + Lucy . CdF + Henrietta . ID . CdN + Jacky . MD + Madeline . SDS + Laura . PL . LR + Maggie . NM + Vera . CE + Di . VdF + Belle . HWB . BT . PPuf + Viv . MdG + Chris . RS + Justine . HdB	ZvT(G) GdB + Bette CdP + Thérèse	GdB + Bette CdP + Thérèse
Outside Fleur de Lys	BLC (ZvT) MdG (CdP)		MdG (ZvT)	
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.				

And so we turn to the ~~real~~ summer Olympics. Even more sports/events here, surely. But only just and a runaway win for Swimming. And no justifications from anybody.

NFL teams	
Saints	1
San Francisco 49ers	9
Seattle Seahawks	8
Steelers	2

And the last was American football which I know a fair number of gamers follow. But not me. Well, at least one other person chose the Steelers. Mike Pollard called it, “Close one between SF and the Seattle Seahawks.” In going for the Seahawks (“which I confess I had to look up.”) Eddy Richards reckoned “Double S = double points?”. No. While John Watson “decided ... it's San Francisco 49ers as that's where one of my sisters lives.”

Tim Macaire adds a postscript: “It occurred to me too late that for the latest round of BPD, I should just have put 'Saints' for every answer as there is bound to be a team by that name...”

Scores are on the next page (layout’s getting tricky!).

Olympics	
Sailing	2
Shooting	1
Shot put	1
Skateboarding	1
Softball	1
Squash	2
Swimming	12

Turn 9 categories

I’m not sure whether this theme is British novelists or just novels. Let me have:

- 1 A novel by Charles Dickens
- 2 A Discworld novel by Terry Pratchett
- 3 A novel by Agatha Christie
- 4 A James Bond novel by Ian Fleming
- 5 A novel by George Eliot
- 6 A novel by Doris Lessing

All beginning with the Letter M, please (My answers have already been recorded.)

What’s this about?

I have cribbed the rules from the *Variable Pig* website. You can find the originals (with lots of variants) at: [variablepig.org/ rules/bypop.html](http://variablepig.org/rules/bypop.html)

Each turn the GM lists six categories and a letter. For each category, players name something that fits it and begins with the initial letter. They score points equal to the number of people who give the same answer. Most points at the end wins.

Example: The initial letter is A and the category is cities in Holland. 13 people give Amsterdam as their answer and score 13 points each, 6 people suggest Alkmaar and score 6 points each, 3 suggest Arnhem and score 3 points.

I suspect I've got the hardest job: deciding on the categories! So I'll cheat and use some of the same ones as last time. We'll run for 10 turns and see what happens.

The scores	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Roy Bleasdale	78	85	20	32	52	44	88	32	431
Colin Bruce	51	83	45	56	50	34	70	43	432
Charles Burrows	69	64	7	51	51	29	61	54	386
Mark Cowper	67	87	46	67	49	32	75	56	479
Mike Dommett	63	87	19	57	37	42	71	-	376
Paul Evans	70	75	48	40	52	34	70	42	437
Anthony Gilbert	74	33	39	43	45	42	88	45	409
William Hay	56	33	47	32	24	42	43	-	277
Eric Henderson								57	57
Peter Jenkins	79	77	31	53	29	41	78	67	455
Andrew Kendall	71	75	43	49	30	38	79	54	439
Andrew Larder	57	49	25	35	39	42	48	42	337
Nik Luker	52	82	23	50	33	41	70	61	412
Tim Macaire	59	68	34	36	-	23	53	49	322
Brad Martin	36	89	38	44	40	21	66	45	379
Nigel Monaghan	37	80	43	51	49	28	70	57	415
Graeme Morris	67	78	44	43	56	37	88	60	473
Jonathan Palfrey	52	91	25	57	34	47	70	66	442
Mike Pollard	66	85	48	59	38	42	65	62	465
Eddy Richards	74	87	37	49	43	42	54	55	441
Richard Salmon	78	80	48	61	43	43	76	51	480
Pam Udowiczenko	45	73	-	52	-	29	79	-	278
John Watson	57	89	42	49	44	43	68	65	457

The scores

And we have a new player as Eric Henderson, who's just signed up for LPBS, joins in. However, Peter Jenkins is top scorer this round.

Richard Salmon is still in the lead, but just by 1 point now as Mark Cowper closes the gap. Graeme Morris isn't far behind in the bronze medal position.

Send your entries to Pevans at 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF or to TWJO@pevans.co.uk by 20th November 2026.

must be released forthwith, his name cleared of any criminal taint and a big fat compensatory award – paid from the pockets of this charlatan imbecile de Nord – given to him.” Court staff move towards the orange ones, but are unable to stop the continuing performance.

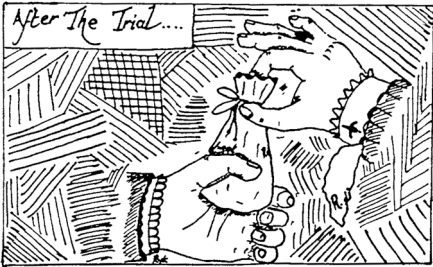
“If anyone deserves to be on trial today it is you Earl Shaw... you... you... stain on the government and judiciary, conniving as you are with that even bigger scoundrel and convicted felon Cuckpowder. The pair of you should be freezing your proverbials off in a Bastille cell, along with the witch whore Le Fay. In fact, consider yourself arrested right now as Commissioner Toothpick has signed and issued this proper arrest warrant for you upon the charges of treason and sorcery and embezzlement and spying and... and... well, lots of other stuff – there's too much to read it all out now but you can go through it when you're sat in your cell”. The spokesman passes the ‘warrant’ to another Tangerine who attempts to hand it to Earl Shaw.

“You're to accompany us, once the Court has been cleared, and we shall hold you under house arrest until such time as we can get the keys to the Bastille off of de Nord! Oh, and by the way, in case you were wondering, I'm Tangerine No.1 but you can call me Captain as Marquis Toothpick has honoured me with the appointment of Captain of his personal bodyguard here,” he turns to survey the orange garbed comrades behind him.

The ‘Captain’ and his men move to release the prisoner, but there are now sufficient guards to restrain the little fellows and ‘usher’ them from the Court. They can be heard complaining bitterly about how TRUE Commissioner Toothpick will get to learn of this and none of you have heard the last of us...

Lifting his head from his hands, Minister Shaw issues his verdict. “The Minister of State appreciates the views of customers, sorry, citizens who have come forward in Le Chimiste's defence. The defendant does not deny selling potions. Unfortunately, Thierry Toothpick has shown us where depravity can lead: it might start with herbal remedies, then it will be ‘milk of the poppy’ and this tobacco stuff they have across the channel. I therefore find Botte Le Chimiste guilty as charged and levy a fine of 1,000 crowns to cover back taxes and cost of regulating his activity to ensure potions remain medicinal only.”

No attempt is made to commute the sentence and Botte is released once he's paid.



While Botte does not formally call any witnesses, Baron Elroi le Flingue strides to the front of the court, spurs ringing on the flagstones, and slaps his gauntlets down upon the rail. “My lords, I have charged cannon and sabre alike, yet never have I seen a more absurd assault than this!” he bellows. “Sir Botte le Chemiste stands accused of corrupting His Majesty’s Subjects, yet what was his crime? He offered a remedy to men who had feasted too well in honour of the season, and he did it at five crowns for twenty pills, a price any honest trooper might pay! Note, gentlemen, that his own notice warned the ladies and the small of stature to abstain. Is that the conduct of a poisoner? A true villain hides his dangers; Sir Botte printed his on the very page! I have seen men fall to the surgeon’s saw and the apothecary’s leeches, and no one hauled them before a tribunal. I ask this court: where is the corpse? Where is the victim? Bring me one soul who took the Elixir and was harmed by it, and I shall eat my shako! Until then, I say this prosecution is smoke without fire, and any man who calls my Colonel a corruptor will answer to me, on the field of honour, at dawn!” He glowers at the CPS before making an equally noisy exit.

The intervention of Marc-Antoine Descartes is not as ostentatious as Elroi’s, but he leaps to his feet in the public gallery and shouts.

“This trial is a travesty, not worth Your Excellency’s time! The CPS didn’t even bring up charges upon arrest, only trumping up some nonsense later. We all know that Le Chimiste works with only the highest quality natural ingredients for his potions and medicines, and they have very positive and healthy effects. This one especially...” Marc-Antoine produces an elaborately decorated flask depicting a small silver stallion on the label, “...has a very invigorating effect on a man’s stamina and constitution. I will leave this to Your Excellency as evidence. Brigadier-General Le Chimiste has to be declared innocent on the spot!”

A few seats away from Marc-Antoine is Frank X Change. While he makes no interruption, he has been taking notes throughout the proceedings and can be seen sketching the image on the flask Marc-Antoine proffers to the court. Neville Moore can also be seen in the gallery, but has nothing to say.

Talking of interruptions, the latest is a trumpet fanfare outside the doors. They are thrown open to admit some 10 or so diminutive gentlemen dressed in the tangerine uniforms of the personal guard to former Commissioner of Public Safety, Marquis Toothpick. Marching in double file and endeavouring to look determinedly fierce, the little chaps brush past CPS Claude de Nord, and file towards the front of the Court where one of their number is hefted up onto the shoulders of two others to wave a scroll and address Minister of State Earl Shaw.

“On behalf of the TRUE Commissioner of Public Safety and rightful Minister of State in waiting, the Magnificent Marquis (should be Count) Thierry Toothpick we denounce this supposed trial for the fabricated nonsense that it is and demand that it be immediately terminated. Marquis Toothpick never arrested the accused, therefore the warrant for such an arrest was invalid and the prisoner

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 17). You will also need (access to) a copy of the published rules to *En Garde!* (see www.engarde.co.uk).

**Orders for February 1678 to Pevans
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by 20th November 2026**



January 1678 (407)

The New Year bells have hardly stopped ringing before the clash of steel is heard in Paris. Yes, not even the turn of the year can prevent matters of honour being settled. Beau Taux has quite a few duels as his introduction to AD 1678. However, his first choice, against Achille d’Orbigny, has to be postponed due to “unforeseen circumstances”. Chemin de Fer is his second choice. Chemin is not a big bloke, but he does have a big weapon: a cutlass. It makes Beau’s rapier look rather insignificant. Still, it’s not the size... Ian Dediette seconds Beau, with Claude de Nord and Marcel Hatch Dupree standing behind Chemin.

Despite being cumbersome, Chemin’s cutlass parries the first lunge from the rapier. Chemin then strikes with a slash. Nothing daunted, Beau comes back with a slash of his own and then steps back to see the effect on his opponent. That’ll be a “meh”. This pause means Chemin’s second slash matches Beau’s second lunge – and deflects it. That’s more than enough for Beau as he’s carrying injuries from duels past and he surrenders. What’s more, he’s no longer fit to meet François de Blanchefort, Maurice Danseur or Vaux de Fon.

Frank X Change is the next man with a few duels on his plate. He chooses Hugo Serre as his first opponent, matching rapier against rapier. Frank has both skill and size on his side, but no-one at his side. His nominated second, Greg de Bécqueur, has not shown up. Hugo’s support is Ben e’Volence. An immediate (furious) lunge sees Hugo draw blood first. However, Frank shrugs off the blow, lunges himself and accepts Hugo’s surrender.

Fresh from his victory against Beau, Chemin is next to meet Frank. Again, it’s cutlass versus rapier with Claude and Marcel backing Chemin. Frank has the

same advantages: expertise and endurance. Defensive moves start the fight before Chemin launches a slash. Frank dodges this and strikes twice in quick succession: slash and (furious) lunge. Chemin has had enough and concedes this one.

Bandaged up, Chemin sticks around to join Hugo as seconds to Claude as he takes on Frank. Claude is not looking well at all. He only seems to realise how weak he is when he attempts to cross his sabre with Frank's rapier. He surrenders without a blow being struck, which does his social standing no good at all.

Talking of people with several duels to fight, here's usual suspect Maurice Danseur. We've already seen that he's not getting to fight Beau Taux and now his meetings with Con Stantinople and Justin Thyme are postponed. This leaves him with just Steve De Sade to cross blades with. With both men wielding sabres, the only advantage is Maurice's greater skill. Neither has a second as Claude B'Limey doesn't arrive to support Steve. Steve backs off initially, but Maurice follows him up to land a slash. Gathering himself together, Steve hits out with a slash of his own, only to be struck by Maurice's cut. Steve quickly finds a towel to throw in. (Where's your second when you need one, eh?)

Peddling potions

The next order of business is, of course, the trial of Botte Le Chimiste. He stands accused of selling unlicensed medical cures. To wit:

1. Supplying dangerous noxious substances and
2. Corrupting the bodies and morals of His Majesty's Subjects.

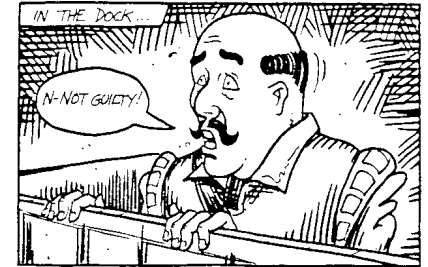
Commissioner of Public Safety Claude de Nord prosecutes, with Minister of State Rick Shaw sitting in judgement. Once the noise from the public seating has quietened down, CPS Claude states his case.

"Lords, ladies and gentle folk of Paris, I take no pleasure in bringing these charges today. BUT the time has come to bring stability to Paris," he intones, looking with reverence towards Earl Rick Shaw and bowing his head. "For too long scandalous behaviour has been tolerated," he continues. "You may be aware a warrant has been issued for the orange carbuncle Toothpick for deliberately insulting his own country and citizens. Botte Le Chimiste has added to the general steady drip, drip, drip of poison into this city."

"I speak now of a literal poison..." Claude pauses as a murmur runs round the court, "...for Botte Le Chimiste has peddled a 'cure' for all types of ills. Unfortunately, the weak willed, feeble minded and less intelligent have succumbed to his seductive sales pitch." This provokes a few outraged cries from the gallery along the lines of "Who are you calling feeble-minded" and "It worked for me."

"I obtained a sample of this so-called cure," resumes Claude, "and had a well-respected doctor analyse it. The sample contained opium-based laudanum, that may numb the pain but offer little to heal. I call my witness, Dr. Didier Bruce, who a few weekends ago treated several users who were brought to his surgery."

The fussy doctor Bruce takes the stand and the oath. "G'day your lordships, sheilas and cobbers," he begins. Claude promptly stands to interject "Please excuse my witness's language, he has been travelling extensively" before re-taking his seat.



"I have observed the effects of this drug," resumes the doctor, "and would like to say the following. This drug comes with a message and that message is 'beware'.

Such is the strength of the drug that victims were being fished out of the sewers and the river Seine every half an hour. The effects include slurred speech and blurred vision. Oh, and this little beaut can really open up the sluices at both ends. Users emit a pungent bouquet, similar to a fromage-maker's armpits."

After thanking the doctor, Claude sums up. "M'lud, you have heard the evidence and I would like to add the following. Botte Le Chimiste may have not meant to cause a problem but he has. If found guilty, could it be considered with a punishment you deem appropriate that future dealing of his medicine be permitted by licence only and that he can purchase said licence from the court or myself for a small fee of 50 crowns? This money can then be used to hire beds and nurses as such to help the afflicted." He concludes patriotically with "God save the King!"

Taking centre stage, Botte introduces his defence: "Your Honour, I would like to address the charges against me in detail." Rick waves permission and Botte begins.

"On the charge of supplying dangerous noxious substances, I plead not guilty. I use only the finest quality natural organic ingredients, the bounty of Mother Nature herself and I am unaware of anyone who has been harmed by my products. If you do wish to crack down on dangerous substances, may I suggest you examine the so-called 'wine' served in some of the low class drinking establishments instead." Cries of "True!" can be heard from the gallery.

"On the charge of corrupting the bodies of His Majesty's subjects," Botte continues, "I plead not guilty. I repeat my statement that no-one has been harmed by my products and, if supplying bandages and salves to His Majesty's brave soldiers is deemed to be 'corrupting their bodies', I am proud to declare my guilt!"

"On the charge of corrupting the morals of His Majesty's subjects, I also plead not guilty. I have provided products that enhance the beauty of the ladies of Paris. Do they not deserve be the most beautiful of women? If I am guilty of this, should not the dressmakers of Paris be in the dock alongside me? Are we to behave like the dour English Protestants and hide their beauty? Heavens forbid!"

"In conclusion I ask you to reject these charges against me," he finishes.