

## PASS THE GIGGIT PIPE - IT'S THE LETTERS PAGE!

Thanks to all the folks who were kind enough to drop me a line either before, during, or after the production of Issue 1. Some of the replies below have appeared in letters to those concerned, but I thought some airing out wouldn't hurt. My comments are prefaced by a smiley face (☺) and are in italics. Please take the time to jot down a few lines, it's always appreciated.



**Paul Mason, Japan**

It's good to see fanzines like this springing up. It seems to me that roleplaying has slid back from the brink of becoming mainstream and has once again become the province of the enthusiast only. This is probably a good thing; although we may bemoan the difficulty of finding players (I feel this particularly acutely) at least the players we *do* find are likely to be reasonably keen. I thought the zine was a good start.

☺ *Thanks Paul, though I realise you're giving BF a qualified thumbs up. The aftermath of Issue 1 was quite a revelation to me as I began to see more fanzines; I was amazed at their production values and professionalism. I guess I still had an idea of fanzines looking like 80s zines like "Dragon Lords" and "SEWARS". No offence to Ian Marsh and Chris Baylis, but the old zines do look scraggy compared to today's triumphs of style.*

*The content was even more staggering, lots of it could wipe the floor with so-called 'official' products. As I've said to more than one person in the last few months, I feel like the one legged man in the ass kicking contest. My hat is well and truly off to all those dedicated souls out there in fandom.*

*As far as players go, I think it is a little harder to find like-minded gamers. Games shops seem to be cutting back on minority systems to accommodate the TSR/White Wolf/WoTC behemoths, so people just don't get to see some stuff at all (that said, I hear someone picked up Jorune in Poland). The same problems are evident with gaming magazines. I had to advertise "Borkelby's Folly" in the amateur press and overseas - there wasn't anywhere to go in the UK. This may change with the advent of free contact ads in Future Publishing's new RPG mag "Arcane". Luckily for me word got around, and so Issue 2 was worth doing. Rolegaming is a difficult hobby to explain to outsiders, and it's not for everyone. Y'know, there are some really good friends that you wouldn't dream of plonking in a chair and improvising a scenario with. To wit:*

**Matthew Pook, Falmouth**

Friends who do not game are always going to think that you and what you do a little odd.

☺ *I think rolegaming can engender the same reaction from acquaintances that would follow a confession that one was an ardent Trekker, and yes, one could speak Klingon. Incidentally I'm learning Welsh, which may not be so far removed from Klingon as one would think. Allegedly.*

**David Hall, Slough**

My advice on running a fanzine would be: don't do it in the first place.

☺ *Aaargh! Too late you fools, too late!*

**Matthew Pook**

Compared to other fanzines that I have seen "Borkelby's Folly" looks very good [but] you cannot escape the fact that it is very slight...with more contributions this should be solved.

☺ *The reaction to BF's 'look' has been mixed. I can only work with what I have. Yeah, BF should have a larger page count, but there is only so much I can write in a given time period. As you point out, more contributions would be a great boon. I'd like to thank Alex Blair for reminding me that*

submission requests are usually greeted by the loud chirping of crickets; however, this issue should contain material by at least four people. Most zines cost about £3 for 30 to 40 pages, and while BF1 was shorter than that it cost nothing more than an envelope and adequate postage. A bargain.

#### Owen Smith, Cambridge

Distribution and material are going to be problems of course. Distribution since Jorune is a fringe game, and material for all the usual reasons. There was a UK Jorune fanzine called "Sarceen's Knowledge" but it folded quite some time ago. Joe [Coleman, editor of "Sholari"] has an edge on material since he works on official Jorune stuff and gets some of his material from those sources.

☉ I have a feeling that Jorune is probably more talked about than actually played. I think quite a few gamers have a high opinion of Jorune and read the material for the heck of it. In this sense it may be akin to "Empire of the Petal Throne". Distribution is indeed a problem, and I'm doing my best to get the zine out to those that would be interested in it. There are Jorune gamers out there, reaching them is the problem.

The former editor of "Sarceen's Knowledge", Alex Blair, has been in touch and should be contributing to the next issue. Alex gets a credit in "The Gire of Sillipus" for work lifted from Issue 1 of "Sarceen's Knowledge" (though apparently this was co-authored by Geoff Gray). I've also heard mention of "Skylarking Digest", which may be a Canadian SoJ fanzine. If anyone has news about this please get in touch. My attempts to contact "Adventures Unlimited" for more info (amongst others) have been unsuccessful.

Yes, Joe Coleman has me by the short and curlies when it comes to sanctioned material. I can't compete on those terms and I don't want to. We're on the same side after all, and I still think a Jorune zine based in the UK is a good idea. "Sholari" seems most interested in culture/society articles, so BF may have more freedom to experiment. "Sholari" is also closer to SkyRealms HQ, and while I'm not suggesting that Joe is anyone's lackey, BF can be less formal. If the readership of "Borkelby's Folly" dwindles to next to nothing I'll throw the towel in. At least I tried.

#### Paul Mason

I'd rather have 10 readers who comment than 100 who don't.

☉ I'll second that.

#### Owen Smith

One of Joe's problems is that most of his subscribers are also on the Jorune mailing list on the Internet, so it's a tricky subject whether he should publish anything that has been seen on the mailing list.

☉ This is no problem at all. RPGs are the most democratic form of entertainment I know, where all you need is paper & pencil, dice, and imagination (hell, sometimes you don't need the dice anymore). Please don't add £1000 worth of high-end PC to that list. Cutting off the 'information poor' amongst us would be a tragedy. And we'd sulk.

Mark Wigoder-Daniels pointed out to me recently that the net bypasses all the traditional bugbears of fanzines, eg. dodgy printers, copying costs, files getting eaten, and so on. That's all true, but at the moment I'm enjoying putting the fanzine together; cutting things out, drawing funny little pictures, figuring out layout, page count, etc. And I like getting fanzines through the post, opening the envelope and admiring someone else's handiwork. I like the physicality of fanzines. This is one reason why, for instance, I thought the squealing about CD-ROM replacing books was misplaced - people like tangible objects like books, the feel and smell of them. Oo-er, I've come over all tactile...

#### Owen Smith

In reference to the Drenn article, I don't see Drenn working that way and generating an income from toth. I look at Drenn as more akin to being awarded an MBE; it's an honour but it isn't a living. One thing you missed on the prejudice front is very important - maudra who are Drenn get to give out one challisk mark per year rather than the five per year the other races are entitled to give out. Now that's what I call prejudice.

☉ Doh! [insert sound of slapping own forehead]. I missed that one, obviously. I guess making it harder for maudra to qualify for Drennship and then ensuring a 5:1 ratio against them is pretty severe, and that's before you figure in the occasional maudra pogrom. I made a small nod in this direction when I said that non-humans were more likely to find ladders of social progression within their own culture. "The Sobayid Atlas" details maudra sects in this way, and was well overdue.

I could have made a clearer distinction between what I believe to be the game designer's inspirations and the game world rationale for the Drenn system. I still think that the Lekers had Athens in mind when they created the Drenn system (why mention Plato at all?), though one word from

them could prove me wrong. The concept of Drenn as part-time councillors who earn a living elsewhere doesn't mesh that well with adventuring tauther. Would Burdothians risk life and limb for the state and then sit back in the bakery or illidge, content with a silver challisk?

This could be one of those problems when game world meets RPG, in that playability becomes a factor. I think the Drenn system is an excellent RPG device, I'm just not sure how it all slots together on Jorune. I made a glaring omission when I forgot to mention that Drenn are tax-collectors (which Paul Mason also queries in a forthcoming article). I was also off base on Drenn Points in general, as the 3rd edition states that it's easier for bronth to reach Drennship than other non-humans. So the following may be more like the Drenn scale: 50 for humans, 60 for boccord, 70 for muadra, 80 for bronth, 90 for woffen, and 100 (or more) for crugar.

A further point is the suitability of military types for drennship. Since writing issue 1 I've got my hands on a copy of Companion Jorune: Burdoth, and it has the following interesting things to say:

"Everyone who enters the military is officially declared tauther" (p.50), and "Many sergeants are drenn since the same skills and experience it took to earn the rank are also reserved for drennship" (p.51). I think that says it all really.

#### Owen Smith

The introduction to Jorune seems aimed at people who know little or nothing of Jorune, but it [was] well written. Weaponsmith and Kesler are both good, usable background pieces...if you can reliably manage 2 or 3 issues of BF a year then you can fill a niche.

☉ The introductory nature of BF's first article was deliberate; Dave Morris rightly pointed out to me that people may pick up the zine out of curiosity and want to get orientated with an article or two for newcomers. This was certainly the case when I bought a copy of Dave's fanzine for EPT (and see Nick Parke's letter, below). In this sense the zine can help publicise the game at the same time as serving existing Jorunists. I expect one or two articles in each issue to be aimed at Jorune debutantes (see "Lost in Space" in this issue).

Kesler was the hardest piece to write in Issue 1 and the one I'm most proud of. I actually think the Weaponsmith was the weakest, I really should have expanded it or worked a scenario around the concept. After I'd finished the piece I noticed the illustration of a Thivin sword in the 2nd edition

Player's Book, which shows a curved and bejewelled scimitar type weapon. Maybe this is the distinctive feature of Thivin craftsmanship.

Three issues a year sounds doable (is that a word?). I'll certainly aim for a fairly regular release, as long as I have enough usable stuff.

#### Nick Parke, Croydon

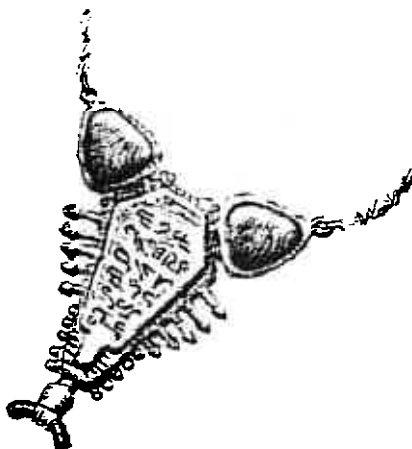
I enjoyed Borkelby's Folly a lot, although it felt at times as though I was reading a professional or trade magazine as a lot of the jargon passed me by. I think the production values are fine by the way...I would gladly read any subsequent issues.

☉ Here's what we were referring to earlier. Nick is an interested newcomer to Jorune, and he's probably right about the jargon. Hopefully the introductory material will help, as will an attempt to cut down on unnecessary neologisms. The difficulty with rolegames that attempt to create an immersive background is that they can seem impenetrable to the outsider.

#### Matthew Pook, Falmouth

What about finding music to play in the background to enhance your games? I would suggest the soundtrack of "The Last Temptation of Christ". Called "Passion", it's by Peter Gabriel and uses a lot of middle eastern and arabic instruments.

☉ Thanks for the tip Matthew. I guess you'd have to be in serious New Age territory for any shanthic encounters, and John Carpenter's minimalist bass lines would seem to fit tense situations. Personally I'm not very good with musical accompaniment as I find it disrupts my concentration (rustling crisp packets do much the same thing...).



OK, that's all for the inaugural letters page. Let's have some more missives next issue.