InsideADRIFT
the newsletter of the ADRIFT community

ADRIFT Review of the Year 2003 by KF

Editorial

Another year has gone by in the wonderful world of ADRIFT, and it has to be said it hasn't been easy for us. A number of high profile Drifters have decided to move on, although we have also seen a number of new enthusiasts join us. This review has been designed to summarize what has been going on in various areas of activity.

I thought it would be good to have a special supplement of the newsletter to look back at ADRIFT in 2003. If it is a successful venture this supplement will become a regular feature

*While it certainly hasn't been the simplest year for us, and at times has been a bit too quiet. Just when you might have thought we had all given up writing, Woodfish's **One-Hour Competition** came along with a highly respectable thirteen entries. Even as this supplement comes out the **InsideADRIFT Awards 2003** and **ADRIFT End of Year Competition 2003** are underway.*

I have also managed to get a short interview with Campbell where he answers questions about 2003 and looks forward to the future.

That just leaves me to wish all Drifters around the world a very enjoyable festive season, and a happy and productive 2004

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Contents

Campbell and the development of ADRIFT

I think it would be kindest to say that this year has been one of consolidation rather than development really. Campbell Wild has quite reasonable been rather more concerned with his home move at the start of the year; the difficulties resulting from the move and the change of Internet connection that resulted; then he was married in September.

While we Drifters have been a bit frustrated, we can hardly have any real quarrels with Campbell's putting the real world ahead of us for a while.

The year has been marked by a series of bugs that have brought much game development to a halt, making a fairly poor year for game releases.

After release 36 came out at the start of October 2002, there was a long wait until towards the end of April before we had the first release of 2003, but in a short period releases 37 to 39 appeared, with many bug fixes. Unfortunately it was awkward as we went through a phase where something else would then go wrong. Releases 40 and 41 came out at the end of June, but then we had a long delay as the real world took centre stage for Campbell.

This year's release notes

This is the list of changes made that is updated and included in each new release of ADRIFT

Release 43 -14/12/2003

Enhancements

Inserting and Duplicating tasks now works for sorted lists

Duplicated tasks marked as <NEW>

Tasks filter now filters out tasks completeable in all rooms

Tasks list can be sorted by dragging and dropping items

Promote and Relegate buttons for character walks

Bug Fixes

Registration info in Runner About box not scrambled

Removing objects updates tasks with actions to move characters onto objects properly

Removed incorrect ambiguity message when taking same objects from another

'Message if task tried again' displays when due rather than task run

Esc button cancels Events window

Deleting tasks when task filter on doesn't crash Generator

No message saying can't see object when two objects are mentioned without verbs

Can't put object in/on object can be overridden by restriction messages

Restrictions that variables must be equal to other variables doesn't crash Generator when editing tasks

Examining non-existant objects doesn't count as a turn

Campbell's return at the end of September brought a discussion on the feeling that ADRIFT releases should be better beta-tested to try and keep the bugs down to a more sensible level. As usual that great advocate of testing Mystery, ably supported by Tech, have stepped into the breach and have been attempting to produce a systematic approach to testing.

Early in October release 42 was freed into our community, hopefully fixing a whole raft of problems. As I write this the jury is still out, but no big bugs have been reported. Also, at the end of October, Campbell gave us an updated version of the ADRIFT 4.0 manual. It is not a huge update, but does add in some extra information on some technical bits, as well as bringing details of some of the things that have changed since the previous version was released.

Development has moved on in December as release 43 came out, with the star enhancement being drag and drop rearrangement of the task list. This is a feature that has long been requested and works very nicely so far. This release also includes some bits of tidying up on the list sorting/filtering front and also introduces buttons to move character walks up and down the list.

Interview: Campbell answers KF's questions

Thanks once again for agreeing to answer a few questions for the End of Year Review.

Q1. It has been quite a 12 months for you in your real life, moving into a new home and getting married. Have all of these changes had a profound effect on how you see your life and ADRIFT?

Yes, it's certainly been very busy (and expensive!). I probably do see my life a little differently now - mainly that I can now see further into my future, whereas before I never knew how things were going to turn out. I don't see ADRIFT any differently though. I'm still as keen at developing it when I can. The only difference is that I don't have quite so much time to work on it these days.

Q2. With all that has happened development of ADRIFT has been slower, but do you think that this may actually have a positive effect as it gives time for things to be looked at, and less of a moving target?

I would hope that in general as more bugs get fixed, the urgency of fix requests should decrease, which puts less pressure on me to rush out a new release. In this way I think it's more positive. It would be nice to get it to a stage where I'm mostly adding enhancements rather than fixing bugs.

Q3. How have your own writing projects coming on? Are we going to see "Humbug" appear soon, and do you have any original

File dialog box set to current directory of last file opened in Generator

X of X displayed in lists when filtering on if item edited

Adding a blank walk doesn't remove the last valid walk

'put/drop all' allowed to override system command

Additional period not added to Player description if doesn't end in "."

Character routines work if player types system command

Examining character not in room works in First person perspective

Hitting object in room takes precedence over character not in room

Duplicating/Inserting tasks now works when filtered

Try again message displayed properly for reversible tasks

Characters refusing to give objects have capital letter in name

Default response for trying to eat non-existant objects

Importing lines with spaces in ALR doesn't cause errors saving TAF files

Release 42 - 07/10/2003

Bug Fixes

Control Panel collapses and expands to correct size if window bars non-standard

'Get all' doesn't try to take objects from within others if not explicit

'empty' on it's own doesn't crash Runner

'I are' grammar error corrected when nothing to drop in 1st Person

Control Panel doesn't crash Runner when movement restrictions are based on object

projects on the blocks?

I'm hoping to release Humbug fairly soon. I've had quite a lot of help from Mystery and Lil Dot beta testing it, and pointing out differences from the original. I don't have any original works in progress, but I would like to once Humbug is released. I have a few ideas up my sleeve anyway! Perhaps IF-Comp '04?

Q4. Although this is a review of 2003, I am also hoping to look forward to 2004. Do you have anything planned for next year that you can discuss at this time?

I think it really depends on how I get on with the current version of ADRIFT. I'd definitely like to clear the outstanding bugs with the application. Once that's done I'd like to add any minor enhancements that have been requested. Once that's done and the product is stable, I'd like to start working on v4.1.

I am sure that your answers will prove hugely interesting for our community, and that they will provide encouragement to push ahead. Hope you have a great Christmas and a really marvellous New Year

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Competition roll of honour

A fairly decent year competition wise, with my normal three events being supplemented by a strong group of small, but beautifully formed, competitions.

Amazing Poodle Boy's One Room Comp was won by 30otsix's entry "The dead man" from a field of six entries.

ADRIFT Spring Competition was won by Jason Guest's one room game "Hell in a Hamper" ahead of two other games.

One Hour Comp was won by "The Forum", a game based around characters based on ADRIFT forum members, by Woodfish, winning in a field of three.

DavidW's Minicomp ended in victory for DavidW's entry "Neighbours from helll". There were a further three entries.

ADRIFT Summer Minicomp resulted in a win for "Sun Empire: Quest for the Founders (Part I)" by Tech ahead of four other entries.

Third ADRIFT One-Hour Competition won by The Mad Monk with "Apprentice of the Demonhunter", which beat of an amazing twelve other entries.

ADRIFT End of Year Competition is currently in the judging phase (entries are listed elsewhere in this issue)

state

Deleting objects updates Player starting object correctly

Modules: - Move all held objects to Hidden now imports

Events not running problem sorted when tasks run

No assumption to take objects before putting if task overrides

Task failing restrictions override putting and dropping

Removed redundant output when task overrides put if object not understood

Put command requires reference to an object to put it on

Incomplete Put command doesn't crash Runner

Removed ambiguity comments when not required

'Message if task tried again' overwrites general tasks

Tasks can override dropping when the object is static

Response for taking static objects reverted to what it used to be

Cannot hit with static objects

Better ambiguity handling for default responses

Proper output when trying to take objects worn by characters

Shortcut to change colour changed from Ctrl-C to Ctrl-A in NBTW

Hidden routes on map properly hidden if map background coloured

Versioning information stored properly in TAS files

Restriction that variables must be compared to other variables now ok

Removed ambiguity issues when opening/closing objects

'It' passed including prefixes, not

Of course there was also the all encompassing event of the Annual Interactive Fiction Competition (IFComp) which has recently come to a conclusion.

This pre-eminent competition has been running for several years now and is established as a major test for if authors. This year was rather disappointing from the point of view that almost 100 people registered there intention to enter, yet when the event happened just 30 games were actually entered. From an ADRIFT point of view things were also poor with just one entry, DavidW's "Sophie's Adventure", representing us this year.

The general feeling from reviews was that this was quite a good game let down by being too big to be played in a reasonable amount of time and also the lack of testing. DavidW has acknowledged that he ran out of time, only completing the game just ready for the competition. The size of game problem is one to note for the future, as judges are supposed to finish marking games after playing for two hours, as a way of being fair to all, even if they then play a longer game through to the finish.

ADRIFT games this year by DavidW

2003 was pretty much a hit and miss year as far as games went. There were some great games - "To Hell In A Hamper" and "Three Monkeys, One Cage" - and some downright bad ones - of which the fourth version of "Jason Evans 4" was the undisputed king. There were lengthy periods of time during which no games seemed to be written at all. Back in 2002 when Mel S' "The Lost Mines" spent 6 weeks at the top of the main ADRIFT page, it was quite unusual for so long a period to go by without a single release (it even prompted a lengthy debate on the forum). Unfortunately the same thing happened quite a few times in 2003. Indeed, no new games came out in January, May and July at all, and only a single game came out in February and September.

And then, of course, there were the competitions.

Competitions - mini or otherwise - were pretty much the lifeblood of ADRIFT throughout 2003. In total, 45 ADRIFT games were released in 2003 which sounds like a great figure and an indication that ADRIFT is growing more and more popular as the years go by… until you consider that the majority of these were smaller games written for one competition or another. Indeed, take away the comps and the grand total of ADRIFT releases drops down to a rather disappointing 7. Of course, you could always argue by with some justification by that if not for the comps people would still have written their games so the total for 2003 would be quite a bit higher than 7. But the total of full-sized games written in 2003 was just 13, compared to almost double that amount in 2002. If the trend continues, we might be seeing less than double figures in

just object name

'put all on X' now works

Must have an object defined if you select start position in or on another

Tab selects between Male & Female at prompt

Spellchecking on task restriction box

Static object locations properly reset between TAS restorations

Release 41 - 26/06/2003

Bug Fixes

Can now open adventures after cancelling dictionary load or even during load

'Get all' doesn't display taking objects from other objects

ESC key cancels Events window

'Get all' doesn't inadvertently run 'get %object%' tasks

Drop tasks can be overridden even if not holding object in question

Get can be overridden by actual task commands, not generated ones

Object states being assigned properly when object is lockable

Alternate views correct for states when have lockable objects

Multiple command inputs can be repeated with 'again'

Position of static objects properly saved in TAS files - backwards compatability retained

Whitespace lines ignored in ALR files

Question in command doesn't assign it as a system command

Drop A and B doesn't complain about ambiguity

Drop all responds correctly when wearing objects but carrying nothing

ADRIFT games for 2004. A depressing thought…

But onto the games that were good, and bad, in 2003:

January

An unusual month in the world of ADRIFT: no games were written. Indeed, none had been written the previous month either which was even more unusual.

February

Black Sheeps Gold by Driftingon - The first new game for three months and not a bad one at all. Let down by a sudden and unnecessary twist in the tale partway through (imagine The Mr Men getting invaded by South Park) and some atrocious guess-the-verb which turned relatively simple puzzles into nightmarish episodes. All in all an impressive first effort.

March

The Dead Man by 30otsix – Winner of the One Room Comp. A detailed and interesting game packed into a single room. Aside from a few annoyances with an ongoing event which moves all the player's items to the floor every few moves, this was a worthy winner.

Dreamland by Echo – One Room Comp entry. Not a terrible game, just an incredibly small one. Just two tasks are needed to complete it although guess-the-verb problems meant that you might have to type variants of the commands a dozen times before you hit upon the right combination.

A Day At The Office by Davidw – Runner up in the One Room Comp. My own game so a review would be naturally biased but I liked the way it turned out (minor bugs notwithstanding).

Everything Emmanuelle by Milestyle – One Room Comp entry. Well written but I couldn't help feel this one was a little pointless. Very little happens and while there are multiple endings it's often difficult to figure out if you did well or not.

I by Christopher Cole – One Room Comp entry. An interesting idea – a game written from the viewpoint of someone lying dead in a coffin(!) – let down by the fact that there was precious little to do. Indeed, one command is all the game has to offer; everything else plays out after that whether you do anything or not. It passed five minutes but little more.

Escape From Insanity by Mel S – One Room Comp entry. A fiendish little game made even more fiendish by guess-the-verb problems that pop up in most commands. There were some genuinely decent ideas here but they were pretty much swamped by the GTV problems, not to mention the annoying bug whereby the player is alternatively referred to as "you" and "I".

'Message if task repeated' text overrules examining characters

Proper response when trying to take static objects

Modules: - Object states exported properly in alternate descriptions; Event object movements exported correctly; Task restrictions for variables export correctly; Can now import alternate descriptions with object states; Objects export key info when key is first object; Can import Death Tasks for characters; Automatically puts Battle System on if importing battle modules

Release 40 - 16/06/2003

Enhancements

Changed prompt arrow

Dictionary loading can be cancelled by clicking on the splash screen

Slight change to settings window

Filename displayed in Generator titlebar

Bug Fixes

No Error 9 when typing "get" or "drop"

Trying to drop a non-existent object responds properly

Cannot take objects from characters without tasks

Changing object states resets option in alternate views in rooms

Deleting state doesn't disable OK button if still valid

Objects not ambiguous when an object matches on both alias and name vs just one

Spaces not allowed at start or end of object name

Closed objects inside others can now be retrieved

Dropping can be properly overridden by tasks again

Montahue Scott & The Mobius Belt by The Mad Monk – Third place in the One Room Comp. Despite adding an unusual take on the "one" room idea, there was a neat game packed into the slightly-more-than-one rooms. A few hard puzzles and some comical humour added to the enjoyment.

Trapped With A Girl by Schoolsinger – One Room Comp entry. My least favourite game in the One Room Comp due to some appalling spelling errors, an NPC whose name seems to be spelt differently every now and then and a frustrating event which runs every single move. My enthusiasm just died after reading the same piece of text for the sixth time in as many moves and any hint of a decent game just died with it.

City In Fear by Davidw – Another one of mine. It seemed to go down better than the first game in the series and although being three times as big was actually written in less time.

April

Lara Croft: The Sun Obelisk by Christopher Cole – An amended (i.e. most of the sex was taken out) version of the writer's earlier game of the same name. Well written for the most part and with puzzles that were potentially lethal for the unwary. Certainly an improvement on "I" and a good indication that C Cole can write decent games outside the AIF market.

Cowboy Blues by Davidw – Runner up in the ADRIFT Spring Comp. I was never that satisfied with the end result as I felt I had to rush it to get it done for the comp deadline, hence the town of Stonetomb was quite a bit smaller than planned and contained less characters and replay value. Maybe one day I'll remake it the way it was originally intended.

The Merry Murders by Mel S – Mel S' first full game since The Lost Mines the previous June. For a writer who had churned out a game every couple of months for a year or so this was quite a lengthy gap. Unfortunately TMM wasn't as good as The Lost Mines and contained several annoying flaws in that the player was referred to sometimes as "you" and other times as "I", not to mention the times when parts of the text were in present tense and other times in past tense. Not a bad game but it took some getting into.

To Hell In A Hamper by J. J. Guest – Winner of the ADRIFT Spring Comp. A devilishly clever game contained in a single room but still managing to be quite a bit bigger than most full size games, THIAH follows the efforts of an eminent Victorian "balloonist" to prevent his balloon from crashing by throwing items overboard. Not helping the situation is his companion, a strange fellow by the name of Hubert Booby, who seems to have a waistcoat capacious enough to hold pretty much anything. My favourite ADRIFT game of 2003.

Complete wildcard tasks can override standard get/drop output

Release 39 - 28/04/2003

Bug Fixes

Adventures with no characters no longer freeze Runner

Release 38 - 27/04/2003

Bug Fixes

Examining static objects with same name as others in game now works again

Tasks overriding 'put X on Y' where Y isn't a surface doesn't display extra error message

Dropping wielded objects returns hands as weapon

Removed 'Subscript out of range' error if no objects have been defined

Held size & weight, character walk positions and text vars undone by undo

Correct pictures/sounds displayed/played when file used more than once in game

Adding events increments the counter at the bottom of the events list

More error messages don't use up a 'turn' when they shouldn't be

Release 37 - 22/04/2003

Enhancements

Paused text now neater with button

Bug Fixes

Text length in conversation replies not capped

Saving games without Write Access doesn't crash Generator

Clicking on a room in an alphabetically sorted list filters properly

Generator Doesn't crash if

House by Matthew Wiltshire – Third place in the ADRIFT Spring Comp. I have to admit I wasn't a fan of this. The opening locations were devoid of description and while the game was fleshed out later on, I had lost interest long before then. A few nice touches – the screen changing colour at various times – didn't make me like the game any more.

June

The Sage Of Percy The Viking by DavidW – Joint runner up in Woodfish's Minicomp. I don't know where I got the idea for this one (no biggie, I never know where my ideas come from!) but I quite liked the setting: no exploring, no items, no descriptions; just a conversation system that changes the way the game plays and leads to multiple endings. Definitely one I'm intending to rewrite one day into a full size game.

Forum by Woodfish – Winner of Woodfish's Minicomp. As bizarre as anything by Heal Butcher this is one of those weird little games that you either love or hate. I loved it and even though it beat me in the Comp I felt it was the better game.

Dance Fever USA by Mel S – Joint runner up in Woodfish's Minicomp. Almost as strange as the game that won the Comp, DFU had the kind of madness that was ripe in The Evil Chicken Of Doom. Though not as good, it was still well worth playing for a game written in an hour and contained some truly unusual puzzles involving peeing and a wrench-swallowing cat.

Neighbours From Hell by Davidw – Winner of Davidw's Minicomp. I finally won a Comp! Pity it was my own but I guess you can't have your cake and eat it. I got the idea from the name of a computer game although whether there are any similarities between the two I couldn't say as I was put off my poor reviews and didn't buy it.

Thorn by Eric Mayer – Runner up in Davidw's Minicomp. My favourite game in my Comp and the one I would have picked to win if I had any say in the matter. Thorn was well written and atmospheric but ultimately confusing. Even after finishing the game, I couldn't really say I had a clue what it was all about.

Monsters by Tech – Entry in Davidw's Minicomp. A game I felt should have done better than it did. A minor annoyance with your mother showing up and ushering you back into bed every few moves let down a nice idea.

Diary Of A Stripper by Christopher Cole – Third place in Davidw's Minicomp. A decent standard of writing couldn't hide the fact that there was a definite lack of storyline here. This coupled with the game often telling you what you needed to type made this too easy and took away any kind of challenge.

searching for an item that has been filtered out

Detects " as start of a word if clicking in Runner

Improved generic response to turn on/off

Removed "Error retrieving stored information - Overflow" messages in Runner

Referring to objects with the same name but different prefixes doesn't crash Runner

TAS files save text variables

Better ambiguity handling

Getting multiple objects when some are task overridden outputs correctly

Prevented error 380 opening Module window

Only first 'else display' message displayed for task restrictions

Deleting objects doesn't mess up defined keys

Changing lockable status of objects doesn't upset task restrictions/actions

Entries in the End of Year Competition 2003

The following games have been entered in this years final competition.

To Hell in a Hamper by J.J. Guest (The Amazing Poodle Boy)

Crimson Detritus by Mystery

The preferred method for voting is using the online judging page, which emails your votes for each game to me.

August

Crimson Detritus by Mystery – Originally intended for the ADRIFT Summer Comp but withdrawn at the last moment, I actually preferred this to the game Mystery did enter. It was surreal and quite playable for ten minutes or so but there isn't enough of a game to really get your teeth into.

Jim Pond & The Agents Of F.A.R.T. by Davidw – Runner up in the ADRIFT Summer Comp. My homage to James Bond and the first of a series (which I may or may not get around to writing one of these days). Several people seemed to think it had guess-the-verb problems which in hindsight it probably did. Chalk up another for the best-testers.

Sun Empire by Tech – Winner of the ADRIFT Summer Comp. One of the few science-fiction ADRIFT games. Complicated in parts, with some overly awkward tasks, but a decent back story and high standard of writing. A worthy winner.

ADRIFT-O-Rama by Mystery – ADRIFT Summer Comp entry. Not a game I could say I liked much. The premise was straightforward: two commands in each location move you on to the next location; type the same two commands there and move to the next; and so on. A few amusing set pieces along the way didn't help what was a nice idea but not a very good game.

The Worst Game In The World… Ever! by Davidw – ADRIFT Summer Comp entry. My joke entry into the Summer Comp. Surprisingly it didn't come last. Clueless Bob Newbie made his first appearance here in a game that was a lot better received than I felt it had any right to be.

The Leviathan Labyrinth by Cheryl Howard – ADRIFT Summer Comp entry. TLL had a neat idea of starting the player in different locations each time; unfortunately this idea wasn't enough to save a game with this many flaws. The labyrinth was a nightmare to map and often locations seemed to have exits that led back to themselves. Frustration hit me hard when playing and I didn't play for long.

September

Asylum by Mel S – A tried and tested idea – waking up in a mental asylum with no knowledge of how you came to be there – but a good one. Guess-the-verb was a lot less severe than in the majority of Mel's games though the task involving the television was nightmarish. One of his better full length efforts.

October

The Revenge Of Clueless Bob Newbie by Davidw - Third One Hour Comp entry. One of my three entries into the Third One Hour comp. Suffered from the usual problem with one hour games: not enough time to make it into the game that you really wanted.

The Revenge Of Clueless Bob Newbie, Part 2 - This Time It's Personal by Davidw - Third One Hour Comp entry. A kind of follow up to the previous game. Shorter than Part 1 but harder (at least in my humble opinion).

A.S.D.F.A. by Davidw - Third One Hour Comp entry. A kind of interlude between ONNAFA and ALDFA. I felt it was better than CBN 1 and 2 but as it came lower in the rankings I was clearly in a minority.

The Curse Of The Revenge Of The Ghost Of The Evil Chicken Of Doom… Returns! by Mel S – Third One Hour Comp entry. Every bit as strange as its predecessor, and possessing the longest title of any ADRIFT game to date, this was sheer lunacy from start to finish. A smattering of guess-the-verb problems let it down but the humour was top notch.

That Crazy Radioactive Monkey by Mel S – Third One Hour Comp entry. A good idea and some good jokes. I wasn't too sure about the subject – beating up, mutilating and killing your sidekick to garner laughs from the studio audience – but I was too busy chuckling at the decidedly over the top humour to worry about that.

Quest For Flesh by Tech – Third One Hour Comp entry. A remarkably small game but well written. Alas there was next to nothing to do here and while this might have worked quite well as the introduction to a larger game, it didn't succeed very well at all as a one room game.

The Pyramid Of Hamaratum by KF – Third One Hour Comp entry. KF's first game but, unfortunately, not one I liked or, considering where it came in the Comp, a favourite with anyone else either. Too small by far and ridiculously easy but it was nice to see him finally get around to writing a game.

Editor's note: I know it was rubbish, I'm too old and slow to write one-hour games.

Just My Imagination, Musings Of A Child by Mystery – Third place in the Third One Hour Comp. A nice enough idea let down by what I felt was an over the top introduction. Interesting for the time it took to place and some good puzzles for a game written within an hour.

Forum 2 by Woodfish - Third One Hour Comp entry. Personally I preferred the original. This lacked any of Forum's humour and had an ending that left me wondering if I was missing something.

Saffire by Woodfish - Third One Hour Comp entry. A decent introduction which then led to… not much really. The game made little sense and left me baffled for the most part.

The Farthest Shore by Stewart J. McAbney - Third One Hour Comp entry. Certainly well written but might have worked better as the introduction to a larger work than a game in itself. Nothing that happens in the game affects the ending in any way and, ultimately, I felt this was a bit of a wasted opportunity.

Doom Cat!! by Eric Mayer - Third One Hour Comp entry. The strangest game in the comp but downright hilarious. Your cat is ticking and you have to get rid of it before it explodes! The twist at the end was particularly amusing.

Apprentice Of The Demonhunter by The Mad Monk – Winner of the Third One Hour Comp. My favourite of all the one hour games. While not a particularly original idea, it was nevertheless very well written and had a remarkable amount of depth for such a short game. A tendency towards jokiness let it down in the end but it was still definitely worth playing.

Three Monkeys One Cage by Hanadorobou – As far as puzzlefests go, this game is a killer. It's one of those games whereby the player seems unable to progress more than a few moves without death unexpectedly striking. That said, it's also an amazingly addictive game; often you seem to reach slightly further into the game with each play and discover interesting and unusual things to try out that you didn't discover before. If this is indeed Hanadorobou's final ADRIFT game it's a crying shame.

Halloween Hijinks by Davidw – Originally my entry for my aborted Halloween Comp. The game was rushed to make it ready for the comp deadline and I missed several annoying errors in my haste (as people seemed only to eager to point out). One day I'll re-write it the way it was originally going to be.

November

The Hornets' Nest by Scuey – Games by newcomers are something I generally approach with a mixture of glee and expectations of disappointment. This one veered sharply towards the latter. Poorly written, lots of errors and showing definite signs of someone so eager to get his first game out that he didn't even bother submitting it to the most cursory testing beforehand.

Sophie's Adventure by Davidw – My entry to the IFComp 2003: it came 16th. Not as high as I would have liked but not a terrible showing by any means. A sequel is planned but not for at least a year.

A.S.D.F.A. by Davidw – An enlarged version of my entry in the Third One Room Comp. This was more the game I had intended to write but a lot of the original premise had to be cut to make it within the time limit.

So in conclusion a hit and miss year for ADRIFT games. Some very good games, some very bad games. By far the most alarming aspect – for me anyway – was the lengthy gaps between releases; a sign that people are taking longer to write their games? Or that ADRIFT doesn't quite hold the level of interest that it once did? Added to that was the fact that quite a few of the long-standing members of the community – Milestyle, Cannibal, Mystery, DuoDave, Mad Monk, Matt Dark Baron, T. Mulkerrins, Cowboy,

Eric Mayer, Campbell himself – didn't produce any full-size games despite assurances (from a certain one of the ten in particular) that they had products they were "working on". Hopefully 2004 will see a flourish of new games from them…

(For anyone left wondering, that last sentence was written with sarcasm in full flow.)

And for anyone's who interested, my top ten games of 2003 were:

1. To Hell In A Hamper – J. J. Guest
2. Three Monkeys, One Cage – Hanadorobou
3. Apprentice Of The Demonhunter – The Mad Monk
4. Sun Empire – Tech
5. The Curse Of The Revenge Of The Ghost Of The Evil Chicken Of Doom… Returns! – Mel S
6. The Dead Man – 30otsix
7. Black Sheeps Gold – Driftingon
8. Doom Cat!! – Eric Mayer
9. That Crazy Radioactive Monkey – Mel S
10. Lara Croft: The Sun Obelisk – Christopher Cole

Community spirit

As usual there have been many attempts to promote our favourite IF creation program, and help to grow our community. Here I have tried to recognize those of us who have contributed towards giving us not just a mass of people who like ADRIFT, but a community of people who support each other.

DavidW has taken an interest in giving an answer to that frequently asked question "What is the largest game created with ADRIFT? He has now added to his http://www.shadowvault.net site lists of ADRIFT games releases sorted by filesize, as well as numbers of objects, rooms and tasks. Also on his site is an incredibly researched listing, by author and title of all ADRIFT game releases so far.

Mystery has taken her BetaDrifter and ADRIFT games sites and created the ADRIFT Network (http://home.gcn.cx/mystery/) which lists some suggestions of games for people to look at, all of the beta testing advice from her old site. In addition she has created an alternative discussion site, which includes an area where she has transferred the information from the ADRIFT manual, so that people can ask questions, as well as adding their own hints and tips.

ADRIFT online chatting has taken a few twists and turns over the year. At the start of the year ADRIFT Group on MSN was being

well used. Then a bit of software Global Communications Network (GCN) became a favourite for many of us, the ability to play chess was a key attraction. Some however had problems and now people are, when chatting, tending back towards the MSN group.

The newsletter has (hopefully) moved on and developed – more of that later.

Here I must also register the passing from the ADRIFT Community of a number of our top authors, including Hanadorobou who has moved on to authoring with TADS. It is sad, though understandable, that he has decided that it will be better for his major works. At the same time Marno also decided that problems with ADRIFT bugs made a switch to TADS desirable. The Amazing Poodle Boy (Jason Guest) has moved to mostly developing for TADS, but has said that he will still continue to write with ADRIFT, maybe competition entries. DuoDave was looking at other systems, and seems to have not been around the forum for a long time.

Others of us have checked out other systems, but seem to be sticking with ADRIFT at the moment.

My final bid to engender some community spirit has come with the InsideADRIFT Awards, currently in the final stages, which I hope means people will consider the broader ADRIFT community. The results are due to be announced on Sunday 10th January 2004.

The newsletter

At the start of 2003 the ADRIFT newsletter, then called, slightly optimistically, Drifter's Monthly had hit a block. Woodfish had produced two packed issues, with lots of input from others, but after the October issue things had gone slow.

Then early in the year Mystery took the editorial reins and, with a bit of friendly bullying, managed to resurrect things. Monthly publication was resumed from February through to July, along with the adoption of the InsideADRIFT title after a small and friendly contest on the forum to think of something.

Mystery's term in the editor's chair came to an end in the summer, taking a back seat to deal with the needs of her family. That brought me, KF, into the hot seat. Not sure how I was mug enough to offer, but I did and have tried to keep things flowing on. To keep myself going I have tried to keep to a regular publication schedule, six months things will be on the last Saturday of the month prior to that on the cover, while there will be three double month issues, issued on the second Saturday of the first cover month (hope you follow that).

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the

newsletter, particularly the two ex-editors and DavidW who has contributed monthly reviews as well as other articles. I would also like to renew my standard appeal to all of you out there to see if there is something you can contribute to the newsletter.

Have your say. What have been your highs and lows of 2003? What does the future hold for ADRIFT?

Mystery starts us off

As far as the forum goes, I'm highly disappointed at the level of pettiness some members have displayed. and a little disappointed that a few have chosen to part with ADRIFT

On a high note, I am please that a few members have volunteered to help sort things out with ADRIFT and test- even if it is only a couple of people

You've taken a dumpy newsletter and turned it into something informative and interesting

I'm mad at myself for not getting to work on my own games, so I feel that I haven't been productive for next year, I would like to get at least one of my longer games finished, and spend less time online and more time working on it

I get caught up talking with people and it really sucks the time away that I could be spending working on my game, but it is my own fault because I enjoy talking with other drifters

For the future of the forum, I would like to see kinder behaviour out of its members towards each other and less complaining

I would also like to see more a participation in writing projects, discussion of the elements of IF, and some out right fun without someone moaning about off topic threads.

Mel S's ADRIFT low of 2003

I think a lack of feedback for games has turned off a lot of writers from Adrift. When a game is released, you're lucky to get 1 review from a site with over 50 users.

KF mutters on about …

We need a truly stable version of ADRIFT that people can develop their games on and not have to worry that a new version will move the goalposts and break the game. Tech and Mystery's beta testing tools look like a big move to aid this target.

A road map for the future of ADRIFT would be handy, even if it just gave Campbell's broad targets for saying that ADRIFT V4 would be considered complete in a May 2004, and V4.1 would be

targeted for release in the second quarter of 2005. (Dates mine not from anything Campbell has proposed)

The forum can always do with more active contributors, so we need to make sure that we don't drive people away before they have joined us. When I first came across the forum I lurked for a week or two, reading the old posts, before I summoned up the courage to join in.

I aim to still be editing the newsletter at the end of the next year, but may not be if there isn't more support from the readers in the form of something to put in it. Having spent over 12 hours putting together Issue 12, it would be nice if others had a few ideas.

Obviously I hope that I can release a game in 2004 that I can be happy to call my own.