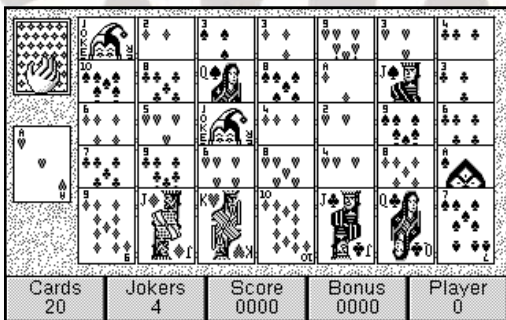


Patience Returns

HomeRun by Purple Software and ZingMagic, familiar to Series 3a owners as Patience, returns to EPOC32.

As a long-term Psion user I fondly remember the *Patience* game that was built in to some Series 3a computers. It was far more entertaining than the *Bombs* game on the Series 5. I was pleased, therefore, to see that the game was brought to EPOC32 in the shape of Purple Software's *HomeRun* shareware game, re-released as freeware by ZingMagic.

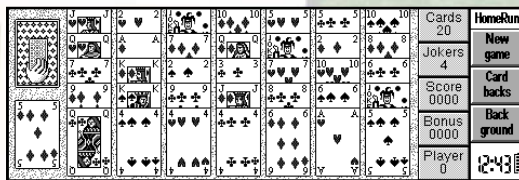
This card game uses a standard 52-card pack with the addition of up to four jokers. 35 of the cards are dealt into a *tableau* of seven columns of five cards



The Osaris version

each, and a further card is laid face-up, called the *layout card*. The remainder of the cards are put face down as the *stock*. Cards may be moved one at a time from the bottom of the tableau ranks onto the layout card, providing that they are consecutive, i.e. a 3 or 5 may be placed into a layout card of a 4. A joker can be laid onto any layout card, and anything can be placed onto a joker. If there are no eligible cards, a new card can be put on the layout card from the stock. The object is to remove all the cards from the tableau before the stock runs out. The game also provides scoring, with a number of points for each card removed from the tableau, and extra points for runs of consecutive cards.

The EPOC32 version runs on everything from the Osaris to the netBook. Separate cards have been designed for each of the different screen resolutions used in EPOC32, making the best use of each com-

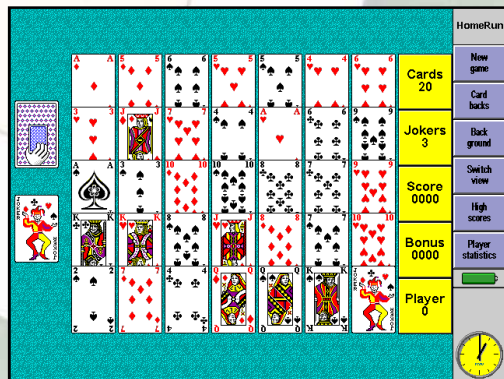


HomeRun on the Revo

puter's screen. The graphics are simple and workmanlike, not exciting but not unattractive. A nice touch is the ability to change the card backs and the background graphic, in common with other Purple Software games.

The game features many options. You can set up player names so as to record your performance. There are also options to control how you use the stylus to play, allowing you to play cards by tapping or dragging them as you prefer. The keyboard is fully supported, however, which will please any Geofox users.

Sound options allow you to turn certain sounds on or off. I found sound support a bit hit and miss on the Osaris. While its beeper is used quite well for card flicks, Purple occasionally forgot that the Osaris can't play sound samples. So I heard the awful "Chimes" beep quite often till I turned sound off altogether. This



In glorious colour on the Series 7

problem shouldn't affect other machines.

If you're a fan of card games on the computer, HomeRun is a good choice as a well-written, nicely-presented, and highly playable Patience game to while away a few spare minutes.

Rating



Fact File

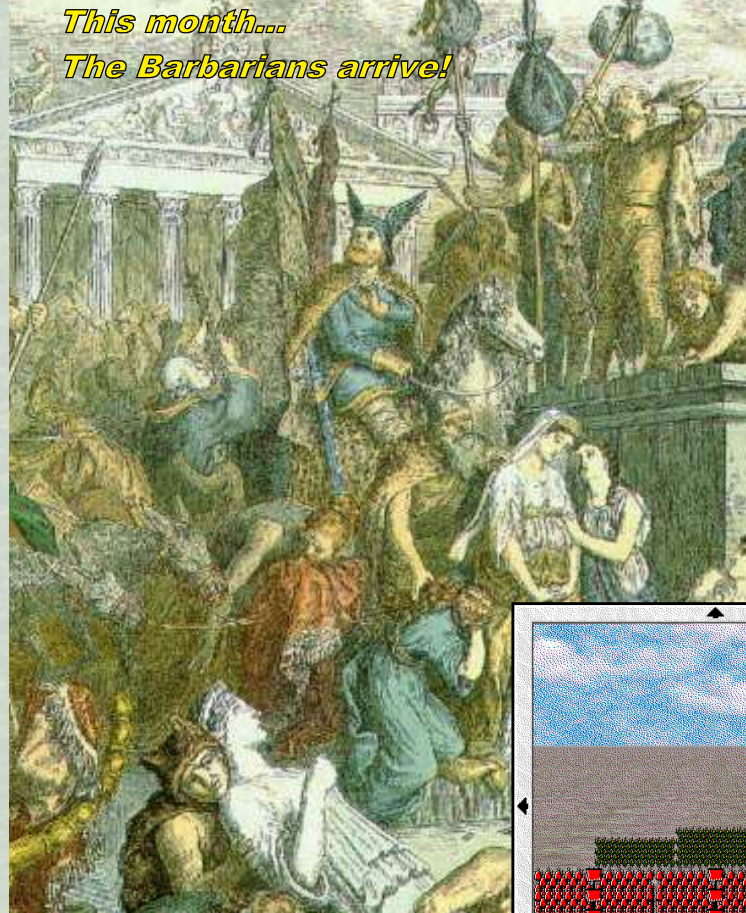
Author **Purple Software/ZingMagic**
 URL **psion.cyningstan.org.uk**
 Licence **Freeware**
 Systems **All EPOC32 Systems**

EPOC ENTERTAINER

Issue 34: Jan 2011

Editor: Damian Walker

*This month...
The Barbarians arrive!*



Web World Unlocked

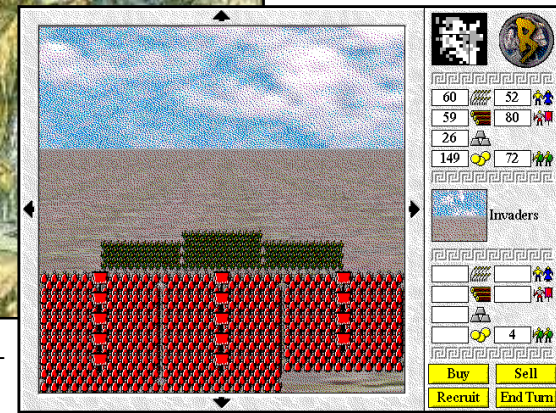
Thanks to the efforts of John Spillett, *Web World* is now fully playable.

Last month's review of *Web World* was hampered slightly by the fact that the game couldn't be registered. This prevented the game being completed.

John has come to the rescue by providing a registration code that will unlock the game's full potential. You can get the code from his web site tobidog.com.

Barbarians Released!

There's nothing like a barbarian invasion to liven up the Christmas season. And that's exactly what happened on 24th December when *Barbarians* was released for EPOC32. Running on



For the new year we're bringing you one of the most fun-packed issues ever. Not only is there a new game for EPOC32 (see right) but an old abandoned game has been unlocked by John Spillett for you to enjoy.

Starting the year on a positive note, there are two four-star reviews. *ZherOes* is a well-known artillery game, and *HomeRun* is a very good Patience card game, and best of all: *both* these games support all EPOC32 machines,

including the Osaris!

For Series 5 owners there's also a look at the unfinished RPG *Dragonward*, and for S7/netBook owners there's a short opinion piece: a first for *EPOC Entertainer*.

As usual, if you've got any comments or contributions, get in touch!
entertainer@cyningstan.org.uk

everything from the little Osaris to the mighty netBook, *Barbarians'* Christmas release went ahead as planned. There will be a player guide in a future issue of *EPOC Entertainer*, but in the mean time you can download the game from its web site:

games.cyningstan.org.uk

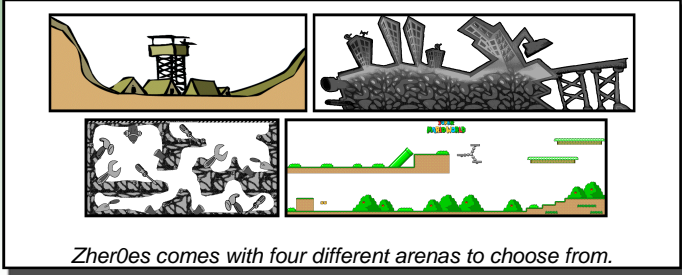
All or nothing

A review of ZherØes, Joeri Capens' artillery war game by Neuron.

So far in *EPOC Entertainer* three artillery games have been reviewed: *Scorched Cannons* in issue 10, *Wrippers* in issue 26 and *Warin* issue 30. Until now, though, we've not got around to the best one of them all: Joeri Capens' excellent *ZherØes: The Garden's Wargame*.

ZherØes is a light-hearted strategy game in which small teams of snails and mosquitoes do battle for control of, it has to be said, anything but a garden. You can choose a camp, construction yard, city or "Mario World" for your creatures to conquer, but "Garden" is strangely missing from the list of terrain. Nevertheless, this list gives you a decent variety of backdrops in which to fight.

Unlike the snails in my own garden, the creatures in *ZherØes* are armed with various weapons. Bazookas, hand grenades, shotguns and TNT form the arsenal with which the combatants do battle. In common with all artillery games, most of these weapons are used by choosing the angle and the strength at which they are fired or thrown, taking turns with the enemy to fire off a single round. The units can move around the landscape in a limited fashion, crawling left and right and having the ability to jump. This is needed in order to use TNT. The explosive is used by moving over to a nearby enemy, dropping the TNT, and moving quickly away again before the resulting explosion.



ZherØes comes with four different arenas to choose from.

The terrain, as well as being a platform to support the teams, it also provides obstruction to use of the weaponry. As units can't move after firing a projectile weapon, its use as cover is sadly limited. The ability to duck behind something before your next turn would have added to the strategy of the game. Other factors are wind speed and direction, which you need to bear in mind if your shots are to be accurate and not wasted.

ZherØes is very well presented. It's not quite up to the standard of similar desktop games, not least because of the plain white sky. There are probably technical reasons for this, and it will also aid clarity on some of the monochrome machines. Given that the game works on everything from the net-Book down to the Osaris, this clarity may be a better approach than pretty skies or other backdrops. Despite the lack of a backdrop, the cartoon graphics are very attractive for an EPOC game, and they are complemented by a few decent sound effects.

The humour in the game suits the levity of its theme. It's most apparent on the title screen, where messages like "Smile! You're being killed!" appear while the game waits for you to start. Once in the game, its simplicity makes it good fun to play. It may take a few moments to find your way around the keyboard controls—help is provided—but after that the interface is simple and doesn't get in your way.

There are a couple of negatives. Though a game of *ZherØes* will usually be short, there's no way to save your position if your game is interrupted. You can of course leave the application open, but it will take up memory all the while. With the graphical backdrops, this may be a significant amount. There are also reliability issues, too. Sometimes when in the background the game will freeze. I found it frozen on the title screen after calling up help, and only Ctrl+Shift+Fn+K would allow me to close the game.

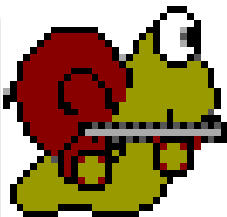
Despite its minor unreliability I would choose this over the other artillery games on EPOC32 for its presentation, its humour and its overall level of fun.

Rating



Fact File

Author **Joeri Capens (Neuron)**
URL **www.neuron.com**
Licence **Freeware**
Systems **All EPOC32 computers**



Here There be Dragons

This month we take a brief look at the unfinished RPG *Dragonward*



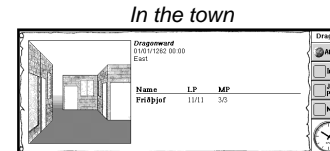
At the title screen

RPG and Adventure games are few and far between on the Psion, as the EPOC32 game database shows. One of the most promising adventure games for the Psion is, unfortunately, unfinished, and that's *Dragonward* by Duncan Murray. I thought I'd take a look at it to see if there's enough of it there to be playable.

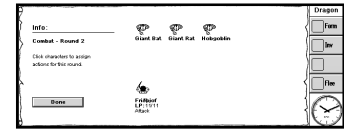
The first thing I noticed about the game is its excellent presentation. From the title screen to the game itself, the screens are well drawn and maintain the atmosphere of a medieval fantasy.

There are several areas of the game I got to explore. I wandered around the town of Dragonward, its shops, taverns and guilds. I ventured into the dungeons, where my party fought various creatures and died. I even set out on a journey to another town, though when I got there it looked just like the one I had left.

But despite first impressions, the game is too incomplete to be playable. Apart from what just isn't there, some bugs hamper your efforts. In the end my party was paralysed in the dungeons by at-



In the town



Fight!

tack after attack on the same spot, without being allowed to move. I don't think this was by design; usually you find your enemies by exploring, rather than them all converging on you at once when you enter the dungeon.

So I think I'd have to class *Dragonward* as an interesting, but unplayable, curiosity, and I'll leave you with some impressive Series 5 screen shots to ponder what might have been.



Sweet Sixteen

Damian Walker advocates the use of sixteen colours in games for the Series 7 and netBook.

The thing that attracts many people to the Series 7 and netBook computers is their most obvious attribute: the large 256-colour screen. For casual viewing it can display almost photographic quality images, and it's great for games. Two games that use it to the full are *Terra Force* and *Alignment*. So why do programmers like me write games that use only sixteen colours?

One of the factors is artistic talent, or lack of it. I won't pick out anybody in particular, but it's a lot easier to hide lack of drawing skill if you're restricted to a limited set of colours. The main issue for me, though, is memory. Graphics gobble memory. OPL programmers have few ways around this; OPL isn't fast enough for scaling, texture mapping or even fast wire-frame vector graphics. If you want something on the screen, you have

to store it in an MBM file. If you want multiple magnifications, you need to have multiple copies. All this adds to the memory footprint of your game.

As a programmer I impose some extra restrictions on my projects. I try to support all EPOC32 machines, and in a single SIS file. That's because, if you offer multiple versions, you can't guarantee they'll all be distributed evenly. I also keep the SIS file size down because some users, like me, don't use PsiWin and have to copy the SIS file to their Psion before installing.

Just to illustrate the problem, let's look at the numbers. An uncompressed, full-screen full-colour image on a Series 7 takes up 300K. The equivalent (16 grey scale) on a Series 5 is 75K. Add together the corresponding images for the Osaris, Revo and Geofox,

and a single graphics screen takes up 544K in a SIS file. Few games can confine all their graphics to a single screen's worth. A LucasArts style point and click adventure is out of the question!

My solution to this is to use sixteen colours. With good dithering, you can still get good results. It's not uncommon to use four grey scales on the monochrome devices, so if you halve the colour depth of all these images, the memory footprint of a single screen becomes 272K, which is a lot more reasonable. This is one instance where I can see the benefits of *not* using the Psion to its full potential.

