

InsideADRIFT

The newsletter of the ADRIFT Community

Issue 37, April 2008

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The Latest News From the ADRIFT Community

ADRIFT 5 coming to a PC near you

Campbell Wild has been working on the next version of our favourite system for writing and playing interactive fiction. He has released a VERY early alpha version to a few lucky testers and is working on the feedback. Do not expect an early release as the current version is very rough and feature light, but you can see the way things are going.

New event for unregistered users of Adrift

If you haven't got round to registering your version of Adrift, then by creating a game you can, thanks to the generosity of Cowboy, get your sparkling, shiny registered version. When you have a registered Adrift V4 then you are also able to get Adrift V5 at no extra cost. The rules of the event are elsewhere in the newsletter (Enter **1** to find them).

InsideADRIFT Summer Competition 2008

This year's Summer competition for new ADRIFT games will have a judging period running for the whole of July (unless there are too few games). You have a few months to come up with an entry, and the chance to win a top prize of £40.00. All details can be found at <http://www.insideadrift.org.uk/?p=53>

Forum get a revamp

Following my return as an admin, the Adrift Forum has had a small facelift with the often requested area for people to go off-topic and also some space to discuss new games and also to show off our other artistic talents.

Things have been very quiet on the forum for a while, with some speculation that people are holding back on their projects in anticipation of Adrift 5. We can only really wait and hope that this is true as the other explanation might be that people have moved on either to other IF languages or away from IF altogether.

The Editorial

Ken Franklin decides to get back into ADRIFT



After a period where I have been largely on the sidelines, I have decided that I can do a bit more within the ADRIFT community. I have taken back my role as admin on the forum and am also going to bring back the newsletter (as you can see). As you can also see it is a fairly sparse first issue back. If drifters choose to contribute some more they will hopefully get a better newsletter.

I'd just like to inform you about what has happened, I am sad to say that my mother passed away on 2 Feb 08 after a long illness. I had been kept pretty busy over the past six months visiting her in hospital and now have more time on my hands

The thoughts of Chairman Ken

This is a very odd time for ADRIFT as we wait for the new version of the system to emerge. Version 5 will not be the great catalyst that springboards ADRIFT into the stratosphere.

What it can do is bring it back to that time a few years back where a large proportion of games were written with it. While many of those releases were not brilliant, there were some that were getting noticed and that were closing in on what others could produce.

Inform 7 has leaped ahead as it brings a much simpler approach to the intricacies of a 'proper' programming language. Now Campbell Wild has to do his best to create an ADRIFT that is good enough to spark a renewed

Community Information

Competitions

InsideADRIFT Summer Competition 2008

A full competition for new ADRIFT games. Entries to be in by 1 Jul 08 and judging ends 31 Jul 2008. (<http://www.insideadrift.org.uk/?p=53>)

The Comp with no name 2008

A competition for games written with the unwritten version of Adrift 4 (only those who haven't registered Adrift need apply). Entries to be in by 1 Jun 08 with a result by 1 Jul 08. (<http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/f/ikonboard.cgi?act=ST;f=1;t=6560>)

Spring Thing 2008

The Spring Thing is an annual competition for interactive fiction. The games can use any IF language. Finished games, by registered authors, must be in by 2 Apr 08. (<http://www.springthing.net/2008/>)

IF Comp 2008 (Not yet announced)

Based on the normal form for this all formats IF competition you will need to register an intention to enter by 1 Sep 08, entries in by 30 Sep 08, judging complete by 15 Nov 08. Entries should be completable within two hours. (<http://www.ifcomp.org/>)

Birthdays and Events

April 2008 Birthdays

- 1 Echo (23); Hellspaw (41); brain in jar (18)
- 2 KFAdrift (47); Deadman (45)
- 3 sfzapgun (43); seigmann (36)
- 6 ifc6467 (41)
- 7 WebMonster (19)
- 8 TedEBearNC (47)
- 9 JamesBaldwin (38)
- 10 Alec (18)
- 11 ToddWat (41); Slayerized (22); Cobra1 (25)
- 14 kICkAdEvIL (25)
- 15 Onierosv7point0 (21)
- 17 Leaflander (55)
- 22 Boredom Man (33)
- 25 wolf (28)
- 27 flea (19)
- 29 Kaos (54)

May 2008 Birthdays

1 Incoming (27); bluemoon (38)
4 RevKeltina (36)
5 FallenKarma (28)
6 gamerfreak1020 (20)
8 ShogunNZ (35); Kojiro (26)
9 Sandy Fowke (29)
10 Hawkrune (35); gscbw (25)
11 fairyale (25); azurestone (24)
13 cchillindawg (16); Nick-Anims (17)
14 Dan Blazquez (21)
15 jimtun (38)
16 Ray (62)
30 AndrewF (40)
31 Heal Butcher (34); CowInParachute (19)

June 2008 Birthdays

1 Entries to Unregistered user competition due in today
6 En Kerklaar (22); Mattaius (22); Seciden Mencarde (19)
8 EricS39 (43)
12 ShereKahn (40)
13 The Amazing Poodle Boy (38)
15 Matt (Dark Baron) (19)
16 Blakk Matt (22); thatguy (33)
19 NickyDude (39)
21 Kinvadren (25)
22 betpet (33)
25 Cannibal (38)
30 BryanP (28)

JULY 2008

1 InsideAdrift Summer Competition entries due in today; Next issue of InsideAdrift due out

New Releases

There have been a few new games released on the main Adrift site over the past few months and you can see a list below, with the authors information.

BANDERA (8067 Kb) By pipo98, released Wed 19th Mar 2008

"Adventure in spanish. The code is free."

A Day at School (61 Kb) By fivesweat, released Mon 10th Mar 2008

"In this version of "A Day at School", there are still glitches but it is fully functional. So enjoy."

Rocky Raccoon (6 Kb) By Ian Herzog, released Wed 5th Mar 2008

"You are a raccoon captured by humans and taken far away. You must find a way home to save your family from Dan and Nancy."

Goldilocks - Breaking & Entering (9 Kb) By L.C.N., released Sat 9th Feb 2008

"My first ADRIFT I.F. Adventure, so I figured I might as well make it short and sweet.

Basically it's Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Only it isn't quite the way they told it to you when you were a kid. This is the adventure of: Goldilocks – Cat Burglar Extraordinaire!"

Greek School Adventure (49 Kb) By Dan McCurdy, released Tue 15th Jan 2008

Ok, after several months of no work, here is an edited version of Greek School adventure. This time, you can win it. Woo hoo!

Greek School Adventure is my attempt to satirize life in Seminary (preacher school). As such, it may be a bit in-jokey, but please try it anyway and let me know about any advice you have for changing it. Now that the biggest design flaws have been fixed, I hope to be able to concentrate on style flaws (of which there are surely many.)

The Comp With No Name 2008 announced by Cowboy

an event for those who haven't already got a registered version of Adrift

I am not quite sure why, but the Adrift community has been kind of quiet lately, or to be honest for quite a long time. I think everybody has their own guess on why this is. Some say that the text adventure genre is slowly dying, other that people are waiting for the new V.5 to be launched and has therefore dropped anything that has to do with the "old" Adrift. Whatever the reason is I have decided to try and give the Adrift community a gentle kick in the butt.

Therefore:to celebrate the rebirth of the Adrift Newsletter, the (hopefully) soon release of Adrift V.5, or just to get things going in the Adrift community, (If you don't like any of the above you are welcome to make your own reason...)

Anyway! I have decided to launch a small competition.

This competition is for non registered users of Adrift and the prize will be a free Adrift registration. This registration will also be valid for the (long awaited) Adrift V.5.

The winner will be notified in the forum, and directly through e-mail.

You can pretty much do as you like but needless to say that the better your game, the greater your chances are for winning.

Rules of entry:

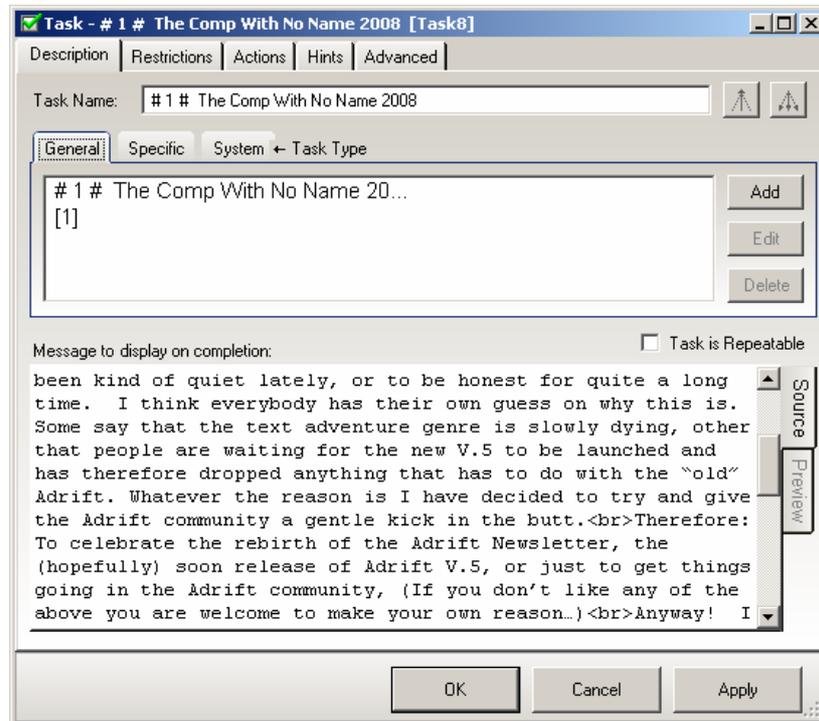
1. Judges of the competition can't participate.
2. Only non registered users of Adrift can participate
3. You can choose whatever theme you want for your game. (No AIF, though.. let's keep it clean *lol*)
4. The game has to be sent in no later than 1 June 2008. (One month prior to the release of the next Newsletter)
5. The adventure must be made using the unregistered version of Adrift 4.0
6. The adventure must have at least 4 locations.
7. When you submit your game, be sure to write your e-mail address so I can contact you and Campbell can send you the registration key

I am hoping that a lot of you will give it a try, and send in your game.

ADRIFT 5: a leap forward?

by Ken Franklin

I have been fortunate to have tested ADRIFT 5 in what is a very early alpha version. This version is not something you could seriously develop a game in, but it does give some clues as to what we will be seeing when it finally escapes from Campbell Wild's computer. I am not going to give a run down on Adrift 5 as it will change significantly from what I have seen so far.



A task window in Adrift 5 (Just remember it may not look like this when you next see it.

Probably the biggest change comes in the interaction between generator and runner. In the past much of the game behaviour has been hard wired into the runner. In the future all of the standard parser will become a library of tasks that are loaded into the generator and can then be manipulated by the author for their own particular purposes. This mean you can take a standard command and change how it operates in certain circumstances.

The thing I have been wondering is whether this will be the big leap forward that we would all love. Inform 7 has raised the bar with regards to ease of use, although in so many ways you could argue that all it has done is change the syntax of its language. You still have to know how to create a particular structure, such as a room, as Inform still wants a pretty tightly worded form.

One place it does score heavily with me is by having very detailed documentation available from within the programme. For the new user this is very useful, but it can still be hard to find what you need.

The Reviews Section

"Goldilocks - breaking and entering" by L. C. N.

Reviewed by David Whyld

Time to finish: fifteen - twenty minutes

Cheated to finish it? No need. It's easy enough that even if you're not very good at text adventures, you shouldn't have any problems with it. There are no real puzzles as such and only guess the verb is likely to slow you down.

Intro: You're Goldilocks, cat burglar extraordinaire, and you've come along to the cottage of the three bears to-

Hang on. Doesn't that sound just a teensy weensy little bit familiar? I could have sworn I played an ADRIFT game a few years back that had a kind of similar storyline to this one. But in the spirit of generosity, I'll give the author the benefit of the doubt. Two different authors coming up with the idea of Goldilocks as a burglar isn't that hard to come by, after all, seeing as that's just what she is. And the other game was a few years back.

The game begins with me, the aforementioned Goldilocks, standing at the locked front door of the three bears' cottage and pondering just how to get inside. Alas, despite being a cat burglar, I don't seem to have brought along any skeleton keys, lockpicks or any of the other tools of the trade that professional cat burglars often have with them (or so I hear anyway), so breaking in will have to be done the ol' fashioned way. On the plus side, I did remember my sack for all the loot I'm planning to swipe. Which is nice.

Considering my forgetfulness at bringing along anything useful to aid me in my burgling enterprises, it's quite fortunate that the three bears, despite having a new security system fitted complete with a keypad, have decided that the combination for said security system should be the same as their house number. Ingenious thinking there. I doubt many cat burglars would have figured it out but clever little Goldilocks got it right on the first attempt. Two seconds after arriving on the scene, her skill and ingenuity had got her inside. Thereafter the game becomes a standard case of finding certain items (i.e. your ill-gotten gains) and getting out of the cottage before the three bears arrive home. It took me several attempts to reach the end due to the game killing me off with the arrival home of the three bears and I did it with a less than stellar final score, indicating there are quite a few things I missed along the way.

As you might expect in a game by a first timer, there are a number of rough edges. Some are simple newbie mistakes that most people make before they learn better [1] [2], while others are just bugs [3] that even a newbie should have picked up on. Examining the sack once it's open (and, incidentally, you can put items inside the sack while it's still closed) reveals:

The beige burlap sack has seen better days. It has several loose strands hanging of it and a small hole in the bottom. empty1 The sack is open. A golden fleece is inside the sack.

A typo (hanging 'of' it) and the variable EMPTY1 showing up in the middle of the description don't help matters. Strangely enough, the game lists three beta testers in its end credits - did they (and the author) really miss this one? Or was it simply a case of the author thinking "ok, it's an error but it's only a minor one and I'm not sure how to fix it, so I'll leave it in and hope no one notices".

Guess the verb is a problem at times [4] though it's never the kind of game-destroying problem I've seen elsewhere. Even when the most logical command didn't work (which is always a pain), it didn't take me many attempts to hit on the right one.

The game is on a timer, ending when the three bears arrive home, find you burgling their house and promptly dispose of you in some nasty (but thankfully unspecified) manner. My

first play through the game I didn't realise there was a time limit and promptly died not long after they arrived home, unfortunately without saving my progress and, with ADRIFT's end game sequence not having an UNDO command, I had to restart from the beginning. Grrrr... [6] A couple of other times, the game ended suddenly without me being told why. I'm guessing the bears caught and killed me (I'd earlier seen a message that they had entered the cottage) but this was never actually stated in the text. One time, even when the three bears had captured and killed me, I was told afterwards they were still searching around the cottage for me.

I wouldn't really recommend "Goldilocks - Breaking & Entering" due to its many, many rough edges but it's not a terrible game by any means. Fix the rough edges, give the text a serious proofread, sort out some of the nasty guess the verb problems and allow me to refer to items by just one word and not six or seven and there might be a promising enough game here.

[1] Most consist of locating an item (none of which are especially difficult to find in a game with as few locations as this one) and then finding a use for them [2].

[2] Also very easy. The locations don't really have a lot of things to do in them and so generally when you find an item, it's not hard to figure out where you need to go and what you need to do with it. The game even hints, strongly, that something floatable is needed to cross the sea in case you hadn't figured that out for yourself already.

[3] It uses the ASK [NAME] ABOUT [SUBJECT] format and while I managed to get a few responses (all lacking speech marks alas), none of them really seemed to change anything. The biggest problem, though, stemmed from the NPC being referred to as Mr. McConkey but, due to ADRIFT treating the full stop as being the divider between one command and another, it's impossible to refer to Mr. McConkey as Mr. McConkey. ADRIFT sees "Mr. McConkey" and processes it as "Mr" and "McConkey" and thus throws a wobbly when trying to process the command. Annoyingly, attempts to engage Mr. McConkey in conversation still advise me to USE THE FORMAT "ASK MR. MCCONKEY ABOUT [SUBJECT]" even though this won't work. Unfortunately, the game doesn't understand "McConkey" either so you have to refer to him as "man" even when you know what his name is. See what I mean about the lack of testing?

[4] Bisquit (sic) ?

[5] I can't take the broom but no reason is given for this.

I know this has been a bit short, but the next issue due out on 1 July 2008 will be better – if drifters can add some content!