DUN DARACH

The Scene is Set

It happened that, following a fateful, bloody and largely pointless battle against the Conachta, Cuchulainn the Great was returning home to Muirmethne in company of his faithful charioteer, Loeg; pointless because the enemy was a scouting party and not intent on taking the peak of Beann Chulbain, below which the battle took place; fateful because, amongst their number was Amhair, a Prince of the Conachta and the darling of his father, who vowed an instant revenge...

Towards the end of the second day, Cuchulainn and Loeg came across a wayside inn and went inside to claim lodging and refreshment, leaving their war chariot by a strange but well-drawn carriage, surmounted by a huge Oak Log. While they waited for food, they were approached by Skar, a strikingly beautiful girl, who told them that she was the owner of the strange carriage, but was desperately troubled for her conveyance had developed a shattered axle. With somewhat unseemly haste, Loeg leapt to assist her and left the inn with Skar.

Cuchulainn smiled to himself and settled down to enjoy the freshly arrived trencher. After a while, he went outside to see what progress Loeg might have made, but was astonished to find no sign of Skar or Loeg. Instead, one of the proud horses that pulled the chariot lay slain on the ground; of the Oak-carriage, there was only a cloud of dust disappearing along the Eastern Road, and on the wind, a hint of ghostly girlish laughter. In a growing rage, Cuchulainn went back inside the inn and shook the terrified landlord until the full story was revealed.

Skar was, it seemed, a Sorceress and ally of the Connachtmen, and she had seized Loeg as retribution for the Pinceling's death, and taken him, body and soul, to the Secret City of Dun Darach.

Vowing a mighty vow, Cuchulainn mounted the remaining horse and took off to find the mist-shrouded city. Long was his search and the trials he endured form part of a different story, but, in time, he found Dun Darach, for in truth, that was where the Secret city was located.

New Dun Darach Works

The Option Screen is presented at the start of the game or upon request via the keyboard; the screen offers the following choices:

1. Enter the Game
2. Save the current Game
3. Restore a Game

Note that returning to the option screen from a current game will leave the game world intact – upon re-entry, nothing will have changed unless a previously saved game has been restored. This feature is given to be saved at a critical point without destroying it. When saving or restoring a game a version number will be asked for – this is to ensure that the right game is restored, so keep a note of version numbers.

The Keyboard controls the actions of the main character – which may perform which actions on your particular make of computer are given on a seperate card.

The following actions may be performed:

– walk left

– change camera angle 90 degrees left or right.

– enter a doorway: to achieve this on any computer, position Cuchulainn in front of the door and press the enter button.

– pick up or drop a specific object; note that objects may only be dropped in certain places – i.e. shelves, counters, etc. Whether this is in compliance with some whimsical city ordinance or merely an inborn sense of tidiness is unclear...

– offer an object to another character – this will produce a display in front of Cuchulainn of the proffered object – what happens next will depend on how well you have judged the other character's personality!

– select an object being carried for dropping, offering, etc. – the currently selected object is indicated by an asterisk.

Note that Cuchulainn can carry 3 separate objects plus a large amount of money.

In addition, there are some special function keys:

– enter/exit Autorin mode.

– freeze/unfreeze frame.

– return to Option screen.

How to play Dun Darach

The main objective of Dun Darach is to locate and release the charioteer, Loeg. But, to go with the streets of the Secret City, you will encounter scores of secondary quests which will need to be completed before a final solution is reached. Each player will develop his or her own strategy as they progress through the game – there is no set route to solve the Quest – however, as a guide, we will describe the elements involved in Dun Darach and give a few hints on play.

The City

The layout of Dun Darach is as complex as any normal large city, and the streets and buildings are continuously mapped by the program. You will notice the following logical sub-divisions.

– the city itself is divided into a series of Quarters, each of which possesses a distinctive character – for instance, one Quarter is involved with entertainment, another houses all the financial institutions.

– to aid the explorer further, each Quarter consists of several named districts.

– every street in Dun Darach bears a street name; every door that opens onto the street carries a house number.

– behind every door there is a room or set of rooms, which may be occupied or empty.

The Population

While some of the other characters in Dun Darach stek single-mindedly to their assigned tasks, most of the shopkeepers – the streets are full of independent, fully-animated characters, each with their own personality. Most of them have something which you will need, like specific objects or information or the knowledge of a secret way and all of them are open to bribery, either directly, with money – normally a large amount – or by some object which they themselves desire or need. Note that you cannot be killed in Dun Darach (another city ordinance?) but you will be fair game for pickpockets, confidence tricks and other normal city street activities. Note that the other characters are represented by one basic female figure and one basic male figure; when a new character appears on screen, an identifying symbol appears beneath the figure and the full name is shown in the text display.

The Currency

The units of currency in common use in Dun Darach are Iridi (literally – Rainbows); these are small gold seapns, variously coloured in the minting process. Iridi can be earned in a variety of ways:

– by working! Opportunity to gain a steady job exists in several parts of the city.

– by gambling; a visit to the Gaming House can be lucrative – or disastrous...

– by selling at a profit throughout the seven Universes, the Entrepreneur's Quarter beckons.

– by stealing; highly profitable but very risk.

– by banking, a wise move, and a reasonable interest rate.

Iridi can also be disposed of by many routes:

– by buying an object from a shop – pick up the object and offer money to the shopkeeper who will deduct the appropriate amount. Of course, you could pay not paying...

– by bribery, but, beware, the denizens of Dun Darach will never give you change...

– by being robbed – oh well.

Extract from 'Dinn Nemeton' – the History of the Sacred Grove, an Anonymous, Ancient and Secret Writing, which may not be published in full.

From the void sporing forth Lightning, that still asunder the long Night to reveal the World to the sight of Men; and the Voice of Darkness torn was Thunder, which rolled in majesty from mountain to valley and from river to sea; and the shape of Thurder in the World was the Oak, whose roots bound together the fabric of the earth, ian whose branches rested the canopy of the sky; and the site of the Sacred Grove wherein rested the Oak was called Dun Darach, the Hill of the Oak, and this was the most secret of knowledge and was entrusted only to the chosen of the Druidhan. But the Druidhan were also of the race of Men, and needed food and clothing and shelter, and there were ever those on hand to supply their needs. In time, the knowledge of the Oak seeped abroad, and the Druidhan surrounded the Grove with a Grea-Castle, to hide it from eager eyes, and the castle was also called Dun Darach, and for a while, the secret was contained.

But, alas, the Pendulum of History had been set into motion, and around the castle grew a great City, built and inhabited by many Men, who also called their city Dun Darach, and knowledge of the Sacred Oak filled the city with strange tales and the minds of Men with longing.

In desperation, the Druidhan called a great conclave of all the strongest of their Order and worked together a mighty Magic. And in that instant, a cold white mist settled on Dun Darach, and the City and all it contained, was freed from the bounds of the World and set to drift on the Tides of Time.

Like a floating log in a dark sea, the shrouded city still comes to rest on Mortal shores, and the black towers of the castle rear starkly from the white mist. It is said that, at such times, there is much furtive activity around the city gates and its streets are forever in Twilight. Alas, Dun Darach has become a melting pot for diverse cultures and a grim shield for the dregs of the race of Men.