PYM'S DAILY WORD SQUARE PUZZLE

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As a respected editor of dictionaries, Dr. Algernon Pym became well known for devising word puzzles for London periodicals in the mid-nineteenth century. Then in 1883, he started to publish books of daily word square puzzles, each book containing enough puzzles to last a year.

In the introduction to the 1883 edition, Dr. Pym stated that "Word squares can be comprehended by all but the most ignorant and worthless persons, while providing delight and satisfaction to the more intelligent sort." The books were very popular in their day, attracting patrons as diverse as Queen Victoria and Oscar Wilde.

The daily word square year books were continued down the decades by Dr. Pym's successors. And now, through the marvels of modern science, we are able to provide a daily word square puzzle on the computer. This computer edition has the advantage that it can check the answer and indicate which words are correct when a player achieves a partial solution.

1.1 Installing the Game

The game runs on an IBM PC or compatible computer. It requires an 8088 processor or better, so it should run on anything from the original IBM PC to its faster clones. It supports CGA and Hercules graphics, and looks best when connected to an RGB colour or TTL or composite monochrome monitor. It requires 512k of memory.

Before playing the game you must install it either to another floppy disk or to a hard disk. This is because the program saves your scores, settings and progress, and the original disk is write-protected so your games could not be saved there.

To create a floppy disk to play the game from, have a formatted disk ready. Put the original game disk in your floppy disk drive (it is assumed your drive is drive **a:**) and type the following command at the `A>` prompt:

```
A> diskcopy a: a:
```

DOS will copy all the files from the original disk to your destination disk, prompting you to swap disks as and when necessary. If you want to copy the game to your hard disk drive, you should insert the original game disk into your floppy disk drive as before, but issue the following commands at the `C>` prompt instead:

```
C> mkdir \pym
C> copy a:\*.* \pym
```

Once installed, you can put the original disk away in a safe place and run the game.

1.2 Starting the Game

If you installed your game to a floppy disk, insert the disk into your disk drive (assumed in this example to be **a:**), and type the following command:

```
A> pym
```

If you installed the game to your hard disk, then you need to use the following commands instead (this example assumes that you installed to **c:\pym** as above):

```
C> cd \pym
C> pym
```

You will then see the *Cyningstan* logo and the game will start.

Pym's Daily Word Square Puzzle chooses what is hoped to be an attractive colour palette for the graphics. Some monitors might not display this palette as well as intended. If this is the case with your monitor, then you have two options. Firstly, you can play with the standard CGA palette of black, cyan, magenta and white by running the game with the **-p** option as follows:

```
A> pym -p
```

Alternatively, you can run the game in monochrome mode. This is obviously a good idea of you have a monochrome display, and can be done with the **-m** option as follows:

```
A> pym -m
```

If you have a Hercules compatible monochrome display, as opposed to a CGA-compatible monochrome display, then the monocrhome display is detected, and the -m parameter is unnecessary.

Chapter 2

What is a Word Square?

Word squares are a form of puzzle where letters on a square grid spell out words across and down. A traditional word square will have the *same* words across and down. As with numerical magic squares, the challenge is usually to build them. In *Pym's Daily Word Square Puzzle*, the word squares are already made, and the challenge is instead to complete a partially filled-in square, an activity more suited to a casual daily puzzle.

Word squares have captivated literate civilisations for thousands of years, and were often put to religious uses. Across the Roman empire are numerous copies of the *Sator Square*, a word square made up of the Latin words *sator*, *arepo*, *tenet*, *opera* and *rotas*. This is a rare and special form of word square: a *palindromic* word square, the words being the same if the square is read backwards.

Word squares can theoretically be of any size. The smallest in English is 1×1, containing the word *a*. It is relatively trivial to construct by hand word squares of size 2×2 or 3×3. Larger sizes present more of a challenge, and the largest squares in English are 10×10 in

S	A	T	O	R
A	R	E	P	O
T	E	N	E	T
O	P	E	R	A
R	O	T	A	S

Figure 2.1: The famous SATOR square

size. These necessarily contain many specialist and scientific words not easilt guessed at.

For *Pym's Daily Word Square Puzzle* a 5×5 grid was chosen, as this provides a supply of hundreds of thousands of puzzles, enough to last for centuries to come. It is also big enough to allow a cross-shaped set of letters to be pre-filled without giving away too many clues.

Chapter 3

Solving the Puzzle

Now let us turn our attention to the computer game. The first control to learn is *fire*, which the title screen urges you to press. The *fire* key is your choice of `Ctrl`, `Space` or `Enter`. Press it now to dismiss the title screen.

If this is the first time you have run the game, the next thing you will see is today's puzzle. A small brass calendar at the top left will show the puzzle's date. Beneath this is the puzzle itself. To the right is a notepad, with brief instructions on the top page; the bottom page is blank. To the right of the notepad are decorative elements.

Filling in the Letters

Turning our attention to the puzzle itself, you will see a grid for the placement of tiles, mostly empty. Across the diagonals of the grid are nine spaces already filled in with small brown letter tiles: these are the it clue. You might notice that the top left letter is surrounded by a bevelled shape, the *cursor*.

The cursor can be moved around the grid with the arrow keys,

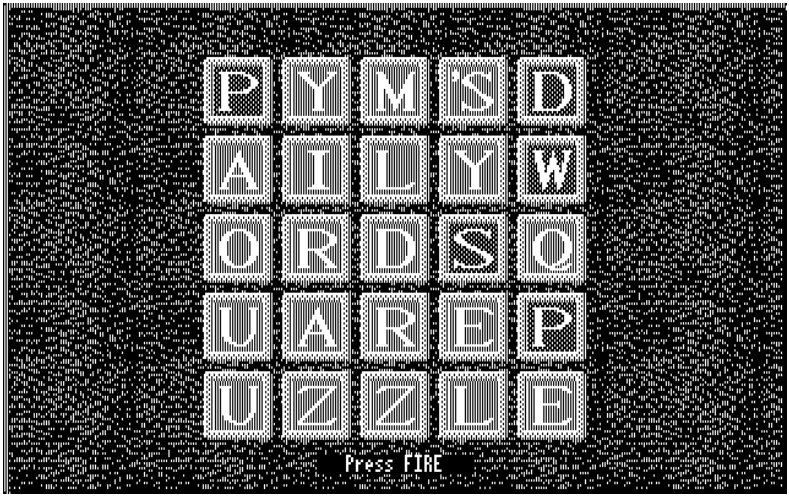

Figure 3.1: The title screen.

also known as the *cursor keys*. To fill in one of the blank spaces, move the cursor there and type a letter. Don't worry if the letter is correct at this stage. You can change the letter at any time by typing another letter while the cursor is on that space. You cannot overtype the letters that form the clue.

When you fill one letter in, you will see two red tiles appear: one where the cursor is, and one elsewhere on the puzzle grid. Since the same words will be spelled out across and down, filling in the letters of a word spelled across will also cause the same letter to be filled in where the word is spelled downwards, and vice versa.

Correcting Mistakes

You can remove a letter entirely if you change your mind about filling it in. With the cursor on the errant letter, press the *backspace*

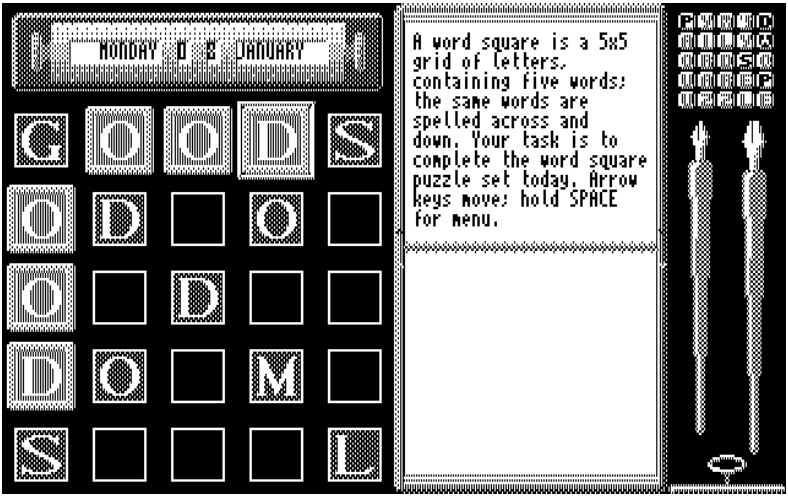

Figure 3.2: Filling in the grid.

key. The letter tile will be removed, along with the corresponding letter from the word spelled out in the other direction. The fixed clue letters cannot be removed.

You can clear the grid entirely if you think your solution is completely wrong. This involves using the *menu*, which has not yet been introduced. Let us rectify that now. To bring up the menu, press **and hold** the *fire* key. The ring pull at the bottom right will lift up and pull the menu with it. While gholding *fire*, the highlight can be moved up or down the list of options with the ↑ and ↓ keys. Highlight the *Clear* option, and release *fire*. The letters you filled in will disappear all at once, leaving only the clue letters.

Submitting Your Solution

When you have filled the grid with youe best guesses at the five words, it is time to *Submit* the puzzle for checking. This is done by choosing *Sumbit* from the menu. The computer will take a moment to check the puzzle, and then one of two things will happen.

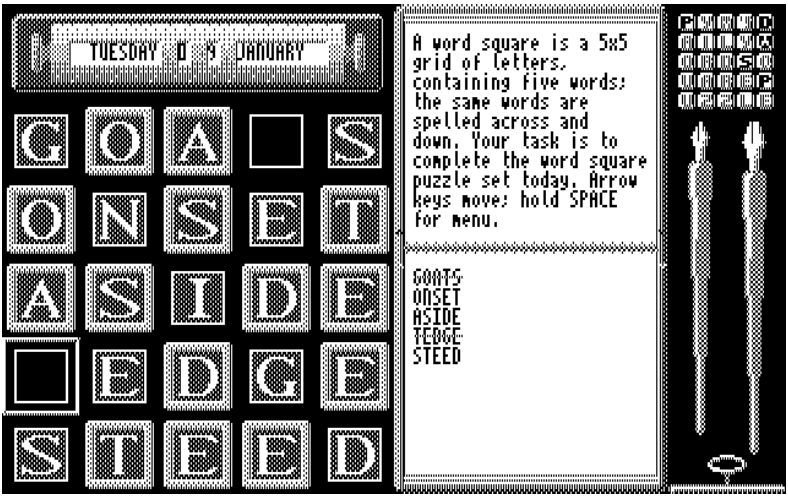

Figure 3.3: After submitting an incorrect solution.

If one or more of your words is incorrect, it will be removed from the grid. Any words that are correct will have their letters change colour, matching the clue letters on the grid. All your words will appear on the notepad, the incorrect ones crossed out. You are then able to continue attempting the puzzle. Words marked as correct cannot be amended; their letters are fixed and behave like the clue letters.

Bear in mind that there is only one solution to each day's puzzle. If you submit another valid word square that fits the clue, this will not be accepted as the correct solution.

If all of your words are correct, then the whole grid will change colour to indicate its correctness. The bottom page of the notepad will show a congratulatory message and a score. Scores range from 5 to 40, 40 being achieved if no wrong words were submitted. You are now free to quit the game, or to examine the calendar as discussed in the next chapter.

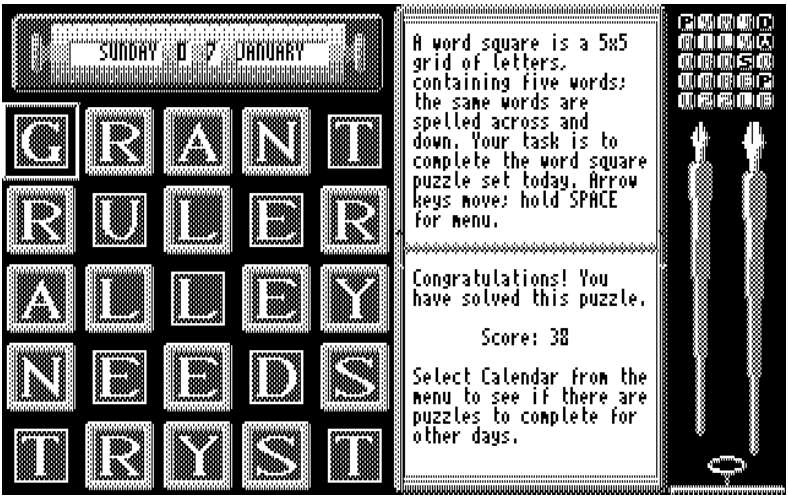

Figure 3.4: A completed puzzle, with score.

Saving and Loading

When you quit the game, the computer saves your progress in the current puzzle, and your scores for any puzzles you have completed. When you next load the game, you will be returned to the incomplete puzzle. If you completed the last puzzle you attempted, you will instead be taken to today's puzzle.

Chapter 4

The Puzzle Calendar

The calendar screen shows the whole year at a glance. Colours are used to divide the puzzles between the past and the future; any past puzzle can be viewed or attempted, while future puzzles are embargoed. Dates for which you have already solved the puzzle will have a tick.

A cursor indicates the date of the last puzzle you viewed, usually today. You can move the cursor around the calendar with the arrow keys. To view the puzzle that the cursor is highlighting, select *Puzzle* from the menu. As previously mentioned, you cannot view future puzzles, only today's and past puzzles.

If you missed a previous puzzle, you can still attempt it at any time until the end of the year. While the game is designed with daily play in mind, you could decide to play weekly, doing seven puzzles in one sitting. Or you can just dip into the game occasionally.

Calendars for Future Years

Pym's Daily Word Square Puzzle is published in yearly editions. As a year nears its end, the next year's puzzles are published and made

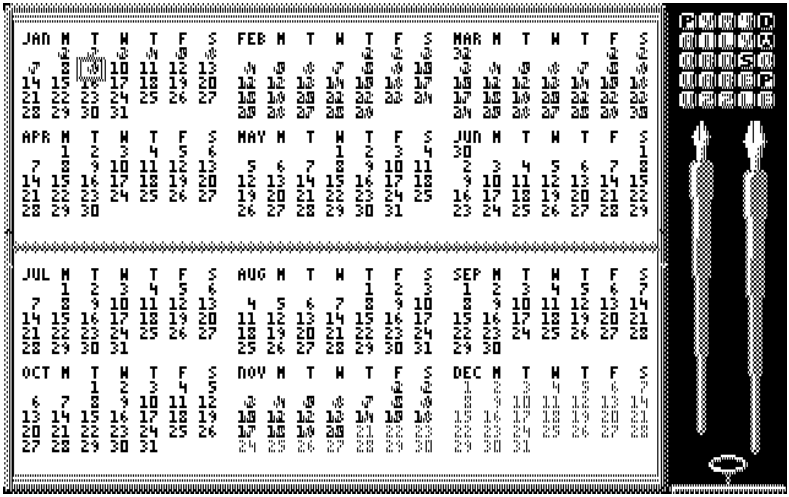

Figure 4.1: The calendar screen, showing which puzzles are complete.

available. You can install these by copying the puzzle file onto your game disk, or into your game directory if you are playing from a hard disk.

When running the game, the calendar loaded will normally be the one for the current year. If you have a previous year's calendar installed, and you want to view its puzzles or catch up on puzzles you missed, you can load it explicitly specifying the year when you load the game:

```
A> pym 2024
```

You can still use the -p or -m parameter here to select alternative display palette if you wish. You can also view next year's calendar if you have it installed, but there is little purpose in doing so, as all the puzzles will be embargoed.

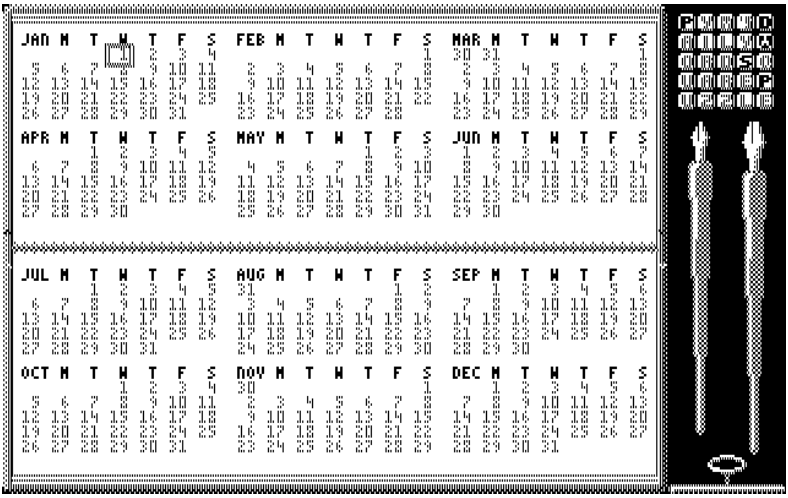

Figure 4.2: Looking at next year's calendar, none of the puzzles are available.

Chapter 5

Some Solving Strategies

Word square puzzles are generally straightforward. But there are instances where you are unable to complete the square satisfactorily, or you are uncertain whether a word you have filled in is valid. There are some strategies to deal with this.

Uncertain Submissions

As long as all the letters are filled in, there is nothing stopping you from submitting the solution even if you are unsure of it. The game will remove any incorrect words and allow you to continue. Your only penalty is a reduced score.

Sometimes you can only fill in a few words, and the remaining words are filled with nonsense letters. Submitting your puzzle in such a state will remove the nonosense letters and verify whether or not the words you think you know are in fact correct.

Visualising Words

Sometimes you just cannot think of a word that fits the letters already filled in. One strategy is useful here, especially if only a single letter remains to be completed in the word.

Simply go through the alphabet from beginning to end, mentally substituting that letter in place, or even overtyping it. This process can bring forgotten words to mind, or even suggest words unfamiliar to you.

Common Words and Patterns

As you play the game more and more, it becomes clear that certain words appear often in the puzzles. This is because those words fit well within word squares in general; words with alternating consonants and vowels tend to sit very well. So you will learn to recognise patterns in the clue letters and always have a preferred word to try out.

Consider also the letters most common to end words with, such as E, S or T. The last word in the puzzle is made up of the last letter of all the words, so it will more commonly contain these letters, and is unlikely to contain a letter like J or Q. Similarly, the first letter is unlikely to contain a letter like X.

Skipping Puzzles

Sometimes a puzzle has you completely stumped. Do not be tempted to spend all day on it, nor is there any need to cheat. Because the calendar allows you to revisit all past puzzles and attempt those not completed, you can leave the puzzle for now and come back to it. Sometimes a fresh view of the puzzle will suggest solutions that did not occur to you before.

Chapter 6

Credits and Acknowlegements

Thanks go to Dr. Algernon Pym (1830-1898) and his successors for creating and publishing the *Pym's Daily Word Square Puzzle* books, and allowing the computer game to be made and to bear Dr. Pym's name.

The *Pym's Daily Word Square Puzzle* computer game was designed and developed by *Damian Gareth Walker*, a.k.a. *Cyningstan*.

The beta test team were Epona, Nina Kalinina, Michael Klameerus, LadyVivianne, Rumorsmatrix, Robb Sherwin, and Sonneveld.

The dictionary used for the game is *3103 Common 5-letter Words*, by Luke Williams.