

MOSAIC

MOSAIC



THE WIDTH OF THE WORLD

Adventure game program by
SIMON GOULD

Based on the story by
IAN WATSON

Instructions
and the complete story

BOOKWARE

Contents

Using the program
if you are using a Spectrum 48K 4

How to play the game 7

The Width of the World by Ian White 9

The Width of the World is a trademark of Ian White. All rights reserved.
Copyright © 1983, Ian White.

London: Spectrum Ltd, 121 Upper Street, London N1 0PD

London: 1983

John Wiley & Sons Limited, Baffins Lane, Chichester, Sussex PO19 1UD

Program © John White 1983

The Width of the World © Ian White 1983

No part of this program may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means
electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage
retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. This program is
copyright © Ian White 1983. All rights reserved. No part of this program may be reproduced
without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. In the case of text,
this program is copyright © Ian White 1983. All rights reserved.

Produced and printed by John White, Chichester, Hampshire.

Typeset by Helen West, London, Hampshire.

Printed by The British Paper Company Ltd, Farnham, Hampshire.

The *Width of the World* first appeared in *Universe 13* edited by Terry Carr (Doubleday & Co., New York).

Mosaic Publishing Ltd, 187 Upper Street, London N1 1RQ

Marketed by
John Wiley & Sons Limited, Baffins Lane, Chichester, Sussex PO19 1UD

Program © Simon Gould 1984
The Width of the World © Ian Watson 1983

No part of this software may be reproduced in any form or by any means by any persons or institutions without the prior written permission of the publishers, Mosaic Publishing Limited. This software is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be re-sold, lent or hired out without Mosaic Publishing Limited's prior written consent and, in the case of re-sale, without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Production services by Book Production Consultants, Cambridge

Phototypeset by Hobson Street Studio Ltd, Cambridge

Printed by The Burlington Press (Cambridge) Ltd., Foxton, Cambridge.

Contents

Using the program If you are using a Spectrum(48K)	5
How to play the game	7
The Width of the World by Ian Watson	9
Ian Watson's introduction to The Width of the World Adventure Game	31

Using the Program

*The program is recorded twice,
once on each side of the cassette.*

If you are using a Spectrum (48K)

LOADING

Takes approximately 5 minutes.

Insert the cassette in the cassette recorder and ensure that it is fully rewound.

Type LOAD "" and press ENTER.

Press the PLAY button on the cassette recorder.

Leave the cassette in the recorder and the PLAY key depressed until the program has loaded. It will start running automatically. Do not press the BREAK key while the program is loading or at any time during the game.

TO SAVE A GAME POSITION

You may save your current game position so that you can turn the computer off, yet return later to the same stage in the game. To do this:

Insert a spare cassette in the cassette recorder.

Type as a game command "Save".

Press the RECORD keys on the cassette recorder.

After allowing for the cassette leader tape to pass the record head of the recorder, press any key on the Spectrum to start saving.

When saving is complete (about one minute) you will be returned to your current game. You may, if you wish, continue playing the current game.

TO LOAD A SAVED GAME

At the start, or at any stage of the game, you may restore a game position you have previously saved on the cassette in the following way:

Insert the rewind 'saved game' cassette in the cassette recorder.

Type "Load" and press ENTER.

Press PLAY on the cassette recorder. The saved position will begin loading and the word "Loading" will appear at the bottom of the screen.

How to play the game

An adventure game is one in which, by instructing the computer in simple English sentences, you act out a role in a particular situation. You may move around from place to place (NORTH or N etc), you may pick up and drop many of the objects you can see (GET, TAKE, PUT, DROP), find out what you are carrying (LIST or I) and you may manipulate and use many of the objects which you find in the adventure.

The Width of the World has a wide vocabulary, but if a word you use is not recognised, you will be told. In that case, try another similar word, or perhaps think of a different way to overcome the situation.

As you enter a new location there may be pictures displayed. These will only be drawn the first time you reach that location, but if you want to see the picture again, type LOOK. (LOOK can also be used as a normal verb in some situations).

Clues to help you with progress through the adventure are provided if you type HELP. The clue provided is usually specific to the location you are in at the time, or one close to it.

Before starting on your adventure read the introduction to the game on page 31, and you are recommended to read Ian Watson's story. This sets the scene and gives invaluable help during the course of the adventure. While the adventure does not follow the exact course of the story (that would be too easy!) but provides a sequel to it, details in the story may help.



How to play the game

A simple way to play the game is to use the command line. At least one command is required. An adventure game is a text-based computer game in which you are in a virtual world. You can move around in the world by typing commands. You can see the objects in the world by typing commands. You can pick up objects by typing commands. You can drop objects by typing commands. You can use objects by typing commands. You can talk to other characters by typing commands. You can solve puzzles by typing commands. You can win the game by typing commands.

As you enter a new location, the screen displays the name of the location. There will only be a few lines of text. You can see the objects in the world by typing commands. You can pick up objects by typing commands. You can drop objects by typing commands. You can use objects by typing commands. You can talk to other characters by typing commands. You can solve puzzles by typing commands. You can win the game by typing commands.

THE WIDTH OF THE WORLD

Ian Watson

OF THE WORLD THE WIDTH

Ian Watson

There were four of us in Dave Bartram's office at GeoGraphics that afternoon: Dave himself, puffing his pipe, Sally-Ann from design, Maggie from marketing, and myself from the computer graphics side.

After hours of gentle gloomy rain, the sun had finally come out over Lanchester. The steeply pitched slate roofs of the town outside were shimmering blue and green as though slicked with oil, while the stone of the Cathedral glowed almost golden.

And I was scrapping with Maggie, as usual.

This time it was over the idea I'd had that we ought to expand the Mappamundi to include optional programs for maps of imaginary worlds — Tolkien's Middle Earth, Donaldson's The Land, that sort of thing. I wasn't exactly winning the argument, but I had certainly managed to rile Maggie.

'For Heaven's sake, we're just about to launch the Mappamundi! The thing's a sure-fire best-seller as it is — for the whole educational market, *and* for the Mums and Dads. And that's because it's an *accurate* record of what the world was like in the past. Your

idea would turn it into . . .' She searched for a suitable term of abuse, '. . . into a video game!'

'I'm betting that we could expand the appeal enormously.'

'No takers, Alan. Mappamundi's a serious project.'

A brief reprieve, by buzzer. Dave flicked his intercom, and we heard Dorothy sing out from Reception:

'Mr MacNamara called from Heathrow, sir. He said not to bother you in conference, but his flight was late from New York. So he won't be at your house till about seven.' Dan MacNamara was our American marketing agent for Mappamundi; this visit mattered to us.

'Right,' said Dave. 'Call Mrs B, will you? Dinner at eight, to be on the safe side.'

In a sense, of course, Maggie was quite right. For Mappamundi — as the brochure boasted — was the ultimate teaching aid: a home computer package displaying on your own TV screen the changing map of the world from the Paeleozoic through to modern times. You could zoom in on any million square-kilometre section; that's roughly the size of France. You could overlay appropriate animated graphics which were just as good as movie footage: of dinosaurs grazing or fighting, of primitive hominids bashing flints together, of the *Niña*, *Pinta* and *Santa Maria* sailing to discover America, of Napoleon marching on Moscow . . .

'Apparently a lot of other planes were late, sir.'

'Tut tut.'

I myself had been hooked on geography, as a boy, by something much more vulgar: an adventure magazine, long defunct, called *Wide World*. I still had a stack of these at home, and every once in a while I hauled them out for a nostalgic chuckle. What lurid covers! And what tall tales inside! Seventy-foot long anacondas outracing galloping horses; six weeks alone on a raft in the shark-infested South Seas . . .

By the time I grew up, alas, the job of geography was somewhat different. It didn't involve drawing pirate charts with 'X' marking where the sea-chest lay buried.

Dave was champing impatiently at his pipe, and it seemed to have gone out.

'Well, Alan?'

'Look, if we include a stylus and digitising tablet, and modify the software slightly, we can even let people design their own maps — of their own imaginary worlds . . .'

'No.' said Maggie flatly, 'But Dave, don't you think we should keep a trick up our sleeves?'

Our chairman read the auspices in the hot dottle of his pipe bowl.

'Hmm, hmm, hmm,' he said.

'I'm willing to work up a presentation in my spare time.' Oh yes, Sarah should *love* that . . . I'd been eating and breathing Mappamundi for the best part of two years now . . .

'Spare time?' said Maggie archly. 'I trust you weren't thinking of taking a holiday, right now?'

'Whatever for? They don't schedule flights to El Dorado.'

'What a weird remark.'

'There be no dragons on our maps.'

'And a good thing too!'

'We'd better wind this up,' said Dave, consulting his watch. 'Listen, Alan, your idea *might* have merits. Nothing ventured, eh? So why don't you go ahead, and work up something for us to get our teeth into?'

Maggie grinned at me, conceding tactical defeat. But she would make sure, by next time, that she had her teeth sharpened.

It's a twelve mile drive home over the moors to Ferrier Malvis. The Volvo always got me back there in just under twenty minutes, and I'd long since stopped paying much conscious heed to the business of steering, or to the sheep grazing amidst heather and bracken.

But this time, just as I was zipping along smartly past a certain ruined dry-stone barn, an alarm bell went off in my head. Because I had left Geographics exactly as usual . . . and I ought to have been home already.

A glance at my watch confirmed this; twenty minutes had passed.

'The world's been stretched,' I thought ridiculously. 'It's been inflated, like a balloon. The surface looks the same, but there's further to go.'

It didn't seem very likely.

I arrived at Ferrier Malvis fifteen minutes late, and

Sarah's green Renault wasn't parked outside the house. She must be late home too, from the craft shop in Forby.

En route to the kitchen, I flipped on a Vivaldi cassette. I poured some chilled wine from the fridge then opened my briefcase on the pine table, to work in the golden light of the westering sun.

Maybe I was heading for a nervous breakdown? Could the weird stretching of the journey home be a warning sign from my psyche — a shot across the bows?

Presently a car door thumped outside.

'Kitchen, love!'

Silver Sarah looked distraught, as though she had been combing her blond hair with her fingers.

'Hullo, Silver.'

'Haven't you been listening to the radio, Alan?'

'No, I was listening to *The Four Seasons*. Should I have been?'

She darted back towards the lounge, presumably to kill the Vivaldi, but checked herself.

'Faster to tell you, my mappaholic husband! The latest planes from the States are landing up to three hours overdue at Heathrow.'

'So?'

'One of them just barely got down at Shannon, out of fuel. A Jumbo from Brazil has ditched off Lisbon. It's the same all over. It took me *far* too long to drive home.'

'Oh my God, I thought it was just me. Hell, I don't know what I thought it was!'

'Those planes aren't leaking, you know. They're using their fuel. They're still travelling at the same speed.'

'And yet there's further to go . . .'

'Miles and miles further.'

'I'll get you a drink, love.'

'Scotch. Neat.'

As I went through to the lounge for the Famous Grouse, *The Four Seasons* was just over. The tape ran on for a moment. Then click, and silence. Silver Sarah followed me.

'So how do you explain it?' She sounded accusatory — as if I had programmed untold square kilometres of blank space into the Mappamundi and these had suddenly sprung into being in the real world.

I poured a few fingers of the noble bird for both of us.

'Something must be happening to space,' I said lamely.

'Space?'

'I mean the nature of space. The universe is expanding, isn't it? So space is expanding too. And now the space between places is getting bigger into the bargain. It takes longer to get from A to B.' I laughed.

Four hours later — after several more fingers of the Bird, a scratch meal and much TV-viewing — we knew that space was just the same today as it had been yesterday. Satellite data confirmed that the

Earth's circumference was exactly the same as usual.

Nevertheless, radar and laser fixes from orbit upon jets sent up specially showed that these aircraft certainly weren't covering the distances as measured by air-speed and fuel consumption on board. There was much talk that night — to little effect — of lasers and the speed of light and trigonometry, and how photons are massless particles . . .

When we went to bed eventually, all airports around the world were closed, and all flights grounded.

Apparently the 'distance-effect' was still on the increase.

Next morning, when the alarm clock grabbed me out of the middle of some silly dream, the radio was repeating the same bulletin, with minor up-dates, every fifteen minutes.

The distance-effect seemed to have stabilised overnight. Imagine a graph with a curve on it, rising gently at first, then ever more steeply. Distances of up to fifty miles were now doubled. A journey of a hundred miles was in the region of five hundred. And the distance between London and New York, say — measured by radio-wave delays — was something of the order of a hundred thousand miles. It might be as far as a million miles from England to Australia, unless the distance effect followed a bell curve, though no one was certain. The American government, in consultation with the Russians, intended to test-fire an ICBM with an instrument

package in place of its warhead from Nevada across the Pacific towards Guam . . .

'Wouldn't they just?' exclaimed Silver. 'All they can think about is whether they can still fight a nuclear war! Just try flying a B-1 bomber to Russia now . . .'

'Or a Backfire Bomber from Russia over here.'

'Which is why they're going to test a missile, of course! Because a missile leaves the atmosphere.'

'It's just to measure the extent of the phenomenon.'

'Oh yes. Of course.'

Power transmission through the National Grid was down by some eight per cent, due to loss over extra distances; so consumers were being asked to be sparing in their use of power . . .

'I suppose we'd better do without toast, Silver. How about cornflakes?'

'For Goodness sake!'

'Well, we have to eat.'

'Don't you realize anything, Alan? What about fuel? Oil! Raw materials. Imported food. What price New Zealand lamb, coming from a million miles away? The ship would have to carry nothing but fuel. The crew would be old men by the time they docked.'

I worked it out in my head. 'No, actually it would take the ship about ten years. But I see what you mean.'

'I'm glad you do. Oh, we'll still be able to hear the news, from a hundred thousand miles away. As

Japan grinds to a halt. As people die in famines that no one can reach with food aid. People *like us*, Alan dear.'

'God, we'll never see a banana again . . .' Curiously, it was this which popped into my head, rather than the wholesale demise of civilization. Or perhaps as an example of it.

'It'll be like living on Mars. And dying on Mars.'

The radio advised commuters with journeys of less than thirty miles to proceed to work normally, but allowing extra time and fuel.

'That's stupid,' said Silver. 'How long is there going to be any fuel in the filling stations?'

'Do you suggest we walk? I suppose it's possible. Twelve miles to Launchester? In the old days, some kids used to walk twelve miles to school.'

'Just what would you be going to Launchester for? Instead of, say, digging up the back lawn quickly — to plant vegetables *tout de suite*? And getting hold of some good egg-laying hens, before everyone realizes?'

'Well, for one thing Dan MacNamara's due at GeoGraphics today . . .'

'What for?'

'The Mappamundi — what did you think?'

'And you're going to be able to export this TV toy a hundred thousand miles to the Land of the Free, in time for Christmas?'

'Look, we shouldn't assume this distance-effect is going to continue. It sprang up in a few hours yesterday. It stabilised overnight. It could fade away

just as fast. Still, I'd better phone Dave to check that Big Mac made it. Let's have orange juice rather than coffee, hmm? And it *isn't* a TV toy, Silver.'

Though, come to think of it, with my proposed extras it *could* come to resemble one . . . Maybe Maggie's taunt was on target.

Heading for the phone in my pyjamas, I lit a stick of my favourite Algerian camel dung, alias Disque Bleu; and I wondered how far away the factories of the Régie Française de Tabac were today.

Big Mac had indeed reached Dave's house — about three hours late; and Dave agreed with me about the sense of coming in to GeoGraphics. So after a rather fraught, cold breakfast I departed, Volvo-borne, towards Launchester, leaving Silver vowing that she was going to dig up the lawn all by herself and sow carrot or cabbage seed or something, if she could get hold of seed packets at the village shop in Hornton, down the road.

We had all got in to work, but it was a somewhat chastened team which met Big Mac in Dave's office.

Red-headed Dan MacNamara was acting in a bluffly amiable way, though I couldn't help noticing a persistent line of sweat along his upper lip, which he wiped away frequently.

After a while, the sales conference ran out of steam.

'Oh hell,' said Big Mac. 'Let's stop pretending. It's okay for you guys. You live here.'

'And here we may very well starve, too,' said I. 'Britain isn't self-sufficient. So my wife's busy digging up the lawn right now, to plant cabbages . . . We've *got* to assume that this business is going to reverse itself. And soon.'

Maggie drummed her fingers on a brochure.

'Or find some way out. Some way round the phenomenon. We're supposed to be the hot-shot cartographers. So how about *thinking* our way out of this, Alan, instead of ignoring it?'

A challenge. Even with the whole world inflating exponentially, she had managed to sharpen her teeth — as other ladies might find time to powder their nose during an earthquake.

'*Think* our way out of it? Maybe it *is* in the mind? Maybe it's an illusion?' I was just talking off the top of my head.

'If that's so,' objected Big Mac, 'and we're just imagining it, you'd get planes stalling in mid-air and autos in the wrong gear, and all.'

'True. We've *got* to be covering extra space — but the space has no content. It doesn't contain anything. Because . . .' and I searched around, 'because we can only see the world that's here.'

We couldn't see the Wide World of childhood: the world of El Dorado and King Solomon's Mines. Because the map of the world was full up with roads and railways, oil rigs and megalopolis. There was no room left for 'Here Be Dragons' or sea serpents. So . . . what if the map of the world had mysteriously expanded to include all of these other things — at

precisely the moment when every last geographical detail had at last been calibrated and computerised, including even prehistoric geography? But no one saw anything new. People were just grossly delayed in their travels. Was it possible to see something extra, something new in the interstices of the world? Was it not space which had betrayed us — but vision?

No, it wasn't quite that . . .

The world was over-filled with people: people who all shared a collective unconscious, a dream-mind.

When a hive becomes too crowded with bees, the bees know instinctively when to swarm; and away fly half of them to find another hive. But we only had one single hive, one world. So when the urge to swarm came, there was no other space to fly off into . . .

'Penny for them,' demanded Maggie. 'Penny for your thoughts.'

'Oh, I was just wondering how many disappearances have been reported to the Police Missing persons. Dave, you play golf with the Chief Constable, don't you?'

'Once in a blue moon, lad. What's that got to do with anything?'

'Just a hunch. Would you do me a big favour, and phone him to ask? Please. It'll only take a moment.'

In fact it took many moments to get through, but that was Dorothy's department. Shortly after Dave

did finally get to pose the question, he covered the mouthpiece, giving me a peculiar look.

'There are quite a lot of people reported missing. He wants to know how we new. At first they thought it was just a case of people not reaching their destinations.'

'Oh, they're reaching those all right!'

'Getting delayed. Running out of petrol, that kind of thing. But a lot of people have promised to phone home, and haven't. There's no sign of them. Here, you'd better talk to him.'

I took the handset.

'One thing I *can* tell you,' I was saying to the Chief Constable a little later, 'is that you're going to be snowed under with missing person calls by tonight.'

'I'll bear this in mind, Mr —?'

'Roxbury. Alan Roxbury.'

'I'll definitely bear you in mind.' He rang off unceremoniously, and I could see that Dave was embarrassed by the episode.

'Would you mind going through that again, for us dummies?' asked Big Mac angrily.

'It's like this,' I said to him. 'Mind constructs reality. Our thoughts make the world —'

'Oh, in a sense!' protested Sally-Ann, with a toss of her brown curls. 'In a sort of philosophical sense. But,' and she thumped her hand down hard on Dave's desk, 'thus I refute you. Flesh and wood. Solid stuff.'

'But what if the mind really does construct reality? And the world has got too small for us. Breakfast in

London, second breakfast in New York. We put a girdle round the Earth in forty minutes. And every square inch is filled up solid with detail. The world has been shrinking for the last hundred years, faster and faster. Now here comes the bounce-back at last. Or rather, here's where we swarm. As soon as enough people have found the way out, distances should return to normal.'

'The way out?' echoed Maggie, incredulous.

'Into the extra spaces.'

'Obviously you're under a lot of strain, Alan. Why don't you go home and have a rest?'

'Why don't we *all go* — and look for the way out ourselves? And try to come back again? Of course there'll be millions of exit points — and by tonight millions of people will have found these, of their own accord. The invisible boundaries. Well, we'll pinpoint one of these. We'll map it. That was your bright idea wasn't it, Maggie? Use our minds. Market the thing.'

I hadn't really expected that Dave would want to do anything other than feast Big Mac royally at Launchester's only *Good Food Guide* restaurant, the Sorrento, and sink a few bottles to take all our minds off the collapse (or rather, the expansion) of the world which we had been so sure of yesterday. Well he did — and he didn't. Or else he drank more than I noticed. For halfway through the *tagliatelle* and *prosciutto* he suddenly said, 'Okay, lad, we'll give it a try. Nothing venture, eh?'

And outside, afterwards, he handed me the key-

to his Jag.

'You drive, lad. Seeing as you know the way.'

'Which way?' demanded Maggie.

'Just let him drive. Spontaneously.' And Dave jammed his pipe into his mouth.

Pragmatic Sally-Ann would have nothing to do with this charade, and insisted on being dropped back at GeoGraphics; but Maggie was determined to enjoy this proof of my insanity, while Big Mac was filled with sudden wanderlust, since he was now effectively a prisoner in the Launchester area. (I suppose, similarly, one's immediate response to the threat of starvation could well be a bout of gluttony!) So off we went, and I took the most spontaneous, unconscious route I knew — which happened to be the road home to Ferrier Malvis. We kept our eyes peeled.

Some fifty minutes later I swung the Jaguar into our driveway. Silver's Renault was absent, so she must have driven the two miles (or four miles) to Hornton to buy cabbage seed. If indeed one does grow cabbages from seed . . .

And nothing at all had happened. Except that the journey had taken twice as long as usual.

'You'd better all come in for a drink,' I said. 'I want to see what Sarah's done to the lawn.'

'Good job someone in the family's got their head screwed on.' Maggie couldn't resist it. 'Oh, by the way, Alan, you do realize that you'll have to drive all the way back with us?'

'Eh?'

'To pick up your own car.'

God help me . . . 'So maybe something'll happen on the way back!' I snapped.

Maggie simply laughed.

We went inside, where I told them to help themselves to drinks, while I went through to the kitchen.

Out on the lawn a strip ten yards long by a yard wide had been stripped of its turf — the same turf which we had bought in so expensively a couple of years earlier. Sodds were piled in a dirty mass on the patio. The spade was stuck in the uncovered soil upright.

How long would this have taken her? Half an hour? Less than an hour, anyway. Whereupon Silver had decided that I could damn well finish the job. Alternatively, she had panicked about a possible rush on cabbage seed; and driven off to Hornton.

Hours ago. Well before lunch. Now it was three thirty.

I hurried back to the lounge, where gin was being glugging into glasses.

'Got any ice, Alan?'

'Fridge. I have to make a phone call —'

I found the number of the Hornton shop in Silver's own neat hand in the red book by the phone.

And Mrs What's-her-name told me that Silver had indeed been in, buying packets of seed — about ten o'clock in the morning. Then she had driven straight back in the direction of Ferrier Malvis.

A distance of two miles. (Or four.) Five hours ago.

I turned to the others. 'My wife's gone missing. Sarah's disappeared. She found one of the ways out.'

But of course, as I realized when I returned the Jag and passengers to Dave's personal parking space outside GeoGraphics, the reason why we couldn't find any of these exit points was that we were looking for them. We were searching for one in full consciousness of what they were. We *knew*. But it was the unconscious of the world which was at work . . .

Recovering the Volvo, I drove homeward recklessly, pushing my registered speed higher and higher so that (as I imagined) I might take all the longer over the journey. All too soon, it seemed to me, I arrived home.

Fixing myself a stiff shot of the Bird — as a gesture towards unconsciousness — I switch on the TV and watched for an hour.

There were missing persons reports galore by now. An epidemic of them. A veritable Hamelin — with hundreds of thousands of people in these British Isles alone somehow following this Pied Piper of the extra spaces, away into somewhere else. A lot of people had only needed to go for a walk around the corner. Or potter down to the bottom of the garden . . .

Drunk, I took the Volvo out several times that evening to race towards Hornton and back again. But, drunk as I was, I still knew exactly what I was

doing.

Finally I slept alone, crying maudlin tears into the pillow for a little while, before the Bird put me soddenly to sleep . . .

. . . to wake at dawn, sweaty with the alcohol, to the bright carillon of other birds: finches, blackbirds thrushes; and to thumb the radio on.

' . . . clear signs that the distance-effect has been growing steadily less during the past few hours,' was what I heard.

'Silver!' I cried — though there was no one to hear me.

Hauling my clothes and shoes on, I raced downstairs unwashed and uncombed. A couple of minutes later, and I was on the road driving hell for leather towards the sharp bends leading up on to the moors.

For the next three hours I drove back and forth between Ferrier Malvis and Launchester, hearing the car radio tell me with increasing optimism that the space-anomaly (for such it was being renamed) really was receding as rapidly and inexplicably as it had first arisen.

Silver! Silver! *Where?*

I sped with all the mad possession of the last old rascal out of Hamelin — and it was me who was left behind while the anomaly closed up seamlessly.

Eventually the Volvo ran out of fuel, by the same tumbled, dry-stone barn. I started to walk home. Then I began to run as fast as I could, hoping that b

exhausting my body I might en-trance myself, and so gain entrance still. Soon, with a terrible stitch in my side, I had to drop back to walking pace. The pain felt rather like a broken heart.

We are decimated, at the very least. Perhaps one tenth of the human race disappeared during the anomaly, overall. The effect was more severe in highly populated areas. Such as Britain.

Now, six months later, a sort of emotional anaesthesia seems to affect our memories of that time — an inability, in retrospect, to focus clearly on what happened, as great as that of the Australian aborigines who reputedly paid no attention whatever to Captain Cook's proud sailing ship when it first anchored off their shores, for the simple reason that there was nothing in their previous experience as huge as it. Like animals we mourned our losses: howling piteously for a few days, then walking on and forgetting. And at the same time, we're all rather glad to see each other — we who remain. We greet each other joyfully.

Not I, though. Because I failed — by knowing.

The jets fly from Heathrow to New York in exactly the same time as ever they did before. Yet when I drive back from Launchester over the moors, I know that Silver is somewhere out there — except that I can't see her or reach her. She's somewhere in the extra spaces.

Oh Silver!

Maybe in another ten years time — or twenty —

when the population again reaches swarming density, the seams will open up again, and there'll be a second exodus . . .

Today I resigned from GeoGraphics. A foolish mistake, said Dave — just at the moment when Mappamundi is really taking off, world wide, selling in the millions beyond our wildest hopes. It seems that something has triggered, deeply, people's interest in cartography . . . Hearing of my decision, Maggie brought her teeth together in a satisfied crocodilian snap. I didn't care.

Tomorrow I shall burn all my old copies of *Wide World* magazine, out on the strip of soil which Silver cleared. The stainless steel spade still stands upright there, just as she left it — a good test of the manufacturer's boast about weather-resistance. I couldn't bear to touch the spade till now. But tomorrow I will, once all the tales of El Dorado and the poison darts of pygmies in the Belgian Congo have been burned. However hard the ground is this Winter, I'll dig the ashes in.

I'm going to take over Silver's old job at the craft shop in Forby. I'll forget about running a Volvo and smoking Disque Bleu and drinking the juice of the Bird. In the evenings, come the Spring, I'll dig up the rest of the lawn and turn the whole garden over to vegetables, to feed myself cheaply. The hens I'll buy should be good enough company for me.

And I'll wait, till the world widens out again. Then I'll be the first person to walk around the corner. I'll stroll down to the bottom of the garden.

Ian Watson's Introduction to The Width of the World Adventure Game

You are Alan Roxbury, husband of the missing Sarah Roxbury. It is now ten years since the events in the story took place. All that time you have spent waiting . . . waiting for the world to widen again.

To earn your living during the interval you have worked in the craft shop at Forby, doing Sarah's old job — which has also helped preserve your sense of connection with her.

You never did sell the Volvo. In the aftermath of all the disappearances you couldn't get a fair price for the car; and besides, in the event, you couldn't bear to part with it. But you hardly ever use the Volvo. You can't really afford the petrol. So generally you walk the two miles from your home in Ferrier Malvis to Forby and back, unless some villager gives you a lift.

Another resolution you didn't carry through was to turn the garden over to vegetables; or to keep hens for eggs, and for company. Hens and brussels sprouts weren't quite your scene, you decided. And memories of Sarah are enough company for you.

Nor did you actually burn your copies of *Wide World Magazine*. You just wrapped them and buried them in the garden. Burning them, you felt, might somehow have stopped you from ever sensing out a

route to Sarah, when and if the chance arrived.

Now it has arrived. Earlier, at Forby, you felt a strange sense of unease. Impulsively you left the shop and got a lift home. However, the drive took far longer than usual . . .

The distance effect has returned. You must now find the exit point and a way through it, locate Sarah and bring her home . . .

