

A reconstruction of a printed sheet of Ken Garland and



Figure 1. Photo by Harriet Crowder, circa 1969.

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and 2 special split-route pieces; used to take the route in two different directions

et 2 carrés à voies partagées ayant des voies de deux différentes directions

2 besondere richtungswechsene Stücke um die Kette in zwie verschiedene Richtungen zu führen.

y 2 piezas especiales de via partida que se usan para que vaya la ruta en dos direcciones distintas

Figure 2. From Connect Rules sheet [v.L0543G], © Ken Garland and Associates, 210x297 mm, offset printed. Reproduced at original size.

Connect

Connect logotype designed by Ken Garland.

for the James Galt Toy Company in 1969.

and Associates

designed by Ken Garland

Robert Chapman's game Connect,

11.9.2006, London, UK.

David Bennewith: I was wondering what you thought about schools? What a school is, or, what a school should be?

Ken Garland: My wife was a school-teacher for 25 years as well, so we both have ideas. We share ideas about this. It's impossible to imagine any civilisation without schools, although there have been societies where schooling was an integral part of daily behaviour and not conducted in a separate institution. So, there have been times, and some people have said very recently, "I wonder if school is the right place to learn?" Sort of a comic idea surely. Where else? Well, you could say that people learn in life. You could say this, could you not, about many sorts of skills you acquire: cabinet making, plumbing – graphic design, maybe – that you learn them on the job. You could say that the best way to learn is not in a school, as such, but as an apprentice under an older person – a person who just passes on his or her wisdom to you during the course of the job. There is quite a lot in this. Some things you must surely learn in school: literacy, numeracy ... and even earlier, social awareness – how to get on. Because if you look at a reception class of children of around five years old, they all turn up from different homes with completely ... well not completely ... very different ways of behaving, which they've acquired in their home. And they have to learn to get on together. Not to bite, not to scratch; to help one another, not to always want to be the best – sometimes to be second best – and to help people in a way that maybe they hadn't done so at home. So, schools to start with are always places where you learn to be a social being and maybe that goes on, not just through primary school but into secondary school and onwards. I suppose things like playing games – which my children and grandchildren do avidly – is a part of social behaviour and it's important to learn. I wish in retrospect I'd paid more attention to learning what it is to play games, to work as a team, to collaborate. I see my grandsons playing football and I'm envious. I look at them and I think 'This is what a school has done for you', because they learn this at school – where else?

Now, schools that happen later on in life – where we are taught to become designers, for example – could you do without them? Well, I guess you could. I guess you could become apprentice to an artist, to a designer, to a plumber ... I see somehow the idea of apprenticeship has died out in this country. I always thought that was sad. Because I appreciated the acquisition of skills from some of my peers who were being apprentices. I thought, 'You lucky person', you know, you really, Really, REALLY learn how to do something in this way. Of

course it's luck too. If you are apprentice to a poor practitioner you become a poor practitioner yourself – or you quit. But most people can pass on something to the younger generation quite well, and I think we've got to leave that one in the air. We could say, "Yes, schools; even advanced schools: colleges, university – yes." But why have we abandoned the notion of apprenticeship? It's a very old custom, which was learned by Greeks and Romans before us and it was also a medieval principle. There is no way that the medieval society could have existed without its apprentices. Very important people. So, it's a bit in the air. I realise what I've done is raise another question – you asked me what do I think about schools ...

DB: You spoke about games as well and that brings me to the Connect game. I know you were talking about physical games, but you also work as a team when you are playing something like a board game. And especially Connect, which incorporates teamwork in a way, because it is dependent on continuing the play.

KG: That's true, I watched it being played so many times. A game needs collaboration. You don't necessarily have to help the other player to win, of course you are trying to win, but you are also looking to make something and enjoy the making of it. I think to some extent I've seen that in dominoes as well – which, of course, Connect is related too. You notice a bunch of people in a pub playing dominoes, you can see the sensual pleasure with which they create the game. The noises of the clicking of the dominoes, the way they turn it round a corner. It is a pleasure, the playing of the game.

DB: I really like one of the photographs on your website that shows Connect being played. It seems to suggest that one of the intentions was to create an awareness of your surrounding spaces as well.^{Fig.1}

KG: Not consciously, but it was an off-shoot. Any game that's worth its salt has got byproducts – it does other things. If you take a game like Monopoly, which is a marvelous, wonderful game – that game teaches all kinds of social lessons. I watched my children and my grandchildren playing Monopoly, being an observer, and watched them fight their way through greed and also generosity – where they learn all these social skills of acquisition, but also the skills of compromise and skills of persuasion, etc. Yes, a good game has many byproducts. Certainly, when we designed the game we did have in mind that people would enjoy laying it out. In the original Connect, the pieces were bigger than they became eventually. We thought it would be played on the floor – just spread around – it would pass under

tables and through chair legs, and it did. That is what we had in mind.

DB: You mentioned to me in an email that the first version of Connect was unplayable?

KG: Not the game itself, but some prototype stuff we did was unplayable: because the children – or the players – couldn't resolve it properly. In earlier prototype versions we found that the game could not be ended. You'd get to the point where all the pieces were played out but everyone still had a lot of pieces in their hand. So, who's the winner? Therefore we had to produce a new set of variants.

DB: Variants of form?

KG: Well, look here, I'll show you one – this is what we call a split-route piece.^{Fig.2} [showing cards] You see you have got ... you are going along like this here ... there are two 'knobs' stopping here ... I've got to illustrate this with pieces I suppose ... Once you come to it, it's not so easy! [Laughs] OK. You've got this piece here, you are playing with that one, let's say, and you've come from there and you've done that – but you've got to have that [split-route] piece to go on – and the game got stonkered [reached a stalemate] because nobody had that split-route piece. So, with a split-route piece, you're coming out here and you can either go off from there, or if you don't have that piece, then you also have a single red available – so you can go off on that. The split-route pieces made it work.

DB: So, the split-route pieces are really important for the continuation of the game.

KG: Absolutely. Without them the game just grinds to a halt. Now, we did find that – even with the split-route pieces – that you could come to the end of a game and still no one had run out of cards, but there would be at the most two players with the least number of cards. So, you have two players and they have two cards each – and they can't put them down anywhere. So then, who's to be the winner? Well ... we didn't know ... so we asked the children about this and the children said, "Oh yeah, if there are two players who have got the same number of cards, the younger one's the winner!". We said, "Why?", and they said, "Well, that's the way it is!". That was a little rule the children seemed to have – that you would give way to the younger person. So, here's the Rule [showing instructions sheet], it states: 'If two players are left with the same number of cards, the younger one is deemed the winner'. There you go. The children gave us that one and we thought that was so

wonderful, because it had them contributing.^{Fig.3}

DB: Testing the game – working through the game – must have been fascinating ...

KG: We thought, because we hadn't designed any games before, that they had to be tested. So Galt Toys, who were waiting for us to do this game, said, "Well come on, when are you coming up with the game?", and we replied, "Oh, no, no – testing", "TESTING!?, TESTING!?". We said, "Yeah? Don't you always test?", they replied, "We ain't got time for that. Come on!" Then, in a moment of rare frankness, one of the directors said to me, "Well, y'know Ken, I suppose we should do a test, but we produce about 10 new games every year at Christmas time and if they don't work we dump them. If they work – if the children like them – then we go on and produce them." There was a lot to learn on both sides. We made a lot of trial sets – prototypes – we made them very well. I've got one to show you, because they look impeccable; you wouldn't know they weren't the printed ones.

[Ken balances precariously on a bookshelf, reaching for the prototype]

DB: It's interesting to see all of the different languages that Connect has appeared in.

KG: [Distracted, balancing] Oh, yeah ...

DB: 'Nex' – where is that version from?

KG: That was what we were originally going to call it but we found out somebody had already registered the name. The prototypes of the games were immaculate and children would not realise that they were hand-drawn – they would think they were an actual product – which was very important to us because, otherwise, the children would say, "Oh, it's not a real game – you just sketched it". We couldn't do that – they wanted to know it was a real game – and we actually made up boxes called 'Nex'. We made six prototypes in total, to pass out to families in the street basically. That's where the rules became refined and we observed them playing. We noticed that quite often the children would have to play the game on a table. OK, so be it, the game had to be played on tables and a table produces its own constraints – you very quickly get to the edge of the table – and the table becomes a board in its own way. In the end Galt were very delighted that we produced a game that had already been tested, they knew it would be a success. Where as with most games you would produce a couple of thousand sets, or five-

hundred, they knew they could go ahead and produce ten thousand – and then more every year. I did a little bit of an account and discovered that, including the game in its present form, which is this form here [shows 'Rivers, Roads and Rails'], it has sold 600,000 copies – probably more.

DB: This might seem like a little bit of a silly question, but – just out of curiosity – would you ever think of a digital possibility of the game?

KG: People have suggested it but I said, "Me – no." I haven't got the time, inclination or skill to evolve a digital variant. One thing that was often suggested to us was that we could make wall tiles with these, you could put them in a bathroom and it could be great fun for kids.

Now, I want to tell you something that a lot of people don't know. The clue to this game is the template from which all these tiles are cut. When the game came out a lot of companies started to make copies, there was an Italian company, somebody in the United States, Japan – they never seemed to get it quite right. Because we bought the imitations we could tell that they hadn't got the idea of the original. If they'd sat down long enough with the original and assembled it – worked out how it would have been layed up to be printed and cut – it wouldn't have needed too much ingenuity to figure this out. But they didn't. I have only one copy of the original sheet from which these were made. Otherwise I'd have to sit down again and work it out myself! It's fairly obvious, of course, that, that would be a ring [joining four single red line curve cards]. The cards are all cut from a single large piece – and that's another key secret to the game.^{Note 1 & Fig.4}

This version [showing 'Rivers, Roads and Rails'], of course, was different.^{Fig.5} In fact this was an ingenious design because none of the pieces are the same. We got the illustrator to make the image on each card unique, so when you go round a corner the image is different each time.

DB: Can you tell me your thoughts on London?

KG: Well ... I'll give you a verbal one and I'll show you an image which is being shown in London in a private view this weekend. I came to London in 1950 and like everyone I discovered it is a very confusing city because it has no grid. But more importantly it has no absolute centre. What is the centre of London? Is it Picadilly Circus? Is it Marble Arch? Is it Saint Pauls? It doesn't have an absolute centre, it's a series of connected components really – and you have your favourite centre. My favourite centre is Tottenham Court Road – the intersection there – which is nothing to

look at but happens to be easy walking distance to other places. I start from there and everything seems to radiate.

I discovered London via the Underground diagram.^{Note 2} Because that's what I could relate to as a new-comer; it was the first thing I saw that made sense. I came off a boat from Holland – actually I was a little soldier in the army. Originally I come from North Devon and I never went to London and when I was in the army I had never visited London either. I happened to have leave from the army; so, from Germany, I decided to go to London. I arrived off the boat at Liverpool Street Station and I wondered, 'My god, where can I go?'. Then I saw this diagram and thought, 'Right that's the thing, go down there, get on this Tube and then get up at Picadilly Circus, or wherever'. I would go down – back into the Tube – and go up in the next place. So, I discovered London via the Underground Connection. A lot of people did this and also a lot of people feel it is the great friendly thing in London – the Underground diagram.

I got to know London very slowly, it's much too confusing to take it all in at once. I'm still learning it after 57 years! It's a fascinating city because it retains its secrets. I can go to a part of London I've never been to before and I might as well be in a strange city. Quite unlike Paris or Amsterdam, where you can feel that you can get to know it quite well in a week, oh, there will be little corners that you find later – but you've got this set-up. You go to Amsterdam and you know it's centered around a semi-circle series of canals. You go to Paris and it radiates out from the centre. New York is no problem either – it's a grid. London is a series of wandering streets and you start out on a street going North and you end up finding it's going East. But being lost in London is fun.

Now, I'll show you an image about London. The International Society for Typographic Designers asked if I could produce an image to go on a wall in a hotel which has been host to this exhibition called 'My City, My London'. So I chose an image that I already had, my picture of my part of London: Camden Town. To me, even though London is a very old city indeed, what I like about it is that it is continually changing and shifting, like a kaleidoscope, and every part of London is in this state of flux. You don't know London if you don't know that. It's not just the tourists, also people that come here and stay here – and even when they go away part of them is a Londoner, and always will be.

Endnotes.

1. See over. A reconstruction of a printed sheet of Connect based on a 50 x 70 cm offset plate.
2. The London Underground diagram was designed by Harry Beck in 1931 and introduced in 1933. See 'Mr. Beck's Underground Map' by Ken Garland, Capital Transport Publishing, 1994.

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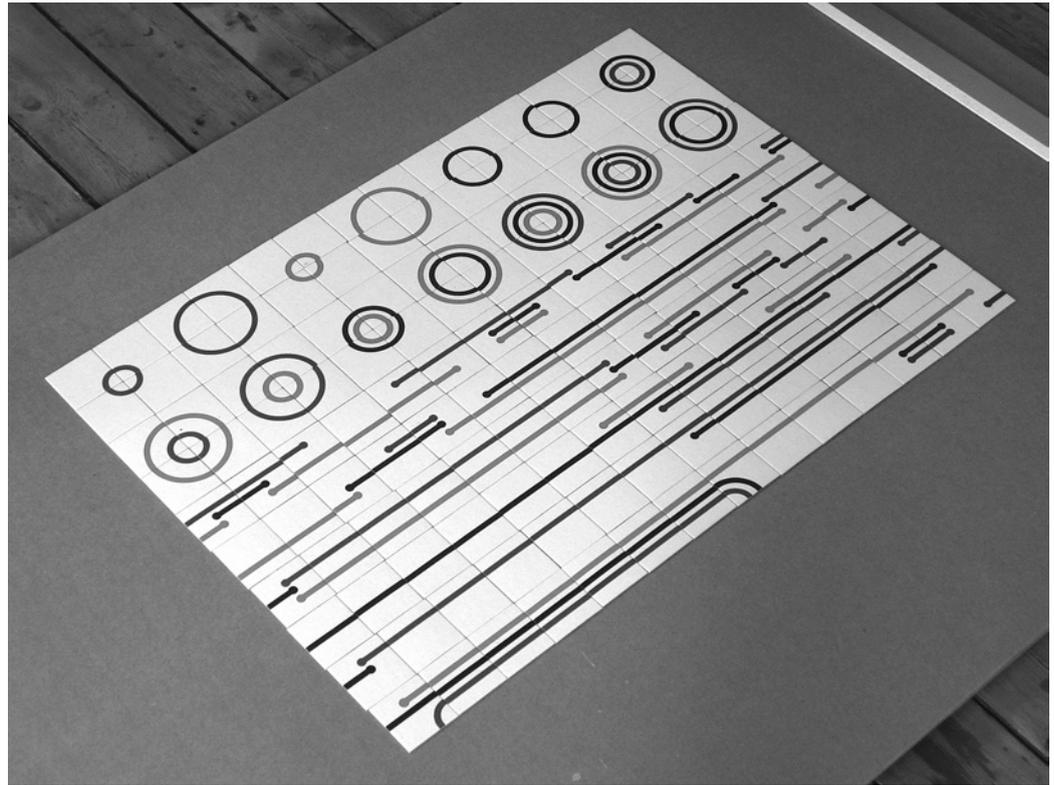


Figure 4. Document, 'A reconstruction of a printed sheet of Ken Garland and Robert Chapman's game Connect', 1-3 June 2009, Amsterdam.

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Figure 3. ibid, Figure 2.

cards until the face down pile is used up.
When this occurs, play continues until one player has no cards left: he is the winner. If no player is able to use up all his cards, then the one with the least cards is the winner. If 2 players are left with the same number of cards, the younger one is deemed the winner.
Note: even if one or two cards are mislaid, the game can still be played quite satisfactorily.

Garland conducted in 2006.

interview with Ken Garland

Including an interview



Figure 5. 'Rivers, Roads & Rails', Ravensburger, Germany, 1982.