

8BIT

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALL 8-BIT COMPUTER USERS

Issue 19

Published May 1998

Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambs. CB6 2RA

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SOMEWHERE CONCEALED WITHIN THIS VERY ISSUE, IS A VERY BELATED APRIL FOOL
IN THE GREAT 8BIT TRADITION OF "OPTICALLY CORRECTING YOUR COMPUTER
SCREEN BY HAVING IT RE-GROUND AT YOUR LOCAL SPECSAVER" (OR WHEREVER),
"THE NEW 8-BIT SUPER-COMPATIBLE COMPUTER", AND OTHERS. CAN YOU FIND IT?

GARAGE FULL OF SOFTWARE

Introduction

It's a bit late for the pantomime season, but the story of Gus Little's hoard of 8-bit software has much in common with Aladdin. It starts in a "golden age" when software for 8-bit computers was to be found in every computer shop as well as many other outlets. It involves a "hoard of treasure" in a number of "caves" which seem to go on for ever. I was quite dazzled to be the "Aladdin" in the middle of it all. Although most of the software is games, I hope the story will also interest those whose computing is not games-orientated. But let us start at the beginning.

About six months ago, I took a telephone call one evening from someone who had phoned earlier in the same day. The message left was that he had been referred to me as, through 8BIT, I might be able to help him dispose of a lot of 8-bit software.

Now, I'm used to getting quite a lot of calls like this. Usually it transpires that the person concerned has decided to get a PC (or already has) and wants to get rid of their old computer and sell separately (to make more money) about 100 or so games, plus a couple of pieces of "serious" software and utilities. If they are already using the PC, they will be finding how expensive their "upgrading" is going to be and every bit of additional funding towards that will help.

The games for sale are invariably on tape and will be either very common or very obscure (and rightly so). Often the seller would be better advised to regard them as individually worthless apart from their incidental value as part of the computer system as a whole. Sold with the machine, the software adds some worth from the point of view of a potential buyer and gives the impression that there's something to be going on with and further titles may be available after the purchase.

This turned out to be more interesting. It became apparent that this vendor had "been in software" in the early 1980s and still had "quite a bit of stock" left from when he moved on to other things. "About a garage full," he said. "Wow," I thought.

We chatted for about half an hour and finished the conversation with my understanding being that he would get back to me once he had compiled some sort of inventory. 8BIT readers could receive copies of this if they sent him an SAE. As I had spoken to him from the phone in our living room, not the one in my office, I had written his name and number on a piece of paper. Did I keep it safe? Unfortunately not; it disappeared into a pile of slightly read magazines and newspapers.

Time passed, and I heard nothing from him, so I decided to seize the initiative. Without the piece of paper I was faced with the problem of how to contact him. My scoop, announced in issue 18, was beginning to look like it might be a lost cause. I had already had it suggested to me by a couple of readers that it was to be the next great "April Fool" story, so I was concerned that the magazine's reputation for accurate reporting (if not punctuality, lately) be maintained.

Without much hope of success, I posted a notice to all the 8-bit computer newsgroups on the Internet, explaining the bare bones of the story, and appealing for anyone who knew the gentleman concerned to come forward with his name and contact details. These newsgroups are the modern equivalent of postcards in newsagents' windows or bulletin boards, but global; they are electronic noticeboards on particular themes with facilities to respond to points raised there. There was no response for a week, then enter Bob Brenchley.

Bob is very much "Mr SAM": he still sells SAM Elites and Coupes new as well as second-hand, and his magazine **Format** gives a lot of coverage to those computers as well as the Spectrums, as the SAM includes a Spectrum-emulation mode. He also handles software and might generally be described as "well connected".

Apparently, Bob Brenchley "lurks" on the comp.sys.sinclair newsgroup. This is not at all a derogatory reference: it simply means he tends to *read* more than he *writes* to the group. My posting caught his eye and he very kindly sent me an e-mail with the man's name, Gus Little, and his (ex-directory) phone number. I phoned that evening and re-established contact with Gus. In fact, I went further; I arranged to go to his home see this (at this point) "alleged" hoard of 8-bit software.

I had to go "cross country" to a sales conference in Gloucester on the 15/16th January and Gus lives "somewhere in rural Gloucestershire", not too far from Bob, as it happens. The reason I am obliged to be so imprecise about the location is because Gus does not want a succession of callers over the next few months (in fact, ideally not at all!). He is making proper arrangements for the availability of the software and to do that properly will take a lot of time before it's fully ready. His number is ex-directory too, so you won't find him that way. Anyway, at about two in the afternoon, and after passing his gate off the small lane twice, I parked outside and knocked at Gus' back door.

At Last, The Hoard

After a hearty "hello", I was at once asked what size shoes I took. "What?" I thought, being someone who has no idea what size any of my clothes are: I just buy what fits once I'm in the shop. Reacting to my confusion, he assessed my feet with a glance and disappeared outside, returning shortly thereafter with a large pair of green Wellington boots for me to put on. It did occur to me then that slippers would have been better if he was thinking of protecting the carpet.

Once he had got rid of the rather intense roof insulation man who had been feverishly writing up a contract at the kitchen table throughout the "boots" business, Gus led me off across the lawn to have a look in the garage. There was no other preliminary conversation so I was really unprepared for what was to come.

"I don't need boots for this" I thought to myself. As soon as we got past the locks and alarms and into the garage (and we only just could, it was so full of boxes), I got the first real inkling of what I had stumbled upon. There were boxes and boxes *and boxes* of "as new" 8-bit games software on cassette, each still in its original case and with its protective cellophane overwrapper. "Very impressive," I thought, "about fifty to a hundred-ish cassettes to a cardboard box, and about twenty cardboard boxes.. Hang on, that could be up to 2,000 pieces of software!"

"Oh, that's just for starters," he said with a smile. And it was. Next, we went over to one of those big steel containers, usually seen on the back of an articulated lorry, but in this case serving as another well-secured storeroom. It too was similarly stuffed with boxes of software. I was beginning to get "boggled".

He strode off across a muddy patch ("Ah, *that* explains the boots mullarkey!") to another building, formerly a chicken shed. This had new items of interest; boxes of joysticks and other accessories (much of it too buried to see clearly what) and, for the first time in this Odyssey, some "full price" disc software. Included were such gems as the Gold edition of the classic space trading game Elite for a couple of formats, complete with its story books and other related publications.

I break here to admit that there were many items in the buildings which I simply don't have the knowledge to assess. My experience of games software is largely limited to reading the the reviews of personal favourites elsewhere in the 8-bit press. Usually I do not publish these paeans in 8BIT as their appeal is too format-specific. But *whichever* computer you have (or have disposed of, having assumed that the source of software was in decline) I hope you can share with me the sense of wonder of the sheer scale of this find. For obvious reasons, I have concentrated throughout this piece on the 8-bit software, but there is also a huge amount of Atari and Amiga disk software too.

GARAGE FULL OF SOFTWARE - continued

Having found similarly high stacks in the pigsty, Gus and I went into his barn. By this time I was feeling fairly stunned, but it just got better and better. "Take a look up there," he said, indicating an aluminium ladder propped up against an upper level of flooring. Perhaps it had once been a hay loft? Gingerly, I climbed up. "There are about five different types of computer up there" Gus said. Without falling off the ladder, I couldn't stretch over to check the names on the boxes, but boxed they were and apparently unused. New 8-bit computers anyone? And two of the best items he had saved until now. From somewhere he produced two Oric keyboards, still in their boxes, wrapped in polythene bags and cradled in their polystyrene mouldings, and both were in absolutely mint condition.

On our way round the various buildings Gus had pointed out some of the other cassette ranges he had been involved with later in his career. For starters, there was a rather fine range of musical exercise and work-out tapes (I can't *think* why he thought I might be interested in *them*), and when we got to the very last building before we returned to the house, Gus showed me what he had moved on to in a big way after getting out of software. This building was racked out to accommodate every sort of music on cassette you can imagine. Despite my earnest protestations, I was eventually persuaded to accept one particularly fine compilation of 1960s psychedelic hits and another by Cab (Minnie the Moocher) Calloway. If you think he's old-fashioned he was the dude in the white suit in *The Blues Brothers*!

Who Is This Man?

After the grand tour, it was back to the house for tea and the actual interview. I started by asking him about his background.

Through the late 1970s and early 1980s, Gus Little had been working as an area manager in Scotland and Northern England for the Royal Doulton china company. An area change to cover The Midlands, Mid- and South Wales, and the South West required a house move to the Gloucester area, but not long after settling into the new home in its idyllic rural setting, he found himself on the wrong end of a company reorganisation, and he was obliged to look for an alternative employment at age 46.

As evidence of his sense of what's right in business, he tells the story of a customer who paid a bill with a succession of post-dated cheques, all of which were returned by the bank endorsed "please re-present". Instead, Gus went to see him, demanding his money (in cash) and the charges Gus incurred by the cheques having been returned. The customer paid up the original amount, but *not* the extra few pounds to cover the charges. So Gus, despite the fact that it would cost him money too, re-presented *all* the original cheques. Unsurprisingly, the customer was not happy as he copped a second lot of charges too! Gus got *both* lots of charges back.

He tells the story as if it were a joke, but it makes a point. Gus commands attention and one is engaged by what he says. He is the best kind of salesman; naturally enthusiastic about his products and direct in his manner, honest in business and requiring others to be too. He listens and reacts to what is put to him without giving an impression there is more to tell. It would be hard to dislike him.

How The Software Business Grew

Just after he left Royal Doulton, Gus heard of someone who was just setting up as a distributor with about a dozen agents working for him in the, then new, home computer software business. What the man did was buy games from the newly emerging publishers and sell the tapes on to retailers, making a small profit on each item along the way to pay for the business costs but still leaving enough for him to take a wage. Gus went to work for him, but soon felt he could do the job better as a "freelance" and struck out on his own.

Initially, the larger software companies would not supply him as he set up in competition to his old boss, but once they saw how successful he was at getting new business, the word got around and before long he was supplying "big name" software right across the south of England.

As a new venture, it was very successful. He had the right product at the right time and at the right price. He had 50-pocket display racks manufactured which he could supply "free on loan" with two cassettes in each pocket. This meant that he could maintain a responsible control over the stock, charging for the new stock as it was supplied and taking out old titles for exchange.

The range of software and computer types which could use the standard cassette-sized format grew to include the BBC, MSX, Oric, Sharp, Vic 20, C16, Electron, Spectrum, CPC, C64 and Atari 8-bits and Gus sold them all.

He was one of the top four distributors for both **Codemasters** and **Mastertronic** at one point, and quotes as his biggest sellers *Jet Set Willy 1 and 2*, *Manic Miner*, *Chuckie Egg*, and *Little Computer People*. Gus once went for an outing on the Darling family's boat, he sold all the *Dizzy* games very well, and by all accounts the social side of the computer business was pretty lively back then.

He also sold a lot of copies of *Elite*, with the offer of a set of wearable metal wings for reporting a high score. At a computer show a businessman, complete with homburg hat and rolled umbrella, approached Gus and offered him £25 for his *Elite* wings. "It could have been a cult...", he says, "if they'd seen the potential."

In **Computer Trade Weekly**, they used to publish sales figures but Gus never figured in the list of the most successful, although he did frequently get a mention, "once again, conspicuous by his absence.. Gus Little."

"I wasn't going to have them publishing my figures," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "I'm a very private person!"

One of his smaller customers was taken over by the national newsagent chain **Forbouys**. Rather than close the account with this "small supplier", **Forbouys** kept him on and let him put stock into all their flagship shops. **Lewis Meeson** shops, a similar newsagent outfit, followed.

All went very well through most of the 1980s. The growth of disc/disk-based software, whether full priced or budget, didn't trouble Gus; he just extended his range to include it when his customers wanted it. But it was at the budget end of the market that he had his greatest successes because *any* outlet (newsagents, toyshops, garages, garden centres, village stores, whatever) could stock and sell his budget-priced range well.

He even pioneered the concept of legitimate in-store game copying from a (supplied) master set.

The fact that it was easy to copy a game for circulation amongst the first buyer's friends was never (he feels) a significant problem to him, even those who had the cheek to return the game saying "it doesn't work" afterwards for a refund or exchange for another title. Anyone feeling uncomfortable?

If he was in a shop when a game came back to the shop he would take it from the shopkeeper in front of the "customer", hold it sideways up to the light, and say, "you've lent this to somebody and they've copied it," suggesting that the copying process could be detected by sight. "Perhaps you'd like to take it home and try it again?" He said a few demonstrations of this sort by him and his customers, significantly reduced the "returns" problem! But it wasn't the money; it was the principle of the thing.

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On the supply side, Gus dealt with everyone of note. I'm not publishing a list here, but if you ever saw a game software company's products sold in a shop, Gus had a contract with them and supplied their products. He was "seriously big time".

But the market very suddenly changed. Gus, as one of the major players in the UK's software marketing system, was sent one of the very first six Sega Megadrive game consoles to come into Britain via Mastertronic around 1987 (he thinks) and he realised at once that this was where the future of games software would lie. The cartridges were not easily copiable and the price for this simple protection system (the shape of the case) was all dumped onto the middle-man, the retailer, and the end user. "If you want it, and you will want it, you will pay the price we say." Nintendo were even more of a threat to Gus' business as they would only sell the games to retailers direct; no distributors were to be involved.

Gus had managed the competition as some business moved away from cassette software with the coming of 16-bit computers, but the console threat was different; higher selling prices, tighter profit margins throughout, the single format shape per system which needed dedicated (and new) racking, plus the fact that one major publisher's range (Nintendo's) would be completely closed to him. They could manipulate their terms and conditions of supply to maximise their share.

Decline and Change

As the market changed and Gus' software business went into decline, he made a quick, but well-judged, decision. Within nine months of the launch of the Megadrive, he was out of software.

He very swiftly moved on to supplying budget music cassettes on the same basis as he had the software. The same racks could be used with a change of the header board. The budget music market was then on the up, fed by very good quality music tapes coming in from overseas, often mainland Europe. These were being legitimately produced there under license from the UK and US copyright holders, although it is not certain that selling the product back into the UK market was anticipated!

The transition was quite easy. The down side was that Gus had to change up his old software stock to get the music in, and he had a lot of customers. So this explains the presence of the hoard. The software Gus has for disposal is new and unused. Anything returned to him as "not working" has been destroyed or is kept quite separately from the main stock. Obviously, as a former big player in the market he would not now want to take "clearance" prices from his former competitors.

What is to be done?

Obviously, the task of cataloguing and handling the disposal of the software will be a prodigious task. For reasons of the distance involved I cannot offer to attend the job to be done in person. But once again, Bob steps in! Bob Branchley is masterminding the task of cataloguing the collection and this is being done in as logical a way as the available elbow-room allows and commonsense suggests. The most saleable stuff will be done first to prove that a viable market still exists. The rest will follow afterwards, but it will still take some time to compile definitive lists. So your patience is required.

I will publish periodic news updates here in 8BIT, and would be very happy to see any of the essential information on the project reproduced elsewhere. Meanwhile, please "hold your fire" in terms of chasing specific titles as you will be wasting his time and your postage.

However, your "statements of preparedness to spend real money(!) on a particular format" should be sent to Bob Branchley at Format Publications, 34, Bourton Road, GLOUCESTER, Glos GL4 0LE. Enclose an A4 SAE and be prepared to wait for a reply.



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REPORT ON STAFFING A STALL AT AN "ALL FORMATS" SHOW by Stephen Potts

I would especially like to greet those of you who made the effort to come and see the show. It was quieter than in the past but still drew in over 2,000 people.

Perhaps I should put in a plug for the AMS shows at *this* point instead of at the end. They are held at Stafford Showground on the A518 between Stafford and Uttoxeter. If you come by car it is well signposted off the M6 at junction 14 and if you get a lift into Stafford town, or better still come on the train, there is even a shuttle bus arranged from the railway station. As for catering, there is a large restaurant upstairs serving proper meals as well as the usual range of snacks and drinks.

I have stood at shows for a few years now and have a well-rehearsed routine which involves taking two days off work. On the preceding Friday, I clear the car and load up with all the essentials (coffee, milk, sugar, kettle, DON'T FORGET THE CUPS THIS YEAR), and the Einstein stuff. Saturday requires an early rise to be ready for my friend John to arrive, then we are off. John doesn't have an Einstein but is the only one who's arm I can twist (that is, get to volunteer). On the journey we chat about discs monitors and "ins and outs" until we arrive at the showground.

As usual, there has been some terrific organisation in advance. We turn up and receive a welcome from organiser Ray Gamble, a permit, and a map of the stalls showing our allocation, and we can drive right up to the stall to unload.

One difficulty I have each time is deciding what to show, being unsure what people would like to see. I have the Einstein master disc demo running automatically as this shows a good representation of the capabilities of the computer with good use of colour and sound (you need a PC386 to match it). On the mono 80 column machine I show text adventure games (interactive books if you like) and I carry my software collection with me so that if someone wants to try something that they like, they can (Chuckie Egg is always popular).

I have had some success in obtaining 3" drive belts (there are standard across the varieties of 3" drives) and although these were my own personal ones I let them go at the show to help others. I also carry the EDI disk magazine of which you can have a copy with pleasure; bring one formatted disc with you per issue.

During the day we meet Graham Bettany and Mike Smallman who carried the Einstein flag so well in the past. We thought about blackmailing them with some old photos from Tatung publicity. Mr Finsilver dropped by, also two young chaps who apparently work for Dr Clark, one of the big brains behind the TC01. Another was Dave Savage, and we talked on a few topics including my drive articles in issue 80 of the Einstein magazine. It sounds as though he may be able to start off a few projects. This is where new activity can come from as long as nobody puts him off! One man came to thank me for his drive belt and his 256 PC is now working. Stan, it is nice to hear a "thank you".

If we socialise with other members and develop new ideas, in other words use the stand as a meeting place for co-operation (not criticism but enthusiasm), it is worth the effort. Do find yourself a project and develop it: don't keep it a secret. Let others know what you are planning and share ideas: what you think is commonplace may be just the information someone else is looking for. I would like to see a membership distribution map to try to encourage the sense of "belonging" by holding localised social evenings. In the meantime do please use the AMS stand as your focal point.

The Amstrad club I also belong to used to hold annual conventions with stalls, demos tutorials and even techies on hand (the other Amstrad Club still does), the Atari clubs now do use the AMS as their focal point.

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Bonzo's Scrapyard

*The occasional newsletter for Amstrad CPC
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29 Chapter Road, Strood, Rochester,
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Bonzo's Scrapyard, the tape to disc transfer information newsletter, using the Bonzo suite of programs, published quarterly, is available now from the above address. To receive a copy, send an A5 or A4 sized SAE, plus an additional first class stamp.

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Remember - OTTO costs you nothing at all! Issues 1 and 2 available on 3" disc - please state when ordering. Issue 3 expected by late August 1996.

REPORT ON STAFFING A STALL AT AN "ALL FORMATS" SHOW (contd)

I have been in touch with a man who is producing 3½" units called a Freddy Drive (as previously mentioned here). This has its own power supply and switches cables etc to plug in and go without hassle. My efforts to get one for the stand came to nought, not even their flyers came in time. Whilst on drives on the stand, I did talk to several people about the subject but I don't think it translated too well.

I am considering buying some more stock for the stall ie, 3" discs, 3" drive belts, printer cables, monitor switch boxes, monitor cables... Do drop me a line with any suggestions, but do remember the purchase will come out of my own pocket. If you have any Einstein stuff for the stall do drop me a line as there are lots I would like to show but at present all the display is my own kit. I could do with a colour monitor as mine is still not working on blue so the colour is rather odd. I would also like a speculator and a 256k memory expansion.

If you have any redundant discs we could sell on the stall or any software or manuals give me a call. If you prefer to sell items, send a list with an SAE plus an extra stamp. I had three enquiries about buying an Einstein at this show.

The show seemed to go well and quickly. As it wound down towards the close at 4pm we started to switch off to allow things to cool down. The last half hour seemed long as we prepared for another loading. Two days work and we head for home saying "goodbye" to the organisers and assuring them of our best efforts in November.

Well, that's my bank holiday gone on typing, so I hope to see some of you at the next AMS show.

If you have any enquiries, sales, donations of equipment or volunteers, drop me a line at 85, Thorold Avenue, Cranwell Village, Lincs NG34 8DS.

If you want details of upcoming AMS and other "All Formats" shows from a range of organisers, send an SAE to 8BIT magazine as we are on the mailing list to receive weekly updates.

A PS ON EINSTEIN DRIVES by Stephen Potts

I have modified my own Einstein to use 3½" drives, there can be various configurations using switches or software. I have a side switch for side [a] or side [b]. There can also be an ABBA switch, ie 3" A/0 drive with 3½" B/1 drive or, when switched, 3½" A/0 drive and 3" B/1 drive. In addition to this, you may have software to allow larger capacity than the standard Einstein format of 180k type 40t s/s. The next is the old PC 360k but this is long gone. Best is 720k type 80t d/s.

Before you reach for the pen, I know this is not the exact number of "k" you have but I am referring to standard types, though the number of sectors per track cause variations about the mean size. It doesn't matter if the drive is 720k or 1.44 as you will have to lock out the sensor in the drive to hold it in 720k mode. The reason for this is the FDC675 chip can only handle 720k - it cannot handle the 1.44 rate of operation or control signals. I cannot (with the best will in the world) say if this drive or that will do or say which pin to solder to which. This is because of the variety of makes and the different types. Even within one make the circuits can change from batch to batch.

I hope this is all clear, as sometimes people get it round there necks and repeat what they only half understand, so don't get technical if you don't need to. It took me 4 years and a lot of purchases to find out what's what.

I will soon write an article on changing 3" drive belts as this seems to affect quite a few people with 3" drives.

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PRECAUTIONS AND SIMPLE DIY FAULT-FIXING ON OLDER COMPUTERS

Queries on data loss abound. Often appeals for help start, "My disk drive has died...", "I really enjoyed playing ???, but it suddenly won't load..." These articles cover precautions and remedies which will solve most difficulties.

PART 1: CPC TAPE ERROR MESSAGES by Gordon Woolliscroft

Those using tapes only or with tape inputs to machines using disc drives can be bedevilled with "read/write error" messages. Here they are as they appear on an Amstrad CPC. Other computers produce similar ones. Always test an apparently faulty tape (or disc, for that matter) in another drive if possible.

Read Error a : Bit too long. Caused by slowing of the drive, bad "wow", poor tape or a dirty read head. Replace belts, clean heads, lubricate moving parts *sparingly*.

Read Error b : CRC check failed. The most common error with tapes. The computer has found that checks on the data have produced different checksums, so the data cannot be validated. Usually caused by faulty tape e.g. kinked, stretched or damaged.

Read Error d : Block too long. This is rarely seen but could occur if you change tapes in the middle of a block of data. The answer is not to start one set of data, change your mind, stop the tape, put in another tape and continue. If you have the wrong tape in when loading you must reset the computer and start loading again.

Write Error a: Frequency too high. This could appear if you alter the write speed and set it higher than about 2500 baud. Don't mess with your tape speed! You should ensure it is below 2500 baud. Some transfer programmes offer higher baud rates but the lower the frequency, the easier it is to save a programme and reload it again later. Test the head's vertical adjustment with an Azimuth check tape.

On Read Errors a & b it is important to have a good quality tape machine if you use a computer with a disc drive to avoid some of these problems. However if you have only tape input you may have to use the one supplied with the machine. They are becoming scarce so it might be wise to get a cheap spare mechanism or machine now.

Clean the heads from time to time as oxide from the tape is deposited and affects the transfer of data. With the machine switched off, open the cassette deck, press 'play' and wipe the record and erase heads using a cotton bud dipped in an alcohol-based cleaning fluid designed for the purpose. Do not use the fluids designed for cleaning electronic circuits as they may damage plastic materials around the heads. If in doubt ask at a reputable electronics store.

It is important to use good quality tapes - "wherever possible" won't do. C15 or C30 for repeated usage but one *can* use up to C60. Remember, the longer the tape the thinner the material, with a greater tendency to stretch and distort data. If you *only* have tape input it will pay you to make backups of your programmes.

Handle them carefully and ensure the tape has had all the slack taken up before running it to avoid twisting the tape and thus damaging it. *Sometimes* it may be possible to rescue it running it through a tape recorder a few times - this may straighten it enough to be able to rescue the material. If not you will have to make another backup from the original which you safely stored away (you did store them safely, didn't you?).

Tapes should be stored in cases or proper tape storage boxes to protect them from excessive light and dust, away from magnetic materials/strong electric currents e.g. loud speakers, powerful amplifiers, and *monitors*. Cups of liquid can seriously damage your tapes and computer.

IEBA

The Independent Eight Bit Association

The Independent Eight Bit Association, formerly solely a SAM and Spectrum group, now works to support and promote the use of *all* 8-bit computers, including the Amstrad CPCs, PCWs, and NC100/200 notepads, BBCs, Commodore C64/128s, Einsteins, Orics, SAMs, Sharps, Spectrums etc ... if it has an eight-bit processor, it is supported by the IEBA.

- The group have already produced a comprehensive **Directory of 8-bit Services**, a copy of which is free to members upon joining.
- When the IEBA has something to discuss among the membership, it publishes and distributes a free newsletter.
- The group's officers use a wide range of computer types themselves.
- The IEBA is seeking to set up a portable display module for use in libraries exhibitions.

Membership of the IEBA costs just £5. There is no annual subscription, and no renewal fee. For further details and a membership application form, write to the Membership Secretary, Brian Watson, at Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA.

Pipeline Software Tutorials

The Pipeline Software Tutorials, written for CPC computers and acting as a professional quality series of introductory guides to programming, are now available again exclusively from Brian Watson under licence from Sentinel Software. The copyright remains with the author of all parts of the series, Robin Gilbert.

• Pipeline Tutorials have long been respected as the definitive and comprehensive series for CPC users who wish to take their computer use beyond 'off the shelf' programs and into BASIC, assembler, and other programming techniques. All are printed on A4 paper with card covers and comb-bound to lie flat in use.

• Each Pipeline Tutorial costs £5, including the postage and packing, in the United Kingdom. Orders from outside the UK should include £3 extra per order towards postage and secure packaging, regardless of the quantity of Tutorials being ordered.

• There are associated disc files available for some Tutorials. When the series was first issued these files cost extra; now they are supplied free onto the purchaser's own discs.

• A catalogue of the Pipeline Tutorials series may be obtained in return for a stamped, addressed, A4 envelope to Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA.

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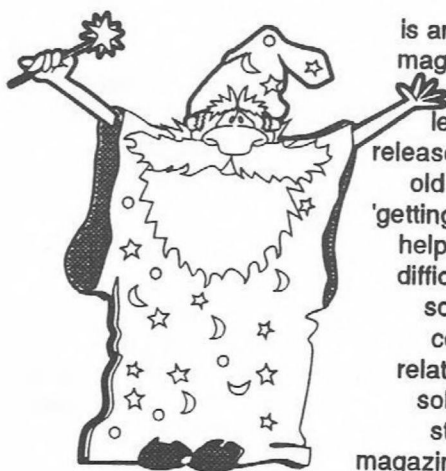
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I keep 2 discs ready formatted to dump material from tape or other discs. They are not numbered (as are my other discs) but have their spines coloured bright red and bright blue for easy identification. After each day's use, the programs are transferred to a more permanent home in my regular discs and the discs reformatted. As a result I always have 2 discs which are easily identified and ready for use immediately and do not have to look for space in my regular discs.

PART 2: DISC (OR DISK) DRIVE BELT REPLACEMENT by Brian Watson

For a while my 3" disc drive had been sounding sluggish, especially first time I used it each session. Then the computer's power supply developed a fault which meant the cut-out kept blowing, requiring 10 minutes while the chips literally warmed up before I could try to access the drive. The last two straws were intermittent 'read error/disc missing' messages which were appearing, and characters starting to get lost between computer and printer when printing from disc. I'm thrifty, but I also know when money *has* to be spent.

The computer gets daily use, albeit as the back-up machine printing while I work on the other one, so the failings were beyond a joke. I'd already used the works of a 3" second drive unit to replace the original mechanism. This time I needed a less drastic solution and thought of the 'replacement belt' gambit; it probably needed changing anyway after ten years(!), and might solve some of my other problems too.

I had written a week before to the CPC user group WACCI about my troublesome trip and mentioned the belt problem almost as an aside. No sooner did their magazine (also called WACCI) hit the mat of André Howard than he got in touch with the offer of a belt for £2.45, with full fitting instructions and including post and packing.

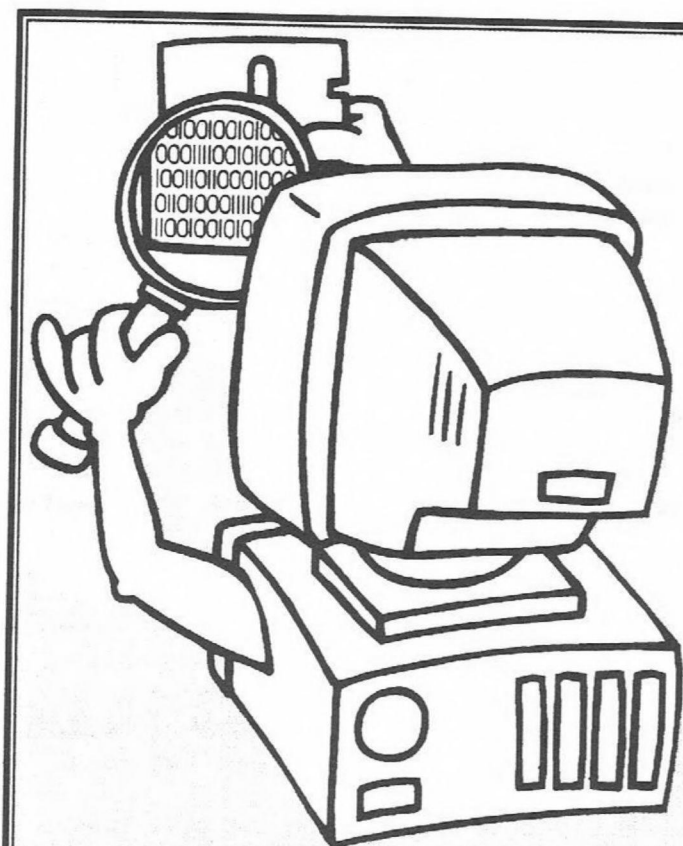
The instructions are in plain English and printed on just one side of the sheet of paper, so were very easy to follow and I did not have any problems, apart from a twinge prising apart the connector André said I might have problems with. Depending on the drive you have, there may be slight variations in the steps to follow (for example, I found there were 4 screws holding in my circuit board rather than the 2 or 3 in the instructions), but this is not a particularly difficult DIY job.

Once the drive was apart I cleaned the pulley with white spirit on a cotton bud. After several soaks and hard rubs with the wet bud I eventually got the muck off. Do NOT scrape off deposits from the brass wheel with a screwdriver. It is soft enough to be damaged by rough handling. Comparing belts I found the old one had stretched to a whole 1/4" longer than the new; no wonder the drive was sloppy.

My tips to add to those supplied with the belt would be:

- 1) Use mats of Blu-Tac to poke loose parts into. If you copy their pattern relative to each other this will help refitting.
- 2) Use a pencil to sketch bits you might forget later. This may be as simple as which side of the drive faced you as you pulled things off.
- 3) Keep a blunt knife handy to prise connectors apart. Apply pressure progressively and carefully, ensuring you support the half which is to stay put with a thumb or finger. Above all BE CAREFUL - disc drives don't work well with blood all over them.
- 4) Ensure you are on the right part of the connector; it can be tricky to decide which ones to separate. You'll be a bit peeved if you split the case of the socket.

The belt I used with success came from André Howard, 65, Altyre Way, BECKENHAM, Kent BR3 3ED. There are many other suppliers of similar belt repair kits to do the same job. They seem to be standard for all 3" drive mechanisms. If you can manage without instructions, 3" belts are available from me (Brian Watson) at just £1 each.



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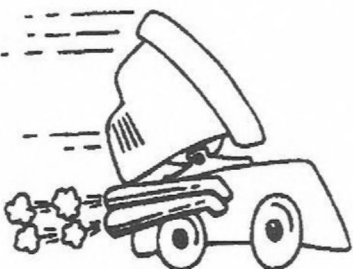
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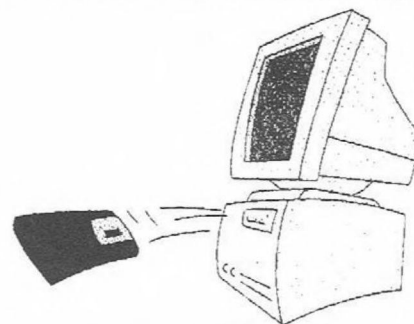


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SOME OVERLOOKED BASICS

Yes, we all know them (or pretend we do), but how many of us can say that we practice the basic safety and 'good practice' precautions of computing.

1) POWER SUPPLIES by Gordon Woolliscroft

Computers are very susceptible to fluctuations in the mains supply. Some may affect your TV set when there are storms and it is a reckless computer user who continues work at the keyboard at such times. There are also many *minor* fluctuations which can go unnoticed but which may nevertheless cause temporary loss of Random Access Memory and therefore loss of the material you are working on. This is why you should frequently save your work to avoid loss of files and many hours of work. There are also other things you can do to minimise losses or corruption of data.

Try to choose a power socket that is on a separate circuit to equipment that is in intermittent use or has automatic switching, eg refrigerators, dish and clothes washers, cookers, immersion heaters, room heaters and anything else on a timer or thermostat. When these switch there is a current surge which may affect your computer. It may pay you to obtain a "spike suppressor" to reduce these surges to your machine, especially if you find you are already being affected by otherwise unaccountable data losses.

Use 4 or 6 way extensions with a correct fuse fitted to the master plug *and* the branches - not one adaptor with all the plugs fitted like a Christmas Tree - and *certainly* not an adaptor connected to a light socket! Use modern, good quality, plugs, wired correctly. If you are not sure of how to do it seek advice from an electrician. Ensure plugs fit well into their sockets and the equipment and check *all* connections and wires from time to time for loose connections and damage.

Run all cables tidily without loops to avoid electromagnetic effects and heating of the cables. This should also mean that they cannot be tripped over or snagged and the plugs pulled out. Try to keep mains cables away from printer and disk drive cables and thus avoid corruption of material being sent to peripheral equipment.

Finally, whilst dealing with electricity (even down to as low as 5 volts) do remember that liquids and electricity do not mix. Do not drink and compute - it may seriously damage your health (and/or your keyboard).

2) GRANDMOTHERS, MOTHERS and DAUGHTERS by Gordon Woolliscroft

I am not being sexist - you can change the heading to the male sex throughout if you wish but I have used the heading to make a point.

I was in my local Social Club when a gentleman came in looking very worried and asked if the Secretary still had the figures for the last year for the Football section. He explained he had been working on the figures on his computer and somehow during a transfer he had erased the disk containing all last year's figures. I asked him whether the words in the heading meant anything to him to receive a blank stare! I went on to explain their meaning in this context to him.

Of course one *always* (pause for embarrassed wince from editor-BW) backs up one's disks without fail so that if the above occurs we still have a back-up copy to refer to even if some additions are necessary to bring the disk back to the level of the erased disk. So, today's disk is the "DAUGHTER", yesterday's disk is the "MOTHER" and the day before yesterday's disk is "GRANDMOTHER". Tomorrow, one uses the "GRANDMOTHER" disk and it becomes the "DAUGHTER", the others moving up accordingly leaving you with 2 back up disks that can be updated if necessary with less effort than trying to re-enter all the data.

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SOME OVERLOOKED BASICS contd

I *always* use this method for membership lists and other data, keeping two separate disks with consecutive sets of details, and a working disk containing current lists so that any accidental erasure causes minimal additional work. Bear in mind *also* that one should work with back up disk copies of the original program disk, keeping the latter in a safe place in case of accidents.

3) PRINTER AND DISK DRIVE LEADS by Gordon Woolliscroft

About 2 months ago I had an enquiry from a member regarding his printer which despite all efforts repeatedly printed a blank line after each line of text printing and did not appear to respond to the usual remedies. However, the printer worked satisfactorily when attached to a friend's machine. At that time I was not aware, or did not realise the significance of the fact, that only the printer was tested using the lead from the friend's printer. A few days ago I received a letter from the member who informed me that the fault was, in fact, in the lead and it had possibly damaged the printer.

It is not always possible to detect faults in printer and disk drive leads, nevertheless it pays to check for folds which have caused a mark across the lead as well as examining for cuts and abrasions. Also check the connectors to the computer, printer or disk drive to see if they have worked loose or are showing signs of obvious damage. This is especially important if you are unable to leave the machine and other equipment permanently assembled and have to re-connect leads each time. This can wear the connector surfaces and affect performance.

If you find a faulty lead (unless you have the skills to make up a new one) it may be possible to obtain a replacement at a Computer Fairs at a reasonable price but take the old one to ensure you obtain the correct type. An alternative is to get one made up by a good computer repairer or electrician using your own connectors if they are suitable for re-use.

While on the subject, also check your power leads, plugs and fuses, bearing in mind that there is always *some* slight heating in electrical wiring which will eventually loosen screws and connections.

Finally if your computer is in a room where cigarettes are smoked it is possible if the exposure is heavy for a similar film which one finds on articles in the room also on connectors thus impairing their efficiency. Cleaning carefully with alcohol (as used with tape and disk cleaners) will remove the film.

4) QUICK TIP - VISIT THE PUB reproduced from ALCHNEWS 11, used with permission

It's becoming harder to get protective covers, especially ones to the high standard CRASH used. (Mine is dated 1987 and still immaculate) But what simple replacements can you use. It's something of a coincidence, but bar towels are *just* the right size for the +2 or +3. But, before you take one, *ask first*. Surprisingly, it is possible to buy bar towels from shops and stores in any major town.

5) THE WORKS vs THE PROFITEERS from ALCHNEWS 11, used with permission

How many of you use an inkjet printer? A tip to start with, then I'll tell you how to save yourself a few bob by making your own ink to use when they run dry.

To get a non-Amstrad printer working on a Spectrum Plus 3, enter as a direct command: POKE 23354,62:POKE 23355,16. It alters the routine that starts at 23354 and instead of disabling interrupts, it does LD A,#10 instead. The printer will now work properly. You don't need these pokes on a +2a, and I've no idea why. You *will* need them on a +3 though if you use a Citizen 120D, Brother Hj 100i or a Canon BJ-10.

Basic98 by R.P.Hill

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Basic98 is actually 3 languages in 1:

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Multi-line statements	Optional line numbers and labels
CASE/OF/ELSE/CEND	Preset arrays
REPEAT/UNTIL	Array SORT and SEEK
System DAY/DATE/TIME	LET/INC/DEC/READ as commands and functions
High precision maths up to 187 dec places.	PLOT/LINE/ARC/CIRCLE
INSERT\$/REMOVE\$/CHOP\$	BOX/PLANE/ORB
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Direct keyboard access	Pattern FILL/FLOOD
AT/CLS/VPT/VIDEO/ULN	Print/copy/move/swap
File print between statements.	zoom/rotate screens or image files up to 256k

Easy to use

Basic98 comes with an integrated editor that can create and read an 'infobase' of up to 100 64k files and 4094 topics. This has been used to create the 532k manual, which can be viewed in the lower half of the screen as you are writing a program, and which is automatically reopened, with the source code position, to explain any compilation or runtime error that occurs.

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Club pages with Linda Barker

Ex editor of "Amstrad Action" and "Your Sinclair" hosts the club pages in both magazines. She writes for members each issue and presents a round up of useful programming tips & competitions.



SOME OVERLOOKED BASICS contd

I got sick and fed up of paying nearly 7 quid for what is, after all, just a bottle of ink. So I came up with this:

You need a few egg cups full of *distilled* water because of the way these inkjet cartridges work. Tiny tubes of silicon are filled with ink from a reservoir, then they are heated very quickly so that the ink shoots forwards under steam pressure. Well, not necessarily steam; remember that the original ink was based on isopropyl alcohol. If you use tap water (even if it has been boiled) you will have dissolved limescale in the water which will quickly block the print head and you'll need to buy a new cartridge. Distilled water adequate for this purpose is easy to make; boil a kettle, and let the steam flow over a *clean* plate. Collect the condensation in a clean vessel, and that's distilled water (or near enough for our purpose).

You also need a cheap plastic pen (*without* an open breather hole in the barrel), some cotton wool, and a bottle of endorsing ink. Dilute the endorsing ink with about 25% water by volume: an egg cup full of ink to about a quarter egg cup of water. Filter your mixture with a small ball of the cotton wool stuffed halfway down the pen tube. Not too tight or the ink won't flow. Now, with an eye dropper or syringe, slowly drop the ink mixture into the pen tube, drop by drop. Collect what comes out of the other end in a very clean egg cup and there you are; enough to fill your cartridge, with some for next time. If you can get a hypodermic needle from somewhere, use that to squirt the ink into the cartridge, or use some other method such as siphoning, then gently blowing, through an empty biro refill.

I've used my method to make my own ink for about two months now, and the results are very good. As good as the original ink, but not quite as good as the leading brands like Premier. Still, for around 50p per refill, can you complain? My printer uses Canon BC-01 cartridges. If yours doesn't, you'll have to experiment a bit. If you don't get a good quality print out, try changing the ink to water ratio.

Make sure you keep the small plastic head guard when you first fit a new cartridge. It's best to re-fit this when you fill the cartridge again because it stops the ink in the head drying while you refill it. When you have refilled the cartridge, you can make the ink flow properly by wiping all surplus ink from around the breather hole (the same one that you've just used to pump more ink into), then put the cartridge to your mouth and lightly blow air into the cartridge until you see fresh ink bubbling at the head. You need to put the corner of the cartridge fully into your mouth, so *don't suck!*

6) GOOD (TAPE) HOUSE KEEPING by Gordon Woolliscroft

It is important that you know what programs there are on the tape and where they are to avoid loss of material, which is why I recommend that only C12/C15 tapes are used and only one or two programs are recorded per side rather than C60 tapes with many programs on them. A C12 takes 6 minutes per side to load, so it is a good idea to let it run through in the mode which tells you what is on there, rather than running an application.

So you need to catalogue a tape and note down the programs and their locations (using the counter). To do this first wind the tape back to the start and place it in the tape deck. Now type in the instruction to catalogue a tape relevant to your computer and press ENTER/RETURN. Should you mis-spell the command you will get an error message. Try again!

Follow the instructions and on the screen there will appear a list of the program blocks in order plus a code indicating the type of program, eg BASIC/BINARY, and hopefully confirmation that they have been read correctly. This indicates that the program would load or run if required to do so.

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SOME OVERLOOKED BASICS contd

Make a note of the programs on the tape and keep this on a cassette box insert or in a loose-leaf book. You can also note their approximate length using the fact that one block is (about) 2K in length. There are some programs in the Public Domain that catalogue tapes and print the results, however I prefer to use a screendump program to print out the screen listings at the end of the cataloguing process.

7) A TAPE PS by Brian Watson

Just before we leave the matter of tapes, did you know that they are called K7s in France? The thinking behind this is as follows; a "k" is pronounced "ka" in French, and 7 is written as the word "sept" (pronounced "set") - "ka set", get it? Say it again faster, if not.

8) GOOD (DISK) HOUSE KEEPING by Gordon Woolliscroft

Unlike tapes, which store their data one block after another, disks store their data in segments on the disk and not always sequentially. Disks are said to be formatted, that is, a kind of magnetic spiderweb is printed onto the surface(s), and the details of the location of the programs within the windows of the web is kept in the disk's directory area.

Normally when you purchase new disks they are not formatted to suit your computer so it is necessary for you to do this yourself. There are a number of Public Domain programs that can do this or you can use the program supplied with your computer following the instructions in your manual.

So how do you find out what is on the disk? Well, first of all ensure that the read/write tags are in the "protected" position (usually moved to leave a space - but check with the instructions with your particular type of disk) and insert the disk with the side you wish to catalogue in the appropriate position. Type in CAT and press ENTER/RETURN to get the catalogue printed out on the screen. But its very full and the top few files have gone off the screen I hear you say and I missed the details. This can happen but do not worry, your manual will tell you how to only get one page full at a time.

You will note that you will usually have the program as one entry, not the individual blocks as for tapes, and the type of program is usually indicated e.g. BAS/BIN plus its size in K. You are also told of the remaining space left in K on the disk. One new feature if you have previously used tape programs is that the program name is a maximum of 8 characters followed by a full stop and then 3 characters usually indicating the type of program e.g. CASSCARD.BAS.

There are a number of Public Domain programs available that will allow you to print out the catalogue of a disk in varying sizes of print so that you can have a more permanent record of the contents of the disk.

Finally one or two words about disks - especially if you have only full ones and need room for another program. You can look through the disks and delete which ones you no longer want to keep or those Back Up (BAK) programs that could be deleted. If you have both tape and disk facilities on your machine then you may be able to transfer some of your little used programs from disk to tape and thus free more disk space for use. See your manual for details.

But what if you have erased something important by mistake - well there are Public Domain programs which have the UNERASE facility. Do bear in mind however that when you erase a file you only initially delete the visible entry in the disk menu and not the contents of the program UNTIL you have filled the disk on one occasion, after which new programs are saved on top of deleted ones.

Quo Vadis?

Some time ago, it was announced that a PcW16 disc of tips and routines was in preparation. When **8BIT** closes, all the PcW16 articles which have appeared in the magazine will be passed (on disc) to the **British PCW Users Club** (formerly **South Essex PCW Users Club**) who are undertaking to be a central point for PcW16 support, and are even appointing a member to cover PcW16 interests.

Latest Operating System Upgrade is v1.12

The free upgrade/rescue disc service will still be available for those who are not able to download one from Cliff Lawson's Amstrad web site. Cliff was one of the people at Amstrad who were very involved in the development of the PCW series, including the PcW16, and although Amstrad's company policy is not to provide user support themselves (in the case of the '16 this is officially contracted out to Locoscript Software), Cliff hosts a web site dealing with questions and answers, product information, upgrades etc. Unfortunately, it is only accessible with a PC or MAC computer, not too handy if all you have is an 8-bit computer! Hence the "middleman" offer. The alternatives are as follows:

If you have a computer capable of accessing Cliff's web site, the URL (Uniform Resource Locator, pronounced "Earl") is <http://www.ukonline.co.uk/members/cliff.lawson/help.html> If not, send a DS/HD disk in a padded bag with return postage and a note of your address and what you want to **8BIT**'s address.

Is there programming going on for the PcW16? The Truth is here.

Periodically, there is speculation on who is, or is not, really preparing software for use on the PcW16. The Internet newsgroup comp.sys.amstrad.8bit receives postings from most of the people who might be expected to know so here are some of the latest postings from the horses' mouths (with additional information where relevant). Lines containing references back to previous postings begin with an ">" symbol.

What is the author of Inventory Master doing now for the PcW16

Response to posting from Brian Watson From: Richard Wildey Subject: PcW16 Date: 05 April 1998 09:01

BW: If you are, what use are you currently making of it, eg: wordprocessing etc, using the built-in applications, programming it (in particular), using it as a door stop....

RW: Well I was (successfully) programming it until I finished the program in question (Inventory Master-BW) and haven't had the inclination, motive or time to write anything new.

BW: As I believe I have mentioned in the newsgroup before, an "additional fonts" disc would be warmly welcomed by most users as word processing seems to be what all the users I am in touch with use it for, and such a publication would indicate the potential for anything more sophisticated.

RW: Well if Creative Technology would be forthcoming with the Font format people could be knocking them out by the dozen I reckon.

A BASIC Compiler?

BW: I would also appreciate any solid news on the widely-rumoured (1) BASIC for the PcW16.

RW: Well, I was speaking to Rob Buckley (very capable 8-bit programmer of Smart Plus art package for the CPC Plus series-BW) the other day who is (was) working on a BASIC compiler for it. It was actually quite nice, he wrote a "Basic to PCode" compiler in VB, then a "PCode to Z80" compiler for the PcW16 and then wrote a text Editor in VB, and converted this to run on the PcW16 so he had the whole package - text editor and compiler up and running on the PcW16.

However, unfortunately Rob's PC Hard Disk crashed and he lost about six months' work. Oops. Alas, (Rob being Rob) this program will probably go the same way as MD3, Butch Cassidy, Doomed, Lethal Moves (all for the CPC), and the PcW16 Art Program. All of which were started and got a fair way into, looked bloody excellent but were never finished. Last I heard he was re-writing the operating system (Can't blame him)

BW: and/or (2) a CP/M emulator for the PcW16?

RW: Sorry, no ideas on that.

Protext for the PcW16?

BW: I can confirm a conversion of Protext for the '16 is *not* going ahead in the foreseeable future.

RW: Well I can understand why, you probably just about finished it and realized that you couldn't put any scroll bars in! ;-) (Sly dig at the fact that, unlike most PC word processors, there are no "sliders" down the side of the PcW16's WP screen to scroll swiftly down the text-BW). Richard

From: Cliff Lawson Subject: Re: Amstrad PcW16 User Base Survey ? Date: 06 April 1998 16:27
Brian Watson wrote in message....

>I can confirm a conversion of Protext for the '16 is *not* going ahead in the foreseeable future.

And do you not think that BASIC and CP/M may also not be going ahead in the foreseeable future for the same reasons? Cliff

From: Cliff Lawson <cliff1@amstrad.com> Subject: Re: Amstrad PcW16 Date: 06 April 1998 16:36
Richard Wildey wrote...

>Well if Creative Technology would be forthcoming with the Font format people could be knocking them out by the dozen I reckon.

Oh no they wouldn't. If you like I can get Creative to document the font format though I guess they'd probably want some payment for their time to do it (perhaps a couple of hundred quid?). But the major stumbling block for more fonts is that there's nowhere for the user to put them. A typical font occupies about 120K so there's only really room for a couple in Flash and there already are a couple there on the standard machine.

The only way to increase this would be to upgrade the flash in the customer's machine which is not impossible as there is already a bare site on the the PCB for an Intel 28F008 (or similar) but, although a suitable flash device may only cost about £15, it is the time of an engineer to disassemble, solder, re-assemble, test and dispatch that means that upgrade would have to cost about £50-£70. Now, how many users are going to be willing to spend that before they can start paying more for the fonts when the whole PcW16 only costs £129? Not enough to make it commercially viable for anyone to offer the service. Creative have a large back catalogue of MD3 fonts that they'd happily convert to PcW16 format but they don't see any commercial motive for doing it because of this flash space problem.

> Last I heard he was re-writing the operating system (Can't blame him)

I simply don't understand that comment. I've never come across any 8 bit operating system that is as good as the one in the PcW16. It's the best thing that Simon Hargreaves ever wrote for the PCW range of machines. Cliff

From: Howard Fisher (MD of LocoScript Software) Subject: Amstrad PcW16 Date: 08 April 1998 15:04

In article, Cliff Lawson writes....

>What it IS GOOD FOR I will leave to others to produce the witty comments. Running the PcW16 customer support line, as we do, I'll refrain from repeating some owners' thoughts - though much of the customer perception problems do lie with the Dixons Group sales persons failing to insert their brain cell before selling. The Canon BJ150 was a particularly popular printer for Dixons to sell for a while. Shame that as it's a Windows-only printer it has no chance of working with the PcW16!

BW: By way of a PS to the "fonts" discussion above, if the HELP files are deleted there is space for another two fonts in the PcW16's memory and it *might* be possible to have others called from a disc as required. Very slow, true, but one way to address/solve the problem which didn't seem to *be* a problem when the machine was launched.

From: Cliff Lawson Subject: Transferring information from a PCW with a 3" drive to a PcW16 which has only a 3.5" drive Date: 15 April 1998 10:53

Matthew Dawson wrote in message...

> How does my auntie copy her files from her 3" drives to her new 3½" PcW16 drive.

There's a "hidden" feature built into the PcW16. Basically all PcW16s already contain half of LocoScript Software's "Locolink" product so what you do is contact LocoScript Software and get the rest of the "Locolink for PcW16" product. You run that on the old PCW and wire across to the PcW16, which will then recognise the other PCW's presence.

In all of the "file open" dialogues you'll now see what appears to be another drive (B:) which is really the disc and files that are inserted in the 3", old model, PCW machine. These can be read into the PcW16 word processor and then saved out onto the new format floppy discs. Cliff Lawson, Amstrad

Follow up from: Howard Fisher of LocoScript Software Date: 15 April 1998 12:27

But as the PcW16 pre-dates LocoScript 4, the above only works for LocoScript 1, 2, and 3! The latest LocoScript 4 has an "export to LocoScript 3" option to overcome this (assuming the old PCW still works).

A Glitch in Time? by Tony Velate for Crawley PCW club, reproduced with permission.

Have no fear; at midnight's hour on the 31 December 1999, the PcW16 will obediently roll-over into the new millennium - it will even recognise 2000 as a true leap year. However, because it knows years only by their two least-significant digits, its overall concept of time must be idiosyncratic.

The date today is set-up from the Desktop by entering dd/mm/yy, but the display panel shows only the day and the month. To see the year, it is necessary to view the Diary Screen, where today's date is shown in full beneath the current calendar page. By setting arbitrary today's and checking the year each time, it can be shown that the PcW16 regards years set as 80 to 99 as being 1980 to 1999, whilst years set as 00 to 79 are considered to be 2000 to 2079. The PcW can therefore be set-up initially for any day from Tuesday 1 January 1980 to Friday 31 December 2079, which should be adequate for most purposes.

Surprisingly, this apparent upper limit can be exceeded by setting this latest date, inserting the time as 23.59 and waiting for the internal clock to tick away the last 60 seconds of that year. In this case the PcW16 rolls-over correctly to Saturday 1 January 2080, and may continue even further into that century - but this can only be checked by letting the clock run on and on in real (and boring) time.

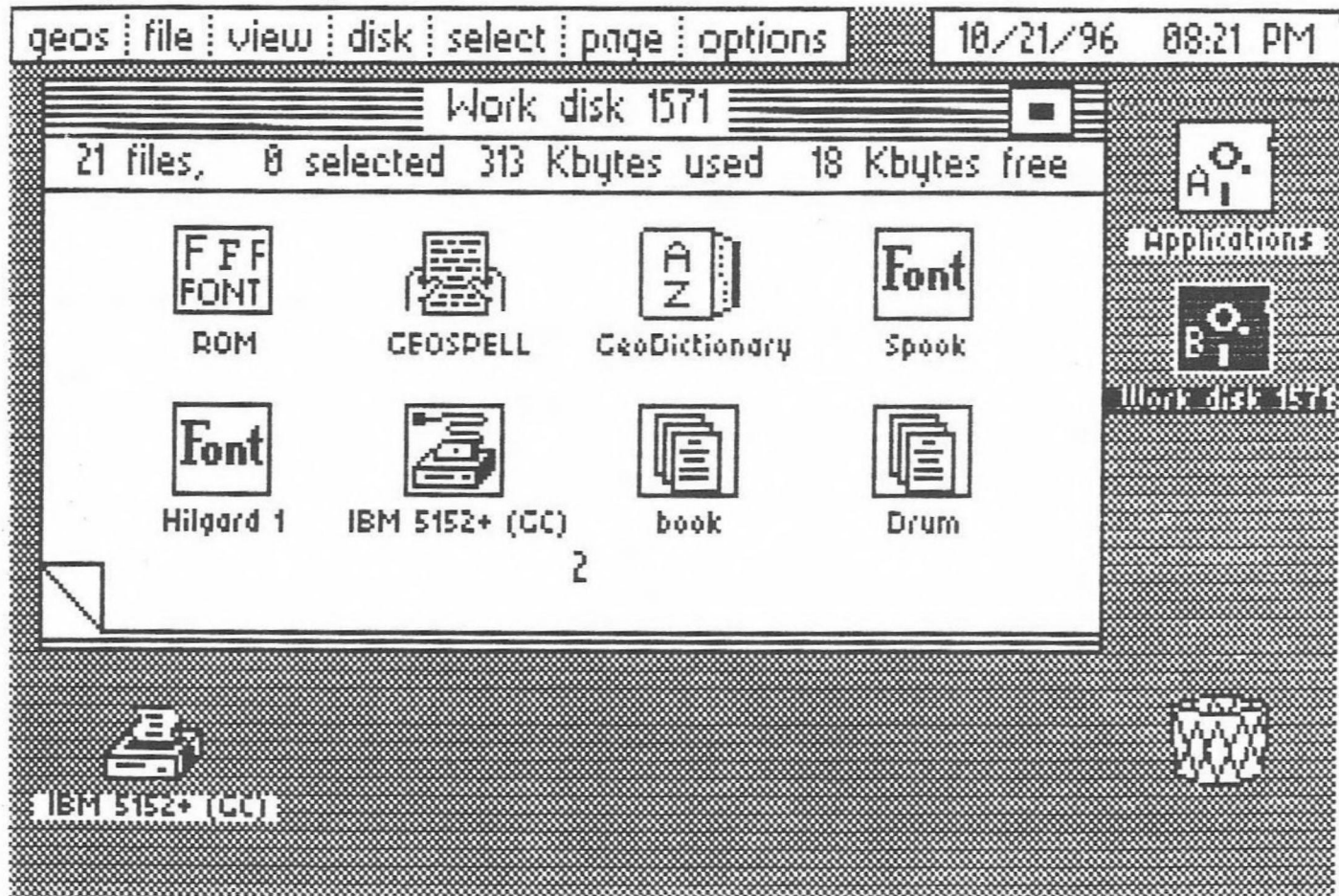
The Diary program naturally has to show dates before and after the current "today", but clicking on to Date and Go-To-Date again restricts the year entry to two digits. With this method the calendar range is also limited to the period 1980 to 2079, but it can be extended considerably by clicking on the arrows on either side of the calendar year displayed on the Diary Screen.

To travel further into the future, set the calendar date to 2079, and click repeatedly on the right year arrow for as long as you like. I got to 2304 before suffering from finger trouble, but by keeping the calendar month set to February, it was clear that the program wrongly considered 2100, 2200 and 2300 to be leap years. This means that the calendar display is accurate only up to 28 February 2100, which is quite enough unless you are boldly writing science fiction and want to use the Diary as a starship log.

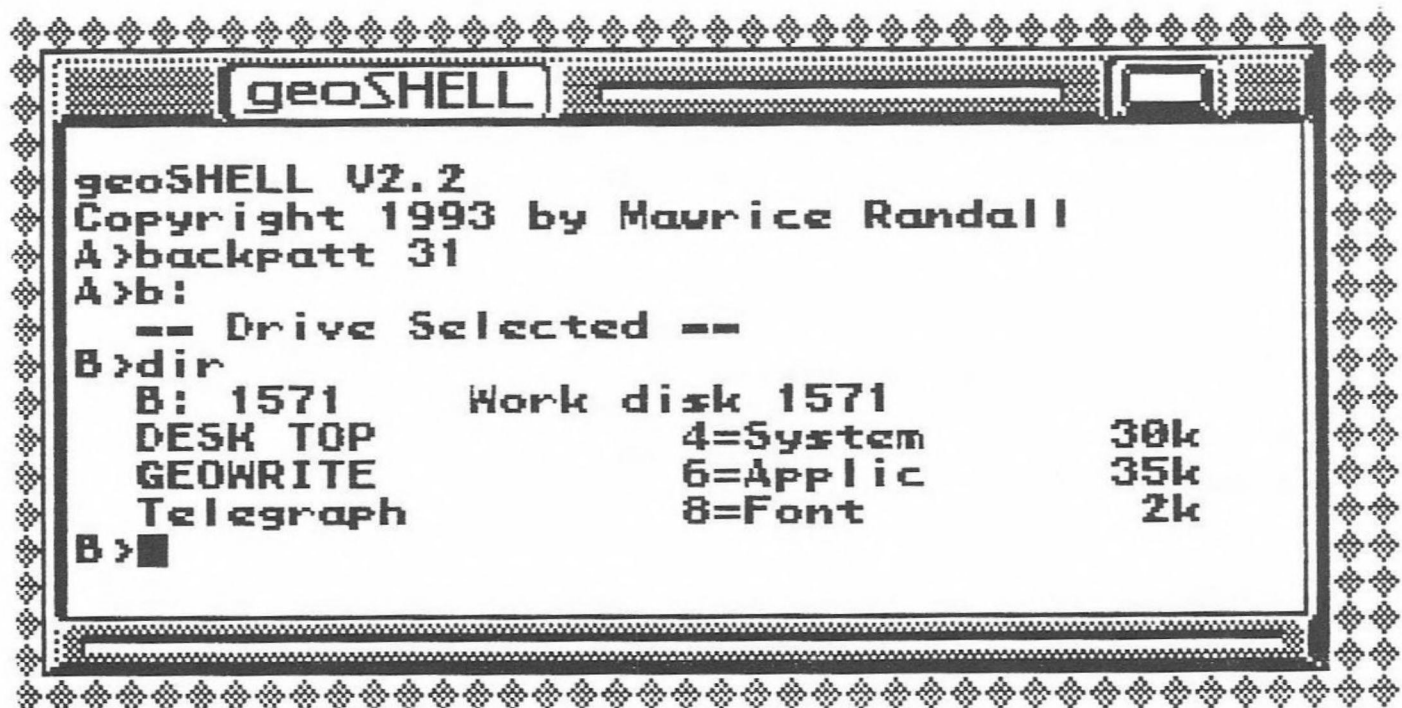
The ability to travel back in time is probably more useful, and applications can be imagined in the writing of histories, autobiographies and genealogies. To test this possibility, set the calendar year to 1980 and repeatedly click on the left year arrow. When 1900 is reached, the February page wrongly shows 29 days, which sets the diary's earliest usable date as 1 March 1900.

Using this method to venture further back before 1900 cannot be recommended. One extra click on the arrow and the calendar year disappears entirely from the Diary Screen, whilst the month is replaced by "k -Y" or "k|Y". Another click and the screen locks-up completely, making it necessary to switch off at the mains. Thereafter, attempts to restart produce the dreaded message "Fatal Check Sum Error", and one must reach for the Rescue Disc.

Have you managed to print out your text in columns using your PcW16 yet? If space allows, the last issue of **8BIT** will cover it. If space proves to be a problem, and there is a large article on programming for which it would be nice to find space, the columns piece will appear on the forthcoming **British PCW Owners Club** PcW16 disc.



•The GEOS desk top v2.0. An excellent example of an 8 bit operating system. Unfortunately, as the software is American, you have to set the date the American way, that's MM/DD/YY.



GeoSHELL claims to be the fastest way around the Geos system. As you can see, you can also change the background pattern!

GeoSHELL an introduction by Leon Bebbington

The following article and its associated screenshots (opposite) are presented as they were submitted by Leon, rather than being retyped, in the interests of avoiding further delay in its inclusion in 8BIT.

geoSHELL article *By Leon Bebbington. (c) 8BIT MCMXCVII.*

geoSHELL claims to be "your fastest way around GEOS", and, once you get used to it, it proves to be a lot easier to use than the desktop, that's not saying that the desktop is that slow, but geoSHELL clearly has a lot of advantages.

Let's start out on a low point, shall we, as one problem I've found with geoSHELL is that it doesn't seem to like my 1571 disk drive very much, and this is one of the main reasons why this article has been delayed - geoSHELL kept crashing out on me, however, it has been reported that earlier versions of the 1571 (the one I have) suffer from reliability problems, and so this may not be true for every 1571 user out there. This problem (or dare I say, incompatibility) is sorted out by configuring the 1571 drive as a 1541 drive. This is very simply done by loading the CONFIGURE file, either before you load geoSHELL, or whilst in geoSHELL.

Now we've got the bad bit out of the way, the geoSHELL package is an excellent addition to any self-respecting GOES users' software collection. geoSHELL is a command line interface (CLI) program which allows you to both type and point and click to load software. This means that you just type in the name of the software you wish to load, and geoSHELL will look for it, and if it can not find it on the drive that is currently active, it will search every other drive until it finds it. Let's take an example of this. I'm currently using drive A and want to load GEOWRITE from my work disk which is in drive B. I can either type in GEOWRITE and press return, or swap to drive B, list the directory, and, if I'm feeling extremely lazy, press F1 for the directory, and just point the cursor over where it says GEOWRITE and press my fire or mouse button twice. Excellent!

One of the most useful things about this superb package is that you can change your disk when ever the drive is not active. When you change disks in the desk top environment, you then have to activate the drive, so that the system knows that you have changed disks. This need not be done in the geoSHELL environment. You can just change disks whenever your drive is not active - which is an excellent little time saver.

geoSHELL also allows you to change the time and date much more easier than from the desk top - one problem though, GEOS is American software, and so the date must go MM/DD/YY rather than our system of DD/MM/YY. Ok, so this isn't anything major, it's just a little niggle I have.

I also think that the geoSHELL font is much better than the old BSW font used in GEOS, and I also like the fact that you can change the background, and create your own Startup file, meaning that every time you go into geoSHELL, you can have your own custom menu - something like;

- 1: Go into GEOWRITE
- 2: Play Mah Jong
- 3: Use GEOSPELL
- 4: Enter geoSHELL

This is very handy indeed, meaning (in some cases) even less work to do! Yes, I'm getting very lazy just lately, and geoSHELL is making life just a little easier, so I'd recommend geoSHELL as much as GEOS. It's a must for every serious Commodore user!

(Please note: This product was reviewed on a C64, not a C128. geoSHELL can use the 80 columns mode of the 128, as well as the other features that the 128 has.)

There is much talk about emulators, those clever programs which persuade a newish computer to act like an 8-bit one. In the following article, former Spectrum, C64 and CPC user Tony Baker describes his experiences with one of them.

If like me your first computer was either a Spectrum or a Commodore 64 and you now also have a PC or an Amiga, then this CD ROM will allow you to play over 3000 Spectrum and over 1200 C64 games on your new computer. In the case of the PC, the minimum requirements are a 486 with 4mb RAM (8mb recommended), a hard drive and a CD ROM drive.

The CD includes a Z80 emulator and a very detailed documentation file to enable you to adapt the software for your particular system. These files are installed on to your hard drive, but the games themselves remain on the CD and are accessed by the emulator. As far as I can see, the Spectrum games are the same as those on the 1996 CD. This 1997 version has been updated to include the C64 games.

The documentation says that the emulator can be run from WINDOWS 3.1, but with my setup I have found it is better to work from DOS. To install the emulator, you just type INSTALL at the D:\ prompt or in the case of the Amiga you type LOAD WORKBENCH. (As I do not have an Amiga, I have no idea what that means!). After installation, return to the C drive and you will find a directory called SPEC1996. Change to that directory and type Z80 to start the emulator. If you encounter any problems, as I did, then browse through the Z80.DOC file to find the solution. This file is very comprehensive and should explain how to alter parts of the Z80.INI file to suit your system. To illustrate this I will describe the first problem I encountered.

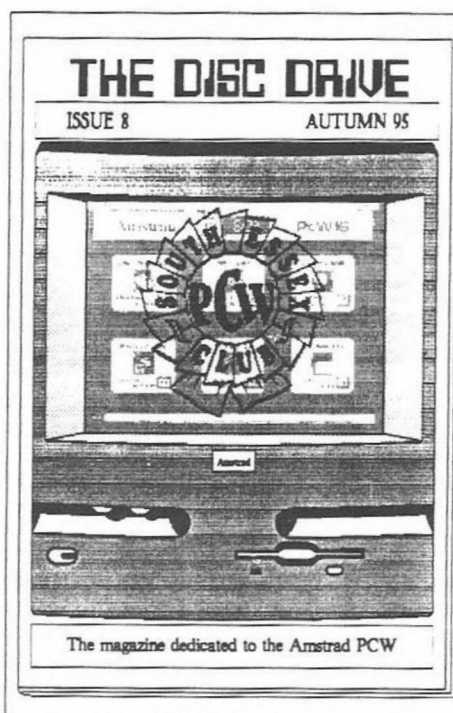
Having returned to the C drive, I changed to the SPEC1996 directory and typed Z80 at the C:\spec1996> prompt. The Z80 opening screen appeared but it was confined to the top half of my screen only. In the bottom half was a message to the effect that if I could read the message then I would have to turn on the -xv switch which I would find in the Z80.INI file. I next browsed through the many chapters of the Z80.DOC file to find out what on earth was wrong! I eventually found the relevant paragraph which explained that the reason for only half a screen appearing was that I had a TRIDENT graphics card and this has a 'bug' in it. This was news to me as I had used my PC for many years without any problems! In order to overcome this problem I would have to edit the Z80.INI file and turn on the -xv switch by simply deleting the percentage sign which starts that particular line. I guess the initial % acts like a REM command. On editing the Z80.INI file I scrolled down to the switches and found that there were nine sets comprising almost 100 switches in all. The first set were all operative by default but the rest were all on separate lines each starting with a % sign. The other sets of switches controlled such things as DISPLAY OPTIONS, EMULATOR CONFIGURATION, SOUND OPTIONS etc. Having found the line with -xv on it I deleted the initial %, SAVED the changes and then returned to the C:\SPEC1996> prompt. Once more I typed Z80, and was pleasantly surprised to see the Z80 opening screen occupying the whole area as it should. However after a few seconds while I looked at the colourful display, the next problem arose. Before I describe it I will mention that once you are into the emulator, you have access to a series of menus activated by using the function keys. Pressing F1 will give you a list of all the menus and say which keys to press. However for most purposes you only need to use F3 to load the games or F10 for the main menu which enables you to quit the emulator, return to SPECTRUM etc.

Now for the second problem which I encountered. Having obtained the correct Z80 opening screen as already described, I waited to see if anything further would appear and sure enough the screen began filling with dozens of figure 5's ! To stop this process, I pressed the F10 key, then the B key to get "Back to spectrum". This resulted in a white screen with just the 5's showing. The 5's can then be deleted with the back space key. I found later that on some occasions I could press F3 and proceed to load a games without deleting the 5's, but this did not always work so it is better to use F10 first. Having deleted the 5's there just remains a white screen with the flashing K cursor. All that now remains is to use F3 to load the game you want. To illustrate this I will show how to load MANIC MINER.

Assuming that the unwanted 5's have been deleted, press F3 to get the loading screen. At the top of the panel it tells you to enter the name of the "SPECTRUM SNAPSHOT", but further down it states "CTR-ENTER = keep settings". By trial and error (or trial and success!) I found that you should ignore the upper suggestion to enter a name and just press CONTROL and ENTER to bring up the next screen. This allows you to highlight the drive containing the CD using the arrow keys (in most cases this will be the D drive), then press RETURN for the next screen. When this appears, highlight the GAMES option and press RETURN. This will bring up the screen which lets you choose the Spectrum or C64. Highlight SPECCY and press RETURN for a list of the 26 directories A to Z. Scroll the cursor down to highlight the M directory and you will see a list of all the games starting with the letter M. The next problem is that for most games there are at least two games files so a decision has to be made as to which to use. In many cases it will make no difference which you choose but if you happen to choose the wrong one and the game "crashes", just start again by pressing F3 or sometimes I have found that pressing ESC will take you back to the previous menu. With MANIC MINER, the files are MANIC.Z80 and MANIC.SNA (the SNA stands for SNAPSHOT, whatever that means!). Whichever you choose in this case the game will start successfully. On a few rare occasions I have found that the program crashes and an error message appears. However when this has happened I just start again with F3 and all is well!

To quit MANIC MINER and load another game, just press F3 to get the CONTROL-ENTER screen and on pressing those keys you will be returned to the M directory. To return to the previous menu, which was the A to Z list, scroll the cursor to the top of the left hand column and highlight the ..\, then press RETURN. To quit the emulator at any time, press F10 and then Q to quit. I have found that if you quit by this means when playing say MANIC MINER, then when you next load the emulator you will bypass some of the opening menus, and go straight to the M directory. When this happens do as already described to return to the A to Z list. I usually return to this list of directories before using F10 and QUIT.

Those of you who buy this CD may find that you do not have the problems I have described. My 486 is quite an old one which has been updated many times over the years so that might explain the problems. There is a note on the CD case that all the games have been released into the Public Domain and that some games might need a particular specification of computer to function properly. All files have been downloaded from various Internet sites. The SPECCY CD 1997 was available from GAMEPLAY on 0113 234 0444 and EPIC MARKETING CD-ROM SOFTWARE on 01793 514188. The price was £14.99 but it would be advisable to check present availability and price.



"Lets Communicate"

Subscribe to "The Disc Drive" and become part of the network of PCWers in contact not only with each other but with the market place.

The magazine is another way of retaining an essential communication link that will assist in providing detailed information to the PCW user. Subscription £8:00 pa. please make cheques payable to the club.

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Recently up-dated, this popular database now covers these magazines from 1986 to 1996. Available as:-
 LocoFile (674 k) LocoScript (370 k) dBase II (380 k)
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 existing user's update for £3:00. 3.0" you supply
 formatted disc. Hardcopy (70xA4pages) £10:00

IDEAL VALUE Products. 10, Sheridan Avenue,
 Thundersley, Essex, SS7 1RD Telephone (01702) 551618

(Please make cheques payable to:- David Lalieu.)

Niall Tracey's TACS

Seeing the wave of Doom clones about to hit the C64, I decided that C64 controllers don't have enough buttons. So I thought a little and came up with TACS. Anyone can adjust joysticks to this idea - without even paying me a penny - but it must always be called a TACS stick.

The first idea came to me quite a while ago. I had played Smash TV on the SNES before I bought it on the C64. The two joystick control system worked, but was clumsier than Nintendo's pad. So why not make a Nintendo pad (or similar) work as two C64 joysticks?

The following diagrams show TACS layouts based on SNES and Megadrive joypads. Making one is a simple matter of buying a pad and two C64-compatible leads and connecting them together in compliance with the diagrams below and the joystick pin-out in the appendixes in the user manual.

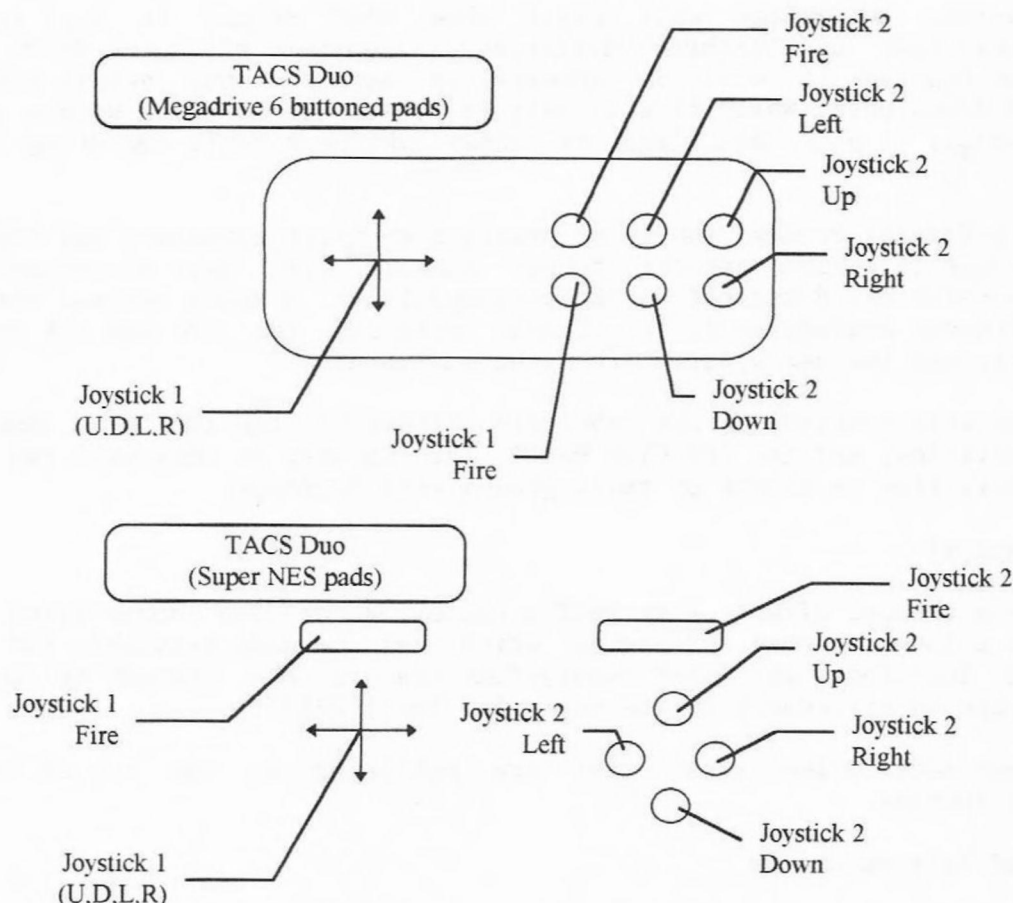
Programming games to use these is simple too. Just read both joystick ports.

I have also been beginning to design several games. My assembly language isn't quite up to programming them myself, and my graphics and sounds are not worth mentioning. If anyone wants more details then please let me know. I have been designing them to use, but not require, TACS. They are:

- **Alien Incursion.** A Doom/Op. Wolf hybrid that needs no fancy 3D graphics routines. (Only level designs to be completed.)
- **Blood of the Dead.** An isometric gothic undead shoot-em-up arcade adventure using simple character and sprite based graphics. (Baddy and weapon designs to be completed.)

Several others, not yet past the initial design stages, including:

- **Desert Earth,** a sort-of Elite clone based in a car.
- **2256Ω,** an overhead-viewed, or perhaps simple isometric, sci-fi shoot-em-up arcade adventure.
- A couple of platform games.
- A strategy/resource game or two.



Of course, we could have more buttons on a joystick if anyone knows how to make/use the second button from Cheetah joysticks.... Please let me know if you do.

You can write to Neill at 32, McNeill Crescent, Gargunnock, STIRLING, FK8 3BX.

Plans in Hand by Brian Watson

Inevitably there has been some speculation, some better informed than other, following the announcement in the last issue of 8BIT's closure after issue 25 and this issue's *appalling* delay and consolidation. To set the record straight, this is what's happening:

1) Brian Watson is not getting out of 8-bit computing, but my new business and the fact that the present Mrs Watson is no longer at this address, does not leave me with enough time to publish 8BIT or offer as full a service to 8-bit computing support as I have up to now.

2) This issue of 8BIT is numbered 19 (as you will have seen!) but it is approximately double-sized and actually contains what *would have been* in issues 19 and 20. The next issue of 8BIT will again be double-sized (at least!) and will be the final issue. It will be numbered 20, and will contain what *would have been* in issues 21/22.

3) Subscribers who have paid beyond issue 22 under the original numbering system will receive a refund of £2 per copy with the final issue. Details of the refund due to you are included in the letter accompanying this issue. *Anyone who wants to skip waiting for the last issue and would like their refund now has only to ask and a cheque will be sent at once, or at least within a few days.*

3) A (free) on-line newsletter will start when 8BIT stops. It will be called **Flounder** and will have a "slightly different" editorial style to 8BIT. You can register now to receive it when it appears by sending your e-mail address to brian@spheroid.demon.co.uk While it will only be accessible to those with a computer who can get e-mail, it will be aimed at those who have 8-bit computing in their bones!

4) User support for the Protext family of programs on 8-bit computers and PCs/Ataris will continue, but in future printer driver support will only be guaranteed for those printers which are described as "Epson-compatible". A newly revised version of the program, Protext Professional, is already released for CPC and PCW computers (not the PcW16), and further updates are expected "soon".

5) Brian Watson will continue as the publicity officer for the IEBA (The Independent Eight Bit Association) and the CPC Club WACCI for as long as they will put up with him and his activities on behalf of those groups will increase.

Bargains! Bargains!

How's this for a special offer? With 8BIT's consolidation into double-sized issues, there is quite a large amount of space which can be made available for display advertisements. Therefore, the first twenty-four readers who contact me can book a free quarter-page advertisement in the next (and last) 8BIT.

Copy requirement details for this offer are published at the top of the small advertisements section.

Schneider Down? It's on the Up

The German PCW users group Joyce User AG is now "on-line", with a web site at www.netcologne.de/~nc-hildebmi/pcw.htm and they can be contacted by e-mail to joyce-ag@t-online.de. Werner Neumeyer-Bubel is the person to contact at Liemecke 8a, D-34466 Wolfhagen, Germany. You can phone him on 5692 995146 or Fax 5692 995148. Prefix either number by 0049 if dialling from the UK.

Hot Keys?

Ken Tether has set up a PCW Club in Marbella under the auspices of the International side of the University of the 3rd Age. Meetings are fortnightly. You can phone/Fax Ken on 34 5 283 2096 (with the appropriate national prefix).

IEBA News

Seeking a particular source of 8-bit support? You should try the very comprehensive **Directory of 8-bit Services**, published by the **Independent Eight Bit Association**. The fourth edition has just been published, updated by editor John Walker.

Enrolment *and life membership* of the IEBA costs just £5 (including a copy of the latest **Directory**), and existing members can obtain the latest edition for just £4. In either case, apply to the IEBA Hon Sec David Williams at 32/34, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, Motherwell, GLASGOW, ML1 4JL.

Once 8BIT closes, the IEBA will become more high profile and active in its efforts to contact 8-bit computer users who are currently isolated and unaware of the support which still exists for them.

TUG Closes

Robert Nisbet has had to close (with no prospect of re-opening) his project to establish a comprehensive support database on all types of 8-bit and other computers. This was to have been called TUG (The User Group?).

Robert also writes saying that he would like to see an RM Link section in 8BIT, or at least some coverage of them. We foresee no problem there in principle, except no expert, or anyone who knows *anything* about them, can be found through 8BIT's usual channels. Anyone?

Busy fella that he is, Robert still finds time to offer a game finder service *across all formats*. In addition, he is offering to locate disks in those getting-harder-to-find formats too, including 3", 3½" DS/DD, 5¼", 8", or whatever. Write to him for fuller details. See the small adverts for his address.

Web site Resouces

For those 8-bit users taking tentative steps onto the World Wide Web (not actually using an 8-bit computer, of course), you may like to know of a handy site for getting hold of graphical stuff for incorporation into your fledgling Web site. If you have a modem, service provider account &etc on either type of computer, you can e-mail clairef@wdg.net (or clairef@wspl.websp.com) for a list of about 85 sites (so far) and further information.

For BBC help (the computer that is, not the broadcasters) you could try Bryan Jenkinson-Dix on 01954 781484. Alternatively, try David McDowell at mcdowell@intecc.co.uk as both are involved with the Bottisham Acorn Users Group, near Cambridge. For a "real" address, contact Brian Watson and he'll look it up.

The Alchemist web site can be found at www.alchemist.clara.net

Oric Users should be in touch with The **Oric User Group**. Dave Dick is the main man and he can be found at **OUM**, 65, Barnard Crescent, AYLESBURY, Bucks, HP21 9PW

Classix is going "three times a year" due to James-Alexander Waddington's commitment to his university course. Issue 7 was released early in '98. In the mean time **Classix** is on the web AT <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/wadster/issue7>

NOTES FOR ADVERTISERS:

1) Advertisements for the last 8BIT must be received by the end of June 1998 (at the latest) to ensure inclusion. Don't blame me if you miss it!

2) You can help readers by including your town's name and county if you are only quoting a phone number eg: 01353 (Ely, Cambs) 777006. Show any time limits you would like respected and give your name.

3) You are entitled to a free small advertisement (or more than that) up to a total limit of 50 words. Advertisements of over 50 words are not small and will be cut.

4) An advertisement which does not get a response is probably either (a) an unattractive offer for some reason, possibly (but not only) in its price or (b) in the wrong magazine for the item concerned.

COPY REQUIREMENTS FOR 8BIT:

Here are 8BIT's requirements for all copy which is to be considered for publication:

1) Files (text only) on disc must be as one of the following:

(a) 720K or 1.44MB PC discs, or any format of CPC or PCW discs.

(b) white paper. Coloured paper may look good for direct mailings, but it all goes grey in a photocopier.

2) Please, please, do not use an old ribbon or excessively fancy fonts.

3) You can e-mail copy to 8BIT at: 8bit@spheroid.demon.co.uk.

4) If you want something in your text (headers, your witticisms, etc) emphasised, underline the relevant passage and I will use it while conforming to 8BIT's house style.

5) If you would like your original copy returned, please enclose a NEW, self-addressed, envelope of a suitable size with the correct postage. I will then copy your copy,

return your copy, and work from my copy of your copy. Get me?

6) Copy should have the same ratio of proportions as those for reproduction (and if you send a horizontal display advert to go into a vertical space; it won't go - hence any sideways insertions).

7) Remember that there must be white space around each image to ensure that information is not lost when it is pasted up and photocopied:

8) An image for a 'full page' should be NO MORE than 245mm x 175mm.

9) A top or bottom 'half-page' image should be NO MORE than 120mm x 175mm. A left or right 'half-page' column should be NO MORE than 85mm x 245mm.

10) A 'quarter-page' image should be NO MORE than 120mm x 85mm. For the last issue, the first 24 quarter-page small advertisements received (in addition to those which have already been booked) will be inserted free of charge. *Now's your chance!*

11) Images submitted larger than the stated guidelines may be trimmed or unusable in 8BIT, so re-size them yourself unless you trust me and my terribly sharp guillotine.

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

The entries are grouped by the type of computer, followed by the two Miscellaneous and Small Works sections. These now include those non-specific small advertisements which are for open-ended offers of services or user support.

COMMODORE - WANTED

Manual wanted for Commodore MPS 1000 printer. Jim Crumley Tel: 01582 (Dunstable) 696166

Any information on Commodore 264 series model 16, also on OKI model 182 printer control codes. Both "ex-tip" but look interesting to this Oldie; Willie, Whitfield Cottage, Eyemouth, Scotland TD14 5TH, or telephone: 018907 71492

Zzap 64! magazines urgently wanted by Alessandro Defendi, Via Roggia Scagna 1, Cap 20127, Milano-Italy or e-mail mr27036@digibank.it. Or, if you prefer, send your reply c/o 8BIT and it will be sent on

COMMODORE 64/128 - MISC

If you own a C64/128, you need COMMODORE SCENE; the bi-monthly magazine packed with all the news and views from the Commodore world. For details send an A5 SAE to Richard Bowen 35, Nottingham Road, Nuthall, NOTTINGHAM NG16 1DN. Mention 8BIT for a free disk of software with your first order.

AMSTRAD CPC - FOR SALE

Two very early-type CPCs with some extremely rare accessories, including Teletext adaptor, Video adaptor, Midi interfaces, ROM burner, ROM boxes, etc, etc. John Cotton, 10, Stuart Close, BRANDON, Suffolk IP27 0HB. Tel: 01842 812441.

For sale. Second-hand disc adventure games for the CPC6128. SAE for list to Angela Allum, 22, Point Royal, BRACKNELL, RG12 7HH.

Amstrad CPC 464 with green screen monitor and user manual, £40. Also Citizen 120D+ printer with manual, £45. CPC 6128 with external 3.5" disc drive, mouse, rombox, colour monitor, Multiface 2, manual, £175 ono. Many games on tape and disc, very cheap. Tel: (Stockport) 0161 439 7034 between 7 and 10pm

Amstrad CPC items for sale - books, Hardware, magazines, software and other items. Send an SAE to Mr T Davies, 8, Garden Suburbs, Trimsaran, Kidwelly, Dyfed SA17 4AB

I have two CPC 6128s with green screen monitors for sale. Included are about 100 3" discs, spare disc drive, serial port, tv modulator units, 2 silicon discs, manuals and bits. Patrick Beautelement is near Malvern, Worcs UK. Offers c/o 8BIT, or e-mail patb-tbt.demon.co.uk

Unusual CPC 464 keyboard with the Spanish layout, now just £5 + p&p or

possible free delivery. Also large list of 2nd hand CPC tape and disc software and hardware at sensible prices. Originals c/w instructions. Send 1st class stamp and return label for lists to **CPC lists**, c/o **8BIT** magazine

AMSTRAD CPC - WANTED

CPC games wanted. Brainstorm, BAT, Battle Command, Battle Stars, Gunboat, Iron Lord, Moon Blaster, PHM Pegasus, Pinball Magic, Red Scorpion, Roller Coaster, Taking Tiger Mountain, Americas' Cup Challenge, Clever and Smart, The Archon Collection, and others. Please send price list to: Martin J Bela, 11, Colwell Drive, Brookside, Alvaston, Derbs DE24 0UP

Amstrad Action 1-5, 21, 34, 35, 38, **ACU** Mar 86, May 86, May 87, Jun 87, Jul 87, Sep 87, **WACCI** 4-30, **CPC User** 1-4, 46-end, Video Master, Dart Scanner, Ram Music Machine, 256k ram expansion. Write to: Rafael Delgado Peiro, c/ cyesa 3 - 1 DCHA, 28017 - MADRID, Spain

Wanted: EMR Amstrad CPC 6128 midi interface and miditrack performer software package. Good price offered. Contact Mark Chater, 58, Chesterwood Road, Kings Heath, BIRMINGHAM B13 0QE. Tel: 0121 444 2940

Amstrad Action issue 2, **ACU** Sep '90, plus Dec '84 - Feb '85, **Amix** 1, 4, 5, 11 - 14. P Curgenven The Hollyar, Bay Road, Trevone Bay, Nr Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8QZ. 01841 520875

Printer for CPC 464 wanted. Must be quite cheap. Dot matrix colour or black only will do. I am also looking for a disk drive. Offers to: J Coley-Shaw, 8 Jerreys Lane, LICHFIELD, Staffs WS14 9QD. Telephone: 01543 432767

CPC - MISCELLANEOUS

King Arthur's Domain is a disc PD library for the CPC. Utilities, games, music, clip art, a large selection of CP/M programs, and lots more. For catalogue, send 3"/3 1/2" disc + SSAE to: **KAD**, Brympton

Cottage, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ

GD.PD: The ultimate in CPC PD software at only 25p per disc (copy charge). For the **GD.PD** list send an SSAE to: Dave Stitson, 6, Connaught Avenue, Mutley, PLYMOUTH, Devon PL4 7BX

AMSTRAD PCW - FOR SALE

Huge list of PCW hardware, parts, and software. A4 SAE to Ian Studley, 44, Paynton Road, St Leonards on sea, East Sussex TN37 7DY

Phone for PCW hardware/software lists to Roy Martin. 01752 (Cornwall) 839430

Amstrad PCW 8256/8512 printer and three brand new boxed ribbons. Price £20 plus post & packing. Tel: 01273 (PEACEHAVEN) 583050

AMSTRAD PCW - WANTED

Genealogical software with manual(s) for PCW 8512 on 3" disc wanted. Genny or whatever you prefer. Please write to Box No: 11 **8BIT**

Perfcalc spreadsheet PD program on 3.5" disc for 9512. Must include setkeys PC key file (it's missing on mine and therefore it won't work). Jim 019303 (SUNBURY ON THAMES) 784397

Does anyone know of any published literature with specifications for the Amstrad PCW 10. Les Derrett 01482 (Hull) 782360

SC2DATE.COM for PCW. Sets date on PCW's Supercalc for dates after 1999. (John Hudson, Huddersfield, PD). Also, IMPEXP program which downloads Cambridge Z88 files to (and from) PCW. (Tried the Z88 user group, Mike? - BW). Phone 01268 (Basildon, Essex) 522484 or Fax 01268 450432

AMSTRAD PCW - MISCELLANEOUS

The German Joyce user group is a new private, non commercial, association for Amstrad/Schneider PCW users. They aim to appeal to all pcw users,

regardless of skill or application. You may contact them by writing c/o Werner Neumeyer-Bubel, Liemecke 8a, D34466 Wolfhagen, Germany, phone 0049 5692 995146, fax 0049 5692 995148, or you can e-mail them on joyce-ag@t-online.de A WWW page is there now, but still growing.

For a low-cost public domain PCW/PCW clipart copying & scanning service. For full details send a SAE, a formatted 3.5" disc, and 50p to: PD Blake, 99, Normandy Avenue, Beverley, East Yorks HU17 8PR.

Crawley PCW Club meets on the first Thursday of each month except August. A Club helpline is available for members. For further details write to the Chairman/Secretary John Fisher at *Pradines*, Four Elms Road, EDENBRIDGE, TN8 6AF.

Berkshire Amstrad PCW Users Club offers you FREE telephone support, magazine/book/machine loan, access to bulletin boards, newsletter, etc. Special offers; eg 3" discs only £10 per 10. SAE for details to Ed Harris, 121, Bullbrook Drive, BRACKNELL, Berks RG12 2QR.

Globe-trotting, or just interested? Contact **Capital Computer Club**, c/o Ray C Petersen (the Secretary), 21, Mapplebeck Street, Titahi Bay, Porirua, New Zealand. The Club now has members with Amstrads (all sorts), Amigas, Macs, Sanyos and PCs with DOS and CP/M. They are well up to date with PCW news. New members are welcome at each monthly meeting.

TRACK is the name of the very useful free advertising feature section of **SCOTWEST.pcw**, the magazine of the PCW Club of the same name. For more details contact David Williams, 32/34, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, MOTHERWELL ML1 4JL Scotland. 01698 732403.

The Cornwall PCW Club meets on the second Saturday of each month (July and August excepted) in St Austell. All those interested in PCWs are most welcome to join us. Details from John Walker on 01752 (Plymouth) 706266.

SINCLAIR SPECTRUM - FOR SALE

Hundreds of software titles for sale. Send SAE to JA Waddington at 11, Finsbury Drive, Wrose, BRADFORD, West Yorks BD2 1QA. Also **Classix** fanzine for sale - See display advertisement for further details.

Spectrum tapes for sale from 35p each. Also discs from £2 each. Send large SAE for list to Pauline, 2, Syndale Cottages, Syndale Farm, Ospringe, Kent ME13 0RJ.

SINCLAIR SPECTRUM - WANTED

Wanted: Plus D interface (for disc drives) in gwo for 128k +2A (black case) pay up to £15 plus p & p. 01622 688201 eves. Mrs Butcher.

Can anyone help me out? I need to know voltage and advanced commands to run a +D interface and drive for Spectrum +2. Contact George Hudspith, 190, Wynyard Road, HARTLEPOOL, TS25 3JJ or Telephone 01429 294506 between 6 and 7pm weekdays.

ALL FORMATS - MISCELLANEOUS

Interested in developing software for the Amstrad PCW16? If so, contact Richard on 01524 68989 after 6pm or you can e-mail me on richard@courtaulds-lingerie.thenet.co.uk

An ENORMOUS amount of Acorn Electron stuff, including the computer. Arthur Coulter, 43, Elizabeth Road, Moseley, BIRMINGHAM B13 8QH. Tel: 0121 449 2244.

Psion organiser hardware and software (datapacks) required. Anything considered, including hardware; accessories, printers, commlinks etc and development software for the PC. Please contact Lee on 01706 (OLDHAM, Lancs) 842355. E-mail: lhewitt104@aol.com

WANTED: Issues 6, 9, 11, 12, and 13 of **8BIT** magazine. Any reasonable price considered. Please call Stephen on 01268 785184 or write to 100, Downhall Road, RAYLEIGH, Essex SS6 9LT.

WANTED: Lapcat program on 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " disk for Amstrad NC100, also Lapcat cable connector. Phone Pat on 01642 (Cleveland) 486704. Also help to transfer file between NC100 and PCW8512. I have both 3" and 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " drives.

WANTED: **8BIT** issue number 9. Willing to pay postage, and if necessary photocopy and return original to owner. Tel: Ken 01633 275156.

Ideal Fathers' Day present. Real catskin mitts for computer screen and cleaning. One size fits all. Come ready-impregnated with sealoil to dissolve even the stickiest dirt deposits. Choose from black and white, ginger or tabby. £9.99 each incl P&P. Credit cards accepted. To order phone Brian Watson on 01353 777006 or Ring **Catco Direct** on 01645 252000 for a free catalogue.

5.25" discs DS/DD black/various colours £5 for 25 incl p&p. Possible discount for higher quantities. Michael D Pearson, 31 Saxon Close, Stratford on Avon, Warks CV37 7DX. Tel: 01789 294978 (after 7pm or daytime Sundays)

Spectrum, C64, BBC, Amiga, Atari ST. Lots of software for these and other 8-bit (Amiga/Atari, 8-bit?-ed) computers. Prices from 50p. Huge lists. Please send SAE indicating lists required to: Alan, 18, West Street, Geddington, NORTHANTS NN14 1BD.

Hardware and Software for Amstrad CPCs, Spectrums, and Commodore C64s on disk and tape. For a list please send a first class stamp with your name and address and which type of computer you use to Stephen Willcox, 20, Hesa Road, HAYES, Middx UB3 2DP.

For CP/M Support, The PD Software Library, *Winscombe House*, Beacon Road, CROWBOROUGH, Sussex, 01892 663298, owns large volumes of CP/M software from all over the globe. Send A5 SAE for their catalogue

The UK CP/M User Group (CPMUKUG) is now defunct, but the disc library is not. UK volumes are now up to number 130. For a catalogue, send a

formatted disc to Rodney Hannis, 34 Falmouth Road, READING, RG2 8QR. 01734 876641. Please include return postage - no other charges

Loads of goodies for your CPC, PCW, Spectrum, Apricot, Games console: Tapes, Discs, Roms, Books, Magazines and Hardware. For list send A5 SAE to: *Brympton Cottage*, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ

Einstein Magazine and **All Micro News** is the magazine of the **Steam Computer Society** - 10 years old and still going strong! Write to AE (Tony) Adams, *Ivy Cottage*, Church Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8TY, enclosing a large envelope and two first class stamps for more details

I'm trying to compile a collection of older computers for exhibition. Still need Acorn BBCs, Altair 8800, Apple Lisa and Plus, Casio PB-700, Memotech MTX500, Sharp MZ800, Vic20, ZX80 and ZX81, also peripherals and parts for Apple II and an example of a mechanical adding machine. E-mail: john.gaiger@edial.pipex.com or Tel: 01734 623258 (eves)

Did you know? The **IEBA** (The Independent Eight Bit Association) is a group active in promoting the use of 8-bit computers. The fourth edition of their **Directory of 8-bit Services** is now out and is free to members. Life Membership is £5. For further details send 2 1st class stamps to the membership secretary David Williams, 24/24, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, Motherwell ML1 4JL. Tel: 01698 732403.

Are you a user of an Amstrad NC100 or 200 notepad? If you believe there is some benefit to be gained by linking together such users please phone John Walker on 01752 (PLYMOUTH) 706266 and we will take it from there

Wanted: NC200 (or NC150) in good working order with manuals etc. Brian Watson c/o **8BIT**.

WANTED: Memory card(s), ideally 1 Meg size, for Amstrad NC200 notepad. Any reasonable price considered. Please call Gary on 01582 (LUTON)

483894 evenings or weekends or 0402
844369 anytime.

For SAM sales and support send SAE
to: Bob Brenchley, **Format**, 34,
Bourton Road, GLOUCESTER GL4 0LE.

Sharp Users Club. Write to Andrew
Ferguson at 11, Harcourt Close,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 1UZ, or
01491 574850 for further details

TUG, the new user group and magazine
for classic computers (all formats
including Atari ST, Amstrad PCW &
CPC, RM Link and PCs running
emulators). Various benefits. £5 per
annum. Call Robert on 01855 (Oxford)
351448

SMALL WORKS DEPT

*The section for offers of help and
repairs at fair prices.* Please help
those mentioned by enclosing return
postage and a sensibly-sized SAE
with each request for help.

Wealden Supplies: a range of quality
consumables at low prices. For
example, range includes blank disks;
3½" HD pack of 10 for £4.50 + 87p.
CHEques payable to Richard Avery.
Send orders or SSAE to 60, Pitreavie
Drive, Knights Manor, HAILSHAM, East
Sussex BN27 3XG. Tel: 01323 844371.
E-mail: 106765.2102@compuserve.com

Drive belts for 3" mechanisms
including CPCs, PCWs, PCs, Spectrum
+3s. Include easy to follow fitting
instructions. £2.45 inc P&P from AJ
Howard, 65, Altyre Way, BECKENHAM,
Kent BR3 3ED

For PCW help, you can try Anthony
Hill, joint co-ordinator of the
Heads of the Valleys PCW User Group,
at 20, Velindre Place, Whitchurch,
CARDIFF CF4 2AN. Please enclose an
SAE and say which PCW you have if
you write. He actually *prefers* phone
calls which can be made to either
01222 618012 or 01829 271515, one of
which should find him.

Nigel Calcutt offers accessories and
low-cost repairs for any CPC. He may
also be able to help with other
computers, so try him at 14,
Blakeney Crescent, Melton Mowbray,

Leics LE13 0QR.

Lloyd Garland, the proprietor of
Alchemist Software, offers to assist
with any Spectrum-related 'techy'
queries and problems. His address is
126, Hayward Road, Redfield, BRISTOL
BS5 9QA.

For help on Spectrum problems, or
general hints, tips, and advice on
8-bit emulators, write or telephone
Alchemist Research, 62, Tithe Barn
Lane, Woodhouse, SHEFFIELD S13 7LN.
Telephone: 0114 269 7644. No costs,
but if you can send an SAE and
(where necessary) relevant blank
media, it will help process the
query much faster.

Commodore 64 Technical advice. If
you have a technical problem on a
C64/128 write to Andrew Fisher, the
former tech consultant to **Commodore
Format** and **Commodore Force** at 30,
Rawlyn Road, CAMBRIDGE CB5 8NL with
a SSAE or an Intl Reply Coupon.

For CPC-related problems, try the
ex-editor of **WACCI** magazine, Philip
DiRichleau at 32, Arboretum Avenue,
LINCOLN Lincs LN5 7NG. Write to him
explaining your problem. If Philip
cannot help he will find someone who
can.

Amstrad PCW 8256/8512 parts for DIY
repair: 3" drives, CPU boards, Power
boards, Tubes, Keyboards, printers,
etc. Also some books and software.
Advice freely given. SAE for lists
and info. Ron King, 19, Stancliffe
Road, BEDFORD, Beds MK41 9AN REF:1

For those who need help, where
better to look than world-wide chat
lines? **8BIT** offers to access the
internet newsgroups which carry
conversations between enthusiasts of
particular computers. Note this is
for *help* only; your editor doesn't
have time to post sales and wants.

Send your enquiry on paper with an
SAE to **8BIT**. On receipt here, it is
posted in the appropriate newsgroup.
One week later, or as soon as it is
likely that no more replies are be
forthcoming, the answer(s) is/are
transferred to paper and sent back
to the enquirer. That's it; simple

and effective.

We have already had some notable
successes, and a couple of failures,
but generally it appears to work
well.

Clubs and contacts outside the UK
have been passed to someone who was
emigrating, and a disk drive for a
C64 was found in a hurry when a
breakdown was threatening a sixth
form assignment.

This service can continue after the
magazine has closed, so make a note
of the contact details somewhere
near your computer for when you need
them.

LATE ENTRIES

Kidding, right?! Apart from the
whole magazine, there are no late
entries this time.

NEXT COPY DATE

The date to ensure copy's inclusion
in the next issue of **8BIT**, which
will be published in September 1998,
is 15th August 1998.

Curiously, it is nearly ready now:
as material was selected and edited
for this issue, what was to be held
over was also compiled to make it
easier to get the next issue ready.

PS

If any computer group, fan club,
publisher, PD librarian, retail
supplier, or whatever, would like to
submit a statement of what they
offer, I will be pleased to publish
it in the final issue (possibly with
additional comment), after the small
adverts, as space allows.

It may be possible to include more
than one such piece, as the
intention is that the final **8BIT**
will be "handing on the baton" by
referring readers on to other clubs,
publications, and support ources.

The intention is to offer '8-bit
computer activists' an open platform
to speak in a way which stands
midway between news and advertising.

BASIC Conversion To COM-municate

Mike Elliston suggests **8BIT** publishes a piece on converting BASIC files to .COM files so that they run under CP/M on a PCW.

There are two problems with this; (1) who is to write it, and (2) who will read it.

I am sure Mike would agree (well he did last time we spoke) that PCW users tend, in the main, to much prefer running software "out of the box", rather than writing their own. Consequently, there are very few technical authors able to write such a piece in plain English who would be prepared to tackle this job.

As to who would read it well, if it were written from a PCW users point of view, realistically only **8BIT**'s PCW using readers (and just possibly some CPC and Spectrum owners) *might* be interested, and one can narrow that down further to the slim percentage who have got as far as BASIC on their machines and are now looking for something past that.

So, for most of the magazine's readership, it would not be an interesting read. Sorry.

This kind of computer-specific technical stuff is still available in the PCW press and books which are fairly widely available. If they don't *seem* to be, one can try putting out a request through the local clubs or the small ads columns of **8BIT**. One more chance....

I know of at least two CPC clubs, **WACCI** and **UAUG**, who have extensive book libraries for their members' use. If the job is that important joining a club is a small cost to pay for the appropriate information.

One club which probably has both the expertise among its members for publishing such an article and an audience too is Mike's own **South Essex PCW Club**. I look forward to reading the article in **The Disc Drive**!

Caught In The Web

Don't you think it's getting very silly when an address is nearly longer than the letter? E-mail's "whatnot@wherever" I can live with, but I take a lot more persuading that Web 'addresses' need to be so damned long and complicated.

Bloomin' PCs Again

Regular readers will notice an increasing amount of Internet and PC/Mac-related material creeping into the pages of recent **8BIT**. As the mag sails gracefully towards the sunset it is not going either soft or daft, but it is a fact that many users of 8-bit computers also use a PC alongside the old "favourite".

Whether for e-mail, or to access Web sites and newsgroups which often carry useful 8-bit information (and occasionally software), a PC can have its uses.

Just as a Fax does not supersede a telephone, so a PC should not replace an 8-bit computer; they are just good at doing different things.

So, where relevant, **8BIT** carries some PC stuff. The next issue *might* even be produced using one; *that* would be a first. And last!

Until Then...

For those of a more outgoing nature in their computing, there are now two very good "transition" magazines available. Both of them are written for those with an 8-bit background who are stepping gingerly into using what most people muddle through with these days.

Format PC is Bob Brenchley's publication which has been published for some time. It is very much in the style of his **SAM** and **Spectrum** magazine **Format**; A5, and very professionally presented.

New Kid on the Block - its first issue has just been published - is called **Wibble**, and it is edited by Angela Cook. Angela is already a professional journalist, and she has

been supporting 8-bit users for many years through her business **Merline-Serve**.

So far, the issues of **Format PC** have many more pages than **Wibble**'s first, but it will be interesting to see how **Wibble** develops as the roster of writers Angela has managed to recruit come "on stream".

For further details, write to the addresses in the **Merline-Serve** and **Format** elsewhere in this issue.

Grinding To A Full Stop

The saga (started *many* issues ago) of "how many spaces should be left after a full stop, and how many after other pieces of punctuation such as commas, colons, semi-colons, exclamation marks, etc" rolls on.

Distilling the wisdom of many of the letters to **8BIT** on the subject seems to come to this:

leaving two spaces after a full stop, but just one space after any other sentence-breaking punctuation not enclosed by single or double quotation/speech marks appears to be an old convention, dating from the days of typewriting tuition.

Except for more "traditional" uses, eg those in the legal profession and one or two rather self-regarding office skill schools, the general convention now seems to be taught as one space after *all* such punctuation, including full stops.

Above all, it is recommended by those with a healthy respect for the variations which naturally evolve through practical usage in the real world that *consistency* throughout a document is paramount in enabling any message to be communicated to the intended reader.

So that's that put to bed. But it does get me wondering, which is the correct side of a letter on which to put an addressee's address? Hmm?

Uh oh! Here we go again. It's at times like this that I'm glad it's

SHORTS - contd

nearly over...

Network Computers

E-mail is becoming quite widely used by users of all types of computer, whereas I suspect that the proliferating Internet information services, which are often a waste of time and money unless you can use a computer on your employer's time and on his phone bill, will struggle to grow much further past the end of next year.

Paying to read a company's advertisements simply because they are described as Web Sites is not going to fool too many people for too long.

Another barmy idea currently occupying a lot of very clever people's time is about to be sold as 'the next big thing'.

The idea is that of selling 'dumb terminals' permanently ready-wired to a phone line, called network computers. These enable a subscriber to use the *supplier companies'* software from perhaps hundreds of miles away or more away, rather than in the subscriber's own home. This has a lot in common with the French Minitel home-terminal system.

In other words, rather than *buying* your software, on the network system you only pay for the *use* of it. The big attraction of this system to its suppliers and software publishers is that, at last, it offers a complete solution to the matter of software piracy. If you don't *have* the software, you cannot *copy and redistribute* it, free or for money.

On the other hand, if the network concept catches on and becomes *the* way to manage business computing needs, software companies who are *not* 'on the system' will be virtually dead, commercially, in the business sector. More cheap scalps for **MicroSoft**, no doubt.

Fortunately, there *is* doubt; and

lots of it. In the financial and computer press there is a *lot* of scepticism and concern that, once committed, companies will be a 'milch cow' for service providers who will be able to steadily ratchet up the prices.

Don't get *too* excited; it will not work for 8-bit computer users as they will not be able to access and run the special software from their terminals due to operating system incompatibilities: quite a blessing, really, as you see.

Data Protection

For those of a paranoid nature or otherwise interests in civil rights issues, the office of the Data Protection Registrar publishes a number of useful pamphlets. Included on the Agency's short list are GN6 Codes of Practice, and GN20 Security action list for microcomputer users. Being of a naturally curmudgeonly nature, I have sent for GN13. Does a data user always have to register? It seems not, but such exemptions are closely defined and if in doubt it might be as well to check to see whether you are risking prosecution by not registering.

The new European Union Data Protection Directive (that's number 95/46/EC of course, as you know) will require Britain to make some small and apparently relatively insignificant changes to its own existing Act.

To paraphrase some of the points covered, added to the coverage of the present law will be *some* manually maintained records, and some special rules will be added for "sensitive" information categories such as race, one's sex life (please restrict all the obvious jokes about "small entries" to the margin), religion or philosophy, criminal convictions and union membership.

Special protection to protect the freedom of expression for *genuine* artistic or journalistic purposes will be incorporated, so scruffy and scurrilous little fanzines may have to be more careful in future. There

will be a duty imposed on *all* users to comply with the data protection legislation whether or not they are, or need to be, registered under the new system.

You can write to Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF for fuller details.

King Of The PCW

Ron King has sent a letter reporting on his year of supplying low-cost but warrantied parts for PCW DIY repairs. Most of the reported failures have been on the 8000 series (not surprising as they're older than other model) but an excellent success rate for home repairs is achieved by him supplying clear instructions and getting back the old (failed) unit for inspection and recycling.

Apparently, in general, PCW users are more concerned that they will not be able to manage repairs than CPC users, but nevertheless they often surprise themselves. Ron's details are in the small adverts.

Who Wants A Date, Then?

I am thoroughly fed-up with the on-going periodic predictions in the various news and computer media of global chaos when computer systems prove unable to cope with any date after 1999.

Certainly, I have yet to see any actual evidence that any recent software or computer system *will* fall over, and the idea that current businesses of any size are still running software designed back in the dark ages when reaching the year 2000 would be seen as defying the will of the deity beggars belief.

So the world of business is perfectly safe. The constant hype-efforts of the PC pushers make sure that there is a constant sense of insecurity present in any company not running the latest, fastest, neatest and prettiest version of any piece of software and that usually means it will have been ~~tested-up~~ "substantially upgraded in features

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DISCLAIMER: All contents of **8BIT** are published on the basis that they are opinion or believed true at the time of publication. "I've done my best, but no liability can be accepted by me or contributors for any loss or damage, distress or upset, however caused. I am careful to try to supply a realistic value to any hunch, belief, opinion, rumour or fact but clangers can still happen. So, Sorry if I get something wrong, please tell me if/when it happens so that I can set the record straight." Brian Watson, Editor.

THE REAL WORLD: Pressures on my time of family, business, hobbies and deadlines mean individual replies to letters cannot be guaranteed (promptly or at all). I'm not (I hope) rude, I'm just a very busy person. Hence the next issue being the last.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Details of **8BIT**'s subscribers will not be divulged without their express, or strongly implied, permission.

LOW-COST REPAIRS: There is now a thriving network of low-cost repairers for small jobs on older computers such as replacing drive belts or drives (keeping old parts for spares). With supplies of older kit (especially peripherals) dwindling, it can be cheaper to replace an item than have it repaired, resulting in *working* parts of the failed item being lost when it goes in the bin. To minimise costs, especially on larger items, I offer a **free courier service** from/to East Anglia, East Midlands, and London. **8BIT**, especially the **MISCELLANEOUS** and **SMALL WORKS** sections, is the best place for appeals for (or offers of) help finding a low-cost solution. I therefore assume permission to publish is implied with any letter received unless otherwise stated.

COMING NEXT ISSUE: A round-up of unpublished articles omitted from this issue plus a discourse on the available sources of support in the absence of **8BIT**. The copy date for this last issue is "as soon as you can." Preliminary editorial work is already well advanced, and I don't want to get in the same cycle of delay as has afflicted issue 19, so please submit all copy ASAP.

FURTHER ON UP THE ROAD: A holiday perhaps, a significant change of primary income, a serious attempt to patch things up with my wife (whose leaving might reasonably be connected with my spending too much time on the magazine, believe it or not) and too little time with her, a redirection of some of my spare time to the **IEBA** and a couple of other computer interests but not as many as before, hours of catching up on the backlog of videoed programmes, clear out the garage, the loft, and the cellar, some happy hours with a fine Jura single malt, a Southern Comfort with another to keep it company, or a stein of Orange Pekoe.

Protext Professional - The Great British Word Processor!

Protext v2.4 is the fastest and most complete word processor on the Amstrad PCW. It also happens to be the best value word processor on the Amstrad CPC too. **Protext v2.4** has been used to produce most of **8BIT**. On one disc, the program features include:

- logical keystrokes ● "plain English" commands ● free tutor file on disc ● fast text handling
- simple Network, MicroDesign and LocoScript compatibility ● mail-merging and spell-checking *at no extra cost*
- use your printer's built-in fonts or colour capability without any additional expense
- *free* user support is included in the purchase price, and the **Protext** helpline operates at normal telephone rates
- **Protext** handles printing in columns and colour with ease ● simply configured for more advanced purposes
- **Protext** can easily produce ASCII files for transfer the text between computers, either by software or by e-mail
- the *free* **Protext** Users' Club is available to all **Protext** users for the open exchange of tips, templates, and information

Protext has had 12 years continuous development. Above all, **Protext** remains fast and very easy to use. The user-friendly 'look and feel' of the program has been maintained throughout its development. It is impossible to cover everything here. For further information on **Protext** and many other items for users of **CPCs** and **PCWs**, send an A4 SAE to Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA. **CP/M Protext**, the 'one-disc' word processing solution, costs just £25 (including p&p). Orders may be placed by phone on 01353 777006, or Fax on 01353 777766, quoting your credit card details, the computer model, and the drive A: size when ordering.