



DRAGON USERS GROUP... (National) .

The Group was started in August 1984 in an attempt to counteract the persistent Dragon obituaries that were appearing in just about every computer related publication. The general idea was that if a sufficiently large number of Dragon owners could get together and make themselves heard, it would eventually become impossible for the press, and more importantly the software and hardware companies, to persist with the myth that the Dragon was dead.

So far we seem to be having a lot of success; we were rushed off our feet at the '6889 Shows', and membership is increasing steadily.....we now have Members in most European and Scandinavian countries as well as within the U.K. and in America!! and a considerable number of software and hardware companies are in touch with us regarding advertising, reviews, etc, and some are offering to make products available to the Group for use as competition prizes, as well as offering substantial discounts to Group Members buying their products.

We publish a monthly Newsletter which averages around twelve pages, the contents of which depend entirely on what Members wish to send in for publication.....reviews of software and hardware, articles, letters, comments, complaints, questions and answers, hints.....whatever it is, so long as it is printable and legal, and Dragon related, we'll publish it!!.

We are NOT a commercial venture...we've no paid staff, and no connection with ANY company or organisation, and everything is costed on a "Zero Profit" basis.

Currently, Paul Grade is Chairman....which means in charge of membership subscriptions, queries, complaints, accounts, and general admin., and Tim Lomas is our Newsletter Editor...which covers deciding Newsletter format and content, typing up, advertising, etc, Neil Scringour is our Software Editor...reviews, software articles, and answering Members queries on games, etc, and Pauline Hampson covers Educational and Adventure type programs. ANYONE else in the Group is likely to be picked on at any time to do just about anything!! (but if you don't want involvement why join a Group??), so the whole thing is very flexible..(Anyone want to be a Technical Writer??).

We try to balance things so that we cover ALL Dragon related interests, so that there is something for everyone from the professional business programmer or writer to the D.I.Y hardware enthusiast or the Alien Zappers and Adventurers. We may not always succeed, but we do our best to give everyone value for money.

U.K. Subscription charges are 8.00 per year, which may seem high but leaves no profit margin at all!, and is only a 50 pence increase in TWO YEARS!!! As stated, we're non-commercial, and the subscription covers ONLY essentials such as printing, postage, phone calls, etc.....there's NO profit, and none of us are living it up in the Bahamas (or even Bridlington) on the proceeds!!.

We hope that you will decide to join, but whether you decide to do so or not, thank you for enquiring.

The Dragon IS NOT DEAD!!!.....werely changed its address.

Owing to postage costs, the fee for members outside the U.K. is 9.00 per year.

We may not be the best Group in the World, but we've been around longer than all the other Dragon Groups, and we're now one of the biggest computer groups in the UK, so people can't think we're THAT bad!!.

For what it's worth, much of our material is reprinted by Dragon Groups in other countries.....and no, I'm NOT worried about 'Copyright'!!!....our policy is to spread information to those who want it, NOT restrict it in the hope of making a profit .

Paul Grade

NEWSLETTER OF THE DRAGON USERS GROUP

Issue 1

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Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. As you can see it lacks an inspired title. I favoured Dragons Song, but it seems that Ann MacCaffery devotees are rare amongst our correspondants. This leads me to the first announcement of this piece, a poll for the name of the newsletter, send your suggestions on the back of a completed membership form, and whichever name gets the most votes will be it.

The users group is being formed due to the demise of both Dragons Teeth and Dragon Data. Our beloved box of tricks is now in the hands of the perfidious spanish and it was thought that some sort of voice was needed to promote our interests and exchange information. Which brings me to the main message of this editorial, any club -and especially a national one- can only survive with a large and active membership. THIS MEANS YOU, so if you have any problems, opinions, comments or contributions write in, also if you know anyone with a Dragon show them this and persuade them to join up, in short go forth and multiply. Subscription for this year is set at £7.50, this may seem a bit steep but with the club relatively small costs are high, however next year we hope to be able to drop the price.

There has been some interest expressed in networking either by modem or RTTY, if anyone has views on this, or already possesses the equipment, let me know and I'll pass it on. That's enough from me, at least wearing this hat, so remember from here on in it's down to you.

A PRINTER FOR TWENTY POUNDS

by Peter Willis

If only a way could be found to interface a printer to your Dragon without spending £200. There is a top quality printer, produced originally for a very large company, which is readily available second hand for £10-£20. The machine in question is a Telex terminal or Teleprinter.

Of course it is not just a matter of buying a Teleprinter and plugging it into the printer port of the Dragon. Indeed, at first glance, it is no use at all. Teleprinters do not understand Ascii code and they demand signal letters of plus and minus 80 volts. In addition they have a limited type font with no \$, *, £ etc. However, there are ways round most of these problems and the few that remain are amply compensated by the attractive cost.

Let's look at the problems one at a time. The Dragon, like most computers, puts its characters out to the printer in 8 bit Ascii code whereas Teleprinters only understand a 5 bit code known as Murray or Baudot. This can be overcome by translating the characters in suitable software.

The next problem is that the Dragon printer port is parallel whilst the Teleprinter needs its data in serial form and at the relatively slow baud rate of 50. This could also be dealt with in software, or as a hardware solution, using a handy IC chip called a UART. (Universal Asynchronous Receiver Transmitter) This is specially designed to translate parallel data into serial format and can be clocked to provide the correct baud rate.

So now we have serial code at the right speed and in a suitable format but its signal is at TTL levels where 'space' is represented by about 0.3v and 'mark' by 4.5v. We need to convert this to -80 for 'space' and +80 for 'mark'. Fortunately Teleprinters come with a control unit which also has

a very good power supply. This can be tapped using a transistor switching board or high speed relays.

The remaining problem is missing characters. There are three approaches that can be taken. You could print a space and then write the character in later; or a different character can be printed which is similar to the missing one (L in place of f for instance); or you can overprint two of the available characters (S and / to give \$).

If this has whetted your appetite watch this space for further articles giving more details of the software and hardware needed to get the budget printer into operation.

CLUBNET

This spot is for the local clubs and users groups that are scattered about the country, at present the idea is that it will contain a list of addresses so you can be contacted by prospective members, and I hope that you will also treat it as a bill board to publicise meetings, events, ideas and opinions.

We are also considering some form of membership deal for clubs, either as an affiliate fee for the club, or as reductions for club members and would like to hear your opinions. Finally if anyone is interested in starting up a local club we will give whatever help we can; including space in these pages and putting him in touch with nearby Dragon users.

So here are the addresses of the first three clubs to contact us:

Sheffield Dragon Users Group,
c/o Mr. R. Crompton,
131 Harringthorpe Valley Road,
Rotherham,
S. Yorks,
S65 3RU.

N. Down Microcomputer Users Group,
c/o E.S. Doak,
1 Meadowville Crescent,
Bangor,
Co. Down,
BT19 1HQ.

Also W.S. File runs a local users group in Sussex and he can be found c/o Multisoft Systems,
St. Martins, Orchard Road,
Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex.

A late entry was the Romsey Area Dragon Users Group and they can be reached via their chairman:
Mr. Ashley Anderson,
St. Elmo, Slab Lane,
West Wellow, Romsey,
Hants,
SO5 8RG.

REDUNDANT INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

(or things you would have liked to have known but the book didn't tell you.)

Yes I KNOW you're all expert programmers who know every POKE on the machine, write a couple of Mb of hex before breakfast, and converse only in assembler. It is just possible however, that somewhere out there exists someone who isn't quite up to your standard of genius, (me -ed), and if this is the case, then it's possible also that this deprived person might find a few of the POKES and EXECs that you no longer bother with, quite useful. If you'd like to pass on any of your BASIC knowledge, please feel free to do so...(you tell us and we'll pass it on!), but meanwhile, someone might find a use for the following:

EXEC 46080
EXEC 41194
POKE 359,60
POKE 329,0
POKE 383,157
POKE 383,126.

COLD RESTART CONDITION
WAIT FOR NEXT KEYPRESS
SLOW SCROLL, RESET WITH POKE 359,57
LOWER CASE, RESET WITH POKE 329,255

THEN POKE 383,158, WILL STOP LIST FROM WORKING< RESET WITH

CLOADM "PROGRAM"

PRINT PEEK(487)*256+PEEK(488)

GIVES ADDRESSES TO COPY NON-

PRINT PEEK(126)*256+PEEK(127)-1

AUTORUN M/C PROGRAMMES.

PRINT PEEK(157)*256+PEEK(158)

THEN TYPE CSAVEN"PROG NAME",FIRST NO.,SECOND NO.,THIRD NO

ASCII CORNER

by Neil Scrimgeour

Welcome, Readers, to ASCII (Adventures, Simulations, Conumdrums, Inc.) Corner. The object of this Corner is to review past and current adventures and simulations, and to offer help and advice to other ASCIIers.

The one thing that we need more than anything else is input from YOU, fellow keyboard bashers, the programs that you like, or don't, as the case may be, and of course information.

There's always someone out there who is stuck at some point, (which you, being an Adventure Genius, have long since passed!), and who is seriously giving thought to testing the aerodynamic qualities of his Dragon (Not recommended as it takes off well but lands disastrously.).

This month, there being no questions I don't have to work very hard finding answers! So let's get down to the serious business of reviews.

I have just received one of Channel 8's adventures. Yes, contrary to popular belief, they can be found! The example that fell into my mucky paws was Feasibility Experiment. The plot is as follows:

There is a race of beings who have no life form as such (no not politicians!), and they are searching for a bodily life form that will suit their needs. You have been captured by them, to be one of their 'guinea pigs', and in order to survive, you must complete a quest by conquering the obligatory monsters etc., in the maze of locations into which you have been dumped. There's also something(??) to do with the legend of Alexander the Great, (you come across the odd lion or two!).

The actual screen layout uses PMODE 4, in white on black. The top third of the screen is for descriptions, or if you have a 64, graphics. Only possessing a 32 I can't comment on the quality of the graphics, but the descriptions do convey a certain amount of atmosphere. The remainder of the screen is for communication using the standard Verb-Noun combinations.

The game itself is not easy, and sometimes rather illogical. At one stage you have to dig up a room but it gives you no clue as to which one, so you spend precious time searching for the correct room. This brings me to the second point, you are allocated a limited number of moves, about /00, and at times this becomes irritating to say the very least! I much prefer to wander about and experiment which, of course, I can't do in this game.

Apart from these gripes, and the fact that I managed to crash the programme, it is reasonable value for anyone wanting a challenge. Mind you it isn't cheap at ten pounds, but then what Dragon programme is?

I've just got space to mention two other programmes; Dragon Datas 'Shenanigans' and 'Cricket' by Peaksoft. If you are looking for a pleasant, easy adventure, then buy Shenanigans, if you can find it! Although it only took me a few hours to solve, it was extremely enjoyable. A good one for first time adventurers.

Cricket is the best simulation I have seen for the Dragon. All the action, apart from the scoreboard, takes place in PMODES 3 and 4. Nearly everything is taken into account, batsmens skills, bowlers, varying amount of movement, spin &c, not to mention luck! There is so much more but I don't have space to mention it here. It's a must for cricket fans. See if you can do better than England! (That shouldn't be difficult!). By the way joysticks are required.

Don't forget to send in your questions, and information, and let me know about any program you'd like to see reviewed.

STRING SEARCHER by N. Edmunds.

This short machine code routine can be loaded anywhere in memory, but you must use the CLEAR command before loading. What it does is quite simple, it searches the current programme in memory for a specified character string and prints the line numbers where it occurs.

To use it type DEF USR0=start address, A\$ = "string to search for" and to activate type A=USR0(VARPTR[A\$]). To send a list of line numbers to the printer type:- POKE&H6F,254:A=USR(VARPTR[A\$]).

Hex loader and dump:

```
0 'IF NO ASSEMBLER USE THIS
10 'HEX LOADER
20 FOR L=&H7F78 TO &H7FF7 'LOOP
30 READ A$:A=VAL("&H"+A$)
40 CS=CS+A:POKE L,A:NEXT L'AGAIN
50 IF CS<>11919 THEN PRINT "DATA ERROR":STOP:ELSE PRINT "OK-SAVE":END
60 'PLACE HEX DATA FROM HERE ON-
70 DATA BD,83,2D....&c.
```

```
BD 8B 2D 1F 01 A6 84 A7 8D 00 79 10 AE 02 10 AF 8D 00
6D 10 9E 19 A6 9D 00 66 AE A4 AF 8D 00 65 AE 22 AF 8D
00 5C 31 24 A1 A0 27 0B 10 AC 8D 00 54 24 46 8D 31 20
F1 E6 8D 00 49 5A AE 8D 00 40 30 01 A6 80 A1 A0 26 13
5A 26 F7 34 20 EC 8D 00 31 BD 95 7A 86 0D BD 85 4A 35
20 8D 09 10 AC 8D 00 23 24 15 20 C2 C6 02 6D A0 26 08
5A 26 F9 32 62 7E 8C 37 A6 9D 00 08 39 10 AE 8D 00 07
20 96 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
```

When ok use DEF USR0=&H7F78

An assembly listing is available for anyone who wants it from the editor, please send an sae.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Well we're here, in print (more or less!), but before we start congratulating ourselves, perhaps it would be as well to get a few things straight.

If you were sent this copy, i.e. you didn't borrow it, nick it, or find it on a nail behind the loo door, then you are one of the Dragon owners who wanted a Users Group enough to write in and take the trouble to say so. Thank you. Some of you have gone to a lot of trouble to get this copy out, and to you even more thanks. But we need more, a LOT more, if this Group is going to exist long enough to make a second edition!

Quite simply keeping a group running isn't a matter of sending off a subscription (please do -ed) and sitting back and reading what someone else has written. All of you must know someone other than yourself who owns a Dragon and WE NEED THAT SOMEONE.

If you want a really functional Group, one that can provide you with news, reviews, help you with Dragon Problems, a Group that can help you to exchange views information and anything else you wish, then it is absolutely essential to have the highest possible membership. It's all a matter of economics; unless you are all telepaths we need a newsletter, and to produce even the most basic one costs money, which I, (and I assume most of you), don't have.

To produce such a basic Newsletter, collect material, (plus such items as phone costs and postage &c), printing and distribution, would cost £1.30 per copy if our group numbered less than 100, which would be ridiculous and quite impractical. Add a zero to that figure and cost percopy would drop to around 60p, a far more viable figure. Make the

membership 2000 and cost drops to its lowest possible figure of 40p per copy. This would mean that we could not only reduce subscription rates, but provide a far better service, not to mention a top quality newsletter.

A few of us have tried to get this started at our own expense. It may not look much, and this edition certainly doesn't cover half the things we'd like it to, it's not even a proper printing job. Whether this is the first edition or the last depends entirely on YOU. If you can recruit enough additional members then we could have the best Users Group in the business, which is what the old Dragon deserves, and I'll look forward to hearing from you in the second edition. If not then we'll just have to refund your subscriptions, and say it's been a pleasure knowing you, however briefly. I've done what I can to get things rolling, but now it's up to you to find enough members to keep 'em going. Good Luck. I hope you succeed. Thank you for all your help and encouragement.

Paul Grade.

DRAGON ADVENTURES by Pauline Hampson.

I hope to encourage you to play and enjoy adventures. In an adventure you have to complete a task. You may even have to discover the task for yourself. Most good adventures are the mainly text only type, I find the sort that you play on a grid, where you encounter various foes, boring and frustrating.

Here are a few tips for anyone attempting a text adventure. It is essential to make a map on a piece of paper. When this is done you can rush around to each location with ease. I always make my map first, exploring each location and seeing what happens if you go North, South, East or West. Often you are given available directions but in some games they may forget to mention them. Here is an example of a simple map:-

```
      |
dead end - passage- circular-
      |
junction
      |
crystal cave
```

In some adventures (Dragon Datas) reading the description of your location is essential. You may not be able to go N,S,E,W but must "GO PATH" if a path is mentioned. You may also find it helpful to write on your map which objects are where. Some games have a use for every object but in others objects may be red herrings (try Salamander). Examine each object because this description often provides vital clues. Try picking them up, there may be something underneath, or "Look under" may work. There is often a limit to the number of objects you can carry, forcing you to drop one to get another. Typing inventory will give a list of what you are carrying.

There will usually be several levels to an adventure game often connected by stairs. The Franklyn trilogy has 2 very novel ways of changing floors. In the course of the game you are bound to encounter doors which must be unlocked by a hidden key or magic word.

You will rarely play a game which does not include a maze. It may not be called this but is the sort of place where going N,S,E or W you end up in a similar sounding place. For example Dragon Datas' 'Seaquest has a meadow and El Diablero an endless desert - or is it? Mazes always contain useful items and once they are mapped present no problem. Always enter a maze with lots of objects on your person. Drop an object now and then to see what happens when you go N,S,E or W. You will then see if you have moved or not. The maze will always have a limit to it. Explore it to its limits. Here is an example of a maze map:-

```
[flashlight]      token]
      |              |
wallett-----cup]
```

The [] mean you don't go anywhere trying to move in that direction.

Occasionally mazes seem most illogical. Just ignore this and draw an arrow round to wherever you end up, even if it is odd. Going East can end you up somewhere North West of where you were, but these events are rare. Sometimes when this sort of thing happens it is better to give up the map and reort to a table, negotiating with this. I had to do this in Franklins Tomb. Here is an example of a table:

	N	S	E	W	Up	Down
Sword	dog	dog	sword	sword	sword	sword
Slimy dog	sword	carrott	carrott	dog	dog	dog
Carrott	dog	sword	sword	dog	sword	carrott

If your game has a game save facility use this frequently. It saves you having to start again as you are bound to be killed occasionally.

With your map done you can start your adventure and hopefully you will solve it. If frustration becomes too great the manufacturers will often provide a help sheet. While on the subject can anyone help me to find the final treasure in 'Keys of the Wizard' because even Microdeal can't do it.

I find adventures a real challenge. Unfortunately I also tend to burn the tea when playing so I advise you to switch off the computer when cooking. Next time I hope to reccomend some of my favourites and include a few tips and answer queries which you, the reader, will provide. Happy Adventuring.

LETTERS

This One is in reply to the original PCW letter of Paul.

Dear Sir,

I am writing in reply to your letter as published in Popular Computing Weekly vol 3 no. 26.

Multisoft Systems began life in 1982 by producing software for the Dragon 32, we have since moved on a bit but wish to offer continued support for Dragon 32 and 64 computers. As a result of our activities with the Dragon we have built up many useful routines and peripherals eg. text and hi-res screen dumps, RS-232 cards, speech synthesiser, MIDI interface and many other useful utilities which have been included in our software at various times

In addition to this we run a small local user group to which we make available the above facilities. For a long time I have thought about setting up a non commercial 'Dragon Net' service and now that modems can be obtained at reasonable cost perhaps this is the right time.

I hope that this information will be of interest to you and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

W.S. File, Multisoft Systems (see Clubnet).

PROBLEMS

Some of our members have been having trouble getting games to work, the offenders are Nightfly, Lionheart and Dragbug, so if anyone can help write in,

POSTSCRIPT

Well now everything's in and typed up -oh my aching finger- it's time to take stock. We could do with some contributions on arcade games for the next issue, anything and everything will be welcome for 'Pixel Park'. On the subject of contributions please send them to me, Jeremy Hoyland, at the address on the heading.

We will take private adverts so long as they are not too long, for the minimal charge of a second class stamp, please put it in the envelope with your advert and to make a start here's one of mine: if anyone has a copy of Smeed and Somerville's Inside the Dragon going I've got a cheque waiting to come your way.