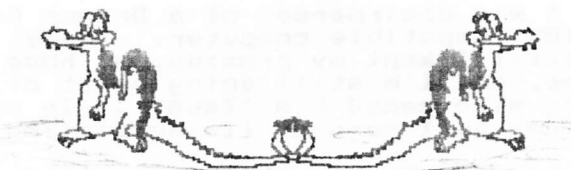


The Newsletter of the National Dragon Users Group

DRAGON



UPDATE

* ISSUE 77. I'm going to see Paul Simon next week. Wheeee! JUNE 1991. *

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The Gaffer's Bit

Flaming June!! and that's being polite about it!. I thought this was supposed to be Summer, and that with all the alleged "Global Warming" the place was supposed to be turning into a desert, instead of which all the local brass monkeys that haven't already drowned are in danger of becoming sopranos, and the local Council are discussing proposals to build a ski slope!. Roll on Winter, let's have some better weather. Anyway, assuming that the Summer Weather improves enough for the mail boat to get through and deliver this, I'd like to thank all those who took the trouble to write in and give their opinion on the revised ads page format so far everyone seems to like the new layout, so until I get some serious complaints about it, it stays. Glad you like it. So what's new? ... not a lot, I'm not going to comment on Ossett as Mike has done that already, but I think thanks are in order to Rob Preston for putting the Show on once again, and for rashly promising another one there next year AND a Show in the Bristol area for later this year. Other than that things are still pretty quiet I have ordered some of the German hardware a-ons mentioned last issue, and will let you know what they are like when they arrive (Post and Customs permitting). By the way, should you intend ordering anything from Germany, the cheapest method is to buy DM at your local bank and simply send the cash, otherwise you could well find the bank charge comes to more than the cost of the order!. I'm not suggesting that Bank charges are devised by a load of thieving gits!, I wouldn't dream of it!, but I think it's about time they started paying US for the use of our hard fiddled cash, at the same rate that they charge us if WE want to use some of theirs!. Anyway, that's more than enough garbage for one page, so if you want more, now read on

Paul G.

The Editor's Bit

So, the Ossett Show appears to have been a success! Although attendance was a little down on last year it was still quite busy, and as always the friendly atmosphere ensured that a good time was had by all. At least as far as my stall (Dragonfire) was concerned, those who did go tended to buy more this year rather than simply browsing. More on the Show later from both myself and Mike, but as for other news I should mention that Pulser have changed their name to P.S.E. COMPUTERS, maybe affirming their swing to hardware-orientated trading, but at the same time have widened their software range with the release of two new arcade games; see Mike's article for details. The Dragon market appears to be quite active at the moment so don't forget to support all those still involved, including yourself, as there is still a good deal going on.

If the comment in the header on this page confuses you, that's nothing to what it does to me!. What gives with my Editors?!. What with Steve getting all worked up about Batman, an now Robin getting excited about some geriatric American guitar basher, I'm starting to get worried. I'm going to recommend a good psychiatrist

Do Not Buy PCs!... Bernd Neuner.

A long time ago, when I was chairperson of a Dragon Club, I promised myself that I would never buy an IBM compatible computer. Today, I am working for a magazine for PCs. But still I kept my promise, at home my good old Dragon is still doing some work for me, and I'm still doing a lot of work for him (he's a male computer, a friend of mine named him "Zeus"). In my bureau, of course, I have to use an AT 286 machine, as I earn my living testing pc software at the moment.

To this day I wonder why people buy these so-called "Personal Computers". There is nothing personal about them (but my Dragon is very personal!). Asking friends who have bought one the question "WHY?" has resulted in the following answers:

1. A PC HAS MORE MEMORY.

This is true, but has no effect. My Dragon has 64K, and my text-editor takes 10K. A PC has about 640K, and text-editors take about 500K.

2. THERE IS MORE SOFTWARE FOR THE PC.

This is true, but has no effect. There are only a few text-editors for the Dragon, but my favourite, "Stylograph" for OS9, does everything I want the way I want it. (Ed-I'm typing this on Paul's "Grotto Mk II" and you're making me jealous!) There are hundreds of text-editors for PCs but not one works together with my printer, nor has the very user-friendly command structure of Stylograph.

3. A PC IS MORE USER-FRIENDLY.

Complete nonsense. MS-DOS is like searching in a dark room for a cat which is not there. Windows is like searching for the same cat in the same dark room with a knife in the hand.

4. A PC IS MORE EXPENSIVE.

That's right! And the only real reason for buying a PC. Every farmer drives Porsches nowadays, and if you go to Thaiti on holiday, you are likely to meet your butcher there! The latest thing to show membership in the jet set is a big, grey, heavy box labelled PC i486, with a monitor and a keyboard connected to it. Do not forget the mouse! It's not necessary to use it, the real work can be done with the Dragon, hidden in the cupboard just as long as you have visitors.

So, folks, do not buy PCs, to keep it as a symbol for these guys, who have according to Paul Grade more money than brain.

(Ed's comment: I agree that many people who buy PCs are wasting their money as Dragons can do the job just as well. However there are circumstances when PCs can be essential so I think the message should be "Do Not Buy PCs Unless You're Sure You Need One". Any other comments on this long-standing point of debate?)

Addendum to Composer/Companion Review

By Roy Cashmore

There is one important thing to remember: if you play a piece of music before you have completed entering it, REMEMBER TO "DELETE DONE" (option 3) BEFORE starting to enter the next note group. (Otherwise you will lose all you have entered.)

Another point worth mentioning is that the "Delete Notes" option (4) asks for a number. This is the number of notes you wish to delete starting from the end. If you use this, again, you must remember to DELETE DONE (or else!!). Music may be saved with or without graphics. The TEMPO has to be set before the music is entered. Try a bar or two of the melody only to check the tempo before you get to work in earnest.

Crossword 58 Answers.....

ACROSS	DOWN
1A. SPATULA	A1. STROBOSCOPE
1H. RODNOC (CONDOR)	B1. PARACETOMOL
2I. VIOLA	C4. PALATAL
5B. CAPER	D1. TRAMP
5G. RODEO	D7. TITANIC
6B. ELASTIC	E1. UNITE
6J. SKID	E6. SINE
7A. STATIONARY	G1. ASPIRIN
10A. POLAR BEAR	G8. CRESS
10K. DIG	H2. ALLOCATE
11B. LANCASTER	I1. OVOID
11K. AFT	J8. BARREL
12I. KEYS	K1. NO SMOKING DAY
13A. BLACKPOOL	M1. CATHEDRAL

SORRY,
NO XWORD THIS ISSUE,
IT HASN'T ARRIVED

Disto Mini Controller 1 DC-7

Review By Paul Marlow

This is a disk controller cartridge for the Tandy Color Computer. The controller measures 100mm X 110 mm X 20 mm and is compatible with the CoCo 1, 2 and 3.

For your \$75 plus \$8 shipping and handling you get a well constructed cartridge with gold plated edge connectors and two ROM sockets. Socket one can hold either a 24- or 28-pin ROM chip while socket two can hold a 28-pin chip. The controller comes complete with a 28 pin chip containing RS-DOS version 1.1 modified to access double sided drives fitted into socket number one. The only thing missing is the cable to connect the controller to a disk drive.

If you do not own double sided drives you have two choices. You can either spend an extra \$25 and buy the unmodified chip or order one from Tandy. I chose the second option and after several visits bought one for \$15.81. If you choose this option you need to give the salesman the following chip numbers:

RS-DOS V 1.0 8045364
RS-DOS V 1.1 8045364A

If they can't get the chip from national parts with either of these numbers then write to me enclosing a SAE and I will send you a picture of the chip for you to give to the salesman. I can be contacted at 50 Lime Avenue, Bentley, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 0JP.

After opening the case you move the 28-pin chip to the second socket and fit the 24-pin chip. The fitting is easy as there is a diagram on the circuitboard showing the position of each size of chip. Just remember to get the chip the right way up with the notch facing the same way as on the 28-pin chip. Also there are three black plastic jumpers which must be moved. These are each lifted up and placed so that each one is as far away from the white mark on the circuitboard as possible. This may sound like a complicated operation but once you have the controller open it is quite simple, but you should remember to earth yourself to avoid zapping the chips with static. (As with all such operations.) I advise you to use a chip extractor and inserter.

Now for another word of warning: not only are you not covered by any consumer laws, but when the minicontroller enters this country Customs will open the package, inspect the contents and charge you VAT. In addition the Post Office will charge a handling fee. In my case the VAT plus handling charge came to \$11.44.

If you're not put off by this you can get the catalogue with the minicontrollers price from: Howard Medical Computers, 1690 North Elston Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60622, USA.

ACOLYTE - REVIEWED BY TIM LEES

Acolyte is an adventure game written in unprotected Basic and will only work on a 64K machine. The program loaded first time every time. You play the part of a storm trooper called 'Zog' - your parents must have had a strange sense of humour! Your mission is to rescue Princess Dragos who has been imprisoned by the evil wizard Zendor on the planet Acolyte. The first few locations were quite straightforward and I was just getting rather blasé about it when I came across a Troll who would not let me cross a bridge. As the computer would not let me do what I would have liked to have done to the troll, and in the absence of any Billy Goat Gruffs, I have to admit that I was stuck here for a while until I realised that "Obvious exits" did not mean "Only exits". Once over the bridge I came across a Magical Maze. My heart sank. I have never really got over buying Madness & The Minotaur as my first game for the Dragon, so I saved my current position to tape and spent a futile few minutes getting nowhere. It was later that evening when the answer to the maze struck me. Of course! The answer had been in front of me all the time. Mapping out the rest of the game was fairly straightforward although one location had me totally confused, so being the totally unscrupulous person I am, I cheated. After that it was a case of exploring the castle and grounds trying to find out where the princess was and how to get to her. I suffered a few rather gruesome deaths during my search. The only really frustrating part was when I was told I was tired, then very tired, then exhausted. I knew I had to sleep but every time I tried to have forty winks I was told I could not sleep there. Once I had sorted that out it was not a problem but before I had got the place mapped I died of exhaustion four times. With all this dying going on, the HOLD command came in very useful. Typing HOLD saves your current position in memory, so if the worst happens you can try again without having to load from tape. I wish more adventure games had that feature.

Despite being in Basic the response time is very fast. You are not left hanging around waiting for the computer to decide what is happening. There are some pretty horrendous spelling mistakes in the descriptions which I found slightly distracting. It would be nice to see those corrected. It would not take much work or even spoil the screen layouts.

All in all I would say that this game would not really stretch an experienced adventurer too much but I enjoyed playing it and look forward to the promised sequel.

ACOLYTE is available from Dragonfire Services, 8 Ingleby Road, Wigston, Leicester, LE8 1DQ at 4.00 (tape only) complete with SCRABBLE. 75P P&P to be added to all orders.

COPTA SNATCH: REVIEWED BY KEITH STUART

The aim of the game, according to the instructions, is to steal enemy plans and destroy enemy installations. Roughly translated into English this means you fly along blasting at various objects until you reach a specified point whereupon you progress a level only to be confronted with more things to blast etc etc. Get the picture? I expect it all sounds vaguely familiar and that's because it probably is. This is another 'Skramble' variant and being the owner of three personal computers I have seen dozens. The only difference here is that the usual spaceship you control is replaced by a helicopter - hence the title. General comparisons aside, this is more than just a mediocre attempt at a conversion and there is evidence, albeit subtle, that the author is trying to hide his games origins. Therefore C.S. is justified, to some extent, as a game in itself.

Upon loading C.S. you are presented with instructions and a choice as to whether you use joystick or keyboard. I found the joystick a little easier to use because it is less fiddly and the main key to succeeding in this game is speed and control dexterity. The graphics are blocky and reminiscent of the old Atari console games (this is not surprising as I am told the game is quite dated) However the chunky, colourful backgrounds and enemy installations are quite pleasing to the eye. The scrolling and 'Copta' movement is very smooth, surprisingly so in fact. The sound effects are also of a high standard with a mildly realistic Helicopter type noise and the usual explosions and laser guns (or whatever you call them) It is the game play which annoys me - poor sprite collision detection and sluggish controls make this game much too difficult too early on, in my opinion. Your Helicopter does not respond quickly enough to joystick/keyboard commands so avoiding obstacles and enemy spaceships is very tricky. Therefore any success at completing a section is usually more down to luck than skill. I am not sure if this aspect was added intentionally by the programmer to make the game more difficult, and if it was then he needn't have bothered.

There is a fine line, in computer games of this sort, between addiction and frustration and I'm afraid, for me, the extraordinary difficulty of C.S. forces it into the latter. Watching my Copta being blown to oblivion over and over again was not exactly fun, but then again I am not exactly the world's greatest 'Skramble' type player. I do expect a game to get harder as you progress (after all if it is too easy then it is a waste of money), but because of poor design C.S.'s difficulty range is sporadic, changing from boringly easy to very addictive to frustratingly difficult with every different game. As I have written, it all depends on luck; if you are lucky you can get through the whole of the first section without so much as a scrape, and if you are unlucky it is sometimes very difficult to progress at all.

Copta Snatch has all the correct elements to be an excellent 'shoot em up' and in some ways it is, but it is let down a little by poor design and apparently clumsy programming. Having said that, there are no bugs or actual technical programming errors and many of you may enjoy very difficult games which demand an almost extra-sensory joystick ability and superior game playing skills. If you do like an immediate challenge I have no reservations at all in recommending this game. If on the other hand you prefer to dip your toe into the water before plunging in head first (metaphorically speaking) then I'd think twice before buying C.S. To sum up then - a very competent arcade conversion considering the 32k restrictions but also an extremely tough one. Recommended only for the experienced gameplayer.

Copta Snatch available from R & A J Preston, Kings Hall Court, St.Brides Major, Mid Glamorgan, CF32 0SE, no price sent with the review copy.

In answer to your comment

Since we started running the series on "Desktop Publishing" several people have mentioned how difficult and slow it is to make up a magazine page using either Desktop or the KCS program. I can only point out that it would be impossible to write a REAL Desktop Publishing program to fit into a Dragon's memory, so at best Dragon versions are a compromise between RAM and ability!. For that matter, if you want to use a REAL pain in the anatomy try running Timeworks on a PC machine! it may use 640K RAM and a couple of Meg disc space, but it would still be faster and easier to get your results by traditional "cut an paste" methods!. Paul.

PEEKING THE DRAGON (33) BY MIKE STOTT

All the doom and gloom that had been spread about the Ossett Show being the last Dragon/Tandy show ever proved to be unfounded. Let me tell you now that Bob Preston will definitely be running another one next year at the same venue, as well as a Bristol show later this year. Over a hundred adults, as well as children, came through the doors and once again we had our usual friendly and successful show in Ossett Town Hall. My thanks must go to my wife Nora, Steve Kind & family, Bill Tarrant and Geoff Smith for not only helping on the Group stand but also filling in on the door etc when necessary. Also thanks to Bob Preston for putting the show on. He appears to be the only one now who is prepared to put up with all the problems of running a Dragon show. Does anyone know of any other computer which still has it's own show?

On entering the front door and turning right you would have first seen the 6809 USER stand, then DRAGSOFT and IRENE SMITH (with her T-Shirts). DRAGONFIRE SERVICES and JOHN PENN SOFTWARE completed that side of the hall and BOB PRESTON's stand was across the front of the stage. KNIGHT COMPUTER SERVICES were next and then Stuart Beardwood was demonstrating the Group's own PD LIBRARY as well as showing items from the SPRITE MAGIC USER GROUP. Our own stand was next and I also displayed material from the NORTH WEST COMPUTER USERS GROUP and the NORTH EAST DRAGON USERS GROUP. Finally there was P.S.E. COMPUTERS. Those of you who were there will know that this is the new name for PULSER who are now selling more and more hardware.

It was nice meeting many old friends over there although I did not get much chance to talk to many people as (for about the first time ever) we actually had customers wanting to buy the group's software which were at special show prices. I spent most of the day copying from the masters as I had not expected to sell anything. Okay it was not much really but it helped to put a few more pounds in the Group's coffers. I would like to welcome the three new members who joined at Ossett and thank those who renewed their membership at the show, especially those who contributed more than the required 8.00.

I am sorry that I am not able to go into detail about what the companies were selling as I did not get much chance to leave our own stand. Still it gave me chance to run my new twin double-sided 40 track Epsom drives which I had only got that morning. Everybody was commenting on how quiet they were, and they so impressed Steve Kind and Bill Tarrant that they toddled over to PSE to buy a set each.

PSE gave me WRIGGLE and DOOM for reviewing. These are two new arcade games from Germany written by Alfred Knoetig. PRESTON'S supplied ROLABALL2 and ZOTOKA, the first being the Jonathan Cartwright classic and the other a role playing game in which you run an island. DRAGSOFT will shortly be marketing some business software and Mike Townsend promised me review copies as soon as they become available.

Frank Fisher, who has now sold his Dragon stuff, came to say goodbye and let me have the early Updates which I had not got. He also let me have some 6809 USER magazines and Roger Quaintance at first thought I was selling back copies of his mag as well as old Updates. I have not seen this mag for a long time. Several years ago I was sent a copy and was disgusted at the treatment of piracy by one individual in particular. Roger assures me that there is none of this now. Maybe he will send me a current issue and I can comment on that in my next article.

Tim Lees and Robert Cleminson both let me have a complete sheet on VORTEX FACTOR so if Sotos Mandalos would like to send me an SAE I will send him copies. If anybody else wants them the same applies. Martin Waller from St. Helens requires help with STARKE ISLAND. Has anybody got very far with this? Many people approached me at the show with general problems, mainly to do with Cumanados. If anyone still has problems unanswered please write and let me know what they are and I will ask for help for you in a future article.

Ian Jones has got a Midi Interface working for the Dragon (at the moment only with the drives disconnected). The next thing that is going to be needed for this project is the software for it. If anybody feels that they have the expertise to help with this could they contact Ian or myself. Finally. Somebody left some software on our table, obviously bought at the show. Contact me to claim it.

Comment

I've just been reading through the reviews (yes, I DO sometimes read what we print!), and I think it should be mentioned that some of the older programs (such as "Copta") are virtually museum pieces. The point being that most Dragon games are NOT conversions from other machines, they are the ORIGINALS, so it seems a little unfair on the writers to imply that their work is "just another version of". After all, when most of those games were written the only competition was a 3K VIC20, a 16K BBC "A", a solid keyboard Atari 400, or a ZX81 (the Spectrum owners were still waiting for delivery!), unless you could afford a couple of grand for an Apple 2 or a PET!. Paul.

Desktop Publishing (3) .. J.R. Winchurch

Line Length And Justification

Last month we looked at spacing. This can be achieved, to the detriment of readability, by right justification. To obtain this, groups of characters have to be shuffled along, thus destroying the evenness of the spacing between them. This option is not available on either the Group's program or on "Publisher". Therefore if you did require full right justification you would have to carefully calculate the position of each word in the sentence, and space accordingly. Not the most useful way to spend an hour. In any case, the resultant gaps would give you what are called "rivers of white" running through the text, thus destroying the flow of print. So don't despair, right justification is not absolutely necessary. A ragged right-hand edge is not considered to be anything approaching a major crime. The crude word-wrap in "Publisher" is useful, if used with care, to ensure that you don't overrun a predetermined line length by too much. (You may have noted that the Group's program tends to chop off the end of words if you go too close to the right-hand edge.) If you need to keep line lengths within a predetermined size it would be better to use a rule to measure them on-screen - more of this anon. Left-justification presents no problem, and the positioning of left-hand margins, either in single- or multi-column text is very easy to obtain ("Publisher" uses <CLEAR+M>). I will come back to the layout of the "edges" in a later article. Finally, the length of the lines must be considered. The optimum recommended length for unbroken lines of text is about 60-65 characters per line. More than this tends to affect readability. If however more are required it would be wise to increase inter-line spacing in order to break up the mass of characters. Also a slightly larger font than normal would help. A better solution would be to reduce line length from that in excess of 60-65 by laying the text out in columns, with suitable side margins. This will come out in more detail when we consider the page "grid". Look critically at the use of right justification, and look for "rivers of white" within blocks of text; look at the length of lines and ways in which the experts have avoided using lines which are too long.

Page Layout

I am indebted to the book "Design for Desktop Publishing" by John Miles for help in the preparation of this section and most of the following articles. To examine page layout in general we must first consider the use of the "grid". This is a means of dividing the page into vertical and horizontal sections. The grid imposes a discipline on page layout and is an aid in positioning the various elements that go into the making of the page. The use of the grid on the Group's DT program is a little difficult due to the fact that it is only possible to see a screen at any one time. "Publisher" on the other hand allows you to lay out a complete A4 page, and so is more amenable to the page grid. To overcome this limitation in the first program I tend to use it to make "galley proofs" in large sized print, which I then mount onto A3 and A2 sheets. Therefore, with careful thought, it is possible to use the grid to an advantage on both programs. The simplest grid is the single, page-wide, page-long grid. You will see such a grid in practically every novel you read. It is suitable for a straightforward ready, without any gimmicks. However it can be a little uninspiring for anything which requires concentrated reading, such as text books, information documents and the like. If you do have to use this type of layout, and it is one of a pair of pages, always consider them together, as this will affect the design of the margins. Traditionally margins are as follows: Bottom margin=2 X Top margin; Outer margin=the average of the Top and Bottom margins; Inner margin=half the outer margin. (Always remember that the inner margin may have to take some form of binding, so don't make it too small.) A word of warning. Before doing any work on margins, make sure that you know the sizes of your hardcopy, and how this relates to what you see on-screen. The dimensions that I give in reference to the various margins and column widths must be treated as guidelines only. You must vary the figures to suit your printer (if you have one). I will tend to give margin sizes in millimetres, and they will be sizes as seen on-screen. Hopefully these dimensions will translate themselves to more manageable sizes when printed out. I have also found it helpful to mark the screen with permanent pen to show the limits of the display. Try the following values (screen sizes):

USING A4 PAPER ON AN EPSON LX-800

OUTER - 60 mm
INNER - 40 mm
TOP - 50 mm
BOTTOM - 80 mm

Just when you thought it was safe...

... to read Update, I'm back to annoy you!. Have you not heard the old saying? "Old Editors never Die, they just go off and do something more worthwhile and profitable". Well, I haven't found anything profitable yet, but I've certainly been able to indulge in a variety of things that are infinitely more worthwhile than editing Update!. On that note, I'll just take this opportunity to congratulate/laugh at Robin for agreeing to become Update's Editor!. Nice one, Robin!!.

I hope you've already got used to your new staff, following Paul's desperately amusing introduction in Issue 75, and trust that articles are flowing in to the new Editorial HQ. Just for a change I won't try to wring material out of you, in fact I would like to do the opposite and offer my sincere thanks to all of you who contributed to Paul's "Buy the Editor a Drink Fund". I was able to buy a substantially large drink as result of your generosity, so many thanks indeed much appreciated!. Anyway, I'm sure you would rather be reading the delights of Update as opposed to my ramblings, so I'll leave you to enjoy Robin's hard graft ... keep up the good work, Robin!. One final note, being now free of Update has enabled me to pursue my own Dragon interests for the first time in years, and as result of this I have a request ... can anyone come up with some good Genlock software/hardware for our favourite machine?. Stephen W.

Introduction to OS9: Redirection

By Malcolm Cowen

No it does not mean telling a stropky Operating System where to go. Redirection means redirecting the "standard input and output" channels which the program uses. This redirection is a concept found on many of the more advanced Operating Systems these days. It's on UNIX, which is where OS9 gets it from, it's on the Tandem system which my company is currently using, it's on Flex, and on IBM PCs (in an inferior form). It is one of the most important ideas to get clear in your head about UNIX-style OSs like OS9.

So after the hype...what is it? Simply it is the idea that every program has three main channels which it is concerned with. The input or driving channel, the output channel, and the error or home terminal channel. The input is the stream of program commands or data which drives the program, in the case of the Shell it might be a file of OS9 commands, whilst in the case of a compiler it would be the program source you want to compile. In the case of the Shell you use when typing commands, it is the keyboard. The point is the program does not know what the source of its input data is, only that it is there. In the same way the output file could be the screen, or the printer, or a file on a disk; the program does not need to know. Lastly the error file is what the name implies, the file on which any error or program messages to the user are put out, usually this will be the screen, but it does not have to be.

It is even possible to pipe the output from one program's output channel (or error channel) to another program's input channel. For example you could run the DIR command to output a list of files, and then pipe the output into the input channel of the sort command, so that the result would be a sorted list of your files. Unfortunately the producers of 6809 OS9 did not design this feature as well as they should. Not only is there no sort program on many OS9 systems but the programs are not designed to fit each other, so that one program cannot understand another's output.

The one example which does work is the DSAVE command.

The commands to perform redirection are more or less standard on most systems.

They are as follows:

To redirect input use "<" before the filename

To redirect output use ">" before the filename

To redirect errors use ">>" before the filename.

The filename can be a channel rather than a file:

A file eg, "/dl/fred/filelist"

eg, "program.paras"

keyboard/screen eg, "/term"

printer eg, "/p"

To pipe data from one program to another the normal way is to use the Shell thus:

"dsave ! (chd /dl/saved.files) "

More than two programs can be piped together at the same time, within memory limitations. Of course you can build up the commands together in any way you want - try it and see.

The Editor's Late Bit.....

You're probably sick by now of reading about the Ossett Show, especially if you didn't go. If this is the case, why not? You missed a good Show, so I hope next time you can find time to attend.

Further Shows are now planned by Rob Preston, the earliest being a possible Bristol venture in October, and a definite return to Ossett next year. There is still a lot of Dragon activity around the country, indeed around the world, so don't be put off by your Atari owning friends who have bigger yet less satisfying shows and more expensive software!

In case there is any doubt, there will never be a better time than now to contribute to the Dragon scene by writing articles for the Group or 6809 User, writing new software, or generally giving the companies some extra feedback.

I would like to say, on behalf of all companies, thank you firstly to those who attend the Shows, and secondly to those active consumers on the Dragon scene.

Without you the whole thing would fold so don't underestimate yourselves!

There doesn't seem to be much else I can say on the subject...keep involved!

I feel I should give a special mention this month to Mike Townsend who is attempting to improve Paul's horrible "Wordwrap II" text editor, which I am forced to type Update on due to the need for proper linespacing commands which this program, I begrudgingly admit, does provide. Thanks for the effort Mike.

Much appreciated as this month it decided to print the Desktop article to screen every time I wanted to save it, thus I lost it completely and had to retype it all.

I hope I haven't offended the ol' gaff too much by berating his software since he's only about 20 miles away and chainsaws are easy to come by; I'll finish off to be on the safe side by reminding him how much we all appreciate his efforts for the Group. Cheers Paul.

That's all from me so you can get back to reading the proper articles now. See you next time.

DATA RECORDER CARE -- By Mike Townsend.

Yes, we've all had it at sometime or another the dreaded "I/O ERROR". Many people still use tapes, some disc drive owners use them as backup, software companies duplicate tapes and sell them. A poor cassette recorder could result in a new program getting a bad review, if the reviewer can't load it properly. The Dragon is a very tolerant beast but there are limits. You may not have noticed the cassette motor slowing down over several months because your recently CSAVED programs work OK, however, a newly purchased program may not.

One very common problem is the automatic volume control. There is a tone burst before the program header and data file, the volume of this gets turned down quickly but sometimes it takes a second or two to come back up to an audible level and then, when attempting to CLOAD, the tone burst is all but non-existent and the I/O ERROR occurs. The usual way to avoid this is :- SOUND1,5:CSAVE"programe". The best way is to POKE144,1 (or ,2 if it's really bad). This extends the tone burst and gives the volume control time to settle down before starting to CSAVE the header or data.

Record/Playback and Erase heads need regular cleaning but don't waste money on dry cleaner tapes. Wet ones aren't much better so get some cotton buds and cleaning fluid (This is the only way to clean the rubber pinch roller). Clean the heads in the PLAY position, so they are pushed forward for easier access, and the Capstan and Pinch Roller are rotating. Keep using clean cotton buds until they no longer go brown, then dry off everything with a clean bud.

A lot of people forget to Demagnetise the heads regularly; this loses treble and clarity. Take your cassette recorder into the shop to buy a demagnetiser because you may need one with a cranked end to reach the heads. Mine cost 7.00 and has also restored all the treble to my stereo. Dragons like treble as well so, if your recorder has a Treble control, run it with full treble. ALWAYS demagnetise the heads with your recorder switched OFF; unplug it as well, just to be safe. Some recorders have a small hole just above, and to one side, of the Record/Playback head. This will allow a small Phillips screwdriver to be used to align the head with the tape. You will have to drill a small hole yourself, if it's not there. Use a good quality music tape (Not BROS please...!), choose a track with plenty of treble and GENTLY adjust the screw until you get the clearest, crispest sound possible.

The more learned and adventurous of you may wish to correct errors in motor speed. Nobody makes speedometers for tape decks so you will require access to a good record deck with strobe timing and a good stereo deck with a speed that you can trust. Play your favourite disc at an accurate speed and record it on the stereo. Now play the tape on your data recorder and pause it at a well known place. Play the record (disc) again and release the pause when you reach that point. Both broadcasts should run together. A slight difference can be ignored but, if it's too far out.....! ONLY qualified people should adjust dismantled recorders if you run it off 240 volt mains. Before you start, check for tight motor bearings, pulleys and pinch roller. If they require oil, use very thin oil (3-in-1 or sewing machine oil) in a tea spoon and dip the end of a straightened paper clip into it. Use this to apply a little oil where required. DON'T get any on the Belts, Capstan or Pinch Roller. The motor has a small hole in it, usually covered in plastic with an "X" cut in it. This allows a small trimming tool to be inserted for speed adjustment. Adjustment should be made with the tape and record running, as explained above. If the motor is mounted separately to the main chassis you will have to drill a hole in the recorder case to line up with the hole in the motor, then adjust the speed with the recorder assembled. WARNING... If the speed is badly out, after correction, you may not be able to CLOAD recently CSAVED tapes (Guess how I know..?). Before you start, borrow a good recorder from a friend, CLOAD from your recorder and CSAVE using theirs. Don't forget to POKE144,1 first.

DISCLAIMER -- ALL repairs are undertaken at owner's risk. NDUG, Dragsoft and myself cannot take responsibility for any "ooh nasty" that occurs. If you do have problems, I am unable to help as I have just moved to outer Mongolia. If it all works, I hope it has just saved you 15.00 for a new recorder. Tune into the next issue for "How to reclaim duff tapes". Happy recording.

To Lay A Ghost (1) Dave Riley

The popularity of the Dragon 64 never matched that of the 32, and there are well-known reasons for this. A less well documented reason which continues to this day to detract from the reputation of the D64 is that atrocious bit of ROM at 48000 which serves to "copy across" the BASIC. 32K extra bytes provided and only some 16K available to the user. Disk users find that they can no longer use their DOS so routines have been written to copy across the DOS as well, and the user is left with only 8K bytes extra. It may be handy to squeeze in that extra bit of program, but is hardly efficient use of the extra memory. Who in his right mind would pay much extra for a D64?

I bought my first 64 not because I wanted it but because it came in a batch with the disk drive and other bits I needed at the time. I started using the 64 in preference to my 32 because it had one of those posh keyboards that were fitted to some 64s which was much better than the rather rattly one on my 32. It was only after I had picked the brains of NDUG contacts that I was hooked and bought another 64 to avoid using the 32 as a standby machine.

The following is written for those 64 owners who have yet to realise what a powerful machine they have.

The simplest thing to do with the extra memory is to use it to hold data (there is room for five standard 6144 byte graphic screens up there). Having obtained a good assembler and successfully practiced 6809 assembly language you are ready to go.

The 64's extra memory overlays locations \$8000 to \$FFFF and is referred to as Map mode 1 memory. \$8000 to \$FEFF is available for anything you fancy. The memory it overlays is termed Map mode 0 memory. At switch-on the Dragon 64 addresses mode 0 memory. (It has to in order to access the BASIC.) If you want to address a Mode 1 location with a load or store instruction immediately before that, insert:

```
ORCC #$10    (stop interrupts)
CLR  $FFDF   (switch to mode 1)
```

Any instruction will do to \$FFDF - it only has to be addressed. After the mode 1 memory has been addressed the mode must be switched back to mode 0, and that can be done by:

```
CLR  $FFDE   (switch to mode 0)
ANDCC #$EF   (re-enable interrupts)
```

Similarly \$FFDE has only to be addressed. Don't forget to switch back to mode 0. The sort of pitfalls that await you if you don't can be illustrated by entering "POKE &HFFDF,0", provided that you have not previously invoked the horrific "EXEC 48000". Next time I will try to explain how to run a programme in mode 1 memory.

To Paul: I suggest the DOSDREAM is even better than DSKDREAM. It has a larger capacity and does not have to be reloaded after every crash, though the source file does, of course. DOSDREAM lacks one or two of the more esoteric features of DSKDREAM, but they are too hard for me anyway. After all, although sometimes I find it difficult to admit it, the computer is always right.

Each to his own, Dave, you pays your money and takes your choice when it comes to assemblers. As to your comments on the 48000 Basic "copy", you'd have hated the prototype version even more! the Basic had to be reloaded from TAPE or DISC as with the "Professional".

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Easy Machine Code (20) . . . R.A.D

We reached line 690 which is the routine to start a new line in the screen dump.

690 BEQ @NULINE if the B register had reached zero.

Otherwise we now need the next byte, and as the X register is pointing elsewhere it has to be reset with the original top address, and then incremented by one, using LEA.

700 LDX @SCREEN where we took the precaution of storing it for re-use.

710 LEAX 1,X moving the address to the next screen byte.

720 STX @SCREEN will save it for re-use again with the new address.

730 CMPX @SCREND where we stored the screen end in line 70, and can check if the screen is complete.

740 LBHS @STOP this is a new Branch - a Long branch if higher or the same as SCREND, and ends the program.

750 LDA #80 otherwise carry on. 760 STA @BIT.

770 LBRA @LOOK and do the next byte.

780 @LOWER LDA #128 the same as #80. We branched here from line 660.

790 STA @BIT starting with 10000000 again.

800 PULS X get the original address from the stack.

810 PSHS X and put it back, but it is now in the X register.

820 LEAX 96,X increment the X register so that it now points 3 rows below.

830 STX @SCREEN and save it for further use.

840 @LOWLOW LDX @SCREEN again, although it already has this address, this routine will be used when the address has altered.

850 LDA ,X start the lower rows as we did with the higher ones ---

860 BITA @BIT

870 BNE @DWN4

880 LDA @CUM

890 ADDA #1 needed for printer data

900 STA @CUM

910 @DWN4 LEAX 32,X

920 LDA ,X

930 BITA @BIT

940 BNE @DWN5

950 LDA @CUM

last routine the scan is complete for one column.

960 ADDA #4
970 STA @CUM
980 @DWN5 LEAX 32,X
990 LDA ,X
1000 BITA @BIT
1010 BNE @DWN6
1020 LDA @CUM
1030 ADDA #24
1040 STA @CUM
1050 @DWN6 LEAX 32,X

And after this

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The Late, Late Bit

Been reading the computer magazines again, those tarty ones with free, well corrupted discs of totally useless shareware Sallotaped onto the front covers, and loads of adverts inside telling you how you can buy the latest in memory upgrades for a mere thousand pounds per million bytes, so that your 486 can run the newest Pacman variant under Windows V99.9 or something like that. Nothing new about the ads or the shareware, of course, but what bothers me is the way almost all of these mags seem to be going completely overboard about something they refer to as "Virtual Reality". "VR, the future of Computing!" was the most restrained of the headings, which seems more than a bit over the top for a syst. which provides "simulations" which have all the reality of a worn Bugs Bunny tape viewed via a VCR with a severe case of belt slip!.

Has computing REALLY sunk this low?, is the future REALLY to consist of wearing a plastic crash hat with a "head-up" display built into it, so that we can pretend that we are part of a world made up of blurred pixels?!. If that is the future, I think I'll stick with the past!.OK, I KNOW the Establishment has spent many years trying to brainwash everyone into believing that "Real Reality" is far too dangerous for us to play with, that if we go outside the front door we will get raped, robbed, murdered, poisoned by exhaust fumes, run down by drivers who had a drink the Christmas before last, get AIDS and Rabies from being bitten by a homosexual French Pit Poodle, die of cancer because the bloke next door lit a cigarette last week, or blown up by the Iraq branch of the Lybian IRA and that if we stay indoors even worse things will happen, but surely no-one is REALLY gullible enough to take any notice of garbage like that, are they? or are they?!. Leaving the brainwash aside, the only thing anyone is likely to die of in the "Real Reality" is boredom and frustration, so why would anyone want to escape to an even MORE boring and frustrating Pixel World?!.

I wouldn't mind so much if the types writing about VR were joking, but they aren't, they are (literally!) deadly serious about it all!. I used to think those old "MUG" (Multi User Games, you peasant!) games were daft enough, with people running up phone bills the size of an ex-Prime Minister's expenses allowance just so they could pretend they were Princess Zog the Indigestible or someone equally ludicrous, but at least those types were interacting with REAL people, even if they were pretending to be something out of a demented games programmer's nightmare, whereas VR appears to be the the ultimate in computerised masturbation!. Think about it before you tell me I'm using the wrong word and consider how long it will take until the "PornoProgs" (and there are plenty around for the PC machines) get rewritten for VR format!. So what am I objecting to? not a lot, I suppose, it's just that I thought people would want (and perhaps even get) more out of computers than a fantasy world to hide in, that they might use them to enhance the Real Reality instead of trying to create a pixel substitute for it. Perhaps I should have known better. Paul.

Printer Leads

You may be interested to know that Eddie Freeman has informed me that Parallel Printer leads, correctly wired for Dragon use, are obtainable from Maplin Electronics. The listed price is 6.95 each including VAT, but that was printed before the latest increases, so I would suggest that you contact them before ordering to check for any changes. The catalogue number is FG31J.

If anyone else has news of where to locate difficult to obtain hardware, software etc, please let me know an I'll pass the news on in the next available Update. Paul G.

SORRY!, NO CROSSWORD THIS MONTH!.

The Last Word.....

Somehow this issue just doesn't seem right maybe it's the lack of a crossword or something, but I can't honestly say that I'm satisfied with the result this time. Maybe I should just blame the Editor!. Oh well, right or not this is all there is room for, so you'll have to put up with it. Sorry and all that but I'm not reinventing a complete issue at THIS stage!. Maybe next issue will be better I certainly hope so!. Paul G.

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SOURCEMAKER...Reviewed by Ken Grade.

Why this program has escaped a proper write-up before now escapes me! It is perhaps the best bit of programming to have come from Pam D'Arcy's keyboard (the Dragon one, not the musical variety), and what happens? It gets ignored. What is it? It comprises of three programs, the main utility being a machine code routine which converts any machine code into a Dream text file. In other words, any M/C program or routine can be converted into sourcecode which can then be edited by the Dream text editor and subsequently re-assembled. You didn't think that was useful? How many times have you cursed some machine code routine or other because it didn't quite do what you wanted or, particularly with graphics screen dumps, didn't quite print as you know your printer can? Now, instead of having to disassemble the routine, type it all up and then try to modify the parts other people dare not POKE, you can get a COMMENTED source listing ready to edit as you like. The conversion is fast - just as fast as the Dream assembler itself, I would say. I only wish I had it when doing the screen dump for the Group's Desktop program; it would have saved a lot of typing!

The snags are that Sourcemaker, Dream and the M/C program for conversion must all be in memory at once, which limits the size of code which can be worked on; Sourcemaker can be confused by Data tables, though these are interpreted as FCB/FDB source lines, the op-codes appearing as comments on the same line. The first snag is not serious - large programs can be converted in sections. Furthermore, Sourcemaker is relocatable, as is Dream, and there are versions on the program disc/tape to run with the cartridge Alldream or to use the extra RAM on the D64.

Well that's enough on "What is it" - now make Robin's day by flooding him with orders. Price is 8.50, available from Robin Hemmings (NDUGSOFT), 8, Ingleby Road, Wigston, Leicester.

Shout for HELP.

OK I give up. I own a D32 & a D64, currently I have on line a D64 with two disk drives running SuperDos E6. My problem is that I cannot find a routine to convert my machine code software onto disks successfully. Apparently the DOS uses the first page area and therefore some of the software will not load correctly, or they load but won't run. I know about the peeks to find the load, start and exec addresses so that, I don't think, is a problem. I've tried to load the program at the first page offset, no joy. I did have a utility for shifting the first page called DISKUP from, I think, Quickbeam or someone like that. Unfortunately they have either gone out of business or moved as dear old directory enquiries can't find them.

So my question is:- Is there someone out there who has a utility they are willing to sell me or part with for the appropriate number of pint vouchers, or whatever, that will convert ALL my software to disk and run. Therefore what I am after is a routine so that I can have the tape drive and the dos online so that I can load a program from tape (Basic or code), save it onto disk in such a form so that it will load and run from diskette. No I'm not trying to get round or infringe anybody's copyright restrictions. Sounds like one for Pam D'Arcy. Hi Pam, read all your books. Grovel, grovel.

That's that one out of the way. My second problem is that my Boss, THE WIFE, is sort of heavily into adventures and she is having one hell of a time with an old program called Fishy Business. Yes, I know you all thought that one was long dead. I assure you it's very much alive in our house. And kicking like hell. So if anyone out there knows how, please tell, for my sanities sake alone. Thanks in anticipation....

Allan Day, 9, Blunden Close, Harrow Way, Basingstoke, Hants. P.S. Anybody got Diskdream for sale? With instructions please.

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