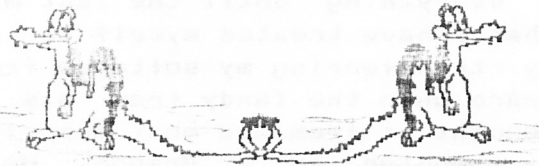


The Newsletter of the National Dragon Users Group

DRAGON



UPDATE

* ISSUE 84. ALL CHANGE ONCE MORE!. AUGUST 1992. *

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The Gaffer's Bit - - - -

Oh dear!, what have I said THIS time?!. Maybe I'm using the wrong soap or something!. On second thoughts, what am I doing taking the blame?, obviously YOU must have said something to offend Robin it's all your fault, it must be, it can't possibly be mine!. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!!. Actually, our Robin DOES have a valid excuse for leaving the Editorial job, a couple of them, in fact, and they have nothing to do with either you or me or even the poor old Dragon ... like everyone else his actions are virtually controlled by domestic and financial considerations, and preferences have very little say in the matter.

Anyway, once again I have to say "goodbye" to an Update Editor, and "thanks for all your hard work on behalf of the Group" ... it's been much appreciated, and I hope that your time as Update Editor hasn't done any lasting psychological harm!. Group funds can't really run to it, but if anyone would care to demonstrate their appreciation by contributing to the Robin Farewell Bonze Fund donations to him at his new address 68A, St. James Street, Brighton, Sussex would do much to help him overcome his sorrow at having to vacate the Editorial job!. Meanwhile, it's Batman II, the Sequel!. Yes, Editing is addictive, and Stephen Wood just can't cope without the Power of the Press, so the longest serving Editor in the history of Update is taking over once again!. Before you ask, no, I did NOT resort to bribery, blackmail, or demanding typing with menaces, he actually VOLUNTEERED, in writing, no less!!. (Any similarity between this statement and certain claims made by members of the West Yorks Serious Crimes Squad are completely coincidental.).

Not really much else worthy of mention this month (how unusual!!), so I may as well let you get on with the more interesting words of wisdom which make up yet another enthralling issue of UPDATE!. (How can you stand the suspense?). Paul Grade.

The Editor's Bit - - - -

It's all-change time again!. Due to changing circumstances (including my intended departure from education) this is to be my last issue as Editor. Conveniently enough, Stephen has just confirmed that he will be happy to accept his old job back, therefore as of NOW all Editorial Correspondence must be addressed to: Stephen Wood, 52, Downsway, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex.

Good luck, Steve, and you must be madder than anyone could previously have suspected!. Fortunately though my complaints in the last issue have born fruit in the form of several articles, so Steve will at least have a small base of material to work from.

So this is my official farewell to the front page, although I'll be back again inside to haunt you some more. So long!, and please make Steve feel welcome by sending him oodles of articles to print!. Cheers. Robin.

PEEKING THE DRAGON (40) BY MIKE STOTT

Yet again I have left everything until the last minute to get this article together. The reason is that I have treated myself to a 386 with mega-memory etc and have been busy transferring my software from the old Tandy 1000 and also putting David's software onto the Tandy from his Amstrad. The technical adviser at the firm I bought it from was most surprised that I was buying the new machine as a secondary computer to a Dragon. He turns out to be Ron Donovan, who wrote LABYRINTH for Dragon Data.

There has been no new commercial software sent to me for a long time now. Stuart has sent me a few disks of PD software and, to be honest, a lot of it is superior to much of the commercial available, but don't forget the Group is always on the lookout for new software too, to market, NOT PD, and let's face it, we need more funds as numbers decrease. Has anybody got a copy of the above mentioned LABYRINTH as I think I could get the copyright off Ron Donovan.

Another idea I have come up with is that I compile a disk of the best programs written by members. Please send entries for this to me on either cassette or disk, preferably with your name on the title screen (so you get the deserved honours) and I will select what I consider to be the most suitable. Let's have a varied a selection as possible. Age will be taken into account so let's have the youngsters writing as well. PLEASE send an SAE with sufficient postage on for items required back otherwise it could cost me a fortune. What shall we call the disk? SOFTWARE EDITOR'S SELECTION? MIKE'S MIXTURE? Anyone got any better ideas?

Visited a computer show at Bowler's, Manchester the other week and bought a TURTLE for a BBC computer for 17.50 (normally about 180.00) so there are lots of bargains out there if you look hard enough.

OSSETT HELP - Thanks to D.J.GRAY of Middlesbrough for his help with WINDOWS. Also to IAN JONES of Middlewich for the tape and listing of WINDOWS, telling us that PROTECH can provide Double Density Delta, and other half helps with other queries. In return Ian would like help in getting a 128 Plus board going and can anyone help with machine code software for a MIDI interface he has built himself. These are the only replies I have received so far to the queries I put into the last edition of Update. Come on, we should be able to answer every one between us. You could be looking for help with something yourself one day so why not help somebody else out now.

Just as I thought that all the Dragon writers had passed away into that software heaven in the sky and I thought I would be made redundant.....the postman woke me with a parcel from Germany. It was a software case similar in size to FRANKLIN'S TOMB containing a disk and cassette of BLOCK OUT. Alfred Knoetig has asked me to test the game and let him know if it is alright. Unfortunately I have had occasional problems with it but, on the whole, I have been quite impressed with it. It is yet another version of TETRIS but with some nice additions to it that make it more playable than the usual offerings. I am now becoming quite an expert on TETRIS, having three Dragon versions and also one for the PC. Paul Burgin's unreleased, and unfinished version, is still the best that I have seen for any machine. Come on Paul, release it!!!!

As I have some space left I feel that I must have my say about the suggestion that Paul use a DTP for UPDATE. I now edit a school newsletter on my PC using EXPRESS PUBLISHER, and yes, it does look good if I may say so myself BUT I do not want UPDATE like this. Update is for my favourite computer and should be produced using a Dragon. Nothing will ever replace my Dragon 64 or my Update. Please do not change it, Paul.

Well that is that for now. Please let me have your answers to the Ossett queries and your software for the group disk.

There have been many people on the Dragon scene in the past, some better known than others; some obtained a cult-like status in their field of expertise. Most such figures have left the scene now; this article is intended to provide some insight into what happens to Dragon gurus when they leave the scene. The first I shall recollect was probably the best-loved Dragon user of all time. She was the mother of them all, Pam D'Arcy. Pam wrote many programs for the Dragon in her time, and marketed them herself mostly. I reviewed her only game, Formula One, in Dragon User and considered it worthy of the highest accolade, five dragons. It is ironic that her sales never reflected her recognition: this was her highest selling program, but still failed to sell more than 200 copies. Apart from this, Pam wrote many articles published in Dragon User, most notably her series on Assembly Language programming. I believe Pam is now writing software for 16-bit machines, namely the Amiga/ST/PC.

Next on the golden list comes Wayne Smithson, who wrote such classics as SuperKid, Electronic Author and Frankie, the game with the most elaborate cheat system on any machine. Each was a classic. He began with the WP "Author" while he was still at school, after which came Gordon Bennet and the monthly fanzine Dragn Monthly. This was scrapped when Quickbeam Software took over the marketing of his programs in late 1986. He wrote two more, Frankie and the superb SuperKid. After May 1987 he shifted his energies onto the ST and Amiga (where the money was and still is), continuing his trend of programming excellent games. His greatest was Blood Money on the Atari ST with others including Baal and Anarchy. In 1989 he formed WJS Designs in Leeds, along with Chris Warren (who drew the graphics for SuperKid), here's hoping the venture is going well.

In 1986 a new legend was born when Microdeal released Wizard's Quest by Ed Scio. This excellent game was nonetheless surpassed by the follow-up, Airball.

This was so good that Microdeal converted it to the Atari ST. (The Dragon version was better of course.) Ed's still around, hitting the ST and Amiga charts late in 1991 with Armour-Geddon, published by Psygnosis, who also put out some of Wayne Smithson's 16-bit offerings. Psygnosis seem to have excellent taste in programmers.

Steve Bak is an unknown in the Dragn world to most people, but made his name by converting the majority of Tandy games to the Dragon, most notably several Cuthbert games for Microdeal. For example, a game which was a plain copy of Activision's Pitfall was a US Tandy CoCo game by the famous Kenneth Kalish, but was licensed by Microdeal, converted to the Dragon and sold in the UK as Cuthbert In The Jungle, until Activision UK obtained an injunction banning its sale. When Atari released the ST in 1985, Steve switched to writing games for that. An interesting comment came from an interview with him in "ST Action" magazine where he said that the graphics for his first few ST games were drawn by him on a Dragon! I suspect that he must have used Premier Microsystems' graphics board however, which gives 16 colours in a PMODE 4 resolution. He wrote about 10 games for Microdeal until they stopped selling them in 1989, and now writes for various publishers, at the truly alarming rate of around 5 a year!

In the second and concluding part of this article I shall also describe the histories of the major Dragon software companies.

That sounds a bit ominous, I can think of three or four former Dragon software companies who disappeared in a cloud of unpaid bills, and who most certainly DON'T want to be remembered!!. Some of them have tried VERY hard to get lost and stay that way!. Paul G.

Instructions... Stuart Beardwood...

The following programs were written in order to save memory when displaying long lists of instructions within a program. They enable the instructions to be loaded from disk rather than wasting space by holding them in PRINT statements. The technique is basically to write the text as a program with lines beginning with the shortened form of REM ('). The CREATOR AND TESTER allows you to write your text on the end of it. When run it will test-run the sequence of instructions for you, then save just the text lines as a binary file to disk.

The READER routine is all that is needed in your program to load and display the file. As it stands, the file is loaded into the first page of graphics. This means that with the default PCLEAR 4, a single file is limited to 6144 bytes. You can, however, save as many files as you like, and load them sequentially for display. This allows an unlimited amount of text to be displayed with no increase in memory requirement!

In the example program I have used the percent sign as an "embedded code" in the text. The READER program looks for this in the file (line 100) and, if one is found, calls the "Press A Key" routine, thus displaying text one screen at a time. The program could easily be modified for use with a printer, and extra embedded codes could be included to send control codes to the printer.

This method also works with most hi-res screen drivers, especially EDIT+, whose extra edit facilities make it particularly easy to create and edit long BASIC files. You have to be careful where the binary file is loaded into memory though, to avoid corrupting the screen driver.

```

0 REM TEXTFILE CREATOR AND TESTER
10 CLS:PRINT"SEARCHING FOR TEXT":P=PEEK(25)*256+PEEK(26):TE=PEEK(31)*256+PEEK(32)
)
20 GOSUB 70:TS=P:P=P+1:CLS 0
30 IF PEEK(P)=0 AND PEEK(P+1)=0 AND PEEK(P+2)=0 THEN 100
40 IF PEEK(P)=0 THEN PRINT:GOSUB 70:P=P+1:GOTO 30
50 IF PEEK(P)=37 THEN PRINT:GOSUB 80:CLS 0:P=P+1:GOSUB 70:P=P+1:GOTO 30
60 PRINTCHR$(PEEK(P));P=P+1:GOTO 30
70 IF PEEK(P)<>131 THEN P=P+1:GOTO 70 ELSE RETURN
80 PRINT@490,"press";CHR$(128);"any";CHR$(128);"key";WAIT 200:K$=INKEY$
90 IF K$="" THEN PRINT@490,"PRESS ANY KEY";WAIT 200:GOTO 80 ELSE RETURN
100 PRINT:PRINTTAB(8)"**end of text**"
110 INPUT"SAVE TEXT AS A BINARY FILE Y/N";A$
120 IF A$<>"Y" THEN 10
130 INPUT"NAME OF FILE";A$:A$=A$+".TXT":SAVE A$,TS,TE,TE-TS
140 END
150 REM YOUR LINES OF TEXT START HERE
160 'THIS IS THE FIRST SCREEN OF TEXT%
170 '
180 '
190 'THIS IS THE SECOND SCREEN.
0 REM TEXTFILE READER ROUTINE
10 CLS 0:INPUT"ENTER NAME OF .TXT FILE";A$:A$=A$+".TXT"
20 CLS 0:LOAD A$,3072:P=3072
30 REM LOOK FOR (') AT START OF LINE
40 IF PEEK(P)<>131 THEN P=P+1:GOTO 40 ELSE P=P+1
50 REM CHECK FOR END OF FILE
60 IF PEEK(P)=0 AND PEEK(P+1)=0 AND PEEK(P+2)=0 THEN 160
70 REM CHEC FOR END OF BASIC LINE
80 IF PEEK(P)=0 THEN P=P+1:PRINT:GOTO 40
90 REM LOOK FOR 'END OF PAGE' EMBEDDED CODE
100 IF PEEK(P)=37 THEN PRINT:GOSUB 130:CLS 0:P=P+1:GOTO 40
110 PRINTCHR$(PEEK(P));P=P+1:GOTO 60
120 REM WAIT FOR KEYPRESS TO GO TO NEXT 'PAGE'
130 PRINT@490,"press";CHR$(128);"any";CHR$(128);"key";WAIT 200:K$=INKEY$
140 IF K$="" THEN PRINT@490,"PRESS ANY KEY";WAIT 200:GOTO 130 ELSE RETURN
150 REM LOAD ANOTHER FILE?
160 PRINT:PRINT"end of file":INPUT"LOAD ANOTHER FILE Y/N";A$:IF A$<>"Y" THEN END
ELSE GOTO 10

```


Some Answers (well sort of!) - Jon Bird.

Due to the overwhelming demand for material which emerged in various sentences across two pages of last issue (OK OK OK! Point taken - Ed.) here is something thrown together rather rapidly. It mostly concerns some queries raised over the last few issues, and a remote attempt at answering some:

1. Program to convert BBC DFS files to DragonDOS files. Yes, as mentioned back then there is a PD program to do this. In the form I saw it, the program displays the contents of a BBC file, and it's not too hard to output this to a standard DOS file using FREAD/FWRITE. The whole key to the thing is to put the machine in single density mode. In DragonDOS this is done by POKE &H607,44, which puts ALL the drives into single density. Remember, though when writing data back to switch back to Double Density (POKE &H607,36) first. When in single density mode you can use the standard SREAD and SWRITE commands (sectors will be 0-9 as opposed to the usual 1-18). If the worst comes you can simply dump the file in continuous sectors on a disk and get it into normal file format on the appropriate machine. DOSPlus can selectively make drives single or double density by POKEing 8 in four consecutive locations from 1707-1710 (0 for double).
2. I don't know about the program READPC, but I think to handle characters above ASCII 128 machine code is required. JSR \$801E & JSR \$8024 can be used to write & read a byte, respectively.
3. There have been a number of hardware upgrades over the years, the most famous being the DragonPLUS expansion (can you still get it?) but what's around now I'm not too sure. In general it depends what you want to add to the machine. Personally I build it myself if possible. Concerning DragonPLUS, I last saw it advertised for \$100, which I think a bit steep for 64K and a video chip. I've just added 128K for half that price.
4. Does an upgraded 32 work like a 64? If it's done properly, ie, all the old RAM chips are ripped out and replaced with new ones then "almost" is the answer. Most applications which require 64K should run OK including OS9. However in order to be fully 100%, it would need the two BASIC ROMs on the D64, and the serial hardware mapped in at \$FF04.
5. Yes, you can use "standard" Shugart SA400 compatible drives with the Dragon, that includes BBC disk drives. I use two 3.5" which are Atari ST drives with the cable removed and replaced with a standard ribbon cable.

A vague attempt at the problems raised in issue 83... 1 & 2 I'll go with Paul's answers last issue; 3, no comment I'll have a look. 4, I'd go with the switch box idea or botch together a couple of 7-pin jacks and a multi-way rotary switch from Maplin - what about sticking another 6551 chip on? Incidentally, you CAN use Maplin printer cables with a Dragon (unless something strange has been happening!). Just open up the Centronics end and snip the two leads connecting to pin 2 & 4. I fail to see why this thing should cause major damage to the Dragon's buffer chip. The connection pulls the 5V rail to ground - at best happily nuking a regulator. Still, someone must know what they're talking about. Also, I did the printer port repair on my 32 some time ago now.

If you solder in a chip socket link the buffer lines with bits of wire! with a bit of clever machine code you can probably force the port to input data, thus enabling a connection to the likes of a BBC or CBM64 user port.

5. Chuck it and go for a DD system - nothing's SD anymore. 6, Can you still GET those things?? The circuit diagram is somewhat naff. 7, Likewise. 8, I think it's essentially RS232 serial. A friend keeps raving about this Maplin chip, E510, which is meant to be good for MIDI. I've got a copy of a thing called MIDI Spec. on Disk ONLY - I'm not printing 23K a time!! If anyone is feeling really bored...! 9, Try pulling the plug...!

I have a simple BASIC09 program under OS9 which converts a Dynacalc data file into one which when transferred to a PC disk can be directly imported by Supercalc (or Lotus 1-2-3?). No source though - Corrupted Disk Blues.

One final point, there is no chance of me ever getting hold of a VGA monitor unless one goes on permanent loan from work. The nearest thing is a b&w TV lurking somewhere round here..... SO FAR, that is?!

Jonathan Bird, 49 Havelock Road, Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex, TN40 2BY.

OS9 Linked to OSK...Malcolm Cowen....

About two years ago I got a rather nice piece of software from Chris Jolly. His original version was called EMUL. It was a program to turn his OS9 Dragon system into a terminal accessing his UNIX system at work. It's a very handy utility, and he included two modes - one to act simply as a terminal, and one to handle file transfers. There's a simple command language to control factors such as transmission rate.

One unusual point is that rather than using the standard Serial driver, which he found too slow, he accesses the ACIA directly.

To make it work on the UNIX side, he had to set up a UNIX termcap entry which he passed on to me. I used it on my OSK system (OS9 on a 68000 Atari ST) and now effectively have the option of one system with two terminals connected. This is useful in many ways, especially when debugging software on the Atari system. (Pity it doesn't work the other way round - must try that some day.)

I've modified it quite a lot since then for my own needs, but I've still got the original EMUL for anyone who wants it, as well as my own version, ATARI. Unfortunately the listing is rather long for inclusion here, so if anyone wants a copy just send me an empty, formatted disk and I will happily oblige. Just one word of warning, it will probably need modifying for CoCos, as the ACIA may well use different addresses.

For my own version I dropped the file transfer - it's unnecessary when I can swap disks quicker - and I've concentrated on the terminal emulation. The main problem was that the control characters tended to get corrupted, because the OSK output driver tried to interpret them itself, and any cursor address which happened to be the same value as (for example) TAB, was turned into what OSK thought was an appropriate number of spaces. For the same reason, but the other way around, I couldn't get EOF into the OSK system, because Dragon OS9 insisted on trying to understand it.

Anyway... I've fixed that and have a working emulator, with a full set of control keys. At present, inspired by RAD's article in issue 82 of Update, I'm trying to update the key scan, by making the emulator program scan the Dragon keyboard itself. That should improve its speed enough to let me double the line speed between the two machines.

If it works (and I can find enough time to make it work) then I'll be writing another article about how I skillfully achieved such a wonderful feat. If it doesn't, I'll just keep quiet and hope nobody notices.

For a copy of EMUL or ATARI, send a disk to me, Malcolm Cowen, 23 Bristol Avenue, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3NU. Phone 061-225-4674.

BEANPATCHED REVIEWED BY DAVID MITCHELL

BEANPATCHED is a special version of the game BEANSTALKER. This version allows the screens to be edited as well as saving and loading them. This feature is great fun and if you know someone else with the game you can swap new levels. BEANSTALKER is a platform and ladders game where Jack has to collect golden eggs, harps and keys. To stop him there are monsters such as birds and insects which cause Jack to lose a life if they catch him. Jack's only defence is to dig a hole into which the monster can fall and get trapped.

The control is from joystick or keyboard using fire, space or shift to dig holes. This game may sound like CUTHBERT GOES DIGGING but it is really closer to CASHMAN. Graphics are quite small but are well drawn and animated. The options and screen designer are selected through a menu driven system.

The screen designer is easy to use but no instructions are given. Do not worry as I hope to write an article on screen designing and include some instructions. It is not too difficult to work out.

In conclusion this is a good game which is worth buying just for the screen editor. I certainly would recommend this as it is fun to play. The 60 levels and a screen designer ensure that you will not get bored with this game. BEANPATCHED is available from PSE Computers, 36 Foxhill, Shaw, Oldham, OL2 7NQ for 3.00 plus postage on tape or disk for either Dragon or Tandy.



JUMBLE DISK REVIEWED BY RAYMOND ROACH

The dictionary defines JUMBLE as "thrown together without order". In that sense, this is indeed a jumble disk. Kieran Anscombe supplies a write-up on how to use the programmes on the disk but, although it was a useful guide, I really had to experiment -and fail - to get the best from the disk.

One programme enables you to sort the disk directory in various ways e.g. by title, extension or size. It works well, but why one should want the DIR to be listed in any of these ways I do not know. Be advised - it takes 1 min 10 secs to complete the SORT, so wait for the 'DONE' signal with patience.

Another programme, called FILER, puts up the disk directory, showing 8 files at any one time, and enables you to carry out several functions on any title such as changing its name, deleting it, protecting or un-protecting etc.

To my mind, the really useful programme on the disk is called SETUP. This programme enables you to instal new commands into your Dragon permitting several useful functions. They include a disk format, disk test (showing where any bad sectors exist) and, using GSEC and PSEC, a good disk editor. With this programme you can also set key autorepeat to your liking, and cursor flash. You can, with PCLEARO, gain another 1536 bytes of memory by removing page 1 of the graphics. Another facility, of some use to programmers, is a NOTEPAD which can be used while using the computer in another way.

There are some other useful facilities and programmes to amuse you. One, called LIFE, enables you to place cursor-sized images in a pattern on the screen and the spacebar sets them off moving across the screen and changing colour. Do not be surprised if you do not get it to work at first - I had to try many times before I got interesting results. The MUSIC programme played back with worse quality than many old 78's - and you have to endure it to the end!! Another facility you have, called VIEW, enables you to look at any 256 bytes of memory and another, called SHOW, configures the SAM.

I have not got room to tell you more - so buy the disk for yourself. You will not regret it.

JUMBLE DISK from Dragonfire Services, 302 Teignmouth Road, Torquay, Devon, TQ1 4RW price 6.00.

TETRIS - REVIEWED BY TIM SUTCLIFFE

The review copy that was sent to me was on cassette and has quite a good loading screen. Unfortunately this gives you a wrong idea of the actual game. MUSIC - The game plays music which is a bit fuzzy, but is probably supposed to be as it sounds like an electric guitar.

GRAPHICS AND COLOUR - The graphics are O.K., but could be better. The game is in colour, which makes it much better than the Nintendo Gameboy version.

PLAYING THE GAME - The game itself is very good, although you have to be good with the shapes. If you are not doing too well and the blocks are nearly at the top of the screen the game seems to get faster and less controllable.

Overall a good game, marks 80%.

TETRIS is available from PSE Computers, 36 Foxhill, High Crompton, Shaw, Oldham, OL2 7NQ on tape or disk for 3.50 plus 1.50 P&P.

Tim is one of our younger readers who has obviously seen versions for other computers. For us olduns who do not know the game, it consists of manipulating differing shapes so that you can fill up a line at the bottom of the screen as the blocks fall. When you completely fill a line this line disappears, but the rest of the pieces of blocks (both above and below) stay there for you to build round. An interesting and challenging game which is more interesting than it sounds and can also be educational.

The Helpline!!.

Yes, in this issue you will find the long awaited Helpline!. Don't ask me how it happened, but after my tale of woe in the last issue, the eight volunteer list that I "mislaid" has now grown to almost double the size!. You've had a long wait, but here it is, HELPLINE II THE SEQUEL!. Paul (Where the Hell did I put it) Grade.

THE N.D.U.G. HELPLINE.

BASIC / ASSEMBLER / GRAPHICS PROGRAMMING / DISC ACCESS VIA ASSEMBLER:

David Linsley, 12, Glen Barr, South Pelaw, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham.

BASIC / MACHINE LANGUAGE / QUERIES RE INPUT MAGAZINE LISTINGS.

R.A. Davis, 39, Boxley Drive, West Bridgford, Notts. NG2-7GQ.

GENERAL ELECTRONICS / INTERFACES / MEMORY DECODERS / ETC / SOME W/C.

Stan Garvey, 82, Maybury Street, Tooting, London. SW17-0SD.

FORTH LANGUAGE.

John Payne, 3, Sibley Close, Thornbury, Bristol.

BASIC / SPRINT COMPILER / GRAPHICS.

Roy Cashmore, Church Farm Cottage, Blaston, Market Harborough, Leicester.

GENERAL SOFTWARE / SIMPLE HARDWARE PROBLEMS.

G.J. Tuttle, 2, Houndwood Close, Houndwood Drove, Street, Somerset BA16-9PW.

HARDWARE / OS9 SYSTEM / UPGRADE INFORMATION.

Steve Tate, 22, Fairfield Drive, Wormley, Broxbourne, Herts. EN10-6DY.

AMATEUR RADIO / GENERAL SMALL HARDWARE PROBLEMS / some components available.

Johnny Brown, 45, Marlborough Avenue, Falmouth, Cornwall. TR11-4HS.

CoCo PROGRAMMING / DRAGON CoCo CONVERSION / ROM EQUIVALENTS ETC.

Paul Marlow, 60, Lime Avenue, Bentley, Walsall, West Midlands. WS2-0JP.

ASSEMBLER / OS9 / PASCAL / ETC.

Chris Jolly, 4, Pinhurst Walk, Orpington, Kent.

FLEX OPERATING SYSTEM / AMATEUR RADIO.

P. D. Wells, 21, Orchard Close, Ockbrook, Derby. DE7-3RQ.

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BASIC / EPSON PRINTERS / BASIC SCREEN DUMPS / ELECTRONIC AUTHOR.

Mike Townsend, TIF, 48, Hewlett Road, Cheltenham. GL52-6AE.

XX

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL ENQUIRIES MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A STAMPED, SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE, AND THAT HELPLINE VOLUNTEERS HAVE OTHER THINGS TO DO AS WELL AS ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS (MINOR MATTERS LIKE EARNING A LIVING, EATING, SLEEPING, ETC), SO PLEASE DON'T PANIC IF YOU DO NOT GET AN IMMEDIATE REPLY. IF YOUR PROBLEM IS ONE NOT COVERED IN THE ABOVE LIST PLEASE CONTACT PAUL GRADE AS USUAL.

Dragon Blade reviewed by P. Marlow

Dragon Blade is a disc based animated adventure for the CoCo 1,2 & 3 with at least 64K. In the game you play Faernorn who lives in the half-elf village of Dragonseed. Your village is having a spot of bother with the dragon that lives in the mountain. It has just woken up after several years of hibernation and is terrorizing the village. Your father, who just happens to be the Chief of the village, was killed in the last attack, and you have inherited the job of killing the aforementioned Dragon. To do this you have to find the sword called Dragon Blade.

You start in the middle of the Forest of Lore (you can tell its a forest by the picture of some trees on the screen). It's a good idea to map out this adventure because it is easy to get lost especially when you enter the mine. Once out of the forest you can go to the resting place of the blade, where you meet a gargoyle, a moving floor, and a cut rope bridge. This is as far as I have reached and I still haven't found the sword mainly because I can't get across the chasm. (Sounds like an Everyday Story of Adventure Folk to me. P.G.).

Dragon Blade uses the usual commands including Help, Get, Drop, Examine, Save, Load etc., Help sometimes gives you a clue, but not always. There is a maximum of ten saves allowed to a disc, numbered 0 to 9, but you can use the same number more than once.

To sum up: this is a very enjoyable adventure that is not too difficult and will take you several hours to complete. Graphics are very good and the animation adds to the feel of the game although it must be remembered that not all objects are shown, and some that are shown can't be used.

Dragon Blade is available from: Sundog Systems, PO Box 766, Manassas, VA22111, U.S.A. Price is \$19.95 plus \$5.00 handling and shipping. Visa & Mastercard are accepted. Sundog are very good with their orders and usually send software out Air Mail on the day the order is received. As to Import Duty and VAT it seems that H.M Customs are very arbitrary about charging these. If the package is a Jiffy envelope they don't seem to bother, but as in the case of my Editor/Assembler which came in a large box, they are only too happy to add Import Duty, VAT, and Post Office handling charge!. So, be ready when the parcel arrives because if you have to pay the Postman won't release the package until you've crossed his palm with silver!.

The Editor's Late Bit

Well, this is to be my final departure from the Dragon scene; I'll still be around as a consumer/user, but I'm not planning any further ventures. I think I'll take this chance to blow my own trumpet, then.

Apart from a few highly dubious mentions in Dragon User, my first claim to fame was my authorship of three games, The Bomb, Hole, and Don't Squeal (the latter inspired by Dire Straits' "Private Investigations" a Raymond Chandler novel, and a bottle of whiskey!).

More to the point, I later took control of Dragonfire and soon after, fanatically obsessed, this Editorial post!. However, my next step, the invasion of Poland, failed as I had to attend a seminar, so this year will have seen me relinquish control of both Dragonfire and Update.

Both, I am confident, are now in much safer hands. I would just like to say a very warm "thank you and goodbye" to all those I've met or contacted during my immensley enjoyable time on the Dragon scene; I'll miss the old thing. Apologies to those who I could not E-Mail after Easter ... my JANET permission was mysteriously withdrawn!.

That seems to be about all there is to say, so to end on a cringeworthy note ... "Y'all take care now, d'y' hear?". R.H.

Alive & Well!.

Mike Townsend (Dragsoft) is alive and well and living in Cheltenham!. Yes folks, I'm not that easy to get rid of. Paul has been printing my correct address in every issue of Update since I moved last year, and there was a half page notification of this grand event in a previous issue of Update. If you've been trying to contact me you can phone on 0242-261621, late evening is usually best. If nobody is in there is an answerphone telling you that you are through to the Flight Factory Paragliding Club (Fiver off an intro course for N.D.U.G Members ... phone for free details!!) .. so come and see me and "Fly the Dragon"!. Best wishes, Mike.

CROSSWORD 63 ANSWERS.

ACROSS: 1, DRIVE; 2, MUDDY; 8, VET; 9, TART; 10, ROD; 11, ROADWORKS; 12, ERRORS; 13, ABSENT; 16, TAILPIECE; 18, TIT; 19, ALIVE; 20, IVY; 21, HUSSY; 22, SISAL.
DOWN: 1, DIVER; 2, INTERPRETATES; 3, EXTRAORDINARY; 4, SHREWS; 5, MISERABLENESS; 6, DIREST ENEMY; 7, YODEL; 14, SPOILS; 15, MATCH; 17, ROYAL.

Not so many entries to this one, and only one all correct, but see how well you can do with XW64.

CROSSWORD NUMBER 64.

ACROSS: 1, CUT; 3, IN TOWN; 8, ELF; 9, MARKED WITH MAGIC; 10, VEHICLE; 11, STAMINA; 12, SCOLD; 13, ANCIENT CATTLE; 16, GENERATOR PARTS; 18, BOAT; 19, RICH MAN; 20, FINISH; 21, SEA RISES; 22, KEEN.

DOWN: 1, SKATE; 2, SNAKE; 3, PROPERTIES; 4, EATERS; 5, INVINCIBLE; 6, SINGLE MEN; 7, WAY TO GO?; 11, ASSIGNED TO; 14, STEADY; 15, BEGIN; 17, COROLLARY; 20, URGES ON.

All entries to Paul Grade, please. First all correct gets a program from the current Dragonfire list, second gets a games tape from Group stock! (That ought to be an incentive to be first!!).

DON'T GET CAUGHT!.. PAUL GRADE.

Now this isn't strictly a Dragon matter, but a lot of members also have other machines as well, especially PCs, so it IS relevant. You will probably have seen the ads and leaflets in computer magazines advertising "The Home Computer Club", with the usual "introductory offer" of three or four well discounted programs if you sign up for a minimum of a year. This usually means that you are required to buy at least another half a dozen programs at, to quote the blurb, greatly reduced prices.

So what's the problem?. Simply that the "reductions" are on a theoretical RRP rather than on the actual average market prices, and most of the programs can be purchased far cheaper from normal retailers. The other snag is that many of the programs offered are VERY early versions, the kind of out-of date stuff that most dealers package up as "freebies" when you buy a computer!.

If you like paying over the top for elderly software, then don't let me discourage you from signing up with HCC and similar firms, but you could easily end up at the end of the year having paid more than double the amount you needed to, and having a fantastic collection of antique software!. How do I know?, I deliberately climbed on the hook to see for myself ... I reckoned it had to be a "catch game", and I wasn't disappointed!.

MACHINE LANGUAGE CACHE. BY RAD.

Some years ago I noticed in Dragon User an enquirer asking if space could be cleared for a Machine Language routine BELOW the Basic. The answer given was negative, and I almost replied to the enquirer myself, but past ingratitude stopped me!. ML can of course be safely placed in RAM reserved for GRAPHICS pages, if the program does not use these pages. a PCLEAR 4 will give room for ML between 1536 and 7679, or with DOS between 3072 and 9215. PCLEAR 8 gives further room as far as 13823 or 15360 respectively. Some pages could be used for Graphics and others for storing ML routines. On the other hand, if the TEXT page is not required by the program then some ML can be put there - 1024 to 1535, some 511 bytes. For those with a Dragon 64 and DOS, a short ML routine which came to me via Pam Darcy and has appeared in many other programs will allow ML to be placed in the upper unused RAM above the DOS cartridge, from &HE000 to &HFEFF. At the same time it puts the Basic ROM into RAM but at the correct addresses, where this can now be POKEd and amended at will. I have used this to load Rainbow Writer, RW32, out of sight in the cartridge RAM, with all the normal Basic RAM free except for the first four Graphics pages which RW uses. It gives proper upper and lower case with a wide screen, which can be used for most Basic purposes and probably some ML ones as well. It gives great improvement when used with text adventures, provided these will fit into RAM without a PCLEAR below 4. In this case I have put the ML routine into the TEXT page, as RW32 does not use that page. If you saved RW32 to disc as I suggested in an earlier article, you can try it for yourself. You should load RW32, which is relocatable, at &HE000 after the EXEC 1024, and then EXEC &HE000 to activate RW32.

```
10 FOR I=1024 TO 1053: READX: POKE I,X: NEXT
```

```
20 DATA 52,127,26,255,142,128,0,183,255,222,166,132,183,255,223,167,128,140,
    224,0,38,241,28,239,53,127,57,4,12,85
```

```
30 EXEC 1024
```

```
*****
THE LATE, LATE BIT - - - - -
```

Oh well, Goodbye Robin, Welcome back Steve ... Editors come and go but this job goes on for ever, or at least it feels that way. So what else is new? .. not a lot really, except that Mike Stott has treated himself to a 386 PC (Poser Compatible) machine so he can keep six steps ahead of the Grade establishment 8088 antique. It wont work, Mike, my old IBM will fetch a fortune at Sothebys when yours is "just another obsolete PC clone"! If you're one of those intelligent types who read the advert pages first you'll have noticed that I'm NOT amused at the latest antics of NatWest. Considering the fact that the Group account was mandated as "non-profit organisation" and we were assured that charges would be minimal, NOT at commercial rate, I reckon 46.00+ for three month's transactions (and there weren't many of 'em!) is absolute robbery. Complaints and refund demands are due to fly in all directions shortly, but if you feel like joining in the fun with a formal letter of complaint at the way the pompous little prat of a sub-manager is ripping off the Group, feel free to write to him and express your views ... the branch is at 149,Portland Road, Hove, Sussex ... or try Head Office if you prefer. Anyway, to change the subject (and the save the price of a stamp!), thanks Tim for the cash contribution, very much appreciated and thanks to Tony Davis and Dave Cadman for helping him out with his request. With any luck we should have ONE new disc on offer by next issue, written and contributed by David Linsley, so watch the next lot of ads and get your cheque book ready. Greenweld say they have a few hundred new Amstrad 1640 machines, complete less monitors, at a hundred quid each. Bob Preston has confirmed that he now has vast quantities of original OS9 software for sale (just about everything released for Dragon OS9). The old photo-copier is making complaints again but will probably survive. And that seems to be about all, so here endeth the garbage. Paul.

GROUP SERVICES ETC.

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