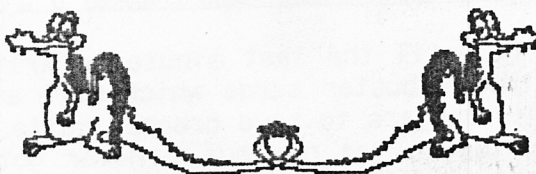


The Newsletter of the National Dragon User's Group

DRAGON



UPDATE

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ISSUE 102 "AND YOU THOUGHT THE LAST ONE WAS BAD?" AUGUST 1995

THE GAFFER'S BIT

You probably aren't reading this at all, are you? you've all headed off on holiday to some exotic tropical paradise like Skegness or Bognor, and the last thing you'd want to be bothered with is reading a computer group newsletter. So why am I bothering to type all this in? mainly because I don't believe in holidays ... the last one I had was Coronation Day (and yes, Queen Victoria looked very nice), so why should YOU be allowed to idle away your time in peace?, and in any case, even if you can think of an acceptable excuse you'll still probably need something to read while spending the week in Terminal 2 at Gatwick while the Greek/Spanish/Mancunian air controllers decide whether they're on strike or not, or waiting for a Eurostar train to reach the station without breaking down on the way. So, being a dedicated, selfless, altruistic sort of person (would I lie?!), I thought I really HAD to provide you with yet another issue of that literary masterpiece "Update". Of course, you really ought to cancel your holiday anyway ... haven't you heard the Official Government Health Warnings about "Exposure to Sunlight Can Seriously Damage Your Health? dunno what the prats are bothered about, because everyone else knows perfectly well that the merest mention of holidays produces instant floods, snowstorms, and force 12 breezes ... and in any case, most of us have managed to survive so far without all their stupidities. By the way, PLEASE don't let Stephen's expressions of gratitude at the sudden arrival of some Update material lull you into a false sense of complacency ... we STILL need lots more if you want to read something more interesting than this issue in future the material is good, I've no complaints at all on that score, but we do need quantity as well as quality, so do remember to get a couple of duty free printer ribbons as well as the usual booze and smokes, and write a ream or two for publication as soon as you can. P.G

It's...

Defying all laws of probability, here we are with another issue of Update. In the past people have said to Paul and I that we moan too much and that we're likely to dissuade rather than encourage with our "abrasive" style. Strangely, though, our little -ahem- requests for articles have a high success rate when accompanied by death threats and dire warnings about the state of Update and its future. True to form, last issue's rant about the diabolical rate of submissions has yielded results, so a big thank you to everybody who has written something and sent it in, and please may this continue! Dave Cadman's series of articles about utilities seems to have caught the imagination of the Group. I now have several articles about why people like a particular program, which will be appearing over the next few issues (presuming we get enough extra material to survive that long). This is good - tell us what you like and why, give us your input...it's what Update is made of.

PEEKING THE DRAGON(58).MIKE STOTT

Yet again I have left it until the last minute to write my article. In my last article I wrote about the Skybuster cards which were available at the All Micro Show at Stafford and this appears to have created quite a bit of interest.

I did say that I was going to get one but I never got round to it. One member rang me up about them and said that he was going to get one and would let me know how good (or bad) they were, but I have had no follow up to this yet. I believe that the software is available on most of the Bulletin Boards, and most of the shows I have visited in the last few months have been selling the software for about five pounds which comes complete with diagrams to enable you to make your own card. The complete package has been advertised in the press for 29.95 and other versions can be picked up at shows for varying amounts of money. A word of warning - not all stallholders at shows are people that I would do business with, having had a few problems in the past. My advice to you would be to visit a computer or electronics show (the next All Micro Show will probably be at Stafford in November) and talk to the person running the stand. Good luck if you decide to purchase a card or similar item.

Tony Drewitt has sent me a printout of his software from A - C and also a list of the Dragon books that he has got.

I will send the book list off to Eddie Freeman as I have received a list of his software on disk (if I can find a working copy of DRS) together with a letter to say that no one sent UP2DATE a list of their books. If I get some spare time I will compile a list of the books that I have got and send this off to him as well.

At a Car Boot sale the other week I spied a Dragon 64 for sale and spoke to the owner about it. The asking price was twenty pounds and it came complete with Dragon Data joysticks and loads of cassettes and cartridges. I was told that it was fully working and it appeared to be a real bargain at the price. If anybody is interested it is a Liverpool telephone number - 0151 733 9462. The cartridges alone must have been worth the asking price and do not forget it is a 64 and not a 32. For that price I would have bought it myself if I had not already taken over Brian Yeoman-Walker's machine as my spare. Having three 64s in the house together with numerous 32s as well as a Co-Co and several spare drives and Dos cartridges I am struggling for space to put everything.

Joe Brincat of Malta has sent me a copy of HIPRINT (TEXT ON PMODE4) which he has written using bits and bobs from other programs, mainly an old game. Using this program Joe produces text and graphics screen dumps from PMODE4 using his TANDY DMP105 printer. I used one of these printers myself for many years but now have a PANASONIC KX-P1080. The program as it stands uses McGowan's DUMPER to print out and is for the 32, but can be modified fairly easily to run on a 64 and can be used with a Dumper for your printer. Joe is offering to send out 10 free copies to people, but to save him money, why not send me a disk together with return envelope and postage and I will send you a copy if you are interested in this useful little utility.

Inside my PC I have a video grabber card which enables me to obtain pictures on disk from either the television or video. The tyre fitter at work borrowed my camcorder and took some footage of his young daughter. I then grabbed some of the frames and saved them out in Windows Bitmap format to floppy. He put them onto his computer and uses them as Windows wallpaper, being very happy with the result although they did not look very good to me through any of my viewer programs, although they did look fantastic through the grabber software. If anybody would like any specific pictures I would be more than happy to oblige. I can cope with standard VHS or Video 8 if you wish to send a tape. Pictures off the TV could take a while as it would depend when that item appeared. Send me PC formatted disks (5 1/4" or 3 1/2") together with return packaging and postage and I will do what I can for you. The formats I can cope with are as follows :.BMP - 24 bit, 256 colours and 256 greyscale. .TIF - same three types. .PCX - 256 colours and greyscale. .TGA - 32, 24, and 16. .MMP - 12 4:1:1 YUV. Do not forget to say which format you require.

HenceForth(19)...Bob Smith

I started this series of articles in issue 38 (October 1987) of Update as some tips and information on using the Forth language. I made some promises in the last episode, issue 58 (June 1989), which I may even keep to in future issues (the way to Hell is paved, and it is a town in Norway...). However, spurred by entreaties from a higher authority that the mayor of Hell, more articles are now being written. Time pressure has made this first article a stop-gap.

I needed a method of listing Forth screens that did not fill the display with all the blank screens in between the useful ones, so I wrote a program to do this. It soon occurred to me that it would be even more useful if this listing could be steered with short text strings or wild cards (perhaps even * and ? a la IBM DOS). I haven't got this far yet, but I thought the original concept would be of interest, so here it is. I have ambitiously called the program DIR. It works like the Forth word INDEX, listing the first line of every screen between two given screen numbers, n1 and n2. For example, 100 200 DIR will list all the screens starting at 100 and finishing at 200, but only if the first character on the screen is not the blank character E. The program pauses after filling the display and prints 'press zero to break'. Pressing Enter will continue the listing, pressing zero will stop it, but will also cause a warm start, so you have to ensure that any parameters, e.g. drive number, are re-entered before continuing.

Should you have any queries or comments, I should be very happy to hear from you, at: *Sneppen 1, N-8614 YTTEREN, Norway. Telephone +47 75 16 92 12*

SCR £205

```

0 ( LISTING OF SCREENS IN USE )
1 0 VARIABLE J2 0 VARIABLE SCRUP
  1 : PR-HDR CR ." SCR £" SCRUP @
2 1 VARIABLE LNR
3 : 8-LI LNR @ 8 = IF CR
4 ." PRESS ZERO TO BREAK" CR KEY
5 48 = IF ABORT ENDIF 1 LNR !
6 ENDIF ; -->
7

```

SCR £207

```

0 ( LISTING OF SCREENS IN USE )
1 : DIR 1 ROT ROT SWAP DO 0 I DUP
2 SCRUP ! (LINE) DROP DUP J2 !
3 C@ 229 = 0= IF 32 0 DO J2 @ I
4 + DUP C@ 32 = 0= IF C@ 137 = 0
5 = IF 8-LI 1 LNR +! PR-HDR
6 LEAVE ENDIF ELSE DROP ENDIF
7 LOOP ENDIF LOOP DROP ; -->

```

SCR £206

```

0 ( LISTING OF SCREENS IN USE )
1
2 CR 0 SCRUP P .LINE 1 + ; -->
3
4
5
6
7

```

SSCR £208

```

0 ( LISTING OF SCREENS IN USE )
1 ;S
2
3
4
5
6
7

```

Favourite Utilities 3.Dave Cadman**TYPE**

This is a handy little program to have on your utility disc. It will read disc DATA files to screen or printer using the FLREAD command. With it you will be able to read information that programmers have hidden away as data files. FLREAD is not as common as FREAD so to save getting the book out, to jog the memory, each time you want to write a two-liner to check a file, keep this one on your utility disc.

1986 and all that. Sotos Mandalos

The new year 1986 started pretty well and Microdeal was by now very successful with the software they have been providing. Micropost, a subsidiary of Microdeal was also selling Dragon software by post. Incentive also committed to bring out Moon Cresta for the Dragon micro later in the year which proved to be a tremendous success. A big show was organised in Wales and participating companies such as COMPUTAPE, BLABY COMPUTER GAMES, COMPUSENSE LTD, DATAPEN, DESIGN-DESIGN, ECLIPSE-FENMAR, JOHN PENN, PAMCOMS and PEAKSOFT. Things looked good this year including the start of the series in the Dragon User of Machine Code. This series was written by very special people that supported the Dragon to the end and including Jason Orbaum and Geoff Campbell. Other names contributing quality articles in this professionally produced magazine was Peter Whittaker, Steve Gathercoe and of course Pam D'Arcy. Some more charts for the most popular software were compiled and Shocktrooper (Microdeal), Juxtaposition (Wintersoft), Speed Racer (Microdeal), Eddie Steady Go (Incentive) and Jet Set Willy (Software Projects) were the top five programmes. In the meantime Microdeal wanted to flood the market with some wonderful prices on old and successful software games, such as WOF, Space Shuttle, the Cuthbert series etc etc for £6.00 for three programmes! Also Blaby Computers had plans to release more titles in the market. By May in the software charts Shaolin Master by Quickbeam appeared to threaten first position. The next month, Dragon User went by subscription only and that seemed to me to be bad news. Microvision of Roy Coates was doing very well with the bean Stalker programme (one of my favourites) and when they announced Talisman pleased me immensely. However, I never saw the programme (has anyone got it?). The Dragon User acquired a new editor (and the last) Helen Armstrong in the July 1986 issue. Things did change a bit especially the cover of the magazine, but the contents remained as good as before. The 6809 Show at Ossett (organised by John Penn) was very good indeed; but then again any show for the Dragon was good.

Harris Micro Software (an important name that kept Dragon User to its last issue) released BASIC 42 designed for the Dragon 64 which extended greatly the micro's capabilities. On a different note Wintersoft abandoned the idea to make a sequel to Juxtaposition later that year. I do not think that they produced any more software for the Dragon 32/64. Microdeal took over of their stock. By Xmas 1986 Blaby started selling their old titles at silly prices. But it did make me wonder a bit. Having mentioned this, I picked some very good games from them. Who was I to complain? My fears did prove me right which meant that Blaby would no longer invest in the Dragon. As a last paragraph, I would like to mention that if you cast your minds back and think of the good programmers and companies that wrote software for the Dragon, I can't help wondering whether it was the limitations of the machine rather than the lack of buyers that killed the Dragon in the end. However, I feel that the real reason was other cheaper more modern and functionally better micros could do everything better. But for most of us it was on the Dragon that we started experimenting in basic and machine code and playing electronic games.

I knew that Paul will make a comment in the Update about the article. I do apologise for the fact that I did not send it earlier and it did not make it in the last issue of the Update. I had to go away to work for sometime. I can only promise that this will not happen again even if I have to take notes with me and finally fax the article to Stephen or Paul from America, Greece or Russia - got a fax machine/number guys?

*** Sorry, Sotos, but Stephen doesn't have a PC and there aren't many fax cards for the Dragon, and while I DO have a PC, I can't afford a decent fax/modem card for it (and I couldn't afford to run a slow one!) unless AST have a "spare" ex-demo one they'd like to sell me cheap???. Anyway, glad to discover that the world DIDN'T really end in 1985, I was wondering if that might have been why Group numbers had decreased since then, but perhaps not!. Paul G.

Spinning Wheel...Clive Scott

Word for Windows on the PC is undoubtedly a very powerful piece of software, capable of producing some attractive reports. However, the load times of Windows software is very slow and reminds me of the days when I had to rely on cassette tape for storage. Who can forget the dreaded ?I/O ERROR or trying to search through a tape for a file you wish to reload? Mind you, Windows is hardly reliable itself, bombing out with equally annoying messages, but that is another story...

I am writing this article on SuperWriter which being cartridge based loads instantly, though you do have to store your files on cassette. ROM based software is also inherently more reliable. When I moved to floppy disks, I was amazed at the speed and thought this was the medium of the future. I bought my Dragon drive cheaply from Boots at the time they and Dixons were dropping Dragon goods following Dragon Data's collapse. I didn't have any disk based software initially but I upgraded TeleWriter and Filmastr and copied many of my games to disk. Floppy disks are still perfectly adequate for the Dragon because the programs and files are compact and load quickly. However, business machines soon outgrew floppy disks as software got ever bigger and they started using hard disks or "Winchesters", which use magnetic coated metal disks which are enclosed and spin constantly, with a read/write head hovering over the disk surface. They have a far greater capacity and are considerably faster than floppies, and have kept pace with the ever increasing demands put on them by modern software. They are getting smaller and holding more data. My first experience of a hard disk was a large floor standing one, the size of a tumble drier with a capacity of 30 megabytes fitted to an ICL main frame. Now you can get a 1.8 inch one with 105 megabytes capacity which will fit into a matchbox. Access times can be increased by using a cache controller or assigning an area of memory as a buffer.

However, to backup these drives you really need a tape streamer, as it would require far too many floppy disks and would take too long. These have come down in price a lot recently but still suffer the usual problems of tape i.e. they are slow and unreliable. Restoring a file at the end of a tape could take up to an hour. Although hard disks have kept up with software demands, floppy disks haven't and current software can come on many disks which slows down installation times. CD ROMs have come to the rescue. These use almost identical technology to music CDs, and CD ROM drives can play them. They have a high capacity (660mb), are read only and can hold text, moving or still pictures, and music. Software companies are increasingly using them, and all games will be sold on this medium in the future. If you want an alternative to hard disks for off line storage your choice is limited to optical disks which are of 2 basic types: WORMS (Write Once Read Many) which are similar to CDs but the laser burns the data onto the disk which can only be done once, or Magneto Optical disks which also use lasers but are a magnetic media and can be written to many times. Both are expensive and rather specialised.

Floppy disks have not been forgotten and there are developments going on which will see floppies of 40mb capacity in the near future. Higher capacity CD ROMs are also being developed to increase capacity to 6.7 gigabytes! You can also increase storage on floppy and hard disks by using compression software which compresses and uncompresses the data as it is written to/read from the disk. Some of it e.g. Microsoft's "Double Space" has a very bad name for reliability. Another form of storage is solid state memory cards. I have a Sharp 3100 palmtop which doesn't have conventional disks but can use 2 solid state memory cards of up to 40mb, which are expensive. I would love to add a 5.2mb card but it would cost over £300.00. They are fast, silent, and use their own battery power to retain data, but I saw an advert recently for a 428mb solid state drive which cost £26,500.00 plus VAT!. Storage requirements are going up exponentially every year and some of the offline methods are approaching the limits of their technology. We will need totally new systems to see us through the next millennium.

Dragons In Ham Radio(3)...J. Brown

The set up for computer amateur radio requires the detection of the audio signal which conveys the data over the air from one station to another. This tone signal is taken from a convenient point in the receiver (either an extension speaker output or an earphone output) to the modem which is used, in the same manner as with a telephone line modem, to convert the tones to electrical pulses which are then fed into the centronics (printer) port. The G4BMK programs also allow in most cases for simple reception to be taken from the receiver via the cassette ear lead, (but for receive ONLY) with Slowscan, RTTY, and CW. The data lines of the printer port are not themselves used, merely the strobe and ack lines, and it is important that voltages in excess of +5V do not corrupt these inputs. Transmission is a reversal of reception, with electrical pulses from the centronics port translated into tones by the modem and fed into the audio output system of the transmitter, usually via the microphone input socket. The 2 metres band is extensively used for Packet Radio which has now taken over, using FM, all the section previously reserved for 'all-mode' transmissions. The majority of contacts are made through the 'nodes', which are stations dedicated to relaying messages around the world, or storing them to be picked up by the addressee in due course. One rarely hears any RTTY and very little CW on VHF or UHF today. CW detect programs will normally detect only machine generated CW even on VHF and UHF, while for ordinary HF operation a very stable receiver and transmitter are needed for all systems. Packet Radio is a good description of what occurs. the data tones are sent in 'packets' by the transmitter which then waits for the receiving station to acknowledge reception before sending a further 'packet' of the message, perhaps 6 ASCII codes at a time, until the whole message is done. Switching from reception to transmission at both ends is dealt with by the software. There is provision for storing the messages to disc or printing them out, and for spooling programs over the air.

(**With thanks to R.A.Davis for his editorial assistance ...SW**)

SuperWriter 2, why I like it.

The first word processor to come my way was Microdeal's TeleWriter, which is good in its own way, but the 51x24 screen is less than useful at times, and the constant 'insert' approach for entering text gets to be a pain after a while. Others have sung the praises of Electronic Author and VisiText Deluxe, but I'm holding out for Dragon Data's SuperWriter 2, simply because I find it easiest to use. It has a great choice of screens, from 51x24 to 85x24, and even the 85 screen is readable! You can even dump the hi-res graphics and go back to 32x16 for an extra 4K of memory space. It's very flexible in terms of facilities. Embedding escape codes is simple, there's a huge menu of parameters which can be changed very easily, and the search and replace option is a doddle, even supporting wild cards. Printouts are fully adaptable to whatever size, shape, and layout you require. There's an approximation of WYSIWYG, although it doesn't take into account font sizes.

What's wrong with it? Well, in true Dragon Data style the manual is a little ponderous, and the combination of keys for some of the operations may take a while to learn, but there's a call-up menu available to remind you of most of them.

In short, I can't find many faults with it. Personal preference comes into it, of course, but overall it is clear, concise, flexible, and very very useful. In the olden days, at this point, I'd be telling you where and how much, but sadly no more. If you come across this one anywhere and you're looking for a word processor, it's worth more than an audition. S.W.

***You shouldn't really believe a word of this article, everyone knows perfectly well that Stephen is totally addicted to using the notorious Group Text Editor soggyware (that's like software, only softer even than Andrex). Not so, Editor?.

The Internet... Jonathan Baker

As Clive Scott said in issue 100, there has been a lot of media coverage about the Internet, although not all good hype as was implied in the article. I would like to cover some of the other advantages/disadvantages.

1) Cost - only a minimal subscription fee plus the cost of phone bills. With a decent modem, say 120.00, you need only be on-line for a few minutes per day. People spend this kind of money on cable/satellite TV and portable phones. Sending mail

to a friend in the States costs the same as sending it to your next door neighbour, and it takes a few minutes at most to arrive - cheaper than the Royal Mail.

2) Information available - somewhere on the internet is the information you need. There are hundreds of news groups to subscribe to, free of charge, plus science, social, support, entertainment, language groups - the list is endless. If you have a problem or question, it is almost guaranteed that someone will be able to help you.

3) Prejudice - there is very little of this on the net. When you talk to someone on e-mail, they don't know anything about you unless you tell them, which leads to a nicer attitude in general, with no being talked down to. In the past there have been problems with certain news groups sending unwanted/malicious mail to individuals or groups, but this is usually only the more controversial groups, of which there are plenty. Some people have phobias about using the phone; I personally find it much easier to type what I want to say and then press a button rather than having to psych myself up before using the phone.

4) Reliability - on the whole, the net is geared to be fail safe. If a computer somewhere goes down, the information is re-routed around the break. If mail fails to arrive then the sender gets a message saying so, including a copy of the original mail should they want to try again. No mail gets lost in the post.

Now the bad bits:

1) Anarchy - The net is not located anywhere in particular, it is merely connections between computers. This means that there is no governing body. If a user abuses the system then there is no big brother to tell him off. The companies which give small users access to the net, "providers", have a policy that they will not be responsible for any of the actions taken by their clients, as well as a policy not to disclose information about their clients. Policing the net proves to be very difficult.

2) Size - the net is so big, it can be like searching for a needle in a haystack. You need to know vaguely where to look before you start.

3) Piracy - there is no way to search every site for illegally copied material, so software companies are facing the loss of millions of pounds, pushing the prices up. Better protection, such as a hardware key, may only provide a temporary solution.

4) Reliability - This is also a disadvantage because if any large computer goes down, then the transmission speed is reduced. Computers are regularly breaking down or being taken off-line for upgrades.

There is talk about an official e-currency, so people all over the world could trade over the internet, which seems a good idea, although I must agree with Clive Scott on this point that some goods just aren't suited to being sold over the net.

Having said that, mail order catalogues have been around for years and rarely have problems - if people are dissatisfied, they send the goods back and get a refund. It is true that the media is making an example of the Information Superhighway, of which the internet is a part, but the more publicity it gets, the more people use it, the lower the cost and so on until it is a truly competitive service.

*(**In my experience, the more people use it, the more clogged up it gets, the slower the response time..Sw**)*

Useful thing...Anon

In case it's of any interest, here's a short routine that I wrote for myself. Not very sophisticated, but it does what I wanted.

It scrolls up a graphics screen held on pages 5 to 8 onto pages 1 to 4. I found using the D register (or accumulator or whatever it's called) instead of just A or B produced a saving of around 16 seconds. Not apparently a lot of time, but it does make a difference.

Can I take a moment to have a moan? Why is it that just about every book or article on machine code, whether it be for the Dragon or any other computer, always launches off talking about binary numbers, twos compliment, and all sorts of stuff guaranteed to put 90% of people off ever trying machine code? For simple routines you don't need to know what a binary number is, or how the computer stores negative binary numbers or anything like that. It's as bad as the old Dragon manual starting off talking about unary minus and exponentiation on page 3. Obviously, if you're going to get serious about machine code then understanding how numbers are stored is important, but for my simple efforts I find it much easier to think of A, B, X, Y, etc as just variables in BASIC.

The program is set up for DOS, so if you haven't got a DOS cartridge in you'll have to knock off 1536 from &0C00, &0C20, and &3C00. No, I'm not working it out for you, what do you think you've got a computer for? In the BASIC program, change the 0C in lines 80 and 90 to 06 and the 3C in line 95 to 36. Dammit! I think I just helped everyone...

```

ORG 30000                                10 CLEAR 200,29999
LDB £192                                20 FOR T=30000 TO 30029
STB $754F                                30 READ A$
@ONE LDX £$0C00                          40 IF A$="END" THEN STOP
LDY £$0C20                                50 A=VAL("&H"+A$)
@TWO LDA ,Y+                              60 POKE T,A
LDB ,Y+                                  70 NEXT
STD ,X++                                80 DATA C6,C0,F7,75,50,8E,0C,00
CMPY £$3C00                              90 DATA 10,8E,0C,20,A6,A0,E6,A0
BLO @TWO                                95 DATA ED,81,10,8C,3C,00,25,F4
DEC $754F                               97 DATA 7A,75,50,26,E8,39,END
BNE @ONE
RTS

```

[NOTE: owing to printer difficulties, £=~~#~~]

Still Later

So we bid a fond welcome back to Bob Smith and his HenceForth series. As a sign of the times, I can remember the first batch of articles when I had my initial stint in the editorial hotseat. I dread to think how old that makes me.

And we welcome back Sotos Mandalos' informative trip through Dragon memory lane. It's amazing how many things you forget happening on the Dragon scene, and even more amazing that we're still here to look back at them.

I hope you managed to pick up some bargains from PSE Computers with their special offers. They have one of the largest range of Dragon stuff still available, and they have been on the scene since the late eighties, so maybe we'll see them in future instalments from Sotos. They are also one of the most reliable mail order companies I have come across (many thanks, Brian), so if you've got a gap in your Dragon system, give them a call.

Thank you to everybody who has sent in articles recently, but please don't stop there! There's always a need for material, so why not send in that piece you've always been promising. Oh, go on!

Finally, it's that time of year again. August/September-ish is always a happy time for HRH Chairman, as he wistfully remembers starting up the group all those x years ago. 1995 means that we're 11 years old, and my how it's flown. Good times, happy times, eh Paul?

*** No polite comment possible, but other varieties under serious consideration!.
 P.G.

The Late, Late Bit

No, I haven't forgotten to staple in the other two pages this issue is The New, Sparkling Update Lite, Guaranteed Non-Alcoholic (unless I spill vodka over the copier) and Environmentally Friendly I use less energy typing it in, less paper printing it, and it should Conserve Resources in other words, leave Stephen with a few more articles for the NEXT issue, which unfortunately will almost certainly be back to normal size. Real reason? I'm feeling bloody idle, and I just can't think of anything worth using to fill the other two sides. OK?. If you really want more pages of waffle that say absolutely nothing, take a look through Hansard!.

Anyway, why doesn't anyone write something about the REALLY important topics like how did Captain James T.Kirk survive all those years on a starship that didn't have any toilet facilities?, and was his "mission" really to find a planet with a vacant public convenience before the entire crew exploded?. Personally I get tired of the endless rubbish about whether John Major is going to consider thinking about considering possibly making a decision about whether or not he will decide to do anything as decisive as deciding to consider the possibility of considering to decide on something or other.

What's new on the computer scene? so far as I know, nothing at all and I don't just mean so far as the poor old Dragon is concerned the PC side of things seems to be total gimmickry at the moment, quadruple speed CD ROMs (I'm still not convinced that any CD ROM has a use yet who wants a read only disc drive?), fax/modem cards seem to have replaced networking cards as THE PC fashion accessory of the month (spend £150 on a card, take out an expensive subscription to Compuserve or similar, plus a load of other charges that the "experts" always forget to mention, and you can use "The Net" to see what some prat in Bungeditupem has written, and even reply to it if you can speak fluent Pratese, and your phone bill can stand the strain). Machines get bigger and faster, they have to in order to run the bigger and slower software and even slower versions of Windows, and prices get bigger and more ridiculous to match, especially RAM prices a few years ago RAM was comparatively cheap, mainly because there was better software around and no-one needed much more than 640K (Yes, I KNOW that's equal to 20 D32's!), but now all the "experts" insist that "entry level is a minimum of 32 Meg RAM" ... and the joke is that they could be right the software shanties (they aren't fit to be called houses) are rigging even their simplest programs (poor copies of stuff that used to run easily on a Dragon 32 or in some cases a Vic 20!) so that they refuse to run unless they can find at least 12 Meg of RAM on board, even though they only actually need about 10K!. A right old load of organic fertiliser, isn't it?.

In other words, things are even more boring than usual at the moment ... nothing new, nothing interesting, and the weather is too hot for anyone to feel like writing reams of fascinating material for Update, which makes page filling even more difficult than usual. I was hoping to have discovered something more about that Sky card/software that Mike was going on about last issue, but no luck so far. If anyone DOES know anything about it, or the firm/person who produces it, please let me know so that I can pass the information on to everyone else interested ... so far I've had a lot of queries but no answers!. Still no six figure cheques arrived either, so presumably none of you have won a fortune or two on the Lottery yet or you'd have sent some of it to the Group wouldn't you??. And on the subject of lotteries ... how come no one has told Camelot that the NDUG is a "Good Cause", well worth a million or two from their petty cash. I mean, surely a computer group is a more deserving cause than the Royal Opera House or similar already over monied and over rated organisations?!.

I suppose I ought to apologise to my Fan Club (yes, I DO have one, even if it only has a membership of one!) for this page being even more boring than usual this month, but there's so few legitimate targets to be nasty about at the moment, even the politicians are all on holiday!. I'm not the only one who hates them, you realise ... even Guy Fawkes was executed for FAILING to blow 'em up!. Oh well, maybe there will be something to write about in the next issue. *Paul.*

More Books Reviewed. R.A.D

Anatomy of the Dragon. By Mike James. Published by Sigma. £7. 150 pages.

Described as advanced Basic programming by this well known author, it explains how best to use that dull theory in practice, to create your own programs. Although strictly Basic in content, it shows how the hardware and software available can be used in ways which are not strictly Basic and discusses many quite complicated ideas from computer theory and practice while sticking to Basic. To get the most from the book it is important that Dragon Basic is fairly well understood and that you can consult the handbook when you meet a command which is not a familiar one. There are no explanations of the more familiar commands such as GOTO or IF, but the more complicated ones are clarified and explained. Mainly dealing with software applications, the hardware descriptions will be easier for those with some slight knowledge of electronics. Starting with an outline of the hardware available, it then introduces some of the ideas associated with the graphics displays, then to sound and play, animation with draw, get and put, interfacing, the PIA and bit manipulation. It carries along with use of the printer port, the keyboard, joystick interfaces and the timer. It explains the formats used for Data and program storage, and finally an introduction to assembly language.

Another Method?!

The following brief listing was sent in by Geoff Thomas, who thought you might like to use it as a basis for a D.I.Y Lottery Number Generator.

```
10 CLS
20 Y=0
30 X$=INKEY$: IF X$+"" THEN 40 ELSE PRINT @ 200,Y;
40 Y=Y+1
50 IF Y=50 THEN 20 ELSE 30
```

Suggestions

You will have noticed, I hope, that we now have the start of a new (well, continuation of an old, really) series on FORTH in this issue, and hopefully a few more people will have a try at using it for their programming it's as easy as Basic (different, but definitely as easy) and in many ways a lot more interesting and useful, so why not give it a try?. If you're one of those who are firmly convinced that disc drives were invented so that you could do everything using OS9, then you probably won't be moved from your beloved Basic09 or whatever, but in that case you could spread the good word about THAT by writing us an article or ten on the wonders of OS9 and, more to the point so far as many of our members are concerned, some simple hints and tips on using it you'd be surprised just how many Dragon owners are still totally baffled by OS9, so why not spread your knowledge about a bit?. For that matter, the same applies to you secret FLEX addicts out there using FLEX isn't really illegal, and so far as I know it isn't even immoral (is it??), so why not get a few other people interested in the subject by explaining to them how it works, why they should use it, and what the snags and advantages are?. STOP BEING SO SECRETIVE!, I know it isn't done in polite computer circles to admit to owning any machine lower down the social scale than a Pentium 100, but don't worry about it, Dragon using is perfectly OK between consenting computers, and any of your material printed in Update will be distributed discretely in a plain brown envelope, so it really IS safe to write to us about the more esoteric forms of Dragon usage, honest!. P.G.

OK, own up!, there have been rumours that SOMEONE is wandering around the Internet on their Dragon 64!. Which one of you is it?, and why haven't you written to us about it with all the gory details?. Report, immediately!. Paul G.

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