

The Newsletter of the National Dragon User's Group

DRAGON



UPDATE

CHAIRMAN: Paul Grade. 6, Navarino Road, Worthing, Sussex. BN11-2NF. 01903-207585

EDITOR: Stephen Wood. 52, Downsway, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex. CM1-5TU.

S/WARE EDITOR: Mike Stott. 10, Mellor Close, Prescott, Merseyside. 0151-480-7712

ISSUE 118

ANOTHER ENVIRONMENTALLY UNFRIENDLY UPDATE!

APRIL 1998

THE GAFFER'S BIT

Yes, I know this issue is a bit late ... but it's been one of those months/weeks when everything that could go wrong has done exactly that, a sort of reverse Midas thing, where everything you touch turns to s**t. Know what I mean?. OK, so even Medusa had the odd bad hair day, but this has been virtually the whole month and there I was thinking that it was only the late Julius C who had to worry about March!. Oh well, if you're actually reading this it will mean that at least something has gone right, so let's get on with it before the next disaster.

Somewhere further down this page you'll find the usual Words of Wisdom from our Revered Editor and I can assure you that he is NOT, repeat NOT exercising his sense of humour. It's simple really, no material, no Update no Update, no Group. There's no way that Mike, Steve or I can invent enough material to make up a complete issue, so it really is entirely up to you ... Write now before 'tis too Late!. Just for laughs I was reading one of those "real" computer magazines a couple of days ago, and it seems the "Experts" have made a Great Discovery they've finally found out that it isn't the business market that wants those enormous computer systems you know the ones, twin Pentium 2/300s, 128 Meg or so of RAM, a couple of 8.2 Gig hard drives, and a light speed DVD read/write CD the business types in general seem quite happy to plod on with their old 386/486 machines, and even the occasional XT the enormous beasts seem to be going almost exclusively to the games players and "multi-media" morons, who would really be far better off saving a couple of thousand quid and buying a Sega or Nintendo anyway!. OK, so what's all that got to do with us? nothing really, except that logically it should mean that the old Dragon 64 ought to be the ideal business machine!. Actually, given the right software and a hard drive it probably would be, but I suppose someone would insist on writing Windows for Dragons or something similar, and then we'd need to make the thing bigger and faster until it became a Pentium, just in order to run the grotty software!. I can't help wondering what happened to those programmers who could write stuff to run in a couple of K, and fit onto a SSDD disc ... they all simply disappeared!.

The Editor's Bit . . .

And now, the end is near, and so we face the final Update ... Regrets, we've had a few certainly, and one of them is that unless some of you would like to write some material for us, then the end of Update is very imminent indeed.

Assuming there IS another Update in June, it's current contents stretch to just three sides. We could have used them up this time and given you a fuller April issue, but then you may have thought that all the goodbye messages we would have had to include were some sort of April fool.

Unfortunately not. As of now, there is no spare stock material to use, so if you would like to continue reading Update six times a year, then you may like to offer us an article or two in exchange. Otherwise we can all look forward to the summer sun rising high whilst Update sinks without trace.

We did it our way?.

SW.

PEEKING THE DRAGON(74).MIKE STOTT

In the February issue of Update Keith Nash wrote a couple of articles telling us about the software that was available from the PD library which he has now taken over following the untimely death of Stuart Beardwood over a year ago.

This month I am going to devote my article to what is available from the PD library as I feel that Keith deserves some support in his efforts to get the PD library up and running again. He has been involved with the Dragon for many years now and we have been bumping into each other at computer shows since they only had abaci or abacuses (whatever the plural of abacus is) on display. In fact I still meet him at the AMS at Stafford each year and he is still as enthusiastic as ever about the Dragon. For that reason only he deserves to be supported in his efforts by sackfuls of orders winging their way over to him.

Jon Bird wrote about Dragons On The Internet in the last issue, well you can see some of what is on offer even if you do not surf the web yourself. Keith can provide it on floppy disks for either the PC or Amiga. Last month he told us that you would need WINDOWS but this is not absolutely necessary. I hate WINDOWS so Keith sent me a copy of ARACHNE, which is a Dos based shareware web browser.

I used this on my 486 and also looked at the web pages on a WINDOWS95 Pentium at work. They came on two high density disks in files which I unzipped to a separate directory on my hard drive. Loading ARACHNE I clicked on the LOAD BOX and entered the name of the file I wished to load. Bingo, it came up with a welcoming message from Keith and a list of the Dragon pages available from Ciaran Anscombe, Jon Bird, Spencer Davies, Ross Hamilton, Graham Kinns and David Linsley.

It also warns you that not all the links are included but NOT FOUND appears in a little box at the bottom when you move the mouse over an item that is not available. So what is available for you to look at?. There are two histories of the Dragon by different people as well as one on the Tandy CoCo.

Yes there are some CoCo pages there as well, in fact on the web there are more for the CoCo than the Dragon so I am told. 6809 technical information is available and many other very useful snippets of information and also some very interesting articles. Anybody interested in PC to Dragon transfer or vice versa is given advice on what software to use and where to seek help on the subject.

If games are your scene then have a look at all the cheats that have been provided. There are lists of numerous items of software that can be run on a PC using one of the emulators available and these are also talked about on these pages. Unfortunately none of these can be accessed on what you are supplied with and you will need to go on the internet yourself to access them, unless Keith can be persuaded to supply them on floppy as well to anybody who is interested.

The emulators are, of course, available direct from Paul as I have told you in a previous article. It also tells you about the Dragon pictures that are available on the internet that can be used for WINDOWS screensavers which I personally think would be a nice little touch and certainly a change from the Guinness advert which I have for the rare occasions that I use WINDOWS....

Keith also sent me four Dragondos disks containing PD software which you can run on your Dragon. The two that I tried first were the Dragonfire 1 and 2 disks.

Overall I was not very impressed. The menu is not very good and a lot of the software on them has no instructions. Some programs crash for no apparent reason but Keith has said he will delete these or tidy them up before distributing them. Having said this there are a few useful programs including an early one by Mike Townsend which lets you access Dragondos commands direct from a menu.

There are a few text adventures which appear to be fairly basic but at least they are new (or new to me anyway). One program prints out a calendar if you input which month and year (I have not tested it for year 2000 compliancy).

To sum up, the Dagnet disks are a must for anybody with a PC or Amiga who has not got access to the internet.

The Dragonfire PD disks are only one pound each plus blank disks plus SAE so worth it to pick up a few useful little programs and routines or at the very least as novelty value.

Dragon Web Pages(2). Keith Nash.

I have found a suitable DOS browser, so that the Dragon Offline Web Pages can now be accessed by any PC with DOS. Microsoft Windows is not required. The DOS browser is called Arachne, and is shareware. It requires an IBM-compatible PC with hard drive, mouse and VGA display.

Arachne is available on one PC floppy from the Dragon PD Library. The Dragon Offline Web Pages (Dragnet) are available on PC floppies (two 3.5" high density, three 5.25" high density, or four 3.5" double density).

Full printed instructions for Arachne and Dragnet are provided. Please send blank formatted disks, plus £1 for Arachne, £2 for Dragnet, and a stamped addressed envelope to the Dragon PD Library, at the address given elsewhere in this page.

Dragon PD Library (2). Keith Nash

The following disks from Stuart Beardwood's library are now available:

1. Top Utilities 1, including:
Read-PC by Martin Vermeer, revised by Jon Bird: read PC disks on the Dragon.
The following utilities by Graham Kinns, with printed instructions (formerly released as 'PC Graphics disk 1'):
GIFREAD to read GIF images from a PC disk
SCRTOGIF, SCRTOIMG to convert Dragon screens to GIF or IMG files
CHECKDSK reports disk allocation errors
FASTBACK fast disk copier
RESOPMOC decompiles COMPOSER code to produce the original note groups.
2. Credit (The Ultimate Visual Editor), including printed instructions
3. Subroutines and utilities. Numerous small utilities, useful resources for the programmer or experimenter.
4. Demonstration Programs (Amiga, Bubbles, Clown...)
5. Packed Graphics (compressor, viewer, graphics screens)
6. 'C.A.D' computer aided design program
- 7-12. Composer Library. Library of music created using COMPOSER. (Disks 1-6, each one can be used independently)

The following new title is now available:

13. Further Utilities:
MAGBOOT will write a disk that autoboots your program while showing your graphics screen
ROT91 3D object rotation (fast machine code). German instructions but easy to use
SPEEDY Speedy disk backup with optional verify
PMASTER MT-80 Printmaster: load and print a graphics screen, choice of print size, normal/inverted graphics
VARIOUS utilities for use with Stone Raider II. Requires game tape.
DIRSORT Rearrange the files in a disk directory. Full-screen display

As usual, please send a blank formatted Dragondos disk and £1 for each disk you require, and a stamped addressed envelope, to Keith Nash, 16 Lansdowne Street, Worcester WR1 1QD. Cheques and postal orders payable to NDUG.

Further additions will be announced in Update as and when they become available. Of course, if you have any non-copyright material which you think would make a useful addition to the Library, please let Keith know soonest. P.G.

DIY PCs... Steve Denning

Having used an ancient Tulip 286 to operate MSDOS programs, I decided to fit a cheap motherboard/VLB video card bundle. I could use the 486SX25 and the 64K cache left over from the office machine, use the Tulip case, PSU, and disk drives, and all I'd need would be a hard disk and a sound card. The board arrived, but the form factor was different. I had to break all the mountings off the case and redrill for new standoffs - at least the keyboard socket was in the same place!. Next the power supply was different and was only 90 watts so I had to butcher the case and chassis to force a standard PSU in. I then had to carve the front panel about to fit 3.5" and 5.25" drives and a CD ROM into a two bay compact case. The video card was full length and fitting it involved considerable further "adjustment" to the front framework. I ended up mounting the hard disk on it's side with one screw at the top and the bottom side resting on a spare ISA slot. I then could only get SIMMs into two slots because the PSU was so tight to the board that the other two could not be used (and I had to cut the back out of the PSU cable plugs so that the cables weren't crushed!) Finally jumpers were set (harder than it sounds as the board wasn't marked to show which pins were which) and the spare 486 fitted. Time to switch on. Bugger all. Not even the BIOS screen. After some thought blame was apportioned to the jumper settings, then the cache chips, and finally after more expenditure to the SIMM of which I only had 1 - 8Mb EDO. After some research it turned out that the board did not support EDO so an ordinary type was obtained and the board successfully powered up. It was then time to install the hard disk for which the auto detect facility on the BIOS was used. This correctly identified the disk and everything proceeded. MSDOS and Windows were eventually installed once my (previously perfectly OK) disks were replaced at some cost with an OEM package and all was well (except that the sound card made funny noises).

At this stage the reader will have worked out that all I had left of the Tulip were two floppy drives, half a case, and a keyboard. I was, however, still using a salvaged 486. I read the motherboard "Handbook" and believed it when it assured me that it would support the AMD K4 DX4/100. I bought one. It didn't unless all the on chip cache was disabled and the board speed slowed down to the point where there was no point in fitting a faster chip. So I bought one of those Powerleap things which comprise an AMD K5 on a adaptor board and this worked reasonably well. I obtained a CD of Windows 95 SR2 and thought that it would be a worthwhile step to install it. Now the horror story really started. Windows 95 takes some time to install on a 486. Firstly I FDISKed and formatted the drive to use the 32 bit File allocation table that W95 offers to minimise disk space lost using lots of small files with big allocations units and proceeded to rather ineptly install W95 using an incomplete copy of the OEM boot disc that sets up the CD drive so that you can install the operating system on a clean machine and, eventually, things started to install. I should point out at this stage that the CD was a copy of a copy and as some readers will be aware some gold discs do not read reliably with some players - this led to considerable amusement as you can imagine as I gradually found this out. Eventually it got to the bit where it says "Preparing to start W95 for the first time". This screen was still showing 5 minutes later so I performed the three finger salute. No boot drive! The hard disc was severely trashed. All was reformatted etc and tried again and this time seemed to be OK. After about 2 weeks of trashed disk drives I discovered that I should have set the disk access to LBA in the BIOS (as recommended in the instructions if I'd bothered to read them). I can only assume that this did not show up during earlier use as DOS/Win 3.11 makes less frantic use of the hard disc than W95. Finally I had a tolerably reliable system (except that the sound card still made funny noises as did the next one). The whole thing felt very touchy in use and I concluded that W95 only works properly on a plug and play board with components that are recent and preferably also plug and play. After a few months the machine became seriously unstable and unusable unless used in DOS for some reason and so I bought a cheap Pine plug and play board, PCI

video card, and Cyrix M1 120MHz chip (they call it the P150+) and a new case and rebuilt the lot. The difference is quite remarkable - it all works and feels totally stable in use. And the board/video card/Cyrix M1 costs less than 100.00. This board even supports an unholy mixture of the non EDO RAM that the old machine had and the EDO RAM that I acquired following an office upgrade. The Cyrix chip runs happily slightly clocked to 133MHz and is subjectively identical in performance (running Quake which is a very good test of processor floating point performance) to the P120 based machine in the office. Oh, and the sound card has stopped making funny noises.

The eagle eyed reader will now have realised that all there is left of the Tulip is the 3.5" and 5.25" drives and the keyboard - so much for a cheap upgrade!

++ Just in case anyone is thinking of following in Steve's footsteps, the following may be of use, if only as a warning!: Firstly, even a "standard" 286/386 case is unlikely to have a PSU which can run a 486 board the 5 volt line isn't up to handling anything above a 386 (ditto XT cases). Secondly, the Cyrix P150+ can safely be clocked as a normal 150 most "auto-configure" boards do precisely that when they detect one. Just set clock speed to 60 and the multiplier to 2.5. I HAVE run a P150+ at 180 with no problems, but I wouldn't recommend it!. Next, Most early 486 boards drop dead at anything above a DX2/80, and very few have the necessary jumpers to change the processor voltage from 5v (as per SX/DX2 etc) to the 3.4 volt needed for DX4 and above. Most can't recognise EDO SIMMs either!. Contrary to popular belief, the Win95 "32 bit FAT table" doesn't really work at all well using the old 16 bit version makes everything run far more happily. Also, anyone running 95 on anything less than a 16 Meg P130 is either hopelessly optimistic, or has too much spare time on their hands a Commodore Pet was fast by comparison!. Come to that, why put that garbage on a machine anyway ... use 3.11 if you must, NT if you are a dedicated masochist, but 95????!. One last point, set any hard drive above 528 Meg as being LBA, anything under that set as normal. Oh well, have fun. Paul Grade.

Free Beer Mats. Dave Cadman

What do you do with all these so called Free Floppies and CD ROMs given away with most computer magazines these days? If you load them all on you HD you will soon need more space than the latest 7 Gig HDs can handle. So, being selective on what you load, what do you do with the rest? Don't pass them on to your "best friend", otherwise you just might lose them; the friend, that is, not the floppy or CD. Paul suggesting using floppies as beer mats got me thinking.

A floppy measures 3.5" by 3.75", and it is difficult to aim the base of a pint pot in it's direction, particularly after the second refill. Should the floppy be Write Protected, or not?. If it were, it might be construed that you are not prepared to have a refill or pay for the next round. Conversely, if it were not, it might indicate that you were prepared to drink the barrel dry, pay for the next round, and willing to end up at anybody's at the end of the night. I must remember to take a few to the next party I attend; unprotected, of course. Now, where have I heard that expression before?

The CD on the other hand is much more sophisticated. Measuring 4.75" in diameter, it can be used for beer mats and /or wine mats, but it is not particularly 'non-slip'. If presented on the coffee table text-side up they have the added advantage of promoting conversational points by way of the printing to view, once you have lifted your glass of course. Over £145 of programs on this disc! Over 700Mb on this CD! Bumper six program disc! The list is endless, and is sure to stimulate interest and liven up any party. The drawback, of course, is the hole in the middle. Mr. Murphy made a Law ensuring any spillage is bound to make it's way in this direction, run through, and stain your coffee table, sideboard, antique commode, or bed side table with disastrous results. They don't make good Frisbees and the serious drinker will not require them anyway; the glass never leaves the hand!. My advice? Chuck 'em in the bin!

Dragon In Business 3. Edwin Lilly

In the previous section, I have portrayed how we used one, two, and then three Dragons to help build up our business. They were used as production machines linked to office type dot matrix printers, and also for word processing and other office tasks such as accounts. During years two and three the Dragons were joined by specialist label printers - two Soabar 9 pin roll label dot matrix printers.

By year four, it was obvious that dot matrix printing had serious limitations, especially for large labels with large characters and graphics. We looked around and eventually bought a PC plus a 6" wide thermal transfer printer. This printed at 3" per second. If we had 2" x 1" labels three across it could produce nearly 30,000 labels an hour - the other printers could manage about 10% of that. The main advantage was in printing large labels, and in the superior quality of print. It was still a DOS program working on a 286 - Windows 3.0 had only just arrived and it would be about 5 more years before we started printing labels from Windows. The business by this time was beginning to produce several million labels per year, and a reasonable income.

At about this time, I was made redundant for a third time. There was no mistake this time. I was well over 40 and, with ageism well entrenched, not likely to get a job. I started a business supplying computer consumables and services like ribbon re-inking. The Dragon 64 with Stylograph and RMS database was a very effective tool for producing mailshots. I bought a Citizen Swift 24 printer and some continuous headed notepaper and wore a print-head out within a couple of years. The Dragon 64 was very well used and I found RMS database, Dynacalc, and Stylograph surprisingly easy to use and powerful. I am currently struggling with Microsoft Access on a training record database and wondering why I don't go back to the Dragon 64. I shall have to have words with my other half about bringing it in out of the garage workshop.

One of the results of the redundancy from my job in the packaging department of a major mail order company, where I was fairly well known in the trade, were offers which we could not refuse. The packaging managers of two other mail order companies asked us if we would like to be included on their preferred supplier lists. We very quickly agreed to this, with the result that business started to flow in at a much higher rate. Not only did we get orders from the two mail order companies, we also got orders alongside for other labels that new customers required - quickly. This increased sales rapidly and we have enjoyed continuous growth ever since, as you will see from the production figures:

1991 -7.8 million, 1992 -7.6m, 1993 -9.5m, 1994 -13.3m, 1995 -14.9m, 1996 -18.1m
During 1994, a new label printer became available from Soabar - the S734 thermal transfer printer. We already had a TEC thermal transfer printer linked to a PC, but it had some limitations, particularly with small labels. The S734 was particularly suited to small labels, including fabric self-adhesive labels. This increased output tremendously as it printed at 5 inches per second - much quicker than the old Soabar 9 pin dot matrix printers, and the print quality was much improved. We very quickly bought two more and retired both Soabar dot matrix printers. Also during 1994 it was evident that space was a problem. The house and garage never seemed to be tidy or free from work. We started looking for premises.

In the next instalment I will bring you up to date.

Anyone Feeling Helpful?

Stewart Orchard is currently working on a mono TTL driver (Dragons for use of) and is trying to discover a more modern equivalent for the old 2N2369A transistor (as used in most Dragons). The BC212L isn't fast enough for the job, so does anyone have any ideas, or better still, reliable data?!. If so please phone Stewart on 01493-377319. Many thanks. Paul G.

Ramblings - I.P. Freely

Very nearly fifteen (count them) years ago saw the launch of Dragon User onto an unsuspecting six thousand of us, whilst we were innocently browsing the other shelves of the newsagent. It promised excitement, adventure, and really wild things. Promises, promises. Because what it actually delivered was a bearded geezer on the front cover looking severely bored, and a help page at the back which recommended avoiding the dreaded speed-up poke. It also delivered that unique brand of journalism - untruths.

"Dragon owners can look forward to a long relationship with [Dragon Data]"

Sad, disillusioned hacks, clearly transferred from Popular Computing Weekly to a sister title with a smaller circulation than Small Circulation Monthly.

The decisions about which press releases to use in the news section and which to use as lining for cat litter trays must have been fraught with tension.

And with so much Dragon back-slapping filling the pages, you could have been forgiven for thinking that Dragon User was a Dragon Data publication. The man Tony Clarke, who in retrospect has an eerily similar likeness to a Chairman not a million miles away from us all, appeared in as many photo-bylines as possible, and was eventually persuaded to have a photo session standing next to a horse - clearly the nag that the Dragon Data management has staked their last thousand on once it became clear that the market had reached critical mass and the projected sales - easily 300,000 according the Dragon User - were never going to materialise.

"Dragon owners...can bank on the support of any number of software and hardware companies..."

In fact, no. Instead, Dragon owners COULD bank on Microdeal taking the back page with a colour advertisement every month, usually for either Donkey King or that ludicrous "we've got it taped" campaign. You can only hope that they got a substantial discount for taking a job lot of advertisements covering such a long period of time. Not only that, but they got a page worth of free publicity masquerading as an interview into the bargain.

Apart from Microdeal, there was Salamander, who released titles fairly frequently and of fairly fair quality, but who seemed to have amongst their number a left over from ZZ Top, plus a strange penchant from doing business from within a stone's throw of the bracing air of the South Coast of England. Hmmm.

But, ah well. The best laid plans of mice. Not so much fifteen years, but fifteen months later, the "number of software and hardware companies" had realised that the game was up and that the lovely Amstrad was the way to go. So they went, and so did everybody else, barring the 3% of Dragon User readers who today make up the roll call for Dragon Update. Perhaps we ought to take one of those inner-child-finding retreats to Port Talbot and erect a monument of some kind - a giant joystick, maybe - to make ourselves feel better, in recompense for still being lumbered with the damn beast all these years down the line.

And yet, absolutely nothing has changed, except the numbers. The virtues of a 180K disc drive were extolled long before an 8.4Gb hard disc was considered obsolete. Dragon Data managed to expel most of its cash up the wall in the face of stiff opposition, and Apple now seem to be doing a very passable imitation of the same - allowing a clone machine to appear, withdrawing cloning licences; firing Steve Jobs as top bod, hiring Steve Jobs as top bod. And what difference does it make?. The main topic of conversation is still whether or not Carmaggedon is amazingly fast on a G3 platform. (it IS, trust me).

So, while we're all distracted by games with twenty million colours and realistic gameplay and multi-player network options, it's worth remembering that some time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, we all managed with four colours, damn awful collision detection, and a multi-player option of two, depending on whether you'd splashed out on the double-pack of joysticks or not.

And all is not lost. You don't have to sit there wading through this tedious garbage to see if it's going anywhere. You want me to stop nicking gags from the Simpsons? You want to write some material for Update?. Choose!! SW.

Who Conneth Whom?. Paul G.

Ever wondered what people learn on all those "Computer Courses" and "IT Courses" that every little College (especially the ones that used to be known as Techs and Polys) are offering at extortionate prices?. I've met a lot of people who went on them, but none of them appear to have learned anything useful at all in return for their money. The very best it seems anyone can hope for is a vague idea of how to use the simplest functions in "Word" or "Office", or which icons to click on in Netscape!. None of these courses even attempts to explain how to use the system itself, how to configure the GUI (invariably 95, what else?), or the machine, or even the actual software, let alone install it. None of them even mention DOS except as "an obsolete system that was very difficult to use and understand", and as to the hardware that is a Terrible Mystery, understood only by the highest grade of magicians, and far too dangerous for lesser mortals to even speak about!.

Of course, a lot this could be due to the fact that 99% of the people actually instructing on these courses are in dire need of some Artificial Intelligence, having none of the genuine variety at all, but surely even they should realise just how totally ignorant they are of the subject they claim to teach?. And what about the establishments that employ them? are the types running those equally ignorant?, or are they deliberately employing the cheapest prats they can get from the local recruitment agency regardless of whether they are capable of doing the job or not?, or is it all just a simple con job "if the peasants knew enough to realise that we're selling them a load of crap they wouldn't be signing up for a course anyway, and we make sure they'll never learn enough for that on our courses, so we can safely rip them off for all the market will take"?. Maybe I'm just a nasty old cynic, but the last of these options really does seem the most likely to me. What do YOU think?.

Of course, there's the State Sponsored version as well "All schools must be linked up to The Net" ... "Information Technology is an essential part of the curriculum in all schools". OK, I'd have nothing at all against the brats learning about computers ... like what the hardware does, and more to the point, how it is supposed to do it and how to fix things when it doesn't ... or even simple programming, Basic even, or if that is too much to ask, at least how to write a batch file and what about how to set up and configure a system for optimum performance?, yet strangely enough none of this comes into it at all all they get is exactly the same load of old spherical objects that the adult "courses" serve up!. Do you ever get the feeling that this dissemination of ignorance is just too universal to be accidental?.

I suppose it would be nasty of me to imagine that the real cause is political, and is down to the Establishment trying to ensure that it's own interests are well protected?. Once upon a time there was a thing called conscription, which was considered a "good thing", as it solved a lot of political problems, like unemployment, and provided a source of cheap and expendable bodies to ensure that "Our Interests" would be well protected. Then it dawned on some brighter than average Ministry type that it could turn into a "bad thing" lots of totally pissed off ex-conscripts well trained in the gentle art of expressing their displeasure via a gun barrel, and they might well become displeased with some of the things The Establishment was planning Conscription ceased forthwith!!. Time passed, and pen-pushers turned into keyboard bashers, Secret Files no longer got stamped and initialled and tied with red tape before being stored under guard in filing cabinets, they sat around on hard drives in ministry computer systems, which had to be landline networked in order shuffle files from one department to another, and this made them very vulnerable to anyone who understood how systems worked, and how to burgle software, yet there was this body of "computer enthusiasts", many of whom knew more about the things than the ministerial "experts"!. How solve this problem?, simple! ... make the standard computer so bloody boring that no one could possible enthuse about it and then make sure that no-one except "the right sort of persons" can learn anything about computer systems at all!. Of course, I could be totally wrong, there's probably a perfectly innocent explanation. There is, isn't there?. Wonder what it is?.

TAPES BOOKS AND DISKS...

There's still quite a hoard of programs and books - if there's anything you want, phone quick! This lot is competing for space in a crowded loft... There was an enquiry lately for "Madness and the Minotaur" - it's still here - at the moment!

BACKTRACK (Incentive Software); GRAND PRIX (Salamander); GOLF (PSS); STOCKMARKET, (Bamby); INTERPLANATERY TRADER (Bamby); MADNESS and the MINOTAUR (DD); TREKBOER; CHICKEN RUN; MINED OUT; DEFENSE; MORBID MANSION; LUNAR ROVER; BOULDER CRASH; EVEREST; GOLF; TOTAL ECLIPSE; SPACE TREK/REVERSI; RING of DARKNESS; FROGGER; MANIC MINER.

UTILITY TAPES:

FILEMASTER (Microdeal); GRAPHIC ANIMATOR; (Salamander); FORTH (Dragon Data version); ELECTRONIC AUTHOR; DREAM (Dragon Data); DRS (another tape has turned up); PERSONAL FINANCE; Special SELECTION 2; COMPUTAVOICE; DUPIDISK 2; DISKPIX; LOAD-IT; Music Maker; Composer; Shaper.

ALL ONE PRICE:- 70 pence each inc postage (in U.K.) or haggle for lots of more than 2.

UTILITY DISKS:-

TELEWRITER (DISKS and tape inc. manual); TELEFORTH (DISK and cassette); RAINBOW WRITER. 3.50 EACH inc. postage. Barter for more than one.

MANUALS for various progs: SPRINT; SALAMANDER GRAPHICS SYSTEM. 50 PENCE.

BOOKS:-

Dragon 32 programmers Reference Manual
The Dragon Programmer
Advanced Sound & Graphics
The Working Dragon 32
TRS-80 Assembly Language.
CoCo Graphics Basic and M/C.
D32 Companion
Dragon Graphics and Sound
Introducing Dragon M/C
Programming with Graphics

John Vander Reyden
S.M.Gee
The Brain Twins
David Lawrence

M.Jarvis
Steve Money
Ian Sinclair
Gerry Marshall

1.25 each including postage.

2 working Dragon 32's including all leads.
1 D64 (dodgy printer port, hence price)

15.00 each inc. postage
20.00 inc. postage

Phone me first on Worthing 207585 most evenings if you want any of these and we'll work out an arrangement on postage etc. Ken Grade.

Whatever next?.

Or to be more precise, whatever are we going to print in the next issue of Update?. Contrary to popular belief, the Editorial Demands for more material are NOT merely a reflex response to the task of making up the master disc, they are 100% genuine, and material stocks are at an all time low right now, so please make sure that the "someone" you are always sure will send us something really does so this time and don't forget, IT'S YOU!!!. Paul G.

The Late, Late Bit

I'm getting seriously peeved with all this garbage about the "Millennium Bug" all that rubbish about "everything will be affected, video recorders, clocks, televisions, etc ...". I know Blair and Co want to Save The World from Everything, as per Superman, and that it's very hard to convince people that you're saving them if they don't believe there's anything to be saved from, but this is getting totally ridiculous!. Since when have television sets, clocks, and VCRs been year reliant?. They don't even know what the date IS!. They don't do a year check on power-up, so there's no way that they can come up with an "invalid date" error!. The very best some of them have is a timer, so there's no possible problem. As to the average computer, even the ancients that never expected to still be around in the year 2K, most of them have a default date of sometime in 1982 or thereabouts, and they don't believe it can possibly be earlier than that, so contrary to legend they cannot take 2000 as being 1900 the latter is even further out of their range than the former, so most will assume that **00 is an invalid date and decide that it is 1982 all over again. Big deal!. Who is going to be running "vital control and management systems" on a machine THAT age?!. The REAL problems aren't hardware at all they're software, but do you really think that Blair and the bunch of coprophiliacs that "advise" him are going to tell Microsoft and the rest of the big software firms that they have to issue new replacement software and pay compensation to all the mugs (private and Government) who trustingly bought their programs?!. You just HAVE to be joking!. Enough of this waffle, more than enough. This is supposed to be a Serious Publication, and stuff in this class is pure farce. So to change the subject, can anyone enlighten me about the most unpublicised Net service provider, bt.com?. Like why are they so shy about this wonderful opportunity to increase the size of your phone bill and cut out the middle-man at the same time?. It really does seem strange, especially when everyone else in that game is trying to cover the surface of the planet in useless CDs and offering centuries of "free" on-line time. This is Telecon we're talking about ... the firm that seriously endangered bird life by inventing Busby, the firm that made half the population take a vow of silence by their insistence that "it's good to talk" so why the sudden lack of publicity?. If anyone knows the answer, do please let me know or better still write us a nice informative article about it. It's Good To Write for Update!!. Still more enlightenment required ... I've been asked by several (well, three or four) people if I have a list of Dragon programs that have been imported to PC for "Emulator" use and saved to PC disc, and if so, where are they available from. General taste seems to be for games stuff, but in any event my answer has had to be "damned if I know!", which while concise isn't exactly helpful. So, does anyone know of such a list?, or better still, does anyone have "PC/Emulator Ready" discs of such things?. If so do please let me know so I can pass on the information you never know, there might even be a market for such discs!. One last appeal for information has anyone who purchased any of the Group "Lottery Number Generators" ever managed to come up with more than three correct numbers yet? of course, if you've managed a consistent six, please let me know and I'll make a start on writing the begging letters, but I really would like to know if the things are actually earning their keep with the occasional tenner or so, or just aiding your contribution to the Treasury booze fund. I know, It COULD be YOU ... but it almost certainly wasn't!. OK, I'll leave you in peace again for a while you can go back to sleep again now or at least, as soon as you've completed that article you were writing for Update. P.G.

REMINDER .

Would the person who telephoned Carl Stockdale some months ago re the Basic09 manual please get in touch with him again and confirm that he actually DOES want to buy it. Failing that, the manual is still available if anyone else is interested, price £3.00 plus £1.00 postage. Carl's phone number is: 01484-424843.

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