

The Newsletter of the National Dragon User's Group

DRAGON



UPDATE

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ISSUE 127 SIX MORE MONTHS TO GO. OCTOBER 1999

THE GAFFER'S BIT

Well, it had to happen eventually, and it looks like eventually is now the old Group will be closing down immediately after the April 2000 issue of Update. You'll find a more detailed explanation a few pages further on, but please note that "closing time" is still six month's away, and I hope most of you will decide to stay with us until then!. We'll be sending the usual "renewal reminders" out, and if anyone is entitled to a refund of "unused" subscription when we shut down they have only to ask and they'll get it. Alternatively, send a 50% sub if you must (tho' it makes the paperwork a bit more chaotic that way!)... it's up to you. Ditto re Update material you can send us something to print, or you can have blank pages for the last few issues, again the choice is entirely yours!.

What happens about Up-2-Date etc? dunno yet, I'm still awaiting a definite decision from Ray Smith, but from what he said last time I spoke to him I would expect the U2D side of things to be closing down at the same time (or possibly earlier). but I'm sure that the same situation applies so far as material for publication is concerned!.

Meanwhile, things stagger on much as usual ... there doesn't seem to be anything of interest happening on the computer scene at all. Nearest I've heard to "news" is the Microsoft claim that Windoze 2000 may be released sometime next year (or the millennium after...), but will simply be a re-hashed version of 95/98 instead of the much hyped NT based "totally DOS-Free" replacement they originally promised! ... seems they couldn't even make THAT work well enough to put a Beta version together!. Oh well, I'm sure that Win 2000 will have at least 2000 completely new bugs to play with!. Ain't progress great? Paul G.

The Editor's Bit . . .

Computers. These are supposed to make our life easier. They are supposed to enable us to do things faster, with greater efficiency, and with less effort. All very impressive. But has ANYONE, EVER, actually found a machine that does any of those things? It amazes me that the Trades Descriptions Act is so wilfully overlooked when it comes to the purported abilities of personal computers. The amount of time spent trying to get the things to do the tasks claimed for them is frankly unbelievable. Plug N Play? We've all been there - it's erratic and unreliable. Technology by all means, but please, technology that works. That does what you ask it to when you follow the correct procedure. Procedures that actually work. How much is that to ask? If it doesn't do the things claimed for it, why is it on sale? If I had a more suspicious mind, I'd say it was done deliberately.

It's a shame that the Group, and the Dragon, will be bidding farewell next year. It marks the end of the days we used to enjoy, when we could program a machine to do what we wanted, and it would do it, rather than having to try and decipher the (twisted) logic of someone else's work in order to achieve a simple task.

But bidding farewell they will. Please write us a piece or two, to see out the last days with some sort of full-page dignity. Stephen.

PEEKING THE DRAGON(83).MIKE STOTT

For the last issue I started a write up about UP2DATE which is a disk magazine produced by Ray Smith in the months that UPDATE does not appear.

I have subscribed to it from the first issue and have found it very interesting and useful with contributions from a varied selection of Dragon owners.

This issue I will continue with my review using the same issues as my last article which means that the last issue is not included.

(H) CAUGHT IN THE NET - These are very useful articles for those of you who use the Internet and I know that there are many who do.

Handy tips are included for new and inexperienced users.

Recent articles have been about the problems of ordinary telephones in the house slowing down modem transfer rates and how to find the problem handset.

Also there is the problem of losing your internet connection and tips on how to stop this.

Line noise has been dealt with as well as many other subjects.

(I) OS9 V DRAGONDOS - This is a series which is explaining the OS9 commands and will be useful to beginners as well as more experienced users.

If you are thinking about having a bash at OS9 then this is definitely the article for you.

(J) BREAKING THE CODE - Gives advice on writing machine code.

(K) MACHINE LANGUAGE TUTOR - This is a more in-depth series of articles on writing machine code.

Even a beginner should soon be able to write very simple routines.

(L) - OUR HARDWARE PROJECT or CHECK THAT HARDWARE - Past projects have included building a lightpen complete with all the diagrams.

The latter tells you about computer maintenance.

It explains how dirt can damage computers and what to clean them with, as well as what not to use to clean them.

(M) - A DIP IN THE POSTBAG - These are letters from readers which have recently included Dave Cadman, Tim Lees, Phil Bass, Jon Bird, Paul Grade (whoever he is), Tony Glickman, Stewart Orchard, and Peter Smith.

Why does your name not appear here?

(N) - THE UP2DATE HELPLINE - Send in a plea for help and it will appear here, followed very shortly, hopefully, with the answer to all your problems.

(O) - PC/DRAGON SHARE - Jon Bird has explained how he used a parallel link between PC and Dragon with the latest version available to download from his web address.

Stewart Orchard and Paul Burgin update us on the PC Dragon emulator which they are both working on to upgrade to work with disks.

(P) - THE SOFTWARE SOURCE - Details of several items of software which are available on the disk for you to run and enjoy, most connected with articles elsewhere on the disk.

(Q) - GRUNTS AND GROANS - Ray Smith passes on what he has been reading in the computer press.

(R) SPEAKERS CORNER -- Recent issues have included a review of MICROHELP UNINSTALLER 4 and also an article written by an optician about vision and computers.

From time to time the subject matters are changed so there is always a wide variety of computer subjects to read about making this one of the most interesting disk magazines available anywhere in the computer world.

Whatever your Dragon interests are then two pounds an issue, including postage, has got to be very cheap for this publication.

Why not send for just one copy now just to see what it is all about?

I am sure that you will be ordering more within a few hours of receiving your first disk.

Just send Ray Smith a cheque made out to NDUG for two pounds.

His address is 5 Glen Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset.

Why Microsoft? — John Payne

1. Introduction

Dragon Update is often seasoned with adverse remarks about Microsoft and their inability to produce decent software. These are, of course, wholly misguided. Bill Gates is the bright hope for the future of the human race. If you don't believe me, check it out in Encarta.

Those of you who don't see the flaw in that argument may as well stop reading now. And I hope the rest of you realise that it is not funny. We've already passed the point where you could pass IT exams without learning how to use Microsoft software. We must be close to the point where you don't pass exams in any factual subject if your answers differ from what it says in Encarta.

2. There Are Alternatives

In the world not according to Encarta, there are alternatives to Microsoft software. There are even alternatives that run on PCs. There is an alternative operating system, Linux, which is everything that Windows and Microsoft aren't: free, reliable, open, and anti-monopoly.

Resist the Microsoft monopoly. Get Linux, install it, use it.

3. Linux Software

The brighter ones amongst you are asking "What software will Linux run?". The really bright ones are asking "Can I do the things I need to do, using Linux software?"

The standard applications (word processing, database, spreadsheet) are available from at least two software companies. For THE standard application (word processing) there is a wide choice, from Word Perfect up to heavy duty professional typesetting software like TEX. In fact, for heavy duty applications (the kind of thing you'd run on engineering workstations or mainframes) Linux comes into its own, with IBM Oracle database software (server end, not just client), Mathematica mathematics software, Apache Web server, and so on. A certain amount of Windows software (if you simply can't tear yourself away) will also run using a Linux Windows emulation.

Not only Linux itself, but also many applications, come with source code, and everything you need to compile it, so if there should be anything you want to change, you can. You don't have to suffer the standard "Helpline" response of "Why would you want to do that?" (sounding a very short way from "Only an idiot would want to do that.")

4. Internet Software

Linux was developed by a collaboration working on the Internet, so there is a lot of Internet-related Linux software. The usual Web browser is Netscape navigator. It gives you the same sort of thing as Internet Explorer. But Netscape Navigator can be set up to use more than one Internet Service Provider with no more difficulty than setting up to use a single one (Chairman, please note). The likes of TescoNet and Freeserve only provide the Microsoft browser (one more instance of Microsoft trying very hard to gain a monopoly). However, you can perfectly well use other software (I know, because I use Netscape on TescoNet).

5. Linux and Dragon Users

Linux puts you back in charge of your computer. That means it does what you want, not what Bill Gates thinks he can make you believe you want. It also means that you take responsibility for what happens. Setting up Linux requires a certain amount of intelligence, as does setting up applications. But I'd've thought that Dragon owners, as a breed, possess the necessary intelligence, and would trade off some effort in setting up against the delight of having software that works properly.

Don't worry, John, Bill Gates will take over all Linux production soon, then there will be a Linux 2000 too!, Complete with 2000 new bugs it never had before.

Re-Housing Your Dragon. G. Tutti et t

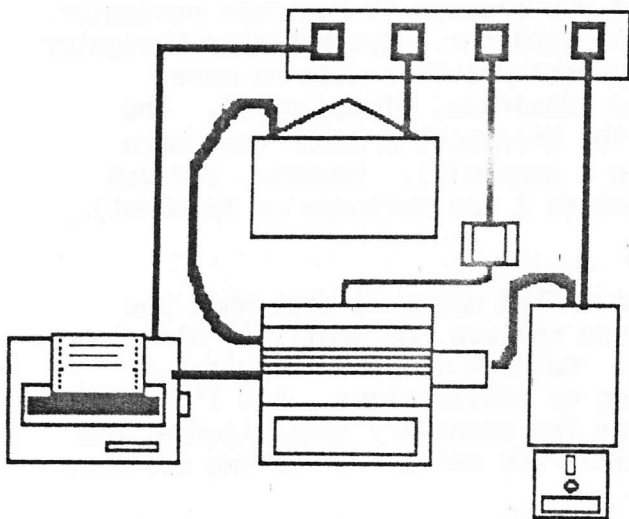
So far, we've discussed new drives, cases, and power supplies. Now it's time for going the whole way and making a Dragon PC. So, ever thought of rehousing your trusty Dragon in a PC case? well, I'm planning such a move later in the year. This may sound a bit odd, but the Dragon can sprawl over your desk with many cables, seriously getting in the way.

Now, consider the typical PC; it's largely self-contained (assuming a basic system here as my main PC has extra bits like speakers, midi keyboard, flatbed scanner etc).

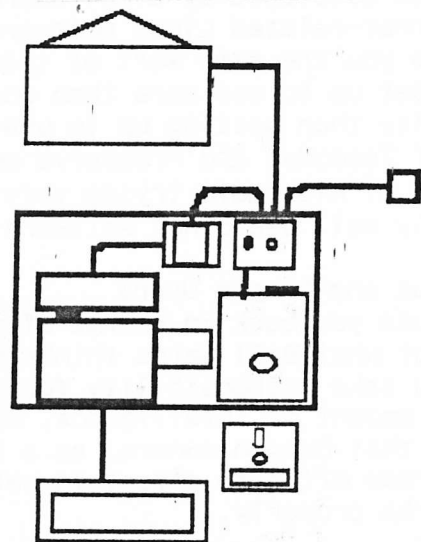
I've always liked the Dragon case, even if the case can't really take a monitor or TV on top of it (looks as though it should, though). But, let's face it, even with the most careful positioning, there is still the problem of cable 'spaghetti' connecting all the parts of your Dragon system. No matter how you arrange it, the cables are either too long or too short, there's stress on the connections, especially the drive cartridge, and you've got to provide power to four devices, so four power cables as well. Not to mention joystick controller and cassette recorder cables.

I know the PC has its own cable problems, but there is one important exception: drives are in the case with the main computer board, and the monitor is usually powered via the power-through connector on the PSU and sits on top of the PC case (tower cases excepted). This means that only one power lead is required for the system and one for the printer. It is tidy, clean, and with less spaghetti. But, I hear you ask, how do you mount the Dragon into the case - the mounting holes won't line up. True, but if you look, mounting jack posts (either screw or clip-mounting) will fit the holes on the mainboard. It's then only a matter of drilling matching holes in the case floor. Remember, the Dragon has two mainboards: main board, and power/video (separated by a short ribbon cable), plus the drive cartridge (this must be supported). Don't forget that the mounting will be dependent on the type of case that you use. Here I am assuming a standard desktop. However, a mini- or full tower would do as well, but a compact or low-profile case may cause problems. New PC cases are now cheap, as little as 20.00 for a standard desktop. A good secondhand case would be even cheaper. As an aside, I had originally thought of getting an old Dragon case and converting it to look like the 'famous' Dragon Professional with built-in Sony 3.5" drives - I thought it was quite smart at the time. However, power supply problems stopped that idea.

In the next issue, we'll look at the most important part of the project...the power supply arrangements.



The Typical Dragon Layout (with drives)



Proposed Dragon PC Layout

The Future Of The NDUG..

Any group supporting users of a single model or a limited range of home computers will start to suffer gradual decline in its membership and finances once the manufacturer loses interest in the machines that it supports, as its user base then inevitably starts to shrink. This process will continue inexorably until the point is reached where the group simply becomes too small to sustain itself as a viable entity.

Exactly when this loss of viability and sustainability of a group will occur depends on many different factors over which it may have little control, and a number of factors over which it does have some control, particularly its management style and objectives, and the presence or otherwise of a strong sense of purpose and direction in the group.

It is clear that the National Dragon users Group is now approaching this crunch point, and that definite decisions about its future must now be made.

In this situation, a number of apparently thriving groups have simply given up, folded their tents, and stolen away into the night. Paul Grade proposes that the Dragon group take this course, which I consider to be unfortunate if the other available options are not given careful consideration, since without manufacturer support, commercial support, or an active and highly visible user group, the Dragon is extinct.

The obvious alternative to closure is merger with another group. If this is arranged with a stronger and more viable group, the danger is that Dragon support will become invisible to users, and that it will effectively cease to exist.

Merger with another group in the same weak position as the Dragon might work very well, as the result would be a group with a more viable user base and an equal division of interests. However, I am not aware of such a group to merge with.

A third alternative is available, which offers the benefits of a merger without the problems. This alternative was applied to the Einstein user group after it had been completely dismantled and abandoned by its organiser some five years ago, at the point where he was about to mail out the last-ever Einstein magazine, telling the handful of remaining subscribers that he was finally giving up on the Einstein and that the remainder of their subscription would be met by a new "Desktop publishing on the PC" magazine.

This third alternative is to adopt the sponsorship of the Steam Computer Society, as the Einstein user group did. Steam Computer Society exists to apply the lessons of management technique, basic infrastructure provision, skills nurturing and development, and basic human motivation that were learnt in the first two decades of railway preservation, and that enabled those projects that survived to achieve results that were quite incredible by any normal standards. They achieved totally impossible targets without any resources at all, other than unlimited enthusiasm and a complete ignorance of what was just not possible.

Starting from a computer user group that was in much the same hopeless state as a disused railway after Dr. Beeching had picked its bones clean, Steam Computer Society has provided central administration and magazine production/distribution facilities to it, and has completely rebuilt the Einstein user group and has given it a new reason for its existence, a new future, and a strong sense of purpose and direction.

The practical alternative to Dragon demise is Steam Computer Society sponsorship, which brings the benefits of merger without the problems.

A.E.Adams. Steam Computer Society.

Once and for all, when the old Group closes, it does just that it is NOT going to "merge" with anything else, continue under new management, become part of an Extinct Machinery Club, or stagger on as two pages (if it's lucky) in some occasional publication or other. If anyone wants to form a completely new and different Dragon Group, then I don't have the slightest objection, but they aren't taking over THIS one!. I started so I'll finish!. Paul G.

The Group's Future...?

I hope you share my sadness in seeing the Group close after all these years. But it's not being closed on a whim, or out of boredom. It's being closed because of a few simple facts: there aren't enough members, there isn't enough material for Update, and there just isn't enough interest in the Dragon any more. It really is that simple, and I'm sure everyone is aware of the reasons. To think that new Dragon users can be generated out of thin air simply by merging the Group with another setup is naive. The Steam Computer Society, for all their enthusiasm, offer admin and printing/distribution facilities. That's all very well, but NDUG has had these since Day One, and they have served it well. To suggest that a renaissance of Dragon interest will develop from an injection of centralised management is to suggest that the Group has been lacking in such bedrock structures as reliable publication and dedicated staff, and that is not only ludicrous, it is insulting!. Mike has given us 83 pages, without missing a beat; I've had 9 years as editor, and Paul has been steering us through choppy waters since the start, over 15 years ago. And that effort is not going to be merged with or sponsored by any other establishment!. The Group is ending because it has reached its end. It really, really IS that simple. Stephen.

From Edwin Lilly...

I am a member of Ilkley Computer Club, which has a membership of around 25-30, some below 18 years old, some above, some female and some male. So it is quite a lively club. Most of the computers that appear are PCs, not surprisingly, although we do occasionally get others - I have sometimes taken along my Dragon 64.

We meet in a local school and have the use of their network connected to the Internet. Ilkley Internet Group is a part of the club, and designs and hosts a local non-commercial website, The Ilkley Pages, at www.ilkley.org. One of our services is to provide a computerised race results service to the local Round Table for their charity 10km road race and 3km fun run. We have also offered the same service to other volunteer groups for similar races. the database program we use started life on a BBC B and was rewritten in C for an IBM PC some years ago. We would now like to rewrite it for a network based on Linux. Anyone interested in providing bits of code or routines? If you want to contact anyone, take a look at the website, and contact Alan Drew or mark Hinchcliffe. An idea that occurred to me was - could Linux be ported or written for the Dragon 64, and how different would it be from OS9?

Another of my current projects is to put together a pictorial record of the village of Burley in Wharfedale, which is where I live. There have been several historical books and pamphlets about the village in times past, but not a comprehensive record of as it is now. It started a few years ago when a bypass was being planned and then built. I took quite a few photographs before the event and have been taking them since. it is remarkable how a place changes in just a few short years.

What I am suggesting is that readers of our august publication might like to consider their own home town or village and perhaps do something similar. With scanners so cheap nowadays, and colour printers also so cheap to buy (although a tad expensive to run!) there has never been a better time to take on such a project. It could be tackled by a small group such as a computer club or society, or by an individual. It may be possible to borrow photographs from friends, relatives, and neighbours.

Of course, this is less a project for a Dragon, more for a PC or Mac. However, the Dragon could be used for correspondence, a database of photographs, and other tasks. Edwin Lilly.

Now Read On .. Paul Grade.

And please read it carefully, because I don't want any misunderstandings. As you'll have gathered from earlier remarks, I've done the books and consulted the tea leaves, etc, and the end result is that I can't see any possible way of keeping the old Group running after April 2000. Numbers are well below the point where the Group can be financially viable, and are still steadily decreasing. Material for publication is decreasing at an even faster rate, and frankly I think the Group has outlived its purpose. It was started (more by accident than design) to provide some form of support for Dragon owners after Dragon Data disappeared and most of the commercial publications didn't want to know about "obsolete machines". Correctly or not, I think we did bloody well, and we certainly had the last laugh on all those "experts" who said we were doing everything wrong and that we wouldn't last six months!. I like to think we managed to help a lot of Dragon owners who otherwise would have had nowhere to go when they had problems, and if nothing else we provided a "contact point" for all those peculiar people who insisted on using Dragons rather than more popular machines. Well, that was a long time ago now ... some of the kids who joined us then are now worrying about what machines they should get THEIR kids!. But now? ... most of you know perfectly well that you've done everything you're ever likely to do with your Dragon, you know all you need to know about it, and you've bought all the software you're ever likely to want for it ... some of you can't even remember the last time you even plugged your Dragon in, can you?.

So, I have always promised that when it came to "closing time" I'd give everyone six month's notice consider it given, w.e.f now. Effectively, the NDUG will cease to exist immediately after the publication of the April 2000 issue of Update. I hope most of you will decide to stay with us until that time anyone who requires a refund of the unused portion of their subscription when we close down has only to ask for it, so don't worry that you'll lose money by staying on until the end ... you won't. I'll be keeping the Group account open (funds permitting!) for a month after we shut down for just that reason.

Other than that, well, all Group software, etc will still be available for as long as anyone wants it, probably at the same old prices because they virtually only cover media and postage anyway, and if anyone gets stuck, needs help, or just wants to talk ... well, you know how to get in touch with me the Group may be shutting down, but I've no plans for a personal disappearance, and I hope most of you will continue to keep in touch as usual. I've no definite answer from Ray Smith as yet, but I understand he intends closing down the Up-2-Date side of things at around the same time more details when I have them!. I assume that Ray will keep the old "Library" stock available, likewise you should also still be able to obtain material from Keith Nash at the "PD Library" and Alan Greenwood will probably still continue to make reprints available as required. Only difference will be that payment will need be made to the individuals involved rather than the Group. I'm sure that Tim Lees will continue to keep the former PSE stock on offer as well. On all these points I'll give you more definite information as and when I get it myself. Well, that's about it on the subject for the moment. I suppose I OUGHT to have said nothing and just shut things down in the traditional computer scene manner collect as much loot as possible then disappear without notice in a cloud of debts and unpaid bills, leaving no forwarding address!, but somehow that doesn't really appeal very much we've always run things straight, we've never ripped anyone off, and it would be a shame to ruin a good reputation at this stage. We may have insulted a lot of people, irritated a lot more, but so far as I know we've never harmed anyone!.

Anyway. all this is six months away yet ... so don't go writing obituaries for us too soon there's another three Update's to put together, loads of software to sell, thousands of curses about lack of material for publication ... save the obits for the final issue!. OK?. Meanwhile, keep on writing or I'll have to add "restraining the Editor from murder" to the list of jobs to do!.

Well, now you know as much as I do about the position. Will keep you informed.

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Any more of you cured your shyness problem?. Now come on, you don't ALL use the firm's account for your e-gossip ... or do you?!. How about some more additions to the list?. All you need to do is let me know at grade1.bigfoot.com. Paul.

Ask a silly question

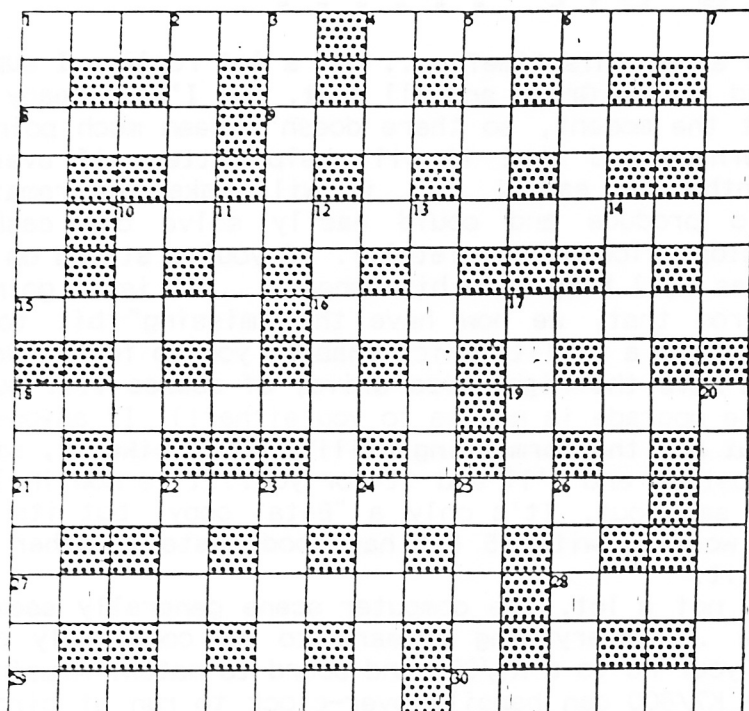
Someone asked me this one t'other day, and I'm damned if I can think of the answer ... I KNOW I know it, but I seem to have suffered a severe attack of brain failure, so see if YOU can let me (and everyone else) know the EASY way to do it!.

Question was simple: On a PC using MS-DOS, how do you write a batch file which, when it has completed a task such as installing a driver routine, will write the necessary additional line to the AUTOEXEC.BAT batch file!.

I KNOW there's a simple method, I've used it myself several times in the past, but I can't think of it at the moment, so see how well YOU can do!. Paul G.

Still Scrounging

I don't really believe it, but I've STILL not been able to get hold of an old 33.6 modem card (no, I've got plenty of externals) which does NOT rely on Win 95 or 98!. All I want is one which has Win 3.x (or possibly even DOS) drivers, preferably a jumper set beast. There were thousands of them around a year ago, so where have they all disappeared to?. If you've got one that you're using as a doorstop or something, please let me know ... I'd even be willing to pay money for it!!. Does everything on the PC scene suddenly get teleported to some mysterious planet as soon as the next, newest, more fashionable version appears?, if not, where DOES it disappear to?!. I mean, has anyone seen a Pentium class CPU (Cyrix excluded!) between P150 and P233 around recently?. Tons of Cyrix garbage, K6/2s, Celerys, P2s, P3s, plenty of antique P75s and P100s, but nowt in between!. Definitely a good case for the X-Files I reckon!. Paul G.



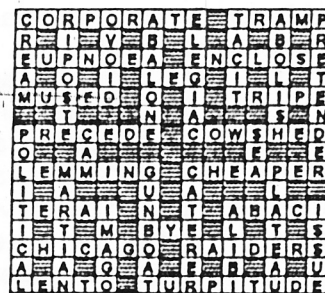
ACROSS

- 1 Countdown contestant drew I,T,S, S,H,I,T - what followed? (Turns out self-descriptive) (6).
- 4 Apply succession of light taps to heel - cobbler leaves it to assistant (8).
- 8 (see 11 down).
- 9 Broken van? Store, or let us attend to it (10).
- 10 Suitable gesture to convey desire for more sandwiches and drinks? (5,3,5).
- 15 Initially collected, I leave totally destroyed (5).
- 16 Is a small collective apt to mess things up? (9).
- 18 First-class motoring organisation found rust and left, on call in country (9).
- 19 None so involved back cuts (5).
- 21 No, it's not a suet mix for use in training (6,7).
- 27 Finally play tune in valley (10).
- 28 (see 11 down).
- 29 Impossible to respond otherwise to suggestion of three? (3,3,2).
- 30 Racehorse, former winner, kept on 'til halfway, then collided with no-hoper and stumbled - and one could have money on it (6).

DOWN

- 1 Apparently rather ratted when leathered into mates in King Henry (7).
- 2 Listen, nip on top of this, right, and you catch no end of plaice (5).
- 3 Sounds acutely eel-like (5).
- 4 Princess turns up with extremely original hairdo - sounds just like Di (5).
- 5 Group of Hindi villagers return black and blue (5).
- 6 Appropriate sentence is doled out to piper's son (5).
- 7 Extremely anxious leader-writers, finding editor surrounded by drink, relaxed (5,2).
- 10 Some habitual users appear reformed (one ideally does this when on trial) (7).
- 11,8ac,28ac "Er...I do know, m'lud - brought to book by a member of the Welsh Force, I think you'll find" (5,4,4).
- 12 Marks out of ten not written down (7).
- 13 Falls, but officer gets up again (7).
- 14 In attempting to realise flawless performance of 'I'm A Believer', am almost put off playing piano completely (7).

- 17 Gigolo, acting with little show of love, produces apparatus (5).
- 18 Ancient, one loses sea legs? Certainly not (7).
- 20 Point to bank - to shape of body, could be of three (7).
- 22 Barrel at port is full of fish (5).
- 23 Parts of speech read back: "... this makes sense.... common in country of middle ranking...." (5).
- 24 Instruction for assembly: '30. If this arises, specific use of 9x3 (British units) may be called for.' - says just the opposite of 29! (3,2).
- 25 Annihilated Reds are totally outplayed (5).
- 26 Lass from Pontypool we nearly pulled (5).



The Late, Late Bit

So what wonders can I tell you about this time? not a lot really, I suppose I could drivel on about The End of the Group and all that, but I've already told you about as much as I can at the moment, so there doesn't seem much point in repeating myself. I should perhaps add that it will help matters if everyone doesn't abandon group six months too early! it will make the remaining newsletters VERY difficult to produce and could easily solve our cashflow problems by ensuring that it stops flowing completely!. If you've stayed on long enough to read this you might as well hang on a bit longer ... it isn't going to cost you a fortune!. Apart from that, we now have the "missing" bit to the PC-Dragon emulator disc upgrade a utility which enables you to format Dragon discs on your PC (assuming you have the right size drive, of course but if you haven't then the rest of the upgrade is no use to you either!). If anyone who already has the upgrade disc but NOT the formatting utility would like it, simply send me your disc and return postage and I'll add it for you. It is now included on all "upgrade" discs that I send out. It's only a "Beta" copy, but its only fault is that it doesn't like working with 95 (it has good taste!), other than that I've had no problems with it.

So what else is new?. As usual not a lot. The computer scene generally seems to be in Cemetery Emulation Mode ... everything appears to be completely dead, unless you can afford to treat your PC to a K7/600 and board to match. Amusingly, it is already claimed that the K7/600 can happily over-clock to run at circa 1K ... I'd like one (I'd like to be able to afford one even more!) but I can't help wondering just what we're supposed to be using all this Faster than Light computing speed FOR personally I still seem to be doing the same old jobs I did using a virtually comatose 4.7 8088, and they don't seem to get done noticeably faster. Maybe it's the users who need faster processors rather than the machines?. IS it just me, or does anyone else get peeved at all these types who keep insisting that "with the advent of IT everyone can work from home"?. I've tried it the computer pointedly refused to repair my van, make the coffee, fix a couple of printers or do any of the other work I told it to, so just what IS all this "work" one can do from home via a PC and a modem?. Actually, there's another small snag these prats never mention so you're a real Office Executive type, working away like a plod with a new speed camera, PC connected to the office via a 56.6 which insists on downloading at nearer 9.6 but who is paying the phone bill????!. Even better if you're using a laptop via your mobile blower (as seen all too often on TV) ... who pays? ... and where does the inexhaustible supply of ready-charged batteries come from?!. Gives me a distinct impression that the prats who reckon that this is the way everyone should be working are talking through the wrong end of their anatomy I mean, anyone with the loan of a working brain cell knows that using a phone line costs money, so why are these types so keen on demonstrating their ignorance?. And on the subject of public displays of ignorance, I see our Senior Plods and Politicians are putting on a good show at the moment ... all this rubbish about "anyone exceeding the speed limit by even 1 m.p.h will be nicked on sight" ... don't they realise that even the most accurate NEW speedo is only accurate to within 10%?, or that even using a different make or profile of tyre makes more difference to the reading than 1 m.p.h?. Also, are people being fitted with dual focus eyeballs? if not, how are you supposed to continuously monitor the clock THAT closely and still avoid driving up the tail-pipe of the wagon in front?!. And these prats are supposed to be sane??. Hope Broadmoor and Rampton have plenty of spare accommodation available looks like they've got a lot of potential customers waiting to move in!.

Finally, I think I've discovered the real reason why so much of the "voice control" software (the garbage which claims to allow you to run your machine just by talking to it) doesn't work properly it's all down to yet another bug in Windows!. Even 98 doesn't have a routine to report "Physical Impossibility Error ... Go Try it on Yourself" when given some of the most common spoken commands!.

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