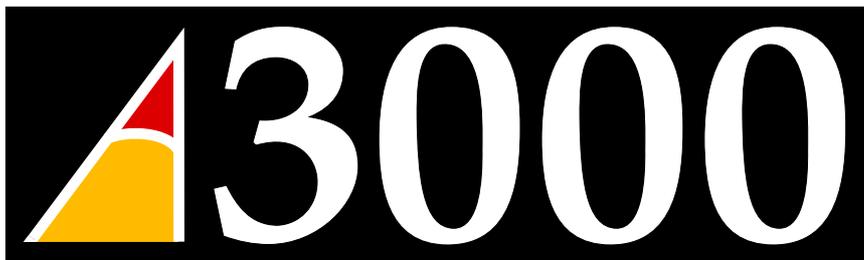


club



Issue Number 1

February 1991

Introduction

Welcome to Club A3000, the user club for all Archimedes users, and our very first newsletter. Over the past few months, since before the BBC Acorn User Show, we have been busy setting up the Club so that it can provide all sorts of useful services to Archimedes users.

- Our primary aim is to put Archimedes users in touch with each other, so that we can all share each others' experience and equipment, and benefit in other ways, such as by the exchange of Public Domain software. So often, computer users can feel isolated as far as their machines are concerned, and we want to try to help. You will see that a Club hands-on Archimedes workshop day has been organised for those in the London area, and we hope that this will be the first of many successful events.

- To encourage users to get in touch with each other, you will find enclosed with this newsletter a printout of the names and addresses of some fellow Club members who live fairly near to you, and we would encourage you to get in touch with them by letter. Find out a bit about them, and see what interests you share. If our experience is anything to go by, you will soon notice the many benefits of being in touch with other users.

- If you have any good ideas for the Club, of any sort, please send them to us. Your input is vital if we are to make Club A3000 a true user club for all Archimedes owners, so please help if you can.

- Club A3000 already has quite a large number of members in the UK and in Europe. However it is our belief that the more members we can get in each area, the better the service that we can provide putting users in touch and organising local events.

If you know anyone who owns or is thinking of buying an Archimedes and might like to join, please ask them to send an SAE to the Club address and we will send them a complete information pack.

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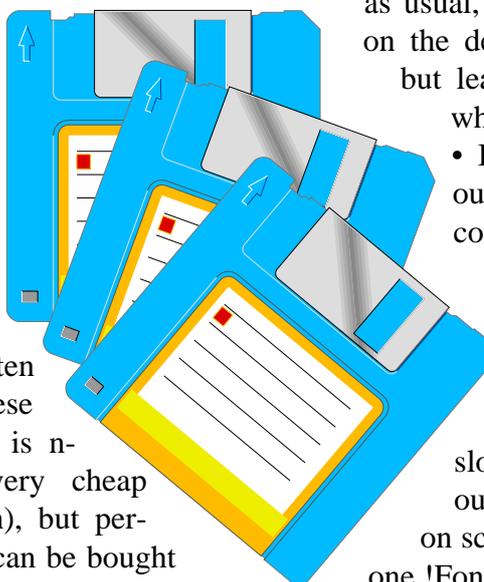
. Andrew Thacker



Beebug High Density Discs

The Retail Catalogue published by Beebug Ltd contains a large advertisement as follows: "High Density Discs for the Archimedes... We are now able to offer high density (1.6Mb) 3.5" discs for extra reliability" priced at £22.45 for ten including p&p. Do not be fooled by this; no more data can be stored on these discs than ones costing 50p each or less, and the reliability point is dubious. "Proper" Beebug Archimedes blank discs are mentioned in the small print at £12.94 inc. p&p for ten, which is still rather expensive! This advertisement is deliberately misleading/ambiguous and should not be published. If you have been misled then perhaps you should moan to Beebug.

When buying blank discs, you should be aware that the discs fall into two categories, branded discs and unbranded ones. Generally within each of these categories there is little to choose between the various discs. The only requirement is that they would be double sided and double density. Branded discs generally cost the most, but often there is little difference between these and the cheaper unbranded discs. It is not recommended that you buy very cheap unbranded discs (less than 30p each), but perfectly adequate discs for general use can be bought for round about 40 - 50p each.



RISC OS Hints and Tips

- Clicking on menu options with the adjust button causes the menu to remain on screen.
- Closing a directory window by clicking on the close icon with the adjust button causes the window of the parent directory to be opened if possible.
- Dragging a window using the adjust button does not bring the window to the front - you can slide it behind other windows.
- To format floppies in E format, it is not necessary to go to the format sub-menu; just click on format in the ADFS menu.
- On an A3000, pressing SHIFT, TAB, Q, Numlock carries out a Control Break (very useful!).
- Holding down * on the numeric keypad whilst pressing reset causes

the machine to start up in supervisor (*command) mode.

- When a window has a vertical scroll bar, clicking on a vertical arrow with the select button causes the window to scroll in the direction indicated, whilst using adjust causes it to scroll the opposite way.
- To completely wipe a disc quickly, keep a blank disc handy and just backup this disc onto the one to be blanked. This is much quicker than selecting all and deleting items one by one.
- Holding down CTRL and SHIFT and pressing F12 causes the desktop and all application tasks to be quitted.
- Spaces can be included in file names if you hold down the ALT key when you press space.
- When you need a printer driver but memory is tight, load the printer driver and set it up as usual, and then quit the printer icon on the desktop. This frees almost 100k but leaves the printer driver module, which is all that is needed to print.
- If you have a large number of outline fonts, you will soon discover the problems this can cause. Some applications (such as !Edit) crash immediately if you have too many, and even well behaved packages such as !FontFX and Ovation are slowed down. Long menus of outline fonts are often unwieldy on screen. A good solution is to keep one !Fonts folder containing a core set of regularly used outline fonts, and then

have several other folders containing small groups of related outline fonts (each folder having a different name). You must then alter the !Run files of the auxiliary !Font folders so that when you click on one of these, the system does not forget the outline fonts already seen. Alter the "Set Font\$Prefix" line to:

```
Set Font$Prefix <Obey$Dir>,<Font$Prefix>
```

By this method, you can keep one core set of fonts plus several smaller sets to be called up only when you need them. Remember though that most applications only recognise the fonts which the system knows about when they are first loaded.

Please send in any hints and tips which may be of interest to other users.



Public Domain

If you obtain your Public Domain software from one of the commercial PD libraries which are currently springing up, run by individuals or companies, remember that the authors of this software have written it for free, and yet some of these libraries are making money for themselves by distributing this free software at high prices. With a software cost as £3.59 a large proportion being (excluding advertising) of producing and distributing each disc is no more than 80p.



disc of software as much as p&p a fit is clearly made considering the cost

Most PD authors state that no charge may be made for their software except the cost of media and postage, and so what some of the libraries are doing is rather immoral. Much of the software should be distributed by these libraries, since they would

"It is not necessary to pay large amounts to get hold of the best PD software."

be breaking the terms and conditions, and because the authors sometimes disapprove, do not keep them up to date with the latest versions.

Norwich Computer Service's excellent Archive Shareware / Careware discs, and discs from Diamond Public Domain Library not suffer in this way, because the profits from the sale of the discs go to charity.

- It is not necessary to pay large amounts to get hold of the best PD software. There are several libraries / user groups which distribute PD for free, in return for blank discs and return postage, you choose what items are on the discs, so that you can be sure that the discs will be full. The monthly disc which accompanies the Micro User magazine contains some good PD software.



Another effective and satisfying way is to build up a network of Archimedes contacts, and swap PD software with each other. Speaking for myself, I have amassed a very large collection of PD software but without paying out large sums of money,

PUBLIC DOMAIN

One of the intended functions of the club will be as a means of distributing Public Domain software between club members. Therefore, if you have a large public domain base and would be willing to give up a bit of spare time during the week to copy software for club members, then inform the club as soon as possible. There will be a nominal charge per disk (probably about £1) to cover such expenses as postage & packaging as well as to finance other club administration costs (such as the production of the newsletter), but this is still a lot cheaper than any dedicated P.D. house. Please note, however, that Club A3000 was not created just as a means of getting lots of Public Domain software cheaply. In the next issue we'll look at some of the best P.D. around.

Archive magazine published by Norwich Computer Services is the least known of the Archimedes magazines, but in the opinion of most who have read it, the best. Below are given a few comparisons between Archive and the other A5 format, subscription-only magazine, RISC User published by Beebug Ltd., and the support behind them, to allow readers to make a more informed choice between the two. Please remember that these are personal views and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Club organisers.

- Archive is published twelve times a year, and an annual subscription costs £17; an annual subscription to RISC User costs £19.90, which is for ten issues. In each issue of Risc User, there are approximately 70 pages, of which just under half are advertisements. Each issue of Archive consists of roughly 60 pages, of which about 15 pages are advertisements.

- The contents of RISC User are only written by a handful of people, whilst Archive consists virtually entirely of material (hints, reviews, news, programs etc) produced by readers; the NCS team only edit the material into a coherent entity. RISC User often has some good programs and applications to type in, and also contains excellent articles on programming techniques, such as a series on programming the WIMP, programming in C, and on using popular software packages such as Pipedream and Impression.

- The RISC User magazine discs are better (but more expensive) than the Archive discs.

- Beebug seem to have recently stopped calling RISC User an "independent user group", and so according to the adverts, people are no longer members; instead they are now just "magazine subscribers". They have stopped members' discounts (without consulting members), and changed their technical help service so that it will now only help with products bought from them (which any dealer will do!), unlike NCS who will help (free) with any prob-

lems by post.

- No discounts are available for RISC User subscribers, except for occasional special discounts on major items of software and small discounts on Beebug's own software. All Archive members receive a members' price list each month, with prices including VAT and prompt delivery, and the prices are very well discounted (frequently 15%+). The Beebug prices are generally not very competitive (with a few exceptions), and prices are often given ex VAT only, meaning that you have to get a calculator out to work out the true price!

- RISC User suffers from the problem that Beebug produce their own software and hardware, which makes it difficult for them to be impartial towards similar products from other companies. The magazine frequently refers to Beebug's own products without mention of alternative products, and often praises Beebug's own products. NCS do not produce hardware / software of their own, and so do not suffer from this problem. Beebug have a strange policy of copying other companies' product ideas, rather than on producing original hardware and software (examples include DTP, SCSI, VIDC, ARM3, External Disc drive buffer, Scanners, Extra RAM, C Compiler, Public Domain Library).

- Sadly Archive is not as well known or appreciated as RISC User (only a few thousand members). Ideally, I would recommend you to subscribe to both magazines, since as magazines, each has its own strengths and weaknesses and both are certainly worth reading. However I would say that the support from NCS is significantly better than that from Beebug, and for what you get, an Archive subscription is better value for money. If you do join Archive and do not like it, you can cancel your membership at any time and receive a refund on issues not yet published. Give it a try, and send in your thoughts on paper!

If you have differing views then we'd love to hear from you.





Computer Concepts' Impression II document processor is now available, and having received the upgrade recently, I have to say that I am extremely impressed with it. Impression has made it really easy to design this newsletter, and is suitable for anyone from a DTP beginner to a convert from Macintosh DTP packages, with many powerful yet well thought out facilities.

Whilst using the alternative packages on a one Mega-byte machine is a tight squeeze, Impression II will fit easily with room for a decent font cache. The caching of fonts requires a lot of disc accessing, but use on a floppy disc only system is perfectly acceptable, and special screen fonts are supplied for use on a non-multiscan monitor.

There are far too many features to describe them all here, but if you are interested, take a look at the recent adverts for Impression II in the glossy magazines and the comments in the same. One of the nicest things about buying Impression is the excellent support provided by Computer Concepts.

A regular newsletter is sent out to customers, with news and hints on using their products. You can upgrade to the latest version at any time free of charge by sending in your program disc, and a telephone helpline is run to help with any problems. In particular, Computer Concepts listens to its customers and acts on suggestions and criticisms.

- Providing you can afford the asking price (make sure that you shop around) I believe Impression to be the best buy of all the DTP packages (and I've used them all). Since it sadly has to be protected with a dongle, Impression II comes with a no quibble money-back guarantee.

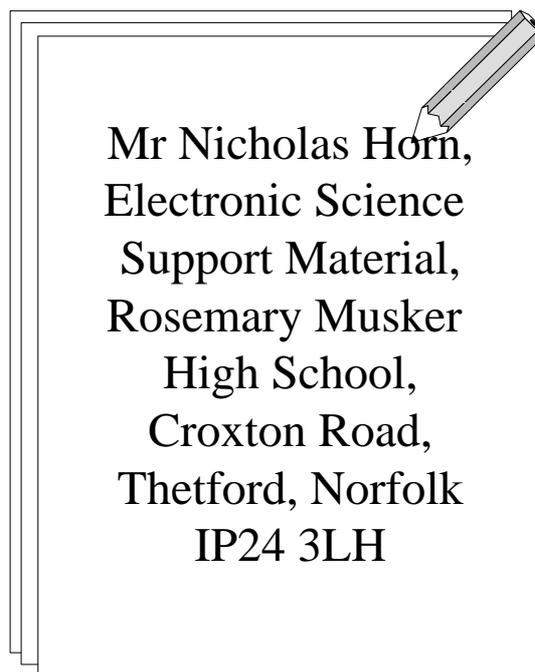
If you do buy Impression II, please let us know what you think of it!

Impression II Hint

There is a bug in Impression in that whenever you drop a graphic into a frame or FIT TO FRAME, the very edges of it will get 'clipped off' when you print it out (try printing out a thin rectangle that has been 'fitted to frame'). The solution is to set the Horizontal and Vertical inserts to 0.01 inches, then FIT TO FRAME, then set these inserts back to 0.00 inches.

Electronic Science Support Material (ESSM)

Club member Nicholas Horn runs a very worthwhile service to Science teachers, with the support of Computer Concepts, providing public domain material for the Archimedes to help schools in the teaching of the sciences at the Secondary School level. At the moment several discs are available for next to nothing, containing information and work sheets, a large poster to be printed out, and a database listing science and technology education broadcasts, all for the Archimedes. The minimum of technical expertise is required to use the discs, and full instructions are included. All material may be freely copied and duplicated. It is available completely free in return for discs and postage, or these can be paid for at very reasonable prices. For more information please send a SAE to:



Reference Manuals

If you have shuddered at the massive price of these essential manuals (currently £79), yet desperately need them for, well, reference I suppose, then why not get your library to buy them for you. They will usually charge a nominal sum of 50p or so to order them, yet it is cheaper than £79, and they will be as good as yours.



Why Atelier is best



The first time I'd ever seen this package was at the B.A.U. show after some designer said it was brill and did *everything*. I already had Art Nouveau and ProArtisan, and between the two I got the effects that I needed, so what made this one so special? Simply, that it offers 99% of the features that the forementioned two offer, and a hell of a lot more added in for good measure.

As with every Art package, it's got stacks of simple—yet essential—routines, and I won't bore you detailing these (anyone can program the Arc to draw a line!), but what makes it stand out is the sheer number of features that you never really get to grips with (i.e. the more advanced effects!), and even one or two (like *Average Area*) that you never really find any use for.

It installs itself on the icon bar and uses a limited form of multi-tasking. It waits there on the icon bar until clicked on—then it takes over as a single-tasking application until F8 is pressed and you return to the multi-tasking desktop where you left off. Very clever! This method makes memory re-allocation whilst using the program (e.g. to increase sprite memory) simple.

At any time, a special magnifying glass/help text can be displayed (like !Help and !Magnify in one!). Not only does it show where the pointer is for accurate lining up, but it gives details such as pointer coordinates, the radius if drawing a circle etc. as well as step-by-step instructions on every tool (if the tool is a multi-stage option (e.g. drawing a rectangle means selecting the start and end coordinates) you can even go back step by step as a form of undo by pressing adjust).

The colour menu is very advanced—even daunting. It features palettes, sliders and priority colours (i.e. making some colours 'unremoveable' so that you can draw 'behind' them).

Copying has many options. You can stretch, rotate and distort a shape using many different options (e.g. logarithmic mapping!) Indeed, for plain filling, Atelier boasts over 340 different combinations to fill, including plain fill, sprite fill, graduated fill using 4 differing finenesses of dither ranging from no dithering (like Art Nouveau) to super-smooth so that you can't really see the graduations. To chose a colour graduation scale, simply select the first and last colours (e.g. matt black and brilliant white) and Atelier will actually work out the colours inbetween. Although time-saving, this presents a problem if you want to create a multi-coloured (e.g. rainbow) graduated fill).

All sorts of editors are provided, including Pattern and Brush

editors and the magnifier is smooth and quick, and there's even a sprite editor which is good, but not a patch on !Paint. There are many different anti-aliases and smoothing effects (including Anti-Alias squash and an option to convert (by brushing) all shades of one colour to shades of another).

There are 3 undos. The first (F1) is a simple undo-screen. The second (F2) undoes a specified rectangle, and the third (F3) lets you brush the screen and undoes the area underneath. Very clever, but it's a pity you can't undo the undo should you need to.

Every last detail is covered. The pointer reflects the current colour. It changes to reflect certain operations (e.g. magnify, print, disk access, filling etc.) Left-handed and Apple Mac style options are provided as well, and little points that really bug you about other art packages have FINALLY been included (like being able to plot a sprite half off the screen.....AT LAST!)

Its wrapping features are breathtaking. You can design a complex vase or bottle and Atelier will wrap a shape round it and can even include shadows - WOW. However, the speed (or lack of it) reminded me of the days of Quest Paint on the BBC Master!

Also included is an animator, but it doesn't use Delta Animation, rendering it practically useless for serious animations and this part of the package represents more of an afterthought on Minerva's part. It lacks polish. Stick with the excellent RISC User movie maker (plug plug!) for animation work.

On the whole, the manual is excellent and the tutorial guides you step by step through most options by showing you their uses by getting you to finish off half-started pictures supplied on the disk. The manual even tells you how to achieve special effects such as smoke, textures, metallic surfaces etc.

So, is it perfect? No. It has a few niggles. All routines, even simple ones like drawing curves, are slow (note there are no proper bezier options). Make sure you have a big enough font cache whilst entering in text (it uses the outline font system giving great flexibility as well as great text!) or it will crash. You also can't rotate text without resizing it rendering this feature almost useless. The supplied printer drivers are not needed because they are not as good as the RISC OS ones (laser printers are not covered). Removing this option would have provided more free memory which is tight on a 1mb machine. Even with all these features, its still not as good as some I've seen on the Amiga, but it does make the likes of ProArtisan look a little stoneage in comparison.



By Andrew Thacker of APT grafix

Of course, the really good thing about Andrew Thacker is that he doesn't take advantage of the fact that he is designing this newsletter to 'slip in' a shameless plug for his business!!!

MEMBERSHIP

Some benefits of Club A3000 membership have already been mentioned, and we hope to expand the services which the Club can offer as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately this does cost money, the major expense being the duplication and postage costs for Club literature.

You will find accompanying this newsletter a sheet giving details of how we intend the Club to be

financed.

However before you hold up your hands in horror at the thought of the massive expense, we should point out this is really only a contribution towards the running costs, and certainly no-one is making money out of the Club.

We hope that you feel it worthwhile to support the Club, so that the membership will continue to grow, increasing the support available.

The overall coordinator of Club A3000 is Rene Barreto, and all Club correspondence should be addressed to him at the Club address:

48 Michleham Down, London, N12 7JN

This newsletter is published quarterly, and the editor is Simon Burrows. Contributions, comments and criticisms will be warmly welcomed. We hope to set up a letters page, so please write in to us. Limited advertising may be permitted in later newsletters. Please send all material to the Club address. If you send in (named) discs, they will be returned!

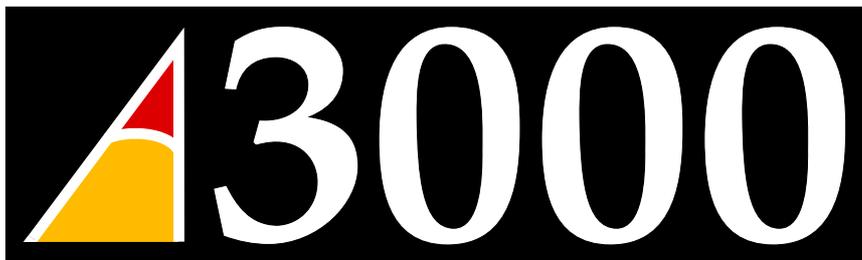
This newsletter was created using Impression II and Poster and all page layout and graphic design was done by Andrew Thacker of APT grafix.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the club. This newsletter is for the exclusive use of club members only.

The user club for the Archimedes



club



I wish to enrol as a member of club A3000: The Archimedes owners' club

Name First Name(s).....

Address

.....

Post Code..... Telephone Number

Which model of Archimedes do you own? A3000/A300 series/A400 series/ A500 series.....

What are your Archimedes interests? Please tick as many as you like

Education (which field?) Music

Games Midi

DTP Graphics

WP Research

Programming Databases.....

Spreadsheets Other (specify)

The Archimedes programs with which I am most familiar are

.....

.....

Extra hardware that I own and use are

.....

Please tick the following as appropriate —

I would be interested in a Public Domain service

I would be prepared to offer some of my hardware for the purposes of club member (e.g. if you have a scanner, would you be prepared to scan pictures for club members?)

I would be willing to be a contact for my area

I do not mind having my 'phone number given to other members

I enclose herewith a donation (minimum of £6) towards the club. I understand that the club does not make money in any way, and the donation is used to pay for administrative costs (such as postage, printing of the newsletters, etc.). Please sign.....

Return this form (or a photocopy of this form if you wish to preserve the newsletter), together with your cheque (payable to Rene Barreto) or 1st class stamps (to the value of the donation) to —

Rene Barreto, 48 Michelham Down, London, N12 7JN