The magazine for members of

The ARM Club

EUREKA

RISCOS Ltd takes over as Acorn bows out

Club plans a new Show to replace Acorn World

Digital photography

101 Amazing Things To Do With Your Computer

World Factbook CD-ROM

Issue 30 — Summer 1999

Coming Back To RISC OS

Most of us who watch television have seen the extensive commercials telling us that telephone users are flocking back to rejoin BT. Could this comeback be repeated among former Acorn computer users when the much heralded and long awaited RISC OS 4 finally becomes available?

One long standing Acorn enthusiast, who has been with the Club since it was founded, wrote to me after Black Thursday saying regretfully that, as he was having to use a PC at work, he felt that there was now no longer any point in continuing with his A7000.

His Club membership had not run out and he obviously continued reading Eureka as he has now written to me again, this time expressing interest in some software which was reviewed and saying that he was going to buy a Risc PC as soon as it was available with RISC OS 4.

The reason: he was fed up with having to use Windows.

The ARM Club is giving its full support and encouragement to those who are working for the continuation and development of RISC OS computers and (as you can read in this issue) it has taken the initiative in arranging a RISC OS Show as the successor to Acorn World.

However, the Club's primary concern remains, as always, the interests of its members. The Club is not a commercial organisation and does not operate for profit so our advice to members will always be impartial. If it ever comes to a point where we could see no future for RISC OS computers we would be free to say so and to offer some expert advice on the best ways of moving into an alternative system.

However, at present, the future looks hopeful with some exciting prospects ahead despite any changes at Acorn.

Stay with us and see!

Peter Jennings

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***FTP An accompanying program is available on our FTP site. See page 79.**

RISCOS Ltd — A New Dawn?

On Friday 5th March 1999, after months of changing and sometimes dramatic negotiations, an agreement was finally signed between Element 14 and RISCOS Ltd for the future development of the RISC OS operating system. Two weeks after this, a meeting was called for any interested developers at the Grimstock County House Hotel just to the north-east of Birmingham. The ARM Club were, of course, represented so that we could keep all members informed of the latest developments.

The Managing Director of RISCOS Ltd is Paul Middleton, probably known to most in the Acorn Community as the man behind Uniqueway, based in Cardiff. When Acorn announced the cancellation of the Phoebe project and Acorn World in September last year Paul, like many Acorn developers, was suddenly faced with the prospect of seeing his business disappear in a short space of time as users migrated to other platforms. Very shortly after this Acorn were approached for an agreement to take over development of RISC OS (and initially to release Phoebe, though that wasn't to happen), firstly by the Steering Group and latterly by RISCOS Ltd.

A number of RISC OS developers have invested money in RISCOS Ltd and, as part of the deal reached with E-14, they will also retain a stake in the company.

So What Does This Mean For RISC OS?

The first step in RISCOS Ltd's business plan is to finish and release RISC OS 4 to current owners of Acorn Risc PC, A7000 and A7000+ computers.

The intention is to have a finalised release by the time of the Wakefield Show, though the practicalities of making a ROM release mean that it is likely to be a while after Wakefield before the ROM sets are actually available.

The price

The retail price of RISC OS 4 will be £120 inclusive of VAT and P&P and will include a CD with updates to the hard disc !Boot structure. This will also include a £10 dealer fitting voucher for anyone who is not confident about fitting the ROMs themselves. Note that to get all the benefits from RISC OS 4, you will need to transfer everything off your hard disc, reformat it and copy everything back on. This is only necessary if you wish to benefit from the long filenames, unlimited numbers of files in a directory and more efficient use of space on large discs.

RISCOS Ltd will be running a Registered Installers scheme for those organisations offering fitting services.

Andrew Rawnsley, RISCOS Ltd's technical director, explained the work that had been carried out on RISC OS 4 since they had obtained the source two weeks earlier. He said that a lot of bugs had been fixed, particularly in making the new Filecore module (supporting long filenames etc) much more stable. A very small number of new features had also been added.

What About the Future?

The next step in RISCOS Ltd's plan is to produce a version which doesn't require the machine it is running on to contain VIDC or IOMD, the proprietary video and memory/input/output control chips used in the Risc PC. This will make it much easier to produce new hardware on which RISC OS can run.

One of the problems that RISC OS is likely to be faced with over the next couple of years is the appearance of new ARM processors that do not support the 26 bit mode used extensively by current versions of the Operating System and provided on current chips for backwards compatibility with ARM 2 and 3. The next step in the plan is to migrate the OS to work in 32 bit mode, though this is likely to cause a lot of problems with software needing to be changed, or at the very least recompiled, before it will work in this mode.

And New Hardware?

Richard Jozefowski from Millipede Electronic Graphics stood up and gave a presentation about a new Risc PC motherboard that they are planning to produce. This will include a StrongARM soldered onto the board, a slot for an existing PC Card and a very interesting video specification. Millipede used a system based on Acorn kit for the graphics, sound and lighting control for ITV's recent series *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*

We are currently awaiting news of Interconnex's Peanut portable, now that the uncertainty over RISC OS development has been overcome.

In the meantime, Castle Technology are now producing A7000+ machines and it is hoped that they will also be in the position to start production of Risc PCs in the near future.

So Can This Really Secure The Future Of The RISC OS Platform?

The answer to that question really revolves around the continued support of users following six months of bad news and uncertainty. The mechanisms are now in place for not only delivering new versions of RISC OS but also to provide a diversified range of new hardware.

New software is also still being developed at as fast a rate as it has been over recent years, with Cerilica Vantage promising to be the next "Killer Application". However, without the continued support of the user community to provide a market for these products this will ultimately mean very little.
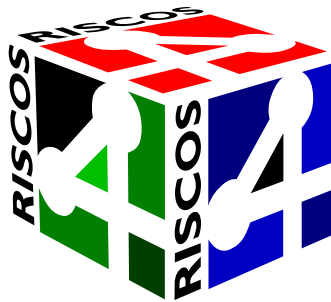
The future, as they say, is in your hands.

Mark Smith

See Us At The Shows

The ARM Club will have a stand at the following shows, taking place in May, June and July. If you're there, come along and introduce yourself.

WAKEFIELD SHOW 99

Saturday 15 May 10.00 - 17.00 and Sunday 16 May10.00 - 16.00

Thornes Park Athletic Stadium, Horbury Road, Wakefield.

Tel: 01924 379778 (evenings only)

Web: www.cybervillage.co.uk/acorn/wakefield/

ACORN EXPO 99

Saturday 5 June 10.00 - 17.00

Hotel Mercure, Buizerdlaan 10, Nieuwegein, Netherlands.

Tel/Fax: 071-408 03 39

Email: bigbenpr@nedernet.nl

Web: www.nedernet.nl/~bigben

ACORN SOUTHEAST SHOW *(Full details on page 67)*

Saturday 3 July 10.00 - 16.30

Alban Arena, Civic Centre, St Albans.

Tel/Fax 01707 390410

Email: acornshow@argonet.co.uk

Web: www.argonet.co.uk/acornshow/

THE RISCOS '99 SHOW

For preliminary details (subject to confirmation) see next page.

The RISC OS '99 Show

The ARM Club, in association with AAUG is organising a show to take place at Epsom Downs Racecourse in Surrey on Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st October 1999. The event is to be sponsored by Acorn User magazine and Spacetech.

This event will give anyone interested in RISC OS based computers the chance to see first hand the latest offerings from RISCOS Ltd and third party software and hardware developers. There will also be the opportunity to see presentations and demonstrations from key companies and individuals in the purpose built theatre. Furthermore, we expect a number of clubs and user groups to be represented giving visitors the ideal opportunity to find out what is happening in their local area.

This new event will be the natural successor to the Acorn World Show and will complement The Wakefield Show to provide a second large two-day event in the South of the country.

Epsom Downs Racecourse is close to the M25 and served by public transport to the nearby Tattenham Corner Station. The Show will be held on two levels in the Queen's Stand which has magnificent views over the racecourse and surrounding area.

The show will be open from 10am until 5pm on Saturday 30th October and from 10am until 4pm on Sunday 31st October. Entrance prices are being kept to a low £3.50 in advance and £4.50 on the door

Any organisation interested in exhibiting should contact us by email at riscos99@armclub.org.uk.

Please note that these are preliminary details, all subject to confirmation. There will be full information in the next issue of Eureka.

Acorn's Final Exit?

Just before this edition of Eureka went to the printers we received an announcement that seems to signal the firnal demise of Acorn. The company is expected to be broken up in a complex deal in the form of a takeover by an investment bank, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, which will give Acorn shareholders two ARM shares for every five Acorn shares they hold. As part of the deal, Pace Micro Technology will buy Acorn's set-top box business. A company headed by Acorn's chief executive, Stan Boland, with other senior Acorn management will buy Element 14 with the remaining silicon and software design part of the business. This will also include the Acorn brand name which, they say, they have no current plans to use. ARM have announced that they are not involved in these proposals.

The two companies most concerned with the continuation of Acorn-type computers, Castle Technology and RISC OS Ltd, have been in contact with each other and are not worried about the changing situation.

'Where there's change there's always opportunity.'

RISC OS Ltd told the Club that they had received no official comment from Acorn Computers plc or Element 14 but their solicitors were confident that their licence agreement will not be affected by the change of ownership of Element 14. Castle Technology said that their licence would also continue and they remained optimistic, taking the attitude that where there's change there's always opportunity.

Some companies, such as Castle Technology, may be considering whether products such as Acorn clones should now be promoted with their own name rather than Acorn's. But the general feeling seems to be a reluctance to lose the value of a well known name with an enthusiastic customer base. So the Acorn company may disappear but the name can live on.

This Week In History

In anticipation of the rapidly approaching millennium, well-respected primary education publishers Sherston have released This Week in History — the millennium resource pack. This package, intended for eight to

categories are covered, which are:

•Medicine and health
•Royalty and government
•Science and technology
•Battles and warfare
•Flight and rockets

As the year 2000 approaches, Andrew Weston looks back with a well illustrated survey of the events of the passing millennium on a new triple-format CD-ROM.

13-year-olds, comprises an extensive source of images and accompanying text relating to major historical events (mainly British) over the past 1,000 years.

The major aim of the package is to provide a resource of historical information that can be used in school topic work. Given the imminent arrival of a new millennium, it is likely that a great many schools will attempt some project work involving charting the progress of people, science and technology over the past 1,000 years or less, whether this be in written report form or as posters. Usefully, nine historical topic

•Surface transport
•Exploration
•Society and people
•Media and communication

One aspect of this wealth of information which will potentially be most attractive to teachers and parents (but also to interested non-parents like myself) is the accessibility of each historical event or set of events.

Information is available in three different ways: through a topics menu (with graphic icons representing the nine categories mentioned above), a calendar menu and a pop-up index box.
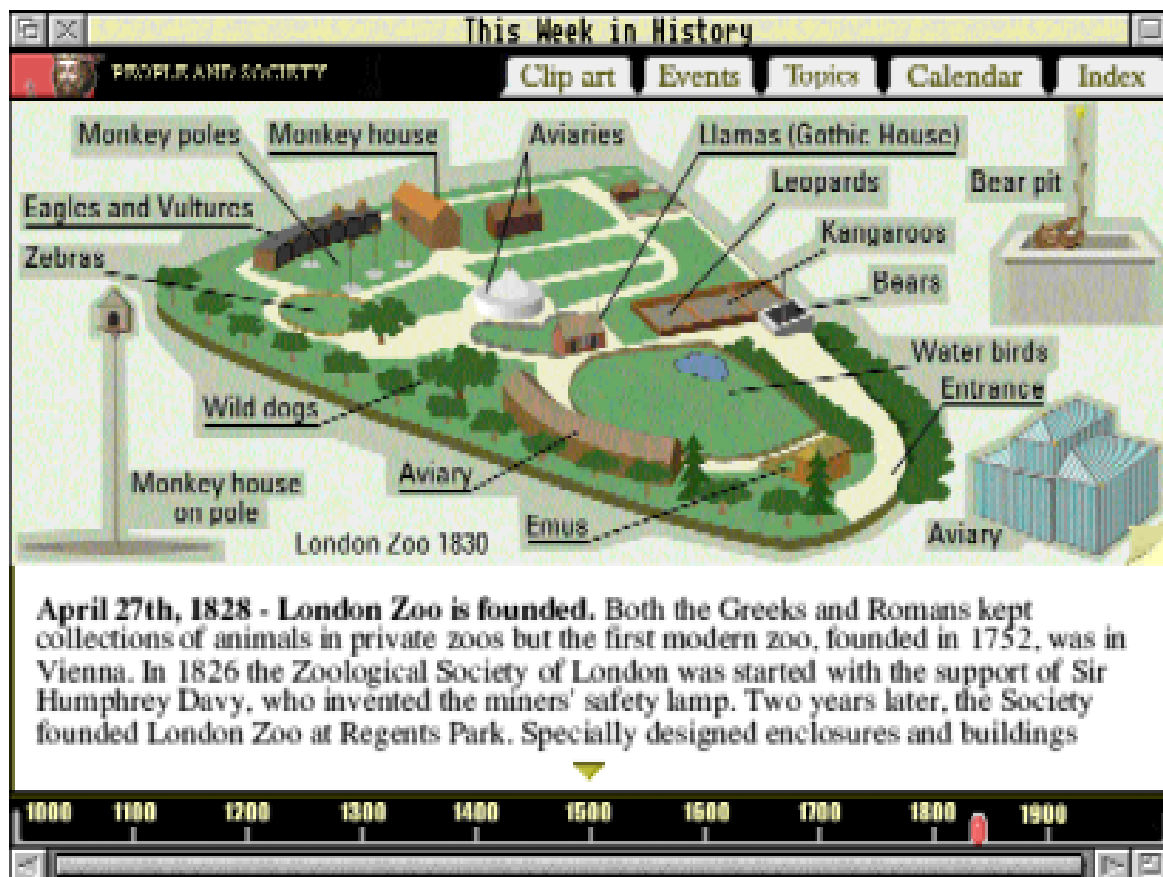
A look at London Zoo when it was founded in 1828.

The calendar menu presents a summarised view of the major events covered by the software that occurred in a chosen week of a chosen month. The index box provides a scrollable alphabetical listing of the individual historical events for which information is available.

Perhaps the calendar and index utilities are more useful in a classroom environment as they enable the pupil to research more specifically for events, although if a piece of work involved looking at a particular aspect of history such as the progress of land transport over the past millennium, the topic menu would provide an equally useful menu to the resources.

I found the topic menu especially interesting to browse through and I would recommend (as an adult user who is neither a parent nor a teacher) this package to anyone who would like to refresh their memory on key events and find out more about British

history in general. I found that the package is certainly an inspiration to do this. It was fascinating reading the description of the Battle of Hastings and the course of Voyager 2 to Jupiter and beyond.

The textual description for each event is often supplemented with additional, less crucial but usually equally as interesting, information. A good example would be the tapestry that survived the fire of London in 1666 which can be seen today to bear scorch marks inflicted by the flames!

However, the main purpose of the package is a resource of text and images. The images, which are assembled together onto each individual event information page, can be viewed as *thumbnails* through a quick click on a control tab on the display. From here, it is simply a matter of clicking on any image to save it. The file appears in a standard 'save as' dialogue box from where the icon can be dragged to a directory display. The same applies for the textual description of the event. Helpfully, and utilising this often overlooked ability of RISC OS, the save facility enables the file to be

dropped directly onto an appropriate application such as a word-processor or DTP package. Not so helpful perhaps is the choice of image formats. Although !Draw is the main clip-art image format supported by the software, bitmap images are available and are saved as JPEGs. This assumes that appropriate image conversion software is at hand and any requirement by an art-package for conversion would reduce pupil productivity to a certain degree. The free availability of !ChangeFSI with RISC OS machines however, prevents this from becoming a major obstacle.

The presentation of all this textual and graphical information in a single window without the need for complex menu-systems or key-presses makes This Week in History a highly manageable package for all, especially younger users.

Along with easy installation, an adequate instruction manual (truly not a lot needs explaining as the software is very intuitive) and eight pages of text explaining the use of the software in the classroom, This Week in History comprises an engrossing

William Harvey, whose work in the 16th century led to better understanding of human circulation.

and informative look into the past. A certain amount of interactivity is provided as well — supplementary pop-up maps, diagrams etc are also available by clicking on relevantly labelled images in the main display-window for a historical event. One can open up the human heart (as first studied by William Harvey in the 16th century) to see the inner workings!

The package does not claim to be a comprehensive account of millennium history but it can be used as a stimulus and basis for study into a topic or period. My only gripe (which is minor) is that a couple of

images are present without annotation highlighting their relevance, for example the nuclear reaction picture. It could be argued though, that this is not really required as the images could be used to give a document on a topic a more authentic feel even with only a basic comprehension of their relevance.

This Week in History is much more than a clip-art CD however, and can be used both for historical curriculum activities as well as other activities as Sherston imaginatively elaborate in the manual. The package left me with the impression that there is a lot of history about and I can't think of a better way for anyone to start discovering it!

This Week In History
Price: £40 + VAT
Site licence free
Supplier: Sherston Software Ltd
Angel House, Sherston
Malmesbury, Wilts SN16 OLH
Tel.: 01666 843200
Fax: 01666 843216
email: sales@sherston.co.uk
Web: www.sherston.com

EasyClip 2

First I must make a confession. I have just bought a PC magazine — I've never done it before, honest!

I must explain that I have no interest in the contents. I was seduced by the accompanying free CD-ROM which

Peter Jennings catalogues a vast new CD-ROM collection of clipart files with the latest version of EasyClip from Fabis.

promised more than 10,000 original clipart images. These turned out to be mostly children's paintings, or at least child-like sketches, but a 108MB "Photos" directory did make the £2·99 magazine worth buying.

Unfortunately, there was no catalogue and most of the images had been given meaningless numbers instead of names. Obviously a catalogue of thumbnails was needed for any of the subjects which I might want to use.

One of these was a very comprehensive collection of 949 animal pictures, which would obviously take time to catalogue and

would need a reliable program which could handle nine and half Megabytes of graphics.

My favourite PD thumbnail program could not do this in one go. So, enter EasyClip 2 , the latest version of *The Graphical Resources Management System* from Fabis.

EasyClip allows you to store your clipart images in a compacted form which can save between 35% and 60% of storage space. They can be accompanied by descriptive text, quickly recovered with a search facility, viewed in a slide show and, of course, catalogued as thumbnails which can be printed out as a visual index.

The graphics can optionally be left on their original source, making the program ideal for cataloguing CD-ROMs, which is what I wanted.
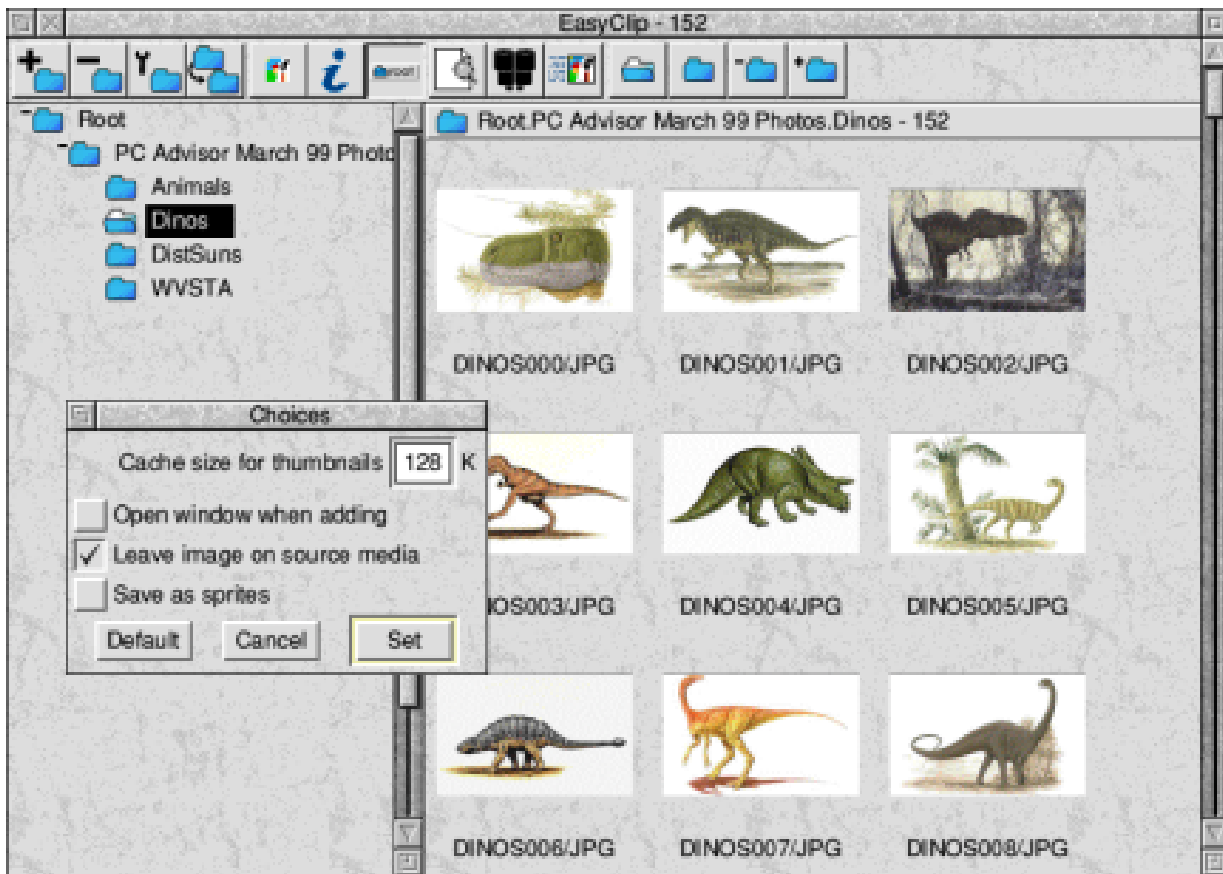
The Main Window, with groups and sub-groups on the left and thumbnail images on the right, and the Choices window.

The image types which EasyClip can handle are: Drawfiles, Sprites, ArtWorks, JPEG, GIF, TIFF, Translator Clear Files, WMF, PhotoCD, PCX, AIM, BMP, MacPaint, FITS, TGA — Targa Files. Fabis offers to add others, when possible, on request.

The software is accompanied by a comb-bound manual, so slim that even experienced computer users may be tempted to read it first. The program is very easy to use and the

manual will probably be left open at page four, where the toolbar icons are illustrated, for quick reference until the icons become familiar.

I installed the program on a Zip Disc which I decided to use to store the clip art catalogues I would be making.

Loading the program puts a blue capital 'C' on the icon bar — probably the most minimalist icon you will have on there. Clicking on this opens the main window which has the
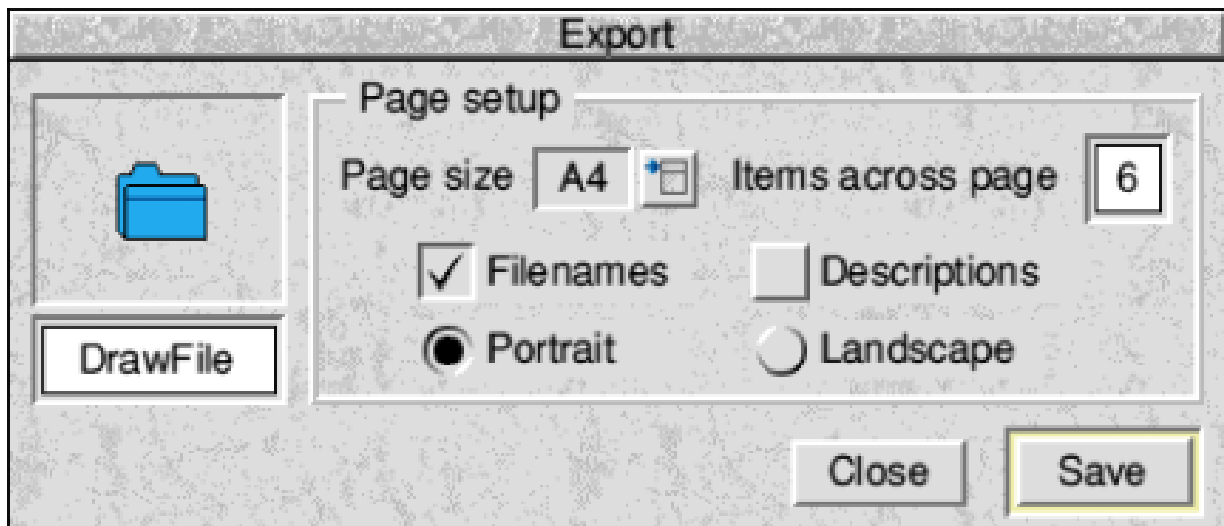
The Export window provides pages of thumbnails for printing. The setting for the number of images to the line automatically adjusts their size.

toolbar across the top and the rest divided into two scrollable section, for groups and images respectively.

At this stage both sections contain only the *Root* directory. Other directories and sub-directories can be created and images dragged in, either to be physically added or just to be stored as thumbnails with a reference to their actual source to allow the originals to be accessed. The thumbnails are displayed in the right-hand section of the window and an image details window opened to allow up to three lines of text to be entered and displayed with the thumbnail when this option is used.

A complete directory can be dragged in and EasyClip will deal with all the images in it and in any sub-directories, combining them all into a single group. This is very efficient but It would be good to have the option of having the sub-directories made into separate groups with their own original file names.

I found that, with my StrongARM Risc PC 600 and ancient, slow, double-speed CD-ROM drive, 100 images totalling just under 2MB and left on the CD-ROM source took six minutes to be processed into thumbnails. I left the program working efficiently on its own on the 949 Animals (9·6MB), which took EasyClip an hour, while I took a meal break.

A *Progress* window can be loaded from the icon bar icon to tell you which image is being processed so you can keep track of which stage has been reached. If you are doing this it helps to keep the clip art images directory open otherwise it become a matter of guessing from the file name how near the end EasyClip has reached.

A picture can be selected from its thumbnail image and dragged into a suitable application or document. If the graphic has not been stored by EasyClip it will name and ask for the original source if it is not present.

The thumbnails can be printed out in sheets from an *Export* window which offers a choice of portrait or landscape format, whether filenames and/or descriptions should be included and the number of images to be in each row. This latter figure automatically adjusts the size of the images and the number of rows to the page, which is saved as a Draw file. The default figure of six gives eight rows, to make a total of 48 images, on an A4 page. This operation took less than two minutes to produce the 20 pages of Animals pictures.

An option for the easy addition of text, such as a heading and page numbers, would be useful as there is enough space to do this. Fabis say they are considering adding this facility but, in the meantime, I set up a pre-headed page in Ovation Pro to drag the Draw files in.

To summarise: EasyClip 2 offers a simple, flexible and efficient way to classify and catalogue a growing collection of clipart files, with the option to store them for quick retrieval.

Having used some good PD programs to make thumbnails in the past, I did have some doubts about whether a commercial one could be worth buying. At its very reasonable price, EasyClip 2 definitely is.

EasyClip2

Price: £30:
Supplier: Fabis Computing
48 Charles Street
Church Gresley, Swadlincote
Derbyshire DE119QD
Tel: 01283 552761
Email: info@fabis.demon.co.uk
Web: www.fabis/demon.co.uk

Got A Problem? — Help Is At Hand

Helping users of the Acorn platform is what The ARM Club is all about and there can't be a more direct way of helping than our Technical Support Service. It doesn't matter if the problem is simple or

have around a hundred man years' experience of being shut away in a room fiddling with stuff! When the team has chipped in answers our Mr Always-Online, Tom Hughes, sends a summary back to the member.

Got a computer problem? There's no need to worry. You have all the Club's experts at your service, as our Technical Help Coordinator, David Ruck, explains.

mind bendingly complex; if a member is stuck, they are stuck, and we are here to help.

It is very rewarding for our support team to get people back up and running. It justifies all those years spent fiddling with systems and software if some of that knowledge can be put to use.

There are two main ways that members enquiries reach us: the quickest and best these days is via an email to support@armclub.org.uk. This is delivered straight to our team of expert spods which, between us, have owned just about every piece of Acorn hardware and software and

The second route is via conventional mail, which is just as important to us because if you don't have an Internet connection you won't have access to other useful sources of information such as the Acorn newsgroups.

It does take a little longer to handle your enquires this way because we offer you a *Freepost* service where all the Club's mail goes to our Secretary, Chris Price, who then sorts out it into membership, products and technical enquires and sends it on to the appropriate Committee member.

For the technical questions that' s me and I either answer myself or bring in the team for additional advice before

sending a reply together with any programs or data on floppy which may be of use.

We can't guarantee to answer everything you may ask but we'll try our best. A few examples of questions we have had in the past year are featured below.

StrongARM

One of our most common enquiries is whether a certain piece of software that doesn't work on the StrongARM is fixed by our StrongGuard product. We have a large database of games that have been tested but sometimes there have been several releases of a game and not all of them behave the same way. I've only ever really been into *Elite* and *Doom* but our team seem to have played just about everything going and usually know the answer.

It's not just games that have problems on the StrongARM. Mr A D Clark enquired about WorraCAD and Mr P Agar asked about CADMust, two popular CAD programs which are being supported by their creators but crash with nasty errors when run on a StrongARM. I wrote back and was able to confirm that WorraCAD worked with StrongGuard but unfortunately CADMust didn't. But a few weeks later one of our team tracked down some patches on the Internet which I downloaded from the Internet and sent to Mr Agar on a floppy disc.

You might worry that there is a conflict of interest in recommending out own product in cases like this, because some of the StrongARM incompatibilities may only occur when loading some programs and if you don't need the extra games compatibility facilities StrongGuard is a bit of an expensive solution.

To reassure you, I always try with some of the PD programs which turn the StrongARM cache off around loading the program. If this works I also try to check as many features of the program to see if there are any other problems and only if StrongGuard fixes these will I recommend it over a PD solution.

Printing problems

Printing often causes even the most experienced users hours of headaches, and we have been able to

pass on hints and tips for topics such as printing sheets of labels and setting the correct text margins on the printer to prevent one line being printed each page.

One of the main problems however is finding the correct driver for a new printer. New printer drivers have been written and these often require a newer version of !Printers than might be installed on your machine. This is so common that The ARM Club has put together a couple of floppy discs containing the latest version of !Printers and all the new drivers from Acorn and Xemplar are available from our stand at shows or via post for the small fee of £2.

Mike Hobbs of Xemplar has given us some invaluable help in identifying which drivers are suitable for the multitude of new models appearing on the market.

Windows95

The prize for the enquiry from the most unusual location has to go to Dan Fyles who emailed us from Unity High School in Khartoum, Sudan. He had a problem getting Windows95 to work on a PC card in his StrongARM

Risc PC. We managed to determine that he had two problems: first was an old copy of Aleph One's !PC software (you need version 2.00 of PCpro or later to use Win95) but the second was the more serious.

Certain models of Risc PC have a timing problem that can occur with a StrongARM, PC card and two SIMMs. Dan was able to use his system by putting the ARM710 card back in until he could arrange to send the machine to Reflex Electronics in England for a timing fix.

!65Host

Lastly, just show you that we don't always know more than our members, John Crane wrote to us asking if we knew any way of getting the BBC emulator !65Host to work on a StrongARM Risc PC.

This is something that I was annoyed about when I upgraded to a StrongARM and found I could no longer run a lot of the little BBC programs I had written years ago.

I wrote back saying we had it on good authority that !65Host would never work on the StrongARM.

!StrongGuard certainly didn't help for this one. The only thing I knew of was a new 6502 emulator by Warm Silence Software which is SA compatible and allows many old Beeb games to work.

Five months later John wrote back saying:

"Whenever anyone tells me something is not possible, I must admit I love proving them wrong.

Note my enquiry regarding use of 65Host on my StrongARM Rise PC. You recommend 6502em by WSS and I do already have that. However. I seem to have various 'Club' discs (EUG, 8BS) which do not run satisfactorily with this but behave impeccably with !65Host which was the reason for my request.

I've enclosed a patch which is mentioned on the PD page of Christmas 98 Acorn User (!pcr13). If you patch !65Host with this instead of using Host Patch, it will work with the StrongARM at full speed. In some cases too fast!! It is then possible to reset !65Host from within by Holding down Ctrl and pressing Scroll Lock

twice. Anyway I thought the info might be of use for the Technical Vaults at The ARM CIub."

Thanks John! I've now got all my beeb programs working and I've been able to pass on that patch to many other people.

So, if you've got a problem, don't forget that your membership includes the free help service and, if you've found a solution to any tricky problems yourself, why not pass them on to others via the pages of Eureka.

Want to join the team? Even if you haven't got the expertise for our Technical Support Service you can still become an active member of the Club in other ways. We often need help with small jobs which can be done at home when you have the odd hour or so to spare.
Contact:
chairman@armclub.org.uk

Also, we always welcome articles for Eureka, to interest computer users of all levels.
Contact: eureka@armclub.org.uk

PublishArt 98

PublishArt, which has been on the Acorn scene since 1994, probably needs no introduction to most of our members as we have reviewed two previous versions (in Eureka 18 and 22) but the first point to get across to

quickpaper, rules, stencils, surrounds, symbols and textures.

These are self-explanatory except for *quickpapers*, which are ready-made A4 backgrounds, complete with

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PublishArt gets updated with a new set of resources for Web page design. Peter Jennings sees what this latest version offers for DTP and Internet users.

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those unfamiliar with it is that this is *not* an ordinary collection of clip art pictures.

It modestly describes itself as *The Ultimate Graphical Resource* and probably the best idea of what it provides comes from a look at the subjects covered. The 19 main design categories *(see opposite page)* are: animations, backdrops, borders, bullets, buttons, corners, designs, drop caps, headers and footers, highlights icons, margins, patterns,

Rules come in 99 different styles

frames and headings, ready to be customised with your own text.

This latest version has been brought up to date with present computer requirements and now has a second set of resources, for Internet Web sites, in bitmap format in addition to the vector graphics previous supplied for destop publishing, posters and similar uses.

The CD-ROM is now compatible with both RISC OS and Windows so even a pessimistic who may doubt the future of RISC OS computers can buy it confident of still being able to use the software if a change of machines does become necessary!

Backdrops   **Quickpaper**   **Icons**

Symbols

Patterns   **Drop Caps**   **Margins**

Borders   **Textures**

Animations   **Buttons**   **Highlights**

Corners   **Surrounds**

Headers & Footers   **Rules**

Designs   **Stencils**   **Bullets**
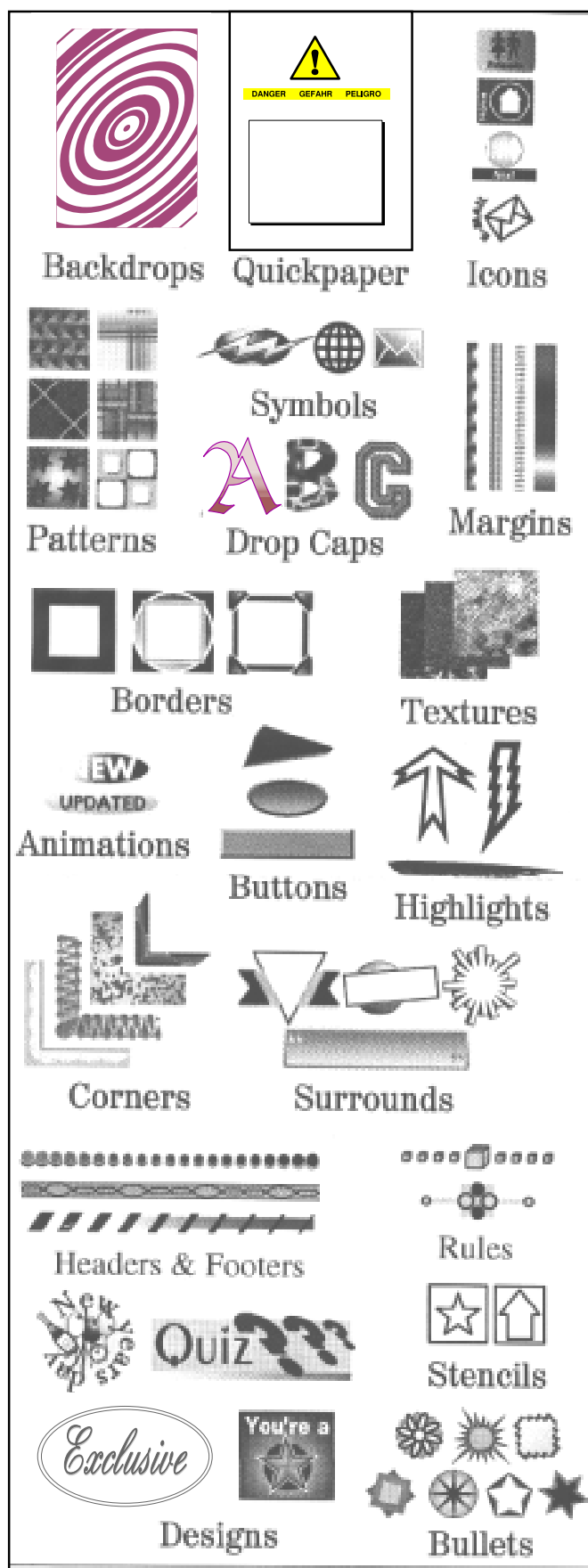
The Windows compatibility means that the DTP resources, previously duplicated as Draw and ArtWorks files, are now also in WMF format. The Internet resources contain JPEG and GIF files. All these formats can be used on Acorn computers without conversion, except WMF which is, of course, not needed when there is a choice of Draw and ArtWorks.

There are some other differences from the previous issue, PublishArt 3. Extra graphics have been added to the backdrops, bullets, designs, drop caps, surrounds and symbols. The *Extras* directory now contains some bonus textures instead of the SmartDTP collections and demos of other commercial software.

The DTP resources now total more than 3,250 designs and the Internet resources more than 3,180 with 12,100 variations. There are 15 design categories in each collection.

Some of these are duplicated in both DTP and Internet categories but with

Examples from the 19 main design categories show how PublishArt differs from a clip art collection.

DANGER   GEFAHR   PELIGRO

*A quickpaper —
just add the words*

There is some useful guidance in it for DTP work but little on Web design.

I found the manual and index both rather irritating to use as the the manual pages lack any links and it was necessary to use the browser tools to keep returning to an appropriate menu page.

The index pages of thumbnail picures, most of which have only three rows, do have links but the buttons are at the top. Only two of the three rows are visible at a time, which means having to scroll down to view the third one and then up again to move onto the next page.

some differences in that some of the Web site versions are animated and others come in a choice of clear or white backgrounds and in up to three sizes for each image.

Illustrated index

An Internet Web browser is necessary to view the illustrated index and the manual but you could get by without RTFM (reading the fine manual). Although it is full of interesting hints, tips and ideas it is by no means essential reading because the use of the resources really depends on imagination rather than instruction.

Four of the 302 designs

Grand Autumn Ball

**The Old Town Hall
Sherwood**

**25th September 1999
8pm to Midnight**

You can brighten up that boring old poster with an appropriate backdrop

The graphics themselves are, as always, good quality and all very useable. There are none of the rough sketches, which appear to have been dashed off as fillers, which are found in some other (usually PC) graphics collections.

It is probably not worth upgrading from PublishArt 3 unless you need the new Internet resources but if you haven't got the earlier version and you use graphics for almost any purpose this CD-ROM can be recommended for the great variety of resources it provides.

SPECIAL OFFER
The special launch price of £19·95 is still available for members of The ARM Club.

PublishArt 98
Price: £30 *(Special offer £19·95)
Site licence: Free
Supplier: Smart DTP
Flat A, Edgehill,
Eaton Bank, Duffield, Belper,
Derbyshire DE56 4BH
Tel/Fax: 01332 842803
Email: parrygroup@intecc.co.uk
Web:
www.intecc.co.uk/users/parrygroup/

101 Amazing Things To Do

It looks inviting, with its zippy title and compact, colourful presentation in a slim, hard-backed instruction book. The whole package has an air of quality. The CD-ROM lives neatly inside the front cover and the back cover boldly declares *"...an*

Although it does need 15MB of free disc space to store copies of its files, the installation is otherwise straightforward and a parent or busy teacher would have no difficulty in setting it up for a young novice. The book has an exciting opener:

Rilla Paterson finds 101 Amazing Things To Do With Your Computer in a book and CD from Kingfisher Publications using software designed by TAG Developments.

invaluable resource..." from the Times Educational Supplement and *"...fun leaping from page to page..."* from the PC Guide.

The package is described as a guide to creative computing for children aged seven+. With powerful hardware the CD can be run on Acorn, PC or Mac. The CD and book are intended to be used together, presenting an interesting challenge to the publisher: there is plenty of software on the market aptly suited to junior children, but could the book intended to accompany it be used as easily by this age group?

"Computers are amazing! With the right software, your PC can be almost anything you want it to be: an incredible painting set, a magical time machine, a spacecraft, an orchestra, or even your very own TV studio!"

Wow!! You' ve got the CD in the drive all cranked up and raring to go, so is it going to do all these things for you? Er, well, not exactly. The book goes on to make recommendations about the kind of software that one *can* buy —such as ClarisWorks, Microsoft Publisher, Microsoft Flight Simulator —which *will* do all these things for you. Oops! "Hold on a minute," I hear

you cry, "I' ve just forked out 15 quid for "An AMAZING Digital Rainy Day CD and now they' re telling me I need a whole lot of other stuff!" Damp squib number one.

So what do you get for your money? Well, the book is actually quite informative and there is much to explore in the CD which, although not all that closely related to some of the book' s content is nevertheless worthy of closer examination.

Rilla's self portrait made with the kit of photofit parts. Recognise the suspect?

In a nutshell, it contains seven activities, each of which leads to the child' s own creation: a greetings card maker, a snakes and ladders game, a histogram/pie graph maker, a message coder/decoder, an addition/subtraction reckoner, a photofit picture builder and a list of descriptive records.

Each creation can be stored on a floppy disc which, along with a second disc, can be given to another user to see or to play. All the activities operate along the same lines and, once the user gets the hang of the

jargon, they are straightforward and entertaining enough for the novice, though I fear a seven or eight-year-old would soon tire of the repetitive style.

Now for a closer look. Take, for example, the photofit activity. The choices are self-explanatory; the user clicking on coloured icons, step by step building a photofit face. A head appears and you choose in turn your favoured skin colour, hair colour and style, eyes with or without specs, various noses and mouths until you have the photofit image of your choice. The result is a funny face, quite amusing I suppose but not

You can make your own background for snakes and ladders — if you know how to use Paint

exactly side-splitting. You can add it to your list and give it a name, but saving in the conventional way is rather complicated for a junior, since it involves typing in the full pathname adfs::4.$.Filename. Printing is accomplished by clicking the menu mouse button, not a problem if you possess intuitive know-how, but no references to printing by this method are made in the book, I suspect because it is written with PC users in mind. Instead they advise printing from the screen, with an invitation to "follow the user guide that came with your computer" —not the most user-friendly approach for the junior child.

The game is quite fun to make. It is really a variation of snakes and ladders. You choose a style of board for your background, and then drag-and-drop a choice of seven graphics from a variety of themes. Having

planted some hidden hazards, you click to spin the die and drag your chosen counters along, square by square. If you land on a hazard an endearing little voice shouts at you to miss a turn, return to the beginning, go back three spaces and so on.

The winner is suitably congratulated. You can make your own background —provided you can use Paint —but to do this you have to quit the program and reload, having saved your background under a file name that their software will recognise, rather a complicated route.

The *games* —like everything else in this package referred to in the plural —are in reality all the same. The differences are in the choices the child makes of backgrounds, clip art and hazards. With the greeting card maker the child can choose between four borders, Happy Birthday, Happy Christmas, Happy Mother' s Day, Get Well Soon and Best Wishes in three fonts, and six bits of clip art. Not mind-boggling and not very original, but adequate for a rainy day.

Having made your greetings card, snakes and ladders game, photofit

picture, and so on, what' s next? Well, you can print them out —if you know how —and send them on disc to your friends, but again it' s a bit of a route march. Having made and saved your creation you click on a *Make Disc* button. You are instructed to insert a blank formatted floppy and your work is saved onto it. You then have to create a second disc with part of the program copied onto it and this can only be done by quitting the program. Each piece of work saved has to go on a separate floppy, so by all means send your exciting coded message to a friend to decipher but you can only send one at a time!

Mouse control

Regarding educational content, the exercises were a good introduction to mouse control, and the repetitive nature of the creative activities couldn' t fail to build confidence in the most timid first-time user. Children could very quickly and easily make colourful graphs of, say, the various heights or weights of their friends and the reckoner has a rather natty way of demonstrating addition and subtraction by asking the child to choose something to save up for and then asking how much money the

car

cost   £9000.00

so far   £8100.75

need   £899.25

digital reckoner

add money

take money

finished
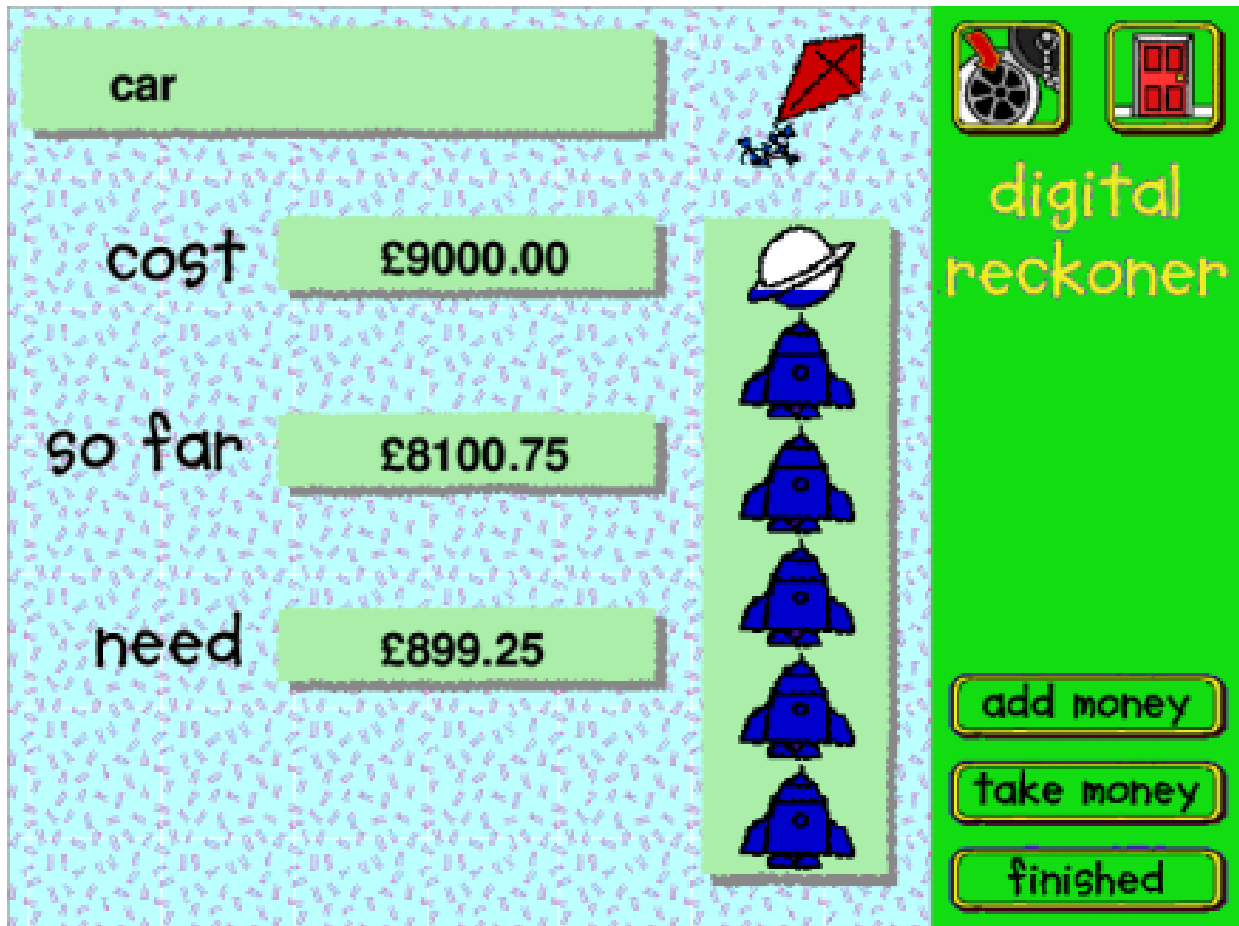
Type in the cost and how much you've saved. The reckoner works out how much you need and tells you with a cheery voice when you are "nearly there!"

child already has. A little graph appears showing how much money is still needed. It does the sums for them, though.

The software comes with a good supply of drawfiles such as templates for CD and cassette covers which a teacher would find useful and also a selection of coloured clip art ready to drag-and-drop into other packages. But this is really where its usefulness ends. I think the average seven plus child would gobble this lot up in no time and lose interest unless the images produced at the end of the session could be used productively and the teacher would need some imagination here.

Although ideas are available from the book on how to use the clip art, you would need the word processing and publishing software to accept the files

and the knowledge and skill to use these other packages. The following statement appears in association with an instruction on how to make use of a CD cover template supplied with the clip art: *"Use your paint package to personalise your designs … and remember to rotate the text on the back and sides of your sleeve so that you can read it."*

Now I, for one, find the standard paint package supplied with my Acorn quite tricky to use and it took me a while to master it. One-liners like these are all over the place. They talk about using screen shots to save and print pictures *'from any CD, game or computer program"* and — incredibly —just tell you to *".. use Paint' s snapshot feature. See the user guide that came with your computer."* In the classroom? They must be kidding. Another suggestion reads *'See if your school has a scanner you could use".*

Who is this book written for? Do the publishers think that juniors will know their way instinctively around the plethora of programs to which they refer? Moreover, do they think that parents will have the ability or that teachers will have the time to work these things out? People who use scanners to entertain themselves on a home computer are unlikely to be turned on by snakes and ladders.

My guess is that Kingfisher have tried to produce a book with universal appeal about how to use a computer and TAG Developments have been wheeled in to supply some software. It is unfortunate that the two do not marry up, because taken individually they do, in fact, have something to offer.

The software is entertaining enough for a junior at a loose end on a rainy day and the book contains much information of interest for the young adult, whether on Acorn, PC or Mac.

101 Amazing Things To Do
With Your Computer
Price: £14·99 +£5·50 post +VAT
Supplier: TAG Developments Ltd
Dept PRI02, Freepost SEA 1562
25 Pelham Road, Gravesend
Kent DA11 0BR
Tel: 0800 591262
Fax: 01474 537887
Email: sales@tagdev.co.uk
Web: www.tagdev.co.uk

Have A Healthy Psion

It would seem that battery life reported by Series 5 owners varies quite drastically. Some people have complained that they only get three to four hours' worth. This is perhaps because you're using 'normal' cells (or what's even worse, NiCad

Toby Smith yet again drivels on about why small isn't automatically simple, beginning with a look at the best batteries to use to keep your Psion active.

rechargeables). Alkalines should give you somewhere around 18 hours' life, even with occasional backlight use, though brands do seem to vary a bit.

We suggest fitting alkalines as they have the additional advantages that they're less likely to leak and they take longer to die, giving you more warning of needing a battery change.

I'd personally recommend getting a mains adapter for when you are back at your desk, especially considering the extra drain of linking to your desktop computer, as it will save valuable battery hours later on when out and about.

Managing CF discs

As recommended on the flash SSDs on the Series 3 range, it makes sense to keep large (and unchanging) applications on a Series 5's Compact Flash (D:) disc and dynamic documents (agenda, data, spreadsheet etc) on the Internal (C:) disc. In theory CF discs can be used in just the same way as internal memory, but it only takes a moment's battery stoppage (quite common if you let your main batteries fall below 2.2V) and you risk the whole disc being corrupted.

Be kind, be gentle

Your Psion cost the best part of £400 so treat it accordingly, with 'kid gloves'. Be kind to your screen as well; try to resist stabbing at it with your finger.

If you still want to avoid getting the pen out, try using the back of your fingernail, especially the little finger,

which is usually fairly muck-free. Try to clean dust from your screen regularly as it only takes a small speck of dust lodged between the pen and the LCD to scratch it permanently.

When opening and closing the case, be gentle, don't just treat it like a spectacles case, snapping it open and shut. Doing this increases the strain on the mechanical parts (hinges, ribbon cables etc) and shortens their life.

Is Your Top Bit Set?

Shift-Control-C will usually bring up a *point and shoot* table of accented and other special characters for easy insertion, in dialogue boxes, edit windows and so on. Alternately, if you know the ASCII code for the symbol you want, hold the Control key down and type the three digit code *et viola!*

Program Listings (not the Radio Times)

Find out what programs are running by pressing *Control* and *System* (the orange bit in the bottom left corner of the screen button-bar) together. Bringing up the task list and selecting

from there can be a time saver when dealing with running third party applications. Note that typing the first letter of a program's name will go to it in the list and repeated presses of the same key will take you to other programs starting with the same letter etc. *Control-Function-System* can also be a useful combination to remember as it cycles between all the running programs in turn, a bit like Alt-Tab on certain other Operating Systems (like RISC OS, given certain PD applications, of course)

And as usual — *back it up!*

Don't just think about it, *do* it. Now. If you back up often to a PC or similar, you'll be covered against the unexpected. If you back up to CF disc, make sure you *don't* keep the CF disc *in* the machine, for obvious reasons!

Backup as often as you practically can. Active users should make it a part of their weekly routine. If you're going to keep lots of valuable information on there, don't get caught without it!

That's all folks!

Cameras For Computer Users

Computer users are very aware of the drastic changes they have made in our life and work in a comparatively few years. One of the activities which is now being completed transformed by them is photography. The long, tedious, business of developing and fixing films and prints is fast being replaced by cameras which make digital images which can be manipulated and reproduced on home computers. Darkrooms are disappearing.

Digital cameras still have some way to go before they can entirely take over. Until recently all the affordable ones could produce little more than snapshots (although these are fine for Web sites as computer screens do not have the high definition of a good quality photograph). To reach the standard of a 35mm camera you would have had to be prepared to spend something like £10,000.

However, in the last month or so digital cameras capable of producing images of more than two million pixels have started coming onto the market at prices below £1,000. That's still expensive unless you are a real enthusiast (although cheaper than a good computer) but it does show how quickly and steeply prices are falling.

Digital photography looks set to become one of the biggest and most important uses for home computers and we have in this issue the first article of what we hope will be a frequent series on the subject for RISC OS users.

There are comparatively few experts on digital photography among camera users and none with any great length of experience. So we begin with an account of how one of our members went digital, just over a year ago, and gained his knowledge the hard way.

We will be very glad to hear from anyone else who uses a digital camera or other equipment, whether experienced or novice.

Getting Into Digital Photography

As a present to ourselves, my wife and I bought an Olympus C820L digital camera at the Open Day in Merton, March 1998, from Spacetech. Luckily the cost had dropped £200 that weekend! Since then prices have fallen a lot more with

Eric Dobson details his move into digital photography last year, with some handy tips for anyone following his example and some requests for advice.

a much wider choice of cameras. Articles in RISC User and Acorn User were very useful at the time in helping to decide what to get.

We have a Risc PC 700, OS3.6 with 2MB VRam & 20MB DRam, 406MB hard disc for downloading and processing the photographs taken. Downloading the images uses Spacetech's PhotoLink with the AC adaptor to save the batteries. This was only the start of paying out money!

Operation and use

It is a neat compact camera, easy to carry and use. We have still not tried all its functions! If buying today I would get the compact version with zoom. The extra cost is worth it. The higher specification is now cheaper than when we bought the C820L.

The removable SmartMedia cards used to hold the JPEG images are tiny, 45mm by 37mm and 1mm thick, so are easy to carry around. These prices are also dropping.

The C820L can produce two image sizes, standard and high quality HQ, typically average sizes of the JPEGs are 55K and 140K respectively.

Currently the largest usable card is 8MB size, holding some 120 standard photos, with 2MB and 4MB card sizes also available.

The SmartMedia cards are reusable after downloading the last set of photos taken but the actual life of a card is not currently known.

The shutter release time delay of about a half second takes getting used to, as does the seven seconds wait while the image is processed within the camera and stored.

The camera has flash, red eye and no flash selections, a 12 seconds time delay, and being able to delete a shot by viewing it on the LCD display is very convenient.

However the LCD monitor on the back of the camera uses up the batteries fast so having an AC adaptor is essential to save on batteries costs (and to avoid the irritating cut-out). Assuming that we have access to mains electricity in most places we go to, it is easiest to take a number of photos and then view them afterwards at leisure to delete what are surplus. In England I use rechargeable batteries, they need frequent recharging but work satisfactorily.

Downloading & image storage

The time to download from the camera with PhotoLink to a *thumbnail clipboard* is quite fast. Downloading the full images is not too slow, but with a large number on

a SmartCard I go off and do something else!

With the JPEG image sizes (standard 55K, HQ 140K) and more photos being taken than with a standard camera since the SmartCard can be continually reused, storage problems arose soon after we started using the camera since the cost of taking photos is nil!

My 406MB HD was going to fill up quickly so I had to look at storage methods and there followed a long discussion with David Holden of APDL. I finally decided on a SyQuest EzFlyer using an Acorn SCSI expansion card which David was offering at a reasonable price. Removable discs can hold 220MB on each disc corresponding to 4,000 standard JPEGs. This means that I now also have backup for the hard disc.

Displaying images

Having got the hundreds of images, what can be done with them? Among the options are:

(a) Single display through ChangeFSI. This takes approximately 12 secs for a standard image, 35 secs for HQ. It is tedious and not very practical. Display times are different with different computers and memory size and depending on how the computer is set up.

(b) After I had drafted this, my wife commented that dropping a HQ JPEG into Draw (for printing) displayed the photo in less than two seconds! It was still not practical though.

(c) Before getting the camera I had a vague idea about how I might display them. *SlideShow* comes with the A7000 and Risc PC in the *Images* directory and uses stored JPEG images to show them sequentially, so why not make use of it?

After a lot of trial and error (and not knowing anything about WIMP) I managed to find out how to put images into the application. I have now modified it to make it more useful as a slide show.

So, what can now be done using SlideShow, and anything else provided on the Risc PC?

(1) Using Draw, Paint and ChangeFSI a slideshow can be built up

interspersing text, maps etc with the photos to add descriptions and explanations.

(2) The display times for the text and for the images can be preset. However note that the time to display the images depends on what memory is available.

On my PC700 the minimum time for each image is two seconds and I can change this to say 10 secs for text and five secs for the picture but on a Junior School's A7000 the basic time increases to 30 secs. (Perhaps someone with the knowledge can write about the complexities of displaying images).

(3) Image lightening or darkening by using the gamma correction in ChangeFSI is normally acceptable. Colours are generally good if a reasonable range of colours exist in the original photo but with just greens, such as forests, the resulting image colours are poor.

(4) Magnifying part of the original photo can be done by taking a Paint snapshot of the zoomed JPEG. It is then converted back into a JPEG as

*Some of the digital pictures. The originals are, of course, in colour.*

the Paint file is huge. HQ photos magnify very well.

(5) Text is inserted into a photo by dropping it into Draw, writing the text in any font and colour and then taking a Paint snapshot before changing back to a JPEG.

(6) To add extra images from normal photographs, maps etc for the slideshow, I produced a makeshift setup in a north facing conservatory. I then bought a camera stand — more cost but easier! It is tricky eliminating reflections with glossy photos but works with careful use of a black card surround. The camera casing itself reflects and needs shielding.

This uses the close up facility in the C820L for 20cm to 30cm distances and the LCD as a viewer for an HQ photo.

(7) Without a zoom on the C820L, I use my old Olympus SLR camera with 135mm attachment (when I do not mind carrying the weight around) for more distant photos and then take a close up photograph. I did this in New Zealand with a snow covered Mount Cook 55Km away and it was
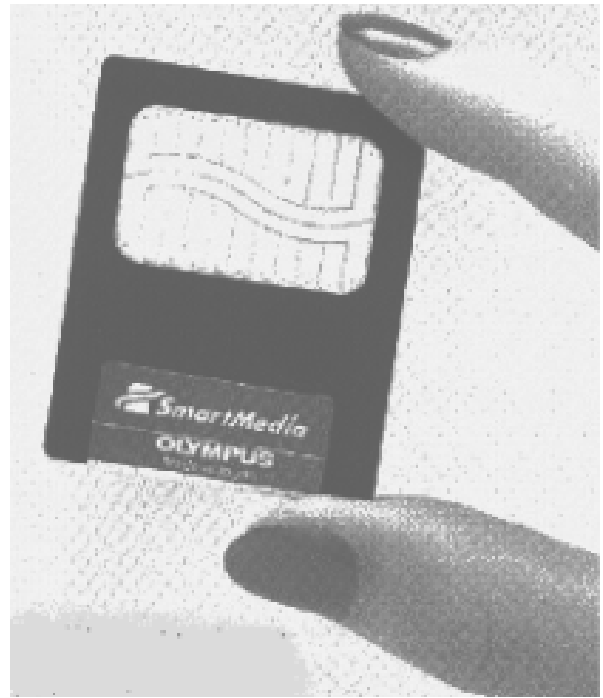
The SmartMedia card

surprisingly successful. For middle distance, an HQ photo followed by magnifying and a Paint snapshot works well.

In the modified *!SlideShow*, the !Run file has to be changed to set the path to the stored images. These are in two directories [00-49] and [50-99] so are put in their own named directory together with the modified !SlideShow. The !RunImage file also has to be opened to define the number of images and the times for image display. This only works with !Zap, not with !Edit. I have produced two versions using either up to 50 images or up to 100 images.

Working with the images and SlideShow within the EzFlyer freezes the EzFlyer regularly. This also occurs sometimes when accessing individual images. Something goes wrong with the links between the hard disc, the screen and the EzFlyer but what? Then, for no obvious reason everything will work and continue for hours. Advice from anyone with experience would be welcome.

In working with the images I use 16 million colours and 800x600 resolution. With 32,000 colours and 1024x768 resolution there seems to be no difference in the end result and I ultimately need 800x600 images output from ChangeFSI for SlideShow.

Sometimes the ChangeFSI JPEG output from a Paint snapshot fails to run and a new snapshot has to be taken. This appears to be associated with the width by height relationship in some way.

I have used my conservatory 'studio' to copy old box camera prints of a 1935 Silver Jubilee street party in East London. The resulting JPEGs are incredibly good.

On an A5000 (for our grand daughter), ChangeFSI output to Mode 28 Paint files are put into a copy of *Carousel* by Alan Wrigley from the RISC User disc of May 1994 and give quite good results.

The major problems are the large number of floppies needed to transfer the files and the low capacity hard discs for storage on early Archimedes.

With the April Acorn User disc has just come WBModules which allows !KwikJpeg on the March disc to run. A JPEG is now displayed instantly!

The Olympus 820 model has now been replaced by the C830L, which has 1280x960 resolution and a 2x digital zoom. The camera has the same external appearance. -Ed.

Olympus Camedia C830L
Price: £399·99 inc 4MB card & VAT
Supplier: Spacetech Ltd
1 The Courtyard
Southwell Business Park
Portland, Dorset DT5 2NQ
Tel: 01305 822753
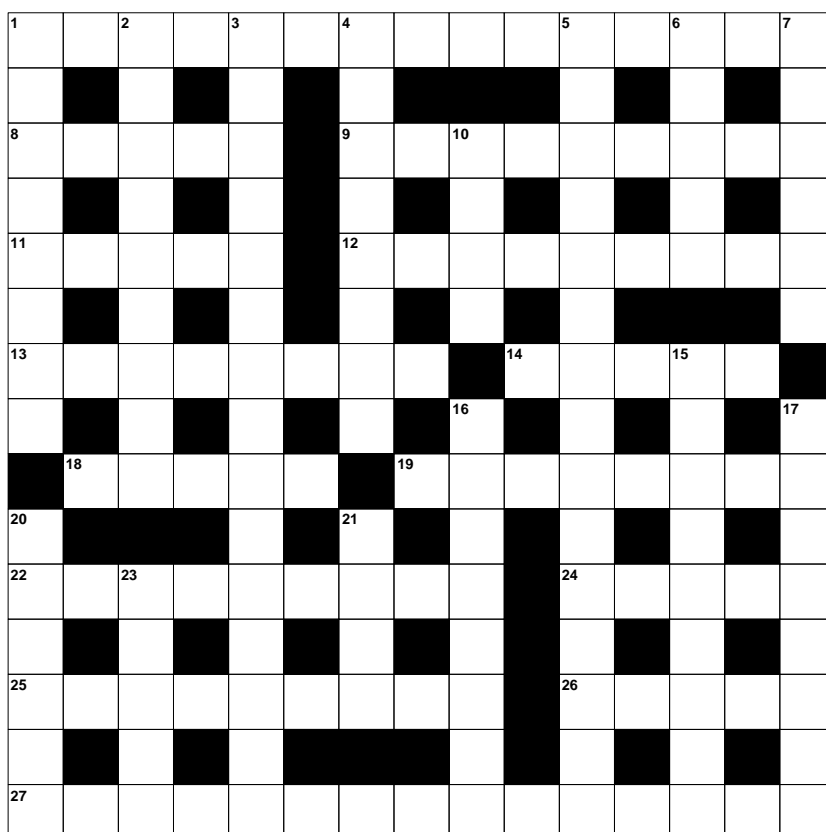Fax: 01305 860483
Email: sales@spacetech.co.uk
Web: www.spacetech.co.uk

The ARM Club Crossword No. 1

Compiled by Roger King

Relax and pit your wits with our new crossword, specially compiled for Eureka. You can check your answers with the solution on page 73.

© Rex Puzzles

ACROSS

1 Writer of the hymn "I Vow to Thee, My Country", set to the music of Gustav Holst (5,6-4)
8 Claudio -----, Chilean classical pianist who died in 1991 (5)
9 The tutor of Alexander the Great (9)
11 Small bubbles of gas in a liquid (5)
12 State of the U.S.A. whose capital is Nashville (9)
13 Place or region where tin is mined (8)
14 Magistrate of ancient Rome (5)
18 Low hill in South Africa (5)
19 Region lying along the Eastern Adriatic coastline (8)
22 Electronic component (9)
24 The Muse of love poetry (5)
25 A hot bath in Roman times (9)
26 Eskimo skin boat, manned by women (5)
27 Medical specialists (15)

DOWN

1 Member of the cod family (8)
2 Piece of meat cut sideways for broiling on coals (9)
3 Another name for the kookaburra (8,7)
4 An ancient stringed musical instrument (8)
5 Opera by Richard Wagner (15)
6 In medicine, a sudden attack or stroke (5)
7 Cathedral city of south-western England (6)
10 Electrically charged atoms (4)
15 Libertines, seducers (9)
16 Relating to the gland that secretes tears (8)
17 Military weapons (8)
20 Often found on the peak of a mountain (6)
21 Small ornamental case for holding needles (4)
23 Of a fainter lustre (5)

Learning And Living The Police Way

Learning for Today, Living for Tomorrow is an educational CD presented by West Yorkshire Police. It is intended to be used in conjunction with Police/Schools liaison and is aimed at children within key stages one to three.

persons concerned. You can read into the history of policing with images of old uniforms, vehicles and buildings. take a virtual tour of a house and answer questions about security in various rooms.

Police Constable Geoff Lane looks at his job through the eyes of a new CD-ROM designed to help the children of today prepare for their life tomorrow.

It comes presented in a colourful cardboard folder which contains the CD, an easy to read guidance booklet and a spiral bound booklet suggesting various activities for children to undertake after using the program.

The CD will run on Acorn, PC and Macs and when inserted is easily started.

Once running there are many different areas of policing or personal safety that you can explore including a look at the day in the life of a police officer with pictures and text explaining the various police duties, a description of court procedure and the

There are a few problems. When the CD starts you get music and a revolving logo but then wait and wait. What is happening? Does something need clicking? Don't know but eventually it starts and a voice says "Click on door to enter the police station."

You have to look for the mouse pointer changing shape for where to click otherwise you may click forever on the door and nothing happens. Once inside you have to click on the edge of another door and then a voice advises to click again on a door to enter the room. If you miss this instruction —too much noise in a
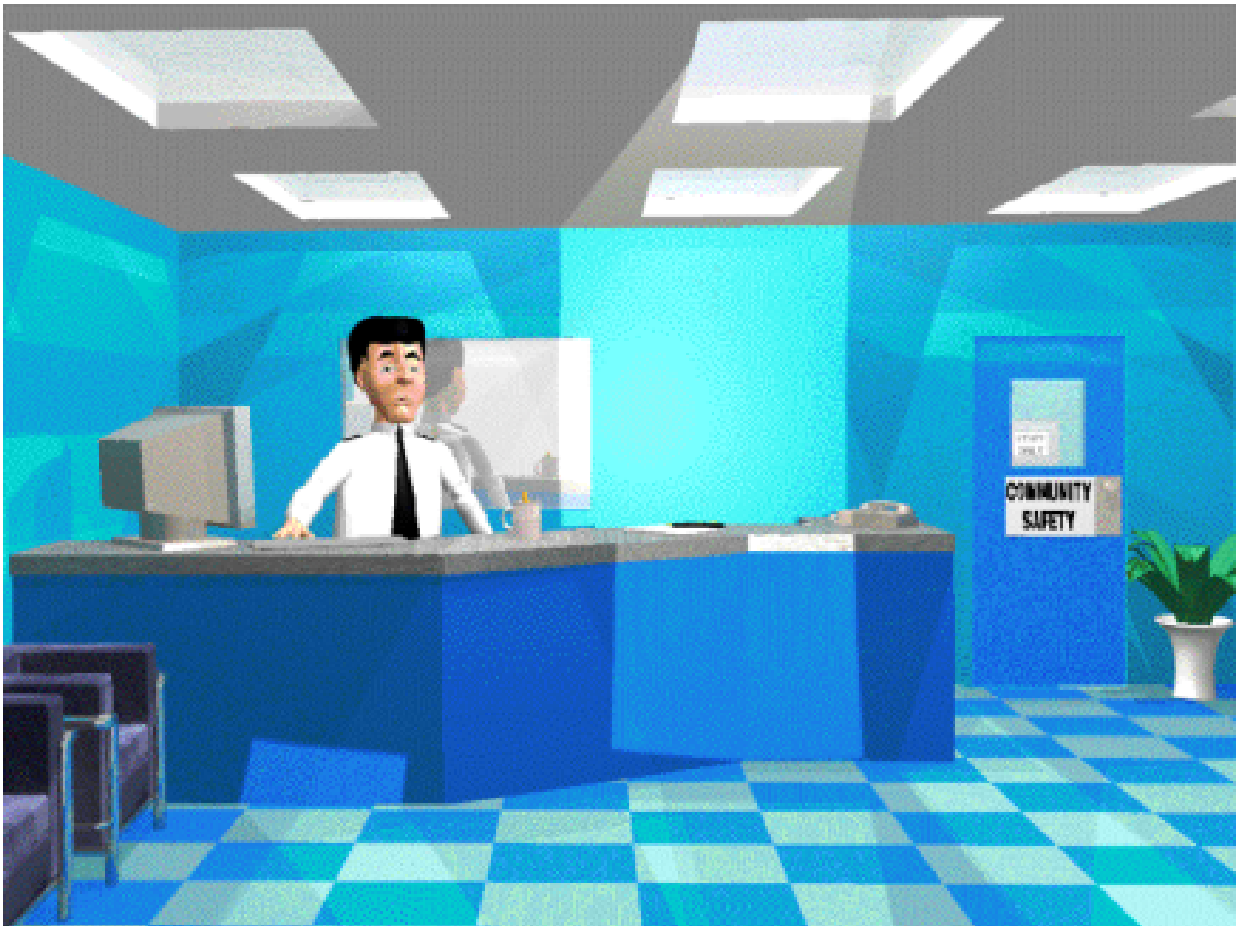
Welcome to the police station. Now find the doors.

school springs to mind —then you haven't a clue what the next move should be.

When within this room you are invited to choose yet *another* door. There are then four obvious further doors to enter but there is also a *History* one at an angle and on my display this could hardly be seen. There is also an *Exit* sign to leave the program.

In the crime prevention room you take a virtual tour of a house and spot security weaknesses. This encourages thought and observation but when I had entered a few rooms I had a difficult job getting out. I had to remember which route was taken otherwise I kept going round in circles. The escape key didn't seem to work, menu didn't come up with anything hopeful so it could be very frustrating. Once out of the virtual house and back in the police station

Health and safety education for the child of today.

there is an option to exit the program but if younger children are left to get on with it they may get stuck —or maybe not, perhaps they will twig it a lot better than me.

The option to view school safety invites one to look around a school. The arrows take you around the edges of the school but I never did find out what happens next —after going round in circles I gave up.

The safety education section has useful subjects on road safety and bodily health which contains useful advice on bullying and drugs and where to get help if needed.

There are other options of citizenship and a day in the life of a police officer and the 'hidden' History option that I found interesting.

My overall impression is that by today's standards it is definitely a bit

Different types of fingerprints
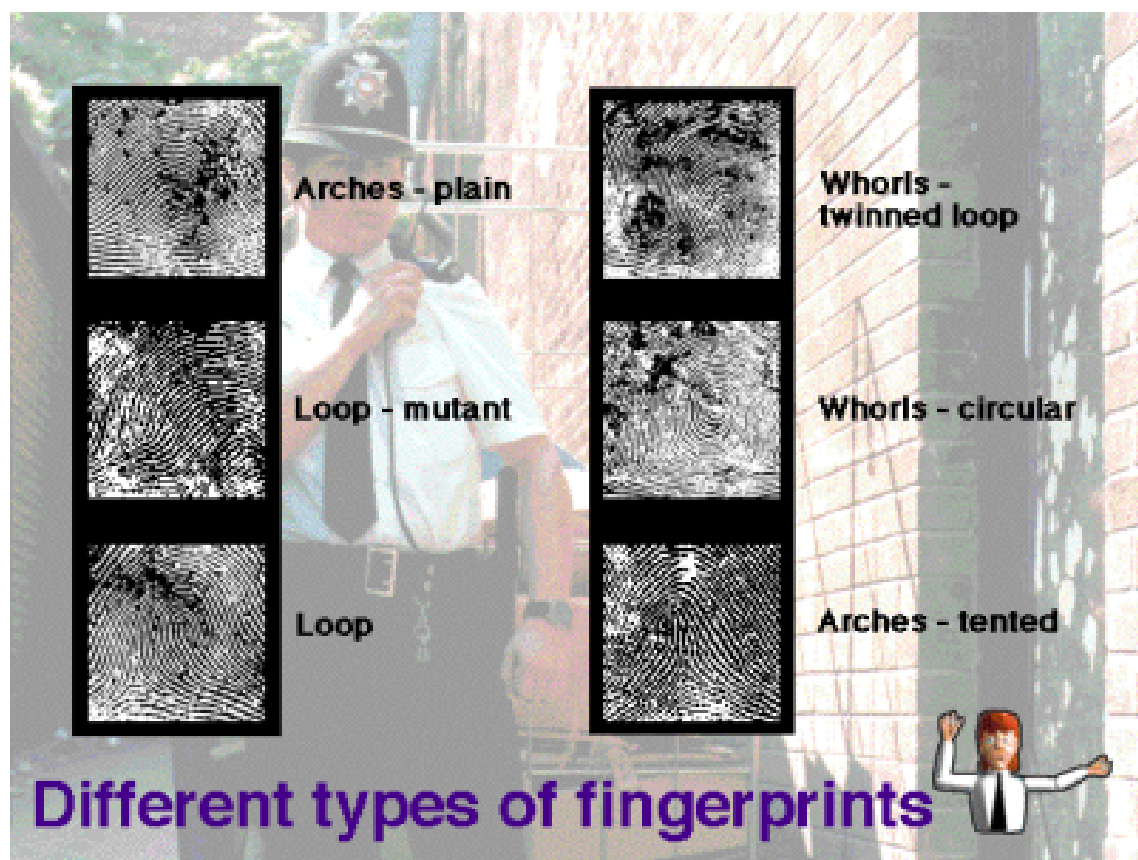
dated. It needs instructions to be repeated after a short while of inactivity and perhaps a better indication to look for the mouse pointer change as a clue to what to click on would be welcome.

There *must* be a straightforward 'escape' feature rather than rely on memorising the way out of the virtual tours.

With today's advancements in computer graphics I feel that this one may be beyond its sell by date. It has many good ideas and has a good method of combining learning with

making children think about being a good citizens but I wonder if it will keep their attention?

Learning For Today — Living For Tomorrow
Price: £39·95 + £5·50 post +VAT
Supplier: TAG Developments Ltd
Dept PRI02, Freepost SEA 1562
25 Pelham Road, Gravesend
Kent DA11 0BR
Tel: 0800 591262
Fax: 01474 537887
Email: sales@tagdev.co.uk
Web: www.tagdev.co.uk

Making Music: Part 3

In this article we will create the chords and the full melody. If you have a StrongARM turn the cache off.

Load in the *Symphony* file from the Eureka disc.

The chords and full melody are added to your musical masterpiece in the third of Kieran Simkin's article on making music with Digital Symphony.

If you have followed the previous instructions properly this is what you will have ended up with.

Open the pattern editor by pressing Shift+F9 and make the following settings:
Pattern to 004
Effect and *Value* to 00
Sample to 07
and *Step* to 08.

This pattern starts off in the chord of C minor and then moves down to G minor.

Click on position 00 and press '<' four times. Now press 'B' four times.

Press Ctrl+P to hear what you have just played.

Pattern 005 is part of the main melody.

Set: *Sample* to 08

Step to 04
Effect and *Value* to 00
and *Pattern* to 005.

Click on position 00 and press '<'. Now press 'J' and then '<' again. Click on position 20 and play '>JB'.

Set *Step* to 02 and play the following starting at position 12: 'J<>:><J'.

Click on position 32 and play the following: 'BJ<:><J'.

Press Ctrl+P now to hear what you have just played. You should hear the main melody of the track.

The Pattern Editor

We need to add an Echo effect to this pattern. Set *Effect* to 0C and *Value* to 000.

Click on position 03 and press 'T'. Do the same on positions 06, 0A, 0E, 11, 23, 27, 2E and 31.

Set *Step* to 02 and click on position 15 and press 'T' seven times. Click on position 35 and press 'T' six times.

Set *Value* to 14, click on position 0B and press '<'. Click on position 2B and press 'B'. Pattern 005 is now finished.

In the next article I will show how to create a second part of the track and start the sequence.

If you need any help e-mail me at kieran@bl-soft.com
or visit my website:
www.bl-soft.com/

The World Factbook

The World Factbook was originally prepared by the American Central Intelligence Agency for the use of US Government officials. The data on this CD-ROM is now in the public domain and can be freely copied and distributed.

The CD-ROM is split up into two sections: the *Install* directory and the *!Factbook* application.

The Install directory contains the following items:

A self-extracting version of

Need to know anything about the world? The CIA now reveals all, in The World Factbook CD-ROM. Roger King finds out how much they know.

The World Factbook CD-ROM will run on any Acorn computer fitted with a minimum of 4MB of RAM and RISC OS 3·5 or later versions. It can however be run on RISC OS 3·1 with a modern !Boot application installed.

The software also needs the nested Window Manager 3·98. To find out if your current Windowmanager is 3·98, press <F12> and type "Help WindowManager". Look for the line which says Module is: and check the version number.

The software also needs updated modules.

SparkPlug, named *Dearchive*.
The *Nestwimp* Spark directory.
The *Tbox* Spark directory.

The Nestwimp directory contains the Upgrader application. This will install Acorn's Nested WindowManager, version 3·98 and the blending FontManager, version 3·37.

The Tbox directory also contains an Upgrader application. This will install Acorn's latest modules and ToolBox modules.

Double-clicking on the !Factbook application will load it onto the icon

bar. The icon bar sprite is displayed as a large grey *W*. Clicking the mouse <Select> button on it will present Factbook's main menu.

Five circles are displayed, each containing sections of Factbook. Clicking on any of the five circles will show data on that particular section.

Starting from the top left-hand corner is the Globe icon. A click on this icon will display a 10 × 10 centimetre colour icon of the Earth from space. By means of four nudge icons the icon can be rotated to show any part of the globe.

The next circle displays the *Sat Maps* option. This displays a flat projection of the Earth in full colour from a satellite view.

Three viewing options are available: (S)mall, (M)edium and (L)arge. Providing that you are using a high-

The United Kingdom entry in Country Details with its map.

quality monitor, the Large option offers breathtaking views of our planet.

The next option, in the bottom left-hand corner, is *Ref Maps.* Quite frankly this option is a disappointment as all of the atlas sprites are of low-resolution quality. Sprites of each area of the atlas can be saved out as Draw files.

The icon in the bottom right-hand corner of the menu panel is named *About.* This option displays in four sections the history of the World Factbook. Again each section can be saved as a Draw file.

Factbook Viewer

Now we come to the large central circle on the Factbook menu. Clicking on this option named *Factbook Viewer* will display an index of each country and certain areas of the world.

A pane will open called *World Factbook – Country Details.*

By default, the country displayed is the United Kingdom.

On the left-hand side of this pane is a scrollable window displaying some 260 countries and areas of the world. Above this scrollable window is a writable icon where a name of a particular country or region may be typed in. If a match is found, then the details will be shown in the scrollable right-hand window.

Areas covered include: Physical Geography, Population, Government, Economy, Communications, Transport, Military and Transnational Issues.

Selecting any country will display a wealth of data about the subject. In the top left-hand corner of the window will be displayed the country's flag, an icon to show a simple outline map of the country or region, which may be saved as a Draw file.

There is also an icon to click upon to play the country's national anthem (if appropriate). Any area of the main text window can be marked by dragging the mouse with the <Select> button depressed. The marked area can then be saved as a text file.

As an example, here is a very small section of text from the **Argentina** entry:

Geography
Location: Southern South America, bordering the South Atlantic Ocean, between Chile and Uruguay.

Geographic coordinates:
34 00 S, 64 00 W.

Map references: South America.

Area: total: 2,766,890 sq km
land: 2,736,690 sq km
water : 30,200 sq km.

Area comparative: slightly less than three-tenths the size of the USA.

Land boundaries: total: 9,665 km.

Border countries: Bolivia 832 km
Brazil 1,224 km
Chile 5,150 km
Paraguay 1,880 km
Uruguay 579 km.

Coastline: 4,989 km.

Summing-up

This world database is really screaming out for a search engine that would allow one to enter search data. For example, which countries of the world use the Dinar as their unit of currency? Which countries are totally landlocked? and so on. Perhaps a search engine can be included in a future release of the software?

The Ref Maps section does really need the atlas sprites replaced with high-definition versions.

Despite this, The World Fact Book is an excellent application which should be in be in everybody's CD-ROM reference library. It really is a bargain at its price.

World Factbook
Price: £22 including postage
Supplier: Interconnex UK Ltd
Box Bush Farm
West Wick
Weston-Super-Mare
BS24 7TF
Tel/Fax: 01934 522 880
Email: sales@interconnex.co.uk
Web: www.interconnex.co.uk/

Science Fair

Each year the secondary school I attended in the '50s holds a reunion where the ancients reminisce at all the so-called wonderful memories of their early learning years.

Rilla Paterson goes to the Science Fair and finds it much more fun and informative than drawing a Bunsen burner in her chemistry lesson at school.

Well some of the science wasn' t very wonderful, I can tell you. We were allotted only one lesson a week of physics and chemistry and we spent the first year —yes, *year* — **drawing** the Bunsen burner, a pipette, a burette, a chemical balance and the box of weights.

When I think of the hours we spent bored out of our 13-year-old skulls drawing 'A Worm' s Eye View of the Bunsen Burner' it makes me cringe. We learned nothing about forces, electricity, light or sound until I was about 14.

However, I am happy to announce that Sherston has come to my rescue and I have been making up for lost time indulging in the various activities at *Science Fair*. I was definitely born 40 years too soon.

Science Fair is an elementary introduction to science for children aged five to seven years. It comes as a triple CD for Acorn, PC or Mac and contains all the usual Sherston-style ingredients that make learning fun.

Sherston is renowned for good quality educational software and I was not at all surprised to find that everything about this package lived up to expectations. It is straightforward to install and can be run direct from the CD. The User Guide is well-written, professionally presented and comes complete with extra educational ideas and sample worksheets for use in the classroom. Its compact style would be very attractive to a busy teacher.

Vicky and Bert welcome the visitor at the gate.

The program opens at the gates of the Fair where children are met by Bert and Vicky. They are invited to choose which of five activities they would like to visit. They can select the *Hoopla Stall, Space Dome, Fun House, Big Wheel* or *Bear Cave,* which focus on aspects of sound, Earth and space, forces, electricity and light respectively.

Each area features a number of different activities at two levels of difficulty, which include up to four variations or games. Each game requires the child to answer questions and a correct answer elicits congratulatory noises from Bert. If the answer is wrong Vicky delivers a suitable encouragement to try again, with attendant explanations. With each completed activity a log is entered in the record-keeping system but no details are kept on how well that pupil has performed, only that the activity has been completed.

I can play the drum loudly

The child is led through the course with very easy-to-follow icons and the interest is kept up with the usual unexpected happenings that have given Sherston their reputation. The action is accompanied by appropriate and amusing noises, although in the Day-or-Night activity the owl that flies around must have been genetically modified because it sounds more like a pigeon.

But apart from that and some other night creature of uncertain species that howls like a hyena with piles the sampled sounds are all very convincing.

Space Dome

The Space Dome features activities which introduce patterns of day and night and the cyclical nature of the seasons. At level one there is an unfinished scene of a house at night and the pupil completes the picture by dragging and dropping suitable items such as an owl and a moon. The *What Comes Next* game features a deciduous tree sprouting and dropping its leaves through spring, summer, autumn and winter. In *Pattern of Day* the child places in order the dawn, day, dusk and night, reinforcing the notion of the constantly repeating cycle.

I was mildly uneasy at the opening statement "It is dawn. The sun rises and the day begins" but at this level I realise that to argue about whether or not the sun rises is a bit academic, even in a science lesson. The designers have admitted certain inaccuracies in *Shapes in Space* by making the sun and moon rotate, but this, they say, is to emphasise the spherical nature of these bodies.

Hoopla Stall

There are prizes to be won at the Hoopla Stall. At level one the child

playing *What's That Noise?* has to match the object with the sound heard, such as a trumpet, car engine or dog barking. The aims are to be able to recognise familiar sounds and identify their sources. Ideas for further classroom study include a sound table where objects which make a noise could be placed and visited during the day. At level two Vicky imagines herself playing an instrument and the child must distinguish long and short, loud and soft, high and low notes played by a violin, a drum and a piano. These activities encourage children to listen carefully, something in which they often do not get sufficient practice!

Fun House

In the Fun House, Vicky has to pull a drawer and push a button to make the penny roll and she has to push the penny harder or softer to ensure it reaches the prize area. These things might be simplicity itself to an adult, but push and pull are the language of forces and children need to make the distinction between the pushes and pulls that cause movement. At level two the vocabulary is expanded further to include the concept of direction. The child has to predict

which one of two monkeys will be able to bat the penny into the pot.

Bear Cave

The Bear Cave features a group of bears that can't get to sleep because the cave isn't dark enough, due to the presence of too much light. The child clicks on the light-producers to make the cave darker. The fact that darkness is caused by the absence of light is introduced and reinforced. Concepts such as these may seem extremely simple but they are very fundamental to an understanding of science. Further suggestions include trying to make a Bear Cave in the classroom, leading to a consideration of why it is not possible to make it completely dark.

Big Wheel

My favourite was the Big Wheel at level two. Here, the child builds a circuit from a lamp, two wires and a battery. The items are chosen by drag-and-drop one at a time and if correctly assembled the bulb will light. Then the child sees the whole procedure repeated to reinforce the principles of the simple circuit. In another variation the child chooses which set of bulbs will shine the

Make your own circuit as you learn about light in the Bear Cave.

brightest if they have an identical power supply but are connected in different numbers. This activity would lead naturally to practical work with simple circuits in the classroom.

My only complaint here was the statement "These bulbs are the brightest because less bulbs are sharing the electricity". *Fewer* bulbs, please. You can only have less of an uncountable noun. Fewer mistakes lead to less fuss by pedantic old schoolteachers. I know even the BBC newsreaders get that one wrong sometimes, but this is educational software after all and I'm ultra-particular.

All the activities operate at two levels of difficulty, controlled by an option button, and all the screens, including the record-keeping, can be printed out. The child can have a sentence repeated by clicking on an icon and all the sentences appear in written

form on screen in large type. Reinforcement is a strong feature of all the games, with a certain amount of repetition but not so much as to become boring. The pace, though slow, is fast enough for this level.

It' s never too early to start learning about the world around us and this software is a good introduction to some aspects of the science curriculum. One word of warning, though — it is very basic. It encourages children to observe. It does not explain, or seek to explain, any of the aspects it covers. The designers state at the outset that the package "is intended as a resource ... to extend the practical experiences that are fundamental to a young child' s understanding of science. It is not the intention that the program replace practical work but that it should be used alongside it."

This is fine, but a five-year-old of even moderate ability would gobble it up in no time. This is the one drawback I have found time and again with Sherston. Their software is certainly very good but it is always aimed at the earliest learners. I sometimes wish their programmers would take the design of these excellent packages a stage further and make the content just a bit more meaty. A CD like Science Fair devoted exclusively to the more advanced properties of, say, light or sound would go a long way to improving an understanding of wave theory and would be a great asset in classrooms of junior children where there are quite a few teachers, albeit skilled in many respects, whose knowledge and ability in science is woefully inadequate, probably because they, like me, spent too many of their formative years drawing idiotic worm' s eye views of a Bunsen.

Science Fair is therefore excellent for elementary classes and special needs and is good value for money.

Photography On The Web

Being a keen photographer, and having seen my favourite two photo magazines disappear (like so many computer magazines have) and both in the same week, I have been seeking consolation on the Web and looking in particular for information and examples of digital photography.
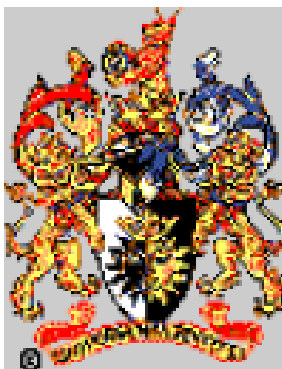
Starting at the top, the first visit was to the Royal Photographic Society's Web site www.rps.org and although dealing largely with the Society's activities (including exhibitions and other events open to the public) there is enough there of general interest for most camera users, including links to some fascinating other photographic sites.

One of these links which I followed was to www.epicentre.co.uk which showed how a 1908 self portrait of the pioneer British photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn was restored by computer from a glass plate colour transparency which had been shattered into more than 20 pieces. Unfortunately we are unable to reproduce it here for copyright reasons.

Among the more commercial sites, the Digital Camera Company (www.digital-cameras.com) offers information, hands-on seminars and sales from an on-line catalogue. Sample pictures and ideas put forward by their customers are also on

view. This is a good place for the serious buyer to browse, with cameras priced from "up to £350" to "Over £5,000". One problem I found was that the cameras I would like to buy were all in the second category while the price I would like to pay was unfortunately in the first!

Megapixel, a Canadian site with English and French versions of its pages, (www.megapixel.net) has a magazine format with lots of interesting reading including reviews of the latest cameras.

Some of the cameras reviewed on Megapixel.Net

If you want to find a Web site with a really enormous range of links to explore log onto www.steves-digicams.com. I tried to count the number of links but gave up when the total went into three figures. They cover cameras and other digital photography products and include news, reviews, tests, guides, webzines, users' pages, dealers, auctions and lists of sites for individual brands.

At this stage I gave up plans to look for more on Alta Vista. Half an hour of browsing had already given me more addresses that I could ever visit.

This has been a random look at a minute selection of the many photographic sites of all types on the Internet. So, if you're interested, you just have to log onto to one of those I have suggested and follow the links for as long as your phone bill can stand it. Happy site seeing.

Meet Our Active Members

Tom Hughes

I wrote my first program some 16 years ago when, as an 11-year-old about to go to secondary school, my father gave me a pocket guide to BASIC and offered to run some programs on the mainframe at work.

In my spare time I look after The Arm Club's Internet presence and manage the email side of the technical support service. I also run the C Acorn User Group and am on the committee of its parent organisation, The Association of C and C++ Users.

Three more of our handsome (as depicted by Beth Rogers), hard working Committee members, reveal something of their real lives outside the Club.

Despite my first experience of programming, requiring me to hand over my hand written code in the morning and wait until the evening to get back a printout of the output, something must have struck a chord with me because I haven' t stopped programming since. ;-)

Having spent three years at university studying Computer Science (in theory) and hanging round the Student Union working on the student newspaper (in practice) I managed to graduate with a 2:1 and went on to enter industry as a Software Engineer working on database software which is what I've been doing for the last five years.

I've also managed to find time over the last few years to write a number of pieces of software in my spare time, most notably a full TCP/IP stack for RISC OS named FreeNet. My most recent project has been an NNTP/IMAP backend for Messenger to allow my Risc PC to access the email stored on my Linux box.

By the time I've finished with all that I seem to have little time left for anything else that I might like to do. I do however try to read as much as possible although certainly not as much as I used to do or would like to do.

age of 15 to join the Army as an apprentice motor mechanic/technician. I really wanted to be an electronics engineer but had to take third choice. On leaving the Army after a total of 12 years I started in a commercial vehicle garage (trucks and vans etc) but didn't stay long and moved on to my other favourite pastime of driving.

Tom Hughes

Ralph Sillett

Many of you will have heard of me and possibly spoken to me at our Club shows. I was the one with the Subaru 555 team rally jacket (bright blue). I joined the Club when Rene Barretto started it as Club 3000 way back in 1990.

I was born in Suffolk some time ago and moved with my parents to Birkenhead, hence the reason for supporting Liverpool FC, where I stayed until I left school at the tender

It was while in the Army stationed in Hampshire that I met my wife and got married back in 1971 (I know —27 years ago). We have two girls called Kelly & Laura who are now 18 & 14 years old. As you can guess we started our family after my Army career.

One of my favourite pastimes was *off road* driving. This stemmed from my early years in the Army and trailing a Series One Land Rover with a friend. Back in 1978 I started work with Daihatsu (UK) Ltd and actually got

Ralph Sillett

I moved to the Midlands, back in 1987, with my family to take up a position doing the same job. My family have settled in well and we all enjoy life there. My only wish is for a robot to do all the maintenance and decorating in the home to give me more time on the computer.

My first computer was the Acorn Electron purchased at Christmas 1983. I expanded the machine with most of the items available from PRES (anyone remember them?). The Electron was used extensively with my job as Promotions Coordinator while at Daihatsu (UK) Ltd as the company moved to new premises in Dover, Kent, from Andover in Hampshire, so I worked from home. My diary, database and letters were all done on the Electron. I was going to go for a BBC Master until I heard that the A3000 was to be launched and purchased it soon after release.

paid for 'playing in the mud' with a four wheel drive car. I was getting paid for teaching dealers and customers the techniques of Off Road Driving in a Daihatsu Fourtrak. I am still keeping up with this involvement in my job with another Japanese car importer based in the Midlands. With this company I have two marques of 4x4 vehicles to play with.

I kept that machine until 1996 (or was it 95?) when I purchased the Risc PC which now has SA. I am a strong supporter of the SCSI system and have had a number of interfaces from the A3000 Morley card through to my current Eesox SCSI 2 card.

I became a Committee member back in 1992 (I think) and took over as Membership Secretary from John Bancroft with a database of around 400 members.

My first quest as Membership Secretary was to establish the database onto !DataPower. The original was !Squirrel. Iota Software Ltd kindly donated a number of copies to the club for our use and have since updated us to !Datapower 2.

On relinquishing the Membership Secretary's job to Toby Smith I became the Show Organiser, due to my experience within my paid job. Since then John Stonier has taken over that to allow me more time to use the Risc PC. I have recently purchased a PC (aargh) which is mainly used by my daughter Laura for her school home work, (she uses a PC at school). My main use for IT is to

back up my closest friend, My Psion Series 5.

Next to the Editor I am the oldest active member of the Committee, I think, and get a great deal of satisfaction out of it especially at the Shows up and down the country. I very rarely miss a show and only if it clashes with my work.

The Psion 5 is my third Psion having had the Pocket Book 1 & 2. Next to the Acorn they are my favourite machines. I would love to see more software available for the Acorn to allow compatibility with the Psion 5 programs such as Word files into !Impression Publisher or !TextEase and Agenda into !Organiser. I have even used the Psion 5 for Web browsing and down loading my email while away from home.

Well I must say that it has taken me some time to put this many words together about myself but I hope it gives you an insight into the type of person that I am, and that it will inspire some of you to take an active part in the Club.

Your club needs you.

Rob Brown

Rob Brown

My first introduction to computing (of sorts) was at school — in the days long before the advent of pocket calculators let alone computers –– when the only aids to mathematics were log tables (hands up those who can still remember how to use them!).

In the sixth form we built a sort of computer —more of a calculator really —which was driven by a series of ex Post Office relays and the output consisted of a series of lamps which displayed the results in binary format.

After leaving school I worked in several branches of a high street bank and saw the early introduction of the then new computer technology whereby data was input and encoded onto punched paper tape which was then transmitted from the branch to the bank's main computer centre.

I also saw the first evidence of the ability of computers to 'really foul things up'; a debit/credit transfer of '8' was mysteriously converted into one for 8,000,000 and I identified that the punched paper tape showed the higher (erroneous) figure although all

the accounting records showed only eight. The response from our computer staff was that such a thing couldn't happen and anyway what was I doing translating the data on the paper tape? This was my first experience of how mainframe IT/computing staff then surrounded their functions with mystique and secrecy.

After joining a major finance house, I had a number of accounting type positions before I was appointed as Project Manager to oversee the conversion of our manual/mechanised accounting systems to (mainframe based) computer systems. Reporting to the Finance Director I couldn't understand his reluctance to sanction the purchase of VDUs with a colour display (rather than just green). It wasn't the cost, it was the fact that he was colour-blind! But I persevered and the accounting departments were the first in the company to be so equipped. It was also gratifying to report that the project was completed on time and to budget –- but then I had hand-picked the staff to work for me. I also understood the importance of the phrase used by our Head of IT

—which is still true of all projects — 'if you don't plan it, you won't do it".

Shortly thereafter the first PCs were introduced to the company and over the years we all struggled with firstly MS-DOS based programs and then the wonder (?) of Windows. By this latter stage the application software had been standardised across the company and was (of course) the MicroS**t 'Office' range, and we all got used to the fact that PCs would crash with monotonous regularity (isn't it a good job that MicroS**t don't make cars!).

However, my most recent role as Information Systems Manager involved the use of mainframe based interrogation software and the design of applications with same —with appropriate summary data then being downloaded to PCs. In spite of promises to that effect the *paperless office* has yet to arrive; and I have always (mischievously?) pointed out to my colleagues that "the most flexible office equipment is a pen and piece of paper"!

In terms of Acorn computers, my first introduction was the purchase of a

BBC Model B back in 1984 which I shared with our daughter who was then at primary school. Quite fascinating even allowing for the painfully long time it took to load programs from tape. I then purchased one of the early Archimedes A300 series computers and used it to set up and maintain the accounting and database records of an external organisation as well as for home use. A few years later I upgraded to an A5000 (which is still used my by daughter) and thence to a Risc PC. In addition to using the usual sorts of Acorn applications for correspondence and accounting matters we are increasingly using the Internet for reference purposes. My wife works in our local village school and she is constantly trying to 'keep ahead' of the children and find interesting material for use in the classroom.

In March 1998, Peter Jennings contacted me and reminded me of my offer — made some months previously –- to assist in compiling a cumulative index (in ArcScan format) of all the Eureka articles. Having started from the then current issue and worked forwards, Peter very kindly (?) provided me with copies of the back issues so that I could go back to the very first issue of the then Club A3000 newsletter published in February 1991. The Eureka index therefore now spans a period of some eight years and 29 issues (if I get the latest issue summarised in time!) and also includes details of the various programs published on the magazine discs.

Having now brought the index up to date, Peter obviously thought that I must have some spare time and so I've been 'volunteered' to take over The ARM Club's Discounts Scheme from Matthew Cook.

After 30 years in the same company, I was recently made an offer that was difficult to refuse: a redundancy/(very) early retirement package. So I guess in acting parlance I am currently 'resting' –- and trying to avoid the list of jobs that my wife keeps updating! Fortunately, the fine weather is coming and with it opportunities for my other interests of golf, photography and travel. As far as the latter is concerned we have a good arrangement: my wife gets to choose where we're going and I get to pay!

ACORN SOUTHEAST SHOW

Supporting RISC OS users in SE England

SATURDAY 3rd JULY 1999

The Alban Arena
St. Albans
Herts

- Acorn companies and clubs
- Special show discounts
- Seminars and talks
- Games Arcade

Theatre programme:
11am - Beyond the Risc PC
12pm - Ask the Expert
2pm - Acorn Product Scene
3pm - Future of RISC OS

DOORS OPEN AT 10am UNTIL 4.30pm

ADMISSION CHARGES

Adults £3 / ARM Club or Foundation members £2
Children under 16 FREE (accompanied by adult)
(Pay at door only)

For further details - Phone/Fax: (01707) 390410
Email: acornshow@argonet.co.uk
http://www.argonet.co.uk/acornshow/

The Jubilee Line Extension

When I first heard of this I thought that it would be an informative CD which could be used by all ages. Sadly I was wrong as the CD is intended mainly for schools. It gives details on how the Jubilee Extension has been built and goes into

Railway buff Gary Parr takes A Journey Through The Jubilee Line Extension by CD-ROM to explore the biggest civil engineering project in Europe.

small details on how it was done.

It is all point and click and uses basic colours and sounds, all put into a layout which doesn' t impress me in the slightest.

The CD is split into different sections such as *Stations*, *Tunnelling*, *Environment* etc, which is useful if the child wants to find a specific area to look into, such as how the tunnels were dug.

It also contains some information that would be useful for children doing topics in subjects which deal with how modern developments effect nature, as it gives a couple of examples of what the contractors had to do to save animals and areas of nature.

There is information on how they built stations and did it so that the building work couldn' t be heard!
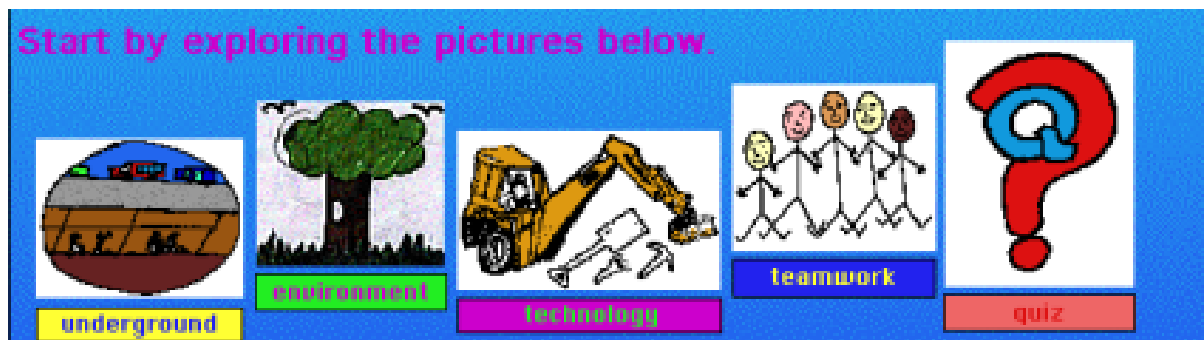
Explore all the aspects of the biggest construction job in Europe.

There are eleven stations on the extension. Five of them are brand new. Some of the other six are having the biggest facelift of their lives. Jump on anywhere along the extension to find out more...
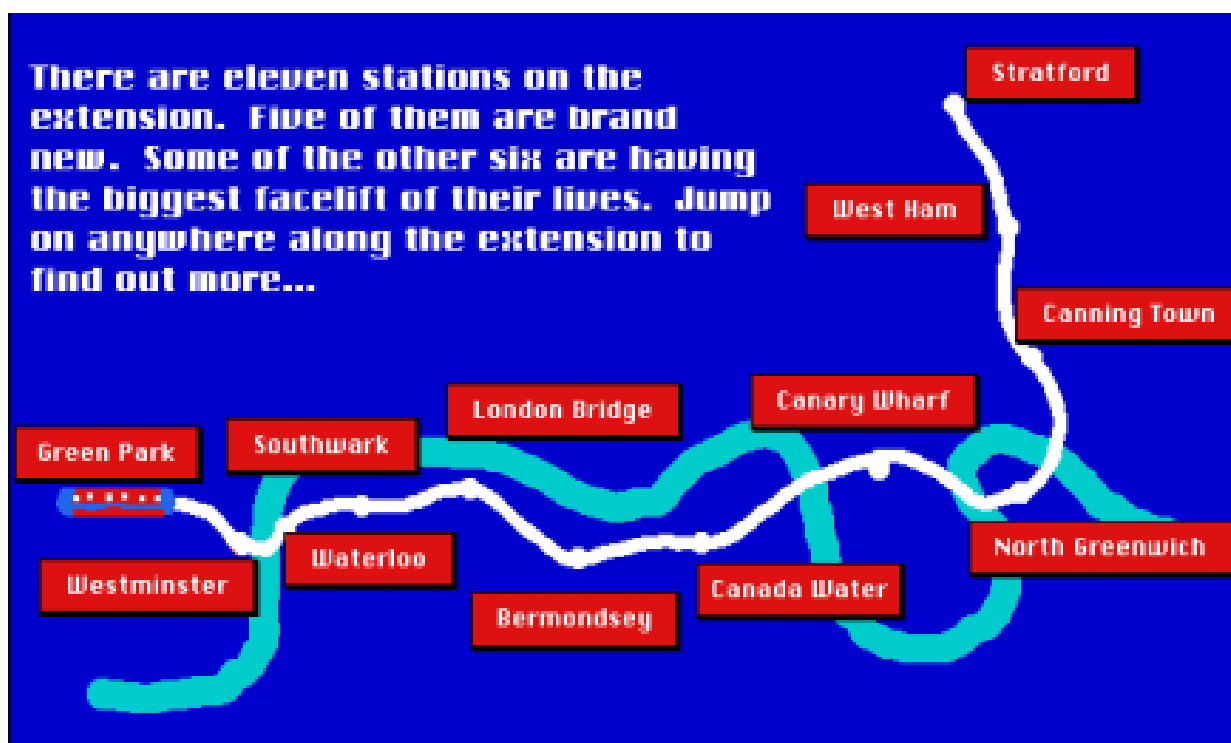
Stratford

West Ham

Canning Town

Canary Wharf

London Bridge

North Greenwich

Green Park

Southwark

Canada Water

Westminster

Waterloo

Bermondsey

The new line's Thameside route.

If your main interest in the CD is in the pictures and diagrams, then you may be disappointed. It contains 65 interactive video clips along with some photographs and sound clips but with 200MB on the CD there was space to spare and I would like to have seen a few more.

The pages are designed in Hyperstudio and so will work on an Acorn, PC or Mac and can be used at home, work or school.

I suggest this would be suited to children aged between seven and 11 and teachers of classes in this age range. All in all the CD is colourful, will be enjoyed by most children and would be useful for teachers.

A Journey Through The Jubilee Line Extension
Price: £15.99 + £5.50 post +VAT
Supplier: TAG Developments Ltd
Dept PRI02, Freepost SEA 1562
25 Pelham Road, Gravesend
Kent DA11 0BR
Tel: 0800 591262
Fax: 01474 537887
Email: sales@tagdev.co.uk
Web: www.tagdev.co.uk

Going International With Email

With email the world is your shellfish.

Shellfish...oyster...? Geddit!! The world is your...
Oh, give up, Chris!

An email out of the blue — well from St Louis, Missouri, in the USA — brought a new teacher and two more pupils to Chris Price's school in Kent.

You may be wondering now what the Club's Secretary and part-time educational correspondent, is blithering on about (unless you're a member of the Committee who will testify, only too willingly, that I've been off my chump for years).

So I'll tell you. The school that the family runs will have two new children and a new teacher in September. Impressed? No?

Well, you ought to be as they've come all the way from St Louis, Missouri, USA to join us!

Now are you impressed?

So why am I telling you all this?

About two years ago I asked our Chairman (then our Membership Secretary) if he would be so kind as to sort me out a website for the school.

(He wasn't married then).

Some little while later we took delivery of our very own website: www.mertoncourt.kent.sch.uk.

Within a few weeks I was starting to get used to the idea. Friends who had found it used it to contact us and then a few parents started to log on.

Then I started to get a bit blasé. Email became routine and checking it became just as routine. Every morning I got up and turned on my machine and there they'd be: a message from Toby, one from Matt and so on, until the morning of November 5th.

I turned the machine on. Yes, message to Committee from Matt... Committee from Mark... and then I stopped. The next message subject line read *Request for information* and the sender was one grade1mp@forsyth.k12.mo.us.

Now I was in uncharted territory. I didn't know anyone called 'grade1mp' and where the heck was 'forsyth.k12.mo.us'? Well, yes, obviously it was in the US. I had worked out that bit! I sat and looked at this subject line for a few seconds and then I opened it up.

Astonished

The contents astonished me. Here was an enquiry for a place —no two places —for her boys from a lady in St Louis, Missouri, USA. Our first *international* prospectus enquiry.

Quickly I printed it out. Having had breakfast I got down as speedily as I could and thrust it into our school secretary's hand muttering all the while, "Prospectus... America... send it... now!"

Having finally understood what I was saying, Jeanne scanned the message and pointed out (a bit pedantically, I thought!) that there was no sender's address, only an email. Well! Some people! Never satisfied.

Received with thanks

So back upstairs. Email the lady and ask for her snail mail address. By the middle of November I'd got a reply that the prospectus had been received with thanks.

This, of course, contrasts well with the standard methods. I have a friend in Canada and a regular letter from her would have taken all of two weeks to get here making turn around time, from receiving her letter to her receiving my letter, of approximately one month. One up to email.

Now it's a funny thing about email — I think it's to do with the fact that people seem to use first names more readily, maybe it's to do with its more instantaneous nature —but it wasn't much longer before we were on first name terms. Had this been done by letter, I am convinced we would still have been on the 'Dear Madam... I remain your obedient servant...' schedule.

Having now used email for some while, I find that I can also assess fairly quickly whether I want to continue correspondence with a person (and whether they want to correspond with me). Lots of *smilies* are definitely 'in'. Lots of capitals (ie shouting as if to emphasise something) are definitely 'out'.

This lady used lots of smilies and seemed to have a ready sense of humour. We learnt quite a lot about each other's families.

Matters took a large leap forward when I mentioned the fact that one of our staff was retiring and that we would be advertising the post for a Year 1 teacher (5/6 year olds for those who don't know!). Was she interested?

Her reply was posted the next night. She was definitely interested and she was sending some work related documents over with her husband who was due into England the next day. Information regarding possible estate agents and appropriate areas to rent houses were discussed.

So, in the space of 13 days, this lady from Missouri and I had gone from complete strangers to potential work colleagues —something that would have been completely impossible in the realms of good old snailmail!

Red letter day

The 20th November was a red letter day. Her husband was flying in from St Louis to inspect the territory he was expected to take over. He was also going to look round the school. We met at end of school and chatted for about an hour. He definitely liked the school, signed up both children and we spent some time looking through the material that his wife had sent over. It looked impressive so an interview was arranged for the new year.

More to the point he was quite astonished by the amount of information that we had accumulated on his family! Later on I emailed his wife that she should have kept him better informed!

Fast forward to 28th January. I had warned my class of Year Sixes that there was a possibility that I would have to leave half way through a

lesson and so it proved to be. At about 9.45, a message was sent up asking me to come down. Grabbing a couple of items that I'd selected as gifts I went down. Opening the door I saw the lady that had been my email pal for the last few weeks.

'It ought to be 'Mrs M' I said but I guess that it's actually 'D''

'Don't even think of calling me Mrs *anything*!' she said with a smile.

After a quick tour of the campus and a long chat we got down to business. Half an hour later we had signed up a teacher from St Louis, Missouri, USA, via New Zealand, to teach in our school in England.

Such is the power of the Internet! Our website is now an integral part of our advertising strategy. Long may it continue to be so.

Crossword solution *(see page 41)*

C	E	C	I	L	S	P	R	I	N	G	R	I	C	E
O		A		A		S				O		C		X
A	R	R	A	U		A	R	I	S	T	O	T	L	E
L		B		G		L		O		T		U		T
F	R	O	T	H		T	E	N	N	E	S	S	E	E
I		N		I		E		S		R				R
S	T	A	N	N	A	R	Y		E	D	I	L	E	
H		D		G		Y		L		A		O		B
	K	O	P	J	E		D	A	L	M	A	T	I	A
I				A		E		C		M		H		Z
C	A	P	A	C	I	T	O	R		E	R	A	T	O
E		A		K		U		Y		R		R		O
C	A	L	D	A	R	I	U	M		U	M	I	A	K
A		E		S				A		N		O		A
P	A	R	A	S	I	T	O	L	O	G	I	S	T	S

Gill's Journal: High Tech Comforters

Having sorted a little technological hiccup, your Chairman and I finally got our copy of Eureka (it even happens to the Chair!) giving me the opportunity to have a read and think about what on earth to write for you in this journal.

hardware, or at least some decent software. Toby and I missed Wakefield last year, where the Phoebe was shown off in all its yellow glory. This year, The ARM Club hope to have PDCD 3 released. That'd be great —for those of you waiting on

Gill Smith reopens her Journal to reveal how spods suffering Acorn withdrawal symptoms can find comfort in some of the other technology now invading the home.

As I read through it, with Toby safely out at a meeting about the Epsom show, I started to wonder about the whole future of The ARM Club, post Black Thursday. I'm not the first, nor the most knowledgeable on the subject, but I'll share my thoughts with you anyway.

Reading through Eureka, and talking to Toby at great length about the possible Epsom show, things seem to be in a silent limbo. Eureka reviews new upgrades to products and people are trying to see which bits of the OS they can put to another use. Any show does far better if it's after —or the occasion of —the release of new

tenterhooks, for the show, and for the Club's coffers. But if we're really honest, it's not quite the same as that moment when you first saw the Phoebe (I was lucky enough to spot one at the Holland show) and realised that it was just as yellow as rumours had made out!

RISC OS 4

This year, nothing is that new, nothing that thrilling. There's been no sighting of Phoebe's successor, or anything else for some time in spite of all the leaflets they handed out. The Peanut is still a distant prospect and we are pinning all our hopes on RISCOS Ltd having RISC OS 4 ready to show.

Rumours of possible successors to RISC OS abound and of new products that will sell, and make a show worth attending, but little is certain.

Acorn spod

This is strange for your average Acorn spod. I know several who, even through the poverty struck days of University, had to be able to get the new Psion, or latest Acorn machine, by going without a few pints or selling on the old machine to unsuspecting Arts students, whose parents had an Electron when they were younger. (Who else remembers 'Snapper' instead of Packman?!) The Psion 5 came out, and I feel rather left out by not being able to IR files about, and still having to use good old-fashioned wires.

Rumours

Of course, there are rumours of all sorts of other innovative Acorn technology that might be made use of by the companies that have taken them over.

I've been told that set-top boxes might be the next big thing, or that something invented by Acorn will be the successor to Digital TV, or whatever else.

That might be so, but the companies concerned haven't said anything and there's no guarantee that new products will be for the general public, rather than business, or that they may be anything like what you were looking for.

So what can we dedicated spods buy instead? How can we keep up to date with the trendiest, flashiest gadgets about?

Psion 5

I've noticed a larger number of waists that have a Psion 5 on one side and a mobile on the other. Orange appears to be the network to be on, to send SMS messages to tell other Committee members that you're about to arrive at the meeting. You can even send them off their website to say you're working hard and will be late home.

You can IR phone numbers or appointments from your phone to a laptop and vice versa, although it may need to run the dreaded Windows. Other networks include Vodaphone, where a click on a *Scoot* website link sends a phone number straight to your phone to save you even dialling.

I just wait for the day when a Committee member gets arrested somewhere for diving at one or other of their waist holsters and getting it mistaken for a gun!

In other areas of life, beyond communications, technology is allowing the average spod to cope a little better with the wait for Phoebe's successor. DVD allows an outlet for the serious spod to keep up to date.

Digital television is also giving you more to watch on TV so you don't miss the thrill of setting up a new OS and installing everything quite so badly. Plus, these are things you may be able to find company to watch with you, which has it's bonuses. All the spoddiness of new technology, together with the social benefits of great viewing.

I'm also looking forward to visiting someone with these new fridges you hear about. You know, your mum has a fridge, big white thing in the kitchen… never mind. I haven't seen them on sale yet (although I haven't exactly been hanging out in my local domestic appliances store) but soon, the geekiest spod in town will be the

one with the fridge that reads barcodes. You scan things in as you use them, and it orders your next four-pack of lager and weekly supply of microwave meals direct from the supermarket by emailing them the list and getting them delivered to the door. Personally, I plan to keep a bar code for something confusingly healthy —like a lettuce —to hand, so that when I'm visiting certain friends I can secretly scan in and order the lettuce and get the delivery boy to take a camera!

Technology like this may soon move in strongly into the rest of the house —assuming you keep your Acorn in the study and know how to distinguish the kitchen from it.

Will your traditional spod have to move from his two bed-roomed flat (one for them, one for the computers) into a house, just in order to have a garden for the automatic mower? Will the washing machine be able to scream 'That suit is dry-clean only!" and go on strike before washing anything?
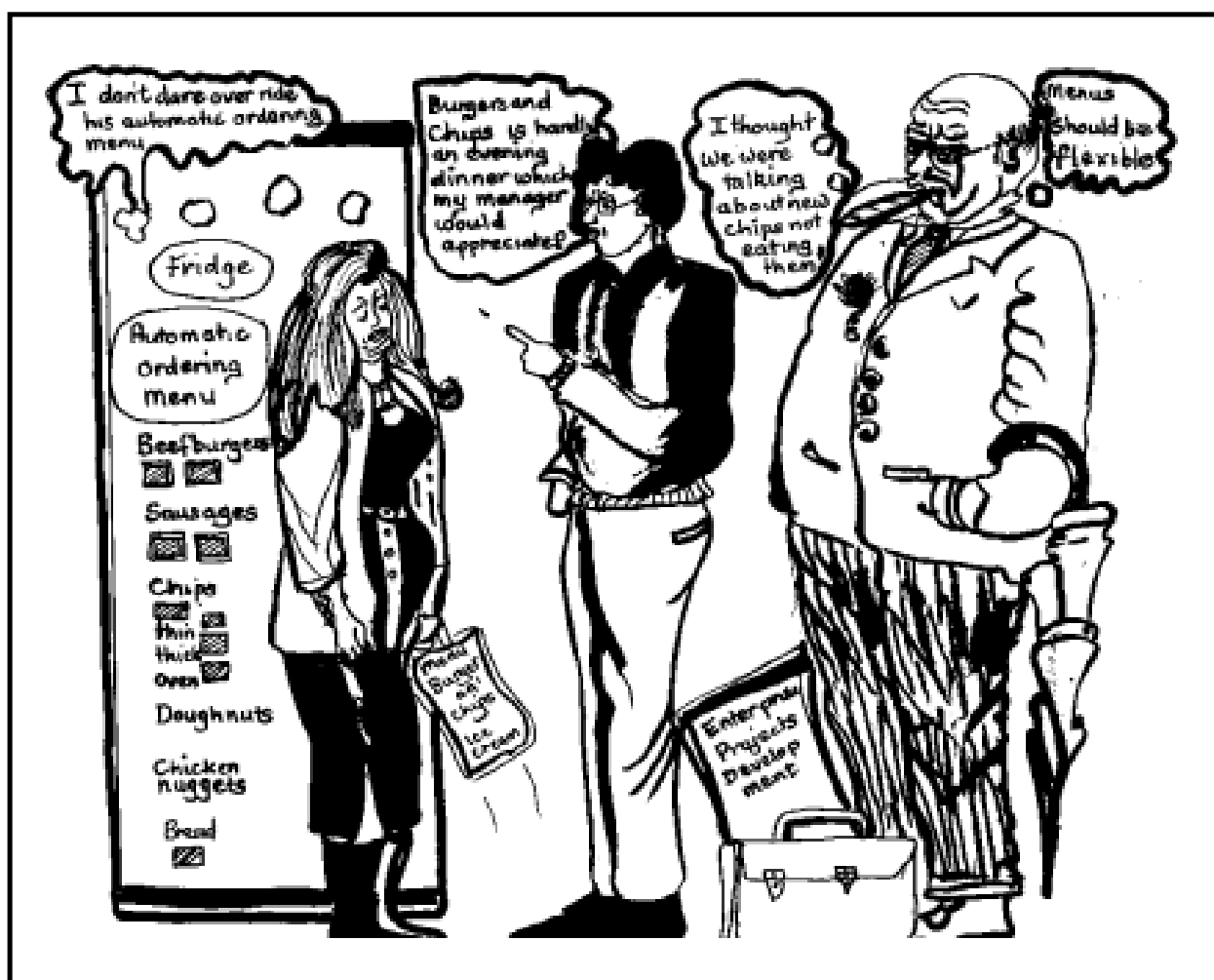
The microwave might get stressed if it doesn't get used for a while and set an alarm on your computer to remind you to eat. Perhaps the alarm clock could be networked with the computer, so you wake to the sound of "You have mail!"(™) and be sure to get straight out of bed!

Personally, I'm just looking for a technology that allows me to be half asleep in the morning and still get washed and dressed properly, eat breakfast and be out of the door in time for work. And you know what, I found it. They can be very expensive to install, maintain, and not always cheap to run but I think it's worth it.

I got myself a husband. And now he hasn't the time or money to worry about the latest technology!

Cartoons by Jan Pearce

There will be more pages from Gill's Journal in our next issue.

The Eureka disc

The Eureka disc has not been circulated with the magazine this issue. The new arrangements, announced in the last issue and planned for Eureka 31, have now been brought forward as it has again become apparent that we cannot rely on having the disc compiled and duplicated in time to accompany the magazine.

The disc contents are available for downloading from the Club's FTP site: ftp.armclub.org.uk but if you do not have access to the site the disc will be posted to you on request. Contact us by email to products@armclub.org.uk, if possible, or by phone, fax or letter as usual. Please include your name and address, membership number and desired disc format.

Members' Ads

FOR SALE

WANTED

Coming in Eureka 31

In our next issue there will be full information on the proposed RISC OS 99 Show, details of the exciting new hardware and software revealed at Wakefield and the latest news of some of the ambitious plans for the future of RISC OS computers. Features will include making MPEG movies with a digital camera, statistics packages and reviews of OHP and Curriculum Clip Art.

That's all in Eureka 31, our Autumn issue, being sent to members in August.

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Benefits of membership

The ARM Club

*The national club for all users of 32 bit
Acorn computers and Pocket Books*

- The Club's magazine, 'Eureka', written by members, is published and sent free of charge four times a year.

- Free software to accompany each issue of Eureka is available on the Club's FTP site or can be sent to members on disc.

- Free Technical Help Service. We will do our best to solve any problems which you may have, by email, letter, telephone or fax.

- Special discounts for Club members from well-known companies.

- Regional open days and shows are regularly organised by the Club. Other events can be arranged on request.

- Special offers at shows and open days.

- Regional contact lists of other members, available on request.

- Opportunities to get involved in the running of the Club itself.

- School and Affiliate Membership available on request.

- Joining pack includes an extra copy of a recent issue of the magazine and software.

*Annual membership £12 (+£3 joining pack for first year)
Europe £16 and rest of the world £19*
FREEPOST 'The ARM Club'
Email: info@armclub.org.uk   Tel: 07010 709849 (Flextel)