

ARM

The magazine for members of

The ARM Club

**Omega: the first
full user's report**



**Internet Special:
from getting on line
to getting a website**

**USB connects
with RISC OS**

Issue 47 — Autumn 2003

The First Full Report On Omega

After all the months of waiting and wondering about Omega, the first machines are now in the hands of users.

As you may know, the Club was fortunate enough to win one of the first two, which were offered in prizes at the Wakefield Show. This has given us the chance to have the first full report on Omega, written by Tom Hughes after two months of use and testing. During, this time, Omega has been updated and further improvements are no doubt still being made on machines not yet delivered.

So, finally, we have two new RISC OS computers and we look forward to seeing how both of them develop over the months ahead.

There's more good news too in the announcement that the ownership of our operating system is now completely back in the hands of Acorn-succession computer makers with the purchase of RISC OS from Pace by Castle.

Obviously, Castle have plans to extend the uses of RISC OS in wider markets, with improvements which will spread out to benefit computer users.

The new ownership should also mean tighter control, which will prevent any risk of diverging versions of the software coming from rival developers. We will watch with interest for further developments.

As well as the exclusive full report on Omega, we are featuring another special section this issue, this time about the Internet, following the success of last issue's Digital Photography Special.

If you found the black and white reproductions of the pictures illustrating those articles rather frustrating you can see them in their full colour on the Club's website at www.armclub.org.uk/eureka/issue46/pictures.html.

Peter Jennings

All opinions expressed in Eureka are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Club or its Committee members and officers.

CONTENTS

4 Omega: full report

The first full report from a user of the long awaited new computer.

14 Completing your auction sale

The final instalment of our series on buying and selling on eBay.

18 ARM Arena

The latest games and the return of some old, updated, favourites.

23 The Midlands RISCOS Show

Plan now for your visit to the Club's big Birmingham Show in November.

24 Internet Special

See the next column for full details.

53 Double Cross puzzle

Your regular chance to test your way with words.

54 RISC OS Rhymes

Our poetic Risc PC relates the mad computer enthusiast's song.

INTERNET SPECIAL

24

Internet access in a nutshell

The various alternatives available to get you on line.

31

Choosing an ISP

More decisions to make to get the best Internet Service Provider for your needs.

35

A permanent presence

How to keep the same internet address even if you eventually want to change your ISP.

38

Site seeing: travel & holidays

Helpful websites to visit if you're heading for sun or sights.

42 Getting a website

How to have a website of your own, with the help of some free software.

56 USB comes to RISC OS

Iyonix users get a USB mass storage class driver and there's a 6-1 USB card reader from R-Comp.

63 The Double Cross solution

See how well you did with our word puzzle.

See you at the shows

RISC OS South East

Saturday 18th October 2003

10am-4pm

Main Building

Guildford Technical College

Stoke Road (A320)

Guildford, Surrey

Entry £5 at the door

Web: www.fillin.co.uk/seshow/index.html

Midlands RISC OS Show

Saturday 29th November 2003

10am-4.30pm

National Motorcycle Museum

Solihull, Birmingham

See full details on page 23.

64 Aunty Gill's Journal

Help and advice on some of those more personal problems that the Technical Help team can't tackle.

Club Contacts

Who and where to contact the person for all your membership queries and suggestions.

Our full report on Omega follows on the next page. There was not room there for our usual information panel so the details are below.

Omega

Price: Standard case £1149

Mini Tower £1189

Desktop £1190

(all plus £20 delivery charge)

Supplier: MicroDigital Limited

37 Titus Street

Saltaire, Shipley BD18 4LU

Tel: 01274 618774

Fax: 01274 619482

Email:

sales@microdigital.co.uk

Web: www.microdigital.co.uk

Omega: The Full Report

Many of you will already know that The ARM Club was lucky enough to win one of the two MicroDigital Omegas offered as prizes at the Wakefield Show. I took the machine away from Wakefield and have had my hands on it for the

Before going any further I should make it clear that the precise status of the machine being reviewed here is unclear. I believe it to be more or less a production machine — certainly neither I nor the club has been given any information to contradict that —

Tom Hughes gives us the first full user's report of the long awaited new computer which has, until recently, been available to try only as demonstration models.

last two months, during which time I have attempted to put it through its paces.

but it is possible that production machines may differ slightly from that on which this review is based.

My first experiences with the machine were summarised in a preview put together during the four days between our winning the machine and my going off on holiday for three weeks. That preview was sent out by email, while I was away, to those of you whose addresses we know. If you didn't get a copy then now would be a good time to remind the Membership Secretary of your email address so that we will be able to include you in future.

Unfortunately, MicroDigital seem to have decided not to cooperate with us in the production of this review — all my emails to both their published support address and directly to members of their staff have gone unanswered. As a result, I have been unable to obtain clarification from them regarding any questions I had and everything in this review is based on my hands-on experience and reports from other Omega users about what MicroDigital have told them when they asked about various things.

The Machine

The machine itself is housed in a mid sized tower case, finished in a dark grey colour. The front of the case has two doors; the upper, larger, door opens to reveal the floppy and CD drives, while the small lower door reveals two USB ports and two 3.5mm audio sockets for connecting a microphone and headphones. In the centre of the front panel is a power button, a recessed reset button and two LEDs: one power light and one hard disc activity light.

Moving to the back of the case we find two PS/2 sockets for a mouse and keyboard, a video output socket and standard serial and parallel ports as well as a further two USB sockets. In the topmost expansion slot is a sound card with a full set of connectors: five 3.5mm sockets to provide 5.1 channel output as well a microphone connection and line input and a 15 pin D connector.

Opening the case requires removing the front panel; a simple 'grab it and pull' job, followed by four screws which then allow the cover to be slid forwards slightly before being lifted up and placed to one side.



Tower cased Omega

With the lid off, the case is revealed to contain no fewer than seven drive bays: three 5.25" bays which can be accessed from the front of the case and are hence suitable for removable drives; three 3.5" bays hung beneath the 5.25" bays and not accessible from the front but perfect for hard drives and the like; and a single 3.5" bay on top of the 5.25" bays which holds the floppy drive.

Also present in the case is a standard 250W ATX power supply, a very large (120mm) fan mounted on the rear of the case and the motherboard...

The Motherboard

At the rear of the motherboard are four 32-bit 5V PCI slots, the top one of which contains a sound card as previously mentioned. The sound card has two CD audio input connectors (for different types of CD drives) and an auxiliary input connector. The CD audio wasn't actually connected in our machine although I assume that was a simple oversight and that it would normally be connected.

Some other things not connected to the sound card are the front audio sockets. The cable from these is hanging loose in the case. So far I have been unable to identify any connector on the sound card to which these might be connected so it is unclear whether or not these can ever be made to work.

The front USB sockets are connected to the motherboard, however, as there are currently no USB drivers available, it is impossible to say anything more about the USB subsystem at the moment. There is a spare header on the motherboard, alongside the connection for the front USB sockets, labelled as *USB Ports*

5+6, which suggests that the hardware may be able to support an additional pair of USB ports if an appropriate socket was connected.

Near the USB connectors is another spare header labelled *Serial Port 2* which may suggest that a second serial port is a possibility in the future. The ALi M1535+ South Bridge chip used in the Omega certainly supports two serial ports, as can be seen from the Iyonix which uses the same South Bridge chip.

To the right of the PCI slots are the floppy drive connector and two IDE connectors, one of which is used to connect the 33GB Maxtor hard drive and the 52x CD drive.

Both the floppy cable and the IDE cable are rounded cables rather than the more common flat ribbon cables and this should help to provide improved airflow inside the machine.

At the top end of the motherboard, and just below the ATX power connector, are a pair of DIMM sockets designed to hold PC133 SDRAM memory modules. In our machine one of these sockets is

populated with a 256Mb Hynix memory module.

In the centre of the motherboard is a surface-mounted SA-110 StrongARM processor alongside the custom North Bridge, implemented on a 200,000 gate Xilinx FPGA chip. This is the core of the custom hardware in the Omega and implements VIDC compatible video and IOMD compatible memory access as well as providing access to the PCI bus.

Between these two chips and the memory slots is a large high density connector labelled as *XScale(tm) Processor Card Connector* which is where the XScale expansion card will plug in once it becomes available.

One minor problem with the motherboard is that it seems to be very poorly supported in the bottom right corner. There are two fixing holes here which are unused and as a result you would need to be very careful not to flex the board too much when inserting or removing the floppy drive connector. Inserting cards in the bottom two or three PCI slots would probably also call for a fair degree of care.

Switching On

After connecting up the keyboard, mouse, video and power leads —no mouse or power lead was supplied with our machine but I assume that the regular production machines would come with these —throwing the main power switch on the back of the machine brought it to life without any need to press the soft power switch on the front. The soft power switch is used to turn the machine on when it has powered off by the operating system as the result of shutting down the system.

When I first received the machine powering on the system didn't bring it straight up however. Instead a kind of graphical test card would appear and it was necessary to press the reset button to get the machine booting. That problem has been fixed by subsequent firmware updates however and the machine now boots cleanly when powered on.

When the machine starts to boot, it initially brings up a screen announcing itself as a MicroDigital Omega and that it is searching for IDE devices. This is almost immediately followed by an

indication that the hard disc has been located and then, some five to ten seconds later, that the CD drive has been located after which the normal RISC OS boot sequence commences.

The desktop is reached in just a few seconds—at least it did until I added all my normal applications to the boot sequence—and looks reassuringly familiar. I was slightly surprised to see two hard drive icons on the icon bar but it turns out that the Omega is using a variant of APDL's IDEFS rather than ADFS and hence it has support for multiple partitions on one drive. In this case there was one small partition with !Boot and the normal bundled applications, and one large, empty, partition.

Looking at the task manager I was slightly surprised to see that the machine seemed to think it had only 64MB of RAM despite the fact that the DIMM that is installed is clearly a 256MB part. This is something that seems to have gone uncorrected by either of the two firmware updates issued since I received the machine but doubtless it will be addressed in due course.

At this point I decided to use a floppy to copy some software onto the Omega in order to start benchmarking it. I was rather shocked to find that the machine was unable to read the floppy that I presented to it and that it crashed when asked to format a floppy. This problem has now been largely resolved; a recent firmware update allows the Omega to read and write floppy discs although it still can't format them at the moment. A future firmware update is expected to address that problem.

Given the lack of a working floppy drive and the fact that the network card for the Omega is not yet available, I was forced to fall back on using my Iyonix and/or my Linux box to write CDs in order to get some software onto the Omega to test it.

Performance

My first task, once I had copied some software onto the Omega, was to run some benchmarks to try to get an idea of just how well it performed. I started by running the *RISCOSmark* benchmark (from www.richardspencer.freeuk.com/riscosmark/) and the results are summarised in the table opposite.

Performance

	Risc PC	Omega	Iyonix
Processor	100%	152%	262%
Memory	100%	245%	208%
Rectangle Copy	100%	155%	5812%
Icon Plotting	100%	135%	33%
Draw Path	100%	152%	102%
Draw Fill	100%	146%	65%
Block Read (MB/s)	100%	1169%	1274%
Block Write (MB/s)	100%	389%	1067%
Stream Read (KB/s)	100%	70%	199%
Stream Write (KB/s)	100%	211%	400%

The figures in the table are relative to a baseline established on my 202MHz StrongARM Risc PC running RISC OS Select. The Iyonix used for the test is running RISC OS 5.03 so has UDMA enabled for hard disc access. The Omega was also tested using a firmware build that has UDMA enabled. All the tests were run at 800x600 with 256 colours.

As can be seen, the processor is almost exactly 50% faster than the Risc PC, as would be expected given that it is clocked at 306MHz. The memory test shows that the memory is considerably faster than the Risc PC and also apparently faster than the

Iyonix although this does not appear to square with other memory benchmarks that I ran. For example, in the tables on the following page there are the peak memory read bandwidths and the corresponding peak memory write bandwidths (in MB/s) as measured in various screens modes using some hand crafted assembler.

As you can see, both the read and write bandwidths on the Omega are significantly higher than on the Risc PC, as expected, although the numbers do start to drop off in higher resolution modes as the video system is contending with the processor for

Peak memory read bandwidths (MB/s)

	Risc PC	Omega	Iyonix
800x600x256	41.53	99.57	171.20
1280x1024x32K	41.39	91.62	171.19
1280x1024x16M		78.01	171.22
1600x1200x32K		77.11	171.21

Peak memory write bandwidths

	Risc PC	Omega	Iyonix
800x600x256	39.71	125.76	122.17
1280x1024x32K	39.38	125.75	122.17
1280x1024x16M		71.37	122.17
1600x1200x32K		90.68	122.17

access to the memory. By contrast the measured bandwidth on the Iyonix is constant across all screen modes and, in the case of writing, is more or less identical to the Omega in lower resolution modes.

One thing that I don't understand is why the peak write bandwidth on the Omega is often higher than the peak read bandwidth. On the face of it this would appear to make little sense, so more investigation may be required here.

On the graphical front we can see that the Omega is definitely an improvement on a Risc PC. The story changes somewhat as we increase the resolution of the display however. The results shown in the table opposite were gathered at 1280x1024 with a full 16 million colours.

Note that for this test a 233Mhz StrongARM Risc PC with a Viewfinder+ card was used, as a normal Risc PC can't manage that resolution. The Omega shows a much

Graphics tests

	Risc PC	Omega	Iyonix
Rectangle Copy	100%	3%	145%
Icon Plotting	100%	1638%	1604%
Draw Path	100%	313%	265%
Draw Fill	100%	1208%	1622%

bigger improvement over the Risc PC in some of these tests but a disastrous reduction in one critical test, the block copy test that simulates what happens when you move a window. This is because there is no 2D graphics acceleration on the Omega at present although it is promised for a future update.

Going back to the original figures and looking at I/O performance, we can see that disc I/O is generally much better on the Omega than the Risc PC, as would be expected. Block I/O in particular is greatly enhanced, especially reading, which has performance roughly equal to the Iyonix. Block writing doesn't seem to show such a large increase, which may indicate that UDMA is not currently used for writing. There also seems to be a surprising reduction in stream read performance, which may

indicate that the IDEFS in the Omega does less buffering than ADFS on the other machines.

Graphics

An area where I had expected the Omega to be a significant improvement over the Risc PC is the graphics subsystem; in particular it ought to be able to manage significantly higher resolutions and colour depths than an unexpanded Risc PC. The specification for the machine does after all claim to support 1600x1200 with 16 million colours at a nice solid 90Hz refresh rate.

Unfortunately, I have so far been somewhat underwhelmed. Even ignoring the current lack of acceleration, it seems that any attempt to push the display beyond fairly low resolutions results in the appearance

of vertical artefacts in the display and once higher resolutions such as 1600x1200 with 16 million colours are reached (even at low refresh rates) the display becomes more or less unusable.

I'm using the Omega with a 19" Iiyama VisionMaster Pro 451 and I've tried using MicroDigital's generic 19" CRT monitor definition that ships with the machine and my own monitor definition that I use on my Risc PC and my Iyonix and both give very similar results.

The really odd thing is the Omega I saw on the RISC OS Ltd stand at the RISC OS Expo in Holland recently was much better. Unfortunately, because MicroDigital have refused to reply to me, I have been unable to determine if this means there is some sort of problem with the specific machine that I have.

Firmware

Since we received our Omega at Wakefield, two new versions of the firmware for the machine have been released by MicroDigital. As mentioned previously, MicroDigital have not responded to any of our

attempts to communicate with them and we have not therefore been able to obtain the updates directly. Fortunately, however, I have received copies of the updates from other sources.

The first update, released on the 17th of June, actually came in two versions, one with sound and UDMA enabled and one with them disabled, which was described as more stable and able to run RISC OS Select, although I haven't actually tried that yet.

The second was released on the 3rd July and fixed a number of problems: it allows the floppy drive to read and write floppy discs, although not to format them, and it gets sound card input from audio CDs working, although there is a small volume problem that can be patched around and should be fixed in the next update. A small downside is that UDMA is disabled, apparently to allow CD writers to work.

The second update appears to have made our machine fairly unstable though — it generally only manages a few minutes before locking up and

having to be rebooted. I would try going back to the previous firmware except that I have now managed to render the machine unbootable by unplugging a key module so until I manage to get that resolved my work with the machine is stalled.

Software Compatibility

As expected, given that the hardware is intended to be entirely compatible with the Risc PC architecture, there are few problems on this front. In fact I have so far failed to find any software which won't run on the Omega although I've run only a fairly small number of programs.

Obviously compatibility with the XScale expansion, when it appears, is another matter altogether and we will have to wait and see before making an assessment there.

Likewise, it is always possible that software that is tightly linked to some obscure hardware feature of a previous machine might fail. Obviously anything which tries to talk to the Podule bus will fail for example, as there isn't one on the Omega!

Conclusions

In general terms, I would say that the Omega is certainly a significant step up from the Risc PC, at least if I could manage to find a solution to my problems with the graphics system. The processor is significantly faster, as is memory access and disc I/O, at least when UDMA is enabled.

Now that the floppy drive is largely working the main problems would appear to be graphics and a distinct lack of stability. So if those two issues can be addressed then the machine is certainly a workable and usable machine. The problem is that, even with the improved performance relative to a Risc PC, it still isn't as fast as an Iyonix on most counts and it costs more. Of course the Omega has the advantage of a 26 bit processor, so if you use a lot of software which hasn't been ported to 32 bits, or which won't run under Aemulor, then the Omega might be a better option.

The balance between the two machines may also move once the XScale upgrade for the Omega is available. Hopefully we'll be able to tell you more about that in a future article.

Completing Your Auction Sale

After listing your item for sale on eBay, you can sit down and wait for the bidding to start. Although there are a number of jobs you will have to do before completion.

You will usually get a number of questions emailed to you from

hopefully not have to answer the same question twice.

It is useful to write a form email message to send on completion of the item to inform the bidder they have successfully won the auction. This email can also be used to outline the

In the final part of his series on buying and selling in on-line auction, Matthew Cook advises on how to complete your sale on eBay when the bids have arrived.

bidders asking anything from the postage costs to detailed item information.

This is why I stressed the importance of getting the listing right in the first place. You may also find people asking for the auction to be ended early offering a fixed price for an item. This is against eBay policy and I strongly recommend that you let the item run for the auction period.

A useful tip is to add the answers to bidder's emails as additions to the item listing as well as replying by personal email. That way you will

different accepted payment methods and to give contact details.

When the auction finally completes, after three, five, seven or 10 days, you have three working days to contact the winning bidder to agree payment methods. You may find if you have detailed online payment methods such as Pay Pal and Bill Point in the auction listing then the winning bidder may have already paid.

Once you have received payment from the winning bidder try and send the item as soon as possible. Swift delivery keeps the buyers happy. You



[home](#) | [my eBay](#) | [site map](#) | [sign in](#)

Browse	Sell	Services	Search	Help	Community	
overview	registration	buying & selling	my eBay	about me	feedback forum	rules & safety

Search

[Advanced Search](#)

☐ Search titles and descriptions

Services Overview

Here you'll find the many services eBay offers to make your trading fun, safe, and successful.

Registration

To trade on eBay, you'll need to register. Don't worry—it's quick and it's free!

- [Register now](#)
- [Confirm registration](#)
Go here to enter the confirmation code you received in your email.
- [I've already registered, but I forgot my password](#)
- [Registration Discussion Board](#)
- [New to eBay Board](#)
If you are new to eBay, Welcome. Come on in!

Feedback Forum

A keystone of safe trading is knowing the **track record** of the person you're trading with.

- [Go directly to The Feedback Forum](#)
- [View a member's feedback record](#)
- [Leave feedback on a member](#)
- [Feedback Discussion Board](#)

My eBay

Save time and get organized with your **personalized** eBay transactions page. Here you can also **update** information about

There's no shortage of help, advice and information

are perfectly within your rights to wait for cheque payments to clear, although you might only want to do this for items over a certain amount, £10 and over for example. I have not had any problems with bounced cheques and once a bidder has bought one item, I dispatch any further items as soon as I receive the cheque thereafter.

It will be useful to track the items you have posted and those you are still waiting for payment. This can be achieved in two different ways, either with a spreadsheet or by way of the eBay feedback process.

I leave feedback for the winning bidder once I have posted the item. That way the status of shipping is



Buy and Sell with Confidence

eBay is committed to making your trading experience safe, enjoyable and easy. Whether you're a buyer or a seller, you're assured of being able to make informed decisions with confidence and trust. This page outlines how you can make sensible trading choices through eBay's feedback system, trust and safety assurances and openly-available information and tools.

Knowing your seller



Learning more about your seller helps you make informed choices about your purchases. You can do this in several ways:

- [Reviewing feedback](#) from community members who have previously purchased from the seller is very useful for evaluating that person's trading history on eBay.
- [Contacting the seller](#) is another excellent way to get to know the seller and learn more about the item, shipping and accepted methods of payment.

Knowing your buyer



If you're a seller, it's natural to want to learn more about your buyer's trading history. You can do this in several ways:

- [Reviewing feedback](#) from community members who have previously transacted with the buyer.
- Getting to know your buyer personally by [requesting the contact information](#) of your winning bidder or buyer.

In addition, eBay enforces several buyer policies to facilitate a successful transaction.

There's every encouragement to take part

known to both the buyer and yourself the seller.

When sending the item at the Post Office it is recommended that you gain a *Proof of Purchase* certificate as you will then have a receipt that you sent the item if the winning bidder claims the item has not be received.

It is also wise to write a return address on the back of the envelope in the case of mis-delivery.

Hopefully, if everything goes to plan, the winning bidder will contact you to let you know the item has been received okay and will leave positive feedback. You are now ready to list some more items on eBay.

If you do need to obtain the contact details of the winning bidder you can apply via eBay to have these emailed to yourself. If you start to list more and more items you may want to take advantage of the eBay watching facilities. eBay allows your to



[home](#) | [my eBay](#) | [site map](#) | [sign in](#)

Browse	Sell	Services	Search	Help	Community
overview talk news events people					

Welcome to **eBay Community**



There's even an invitation to join the Community

monitor 30 items. You can monitor the auctions to see how much items similar to yours are being sold for and ensure you do not list a similar item at the same time when the auction price is low.

However, if the auction price is high and there are a number of bidders competing for an item you have to list, you can take advantage of the interest in the other item and list your item before the other auction completes.

My final words are simple: you will encounter all sorts of people trading and bidding on eBay. It mirrors the real world. It pays to be polite and calm at all times even if you get silly or impatient email messages. It will be better in the long run to have 100% positive feedback, having bitten one's tongue a couple of times, than to have winning bidders leaving negative feedback over petty issues. Good luck and happy eBaying.

See Internet Special starting page 24

ARM Arena

After a brief lull during the Spring, the gaming scene seems to have warmed up quite a lot with a buzz of activity in the last few weeks including a major release.

With this activity occurring in the same space of time as the

FreeCIV

A major release arising from Peter Naull's Linux/Unix OS porting project is *FreeCIV*, a Linux port of the formerly commercial game *Civilisation2* that was released under the General Public License (freely available sources but any

Our regular round up of the gaming scene, by Andrew Weston, includes the new arrivals and some old favourites making an upgraded come-back.

announcement of Castle Technology acquiring the rights to RISC OS, you could almost be forgiven for thinking that some of the good old days of Acorn were upon us again!

With regards to gaming, it's not clear yet if the arrival of the Iyonix has spurred on any significant interest in games development but one thing is certain — with the platform's development assured it is hard to imagine that anybody will be put off from bringing new projects to the RISC OS domain.

modifications must also be released publicly), which has in turn been ported to RISC OS by Peter.

Readers might remember the SDL multiplatform programming routine library that was mentioned in this column several months ago brought to RISC OS by eQ R&D. This library has since been ported to RISC OS again with enhancements by Alan Buckley and, in fact, FreeCIV was written using SDL. Thus, with a RISC OS version of SDL, it was just a matter of utilising RISC OS SDL to convert FreeCIV for use under RISC OS.



FreeCIV joins the RISC OS strategy games scene

FreeCIV is a turn-based strategy game similar in concept to Artex Software's TEK1608 but involving the construction and leadership of civilisations with the eventual goal of dominating a planet.

It is turn-based as the player competes against the computer or connects to the internet to a dedicated web-server where he/she can join a game with another player.

FreeCIV can be downloaded from Peter's website but be warned it is a very big download for those with

standard modem-based connections (56K and less) being almost 8MB in size.

More SDL

Peter Naull has also used the SDL port to RISC OS to make available a number of Linux SDL games and these are also available on his website.

Many of these games have a recognisable style of play from days gone by, such as *Asteroids*, *Moonquake*, *Breakout*, *Pacman* and *Boulderdash*. However, support for



Now you can complete it

these games is only available to subscribers to Peter's Unix porting project so any reliability problems which I detected on testing one of these games will have to wait for any updates made to the game as a result of subscriber feedback to Peter.

Starfighter 3000

A regular visitor to this column is this popular Fednet game which was enhanced and repackaged by iSV Software (now available from APDL) and has been subsequently enhanced regularly by Chris Bazley who runs the Starfighter website.

He has been working on an Iyonix-compatible version of Starfighter which will be available as an upgrade to owners of the enhanced version CD.

The game will also run in the desktop as an added bonus for owners of this powerful new machine.

Patience

Computer versions of card games are very abundant in the RISC OS community and a highly configurable release of Patience has been released by Phil Donsback and can be found at his website, given at the end of this article.

Repton

Over the past few years David Bradforth of ProAction has been either commissioning or collating various conversions of BBC games and one set of games which he brought together for RISC OS is the Repton collection,

Repton being the unforgettable lizard who starred in numerous and massively selling titles on the BBC Micro.

One incredibly annoying bug that has apparently been carried over in the conversion is that which prevents the most complex and involved of all the Reptons — Repton 2 — from being completed! At least one person had tried to complete it on the BBC and couldn't and having bought the 32-bit version, still couldn't do it over a



Take your pick of Patience games

decade later. Fortunately, an update has been made available on APDL's website and I'm informed that the game can finally be completed. I wonder what the original author would have said?!

Descent and Quake

Author of one of these PC conversions, David McEwen, has been trying to find time to update both titles (including *Descent 2*) to be Iyonix-compatible. I'm told that all that remains is to update the sound routines before Iyonix owners can try out these games at a much faster speed than previously available. David is also hoping to include some additional features into both *Descent 1* and *2* which were not available in the

original release. Both titles in their Risc PC form are sold by RCI.

Beebit

The popular freeware BBC Micro emulator *Beebit* has been made Iyonix compatible along with various

other updates to the application meaning that tape and disc images, (entire data of tape or disc in single file) of old BBC games available on the internet (sometimes breaching copyright it should be noted) can be run on the latest RISC OS machine, itself a descendent, one could, say of the famous old Acorn 8-bit machine.

Beebit is available for download from Michael Foot's website along with various other 8-bit associated utilities, links and games.

Final words

The arrival of the Iyonix has certainly seemed to have been accompanied by an interesting set of gaming developments and with the future of RISC OS hopefully safe in the skilled hands of Castle Technology, any ongoing projects such as the Unix porting efforts together with ARM Arena regulars such as Beebit will certainly have added incentive to continue.

It will be interesting to see what releases the near future will bring.

See you next time.

Contacts

Unix Porting Project

Website: www.chocky.org/unix/

FreeCiv page:

www.chocky.org/unix/downloads.html#freeciv

SDL page: www.riscos.info/sdl/

Other SDL games:

www.chocky.org/unix/downloads.html

Starfighter

www.starfighter.acornarcade.com

ADPL

Phone: 020 8778 2659

Website: www.apdl.co.uk

Repton update:

www.apdl.co.uk/proact.htm#repton

Patience

<http://perso.worldonline.fr/donsback/>

RCI

Phone: 01925 757377

Website: www.rcomp.co.uk

Beebit

<http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/mjfoot/>



CASTLE

2003

MIDLANDS RISCOS SHOW

2003



CASTLE



The National Motorcycle Museum

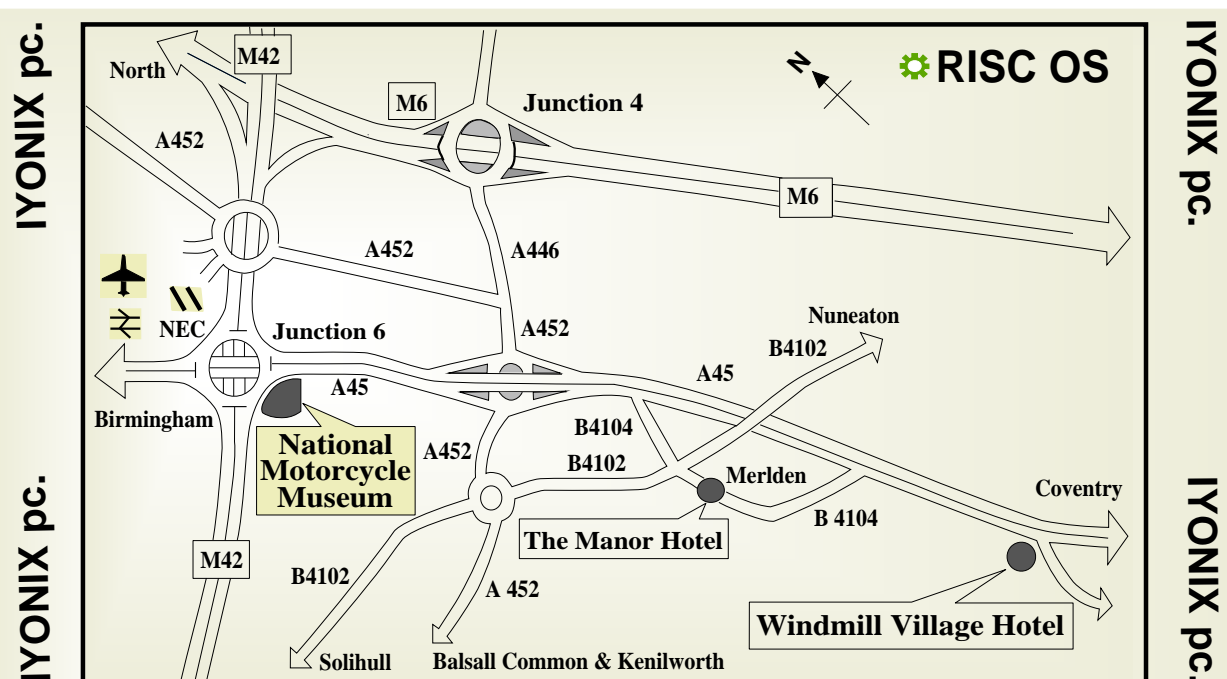
Solihull
Nr Birmingham

Saturday 29th November 2003

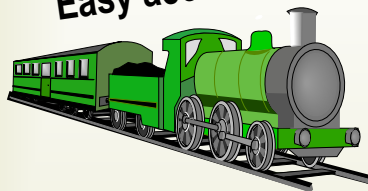
Adults £3, Arm Club members £2

Doors open 10am - 4.30pm

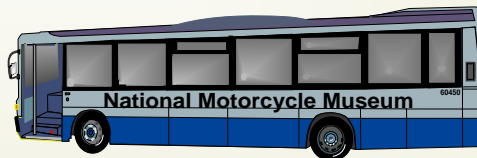
Children under 14 (with an adult) FREE !



Easy access



by public transport



or by road



A free coach service from Birmingham International rail station to and from The National Motorcycle Museum is available.

Birmingham International Airport is also only 10 minutes away and you could catch the monorail to the train station to use the free bus from there.

For further details: Tel. 07010 709 849 - Fax. 07020 954 018 - EMail. sales@armclub.org.uk
Web page: <http://www.armclub.org.uk> - ftp site: <ftp://ftp.armclub.org.uk>

Internet Access In A Nutshell

As part of our Internet special edition, this article aims to explain the different internet access methods available to members, their pros and cons and any issues relating to using RISC OS with them.

discount schemes, such as BT's Friends and Family, to reduce call costs. ISP numbers allegedly account for more than a third of BT 'Best Friends', getting a 20% discount on call costs.

Toby Smith begins our Internet Special series of articles with information on how to get connected and the choices in services available to RISC OS users.

Pay as You Go Dialup

Basic dialup access to the internet is now very common in the UK. This uses your normal phone line to transmit and receive the data and, as such, stops you making or receiving other calls during an internet session.

Due to a peculiarity of our unregulated telecoms industry, ISPs can make profit on 0845 local rate dialup numbers, providing cheap access to the customer, without the need for a monthly fee arrangement. This ideally suits low usage levels, as you pay for precisely what you use in the value of the phone call. More regular users may wish to consider

Equipment wise, you'll need a standard telephone line from any provider —BT or cable. You'll also need an external modem (or internal if possible on your machine) and the relevant software, freeware or commercial. Technically you should have no problems accessing an ISP using RISC OS but do avoid ISPs which require you to use their own software.

Speed will be dependant on your modem and the quality of the phone line. Modern modems have a 56k theoretical maximum, though most usually only attain high 40s. If you have a low quality phone line,

especially one using overhead lines, you may get less. You'll probably not be able to tell the quality difference on a normal voice call and there is usually little BT can or will do about low speeds. I've had many reports of regular good connections using cable telephone lines, however, presumably due to more modern connections and cabling.

You will need to allow Caller Line Identity (commonly known as the 1471 service) when making these calls. This allows the ISP to attach your telephone number to their records, so that if any illegal activity needs to be traced it can be linked to a telephone number and thus address.

Most ISPs will allow you to sign up for 'free' or *Pay as You Go* style accounts online on their own website. You may need the help of a friend with an existing account, or a bit of time in an internet cafe or similar to start your first account. Often these signup procedures require browser features not available on RISC OS machines, so it may be worth using a PC if possible.

Unmetered dialup

A step beyond basic dialup is unmetered dialup, where you pay a fixed monthly fee for your internet access and can then use it as much as you want, as there are no fees related to usage levels.

The most common deals available from most ISPs require a BT telephone line.

The first deal covers *Evenings only* or *Off Peak*, giving unlimited access between 6pm-8am Monday to Friday and at weekends (6pm Friday to 8am Monday). Daytime usage requires a different (0845 local rate) phone number.

The second deal covers the whole day, all week and generally gets called *Anytime*.

These schemes use exactly the same equipment as normal dialup and only differ in the billing arrangements. You will pay a flat monthly fee by direct debit or regular credit card payment to your ISP. Internally this fee is split between BT and the ISP for their costs and profits.

Unmetered schemes are tied to one phone number and as such you cannot use them when visiting friends or relatives as you can with Pay as You Go arrangements.

Note that these services are not designed for constant access to the internet. You will usually find that there is a maximum call length of about two hours, after which you'll need to redial. The computer will usually do this automatically for you without problem. Similarly, if you use the service for long periods on a continuous basis your ISP may spot this and suggest moving up to ADSL or similar.

Financially, the break-even point for unmetered access is where your metered dialup calls per month are equal to the monthly fee. Assuming a 0845 of peak call (1p a minute) with Best Friend discount, this is about 31 hours in the month (seven hours a week or one hour a day average).

However, it is also worth considering the advantages of an unmetered access method. You won't have to worry about the costs mounting up as

you use the internet and can browse around without this kind of concern. Even if you're not near the breakpoint, would knowing you had a fixed fee make you use the internet more for a wider variety of things?

If your telephone line is with a cable company rather than BT you can't access either of these deals. However you may find that cable providers offer a similar deal, often tied to their own ISP.

ISDN line

While covering dialup access it is worth briefly mentioning ISDN. An ISDN line is (roughly) a telephone line designed for two-channel digital transmission, rather than the analogue style of normal phone lines.

ISDN lines have a different and higher quarterly cost from BT and require different equipment. You can use ISDN lines with normal telephones via adapters or different sockets. Also with an ISDN line you'll need an ISDN Terminal Adapter (TA) instead of a modem.

ISDN calls guarantee a basic rate of

64k, higher than for modems but not by much. At this rate you'll also be able to make and receive voice calls down the other channel. If you use both channels for data you can achieve 128k, which is quite a good speed and probably more than enough to handle the browsing requirements of one or two people. As a rough measure, the internet cafe at most recent RISC OS shows has run comparatively comfortably off 128k ISDN covering 10 or so machines.

ISDN can be used with metered and unmetered accounts alike as long as you check carefully with the ISP details that they accept ISDN calls on these services. Usually ISDN will have a different phone number to call. Check very carefully to ensure that they'll support 128k or *bonded* calls if you wish to use the higher data rate. At the last check, only BT Openworld supported this on a Pay as You Go deal. Note that for 128k you'll pay *twice* as you're essentially making two phone calls.

(See panel for details of ISDN Routers at the end of this article).

Cable Broadband

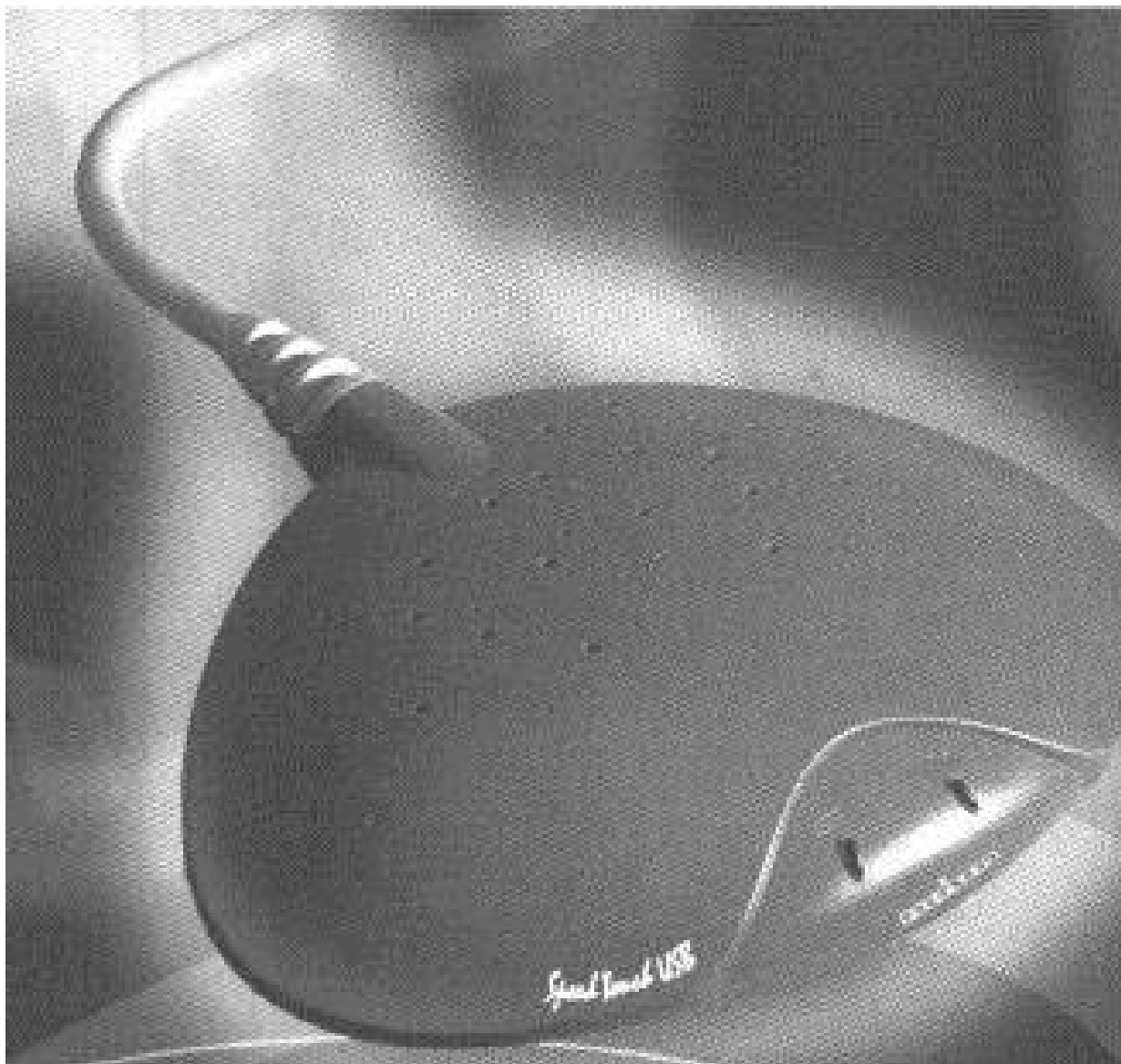
Cable TV companies have started offering broadband packages providing a high speed, always on, connection through their cable network. Prices vary depending on supplier and bandwidth.

As a generalisation, you will be provided with a cable modem device that will give you a single standard network connection to attach one computer. If you wish to connect several machines you will need one acting as a network gateway. Most cable providers use DHCP dynamic addressing, which will work on Linux, Windows or Mac systems and RISC OS 5 or appropriate versions of Select.

ADSL

ADSL is a method of converting a single standard BT telephone line to take internet traffic. The data traffic is sent as a high frequency sound down the line, while the normal voice traffic remains on normal voice frequencies.

BT does conversion at their exchange to direct the data traffic over their own networks to your choice of ISP and



An Alcatel ADSL modem

then onto the wider internet. At your end you'll need a special filter in each of your phone sockets to separate the voice and data frequencies. ADSL packages cover a range of speeds but the most common for domestic use is 512k, which is more than enough for even the most active household. With

ADSL, voice calls can still be made and received at any time.

To get ADSL you'll have to check if your local exchange is ADSL enabled. Most ISPs will have a web page into which you can enter your phone number to check. You'll also

need to be within 5km (in terms of telephone line distance, not physical distance) from that exchange.

Equipment wise, you'll need an ADSL router, for £50-100. You'll need a network card in each machine that is to access the internet, (prices vary) and cabling. You'll also need an ADSL filter for every phone socket in your house, including the one for the ADSL Router. It's worth getting good filters and they cost about £10 each.

Several RISC OS dealers are now providing packages for ADSL including a suitable router and relevant networking equipment. If you are using a RISC OS machine with broadband it is worth going for one of these packages so that you know it will work with your browser and network capabilities.

(Tip: To reduce the number of filters, either for cost or because they're a little unsightly, you can play a bit clever depending on your phone layout and re-cabling abilities. For a good series of articles on the topic see www.clarity.it).

ADSL accounts vary in cost but are usually around the £25 a month mark (paid by direct debit etc to the ISP). Features and services vary between ISPs, so do shop around.

(See the following article, which deals with this topic).

Others

Several other more exotic methods exist for providing broadband, generally focusing on regions that are not ADSL enabled.

Several providers exist using two way microwave or radio systems from dishes on your house or office to their local transmitters. Other providers offer a two-way satellite system for internet connection. Connection methods, speeds and prices vary.

If you're considering one of these options, you may like to check with the Club's Technical Help Service who may be able to translate the provider's web pages into you what you'll need.

See the details of routers on the following page.

Routers

A router is a device than allows a network or set of computers in one location access to another network. In the domestic setting, this means a small device, about the size of a book, that handles all the internet access for you, presenting a standard RJ45 network connection for several computers.

If you have several computers on a home network, then a router can give them all access to the internet equally, as opposed to having only one with internet access, or having one computer which dials the internet for the others. (In fact you do have one computer that does that; the router is a computer albeit a purpose built one).

Routers are generally controlled through a web interface from your normal computer, and all the internet access settings entered though this. You can then configure them to dial the internet on demand (for ISDN), or keep their connection up permanently (common for ADSL).

On the home network side, routers will generally offer a built in network hub for 4 or 8 computers over standard 10baseT network cable. All computers will need their own network card. The router will handle local IP addresses through DHCP, which will work on Linux, Windows or Mac systems, and RISC OS 5 or appropriate versions of Select. Alternatively you should be able to get the IP range the router is using from its web interface and assign a static address to older RISC OS machines.

ADSL and ISDN routers cost in the region of £50-100 depending on features. For ADSL they are the standard connection method. ADSL modems do exist (where the connected computer controls the connection) but generally cost more than routers with better features. If you wish to control a router from a RISC OS machine, it is wise to buy from a RISC OS dealer who can confirm for you that it can be controlled from your RISC OS browser software.

Choosing An ISP

To access the internet at home you'll need an account with an Internet Service Provider (ISP). In addition to connectivity, ISPs all provide a varying array of internet related services.

Here's our guide to the kind of services on offer, and how to rate each ISP's offerings to see if it suits your personal requirements.

size (how much space you can use). Fifteen MB is about the average for a home-based account (as distinct from business accounts). This is a seemingly high limit, but if you use lots of images, especially photos, you can quickly eat up the space.

Advanced features include the ability to run certain provided *CGI* scripts (such as counters and email response

It's import to get the right Interent Service Provider (ISP) to get exactly what you want from the internet. Toby Smith tells you what to look for when choosing one.

Each section covers the basic features that most ISPs will provide. Some of the more advanced options in each area are only available from specific ISPs. Choose which level will suit your internet work best, you can then select an ISP providing all the features you want.

Web space

Many providers will offer basic webspace, allowing you to build yourself a small website. Check for

forms). More advanced is the ability to upload and use your own scripts.

Some providers also provide web usage logs or statistics so you can see who is using your site. If you're running a significant site covering more than the usual family interest stuff, then this may be very useful in analysing how your site is being found, and what pages people are looking at.

Email addresses

All providers will offer basic email address provision with their accounts, usually collectable from one single mailbox.

Advanced features include a webmail interface so you can read your email without having to download it. This is useful when not at home, such as on holiday or visiting others.

While most providers offer a limited number of addresses, certain providers also offer an unrestricted number of email addresses within your own domain (such as: <anything>@username.isp.co.uk).

This allows you to create different addresses for family members and also to maintain different personal identities as relevant. You might not want to be called funkyfred@isp.net when emailing your CV for a job interview. Being able to be funkyfred@username.isp.co.uk and fred.bloggs@username.isp.co.uk offers the choice for a much more professional appearance when needed.

In most cases all these addresses will be sent to the same single POP box for collection together. This has the advantage of being able to collect all the mail in one go but that may not be ideal if you want to filter it, for example having different family member's email collected on their own machine.

In this case, some ISPs also offer the ability to collect specific addresses, usually by changing the mail login from (for example) place.isp.co.uk to fred.bloggs+place.isp.co.uk. Often you'll have to experiment to see if this works, or hunt hard through FAQs and help pages to find out.

Web proxy

A web proxy is a (set of) machines on the ISP's network through which requests for web pages from customers can go. The proxy keeps a copy of each page, text and graphics, that all of the customers ask for (unless that page is marked as dynamic and uncacheable). If the page is requested again, it can be served from the proxy on the ISP's network rather than requested from the original website.

This often provides a much faster response and a better management of the ISP's upstream connections to the rest of the internet, especially for popular image heavy sites, but it can cause errors in some cases. Opinions vary as to whether proxies are a good or bad thing but in general they do help.

We recommend looking for an ISP that quotes a web cache that you can use if you wish (opt in) but don't have to either by requirements or by the ISP automatically putting all requests through their cache.

Support

All ISPs provide both email and telephone support. You can probably expect the vast majority of ISPs to not be able to help with RISC OS related issues and most won't even have heard of people not using Windows or Mac. However, certain specialist ISPs remain in the RISC OS market that can help you, or you can use other technical support systems available.

If, however, you encounter a problem that's not RISC OS specific (such as missing emails, failure to connect to some websites, personal web hosting

downtime etc) then the ISP's support channels will be important to you.

Be wary of support help lines that are based around premium rate numbers, especially when not backed up with a (free) email/web-form based system as well. Check newsgroups and web forums for a general opinion of how good their support is. However, do remember that one person with a grievance tends to be much louder than ten who where perfectly happy. If the noise of grievances is deafening though, take heed of it.

If you're already technically knowledgeable about internet access, levels of support are often more important rather than less. By the time you have a problem, a basic support system may not be able to help. Check that you can quickly gain access to 'intelligent' support who can understand your issue.

News access

The RISC OS scene is blessed with a number of well populated and genuinely useful usenet discussion groups for general discussion and assistance with RISC OS related



alt.acorn.adverts
alt.acorn.demos
argonet.acorn.assist
argonet.acorn.betabu...
argonet.acorn.binaries
argonet.acorn.misc
argonet.acorn.voyager
cam.net.support.acorn
comp.binaries.acorn
comp.sources.acorn
comp.sys.acorn.advo...
comp.sys.acorn.anno...
comp.sys.acorn.apps
comp.sys.acorn.extra...
comp.sys.acorn.games
comp.sys.acorn.hard...
comp.sys.acorn.misc
comp.sys.acorn.netw...
comp.sys.acorn.progr...
freeserve.help.acorn
z-netz.rechner.acorn...

***A choice of
Acorn newsgroups***

problems. This is another mark of our great remaining community spirit. If you enjoy following the newsgroups, check that the ISP provides a news feed and that there isn't a restricted set of groups that doesn't include the comp.sys.acorn hierarchy.

In general this will not make much difference. However there are a few scenarios where static IP is better.

Firstly, if you need any secure or restricted access to machines on other parts of the internet, then static IP will mean that your machine can be simply identified to the other machine for security rules. If this applies to you, you'll probably know and other security methods that don't rely on static IP exist.

Secondly, if you have a permanent connection and want to run any services on your computer (your own incoming mail server, web server, ftp server etc), static IP will be necessary so your machine is always accessible in the same 'place'.

Static IP

An IP address is the number that uniquely identifies each machine connected to the internet. With most accounts, you'll be provided with dynamic IP, where you have one of the ISP's pool of addresses, changing each time you connect. With static IP you'll always be given the same address.

Backup connection

For an ADSL ISP, check to see if the ISP provides a modem backup line for you to call if your ADSL service is down for any reason. For static IP ADSL connections, see if the modem connection can take over your ADSL IP to keep your services up and running in the same place.

A Permanent Presence

One of the perennial problems on the internet is becoming tied to one ISP as your contacts get used to your email address, making you reluctant to change it. However you can lose that address when you need

Get a Redirectable address

Many services have cropped up recently where you can apply for an email address that can be configured to forward on to your normal address. If you quote this redirectable address

Changing you ISP can be a problem if it means having to change your email address too. Toby Smith explains some of the ways to make your address permanent.

to change to take advantage of a better connection deal, or if the ISP ceases to trade.

This is all the more important if you are working for yourself, for example, and trying to maintain a permanent address for work reasons.

Similarly, many email addresses end up looking silly, unprofessional or rather forced and you end up with RayRay23@obscureisp.net — not an address that is all that memorable, or that pairs well to your name or location.

So what can you do about this?

to your contacts, you can safely change your underlying ISP. Simply update the forwarding (usually through a web interface) and hey presto, all your existing contacts have no need to know!

Redirectable services are available from an increasing number of professional bodies, school or University alumni associations and similar bodies, even our own Association of Acorn User Groups.

Other commercial services abound on the internet with a variety of domains (the bit after the @) and prices.

Buy a domain

Your own internet domain (such as armclub.org.uk) will not only provide the ability to take your email address around with you, but also give the same benefit to your website. Domains cost surprisingly little these days, so this could be a worthwhile option for you.

You could choose to purchase a domain through your current ISP, who can then tie it to your existing email account and website. When you come to change ISP, the domain (which should be your property) can be transferred to your new choice of ISP. This has the advantage of handling all your internet dealings in one place. However there are some disadvantages. Some ISPs restrict what type of accounts can be linked to domains, so your pay-as-you-go account may not be suitable. Often buying through your ISP is a little more costly, as the assumption is that if you want a domain you'll be getting more web and email traffic, which may not be the case. In the event of a change, the domain transfer can take some time, and does depend on a degree of cooperation between the two ISPs.

Alternately, you could choose a third party domain hosting service that will register the domain for you, and then forward email and web traffic to the addresses of your choice (configured through a web interface, often). This often provides the best flexibility.

The domain hoster's interface generally allows you to set a single address where email to any address in the domain will be invisibly redirected. Some services also allow a set of specific addresses within the domain to be forwarded to other specified addresses in addition to the catchall method. Similarly, web requests can be forwarded to wherever your site is hosted through a variety of methods.

One point to note is that while domain registration is a very competitive and thus low priced, with two years forwarding on a .co.uk address in the region of £2-3, these prices represent only the initial registration period. After this initial period, expect subsequent periods to be around £50. When choosing a domain hoster, it's also worth checking for their *transfer out* fees should you have problems

with their service and wish to move your domain elsewhere. Some of the cheaper providers do give quite exorbitant costs on this, which should be avoided.

How do I check?

Most companies that can register domains for you will provide some form of online interface to see if your chosen domain name is still available. My personal favourite is provided by www.simply.com as it will check a large number of endings in one go and allow you to look up who has the address if it is already registered. If you're going for a permanent presence on the internet, think carefully about what your domain should be.

Think about your choice of top-level domain. Do you want to end with 'uk' to indicate your location? Traditionally the most common domains are within .com (companies), co.uk (UK companies), org.uk (UK organisations and non commercial ventures, including a lot of personal domains) and the more recent .me.uk (for personal domains). Other top levels exist for

other countries and a selection of new equivalents to .com such as .biz and .info which are yet to take off in common usage.

Think also of the interaction with the initial part of the email address too. Fred.Bloggs@fredbloggs.me.uk is a little repetitious and won't extend very well to personal addresses for other family members, for example. However, bloggs.me.uk may well already have been registered, even for uncommon surnames.

Beware of words in your domain name that are ambiguous to spell, unless you purchase all of the variants. Similarly, look up any domains that might be related, like yours with extra punctuation for example or the com version of your chosen co.uk and have a quick look at their websites. It's not ideal if people mistyping your address get led to a site you'd not want to be associated with.

So once you've chosen your domain and provider, you should find that this is the last 'change of address' you'll ever have to make. Just remember to keep the Club updated too!

Site Seeing: Travel & Holidays

By the time you read this I will probably be back from my travels but at the time of writing I am busy using the Internet to plan our annual holiday. More and more people, it seems, are going through

bizarre! I suppose if you just want to get from one major city to another on mainland Europe it would be OK but I'm a rather awkward customer. Next I tried their rivals, the RAC (www.rac.co.uk/). They were even

Sue Clamp plans her holiday online and finds some interesting and informative websites to book the journey and guide her to her chosen destinations.

this process now, rather than using the traditional travel agent on the High Street.

This year I decided to try finding route maps online and started with the AA site at www.theaa.com/travelwatch/planner_main.jsp. Here you can plan routes in Great Britain, Ireland (Republic and Northern) and Europe. I was disappointed that although I could plan routes really well for one small town to another in England, once I tried small towns in Europe the site couldn't really help me. The options it gave for Tarazona in northern Spain, for example, where I hope to visit family, were somewhat

worse. Not only did they not recognise my home town but their advanced route planner, which includes European routes, didn't seem to work in Oregon.

My last port of call was Michelin at www.viamichelin.com. Never having used the site before, I was pleasantly surprised to find how comprehensive it was. Not only did it recognise the town where I live and my UK destination but I was also able to plot accurate routes across Europe, including the obscure towns that we plan to visit. Also, by clicking on symbols at various places en route I could access lists of hotels,

A ViaMichelin map pinpoints the Hotel Cygne in Tours

restaurants and places of interest in those areas. These are categorised, described and contact details given, where appropriate. Maps pinpointing these places can also be shown. Apart from the routing service you can also access maps, including street maps, of many towns and cities across Europe, as well as weather forecasts and

traffic information. ViaMichelin is not without adverts though, but at least they were unobtrusively placed at the bottom of the page.

There are, of course, other map and route finding sites, including Multimap.com. I compared a route produced by Multimap with one

recommended by Michelin and found that the Michelin route was much closer to the one that I would normally take for that journey. At the moment only routes on mainland Great Britain are available at Multimap.

For pinpointing an exact address in the UK, Streetmap.co.uk is hard to beat. The Ordnance Survey maps are large, clear and have an arrow pointing to the exact location. In this respect it is better than Multimap which attempts to circle the location but this doesn't work in Oregano 1; the circle appearing to the bottom left of the map — pretty useless.

Booking flights online has been possible for a few years now and, as I am a frequent flyer to Germany, I have often used this facility and in the past used the budget airline, Buzz. Their website was always easy to use and gave no problems in Oregano, until relatively recently when a change in their javascript made it difficult, though not impossible, to enter the country information on the address details page. This fault seems to have been carried over to the

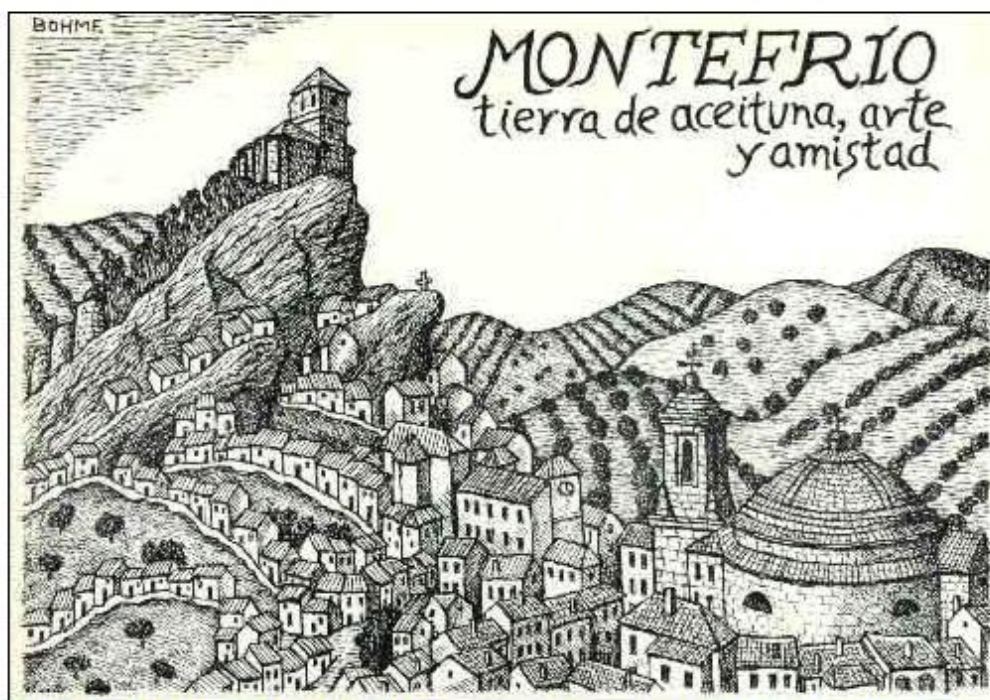
Ryanair site, who recently bought Buzz. I would imagine that Easyjet is similarly easy to book with, but I wasn't going to book a flight just for the purpose of this article!

Once you have selected your destination, you need to find accommodation. Using key words in a search engine will come up with long lists of hotels or apartments. Sometimes these are booked via sites who specialise in this, like an online travel agent, rather than directly with the hotel or apartment owner. One such 'travel agent' site is the hotel booking engine at www.venere.com/, whose slogan is "Sleep With Us"!

The sites I like best are those which give you a real flavour of the region you happen to be visiting. A superb example of this is www.donlorenzo.com/casas.htm. *Las Casas de Lorenzo* is a site which has been set up by a character called Lawrence Bohme. Obviously his main aim is to rent out his houses and apartments in the area around Granada in Spain but the site gives its visitors much more than just a description of the properties, prices

Las Casas de Lorenzo

Lorenzo's rental houses and villas in Montefrio and Granada, Andalucia, Spain



"Montefrío, land of olives, art and friendship", pen and ink by Lorenzo Bohme, 1983

The Las Casas de Lorenzo site provides extensive guides to the areas around Granada as well as offering houses and apartments to rent.

and contact details. Lorenzo, as he is known in the area, has written extensive guides, illustrated with digital photos and pen and ink drawings, to the area where his houses and apartments are, and also of Granada. On the site you will find many of these and a link to his other site, specifically about Granada, called *¡Viva Granada!* So good are

his web sites that I believe them to be essential reading for anyone thinking of visiting the area, not just those wishing to rent one of his properties.

I always enjoy the planning of a holiday — it's so exciting; the Internet can bring the world to your computer's screen.

Getting A Website With WebGen

A few years ago if you'd come back from holidays with a few rolls of film, you'd get them developed and then mount the pictures in a photo album for friends and family to view. In today's modern

First of all you'll have to download all the images from the camera, then probably run quite a few of them through a photo retouching package, to correct under or over exposure, that annoying slight tilt of the horizon

Like your own website, to show your snapshots or display your other interests and views. David Ruck explains how to do it the easy way with free software.

digital age, friends and family can be spread out around the world, so why wait to see them in person to show off your snaps? Take advantage of your digital camera and create an online album on the World Wide Web for everyone to enjoy.

However, if computers really did make everyone's life easier, you'd connect the camera to the computer and hit the upload to website button and everything would be done for you. Of course the technology never quite lives up to its billing and making a web album is quite a bit more work than the old fashioned equivalent.

most of my shots have (I don't think my eyes are quite level!) and, if you're a bit more adventurous, clone out lamp posts and that pesky friend who keeps wandering into the edges of shots.

You'll have to find out the details from your ISP on how to upload the images to your website via FTP and, if you have a modem, spend a considerable time transferring the data. But, hold on, when you view your web page all you find is a list of filenames. You can click to download them but that also takes ages for the large pictures from modern multi-mega pixel digital camera. Where is

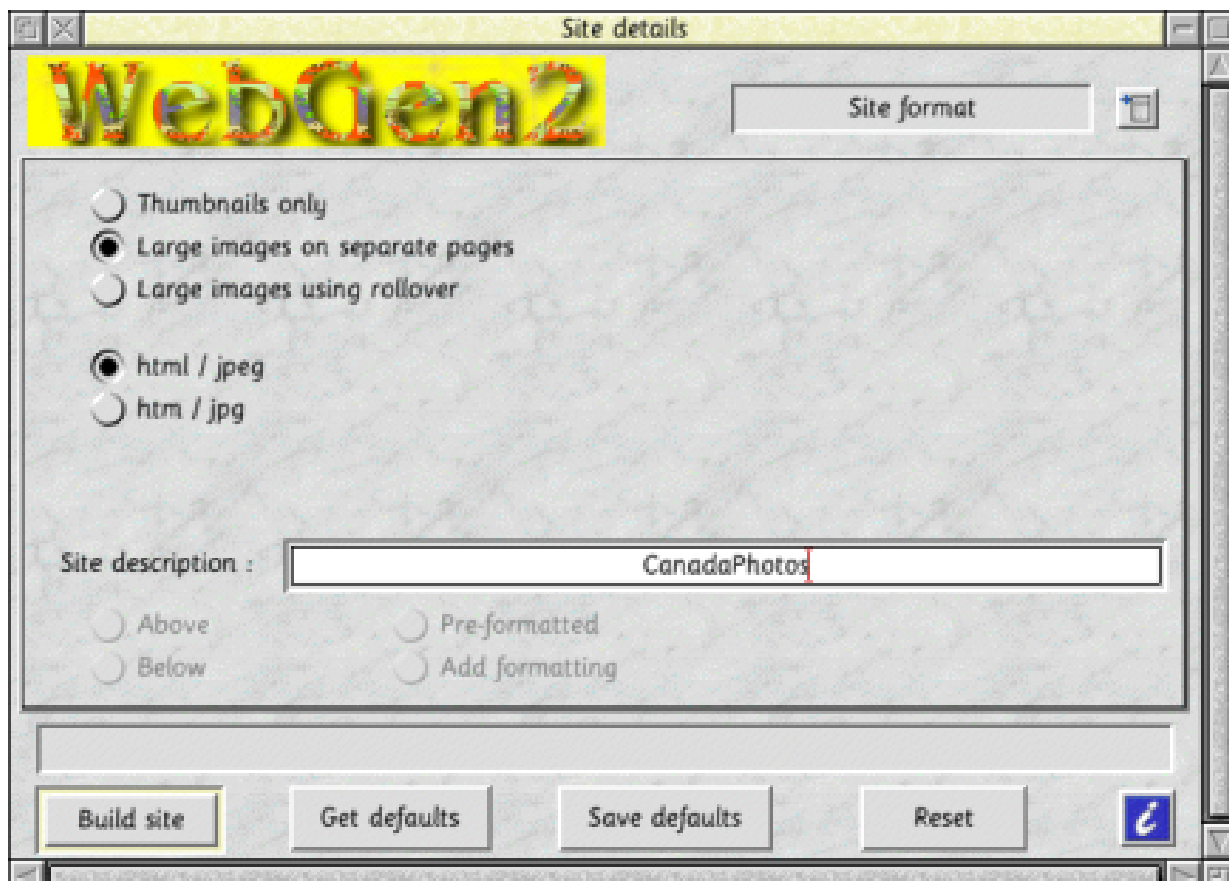
the nicely laid out grid of small thumbnail images of the pictures, allowing you to click to get the larger but web friendly main picture? Well you could create all this by hand. First you'll need to know a bit of HTML so you can create an index page containing a table and links to thumbnails and main pictures. Then you'll need to run each of your pictures through a program such as *!ChangeFSI* twice; once to scale down to thumbnail size and again to a reduced size and/or quality for the main image, so it won't take as long to download as the raw image from the camera.

This sounds like a lot of work and you'd be right to think so. But before you give up and go back to film and plastic wallets, there are programs to help out with the website generation and this is where *!WebGen2* by D.E. Stratford comes in. It's not the only program in this field, I've previously tried half a dozen others but *!WebGen* was the only program that did everything I wanted. With the other programs I often had to fiddle with the HTML by hand, or even regenerate all the pictures because

they wouldn't let me control all the parameters used by *ChangeFSI*.

Once WebGen is loaded it sits on the icon bar waiting for you to drag a directory of images to it. You don't have to worry about copying your images first as it won't alter anything in this directory —unlike some of the other programs which could destroy your original images. Clicking on its icon pops up the setup window and this is where the main improvement of version two over version one is apparent. Instead of a large window packed with all the options, they split into logical groups, accessed via a pop up menu in the top right. There are a vast number of options which can seem quite daunting but luckily you can leave many of them at the default values. If you do happen to set them all up, they can be saved and retrieved for use again using the buttons at the bottom of the window.

The first page controls the style of site to be generated. You can make just a table of thumbnails, which could be useful if you want to link the thumbnails to your own pages. The style I use most is the classic table



The first page controls the style of site to be generated

layout of thumbnails which leads to the large images when clicked on. Unlike other programs which just display the large image, requiring you to keep hitting the back button to go back to the index, WebGen actually leads you to a page containing the picture along with forward, back and return to the index buttons, so you can move between the large pictures more easily. It doesn't put a previous button on the first image, or a next on the last, which is better than many

commercial sites I've visited. The last style is to create a table of thumbnails on the left and when the mouse moves over them a larger image is shown on the right. Your browser must have *javascript* enabled for this to work and all your images must be the same size or they will be shown stretched. I don't really like this style of site as it makes it harder to download the large images as when you move the mouse off the thumbnail to the large image to save it, it disappears. I think this could

Page title :

Heading :

Banner Img :

Sub :

Author :

Date :

Max images : Split index page into pages of images

The second page allows for text and the number of thumbnails

be fixed by different javascript, although you might want this as a feature to discourage people from downloading your pictures but it is possible to find out their URL from looking at the source of the page if you know what you are doing.

The second page has fields to allow you to enter the text that will appear in

titles and headings on the page and also the number of thumbnails that will appear on the index page. After this number is reached a new index page will be started. It's a good idea not to put too many thumbnails on a page as, otherwise, it can take a long time before the page is downloaded initially and also to redraw if you keep flicking back and forth between the index and the images in the same window.

Max X/Y size of thumbnail :

Percentage quality of jpeg :

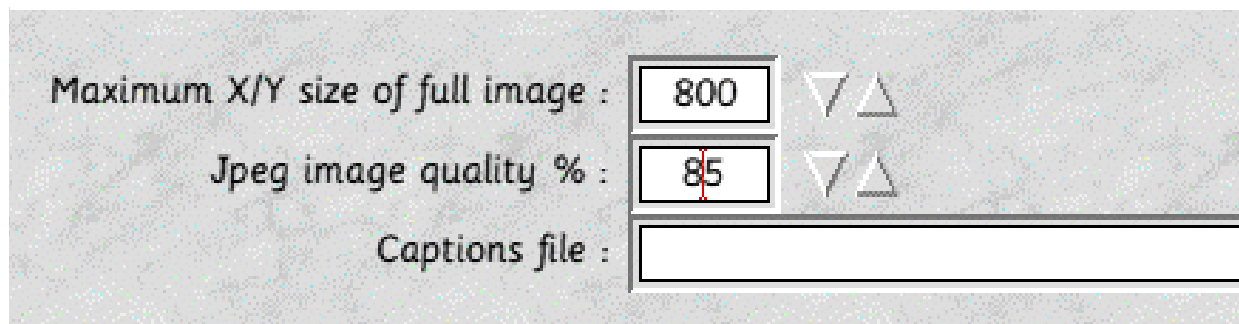
No. of thumbs across page :

☒ Use tables to align thumbnails

☒ Include image name

The third page controls the thumbnail settings

The third page controls the settings for the thumbnails. You can choose the size, which should be from 80 pixels to 200. It is important to get this right, as too small and it may be impossible



Maximum X/Y size of full image : ▽△

Jpeg image quality % : ▽△

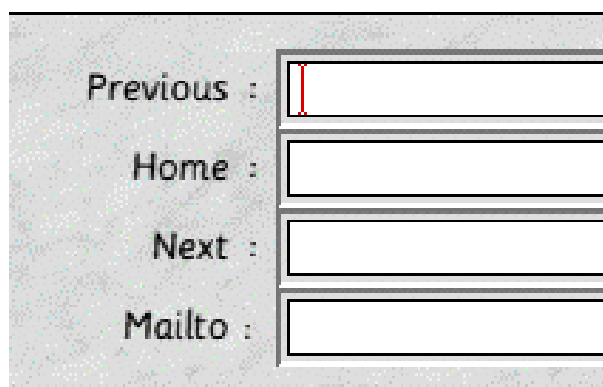
Captions file :

The fourth page controls the size and quality of the main pictures

to tell what they are but too large will lead to slow downloads and wasting of your web space. The quality setting for thumbnails can be quite low; down to as little as 50% because they are so small there isn't a lot of detail to be lost by using a lower quality setting and the thumbnails then download quicker. The number of thumbnails across the page should be chosen in conjunction with the width to ensure the page isn't too wide to be displayed on most browsers. 1024x768 is still the most popular screen size,

which corresponds to about eight 120 pixel wide thumbnails plus gaps and scrollbars.

The fourth page controls the size and JPEG quality of the large pictures. You should again aim for the size of screen most people are using but you may also have to take into account how much web space your ISP allocates and reduce size and quality if the site becomes too big. Quality settings from 75% to 90% work best. Scaling down images by an even ratio tends to give better results. I choose 800 for my 1600x1200 camera pictures, as this will halve the size of both landscape and portrait pictures. The maximum size seems to be 999 pixels, which may prove a limitation if you want to provide huge pictures for lucky broadband users, hopefully this restriction will be lifted in future versions.



Previous :

Home :

Next :

Mailto :

The fifth page allows links to other pages on your site to be set up

The screenshot shows a web site configuration interface with the following settings:

- Bg colour :** #ffff00
- Bg Image :** Disc0\$.MARBLE03
- Text colour :** #000000
- Link colour :** #ff0000
- Visited link :** #52188C
- Font face :** C85
- ☐ Use colour names
- ☐ Use Cascading Style Sheets

The sixth page controls your site's appearance

The fifth page isn't as obvious as it could be and I had to refer to the !Help file for information. If your picture gallery is going to be part of a larger site, this allows you to put links on the thumbnail index pages to take you other pages on your site, or perhaps your friends' sites. Links to the previous, next and home page can be set up, along with a mail-to link, as people will be desperate to email you and say how great your pictures are.

Alternatively it is likely to be harvested by spammers trawling your web pages and you'll receive a lot of junk email instead, so I wouldn't recommend too much use is made of this feature.

The sixth page controls the appearance of the site. You can choose the font face and the colours used for the text and backgrounds. The font face attribute is widely supported by non-RISC OS browsers but only by Oregano 2 on our platform, so you may not be able to see the effect of this.

The colours can be entered as hexadecimal values to match a graphic or other pages on your site but if you can't easily see colours in terms of hex RGB triplets, the pop-up menus contain a range of more meaningful named colours. My favourite feature is being able to pick a background image to be tiled behind the index and picture pages.

Keywords	<input type="text" value="Canada, Holiday, Travel, Photos, The ARM Club"/>		
Description	<input type="text" value="Canada Holiday Photos 2003"/>		
Name	<input type="text"/>	Content	<input type="text"/>
HTTP-Equiv	<input type="text"/>	Content	<input type="text"/>

The following strings are added as standard:

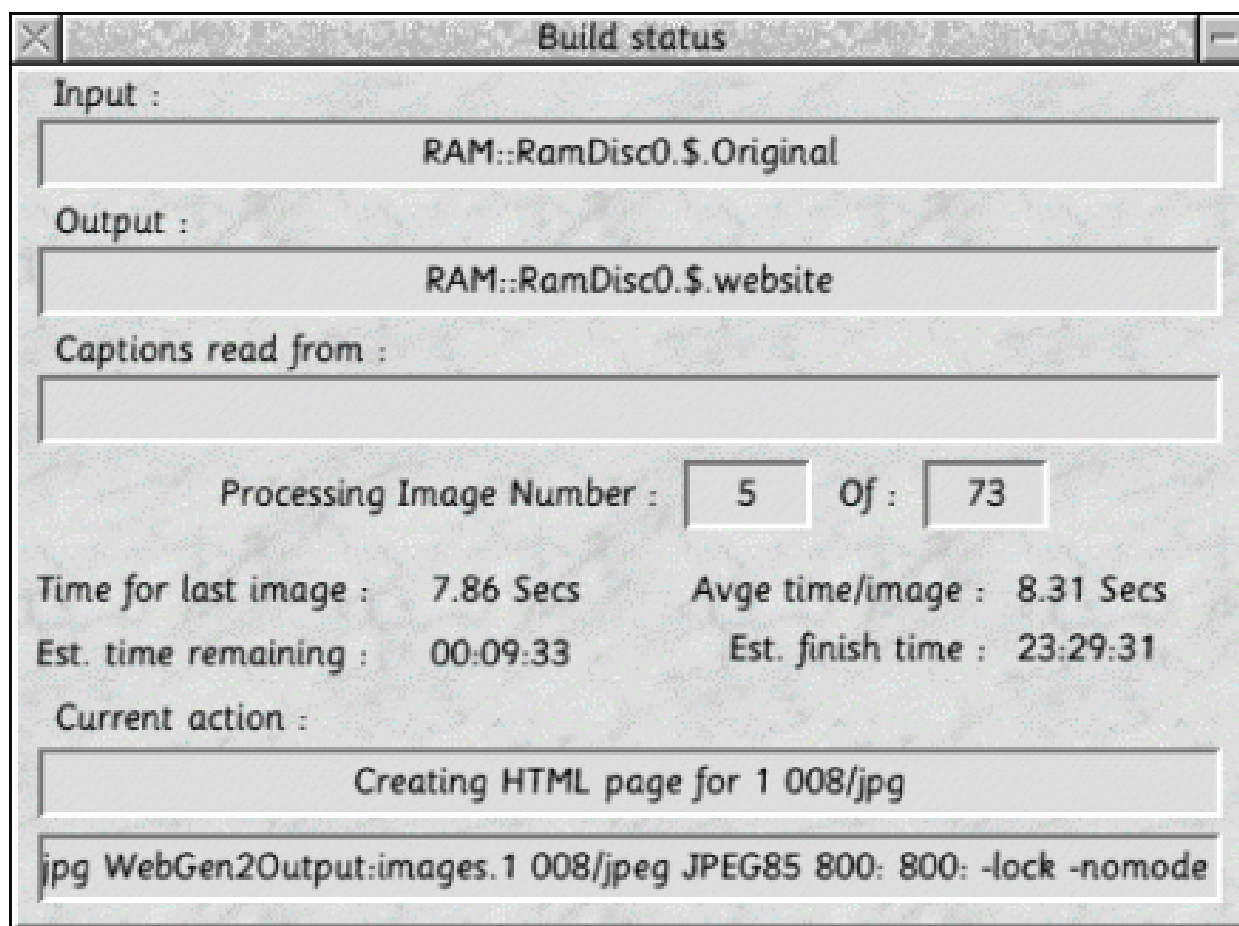
```
meta name="author" content="Site generated by <author>"
meta name="generator" content="!Web_Gen v2 for RISC OS"
meta http-equiv="content-type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8559-1"
```

Finally, the seventh page allows the unseen information to be added

The seventh and final page (pheeew!) allows you to enter the invisible information on the web page such as the description and keywords fields. When search engine robots examine this page they can use the information in the keywords to build their indexes, allowing people to find your site when they enter similar search phrases.

Use as many keywords as you can think of to get the best results, although don't repeat any as this could reduce your rating and above all be honest!

After going through all the set up, or as much as you need, you are ready to hit the *build site* button. Your options will be checked and any warnings (such as forgetting to enter a heading) will be displayed in the bar just above the buttons but if all is well a save box will appear allowing you to name the website directory and drag it to where you want it created. Note that if you are using a pre-RISC OS 4 formatted disc, you need to ensure that the location supports long filenames or the site won't be generated correctly. *!RaFS* can be used for this, although my recommendation is to upgrade to

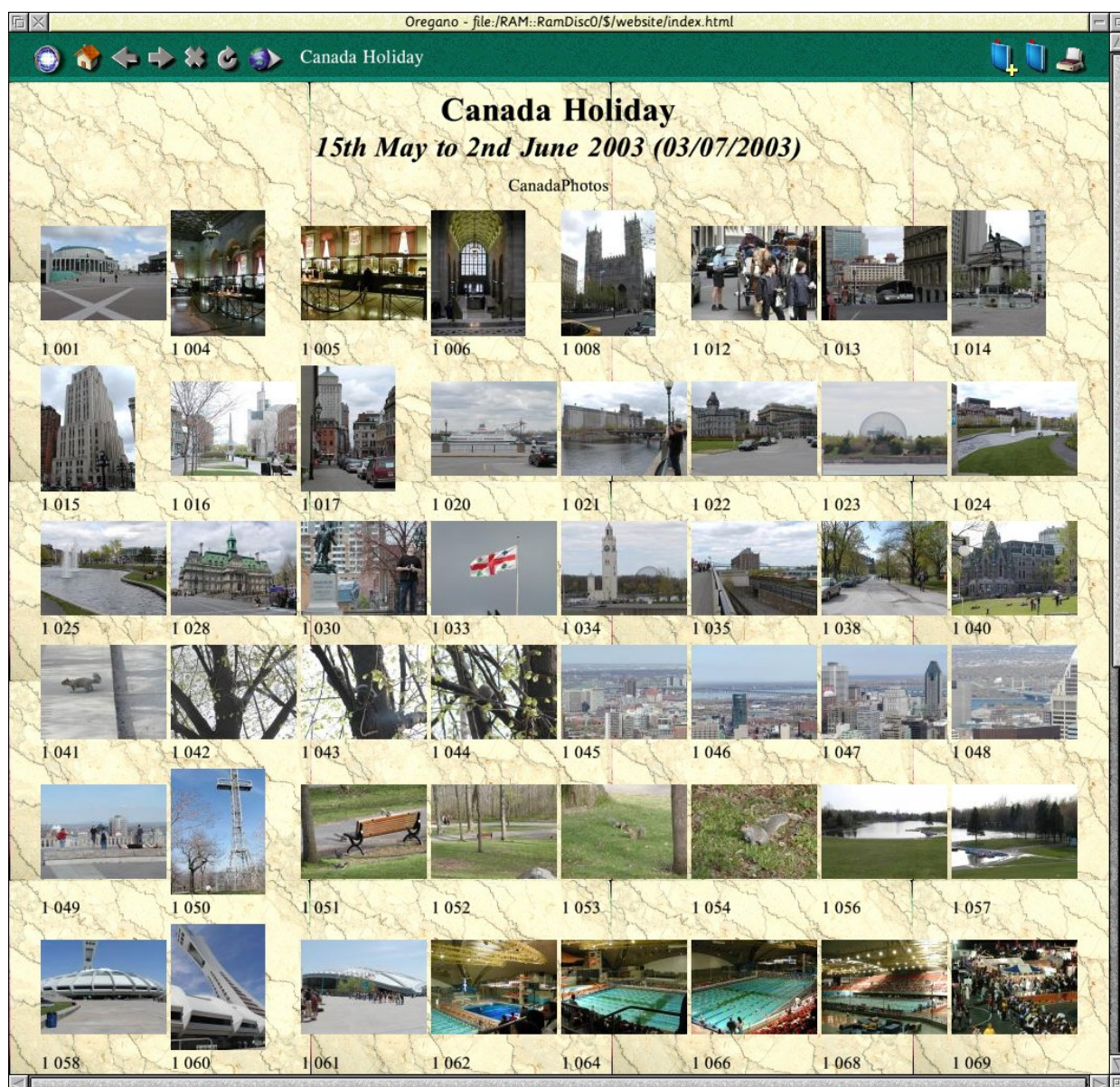


Now you can start putting the words and pictures on your new website

RISC OS 4 and get the full benefit of long filenames everywhere.

Next comes the generation stage where the HTML is created and the pictures are passed through your copy of !ChangeFSI to create the thumbnails and large images. This is the only part of the program that I am disappointed with as it single tasks during this process, which can take a very long time with a large number of

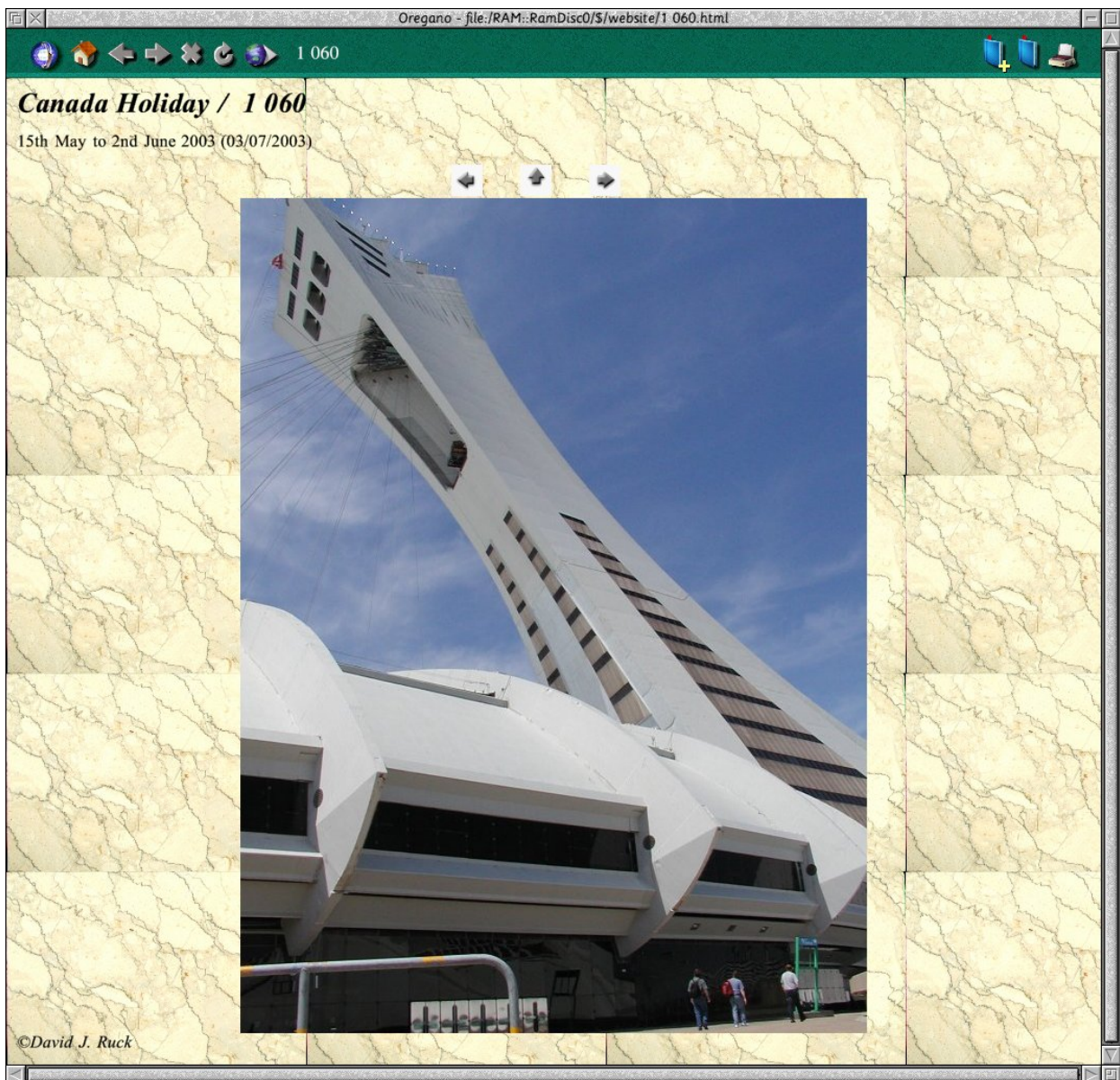
big camera pictures. Not only do you have enough time to make a cup of tea but you'll easily be able to mow the lawn and wax the car before it completes. I would prefer it to have an option to run the image processing program in a task window like !JClean does. You could then carry on with other things while it completes. At least a comprehensive progress dialog is displayed showing you how far it's got and how much



longer you are likely to have to wait based on the speed it has processed the previous images.

My other niggle with the program is that currently it is 26bit only, as the generation process would benefit greatly from the increased speed of the Iyonix. I' ve looked in to this and

the main reason it won' t run is the way the BASIC program is compressed and it will work fine on a 32bit machine if this and one other minor issue is corrected. I' ve passed this information on to the author and hopefully a 32bit compatible release will be forthcoming.



Once the generation is done, you can then admire your results browsing locally before uploading to your web space. The pictures opposite and above are of an example site I've just knocked up with a few (out the 500) pictures I took on my recent trip across Canada with fellow ARM Club Committee members Mark, Tom and

Simon. You didn't think we spent our entire time sat around playing with computers did you?

Just after writing this article, I emailed the author, Dave Stratford, to congratulate him on the excellent program and to mention the couple of issues with Iyonix compatibility,

large image size and multi-tasking. The next day I received an email saying that he had produced an Iyonix compatible version for me to try. This was very welcome and a quick test creating a site from eight 1600x1200 original pictures converting to 120 pixel 75% thumbnails and 800 pixel maximum large images, gave the following results:

Risc PC Kinetic 233	90 seconds
Iyonix	31 seconds.

That's a very impressive 3x speed increase, benefitting from both the Iyonix's faster processor and ultra quick UDMA disc system. It does, however, pose a nasty problem: using the Iyonix means there won't be time to wax the car or mow the lawn while my 500 holiday pictures are being processed! I'll have to settle for a quick sprinkle of the hose for each of them before the computer is free again!

Dave went on to point out that the limitation of 999 pixels for the large image could be circumvented by leaving the field empty, in which case the pictures would just be copied and not scaled down. If scaling is required

this could be done with a utility such as !FSI_Batch or !BatchFSI which allows groups of images to be processed by !ChangeFSI. All this is mentioned in the help file and interactive (no marks to me for not spotting it) but he agreed it would be more convenient to allow large images to be produced within the program and raised the limit to 2000 pixels.

Finally, on the subject of multi-tasking, Dave is now looking into using task windows for future versions but in the meantime he is working on a facility to pause the processing. Not as good as full multi-tasking, but it does mean if you start getting in a blind panic because you haven't checked your email for 10 minutes, you can log on, collect your spam, and then resume processing afterwards. So not only a great program but superb support from the author too; which is another example of why the RISC OS scene is good.

!WebGen 2.02 is available to be downloaded, free of charge, from www.argonet.co.uk/users/daves/software/index.html

The Double Cross Puzzle

Our regular word teaser from Roger King

CROSS
DOUBLE

	E		R	
O		A		N
	O		E	
I		A		U
	N		N	
C		R		L

	A		O									L		T		
R		O		N		E		I		T		I		R		A
	P		S		U						S		A		I	
U		T		E		U		L		N		C		E		H
	R		S										U		S	

© PUZZLES
REX

Place the 42 letters shown below into the grid to make valid words.

A	C	I	O	U
A	C	I	O	V
A	D	K	O	Y
A	E	L	O	Y
A	E	M	R	Z
B	H	M	R	Z
B	H	N	S	Z

P		P		S
	M		A	
R		X		I
	H		E	
U		L		T
	A		E	

The solution is on page 63.

RISC OS Rhymes

*The latest verses from Alan Wickham's poetic computer,
with apologies to Lewis Carroll.*

The Mad Computer Enthusiast's Song

- 1) He thought he saw a Megaflop, that cluttered up his Screen. He looked again and saw it was a yellow limousine. The one thing I regret, he said, is that it isn't green.
- 2) He thought he saw a Floppy Disc, flying like a kite. He looked again and saw it was Compressed Kilobyte. If this turns up again, he said, I will have seen the light.
- 3) He thought he saw a Textofile that hunted for its Bits. He looked again and saw it was glass of slivovitz. Should I drink this, he said, I'll land up having fits.
- 4) He thought he saw some Bits-per-Sec converted into Bauds. He looked again and saw it was a can of nemetodes. We can't have this, he gruffly said, it all depends on Codes.
- 5) He thought he saw a Wysiwyg that questioned him in 'C'. He looked again and saw it was total lobotomy. It gives one fright, he said aright, but the Software does come free.

6) He thought he saw a Vector Font that nestled in his Disc. He looked again and saw it was hyped-up basilisk. I'd like to play the Game, he said, but cannot take the risc.

7) He thought he saw a Data Bus waiting for its Master. He looked again and saw it was a faulty TV Raster. Had I more speed, said he indeed, then it would go much faster.

8) He thought he saw an *Analog*, a thing he'd never mention. He looked again and saw it was within the Fourth dimension. Such a state, he did relate, only causes tension.

9) He thought he saw a Printer Head that Dithered in its Kerning. He looked again and saw it was a lady not for turning. If this be true, he said anew, it isn't worth the learning.



Arnold Kilroy Byte

There will be another epic poem from our literary computer next issue.

USB Comes To RISC OS

The new Iyonix and Omega offer great opportunities for expansion due to the inclusion of industry standard interfaces such as PCI and particularly USB, which is used by almost every peripheral these days. However, so far support of USB

can store files, including anything from the tiny solid state hard drive on a key ring, to digital cameras and readers for various memory card formats such as SmartMedia, Compact Flash and Memory Stick.

With USB connection now being brought to RISC OS, David Ruck looks at the Iyonix USB Mass Storage Driver and R-Comp's 6-in-1 USB Card Reader.

devices other than keyboards, mice and printers, has been slow coming both on the Iyonix and the USB podule cards for older machines. Castle have now started to address that with the release of a mass storage class driver, which is a very welcome development that will allow the use of many new and previously inaccessible peripherals on a RISC OS machine.

The aim for USB was to cut down on the number of drivers and make similar classes of devices compatible and accessible with the minimum of additional software. Among the most common and useful are devices which

The new Castle driver will allow most (but not all) of these types of devices to be accessed. It is currently only available as a free upgrade for Iyonix machines and can be downloaded from the internet and installed with the minimum of fuss, using the Iyonix Update Watcher. However, Castle intends to release the driver for the Castle USB podule card for older machines too. Whether this will also be free is not yet known.

Once installed, the new driver sits dormant until a suitable device is plugged into one of the USB sockets on the machine or an attached USB hub. A black removable drive icon

will suddenly appear on the iconbar between the hard discs and the floppy drive icons. The drive works just like a DOS format floppy, allowing you to read files from the devices and, in most cases, write files back to it. It's as simple as that! But like DOS disc remember to dismount before removing it, to ensure the completion of all writing operations.

The only niggle with the system is that, because most cards are DOS formatted, they are accessed via DOSFS which does not support long file names. At the time of writing Warm Silence Software are still dragging their feet on the issue of porting their extremely useful software to 32bit and the excellent Win95FS is not available. File names over eight letters will be truncated, which results in something like *longfi~1.jpg* instead of *longfilename.jpg*. It's less of a problem with digital camera images than general file storage, as the names of the pictures tend to be short and so won't be mangled.

Incidentally, you'll notice from the title bars of any filer windows you open on the drive that they are

prefixed with *SCSI::* as the USB driver presents the drives as pseudo SCSI devices. I would have expected to see a USB filing system rather than SCSI, as support for real SCSI cards (both PCI and Podule) are being worked on. It remains to be seen if the limit of eight drives per filing system proves to be a restriction if eventually you have both USB and real SCSI drives connected at once.

I mentioned that the Castle driver will access most, but not all, storage devices and that's because there are some devices which don't conform to the mass storage specification. These require specific drivers when used under Windows, so will be unlikely to work on RISC OS. You can tell if the device is likely to work by enquiring its class. This can be done with the very nice graphical *!USBinfo* utility by Paul Reuvers (www.xat.nl/en/riscos/sw/usb/), or from the command line. Use **USBDevices* to list devices and then **USBDevInfo* with a parameter of the devices number from the first command. The device class, sub class and protocol will be displayed and if the numbers are 8-6-0, 8-6-1 or 8-6-80 the device will be supported.

Example:-

*usbdevices No. Bus Dev Class Description

```
1 1 1 9/0 NEC OHCI root hub
2 1 2 9/0 Iiyama Hub
3 1 3 0/0 Prolific Technology Inc. IEEE-1284 Controller
4 1 4 0/0 Logitech USB Mouse
5 2 1 9/0 NEC OHCI root hub
6 2 2 0/0 Chicony USB Keyboard
7 1 5 0/0 Genesys Logic Flash Reader
8 2 3 FF/FF OLYMPU C-2100 Ultra Zoom
```

*usbdevinfo 8

```
USB release   : 0110
Device class   : FF
Device subclass : FF
Device protocol : FF
Max packet size : 08
Vendor ID      : 07B4
Product ID     : 0100
Device ID      : 0100
Manufacturer   : 'OLYMPU'
Product        : 'C-2100 Ultra Zoom'
Serial number   : ''
# of configs    : 1
```

When the driver was released I was on holiday in Canada but I found out about it while checking my email. The Iyonix mailing list was flooded with reports of successful attempts to access Olympus cameras and I was very pleased. Up until then I had been

using Photodesk's *!PhotoLink* software to transfer the images from my Olympus C2100UZ via serial. This was slow, back when I got my first digital camera with a 16MB card taking 20 minutes, but now with a 128MB, a 64MB and three 16MB

cards all full of pictures, downloading by serial would take almost as long as the three-week holiday!

However, when I got back and plugged my camera in to the machine, I was most disappointed to find it was not recognised. As you can see from the details opposite, its class numbers are FF-FF-FF which means a proprietary driver is needed. My C2100UZ is now a couple of years old and was one of the last to have serial and the first to have USB, so the USB support is not mature. All the newer USB-only Olympus cameras (as with those of most other manufacturers) do support the mass storage class driver.

As luck would have it, a few days later R-Comp made an announcement that they were selling a 6-in-1 USB card reader and I was able to go and see it in action at the Dutch Show. The previous incarnations of card readers were parallel port affairs, which were clunky to connect and were not always reliable. However, the new generation of USB readers are very much improved. From the size of the box I was expecting some huge unit, to cater for the six different types of

cards, but it's actually a tiny silver box, measuring just 8cm x 6cm and 1.5cm thick. The front looks as though it has been scratched to reveal shiny metal underneath but it hasn't been damaged in transit —that is actually the design, as weird as it looks at first. Around the edges are the USB connector and holes to insert the various types of card which are supported, which are:

- Compact Flash
- SmartMedia
- MicroDrive
- Memory Stick
- MultiMedia Card
- Secure Digital

Actually there are only four holes, as a MicroDrive is an impossibly small hard drive compatible with Compact Flash, and MultiMedia Cards and Secure Digital cards share the same connector. The reader should allow the majority of storage devices from cameras and PDAs to be accessed.

The reader comes with a very good quality zip-up pouch to store the unit and the cable, with pockets which can hold a couple of storage cards, which means you can take it with you and



The reader comes in a zip up pouch which also holds the cable and a couple of cards

use it on a variety of machines. Inside the pouch is a CD clipped to the size of a credit card, which means it won't work in vertical CD-ROM drives; but this contains only PC drivers which aren't needed on the Iyonix or most modern PCs for that matter. Only a short length of cable is provided but, once straightened out, it is long enough for the unit to reach the desk when plugged into the front USB sockets of the Iyonix. Unfortunately, it is not quite long enough to let it sit on top of the case without it springing off. If used with a machine that only

has USB sockets round the back, you'll definitely want a to get a USB extension cable.

On plugging in, four black drive icons immediately appear, one for each of the distinct types of card. Unfortunately these are just labelled 0: to 3: and there is no indication of which drive is for which type of card. There are two ways to find out which is which. One is to put a card in the reader and click on each, the wrong ones will give a drive empty error and the right one rewards you with a filer

window. The second way is to notice the single sheet of documentation which R-Comp provides which explains the order!

Interestingly, while on a PC the card reader appears as one drive and you can access only one card at a time, under RISC OS you can put a card of each type in to each of the four slots and read each simultaneously. I don't know how likely it is you will want to be able to copy files from say a SmartMedia to a CompactFlash but it's something for you to boast about over PC

owning friends, as you can slot both in at the same time and copy directly, whereas they have to copy to hard disc, swap cards and copy back again.

The first test of the unit was to read all the holiday images of my cards which, despite the increased speed of the USB, still took more than a quarter of an hour to download all 240MB. Much faster than serial and

with the added advantage that the reader is powered from the USB cable, whereas my camera still runs of batteries when connected to USB — and doesn't last long on even the highest capacity NMiHs.

I did a couple of speed tests reading and writing images to and from the Iyonix hard disc, using a SmartMedia card from my camera and



An extension lead may be necessary if the USB socket is at the back of the computer

CompactFlash card borrowed from a PDA. The SmartMedia reading speed is considerably faster than the speed quoted on the box, which is good. The CompactFlash reading is as claimed. Writing to the cards is quite a bit slower than reading but this is normal with the storage technology used in the cards.

SmartMedia:

Read 362KB/s Write 245KB/s

CompactFlash:

Read 360KB/s Write 126KB/s

With the small size of the unit and its convenient carrying case, writing files onto card is an alternative to blowing a CD to take your processed images (or other data) to a friend's machine or in to work. Be careful to delete any files you have put on cards to be used in cameras, as they may not be able to clear non picture files, or those stored outside the directory structure they create. In which case you will have to do a reformat on the camera to get the full space back on the card. Formatting cards is not yet supported on RISC OS but it is not always a good idea to reformat a card used by a camera on a computer, as it can lose any special information on

the cards, used by the manufacturer to enable features on the camera.

The card reader is now also available in an internal version to mount in the spare 3.5" bay.

So, thanks to Castle and R-Comp, RISC OS has taken another leap forward, opening up the use of a vast number of new toys. Following on from our Digital Photography Special in the last issues, there is now no excuse for not getting into this exciting field with the ease pictures can be downloaded to your favourite computer.

Castle USB Mass Storage driver is free to Iyonix users.

Web: www.iyonix.com

6-1 USB Card Reader

Price: £36 including VAT

Supplier: R-Comp

22 Robert Moffat, High Legh,
Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6PS

Tel: 01925 755043

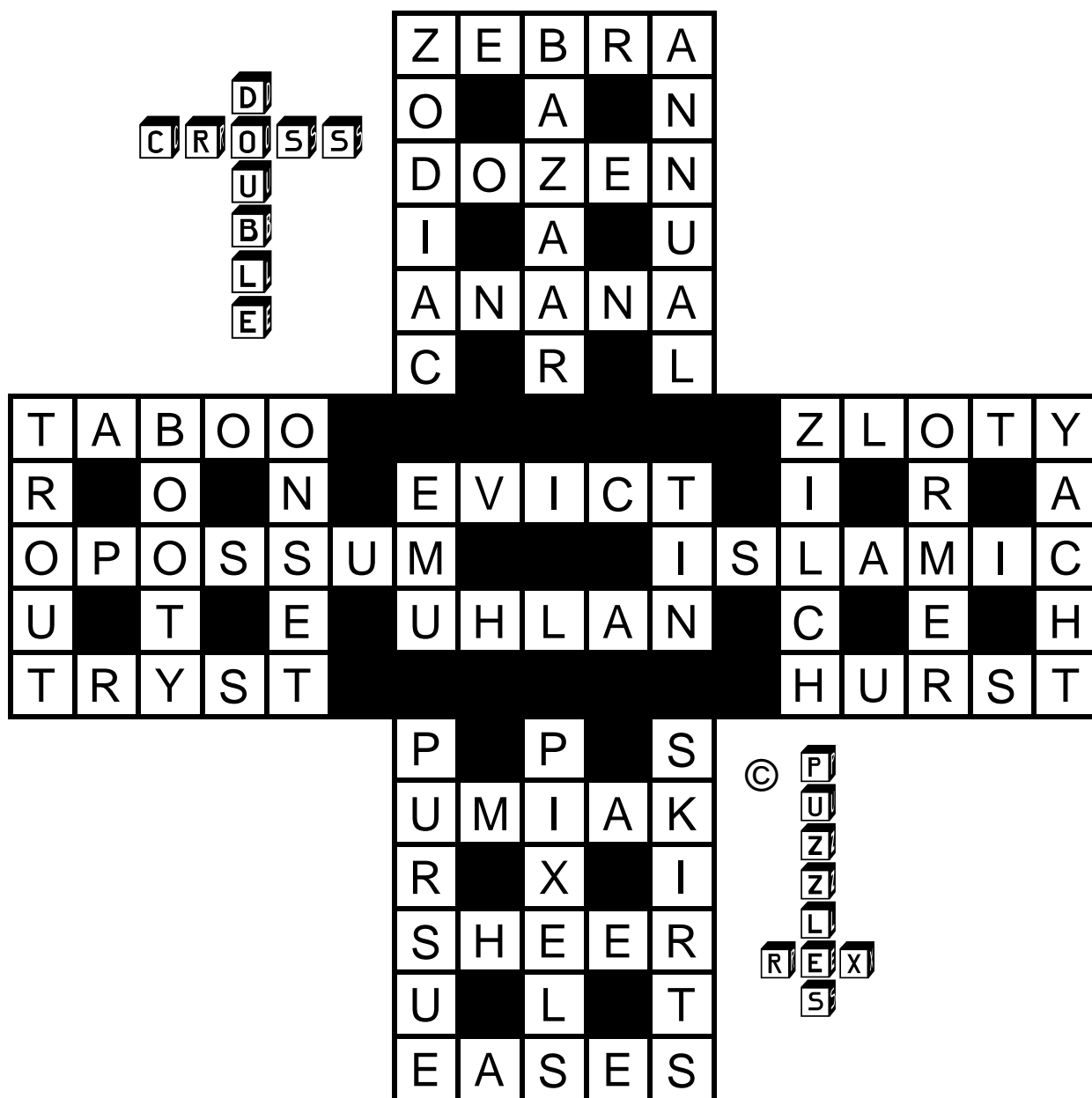
Fax: 01925 757377

Email: rcomp@rcomp.co.uk

Web: www.rcomp.co.uk

The Double Cross Solution

The puzzle is on page 53.



Get it all correct?

There'll be another chance to check your word power in our next issue.

Aunty Gill's Journal

PC depression

Dear Aunty Gill,

My boss is evil and cruel. You see, he insists I use a Windows PC at work and even spends company money on PCs on a regular basis. What can I do?

then this could still be your best course of action. Another drawback to this is that it limits your social contact. Let me explain that complex idea. It means meeting and chatting to people. No, not online. In person. Speaking aloud. Of course, you may consider that quite an asset.

Depressed

Gill Smith reveals her abilities as a knowledgeable and caring Agony Aunt and deals with some of the questions outside the range of our Technical Help Team.

Dear Depressed,

There are several options available to you. Of course, the first is to give up your job and sit at home, playing on your RISC machine and rehearsing your evil laugh. I'm not sure why the laugh is necessary but it'll probably add to the fun.

There is one small drawback to this option and that's the lack of a regular salary, so I don't recommend this option if you like, say, eating. Of course, if instead of Dominos doing so, your mother provides your food,

A second possible option is to change what's inside your box at work to a RISC PC, given that your boss is highly unlikely to notice. So long as you have a big grey box on or under your desk, no one's going to pay very close attention to its internal mechanisms. Unless, that is, someone else tries using it while you're away, when it then might end up enlightening the technical support people at your company. Of course, they might just hit it with a hammer, completely destroying it. This option does have its difficulties, as they might not like you sneaking out with

a computer every night to protect your OS.

Of course there is a very simple alternative. Just shut up and put up with it. Everyone else has to and they don't even get to know, as a smug secret, that computers that do exactly as you ask them even exist. The rest of the world's poor fools think that making up what someone once thought you might like to consider doing, based on some tick-box you left on because you've never found it, is actually acceptable and normal.

You could even laugh (that well-rehearsed evil laugh) out loud whenever your machine crashes, ignores your instructions, or simply takes forever to do a trivial operation. OK, so your colleagues may be led to think that you're mad as a hatter but you can enjoy your knowledge that you definitely made the right decision on buying your efficient home machine. And of course, laughter leads to fewer wrinkles than frowning.

So your new motto could be this: "for the sake of your skin, when it crashes, grin."

I hope that helps you, Depressed. You see, there are so many alternatives available to you. Just like on a menu, only without the one you wanted greyed out because you haven't remembered to do something complex before even looking at the menu.

Aunty Gill

Doleful docs users

Dear Aunty Gill,

I simply don't know what to do. All my friends keep emailing me Word docs and, although my superior RISC machine can of course open them, I really feel that these poor souls should learn the error of their ways. How can I get my friends to understand that there is another way? How can I enlighten them, so that they turn from the path Microsoft, towards the light that is RISC OS.

Odd One Out

Dear O3,

You're quite right to show such deep concern for your friends and their affliction. And, may I add, well done

on having friends in the plural. Are you sure you're not related to any of the people you're talking about?

Anyway, concerning your valiant attempts to open their eyes. Of course, you must keep trying to explain the way forward to them, as this simple enlightenment could improve their lives beyond their wildest dreams... unless they have very wild dreams, like that one about... mmmm. Oh! What was I saying? Oh yes. Do continue to explain gently to your friends the delights of RISC OS.

Be careful not to try too hard though, or you may (just maybe) come across as a little dull, only focused on this one topic and, by doing so, you then will quickly solve the problem of your friends sending you Word files, as they'll quickly stop sending you anything, other than restraining orders.

Of course, it can be difficult to maintain your commitment to RISC OS, when all your friends and family simply don't understand it. This is why it's important to also have some friends -- and, for a nice change, these can either be online, or ones

you've physically met —who do share your superior knowledge.

It's good to have people around sometimes who understand just how difficult it can be to keep a straight face when yet another friend tells a tale of their PC crashing yet again, while yours hasn't been turned off since you last took it apart to upgrade the memory.

Instead of laughing, take encouragement from these shared stories of Windows-based problems. They can work wonders for restoring your joy at just how well your own machine works.

You may have to accept that some of your friends will never, ever see the light. All you can do is be strong, O3. You know that you are using the right machine. Remind yourself that you save hours that others waste rebooting and cursing at problems.

Those extra hours might even be enough to allow you to have a life beyond computers but let's just start with small steps. For now, you have enough of a challenge in perfecting keeping a completely straight,

sympathetic face, when you hear of a virus that does untold damage to the hard drive, all from a macro within a word-processing program.

Now come on, that's not nice. Stop grinning. Well, OK, you can get away with it for now, so long as no one can see you. But I think you'd better keep practising.

Aunty Gill

PC mania

Dear Aunty Gill,

I've been finding myself thinking about PCs more and more — and the thing is, they aren't RISC PCs. I hate myself for these thoughts but in my darker moments, I've even been considering buying one. What can I do?

Crazy

Dear Crazy,

Of course, I can understand why this is worrying you so much but you must calm down. Don't let it take over your life. Many people have, at times, thoughts of PCs, or consider giving in

and buying one. Peer pressure in this area can be huge, as well as your own natural curiosity. So stop berating yourself for having these thoughts. They don't make you a bad person.

The trick, of course, is to know that such an idea is entirely foolish and not to follow through and act on it. I'm sure that when you're in your right mind, you wouldn't even consider it.

You probably have these thoughts more when you're feeling tired, or ill, or stressed. Do remember that Windows will only add to your stress-levels and leave you feeling yet worse and needing another try. A quick go on *Office* can sometimes feel like a quick-fix but in the long run, you do yourself much more harm than good.

Don't even be tempted to dabble. You should avoid such dens of iniquity as internet cafés and, if necessary, even friends' houses, when they invite you to just give it a try. One thing can, sadly, so easily lead to another.

Don't become another victim. You might think you can control it at first. You'll say that you aren't addicted.

But sooner or later you'll find yourself crying over a crashed PC that you've sneaked into the house. You'll wake in the early hours after nightmares about all your work being lost and the mother-board frying itself. It's really not a pleasant scenario.

If you've already been dabbling, you'll be pleased to know that it isn't too late to save you. There are several solutions and you may find you try several before you really can quit.

Naturally, just cutting out all contact with these machines is the best way, if you can do it. But I do understand that that isn't easy. You'll find that you'll get urges to create a quick Word document and you'll crave an *Excel* formula. Resistance is the only option here but it isn't an easy one.

If you plan to try this, get friends and family to surround you with RISC machines and whenever you crave a fix, ask their help to distract you. To make it easier on yourself, keep away from the places where you'd normally boot-up and the people you'd open Windows with.

You won't be able to give up while you're still hanging around *Powerpoint* or *Outlook*.

Of course, there are substitutes. If you don't think you can go cold keyboard, ask your technician to prescribe you a course of Apple Mac work. It gives a somewhat similar effect to Windows, without all the trauma and can wean you very gently back to your RISC. It's a sort of a middle step.

Naturally, this is only available once you've taken the first step and admitted your problem to a trained professional. If you can convince them of your commitment to quit and that this is a method that will suit you, then they will offer support throughout the program.

Otherwise, I suggest you join a quitting support group — such as The ARM Club. This, as I'm sure you know, stands for *Always Risc Machines*. Group therapy can be a very good way of moving on from this dangerous addiction. It may even be worth going to regular meetings even if you're claiming you've only 'tried' it a few times. It's amazing how one 'try' can lead to another and

cravings for yet another. Act before you find yourself addicted.

Best of luck, Crazy.

Aunty Gill

Girl getting

Dear Aunty Gill

I've trained myself to eat tomatoes, I regularly go outside in natural light, to avoid an unhealthy glow, and have a single phone/PDA, to avoid carrying too much technology on my belt. Yet I still can't seem to get a girl. What can I do?

Lonely

Dear Lonely,

I'm glad to see you're trying and you are certainly moving in the right direction. However, I suspect you haven't taken all my advice, offered in these columns in the past. Perhaps you've missed a suggestion or two, that might really help. You know, Aunty Gill has made sure you can always go back over my past articles on the web, any time you need them, on:

www.oikade.plus.com/eureka/index.html.

OK, so for starters, have you ever tried conversation with a girl? Not online. In person. No? Let's get right back to even more basics. Do you actually know any girls? First you will need to meet one and you'll need to do so without any faffing.

Now, I accept that this can be a tricky challenge but I do have some tips that might help. One is that you'll need to get yourself to a place where girls hang out. That makes it much easier to find them and especially to get talking to them.

Let's start with where they're not. Real, interesting girls (as opposed to posters from FHM) are not currently in your bedroom, nor are they sitting near your computer, or alongside your widescreen TV. So you will have to go to other places. In fact, available, interesting girls probably aren't even in your house at all, unless you happen to share the place with one, in which case, stop writing to me and get practised chatting to her. Even if she's not available, girls often have friends.

You'll need to prove you can manage conversation first, as girls do like their friends and won't introduce you if you can't at least smile in the right direction.

To find one elsewhere, I suggest you start by leaving the house. And that's not just for the journey to work. You need to go to a social place, where many people gather. Pubs, clubs, restaurants, the supermarket, even the local library. You'll find that there are women there.

Now, conversation is definitely trickier but, like a wise man once said, the code of a thousand OSs started with a single line. Your chat with the young lady that you happen to have found starts with a single word. Try ‘

“Hello” or for variety “Hi”. Then smile. If you greet the woman you've just discovered with a cheery phrase but a facial expression that makes you look like a stalker, she will think you are some kind of stalker. Which is, of course, another option for getting to know a woman but perhaps not the most highly recommended, as it can lead to such drawbacks as losing your job (unless she works with you, as

you won't be able to be there as well as following her) and eventually, to your very own restraining order.

Now, after your initial greeting and assuming she responds, the next bit of the conversation is harder. Unless she asks a question, in which case, some sort of answer is then appropriate. If the question is “Do I know you from somewhere?” the answer is not to ask what her online nickname is.

If it's “What the **** do you ****ing think you're doing, you ****ing freak?” then you've probably followed her into Tesco's Tampax section, or perhaps the ladies' toilets. This is not so much a question, as a bit of a hint to leave her alone. Right now.

However, elsewhere, the response is unlikely to be quite this extreme. Assuming a simple greeting back from her, you can take one of several options. But please, do think carefully about the venue you've met her in. For example “Would you like a drink?” can be really good in a bar or pub. However if this attempt at a conversation is going on in the Sainsbury's cleaning aisle and you're



Don't wave your arms around too much when dancing,

currently waving a bottle of extra strong bleach at her, she may feel that your intentions aren't friendly.

Remember also to temper your volume of speech, based on where you are at the time. At the

library, shouting "Do you come here often?" will quickly ensure that you don't. However if she's currently browsing through a Val McDermid, whispering "So you like Crime then?" is acceptable there. If she's downing a vodka and Red Bull in the bar, it may sound to her like an offer to take her joyriding. She may look deeply shocked and run away from you. Or if she's the sort to say yes to this tempting offer, while I'm sure you could hotwire an IBM, she may prefer the letters BMW.

Well, Lonely, I'll leave you to practise the conversation bit. Don't forget that when you do so, you shouldn't be wearing the geek uniform of a Sci-Fi

T-shirt. You will also be forgiven for temporarily removing your ARM Club pin badge for the occasion.

Do not start trying to impress with your dancing, unless you have attended enough classes, run by professionals, to at least have found out what the beat and the rhythm actually are. Ideally, you should also be able to find them. Even then, please don't wave your arms around too much — a mid-air collision might damage your typing fingers.

So, you've found a girl and had a conversation. Slowly, after lots of talking to her, she becomes a friend. Now, I hate to break it to you but just because she's a girl who is also a friend, this does not make her a girlfriend.

But perhaps that extra leap into a relationship is a bit much all at once. Don't rush things — and hopefully she'll think you're a gentleman, rather than just clueless.

Good luck!

Aunty Gill

Club contacts

Email:

General queries	info@armclub.org.uk
Membership queries	membership@armclub.org.uk
Members' technical help	support@armclub.org.uk
Product sales	sales@armclub.org.uk
Magazine	eureka@armclub.org.uk
Software	products@amclub.org.uk

The ARM Club, Merton Court, 38 Knoll Road
Sidcup, Kent DA14 4QU

Telephone (higher rates):

General queries 07010 709849
Technical help line 07010 708098
Fax: 07020 954018

Web site: <http://www.armclub.org.uk/>

Published by The ARM Club

- Chairman: Toby Smith
- Secretary: Chris Price • Treasurer: Simon Burrows
 - Technical Help Co-ordinator: David Ruck
 - Internet & Products Co-ordinator: Tom Hughes
- Open Days Advisor & Quartermaster: Ralph Sillett
 - Open Days Organisation/Support: John Stonier
- Discount Scheme Organiser: Rob Brown
- Without portfolio: Matthew Cook Martin Ebourne Mark Smith

Editor: Peter Jennings

© 2003 The ARM Club. All rights reserved

Benefits of membership

*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 articles in 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 £15

Europe £19 and rest of the world £22

The ARM Club, Merton Court, 38 Knoll Road, Sidcup, Kent DA14 4QU

Email: info@armclub.org.uk Tel: 07010 709849 (Flexitel)