FILE

PCW FILE

Volume 1 Issue 1

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NEXT ISSUE

PCW FILE Will be going to the Printers on 13th April. Expect to see it on your door mat about the end of April. If you have a Hint or Tip, a problem, or want to start a series please send it in. Nothing is to small for publication!

EDITORIAL

Hello, welcome to the first edition of the new magazine PCW File. First let me thank David Moore, S.Cholerton and Stuart Williams for their help. Without them this issue would have been impossible.

The object of PCW File is for you the user to share his experiences. If you have a question on anything then please do not be afraid to send it in as this is the idea of publishing PCW File. My aim is to help as many people as possible get used to the PCW computer. I would like as many people who feel that they are capable of writing regular articles to write to me. The size of the magazine will depend on you. I hope Issue 2 will be 32 pages so get writing!

So what do you want to see in the magazine? I am open to suggestions so send them in as well. Any comments about the first issue are very welcome as I hope to start a 2 page letters column which will let you air your views on anything.

If anyone wishes to ring me up for a chat please telephone 0297-20456 after 5pm. If I cannot answer your query I'm sure another member will be able too.

Mr C.Bryant, 11 Havenview Rd, SEATON, Devon EX12 2PF

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SEND £2 TO ALADDINK(CBR), 4 Hurkur Crescent, EYEMOUTH,

BERWICKSHIRE, TD14 5AP.

Hints and tips for the PCW8256/8512

To stop a program being broken into while running it is necessary to type the command OPTION RUN near the beginning of the program. This disables the break key and also ALT C and ALT S.

To stop a program being listed or stopped it is necessary to save it as save "file",P the P means protected. If using this option for one of your own programs then KEEP A COPY saved in the normal fashion. It is not easy to bypass the protection unless you know a bit about CP/M.

To save a program as an ASCII file (For later editing in RPED etc) the save it as save "file",A.

When listing a program it is often useful to pause the listing to examine a particular part, this is done by pressing first ALT then S whilst still holding down ALT. To carry on listing you should press ALT and S again.

To reverse the PCW's screen colours to black on green the command from CP/M is PALETTE 1 0. PALETTE 0 1 returns you to normal green on black.

The following are escape codes used in basic to perform certain functions.
To use them you must type PRINT first

To clear the screen -	chr$(27)+"E"+chr$(27)+"H"
To get reverse video -	chr$(27)+"p"
Reverse video off -	chr$(27)+"q"
To sound a bleep -	chr$(7)
To underline characters -	chr$(27)+"r"
Underline off -	chr$(27)+"u"
To disable the cursor -	chr$(27)+"f"
To enable cursor -	chr$(27)+"e"

To use the following LPRINT must be typed first.

To put a slash through zeros -	chr$(27)+"X"
To reset -	chr$(27)+"o"
Italic -	chr$(27)+"4"
Reset -	chr$(27)+"5"
Enlarged -	chr$(27)+"W"+chr$(1)
Reset -	chr$(27)+"W"+chr$(0)
Condensed(17cpi) -	chr$(15)
Reset -	chr$(18)

Instead of typing in PRINT in Mallard Basic you can use the abbreviation '?' also instead of typing REM you may use ' instead. When listed the ? will be changed to PRINT but the ' will remain as it is.

To redirect screen output to the printer you may use POKE 8793,234. To redirect printer output to the screen, POKE 8796,239. To reset POKE 8793,239 and POKE 8796,234.

Below are shown what output to expect from the printer when using different pitches and effects.

The man on the moon came down to soon

The man on the moon came down to soon

The man on the moon came down to soon

The man on the moon came down to soon

The man on the moon came down to soon

The man on the moon came down to soon

The man on the moon came down to soon

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The man on the moon came down to soon

The man on the moon came down to soon

The codes used, in order, are:- Normal, Underline, Word Underline, Bold, Double, Superscript, Subscript, Italic, 10 pitch, 12 pitch, 15 pitch, 17 pitch, Proportionally spaced, 10 pitch Double, 12 pitch Double, 15 pitch Double, 17 pitch Double, Proportionally spaced Double.

If you are new to computing you may eventually have a go at programming for yourself in Mallard BASIC as supplied with the PCW machines. The BASIC manual unfortunately is not now supplied with the machine so it is essential to write a cheque for £9.95 and address it to:

Locomotive Software
1 South Street
Dorking
Surrey
RH4 LDY

Once you have the manual you should get a BASIC tutorial to help you. One I can recommend is Program your PCW by Ian Sinclair published by Glentop. When you start programming you will find the need to create a BASIC start of the day disk. A method is described in the above book, this is the method I used.

Firstly PIP the files BASIC.COM, J14CPM3.EMS, SUBMIT.COM and the two RPED files onto a newly formatted disk. The method for this is shown in the AMSTRAD user guide as supplied with the machine.

2) Type SUBMIT RPED.SUB, press return
3) Press F1 and give old name as RPED.SUB
4) Type as new name PROFILE.SUB
5) Edit out lines leaving only BASIC in list
6) Press RETURN then EXIT
7) Press EXIT to quit

If you have done this correctly after pressing SHIFT, EXTRA and EXIT and inserting your new disk, you should go into BASIC after a short delay. You now have your BASIC self starting work disc.

HACKER'S HANGOUT
The PCW Communications Column

by Stuart Williams

In the first of this new series in PCW File, I intend to introduce you to the Viewdata communications system, the most famous exponent of which is Prestel, the nationwide mainframe computer database.

Unlike the ascii system, most commonly used for Electronic Mail services such as Telecom Gold, Easylink and One to One, in addition to Bulletin Boards, which are scrolling text services, viewdata uses a standard block graphic system, along similar lines to the Teletext Oracle, Ceefax and 4-Tel services seen on television, and, for those machines which support it, colour. Another major difference is that viewdata boards, and Prestel, use a paged format, whereby instead of a constantly scrolling stream of text, you receive a page at a time of information, whether text or the crude but effective graphic pictures which can be made up using the viewdata character set.

Generally speaking, the same equipment can be used for Prestel and its clones as for ascii systems; the main difference being the software. This has a much more difficult job to do than the simpler program required for a scrolling text system, and so is often slower and more expensive. As far as I know, there are no working Public Domain Viewdata software packages available for the Amstrad machines, so it's a case coughing up with the cash. Also, the 300 baud modem you bought for BBS's will not help you here, especially in the case of Prestel. One with 1200/75 baud facilities is essential in most cases. Obviously, a multi-standard unit is ideal for all systems.

The equipement and software situation with the PCW8256/8512 is complicated, and can be expensive. It is possible to buy a complete package, with serial interface, software and modem, for between £150 and £200, and this may be your best bet if you do not have any equipment already, but check the facilities of both software and modem in comparison with each package, as at this price level, a multi-baud rate modem should form the core of the system. Recommended software includes Comm+, Sage Chit-Chat Viewdata, and Kiwi-Chat. I am hoping to have a review of some or all of these packages in the bag for the next issue of PCW File, which should be sufficiently comprehensive to make your choice much easier.

What are the advantages of Viewdata? Well, that very much depends on how often you are going to use it. If you want to subscribe to Prestel, then you have no choice, since it is basically viewdata only, except for a single London line which replaces all the graphics with asterisks, and foregoes the local call rates which make Prestel an economic proposition on a nationwide basis. Sadly, the PCW micro's have no colour facility, so viewdata is not as pretty as it might be!

The Prestel service has taken a bit of a pasting in the computer press over the last few months, since it is a little old-fashioned by modern standards; having said that, it has to be borne in mind that Prestel

 Cont'd Overleaf

Hackers Hangout cont'd

was originated as a passive information retrieval system, accessed by dumb numeric keyboards. It is percisely because of the home computer revolution that Prestel has expanded into a much more interactive set-up than was intended. Ideally, the hobbyist user of Prestel will also take on Micronet subscription; as there are in the region of 60,000 Prestel subscribers, and 35,000 of those also take Micronet, someone must be doing something right! Micronet is a mainly micro-oriented area which is accessible only by those who pay the extra subscription fee (Prestel only is £6.50 per quarter and Micronet is another £10 on top of that). Access to Prestel and Micronet is free (other than the subscription, of course) after 6pm in the week, all day Sunday, and after 1pm on Saturday. At other times, a 6p per minute time charge is levied, but of course this mainly affects business users. Don't forget your 'phone bill as well! I always use a stop watch to keep track of that, as it's all too easy to become absorbed in what's going on, especially on the Chatlines in Micronet!

There is a great deal to see on Micronet, and in future articles I'll go into some of the area relevant to PCW users in more detail. There is much more to Prestel than Micronet, however, and if you are not interested in the information stored there, perhaps the ability to send and receive Telexes, contact other subscribers via Mailbox, and use Chatlines as a kind of computer 'CB Radio' or electronic discussion forum, appeals?

One of the aspects of Prestel which puts off some people is the seemingly endless series of menus which you have to know the page numbers for; as part of a series of new development for 1987, Prestel are introducing Keyword searching, where typing the name of a service should automatically get you to the revelant area. Also, owners of V22 and V22bis (1200 and 2400 baud full duplex) modems will be glad to know that Prestel is being put onto the Vasscom system, so they can use much faster speeds than has been the case up to now. This will be very useful where someone wishes to download telesoftware, or upload pre-edited messages, thus saving a fair bit of cash on the 'phone bill! In addition, the Yellow Pages is being transferred onto Prestel, and a gateway into the Telecom Gold electronic mail service is also on the cards shortly. Obviously, Prestel is about to become better value for money!

There are also a few independent viewdata type bulletin boards, mostly running on BBC Micro's, which are uniquely well suited to the task, having teletext graphics built-in. The Gnome At Home is a particularly good example of this type of system, and is more sophisticated, running on a group of networked BBC Micro's. Usually, it is a multi-user system, with several lines available to subscribers. There is a free line which you can call to try things out in a limited area, before deciding whether to release the moths from your wallet. The only disadvantage (shared with many BBS's) is that it is not a local call outside London. Nevertheless, a very interesting and original system, and well worth logging onto, on 01 888 8894.

Future articles will also cover Bulletin Boards and how to use them.

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE ON THE PCW

David Moore

One of the problems with Public Domain software is that the newcomer is presented with catalogues listing thousands of programs, but with no real description of what these programs are all about. The next problem, once you have finally managed to make a choice, is either to load the program or to be able to run it properly after it is loaded. This article is designed to offer some assistance in the CP/M Public Domain maze and concentrates on the programs offered by our own Amstrad Newsletter and PCW File.

The programs will either run under CP/M by entering the main title name at the A> prompt or under Basic if the file name ends in BAS. Most, but not all, basic programs were written in 'M' Basic and the Mallard Basic supplied with the PCW is very similar and should present no real problems. Some of the very early programs were written in 'O' Basic, but again you should not have too many problems. Of course, you must first load Basic into the PCW.

Secondly, some of these programs will not run correctly on the PCW without modification to the program itself or installing the program to suit the PCW. From our own lists the following fall into this category and require a reasonable degree of programing knowledge to be able to make them work.

'TYPWRYT', 'FINDBAD', 'MAKE', 'DU-V86', 'SYNONYM', 'SPELL-11', 'UNSPOOL', 'QWIKKEY', 'I/O-CAP', 'SPELL-ED'. 'TTYPE.BAS' needs installing but is not too difficult.

Sometimes, but certainly not always, you will find that the program has an information file supplied with it and this will explain how to load, install, and understand the program. These maybe shown in the directory under file names such as : .DOC, .INF, .HLP, READ.ME, etc. However, quite often they are stored on the disc in a squeezed form and must be unsqueezed before they can be read. In this case a 'Q' is usually included in the file name. i.e DQC, IQF, etc. A file is squeezed to reduce the memory size taken up on the disc.

Of all the utilities available, perhaps, NEWSWEEP (NSWP205.COM) is the most useful. Although it takes up only 11K of disc space, it gives you all in one program, PIP/DIR.COM/ERASE/SHOW/LIST/SQUEEZE/UNSQUEEZE. It will even list a squeezed file to screen without having to unsqueeze it first. If you use the utilities supplied on the CP/M+ disc, PIP, DIR.COM, ERASE, & SHOW, alone take up 37K of memory and all have to be loaded separately.
Newsweep has an information file supplied with it, but in a squeezed form.

DISK76.COM: similar to Newsweep, but with fewer features. The main ones missing are Squeeze and Unsqueeze. However, Disk76 only uses 4K of memory.

NI.COM [4K] can be used in place of DIR.COM [16K]. A saving of 12K disc space.

D.COM [3K]: similar to NI.COM and has the added advantage of being able to look over all user areas.

WCOUNT.COM [6K]: a word count program. Very useful if you have to write an article or paper of a set number of words. Locoscript must be changed to ASCII. To use it enter at the A> WCOUNT drv:FILENAME.EXT (drv = A or B disc drive)

FOOD.COM [32K]: a very good and powerful stock inventory program. Although written as a food inventory system it can be easily adapted to any kind of trade and is the equal of many commercial packages. Before you start using FOOD, transfer it to an empty disc. The data files take up a lot of space.

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE ON THE PCW

(continued)

BANNER.COM [2K]: a program which prints letters across the paper, 7 lines high and 7 characters wide. The main problem is that it was set up for use with a 132 character wide printer. Not really suitable for the PCW printer.

GOTHIC.COM [11K]: similar to BANNER.COM and again needs a 132 character wide printer. You can try using subscript or superscript on the PCW. Both of these programs can wear out your printer ribbon quickly, as each position is overstriked many times.

PASSWORD.COM [1K]: as the title suggests a program to protect any .COM file. Be warned, once protected the file can only be used with the correct password.

*** If you forget the password the file is lost forever !! ***

To use this program enter at the A> PASSWORD drv:xxx.com
(drv = A or B drive. xxx = name of your file)

IDUMP.COM [1K] prints on the screen the hexadecimal and ASCII contents of a program file. Enter at the A> IDUMP FILENAME.EXT

ADV.COM is the original Colossal Cave Adventure game. There are no real problems with loading and playing this adventure, but a problem exists over re-loading a 'saved' game. The instructions, contained in the program, tell you that a game position can be saved and this is easily achieved. The problem is that you are not told how to reload the 'saved' game and nobody completes this adventure in one session. All the usual words such as, reload, restore, etc., have not effect whatsoever.
The answer is to enter: ADVENT -R (there must be a space between the T and -).

BIO.COM [14K]: a program which gives a biorhythm chart based on a birth date. No instructions are given, but all entries required are shown by screen prompts, so you should not have any trouble in running this program. One small point which causes a little confusion, the dates are entered and shown in reverse order. i.e. 8th March 1966 is shown as 660308

STRTRK.BAS [21K] is one of numerous Star Trek programs to be found in the CP/M public domain. This is a very good version of the game and runs in Mallard Basic without any problems. Unfortunately, the rules of play and required commands are not explained properly, but it is well worth persevering with.

TRADE.BAS [13K]: a space trading strategy game. The object of the game is to establish large shipping lanes and purchase stock in the companies. At the start, you are asked for a three digit number and this determines the stars position on the game board. Change the numbers and you get a different board. Full instructions are included in the program.

MERCHANT.BAS [14K]: another space trading game. You travel from star to star buying and selling different cargos. Again a random number is asked for at the start of each game. Instructions are shown on the screen.

One interesting thing about the basic programs to be found in public domain. The data can be listed, so for once you can see how they were written.

Finally, if you need modem software, SMODEM+.COM is an excellent program and fully documented. The information files are: SMODEM+.IQF & SMODEM.DQC and these need to be unsqueezed. Who said 'NEWSWEEP' wasn't useful !!

PCW POINT OF VIEW
By Stuart Williams

Hello, hope you're recovered from the ice and snow, and are raring to get your hands on Joyce again! In this issue of PCW File, I'm discussing languages.

Contrary to popular belief, many people do use Joyce and Big Betha (alias the 8512!) for other things than wordprocessing . One of the first things the hobbyist user thinks of is programming, and an excellent BASIC language is included with all Amstrad computers, although you wouldn't think so since Amstrad stopped supplying the Mallard manual with the machine!

Mallard BASIC is a reasonably standard version of the lanuage, and works well, but it is an interpreted language, and therefore relatively slow, as each instruction has to be run through and checked by the machine and then translated into the machine code instructions which the microprocessor can understand. The easiest way to speed up program execution is to use a compiler. This turns your written instructions into machine code before running the program, and thus enables faster operation.

There are two kinds of compiler, the intermediate or p-code system, and the stand-alone system. What this means is that with the first kind, an intermediate code file is produced which can be run on its own. The latter is usually faster, but can be more expensive if you are purchasing a commericial product.

An economical alternative (not to say dirt cheap!) are the Public Domain EBASIC, JRTPASCAL, and FORTH languages. The first two use an intermediate code system, and the latter is a standard FIG Forth compiler. There are also LISP and E-PROLOG interpreted languages if you fancy dabbling in that direction.

The disavantage of most compiled languages is that you have to use a text editor of some kind (such as the excellent VDO25) to write the program, then compile it seperately, and if there are errors, return to the editor and make the necessary alterations to your program. This can be a long winded process, but the end result justifies the effort made. Turbo Pascal from Borland, has a very nice system which has the text editor built-in, and drops you into it editor roughly at the point where changes are required if mistakes are detected when compiling.

Which language is best for you? Well, there's no doubt that for the beginner, BASIC is the easiest, but many authorities now recommend Pascal, which is a sophisticated and speedy language, and forces tidy programming due to its rigid, structured working. If you have had experience of BASIC, you may find Pascal rather unforgiving of the 'spaghetti' approach encouraged by the standard beginners language.

 Cont'd Overleaf

PCW Point of View Cont'd

If you are into writing databases, or fancy a carreer in business programming, COBOL may be a good choice. It's the nearest thing to writing in plain English, but is getting on a bit now, and is not at all suited to writing, for instance, fast games! Worth a try if you hope to get your hands on a Mainframe some day!

FORTH is a peculiar language, orginally designed to control radio telescope movement, it is very cleverly structured so the language can be extended and changed to suit what you want to do, but has rather unfriendly syntax and uses reverse Polish mathematical notation, which takes some getting used to! Nevertheless, an efficient, compact and fast language, and well suited to games writing, although a version with graphics entensions may prove difficult to find.

C is the 'in' language amongst technofreaks these days. Operating systems for the latest computers are often written using C, and it's the nearest high level language to machine code. Unfortuately, its unfriendly syntax and poor error trapping make it unsuitable for beginners, but for experts, well worth a look. A limited version, Small C is available from the PD Library for those who wish to dabble. A good book is essential!

LOGO, often called 'the children's language' is included with all disc based Amstrad Micro's. It's easy to use, but relatively unsophisticated, as it is designed mainly to teach mathematics and geometry. It has some interesting graphics routines built-in, though, as well as list processing features. DR LOGO is not the best verison on the market, but it is free!

There are a number of other languages not often used on micros, such as FORTRAN, PL/M, PILOT, ADA, APL, and BCPL, which are often found on mainframes, and are of rather specialised use. Certainly they are not for beginners.

So, when it comes down to choosing a language, there are two main factors to consider. The first one for most people is whether you can afford it! Fortunately, most of the above are available at reasonable prices to run under CP/M. Hisoft, and also Borland, are particularly reasonable in their pricing, and their Pascal compilers come highly recommended. Sadly, good BASIC compilers, for example Microsoft BASIC, and Digital Research CBASIC, are often expensive, from £70-£150+. Alternatively, you could try one of the Public Domain languages.

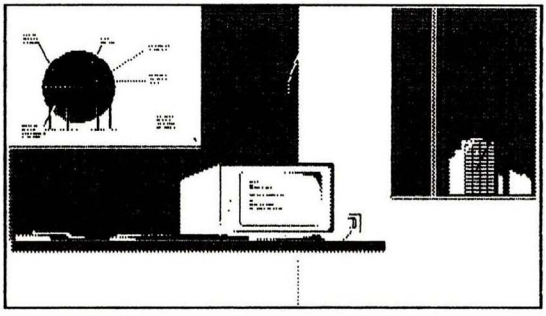
Secondly, it has to be considered whether you have a specific task in mind, which will probably make up your mind for you, or whether you just want to dabble in programming for the sake of it; if the latter, there's not much point spending on other languages when a perfectly good BASIC comes with the machine.

Software Reviews for the PCW8256/8512

Title: Aftershock
Type : Adventure
S/W House : Interceptor Software
Price: £17.95

Aftershock is an adventure game which occasionally gives you graphic pictures of your location. The graphics are superb and very detailed (see the screen dump) but unlike versions produced for other micros, there is no animation. The graphics are the best thing about this adventure, the game itself is not much cop at all. The problems are not so much in deciding what to do next but in finding the right words to explain to the computer what you want to do. The idea of the game is to get to the nuclear power station at the other side of the city and prevent it going critical following a recent earthquake. You are one of the men who designed the reactor and so it is up to you to prevent a major catastrophe. Although a good scenario the game fails to please largely due to the rather difficult and odd statements needed to accomplish rather simple things. Not recommended. Stick to Infocom.

Graphics: 15/20
Sound: N/A
Grab factor: There isn't one!!
Overall: 5/20



Review by Steve 'Cholo' Cholerton

Sofware Reviews for PCW8256/8512 continued

Review By Steve 'Cholo' Cholerton

Title: Retrieve
Type: Database
S/W house: Sagesoft
Price: £69.99

Retrieve is a good and powerful database. It comes with a good manual - 77 pages - and a CP/M and Retrieve tutorial on Audio cassette. I found it easy to use, as long as you listen to the tape first and then tackle the manual. Sage also offer you a 90 day telephone hotline support free of charge, as soon as you send your registration card in. This service can be extended to 1 year for a fee. If you listen to the tape and read the manual you should never find need for this service. Retrieve allows 65,600 records per data file, a maximum field length of 222 characters, maximum fields per record is also 255 and the maximum record length is 1,020. Each record may be spread over two screens if you require a lot of fields for each record.

Retrieve allows two forms of password protection and you may specify whether a person may look and update and alter the files or may just look at them. You design your own screens but for this you use X,Y co-ordinates which is rather primitive but does allow a good job to be made. Some other features of Retrieve, It has an 'Enquiry Processor' which allows you to specify, using english sentences, which records you want to see etc. eg. List contacts name address where number="01"] will list all the people in the file 'contacts' who have a telephone number beginning '01', it will also list their address and name. Retrieve also allows fields to be calculated upon and updated automatically using simple commands.

There is a lot more I could say about Retrieve but I think I ought to mention that if you own an 8256 then think twice about Retrieve, it makes considerable use of overlays and runs slow enough on an 8512 using both drives. If you have an 8256 you will frequently need to swap disks.
Below is a screen dump of Retrieve's Field Definition Screen

Graphics: N/A
Sound: N/A
Grab Factor: 15/20
Overall: 14/20

```
Sage Database              Data Management System              13/01/1987
Version: 2.01              Field definition procedure          Page: 2

    Definition of field number:  1    Characters used:    0  Fields:  1

---------- Data Description ----------     ---- Display parameters ----

 1. Field name.....:?                      4. Justify (L/R)....:
 2. Field type.....:                       5. Output width.....:
 3. Field length...:                       6. Decimal precision:
                                           7. Default print Y/N:

---------------------- Data entry characteristics --------------------------

 8. Forced entry  Y/N:        9. Options:
10. Entry pattern....:
11. New display page.:       12. Display position ...  Col:     Row:
13. Range/calculation:
```

SEATON CHRISTIAN GRAPHICS, UPCOTT, OLD BEER ROAD, SEATON, DEVON EX12 2PZ. 0297/23216