Britain's best-selling classic computer magazine

PCW TODAY

Issue 12 Feb - Apr 99

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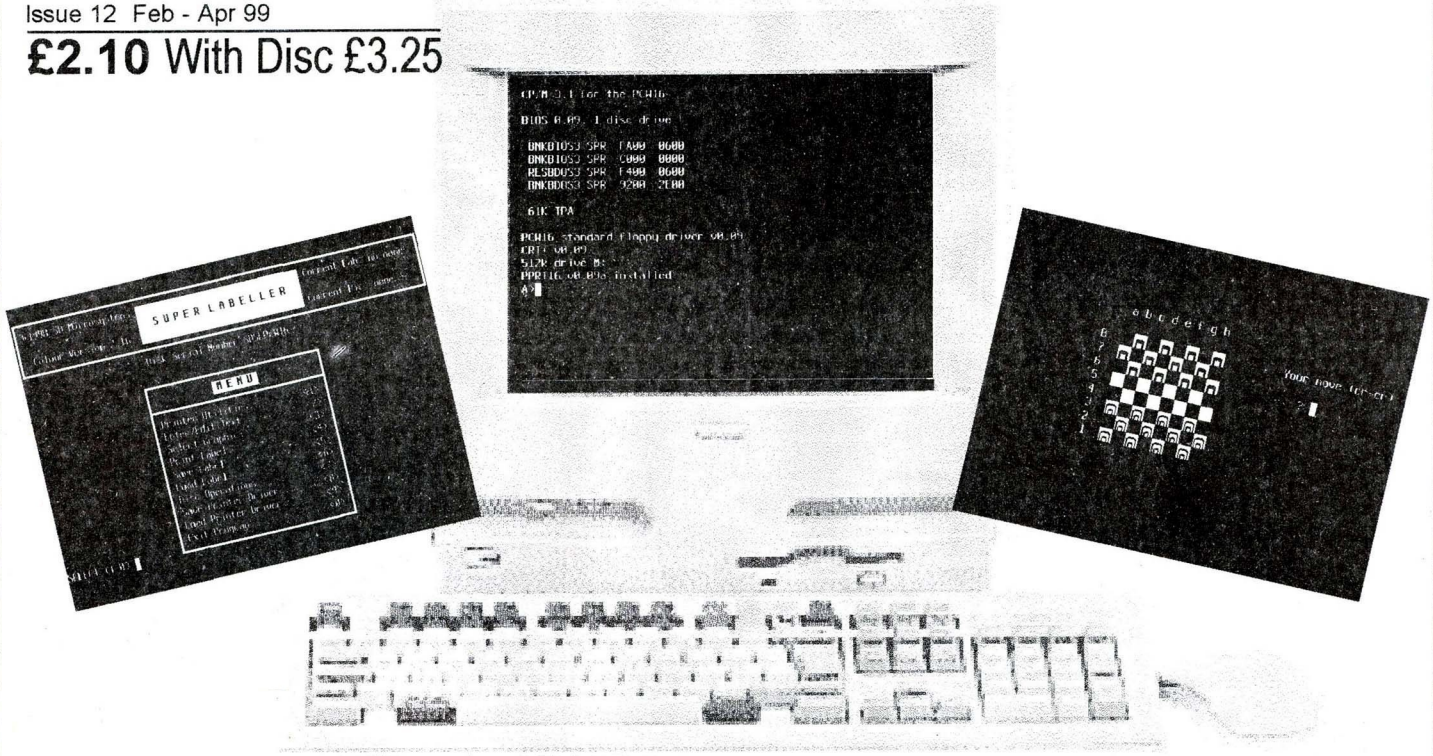

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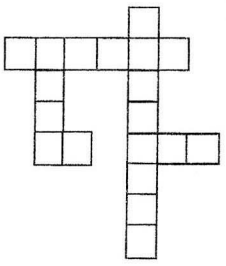

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Brian Dorricott's acclaimed software now at radically reduced prices. Normally available on 3.5" DSDD (720k) discs. (3", you supply your own identified and formatted disc) Control disc contains Crossword v2, Word Search Generator and Word File No 1. Price: £25.00. (Price includes a set of manuals.) Four other word Files includig one in German and French. Price £5.00 each.

The British Amstrad PCW Club
"Four Winds", 10 Sheridan Avenue, Thundersley,
Essex SS7 1RD Tele: 01702 551618

This Issue...

THE PCW is a strange beast. Just when you think it's dead on its feet, the old dog gets yet another injection of life, and everything looks rosy again.

LocoScript 4 and RoutePlanner gave the classic PCWs a much needed kick up the backside last year, and now John Elliott's CP/M clone seems to have rejuvenated the 16 in much the same way.

A couple of months ago things were looking bleak for the much-criticised 16, but now all that has changed. Read the exciting details in our specially extended news pages, and check out the exclusive review of CP/M on page 22.

Perhaps now, we can start to treat Joyce and Anne like the sisters they are, rather than distant relatives. The great thing about this new version of CP/M is that it makes the 16 a *proper* PCW at last. Perhaps now, at last, we can really say: "Welcome to the family!"

And finally, whatever PCW you have, the place to be this May is *Crawley*. It's the Crawley PCW Day on the 15th and I'm travelling down from the North-East. I'd love to see you there.

Adrian Braddy,
Editor.

4 **NEWS** It's CP/M for the 16 at last, and SD Micro announce their plans for the new O/S.

8 **CLUB SCENE** 8 Bit bows out, and the Teesside group closes down - not a good start to 99.

10 **BAD FORMAT** Keep those floppies safe and clean - we tell you how.

12 **COVER DISC** What's on our latest disc of free stuff, and how can you get at it?

14 **Q&A** Got a problem with your PCW? Here's a selection of your queries.

16 **HELPFILE** Our regular page of reader's handy hints, tips and shortcuts.

17 **QUEEN ANNE'S GATE** Get another dose of 16 hot gossip from our top columnists.

18 **LOCOMAIL** Keep track of your electricity bills with this great tutorial.

20 **PCW DAY** We travel to Crawley to preview the biggest PCW event in years.

22 **COVER FEATURE** It's going to revolutionise the 16, and we've taken a sneak preview.

24 **MAILBAG** Another selection of the many letters we receive every week.

26 **MICRODESIGN** A novel guide to playing chess with the versatile desktop publisher.

28 **PCW WORLD** Steve Denson reveals some of the secrets behind the PC industry.

29 **READER SURVEY** We reveal the results of our comprehensive study of PCW users.

30 **ROD ON LOCOSCRIPT** Part eight of our epic Letters in LocoScript series.

32 **JARGON BUSTER** Kathleen Thorpe's doing some more of her famous babble bashing.

34 **PCW 16** Don't worry, we know how to save your 16 when it crashes.

36 **PROGRAMMING** PD Blake rounds off his series on BASIC with a few helpful snippets.

38 **LANDERS** The PCW pro takes a look at CP/M's useful Help utility.

40 **CP/M BASICS** Kathleen Thorpe reveals how you can use CP/M as a word processor.

42 **CLASSIFIEDS** Pick up a bargain in our page of small adverts.

43 **COMPETITION** Win some top prizes in our new regular competition page.

44 **DIRECTORY** The essential PCW company locator gets a makeover

46 **LANGFORD** The funniest writer in the country on the trials of fitting a drive.

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PRINTED BY Initiative Design and Print, Hemlington, Middlesbrough. Tel: 01642 599990.
PUBLISHED BY Strad Publishing.

PCW Today is an independent magazine, published quarterly by STRAD, a national PCW user group.
STRAD and *PCW Today* do not have links with any commercial organisation. We do not act as an agent for nor are we associated to Amstrad plc or its associated companies.
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Approximate circulation of: Issue 11, Nov 98 - Jan 99:
1,120
(Estimated readership: 3,360)

ISSN 1368-4485
STRAD publishing

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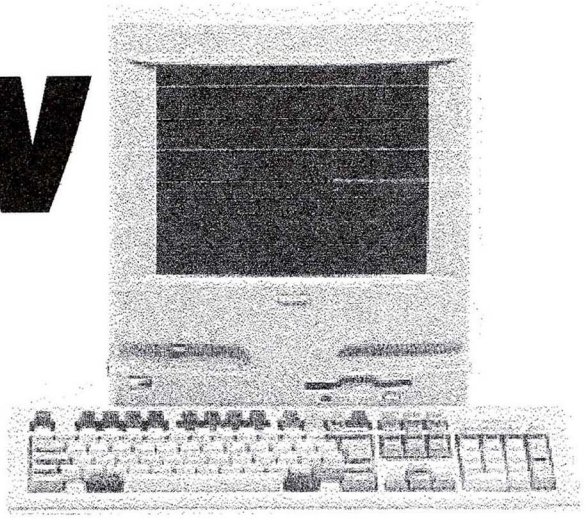
news update

Another PCW TODAY exclusive

16 new titles for the 16!



IT'S TRUE: Graphics, databases, games and even more launched for the PcW 16!

THE PcW 16 is a REAL PCW at last - and that's official. SD MicroSystems has just converted 16 of its most popular software titles to work with the new CP/M clone.

The sensational news will be welcomed by the army of long-suffering 16 users, who have seen just two pieces of new external software in three years.

SD MicroSystems will also be selling copies of the CP/M clone, and they have even negotiated an exclusive deal with LocoScript to sell BASIC for the 16.

The company's boss, Steve Denson said: "We're taking quite a gamble on the 16 - I just hope it pays off. I like the PcW 16 and think it deserves a bit of luck just now."

Among the most welcome of the software is Super Labeller, which is the first 16 package ever to offer a graphical output. The pick of the rest includes a wide selection of games and two databases.

All 16 titles can be bought immediately and they have been checked with the latest version of the CP/M clone. However this is a beta edition, and is not yet ready for general release. SD MicroSystems cannot distribute the program, until the programmer gives the go-ahead.

As we go to press, programmer John Elliott has just released version 0.10 of the package, he also described the finished version as "imminent".

This suggests that the clone could be ready in a matter of weeks, or even days.

We also understand that Creative Technology are interested in selling much of the software too, and they are planning a third edition of the PcW 16 magazine to promote it.

Other companies are not yet convinced that software for the PcW will sell. LocoScript, Protext and RoutePlanner are just three of the products that will definitely not be converted to run on the 16.

Now at last it's a 'real' PCW!

We talk exclusively to the man who dared to invest in the PcW 16!

WHEN the PcW 16 was first muted back in 1995, it came under heavy criticism from staunch PCW owners, who didn't like what they saw.

"It won't run CP/M, or LocoScript so how can it be a PCW?" was the usual argument. And it seemed that the traditionalists had a strong case.

Even back then, there was talk of a CP/M emulator. Three years ago, in Spring 1996, the news pages of *PCW Today*, carried an item which reported: "Currently many PCW users are very unhappy about the limitations of the PcW 16," adding: "Speculation is abounding that a CP/M emulator is on its way."

Now at last, after a very long wait, we have a new version of CP/M for the 16 that is so good, it's being described as more of a clone than an emulator.

John Elliott's fantastic new operating system, previewed on page 22, means that at last the PcW 16 will run some classic PCW programs.

Of course, many of them have to be tweaked to cope with differences in speed and keyboard layout, but that, it seems, will not be a problem.

SD MicroSystems told *PCW Today* first, the news that every 16 user wanted to hear. It has adapted 16 of its best titles to work with the new CP/M clone, and Steve Denson, the company's boss, told us why:

"I have an abiding love of Amstrads and especially the PCW, and I see the 16 as advancing the cause of 'alternative' computing.

"In the PcW 16 I think we have an Amstrad for the millennium, and it deserves support. 40,000 machines may be small beer to the industry at large, but it could help us to keep the PCW market going for years to come.

The SD Micro PcW 16 software range:

£9.95 - CP/M
£14.95 - CP/M + BASIC

£5.00 - GAMES DISC 1
£5.00 - PCW ADVENTURES
£5.00 - CROSS WORDER
£5.00 - MORSE CODE TUTOR
£5.00 - BASIC TUTOR
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£9.95 - JUNIOR PLAYTIME
£14.95 - SUPER LABELLER
£14.95 - MAILING MANAGER
£24.95 - PERSONAL LEDGER
£29.95 - BUSINESS LEDGER
£49.95 - SMALL TRADER

(Prices not yet confirmed)

"Just one example of where the 16 scores is its size. It's so compact compared to those huge PCs and looks as modern as the iMac.

"The Rosanne desktop is attractive, and although the software is bugged, it's perfectly adequate for home or small-office work. As Cliff Lawson said, nobody should expect it to run Microsoft Office.

"However, it's when you step out into CP/M that classic PCW owners will appreciate the 16. The display is sharp, the text looks bigger and bolder than it does on the desktop, and the screen changes are slick and snappy due to the extra speed of the Z80 16 MHz chip.

"On the downside, not all machine code, or even BASIC programs will run. Any programs which make direct machine code calls, crash the 16. And we will have to live without the big two of LocoScript 4 and MicroDesign 3 - there are problems at the moment with software that uses the classic PCW's 90 column screens.

"I think that before long we'll have plenty of games and utilities for the 16. All that will be needed is a decent graphics program, but that might be tricky to achieve. However 16 users will be able to print small logos using our Super Labeller.

"The release date of our 16 software depends on John Elliott giving the go-ahead for CP/M which he is still completing, but I can tell you it already works very well. I must also admit that I like the 16 much more than I thought I would, especially now we can run other external programs on it.

"All the software has been tested with the most recent version of the CP/M clone, and of course all will require the CP/M loader disc set, and in many cases Mallard BASIC, which we have a license to supply from LocoScript Software.

"All in all, the future for both the 16 and the PCW market in general is looking brighter than it did a few months ago.

"I just hope that 16 users will put their money where their mouths are, and buy some of the new software when it becomes available, and prove that there is a whole new market available for the PCW."

For more information, contact SD MicroSystems on 07000736427.

It's the end of the road for the PCW

THE PcW 16 was the final statement in the PCW range, *PCW Today* can reveal. Amstrad has decided NOT to produce any more PcW 16s, and has NO plans to introduce an eighth incarnation of its famous word processor.

EXCLUSIVE REPORT

Bosses at Amstrad have decided that there is no longer sufficient demand to warrant producing any new PCWs.

A batch of 30,000 units was sold to Dixons last year, and we now know that they were the last ever PCWs to come off the Amstrad production line.

Now Dixons is selling-off the last of that stockpile at well under £100 a unit, and it is estimated that within months they will have completely sold out. Some stores are already out of stock.

■ **SUGAR:** "We expect to release five new products."

An industry source revealed: "There is no longer enough consumer demand for word processors like the 16.

"The price of PCs has dropped dramatically, and most new users would rather pay that little bit more and get Internet access - one thing that the 16 cannot provide."

Amstrad will now move into new areas, as it enters the millennium.

Chairman, Alan Sugar said: "We are concentrating on developing innovative products; we have got the same engineering team together that made us famous in the 1980s.

"We expect to release five new products this year," he added.

The consumer electronics giant has gone into the black for the first time since 1995, with an opening-half profit of £4.08m.

That contrasts with losses of £879,000 last time. Sales income has risen 47 per cent to £45.4m.

Cross-platform OS under development

A REVOLUTIONARY new operating system that could work on ALL Amstrad PCWs and CPCs is under development.

Rob Buckley of Radical Software originally started the software to make it easier for programmers to write for the 16. But once it neared completion, Rob discovered that it would be relatively easy to convert the software to work on all PCWs and CPCs as well.

As we exclusively reported in Summer 1997, Rob was working on a BASIC package for the 16. However, when his hard drive crashed, wiping the code, there were fears that the programmer had given up on the project.Now it seems that the scheme is back on again, and we await the results with interest.

Information is very hard to come by, but we do know that the software will include features like drop-down menus, drag and drop and dialogue boxes. It is not yet clear whether the software is compatible with CP/M software.

Rob intriguingly told a CPC magazine: "It's Windows for the Z80", but as we go to press, we have not been able to track down the programmer ourselves.

'16 rumours rubbished

AMSTRAD has scotched claims that the PcW 16 has a short life-span.

Several magazines had suggested that the machines were unreliable, and that repeated crashes could damage the machine.

Rosanne programmer, Cliff Lawson, said: "A hardware fault is very unlikely, as there is very little hardware inside a PcW 16 to go wrong. And software crashes can always be fixed by resetting the machine."

It seems that computer repair shops may have written off PcW 16s that had nothing wrong with them.

Read how to fix your 16 on page 35.

'Roots man' Wilf will be missed

ONE of the most respected PCW programmers - Wilf Ford - sadly died at the age of 76, in January.

Wilf, who most famously wrote the hugely successful Roots PCW genealogy system, was a well-known figure in the PCW scene.

■ **WILF FORD:** 1922-1999

He also worked as a voluntary programmer for the charity disc repair firm, Dave's Disk Doctor Service.

Dave Smith, who runs the charity, praised Wilf, saying: "We owe a great debt of gratitude to Wilf. Many of the programs which we use to salvage damaged disks and recover the files from them, were written by him. And his work has literally saved us thousands of hours of time and made an important contribution to our fundraising activities.

"It is probably true to say that without his help we would not have coped."

Fairhurst - I will write more PCW programs

LEADING classic computer programmer, Richard Fairhurst, has given the PCW market a boost be revealing that he wants to write more new software for the machine.

Richard, who launched the superb RoutePlanner PCW, last year, is now looking for new projects.

He told PCW Today: "I'd be interested in continuing to write for the PCW Classic series - something a bit less mammoth than RoutePlanner - but haven't any great ideas."

He is now appealing to readers to help him with ideas. If you've got any ideas for new software, drop us a line at the usual address, and we'll let Richard know.

Clive planning 'new Sinclair'

BRITISH inventor, Sir Clive Sinclair, has plans for a brand new computer in the spirit of classic eighties computers like the PCW.

Dubbed the "ZX2000", the new machine could challenge the supremacy of PCs, which Sir Clive feels are overrated.

■ **CLIVE SINCLAIR:** Planning a new computer

He explained: "I want to design another computer because I think I can make a decent job of it. I've started work on a prototype already.

"It's a competitor to the PC because the modern desktop computer is about as bad a design as possible. It really is appalling. It wastes memory on an unbelievable scale and it slows down an extremely fast processor with cumbersome routines and programs. There's huge room for improvement.

"I want to create a computer that's completely portable, but also totally functional so there's no compromise. I want something that is going to cost ten times less than current notebook PCs and have a huge battery life so you won't have to keep recharging the thing.

"We've designed our own CPU and it's an extremely high performance one. We had prototypes of it sometime ago and it is blindingly fast - about ten times faster than a Pentium II processor.

"It is an ultra-RISC chip - I don't want to go into too much technical detail or bamboozle you with jargon, but this little blighter will be incredibly fast and very efficient."

We will keep you informed of Sir Clive's progress.

Eye Spy

- Amstrads in the media -

A DECEMBER issue of *PC Mart* magazine carried a feature on "computers of yesteryear".

This gave some skimpy information on where to get help for your classic computer.

The article was accompanied by a nice picture of an 8256 - but Angela Cook still managed to get in a PCW dig, saying: "There's film footage of Jeffrey Archer writing on a PCW - that might explain something."

The Independent recently carried a feature on LocoScript Software, that Howard Fisher described as "Not very complimentary." Ah well!

And lastly, your editor was interviewed by a writer from the London *Evening Standard*, in January, who was writing an article on "The joys of Amstrad owning," for that paper's magazine. Let's hope they at least, give PCWs a better write-up.

If anyone from the London area should spot the *Standard* feature, we'd be grateful of a copy.

If you spot an 8256 on *The Antiques Roadshow*, or a '16 in *Cosmo*, we want to know about it. In fact, if you see any PCW in the media, drop us a line and you might even win a prize!

PCW Club Scene

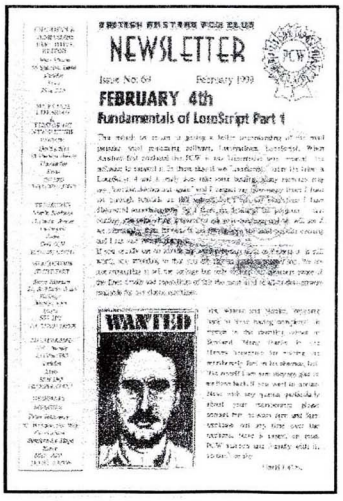
Amstrad Computer Club Incorporated
Open to all Amstrad users in South Australia. Weekly meetings are held on Tuesdays at 2/24 Torreno Street, Mitcham, between 6.30pm and 9pm. Contact David Simpson, DAS@picknow.com.au

Berkshire PCW Users Group
Several members report that Ed cannot be contacted. Try him at: 121 Bullbroook Drive, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 2QR.

Birmingham and West Midlands PCW Club
To find out more about this midlands based club, get in touch with John Bell on: 0121 4343078

Brisbane PCW User Group
Mike Mackenzie runs this Australian club. To contact him from outside the country, telephone 617 32775701. Mike is also the LocoScript Software representative down under.

British Amstrad PCW Club
There was much amusement in the *PCW Today* office when the February edition of the British Amstrad PCW Club newsletter arrived. In one article, Mike Elliston grumbles about mistakes in club newsletters, but unfortunately fails to check his own copy - referring to the *PCW Today* editor as Adrian *Hooper!* Then on the facing page, we learn that Steve Massam has returned from *Edinborough!* It's good to see we're not the only publication to be invaded by gremlins occasionally. Contact secretary, David Lalieu at 10 Sheridan Avenue, Thundersley, Essex SS7 1RD. 01702 551618.



Capital Computer Club
The group cover PCWs along with other formats. For further information, write to: 13 Eagle Street, Karori, Wellington 6005, New Zealand.

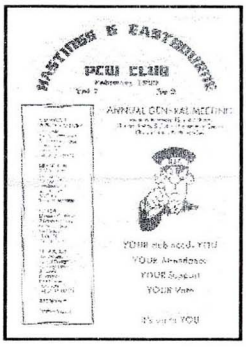
Cornwall PCW Club
The group no longer holds regular formal meetings. There are informal meetings every two to three months in members' homes. The newsletter will continue on a quarterly basis, and PCs will now be covered as well. A further decision on the club's future will be made in about a year's time. For more details, contact chairman, John Walker on 01752 706266.

Costa del Sol PCW Users Club
No longer affiliated to the U3A, the group has 15 active members. Full membership costs P3,000 per year. Meetings are fortnightly on Mondays from 11am at the Manilla Bar, Paseo Maritimo, Los Boliches. Contact Ken Tether on 95 293 2096 for more details.

Crawley PCW Club
See elsewhere for our fairly extensive coverage of the PCW Day that the Crawley gang are hard at work organising. Contact John Fisher on: 01732 863062.

Devon PCW Club
To join this group, get in touch with: the Chairman, Peter Godderidge on 01626 330373, Treasurer, Christine Stone on 01392 252646, or Newsletter Editor, Andy Young on 01395 577972.

Hastings & Eastbourne PCW Club
There's a club AGM on February 15, and the newsletter reports that if no new officers are elected, the club will not be able to continue. On Monday May 17th, Jeff Brooks will be designing logos in MicroDesign and demonstrating accounts on the PcW 16. Contact: George Magee on: 01323 833969.



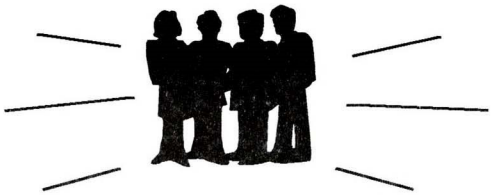
Heads of the Valleys Group
This Welsh group still continues to operate informally and the few remaining members still correspond on PCW matters. Contact: Anthony Hill on 01222 618012.

Hereford Computer Club
It costs £15 to join up and that includes subscription to the club magazine - Keyboard. Meetings are held from 7pm on the first Wednesday of each month at The Cellar, 41 Widemarsh Street, Hereford.

Javea Computer Club
Regular meetings are held at Pedro's Restaurant, Javea in Alicante. PCW users are welcome. Contact Tom Hughes on: 96 5583508.

Joyce Computer Club
The PCW's highly active presence in Holland has its own web site, which has just been updated. There's a link on the *PCW Today* site. Contact: Frank Van Empel, Leksmondhof 8, NL-1108 EM Amsterdam.

Kentish PCW Club
Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month at the Chapel Hall in Bush Road, Cuxton. For further details, contact: Leslie Merchant, 14 Mill Road, Northfleet, Gravesend. Tel: 01474 335882.



Lancashire Group (Proposed)
Edward Green is looking for like minded people interested in sharing information regarding all Amstrad PCWs. He says: "There are a lot of Amstrad clubs around the country, but none in this area. Anyone interested can call me on (01254) 823632 for a chat."

Leeds Amstrad PCW Club
For more information on the club, contact Paul Newmark, 18 Claythorpe Road, Leeds LS16 5HW. Tel: 0113 2755576.

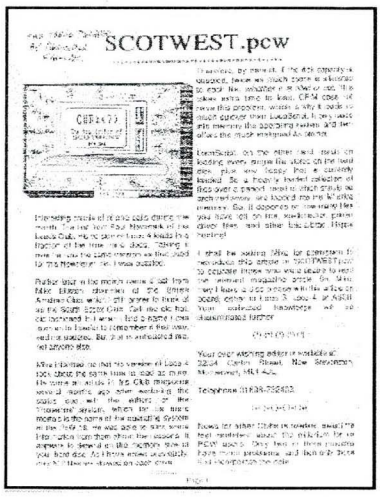
MicroDesign International User Group
Membership to this large club costs £8 and includes subscription to the excellent magazine - The Design Tree. Contact: Doug Cox, 132 Adelaide Grove, East Cowes, Isle of Wight PO32 6DF. 01983 296366.

Morley Amstrad PCWers
This club meets in Morely Public Library at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of every month. Membership costs just £10. The group has a library of PCW software. Contact: Frank King on 01924 430319.

Perthshire PCW Club
For more information on this Scottish PCW group, contact David Paterson, 26 Moulin Crescent, Perth PH1 2EA. Tel: 01738 621346.

RADSTOCK.pcw
This enthusiastic PCW club meets on the second Friday of each month at the Radstock Methodist Church from 7.30pm. For more information, contact Adrian Hooper, 40 Kilmersdon Road, Haydon, Radstock, Avon BA3 3QN. Tel: 01761 436276.

SCOTWEST.pcw
More of the usual round-up of club news in the latest issue of CHR$(7). David certainly didn't like that Edinburgh spelling mistake in the British Amstrad PCW Club newsletter! He also enters into the great PC debate by revealing that he has a PC - but only for e-mailing relatives down under, and he blasts other publications for branching out to cover the PC. Contact: David Williams, 32/34 Carfin Street, New Stevenson, Motherwell ML1 4JL. Tel: 01698 732403.


SCOTWEST.pcw

SIG - Amstrad PCW (USA)
Believe it or not, there is a PCW club in the States, with a regular newsletter. It's a branch of Mensa, and is run by Al Walsh. You can contact him at 6889 Crest Avenue, Riverside, California 12503.

Somerset PCW Club
The group are bothered by falling membership, so have decided to allow PC users into the meetings. They produce a quarterly newsletter. For details, contact: Elsa Turner on 01935 823618.

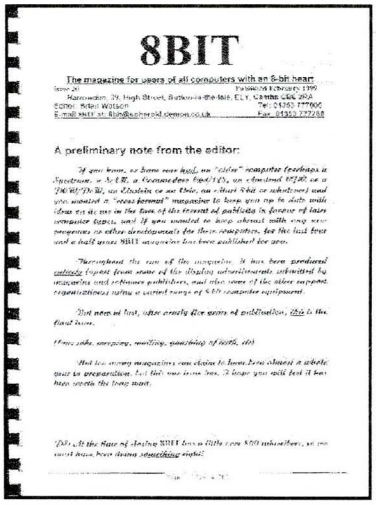
South Essex PCW Club
Now renamed The British Amstrad PCW Club because of a new national outlook. Contact: David Lalieu, 10 Sheridan Avenue, Thundersley, Essex SS7 1RD. Tel: 01702 551618. See details on facing page.

Teesside PCW Users Group
This club has sadly been disbanded, after almost 10 years. The group, founded back in 1990 by Gladys Baker, was forced to fold after declining membership. All monies were donated to the Butterwick Trust Children's Hospice. Computer equipment, software, books and other items were given to the TocH Stockton branch.

Thornton PCW Club
Meetings are held on every second Tuesday at the Cleveleys Community Centre, Blackpool. New members are very welcome to the group. For more information, contact Steve at 5 Carlisle Grove, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 4BY.

Widmore PCW Club
Members meet on the third Wednesday of the month at Bromley Adult Education College. For more details, contact Dorothy Featherstone on 01689 858105. The picture on the left shows a recent club meeting. Watch out for more pictures of the gang at Widmore in the future.

8 Bit Magazine
The magazine went out in style with the last-ever issue in February. Brian Watson has finally decided he wants his "life back again," and he's shut up shop. The last magazine includes all the usual adverts, and an interesting guide to producing columns on the 16 word processor. Brian isn't giving up on 8-bits all together - he reports that Protext will last well into the new millennium.


8BIT
The magazine for users of all computers with an 8-bit heart
A preliminary note from the editor:

6502/z80
A possible replacement multi-format magazine has been launched by Wallis Publishing, with the rather clumsy title of 6502/z80. It promises a regular PCW section, so should be worth a look. A year's subscription (six issues) costs just £12, or it's £3 for a trial copy. Contact: 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby CV22 7HJ. 01788 817473.

Take care!

Adrian Braddy is playing Disc Doctors again in this floppy disc keep-fit class

AMSTRAD users depend on floppy discs more than PC and Mac users, in fact the latest iMacs are sold without a disc drive. This means that we have to be extra careful when looking after our floppies.

The disc is a vulnerable thing, cheaply made, flexible, and so easily corrupted. Yet it is also highly important and may contain data of immeasurable value. Whole novels, treasured letters, financial records, and personal information are just some of the things that you could have on a single disc.

The first rule is, don't use discs in a machine that is playing up. The 3" PCW drive in particular, is notorious for going wrong. If your drive stops reading discs correctly, or makes an unusual noise, the belt probably wants replacing. DO NOT use an important disc in this drive until it has been fixed - rely instead on backups or ne discs.

Replacing drive belts is a simple job that anyone can do at home.

Never switch your PCW on or off whilst there is a disc in one of the drives - this will not damage your machine, but you may lose important data on the disc. Leaving discs in your drives for long periods of time can have the same disastrous effects.

Do not ever take the disc out of the drive while the red drive light shows that it is being accessed, or while the drive is whirring.

Be sure to repeatedly save your work, as a power surge, dip or cut, may switch off your machine unexpectedly. If you are a heavy user, and are concerned, get a mains surge protector, and try to avoid working late at night or during thunder storms.

Use good quality branded floppy discs. These usually have a batch number or country of origin printed on them (it tends to be Japan). Go for a brand name that you recognize. I personally reccommend Imation 3M, Verbatim, or Sony.

Now that 3" discs are no longer manufactured in the Far East, the only source is from an Italian firm which supplies new discs of somewhat dubious quality.

It is not advisable to use these for important data - but if you do, be sure to make several backups. However, secondhand Amsoft, or Maxell discs are probably a safer option.

Whatever type of disc you use, it will have a metal shutter, protecting the magnetic disc inside. That is there for a reason, so don't pull it back and touch the surface of the disc, unless you really need to. A greasy finger can wreck a disc within seconds.

If you can, keep discs in individual cardboard sleeves, or plastic cases, away from dust. And, as a double precaution, keep all your discs in a sturdy disc box.

"Keep discs well away from magnetic fields, given-off by often innocent looking office equipment"

There are many different types available in a wide variety of capacities, and they make a good investment. As well as keeping the discs clean and safe, they will also be tidier and more organized.

Keep discs well away from magnetic fields, given-off by often innocent looking office equipment.

There are magnets hidden everywhere. They're even in telephones and hi-fi speakers. A strong magnetic field will wipe your discs clean.

Avoid extremes of humidity and temperature, and dusty environments are a big "no, no". There are disc-head cleaners available for both 3" and 3.5" drives.

These are essentially everyday discs, only with the usual magnetic disc replaced by a circle of fabric, which is soaked with a little spirit, and inserted in the drive. Opinions are divided as to how wise this practice actually is, but I've tried it and it seemed to work fine.

After you've had a 3" disc in the drive for a long period, lay it flat and let it cool down - the glue used in some of the cheaper discs can melt if the disc gets too hot, and the hub may move out of position.

When you format a new disc for the classic PCWs, reformat an old one, or copy a disc, use DISCKIT (or LocoScript 2, 3 or 4) to verify it afterwards. This checks that the disc is not faulty, and may avoid serious problems later.

Remember to use the write protect tabs on a disc if you are not going to change its contents, especially when copying it.

Use separate discs for LocoScript and CP/M files. LocoScript and CP/M interpret the user groups quite differently and you may lose data, if you mix and match.

Also, do not store your data files on your "start of day" disc if at all possible. They should be write protected and kept separately.

If you use a 16, don't gamble on using DOS formatted discs, without doing a 16 format first - while they seem to work, you may lose some of the data, as the root directory is incorrect.

And remember, all discs wear out eventually - nothing lasts forever, and discs aren't even particularly well made. Use plenty of them, and back up frequently - discs are a lot cheaper than work, effort and time. And data-recovery services are not cheap!

Next time, I'll be highlighting the importance of backing up your discs, and I'll be offering a series of tips that should make data-storage a much safer business.

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For a detailed information sheet and ordering information, call us on 01306 747757. We'll tell you about our price promise too, so you can buy with confidence that the price is right!

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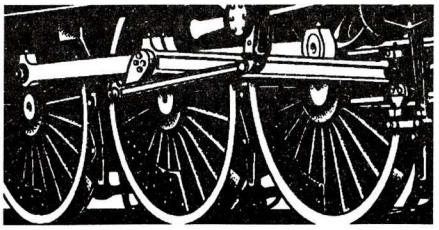
We have a variety of models available, and each comes with a three month exchange warranty.

A standard model including the Amstrad printer costs just £135. And to take advantage of LocoScript 4's great printing features, for £235 we'll supply an upgraded model including LocoScript 4 and a monochrome inkjet printer (or £295 including a colour printer).



LOCOSCRIPT SOFTWARE

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Cover Disc

Here's our guide to the fourth *PCW Today* cover disc - have fun!

WE'VE been putting together cover discs for a year now, but this one has to be our best yet.

Top of the bill is the incredible LocoScript screen saver from John Elliott. Just copy it onto your Start of Day disc and the screen saver will spring into action every time you leave the PCW unattended.

On top of that, we've got more original software than ever before, with a great selection of new software from FW Manders.

There's a couple of fabulous games, a neat fuel consumption calculator, and a graphics designer for BASIC.

Plus there's yet another terrific selection of graphics for MicroDesign3 and LocoScript 4, and a new MicroDesign font.

For basic information about the contents of the cover disc, type **PCWTODAY** at the A: prompt and press **[RETURN].** This accesses what we call the "cover disc server". It is heavy on graphics, so can be quite slow, and many people decide to skip it. It contains program notes and some late news. The former gives details of each individual program and explains what it does.

For instructions on each program, you should access the help file. Each help file has the same name as the program it refers to, only with a .DOC suffix. So, the program EXAMPLE.COM would have a help file called EXAMPLE.DOC.

To view one of these help files, put the cover disc in the drive, type **HELP**, then press **[RETURN].** You will be prompted to "Enter File". Simply do as it asks - choose the document you want to view (eg EXAMPLE.DOC) and type in the full name. Remember to include the .DOC suffix and to get the spelling correct. Next hit **[RETURN]** and the first page of the on-screen manual will appear. Press **[RETURN]** again to read the next page, and so on.

If you don't want to bother with the cumbersome "cover disc server", you can access the text files it includes, by using **HELP** instead. The two text files are called LNEWS.DOC and PNOTES.DOC.

If you prefer, the help files can be accessed from a word processor. They will load directly into Protext or MicroDesign, but they are not LocoScript documents - they are written in ASCII plain text format. LocoScript will read ASCII, but you should consult your manual to see how to do this.

It is advisable to read the help file before trying a program, especially with some of the utilities packages.. Some programs do not come with a help file, either because one was not written, or because the programs are self-explanatory. The latter is the case with most games.

Once you have read the program notes, late news and help files, you will want to try out some of the goodies on the disc. Firstly, from CP/M, type **DIR** and press **[RETURN]**, this will bring up an on-screen directory of all the files on disc.

The files on the disc come in a variety of different formats, and you can tell them apart by their suffix. Here are some of the most important.

.COM - These are the most common program files and will load from CP/M. Just type in the name of the file (forget about the suffix) and press **[RETURN].** For example, try typing **FASTCOPY** and then hitting **[RETURN].**

.BAS - These files are also programs, but they must be run from BASIC. To make things easy, copy BASIC from the CP/M disc onto your cover disc using LocoScript or some other file-copying utility. Once you have done that, type **BASIC** and press **[RETURN].** Once BASIC has loaded up, type in **RUN "FILENAME** and then press **[RETURN],** so for example you might try typing **RUN "DESIGNER** and pressing **[RETURN]** to load that program.

.MDA - These are graphics files and are in MicroDesign3 Area format. This means that they can be used with MD3 or with LocoScript 4. Each file name gives a description of the picture. Remember that to use graphics in LocoScript 4, they must be copied to either the M: drive, or onto the same disc as the document you wish to place them in. Check your manual if you're not sure.

.MDF - These are fonts for use with MicroDesign3. There is usually a number in the name, giving the point size.

.MDS - These files are shades for use with MicroDesign 3. You load them from the GRAPHICS screen.

.DOC - As already mentioned, these are text files, for use with the **HELP** command. They are in ASCII format and can be loaded into a word processor and printed out.

.TXT - These are MicroDesign text files and are loaded from the EDITOR screen of MD3.

There are other files on the disc with different suffixes to those described here. These are files read by other programs. You should not delete them as that may stop another program from working. PCWTODAY.001 for example is a vital part of the cover disc server and you will not be able to run the program without it.

We hope that you enjoy the disc and its many delights. One piece of advice, before using the cover disc, make a back-up copy of it. You don't want to accidentally delete all the files.

COVER DISC PROBLEMS

If you subscribe to the cover disc, you should find your copy inside the magazine, or affixed to the cover. If your disc is missing, please let us know. And if your disc is not working, return it to us and we'll fix the problem.

WE NEED YOUR SOFTWARE

We urgently need good quality software for our cover discs. Any public domain or shareware programs are greatly appreciated

This page isn't big enough for details of everything we do for the PCW

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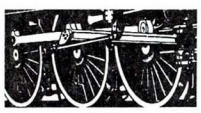

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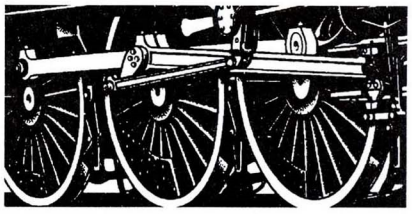

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Q&A

A selection of reader questions. if you can help please let us know. Write your solutions to: Help File, PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL.

I WONDER if you, or any of your readers can answer the questions below, all of which are concerned with the use of the spreadsheet of Mini Office Professional on a PCW 8256.

1. How can a spreadsheet file be erased completely? It seems that the option to 'wipe' a file erases the text but leaves a blank file in its place.

2. Is it possible to copy a file to another disc to make a backup copy for safety?

3. Is it possible in the spreadsheet to print zeros without the slash?

Dr. RC Evans, Cambridge

I HAVE read from more than one source that the PCW (mine is a 9512) can handle more than 64 Kb of RAM with a fairly complicated bank switching scheme. I do not care how complicated it may be, I would like to try to use this extra RAM.

Yet despite some considerable research, I am unable to find any information on how to use it. Is there anyone out there who can help?

I use a large Supercalc2 spreadsheet on a weekly basis, which needs approximately 150k RAM using the SC2 program. I currently overcome the problem by splitting the spreadsheet into 8 files.

It would be nice to know if I would be any better off using extra RAM via bank switching.

Bill Mainman, Lampeter

I HAVE recently installed a Citizen 24 pin ABC colour printer, and tried unsuccessfully to print to it from the Mini Office Spreadsheet. Have you or any readers any suggestions about how I might make this work?

My profile.sub is:

```
setdef m:,*[order = (sub,com) temporary = a:]
DEVICE LST: = CEN
paper f70 p[off] d
office
```

The last line can also read 'sheet' - it makes no difference. I have also changed the 'Printer Type' on the 'Print Spreadsheet' screen to 'Parallel', but the program does not recognise the external printer. I have to use my PCW's original 9 pin printer.

Anthony M Whitehouse, Chelmsford

I AM wondering if you or any of your readers know of a program that would assist me in my work as secretary of a flat green bowls league. I would require it to produce fixture lists and I want to be able to enter match results, print them out, and produce current league tables.

SR Batty, York

I BOUGHT the PcW 16 to list my slides - I am an amateur photographer and am looking for a filing system to cope with this task.

I need a filing system which I can access, then pick out an item with the mouse/keyboard, and transfer it to a screen, folder or whatever. It should be able to print out the items on a sheet which wll then accompany the slides to a prospective buyer.

CR Henderson, Newcastle upon Tyne

CAN anyone tell me how I can transfer cells containing data in one Rocket spreadsheet to another Rocket spreadsheet?

Surely this must be possible. I understand that there are ways of transferring data from SuperCalc and LocoScript to Rocket.

I'd appreciate any advice anyone could give me about this.

SH Coutts, France

I NORMALLY use a Star LC15 printer for output of my PcW 10, when in MicroDesign 3. Although I can buy black ribbons for use on this, I can no longer find a local or national source of single colour ribbons.

Can anyone please tell me of a source of single colour ribbons for this printer. To the best of my knowledge these ribbons are the same as used on the LC10. The ones I am using are marked Star LC24-10 Group 2868FN. These are a standard half inch wide ribbon, so even a source of colour ribbons which I could fit into my present cassettes would be useful.

Ivan Swan, Norwich

I STARTED using PC Line 3.5" DD discs with my PcW 16 and on the advice of a friend, decided to duplicate the discs for each of my subjects. This worked perfectly with the DD discs, so my five college subjects has produced a library of ten discs (five originals and five duplicates).

However, I have tried duplicating MF-2HD discs with absolutely no success. This only became apparent when I bought Account Manager from Creative Technology, and could not duplicate the disc.

To give Creative Technology its due. They could not find any problems but duplicated the disc for me. I have managed to play around with the working copy, and find that if I copy files back to the desktop and then onto another disc, I have two working copies. This is great, but can you tell me why my 16 won't duplicate the HD discs, especially as it does not give me any error messages.

Irene Dunn, Greenock

Pinboard Computers *01462 894410*

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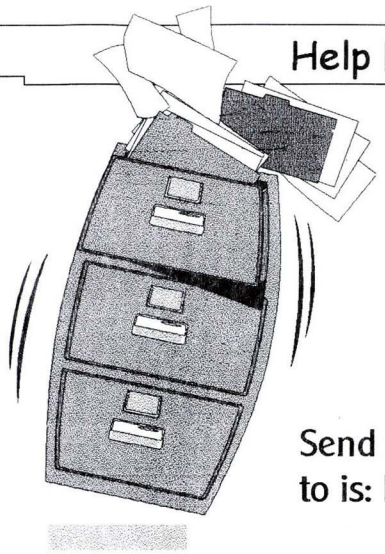

Help File

Send us your solutions, tips and helpful snippets. The address to write to is: Help File, PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough TS5 5EL.

Forget the cabinet

WHY do us 16 users save our documents in the Cabinet Flash ROM and then, later, back up with a floppy disc? Am I missing something?

It would appear that it is standard practice to create a document and file it in the cabinet memory, and in due course, if considered necessary, copy onto a floppy disc.

If the document *is* important, I cannot see the point of not putting it on the floppy disc in the first place.

Should the machine crash when three quarters of the way through compiling a complicated spreadsheet, for example, all the work is lost!

It would have happened to me with an on-going very extensive spreadsheet, had I not put the document onto the disc in the first place.

The Flash ROM memory is far less than that of a disc, and I understand that repeated erasures to a Flash ROM shorten its working life, and floppy discs are only a few pence each. All in all, it is just common sense.

LS Cooper, Altringham

Millennium matters

MASS Labeller may be effected by the Millennium bug. It cannot be used without entering the current day's date.

I rang MASS Software in Norwich, regarding any problems with the millennium, date-wise. Mr Lake, the program's designer, told me to try entering the first day in 2000, and said: "If it doesn't blow up, you're okay."

However, I tried to enter the date and got the message: "INVALID DATE". I then tried using a back-date and it worked fine.

This is a great little program to use, and if you are not concerned as to the day's date, you can trick it by using a back-date and it'll work as usual.

Edward Green, Clitheroe

Copy discs

IN answer to the query by Adam Pickering (PCW Today, Issue 11), to copy files from one disc to another on the 16 is simple.

Just go to File Manager, copy the required files from the disc to the cabinet, then remove the disc, replace it with the disc you want to copy onto, press [Ctrl] [L] to change disc.

Then copy the files from the cabinet to the folder on the new disc. You may then remove the files from the cabinet after checking that the transfer worked okay.

This can take time, but it works.

Ernest Wright, Hassocks

Print error

I READ with interest in this quarter's magazine about a reader who says he is experiencing difficulty with a printing error in MicroDesign 3.

I get this regularly, but I have never had to reboot to get out of it.

All I do is this: Press the [PTR] key to go into printer mode, then press the left cursor key to go direct to the reset position.

Press the [+] key at the left hand side of the spacebar, to engage reset, then right cursor back to On-line and Exit. This allows the printer to carry on.

CC Partlow, Doncaster

Micro memory

REGARDING Joe Billington's problems with MicroDesign (Help File, Issue 11), I suspect that his machine only has 512k.

If this is the case, then the page shown on the MD3 screen won't be full size, and Joe will find it difficult to match the results he wants with the results his lack of RAM forces on him.

It is possible to use Queue printing to move two A5 pages about on an A4 page, altering the gap between the two A5 pages, but doubt if Joe will ever be satisfied with the printed result.

My advice is either to increase the RAM and try again, or print his letters only on A4 pages.

Joe will also discover that altering the 16k to the 32k font allowance will not allow the OLDENG66 font to be loaded, even after blanking the three font slots, unless the RAM is loadd to more than 512k.

For instance, with three blanked font slots on my PcW 10 (512k), and the font allowance set to 32k in Options, the Delphi60 font from cover disc No 3 still wouldn't load, yet the Delphi50 (uppercase only) loaded okay.

To load a large font from my MD3's font library disc, when doing posters, I use the Font and Shade Designer program. After writing all the large lettering needed, I save the page to disc and finish off the poster in MicroDesign.

Rod Shinkfield, Chorley

Queen Anne's -GATE-

Catch up on the PcW 16 gossip

IT'S been quite a few months for Annie, so instead of the usual moans, groans and controversy, I've decided to bring you some of the hot news that wasn't quite hot enough for the news pages.

The biggest and best news is of course the imminent arrival of CP/M for the 16, and the launch of 16 classic PCW programs to work with the new operating system. However, quite a lot else has been going on too.

***

Until recently the world's only 2 Mb PcW 16 was owned by Amstrad programmer Cliff Lawson. Well not any more. Computer wizard, Gareth Morris, has upgraded both his units, and now he's willing to do the same for other users.

Gareth has discovered a supplier of the memory chips used in the 16, and has made a preliminary order of eight chips. The upgrade doubles the size of the cabinet, and would potentially make space for new fonts, were they ever to become available.

The generous electrical expert wil upgrade your PcW 16 for around a tenner. Talk about a bargain!

For more information, contact him at 8x South Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, Essex CM11 2RG, tel 01245 496130.

***

You can get hold of a copy of the latest PcW 16 Rescue Disc (1.12) from Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2RA, tel 01353 777006. Just send him a 1.44MB disc and an SAE and he'll kindly dispatch a copy to you free of charge.

SD MicroSystems is also now distributing Rescue Discs, and the company has actually secured a supply of PcW 16 manuals, which are now on sale complementing the new 16 range.

Contact: Dept 16, PO Box 99, Thetford IP24 1NA, tel 07000 736427.

***

The official Amstrad PcW 16 help line is now completely automated. The line, operated by LocoScript Software, now works on a touch-tone system.

Users are offered a selection of the most common problems, and are asked to select the one matching their own.

A recorded message will then come up with a solution. Apparently there ain't much variety in the problems users are experiencing.Tel 0891 515715. The number is still premium rate so calls cost 50p a minute.

By the way, don't bother ringing Amstrad - they no longer offer PCW technical support over the phone.

***

We understand that Creative Technology is planning to distribute issue three of the PcW 16 magazine pretty soon. A first batch will go out to 500 registered 16 users. Incidentally, the Creative PcW 16 web site has not been updated in over a year.

***

In an advert in *8 Bit* magazine, a chap called Richard is asking for people interested in writing software for the PcW 16 to get in touch. You can give him a ring on 01524 68989 after 6pm, or e-mail him on richard@courtaulds-lingerie.thenet.co.uk

***

Blink and you'd have missed it. A new product for the PcW 16 was launched last year, and none of the PCW press picked up on it. An enthusiastic and talented 16 user, Don Moody, has created a "Desktop Publishing" disc for the 16.

For just £8, you can get a disc packed with templates and tutorials that will enable you to produce columns with mastheads, create a database, print labels, and print in draft quality. It's well worth the few quid Don's asking. Contact: 28 Rectory Road, Southport, Merseyside PR9 7PU.

***

AND FINALLY We've heard rumours that a programmer is working on new fonts for the 16. Is it true, and if it is, would they sell? Who knows.

***

One slightly more plausible piece of gossip doing the rounds is that there's a new version of BASIC being worked on for the machine. We know that there were two such projects well underway a year ago, but they were scrapped.

A neat implementation of the traditional programming language would be most welcome.

It may be that this is the same program as the one described in the news pages, being written by Rob Buckley. But despite some frantic investigations, we failed to trace Rob before the deadline. We hope to have more next time.

Sort your 'leccy bills with LocoMail

Anthony Dimond uses the programming power of LocoMail to sort his home finances

IN THE box is a LocoMail listing which you can use to calculate your domestic electricity costs - it will even check your electricity bill.

When you have keyed it in, saved it as something like ELECTRIC.FIL and checked carefully for errors, place the cursor over the file, press f (for Fill) and [ENTER].

Answer the questions put to you by the program, for example enter one or two digits for the date, followed by a slash, then one or two digits for the month.

The program will look after the year. The next question asks for the previous reading on your electricity meter, then the present reading. Enter these in turn, following each by [ENTER].

Now you are asked for the days involved more or less than 90 - if it is less than 90 precede the number by a minus sign from the TOP row of your keyboard. 89 days would require you to enter -1, that is one day less than 90. Generally the period (a quarter) will be more than 90 days. The number of days is on my bills and I expect it is on yours too. That's it, sit back and watch the result appear on screen.

Let's see how it works.

The first line begins with a (+Mail) code to tell your computer this is written in the LocoMail language. It goes on to say that y (for year, would you guess?) ="/99".

This has the effect that every time the program comes across y in the LocoMail program context it treats it as /99. Next the program says that t=" ", so when it comes across t in the LocoMail context it treats it as a tab. sp=" " or a space, and pd="£ " which is a pound sign.

```
(+Mail)y="/99":t="        ":sp=" ":pd="£ "
date=?;What is today's date dd/mm?
date=date&y
us=0
ds=90
ps=?#;What was the previous reading?
pt=?#;What is the present reading?
days=?#;How many days more or less(-) than 90?
ds=[ds+days]
us=[pt-ps]
uc=.0612
elec=[us*uc|2!]
ch=[ds*.1210|2!]
sub=[elec+ch]
rt=.05
vat=[sub*rt|2!]
p=[sub+vat](-Mail)
     Meter Readings  Units  Electric
Date  Previous Present  used  Charge
(+Mail)date:t:ps:t:pt:t:us:t:pd:elec(-Mail)

 Standing Charge for (+Mail)ds:sp(-Mail)days      (+Mail)pd:ch(-Mail)
                  Sub-total      (+Wordul)(+Mail)pd:sub(-Mail)(-UL)
                        VAT      (+Mail)pd:vat(-Mail)
                Payment due      (+Wordul)(+Mail)pd:p(-Mail)(-UL)
```

Why do I say "in the LocoMail context? Because during the listing LocoMail is sometimes switched on and sometimes switched off.

Next the program asks you for a date - date=? - and that question is followed in a more intelligible form with guidance about how to enter the date by entering one or two digits for the day followed by a slash and one or two more digits for the month.

Then the third line - date=date&y - takes the day and month you have just entered and adds them to y, which you may remember equals /99.

If you have any experience writing Basic listings you will recognize the next few lines set some variables for later use in the program. us (units) equal zero, and ds (days) equal 90 which is, give or take one or two days, the number of days in a quarter.

You will be asked to enter how many extra (or fewer) days than 90. Lines 6, 7, 8 and 9 ask you more questions.

What was the previous (ps) meter reading, the present (pt) reading and how many days more or less than 90 in the quarter.

These details appear on your bill, well they do on mine, or you could work them out from a calendar or diary, and by reading the meter and looking on your old bill for the previous meter reading.

If the period was for less than 90 days don't forget to put a minus sign before the days to be subtracted from 90.

That's it! You've finished!

The program takes over, adding the days

to 90, calculating the us (units) by subtracting the ps (previous) from the pt (present), then multiplying the units by uc (unit charge) which in this listing is .0612 or £ 0.0612 or six whole pence and twelve hundredths of a penny!

Don't worry about it, the machine deals with the arithmetic, where it says elec (electricity charge) equals units times unit charge rounded to two places of decimals - [us*uc|2!].

The square brackets tell the program arithmetic is necessary, the asterisk says multiply, the upright bar and the 2 require the result to be rounded off to two places of decimals, and the exclamation ! mark says to truncate the result to two decimal places which is not the same as rounding off.

This is the correct method for this calculation, as it is for VAT calculations. It is the nearest penny BELOW any decimal places, NOT the next penny if, say, the result was £ 31.345. This must be charged as £ 31.34.

I repeat, don't worry about it, the program deals with this correctly.

There is a possibility that your electricity supplier charges you a different price from my example of .0612p for each unit, and indeed for each day of the standing charge.

If so you can find this from a bill. Likewise with the standing charge which is the next calculation.

If your charges are different CHANGE MY PROGRAM! After you have a working copy of the version above, make a new copy with a different file name, and change this copy.

Then you can fall back on your original if you make a mistake.

The serious risk here is that when you change details you may change something by mistake, and you can guard against this danger by using F8 to switch on Codes, Spaces, and things like Carriage Returns and Tabs.

If you can see them on screen it is less likely you will erase them by mistake, but you can always go back to your original version.

The next calculation is to find the standing charge - ch - which is the number of days multiplied by £ 0.1210 or [ds*.1210|2!] Do you recognize that calculation?

I think you could learn a lot by trying to follow the rest of the program in your own time.

Sub is a sub-total made up of the charge for electricity added to the standing charge. rt is the rate of VAT to be charged on the cost of the electricity.

The VAT is added to the sub-total to find the p or payment due.

Meter Readings			Units	Electric
Date	Previous	Present	used	Charge
31/3/99	1234	1567	333	£ 20.37
Standing Charge for 91 days				£ 11.01
Subtotal				£ 31.38
VAT				£ 1.56
Payment due				£ 32.94

From this point on LocoMail is switched on and off as necessary to allow for headings to be printed above, or to one side, of the various money amounts, with the pound sign being inserted when the program finds the variable pd.

Remember that from the first line of the program? Don't trust me, have a look now.

That's about it, except that I have set up a Layout with the left-hand margin at 10, simple tabs at 19, 28 and 36 and a decimal tab at 46, so that the result is nicely lined up down the page.

A very important point. Every line of the LocoMail listing ends with a carriage return. If you leave any of them out, the listing may not work correctly.

In lines 6, 7 and 8 of the LocoMail listing there is a hash sign alongside the question mark near the start of each of these lines.

The question mark requires you to enter information, and the hash sign ensures that you enter a number, nothing else will be accepted.

And for real beginners - stop whining all you 'experts' sitting in the back row! We were all beginners once. Anyway, how do you enter these 'Codes'?

Look at your keyboard, near the space bar you will find two keys with boxed plus and minus signs on them, one of each.

If you press one of these keys after a brief delay a list of Codes will appear down the side of your screen, allowing you to choose which you want to use. Using the special plus key turns a Code on. Use the minus key to turn them off.

You can speed-up this process by pressing the plus or minus key followed immediately by appropriate letter keys. Plus and U turns on underlining. Minus and U turns off underlining.

For this LocoMail listing you will need to use Plus and m (it doesn't have to be upper-case) to turn LocoMail on, and Minus and m to turn it off. Plus w and minus u turns word-underline on and off.

I think they are the only codes I have used in this listing.

And, just in case, none of this will work unless you have LocoMail on your start-of-day disc, in which case the top three lines of your opening screen will include (second line near the right-hand edge) F=Fill and M=Merge. These are the startup codes for LocoMail actions.

As a test-run I used 31/3 for the date, 1234 for the previous meter reading, 1567 for the present meter reading, and 1 day for the standing charge period, and the following results appeared.

If you do this test-run it will assure you everything is correct, then you can try something more convincing by entering details from an old bill.

Come to Crawley

Esther Welch, organiser of the Crawley PCW Day, previews this year's biggest event

THE PCW is famed for the interaction between users, with numerous clubs dotted around the world. Now, for the first time, there is to be a national day, devoted entirely to the PCW - and you're invited.

This will probably be the greatest gathering of PCW expertise since Alan Sugar first dreamed of building a word processor every family could afford. Whatever your problem - technical, software, artistic - there will be someone able to advise and help.

WHO'LL BE THERE?

Adrian Braddy, editor of *PCWToday*, and well known for his contacts with the great and famous in the PCW world now wants to meet you, his readers, to hear your views on all aspects of the current PCW scene.

Brian Watson is coming to Crawley in preference to a trip to India! So make his visit worth while by picking his brains on Protext and the late, but great, *8Bit*.

Ian Studley will be in Room C with some practical low cost suggestions helping you to keep your PCW in working order. There will be various PCW bits in bits. This is your chance to poke about without damaging your own! Provided you have ordered and paid in advance you will be able to collect a re-belted, tested and cleaned PCW or printer.

WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

Many of us buy PCWs for word processing and subsequently go on to write articles and fiction. **John Craggs**, formerly a regular contributor to *PCW Plus*, and now occasional *PCW Today* columnist, believes that writers should be paid for their work and has produced 'Writer's Desk' for all PCWs. He looks forward to meeting you.

CREATING A CLUB MAGAZINE

The British Amstrad PCW Club, producers of the excellent quarterly *The Disc Drive*, will be on hand to advise how to tackle this important tool in communicating with club members. The editor, **Mike Elliston**, wants to hear your views on what aspects of the PCW you would like covered in future issues.

LOCOSCRIPT 4

Dorothy Featherstone will be demonstrating the latest refinements in LocoScript. Dorothy is an experienced tutor, running a regular adult workshop in Bromley. Copies of her latest book 'A basic tutorial in LocoScript 4 with assignments and lots of things to do' will be on sale. Unfortunately Dorothy has to leave at 2 p.m., so get there early.

MICRODESIGN IN ACTION

The MicroDesign International User Group team from the Isle of Wight, led by **Doug Cox**, will be demonstrating all aspects of the DTP program.

ROLLING DISPLAY

The Crawley PCW Club will have a splendid rolling display throughout the day highlighting personalities and events in addition to details of the club's programme and membership information.

THE PcW 16

All the programs currently available should be up and running, and **John Elliott** will be demonstrating links between the 16, other PCWs and PCs. He may well be showing-off his new version of CP/M on the 16. He may also be demonstrating MicroDesign 3 working on a PC, with his famous Joyce emulator. As John is constantly working on new ideas, as well as perfecting earlier ones, it is difficult to be precise about exactly what will be happening in Hall D.

BRING FORMATTED DISCS

Make sure you have a supply of these essential items. The British PCW Club will be offering free copies of any item from their extensive collection of PD programs. MDIUG is offering free copies of clip art discs.

Commercial firms supporting the PCW have been invited to demonstrate and sell their products but answers are still awaited as we go to press. Who knows what goodies they will offer on the day?

ADMISSION

Because of a need to control the numbers (health and safety etc.) admission will be by prepaid ticket only, £5 from John Moon, 25 Crawford Gardens, Horsham RH13 5AZ after Easter. Make your cheque payable to 'Crawley PCW Club' and enclose an A5 stamped addressed envelope.

THE VENUE

The Christ Church at Three Bridges, Crawley, a modern well equipped building. The whole complex has been booked (except the actual church). Light refreshments will be available in Hall A throughout the day. You are welcome to bring your own packed lunch, but for those requiring more robust fare the nearby 'Snooty Fox' offers a wide menu.

GETTING THERE

By car leave the M23 at Junction 10, head for Crawley, at the first roundabout turn left and follow the signs to Three Bridges station. Parking at the station is "free" on Saturdays. Or let the train take the strain. There are frequent trains from Victoria or Brighton with good connections to other lines. The ThamesLink service from Bedford crosses London without any need to change.

On the day parking at the church will be restricted to 'workers' and stall holders. The hall is wheelchair accessible with a disabled person's toilet. Wheelchair users may bring an attendant free of charge. The disabled will be able to park adjacent to the hall but must reserve a place in advance.

I hope that you will be able to come, and I look forward to seeing you in May.

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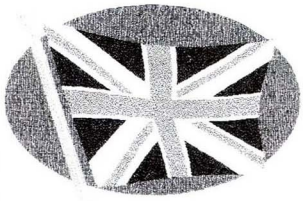


The Great British Word Processor

Protext in its CP/M version is the fastest and most complete word processor on the Amstrad PCW. On one disc, the program features include:

- Logical Keystrokes
- "Plain English" commands
- A free tutor file on disc
- Fast text handling
- Network, hard disc, MicroDesign and LocoScript compatability
- Mail-merging and spell-checking included *at no extra cost*
- Free printer support for *virtually any* printer. You can use your printer's built-in fonts or colour capability without any additional expense
- Free user support is included in the purchase price, and the Protext helpline operates (at normal 'phone rates during evenings and weekends
- Protext handles printing in columns with ease
- Simply configured for more advanced purposes
- Protext can easily produce ASCII files to let you transfer between computers, either by software or for e-mail purposes
- The Free Protext User's Club is available to all Protext users for the open exchange of tips, templates and information

Protext v2.23 has had 12 years of continuous development. Despite being highly developed, above all, it is very fast and the user friendly 'look and feel' of the program has been maintained throughout its development. Because of Protext's wide range of useful features, it is impossible to cover everything here, but further information is available if you send an A4 SAE to Brian Watson at Protext Software, *Harrowden*, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambridgeshire CB6 2RA. Alternatively, you can phone 01353 777006 (from 7-9pm weekdays, or any time at weekends)

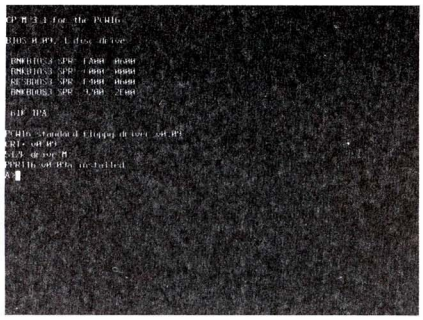
CP/M Protext, the one-disc word processing solution, costs just £25. It is available from the above address or from ComSoft, 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW. Orders may be placed by phone on 0141 5544735, qoting your credit card details. Please state the computer model and your drive A: size when ordering.

CP/M for the 16

At long last the PcW 16 will run classic PCW programs. Here's our exclusive preview

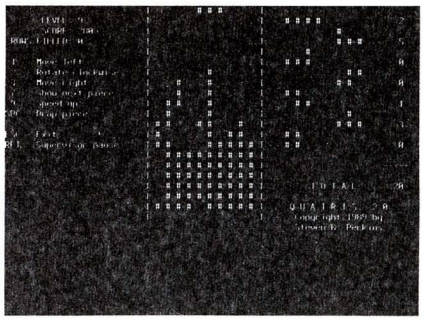
AFTER years of rumour and speculation, the much wished-for CP/M clone for the 16 has finally arrived.

Although it has not been released yet, PCW Today, took an exclusive peek at pre-release version 0.09. As we go to press, beta testers are checking out version 0.99, which means that the finished product is imminent. In fact, by the time you read this, it may even have been launched already.



We held our deadline back for as long as possible, but sadly the software was not ready when we went to press.

The CP/M clone, as it is now being widely dubbed, is officially called CP/M 3.1 for the PcW 16.



It will be available free of charge over the Internet, but downloading it is tricky, and you'll need a PC, so most people will probably choose to pay for their copy, and get it from suppliers such as SD MicroSystems.

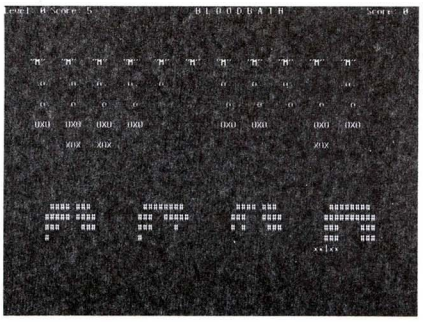
Whichever option you take, you'll end up with two discs. The first is called the "Loader", and the second is "Start up".

To run the software is easy. Place the loader disc in your drive and select "Run external program" from the Tasks menu. Click on "disc", and you should see the name of the CP/M program appear at the top of the box. Select that and within a couple of seconds, you will be prompted to insert disc two - your start up disc.

This disc contains all the CP/M data, so it takes a little longer to load. The screen will go black, and some text scrolls down the screen.

Finally you will be faced with the famous A> prompt that all classic PCW users know so well. Next to it is a flashing square cursor.

From here you can load numerous pieces of classic PCW software, although much of it will need to be tweaked, fine tuned, or converted.



BASIC, seems to be an exception, and all those budding programmers will soon be able to write great new 16 software using Mallard, which is available from LocoScript or SD MicroSystems.

We messed around and got that old classic game Quatris, from our first cover disc, to work fine. Because the processor is faster, so was the game, but not too fast. We managed a pretty mean score.

Some other programs we tried crashed the computer, others resulted in bizarre text error messages. It is clear that this is far from being a prefect copy of the original CP/M. The differences between the PCWs are just too great.

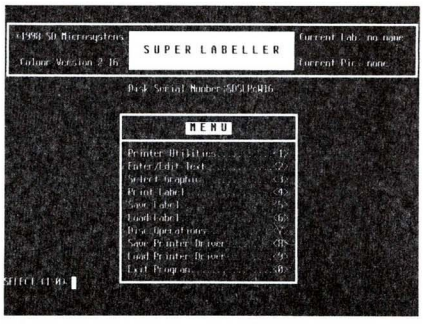
As a rule, programs with anything more than basic graphics will crash. This is because the PcW 16 screen is completely different to the classic PCW screen, with its antiquated 90 column display.

Who knows, John Elliott may yet find out a way to get over this fairly huge hurdle, but for now, we've still got plenty of programs that work fine.

SD MicroSystems has launched an incredible 16 titles to work with the new version of CP/M. We tried out Super Labeller, which will allow you to actually print graphics in colour on an Epson, Canon, or dot matrix printer. Sadly if you've got a Hewlett Packard, your printer is not supported.

The program works exactly as it does on the classic series, although you can tell that some reprogramming has been done, because keys, unique to the 16 have replaced those unique to the classics. Everything is a lot slicker, because the machine is running at 16 and not 4 MHz.

We also had a look at the company's budget games selection, which includes a wide variety of simple amusements. The graphics aren't up to much, but you'll find that with classics such as space invaders, tennis, draughts and pac-man, it doesn't really matter - they're still as addictive as ever.



CP/M software operating under this clone will never be as pretty, or as easy to use as software written specifically for the 16. But to be honest, at this stage, who re-

ally cares? We now have 16 commercial packages available, and many more are sure to follow. And who knows what improvements John Elliott will make in the future.

The version we looked at was understandably bugged. You sometimes have to press [RETURN] more than once, or retype a filename, as the program doesn't always recognise them first time. This may already have been sorted out, and if it hasn't, I assume it will be before long.

Strangely, although CP/M seems to work outside of the Rosanne operating system, every now and then, error messages spring up in the familiar 16 dialogue boxes. However, for the rest of the time, what's on screen looks more like a classic PCW display than the modern 16 desktop.

The mono white text on black background is the same, although it is much sharper and clearer than before. Most of the CP/M add-ons are missing, as they are copyright, so this clone has the feel of a slim, trimmed down version of the classic.

You can crash CP/M, if you try and run something it can't cope with, but satisfyingly, a CP/M crash doesn't seem to injure the 16 as much as a Rosanne crash would. We've not yet had to reload the operating system after a CP/M error.

And if you stick to using software that has been checked on a 16 - such as the SD MicroSystems range - as far as we can gather, the software will NEVER crash.

The CP/M clone was everything we expected, and it is a quite remarkable achievement. People used to the friendly easy to use built-in software, may find CP/M a bit of a culture shock, but it's really not that difficult.

This step back in time, is in reality a step forward into the future for the 16. It should re-ignite the market, and will certainly bring the 16 closer to the rest of the PCW family. Three cheers for John Elliott!

The beginners guide to CP/M

WHEN the PCW was first launched back in 1985, it was bundled with LocoScript, CP/M and Mallard BASIC. Now for the first time, the last two of these are available for the PcW 16 too.

CP/M is an operating system. It is a bit like DOS on the PC, which you may have heard of. The PcW 16 already has an operating system, called Rosanne. An operating system acts as an interface, allowing you to load other programs and perform housekeeping tasks.

Programs can be written specially for the Rosanne operating system, and some already have been. But as it is a new and relatively obscure program, there is little knowledge of it, and few programmers see it as commercially worth their while to write software for it.

However CP/M is established, and there is already a lot of software available for it. Much of the classic PCW software will work on the PcW 16 version of CP/M, with only minor changes needed. This means that companies are far keener to support it.

Unlike the Rosanne operating system, which has been designed to look good, CP/M is text based, and the mouse cannot be used.

A directory or list of all the files on a CP/M disc can be listed by typing DIR and [ENTER]. You load a CP/M program by typing its name, and then pressing [RETURN].

Some programs however, need BASIC to be loaded before they will run. Place the disc which contains the BASIC program in the drive and type BASIC, [ENTER]. Once it has loaded, type RUN "FILENAME" and then press [ENTER]. Type the name of the file within the quote marks.

To return to CP/M from BASIC, type SYSTEM then press [RETURN].

To leave CP/M and return to the Rosanne desktop, type DESK [RETURN]. Or you can switch off as normal.

PCW Today is now on the Net! Why not join the 6,500+ people who have already visited our site at:
http://members.tripod.com/~pcwtoday

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✳STAR LETTER✳

I DO not think that I am the oldest subscriber, but at 88 must be somewhere near the top!

I did not start with word processing until I was already 80, purchasing an Amstrad 8256, which I have progressively upgraded, adding an extra 256k RAM internally, and another 256k externally.

I have worked my way up from LocoScript 1 via 2 and 3 to v4.10, plus LocoFile, Mail, Spell and lots of fonts, fitting a Silicon City 3.5" drive and finally adding a Cirtech Gem 40 Hard Drive. Somewhere in between I changed from the basic printer, a most ingenious piece of engineering, to an Epson LQ-100.

Although I had not previously had a computer, I had been very much involved at the beginning of the war with the design and actual building of the famous BOMBE machines which showed the most likely drum settings of the ENIGMA cipher and decipher machines at Bletchley Park.

At the time I was Chief Production Engineer at the British Tabulating Machine Company at Letchworth - makers of Hollerith punched card accounting machines - the most advanced system back then.

A team of senior engineers was selected, sworn to secrecy and set to work, successfully producing an early Mark I machine, which was later much upgraded.

Although I was not involved, the work being done by the GPO Telephone Research Laboratory led to the first electronic computer in the world. Our machines were actually computers, but not electronic with valves, but electro-mechanical with relays. What a long time ago it seems now.
G.R. Blakely, North Ferriby

PCW Today: *What a pleasure to hear from someone involved in computers at the very beginning. I wonder if you ever imagined that they would grow to be as powerful as they are today.*

Oh, De-bugger!

I DON'T know whether anyone is still involved, or even interested in de-bugging the 16, but if they are, I have seven pages of detailed notes relating to the five crashes and 23 lock-ups I have experienced on my two 16s in just six months - an average of one "cursing incident" every six days.

The first machine was new, the second came from Mastercare, which I later found to be "Reconditioned/Tested OK". IT WASN'T! - it was worse than the first.

I am now on my third '16 (another new one) which so far - fingers crossed - has performed perfectly for 12 days!

If anyone is interested, just ring me on 01704 225796 for a free copy.
Don Moody, Southport

PCW Today: *There are still serious problems with Rosanne, yet Amstrad say it is "stable" - judging by letters like yours, it is far from stable!*

PcW 16 Plea

COULD I make a plea for lots more articles, or brief tips, about the PcW 16, which I am sure many people like myself would find priceless.

For example, I struggled and got really frustrated when the spreadsheet would not add up at all, or gave wrong answers. All because the manual said, and showed, a £ sign in a numerical cell is quite acceptable.

There is a lot of misleading information in the manual - let's face it - it's very badly written. Everyone buying this really excellent PcW can look forward to a lot of frustration (unless they happen to be well-versed in these matters, and even then they would have to do a lot of experimenting).

Your article in issue 11 - '16 Hot Keys - seems to me to be just what is needed. Let's have more!

No one would no from the manual there are 26 pages of Questions & Answers on the Rescue Disc and would be overjoyed - as I was - to discover them, and be told how to access them.

So here's to an on-going education of the likes of your contributor in issue 11, and myself (who always added: "And I would not know what to use a computer for if you gave me one").

And there is a vast number of similar folk beginning to realise that typewriters are getting archaic now that a PcW 16 can be had for a good deal less than an average typewriter.

I have a lot to learn yet; don't understand what CP/M is or does yet!
D.S. Cooper, Altringham

PCW Today: *Our coverage of the 16 will increase, as the user-base grows, so watch this space. We have plenty of ideas to expand coverage of the entire range. Incidentally, we are always on the look-out for articles about the PcW 16!*

As for CP/M, read our cover feature on page 22.

Guide at your Side

MAY I say how relieved I was to discover your magazine a year or so ago, having been an avid reader of PCW Plus, 8000 Plus, Amstrad PCW and LocoScript User magazines over the last decade.

I would not be without a dedicated magazine to update me on the latest developments in 8 bit hard/software, and to bring me the latest tips and news on the PCW front.

I have been a PCW addict for many years now, and despite having a PC with Windows 3.1, I much prefer to use the Amstrad PCW 8512, for all my correspondence, accounts, databases and route-planing. I have been lucky enough to have been given plenty of redundant PCW equipment by other users who have moved to PCs. They have perhaps later regretted it when their machines have crashed or they have found themselves spending vast sums to keep up with the latest technology.

To my mind, one of the great advantages of the PCW is its simplicity and reliability, one can type one's correspondence with ease and considerable style using LocoScript 4, without having to send time playing with an awkward mouse to make adjustments and carry out simple functions as in Windows.

I also find it a great relief to be able to see all my files in the Disc Management screen and know they have not disappeared, or been incorrectly filed.

I also find that simple accounts can be done very professionally with the PCW and as treasurer of various funds over a number of years, I would be lost without my accounts packages. It is invaluable for demonstrating to my wife the state of our funds, and if one is dealing with the tax man, one can print out separate returns showing individual income and expenditure for both myself and my wife from our joint personal accounts file.

Lastly, some of the older readers may remember the excellent wall charts entitled "The Guide At Your Side", which were so useful for working out the LocoScript functions associated with the various screens.

The last edition that I have got of these guides is the LocoScript 2 edition published by 8000 Plus many years ago now, it also had five different keyboard set-ups with lost of different symbols on them for use with different languages etc. So what about it *PCW Today*, let's have a "Guide At Your Side" fold out for LocoScript 4.

R.A.H. Hoghton, Blandford

PCW Today: *We'll give it some thought - a quick reference guide for LocoScript 4 is a very good idea.*

Magic Memories

I THINK *PCW Today* is a project to be admired. Myself and plenty of others wish you all a successful and eventful 1999, and in many years to come.

I am loyal to the original LocoScript series, so please don't waste space on alternative subjects like Protext or PCs.

We think of such subjects as blasphemous. Space could be better used!

As to who owns Amstrad's PCW business and what is being done with it? I should love to know.

I am 82 in May and bought my first computer on impulse, from an agent in Chorley, complete with monitor, daisy wheel printer and keyboard for under £600. That was in 1989 when I was 71.

Why? I felt out of it when a few members of the sailing club kept on and on about their Sinclair Z80s.

I knew nothing about computers. After talking to the sales person at the computer shop I felt I would be "one up" with my new Amstrad!

I had already initiated a club magazine some years previously, which I produced quarterly, hand written, my wife bashing it out on her manual typewriter. So the Amstrad took over.

I purchased an Amstrad LQ2000 DM printer and a desktop publishing program called PrintMaster, so the Z80s were suitably mollified! I now keep the membership records on LocoFile and LocoMail.

I remember asking in a big store's computer department if my Amstrad could be used as a calculator.

Also, we don't think so they said, and I was taken to the electronic hand-held calculator department.

I didn't fall for that and later found a good calculator program in "Hints & Tips".

I did make several contributions to PCW Plus and other PCW magazines, and actually was awarded a drinking mug for one item.

However, enough of reminiscence, it's all history now.

Vincent S Evans, Parbold

PCW Today: *If you've got any PCW reminiscences, we'd love to hear them. Send them in to the usual address.*

We might even manage a drinking mug!

Sad News

RECENTLY I was looking for a means to place my Family History writings into a suitable program that would enable me to print out various charts of family relationships.

So I turned to issue 11 of *PCW Today,* and found on page 41 an advertisement for RootsPCW93. I rang the telephone number concerned, and a woman answered. She told me that the man who had provided this program had died recently and so there would be no further provision or support for it.

I think that your readers need to be alerted to this sad situation. How precarious programs are which depend wholly on the inventiveness and interest of their creators! The producer of GenTree II seems also to have given up responsibility, but no doubt because it has been available for a long time, LocoScript Software are now selling it themselves. Oddly they call it a 'new, more powerful program'.

Rev David. F. Hinson, Harlington

PCW Today: *Thanks for that David. It is, unfortunately one of the features of PCW software that it is usually written and marketed by one single person. It does leave the market in a fragile state. You can read about the sad death of Wilf Ford elsewhere in the magazine.*

Check mate

Rod Shinkfield presents this unique guide to playing chess with MicroDesign 3

BELIEVE it or not, MicroDesign can be used to play a very good game of chess. Follow the guidelines below, and you could be the next grand master!

If you subscribe to *PCW Today* Cover Discs, then all the hard work has been done for you. Read the instructions given below, then load PLAYGAME.CUT and have ago. Other MD3 files will hopefully explain things should you become stumped.

Creating the chess board:

Set the MicroDesign Graphics screen to 1:1 view-scale, press the [R] key to put the frame of a rectangular shape on the screen. Use the spacebar and cursor keys to alter the shape until the readout shown lower right of screen reads W: 5.5 H: 6.0. This should give the shape a square-like appearance. Press [ENTER] to set the square.

Press the [UNIT] key to reveal the block operation menu (BLOCK OPS) on the extra keys panel shown on the right of the screen. If the cursor keys haven't been touched since setting the square, the block operation frame should still be W: 5.5 H: 6.0 and exactly match the square. Press [1] to store the square under the number one key. The store operation can only be carried out in 1:1 view-scale.

Press [1] to recall the stored square, and then press the right cursor key (the cursor is in the centre of the square), to move a copy of the first square towards the right. Join the second square to the first square and press [ENTER] to set it. You must ensure that the three vertical lines of the two joined squares are of equal thickness. If the middle line doesn't look right, press the [WORD] key to undo the last operation. Use the cursor keys to nudge the second square until all three vertical lines are equal. Then press [ENTER] to re-set the second square. You now have a horizontal row of two squares.

Press [1] again, and then press the right cursor key as before, to move square number three towards the right. Again, you must ensure that all vertical lines are of equal thickness before moving on. A line that looks bold compared to the others is not in the exact position, and will need undoing by pressing the [WORD] key and nudging it with the cursor keys before pressing [ENTER] to set the latest square. It is important that all vertical lines are of equal thickness. You can use ZOOM to check that this is so, but, remember, once you use ZOOM you cannot later use [WORD] to undo the last block operation.

Add a forth square to the row, then stretch the block operations frame to match exactly the outline of the four squares and store them under the [1] key. Press [1] and use the right cursor key to move a copy towards the right, which will then leave you with a horizontal row of eight squares. Copy all eight squares and store them under the [1] key.

Press [1] and, this time, move a copy of the horizontal row of eight squares upwards. You must now ensure that the second row of eight squares join the first row exactly, and that the joining line between the first and second horizontal rows is equal in thickness to the other horizontal lines.

Copy the two rows by storing them using the [1] key, and move a copy of the two rows upwards until you have a block of eight squares horizontally and four rows vertically, giving you a total of 32 squares. In other words, you should now have half a blank chess board on the screen. Before you go any further, it is best to now shade in alternate squares and make your half board look more chess board-like.

Put the cursor in the first square in the bottom left-hand corner of your half board. Press [RELAY] to reveal the choice of shades. Chose a very fine grey shade which doesn't show the pixels and the spaces between the pixels too clearly. With the shade chosen, press the [F] key and [ENTER] to flood the first square. Don't flood with black or you won't be able to see the black chess pieces later! The left-hand corner square on a chess board should always be shaded (usually black on a real chess board). Move the cursor towards the right to the next but one square and flood this square also. Keep alternately flooding squares until you have a checked patterned half chess board.

Now copy the half board and store it under [1], a store operation you have now done several times. Move a copy upwards and join both halves together (ensure the join is equal in thickness). You should now have a full chess board of 64 alternately shaded squares. Now save the chess board as BOARD.CUT (and back it up on another disc for safety).

Save an empty chess board for setting up chess problems, when only a few chess pieces are needed on the board.

Creating the chess pieces:

You must now create the chess pieces by using Microdesign shapes, line and flood operations. The base of the Pawn was made from a small oval cut in half horizontally and a base line drawn in. Other small oval shapes formed the body and head of the Pawn. Then a finished White Pawn, which was made small enough to fit inside a chess board square, was saved as W-PAWN.CUT. A copy of the White Pawn was then flooded in black and the black pawn was saved as B-PAWN.CUT.

The other pieces: King, Queen, Bishop, Knight and Rook, were also created in a similar fashion to the Pawn. Each piece was first saved as W-KING.CUT, W-QUEEN.CUT, etc. and another copy was then flooded in black and saved as B-KING.CUT, B-QUEEN.CUT, and so on. Only one un-flooded example of each piece need be made, but both a black and white version must be saved as separate cut files.

On a copy of BOARD.CUT, set Opaque

on the Extra Keys menu, and then put the pieces onto their normal starting positions by loading the cut files. For instance, the B-PAWN.CUT will need loading on to the chess board eight times - there being eight Black Pawns in a chess set. The White King, on the other hand, is only loaded once.

You will have no problem with the white squares, but loading onto a shaded square will also turn the shaded square white. In which case, flood the space around the chess piece and so re-shade the square. If you can't flood the square in one operation, then reduce the size of the cut file slightly until you can.

So load a chess piece file once and flood the square. If it doesn't flood in one operation, slightly reduce the size of the piece and try flooding again. If the square floods in one operation this time, re-save the piece's cut file and use this file for future loading of the chess piece.

Also, if you have selected Transparent instead of Opaque, the square will turn black instead of being shaded. So for best results select Opaque. Once every piece is in position, save the board as PLAYGAME.CUT.

Play a game:

First boot into MicroDesign and load PLAYGAME.CUT on the Graphics 1:1 view-scale. Press [RELAY] and select the same shade used in originally shading the chess board squares, for you will need to re-flood squares as the game is played. Also, select Opaque in the Extra Keys Flood menu, and, finally, press the [UNIT] key for the Block Operation menu. Use the spacebar and cursor keys to re-size the block operation frame to W: 5.0 H: 5.6, which should give a snug fit inside a chess board square, which is W: 5.5 H: 6.0. These measurements, which are millimetres, should ensure the contents of a square will be neatly erased without touching the lines forming the square. If this is not so, on your set up you will have to make adjustments to create a snug fit on your chess board.

Example moves:

* To move a Knight on a white square to a black square: In the example of a Knight's move shown in MOVE-KT1.CUT, blocks 1, 2 and 3. On square "a" there is a White Knight which we want to move to square "b". Use the Block operation frame, which should have been set to fit inside a square before a game is started. Copy the White Knight in square "a", and load a copy of the White Knight into square "b" and press [ENTER], which will turn the square to white. Move the cursor slightly outside the White Knight, but stay inside the square, and then flood the square. This will leave the White Knight standing on a shaded square.

To move a Knight on a black square to a white square: In MOVE-KT2.CUT, blocks 1, 2 and 3, the White Knight standing on a shaded square "a" needs to move to the white square "b". If we simply copy square "a" and load it into square "b", we will also load the shaded background. In this case, we load W-KNIGHT.CUT from the disc into square "b", and then use erase to clear out square "a" and re-flood it to leave an empty shaded square.

Pawn moved forward: In MOVE-P.CUT, blocks 1, 2 and 3, the QBP (Queen Bishop's Pawn) is moved two squares forward, to QB4. In this example, because it's a move from a white square to another white square, it is a simple copy and load operation.

In the case of the QP (Queen's Pawn), the QP is moved forward one square and from a shaded square to a white square. As in the Knight move from a shaded square to a white square, you'll load W-PAWN.CUT into Q3 first, then erase the contents of Q2, before re-flooding the emptied square.

If you erase a chess piece and re-shade the square first, it could be difficult to remember what chess piece you need to reload. So load a piece into the new square first, before erasing the piece from the old square.

Chess Notation:

King K	stands on rank 1
Queen Q	ditto
Rook R	ditto
Bishop B	ditto
Knight Kt	ditto
PawnP	stands on rank 2

Rows running across the board from left to right are known as ranks. The columns running up and down the board are known as files. A chess board is formed from 8 x 8 squares (64 squares), alternating white and shaded (usually black) squares. The square in the left-hand corner is always a black square. The Queen stands on her own colour (ie the white Queen stands on a white square).

Pieces to the right of the King are called:

King Bishop	KB
King Knight	KKt
King Rook	KR

Pieces to the left of the Queen are called:

Queen Bishop	QB
Queen Knight	QKt
Queen Rook	QR

Pawns (beginning from the left):

Queen Rook Pawn	QRP
Queen Knight Pawn	QKtP
Queen Bishop Pawn	QBP
Queen Pawn	QP
King Pawn	KP
King Bishop Pawn	KBP
King Knight Pawn	KKtP
King Rook Pawn	KRP

Check	ch
Capture	x
en passant	e.p.

Castling on the King-side is O-O
Castling on the Queen-side is O-O-O

Excess description is always avoided. If one piece could only have captured one specified Pawn, the Knight (Kt) capture the King Pawn (KP), for example, Black need not specify which Knight should capture the King Pawn if only his KKt could have done so, therefore, 4 ... KtxKP6 (eg Knight takes King Pawn that stands on the sixth square of the King file. Remember White's ranks are counted 1-8 forward toward Black, and Black's ranks are counted in reverse, 1-8 forward toward White.

The move actually made when it is written down is shown in bold. The move that might have been made is shown in light type-face.

Comment Code:

!	Brilliant move.
!!	Exceptionary fine move.
?	Mistake.
??	Blunder.
!?	Clever but risky.
?!	Definitely unsound a!?.

PCW WORLD

With Stephen Denson - the man who knows the PCW business inside out

THERE is no other industry like computing. Consider that you could buy an Amstrad PCW complete with printer for around £500 in the 1980s and it was rightly regarded as a great bargain.

Today's Pentium PCs now start at around the same price and, let's be honest, you would be buying a much more powerful computer although whether it is any more useful to most people is another question altogether.

On the surface this looks a fantastic deal, especially if you compare computers to other consumer items. For example you would pay a vast amount more for a new car today than you did ten years ago, albeit with technological advances built-in. So PCs look remarkable value don't they?

However, there is a down side to this both for the buyer and seller. Profit margins on hardware have always been relatively low on average little more than 10%. Thus a trader selling a PC system at say £600 would receive around 40% less commission on the deal than he did a year ago when a similar computer sold for £1000.

Tough you might say, but remember that this chap has to pay rent, rates plus other overheads, as well as trying to make a living. He's also doing no less work in preparing the system for sale but he now has to attempt to sell two systems to make around the same money he made on one last year.

Here I am really talking about the independent specialist computer store of the sort you used to find in most towns and not the high street 'box shifters'. These were usually run by self-employed technicians, who could be relied upon to give excellent support to their customers, and didn't just give out a premium rate hotline number whenever a problem arose.

I use the past tense because, sadly, most of these independents have been run out of town, priced out of the market by the big boys or falling prices. A friend of mine ran such a store in the late 80s but closed down because in the end he couldn't make it pay despite his vast knowledge. He also became fed-up with people who sought his advice and then took their custom to the chain stores to save a few pounds. I wonder where such people go for advice now?

Of course, you might conclude that the customer is still the winner but is that really the case? The nature of computing has changed and if you buy a new PC today what are the chances that you will still be using it in five, ten or even fifteen years? Many readers have been using their trusty PCWs for a period between the latter time-span, which is incredible really.

The trouble with modern PCs is that they are not as physically durable and much more prone to ageing than Amstrads. To stay up to date, a PC owner has to invest in hardware upgrades and software updates on a regular basis. The simple fact is that every PC on sale at Christmas 1997 was off the price list a year later.

There was immense pressure to move on from Windows 3.1 to 95 and then to 98 and soon the 2000 version will appear. Can your hardware cope with the extra demands on memory, speed and storage? If not, how much must you spend to keep up? And then there is the catch 22 situation. There is no point in upgrading unless you then want to run the latest software. Yet if you do upgrade, the new programs will cost you a fortune.

The other point to remember is that PCs just seem to wear out quicker. One small illustration of this is the Windows 95 keyboard I bought about six months ago. It still works OK but the legends are wearing off the keys already. The vowels are disappearing!

Conversely, none of my PCW keyboards are showing the least bit of wear although most have been in use every day for up to ten years or more. Likewise we have 100s of CF2s (the Japanese originals not the Italian jobs), which are as reliable as ever. Not so my Pentium's hard disk which regularly scrambles data and is by no means unusual in this respect. Ask any PC user, especially our esteemed editor!

Nor does the PCW user ever have to worry about OS (operating system) upgrades. CP/M was already well established when the PCW was launched and apart from one or two bug fixes has not changed one iota. Therefore we have a totally stable program environment, if a little staid!

Most serious owners have of course added extra RAM and perhaps a new printer to make the most of LocoScript 4 or Micro Design 3 but generally the PCW user has never had to worry whether a new piece of software will run on his/her machine. There is no constant pressure to upgrade unlike the PC market. We sail in a calmer, less tidal zone. A backwater if you like but quite a contented one.

****

I recently acquired a PcW 16 and, as someone who was initially critical of the new machine and its lack of compatibility, I have to say I like the little Amstrad. The built-in desktop is attractive and easy to navigate with the mouse or the coloured-coded keys. The software may be a bit bugged but it works well enough to perform basic small/home office tasks. And now, fantastically, a decent implementation of CP/M is being developed by that wizard, John Elliott, that will open the path to lots of extra programs being available.

I'm already working on the conversion of software, both PD and commercial, of all types, games, business, utilities and I reckon the PcW 16 CAN now offer low-cost alternative computing for the millennium. At around £100 it looks great value against the current crop of iMacs and PCs.

Facts & Figures

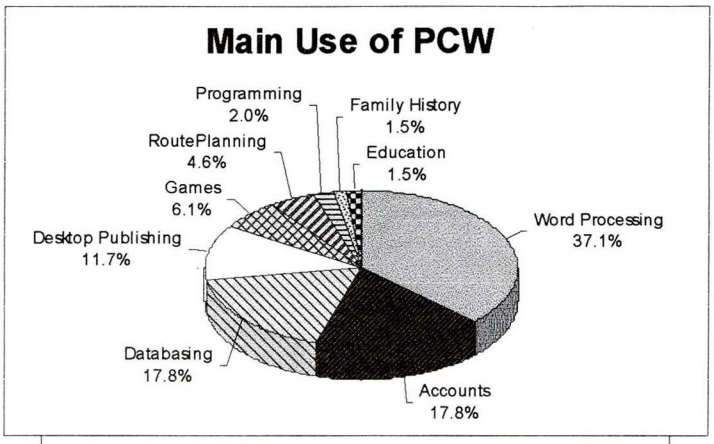
The results of our reader survey provided a unique insight into the world of the PCW

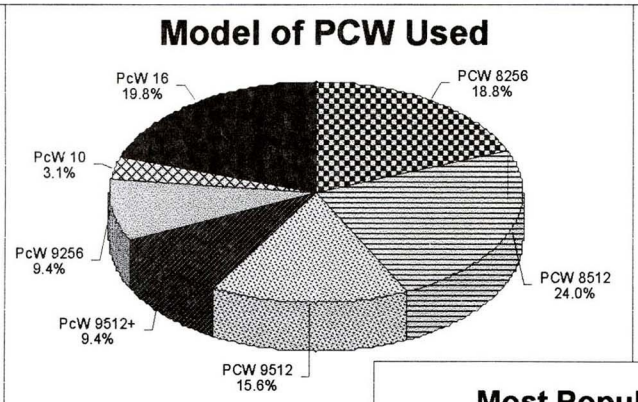
WE got a great response from readers, after printing the questionnaire in the last issue. Almost 100 people returned the survey, and after much number-crunching, we have tabulated the most interesting statistics.

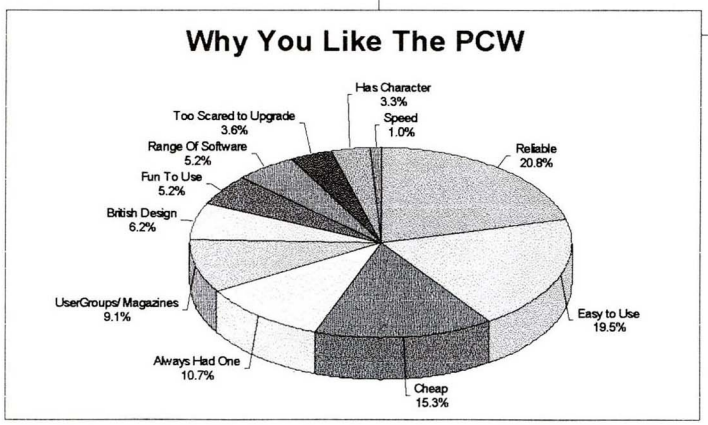
The majority of our readership appears to be elderly, with just over half of those surveyed (50.6%), aged over 65. And another 38% are approaching retirement - aged between 50 and 64.

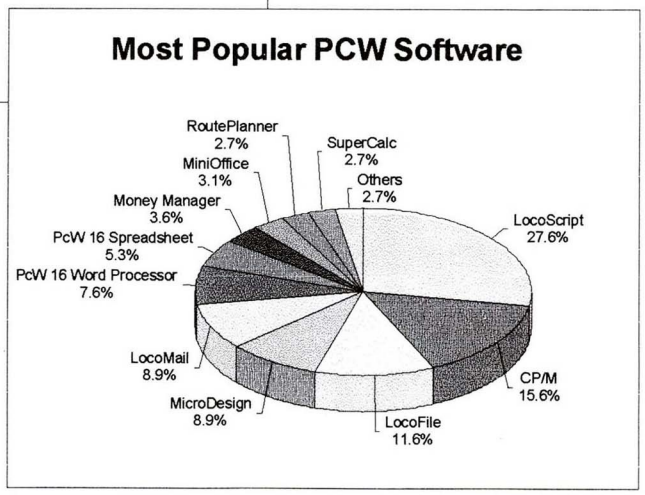
Reflecting a trend common in all computer magazines, the readership is predominantly male. Just 17.1% of readers are female.

A massive 94.9% of readers use their PCW at home, and just 3.8% have an Amstrad at work.









word processor fares well, with 7.6% of users using it most.

More than half of all those questioned (53.3%), has upgraded their PCW, with memory the most popular hardware add-on. 29.2% of those surveyed has added extra memory to their machine. An unexpected 28.3% use a mouse, while 17.7% have invested in an external disc drive.

The biggest attraction of the PCW, is it's reliability, say 20.8% of people, while its ease of use (19.5%), and price (15.3%), are other popular attractions. Interestingly, 6.2% of users like the British design and 3.3% say it "has character."

The most popular PCW is the 8512, used by 24% of readers. Somewhat surprisingly, the second most popular PCW is the PcW 16, used by 19.8% of those surveyed. That is closely followed by the aging 8256, owned by 18.8%. The 10, trails in last, used by just 3.1% of readers.

Unsurprisingly, the most common use of the PCW is as a word processor (37.1%). After that it seems that accounting and keeping databases are equally popular, each with 17.8% of the vote.

LocoScript is easily the most popular PCW software, with 27.6% of readers saying they use it the most. CP/M is another favourite, 15.6% voted for it. The PcW 16

The majority of readers (60.7%), do not use another computer, but 23.8% also use a PC, and 5% have an Amstrad NC100 as well.

Most readers use their PCW regularly, 43.6% use it every couple of days, whilst 33.3% say they use it daily. Just 2.6% rarely use their Amstrad.

Keeping it in the family

Rod Shinkfield wraps up the series by introducing other members of the Loco clan

IF you've been following my letter saving LocoScript tutorials over the last few issues of *PCW Today*, I hope you have found them useful (or useful in parts at least).

It is now time to mention other members of the LocoScript suite.

Apart from LocoScript 4 and LocoSpell, you will find that adding LocoFile and LocoMail to your LocoScript collection gives you as complete a word processing package most people are ever likely to need.

I want to show you how I've recently added both LocoFile and LocoMail to my letter writing and saving system.

In issue 7 of *PCW Today*, you will see in the graphic on page 24, how the code, filename and key contents of letters has been placed in alphabetical order in a LocoScript page document named as INDEX.PPP. One such 'INDEX.nnn' document is placed in each group of all 4 letter discs.

Taking the bottom letter shown in graphic as an example, PCW is the 3 character code standing for *PCW Today*, PCW Today is also the title, PCWAPR12.96 is the filename and includes the date when the letter was written, and the key contents are shown along the line running towards the right.

To prepare the original INDEX.PPP for importing into LocoFile, I first of all stripped away unwanted detail, and used [COPY] [COPY] to repeat the code and title, pasting them before each filename.

Each letter finally occupied a single line on the page, see figure one. Each item (sometimes known as a field) must be separated by a punctuation character, but don't use a comma if an item of information contains a comma, use a semicolon or a slash instead.

I'm using a comma as a separator, and a return marker as the end of each record marker.

LocoFile has to be told where to find the end of a record. The document was saved as PPP.DAT (DAT standing for DATA) and put in drive M. INDEX.PPP was also put in drive M.

The final file we need to create is the Record pattern. The Record pattern simply tells LocoFile which items and in what order to insert items taken from PPP.DAT into the waiting and as yet empty LocoFile INDEX.PPP.

The Record pattern, saved as RECORD.PAT, can either be a separate file (as here), or the record pattern can be put on a separate page (page 1) at the head of PPP.DAT, the remaining data occupying page 2 and onwards.

Where the record and the data is in the same file, LocoFile will read the record pattern first, then the following items, and will then insert the items into their correct positions in the INDEX.PPP.

But we are using a separate RECORD.PAT which also goes in drive M. We now have 3 files, RECORD.PAT, PPP.DAT and INDEX.PPP, and are ready to begin importing.

To import into LocoFile, put the cursor on INDEX.PPP in drive M, and press M (for Merge). A merge menu will appear. Next put the cursor on the Record pattern, and press [ENTER] twice. Finally, put the cursor on PPP.DAT and again press [ENTER] twice. LocoFile first reads RECORD.PAT, then PPP.DAT and merges the items into the records of INDEX.PPP.

Importing LocoScript data into LocoFile is now complete. Put a copy of 'INDEX.PPP into group PPP of the appropriate letter disc, disc 6:0 in my case, your disc numbering may differ.

Notice an apostrophe has been put in first to keep INDEX.PPP at the top of the files stored in group PPP).

Remember to back up your work. The above instructions are repeated until all letter groups contain an INDEX.nnn.

Once you have checked each INDEX.nnn file and made certain all the items are in their correct places, you can erase the original and now redundant index page documents from the letter groups.

To view the letters in INDEX.PPP, first put the cursor on INDEX.PPP and press f1 and then press [R] (for run LocoFile), pressing [ENTER] twice.

The INDEX.PPP file will open and show a single record. Press [DOC] to view the next record, or press [ALT] and [DOC] to view the previous record.

You can move through the file in this way and see the details of the letter index file. Unfortunately, you can only view one LocoFile record at a time - unless, that is, you use LocoMail.

I hope you've enjoyed reading my series over the last two years, but that's all for now.

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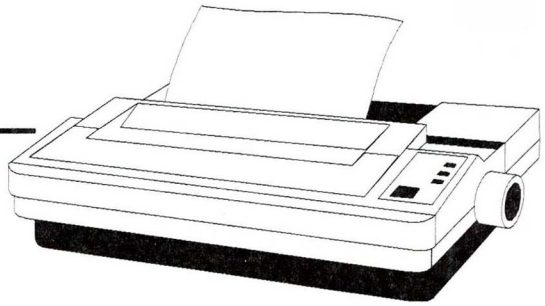

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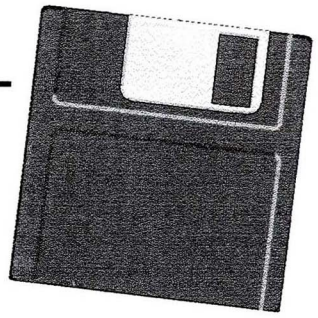

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Babble bashing

Confused by all this techno talk? Who ya gonna call? - Jargon Buster - Kathleen Thorpe!

IT has been predicted that by the year 2000, worldwide revenues of the computer industry will be second only to agricultural revenues.

Computers have become the heart of modern life, but they can still baffle us - as can the technological terminology (babble) that accompanies them. Here are just a few aspects of 'Computer speak', with a brief explanation of what they mean:

CPU (Central Processing Unit), this is the brains of the computer; it is here that all the work is done. It consists of an 'Arithmetic and Logic Unit' (ALU) which does all the mathematical procedures involved in translating the data we give it through input devices like the keyboard.

The CPU of a small computer, such as the PCW, is usually called a microprocessor. this is built onto a single piece of silicon or 'chip', which is usually about 0.5cm along one side and 0.05cm thick. A single chip could contain between 1,000 and several hundred thousand elements.

MODEM (A contraction of its basic functions, MOdulation and DEModulation). Communication has always been an important factor in the development of civilization. One such method of communication that has become important for many people is the modem. As modems usually communicate along a telephone line, the signal from the sending computer needs to be changed first.

Let's say you have a modem attached to your PCW, and you want to send an e-mail to *PCW Today*. Your modem will convert the digital signals from your PCW into analogue signals which can be transmitted through your telephone line. This is called modulation.

When your e-mail has been received via your 'server', by a modem here at *PCW Today*, it is then demodulated and converted back to a digital signal so that your e-mail can be read on screen or printed out.

ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange). Thank goodness it's been shortened! We often talk about turning a LocoScript document into an ASCII file to transfer it for use in a CP/M program.

It is, of course, a coding scheme that assigns numeric values to letters, numbers, punctuation marks and certain other characters. By standardizing the values for these characters, ASCII enables computers and computer programs to exchange information.

There are two sets of ASCII codes, Standard and Extended. The standard set contains 128 character codes from 0-127. The first 32 values are assigned to communication and printer codes (like non-printing characters such as carriage return and tab). The remaining 96 codes are assigned to upper and lower case letters, numbers 0-9 and common punctuation marks.

The extended ASCII set (128-255), are not as interchangeable among different programs and computers as the standard set are, as each computer and software manufacturer uses a similar but different group of characters.

GUI (Graphical User Interface). This is a type of display format that enables the user to choose commands, start programs, start programs, and see lists of files, as well as other options, by pointing to pictorial symbols on your screen (icons). It also allows you to see menu items.

Your choices can be activated either with a keyboard stroke, or the pointer of your mouse. One excellent example of a GUI program is The Network, available from Creative Technology for all PCWs except the 16. This has its own Graphical User Interface - Rosanne - built in, which is automatically accessed when you switch on.

MHz (MegaHertz). A measure of the frequency of a timing signal that's equal to 1,000,000 cycles per second. If your PCW runs at 4 MHz, the processor is working at a speed of approximately 4,000,000 cycles per second. When you press a key, input a command, or click your mouse, the PCW responds so quickly, it is already waiting for your next command. The newest PCW, the PcW 16, runs at 16 MHz.

USER FRIENDLY. This term reflects the revolution in computing which came with the introduction of the microcomputer. In the days of mainframe machines, it was assumed that only computer scientists and their like would be able to program and use a computer. Ordinary people such as you and me were never allowed to go near one of these huge beasts.

All this changed with the advent of the micro, because it meant that computing power became within reach of mere mortals. Nowadays the term usually refers to the ease of use of some software packages such as LocoScript, which is more user friendly than CP/M.

WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get). This term describes software packages that show on screen exactly what the finished document will look like when printed out. For example the MicroDesign family are all WYSIWYG, as is PcW 16 software, but LocoScript is not.

FONT (not to be confused with typeface which refers to the design itself). A set of printing characters of the same design, style, weight, and point size. Fonts are used by the PCW for on-screen displays and by your printer for a hard copy. Programs such as LocoScript are able to send the information about the font and its size, to your printer even though it is not able to simulate it on screen. Your printer can then reproduce the font and its size, provided that the capability is there.

As the computer industry is expanding at an alarming rate, unfortunately so is the amount of 'babble' that accompanies it! To win a dictionary of computer speak, turn to page 43 where we've got three copies to give away.

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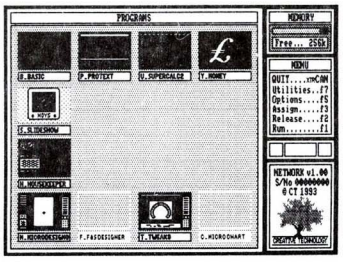

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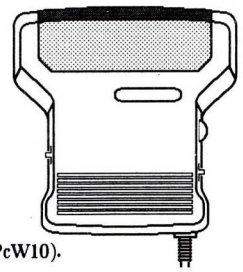

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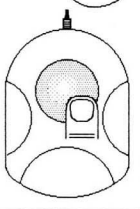

- ❑ *KeyMouse is a high-quality 3-button mouse which connects to the PCW via the keyboard socket. It is now available with a new Track-Ball option.*
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CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Crash course

Worried about your temperamental PCW? Adrian Braddy guides you through the pitfalls

RUMOURS about the reliability of the PcW 16 have been rife in the PCW press and on the Internet in recent weeks.

Stories of 'dying' computers, constant crashes, and worse, have become commonplace. Yet it seems that the biggest problem is one of misinformation and lack of knowledge. In truth there is little that can go wrong with your PcW 16 that can't be fixed.

So just ignore the rumour, hearsay and unhelpful advice (even the manual gets it wrong). If you follow this comprehensive guide, you should be okay.

The first thing you should realise is that your 16 will 'crash' from time to time.

A crash is where your software freezes, and refuses to work. This is nothing unusual, all modern computers crash, including state of the art PCs.

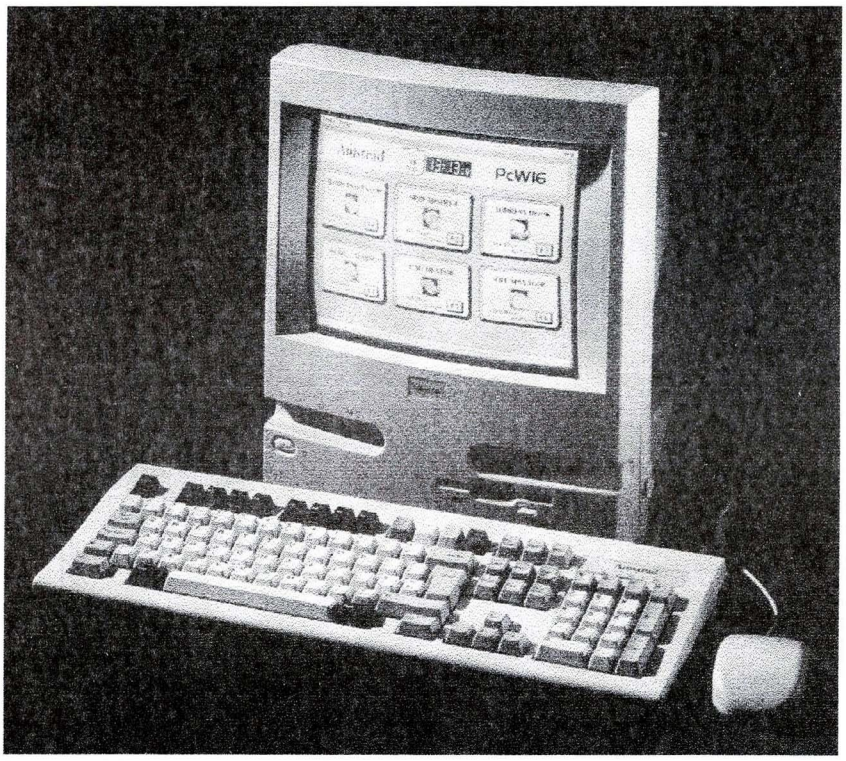
You may have been used to the outstandingly reliable classic PCWs, which hardly ever crashed, but the 16 has hardware and software that is more complex, and so is prone to the occasional hiccup.

It is impossible to avoid ever crashing your 16, but you can reduce the risk. Slow down your computing, don't give Annie too many commands at once - it may only serve to confuse her.

Regularly back up your work to disc - there is no real need to use the cabinet - discs are by far the safest option. Read Jeff Anderson's tutorial in issue 11 for more information on backing up.

When working in the word processor, refresh the screen regularly by pressing the GREEN key.

And try not to write very long documents in one file. If you're writing a book, split it into chapters, and put each chapter onto a different file.



Despite taking all these precautions, your 16 will occasionally crash. The screen will freeze up and both the mouse and keyboard refuse to work.

The worst thing you can do is panic - remember a software crash WILL NOT damage your computer in any way - no matter what you may have read elsewhere. And in a worst case scenario, you can always reload the operating system from your Rescue Disc.

Firstly you can check if it's a real crash by pressing the Caps Lock on and off. If the corresponding light flickers on and off too, you're probably going to okay.

Whatever the result of this test, leave the 16 alone for five minutes - go and make yourself a cup of coffee. When you come back, there is a slim chance that the problem will have righted itself. If the flying stars screen saver has come on, you're safe, and should immediately save your work to disc. If not, your 16 has definitely crashed.

Once again, don't panic. Try and switch-off using the power switch on your 16 which will be growing red.

In most cases nothing will happen, so you must switch off at the mains. Don't pull the plug out - just switch off the socket.

Unhelpfully, the manual tells you never to do this, and other publications have suggested that doing it shortens the life span of your 16. This is not the case. Whilst it is not advisable to do this every five minutes, cutting off the power will have no impact on your hardware whatsoever.

Once you've switched off at the mains, leave your 16 to cool off for about ten minutes. Go and drink that coffee. For some reason, if you do this, there is usually no

problem when you switch your machine back on. And your system will be restored in perfect working order.

However, occasionally, that dreaded error message: "Fatal Checksum Error" will appear on your screen. Again, don't get too stressed out, it's not as bad as it sounds.

All you will have lost is any work saved to the cabinet that you have not backed up on floppy disc. But I cannot say this often enough - save to disc not cabinet!

Insert your Rescue Disc as prompted and follow the instructions displayed on screen.

This will replace the corrupted operating system with a fresh copy - and that's all. Try and use the most recent version of the Rescue Disc, currently 1.12. This has the least bugs, so is less likely to go wrong in future.

Of course, in very rare circumstances, your PcW 16 may apparently die altogether, and you won't even get the error message - just a blank screen.

Now this is very rare indeed, but it may happen. Nine times out of ten, it will be a software fault and not hardware. Amstrad tell us that very little can go wrong with the hardware.

The good news is, if it's a software fault, the following method will ALWAYS work. The trouble is, it's a factory technique, and is not printed in the manual. You should only need to use this method as a last resort.

Pressing four keys together will kick start the 16 back into life again. Amstrad PcW 16 programmer, Cliff Lawson explains: "There is some confusion amongst people as to exactly how you do the four key thing. Firstly it is four keys, not three - the keys are [RED], [Ctrl], [SHIFT] and [TASK].

"Secondly, they MUST be the Red key and the three shifts that are vertically beneath it, not the shift keys at the left hand end of the keyboard.

They must be held down together. Then, to make it work, hold down those four keys with the power button on the front of the computer showing a red light. You then press the power button and KEEP them held.

"Keep holding them for about 10 seconds until the normally "grey" screen turns black and a single line of white writing on the top line invites you to insert the OS Rescue Disc."

Of course, there is a chance, despite anything Amstrad might say, that a hardware fault could develop with your 16. And if the above method doesn't work, then there probably is a hardware problem.

Electrical Engineer, Gareth Morris, had a look at a 'dead' PcW 16 for us, and he says that there are two things that can go wrong with it.

The first is the power board - which gives the 16 its energy, and the second is the rechargeable battery - which keeps the date and time straight.

"So if you're away on a long holiday, it may be an idea to leave your 16 on standby, just so the battery gets its quota of energy"

Unfortunately, the power boards are no longer available from any source - and repairing them would be too costly.

The battery can be replaced but you need some expertise to be able to do that.

It's not all bad news though. Gareth has come up with a couple of tips that should save both the battery an the power board.

Firstly, forget everything you've read before. The PcW 16 should not be left on standby - unless you are not planning on using it for a while.

The 16 works like your television set, and the manual suggests leaving the power connected at all times. Don't. If you listen to your 16 when it is on standby, it makes a very faint sound. Despite the blank screen, electricity is still entering the unit.

If you think about it, the longer you leave any electrical appliance 'on', the shorter its life will be. When you finish a session, switch off the power switch on the front of your 16, so that it turns green, then switch off at the mains socket too.

Of course, the standby mode is there for a purpose, it is the battery that enables your 16 to tell the time, and indeed wake you in the morning if anyone actually uses the alarm function.

That's why, if you haven't used your 16 for a while, it occasionally asks you to reset the time and date. It just means that the battery got a little flat.

"Consequently, there is a danger, if you leave your PCW for a long time, unused, the battery may go completely flat.

So if you're away on a long holiday, it may be an idea to leave your 16 on standby, just so the battery gets its quota of energy.

Whilst investigating the problems with the 16, Gareth discovered that whenever the unit is switched on, the tube glows bright white, and he says that this means a huge surge of electricity goes through the power board every time the computer is switched on.

This is presumably needed to create the high-definition paper quality screen that is a distinctive feature of the 16.

However, Gareth suggests that this surge of power travelling through the power board could be one of the reasons behind its occasional failure. His solution is a novel one: Every time you switch off the computer, turn the brightness and contrast right down, so that the screen looks blank.

When you switch the unit back on again, wait a few seconds for the desktop to load up and the 16 to warm up, then gradually turn up the contrast and brightness. This should save your power board from future disaster, and give you many years of happy computing.

It will seem a little strange at first, but soon you'll be doing it automatically.

The 16 is not really that bad. Ignore the gloom merchants who say it will not live long. If you treat your PCW right, it'll be churning out letters well into the year 2000.

Odds & ends

PD Blake rounds up his series on Basic with a few snippets to liven up your programs

HERE are a few odds and ends which you may find useful in your own basic programs. They are simply subroutines which can be altered to fit into most programs and even linked together to create some good effects and useful routines.

Firstly, this is what to do when you use an INPUT but want the answer given to be in uppercase and only a certain amount of characters long, in this case ten. With this short routine it doesn't matter if a hundred characters are typed in at the INPUT line, only the first TEN will count, and if all are typed in lowercase they will be converted to uppercase.

```
10 INPUT "Type:";ANS$
20 ANS$=LEFT$(ANS$,20): REM 'this takes the first 10 characters from the answer and discards the rest'
30 ANS$=UPPER$ :REM 'this converts 10 remaining characters to uppercase'
40 PRINT ANS$
```

Instead of LEFT$ you can use RIGHT$ to take the last ten characters or MID$ to take the ten from the middle. You can also use LOWER$ instead of UPPER$ to convert to lowercase. The number in brackets in line 20 can be anything between 1 and 255.

This next example shows a simple time delay.

```
10 FOR J=1 TO 2400:NEXT
20 PRINT"Run out of time"
```

This will only delay for a few seconds, to make the delay longer just change the 2400. Remember if a line contains a FOR command, the FOR must be followed somewhere in the line or the routine by a NEXT command.

The following are useful to know when testing or saving your programs.

TRON type this before you run a program to display each program line as it is executed.

TROFF cancels TRON. Both can be included in a program if you like, to either make the option mandatory or make it impossible.

OPTION RUN adding this to a program (usually at the very beggining) makes the [STOP] key non functional. It also makes it impossible to use [ALT]-S to stop/start the screen scrolling when listing.

OPTION STOP cancels the effect of OPTION RUN

SAVE"FILENAME.EXT",A this saves the program in ASCII format so that it can be used on a wordprocessor, but it does use a little more memory.

SAVE""FILENAME.EXT",P this saves the program in protected form.

In this form it cannot be listed or edited and the effect is irreversible, so be warned, don't use it unless you know that your program is absolutely perfect and won't need editing.

Some other time I will let you know a few more, more complicated commands, but you'd better get to know what I've already shown you first, certain commands and functions in BASIC can be quite nasty until you get used to the easier ones.

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We are now offering cover discs, like the ones you may have seen on the front of PC magazines in your local newsagent. Upgrade to a premium subscription and you will receive a disc with every issue of PCW Today. Each disc has a selection of brand-new software, fonts for MicroDesign, graphics for LocoScript 4 and MicroDesign 3, and the best of "public domain" and "shareware" software. Sadly we are only able to provide cover discs in 3.5" Classic CP/M format. This means that if you have a PcW 16 or a 3" machine, you will not be able to use the discs.

Discs cost £1.50 each, however, if you are already a subscriber to the magazine, but want to upgrade to a premium subscription with cover discs, it is best to "level out" your subscription.

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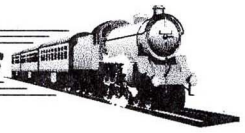

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Help me!

David Landers takes a detailed look at CP/M's ground-breaking HELP utility

SCARED of CP/M? Cowering at its command line? Fear not... Help is at hand.

It comes in the form of Digital Research's 'on-screen help', which was an genuinely innovative feature of their CP/M Plus operating system.

And we can be excused for feeling smug, because PC users had to wait some years before Microsoft provided a similar facility for MS-DOS!

DR HELP consists of two files: HELP.COM, the program file; and HELP.HLP, a resource file holding the information displayed by HELP.COM. These files will be found on the CP/M disc(s) supplied with your PCW (Side-4 on 8000-series machines).

For most people, the easiest way to use HELP is to copy both files on to a fresh floppy "help disc".

Owners of a Cirtech drive (GEM, Insyder or Flash-Drive) can more conveniently hold the help files there - alternatively, if you have enough RAM on your machine, they'll run much faster from Drive M:.

Having changed to the appropriate drive, simply type HELP [RETURN] and a display will appear, listing the topics available and giving basic instructions for using the facility.

You'll probably notice straight-away that the normal A>, B> or M> prompt has changed to HELP> - meaning that the program is now waiting for you to choose a topic from the list.

Try typing:- DATE [RETURN]. You will be given the 'syntax' of the DATE command and an explanation of what the command does. You are also told that there is a sub- topic called EXAMPLES.

To read the subtopic, type a full-stop followed by its name.

Comprehensive schooling

The information on DATE.COM given by the help facility - although quite brief - is remarkably comprehensive.

Two of the options shown, 'date c' and 'date set', aren't even mentioned in the manual. (The first of these will keep the clock ticking continuously on screen, while the second represents an easy way to set the date/time.) And this is generally true of HELP - it tends to give a fuller picture.

When you've finished reading the DATE entry, you will probably have forgotten what the other topics were.

Type a question-mark, followed by [RETURN], and the list will be displayed again. To learn more about the help facility, and get a full breakdown of its key-commands, look up HELP itself as a topic.

You'll soon find it becomes second nature to pop in the "help disc" whenever you're baffled by some obscure CP/M syntax. What about those bewildering PIP options? HELP can help.

As the name of the topic is known, it can be entered at the CP/M prompt, thus:- HELP PIP [RETURN]. OPTIONS is now shown as a subtopic, so type a full-stop followed by that word - or just enough of it to distinguish it from other subtopics. '.op' or even '.o' would be fine.

Next time, knowing the name of the subtopic too, you can get straight there from the CP/M prompt with: HELP PIP O [RETURN]. (Note: no full-stop in front of a subtopic when it's preceded by the main topic.)

Altered states

A little known feature of HELP.COM is the fact that the HELP.HLP file can be changed into a form which allows it to be amended by a word-processor. This means that the information produced by the help facility can be altered/expanded or even changed for something else entirely.

Why might you want to do that? Well, as the last paragraph suggests, certain CP/M features are poorly documented - and you may have discovered something which you'd like to record for future reference.

For instance, the TYPE utility will accept 'wild cards' in filenames. That isn't mentioned anywhere in the PCW literature so far as I'm aware, and it can be useful when you need to scan through several text files one after the other. So let's add this fact to HELP.HLP.

First of all, HELP.HLP has to be made into a text file itself. This is done with HELP's [extract] command. It would be best to make another copy of your "help-disc" for this experiment. Using that new floppy, enter:- HELP [E] [RETURN].

The screen will show "Extracting data....", and the drive motor will start whirring. Eventually the message "Extraction complete" will appear.

If you use DIR to check, you'll find an extra file, named HELP.DAT, on the disc. Sadly, an unexpanded 8256 can't work this trick - there's insufficient room on either a CF2 disc or its memory drive.

HELP.DAT is a simple ASCII text file

which contains special markers. TYPE it, and you'll see that it starts with three forward-slashes, followed by a number and a word: ///1commands. HELP.COM translates this as: "marker, level-one, COMMANDS". Information about CP/M commands follows.

Further down the screen you'll see: /// 2conventions. This is a level-two marker - meaning that 'conventions' is a subtopic of 'commands'.

It would be possible for 'commands' to have other subtopics (i.e. additional /// 2name markers) - or even for 'conventions' to have its own subtopics with level-three markers (///3name), and so on - but the next marker is, in fact: ///1cntrlchars, which means we've exhausted the 'commands' topic and passed on to the next one, 'control characters'. (Note: on a 3" drive PCW9512 the first topic will be 8000COPY.)

Enter LocoScript

Having seen how the HELP.DAT file is arranged, reboot your PCW with LocoScript - or switch environments if you're running Flipper - and create a new Loco document called HELP.DOC. Use a fixed character pitch and alter HELP.DOC's Layout to give a 90 character line-width. (As long as the Layout's Character Pitch coincides with its Scale Pitch, this means setting the left margin at ruler position '0', and the right margin at ruler '9'.)

Now press [f1] and select Insert Text, choosing HELP.DAT as the file to insert.

Once the text has flowed in, cursor back up the document to find the TYPE topic (it's about two pages from the end). At the end of the line which reads, "character file on your screen." you could usefully add, " File spec can contain wild cards."

If you like, you could drop down into the subtonic section (headed: ///2examples), and below the line ending, "...MYPROG.PLI on your screen.", add two carriage returns and give a further example:

A>TYPE *.TXT

Displays in sequence all files with a .TXT extension.

Also, since a paged, 24-line display is the default setting on PCWs, you might want to change the existing '[PAGE]' example to '[NOPAGE]' and make the description read:- "Scrolls the contents of THISFILE from drive B on your screen. Press [f5] to stop scrolling, [f3] to restart." (Note: make sure that you end each line with a carriage return, as HELP.COM can't word-wrap like LocoScript.)

Having suitably amended the TYPE topic - and made any other changes which you feel are useful - exit from HELP.DOC and Finish Edit to save the document. It now has to be converted into HELP.HLP.

This takes two operations: the first, under LocoScript, is to convert it to ASCII. In Disc Manager, press [f1], and choose to make an ASCII file named HELP.DAT on your help-disc copy. Confirm that you wish to overwrite the existing HELP.DAT file.

When LocoScript has done that, reboot to CP/M, log the disc and enter the command:- HELP [C] [RTN]. The [C] parameter stands for 'create' and you'll get a screen message confirming that HELP.HLP is being created. It will automatically overwrite the old HELP.HLP file - which is why you ought to have been working with a copy of a copy. When everything's finished, enter the command: HELP TYPE [RETURN] and you should see your newly amended version of the TYPE topic.

Reference help

CP/M's HELP program can become the basis of a completely different data-search facility. The program is actually a sophisticated file-reader which performs rapid jumps to marked points - and, now that we can get inside HELP.HLP, we can fill it with whatever material we like!

What about the lengthy on-disc manual which came with that new software? Wouldn't it be handy to be able to jump from chapter to chapter and then to individual sections within chapters?

Perhaps you've written a play, and you need to move quickly from act to act, scene to scene, checking for consistency. Or your hobby might be local history, and you've amassed large amounts of reference material on disc - whatever the project, HELP.COM lets you find marked passages in a flash. The possibilities are endless, and you already have the program to do it...

Using the same pattern of LocoScript document - with a 90 character line-width - simply type in (or Insert) any text you want, and place the markers.

When devising a new resource file it's a good idea to plan the 'topic, subtopic, subsub topic ...' scheme beforehand - particularly if it's likely to be a complicated structure.

The levels can go nine deep, with any number of topics at each level. Topic names are limited to 12 characters (spaces aren't allowed - use an underscore instead), and names must not be duplicated. The document will therefore look something like this:

///1NAME_A
Text for Name A (level 1 topic)
///2NAME_AA
Text for Name AA (level 2 subtopic to Name A)
///3NAME_AAA
Text for Name AAA (level 3 subtopic to Name AA)
(etc)
///2NAME_AB
Text for Name AB (level 2 subtopic to Name A)
///2NAME_AC
Text for Name AC (level 2 subtopic to Name A)
(etc)
///1NAME_B
Text for Name B (level 1 topic)
///1NAME_C
Text for Name C (level 1 topic)
(etc. etc)

Separate the marker lines from text with a couple of carriage-returns, remembering that each line of text must itself end in a carriage-return.

HELP.COM can only create HELP.HLP from a HELP.DAT file - so that's what the ASCII file has to be called. Similarly, HELP.HLP must not be renamed. As it's not possible to have two files with the same name in the same user area (group), keep your new HELP.HLP file on its own disc, together with a copy of HELP.COM.

People who are familiar with CP/M will realize, of course, that different HELP.HLP files can be held in different user areas of the same disc. Provided that HELP.COM is set to [SYStem], in User 0, HELP can be run from any user area to access a specific resource file.

Word processing from CP/M

It can be done - Kathleen Thorpe has this walk-through quide to text editing in CP/M

WHEN disc housekeeping in CP/M, you may suddenly have a brilliant idea that you would like to record for future reference. This means quitting CP/M and loading LocoScript, doesn't it?

Well no, actually it doesn't. There are ways of typing up a short ASCII file and saving it to disc to insert into a LocoScript document at a later date.

PIP.COM Mainly used as a file copy utility, PIP can also be used as a text editor to create a short note to yourself. First, decide what you are going to call your file, lets say MESSAGE.DOC. At the A> prompt, type PIP MESSAGE.DOC=CON: then hit [RETURN].

Type in your message, but at the end of each line you will have to press [ALT] and [J], followed by [ALT] and [M] to put the cursor at the beginning of the next line. [RETURN] will not work, neither will the delete keys, so mistakes cannot be rectified unless they are on the current line.

Press [ALT] and [H] and the cursor will jump to the error, enabling you to correct it.

When you have finished, press [ALT] and [Z]. This will save your file and return you to the A> again.

ED.COM This utility was originally designed as an editor for programmers. It too can be used to create a short ASCII file in the following way.

Type ED MESSAGE.TXT [RETURN]. Ed will then tell you this is a new file and the prompt :* will appear. Press [I] for insert, followed by your first line of text.

At the end of that line, press [RETURN] and hit [I] again, then enter your second line of text. Continue doing this until you have completed your note.

When you have pressed [RETURN] to complete your document, press [E] again. This will save your file to disc.

SID.COM At the A> prompt type SID [RETURN]. The prompt for SID is a hash symbol (#). Type S100 [RETURN]. A new line will appear saying something like: '0100 01'. Now type a double quote (") followed by your first line of text. SID will only allow you to type up to 63 characters (including spaces) per line, so anticipate this and press [RETURN] to move to the next line before you exceed this limit.

Start each new line with double quotes, entering text until you have finished. After the last line of text, press [RETURN]. Now you need to type 1a, press [RETURN] then a full stop and [RETURN] again.

To save the file to disc, type WA:MESSAGE.DOC [RETURN]. Press [STOP] to exit from SID.

Like ED, correcting errors in SID is impossible, but as these utilities will probably only ever be used to make a short not to yourself, this really doesn't matter. If they are inserted into a LocoScript document, errors can be rectified there.

RPED.BAS This is a text editor written by Roland Perry, hence its name. To access it from your CP/M disc, at the A> type RPED [RETURN]. First BASIC will be loaded, which will then run RPED.

The opening screen tells you that you can type up to 200 lines of text (that's the approximate equivalent of four pages), normal cursor and delete keys can be used on both text and filenames, [+] toggles insert/overstrike mode, [STOP] aborts edit, [EXIT] ends edit and saves the file to the specified drive. The menu is as follows:

[f5] - edit last screen
[f3] - edit new screen
[f1] - edit existing file
[EXIT] - to quit

Press [f3] to edit a new screen and a small box appears for you to specify a drive and type in your filename. The default drive is A: but to change this to M: or B:, just press the left arrow key to put the cursor over A: and type your drive choice over it. Then use the right arrow key to put the cursor back in the filename section and type in your choice of name, then press [RETURN].

When you are on the editing screen, keys such as [LINE], [EOL] and [RETURN] work in the same way as they do in LocoScript. As you can use INSERT or OVERSTRIKE mode, correcting mistakes is just as easy as it is in LocoScript.

Unfortunately there is no word wrap and RPED only accepts 88 letters to a line, including spaces. Then you have to press [RETURN] to get to the start of the next line. [TAB] doesn't work either, so to indent, you'll have to press the space bar an appropriate number of times.

To abandon edit, press [STOP], everything you have typed will be lost. To save your file to the disc, or the M: drive, press [EXIT]. You will be brought back to the main menu, where you can either press another function key to use RPED again, or [EXIT] to return to the A> prompt.

As with the other utilities, documents created in RPED can be inserted as ASCII into LocoScript where they can be prettied up with any decorative effects available.

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A whole new language has sprung up with the Net generation. Commonly called geek-speak, this is just the kind of jargon that we try to keep out of our magazine. But it's there, and it would be useful to know what the nerds were talking about from time to time.

Now the editors of *Wired* magazine, America's most respected computer journal, have produced a dictionary of geek speak. The book is called: "*Wired Style: Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age*", and should be a part of every computer-owners library.

Read it and learn about "metaworlds", "e-zines", "flops", "spam", and so many more weird and wonderful words and acronyms. *Wired Style* will prepare you for the millennium, and give you a feel of this new language that's evolving everyday.

The PCW doesn't make it into the dictionary, nor does Amstrad, but we were delighted to find CP/M in the acronyms section. According to *Wired Style*: "The CP/M operating system is hardly ever used; DOS drove it out of the market." We also found words like BASIC and ASCII, which will be familiar to most PCW users.

You'll probably never use most of the rest of the words in this dictionary, but you'll certainly be one-up on your neighbours, or the Dixons salesman, with your new impressive knowledge.

The book is perfect for the desktop - ring-bound, and printed on card, in bright modern colours. It even comes in a presentation cardboard sleeve. We've got three copies of *Wired Style*, worth £12 each, to give away, but you'll have to work to get them.

We want you to invent a new computer word or acronym - it's not as hard as you'd think. There must be something that irritates or tickles you, that has as yet not been given a name. How about a word describing a PCW user? Or a word for all that fluff that somehow works its way into your keyboard?

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david langford

picture - Martin Hoare

SOONER or later there comes the time of the Big Decision to take the bull between one's teeth, the time when a man has got to do what a man has got to do. Yes, I finally got around to changing that dodgy belt in Drive A of the ancestral PCW 8512.

A small plug here to Brian Watson of the Independent Eight Bit Association - ieba@spheroid.demon.co.uk - who in mid-1998 offered spare belts for one pound apiece, post free. I bought a couple, put them reverently on top of the PCW, and guiltily avoided their gaze for several months. As noted in *PCW Today* issue 9, the computer would still start if switched on and given a few hours to get warm enough for its withered old drive belt to regain a semblance of youthful springiness. But as the months went by, that warm-up time grew to many hours....

After this display of laziness and procrastination, it will come as no surprise that I couldn't face searching through the dusty boxes housing my run of *PCW Plus* (still incomplete - the final Christmas issue with my last column is missing: hint, hint) for one of those legendary how-to articles with witty titles like "Belt Up!" As a qualified physicist, I should surely be able to tackle this with effortless flair, panache and screwdrivers.

Unfortunately the famous Amstrad cost-cutting construction does make the whole process more tortuous than expected, as you grope among tightly packed components. I started obsessively counting the stages and the growing piles of screws:

a) Remove the PCW keyboard connector and, in my case, the serial interface box (two screws).

b) Remove monitor case (four screws, two cunningly hard to reach). Be amazed by the great wads of dust, fluff and mummified insects which have accumulated within. Note that these screws are not all the same length ... er, which hole did which one just come out of?

c) Remove monitor stand (two screws plus two awkward lugs) ... perhaps not strictly necessary, but it makes the thing easier to manhandle. Discover how the lugs and the two halves of the case are arranged to make this incredibly difficult if, like certain Langfords of this parish, you first attempt it before step (b).

d) Remove the main printed circuit board from its slots - no screws but much paranoia at the belated recollection of all those anti-static precautions which one has just failed to take.

e) Prise off incredibly fiddly disk drive ribbon and power cables: more paranoia as the latter, in particular, seems readier to break off altogether than separate in the orthodox way. Pat oneself on the back for having correctly done this to Drive A and not Drive B.

f) Remove the Drive A mounting screws (four of these, two almost inaccessible and requiring extensive search for a screwdriver with a longer blade). Hurray, we've got the wretched drive out of the machine at last!

g) Remove the drive case screws (four) and slide out the drive itself. Blow away further startling quantities of fluff.

"Be amazed by the great wads of dust, fluff and mummified insects which have accumulated within"

h) Remove the drive's front panel screws (two). It's around now that one has to go and hunt for jeweller's screwdrivers as the standard tools prove to be too big.

i) Remove likely-looking screws holding little circuit board to one side of drive (two). No use. Put them back again. Remember to tell readers to scan this saga all the way to the end before committing copycat crimes on their own PCWs.

j) Try again with the larger circuit board that covers the whole of the *other* side of the drive mechanism (two screws). It is at last possible to see where the belt actually is!

k) Remove the still more incredibly fragile connector which prevents this larger circuit board from being tilted out. Maximum paranoia as it seems about to disintegrate in a fit of petulance.... Now the circuit board can be tilted just far enough to allow access to the belt pulleys.

l) Wrench out grotty old belt with forceps. Try stretching it. Be amazed that this limp, enfeebled thing could work the drive even after hours of warm-up. Sternly suppress the Viagra jokes which spring to mind.

m) Thread the new one, the one step which proves surprisingly easy: the big pulley is the nearest to hand, and once the belt is loosely looped around this, you can shove it with the blunt end of a pencil to stretch it over the smaller, less accessible pulley. Getting it twisted must be the thing to avoid ... I was lucky first time.

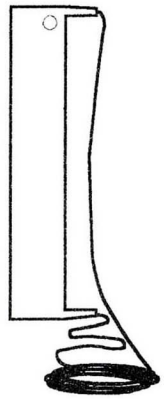
n) Reassemble by undoing steps (k) to (a) in reverse order, while wisely avoiding (i). It is around now that you realise what a stunningly good idea it would have been to lay the screws on a sheet of paper with detailed annotations about which goes where. The hardest thing to re-insert is the inmost drive-mount screw at step (f): getting it aligned with its inconveniently placed hole is reminiscent of pinning the tail on the donkey, blindfold.

o) Blimey, the thing actually boots up! Even from those start of day disks which I'd filed as possible cases for Dave's Disk Doctor Service, since they seemed hopeless even after the prescribed many hours of warm-up. Well, well.

p) Pausing for a small prayer that the less-used Drive B won't go the same way within the week, this would seem a good time for a stiff drink. The most appropriate cocktail is a Screwdriver.

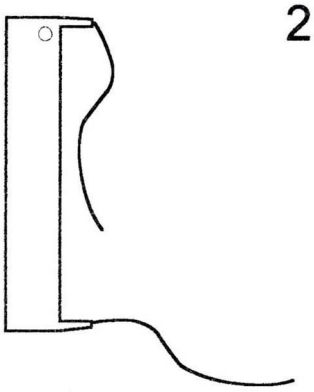
How to Replace the Film Ribbon in a Used PCW Dot Matrix Cassette

1



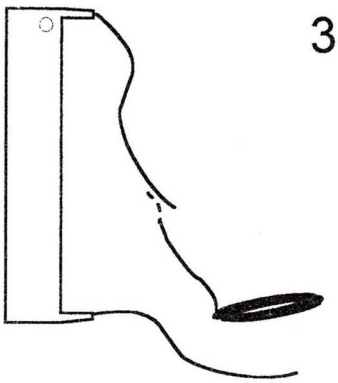
Pull out the old film ribbon.

2



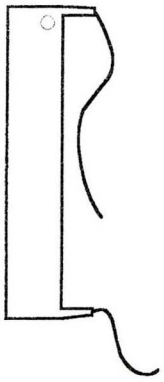
Cut off the old film ribbon from about 9" each end.

3



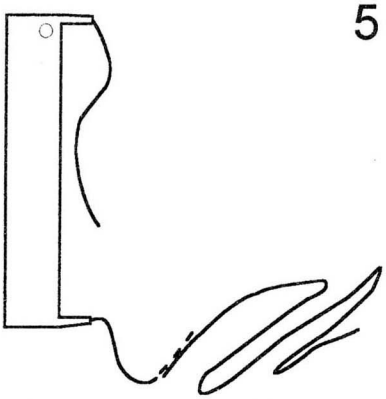
Snip tape foldover off the end of the new film, and tape to winder end of old film.

4



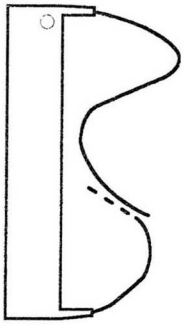
Wind in new film until about 12" is left showing (see "Winder Tip").

5



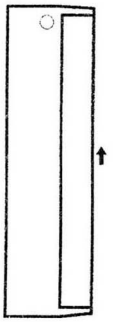
Pull out remains of old film to expose the join with new film.

6



Untape old film remnant and tape ends of new film together.

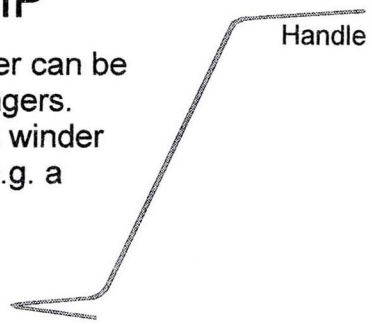
7



Wind join into cassette.

WINDER TIP

Turning the winder can be a strain on the fingers. Instead fashion a winder out of stiff wire (e.g. a large paperclip).



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