pcw Today

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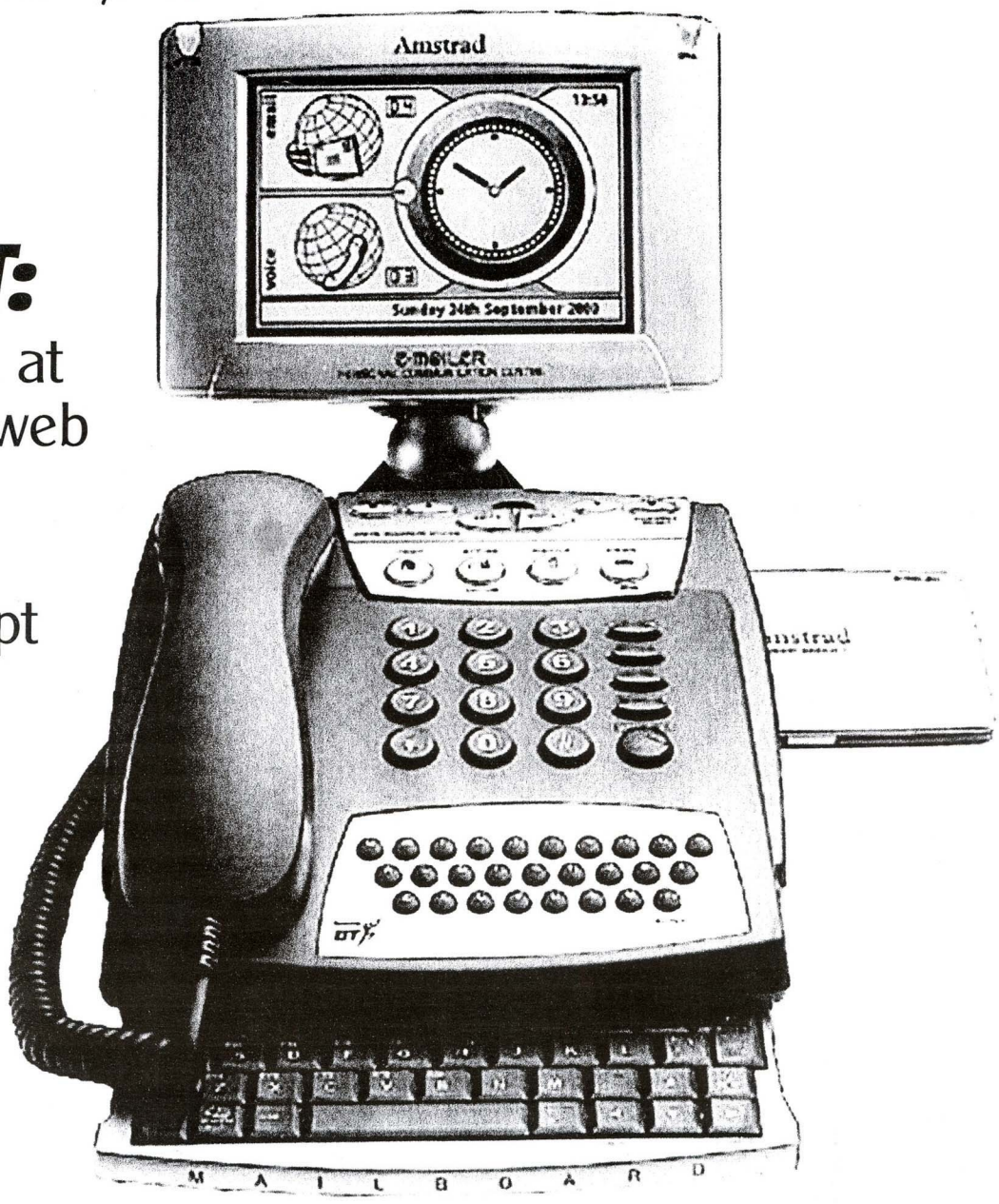
■ Issue 14
■ October 2000
■ £2.10 (Or £8 for 4 issues)
■ ISSN 1368-4485



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A new LocoScript spreadsheet

HOW TO:
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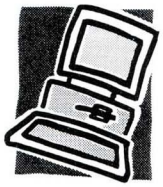

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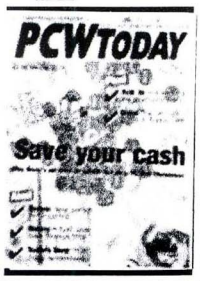
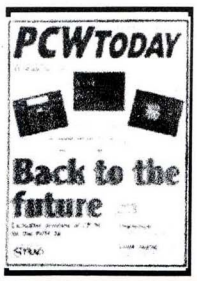


ISSUE 11
- Games review
- PCW history
- Disc care
- Selling the 16
- PC feature
- Guide to free software



ISSUE 12
- New 16 software boost
- Play chess in MicroDesign
- Crash course
- Guide to Help
- Drive belts

ISSUE 13
- Exclusive: Loco boss interview
- Complete guide to getting online
- Fix your PCW
- Logo tutorial
- Loco book review

To order a back issue, simply send a cheque or postal order for the correct amount (payable to PCW Today) to the usual address. Back issues cost £2.50 each, or £7 for all three.

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what's in the latest issue?

first look

ISSUE FOURTEEN

The e-mail of the species

Good old Alan Sugar has done it again with the launch of his e-m@iler communication system.

It is possibly the best Amstrad product to hit Britain's shop shelves since the PCW.

Heralded as e-mail for the masses, it certainly seems to live up to the hype.

But unintentionally, Sugar has handed thousands of PCW users a great reason to stick with their ageing computer.

The e-m@iler is a perfect partner for the Amstrad PCW, whose one major downfall has always been a lack of easy internet access.

With an e-m@iler and PCW working in harmony, you can do just about anything a PC or Mac user can - for a fraction of the cost. Not bad huh?

Check out all the latest news on the e-m@iler and a full review elsewhere in this issue.

PCW TODAY
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(2p per min at weekends).
24-hour Answer Machine: 01642 823117.
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EDITORIAL TEAM Steve Denson, David Landers, David Langford, Peter Sutton, Kathleen Thorpe.
PRINTED BY TeesPrint, Unit 5, Stockton Street, Middlesbrough.
PUBLISHED BY PCW Today.

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TO ALL READERS & ADVERTISERS - AN APOLOGY

We would like to apologise wholheartedly to all readers and advertisers for the continued delays in publication of the magazine and Super Discs over the last year.

Your patience and understanding over the last year has been terrific, and hopefully we can begin to get things back on track now.

Watch out for some great new features in the coming months, as we continue to improve the magazine. Despite what some gloom-merchants will have you believe, the PCW is still very much live and kicking.

We value your ideas and constructive criticism. If you have a view on anything in PCW Today, just drop us a line at the usual address.

Also we are currently looking for new writers, so if you fancy writing about the Amstrad, please let us know.

Headlines

New spreadsheet for LocoScript...

David Landers has launched a brand new spreadsheet that will work within the LocoScript environment.

Instant Recall 3 is the latest addition to the Instant Recall range of LocoScript add-ons developed by the Northumbria based programmer.

David told PCW Today: "My primary intention was to produce a pseudo-spreadsheet for LocoScript users, which not only mimicked the operation of a standard spreadsheet, but also offered many of the specialist features associated with these programs."

The package uses LocoMail in conjunction with LocoFile and is the first ever spreadsheet to work within the LocoScript shell.

The package includes extensive documentation, and has a number of on-disc tutorials that will guide the user through the various functions.

Instant Recall 3 retails at £14.50 inclusive, on 3" or 3.5" discs.

To order your copy, contact David Landers, Brinkburn Cottage, Longframlington, Morpeth, NE65 8AR. Tel: 01665 570662.

• **See review on page 6.**

Three Inch Software on the move

Three Inch Software have moved again after four years in the metropolis of Milton Keynes.

The makers of the famous Three Inch Thesaurus are now based in rural Aberdeenshire.

Their new address is Rowan Cottage, Wester Craigie, Whitecairns, Aberdeen, AB23 8XE and the new number is 01651 862359.

As well as the Thesaurus, Three Inch sell a Rhyming Dictionary, a disc copy program, and the 9512 Rescue Kit.

They continue to have stocks of Japanese-made 3" discs, available at £3 each.

Elliott working on the 'Explorer' disc reader

Programming genius John Elliott is working on a new project that will enable the PC to read PCW graphics.

His 'PCW Explorer' package is in the early stages of development, and a trial version is available free for download on the internet.

John, famous for his Windows PCW emulator, Joyce, and most recently the PcW 16 CP/M emulator, has been working on this latest project on and off for around a year.

Currently just at version 0.01, PCW Explorer could become the new standard for file conversion across platforms. The sector is currently one of the most popular in the PCW market, as many people have deserted their PCWs for Windows PCs and Macs, and want to transfer files across to their new machines.

John said: "PCW Explorer is a first stab at a graphical program to read PCW discs. It is based on Michael Haardt's command-line 'cpmtools' suite, and runs on Unix, Windows NT and Windows 95."

He added: "This is very much a trial run."

At present, the Windows versions are slower and not as pretty as the base Unix version.

Explorer will at present not run with Windows 98 at all, but that will probably change in the future.

The package can currently extract files from PCW discs, read MDA, CUT, SPC and CUT (Logo) files and display them to screen or convert them to JPG or PNG format. It can also delete files from PCW discs.

As with all of John Elliott's software it is free to download at his site - www.seaspip.demon.co.uk.

Amstrad deny e-m@iler crisis

AMSTRAD have moved to deny claims their e-m@iler project is in crisis.

The *Mail on Sunday* alleged that the Amstrad machine was affected by technical problems and supply difficulties.

But Amstrad spokesman Nick Hewer hit back saying: "There are no technical difficulties whatsoever. Deliveries and sales are going very well, and increased supply volumes are scheduled.

"Revenues from e-mail usage are pleasingly in line with our budget expectations, and experimental advertising responses, which also generate revenue, are also very encouraging."

At the start of September, Amstrad announced the third phase of their stepped launch of the e-m@iler, with increased volumes of the system reaching the market.

Quotas of the futuristic phone are going out to Allders, House of Fraser, Rymans, Scottish Power, Tempo and Woolworths.

Sir Alan Sugar, Chairman of Amstrad said: "I am pleased to report that our plans for the e-m@iler are on target and the increased volumes announced today underlines our confidence, and that of our retail customers in the product."

He added: "E-mail traffic and the level of consumer response to advertising offers has been very satisfactory. In the third phase we will use the growing user base to further evaluate the advertising strategy by recruiting other advertisers."

In June, the Dixons group acquired, in a £15 million deal, a 20 per cent shareholding in Amserve, the Amstrad subsidiary behind the e-m@iler.

Dixons Chief Executive, John Clare believes his firm have backed a winner. He said: "There is a definite pent-up demand in the market for a product that will give non-technical people really easy access to e-mail services. Once again, Sir Alan has shown that he has his finger on the pulse of high tech products.

"The e-m@iler makes e-mailing both accessible and affordable to the mass market."

Sir Alan Sugar: 'Demand for the e-m@iler compares with that for the Amstrad PCW

Meanwhile Amstrad has appointed strategic marketing consultancy firm Branded Limited.

Branded will be responsible for positioning and marketing strategy for the e-m@iler which has been given a massive £8 million advertising budget.

Simon Sugar, Commercial Director of Amstrad said: "Branded has the expertise to manage the launch of the e-m@iler now that it has national distribution."

Sir Alan Sugar has compared his e-m@iler system to the Amstrad PCWs that made him famous.

He said: "The demand for the e-m@iler compares with that created by the Amstrad word processor, which also brought affordable technology to the mass market at exactly the right time.

- Amstrad have just announced their annual financial results, which are dramatically up on last year. The firm made a profit before tax of £15.4m excluding £2.3m loss on the e-m@iler set-up. That is 85 per cent up on last year's figure of £8.4 million. Strong sales of the firm's digital set top boxes are the main reason for the rise.

Disk Doctor announces yearly profits

Dave the Disk Doctor's charity data rescue service has announced its profits for 1999/2000.

During the last year, the service, which has rescued thousands of people's damaged discs.

A total of £6,500 profit was made, which will be distributed to worthy causes via the Charities Aid Foundation. It takes the total raised so far to a tremendous £165,000.

Dave Smith, who operates the service has expressed his thanks to all those organisations and individuals who pass clients on to the company.

You can contact the Disk Doctor service on 01892 835974.

New Rescue Disc upgrade

An upgrade of the PcW 16 Rescue Disc has been released.

The latest version - 1.13 - includes a bug fix in the Speadsheet.

The disc is available exclusively from the British Amstrad PCW Club.

If you are a member, send a one pound cheque or postal order, or five first class stamps, along with a PcW 16 HD formatted disc to the club's PD librarian.

Non-members should contact the club for costing and other details.

SD Micro relaunch 'Essential guides'

SD MicroSystems have relaunched the excellent 'Essential Guide to...' series.

The on-disc guides were originally marketed by DGC Software and were hugely popular at the time.

Subjects covered by the guides, which are on sale for £9.95 each, include LocoScript 2, LocoScript 3, CP/M and MicroDesign. And of particular interest to Super Disc subscribers is the Protext disc. Ring SD Micro/LocoScript on 08700 736427 for more information.

instant recall 3

a spreadsheet for locoscript

We take an exclusive look at the new LocoScript add-on

Just when you thought all was quiet on the PCW software front, along comes another new product to fill a niche in the market.

Most people agree that LocoScript is a pretty amazing little piece of software, especially in its fourth incarnation. And when bundled with LocoMail and LocoFile, you have an unbeatable software suite, all working from the same easy-to-use environment.

Like all great software, there have been numerous add-ons over the years, like John Elliott's screen saver, the Three Inch Thesaurus and David Langford's Ansible Index. All these programs, still available today, add an extra dimension to the LocoScript family.

But perhaps most significant of all the add-ons was Instant Recall 1 and 2, now re-bundled as LocoOffice by the new owners of LocoScript Software.

These packages combine the wonders of LocoMail and LocoScript to offer new possibilities such as calculations, accounting, and graph-making.

Now the programmer behind Instant Recall, David Landers, has just launched the latest in the series, called what else but Instant Recall 3.

His new venture has been billed as a 'pseudo spreadsheet for LocoScript', and that is IR3 in a nutshell.

This revolution in PCW software means you no longer need to load CP/M to use work with a spreadsheet. Now, with the full Instant Recall Package, your classic PCW can do everything the PcW 16 suite can and more - all within the LocoScript environment.

Our review copy was a prototype version, but David doesn't think it will be radically different from the final release edition.

To use IR3 you will need LocoScript 2.5 or above, LocoFile and LocoMail. (If you haven't already got File and Mail, now is a great time to upgrade, because the packages are available together for their lowest ever price.)

You will need some working knowledge of File and Mail before you start, but once you've got the hang of things, it is all reasonably easy to use.

The package is split into two elements, a special LocoFile datafile, containing a hidden LocoMail routine, plus a LocoMail Master (merge) file.

Once filled in, within LocoFile, the worksheet is calculated by the LocoMail Master file. In other words, IR3, cleverly combines both packages to bring you the data you need.

As with all spreadsheets, IR3 is made up of cells. These appear on LocoFile record cards, and each card can hold 48 cells. A total of 288 cells, or six record cards, is possible. This is not a lot compared to the more established CP/M spreadsheets, by in reality, 288 cells should be enough for most home-based users.

Like all spreadsheets, cells can contain text numbers, formulae, cell references and commands, making the most complicated of commands possible.

IR3 falls down on calculation speed, because LocoFile and Mail are not the fastest of programs. But one big advantage this program has over its CP/M rivals is print quality, which is unbeatable. The final results are printed through LocoScript, which produces undeniably the best print-out on the PCW .

Because, like all spreadsheets, it is by its very nature complicated, IR3 comes with a series of handy tutorial sessions. These use sample worksheets to show you how calculations are carried out. The first session teaches you the basics, while the second goes on to demonstrate the more sophisticated features of the system.

For advanced users, there are some neat features, like 'What if?' and 'Goal Seek' processing, which help solve potential problems in the long term.

There is also a 'Sum' function, two internal macros and a number of external macros.

Extensive documentation is promised, although we didn't see all of it in the review copy. IR3 comes on 3" or 3.5" discs, and at just £14.50 inclusive, it's an absolute bargain.

All in all, IR3 is another welcome addition to the ever-expanding LocoScript family. It is a cleverly thought out and thoroughly well produced package.

Instant Recall 3's obvious strength is that you never need to leave LocoScript to make a calculation, and I'm sure users of the classic word processor will welcome this new sibling with open arms. It certainly deserves to be a success.

INSTANT RECALL 3

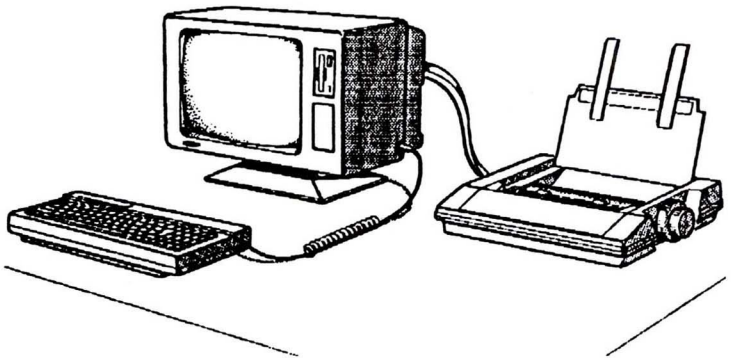
Price: £14.50 inc.

From: David Landers, 01665 570662.

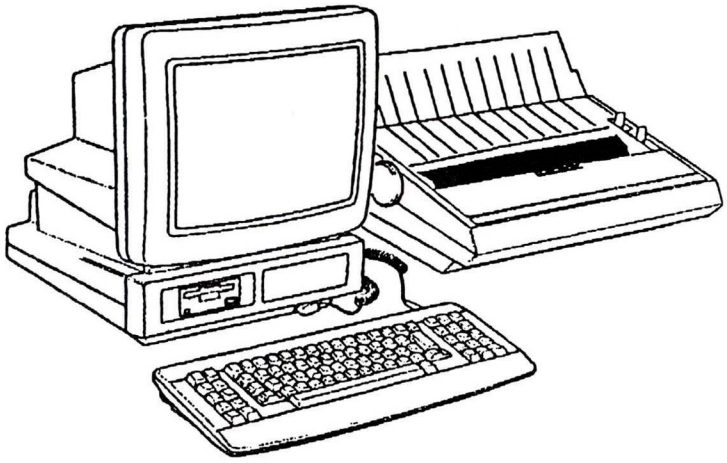
Suitable for: All classic PCWs with LocoScript 2.5+, LocoFile and LocoMail (Not PcW 16)

VALUE	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
OVERALL	★★★★☆

Do you own a PCW?



Do you still use it?



Then join the **British Amstrad PCW Club** now!
The annual subscription of just £12 entitles you to the *Disc Drive*, **the** quarterly magazine devoted entirely to the Amstrad PCW, plus regular issues of the *Newsletter* throughout the year.

In addition PCW Workshops are held every month at the Basildon Centre, Basildon, Essex, usually at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month. All visitors are welcome and the first meeting is free.

Full details of membership from the Secretary, Peter A Clark, 8 Wiltshire Avenue, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 3DX.
Telephone: 01708 450596

You can also e-mail `PadInt4U@aol.com` for details or simply turn up on the night.

www.web watch

Adrian Braddy reviews a selection of the many top internet sites devoted to the Amstrad PCW

PCW Today Online
www.pcwtoday.co.uk

The leading site on the web - well we would say that wouldn't we! Recently given a complete make-over this site is best known for its extensive list of regularly-updated links to other major PCW sites.

Another popular feature is the PCW Today Forum, where Amstrad users can share views and questions. Currently the most popular topic of discussion is data transfer between PC and PCW.

There is also information about the full PCW range, the latest Amstrad news, and subscription details.

Although primarily intended to promote the magazine worldwide to non-subscribers, there is plenty here for regular readers too.

16 Storm
www.aster.fsnet.co.uk/pcw16.htm

PCW Today readers overwhelmingly voted this site the best PCW site on the web in our last Joyce Awards, and it certainly deserved the honour.

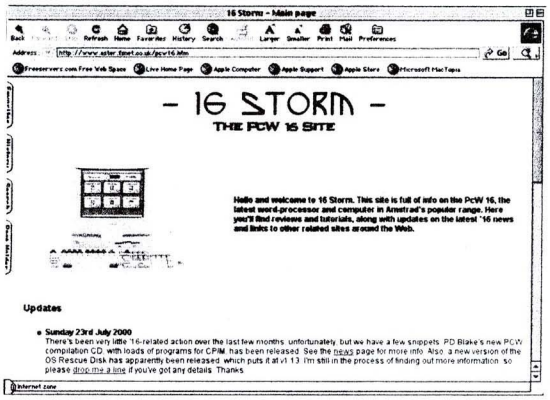
This is essential viewing for PcW 16 users. The site is extremely well designed by Mike Saunders, and contains news, reviews of software and opinion columns. A lack of action on the16 front dictates that there have been few updates on this site recently, but don't let that stop you paying it a visit.

Joyce-User-AG
www.joyce.de

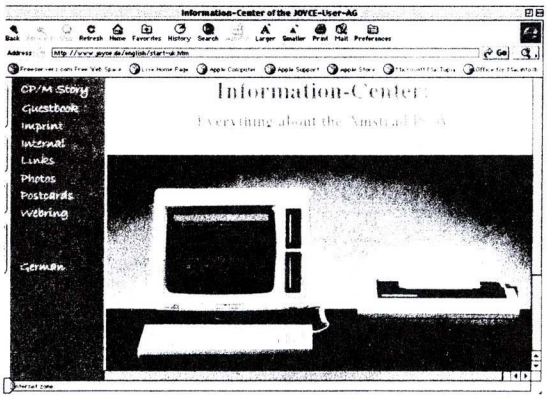
The PCW is very big on the continent, where it is known largely as Joyce. One of the best overseas sites is that set up by this German PCW Club.

It is packed with pictures and a detailed history of CP/M operating system. For a different perspective on the PCW world, take a look at this site.

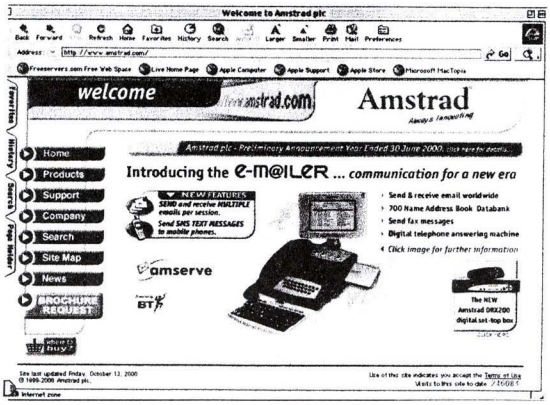
Judging by the photos section, they have a large and very active organisation here.



The beautifully designed 16 Storm web site voted No. 1



This German site offers an alternative PCWing perspective



Amstrad's classy site is mostly devoted to their new e-m@iler system

Amstrad
www.amstrad.com

Of course, as you would expect Amstrad have a terrific web presence, with this beautiful, if rather slow site.

Somewhat surprisingly however, they were very late on the scene, and PCW Today actually had an official web site before Amstrad!

The site concentrates mostly on the new e-m@iler as you might expect, and coverage of the older PCW systems is almost non-existent.

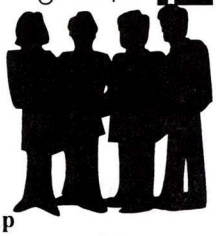
Next issue we will look at the unofficial Amstrad site, which does still remember the word processor.

LocoScript Software
www.locomotive.com

LocoScript do around 10 per cent of their trade on-line, and this is reflected in this impressive site, which includes the entire LocoScript catalogue.

This is as close as the PCW world gets to dot.com marketing alone. Well worth a look if you want to check out the latest prices. Secure credit card ordering is available. We'll look at SD MicroSystem's sister site next time.

club scene



Brisbane PCW User Group
Mike Mackenzie runs this Australian club. To contact him from outside the country, telephone 617 32775701. Alternatively you could e-mail him on avcom@gil.com.au

British Amstrad PCW Club
Club secretary David Lalieu has resigned from the committee, so chairman Mike Elliston has taken up editorship of the newsletter.

New secretary is Peter Clark and you can contact him at the address below.

As a result of a letter in the Daily Telegraph earlier this year, the group received about 120 enquiries from the public, which resulted in 35 new members.

The always-excellent club magazine The Disc Drive, at 24 pages this issue, reports that one PCW, circa 1985, is still working well in the Middle East! The only setback is that the dot matrix printer ribbons dry up very quickly in the heat.

There are articles on making business cards with MD3 and the idiosyncracies of the PcW 16.

Contact secretary, Peter Clark, 8 Wiltshire Avenue, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 3DX. Or e-mail for information: PadInt4U@aol.com

See their display ad elsewhere for further information.

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
Our congratulations go out to newsletter editor, Eileen, who was due to get married on November 1st.

Meanwhile the club is getting heavily involved in PC matters, so room for the PCW is limited.

Contact Membership Secretary Aldyth Scott on 01293 523513.

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.

Joyce Computer Club (Amsterdam)
The PCW's highly active presence in Holland has its own web site, which is now regularly updated. You can find it at www.euronet.nl/users/fvempel. Contact: Frank Van Empel, Leksmondhof 8, NL-1108 EM Amsterdam. E-mail: fvempel@euronet.nl.

Joyce User AG (Germany)
One of the biggest PCW clubs in Europe, this group has a major on-line presence in both German and English at www.joyce.de where you can find information and pictures showing the club's activities.

The club produce a large magazine and have a software collection. Contact the group c/o Werner Neumeyer-Babel, Liemeckestr Sa, D34466 Wolfhagen, Germany. Or you can e-mail him at postmaster@joyce.de

Kentish PCW Club
For further details, contact: Leslie Merchant, 14 Mill Road, Northfleet, Gravesend. Tel: 01474 335882.

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
This group appears to have finally discontinued, and judging by a few letters we have received here, the membership were not happy about the way things went in the end.

Morley Amstrad PCWers
This club meets in Morley 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.

PCW Australia Group
Sid O'Brien writes "There are still a number of people including myself doing their best to support the Amstrad PCW and its users in OZ." Contact him via e-mail at killjoy@one.net.au

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
Newsletter editor and group 'organiser' David Williams is standing down from his post. And at a September meeting, members opted to cover PCs as well as PCWs in future.

Recent newsletters have included an interesting article on switchable A/B disc drives.

Contact: David Williams, 32/34 Carfin Street, New Stevenson, Motherwell ML1 4JL. Tel: 01698 732403. E-mail: beafeater@lineone.net

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
For details, contact: Elsa Turner on 01935 823618.

Widmore PCW Club
Members meet on the third Wednesday of the month at Bromley Adult Education College.

There are an average of 14 to 20 members at each meeting with 50 members in total, making this one of the biggest PCW clubs around.

For more details, contact Dorothy Featherstone on 01689 858105. And be sure to buy a copy of her excellent book on LocoScript 4.

Please keep your newsletters coming!

change the belt on a 3" drive

revive your drive

Ron King and **Adrian Braddy** explain how to fix that ageing 3" drive in just half an hour

The single most common reason for your PCW to break down is a worn or stretched drive belt.

And dozens of PCWs are thrown away every month by owners who do not realise that a simple DIY job would have restored the health of their computer.

You can tell if your drive belt is on the way out pretty easily. You may get a lot of error messages, the drive may make a racket when searching for files, or the computer may take some time to warm up before accepting. Sound familiar? Now is the time to act, before you lose some valuable data.

You can buy replacement belts from a number of sources, although SD Micro-Systems is probably your best bet, as they pioneered the 'Drive Reviver' and they also include a disc head cleaner.

This job requires some very small screwdrivers, patience and a steady hand. These instructions are given in good faith, and I cannot be held responsible for damage that you may do to your drive. However, having said that, it is not too difficult, and I have done it dozens of times without too much hassle.

First off you need a good clear surface, covered by a towel or blanket. This will help protect your PCW and stop screws rolling away under the furniture.

Remove any discs from the drive/s, switch off and unplug your computer, disconnect the keyboard, printer and any extra add-ons you may have like a memory upgrade or mouse.

Before removing the back, leave the unit to stand for half an hour, to let the high voltages discharge.

Now you are ready to get inside the PCW, lay the monitor face down on your blanket, and remove the six screws from the back. You will need at least two different screwdrivers to do this. 9512 users also need to pull off the two picture control knobs at the side.

Now carefully ease off the back.

8000 series users can now get direct access to the drive, although you should slide the main PCB (Printed Circuit Board) out of its grooves. You will not be able to remove it entirely as it is connected by numerous cables and wires.

9512 users will first need to unplug two connectors, labelled CP006 and J003 from the PCB, then unscrew the earth wire.

Next, remove the two connectors from the back of the drive, and lift out the drive itself.

There are two basic drive types; those with a slot which just takes the disc, and the other with a slot which is about twice the width of the disc.

Within the two types there are various configurations including single and double head drives, different printed circuit boards, etc. But the two basic types, in my experience, have different ways of detecting whether a disc is write-protected or not.

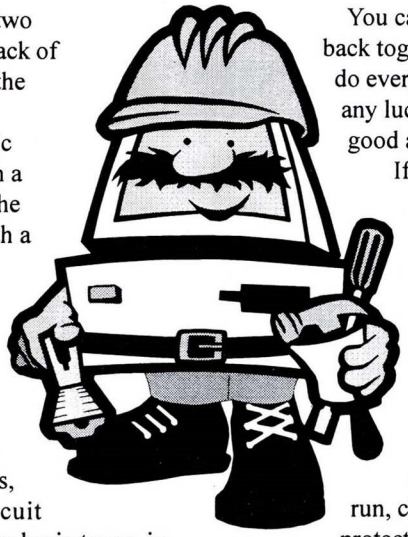
The 'wide slot' type has a light source and detector, while the 'narrow slot' type has a brass headed pin which operates a microswitch. This is easy to drop out and lose, so be warned; always work over a soft cloth or towel which prevents small parts from bouncing away.

Remove the screws which hold the drive to its case, and it should easily slide out.

You should find that the drive has its own PCB (they are always green). This needs to be removed by loosening the tiny screw that holds it in place.

Using a screwdriver, you should be able to lever the PCB up. Be careful, because it will be connected by wires on the underside.

Lifting it just an inch should be enough for you to remove the old drive belt. You will probably find it slides off its wheel very easily as it is stretched and worn. Using a pencil, or anything with a point, ease the new belt into place, and check that the wheels turn freely.



You can now put everything back together. Take your time and do everything in reverse. With any luck your PCW will be as good as new when you test it.

If the drive fails to work.

1. Check that the LEDs in the drive are lit up, otherwise it could be a power fault or the failure of an IC protector.

2. Does the motor run? Check that the disc is being driven round okay. If the motor doesn't run, check for failure of the IC protector.

3. Are you sure that the disc you are using is okay.

If, after all these checks, the drive still doesn't function then it is probably a write-off. A typical malfunction is when the head(s) hunt up and down the disc without picking up a signal. This signifies failure of either the head or the PC board and unfortunately new spares are no longer available (though you could try Pinboard for second user spares).

However I hope that the replacement belt gets your drive working again.

For more repairs information, check out Ron's web site at **www.king27.freeserve.co.uk**

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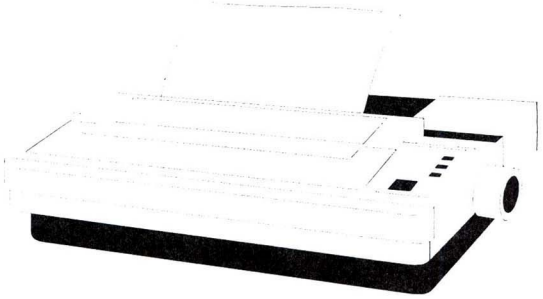

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perfect partners

Amstrad's newest invention is one of their greatest yet. **Adrian Braddy** investigates how the e-m@iler can work in harmony with Alan Sugar's other famous creation

In recent years it has become clear that the Amstrad PCW is lagging behind in the connected age.

When it comes to basic word processing, accounting and desktop publishing, the PCW takes some beating. But because it is very tricky to get on-line with a PCW, many users have reluctantly pensioned-off their Amstrad and been lured into the glitzy world of PCs and iMacs.

They have been forced to spend upwards of £500 on the computer equipment that will enable them to get hooked-up to the internet.

Almost without fail, every ex-PCW user I speak to says they made the decision to fork out for a PC, merely because they wanted to send e-mail and get onto the internet. They were perfectly happy with everything else about their PCW.

As we told you last week, it is possible to get connected to the world wide web on your little Amstrad - a feat of some magnitude when you consider the processing power of a PCW compared to a Pentium. However the software and technology to get you on-line is slow, unreliable and in reality, probably too tricky for most users to deal with.

So when Amstrad announced their latest in a long-line of recent innovations earlier this year, everyone in the diminishing PCW world jumped in delight.

Imagine an all-in-one telephone, digital answerphone and e-mail device that is as simple to use as an everyday telephone, and costs just £80.

Well Amstrad have created just that, and it's called the e-m@iler.

Already, they have shifted 200,000 units, and Alan Sugar hopes to sell a million within two years. With the commercial backing of the giant Dixons group, it seems certain to become a success.

And every PCW user should own one, because the e-m@iler can work in perfect harmony with your current Amstrad wonder machine.

Sit an e-m@iler on a desk next to your PCW, and you have all you need in the modern connected world, for a fraction of the price it would cost you to buy a PC or iMac.

At present the e-m@iler does exactly what it says on the tin - it sends e-mails. But in the future, when the user base has grown, Amstrad plan to add internet-capabilities, allowing you to browse the web, pay your bills and shop on-line.

And the clever thing is, the software updates itself automatically during the night when you are asleep. At the time of writing, the operating system is up to version six, and more updates are just around the corner.

Alan Sugar reckons his e-m@iler is Amstrad's greatest product since the PCW, and it is certainly the first to sell in numbers like the 8256 did back in the mid-eighties.

He is aiming the e-m@iler at technophobes, but perhaps accidentally he has provided a product ideal for the thousands of people who still use his word processors.

Probably without knowing it, Big Al has given the PCW the lifeline it desperately needed.

Already we are receiving e-mails from readers who have bought one of the new machines, and they all seem to think it's the greatest thing since sliced bread. We at *Today* have to agree.

The em@iler, like the PCW, is compatible with parallel non-Windows printers, which means you probably won't even need to invest in a new printer if you decide to treat yourself to an e-m@iler. The two computers can share the same output device.

As I said, surely a match made in heaven!

Why bother with a PC now, when your PCW and em@iler together will do everything you need!

easy **e-mailing**

For six months, *PCW Today* has had one of Amstrad's e-m@ilers in daily use. **Adrian Braddy** reports on how the futuristic telephone will change the way you live

At first glance, the em@iler looks just like an everyday telephone, with a bizarre mini computer screen sprouting out of its back.

But the simple design deceptively hides the fact that this is a fantastic piece of technology that will genuinely change your communications habits forever.

Previously sending an e-mail was quite a laboured process. First you had to boot up the PC or iMac - a process that seems to take longer, the more advanced these computers get. Then you had to log onto the Internet, launch your e-mail program, and connect to your ISP.

But the e-m@iler cuts out all this time-wasting, and sending an electronic message takes about as long as it takes to lift the receiver and make a phone call.

When you first take the e-m@iler out of its box - a colourful and ludicrously oversized cardboard creation - you may be put-off by the chunky manual. But in reality, even the biggest technophobe can set up the phone for use and you barely need touch the manual, because you are guided by simple on-screen instructions.

The screen itself is black and white, with a resolution of 480 x 320 dpi. It is back-lit for easy reading and is more than adequate to read e-mail messages, and view graphics.

Unlike ordinary phones that just sit there and look boring, the em@iler has animated graphics that will make your office or living room look like the set of a Star Trek episode.

For example, when the phone rings, a picture of an old-fashioned telephone appears on-screen, with the handset bouncing off the receiver. Completely pointless, but I love it!

Once you and family members have set up their e-mail account - which takes around five minutes - you can send and receive e-mails immediately.

To write an e-mail, bring up the name of your contact in the on-screen address book and press the e-mail button. This instantly opens a message box on-screen with the recipient's e-mail address already entered.

Slide out the natty little keyboard, hidden at the base of the phone and type in your message. Press the e-mail button again and your message will be sent to its destination. And it really is that simple.

As you send a message out, your e-m@iler checks to see if you have any e-mails waiting for you to read. This saves you money on your phone bill. One connection costs just 12p and you can receive any number of e-mail for that one price.

Curiously though, in the six months we have been using the e-m@iler, BT have still not billed us for the e-m@il calls! Slightly worrying for Amstrad that, since this is where they make-up the money they are losing on the ridiculously low price of the console.

You can opt to subscribe to BT's caller ID service, which costs £4 a quarter, and it will let you know when you've received a new message. It also shows you on-screen who's calling you, which is quite good if you want to avoid double glazing salespeople.

Whilst you can discourage human salesman, your e-m@iler sadly introduces a new form of pressure-selling into your home.

Amstrad makes money by selling screen-space on your e-m@iler, giving advertisers direct access to your living room. Throughout the day, these prettily designed adverts, will appear on-screen when the phone is not in use.

Some reviewers have called this a sinister development, and I admit it did seem a little odd. But in reality, the advertising is hardly intrusive. At present, you rarely see an advert, and if you do, simply pressing a button, or lifting the receiver gets rid of the message. I doubt if many will feel it's an invasion of privacy.

I mentioned the slide-out keyboard earlier. This is very similar to those found on the Psion palmtop computers so popular these days. If you have small hands, you can actually touch type, but if you have larger than average digits you may find it a problem. However, since Amstrad never intended you to type a best-selling novel on the e-m@iler, the keyboard should not offer too many problems.

Also included is a slide-out 'Docket Pocket', which acts as a portable databank. You can take it with you when you go on holiday and never need forget those important names and addresses again.

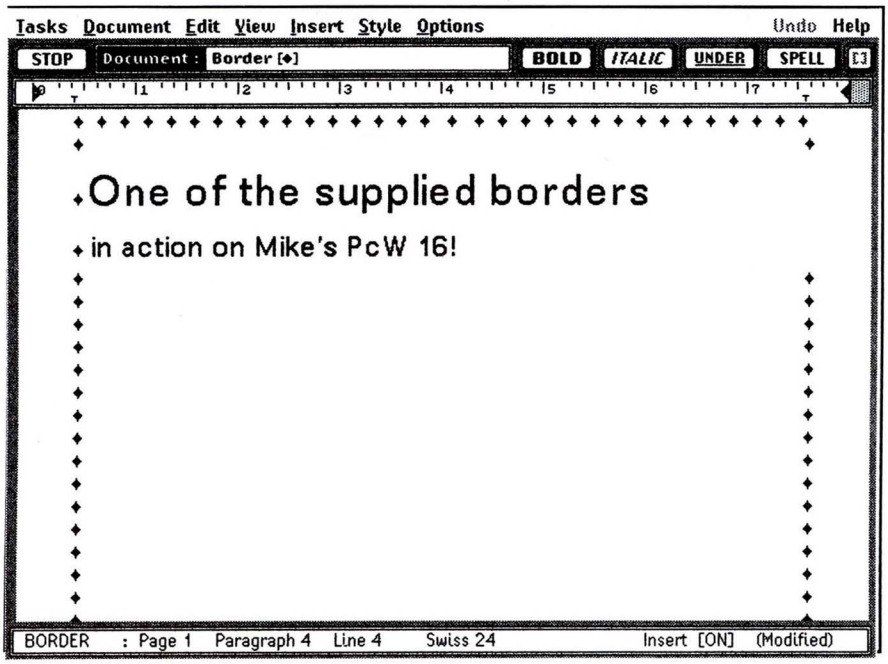
For the average PCW user, who has neither the cash or the inclination to splash out on a PC, this is a fantastic development. If you insist on having 24 million colours and access to the most sophisticated of web sites, then you should probably fork out the money for a Pentium or Apple. But for the rest of us, Amstrad's e-m@iler can open a whole new world of communications at a budget price. Go for it!

more than words

Mike Saunders reviews a great add-on for the PcW 16

Although things have recently been quiet on the PcW 16 front, a few developers are still aiming to improve the situation and give the machine a bit more hope for the future.

One such '16 fan is Don Moody, who has put together an assortment of tutorials, templates and tips to help '16 users make the most of their applications.



It's generally accepted that the 16's word processor is rather limited when compared to recent releases of LocoScript. Despite competent WYSIWYG screen rendering (ie the text on screen appears the same as the printed sheet), its lack of any decent graphics tools and advanced formatting options relegates the program's potential to creating plain letters and other simple documents.

However, with some tweaking and experimenting, it's possible to squeeze some extra features out of the word processor.

This is the aim of Don's disc - to demonstrate some of the effects that can be achieved and assist you in creating your own enhanced documents from scratch. They're not programs as such, but individual files explaining the process involved in using these methods.

The disc has a few instructions on the label, which direct you to the first introductory file. This details the various other files on the disc, with some extra notes on compatibility with the expected OS version and printer.

The disc is known to work with Rosanne v1.12 and was created with the Canon BJC 250 printer. With the emphasis on Desktop publishing, the disc's main focus is on the word processor application itself.

The most prominent feature here is the ability to create two or three column text - either by modifying current documents, or by writing text diirectly into the program. This involves copying text to the Scratchpad and passing the paper multiple times through the printer, and it works quite well.

Comprehensive instructions are supplied for this process, and while they're initially daunting, they're well written and can be printed out before you attempt to make a multi-columned document of your own. A nice touch is the inclusion of some sample documents, which give a solid idea of how the process works and what the finished result will look like.

Moving on, there's a guide to emulating draft-mode printing, but this is specific to the Canon printer mentioned earlier and won't be applicable to all users. Another file deals with the issue of template sorting, and how they can be converted to normal files and arranged in the best way on disc.

A folder on the disc is devoted to artwork, and more specifically graphical borders to print around the edges of documents. It only uses the built-in symbols and icons that the '16 is supplied with, so you can't use other images, as with SD Micro's Fancy Borders, but nevertheless, it's a top feature and certainly improves the look of any document.

Another folder covers the process of creating labels, such as address labels and so forth. Essentially, this is similar to the multiple-column method seen elsewhere on the disc, but with some extra ideas behind it. There's also an extra document explaining direct envelopes themselves. Again, both are clearly explained and go step-by-step through the procedure.

Other guides and sample documents cover cassette tapes - both producing labels and inlay cards for them. The inlay example shows you exactly where to type the track listings and title, and is very well done indeed.

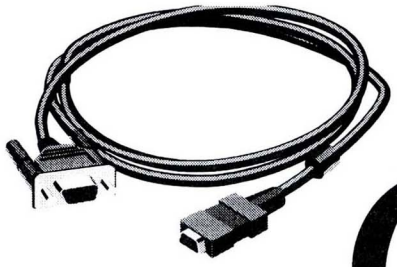
There's a file showing how to make a simple database out of the address book and word processor programs. with extra overlays for when you want to print the stored data.

Finally, there's some information on using the Spreadsheet application to deal with financial information, which will automatically calculate the overall balance from credits and debits.

The supplied samples have been designed to fit neatly into the screen space, which is a bonus when taking into account the slow redraw speed.

In all, this disc has been carefully thought-out, and it's clear that time and attention has been spent in creating the tutorials and sample documents.

The examples are highly useful and show just what can be achieved, and for £ 10 it's also pretty good value. If you've exhausted all possibilities with your PCW 16 and want to get more out of the supplied programs' this should be your first priority.



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temping in loco

Kathleen Thorpe has this guide to LocoScript letters

When typing your personal or business letters using LocoScript, there are several ways to easily access other information such as names, addresses, telephone numbers or even notes and memos, without the necessity of LocoFile or LocoMail.

Whichever version of LocoScript you use, it automatically copies any Template.Std files you might have on your start of day disc, into the corresponding group in the M: drive. Why not take advantage of this useful facility in the following ways.

To begin with, your start of day disc must be write enabled (shock horror!). After loading LocoScript move the cursor to a group on the disc which doesn't already have a Template.Std, and press 'C' to create a new one. Set the margins with the layout you would normally use for envelopes, for example left margin 35, right margin 70. Type the first name and address as it would appear on an envelope and put an 'end page here' code at the end. On the second page, type in the telephone number(s), fax, e-mail address (if applicable) and a short note about that particular person, e.g. 'only phone after 6pm' or 'expert on disc drives', followed by another 'end page here' code. Continue adding names and addresses on odd numbered pages, with any other details on even numbered pages until you have all the contact details you want included. You could even put them in alphabetical order if you wish. Then when you have finished, press EXIT, FINISH EDIT, followed by ENTER to save the Template.Std file to the disc. Now rename the group this file is in to something like 'MAILLIST' or a name you will recognise. Then give the new file an 'identity' text which will remind you what it's there for. Finally, write protect your disc.

The next time you load LocoScript again, your new template file will be copied (along with any others) automatically to the corresponding group on the M: drive. Use this file to 'COPY' and 'PASTE' the data that you want to include in your document, 'PRINT' an address onto an envelope or simply check a phone number and contact details for a particular person or company.

If you use LocoScript 4, you could even print the entire list of addresses onto continuous labels, using the 'print odd pages' option in the print menu. To enhance your labels further, it would also be possible to put a small graphic on each label by including a graphic file in the same group as the Template.Std, and adding a picture code to position it. Any of LocoScript's LX fonts you may have could be used to add more style to your labels and they could even be printed on a colour printer if you have one. Another use for a Template.Std file in an otherwise empty group of your start of day disc, is to set one up in any form you find easy to use for keeping notes, memos, messages or lists and use it as a diary. This will always be available on drive M: after loading, where you can add any information you might need to carry over from one session on your PCW to another, such as to do lists, phone messages and appointments etc. Don't forget to copy the file back to the disc before switching off your PCW (otherwise this data will be lost) and then this information will be ready and waiting for you in drive M: the next time you boot up.

If you have a two drive machine and don't want to tamper with your start of day disc, there is an alternative way to keep an address/phone list and a diary. Keep a second disc with two groups, one called 'ADDRESS' and the other called 'DIARY'. Create a diary Template.Std in the diary group and create a separate diary file for each day using the date as a file name. Out of date entries could then be deleted to ensure there will always be room for any new entries.

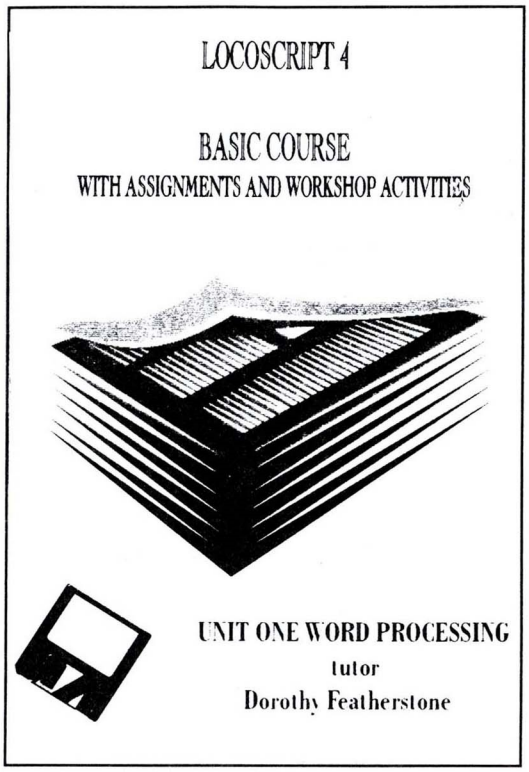
In the address group, set up a Template.Std with the margins set for envelopes, no text is necessary. Then create separate files for each name and address, using the surname as the file name title e.g. THORPE.ADD would have my name and address in it. PCWTODAY.ADD would be the address for your favourite PCW magazine. Use the 'identity' text for phone numbers etc. For instance, for PCW Today you could put: Editor - Adrian Braddy, Tel: 01642 823117., adrian@pcwtoday.co.uk

The beauty of this method is that all the addresses will be in alphabetical order in the 'Disc Management Screen'. When this disc is inserted into your B: drive, the information is easily accessed whether you are working in the A: or M: drive.

If you occasionally need to use a simple one page set letter, which just needs a different name and address added to each one, then this is another candidate for using Template.Std file to make your life easier. Press 'C' and name your new document Template.Std.

In the editing screen, press F1 (in LocoScript 2, 3 and 4) and select 'Document Setup' now press F5 and select A4 paper with a header zone of 9, page body 8 and footer zone of 53. This will give you a page length of 70 which is the correct size for A4 paper. Return to the document set up and type in your own name, address and telephone number in the header. In the footer, type the main body of text (excluding 'Dear' and the name of the recipient) followed by 'Yours Sincerely' and your signature. Save the template to an empty group on the disc. All you need to do now is press 'C' to create new document, give it the name of the person or organisation you are sending it to.

In the editing screen you only need to type in the recipients address followed by 'Dear' and their title. If you have used either of the above methods to store names and addresses you could have already copied up to nine addresses in blocks. If so, you only need to 'PASTE' each block into the relevant letter. This would be a quick and easy way to notify everyone of a change of address, the birth of a new baby or a forthcoming event such as a party. All this without using any additional programs!



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By Dorothy Featherstone
Lecturer in IT at Bromley Adult Education
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The book lists the new features in upgrading from LocoScript 2 and 3 to version 4 and explains simply how to apply them.
It is an easy guide to all word processing techniques from basic commands to advanced features. The book gives advice on installing Decorative and Business fonts, adding an external printer, printing in colour and adding clipart pictures to enhance text.
It includes help with tables, columns, page numbering, inserting frames, boxes and pictures. It contains interesting activities to pursue including repetitively numbering theatre tickets, creating exciting posters, illustrating poetry and displaying newsletters efficiently. It will refresh and enthuse the experienced PCW user and show new users what can be achieved with a simple Word Processor/Computer.

david landers

file compression

the incredible shrinking man

Programmer **David Landers** finds out how Mr Greenlaw squashed his bits and introduced file compression

Richard Greenlaw was responsible for introducing the concept of file compression to microcomputers, and his pioneering program (dating from 1981) was CP/M based.

The primary intention behind it was to reduce the size of files sent via modem links - the smaller the file the less chance there is of transmission errors, while shorter transmission times also mean lower phone bills of course.

Remote-access (bulletin board) systems enthusiastically embraced the new technique; not least because the space saved on the host computer allowed it to hold many more files than before. Soon, virtually all the files on these 'dial-up' services would be compressed - apart from the relevant decompression program. Obviously, subscribers had to have the normal version of this in order to deal with compressed files that they subsequently downloaded.

pack it in

The first stage of compression consists of 'packing' the file to rid it of wasted space. This procedure (properly known as run-length encoding) removes character repeats. For instance, a run of six hyphens can be packed into half the original space by changing it into a new sequence consisting of a special marker code, followed by the code for '6', then a single hyphen.

Once the compression program has packed the file, it can start on the real work. And the method employed is rather like the one used in a simple secret message system: substituting new symbols for letters of the alphabet. Except that in our case, by manipulating the manner in which the computer stores information, the encoded version ends up shorter. Every character in the ASCII set is represented by seven data bits, with each bit being either a one or a nought. But some characters are far more widely used than others: in this article so far, the letter 'z' has occurred twice, yet the letter 'e' has been used over 200 times. If 'e' were to be represented by two data bits, 200 bits could be allocated to 'z' and there'd still be a big overall saving compared to giving them seven each.

letter squeezing

That's more or less how the original Greenlaw program, SQ.COM (SQUEEZE), works - although it certainly wouldn't waste 200 data bits on a letter 'z'! SQUEEZE replaces standard bit-strings with alternative data bits, in such a way that the length of the replacement bit-code is inversely proportional to the frequency of occurrence.

A new file is thereby produced, which is automatically given a 'Q' as the middle letter of its filename extension (its 'suffix'). TEXT.DOC, for example, would be called TEXT.DQC when compressed. The original name is preserved within the new file, so that the decompressor, USQ.COM, knows what to call it whenever it is expanded to its pre-compression state. USQ also has to have a cipher key - just as anyone receiving a secret 'symbol' message needs the swap-code to be able to read it. A decoding table is therefore included within each compressed file.

It's done that way - rather than building a permanent key into the decompression program - because SQUEEZE doesn't impose a fixed coding structure. Its flexibility (and much of its efficiency) comes from not making assumptions: 'e' may be the most common letter in the English language, but 'z' could be close behind if the text happened to be a zoological study about zymotic diseases in Zambian zebras.

Anyway, program files (...yes, these can be compressed too) are unlikely to follow any pattern based on text files. So SQUEEZE searches through the target file, determining individual character frequencies, before assigning any codes.

The decoding table takes up space itself, meaning that very small files can actually end up larger than before - but reductions of around 30% will be achieved on most text files, and about half that on program files.

Although newer compressors offer far better reduction rates than SQUEEZE, its main advantage is that - having been around so long - squeezed files are more likely to be compatible with other CP/M programs.

word crunching

The next generation of compression programs work at 'word' rather than 'character' level: to continue the secret-message analogy, they substitute symbols for whole words.

Again taking this article as an example, the CRUNCH program would realize that words like 'the' and 'this' have occurred far more often than 'assumptions' or 'zoological'. So it would assign short bit-codes to the former, longer ones to the latter. Frequency, not word length, is the deciding factor - a small saving made many times being better than a larger saving made just once or twice.

Now, within a computer file, the storage of programming code is really no different to the storage of text. And, although individual characters (bytes) are fairly uniformly distributed in a binary file, strings of bytes do tend to form distinct patterns. So CRUNCH is able to compress these files more effectively than SQUEEZE can.

And it's much faster, too. CRUNCH rapidly reduces a text file to about half its original size, and manages almost as well with program files. A later variation on CRUNCH, called CRLZH.COM, does even better - regularly attaining 60-65% reductions on text files - but can't match CRUNCH on speed.

Crunched files have a 'Z' as the middle letter of their filename extension (so TEXT.DOC becomes TEXT.DZC), whereas CRLZH uses a 'Y' (TEXT.DYC).

Incidentally, the 'LZH' in the name of the latter program records the initials of the trio who developed this particular compression technique.

restoration work

Compressed files aren't much use until they've been expanded to their original form. Some CP/M file managers will recognise certain compression formats and can either decompress the file to disc or display it (if suitable) on screen. But try to TYPE a compressed text file and you'd get gibberish; attempt to run a compressed program and the computer would probably hang (which is one reason for the filename changes.) So each compressor has an associated decompressor - and it's worth noting that the decompression programs for CRUNCH and CRLZH are both backwards compatible: UNCR.COM decompresses squeezed and crunched files; UCRLZH.COM can handle all three kinds.

A useful, backwards compatible viewer is available for LZH-compressed text files. Called TLZH.COM (short for TYPE-LZH), it provides a paged screen display of virtually any ASCII file - whether compressed or not.

The programs described are all freeware, and can be found on the new Super Disc, due out soon.

We'll continue with this subject in the next issue by finding out how compressed files may be conveniently held in libraries and archives.

File Compression - Why?

Hard disc owners perhaps benefit most - there's a tendency to keep anything and everything on the fixed drive, so it's not surprising that it fills up. Anyone with lengthy text files on a hard disc should definitely consider compressing them: they'll take up far less room, yet can still be displayed on screen very easily. Much the same is true of rarely used, space-hungry programs.

With or without a hard disc, all of us accumulate old work files over the years, and these are prime candidates for compression. Graphics files can produce spectacular savings - just prior to writing this I crunched a 28k Desktop Publisher 'GRF' file, which went down to a mere 2k in a matter of seconds! In bulk storage terms, that means one floppy disc instead of fourteen.

Large, redundant LocoScript documents compress quite well: CRLZH will reduce a 16k Loco-4 document to about 8k - with page layout, etc., still intact. However, the disadvantage is that it must be decompressed under CP/M then edited by LocoScript purely in order to read it. So if layout isn't important, turn the document into ASCII text first, via [f1]. (That will reduce its size even before you compress it.) The compressed file can then be viewed - as a reminder of what it contains - by a utility such as TLZH. If you do need it again, decompress it and insert the ASCII text into a new Loco document.

Choice of compression program depends partly on which CP/M file manager you may use. If you're a NewSweep fan, stick with SQUEEZE - otherwise CRUNCH undoubtedly offers the best compromise between speed and size reduction, with a file format recognised by MaxiSweep.

And - How?

The three compression programs discussed in this article all take a similar command line syntax: ie. compress 'this' and put it 'there'.

To use the SQUEEZE program (SQ.COM) from Drive A: the following command would be issued:-

A>SQ filename.ext d:

...where filename.ext is the name of the file to be compressed (which SQUEEZE expects to find on A:); and d: is the (optional) destination drive where the new, compressed version is to be stored.

If no destination is given, the compressed file will be put on the default drive alongside the original version - which is always retained.

With two floppy drives, it would probably be more convenient to run the program from A:, and keep the data disc in B:. In which case, change to the B> prompt and issue this command:-

B>A:SQ filename.ext

...the default drive is now B:, which is where SQUEEZE looks for the file to be operated upon. The compressed file will also be generated on B:, as no destination drive was specified.

A Spreadsheet for LocoScript?

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(Note: Super Discs are not suitable for 3" PCWs or PcW 16s)

memory lane

Kathleen Thorpe takes a nostalgic stroll back in time

In the beginning came the Amstrad PCW 8256 (Book of Alan Sugar: Ch.1, v1). From then on, it is well documented how the PCW dynasty developed, but what about the huge peripheral businesses that grew around the machine's popularity?

For those of you lucky enough to have issue 3 of PCW Today (Autumn 1996) you will see an article under the heading 'Hold the Back Page' called 'Down Memory Lane'. So why don't you join me on a return visit and see what else we can find.

Amstrad were quick to obtain the co-operation of the major software houses of the time, who produced a very extensive range of business software at realistic prices. Along with the various news-stand magazine and books dedicated to the PCW, the software companies produced every type of program from those that predicted horse racing results, through desktop publishing, onto accountancy, spreadsheets and beyond.

Companies that produced hardware and accessories were also swept along in the huge tide of PCW enthusiasm, as over the years, they too have seen many changes. A good deal of these enhancements are still with us, but many more have fallen by the technological wayside.

Perhaps it would be interesting for those people who are relatively new users for PCWs to find out a little more about some of the products that were once available. And 'veteran' users might like to wallow in nostalgia and see how many they can remember.

Word Processing

It seems there has always been a battle for supremacy between LocoScript and Protext, but others had a more limited success. As recently as 1994, a major PCW magazine ran a comparison of LocoScript 3, Protext, Tasword and New Word 2. Some PCW users might still have copies of the latter two, but who today uses Pocket Wordstar? Even those who still use LocoScript 1 are now a minority.

Databases

There have been numerous database programs written for the PCW. LocoFile and MasterFile 8000 were particularly successful, and some others like DBase II and Cambase II are still available in one form or another. However there are some that didn't last the course. Chibase 3.0 was a free format priced at the lower end of the market. It was available in 1990 at a cost of just over £26.00. Around about the same time, you could have purchased the imaginatively named 'At Last Plus' for £39.95. Also worth a mention are 'Delta' (produced by Comsoft), 'Smartcard', a card index database (Pecansoft) and 'Datastore II' (Digita).

Spreadsheets

While SuperCalc 2, Rocket and Cracker Turbo II seem to have cornered the market for spreadsheet programs, others appear to have been forgotten. Two titles that come to mind are 'System 3' which at the time was pitched at the same price as Cracker, costing in excess of £40.00, while 'First Calc' was released at £10.00 cheaper.

Business Packages

The software that was made available for this category seemed endless. Because Amstrad designed the PCW to be a semi-business machine, software houses were more prolific in producing this kind of program.

Along with the ever-popular Cornix range of software, Money Manager, and the Sage Accounts/Invoicing series, came more diverse titles such as 'Diner' (restaurant menu, stock and billing), 'Homeview' (essential for estate agents) and 'Inbusiness' (both produced by Cavalier Software). For newsagents there was 'Newsboy' and video shops had 'Teleadd'. For taxi firms there was 'Taxicab' and even pigeon fanciers had a database, called 'Pigeon'.

And what ever happened to MAP Integrated Accounts, Comsoft Accounts, Stock Market 2, Compact Accounts and Compact Payroll?

Business packages varied from as little as £30.00 up to and over £195.00.

Integrated Packages

Mini Office Professional is still used quite extensively, mostly for its excellent database module, but many people think the word processor module lets the package down badly.

There was however another 'all in one' package for the PCW called 'Micro Collection' made by Saxon Computing.

This program was later revamped and re-launched as 'PCW Works' by SCA on 3.5" discs. Despite obvious similarities with Mini Office, it was never a great success.

Miscellaneous

This section included programs such as 'Astrology for Beginners', 'Pools Master' (Football pools predictor), 'Coursemaster' (for horse racing enthusiasts), 'Graphologist' (to analyse your handwriting), 'Designer' (knitting and embroidery patterns), "Micronav' (flight simulation for pilots), 'Startrack' which plotted astronomy charts, and 'Gillian's Guide' (OS maps).

The PCW was also used by musicians in recording and writing music. The 'DHCP Sequencer' was a 12 track on-screen recording studio, and along with 'Pro-performer' you could attach a MIDI electronic keyboard to your PCW and make musical compositions.

Hardware/Accessories

Whatever happened to that ultimate fashion accessory for all 9512 owners, the 'PCW 9512 shoulder bag'? This snazzy two piece outfit was woven in black nylon material. The monitor would be placed in the bag, while the keyboard and printer were contained in a stylish matching holdall.

And how many of you are still transporting your PCWs around on a 'Gnome Pack-A-Way for the 8000 or 9000 series? These came in black ash panels as flat packs for self assembly. Described in the adverts as "Compact, portable and tidy", they could "hold all components of your PCW, your paper and your discs". They claimed to weigh only 15kgs complete with PCW.

Also check out the following: Contriver Mouse, Kempston Joystick, Pan Euro Enhanced Keyboard and Heat Transfer Ribbons (whatever they were).

Ah those memories!

it's only words

Wordsmith **Kathleen Thorpe** translates publishing jargon

As more and more people are using Desktop Publishing packages such as MicroDesign, and creating their own booklets and posters at home, certain rather mystifying words and phrases can creep in.

Many of these terms have been used in the publishing industry since the first printing presses were invented in the Middle Ages. Here are a few of the more common terms, with a brief description of what they mean.

Arabic Figures
Normal numbers such as 1, 2, 3, etc as opposed to Roman numerals I, II, III and so on.

Arm
The horizontal stroke in letters such as T, E, F etc.

Ascenders
The part of a lower case letter which projects above the mean line, for example b, d, f, h, etc.

Base Line
The imaginary line on which those letters without ascenders sit, for example e, c, m, n, etc.

Bitmap
A design made of blocks or pixels, like a knitting pattern. MicroDesign fonts are bitmap fonts. When they are stretched, they become jagged.

Bold
A darker or heavier version of a type design. In MicroDesign, Bold thickens the whole character sideways along by a pre-set amount. In LocoScript, Bold works in a similar way, except where a specially designed Bold version of the font is loaded.

Book Face
A style designed for continuous reading - clear and easy on the eye - as opposed to display. Also known as Body Face.

Bowl
The curved part of a letter which encloses the counter.

Cap Line
The imaginary line across the top of capital letters. The number of pixels between this and the base line determines the size of a MicroDesign 3 font.

Condensed
A typestyle with very narrow letters.

Counter
The space or hole within a letter such as 'B'. This space was originally produced with a'counter punch', hence its name.

Cursive
Text which resembles handwriting, with letters within each word joined together, instead of separate letters.

Display Face
A typestyle designed for headlines and posters - larger and with more impact than book face.

Dropped Capital
An initial letter which is larger than the rest of the text, sometimes fancy, and set into the top two or three lines of the main text.

Ellipsis
Three full stops at the end of a line of text, indicating a pause, or an emission in a quote.

Face
Short for Typeface, this means the syle of the letters. Whereas a font is just one size, a face includes all sizes of that particular style.

Folio
A printer's term for page numbers.

Font
A complete set of matching letters, figures, punctuation and accents which are all the same point size. The correct spelling is 'fount' although we pronounce it 'font'.

Justify
To line the text up with either or both of the margins. Left justify lines text up with the left margin, leaving the right edge ragged. Right justify lines up text with the right margin, leaving the left edge ragged. Full justify spreads the text evenly across the page so that both edges are level with the margins.

Kerning
The deliberate overlapping of certain letters to even out the spacing of ceratin words like 'PAY', to avoid too much white space.

Logo
A symbol or trademark, which can be produced as a 'cut' or as part of a personalised font.

Lower Case
Non capital letters such as a, b, c, etc.

Loop
The lower part of the letter g and sometimes also y.

Measure
The column width of a typeset document.

Mean line
The imaginary line across the top of lower case letters such as a, c, e, etc. The distance from this to the base line is known as the 'x-height'.

Perfecting
Printing the back of a sheet so that the two pages fit exactly when held up to the light. Also a printer or copier which produces both sides simultaneously.

Pica
A measurement used for column widths etc. 12 points equals one pica and six picas equals almost one inch.

Pitch
Normally measured in characters per inch. 12 pitch = 12 characters per inch.

Point
A special measure used only in the printing trade. One point is approximately 1/72 of an inch. This refers to the height of the metal block that carried the letter in the days of hot metal presses.

Recto
The right hand sheet of an open book. Usually odd numbered.

Sans Serif
A typestyle with no finishing marks on the letter strokes.

Serif
Originates from when typeface was cut from stone. The masons cut strokes from the ends of each letter to produce a neater effect.

Set
The amount of space between letters, similar to 'Character Gap' in MD3.

Stroke
The part of a letter shape created with on movement of the pen. 'T' has a horizontal and a vertical stroke.

Upper Case
Capital letters such as A, B, C, etc.

Verso
The left hand sheet of an open book. Usually even numbered.

There are of course, some more rather technical and obscure terms that I have not included here. But for the majority of PCW users, whether for desktop publishing or word processing, I am sure those I have mentioned will be more than adequate.

letters

a selection from our mailbag

have your say

Write your letters to us at: PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL.
Or you can e-mail us at: letters@pcwtoday.co.uk

Help! I understand nothing about my PCW!

HELP! HELP! HELP!! I am now a PCW Today magazine (issue 13) subscriber. I understand nothing of my PcW 16 which I bought to type my letters and which it does magnificently.

For most of the time the manual was a book with a shroud of mystery round it, although I did overcome some problems myself. I had to call for help from the Amstrad helpline at £1 a minute, thinking it was an Amstrad product I bought, only to find that the model was owned by Dixons and all Amstrad did was refer me to the Dixons helpline.

Now I am intrigued reading through your magazine, I learn about something called LocoScript 4 on page 16, "a must", only to turn the page to find an advert "Get Instant Recall", to find an additional bit of information beneath this advert telling me if I am serious about LocoScript to take a look at Instant Recall.

Then, still browsing, I am told LocoScript had gone into liquidation and had been taken over by SD MicroSystems. I am a 71 year old pensioner, of small means and with intelligence enough to get me through the day (just) and to say the least I am confused.

Is it possible to get to know more about the PcW 16 from a beginner's point of view. Possibly a regular quarterly article that starts from basics to allow people like me to be brought up to date.

To say the least you have whetted my appetite, having said that I can't afford too much expense.

I am really looking forward to your next publication.

Who knows, I might by then know about LocoScripts, upgrades and what I should or should not do with this mysterious monster I have unleashed into my hideaway room.

HL Goodall, Chesterfield.

13 years on and my Amstrad's still going strong

This is being typed on my 8512 which was bought 4th April 1986 - possibly the first turned on I Birmingham as it was the demo machine on the first day of sales and the only machine left when I called later that day - £20 off and a new ribbon!

I bought it as, aged 43, I started on a part time PhD and needed to speed up my administration of various 'spare time' tasks in societies and church.

I also continued my full time job so the machine got a good thrashing, including my drafts of the PhD thesis which was finished in 1991.

With the addition of a daisywheel printer from the start, Isenstein internal memory card when it appeared, switchable 3.5" drive, Technique keyboard and lots of tender loving care, it continues to be used most days for academic research, writing papers, a vast spreadsheet (Rocket) for church fund raising/tax recovery and lots of correspondence.

Using 2in1 it regularly ships files between a variety of other machines at work, and with colleagues using PCs.

Its performance recently has been gathering data on steam engine patents - using an Amstrad NC200 Notebook to collect the data in the Birmingham Patent Library, ASCII transfer to process data and check it on the PCW and then ship it (ASCII) to Birmingham University for a research colleague to inject it into the FileMaker Pro database (on a PC) which is our central data processor for research on Boulton & Watt and James Watt and Company's steam engine business.

I also give quite a number of lectures to groups with notes typed out 12D pitch for easy reading.

Recently I could not find the notes for a lecture first given in 1986 but I found the 3" disc and read the file without any problem - not bad after 13 and a half years.

Amstrad don't want to know

Brian Platt's letter about the PCW 16 which is driving him mad (issue 13) is just me!! I find the manual completely useless. It tells you all the wonderful things you can do but not HOW to do them.

Amstrad don't want to know about problems, since they sold all the PcW 16s to Dixons. Once they've sold the machines, Dixons don't want to know either. So it's back to square one.

I reckon that if someone could rewrite the manual using everyday language in explaining everything 'step by step' they would be on to a winner.

In the meantime is there anyone somewhere near here who has a PcW 16 and understands it who could PLEASE help me.

Frustrated of Sutton.

Annie needs all the support she can get

I am so pleased that you are championing the cause of the PcW 16 now that Amstrad seem to have forgotten that they ever made the thing in the first place!

Annie needs all the support she can get. Although the software is reasonable well supported, the same cannot be said for the hardware. Despite assurances from Amstrad that the machine itself is quite robust and will last a long time - this has not been my experience and investigations have proved that I am not alone.

My problems started after I had loaded the CP/M emulator. The program was running fine until (foolishly) I tried to load another CP/M program. Unfortunately there were graphics in the program so it promptly crashed.

As the machine would not respond to any commands, I decided to re-boot the system. I switched off the power, waited for a few minutes, then switched the power back on. Since then the 16 has not worked at all. As not even the power switch was illuminated, I suspected the fault might be the power supply board. The last time I had a problem of this type I phoned Pinboard Computers.

They supplied an exchange power board for my PCW 9512 by mail order, which gave that machine a new lease of life. Unfortunately this was not to be the case this time and they confirmed that when the 16 died it was usually sudden and complete, and they did not, as yet, supply replacement parts.

The 16 support line did not provide much help as they were really only concerned with software problems. Amstrad seems to offer very little support for 16 owners and the suppliers of the machine (in my case Tempo) consider them to be cheap and cheerful, last as long as they last, and when they go wrong, you should buy something more sophisticated (and expensive).

I remembered reading several letters from a reader of *PCW Today*. He was advising changing the 16's on-board battery to a lithium battery, turning down the brilliance control to a minimum on switching off and also offering a memory upgrade.

So I made contact with Gareth, and after telling him my tale of woe, he confirmed that the problem was most likely the power supply board, as he had come across this before. He suspects the problem is due to a power surge blowing two components on the power board.

Gareth has tried to get parts to repair the fault but he has found that power boards are as rare as dinosaur teeth. The two components that fail appear to be unique to Amstrad and also not easy to obtain.

So that's as far as I've got. I have a PcW 16 that's barely 18 months old that is now obsolete. On a recent radio programme, their Inspector Gadget said the built-in obsolescence of electronic equipment is seven years, so I think 18 months is a bit much.

Therefore I think it's time for another crusade by PCW Today. Not only have you got to get more software available for the 16, you now have to campaign to get parts available to get the machines to last long enough to use them.

Or if the failure is caused by a design fault, you should lobby Amstrad to come clean and undertake a product recall to correct the fault. All I can say is Good Luck!

Kevin Boniface, London.

Problem addressed

I am pleased with the Directory in PCW Today as it has the addresses of the companies.

This is very useful to people like myself who live in another country. The old magazines did not have the addresses which was a problem when ordering anything from England.

Fred Wellman, Australia.

Personality of their own

They are so different from the 8s and 9s. With the 8256 and 9512 everything is predictable. Reliability is their by-word. With the 16s expect anything.

They are always capricious and sometimes even malicious. Each machine is an individual with its own idiosyncracies. You have to go along with their funny little ways or woe betide - everything is lost!

Our two are as different as boys and girls. The 'Old One' allows you to dab at the save button in mid sentence but the 'Young Un' will have nothing of that. Only a gentle touch of F8 in a quiet moment gives the required result. Anything else and the whole machine packs up and pages and pages of work are lost, - never mind that you last saved it a mere paragraph back. Up comes that dreaded message "An error has occurred" and that's that!

The 'Old One' has its own list of dislikes. It definitely does not like you to write more than four pages on the same document. It starts to spread out the words so that there are only two or three on a line. It's best to acknowledge defeat at once. If you continue words are transposed, missed out or written on top of each other and then - everything stops and all is lost. Again!

One machine does not like to justify - even when the style menu says otherwise, and on no account expect it to deal with tabs and justification at the same time. Gentle coaxing is the answer, sometimes!

Come to think about it asking either machine to do anything complicated is asking for trouble. They get these little fixations like when you use bold or italic or underline occasionally in the first half of a document then words appear underlined or in bold or italic unexpectedly and unasked for in the second half of the writing. One of our machines sometimes refuses to delete a word or a phrase. You think it has gone, press the green button and lo and behold its back again - in the line above.

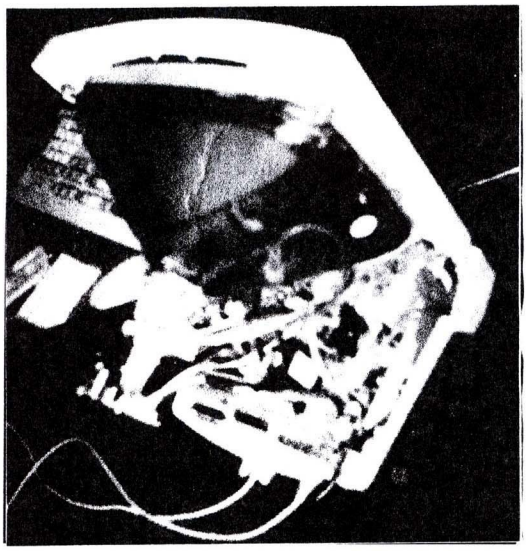
What can you do? Well nothing actually. The 16 nearly always wins. Sometimes I win though and thats why I like the PcW 16.

Jenny Lee, Teesside.

16 stripped bare

Lee Jackson bravely goes where few have gone before

Amstrad's last statement in the PCW range is a very different beast to its predecessors. Technically, the innards of a 16 are far more advanced than anything seen in a PCW before, but as users know, the 16 is hardly as reliable, or well-made, as its older sisters.



The Chinese-built monster may look pretty, but it can be very temperamental at times, and many have ended up on a scrap heap, after crashing and never being brought back to life.

So exactly what is inside this Chinese puzzle? I decided to open up the back and find out.

However, after opening the PcW 16 and trying to break down the pieces, I came out knowing only a little more. Believe it or not it has a fairly complicated layout.

Unlike your average PC with card slot, the 16 has two chip boards, one two act as the main unit which controls the main computer and a second to act as a go between.

The flash ram, Christened the Cabinet by Amstrad programmers, is programmable using calls, but 16k of it can only be programmed using a programming cartridge in the underside of the PcW 16.

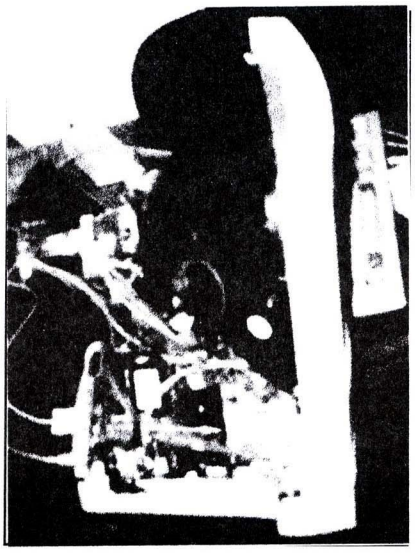
The main memory chips are situated on the bottom board, which we shall call the main board. The main board is also where we find the main lead attachments for things like the disc drive. The drive itself seems pretty standard and could probably be replace by a regular drive if your old one was damaged.

Unlike PCs, the PcW 16 does not have a "power pack" as such. Instead the second board, which we shall call the 'go between' acts as a distributor and there are several strange devices which one would guess were for this job.

The go between board has several connections, and two of these take power to the monitor, another supplies the main board with power.

Not being well-versed in monitors, I can tell you the 16's screen is a fairly standard monochrome screen (although there are rumours that the 16 can do green too - just like the good old 8256!). The screen resolution is around 640 x 480.

One of the surprising finds on the main board is a hard drive interface. At one stage Amstrad were obviously thinking big. There are certain calls that can be used in the BIOS to accept a hard drive, but it has actually never been tested.



The hard drive interface is made up of two rows of 20 small holes/plugs. The male socket adapter fits into this set of plugs and then a wire connects to the hard drive. To power the hard drive you would need an adapter that can plug into the four pin power socket, branching off into a male and female socket to attach it to the go between board and the hard drive.

The main memory chips are small, black, and look like those you would find inside a PC. There is space for extra memory next to the hard drive interface and if you have the know-how you could add an extra 1 Mb of memory. There are several 16s out there which have undergone the memory upgrade, but they are few and far between.

The main board incorporates the main memory and instead of each different part (graphics, sound etc.) being on separate cards as in a PC, they are all incorporated. Therefore all external ports (serial, printer, mouse) are connected to the main board.

At the moment, I honestly cannot find the heart of the 16 - the CPU or processor. It is either situated on a part underneath the disc drive, or it is so much different from normal CPUs that I cannot recognise it. Wherever it is, the processor is built into the main board, somewhere, and like the classic PCW it is a Z80 processor, although much faster and capable of up to 16 MHz - more than enough for what the 16 can do.

The 16 has two serial ports - one for a mouse and the other for a modem - and yes some people have successfully got online with their 16!

There is also a printer port and a PS/2 port for the keyboard. Should you ever want to, you can use a standard PS/2 Windows keyboard, although you would need to get used to different labels on some keys.

the classifieds

FOR SALE PCW 9512 with 3.5" and 3" drives. Rampak. LocoScript 4 master discs and other software. Spare printer Loco 2, 3, and 4 manuals. No realistic offer refused. Will split. Space needed. Tel 01225 706533.

1500k RAM PCW 8256, external 3.5@" drive, Scanner, Scan Align, LS4, Protext, MD3, vast amount software, clipart, 3" and 3.5" discs. Magazines. Also 512k PCW 8256 3". View/Collect London SW6. Offers. Half proceeds to medical charities. Fox. 020 738114445.

FOR SALE PCW magazines - almost a complete set. Offers? Will split. Tel 01225 706533.

FREE to good home. PCW 9512 with auto sheet feeder and discs. Problem with printer, hence free to anyone who can collect. Tel 01780 753865 (South Lincs)

WANTED by voluntary orgaisation in east Africa - fabric ribbon re-inking machine. Willing to pay small charge and postage. Tel 01424 713927 (3.00pm - 7.00pm). Also re-usable black fabric ribbons, no payment, just many thanks. Please post to 44 Paynton Road, St Leonards, East Sussex, TN37 7DY.

FOR SALE Amstrad PCW 9512 with 2 Mb memory, Insyder hard drive, second 3.5" floppy drive and daisywheel printer with sheet feeder. With software; LocoScript 4, MD3, Network etc on 3.5" discs. Also Superdos, Composers Pen, Flipper 3, Masterfile 8000, Cracker. All on 3" discs. £150 the lot or will split. Buyer collects or postage extra. 01273 779585.

FOR SALE Three PCW 8512s, two PCW 8256s, three dot matrix printers, four keyboards, manuals and discs. What offers? Acton, London W3 92E. 020 89932208. All working.

FOR SALE Computer printers: OKI Microline 591 £10. Panasonic KXP 1082 6 £6. Star 200 £8. Canon BJ 250 requires power cable, perfect £10. HP 500 with driver £8. Offers for all considered. Complete Word Perfect eleven discs and manual £10. 9 Ravenscourt Drive, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 6HP. 01708 447017.

MICRO DESIGN 3 with back-up discs (3") and manuals, plus MD3 Scanner, hardly used. £40 plus carriage. Contact Munro 01776 870250 (SW Scotland). Free pile of PCW Plus with final issue.

PROGRAMS with manuals and original master discs:- MicroDesign 3, The Network, Tweak 3. Hardware - MD3 Scanner. Any reasonable offer accepted. Archie Campbell, Telephone 01592 592903.

PCW 8512 with 1 Mb rampac, Keymouse, MD Handscanner, Canon BJ10EX and 9 pin PCW printers. Lots of original software (MD3, Mini Office etc) and manuials, RS232 interface. Over 60 x 3" discs, (many new), Dustcovers, ribbons, etc, etc. Only £120 ono (Sorry can't split!!) Phone (01325) 352341 (Can deliver locally)

PCW 9512 daisywheel printer - unused £50. PCW 9512 User instruction manual - new £10. Amstrad portable PPC640/512 manual - new £8. PC 2386 User Manual and MSDOS guide - new £8. 10 x 3" CF2 discs £15. ASF9512 LocoScript 2/CP/M Plus Master discs £15. 9512 3" disc drive working £10. 9512 motherboard £22. Assorted 9512 daisywheels - new £5 each. 01926 613841 (Warks) P&P extra.

CALL for help with LocoScript, CP/M or MicroDesign 2, or just for a chat about PCWs in general. Monday-Saturday, 2-8pm. Or write to: Kathleen Thorpe, 22 Haddon Way, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 3EE. Tel: 0115 9720114. E-mail: kathleen.thorpe@talk21.com

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PCW books - CP/M Plus Step by Step, John Campbell, Program Your PCW, Ian Sinclair, 8000 Plus Ultimate Tips. User guides - Mallard Basic, LocoMail, LocoScript 3, PCW 9512, Mini Office Professional and Gentree II. PCW Plus issues 37, 41, 43 to 114 and 117 to 124. Any reasonable offer accepted. Archie Campbell, telephone 01592 592903.

TWO cartons of 10 each branded new original Maxell CF2-D discs. In original and unopened individual packing. £30 per carton. FJ Langfield. 0117 9650996 (Bristol).

THREE INCH CF2 discs. NEW - Still in original makers packs of five. £12.50 per pack plus £1.00 P&P. Roy Martin 01752 839430. (Plymouth)

WANTED Amstrad 8512 A Drive. For Sale Amstrad 9512 single drive with printer £90. Daytime 0860 885678 / After 6pm 01527 837098.

WANTED - Cirtech Gem Hard Drive. Will collect. Tel Peter 01527 893619.

LARGE collection of PCW and PC books and manuals for sale. Several PCW Series 8000 and 9000 word processors being sold for parts or repair. (Mainly with disc drive faults). Also 3" Discs and miscellaneous spares such as 9512 printer armatures, daisy wheels, ribbons, etc. Lists available. Tel 0113 2671393.

AMSTRAD 3 inch discs (used formatted for 8256 and 9512) approx 100. Plus some original masters. Offer for the lot. Eric on 01273 558071.

AMSTRAD GT 65-2 Monitor only. Believed in good working order. FREE - Collect or pay P&P. Roy Martin 01752 839430 (Plymouth).

FREE to a good home. Amstrad PCW 8256, memory extended to 512k. Complete, in working order (in regular use till earlier this year). Also 10 CF2 discs, six Locomotive Software master discs for Class G printers (BJ10sx). Recipient to arrange collection from Weybridge, Surrey. Phone (01932) 846081.

FOR SALE: PcW 9512+ with BJ10e, both in good condition. With LocoScript 2, CP/M, Mini Office, Rocket and all documentation. Also manuals: BJ10e User Guide, BJ10e Programming Manual, Mallard Basic, CP/M Plus on the Amstrad PcW and a stack of PCW Plus magazines. £30 the lot. Ring 01252 835119.

AMSTRAD (9512 and 8256) equipment for sale. New ribbons, head cleaners, 3.5" disc drive, RS 232c serial interface, print wheels, LocoLink PCW - Pc transfer cables, one 8256 with printer, 2 daisywheel printers (9512), sheet feeder (9512). All machines in GWO. Various programs (mainly office) and more. Make me an offer for the lot! Eric on 01273 558071.

THREE INCH CF2 discs reformatted £1.50 each plus £1.00 P&P for 5. Roy Martin 01742 839430 (Plymouth).

AMSTRAD software for the 8256/8512 (LocoScript 2, 3, and 4) £20 on 3" disc. PCW magazines in binders for £12 the lot (1983-1993) LocoFile and LocoSpell together £20 on 3" disc. Supercalc 2 £6 on 3" disc. Plus 25 disc 3" blank disc @ £1.00 each. Scrabble, Chess and Snooker £3 each o 3" disc. All the above with manuals and instructions. Tel 0117 9879979.

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dot.com hysteria

Forget the Windows web revolution, LocoScript Software chief **Stephen Denson** thinks it is vastly over-rated

We are told that, like Spring, "dot.com" hysteria is breaking out all over. Yet I can remember when "dot.com" referred to a machine code program you ran from CP/M. You know, disckit.com, pip.com or whatever.

Now, I am not a luddite as such. My company has a web site; two in fact if you also count www.locoscript.com which we also use to trade on-line.

I use the internet every day for sending and receiving e-mail messages. Yet I didn't join the frantic rush to buy shares in lastminute.com and I hope dear reader that you did not either.

If you had, you would have made a considerable loss on the ridiculous "investment" in an internet company which, despite modest turnover and large trading losses, was at one point worth on the stock exxchange £750 million! Much more in fact than some REAL bricks-and-mortar companies with multiple branches all over the UK, who have been established in business for decades AND who make genuine profits.

I am still old fashioned enough to believe in companies with a proven track record of bringing to the market REAL products, making a success of marketing them and THEN providing profits for their shareholders and dividends for their directors. A company like Amstrad PLC in fact. And yet when they launched their innovative em@iler web phone recently their share price actually dropped by a third of its value.

This looks to be a brilliant device which combines phone, fax, printer, plug-in databank, keyboard, digitised answerphone and e-mail facilities - an all-in-one unit at an incredibly low price.

Thus instead of having to buy a £ 1,000 PC with all its ridiculous "bloatware", riddled with potential bugs and conflicts, you can now buy an em@iler for under £100 to do the job of sending electronic messages and more. And, knowing Amstrad's design record, it will probably be very easy to use without having to master the use of an operating system such as Windows and a mouse! I haven't tried one myself yet because the first batch of 500 sold out within two days.

Echoes there of the early days of the PCW before production was ramped up to cope with demand.

Actually I can see a connection between the PCW and the em@iler other than its manufacturer.

The fact is that many PCW users go across to a modern PC not because they are so thrilled with the prospect of using a Windows word processor like Word. Quite the opposite in fact. They usually hate the program and buy LocoScript Professional instead.

No, they move to PC computing because they feel they are getting left behind and need to be able to use e-mail which is an instant and incredibly useful form of communication whether for business or to reach relatives in Australia.

Now, however, a PCW owner can buy Amstrad's latest wonder machine and e-mail without having to desert their favourite computer. For many people the PCW plus em@iler will offer a perfect combination. I have always felt that using a modern PC to get on the internet and do e-mail was a sledgehammer-to-crack-nut solution and that what we were waiting for was a "super phone", the first generation of which the em@iler is one.

After all, every bit of digital information goes down an analogue phone line after being converted by a modem in any case. And when WAP applications take off in the near future, em@iler users will also be able to surf the net with their telephone.

Sir Alan Sugar hopes eventually to have one million em@ilers installed and to achieve this figure the machine will have to emulate the tremendous success of the PCW range all those years ago.

Now if Sir Alan was a 20 year-old graduate from a top university and had taken his prototype to some fat-cat venture capitalists sitting on a pile of cash, the world would be beating a path to his doorstep. And his "dot com" start-up share price would be going through the roof. No wonder then that the great man dislikes and distrusts the City so much.

REAL DESKTOP PUBLISHING AND GRAPHICS POWER FOR YOUR PCW!

MicroDesign3

"It'll knock your socks off!" *(PCW User Magazine)*

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- ❑ *Teaching Material*
- ❑ *Essays & Reports*
- ❑ *Books & Manuals*
- ❑ *Leaflets & Brochures*
- ❑ *Menus & Price Lists*
- ❑ *Advertisements & Forms*
- ❑ *Posters & Flysheets*

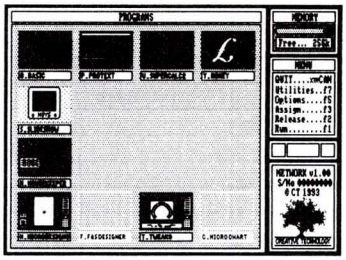
...and more - *the only limit is your imagination!*

Desktop Publishing means combining your word-processor text with pictures and diagrams to create spectacular pages like these - this advertisement was created and printed using *MicroDesign3* and a Bubblejet printer. *MicroDesign3* lets you lay out your text in columns, combine it with graphics, and even draw your own pictures and diagrams straight onto your PCW's screen.

MD3 is a powerful program, but it is also simple to learn: PCW Plus Magazine gave *MD3* five marks out of five for *"ease of use"* in their review. The *MD3* package comes complete with a comprehensive Beginner's Tutorial, and we also provide a Technical Support hotline free of charge between 4pm and 7pm every weekday.

THE NETWORK

"A PCW REVOLUTION" *(PCW Plus)*

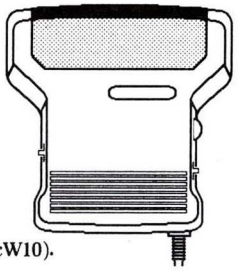


- ❑ *A modern Graphic User Interface for your PCW.*
- ❑ *Arrange up to 16 CP/M program icons on the "Desktop".*
- ❑ *Full menu-driven mouse and keyboard control.*
- ❑ *Stores active programs in memory for instant access.*
- ❑ *Links MD3 and Tweak3 together automatically.*

Please Note:
The Network is compatible with most CP/M programs and versions, but you are welcome to contact us with queries about compatibility.

MD3 Scanner

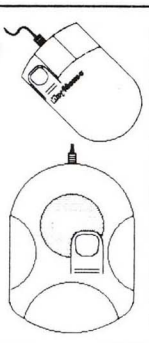
"CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY HAVE TRIUMPHED!" *(PCW Plus)*



- ❑ *Scan your own images and clip-art into MD3;*
- ❑ *Works directly on the MD3 Page - no extra software required;*
- ❑ *Scanned Image appears on the screen as you scan;*
- ❑ *Scanning resolutions of 200, 300 and 400 dots per inch;*
- ❑ *Uses "dither-patterns" to simulate colours & grey-shades;*
- ❑ *Superb results from line-art or photographs;*
- ❑ *Compatible with all PCWs* (note: extension cable required for 9256 & PcW10).

KeyMouse

"INDISPUTABLY TOP OF THE TREE." *(PCW Plus)*



- ❑ *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.*
- ❑ *KeyMouse comes complete with its own smart mouse mat, and comprehensive user manual.*
- ❑ *In MicroDesign, the KeyMouse system can be locked to move only vertically or horizontally, making it much easier to draw straight lines.*
- ❑ *KeyMouse has special modes for LocoScript, Protext and CP/M. It is especially useful for CP/M programs which use the cursor (arrow) keys.*

PRICE LIST

PCW Software (3" or 3½")

MicroDesign3 (requires 512Kb memory)	£49.95
MD2-MD3 Upgrade (Registered Users)	£29.95
The Network (requires 512Kb memory) †	£25.00
Font & Shade Designer	£25.00
Tweak3 †	£25.00
Micro-Display	£25.00
MD3 Extra Fonts Discs (each)	£16.00
Program Upgrades & 3"/3½" disc change	£10.00
CP/M Upgrade to latest version	£12.50

†*Not compatible with CP/M v1.4, v2.1 & v2.9*

PCW Hardware

MD3 Scanner	£120.00
KeyMouse	£50.00
CT-RAM Memory Expansion	
512Kb	£59.95
1Mb	£79.95
1½Mb	£99.95
RamPort Memory + Centronics Expansion	
512Kb	£75.00
1Mb	£95.00
1½Mb	£115.00

PC-Compatible Products

ViewPoint PCW-PC Conversion Program	£35.00
PCW-PC Scanner Upgrade	£45.00
MicroDesign2-PC	£40.00

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Credit Cards welcome

Creative Technology (MicroDesign) Ltd
10 Park St, Uttoxeter
Staffs ST14 7AG
Tel 01889 567160
Fax 01889 563548

CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

slow runner

Our programming expert **Fred Manders** continues his series on Logo with this educational program for your kids

Compared with Mallard Basic, LOGO is a slow-running language but, for some applications, this can be an advantage.

For example, the TABLETST program in the accompanying listing runs at a suitable speed for children learning their multiplication tables. It is a simple example of how LOGO can be used for programs which do not involve the use of graphics.

Like all but very short LOGO programs, this program is built up of a number of 'procedures', all beginning with 'to' and ending with 'end'. Each of them contain at least one 'remark' (the items preceded by a semicolon), which I hope will enable you to understand what they do.

When typing the program in you can omit the semicolons and what follows them on the same line, if you wish. But please note that the lines with ';INDENT' at the end of them must start with at least one space. This lets the LOGO Interpreter know they are continuations of something within square brackets.

You will need to type all of the program in before you can test it, as most of the procedures cannot be run as separate programs.

As the edit buffer is too small for it to be possible to type in the whole program in one go, I suggest that you type in the first five to begin with.

Do this by typing 'ed "rv' and pressing RETURN, to bring up the editor with

to rv

end already in place.

Move the cursor to the end of the first line and press RETURN. This will move 'end' down one line, leaving the cursor at the start of the blank line created, waiting for you to type in the rest of the procedure.

Having done that, press the down arrow key to move the cursor to the end of 'end'. Then press RETURN to move it to the start of the next line.

Type in the next four procedures and then press EXIT. This will cause the names of the procedures just defined to be displayed on screen.

For the rest of the procedures, I suggest that you enter them individually, thus avoiding the possibility of overfilling the edit buffer.

An alternative way to enter a new procedure is to type 'to procedurename' and press RETURN. This will put the cursor on the next line preceded by '>', waiting for your line of instructions. Each time you press RETURN a new line will be started; until you signal the end of the procedure with 'end'. The drawback with this method is, you can only edit the line being entered.

Unless you know for sure there isn't a procedure of the name you intend to use already in memory, it is probably best to use the first method.

This way the procedure already there will be presented for editing; and the possibility of overwriting your earlier work will be avoided.

The editor can also be called with 'edall', when all of the procedures in memory will be displayed, in the order in which they were entered. This is useful when there are only a few short procedures, as they can all be edited at one go. If you try it with a long program, you are very likely to get the 'My edit buffer is full ' error message.

Having entered the complete program, save it to disc with 'save "tabletst', before testing it; in case something drastic goes wrong and you lose all your hard work.

Test the program by typing 'start' and pressing RETURN. The screen prompts should tell you what to do next. If you are good at your multiplication tables, make a few deliberate mistakes to test how it copes with them.

In the 'table' procedure, you might have noticed the 'make "t :t * 1' and wondered why it was necessary to multiply a number by one. Until I put this in, the comparisons 'if :t > 9' and 'if :t > 99' in the next line wouldn't work.

I suspect this is something to do with how the number represented by 't' is stored, after being read in from the keyboard in the 'start' procedure; and doing a simple calculation on it changes the form in which it is stored.

To delete a program file from disc the command is 'erasefile "filename'.

Unless the filename is preceded by a drive letter and colon (e.g. b:filename) the file will be sent to the default drive.

Should you wish to change the default drive, the command is 'setd "b' or 'a' or 'm', as the case may be.

Unlike BASIC, LOGO doesn't clear out an old program when a new one is loaded.

So, to avoid using up too much memory space, always use 'erall' to clear the program area before loading a new program. Or make the last instruction in the program 'erall', so that it erases itself when you exit from it.

The command 'poall' will display the memory contents (including variables) on screen, waiting for a key to be pressed after each screenfull.

'pops' displays the procedures, but not the variables.

'pots' displays the names (titles) of each procedure in memory.

When a program is saved, the contents of the variables are saved with it.

This can be avoided by erasing the variables first with 'ern [list of vars]', where 'list of vars' contains all the variable names displayed after the procedures when 'poall' is used.

That's all for this time. Have fun!

```
to rv ;switch on reverse video
type char 27 type [p]
end
to nv ;switch off reverse video
type char 27 type [q]
end
to bell ;beep five times
repeat 5 [type char 7]
end
to erle ;erase from cursor to end of line
type char 27 type [K]
end
to erpe ;erase from cursor to bottom of screen
type char 27 type [J]
end
to line ;print a line of the table
if :n < 10 [type char 32]
type :n type char 32 type [X] type char 32
type :t type char 32 type [=] type char 32
end
to start ;executive routine
type char 27 type [0] ;disable status line
ts ct make "tbl 0 make "err 0
setcursor [32 0] pr [MULTIPLICATION TABLES TEST]
pr [] type [Which table do you want? (type in number and press
RETURN)]
type char 32 make "t rq
label "another
table
if :x = 0 [rv pr [You got them all right!] nv]
if :x = 1 [rv pr [You only made 1 mistake.] nv]
if :x > 1 [type [You made] type char 32 rv
 type :x type char 32 pr [mistakes.] nv] ;INDENT
score setcursor [0 18]
type char 27 type [f] ;disable cursor blob
recycle ;use recycle as a short delay
type char 27 type [e] ;enable cursor blob
bell
pr [For another table type in the number and press RETURN]
pr [] type [To stop press RETURN only]
type char 32 make "t rq if :t > 0 [go "another]
setcursor [0 2] erpe make "n 3 make "l 0
repeat 14 [setcursor se :n :l pr [Goodbye!]
 make "n :n + 6 make "l :l + 2] ;INDENT
setcursor [0 29] type [GOODBYE! And thankyou!]
recycle ct bell
type char 27 type [1] ;enable status line
end
to table ;print table, waiting for answer to each line
setcursor [0 2] erpe score
make "a 0 make "t :t * 1
if :t > 9 [make "a 1] if :t > 99 [make "a 2]
make "x 0 make "n 1 pr []
line type :t make "n :n + 1 pr []
label "loop
line
label "xx
make "nt :n * :t ;give nt the value of the correct answer
make "ans rq ;read answer from keyboard
setcursor se 9 + :a :n + 2 type :ans erle
if not :ans = :nt [make "x :x + 1 (type char 32 [< WRONG Try
again])
 bell setcursor se 9 + :a :n + 2 go "xx] ;INDENT
pr [] make "n :n + 1 if :n < 13 [go "loop]
make "tbl :tbl + 1 make "err :err + :x pr []
end
to score ; keep track of tables done and total errors
setcursor [50 2]
type [Tables done :] type :tbl type char 32
type char 32 type [Mistakes :] type :err
end
```

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A no-frills, no-nonsense disk, stuffed with tutorials, advice and useful templates for PCW users. Based on my regular class 'Profit from your Pen'. Available in Loco3 format or ASCII files on 3" and 3 ½" disks (3" send 2 blank disks with order).

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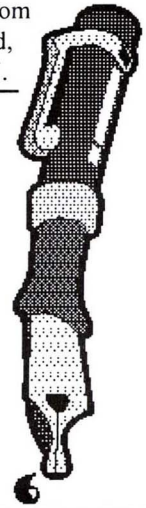

company locator

Aladdink.....0131 2700538
16 Springwood Park, Edinburgh EH16 6JL.
Fabric and film ribbon recycling and re-inking. They also supply DIY re-inking packs.

Amstrad Consumer Electronics Plc.....01227 228888
Brentwood House, 169 Kings Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4EF.
Manufacturers of the, em@iler, PcW 16 and every other PCW on the planet.

Anlaby Computer Services.....01482 650648
7 North Street, Anlaby, Hull HU10 7DD.
Drive repairs and PCW-PC disc conversion.

Ansible Information.....
94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU. ..
If you write a book with LocoScript, you'll need an index. That's where AnsibleIndex comes in.

A-Z Computers.....0181 7441834
134 Heath Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 4BN.
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LocoScript Software.....08700 736427
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Please let us know if there is a company you think should appear on these pages. Also keep us informed about any changes you think should be made to this section. We aim to keep the directory as up to date as possible. Send your information to Company Locator, PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside, TS5 5EL. Or e-mail it to: directory@pcwtoday.co.uk

langford

me, ansible and thog

david langford

What has our man been up to since *PCW Plus* folded?

Well, I have to admit it: my little software company Ansible Information is in its twilight years as far as the Amstrad PCW is concerned.

Orders for Ansibleindex, the famous Locoscript indexing software, are now rare and joyful things. Each time, it takes me longer and longer to remember how Ansible's home-made invoicing software works, and spiders have spun their webs over our last immemorial stack of 3" discs...

All this is something of a relief, since I've been ever so busy writing and occasionally editing - that other perennial subject of my old *PCW Plus* columns.

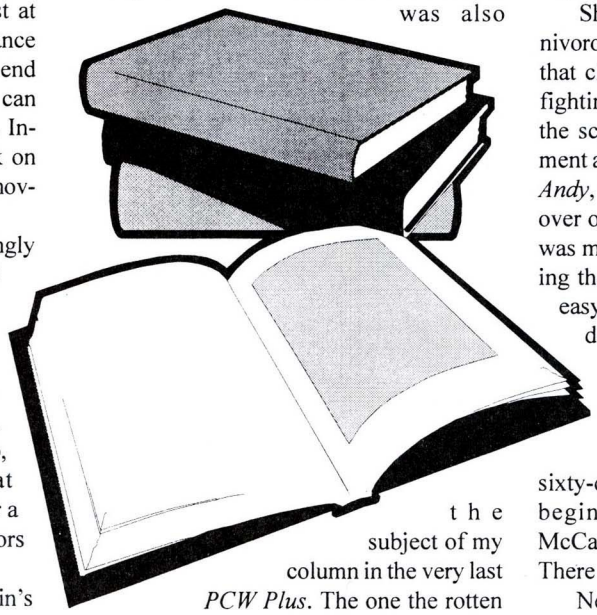
Twenty years since I escaped the radioactive hell of being a weapons physicist at Aldermaston, I'm still a footloose freelance and struggling with some success not to end up in the gutter asking passers-by if they can spare a few Terry Pratchett paperbacks. Instead, I get paid for providing feedback on first drafts of Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels... but that's another story.

Even the main hobby of what I laughingly call my spare time consists of writing and editing. This is the scurrilous science fiction newsletter *Ansible*, which is still the only non-North American SF fanzine ever to win the Hugo award, - SF's equivalent of the Oscar - four times now. It's available free by e-mail and on the web, incidently: see the links at www.ansible.co.uk. Strangely enough for a free publication, *Ansible* has opened doors leading me to sums of actual money.

Example: years ago the editor of Britain's longest-established SF fiction magazine *Interzone* decided he'd like a news and gossip page to provide variety amid all those worthy stories. I gave him an *Ansible* at a publishing party and he instantly commissioned a monthly column based on it. As I write, I've just sent in the 100th instalment.

Example: in 1995, by waving around all the vaguely prestigious Hugo awards resulting from my SF fanzine hobby (I also have fourteen as 'best fan writer', a peculiar category covering SF journalism, humour and gossip), I persuaded the newely founded magazine *SFX* to take on a regular Langford column. Nowadays *SFX* claims to be the world's best-selling SF magazine, which may even be true; and I'm working hard to persuade them that this is all because, at the time of writing, I've produced 70 columns without missing an issue.

Example: occasionally I scatter a few copies of *Ansible* in the SF sections of local Reading bookshops. This year someone passed it on to Waterstone's head office, and the editor of their planned on-line SF newsletter got in touch about reprinting some of the material for real money. We eventually settled on a version of the *Ansible* department called Thog's Masterclass ... which was also



the subject of my column in the very last *PCW Plus*. The one the rotten sods at Future Publishing never sent me a complimentary copy of. Sniff.

What, asks the elert and keen-eyed reader, is Thog's Masterclass? Well, *Ansible* has long had a tradition of publishing awful or accidentally funny sentances from SF and fantasy - the more famous the author, the better. Meanwhile my pal John Grant had invented the huge and thick-witted barbarian Thog the Mighty for various of his fantasy novels. Somehow Thog's name attached itself to *Ansible's* Ghastly Lines from Genre Fiction' department. The rest is history.

Thog's selections cover a wide range of fictional strangeness. Sometimes you suspect the author isn't entirely sure what he meant: 'They were both roughly the same age, in their very early fifties, though a hundred years earlier they would have appeared much younger.' (D.F.Jones, *Colossus*, 1966)

Often fictional character's eyes do unexpected things: 'They all felt Michael's adrenalin kick in and watched his eyes bounce off his legal pad ...' (Rock Brynner, *The Doomsday Report, 1998).* Certain authors have a flair for the utterly wrong simile: 'A silence descended like steel doors slamming down around the room.' (James P.Hogan, *Voyage from Yesteryear*, 1982).

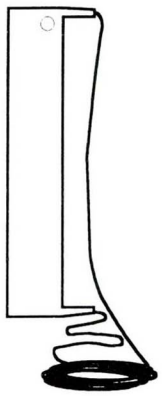
Sheer overwriting offers treats like carnivorous weather: 'Rain came as a wet drizzle that clings to your face like a hungry leech fighting to hang on, only to slip down over the scars and dive into the abyss of excrement and refuse at your feet.' (Bradley Snow, *Andy*, 1990). Metaphors often fall awkwardly over one another: 'Only Lily could tell there was more to it, because whatever was haunting the back of his eyes made a trail of uneasy paw prints up her own spine.' (Charles de Lint, *Someplace to be Flying,* 1998) And it's so important to retain a sense of direction when piloting spacecraft: 'Captain Vandermeer, if you will please initiate a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree turn of the *Washington,* we'll begin the long journey home.' (Anne McCaffrey, *The Tower and the Hive*, 1999) There is more, all too much more.

Needless to say, I'm planning (with John Grant) to compile an entire book of Thog's Masterclass. The time is ripe, because electronic and print-on-demand publishing is making it easier for marginal or special-interest books to appear.

One such publisher, Wildside Press, has already signed up my long out-of-print novel *Earthdoom* and its unpublished companion (both coincidently, collaborations with John Grant), plus a huge collection of the 'Critical Mass' SF review columns I wrote in the 80's. I wonder if they'd like a book of all my *PCW Plus* contributions?

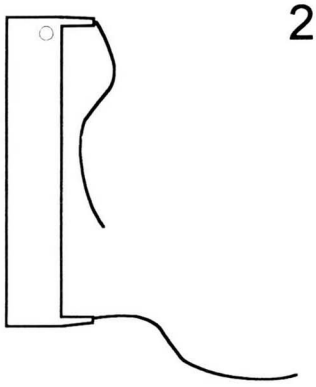
How to Replace the Film Ribbon in a Used PCW Dot Matrix Cassette

1



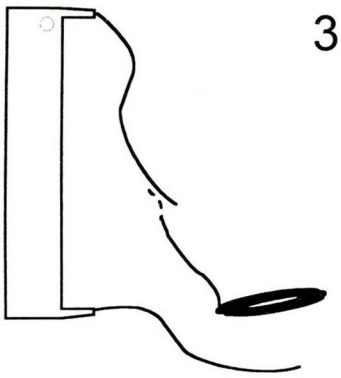
Pull out the old film ribbon.

2



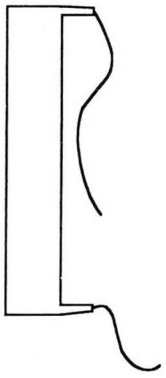
Cut off the old film ribbon from about 9" each end.

3



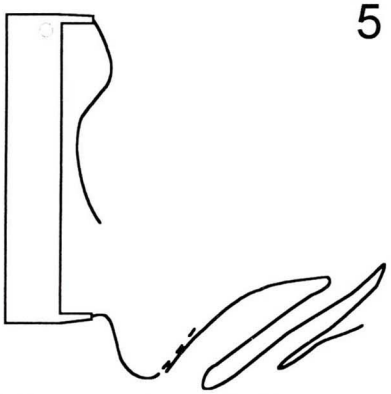
Snip tape foldover off the end of the new film, and tape to winder end of old film.

4



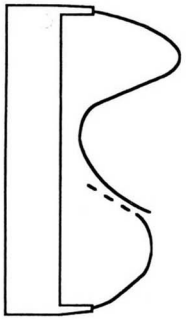
Wind in new film until about 12" is left showing (see "Winder Tip").

5



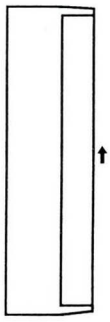
Pull out remains of old film to expose the join with new film.

6



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

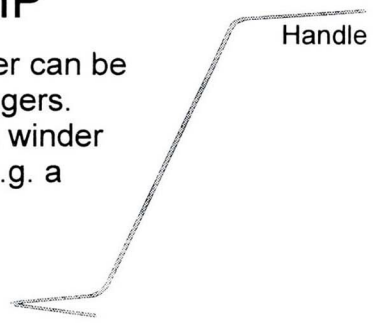
7



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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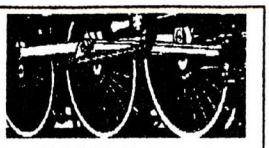

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