

Einstein Magazine

& ALL MICRO NEWS **Number 108**

Rapid, Safe & Cheap Travelling by the Elegant
NEW RAILWAY COACH,
The Union
which will commence running on the
Stockton & Darlington Ry

on Monday the 16th day of October 1826

And will call at Yarm, and will pass
within a mile of Middleton Spa on its
way from Stockton to Darlington and
vice versa.

Fares: Inside 1½d. — Outside 1d. per Mile.

**Parcels in proportion. No gratuities
expected by the Guard or Coachman.**

**N.B. The Proprietors will not be accountable for any parcel of
more than £5 values unless entered and paid for accordingly.
The UNION will run from the Black Lion Hotel and New Inn,
Stockton to the New Inn, Yarm and to the Black Swan Inn, near
the Croft Branch, Darlington; at each of which Inns passengers
and parcels are booked, and the times of starting may be
ascertained as also at the Union Inn, Yarm and the Talbot Inn,
Darlington.**

**On the 15th and 20th October, the Fair Days at Yarm, the
UNION will leave Darlington at six in the morning for Yarm
and will leave Yarm for Darlington again at six in the evening;
in the intermediate time, each day, it will ply constantly
between Stockton and Yarm, leaving each place every half hour.**

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This issue of your favourite magazine is very definitely an experimental one.

Ted Cawkwell and Bob Deeley had achieved a very professional standard of "typesetting" and an excellent overall appearance by using a PC running under "Windows" to assemble the magazine master sheets. The major problem in maintaining those standards of excellence after Bob Deeley suffered a major computer crash and upheaval in his circumstances, was that the editing task fell back on my shoulders, but my current computer "establishment" consisted of a couple of non-functioning Windows 3.1 computers - obtained dirt cheap because they had been discarded with good reason by previous owners as not worth trying to repair - plus a 1992-vintage Amstrad series-7 286-processor computer running MsDos which wouldn't display anything on screen, and a 1988-vintage Amstrad series-1 386-processor computer with a damaged and non-functioning floppy disk drive, which won't access its hard disk or load the operating system or any of its software in cold weather. Even when it can be persuaded to run, it runs under MsDos version 5, so it can only send ASCII output to the printer. ASCII is a standard that was adopted a century ago to enable teleprinters to replace telegraph operators sending telegrams in morse code, so the output resembles that of mechanical typewriters.

Clearly what was needed was a Windows-based computer linked to a printer which can accept and accurately reproduce Windows output. John Marriott had hinted that such base units were readily available in the Exeter area, where lives, so he was asked to hunt down a suitable base unit. He had previously suggested that a lot of the correspondence which I had sent him merited publishing in the magazine - and much of the content of his own letters to me seemed to be equally as interesting as worthy of publication as the excellent material which he had submitted as formal magazine articles - and which is due to appear in forthcoming EM issues - so much of the material in this issue consists of our mutual correspondence over the past year or so.

This issue is experimental, too, in the way its content has been assembled. After a few very frustrating problems John came up with a good Windows base unit, but the hard disk had been reformatted to make sure it didn't have any confidential information left on it before he bought it.

Fortunately John was heavily involved until very recently in checking over and getting donated computer equipment with problems back into good order for local charities. Often this was discarded because it had developed problems when it was only just out of guarantee, and the owner decided to discard it in favour of a new replacement rather than spend money on it. Much could be repaired and sold on to a new home, but some had fatal faults that made it more sensible to break them up for spares, to repair others with.

This meant that John had a good supply of fairly new hard drives, software and Windows from broken-up machines to hand, so he was able to re-install the operating system and software programs on the "new" computer base unit and set it all up properly before sending it off to me by parcel post, for me to add a monitor screen, keyboard, serial mouse and printer.

The software includes an excellent desktop publisher program, but to avoid a long delay producing this issue while I learn to use it, I have used the computer in the public library which has a scanner linked to it to scan the printed correspondence and store it on a floppy disk as text files. I then opened a new blank document in Word on the new computer, and imported each text file in turn to clean it up and correct any errors. After saving, the final step was to open a new blank Word document, with paper size and margins set to the A5 page size of the magazine, & the font set to Arial 8 point, and import the text which had previously been cleaned up. It was then a simple matter to set up a heading, print the copy a page at a time, correct any remaining errors, and final-edit and copy-fit the text so that it fits the space available.

If you don't much like the content of this issue, YOUR input is needed to improve the next one!

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From:- John Marriott, 121, Hill Barton Road, Exeter, Devon . EX1 3PP 01392-469206
1st/2nd March 2002. Dear Tony, Thanks for your letter - very nearly as bad as my "memo's" lengthwise! My commiserations on your PC hard drive problems, something I know only too well. I tend to go back to square one and save off what I can from the hard drive, then reformat it and load back the minimal amount, i.e. sod the rubbish. The last time (recently!) I didn't even bother to reload my sound card programs as well as a lot of picture file handling/processing programs - working on the principle of "...if haven't used them for 6 months, why waste time reloading them, for what? ..." I see you're running one of the Amstrad 1000 series - memory says that Alan Sugar tried cutting corners on that series, something about the hard drive, but any problem that way should have shown up long ago - a bug/virus or its power supply "sparking"? Quick checks - check the screw terminals in the 13A plug, look at its pins, especially their underside for any burning. If so, replace plug AND socket. Check the fuse board for warming on fuse serving that socket, pull the fuse and check fuse wire for discoloration (should look silver) and again for any burning to fuse pins. Plug/socket wiring screws can/do slacken, it's put down to the vibration of the 50 hertz frequency of the mains. Washing machines and fridge/freezers are also a source of "sparking back" on the power lines. Of course, with the weather we've been having, "clashing" of overhead power lines in windy/stormy weather can find its way past computer switch mode power supplies and really sod up PCB bits & drive media.

Right, in no particular order - I have been wondering where the EM is going, how is its Subscriber Base holding up (how many are dying!) and Bob's lack of confidence and belief in himself - something I know only too well personally. Bob and I have spoken a number of times, some at length (employer's phone bill?) and one of the simple problems is ISOLATION, or lack of feedback - am I doing it right, now I see it in print it's wrong, is anybody out there? Doubtless Ted had it, no doubt the North Devon Editor (can't remember his & her names, those EM's never returned from loan) too - but, to put it in its true context, the magazine is really of the Fanzine type, it's only been your knowledge and experience of the Printing Trade which has made the presentation (and revival!), professional standing and continued publication possible.

Okay, I'm the first to admit that it needs content - but most of your letter to me would make an Ideal Editorial, even the point of "taking me to task" about PC and other computers being "dragged" into EM. No man - let alone a computer - is an island! And in a sense your comment on my "EUGMPS" attitude has probably hit a hidden truth. My feelings about the TCO1 were mainly a response to its inherent appeal to a certain "type" of User - i.e. those who recognised the limitations of the BBC-B brought about by its "Educational Concept" whereas the TCO1 had manufacturing and control processing functionality, and in response to its 99% compatibility with CP/M - and the masses of programs proliferating/coming from the USA - mainly PD and early Shareware, but it was and is a true Programmer's Computer.

Unfortunately, this initial appeal was to a very special sector of people - both moneywise and intellectually, who knew about computers -and strangely enough tended to be "Hams", so I guess the old Morse Network added to its credence, what have you. To be true, it wasn't until Dixons sold them off at "dump" prices that I became (well, my youngest 7 year old son) aware/involved - yet commercial software/games were so OUCH! in price as compared to the Spectrum (who mentioned pirated ones?) that, with the introduction of the Spectrum+3 and the old ISCA Club, any TCO1 tended to be "special loan" to probable budding programmers or sold on for the money to buy "cheaper / special loan" computers - and it's only really been the demise in the last 5/6 years of Spectrum clubs/fanzines which has focused my time more and more onto the TCO1.

Right - my personal taste is for the EM to remain in A5 format, for it "looks" and "feels" okay in that format by comparison with earlier A4 EUG magazines, which looked and felt amateurish. I know full well the problem this A5 format can cause on today's PC "sideways" printers, as

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there's a need for a "run off" margin which never balances the reverse side! Whilst I'm running GST's desktop publishing, I'm still struggling with the "reverse pages" margins!

Whilst (at this stage) I can only add "give me some time to think...", in what format do you expect the EM to be "presented" for publishing/printing, i.e. would a series of A5 "printed one side" do, so that the pages can be "pasted up" physically, what have you? Part of the reason being, despite my apparent capability with computers, I tend to have a long learning curve, mainly due to the problem of "the first thing I learn, right or wrong, is the way I then tend to do it in the future" with the resulting need to re-train a trait which doesn't want to! At present I'm running a Pentium with Windows 95, CD drive, basic flat bed scanner, HP560C colour printer with spare 510 plus various dot matrix printers, and a fax machine which I use as a cheap photocopier (the paper being a bit oddish and ex-boot sale, the printed copy tends to be sepia-ish in colour, rather than black!)

One thing I'd like to comment on - it just seems that I came into the EM scene whilst it was going through its "hardware projects and low level programming" stage, rather than games/discussion, so I've tended to slant my offerings likewise (grovel to the Editor and he'll - always publish his taste!) - although I have tried of late to include some "short story with a twist" type of articles, even the deliberate attempt to create a "my column" (a bit like Lawry Johns used to have many years back in the Television monthly magazine) where a project is ongoing, never ever completely right, "look, I've got that wrong - again!" as a basic bit of psychology to show the readers that EM isn't expecting Einstein or Jeff Minter" style programs/ideas - with the idea that "IDEAS" will be submitted for discourse and expansion, with nobody pointing a finger and shouting "IDIOT!".

Now, as I'm not on the Internet myself, I've not seen those websites which have some Einstein content, so no feedback there. Chris Coxall let me have a CD with masses of information re the MESS Group - whilst I had a quick scan of it, I put it to one side as I was more focused on getting the 80TDS drive problem (as I thought, see "the Holy Grail" article enclosed) solved, up and running, feasible. Whilst there is some possibility of a TCO1 emulator running on a PC, from the quick look I had at the MESS emulation system it's got some way to go before being acceptable - but at least that's something somebody else could write up about?

In correspondence to Bob I have mentioned two PC Shareware programs, called Anadisk and 22-Disk. The first easily reads 3.5" TCO1 disks and can save off sections/all of the disk. 22-Disk I've not been too successful with - part of the stumbling block is that today's PC doesn't like 3" 40TSS drives (perhaps the XT or early AT might - but...) and you need a completely unformatted 3.5" 720K disk if you're emulating a single sided drive, as 22-Disk "reads" whatever it can, so whilst you KNOW it's only a SS disk, 22-Disk knows otherwise!

Jumping a bit (bad habit - called the Walker's twitch...), I chanced on Andrew Dunipace's first disk magazine amongst my hoard, although it's probably a copy as it's on a 720K disk formatted 40TSS. Whilst it's easy enough to say "he could have tried harder", at least he tried! One point he would have fallen foul of was from Xtal - not only were there DOS 2.05 tracks but also XC.COM and XR.COM files as well as their updated X BAS - and that is a complete violation of their Copyright - and from comments within his disk-mag they're not to be "put on" by a Third Party. Part of me says that it's logical to have a disk-mag, rather like BEEBUG and 8-BIT - yet I find it extremely difficult to read and assimilate information from a screen, having to print it out to make any sense - hence my old Epson FX-1170 wide carriage high speed printer (the ribbon livened with WD40!). No doubt this has to be my schooling, where books and reading were King (or should that be "was"?), which most of the EM Readers would also fall prey to - and of course, the written word can be picked up, put down, random search selected - Magic!

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So, hopefully I've put forward a convincing argument for retaining the A5-sized printed magazine. Daft as it would seem, seeing as how 100% of 0 is a great big 0 from the amount of writing in that the EM Subscribers don't do, I'd hope for a MONTHLY magazine, as I think at present it could be a bit of a case of "out of sight, out of mind" and going over to quarterly publication would, I think, be the final nail in the coffin.

Sadly, there must come a time when I'll eventually run out of ideas - although I keep intending to transcribe a bit of music to the TCO1, it's the "preparation" time as I refresh myself on sound/envelopes/waveforms that holds me back. Some years back somebody did have a letter published asking for help "finalising" a music program they'd created, but that was another EM I lent to somebody - over in the Ipswich area - which never came back (well, it might have, but a lot of ISCA's stuff never saw the light of day after it was decided that enough was enough. And that was a Club with over 300 free-loan computers out locally!).

A slight aside, my younger Son is a Computer Programmer (although his degree is a BSc. Mech. Eng.) - he's spent most of the last year transcribing COBOL-written Life Insurance Actuary Programs into SQL. Recently they were taken over by another Major Insurance Company and his department side-lined off to a large Computer Programming Group - who have now decided that they want everything back into COBOL as a "common platform" for the Insurance Company's Products - something about what comes round, goes round and rolls over you? Now, if I remember right - the Open University had a Degree Course on Programming - COBOL based - and configured for the TCO1, so there's a niche for "Youngsters" to examine.

Can I add a point, re. your 40 years in printing/experience compared to mine. In some ways I was fortunate, coming into electrical/mechanical servicing when things were still repaired i.e. replacement elements in irons, kettles, toasters. Even the move on to radio & TV with valves, chunky resistors and 100W soldering irons - even colour TV where you could learn by your mistakes without the "Boss" knowing - especially the customer - usually of the middle class type who wasn't particularly fussed about the set working, rather that the neighbours should know that they'd fallen well behind in the Possessions League. Rather as the Printing Industry took that gigantic leap from hot metal to DTP and etched drum plates, so mine jumped from transistors (some TV engineers would have said from valves to transistors) to IC's -and this is where a lot of people either went with the jump or were left behind.

The printing industry is about to make another great jump to direct laser printing from computer programming/control (CP/M?) and how long will it be before the Press Barons see something similar in their side? The jump which has now occurred in my Industry is DSP - digital signal processing, with even smaller IC's surface mounted - and due to Workshop hourly rates as compared to Far East mass produced "swap out" PCB's, the word repair really means replace, swap it and see - but don't refit the old part - just add it to the bill - I would have had great difficulty in going with that jump as it is contrary to my Lifetime's Ethos, so Life was kind by letting me reach retirement last year.

Now, more food for thought - during my working lifetime Society has moved from the "Oi, you!", "Come 'ere!", "Want this by...", "the Old Man wants to see you", "it's Marriott, ain't it?", "John, could you...", an ever open office door with "Mr. J.A. Marriott, Workshop Manager", various titles ranging from Director, Managing Director, Regional Service Supervisor, Engineering Plant Operator grade-2 and Counsellor - all along the line requiring to learn new skills, accept new ideas - the point, finally, being - how many EM Subscribers are fixed in that time warp of "Mister" and "Social Attitudes" era of the 1950's - and that's the type of EM they expect, will only accept?

As you so rightly say - offer to wipe a person's backside and they'll take you up on it, then expect a "onc-off" to become a permanent event.

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Whilst the idea of a bit of "Market Research" comes to mind - of what do the EM Readers want type, experience has taught me that "questions are formulated in order to provide the conclusion already reached" - and lands up being a bloody waste of time and good money!

And on that note I'll close - the enclosed articles are in Bob's file, some you've already got - but something to rest your mug of tea and sticky bun on when you get a 5 minute break from Life's hectic round?

All the best, John Marriott.

From:- Tony Adams, To:- JOHN MARRIOTT 29 October 2002

The enclosed Einstein Magazine is the final issue to be edited by Bob Deeley, who now wishes to concentrate on other aspects of the Einstein scene, and in particular to investigate the "nuts and bolts" of it all.

Unless you have (or someone else has) a burning desire to take on the editor's role, I'm intending to become Acting Editor again, to keep EM going as a vehicle for Einstein people to share views, ideas, hints, tips and information about the Einstein computer. However, the actual content of each issue will entirely depend on what comes to hand, as I'm not in a position to generate Einstein-related material myself.

If you have anything waiting to be published in EM, or if you have sent anything to Bob Deeley for publication in EM that's not appeared yet, please let me have hard copy of it in ready-to-print form. I can't read disks in ASCII format, let alone anything more exotic, and I don't have any facilities at all to scan anything in and re-size it.

I intend to keep to the traditional A5 magazine format if this is possible, so input printed at this size (on A4 sheets if this is more convenient for you) will be very helpful to me at this end.

With regard to your "free disks" offer, which I've reproduced in this issue, I don't know how much of a response you are likely to get on this, but it would be a pity to have a load of 720Kb and 3" disks dumped to landfill when these are no longer being manufactured, just because of a lack of immediate response to your offer from Einstein users. I'd like to keep these disks available to Einstein - and to Sharp and other - computer users. If you can ship any unwanted surplus to me by standard Royal Mail parcel post from your local post office, I'll be happy to refund your postage cost. There have been a few problems with mail going astray to my New Romney address, and other carriers can never find my delivery point anyway, so it would be preferable for anything to me to be sent c/o 12 Dunstall Close, St Mary's Bay, ROMNEY MARSH, Kent. TN29 0QY, at least for now.

To: Tony Adams From: John Marriott 121 EX1 3PP 15th. November, 2002

Re. Enclosed unpublished articles for EM submitted to Bob Deeley. Thanks for your note enclosed with EM-107 and the bit of "down side" news about Bob dropping out of the Editorial Role. At present I am in the middle of collating info to try and head off a "proposed" new school (replacement from elsewhere, but twice the size - hardly a replacement?) where at least 600 children will have to cross the road outside my house, which was the old Exeter By-pass but now carries just about the heaviest load of Commuter Traffic...

...but the Devon County Council can "count" on nearly £80,000,000.00p. of PFI (Privately Funded Initiative) money (borrowed with extortive interest/conditions which the local Council Tax Payer will have to find, NOT Central Government!), so what does the odd child's life cost by

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comparison? Whilst most local householders want to stop it, they've not a snow ball's chance in Hell - especially if they just act like NIMBY's, so one chap (91 years of age, ex-RAF) has suggested that open space (green field site) is needed as an "emergency drop out of the sky" area for planes in trouble from Exeter Airport.

We've got the local snooze-paper in to the act, except they've gone a bit over the top - scare mongering for the sales, not the gentle build up - so somebody brought to my attention the fact that on 23.10.1953 a Canberra B2 bomber came down locally following a bird strike on take off. Looking at some of the hazy facts, 5 people's recollections gives 6 results(!) - but even Coroners' records only go back to 1970 locally, so I've been casting a rather wide net (and a little bit of blackmail?) but at least I now have the aircraft call-sign WF892, the pilot and navigator's names...

...so next year, in the beautiful small Church in Honiton Clyst we may be able to arrange a 50 year Memorial Service - who knows.

I've put the articles in date order and numbered the sheets consecutively - except for the first sheet which is an "OOPS!" correction, hopefully if anybody takes up my "free disks" offer I'll stick an errata note in with their envelope. Due to the gap between EM106 & EM107 I have disposed of about 1500 3.5" 1.44M disks to my Sons' old school (plus some other bits & pieces) and about 600 3.5" 720K Atari programmed disks went with my eldest Son's Atari 1040 STE, so I'll have to see what's left over from any response as I shall be lending out (on rather a long term loan) 2 of my TC01 's set up with 3.5" drives - but having now off loaded all my Amstrad/Sinclair stuff I should be able to meet any reasonable 3" disk "freebies" if I do run out.

My cupboard is looking a bit bare, a SAM Coupe wings its way out this week, up to the Lancaster area, and whilst I've been running some local snooze-paper ads for my Sons' Amiga 1200 with HD's/software/manuals/RGB or SCART TV monitors, the response hasn't been out of this World - and they're 32-bit computers which'll run 286/386 PC emulation in CGA/EGA!

Yes, Big-Blue and Windoze have sure killed the Market - and some. Anyway, will probably drop you a line in 3-4 weeks after giving the "Editor problem" some more thought. Part of the problem, and no denigration to Bob, was the simple fact that Editors are born, not created - they may not be able to write a good story, but recognise one when they read it, even one which requires "a bit more work" - what to edit out, what to comment on - and I think that Bob suffered from "technologic" interference by relying on OCR Software too much, believing it was 100% effective when in fact its 0.5% misreading was more than enough to f**k up an article's ethos, meaning - which of course is just as easy to do if the "Editor" types in the article from copy. You always need a "double book-keeping entry system" to reduce errors to about zilch...

...two Editors? And who checks the Editors?

All the best, John

A E Adams, New Romney, Kent.

To: JOHN MARRIOTT

18 November 2002

Many thanks for your letter of 15/11/02, received safely at 12 Dunstall Close this morning, with sundry copy enclosed for EM.

This input from you has well and truly scuppered my plans to issue all future issues of the Einstein Magazine with the content consisting entirely of reports of track meetings of the Romney Marsh miniature steam train enthusiasts, favourite recipes from the local Women's Institute, the vicar's monthly letter from the local parish magazine, and hints tips and exciting

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adventure stories from a bound volume for 1922 of "THE SCOUT - The Paper For All Boys - Founded by Sir Robert Baden-Powell - issued weekly, Price Three Half-Pence".

It also deprives me of the opportunity to publish fascinating articles like "How to knit your own printing press from bits of balsa wood and a pair of Valerie Singleton's old tights", and "Melting down those unwanted milk bottle tops in order to cast your own printers' type". The best-laid plans of mice and men will keep ganging astray on me!

I have no practical experience at all of Atari or Amiga machines. I did see both in action at computer shows in London in late 1990, but I was not at all impressed by their "point and grunt" operating systems / graphics user interfaces, which seemed to me at the time to be unbelievably crude and horrible, just like an attempt to do the same on the Einstein in BASIC by a very green novice programmer. Fine for computer games buffs in short trousers, I thought, but not for adults.

The season is fast approaching when this Amstrad 386 is going to seize up unless I play a blowlamp into its cooling air intake, which doesn't do a lot for my ability to keep the membership database updated, print out mailing labels for EM, or conduct any correspondence.

Where are all these late 286 / early 386 PC machines for under a tenner that you mention midway down the 3rd page of your July 2002 article "PC 3.5" 1.44M DRIVES" ? Is there a secret quarry full of them in the Exeter area? There's none around here. Are they all clapped out and only good for parts like the ones I've paid a lot more than that for - and then had them die on me within a week or so, after the chewing gum holding their essential working bits together has dried out and crumbled away?

Mind you, I've recently followed up my exploit of some year's ago, almost knacker myself by buying up the redundant village hall at St Mary's Bay and racing the demolition men to see if I could cart it all away with the help of an elderly lady pensioner faster than a team of demolition men could knock it down and load it into a skip with a JCB. This time I've been systematically stripping out all the plumbing and mains electrical gear that looked at all useful from the disused and derelict caravan site round the back of the said lady pensioner's bungalow estate. I got some useful stuff from the main administration and bar block. The site agent said I could take anything I wanted!

To: Tony Adams From: John Marriott 121-EX1-3PP 26th. November, 2002

Many thanks for your "memo" of the 18th. - and sorry to have spoiled your "fun", but in all honesty why don't you run that memo as an Editorial, even some of those other "Groups" minutes & articles. Your observation on the type of materials for the construction of a printing press ain't all that impossible - we used to have a Quality Control Engineer at one Company I worked with for 20 years who'd make sure that if the specifications for a "high tensile steel bolt" said it was to be made out of stale bread - the fact that he KNEW that was a negation of ideas wouldn't hinder him in any way in ensuring that those bolts WERE made out of stale bread...

...and when the bolts failed he would check the specification and make sure the mixture of the flour and its constituents were correct! By a little bit of judicial juggling I managed to "off load" him to one of our Competitors, and the daft Bastard was stupid enough to ring us up after a couple of days to tell us that a bought-in component we'd been having a 100% failure rate with (and I'd told the Company and him why it had, and would always have a 100% failure rate because of an inbuilt design flaw) to say "...never guess, they've got the same problem too,

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except they're being told that it's a temporary component from a Supplier fault which has now been cleared..." - like F**K!

Bob Deeley sent me a long screed, it seems that his laptop crashed big time and he hadn't got a replacement, let alone any way to transfer the old HD files, and his Employer booking him on a trip to Mexico didn't help. Plus the USB transfer lead/program wasn't supplied/compatible... doesn't anything ever change in the Computing Industry? He's okay now, but other things have come out of the Woodwork to savage him - SOD'S LAW - I will have to dream up an article on that, although I guess it's just an extension to MURPHY'S FLAW.

Right - I don't use MS WORD to output 2xA5 pages, instead I use GST Publisher3 - I write up my article in MS WORD then IMPORT it into GST with the PAGE FRAME set for my HP560C printer, open up the PAGE and IMPORT my text (.DOC) file and set the AUTOFLOW - then run through re-checking the format layout. It sounds a bit longwinded - but it was the case that I started off with TASWORD PC files imported into the Shareware Version of TIMEWORKS Lite, I liked it - so I bought the whole program (BASIC running ONLY!). The GST P/2 can (at a pinch!) run in WINDOWS 3.1 but it has been revamped in parts for WINDOWS 95 and has now "grown" too big really for PC's less than 486DX/2's, it's the speed and memory. The enclosed 2 disks contain the early TIMEWORKS DTP (which I no longer use), the compressed .ZIP files expand out to .IMG 360K disks with the IMAGE program to "rebuild" onto (say) 3.5" 720K disks for installing onto a HD Directory. Whilst there is a WINSTALL program, I find it easier to boot up into DOS and run it as a DOS program through its GEM environment. Give it a try, it make the old 9 pin printers look civilised! It may be good training for a later version too?

Lunch is coming up, then the post when I'm out on today's 6/8 mile "stroll". The following is not a promise, but a possibility. IF, if I should happen to come across a good PC BASE unit when the Sunday's boot sale perks up (bad weather the last 6 weeks, 4 completely rained off, just about the others...), I've got some HD's and CD-ROM's languishing on my shelves, so I might be able to put something useful together which I can post on to you - subject to YOU paying its parcel post / insurance. Whilst I've still got a few spare pence in my "Computer Kitty" from the old ISCA Club they might as well be used productively - my eldest Son has said that I can dispose of / pocket his two AMIGA 1200's - but not his CASIO CZ1 keyboard and amp/speakers! Pity, must be worth £300/400 range. Pity is I've a PC base / box but I blew up the CMOS trying to clear the password, but I'm more than wary of picking up a "slung on the pasting table" PC-PCB as the tracks are so fine that even a little "snag" can sod up a few, so all being well, some "box" with a crashed HD may turn up - but no promises.

See - you've got the compensation of being a trainee Demolition Expert and Get lots of Bits & Pieces - something my Better Half has banned me from - although I do make Lightning Dashes at any Rubbish Skip I come across!

All the best, John

From Tony to JOHN MARRIOTT 06 December 2002

Many thanks for your letter of 26 November, with enclosed disks. The cold spell that set in over the past couple of days has caused my Amstrad 386 to go on the sulk, just as I predicted. I'm just back home from a week in Sussex working on Wendy's 1720 cottage, and it's taken me over 4 hours with a fan heater blowing into the air intake to get WordStar 4 loaded up, even though I'd left the thing running when I left, with all the night storage heaters switched on.

I'd therefore be extremely chuffed if you could fix me up with a working Windows base unit, especially if you can get hold of one for me that runs something like Winders 95/97/98 rather

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than 3.1 - gives me fewer text file compatibility problems if I need to scan something in, using the local library's scanner-linked PC and then work on it here - and also if it has standard keyboard and monitor interfaces, rather than weird proprietary non-standard ones that I can't fit anything to. You mention that if you can find a good base unit you have some HDs and CD-ROMs languishing on your shelves. Are you referring just to the bird-scarers themselves, or can you maybe provide a base unit fitted with a drive to read (/write?) these pretty little plastic discs? The jolly old parcel post had become a real pain in the bum after it was hived off from Royal Mail and used as the basis of ParcelForce - this firm was a total headache to try and deal with in my experience, and usually completely failed to deliver what was entrusted to them. They have now given up on the original parcel post service altogether, in order to concentrate on high-value timed "courier" services, and have handed the original parcel post back to Royal Mail, who are now concentrating on getting things delivered instead of concentrating on creating a trendy new image, after this move proved to be a major commercial disaster for them.

Since the original parcels post has been back in Royal Mail hands it seems to have become extremely good instead of extremely bad. Wendy uses it regularly to ship the assorted junk up to her two generations of female offspring in Manchester that she spends all her pocket money on in the local jumble sales, junk shops and bargain basement emporia hereabouts, and - although it may reflect the way that I package it up so as to withstand it being sat on by an elephant in transit, and never label any package with less than half a dozen computer-printed address labels, themselves protected by very wide clear "Sellotape" -- as per the EM mailing envelope address labels - we have no problems at all now with parcels going missing or suffering damage, or getting lost and delayed, as ParcelForce used to manage to do all too often.

The parcels post prices are not as cheap as they used to be, but they are not excessive for the service now being given. 40p extra to insure for £100 isn't bad, either. Seems like a bargain to me if it gets me a good base unit which I can use to keep the Einstein Empire running.

To: Tony Adams EUG/EM & etc.
Subject: a Happy New Year?

From: John Marriott, Exeter

1st January, 2003

At the moment I'm part watching a 202M H/D being reformatted/recovered on a TINY Pentium, my eldest Son's PC, which he has "kindly" donated to me seeing as how he is fed-up with being on computers all day (a Graphic Design Artist) & it has an "iffy" 40G H/D. I suspect something "iffy" on its "all in one" Mother Board. Just shows you, less than 2 years old and well on its way to being next week's junk - though the 19" SVGA Colour Monitor makes my 15" one look sad...

...which brings me to the first "not so good news" - the last couple of months with the weather being less than kind in this part of the World, most of the Sunday boot sales haven't - with the only one where more than 20 Sellers turned up being so bloody cold that the Seller I bought a PC Base off, stuck it in the back of his van for me to pick up at 10.30 (he said he was going at 11.00) but he had actually hauled up anchor and gone by 10.00. The Seller next to him (who was close to tears with the cold!) said "my Seller" couldn't stand the pain and went. The chap is a Regular (every 4th Week) because of his work rota, so hopefully I'll catch up with him later. I've bought stuff off him before, he used to work as a Computer Bench Engineer but changed to servicing Industrial Laundry Equipment - so hopefully that base unit'll turn up. Whilst I've a "back up" 386SX laptop computer with mono-LCD screen, about 2M RAM and 40G H/D which'll link up with normal screens and keyboards - it's SLOW, slower than slow - and every now and then the H/D cable needs "refitting" (due to a pin oxidising?), which is a bit fiddly gaining entry, even when you know how - and of course the battery pack got nicked (ISCA Club open evening!) so it will only run on its mains power pack, so I don't think it's worth the cost of posting - but I'll keep on looking!

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On the Editorship of EM, it has been "suggested" to me that the painting/wallpapering that/which I intended to start back in September (but didn't!) should commence some time later this month and that I obtain some quotes for the "front of the house" windows to be replaced with double glazing due to the increase of the traffic volume/noise (I live on the old Exeter Bypass, and whilst it may have been "down-rated" to the B3181 someone hasn't told the traffic that - no, it's just a case of Exeter growing unchecked with a local road running parallel to mine being closed by the Highways Committee because "motorists are using it!"). Added to that are some articles I've been asked to rewrite for a local Charity as well as Read/Edit some other Subscriber's, plus a research project I've got regarding a Canberra B2 bomber which crashed on take-off from Exeter airport on 23.10.1953. That's a longish story, but I hope that the small local Church in Clyst Honiton will have a Remembrance Service for the two Crewmen this coming October - it may be 50 years (I lived in Debden [Chigwell Green as-was] then) but research suggests that the Pilot deliberately avoided the (then) main A30 and some houses in the Blackhorse area close to the village of Sowton when things went really seriously wrong as he tried making it back to another runway when things were then reasonably under control but dicey. As I say, a long story .

And - if there is space in the next EM for the following ad:-

FOR FREE -TO COLLECTORS, OR...

(*** EDITOR'S NOTE:- John's ad and article update are printed elsewhere in this issue)

NOTE that I reserve the right to withdraw any or all of these items should any Member of the old ISCA Club claim prior right. These items are FREE to EUG Members only if collected. Whilst I do not want to get involved in the hassle of obtaining packaging & etc, IF you want something but need it posting, then a charge of £10.00p PER PARCEL is what I value my time at, PLUS of course any postage/insurance costs

Well, I think that explains the "Subject: a Happy New Year?" comment at the start. It'll leave me with a basic level of TCO1 gear (including manuals Basic, BBC Basic, Logo & etc., plus the more technical Albert books) to "interface with" when the mood takes me, not the mass of "room takers" the stuff is at present - and not being used!

The DTP program which I sent for the PC does have HELP files built in, about the same as the original manual but better laid out! They can be read with the LIST.COM type of file reading program. The DTP prog is a bit dated (aren't we all!) but it's well worth the trouble of trying. You can use it as a "direct type in" word processor DTP but I must admit that I found it better to type in your prose in say TASWORD (I know, but don't scream!) then IMPORT TEXT into a LIVE FRAME and set FLOW TEXT. The thing I liked about it (then) was the way it made a 9-pin DM printer look good.

And that's it! Sorry for the depressive content - but let's hope the New Year brightens up!

All the best,

John Marriott.

Exeter, 8th. January 2003.

Dear Tony, Some better news than my last letter - I got to last Sunday's boot sale, again not many people there 'cos of the biting cold, but the chap I bought the base unit off was - except that he'd off-loaded all the base units (plus mine!) to a "friend", and with profuse apologies - my money back. Not so miffed, as it was only a 386SX with a 387 maths chip (so not as fast as a 386DX) and I'd already seen another "door stop" of a base unit which I landed up buying as I knew the guy, called Gavin and had worked at the Express & Echo when I was doing promotional work there - and I'd a fair idea of where this unit had come from!

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Anyway (my favourite word?), there is a bit of "not so good news" - it is a floor standing tower, 23" high x 18" deep x 7.5" wide so there's plenty of room to spare in it. Specification - 486DX2-66, 16M RAM, 250K Cache, VGA, 540M HD now loaded Windows 95 with on-line manual, MS Office suit and other programs I tend to find of use, most of them have HELP files, plus my old 8X CD drive. In order to get its price down to my "Charity to the EUG/EM" price Gavin removed 3 "cards" but he did admit that he'd forgotten when he "re-did" the HD that he didn't have the disks for those "cards". However, he had a fair idea of who would and would pay him as much as he wanted for the whole PC base unit - so he'd make more that way! As I tend not to go much on sound/games and the Internet can be a pain/time waster, I was quite happy with the cost outcome.

I've set the VDU display to 32-bit colour of 640 X 480 pixels although you may need to change that through the Control Panel to either a 256 or 16-bit colour setting - I've also set the screen saver to kick in at 5 minutes and the hard drive "to rest" the same (if not program accessed) so there's a minimum-but access-restart delay.

You'll need to supply a keyboard with a 5-pin DIN plug and Mouse with a COM1 9-pin D plug and VDU. I had to make a small temporary "plug adapter" (FAX copy enclosed) to test it with my PS2 plugged k/b - and for some reason my PC won't accept a PS2 plugged mouse, it insists on the COM1 port in spite of all my attempts to persuade it otherwise (that was probably why it went to the Government Surplus Auction House!) & it's my only 9-pin D plug mouse (so I'll have to keep my boot sale eyes open for a spare worker?).

Whilst I've GST Publisher-3, I've installed their earlier Publisher-2, as the later version on the 486DX2-66 is a mite slow/frustrating when weighing off its other "benefits" - and it isn't all that faster on my AST P/90, so I might go a bit "retro" myself as well as save a bit of room on my HD. Some of the programs you may not feel are of any use, and rather than fully delete them I'd suggest copying off each Directory/Sub-directory on 1.44M floppies into A:>MD (same-name)(Directories/Sub-directories) then just erasing the contents off the HD - but DON'T delete the directory names or *.DLL's. That is my way of "remembering" where things need to go back into without wasting much HD space.

Printers - I've pre-loaded some, i.e. Epson 8 & 24 pin, Cannon bubble jet, HP510/560C, OKI OL400ex (HP emulate) & 1200, so there's a reasonable choice, but if you've something really different, let me know so I can let you have copies of whichever other drivers you need.

Due to the tower unit's size & weight its parcel postage cost (when I can find a suitable carton or packaging - I'll have to make a special trip into Exeter, be later this week) is going to be the top rate (over 10Kg but under 30Kg) plus any compensation fee - I'd suggest at least up to the £100.00p level, possibly even £250.00p. as its packed size could result in heavy handling...

...human nature being what it is.

If this PC is of interest (despite its size?) and you're willing to pay its post/insurance costs (the PC to be donated to EUG/EM with its cost paid from the old ISCA Club liquidation funds), can you let me know? If you'd prefer to wait and see if a small desktop PC base turns up can you also let me know, as I can let a local Charity have this one on a "loan" basis pending a "promised from elsewhere" one at the start of April 2003?

All the best, John.

John Marriott,
121, Hill Barton Road,
Exeter.
EX1 3PP

01392-469206

17th. January, 2003

Dear Tony,

Just received your letter - gave me a slight "slingshot" back in time, as being in the "OHMS" brown envelope I thought it was my Reservists Call-up papers arriving (I hear Iraq in the early Spring is quite nice...) - then of course remembering that back in 1958 when they did "invite" me to attend my first "H" Reserve annual camp, I suggested to them that if they wanted me they'd have to come and get me...

...as they never did then, why now?

No doubt my age and senility confusing me, but I have been "correcting & re-editing" two fact/fiction/fantasy novelettes of mine (loosely based on personal past experiences) recently - titled "Don't bug me!" and its sequel "Don't bug me! ...too?", so memories of that era feel quite fresh - and probably the fact that in 1956 we were doing something similar in Egypt - same lies, same excuses - same dysentery?

Right, the enclosed is part of my "Happy New Year" letter (I didn't bother to save it off, and to confused things further, the ink cartridge ran out) - being the "freebies" bit plus a diagram of "how to modify a PC drive cable" (which you've got the full article on - but it finishes off the page), hopefully the Arial font at 8 point isn't too small.

Right - computer specification - no different to motor car models & specifications, the Salesman will try to sell you what you don't want and you'll buy it because you don't know what you really want, or need. The 486DX2-66 with 16Meg RAM, 256K cache, 540Meg HD, 2K video RAM and 8 speed CD drive will happily run Windows 95 at a good rate of knots - and if you feel like going backwards to Windows 3.1 and DOS 6.2 it'll be waiting for your input 99.9999% of the Time - so take advantage of the "...we'll do it all for you W95..." and if you come across any "that era program" which insists on more RAM, more HD, more XYZ - then ditch it, for it'll be a program which loads up 110% whilst you only really want to use 2% of it!

My article - "Simple Database" in EM100/30 describes the actions of a "retrieval data base" as compared with the heavyweight, slow, memory hungry "enter information and sort it into the program cells, come back for more & etc." is a case of a program (which is going to contain umpteen records) being written wrong, as the more records it contains the slower it becomes if you have to use the disk (floppy or HD, doesn't matter) as a "read/write back" memory. Digital Research had plenty of those programs for the Amstrad CPC6128 - what a yawn! Now that type of program needs so much

RAM to make it just partially "watch paint dry" acceptable that's it's best to accept the fact that 128K RAM will eventually not be enough - ditch it.

One of the problems with W95 is the "bells & whistles" it insists on loading - which all take time and memory - so a little bit of sideways thinking helps. Don't load up a wallpaper on the desktop, don't load up a virus check program if you're not on a telephone/network line and don't use "Stranger's" disks. Yes, it's nice to have "bing-bong" sound to tell you that you've opened/closed a file/program/window - but they all land up loading "background" programs. Sounds a bit penny pinching (Stan Gibbs is right, I am a tightwad!). Graphics/pictures - if your printer only has a 180 dots per inch capability, why scan in a picture at 600 d.p.i. - come to that, if it only has a black ribbon - why scan in colour?

Space can easily be saved (especially with text and line drawings) by compressing them (Pkware programs I find easiest) as they can be read back by, say, Quick View Plus without you going through the trouble of un-compressing them, and then if you want, fully retrieved. Don't use a program for 3 months - compress the whole lot, another 3 months transfer it/backup to floppy and ditch it off your HD. Check with DEFRAG, I run it if my HD is over 3% - sod the message.

As for adding hardware - your choice, but NEVER with new boards as the chances you'll have "speed" problems &/or infuriating clashes which you WON'T be able to sort as you haven't the original software/hardware installation disks. Any hardware, try to make it from the same era i.e. 1995/6 BUT make sure you have those important disks. Yes, a lot of "drivers" are available on the Internet - but I'll guarantee the one you want has been superseded by the "card" following which happened to be a complete "plug-n-play" device where-as yours still has "jumpers", but the "print paint" showing what the jumpers set/do are a hangover from the previous "card", so you set what you think is right...

...and W95 goes bananas as it tries to get to grips with clashing "Interrupts" and what have you - so not only the driver/set-up disk, but User Manual as well - be warned!

"Slave" HD's are simple enough to install as at least one extra connector is always included on the HD ribbon cable. The simple part is the plugging in - on the HD set the jumper from MASTER to SLAVE. All being well there'll be a little descriptive sticker on the drive, or "paint print". Plug in the power cable (computer OFF!) as it will only go in one way, then the ribbon cable with the "red stripe" edge towards the red lead of the power cable (sometimes the plug's not "keyed"). Now power up and press whatever keys the computer screen says you'll need to enter into CMOS. This does vary and sometimes "evil people" set a link on the PCB which stops you getting into the CMOS set-up program - TOUGH! I find it easier to either BACKUP what DIRECTORIES I want to save from your old (but working, just?) PC's HD and restore it to your new PC - BUT into dummy DIRECTORIES. DON'T wipe off any programs from the old HD until you're sure you've really transferred them - been there!

Sometimes there is an AUTO-SENSE setting for HD's, if there is AND you're confident enough to try it, then choose that selection and save it off - BUT (and the

CMOS pattern is on that floppy disk), run FIRST AID and select the CMOS SAVE, as you can then use THAT configuration to RECOVER should things go wrong - also been there!

Out of the two - I'd use the former. Bit more long winded in some ways, but Murphy's Flaw will always ensure that opening and poking around inside a computer (anything electrical!) will result in a FLASH and a BANG on switch-on! (...many times, many many times!...)

CD drives - the "writers" are still to new to be turning up WORKING at boot sales and for the amount you're likely to use one, cheaper to find somebody local who can "burn" a CD with your "favourite" programs i.e. you can delete them off your HD and use that CD as a pseudo HD. I've given somewhere in the region of 250 ex-magazine CD's to the School - who've found the best use (after bird scarers) was to create a "solar furnace" (like the one in the South of France!) reflective dish - which seemed such a good idea I might try that later this year with the 60 or so scudding on my shelf. The "speed" is a misleader, as very rarely will, say, a 36 speed one run faster than 12, perhaps 15 - it's a case of information transference, expansion, checking, saving to a temporary HD file - then going back for more. 50 speed ones are for top class Pentiums for "real time" video role game playing - which then requires a high-spec video card/memory with at least a 15" SVGA 28 mm dot pitch (the TM01 tube is probably 40 mm dot pitch) and 32-bit colour capability - so you're at a £1000.00p. plus level with a good sound system, or probably £600.00p. for a "used" model which the "first owner" has found unstable/troublesome...

...bit like my eldest son's TINY PC, just coming up to 2 years of age and a trashed 40 Gig HD! Mind you, his 19" SVGA 26 mm dot pitch monitor - whilst only about a 7% "pitch" improvement has about a 20% larger viewing area - now colour, clarity & graphics on that - WOW!

Incidentally, going back to your "observation" re-my old 8xCD drive - I've a really old 2xCD drive which is a real pleasure to use as it runs all the time when transferring from most CD's and is actually faster than my 36xCD drive because of it's "having to run up to speed, stabilise, match transfer rates, decides to switch off because the memory/HD buffer is full, & etc." when installing new programs.

Haven't forgotten your computer - just can't get hold of a box for it - none of the "normal" TV shops seem to have any sales going - but it'll get to you

All the best

John M.

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To JOHN MARRIOTT ~ Sunday evening, 26 January 2003

Many thanks for your 17 January letter and also for the big parcel of 486 computer that was sitting on Wendy's doorstep, just inside the front porch, patiently waiting for us to arrive back on Friday night from her near-derelict listed cottage in a small village on the A28, northeast from Hastings, that we're trying to get back into a sound state of structural repair.

The weather today is pleasant, a bit of wet overnight last night, and about ten degrees above what it ought to be at this time of year, so hopefully you will have had a productive boot fair today and will have found a good serial mouse for me so that I can get your 486 up and running to replace the 1988-vintage Amstrad 1386, with its 20Mhz system unit, that I'm only able to key this into because the temperature has shot up. To balance this, the weather girl says that when the other half of the Atlantic high pressure system reaches us, later in the week, it will be dragging freezing cold winds from the Arctic across us instead of from Gibraltar, as at present, so our teeth will then be chattering with a temperature of ten degrees below the seasonal average - PLUS a wind chill factor of another eleven degrees! Well, we won't hardly notice, will we? That's only 30 degrees below what it is today - in Centigrade, of course, which can't be much more than something like 50 degrees colder in Faringheit.

Anyway, I hope it doesn't freeze solid and break into little pieces on the way to you, but I enclose my cheque to reimburse you for the postage + insurance fee on the 486 computer, much appreciated.

I really should have asked while I was on the phone to you yesterday, but my brain has only just woken up to the fact that your "Free if you travel the length of the M4/M5 or pay oodles of money to Virgin or First Great Western so you can collect from Exeter" disposal list includes 4 "as is" 1.44Mb drives from gutted PCs. Is there any possibility of your plugging one (or more) in, checking if it is a runner, and whizzing it in my direction with a dummy floppy disk in it (so it doesn't bounce itself silly and get its innards dislodged like sometimes happens to floppy drives in the post)? I can get at the temperature-sensitive 386 to open up the box and connect another 1.44Mb floppy drive in place of the graunched-up one without too much of a problem in order to extract the current data and program files onto a 1.44Mb floppy to set up a Dos ghetto on the 486 hard drive as a transitional arrangement to keep the show on the road until I work out how to do it all in Windows, but the other non-functioning computers here that I could theoretically rob of bits like a good 1.44 floppy drive are all well buried, and will cause an enormous amount of chaos to unearth and dive into, which I'd much rather do when I am not under such pressure from council planning officers who are looking for any excuse to slap a compulsory purchase order on Wendy to take her cottage away from her with only derisory compensation - if any!!! for not being able to restore it to its original 1720 as-new condition fast enough for their liking.

John to Tony, undated

Enclosed are DOS 6.22 disks plus some (later) WIN 3.11 disks I've come across - I don't need them back. Jumping quickly to the Tower PC - DON'T try installing DOS 6.22 on its hard drive as it needs to check/format before it can install itself AND as it's NOT an "upgrade" version i.e. DOS already installed, you would need to reformat the HD or "kill" the existing DOS if it "finds" DOS there already. If memory serves me right, I did a minimal DOS route of just getting a CD driver software installed on that 540Meg HD which Gavin had reformatted to a basic System drive, then installing Windows 95...

...but NOT the "Accessibility" portion (as I've never used it on my own system) which has the "mousekey". BUT try this after you've booted up and have the Windows Desktop display. Press <alt><s> to bring the first menu up

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Press <s> for settings menu

Press <c> to load up control panel display

Press <tab> to highlight words of first icon and the cursor keys (to move around) until the <accessibility option> is reverse highlighted

Press <enter> then <ctrl><tab> to move to the "mouse" card/name, then <m> to tick the <use mousekey> with <a> for apply and <ok>

Use the NUMERIC KEYPAD arrows to move the mouse pointer, I think <ctrl> pressed at the same time "jumps" the pointer -but there's a lot of "hot keys" active too. The MOUSE (if fitted) is still active. Short cut to turn <mousekey> on/of is <leftALT>+<leftSHIFT>+ <Num Lock>

Whilst I've "looked" to see what programs W95 might use, the file C:\Windows\System.ini shows that it's using Mouse.Drv so it might in fact be a "Transient" program it's temporarily patching - I haven't had time to test that out.

Boot sale - weather fairly good, but the Met Office had "promised" rain and heavy winds, so lots of Buyers but hardly any Sellers - no Serial Mouse available. Can't find the "pin out" info for the PC Serial mouse - got the feeling I'm clearing too much too soon otherwise I'd "make good" the PS/2 socket I cannibalised for the "test" keyboard PS/2=>9 pin DIN back to a PS/2=>9 pin D socket - check that your local PC shop hasn't got that type of converter plug in stock, it may be a cheaper way of using one of your PS/2 mice. If you have to buy a SERIAL mouse, buy it on the condition that it'll work, as there was/is the MS/PC standards. All the best, John.

To: Tony Adams From: John Marriott, Exeter. 15.2.03

Dear Tony, For one moment when I received your handwritten letter from the cottage I thought you were going into the business of making paper - you know, that "parchment" type. Well, there must be enough geese around on the Romney Marshes to obtain "quill pen" supplies - the only trouble is that those "punt guns" tend to blow them to pieces, or the bottom of the punt out!

No comment on your suggestion re the 4" roll of perforated writing paper - but I find felt tipped pens rather smudgy, with 4H pencil leads as close to a scalpel as makes no odds. Actually, I've got 3 boxes of letter/A4 fan fold paper sitting on the floor next to me doing nothing. The School doesn't even want them, but the postage cost to you would make them uneconomic, I'd think?

Right, on to computers - well, the PC's. Some weeks back I let my Sons' old school have all my computer leads and what have you - only saving a specially extra long Centronics lead as a spare (saves me humping a spare printer up on my desk - a laser HP emulation, a 5Op Boot Sale one which didn't have any "driver disk" - turns out that whilst it's badged OK! OL600ex, in fact Windows95 sees it as a HP laser printer - so whilst its cartridge lasts, a spare!). Yes, for some reason the SERIAL mouse has shuffled off this Mortal Toil. I've phoned a couple of "Scrappers" without success - and the last few Boot Sales have been really dead, the only computer being an Amstrad PCW 8256 with an "asking price" of £40.00p.! High level used Pentium 200's are "shop priced" at £80.00p. (without monitor, but with keyboard, CD, PS/2 mouse, sound card & etc.) here in Exeter. Somewhere I think(?) I've the "pin out" for the SERIAL & PS/2 mice as I've the feeling that problems are bound to arise in the near future. I know there is an "adapter/converter" (as I cannibalised one for a keyboard, as mentioned previously!) but I've been clearing masses of "paperwork collections" these last few months, so there's more than the likely possibility that the "baby's gone out with the bath water..."

With that dead 7286 monitor, the chances are that the internal "signal" leads have broken - it's usually about the "weight" of those disposable "Airline" earphones well encapsulated in heavy braid screening wire - so the lighter gauge wire "stress fatigues" at any sharp bend i.e. plug or

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monitor exit. I've actually repaired a monitor lead - forgetting that there are "two ends" - but I shall NEVER be daft enough to do the same, despite how much a replacement signal lead costs - will scrap the monitor first! Some "manufacturers" have got round to having a monitor socket giving a similar situation to the mains cable - straight "swap-out" of the signal cable!

The HD on your dodgy £30.00p. 486 - I'd check the stand-by CMOS battery and replace it - there might even be some condensation/crud fouling the CMOS battery holder. The enclosed disk - slot it in the 486 then boot up and after just pressing the <enter> key when it "asks" for the date and time, try A:>DIR C:<e> to see if the 486 has "picked up" the HD, then run MSD<e> or SYSCHK<e> which'll (hopefully?) provide the true HD parameters. I know there is a "problem" with trying to set up the "Type 47" parameters as the "System" won't accept "figures" over a certain value (but I can't remember what!) and it "defaults" to a lower figure (S*TI). It's best to try the following with a spare HD (to gauge the effect...), and at the A:> prompt (enclosed disk in!) enter FORMAT C: /U /S<e>, it'll "squawk" a bit with "...this is a fixed drive...blah, blah, blah...", but on <Y><e> will trundle off to check the HD's parameters and unconditionally reformat it - THEN do a A:>SCANDISK C:<e> to ensure that HD's fit to use.

The FDISK is for PARTITIONING the HD and if memory serves me correct, then A:>FDISK C:<e> and selecting (4) which checks/shows if the drive has been split i.e. DRVSPACE'd compression where a C:> will have a H:> partition COULD be the cause of the auto-detect getting confused - however, do check that CMOS battery/serviceability.

Perhaps going into the 'NET and the CONNOR Website(?) may come up with those HD values, but substitution testing with a "known" HD to see if the 486's auto-detect does - if it does, switch HD's, reboot, see effect, power down, swap, reboot. Sometimes the "manufacturer's" HD "table" gets corrupted (IBM - DON'T do a low level format, drive can only be used as a Slave afterwards!) so the HD is just junk - simplest description of how these "manufacturer's HD" work is "you boot up with a floppy, change to the HD, enter WIN<e> and it does just that...". You can then try that CONNOR HD (set jumper to Slave - there should be another socket on the HD cable) and run it with a "good" HD as Master - again to see any cause/effect behaviour. Depending on the "age" of that CONNOR it could be "expecting" the old PARK command on Windows close-down (modern auto-park drives - listen carefully and you can often hear the "head" self-park) as disk corruption may be happening through "supply switch-off spike" - long shot? Landing zone is a hang-over from the old PARK days, Pre-compensation too, usually "self-checked" and adjusted nowadays with WIN95..

Can't spend to long on the computer today (this one I'm on!...) as my poor old eyeballs dry up and creak a bit. Mum suffered from the "dry eye" syndrome too - but she was in her early 80's. I guess mine are playing up through this cold weather - the air's drier, and of course with turning up the central heating temperature (3:1 ratio - every degree lower outside, 3 degrees extra on the water!) it makes the "relative humidity" even drier - and my poor old eyeballs even sorer! Well, the old ISCA Club gear has now hit the bottom of the barrel, there's nothing left to raise funds for "good causes" and with only £30.00p. now left in the kitty (proceeds of selling that 256 colour monitor and the Amiga disks), the remaining "interested parties" have agreed that it'll be finally laid to rest on the 28th of this month by the simple act of converting what's left into wine and drinking it, whilst sadly reminiscing over some of the events of the last 20 years.

...how a simple 8-Bit 48K computer cost £200.00p. (£600.00p. at today's figure?), a printer interface another £45.00p. and a "till ticket" dot matrix printer nearly £300.00p. - which can't be given away now for love nor money, like today's Big Blue? The Death of the Programmer with the Birth of the Program User. Well, at least the ISCA Club was in at the best time - 20 years with me 15 years of them as Secretary and Fund Raiser.

That's it for now - hopefully EM108 is squeezing itself along the pipeline All the best, John

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From:- A E ADAMS

To:- John Marriott

03 March 2003

Many thanks for your letter of 15th February, and for all the useful bits and pieces you've sent me. The 1988 Amstrad 1386 PC has unfrozen itself due to the present mild spell, but I've now got the tower unit that you got for me at a local boot fair in Exeter set up with a good colour monitor, serial mouse and Windows keyboard - all borrowed from other machines that I'm hoping to sort out and get running in various locations that I am active at on a regular basis with the help of the system analysis software that you've supplied me with, so I am on the lookout for replacements for all of these. I've also found a Centronics printer cable, and got it all working with a Panasonic KX-P1123 24-pin dot-matrix printer, which was part of the computer stuff that I recently cleared out of the attic for the widow of Einstein member Dick Keynes of Bexhill, who sadly died last year. One less of us left! There may be some good Einstein stuff among it to pass on when I've got it all sorted out for anyone who can pick it up from Romney Marsh or the Hastings area, but who can't get to Exeter to pick up what you have to pass on.

I was intending to rob the Amstrad 7286 computer of its floppy disk drive and fit this to the 1386 so that I can back up the 1386 hard disk, reformat it, and set it up in the printing office to run the parish magazine distribution database, but on hooking up a good monitor to the 7286 I discovered that - as you suggested - the fault lay in the monitor or its cable, and that the base unit is working fine. Indeed, even tho' it is several years since I was able to use it, the CMOS configuration settings are still OK. I know that the 1386 has a couple of throwaway pencil cells to power the CMOS when the power is off, as opposed to whatever other computers have. I suspect these are either some sort of capacitor or rechargeable batteries, as all the ones I've seen are hardwired. The non-Amstrad ones that I have seem to hold the CMOS setting for six months to a year if not powered up, so I was surprised that the 1992-vintage Amstrad 7286 had held the settings, when it must be nearly three years since I last powered it up. I gave up word-processing on it as it was so awkward when the screen was completely blank! As the 7286 is now working fine, I still need a replacement 1.44Mb floppy drive for the 1386. I need to keep this one running, as it is the only base unit I have that I can plug external 360Kb or 1.2Mb 5.25" floppy drives into, and I still have a lot of old data files in those formats that I need to be able to access occasionally. As and when I get all the machines up and running in their various locations, I intend to sort out the stack of printers I've got, and attach one to each. Do you know if printer drivers are specific to the various versions of Windows as well as specific to the printer or its emulation, or will a printer driver for one version of Windows work for all?

I would have replied to your letter sooner, but I was hit by a virus infection and laid low for a couple of weeks, and it's rather hard to use a computer that is even more frozen up than you are yourself in the recent cold spells. I am up and running again now, and so is your tower base unit, so I am getting to learn my way round a modern Windows word-processor. I have installed WordStar 4 and dBASE 3+ and the Einstein database system, with direct access from the Windows desktop, but I had to install the data files for these from rather ancient backup disks, as I can't extract anything onto a floppy disk from the workhorse 1386 until I replace the ravaged 1.44Mb drive on it. I have rooted out a dead Acorn Archimedes computer, with a 3.5" floppy drive, which I think uses the equivalent of 720Kb disks, but to a 800Kb format. I was going to see if I can hook this up temporarily as a 720Kb drive to give me at least some sort of floppy disk backup and data transfer capability for now, but I really can't spare the time to play with this until after I've got the late-running Einstein Magazine printed and mailed out.

I was hoping to get it printed and mailed out a month ago, but as a result of the 1386 computer freezing up, the virus infection which hit Wendy and me and laid us both low, the time taken to set up your new Exeter boot sale Windows tower unit with all the necessary peripherals to make use of it, and an even heavier workload than before I retired - not at all unusual, I understand - I am only now able to get on with sorting and selecting the copy, and assembling, editing and copy-fitting it to produce a master copy to print from. I intend - if I can pack it all

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into the van as well as all the listed cottage repair/rebuilding gear - to take the tower unit and peripherals with me to the cottage this week, so that (hopefully) I shall be able to get on with the EinMag in whatever brief spells I have in the evenings when I am not eating or getting on with other cottage repair work. That should enable me to progress things at least a little bit.

While I was in the public library today, scanning various bits of text onto a floppy disk to load into the tower unit for editing for the mag, I accessed the Einstein sites on the web, using DOGPILE. This is a search engine that triggers a multiple search using other search engines, and it seems to get better results this way than Jeeves, which I've used previously with very poor results. The stuff I was scanning in while I was there was various letters you and I had sent to each other in the last year or so, as I thought about your repeated comments that much of what I was writing to you would make a good editorial feature, and realised that it is equally true that much of what you have written to me is equally as interesting and worth publishing in the mag as the stuff that you have submitted in formal magazine article style.

Hopefully, including much of it in correspondence form, interspersed with your more formal submissions, will encourage others to submit letters and interesting irrelevancies too, so that we are not entirely reliant on your efforts and whatever I can scrape together from other outside sources to put the magazine together from. Are you in contact with that awfully nice Deeley chap? Do you know if he has any interesting discoveries to share with us yet?

Right, as I am supposed to be replying to your last letter, let's have a look and see what you say in it. The only paper I had available to write to you with on site at the under-repair listed cottage - we have one room in it set up as a site hut cum messroom - being thoroughly water-stained seems to have really got your imagination going. As to your thinking I was going into the business of making paper, I did have a go at pulping old envelopes and recycling it by making new paper sheets from it before I first met Wendy, way back when I was married to a young lady called Mary. I'm no longer married to her, and the last I heard of her she was living up in Gateshead with the father of her children. That's about the right distance away for me to be able to afford to have fond memories of her! Anyway, to turn a sink full of pulp into sheets of paper I used a simple net curtain mesh to lift a layer of pulp and drain the water off, fixed to a simple home-made wooden frame. The drained layers of pulp were stacked up, with a cloth between each, and then pressed with heavy weights stacked on top to force the remaining water out, before being hung up to dry. Originally this would have been on horsehair ropes in a drying loft, as horsehair doesn't stain the paper. The process produces an absorbent sheet rather like blotting paper, which would need dipping in size and drying again, and/or calendaring - a hot iron would probably do the job - before it would be suitable for writing on with a quill pen. As to goose quills being plentiful here, this may be true of parts of the North Kent marshes, but almost all of the Romney Marsh area has long been drained and is now arable land, so geese are few and far between except on the bird reserve at Dungeness - next to the nuclear power stations - and I'd think you'd be more likely to get lynched than to get quill pen supplies if you went hunting geese there! Swans are rather more plentiful locally, but I have no wish to get myself banged up in The Tower for nicking the source of the Royal writing supplies. I am puzzled by your reference to "parchment" in this context, as this is made from scraped kid or lambskin. I don't think I fancy being transported to the colonies for seven years for sheep stealing when I can buy perfectly good copier paper from Viking Direct at 99p per 500-sheet ream - limit 100 reams per customer - whenever they decide their trade needs perking up.

I'm not all that surprised you can't even give away the 3 boxes of fanfold A4/letter paper that are sitting on your floor, doing nothing. I have a limited stock of this which I can make good use of now that I have a 24-pin dot-matrix printer working with a Windows computer, whereas it was of little use to me when most of my output was onto pre-printed headed sheets. In fact, once I've exhausted these pre-printed sheets, it will be a lot more convenient to use tractor-fed fanfold paper than loose sheets, as it is awkward to position loose sheets accurately using the Panasonic KX-P1123 sheet feed tray, but tractor paper is positioned automatically. This won't apply to anyone using an inkjet or laser printer though, as these are not intended for tractor fed

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paper. If yours is American standard size letter paper, which is shorter than A4, this will reduce its general utility even further. It may be that someone who is interested in your surplus Einstein kit will have a good use for your fanfold paper. If not, I wonder just how many sheets you actually have, what the weight is of the packs (individually and in the aggregate) when secured with packing tape, and whether the standard parcels post rate is competitive with the cost of acquiring fanfold or economy copier paper in the usual way to replenish my stocks at my end.

I reckon you've done pretty well, picking up a good laser printer for 50p. I'm not surprised that although it's badged as an OKI OL600ex, your Windows system sees it as an HP laser printer. With laser printers there is quite a lot of minor badge names buying in the main "engine" in bulk from major producers, to clad it and badge it as their own brand. Tatung did this too, if you remember. Incidentally, among the computer stuff that Dick Keynes had stored in his loft and that I cleared out for his widow, there was a HP Deskjet 880C inkjet printer which looks OK. Unfortunately, although it has the user manual to use it with a Mac, both the black and colour cartridges are missing, as is the software disk and the user manual(s) for Dos/Windows. As it won't work at all without the ink cartridges in place, I am slightly stymied. It clearly isn't worth buying new ink cartridges if the unit is dud or if I can't use it without the software disk/manual.

As regards your finding an Amstrad PCW8256 on offer at £40.00, this does seem a little high nowadays, but an 8512 might well be worth that much to someone who has been using one anyway and is looking for a spare or a replacement, or to upgrade an 8256, especially if it comes with all the kit in good nick, lots of software, and maybe a 3.5" drive. It might even be a good upgrade for an Einstein user with simple needs, whose TCO1 has given up the ghost, as software is available to read Einy disks on a PCW with single-sided 3" drive.

Well, that about covers your letter, so I'd better get on with sorting out/assembling EM-108!

This is Einstein Magazine No.108, Edited, Printed and Published by A E Adams for Einstein (/other) computerists
The main text is in Arial 8pt, and this is Bookman Old Style (similar to Cheltenham as much used in the early 20th Century for books, etc?) set in 12 point and 8 point.

All contributions - YES PLEASE! - subscriptions, queries, donations, winning lottery tickets, copperespondence and other unsolicited gifts to our Editorial Office please. Due to security problems with our mailbox at New Romney, please use the following address:-

12 Dunstall Close, St Marys Bay, Romney Marsh, Kent. TN29 0QY

YOUR SHADOW

Have you looked at your shadow lately? Out of the corner of your eye while you look directly at something else? That's the only way that grown-ups can usually see ghosts and fairies, 'cos growing-up means putting away childish things like universal faith, hope and trust, and becoming convinced that almost everything is unbelievable. What did the man say about "Suffer the little children to come unto me"? Because the church had thoroughly convinced me that the only God it would allow around the place was an absentee landlord God who had lost all interest and had gone away, leaving them in charge, it took me more than half a lifetime to realise that I had two shadows, walking hand in hand wherever I went, not just my own. Put in Einstein terms, God is spirit (pure energy) and everything else is concentrated energy that thinks it is a self, but which is only half alive unless it realises its true origin and learns to move the self out of the way and fully attune itself to the universal presence of the living breath of God (i.e. the Cosmic Wind?)

FREE TO EINSTEIN USER GROUP MEMBERS WHO CAN COLLECT!

TC01 with 2x3" drives, 80 column card (2 off)

TC01 with 1x3" 1x3.5" drives, 80 column card (1 off)

3.5" 720K cased self powered, 80T/DS boot software (2 off)

3.5" 720K bare drive, 80T/DS boot software (5 off) - bare drive ex-my Spectrum+3 (5off)

3.5" 1.44M bare drive ex-gutted PC's (4 off as-is)

3" 40T/SS cased self-powered ex-BBCB (1 off)

3.5" 720K twin self powered ex-BBC Compact (TC01 cable)

K/B matrix for TC01 un-used (1 off) Speculator c/w disks/manual (1 off)

TC01 colour monitor c/w RGB/mono switch (1 off) 256 colour monitor c/w lead (1 off)

3" disks ex-Spectrum/Amstrad (100 approx) 3" disks ex-TC01 (200 approx)

3.5" 720 disks ex-Amiga 1200 (350 approx) - see figures 1 & 2 below

Plus some unlisted odds and sods to be cleared - ASK!

NOTE - offer subject to the old ISCA Club's members prior right/claim

These items are FREE to EUG Members only IF COLLECTED by prior arrangement. If you want something posted, then as well as the postage/insurance there will be a £10 charge per parcel to cover my time, packaging costs and donation to a local Charity.

Phone John Marriott on Exeter (01392) 469206. Again, a 2 week cut off from EM Issue!

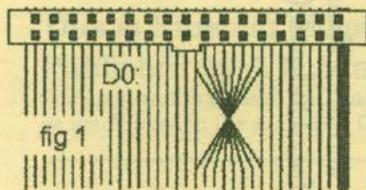
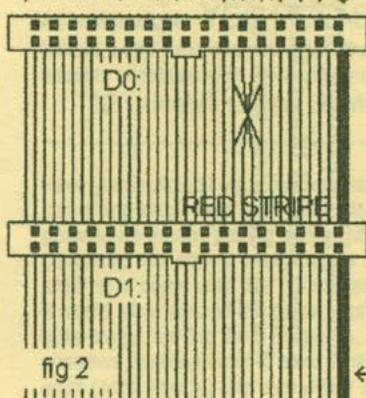


Figure 1 shows how a standard PC 1.44M ribbon should be modified so that the TC01 is fooled into thinking that a standard factory set D1: 1.44M is D0:



It is a simple case of taking out the existing twist and then just twisting wires 10-12 (or cutting and interchanging 10 & 12 on a "flat" ribbon)

This suggestion is made in order to satisfactorily reformat the AMIGA 720K disks which have the 11 sectors/track format, a format which appears to defeat the 720K drives to reformat to TC01 80T/DS standard.

Hopefully, Tony will publish my fuller article at some date, but this should be enough to help those experimenters with a spare PC drive & etc.

← John Marriott - January 2003