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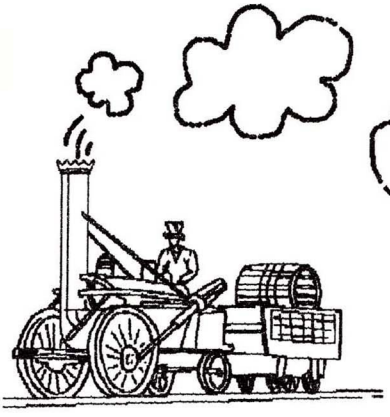
NEWSLETTER

BRITISH AMSTRAD PCW CLUB

Issue No 63 July 1998



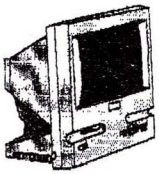
July 2nd Meeting bring your machines & Discs and Mike will show you Loco 4.

LOCOSCRIPT 4 UPDATE

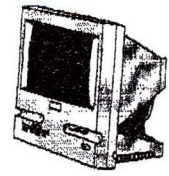
From the Secretary's Desk.

What on earth has happened to our weather. I could also say our cricket, football and even the tennis is not looking too encouraging, ye I know if strike-up a conversation with an Englishman they only want to talk about the weather or their favourite sport. Enough of this, lets get onto important things like PCWing.

Our last club night was a very interesting discussion on Comms. In particular member Joe Bird gave us an insight into his Amstrad laptop. Our chairman then demonstrated various machines of this type and showed how they could be used in conjuction with PCWs. Very interesting. The meeting finished reasonably early and when I got home I decided to have a cup of tea before going to bed and as I usually do read the local evening paper. In the small advertisement section under computers there was a 386 laptop for £80:00 and the next day after my early morning round of golf I rang the seller and purchased it. I am now having to come to terms with DOS, but the features on this machine are very good, an excellent purchase and certainly worth the money. It appears there are a lot of bargains about if you are prepared to hunt for them. We are indeed fortunate to have M.E who is willing to share his wealth of knowledge about computing with us all, thanks Mike for your help. I'll still keep my friendly PCW's.



SWEET LITTLE SIXTEEN



Chairman's Chatterings July 1998

Unfortunately your PCW is not going to last for ever. Sad, but true. At some point in the future you are going to have to consider a replacement computer. There are, of course, dozens of PCs on offer at the Dixons, Currys and PC Worlds in the retail park or high street but are these really what you need? If you only use the PCW for word processing with LocoScript, as it seems do many of our members, then the answer is No.

Take my word for it: PCs nowadays are wonderful toys and if you have children who are to grow up in the modern world with a hands-on feel for the technology that they will have to use in the workplace then a PC is a must - for them. But do *you* need one? Windows 98 is upon us as I write. It will oust Windows 95 within a short space of time and make Windows 3.1 as out of date as 8" discs. In the PC world the motto is onwards and upwards: If it's on the shelf it's already been superseded by something coming out next week.

In the PCW world we are used to a comfortable stability; change only when change is necessary. The later models of PCW incorporated 3½" drives because the 3" drives were no longer in production. The white screen took over from the green screen for similar reasons. LocoScript has improved out of all proportion to its price and place in the market, but it still has the same touch and feel as the earlier versions and you know where you are with it.

Take a look in the very corner of the window in Dixons. Almost pushed off the end of the shelf by the row of multi-tasking, multi-coloured, mighty confusing PCs is another Amstrad marvel for the price: the PcW16. OK, its more of a jump from the PCW10 than was the 10 from the earlier models but it's still a stand alone Personal computer Wordprocessor that you can learn to use in a very short period of time. The c in PcW16 is in lowercase because this is very much a word processor and only just a computer but, at £130 on its own, or about £200 with a (colour!) bubblejet printer it's far cheaper than was the original 8256!

The 16 has a built-in word processor and spreadsheet and comes with an address book that you can merge with the word processor, a clock, calendar, diary and alarm suite that will keep going way past lst January 2000! (To 2079 in fact, so you can safely leave it to the grandchildren.) In addition there is an on-board calculator and a fully functional file manager to help you back up your files to disc. As these functions are held in memory all the time, there is no need to load up from disc each time you want to use it: switch on and a few moments later it's ready to go. And, no, you don't have to leave it plugged in all the time; just the occasional top up from the mains will suffice.

'But I've still got all my old files from my dead PCW on disc - now what?' Well, the

16 is so clever that it will read directly from your old PCW 3½" discs and allow you to import your files with minimal effort: it will even recognise the bold, italic and underline codes as well. If you are still using only 3" discs then the 16 has half of the LocoLink package built into it already and LocoScript will sell you the requisite cable at a very reasonable rate allowing to move all your files from the 8256 to the 16 now, while your 8256 is still working.

There are two other programs free on the Rescue Disc that comes with the machine: a crossword solver and a shopping list print out/reminder. (Make sure that you are supplied with version 1.12 of the Rescue Disc; that is the current update.) In addition there are available a Home Inventory program and a Home Finance package, both in the order of £25-£30. I keep on being told that there is no database program but there is! It's preloaded and it's called the Spreadsheet. There is no reason at all why you cannot manipulate textual data as well as numeric data in a spreadsheet and its Find function is *very* fast indeed. Unfortunately there is, as yet, no sort routine but you can use the Insert and Delete functions to organise your records.

What about upgrades or running my PCW programs? Well, there are serious proposals to produce a CP/M emulator which means that most of the programs you can run on your PCW could run on the 16 - I have to say 'most' for practical reasons. But programmers are not going to produce the goods if you don't buy the machine and if you wait for the programs (before getting a 16) then they won't happen. Remember the chicken and egg conundrum? At the price of the 16 at the moment you can help determine which comes first! The British Amstrad PCW Club will be giving the PCW16 all the support it can because it merits that support. If you wait until the 16 gets even cheaper you will lose out altogether. SOS stands for *Support* Our Sixteen!

Mike Elliston

From the Secretarys Desk Continuation

Last months request for a help-line has had a reasonable response, I am pleased to report some of the old faithfuls like David Williams and Anthony Hill have readily agreed to offer their services. It is with members of this ilk that we are considered to be a friendly PCW fraternity. Let me say a very special thankyou to all of the members that have agreed to help. With the possibility of considering to sound like a cracked record, we are hoping to start this help line and in the future it could lead to small local groups affiliated to the main club but able to organise face to face tutorial sessions. Who Knows.

If you feel you are able to help your fellow members with a particular aspect of PCWing we would like to include your details in our help-line. These details should contain the subject of your expertise, the time of day you prefer to be contacted and the method of contact ie. telephone, fax,writing, etc. giving all details. You should understand within the confines of the *Data Protection Act* we are unable to give other members details without their formal permission.

David Lalieu

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Editors Note:
My apologies for missing the last digit in this advertisement last month.

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A database that takes all of the hard work out of searching for that elusive article or tip in your magazine library, available in LocoFile. One or three files, LocoScript, ASCII, dBase II or Hardcopy. On 3½"discs @ £8:00. The hardcopy @ £10:00. Cheques payable to:-
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