

NATGUG NEWS

Volume 9, Issue 6, December 1987

*Christmas
Greetings*

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE

***National Amstrad, Tandy
&
General User Group***

INFORMATION ON THE GROUP

Membership of the group is by subscription to the Newsletter which is published at regular intervals – application forms are available from the secretary. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in computers but special emphasis is placed on equipment within the Amstrad, Tandy and MS-DOS range.

Details of the group's accounts and constitution are available from the Treasurer -- please ensure that your requests are accompanied by a S.A.E.

Members requiring assistance with problems related to the machines specified should contact the P.R. Officer who will endeavour to put them in touch with possible advisors.

Sub-groups exist in many areas and their secretaries are invited to forward details to our Editor/Publisher for inclusion in the magazine. The back page is being reserved for this purpose.

Public domain software libraries are maintained in five separate collections : Model 1, Model 4, C/P/M, Amstrad and MS-DOS. Names of the appropriate librarians are available from the secretary. There is a copying charge of 1.00 per disk or tape. (see also Vol.8, Iss.10)

Back numbers of the magazine, in 6 month volumes, are available at the price indicated on the application forms.

The group has no paid Officers or employees, and the issue of the magazine depends on contributions from Members, who are also invited to submit responses to questions raised in the previous issue. To allow legible print, we prefer contributions to be submitted on 5.25" disk, direct to the Editor – ASCII files are perfectly acceptable but please indicate the disk format used (SS,DS,SD,DD, track count, DOS etc.). Your disk will be returned if you enclose an addressed label, normally within 7 days. The Editor will accept written or typed articles where members insist - publishing will depend on readability.

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EDITORIAL

A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, from all committee members

Thank you to all the people who have sent in articles, there were not so many this last month.

This is the final issue of Volume 9, the reasons for this were given in an earlier issue.

I had my first major complaint about the Newsletter the other day. This was in the form of a request to keep the size of the Newsletter down, so that it can be read during only one visit to the smallest room. What do other members think?

If you had a look at the label which was stuck on the envelope bringing your Newsletter and you saw the date of DEC 1987, (the month is that month you are paid up to the end of) then please renew your subscription immediately in order to receive the first issue of Volume 10, or please write to Roger if you do not agree with the date. We will be sad if you do not rejoin, unfortunately with limited funds, NATGUG can not afford to spend to much on coaxing you for any length of time, to rejoin. DO NOT THROW AWAY AN ENVELOPE WITHOUT FIRST CHECKING THIS DATE. My aim is to get the first issue of volume 10 to all members just after Christmas, those who have not renewed in time will not get an envelope dropping on their mat.

I hope that David will give some news about the A.C.C., I have to admit that I am still confused as to what A.C.C. is or what they do, although NATGUG are members.

Editorial in Nov '87 80 Micro. I was given a copy about the 21st Oct, a "Thank you" goes to that Member. As this is copyright I can not put it into NATGUG News, but the main statement is that, "Starting as from Jan. 1988 issue, 80 Micro will no longer devote any coverage to TRSDOS machines". We on the committee suspected that this would happen. Without saying too much at the moment, David has followed up on his earlier writings to 80 Micro, as the above mentioned editorial suggested that they are considering several options for a newsletter or small magazine exclusively for the "older" TRS-80's. We await a reply. 80 Micro starting as from Jan. '88 will be devoted entirely to the Tandy MS-DOS systems.

I understand that the Model IV Library files are building up. Mike has promised to send in a report as soon as he gets settled down again.

I have made a decision that, as from now, all program listings sent to me will be passed on to the appropriate librarian. Any program over about 100 lines would probably not get published, amendments to other programs probably would. This will be at my discretion and will depend mainly on the number of

other articles received that month and on how long the program is. Would Members submitting programs please bear this in mind. What would be helpful to me as Editor, is to receive a description of the submitted program, with possibly this only to be used for publication. To save members any further work, if you include the program itself, I will then pass it on to the librarian. As always, if any Member has specific wishes I will go along with those, if they do not mean breaking any rules. I will try to sort out all the programs already submitted and send them to the appropriate Librarian. Please from now on, send to the appropriate librarian for any program mentioned in NATGUG News. It may take me a few weeks to get all the previous ones out to the librarians.

I asked Members to send to me their questions to put to any forums held at the Swindon Workshop, I received none, so there will be no answers here.

SWINDON Oct. '87. We were sorry that storms in the south of England made it impossible for a number of Members to get to this meeting, those included our Chairman and PRO. Those who did attend Swindon will have seen Tandy's representatives there. Both are now Members of NATGUG, we welcome them and all the other people who have joined recently. I believe we are now above the 200 mark. That is a 70% increase in Membership since the AGM. I did some ground work in an effort to have someone do a report on the Swindon meeting, but it seems we were all too busy. I have heard only good verbal reports of the meeting, and have received a letter saying how much it was enjoyed by that Member. So that you do not miss out on attending next March, PLEASE BOOK EARLY BY CONTACTING THE HOTEL DIRECT, don't be one of those who decide at the last minute, and find as this time, that the hotel is fully booked. I understand that Bob Sparling is trying to arrange for the Hotel's printed booking form to be sent out with a NATGUG News, but don't rely on that. NATGUG will not be sending out a booking form, we are trying to keep down costs, it's your money.

SWINDON WEEKEND March '88 Next meeting and AGM, March 11th-13th.
Do not wait - book now !!! ring (0793) 28282

The address is:- The Wiltshire Hotel, Flemming Way, Swindon.

We were promised that NATGUG would be on page 703 of CEFAX the weekend of 1/2 Nov., I am sorry that I have still not seen anything, we do keep trying. Has anyone noticed, that a last, MICRO MART has got our name correct ? (one step forward at least)

I have had no replies to my request for any Member with a copy of LDOS 5:3 with a serial number of TCOA0020 to please write to me giving details, from where purchased, etc. See NATGUG News Editorial Vol. 9, issue 5.

Advertising. We are still pursuing commercial advertising for inclusion in NATGUG News. Does any Member know of anyone we can approach. The payments received from advertising save the committee from increasing subscriptions.

More PROfound ? statements.

To everyone who was hoping to meet me at Swindon, my apologies, I was 'fenced' in by hundreds of trees.

Now that 80 Micro are going to abandon all but MS-DOS machines it would seem that we are even more on our own, NATGUG will be the only lifeline so don't dump your 8 bit machines because as long as the group hangs together the expertise will still be available, it is up to those of us who have the experience to stay with the group to help the others even though we have moved on to 'better?' things.

My thanks to all those members to come & said hello to me at the PCW show, it is such a pity that Tandy can't be bothered to exhibit, they don't even seem to be showing at COMPEC, as that is a 'Business' show it is even more surprising, what is it ? Are they doing so well they don't need to advertise. As soon as I can get round to it I shall have a go at trying out Henry Shepherds program to use the extra ram in a model 4 from Basic.

David Roberts article on XTREE was very interesting, (I use Nusweep all the time when working with CP/M), but he doesn't say where it can be bought.

I have been in contact with Eric Brandes about his drives & have given him some of the information he was lacking, as yet he has not rung back so I can only hope that my information was enough. For the benefit of anyone else, the model 4 looks at the two extra drives expecting them to be configured by their jumpers or dip switches as drive 0 & 1, although they are still called 2 & 3 from the keyboard, also some versions of TRSDOS need patching, the patch is as follows:

```
PATCH BOOT/SYS.LSIDOS:0 (D02,84=C3:F02,84=C9)    This enables drive 2.
PATCH BOOT/SYS.LSIDOS:0 (D02,8E=C3:F02,8E=C9)    This enables drive 3.
```

If of course you have enabled Gordon's patches, used PASSG06 or Super Utility to remove passwords, then ".LSIDOS" does not have to be included. There is another patch to enable FORMAT to automatically format double sided discs, it is as follows:

```
PATCH FORMAT/CMD.UTILITY (D09,5B=02:F09,5B=00)
```

& of course the password ".UTILITY" is not used if you have removed password checking. NOTE the patch on page 23 of the September issue of 80 Micro is wrong there is an error in the second BOOT/SYS patch, it should be F02,8E instead of F02,84 as published, the rest is OK.

Another member rang me & wanted to know if it would be possible to use non Tandy disc drives plugged into the back of one of the new 1000 (HX or EX) series

machines, well I was told by my local Tandy shop that they can be, but they must have their own power supply, however according to OZ that is not so, the power supply comes down the 34 way flat cable, in which case plugging an ordinary drive & cable would blow up the machines power supply. However I see no reason to believe that the DOS will be able to tell the difference between a 3.5" 720K drive & a 5.25" 720K, if anyone knows better I would very much like to know. Whether or not more than one can be daisy-chained is another question.

The October issue of BYTE has a review of all the new Tandy Machines & a list of all the machines they are still supporting in the U.S.A which includes the Model 4D yet it is not mentioned in the latest catalogue available here.

In the June issue of NATGUG News, page 50, I said I was going to write to another firm that was advertising an HD64180 board, well I did & to date I have not heard anything from them, notwithstanding the fact that I included money & an addressed envelope for their reply, so unless enough people are interested in taking up Stuart Ransoms offer then anyone who wants an XLER8er board will have to write to High Tec & take their chances that they will get a reply.

Members who are thinking about an MS-DOS computer might like to know that Tandy have dropped the price of the 1000EX by 100 pounds till Xmas.

Since I started this I have been able to look at the memory enhancement in the October issue of 80 Micro & we are now in the position of having two very different means of adding 256K of RAM to the Model 4,4P range. The XLER8er board which gives us the speed enhancement of the HD64180 but will not work properly in Model 3 mode as yet, & the new enhancement which gives no speed increase & only software for TRSDOS 6.2, nothing for CP/M or Model 3.

The XLER8er is expensive, \$249.00, plus customs duty, but does not involve any alteration to the computer, (except the removal of the Z80 chip). The other mod does not give any speedup, it involves some changes to the main PCB, but does not cost very much, about £40.00 at the most, the most expensive item is the extra ram, but that can be bought for £20.00 from SILICONE CITY, MITHIAN, ST AGNES, CORNWALL. TR5 0QE. The result is, until suitable software can be written by NATGUG Gurus, you will either have to run in model 4 or CP/M with the XLER8er or stay in TRSDOS with the memory add-on, of course with this add-on CP/M & Model 3 mode can be used but with only the use of the first 64k of Ram, (excluding the second bank under CP/M), at least that's how I think it will work as I have not made up a board to test it yet but will do soon & will write up the results probably in the next issue.

John Kilpatrick, PRO.

TREASURED Notes

By now most of you should understand the date in the top right hand corner of your envelope label, it indicates the month a member is payed up to the end of. Can I ask all those who see DEC 1987 to pay up for next year. As has been said before, I will accept payment for six or twelve months, but I would obviously prefer you to pay a year at a time. Any of you who have JUN 1988 on your envelope would be very welcome to pay the remaining six months of 1988. For the moment I would prefer not to go beyond December 1988 for reasons discussed below.

I am very apprehensive about raising the membership fees from the present £12 a year. I suspect that we will lose members by such an action. To many lost and we would destroy the whole point of raising the subscription fees. I am working on the assumption that at some time this must be tried. David, Gordon and I discussed this problem at Swindon and came to the conclusion that consideration of a higher fee must be included on the agenda at the AGM. I think therefore, you should consider now about how much you are prepared to pay for membership.

The other thing we need to know concerns the election of officers at the next AGM. David will no doubt discuss this in a "SEX NOTES", but basically we need to know if there are any candidates to stand for the offices. We would like to work out some way of allowing those of you who cannot attend the AGM to vote. This means we need to find out in advance exactly what is to be voted on, so that we can produce the necessary forms of proxy. It is now up to you to make your feelings known and declare your wish to vote by proxy.

The Hon. Ed. and I have taken to meeting in car parks to exchange items and discuss points, not any old car park of course only the best for us, four star hotels no less. If any of you see a Red Mercedes Van parked in a layby, this will be the Gordon hard at work on our next little tome. Just bang on the side (quietly he is prone to miss type etc. when he is distracted) and hand over your discs and articles in person. Gordon is shortly going to write a learned dissertation on fitting a Model 4P and full mod cons to a twelve volt supply.

*(Don't know where Roger got that from. Ed. **)*

From discussions at Swindon it appears that there ARE quite a few more TRS80 local clubs still alive and well around the countryside. I think Manchester, Nunneaton and the North East were mentioned. Who can put us in touch with these groups ?

All Tandy stores would now seem to have our leaflets, although none of the stores that I have visited could produce them quickly. They needed quite a bit of prompting before they would admit their existence. Please visit your local store and just ask for information on Tandy orientated clubs. Hopefully this should make the Managers more conscious of us. I would like to see these leaflets displayed in the window and at the computer sales point. I would not

like to see them put out for the taking, as this might result in an expense which we cannot afford.

Following on from the above paragraph is the problem of the CoCo machine. We are likely to get, indeed both David and I have had them, contacts from owners of this group of machines. John's database contains the names of only two users of colour TRS-80's; are there any others and is there anyone who is prepared to help these potential members ?

LIBRARIES.

I think it might be an idea to recap on the situation regarding the libraries. We have three substantial libraries of PD software and one infant collection for non CP/M Model 4. The later is run by Mike Gordon-Saker who is desperate for your contributions.

The elder library is the Model 1/III collection which is run by Leighton Davies. This library is substantial, but is probably not expanding greatly nowadays. It is mainly aimed at the Model I, mostly disc I think, but also a fair amount of tape material. Many items will run on the III and of course the four in three mode. A Model 1/III library list is available from me for £2.00.

The CP/M collection can only be described as colossal. Peter Hall is in charge and he will supply the catalogue disk as well as the actual programs. Disks and fees to HIM please.

The MSDOS library is growing at a fantastic rate. It is another demonstration of Ariela Taylor's considerable abilities that she can keep pace with it and cope. I am absolutely convinced I would be in the most awful mess. We tried at first to produce a library list like Leighton's. A few of you have them but there was no way we could keep it up to date. Ariela will therefore supply catalogue disks under the same system that Peter uses.

Ariela can evidently supply on 3 1/2" disks as well as 5 1/4". Only half as many disks are required, but the copying fee is NOT reduced due to the extra work involved.

As an aside I would say here that the club has gained a useful contribution to its funds over the last six months selling Mod 1/III library lists. The sale of back magazines, and the various information sheets have also been crucial in keeping us afloat. All copying fees are paid to the librarian, this way the club has no responsibility for the librarian's equipment. The Library disks are supplied by the club and belong to the club. We would have liked the libraries to be a source of income, but it is more important to make sure they are not a liability. It is now established that if a Librarian retires, then the disks will be handed over to the new Librarian. I think we are very lucky with our four Librarians, they are dedicated and doing a fantastic job.

If you crash or reset the system while in model 3 mode you must first reboot in model 4 mode, install the model 3 image and then boot model 3. A laborious process but at the moment it is the only way to get model 3 running. It is a compromise and must be weighed against the other points if a purchase is considered.

From your comments Barry, I assume you use visicalc in model 3 mode and you would want to use the extra memory the XLR8 board provides. The standard model 3 image provided with your TRSDOS 6.2 or LS-DOS 6.3 does not provide any form of bank switching function and as you are probably aware neither does LDOS 5.1.4 or 5.3, however, MISOSYS can provide a utility disc which contains the necessary software to access at least two additional banks (the 2 banks you already have installed). The remaining 8 banks are not accessible, at least not until someone modifies the model 3 bank controller.

Summarising the above, yes you can run the XLR8 in model 3 mode, however, if you intend to use model 3 mode a great deal of the time, the benefits the XLR8 provides are marginal and perhaps not worth the expense or the gyrations you must go through to get model 3 running.

If you use model 3 occasionally then you may find the method of getting model 3 running acceptable, bearing in mind model 3 basic will not run.

It appears the XLR8 was designed for the model 4 only. To be able to run in model 3 mode appears not to have been addressed. This particular shortcoming must be weighed up when considering the pros and cons of a purchase.

Memdisc Initialisation During Startup

The statement made by John Kilpatrick was correct. Trying to install the system and any other programs into the 256k memory provided by the XLR8, during startup can take some time. It was for this reason that I developed a program (Dumper) which will carry out this task considerably faster than trying to do the job using a JCL. The program was described in September issue of NATGUG. You will still need to wait 35-45 seconds to load everything into a maximum size memory. In my opinion the increase in performance obtained by having the system in memory is well worth the wait during startup, especially when running programs which require frequent disc access.

Normally a crash will leave the contents of memdisc unscathed, therefore after a reboot only the driver should need to be installed (without format). This will only take a 'second or two'. If the crash destroys the memdisc contents then it will be necessary to reload memdisc and wait.

XLR8 Improvements To Model 4 - In simple Terms

It is not easy to establish at what level an article should be 'pitched', especially with the wide audience that NATGUG addresses, however, I feel that

anyone who does not understand an article and would like clarification should make the point known and write !

As I understand from your letter you raised the following points:

1. What practical application would benefit from the XLR8 ?
2. What improvements does the XLR8 provide ?
3. Is any additional software required to run the XLR8 ?
4. Is more hardware required to benefit from the XLR8 ?
5. Is it simple to use ?

I will not address each point separately, although I hope to answer all questions in the text.

Practical Applications

I think increased processor speed speaks for itself. To try and relate the improved performance to something everyone could equate to is difficult, even a statement like XX faster does not mean a lot to everybody, but that is the best that can be done at the moment. Please bear in mind the improved performance is processor speed, disc i/o will not improve, therefore, if your application requires a lot of disc activity performance improvements may not be very noticeable, however, this is where the additional memory comes in useful. Without using disc i/o (using memdisk) performance is really impressive.

Now to provide a number of practical examples. In the following examples I use the extra memory as randisc and load the system files and the program at the start into memory with 'Dumper', which takes no more than a minute. I could always leave my data file on disc if it is critical. If things go wrong (crash) I only loose the program which I can reload in a few seconds. My three main applications using the above procedures are:

1. Lescrypt & Webster (wordprocessor)
2. Multiplan (*) (spreadsheet)
3. Little Brother (*) (database)

In all cases with the operating system and program in memdisk the performance improves considerable. The application relying on overlaying (*) obviously showed the greatest improvement. I am well aware that Lescrypt is more or less self contained when loaded and requires no disc i/o when running except when saving and loading text. Lescrypt is quiet happy running on a 128k machine (64k for small text files). Electric Webster, however, does require a considerable amount of disc i/o when running and is an ideal candidate for randisc.

I do not want to enter into prolonged discussions over the virtue of these programs with or without randisc, they are examples and should be sufficient to help the readers to form their own opinions.

As a programmer I find it useful to be able to install a number of utilities which use additional memory banks, but not as memdisk. It is inappropriate to describe the functions of the utilities here, but for the benefit of users who are familiar with the utilities, I can install DDUTY, edit in one window using SAID, which can also use additional banks, and assemble in another window. Within either window I can utilise PROWAM (alias PRONTO) to carry out calculations, scan memory or disc and perhaps store details in a scratchpad for later. This may seem a little extreme, but it is possible

150ns Ram Chips

The faster ram chips are not really required if you are satisfied with approximately 70% of the maximum processor speed. I am certainly not in a hurry to install the fast chips, but if you feel the need to obtain maximum performance, the technical manual specifies MCM6665 64k DRAMs and they need to be 150ns. How many will depend on what is already installed. I had the extra 64k installed when I bought my model 4, it just happens that they were 150ns, whereas the standard set are 200ns. Each block of 64k requires 8 chips. Source of supply in the UK is not difficult, if asked nicely I am sure OS (O & J House) may be able to help. Price approximately £3-4 each.

Clock

My clock has nothing to do with the XLR8 board, I simply used it as an example to illustrate the problems that may be encountered with external hardware which can not cope with the increased performance.

You are quite correct as to its purpose, it is simply a means of getting around the keying in of date and time during boot and the time stamping of the directory.

XLR8 Boot

The XLR8 speed is soft configured and when switched on the processor will default to the slowest speed. A small and moderately friendly program will allow you to set the processor speed to meet your requirements. This can be done as a JCL file and then invoked by an auto command on startup.

Software

I am sorry to confuse you with DDUTY and PRONTO, they are simply nice to have around utilities and have nothing to do with the XLR8.

The XLR8 will work with all model 4 programs running either under LS-DOS 6.3 or CPM 2.2. You must specify which operating system you are using if you order the board, you can have both at extra cost.

All the special software necessary is provided with the XLR8. You

CHKDSK (without the /f option, I only wanted to know the extent of the disaster, not cause more problems) showed that I had 372 crosslinked files and zillions of lost clusters. It appeared that the moment that I kicked the desk had coincided with the moment the head was writing to the directory and the resulting head crash had been the magnetic equivalent of a record stylus skating across the record. I was beginning to worry that I might have not only have lost all that data but also had permanently damaged the platters.

But first, what about all that lost data? My last full backup was about 3 weeks previously, so the majority of data was OK, and of course I had masters and submasters of all the software anyway. The main problem was two source files of about 50K each. I had backups of the compiled programs but not the sources, I did not even have an up-to-date listing of one of them. Even allowing that I might have the patience to re-enter it all, I was not sure that I could remember all the logical steps I had made and it would therefore be like re-writing the program from scratch. It was now about 1:30 am and I thought I'd better get a full nights sleep before any rescue attempts.

Next evening the magic cpu fairy had not restored my files so I had to find and dust off a floppy version of Norton Utilities. Where to start. Well the first thing is to DELETE the files that you want to attempt to recover. This is mentally hard to do, but that's the way Norton works. Then firing up the program and getting to the appropriate directory will eventually give a list of deleted files. As I suspected, allowing NU to undelete automatically resulted in the same garbage as I started with. I was going to have to actually manually reconstruct my files. Luckily, being PASCAL source code, you know if the file is correct because the program context should make sense. The latest versions of NU allow considerable freedom in choosing and joining clusters to remake a file of the correct size, and allow you to view the chosen cluster in ASCII. The first 6 or 7 clusters were obviously correct but that's where the trouble started. I let NU show me 40 or 50 more clusters before I realised that something illogical was happening since none of the material being viewed now was anything related to PASCAL source. A brainwave then struck and I asked NU to look at clusters BEFORE the correct first half dozen and there they were. The algorithm allocating storage had obviously found some non-contiguous space preceding the start of the file and put the cart before the horse so as to speak. After that, it was a few minutes work to save the restored files and copy to a floppy (twice! - 2 separate floppies). Reformattting the hard disk and running verify etc. showed that I had not permanently damaged the hard disk, and an hour or two later all was restored.

I think there are several lessons to be learnt from this, the first being - don't think it won't happen to you - it almost certainly will and always when your most precious file is not properly backed up. The second is don't panic, at least not too much. If the disk is not physically damaged then with a bit of luck you can get most, if not all of it back. The third is that with a hard disk, backups are even more important than with a floppy based system, you've got a lot more to loose.

There are a number of quite good backup programs on the market. FASTBACK is very good if you want to make rapid backups (10 MBytes in 4-5 min) of the complete disk contents onto floppies. It saves in a special compressed format with an extra error correcting sector that is claimed to recover data even if a staple is put through the disk. The disk drives are kept running continuously and it probably takes longer for you stuff disks in and out of the drives than it does for the program to copy the data, in fact it keeps a record of just how long you keep it waiting ! You can make selective backups of subdirectories and backups dependent on whether the archive bit is set but it feels a bit clumsy and its options are a little limited. It's also quite expensive at around £135.00.

A better bet is probably COREFAST which offers the same sort of facilities as FASTBACK plus a lot more. Its just as fast, offers both a command line operation or a menu driven one. Its main advantage is the construction of quite intricate (if you need it) catalogues which allow automatic backup of selected files and directories. Its rather cheaper than FASTBACK at about £100.00.

The cheapest utility that I know other than the BACKUP which comes with DOS is CLIP from Keele Codes at £29.95 which appears to offer a lot of the functionality of the more expensive programs at fraction of the price. I've not actually used it myself so cannot comment on any other aspects. One to avoid would seem to be DSBakup Plus which in one review (PC Magazine, April 28, 1987) failed in some aspects of both file saving and restoring. It would not appear to have much going for it !

Seeing the furry rodent perched on the systems desk on the front cover of NATGUG News reminds me to mention that I've recently become something of a convert to the point and click brigade. I had a play with one when we had an Amstrad to evaluate at work, and although the 1512 did not make the grade for our purposes, I was quite impressed with the usefulness of the mouse during the editing phase of working on documents. I would estimate that it could save up to 20% of time that you spend tinkering with your text. With a program such as Microsoft Word which is designed to run with a mouse, it is certainly a more "natural" way to mark blocks of text for moving etc. than with cursor movement. The mouse really comes into its own with a drawing/DTP program, where the ability to place objects just where you want them, is just not possible without it.

I was originally going to get a Microsoft mouse, mainly because of software compatibility. However you have two options, one is a serial mouse which is interrupt driven and theoretically you can use on any PC machine, but of course it ties up a serial port. The other is a bus mouse, which has a separate card, which frees the serial port but you have to vivisect your machine to use it on another PC. Also in the case of the Microsoft bus mouse, it is not interrupt driven and relies on the cpu polling it for movement and button presses, and therefore puts even more load on a not particularly lively cpu. While I was debating this situation, a local PC shop, Computer Express, started

to advertise the Logimouse - Plus for £89.00, that's about £50.00 less than the Microsoft rodent. Additionally, unlike the Logimouse-C7, it's a bus mouse, is interrupt driven and the package also contains software for grafting the mouse onto existing non-mouse applications. Microsoft charge extra for similar software. In no time at all I had convinced myself that it was just the thing for me and I bought one. Physically it's a three button opto-mechanical mouse. The opto-mechanical bit means that unlike the purely optical mice you don't have to have a special engraved board on which to exercise your mouse, but the tracking mechanism is not directly coupled to the ball, so that when your mouse runs over the remains of elevenses' jam doughnut there is less chance of screwing the vital bits of the works. The mouse driver appears to emulate the microsoft one quite satisfactorily, with the middle button corresponding to a simultaneous push of both microsoft buttons for those applications that expect a microsoft mouse. The software for grafting the mouse onto existing applications is a compiler for a very simple programming language. A TSR which you normally load from your autoexec automatically links the compiled code to the application. You can in fact build quite sophisticated menus in pop up windows if that is your fancy. Below is a very small example of a program to allow use of the mouse with Supercalc-4.

```

;
; Menu file for Supercalc 4
; Set up labels that correspond to the buttons, direction of
; movement, and values for sensitivity
; and labels for the chords, ie multiple button pushes

BEGIN leftb, midb, rightb, leftm, rightm, upm, downm, 16, 16
CHORDS      lmb, back, mrb, back

; Then set up definitions for labels. Match is a conditional
; statement that in this case looks for the word "Width" on the
; 23 rd screen line starting at position 1. If it finds it, it
; goes to label slash, if not it goes to label return
leftb:      MATCH 23, 1, , "Width:", slash, return
midb:       MATCH 23, 1, , "Width:", slash, esc
rightb:     MATCH 23, 1, , "Width:", slash, colon

return: TYPE ENTER      ;Type a carriage return
esc:       TYPE ESC      ;Type an escape character
colon:     TYPE ":"      ;Type a colon

slash:     TYPE "/"
back:      TYPE BACKSP
leftm:     TYPE 0,75 ; Left arrow (extended 75)
rightm:    TYPE 0,77 ; Right arrow (extended 77)
upm:       TYPE 0,72 ; Up arrow (extended 72)
downm:     TYPE 0,80 ; Down arrow (extended 80)
lmb:       TYPE 0,59 ;f1 help

```

All in all I'm very pleased with my new acquisition and feel that I can recommend it with no reservations.

The baud-rate actually refers to the number of changes of state per second. If, in the `comms` system you are using, there are only two possible states, then baud will equal bps, since the two states can only be used to represent 0 and 1. However, with more complicated electronics, the carrier system can be made to have more than two states. If there are four possible states then each state can represent two binary digits, ie.

```
State 1 => 0 0
State 2 => 0 1
State 3 => 1 0
State 4 => 1 1
```

Therefore one change of state, transfers two bits of information, and 1200 bps may actually be 600 baud. Similarly if a transmission system (modem) can distinguish 16 separate states, then it can transfer 2400 bps at 600 baud. The ability to distinguish an increasing number of states requires increasingly sophisticated electronics which in part accounts for the disproportionate cost of high baud-rate modems.

Geof Smith (01-950-6345).

[illegible]

I think I have been a bad lad winding up several of you and the Editor with my comments on SYS13 and DDUTY. Seriously though its not a bad idea to write a provocative and "slightly" inaccurate article which makes everyone think and inspires somebody to put the record straight. We all then hopefully learn something useful.

I am using SYS13 and DDUTY quite a lot now. I do find that quite often when I convert one of working disks to the system it does not function properly first time. Why - I do not know, but I do feel we had this problem at Swindon when others were being introduced to its delights.

One thing that bothers me somewhat is the alledged protection on LSDOS 6.3. Who is going to unravel all this HYPE and write us a definitive article on this so called DOS protection. My copy is I believe legal although it came from Molymerx, who must now be regarded as "dodgy"

OPTICA.

[illegible]

The MS DOS library.

A large pile of new programs from the USA came my way recently. Most were for dBase III+ and Clipper and I've not added them to our library but there were some for dBase II and some general utilities too. In keeping with the spirit of pd / shareware I did some exchanging with the librarians of the other two user groups I belong to. It will take a good few weeks to go through the accumulated result and add everything suitable to the library. From the programs I have looked at so far though, these are the ones that are still on my hard disk.

FREEZ - this one makes the SCROLL LOCK key do what it ought to - ie stop listings whizzing past your eyes. If you have a 3000 (or any other AT clone presumably) you can also use the SYS REQ key to hold the screen stationary as long as you are pressing that key.

SQUEEZE PRINT. A lot of shareware now comes with large DOC files, laid out as for a book, with lots of blank space. This may look nice but is heavy on paper and filing space. SQUEEZE prints such files (or any other ASCII file) out without the surplus blanks. It offers a choice of formats, from standard 80 col 10 cpi to 180 column condensed superscript. I find the two column 160 cpi format the most useful. It reduces a 100K + file to about 10 pages

Q_DUPS. This checks disks for duplicate files, lists them and lets you delete the surplus one if wanted.

FGREP - This is an improved and much more flexible FIND. It can use wild cards and has lots of display options

TINYPRNT - This is perfect for library disk labels where there are more than about 30 file names to print. It sets the printer to superscript and what looks like about 12 lines per inch.

CMOSSET. Those with 3000s will know that you have to run the SETUP program to correct the date or time permanently. SETUP is a large program with other rarely required functions and I, for one, do not keep on it on the hard disk. Consequently when the clock did need adjusting it was usually some time before I got round to finding the DOS UTILITIES disk and running SETUP. CMOSSET is small and just entering CMOSSET is all that is needed to reset the CMOS.

IOLITE - The COMPAQ that I use to do the dBase Magazine has a Hardcard - which means no light to show hard disk activity and, being rather deaf, I can't hear it either. IOLITE shows a small flashing block at the top right of the screen when the hard disk is being accessed.

I've just added disk no 40 to the MSDOS library. As the programs are almost all ARC'd that means about 35 Mb of public domain and shareware programs. And yes Dave, there is a GOSLOW utility somewhere. And there are at least that many more waiting to be sorted, checked and catalogued.

Ariela Taylor, 42 Davenham Avenue, Northwood, Middlesex. HA6 3HQ (09274) 22773

[illegible]

READER'S FORUM

THIS IS WHERE YOU ARE INVITED TO ASK ALL THOSE QUESTIONS THAT YOU HAVE NEEDED ANSWERS FOR, OR TO MAKE ANY COMMENTS, OR ???

From: 72 Morningside Drive, Edinburgh. EH10 5NU 031-447 6651

Dear Gordon,

SPeCS

You ask in your recent NATGUG News whether the Scottish TRS-80 Users Group is still in existence and the answer must be yes and no. Yes- 'cos the same guys still meet in the same place at the same time each month, but No - because it first transformed itself into STAQLUG, to wit the Scottish TRS-80 & QL Users Group, and then merged with the Scottish Amateur Computing Society last year to become the Scottish Personal Computing Society, or SPeCS.

So why wait all this time to let you know these things; well it's just a simple case of Planning Blight. The place in which we meet is a humble little bachelor's pad now owned and operated by Ted Gladstone's family (Brian, Laurie and Leon could give you some idea of just how humble it is, but let's just say that the main staircase into the hall looks like something out of a Hollywood musical) and is run as an Hotel/Motel. However Ted (he's our librarian) & Co have wanted to upgrade the place a little, building some houses in the grounds to help pay for the work so they can lease it to a hotel company and get the odd

free evening to go to computer clubs elsewhere. Then came the siren call, "given it is such a splendid place, why not get some loot from the Historic Buildings Council etc." Great idea, and all are in favour, but this has added some years to the delivery schedule, during which the costs have escalated and the start date has vanished over the horizon. This wasn't foreseen however, so the bar has closed, the customers have migrated, and the Coach Party bookings which kept it going over the summer months have melted away as they are booked a year in advance, and all was expected to be well under way from that viewpoint. More relevantly SPeCS has had to consider relocating itself, but due to the delays we have continued to meet in the same place, but have never been happy to announce our arrangements as we expected to be in transit at any time. I think this has been with us for about 3 years now, so maybe now that I've told you, the planning permission etc will suddenly come OK.

All in all we still have a successful club night, with many of the original Tandy members still in place, but we are now an all-machine outfit, with DOS probably the way to move where individuals can afford it. However with the Amiga and Archimedes around I doubt if this will take a total hold as many of the SACS members were of the Beeb inclination.

For the record, we meet at the Mansion House Hotel, Milton Road West (A1), Edinburgh at 7.30 for 8 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. We no longer have a newsletter as it is more than a little frustrating to write for a dedicated audience in single figures. We do mail a membership of around 40 and probably reach about 20-25 active members. There is no subscription fee at present as we are OK at the Bank so far. We have a committee which never meets, and most of the arrangements (if any!) are made by myself in consultation with Ted. You can contact me on 031-447 6651 out of hours, with Ted on 031-661 4558 at almost any time. Sadly few of our members have taken up membership of NATGUG, not for the want of publicity I may say, and apart from the two above-mentioned, along with John Miller and Ian (Howard) Wright, I don't think any others have joined. I might just try again. Keep up the good work, I will make it to Swindon one of these days. I had hoped to do so this year but somebody screwed up my diary for the Friday and it's a long way to go for just part of a workshop. I'll also rite an arttical, honist!

Yours computingly,

Dick Mackie, Chairman, SPeCS.

-0-

FROM: 1 Barrowsfield, Limsfield Road, Sanderstead, Surrey. CR2 9EA 01-657 1694

Dear Gordon,

Thank you for the November News. Overleaf is a copy of a letter I have sent to Robert Abraham.

I have written all my own programs in basic. Except in one instance they

Technical expert, it took me some time to track the problem down to one drive - I have access and use up to 10 drives. A report of the suspected drive said that it was only possible to just get the alignment of what I understand to be where the drive writes a cylinder, to spec. Two drives of the same manufacture have now been replaced, so hopefully I am now over my problems. The report went on to say that the drives in question, manufactured by "Hoshin" were notorious in the trade. The point of all this is to both warn members about buying this manufacture of drive and also request members who see, or have seen errors in NATGUG News, to please write to me so that any major errors can be corrected. Also if any member has submitted a item for inclusion in NATGUG News and has not yet seen it there, again contact me please. Yes, the above problem was also affecting the directory tracks. I don't think that I have lost any files.

[illegible]

MSDOS Monthly - by Dave Holman

An open Forum on MSDOS and associated subjects.

Well the trip to Germany was a great success and it only rained for a total of about 15 minutes during the whole month of October

I was sorry not to be able to attend the Swindon Workshop and I have since heard that it was a good workshop and not to be missed.

David Roberts article on XTREE caught my eye and it looks a good little utility, however there is a public domain version of SWEEP available from the CPMSDOSUGUK library. I have received no letters this month, maybe because I said I would be away. This means that I have nothing to write about.

Therefore this issue is devoted to a few questions that I would like to ask. I am presently using PC-Write as my word processor, this is the Shareware version. I know of many other word processors but have not heard of anyone using them. A publication called the Buyers Guide to the Amstrad PC which reviews all sorts of programs for IBM PC compatibles However all these reviews only give a reviewers eye view and I would like to hear from anyone with personal experience of such word processors as Volkswriter, Newstar in addition some of the more expensive ones sound interesting especially if the earlier versions are now selling for vastly reduced prices.

Next I bought my PC1512 for a good price which has since come down because a new machine the PC1640 has come onto the market. It is similar to the 1512 but has an EGA board instead of CGA. This gives a much better display. I would like to upgrade my machine to this better display but am told that I would need a new monitor to do this, therefore it is not cost effective to do this. Any suggestions apart from selling up?

Does anyone know of a cheap source of computer paper for Filofax, so that I can input text directly onto it from my word processor and Epson Printer ?

I am a great fan of Fontasy, but some reviews indicate that it is an inferior DeskTop Publisher. Has anyone used anything else which has even a tenth of the fonts used by Fontasy or has anyone found a way of transferring Fontasy Fonts to other DTPs ?

My job has given me some contact with the world of short wave radio and I was interested to know if it is possible to read the transmissions of the various teleprinters (RTTY) in use today. I think Peter Hall was doing something in this line. Does it require both Hardware and Software to do this ?

Finally I have an Aculab floppy tape which I have no more use for, I would be happy to part with for a nominal price or if a charitable organisation has need of it then I would be prepared to give it away. It seems a waste to throw such an item away but no-one seems to use them these days

Good Luck and Happy "MSDOSing"

Dave Holman, 160 London Road West, Bath, Avon. BA1 7QU

FOR SALE:- TRS-80 48K Model 1 plus Green Monitor: Two DS/DD 80/40 track Cumana disk drives: Hi-Res board with manual: Orch 85 board with manual: Newdos 80. Dosplus: Visicalc: Payroll: Inventory control: Datawriter: PowerDot: SU plus, with documentation. An assortment of many other programs and games on both disks and cassettes too many to list. All manuals including Assembly Language Programming. Programming Techniques. Back issues of NATGUG News and 80 Micro. Printer, leads etc, etc. £500.00 ONO.

D. P. Wood. Please telephone the following number:- 01-831 7063

=====

FOR SALE:- TRS-80 Model III, Twin disk, high resolution graphics card. Manuals, including Technical Reference Manual and Rodney Zak's "How to program the Z80" in good condition. Any reasonable offer considered. £150.00 secures.

Model 1. In mint condition, because never used. Manuals include "TRS-80 Micro Computer Technical Reference Handbook". Offers please.

Datapoint 3600 terminal: Professional quality ex-mainframe terminal. Selectable baud rates 75-9600. Beautiful Keytronics keyboard. Used by me with modem as stand alone comms console. Offering for sale my second terminal since it was never needed in three years for its original purpose: a source of spares. Technical information included. Any reasonable offer considered. £150.00 secures.

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=====

FOR SALE:- Video Genie EG 3003 with EG 3013 Expander 48K; RS232; Printer Interface and Doubler. Cumana twin 40T S/S Drives with Disks and Manuals for SmallDOS; Multidos; Newdos 80 and Dosplus. Price Complete £195.00

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Tele:- (0424) 222201

MORE ON USING SYS13/SYS

In Vol. 9, Iss. 5, of NATGUG News, I wrote about using SYS13/SYS. Toward the end of that article I wrote, "I would also publish any patches for other CMD files that have been copied to SYS13/SYS, to reset the EFLAG\$ memory byte, which I receive, etc.

At Swindon, Peter Knaggs again came to my rescue, thank you Peter, and sorted out a simple patch which can be applied to SYS13/SYS, after any file has been copied to SYS13/SYS, & is as follows, just type in at DOS Ready and 'ENTER' (but be prepared to wait a little while)

PATCH SYS13/SYS :X'006E'=00.

Now forget the zap I published for VC/CMD after copying it to SYS13/SYS.

Gordon Collins, Editor. **

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

STOP, STOP PRESS

With reference to the letter from Peter Kyle and NEWDOS 80 type sort for a PC machine, could I refer you to a letter in the centre of page 11 in November 1987 80 Micro.

In the same issue (page 82) is an article which refers to a program that appeared in The MisoSys Quarterly, all of which gives the opportunity to have almost 1,000,000 bytes of Basic data storage on a Model 4.

Also, page 77 a review of CED. Thanks to our own Geof Smith NATGUG News carried a review way back in Vol. 9, Issue 1, pages 34 - 36. Subscribe to NATGUG News and be the first in the know.

I am prepared to have a little wager against any member who has never contributed an article/letter/etc. to NATGUG News, doing so in the next six months. Who is going to prove me wrong?

If your membership of NATGUG expires on the 31st December 1987, don't let this be some of the last words you read in NATGUG News, please renew your subscription now.

Librarians

I have been asked to again publish the names of the librarians. This information is being put onto one page, if you feel that at sometime in the future you will not be able to remember were this is, then please feel free to photocopy this page and pin it up somewhere.

=====

Model 1/(III) Librarian:-

Leighton Davies, Glamor, Brynna, Pencoe, Bridgend,
Mid-Glamorgan. CF35 6PD (0656) 860398 & Robophone

Full details given in Vol. 8, Issue 10, Pages 10/11

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Model 4 Librarian:-

Mike Gordon-Saker, 'Uplands', St. Lawrence Drive,
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Full details given in Vol. 8, Issue 10, Pages 11/12

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Peter Hall, 11 Gerrard Street, Brighton, Sussex. BN1 4NN
(0273) 684286

Full details given in Vol. 9, Issue 4, Pages 11-13

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MS-DOS Librarian:-

Ariela Taylor, 42 Davenham Avenue, Northwood.
HA6 3HQ (09274) 22773

For details see the following NATGUG News:-

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LOCAL CLUB NEWS

BOURNEMOUTH

1st & 3rd Wed. @ Kinson Community Centre 7.30pm. Ring Carl Rabe (0202) 730617

MS.DOS User Group. 2nd & 4th Wednesday, 8 pm in rear room, Sports Centre, Hurn.
Ring Mark Austin (0202) 428856.

CHELMSFORD

1st Wed. @ 7.30pm. Ring Richard Creak (0245) 413725 Woodcote, 59D Little Baddow Road, Danbury, Chelmsford, CM3 4NT.

LONDON

Nth East London-80; 1st Sun, 77 Old Church Road, Chingford, LONDON. E4 6ST.

Nth West London; 1st Sun, Central Common Rooms, 10.30-1.30 Northwick Park Hospital. Geof Smith, 01-950 6345 after 8 pm.

MILTON KEYNES

Alternate Sundays, October to March. Brian Pain (0908) 564211

SCOTLAND

2nd Thur. @ 7.30. Mansion House Hotel, Milton Road West (A1), Edinburgh.
Dick Mackie, Chairman, SPECS. on 031-447 6651 out of hours,

SUDBURY

2nd Wed. at:- 3a Gainsborough Street. John Kilpatrick (0787) 79504.

WEST MIDLANDS

Every Wed. Fred Challenor, 40 Whoberley, Coventry, CV5 8EP (0203) 78180

SWINDON WEEKEND '88 next meeting March 11th-13th. ring (0793) 28282

Do not wait - book now !!!

If your club is not mentioned above then for your FREE advert, write with details to:- Gordon Collins, Editor.