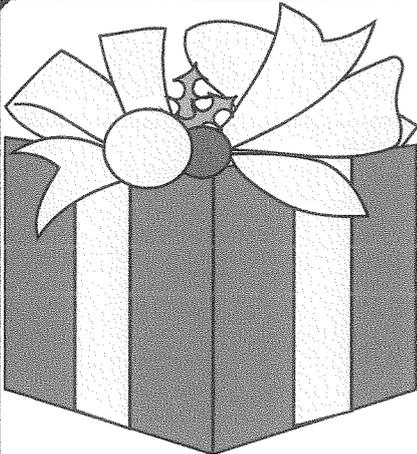


QL Today

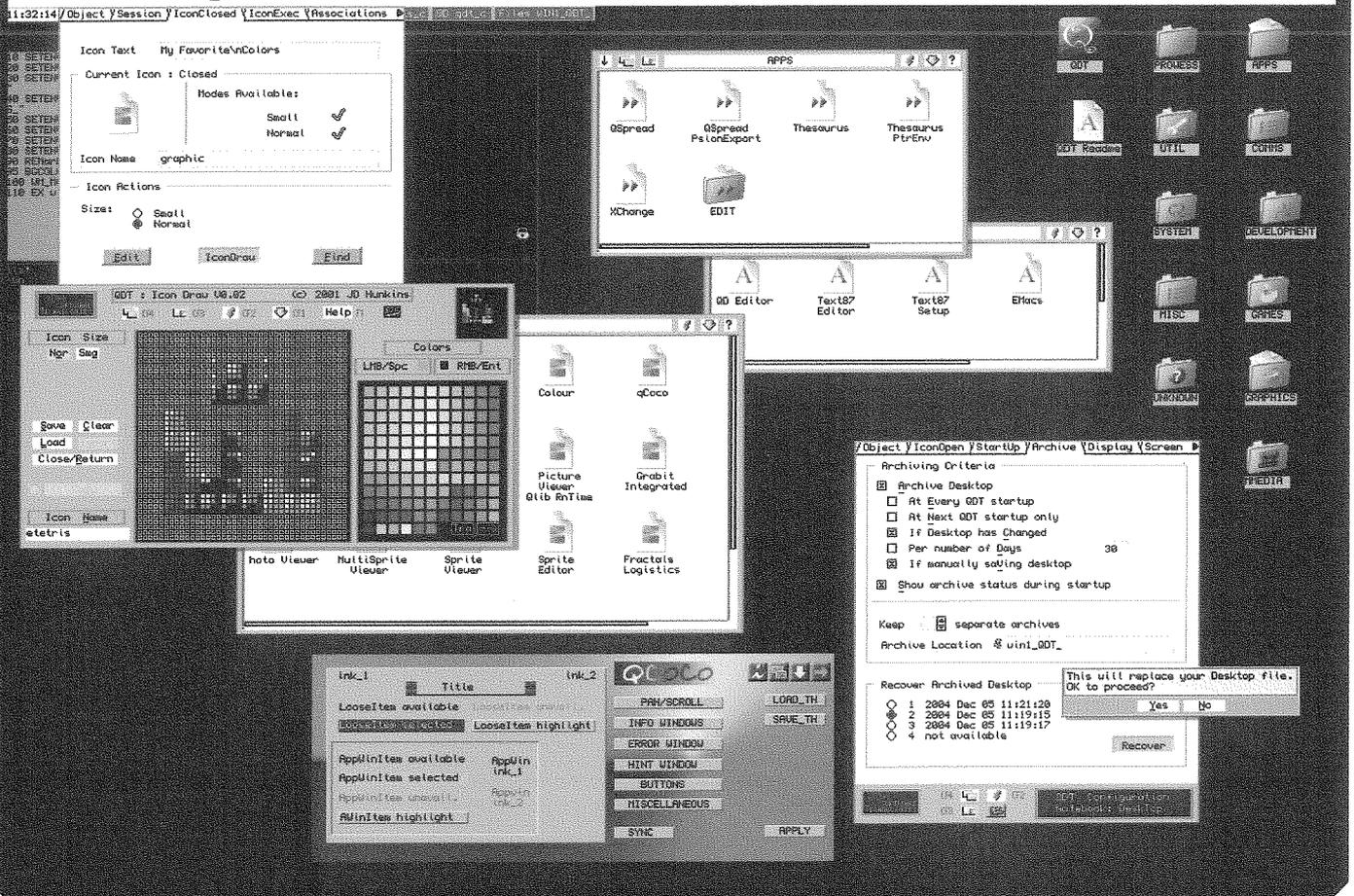
Volume 9
Issue 4
Nov./December
2004

ISSN 1432-5454

The Magazine about QL, QDOS,
Sinclair Computers, SMSQ...



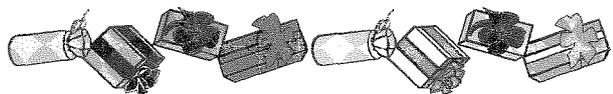
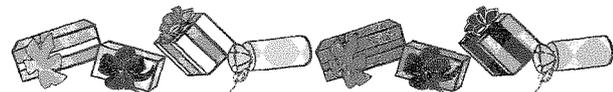
THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT!



QDT DEMO ON THE COVER DISK!

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QL Today

ISSN 1432-5454

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QL Today is published bi-monthly, our volume begins on beginning of June. Subscriptions begin with the current issue at the time of sign up. Please contact the German or English office for current subscription rates.

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**The deadline for Issue 5 is the
20th of January!**

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What a couple of months it's been!

The ql-users email mailing list sprang not just into life but into overdrive following comments about the future of printing on our platforms what with all the prophecies of doom about no printers with control code sets and so on. A lot of discussion, argument, counter argument and so on ensued until Wolfgang Lerner took the bull by the horns and decided to write a printing application based on Proforma, the Progs Font and Raster Manager. More on this from Wolfgang himself in this issue.

Thanks also to people like Rich Mellor who fed so many ideas into the project, and all those who contributed to the discussion on the mailing list - it's a while since I saw such impassioned discussion!

Wolfgang, though, isn't the only one to have been working hard.

Jim Hunkins has worked for a long time on QDT to give SMSQ/E based systems a desktop system to be proud of. I provided a Launchpad desktop demo some time ago, but the waiting is virtually over now, we are proud to bring you the QDT demo disk. If I tell you that Jim Hunkins works for Apple Computers (those who've used Apple computers will know how well regarded their desktop systems are!) you will start to see that QDT should really be something to look forward to!

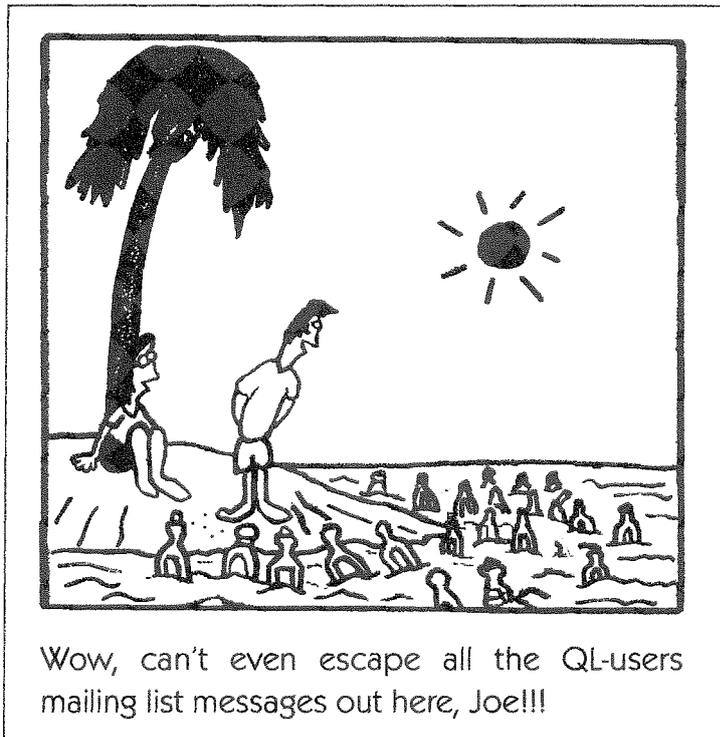
Following the successful QL2004 event in The Netherlands, Quanta have turned their attention to a major event provisionally called

QL2005 for next year. It looks like it'll be held on the south coast of England next autumn, although work is ongoing to prepare for the event.

Quanta was another subject of heated discussion recently on the mailing list and it's really good to know we can still look forward to major events like this some 20 years after the last black QL was manufactured.

Going back a bit, the QL network was one of those well regarded but little mentioned facilities. Well - we aim to put that right in this issue! In theory, you could hook up about 60 QLs/Auroras/QXLs to share hard disks, printers and just about any QL device. I didn't realize just how much there was to this network facility.

It just goes to show we shouldn't write off the little black box yet.



Cartoon

NEWS

Config IDs

Wolfgang Lenerz - the SMSQ/E registrar - is now also the registrar for Config IDs. More details in an article in this issue!

More News from Wolfgang Lenerz

During some discussion on the ql-users mailing list of the future of QL printing and the possible shortage of QL-compatible printers at some point in the future, Wolfgang Lenerz raised the possibility of writing an ASCII file printer based on Proforma facilities (Proforma is the font rastering system from PROGS used by programs like Line Design and Paragraph word processor). Well, Wolfgang took the bull by the horns and wrote a program which is now available from his website. <http://www.scp-paulet-lenerz.com/14mijkl24/wolf/download/>

QL-Users/developers News List Joining Instructions

Bruce Nicholls writes:

Instructions to join/remove yourself from the ql-users and ql-developers mailing lists are now permanently at <http://www.q-v-d.demon.co.uk/smsqe.htm>

SUCCESS 2.02

Bob Spelten writes:

Oops, I did it again. Updating Success and not telling the QL world about it.

It was just ready before the QL-2004 show but there was so much going on that I only showed it to a handful of people. Out now is version 2.02, with the usual bugfixes and some new features. Under the heading of "Search Assistant" there is now a Find & Replace option that looks through the whole database or the current records, on field type (String, Integer, Long INT, Float) or on the selected field only.

Highlighting the matching record, ready to replace or edit the field.

The existing Search now also works correctly on Dates.

The warning beep hit a nerve with some people so it can now be turned off.

You can close the current database before loading, importing or creating a new one.

A temporary printer driver can be selected from

the Print Preset menu, no need to go back to Preferences.

Take note that from version 2.00 onward Success needs SMSQ/E 3.00 or later. But if you choose high resolution over colour on an Aurora it will happily run in mode 4. The printer drivers have been updated as well and will adapt to the colour theme that Success is using, in colour or mode 4.

Success is a PE front-end for DBAS databases and comes in English, German and Dutch versions. A pretty picture of Success and an english trial version can be found at

www.uhlich.nl/ql/

Available from JMS Software for euro clients or from QBranch if you prefer pounds.

QPC2 Sound Player

Wolfgang Lenerz has added a new file to download from his website. It's a small basic extension allowing you to play "_ub" ("Unsigned Byte) sound files from basic on QPC & Qx0. As usual this is at

<http://www.scp-paulet-lenerz.com/14mijkl24/wolf/download/>

ORSAM 2004

Tarquin Mills organised this year's ORSAM 2004 show. This was a multi format event, catering for other 'retro' computers such as Spectrum and SAM as well as the little QL village. The event was opened by the Lord Mayor and quite well attended by all accounts (I wasn't able to go there myself).

Tony Firshman has kindly put some pictures of the event on his website at

<http://www.firshman.co.uk/showphotos/orsam-20041107/>

Note in Tony Firshman's pictures there was an ICL OPD exhibit, the QLers may have missed this if they stayed in the QL village. Tarquin says he was a bit disappointed by the turnout of QL users from East Anglia, Greater London and surrounding areas. More pictures of the event can be seen at:

<http://www.simonowen.com/photo/index.php?folder=/orsam2004/>

(I get a close encounter with a Thor XVI above)

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/paul.dunn4/ORSAM2004/>

ORSAM2004/

40 pounds was raised for charity at the event.

Tarquin recounts this little story from the show. A man went to the TF Services stand and asked if they fixed Spectrums, Tony agreed to have a look. The man said he had last been using it in 1986 and had not been able to use it since (18

years) because it was broken. He had been using it on a monitor but when he got back from working in Saudi Arabia, the monitor was gone. On the television left in its place no picture could be had. It turns out he did not know you had to tune in the television to the right channel. He won 12 Spectrum games in the prize draw. It's little events like that which make organising QL shows worthwhile!

EPSONPS

After recent discussions about Postscript, printing problems (i.e. finding QL compatible printers in the future) and so on on the ql-users mailing list, Tarquin Mills has ported `epsonps`, a Linux postscript printing utility which accepts input files created with Epson printer drivers and converts it to Postscript, ready to send to Postscript printers, e.g. spooled to printers on systems like QPC2 if I have understood the description correctly.

I have used it on my Q60 to:

```
Xchange -> EpsonPs -> Ghostscript -> PAR  
-> Printer
```

It produced the same output as:

```
Xchange -> PAR -> Printer
```

Ghostscript is hard to setup, in the process Tarquin ported a file splitter and joiner, all three programs are on the ACCUS (Anglia Classic Computer Users Society)

<http://www.speccyverse.me.uk/comp/accus/> website. Now he needs to find a Postscript downloader i.e. for:

```
Xchange -> EpsonPs -> downloader -> Printer
```

and the source to Graham Lutz's Ghostscript PE Frontend (Exorcist) as it is out of date. Can anyone help Tarquin get in contact with Graham Lutz or know his whereabouts these days?

KNOWARE Website Update

A few more bits and bobs relating to software and website updates from Knoware (Per Witte) (<http://knoware.mysite.freemove.com/index.html>) for people who enjoy this sort of thing:

2004/10/31 Update and Additions

- Problems with Qwirc in QPC2v3.22? A fix is being prepared!
- Fixed html errors in s2hB090
- Added PickQD - a handy utility and demonstration
- Added kbdbtn - a handy utility and demonstration
- Added Last Match - a simple PE game
- Added LX2 - Menu-driven Psion XChange launcher
- Added Calendar - An SBASIC script to produce various printed calendars

Regarding the message about Qwirc - for some reason it won't run off a hotkey in recent versions of QPC2. I'm investigating the problem and will upload a fix as soon as possible. It can still be run by EXECuting it, though.

2004/11/10 Update and Additions

- Patch for Msprv. View Readme or download here and now.
- Qwirc V0.65 - bug fixes
- Added miscellaneous Articles and documents
- Added StatCounter from www.statcounter.com

News from Simon Goodwin

Jimmy Montesinos, author of QLAY2 and QL2K, has asked me to let you know that documentation I have written for the free open-source QL emulator QLAY2 is now online at:

<http://www.jadnam.org/QL/QLAY2/>

The emulator runs on recent (32 bit) versions of Windows and also on x86 Linux systems - I tested it on a K6/500 running Debian Gnu Linux 3.0 and the free WINE software which provides Windows-compatible libraries without the Microsoft tax or other baggage.

I gave a talk about Sinclair clones and spin-offs (like the Thors, Jupiter Ace, Micro Ace, Flare 1, Slipstream, SAM, Panther and Jaguar, Q40/Q60 and QL expansions) at the ORSAM show on Saturday. About 60 people attended in the course of the day; besides QLs, and at least one new convert to the Quantum Lepers, there were MK14s, ZX-80s, ZX-81s, sundry Spectrums and Sams, Q60s and my own Thor XVI which came out of retirement with a little help from the soldering iron of Tony Firshman.

You might also note that my email addresses are changing. `qdos-studio.co.uk` no longer works and other 'studio' addresses will be closed over the coming few months. For the foreseeable future I can be reached via:

simon@mooli.org.uk

Please do not put this address on any web site, usenet feed or other searchable internet medium - I prefer to have an address that does not attract 50 spams for every one mail I want to read, and unobfuscated addresses online are prime targets for spam hoovers. ;-(

[I think the same goes for all our email addresses. I know myself from bad experience that putting my own email address on my own website resulted in vast amounts of spam emails, which is why I added a form to my website in its place. Another email address which I have and which has never appeared on any searchable internet medium gets hardly any spam at all. Lesson learned - Editor]

QL Icons Library

Javier Guerra (Spanish QL Resources website) writes:

I'm working on a QL icons series in my personal QL page (not the Spanish Resources page). The link is:

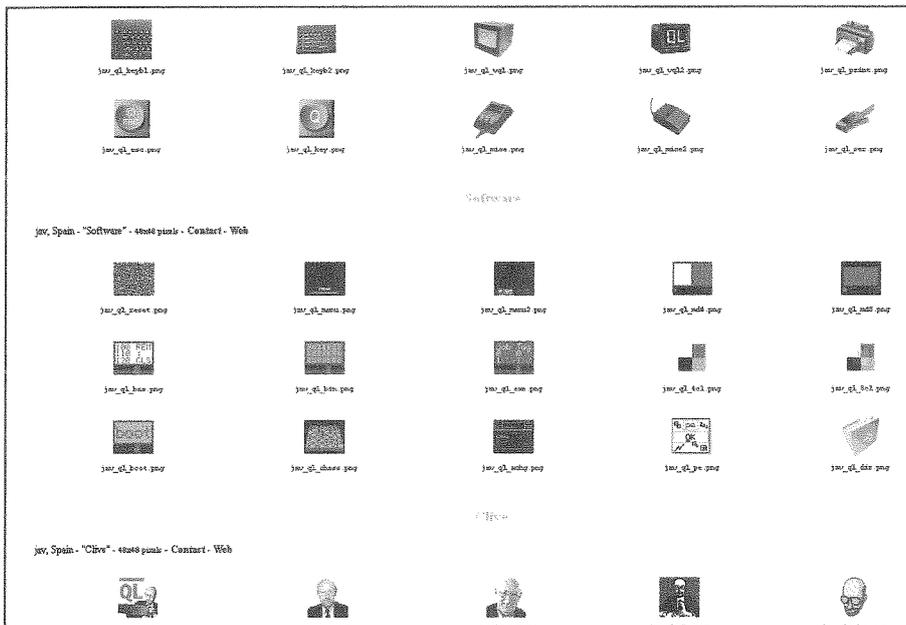
<http://badared.com/badaman/QL/icons/index.htm>

They can be used in programs, in emulators or for QL desktops. These icons are under GPL license and they are for public use.

If you have some icons for sharing, please, send it to me in an email.

I hope that you like them and find them useful. I can be contacted at:

sinclairql@badared.com



(still available from Q-Celt and from Dilwyn himself) – these are NOT freeware and are still sold as commercial programs.

News from Q-CELT

Darren Branagh writes:

After I have finished working at the Bank of Ireland in Dublin early November, my new email address will be:

Darrenbranagh@o2.ie

until further notice, this should be used for all queries – both personal and relating to Q-Celt Computing. I will advise of my new work email in due course. Please keep emails to this address to a minimum, and a small file size, as I have no

phone lines at present and will be using my mobile phone to retrieve them. Also, I will be temporarily unavailable on the mailing list due to this, so please contact me directly, by email, post or phone if you urgently need any assistance.

My new postal address is:

Darren Branagh,
C/o Sandra Storey,
Gortnaglossa,
Cong,
Co.Mayo,
Ireland
Mobile phone:
+353-86-8100090.

DJ Bargain Bundle CD

It has been agreed between Dilwyn Jones and Darren Branagh that the DJ Bargain Bundle CD of ex-DJC programs will no longer be commercial software and the programs on it will all become freeware as soon as Dilwyn can find time to add them to his PD library catalogue and websites. The CD itself will still be available for those who cannot download programs from websites and who prefer to get the collection in one set on a single medium. The revised price was not yet available at the time of writing. The range of formerly commercial programs which will now become freeware includes older programs like Basic Reporter and Vision Mixer, Disk Labeller and Indexer and even the most recent package on the CD, the Easybase database program. The only two of Dilwyn's programs not covered by this are Sidewriter (which remains available from Rich Mellor at RWAP Software) and Launchpad

J-M-S News

1. Jochen Merz Software has moved. The new address is very close to the old address, just the street changes:
"Im stillen Winkel 12" becomes
"Kaiser-Wilhelm-Str. 302"
Letters sent to both addresses will reach me for a while, but please use the new address from now on.
2. QPAC1 has been colour-updated. Yes, all the utilities of QPAC1 are now converted by Marcel Kilgus to use the new, nice-looking colours. You can update your disk as usual: Return the old disk to be updated and enclose enough return postage (3 IRCs).
3. 20 years J-M-S! Yes, J-M-S has existed for 20 years now. And for this very special event, we have put together an extremely good offer: the Celebration-Restarter-Pack! Have a look at our homepage <http://smsqj-m-s.com> for

more details.

4. Brandnew version of QPC2. Version 3.23 update is available for download at <http://www.kilgus.net>
You need a password to extract the ZIP, which registered users can get from Jochen Merz. You can use your existing QPC2 Version 3 register key with the new version.

For those who would rather use existing configuration settings rather than reconfigure each new version as it is installed, here is a little hint: Use the level 2 MenuConfig program to "learn" the settings of your existing SMSQE.BIN file and use it to configure SMSQE.BIN directly from within QPC2 by finding the SMSQE.BIN on the Windows drive via the DOS device.

Updates in the v3.23 release at the time of writing included:

- * PAR dialog sometimes didn't show the actual settings.
 - * Changed printer enumerations so that unavailable network printers don't delay everything.
 - * Slightly improved compatibility with Wine (/Cedega) Windows emulator.
 - * Removed small bug in new implementation of MOVEM 68k command.
 - * If "Keep aspect ratio" is selected window size snaps to exact multiples of SMSQ/E resolution when near that size.
 - * Umlauts in registration information are now handled correctly. (helps German users!)
5. BBS problems. The BBS (Bulletin Board System) computer died just before the Eindhoven QL meeting (which was a great show, by the way). I have already announced in QL Today that the BBS will be shut down soon anyway because of lack of usage and also related to a problem with the phone-number (with the move, we run out of phone numbers).

Converting PC Graphics to QL

Javier Guerra writes:

I have prepared an article about how to convert images from PC to QL.

<http://sinclairql.info/docs/trucos/qlpal.htm>

This is an example gallery.

<http://sinclairql.info/docs/trucos/qlpal/galeria.htm>

The method is based on the article "Convert images to QL format" by Selsyn:

<http://pages.zoom.co.uk/selsyn/ql/index.html>

but my method does not need a perl program. I believe that it can be interesting.

Sorry, the article is currently in spanish only.

If someone could help, I believe that I can translate it to my poor English, but I will need someone to check the document to correct the grammatical drafts.

At the time of writing, a possible QL show in Spain (possibly Madrid) was being discussed, likeliest dates being April to June of next year. Anyone interested in attending or helping Javier is welcome to contact him direct via sinclairql@badared.com

Jungle Eddie

Rich Mellor writes:

Just to let everyone know that I have now re-released Jungle Eddi for the QL (just in time for Christmas).

Cost is £5 on disk. Unfortunately, it will not work on SMSQ/e or the Pointer Environment. Needs a minimum of 256K RAM. Details appear at:

<http://www.rwapsoftware.co.uk/games.html>

uQLx Emulator for MAC and WIN32

Phoebus R. Dokos writes:

the uQLx homepage is once again up at:

URL:<http://uqlx.dokos-gr.net/>

(for English)

URL:<http://uqlx.dokos-gr.net/indexgr.html>

(for Greek)

URL:<http://uqlx.dokos-gr.net/indexfr.html>

(for French)

URL:<http://uqlx.dokos-gr.net/indexit.html>

(for Italian)

Spanish, Dutch and German translations welcome :-)

the uQLx-mac page can be found at:

URL:<http://uqlx.dokos-gr.net/indexmac.html>

(only in English)

George Gwilt Software Updates

The SQLUG website now features the following updates to programs by George Gwilt.

Gwass 10 (assembler for 68020+ systems), which now handles Qmac macros, and Netpeek which will handle colours on QPC2.

Quanta (and TF Software) News

Quanta is planning to organise another 2-day event in the second half of 2005. We hope to be able to publish date and venue in the next issue.

Also, the survey on Tony Firshmans page (which he initially planned to do for Quanta) was a big success with over 80 replies so far. Maybe Tony can write a little bit about the results in the next issue. If you have not filled in the survey, then please visit the Quanta or TF's homepage and do so:

www.quanta.org.uk

QL CALENDAR 2005

Dilwyn Jones

Just to be different, I thought I'd make up a QL calendar for 2005. Rather than pictures of scantily clad ladies, or cute animals, or nice scenery, this one would have QL pictures.

The downside is it's rather a large download (about 1MB), and you'll need Micro\$oft Word to print it, but the finished product will be all QL!

Get it from <http://homepages.tesco.net/dilwyn.jones/calendar/calendar.html>

If you haven't got access to M\$ Word, you can get a free Word file viewer for Windows from

<http://office.microsoft.com/downloads/2000/wd97vwr32.aspx>

Word users will be able to amend it if required, just click on a picture to select it, and go from there.

Thanks to Javier Guerra, the QL Calendar (QaLendar) is now available for download as a PDF file.

Those without access to Word can use the free Adobe PDF Reader to view and print it.

Gee Graphics! (on the QL ?)

- Part 41

H. L. Schaaf

Where's that hat at?

Was it "caret away" in the editing?

The listing in GG#40 was meant to be merged with the listing from GG#39, but there's a missing character. An ASCII code 94 should have been in line 1910 and also in line 1960. Some refer to it as circumflex when used over a vowel, also known as a shark, hat, caret, and shorthand for CTRL or control. The character has been used before and made it through the migration from Quill doc to PC txt to Unix file to email to Jochen to ??? to ??? to ??? etc. to printer to post, but not for GG#40. On line 1910 we want to break a-b into about a thousand pieces. I used 2 raised to the 10th power or 2^{10} , but it came out as 210. On line 1960 we want to square the change in the y-distance so there should be a chr\$(94) in front of

the final 2 on that line. On my keyboard the character is gotten by using SHIFT-6, but then not all keyboards are alike. Where is the @ at on the UK keyboard?

What about the length of Lame curves? I've thought about breaking the compound Lame curves into regions with the break points being where the slope is + or - 1. Then the flatter more horizontal parts can be 'Gruled' with greater confidence. The steeper more vertical parts can then rotated

90 degrees, thereby converting them to less a problematic integration.

By using the Gauss-Legendre scheme we find the area under the curve of $\sqrt{1 + \text{the derivative squared}}$ for each region, add them up and see if it gives us a reasonable approximation to the length of compound Lame curves. If and when I get it cleaned up, I'll submit it as a rather long listing. For this time I'm including the listing "Bessel_bas" to be merged with GG#39 (and/or GG#40). It turns out that the Bessel function is the area under a curve, and Grule does it nicely. Still looking for applications for Bessel functions. Any offers?

```
102 REMark Bessel_bas for GG#41
103 REMark HL Schaaf Nov. 21, 2004
104 REMark adding Bessel function J n (x)
105 REMark to be merged with GG#39
892 = 8 : RETurn (COS(Besx*SIN(X)-Besn*(X)))/PI :REMark Bessel
1282 PRINT ' 8 - Bessel Jn(x)'
1300 IF examp$ INSTR('12345678') : EXIT choice
1402 = 8 : a = 0 : b = PI : name$ = "Bessel":get_Besxn
1695 fudge = 1 : if example = 8 : fudge = 2
1700 SCALE fudge*2*(maxy-miny), a - .1, miny - .1 : CLS
2030 DEFine PROCEDURE get_Besxn
2040 PRINT ' for Bessel function Jn(x)'
2050 INPUT ' n value ? ',Besn
2060 INPUT ' x value ? ',Besx
2070 name$ = name$&' J '&Besn&' ('&Besx&')'
2080 ans = Besn*Besx
2090 END DEFine get_Besxn
2100 REMark end of listing Bessel_bas
```

Q U A N T A



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**John Gilpin, 181, Urmston Lane
Stretford, Manchester, M32 9EH (UK).**

Tel. +44 (0) 161 865 2872

or

Visit the Quanta Web Site

<http://www.quanta.org.uk>

E-mail: quanta_membership@uk2.net

Next QUANTA Sponsored Event

SUSSEX QL USER GROUP

PORTISHEAD WORKSHOP & QUANTA AGM

Portishead Town Hall,

Mile Oak Community Centre,

HOVE,

SUSSEX.

Sunday 17th April 2005

From 10.00 am to 4 p.m. AGM at 2.00 p.m.

Ring Roy Wood on 01273 – 386030 (or 07836-745501) for full details.

At Eindhoven

Al Boehm

Dorothy and I attended the QL meeting in Eindhoven, Holland. Here are a few tidbits from the meeting. The meeting was well attended and very busy with tutorials. Urs König gave a fine historical overview. My comment was that the reason the QL did not do well in the US was because of poor quality control of hardware. Five out of ten QLs I bought for myself and children had to be returned. Roy Wood demonstrated Jim Hunkins' latest version of the QDT frontend. It is looking very good and will really be handy for those who like graphical front ends. I will probably get it just to be able to play with its many features. However, I will most likely stick with my DO starters and command line input since I have issues with mouses. Further, QDT only works with SMSQE which I really like but perhaps a third of my computing is done with QDOS.

The two most interesting (to me) advances were the color drivers and sound device. I would have given \$1000 for

the color drivers 10 years ago when I was heavy into generating cloudscapes for simulation.

Now I am more into music and the sound devices are intriguing. My son Ted gave me his old computer which I intend to convert to a Linux UQXL system to use for a music studio. I got to meet a lot of old friends plus I finally met Tony Tebby and Steve Poole with whom I have shared a lot of ideas. Looking back, I wish the meeting was a two day affair since there just wasn't enough

time to talk to everyone as much as wanted to.

My time was also affected by two non-QL events. The first had to do with money. Eindhoven was the third leg of a month long trip that included Massachusetts at my daughter Liz' home and upstate New York at my son Ted's home. We happily spent most of our money with our kids and grandkids. When I checked my budget, there was only \$300 left to go to Holland. Even with the free space available cargo flights to Germany, I told Dorothy we better just go straight back to Alabama. However, when we prayed, the Lord said to go, there is someone there you are supposed to help. So after double checking that the Lord knew what He was talking about, we went. But whenever anyone mentioned anything about religion, I gave them my full attention. I wasn't about to get stuck in Europe because I did not do what I was sent to do. We must have done OK since everything fell into place, (we did only sleep in a hotel only every other night for a while) We got back home with \$2 in my pocket without begging any money from family or friends.





The second had to do with the SMART car we rented to get from Ramstein Air Base to Eindhoven. This is a very tiny car that has six forward speeds, no clutch, but you have to manually shift gears!! The problem was there were no instructions, not even in German, only arcane icons to suggest what a button was supposed to do. For example, you had to have the car in neutral, push a button on the key, tap the brake, then turn the key to start it. (I think?) This sequence took some 20 minutes at a rest stop to trial and error figure out. It took us a whole day to find out how to lower the windows. I never did completely figure out how to put it into reverse, but this was no problem since the car was so small, I just opened the door and pushed it back with my foot!

The SMART car problem at the meeting involved Dorothy. After she had spent an hour or two looking over the QL stuff and chatting with Mrs. Dent, she decided to visit the Eindhoven museums. As she was driving, a wrong button must have been pushed since the convertible top opened. It was

quite cold and drizzling. She didn't dare park the car with the top open and our luggage inside. Worst, she got lost trying to find her way back to the meeting. She was nearly in tears when she told me there was a problem with the car. Which after a few minutes of scratching my head, I figured out - you had to manually shove the top far enough to engage the track then find the right button to push.

I had planned to give a demo on MIDI and Ed Aids, but I knew what I had to do was take



Dorothy to the museum. We got to the wrong museum first and spent a little time there, but they showed us how to walk to the Iron Age Village Museum. We got there five minutes before it closed, so the gate keeper let us in for free. But the most important thing was the gift shop was open for 30 minutes more, so Dorothy's face showed mission accomplished. The meeting was very full of activities. I really think a two day meeting is needed.

Geoff Wicks had a lot to do with the success of the meeting and deserves our thanks. Instead, I nominate him for Quanta/Vendor meeting coordinator so that there are no potential conflicts like last year's US and AGM meetings. I did plan to renew my Quanta membership, but there was no Quanta presence at the meeting?

I did get to talk to several of the QL dealers and the consensus was to have the 2005 US QL show in the North East in the Fall so as to see the remarkable Fall leaf colors.

Did you notice that Jochen can no longer say, "I'm still in Winkel 12"?

MenuConfig and Config IDs

Jochen Merz

As the J-M-S BBS is about to be shut down, some things remained to be dealt with.

One of them is the registration of Config IDs, and the description of the Config Level 2 (which was only available in the BBS so far).

As we now have a registrar for SMSQ, he seems to be the ideal person to keep track of the config IDs as well - so please contact Wolfgang Lernerz in the future if you need Config IDs.

To ensure it is properly published as well in its current state, here we go:

CONFIG Level 2

We felt that a number of things were missing in the definition of level 1 of the QJUMP Standard configuration definition. Therefore, after a number of discussions, the following suggestions were made to be implemented on level 2.

First of all, re-configuring software you already had in previous versions is a very boring thing. Most of the time, all you do is set the old settings in the new file. This has to be made automatic. Therefore, the item structure is expanded to make room for an config-item-ID.

The configuration level 2 consists of the information shown in figure 1.

The ID should be unique for every item. There may be global ID names, which could be used by many programs (like the colourway setting), there can be unique "registered" ID names (which are preferred) and there may be "unregistered" local ID names. Global ID names should start with an underscore, unique ID names should start with a letter. For unregistered local IDs, the top byte of the ID has to be 0.

For all ID names, a list (which is maintained by the SMSQ/E registrar) is created, to avoid multiple name conflicts. If you wish to register for one or more ID names, please write to the registrar. You may suggest one or more name, otherwise the registrar will try to find a sensible abbreviation for you. ID names consist of a longword (i.e. four characters). The first three characters have to be reserved through the registrar, the fourth character can freely be assigned by the software house for the various items.

The function of the CONFIG program

When the CONFIG program starts up, the user selects the file to configure (which should contain one or more level 1 or level 2 config blocks). Level 1 blocks are treated as before (i.e. they can be printed or configured), but for level 2, there is an additional UPDATE facility. CONFIG "learns" level 2 configurations and stores the settings of the item for any ID in a separate file, giving a "global" default configuration file. When the user selects UPDATE, the config block is scanned for IDs, and every ID is checked in the global default configuration file. If it is found, the preferred setting is automatically copied in the file which is to be configured. This way, updating programs is MUCH easier and nearly automatic. In fact, it could be made completely automatic (via parameter string).

Another advantage is, that the configuration can be made language-independent.

The "learned" configuration of an English file could be used to configure a German or French file, for example, provided that the same items have got the

same ID's. Care should be taken for items, which are language-dependent filenames (i.e. help-files, auto-save filenames etc.), which SHOULD have different ID's, otherwise the German program would save to an English file or vice versa.

Figure 1

```
Configuration ID
Configuration level
Software name
Software version
List of
  Item ID (long) <----- NEW!!!
  Type of item (string, integer etc.) (byte)
  Item Selection keystroke (byte)
  Pointer to item
  Pointer to item pre-processing routine
  Pointer to item post-processing routine
  Pointer to description of item
  Pointer to attributes of item (item type dependent)
End word (value -1)
```

Local IDs are not stored by MenuConfig by default. You can configure MenuConfig from V3.21 onwards to enable the save of local IDs, but it may crash your system if you update files with the same "local" ID with different meaning, e.g. a string assignment is done to an ID which was defined as a word. There is no type check! We think it is safer not to save local IDs and update as follows:

load a different _INF file containing other configuration information, for example if you prefer having different configurations for colour and monochrome versions (!). When you terminate MenuConfig and you changed or learned new settings, MenuConfig asks you whether you want to update the _INF file, so that the settings are preserved for the next update.

Working Copy

If the configured file contains a flag "«QCFC»" BEFORE the "«QCFX»" flag (which can be generated with the new Macro MKCFCUT) then MenuConfig offers the user the choice to save a configured version without the config texts, to reduce the required file size to the minimum (as the configuration texts are not required anymore after configuration). Of course, a file treated this way cannot be configured afterwards anymore. Programmers should take care that the configuration items come BEFORE the configuration texts, otherwise they will be cut away too. So make sure that the configuration texts are always the last section in your file!

Figure 2

\$0000	4k	base of workspace passed to pre/postprocessing routine
-\$0004	long	MenuConfig's version
-\$0008	long	primary channel ID
-\$000c	long	pointer to working definition
-\$0010	2 word	primary window x/y size
-\$0014	2 word	primary window x/y origin
-\$0018	2 word	work area x/y size
-\$001c	2 word	work area x/y origin
-\$001d	byte	text info window number in working def
-\$001e	byte	work info window number in working def
-\$0022	long	window manager vector
-\$0026	long	pointer to filename of the file being configured
-\$002a	long	pointer to buffer containing file being configured
-\$002e	long	pointer to buffer of default directory
-\$0032	long	pointer to buffer of output device
-\$0040	long	colourway

When a user wants to update a file containing local IDs, then MenuConfig has to "learn" the old settings from the old (already configured) version of the file, and these settings are then updated to the new version of the file. The local IDs are not stored anywhere else, as this could lead to ID clashes between different files containing the same local ID for different purposes.

MenuConfig V2 stores the learned settings in a file called MenuConfig_INF on your current PROGRAM default device. It will try to read it from there the next time to execute MenuConfig. You can, of course, tell MenuConfig to

An additional item type

It became obvious in MenuConfig, that a new item type "nothing" or "all" is required, which does not do anything automatic but calling the pre/post-processing routines. This is useful for providing own menus without having to mess around with unwanted texts. In addition, more information is required to be passed to these pre/postprocessing routines. We think, at the moment, of the following scheme:

A3, which points to a 4kBytes space, is negative indexed and provides the following information (see figure 2).

Current List of Global IDs

_COL	Main Colourway
Byte	range -1, 0 to 3.
_COS	Sub-Window Colourway
Byte	range -1, 0 to 3.
_COB	Button Colourway
Byte	range -1, 0 to 3.
_COE	Explanation window Colourway
Byte	range -1, 0 to 3.
_FFU	Flash-frequency for update icon
Byte	0 (steady) or nr. of ticks

List of Reserved IDs

APP.	APPMan	PT_.	Pointer Interface Configuration
ATA.	ATARI-Rext	PW..	ProWes & Applications
BLC.	BASIC Linker	QBS.	QBASIC
BLD.	Balled	QDA.	QD (Tab Options)
BLG.	BASIC Linker	QDE.	QD (Editor)
BLO.	BASIC Linker	QDF.	QD (Files)
CCT.	C68Tool (T. Roesner)	QDG.	QD (General)
CSH.	CueShell	QDS.	QDesign
CDK.	CueDark	QMK.	QMake
DDE.	DataDesign	SQ_.	SMSQ Configuration
DIS.	DISA V2	QPC.	QPC general
DRN.	Disk Rename	QPS.	QPC serial
EMN.	EASYMenu	QPP.	QPC parallel
EMU.	ATARI-Emulator	QP1.	QPC1 specific
EPM.	EPROM-Manager	QP2.	QPC2 specific
ESP.	EASYSprite	Q2_.	QPAC2 Main
EXT.	EASYExt	Q2S.	QPAC2 Sysdef
FiF.	FiFi	Q2F.	QPAC2 Files
HLP.	HyperHelp	Q2B.	QPAC2 Buttons
MBT.	MultiButton	QSN.	QSnap
MCF.	MenuConfig	SST.	Systat
MEN.	Menu Extension	SYP.	System Password
MPK.	MultiPick	SYS.	System
OSP.	Operating System Preferences (SMSQ)	TAB.	QSpread
PAD.	Notepad	TAb.	QSpread
PAR.	Paragraph (F. Lanciault)	TaB.	QSpread
PDF.	Page Designer 3 Fonts 1	Tab.	QSpread
PDf.	Page Designer 3 Fonts 2	TRA.	TRA Extension
PDG.	Page Designer 3 General	WED.	WIN Ed
PDP.	Page Designer 3 Page	WSL.	WIN Select
PDp.	Page Designer 3 Pattern		
PF..	Proforma & Applications		
PRP.	PrinterPanel		
PRM.	QPrommer		

Addition to the CONFIG String Attribute word

%001xxxxx00000000is reserved for PROGS.

The Show must Go On!

Geoff Wicks

Thanks to the QL I now have a new virtual hobby. I have moved into horticulture, and specialise in growing the finest and best raspberries to blow loudly in the direction of some QL-ers when they talk about shows.

I have a right to do this because I am Mr. QL2004. Or perhaps not. QL2004 became a reality because 3 people, Sjef van de Molengraaf, Jochen Merz and I, believed in it. There

were many who did not share our belief.

Earlier this year I sat with the Quanta committee, and heard the then chairman ridicule our plans. Eindhoven was a stupid place to hold QL2004. He had been there once and discovered scarcely anyone attends meetings in Eindhoven. His four colleagues nodded in assent, and from then on Quanta excluded itself from QL2004 and missed out on the most impor-

tant international show for 4 years. Quanta was not alone. Although all traders, bar one, gave their support and advice, if not their attendance, I suspect some had doubts about the viability of QL2004.

If I am honest, I too had my doubts. It had been about 7 or 8 years since Sin_QL_Air had hosted a major international show in Eindhoven, and since then the organisation has become much smaller. Would they still have the resources and skills to host QL2004? After our first and only meeting as a QL2004 committee any

doubts I had were dispelled. Sijef van de Molengraaf, the unsung hero of QL2004, had a determination to make the show a success. The rest is history. We had a hardworking day, both inside and outside the lecture room, and then dined together for almost 3 hours in the New Canton restaurant. Many found the day too short. One person spoke of being transported back to the shows of the late 90s. QL2004 was a success beyond my wildest dreams.

Shows have gained a bad name in the QL community. In the last 12 months Byfleet was badly attended, as was London, Hove, Manchester, Orlando and Berchtesgaden. Perhaps we have become trapped in a vicious circle in which people are reluctant to attend shows because the previous one was so bad. In the last QL-Today Jochen asked if QL shows still serve a useful purpose and, if so, with what frequency and in what form we should continue to hold them.

What made QL2004 such a success and what can we learn from it?

Right at the start I realised we had to break the pattern of the vicious circle, and the message had to go out that QL2004 was a serious show. Probably my most effective tool in doing this was the QL2004 website. It takes time, money and effort to attend a show, but looking at a website is a simple matter of a few clicks of the mouse. We took a lot of care to ensure the QL2004 website was as comprehensive as possible. It gave not only the show details with pictures of the

venue but also travel and hotel information, including links to rail timetables, airports and hotels. Some idea of the effectiveness of the website can be gained from an email I had from Lycos to tell me that in October the site was one of the most popular UK Tripod sites. In the week before QL2004 the average hit rate was 40 per day. (There was also a peak in the hit rate when Jochen sent out a snailmail flyer – there is still some mileage in old fashioned communication methods.)

Like QL2000 four years ago, QL2004 had a name that was easy to remember. Unlike QL2000 it also had a simple logo giving venue and date. I was pleasantly surprised to see how many people downloaded this logo to use as a link on their own website. Because QL2004 was planned well in advance, we were also able to get good publicity in QL publications including formal announcements, advertisements, news items and editorial material. QL-Today proved to be a more effective medium than the Quanta Magazine because of its greater reliability. Publicity is only part of a successful show. The show must have a content that attracts the users. Some QL-ers say the poor attendance at recent shows is because there has been nothing new to talk about or demonstrate. I do not subscribe to this. In the four years since QL2000 there have been huge software developments in QPC, colours and sprite technology and there has also been a major hardware development in the Q60. Much of this activity has occurred outside the mainstream traders, with most of the colour software tools be-

ing non-commercial and Q60 specialists D&D Systems rarely showing a public face.

From the start we attempted to involve QL-users in the content of QL2004, and we gave ourselves the time to do this. We used the most effective way of quickly sounding out opinion, which is the email QL-users group. The disadvantage of using this group is that you only reach a small proportion of the QL community. The advantage is that most of what I call the "movers and shakers" of the QL community subscribe to it. (We tried to involve other QL-ers by the paper publications.)

The QL-users email group also proved useful in the last weeks before the show when I heard from the tourist office that Eindhoven hotels could be busy during the QL2004 weekend. We were able to quickly exchange hotel information, which enabled me to advise several enquirers where hotel rooms were available at a reasonable price.

Our first appeals for suggestions for the show content bore little fruit. An initial email to the user group produced just 2 replies. Emails to traders were more productive, but the big breakthrough came earlier than expected when Jon Dent suggested an internet connection workshop. I knew this topic would attract a good deal of interest and encourage people to think of QL2004 as a serious show. (As it happened this part of the activity programme had to be abandoned because of technical problems.) Slowly, but surely, a programme of events was built up, and it was a sign of enthusiasm for the show that two thirds of the presenters volunteered their services. It was no

longer a question of hoping for enough events to fill the time, but of hoping there was enough time for all the events. If nothing else the activity programme demonstrated how vibrant the QL community still is. This was no passive entertainment. All activities were well attended with lively discussion and questions after the formal presentation. And when you left the lecture room, you were confronted with a buzz of activity in the main hall. It is a long time since I have seen so many QL-ers working on their machines at a show.

One activity that did not get off the ground was the QL Forum. In the early stages of QL2004 planning this was the most popular request, but interest in a forum soon waned, and it proved difficult to get suggestions for panel members and topics. At three recent shows a planned QL Forum has been cancelled, which suggests that in practice QL-ers have little enthusiasm for this type of activity.

Two features of the QL2004 activity programme are worthy

of mention. We had the use of a projector, which gave presentations a much more professional character, and Tony Firshman set up an internet connection and local network. Theoretically we could have had voice conferencing with QL users around the world. These are essentials for any future international show. Earlier I referred to Sjef van de Molengraaf as being the unsung hero of QL2004. Unfortunately we were unable to use all the facilities at the school that we were hoping for and this included their projectors and network. Sjef ensured that we kept our promises by hiring a projector and allowed us to use his account for the internet connection. This efficiency at a local level contributed greatly to the success of QL2004.

At QL2004 we exploded the myth that major QL shows are no longer possible. We now have to stop thinking in old terms and redesign shows using the opportunities the internet has given us. There are important lessons to be learnt for QL2005 should we suc-

ceed in persuading Quanta to sponsor such an event.

I suspect QL2005 will be a more difficult to organise than QL2004. The QL scene in the UK is more passive than on the continent, and there are fewer people available to give presentations. To be successful QL2005 will have to attract presenters from the continent and the USA. The greatest strength of QL2004 (and also its greatest weakness) was that it was more a show for the movers and shakers of the QL community than for the punters. The nature of the QL scene in the UK means that QL2005 must be more a show for the punters than the movers and shakers. Most of the potential attendees do not subscribe to the QL-users email group and some do not have access to the internet. We must start planning months before the event so that there can be adequate publicity and consultation in both QL-Today and the Quanta Magazine.

QL2005 could be my big QL challenge next year.

War and Peace

Tony Firshman

The Byfleet Quanta Workshop on November 28th was pretty poorly attended.

There was though a very good Quanta committee attendance with many John's and one Geoff, and many past committee members. In fact Bill Newell and John Taylor took over the Quanta stand during the committee meeting. The Quanta committee past and present seems to get far more than its fair share of John's!

It was reportedly a very lively affair, with an ultimatum and negotiations. However it all clearly ended amicably and the outcome is not known at time of going to press.

Geoff Wicks and I were the sole trader representatives, and I personally had a very good day. Roy Wood had an important diving examination,

and Jochen Merz's house move has taken far longer than he expected.

Bill Richardson's wife Dorothy died recently, and we wish him and his family well. Dorothy had not fully recovered after a fall some time ago, and life had been very hard for her and Bill in recent years.

I actually failed to repair two QL systems. One was an Aurora system that reported no QL ROM. This seemed to be a faulty Aurora, as both SuperGoldCard and the (Minerva) ROM were fine. The other was interesting. It was a standard QL motherboard, with a homemade veroboard backplane, Gold Card and the Falkenberg hard disk interface. The HD interface was the first I had seen. What an awful piece of manufacture. It was made to the usual poor standard. I don't know about this board, but the keyboard interface was, I am told, handmade using university facilities. This is only heresay, but the quality was awful. I have seen many, and the two sided pcbs were

not aligned well. Often pins had to be bent to get to the reverse side pads. Awful.

This interface had a badly mounted plug-in ISA HD card.

Installations using the QL motherboard are noisy at the best of times, as I know from my BBS system. I used Qplane and Qubide. Even then I regularly lost files, and twice lost the directory tree. Phil Borman will remember the two long overnight sessions, for which I am eternally grateful.

Both Mplane and Qplane have groundplanes, which help. Mplane moves the expansion and qubide away from the QL motherboard, which is even better. Both have resistor pullups and de-coupling capacitors etc.

This homemade backplane at Byfleet did not have anything other than connections. It didn't stand a chance. I am amazed it even managed to work at all. The reported problem was hard disk errors. I couldn't even get the system to boot with the HD interface plugged in. Without the interface, all was fine.

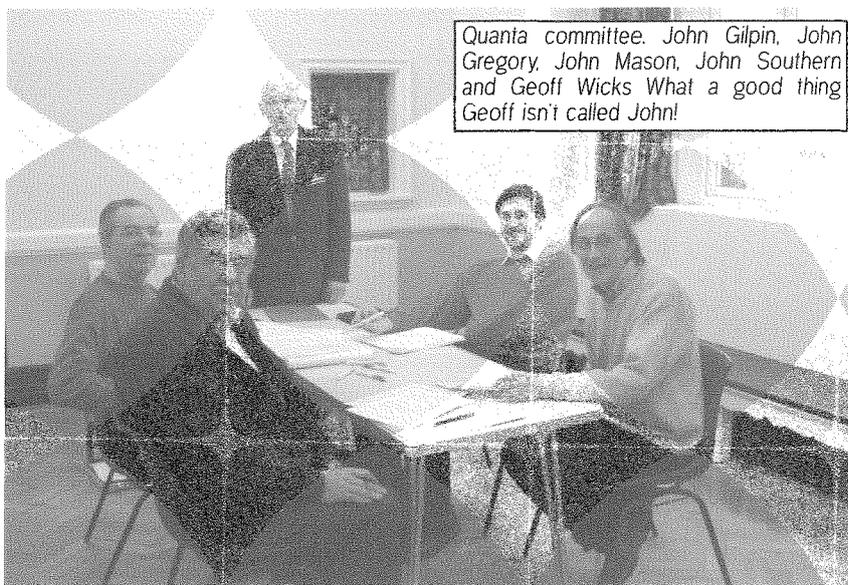
I also sold an analogue interface. The purchaser wanted to monitor battery charging, and also needed voltage reference outputs. This is the first time to my knowledge the output line has been used. I had to check details in my own manual before I could confirm he could do this!

Geoff Wicks used my 17 inch LCD monitor to demonstrate Qword. An excellent demo of this is now available on

<http://www.rwapsoftware.co.uk/QWord.html>

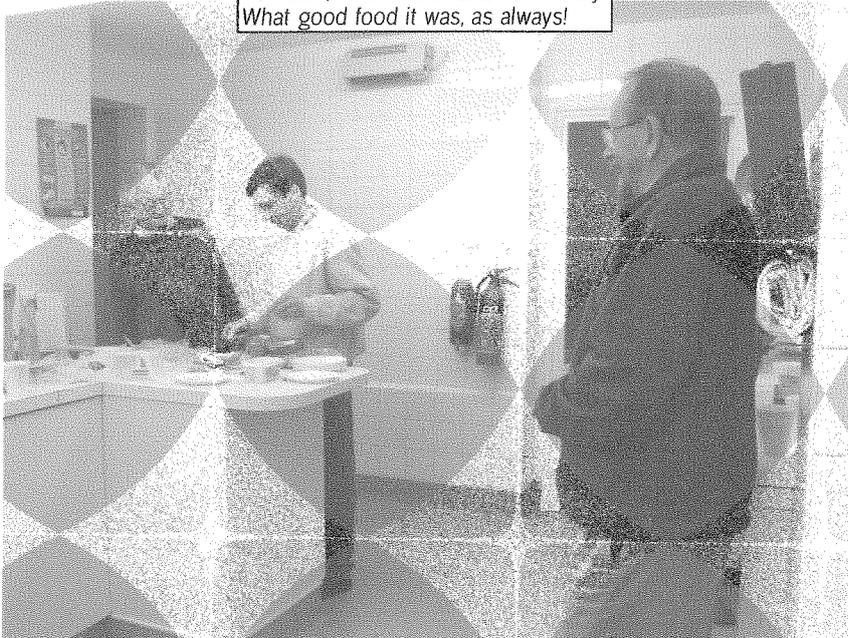
I really don't particularly like computer games, but I can see I am going to like this one.

The home team again produced excellent food in



Quanta committee. John Gilpin, John Gregory, John Mason, John Southern and Geoff Wicks What a good thing Geoff isn't called John!

the canteen. It was also good to see that, at last, there are plenty of power points. There are also two side rooms and a stage. I reckon this is now the best QL venue in the UK.



Ken Bain, Peter Marsh and Peter Baily. What good food it was, as always!

There are more photos on <http://firshman.co.uk>

The Move - a never ending Story?

Jochen Merz

Blame it on The Move - yes, but that's the real reason! I am very sorry about the fact that I could not make it to this year's

Byfleet show. I keep saying that some things can be slower than usual. This is true for some things (i.e. Bug fixes,

Updates), but at least I am still extremely reliable regarding QL Today. Before you turn the page over, you may think, it's just an excuse.

Well, it is not - unfortunately! It is much, much, much more work than we ever thought!

It's an old house - about 100 years old now. Walls are about 3,5 meters high in the 1st floor, about 3 meters in the floors above. We knew a lot was required to be done, but on the other hand, affordable rent for many rooms and room - and a large 2-room office for me!

We started in June, and initially thought we could move my office in October - after we moved Andrea's flat in September. We were so wrong - with every planned date!

I do not want to go into details, but by October, we managed to have useable living room, bathroom and sleeping room.

The kitchen is ... let's say, useable ... and the office - have a look yourself.

Whatever we did, it took at least twice as long as expected and everything, really everything turned out to be a problem.

Let me just say, that the other rooms looked much worse than what you see here (actually, for the kitchen, we removed about 2 tons of tiles and concrete from the wall (a total of 7 cubic meters of stuff!) and rebuilt it.

The top picture will become the "server" room of my office - all the noisy machines will get in here. There are many round holes in the wall - connection to the main room (no, not the door, the very left hole) for cables etc. - LAN (to the living room), ISDN through the house, doorbell and door opener (connected to the provisional ISDN exchange) and two telephone lines coming in. A lot of work! Through the door, my main office room. The reverse view in the middle picture. And even more connectors and cables (and satellite and cable TV) in my main office - bottom picture. Look through the ladder - under the window... there's a wall safe - and turn the page!



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J-M-S is still moving!

But the only visible change is a new street name! Please note, that the address change will become active on October, 1st., 2004. It will be

Kaiser-Wilhelm-Str. 302

and even the postcode remains the same! It is possible that during the move, phone and internet facilities will stop working for a day or two, but the phone numbers will move with me.

Happy Birthday J-M-S!

J-M-S celebrates its 20th birthday! Yes, time moves on quite fast. 20 years is a very long time in the computer business, so this deserves a very special offer: aimed at everybody who is still using the QL (or cannot use it anymore because it broke down) and would like to upgrade to a faster machine, who misses it on the PC and would like to access QL programs and QL data on disks, we have created a pack consisting of QPC 2 in its current version for Windows 98 through XP, QD 2003 with the new colours, QPAC 2 in the current version and of course FiFi, the FileFinder. Plus the colour utility disk. **This is software worth over EUR 234,-** if purchased separately, and our celebration offer gives you all this **for only EUR 99,90** in the Celebration-Restarter-Pack!! Offer ends January 2005. Plus postage.

You can order via letter, fax, email (SMSQ@J-M-S.COM), or by using our secure order form on

SMSQ.J-M-S.COM

A new game is coming up!

Yes, a new game, running under the Pointer Environment, will soon be available from J-M-S. Watch this space and the J-M-S website!

... and this is how it looked several hours later. Yes, we found a wall safe, but unfortunately, no keys did exist. So we decided to remove it, and half the wall under the window came down as well.

I hope the pictures come out in a way you can see what I mean.

Today is the first December weekend, and you see how the office rooms look. Today I think, I can be glad if the office is moved by the end of January.

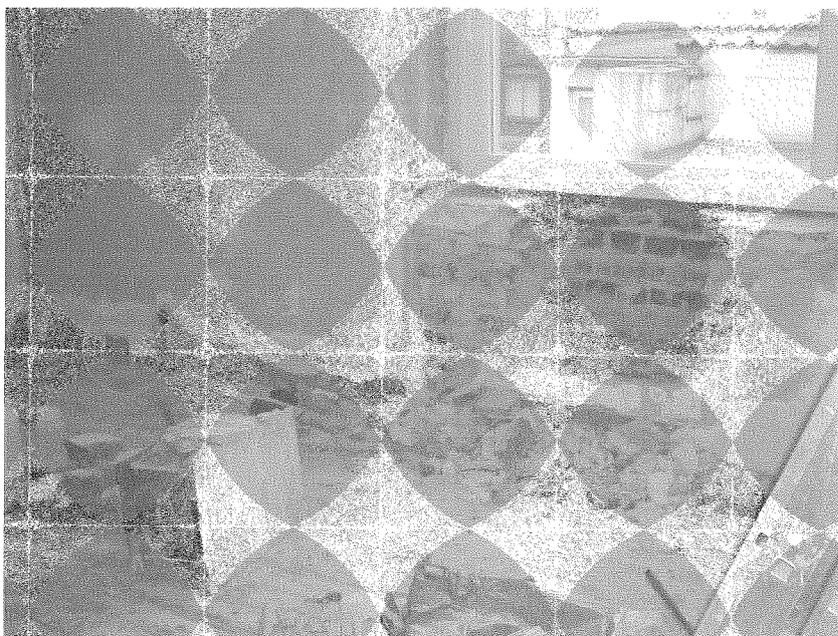
And this is how the weeks pass by - work, work, and more work.

So, that's "The J-M-S Move - The Inside Story". Once again sorry for every late reply, delay, or expectations that I cannot fulfil. There is a very good reason, and I fear that this reason will exist for at least the next half year or so.

I hope to be back in step after the summer ... that's some time ahead and hopefully not too unrealistic.

However, problems which urgently need to be fixed can always occur.

The Byfleet date had to be used, unfortunately, to get proper heating in the sleeping room (good idea at current temperatures) and - even more



important - the complete tax for 2003 (which I had to keep pushing ahead due to all the other problems) had to be finished during this last November weekend. No option.

The third problem was: If I went just for the day, I had to drive both ways at night. I did these things when I was 15 years younger, but at the present situation, exhausted, lack of sleep anyway, it would have been stupid and far too dangerous - and I cannot see how I could have squeezed it in at all.

But that's a general problem, and maybe something positive can come out of it.

Roy and Tony usually travel together, which helps reducing the costs.

As Bernd could not make it (he did not dare travelling such a long way after he broke his foot this year) and Marcel had no time either, I wonder if there are people out there who would like to join in to a trip to the UK - visiting a QL show.

Much more entertaining, safer, and also more affordable to travel together, isn't it?

Generally interested? Please let me know! If Duisburg is on your way to the UK (coming from Austria or Switzerland, for example), even better!

Q60 Blues

David McCann

Choosing a new computer

It had been clear for some time that my faithful QL was no longer able to fulfil all my computing needs. I wanted to be able to use a scanner and optical character recognition software; the QL cannot input from a scanner, and no software is available. I wanted to buy a back run of a periodical on CD-ROM; getting access would involve finding a second-hand Qubide to connect a CD reader, and yet another box on the table. Above all, I wanted internet access.

On the other hand, I did not want to abandon my QL. I had a lot of SuperBasic software which I had written myself, and I did not fancy converting it into C (which I hadn't even learnt). I did not want to waste the knowledge (however slight) which I had acquired of its operating system and CPU. Moreover, I have used PCs and their operating systems, from version 1 of MSDOS to the latest Windows, and I did not like them. I also objected to any purchase which put money into the accounts of Intel or (above all) Microsoft.

The Q60 seemed the answer. It would run all the software I currently used, and where no program was available under QDOS, Linux would come to the rescue. I read what little information was avail-

lable, looked at one at a show, and in 2003 I took the plunge.

First impressions

I had paid for the Q60 to be set up with the hard-disk partitioned and formatted, so I panicked straight away when I could not access WIN2_. It took me some time to locate the information that SMSQ/E assigns WIN1_ to any partition on which it finds a boot file, but otherwise leaves partitions to be numbered by the user. To say that the documentation is a muddle is putting it mildly. It is divided into separate sections for the Q60, SMSQ/E, SMSQ/E on the Q60, SMSQ/E v. 2.98, and SMSQ/E v. 3. There is no index, and vital information tends to be buried in odd places. I am not even sure how reliable the documentation is: the manual says that SMSQ/E partitions should be no larger than 256Mb, but mine are all of 1Gb; is the computer wrongly set up or the manual out of date?

Since it had flashed on powering up, I was surprised to find the caps-lock indicator did not work. Naturally I loaded my own caps-lock beep utility. That did not work either; nor did ALARM or BEEP! had not ordered speakers as I did not think I needed them, and no one had mentioned that the Q60 had no internal speaker; after all, even a laptop finds room for one. Could I connect it to the speakers of my audio system? Well perhaps, if the manual told me how. It refers to four lines, yet the socket is one of those little round things which I assumed to have two, and my speakers have eight inputs between them. Subsequently I discovered that those "little round things" can have four lines, but that is still too few; if I wanted a beep, I should have to buy more speakers. The real point here is that, when writing documentation, you cannot assume that the user knows anything, even how to wire a three-pin plug.

Linux

The real problems arose when I tried Linux, on which I was relying for new facilities such as internet access. Shoestring Linux may be based on the Red Hat distribution, but it is a far less neatly packaged implementation. For example, a book on Red Hat Linux says that to configure the internet software, I should click on Internet Configuration Wizard and answer its questions from the information provided by my ISP. After that, I can access the internet by just clicking on Netscape. The Shoestring manual offers such helpful instructions as "Use rp3 ... disable DNS ... add

masquerading ... use named ... send a -HUP after connection buildup ...". Even if I survived this obstacle course, would the connection be worth having? On the subject of web browsers, the manual warns that the Netscape is old with unstable Javascript and no SSL (what?); the Mozilla is extremely slow; the Skipstone is "acceptably slow for some tasks" (a typo for "unacceptably"?). It looks as if reliable access means Lynx: text only.

After logging on to Linux, I tried loading X Window, only to find that the mouse did not work. Since you can't log off from the GUI without using it, I had to switch off without shutting down, and the next time I loaded Linux it took some time to repair the damage done. The problem was simply that Linux had been set up to expect the mouse on SER1, despite the fact that SMSQ/E needs the mouse in the highest numbered SER port.

Accessing the CD-drive proved refreshingly simple, as did using the reader for PDF files. The process is very slow, however; I can make a cup of tea while each page is loaded and decoded. I assume that the problem is the window manager, which would explain why the web browsers are all so slow.

The manual tells me that there is software to read and write the SMSQ/E partitions, but it does not seem to be supplied. As QDOS floppies are not supported either, the only way to send data between Linux and SMSQ/E is via a PC-format floppy disk.

A book on Linux is provided, but that describes itself as an overview and what is really needed is a tutorial. The books at which I have looked are either aimed at the users of the neatly packaged distributions provided for PCs, or at computer professionals who will be getting some sort of training as well as reading the text. Certainly none have any explanation of how to use the internet with the resources provided on the Q60. I couldn't even discover how to relocate my mouse!

It seems to me that anyone without prior experience of Linux will face almost insuperable obstacles in using this implementation.

SMSQ/E and QDOS

I cannot say I was impressed by SMSQ/E. The reviewers all rave about the high resolution screen, but I have no need for it and I find it makes the screen font too small to read. The improvements introduced by Minerva are missing,

so I would have to rewrite all my software to eliminate things like "SElect ON option\$", and keep a crib to hand for keystrokes instead of just typing <CTRL><ENTER>e^ for ê. And why can't I resize the window for channel #2 without closing and reopening it?

The Q60 also comes with QDOS Classic, but that could not find the hard disk. The explanation turned out to be that QDOS and SMSQ/E use different formats: QDOS uses that established by Qubide, but SMSQ/E has copied that of the Atari ST. Since Linux uses the SMSQ/E format, combining it with QDOS would require either two hard disks, or running all QDOS software from floppies.

Software

The payment I made for having the system set up also bought a bundle of commercial software, and this too gave problems.

Prowess I cannot get to work, except in high resolution. On the Q60, the font is garbage, while when I transferred it to my QL it would not load at all. The documentation is all in HTML format, with a reader supplied in the package, so that you can read how to get the system running after you've actually done it. Lynx could read HTML, but I couldn't get that to run either. The manual for Paragraph (the Prowess word processor) confesses that the program is slow, unreliable, and unfinished, so I'm not missing much. Incidentally, am I the only one who thinks that you should finish programs before charging for them? QBase also turned out to be an example of someone charging for what they admitted to be an alpha release, and the version of Dbas supplied with it was actually older than the one I already had.

QD, FiFi, QPAC1, and QPAC2 all worked, but it struck me as a bit mean not to supply manuals just because the programs came cheap. In fact, manuals were supplied: they just took six months to arrive. Except for FiFi, I would not actually use these, but that is a matter of personal taste rather than a reflection on the programs.

As for my existing software, my most frequently used program, Text87, refused to run: the Q60 locked up. It turned out that it would run on the Q60 under QDOS, on the Q40 under SMSQ/E, but not on the Q60 under SMSQ/E. Appeals for help produced no response. Months later, a patch for Text87 was announced to enable the use of the Q60 high resolution screens; I haven't bothered to find out whether this would solve my problem with the mode 4 screen.

Conclusion

The upshot of all this is that I am still using my QL and I still have no internet connection; the Q60 is switched on about once a month, when I want to access my CD journal. Since I am retired with a small pension, its purchase was a considerable expense and I resent this situation.

My indignation is directed impartially throughout the QL community. At the Quanta committee, for financing the development of a system and not checking that it has been done properly. At the authors of QDOS Classic and SMSQ/E for not getting their acts together. At D & D Systems for making exaggerated claims and not providing decent documentation. At the editors of Quanta and QL Today for not getting the Q60 properly reviewed. The only person to come out of this with credit is Roy Wood, who did his best to help me with the Text87 and Prowess problems.

The name Quanta has often been glossed as the "QL Users' and Tinkerers' Association". The problem seems to be that the development of QL successors and of much recent software is being done by tinkerers who are not users. I suspect that for most of them, SMSQ/E is a sort of game; after using it they go back to Windows.

If you too are a user, I cannot advise purchasing a Q60. If you are a tinkerer, however, I'm sure that it would give you hours of innocent enjoyment. Perhaps you would like to buy mine? Preference will be given to anyone who can collect from London. I cannot offer a big discount on what I paid, however, because I need the money to buy a PC. And that is a shame.

[Well, plenty of chances for replies - and maybe even better, some help! Unfortunately, the Editors of QL Today did not get a review sample of a Q60 ... and even if so, the Linux side of it (which seemed to have caused the majority of trouble and disappointment) would not have been tested by us anyway, as we are not using Linux ourselves. The display resolutions are not SMSQ/E's fault, they are hardware restrictions of the Q40/Q60. You will find more flexibility in QPC's SMSQ/E.

The text87 colour patch will not fix general Q60 problems, that's something which has to be done in the operating system.

For operating system issues regarding the Q60, the bundled software and some other issues (not FiFi/QD/QPAC1 and QPAC2 which all work) it would be best if D&D reply - maybe in the next issue? - Editor].

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The QL Network

David Denham

From time to time, I set up a spare QL when my grand-children come over to stay with us for a weekend. They enjoy playing games and generally messing about with a computer that's just a little bit different to the PCs and PlayStations they are used to.

Recently, one of them asked me what the little 3.5mm jack sockets on the back were for, and I explained they were for a QL network, where you could wire up several QLs together, save files to each other's computers and print to each other's computers.

Despite their tender ages, they took it all in and seemed a little surprised that a 20 year old computer could do all this, so I was coaxed into setting up a network for them to use during the weekend. As usual, I didn't really like to admit I didn't know all that much about it, so we got the manuals out and learned how to use them. They ended up teaching me, but that's another story. The network is really quite impressive despite its age and really easy to use once you get used to the principles behind it.

Before you even think about using the QL Network, make sure you use Toolkit 2. It makes it so much more of a joy to use. The basic network is useable without Toolkit 2, but you really do need to have Toolkit 2 to make the most of the network.

Although my experience of use of the QL network is purely with QLs, I'm told that Aurora and QXL cards also have QL network sockets and that they are totally or 99.99% compatible with the QL. The only factor to upset this compatibility is timing – an overclocked QXL or a Toolkit 2 ROM image running at different speed in RAM may result in timing difficulties, but nobody I spoke to on the subject has any experience of this.

The Wiring

QL network cabling is delightfully simple. A simple two wire lead (speaker or bell wire is perfectly adequate) with mono 3.5mm audio jacks at both ends is all you need to join up two QLs. Any reasonable length of cable seems to work, although I don't know if there is a maximum recommended distance between machines. As each QL (or Aurora or QXL) has two sockets, you simply daisy chain up to 63 machines together. The two machines on the ends of the net-

work both have an unconnected socket, which I think has a resistor or something inside to terminate the network when no cable is inserted. In other words, you do not need to connect the unused end sockets of the two machines on opposite ends of the network into a loop or anything like that.

I bought a cable from my local TV and Hifi shop. This turned out to be a stereo 3.5mm lead (the QL sockets use the mono 2-pole version) which luckily seemed to work fine – I was a little bit afraid that the third conductors might cause a problem but it seemed not. Again – tested on QL only!

TOOLKIT 2

Tony Tebby's Toolkit 2 may be either in the form of a plug in EPROM (which uses the EPROM socket at the back of the QL), or built into disk interfaces such as those from Miracle Systems – Trump Card, Gold Card, Super Gold Card. Just about any QL system with a network socket apart from an unexpanded 128K QL will have a Toolkit 2 on board. In some cases it needs to be brought to life with a TK2_EXT statement in your BOOT program.

Without TOOLKIT 2

Even if you do not have Toolkit 2, a very basic level of operation is possible by using the NETI and NETO device names. These blindly send files to the network station numbers given, for example, if the first QL is station 1 and the second is station 2, the first can send a basic program to the second with the command `SAVE NETO_2`, while the second would receive it with the command `LOAD NETI_1`. The commands simply mean output this file to station 2, while the second simply inputs whatever was sent to station 2 from station 1. The NETO device name always requires the station number of the QL to which the data is to be sent, while the NETI device name requires the number of the station from which the data is being sent. Both should tie up if the file transfer is to succeed!

Station Numbers

To identify computers on the network, each is given a number from 1 to 63. This is set with the NET command, and defaults to station number 1 if no NET command is issued. Issuing a NET 2 command sets that computer's network station number to 2.

On a simple 2-QL system (i.e. only two computers connected), both computers can have the same station numbers. It makes life simpler to have them both set to the same station number, indeed both can be station number 1 so on a simple 2-QL network, no NET commands need be issued at all!

Checking the network station number of a particular QL is not that easy. The network station number is stored in the system variables but there is no function to return the value so you have to carefully PEEK it if you really need to find it. It's a 1-byte value stored at address hex 28037 (decimal 163895) on systems where the system variables are at the old QL address. Better to regard it as an offset of hex 37 or decimal +55 from the base of the system variables. Here is a suggestion of how to allow for this on a Minerva or SMSQ/E system using VER\$(-2) to find the base address:

```

9000 DEFine FuNction My_Station_Number
9010   LOCal v$
9020   v$ = VER$
9030   IF v$ = "JSL" or v$ = "HBA1" THEN
9040     REMark Minerva or SBASIC
9050     RETurn PEEK(VER$(-2)+55)
9060   ELSE
9070     REMark other systems
9080     RETurn PEEK(163895)
9090   END IF
9100 END Define My_Station_Number

```

Numbering of stations is not done automatically on a multi QL network – each machine has to have its number set with a NET command. It makes sense to number them from 1 upward starting from the first machine, although there are some considerations such as 'file server' machines having to have low station numbers (no higher than station 8).

Broadcasting

Station 0 has a special significance – this is the 'broadcast' station. No physical QL on the network can have this number, but anything sent to station 0 can be picked up by all machines 'listening' to station 0. So if you want to send your basic program to everyone on the network, shout out 'all load from station 0 now' so that everyone can issue a `LOAD NETI_0` command and you issue a `SAVE NETO_0` command from your machine.

Another special station number is your own station number. If you 'listen' (or NETI) from your own station number, you can input from any station number. Thus if I am station 2 and I enter the command `LOAD NETI_2` my QL will accept input from any station which happens to be sending me a file at the time. So you can either explicitly get a file from a particular station, or by listening to yourself you can accept from any station (e.g. if you know a file is to be sent to you but you don't know who is sending it from where!

There isn't really a lot more you can do on a system without Toolkit 2. You can transfer files in a very simple minded version, but you can only specify a network station number at the sending and receiving end, not a specific device on that station, so you have to use explicit commands on both machines, for example if I wanted to copy a file called `FLP1_EXAMPLE` from station 2 to ramdisk on station 3, I'd have to issue the following command on the sending machine (station 2)

```
COPY FLP1_EXAMPLE TO NETO_3
```

And on the receiving machine I'd have to enter a command like:

```
COPY NETI_2 TO RAM1_EXAMPLE
```

But once you have Toolkit 2 facilities things become much more versatile, although somewhat more complicated.

- * You can have a file server machine (one whose drives and printers may be shared by other machines)
- * You can not only send to and receive from specific station numbers, but also from specified devices and files on those stations. In other words, users do not need to spend so much time entering commands to specify what to do with the data once it arrives.
- * You can do useful (if annoying) little things like open windows on a colleague's screen to send him/her a message, even get them to reply (who needs to email across a busy office!)

Toolkit 2 provides a program called a File Server which lets other QL stations access its drives, windows, printers etc. The file server is started with a simple command called `FSERVE`.

This starts a little job running which takes care of handling the files passed to and from its machine. Once you have issued an FSERVE command you will find that if you examine the jobs list with a JOBS command, there will be a program called 'server' which may be removed with a command such as RJOB 'server' if you wish to stop it for any reason.

If you want to have more than one QL running a file server, this is perfectly possible, as long as you adhere to a simple rule – servers should only run on stations with numbers from 1 to 8. Any of the 63 possible stations can access these 'server' QLs, so taken to its logical extremes, you could probably have a 63 station office, with only 1 printer and hard disk between the lot I suppose. On a typical 2 QL network, you can issue the FSERVE command on both QLs and both can then access the other's drives, windows and printers.

Note: you should always set the network station number first, THEN issue an FSERVE command. I'm not sure why, it seems that FSERVE only looks at the network station number when it starts.

The device names for referring to devices on a file server is slightly different to the NET1 and NET0 names mentioned already. The new device consists of a name starting with the letter n and a station number, then an underscore and a full filename or device name.

Some Examples

A 2-QL Network

We have a 2 QL setup. We decide to leave them both with the default station number 1 (i.e. both are NET 1). FSERVE has been activated on both. Either QL can now enter the command

```
DIR n1_FLP1_
```

and it will give a list of files on FLP1_ on the other QL.

```
DIR n1_win1_programs_
```

will print a list of files from the directory called programs_ on the WIN1_ hard drive on the other QL.

```
COPY_N flp1_myfile_txt TO n1_par
```

will copy a file called myfile_txt on FLP1_ on the first machine to the PAR printer port on the other QL.

```
WCOPY WIN1_programs_ TO n1_win1_programs_
```

will copy all files from a directory called 'programs_' on WIN1_ on one QL to a similarly named directory on WIN1_ on the other computer.

```
RENAME n1_win1_programs_myprogram TO  
n1_win1_programs_anothername
```

will rename a program called 'myprogram' in the directory called 'programs' on WIN1_ on the other computer to a program called 'anothername' in the same directory on that computer.

```
OPEN #3,n1_scr_448x200a32x16: LIST #3:  
CLOSE #3
```

will list your current BASIC program to a window on the other computer.

More than 2 QLs

Suppose we have a three station QL system. All three have servers running. Station 2 wants a list of files on drive WIN1_ of station number 1. So station 2 enters the command:

```
DIR n1_win1_
```

Which gives him/her a list of the files held on win1_ on station number 1. Meanwhile, QL station number 3 has no printer, so wishes to print a listing of his BASIC program to that nice new printer connected to SER1 on station 2. So he enters the command SAVE n2_SER1. Or he could enter these commands:

```
OPEN #3,n2_ser1:LIST #3:CLOSE #3
```

Sadly, the printer (or probably the person) on station 2 does not deliver the printout to you, but that's life.

Meanwhile, the girl on station 1 wishes to remind her friend on station 3 that it's lunchtime, so she decides to send her a message to appear on her screen on station 3 and invite a reply from her:

```
OPEN #3,n3_con_512x256a0x0 : REMark full  
screen window on station 3  
INPUT #3,"Hi, it's Linda on station 1,  
are you coming to lunch now? ";a$  
PRINT a$  
CLOSE #3
```

OK, that was a pretty silly example, especially as she wiped out her colleague's entire screen with the CON channel she opened, but it illustrates the kind of things possible. Messaging is usually better if you use somewhat smaller windows on

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the remote screen, just big enough for what you want to do rather than cover the entire screen. Also, be aware of the default colours when you open a window (green ink on black paper), so you may need some INK, PAPER, BORDER, STRIP and CLS commands to handle the window as well.

Some Mischief

On the basis that injecting some fun into networking helps to explain and stimulate interest, here are some of the things my grandchildren learned to do to me in order to annoy me while I was working away on my QL.

The example above illustrates one possibility!

```
OPEN #3,n2_con_512x256a0x0:PAPER #3:CLS
#3:PAUSE:CLOSE #3
```

Screen goes blank. Grrrr. Has my QL crashed?

How to slow down a computer by keeping its server busy. Suppose that in revenge I (station 2) want to slow down the grandchild's QL on station 1:

```
REPeat loop
  COPY RAM1_afile_txt TO n1_RAM1_afile_txt
  PAUSE 5 : REMark optional
  DELETE n1_RAM1_afile_txt
END REPeat loop
```

Thought the QL couldn't get a virus?

```
COPY FLP1_QUILL TO n2_WIN1_VIRUS
OPEN #3,n2_CON_128x64a0x0
CSIZE #3,2,1
PRINT #3,"QL ANTI-VIRUS"
PRINT #3,"Virus Alert On Your WIN1 Drive!"
PRINT #3,"Check WIN1_VIRUS"
PAUSE : REMark goes away on pressing a key
CLOSE #3
```

That last one got them a right ticking off! Fortunately, as far as I know, you can't copy an executable program to another station and start it running (no doubt someone will prove me wrong!) so there's no chance of a QL virus spreading from computer to computer!

We made all these little programs up on the hoof as we went along and so I hope I've remembered them correctly.

Most commands which can take a channel number can do this sort of thing over the network to suitable devices, such as SAVE, SBYTES, OPEN, OPEN_IN, OPEN_NEW, INPUT, PRINT, LIST, DIR, INPUT, CLOSE and even functions such as FLEN can do this. A tribute to the QL 'device independence'.

The only things you strictly can't do is to set a fount over the network and anything which involves sd.extop (extended operations) – if you don't understand what sd.extop means (like me) you probably don't need to know. Just don't try to change founts over the network and you can probably do just about anything else you're likely to need to.

Another slightly more advanced little example: The file server is station 1. Station 3 wishes to access a modem connected to SER1 on station 1. Provided the user on station 3 (or the software perhaps) knows how to control a modem with command strings, I'm sure it would be possible to access that modem from another machine, by opening a channel to the modem device and sending the relevant control bytes, which opens up some interesting possibilities once soql or any other QL internet software is a fully working reality.

Another possibility for you the readers to investigate as I haven't got the necessaries to test this theory of mine is extending the QL network with sernet to allow machines without QL network sockets to join the network. Sernet links computers via the serial port and uses device name "S" in a similar fashion to "N" for the QL network. I just wonder with both sernet and QL network file servers running if one network can access the other, e.g. station 4 is a PC running QPC2 (sernet station 2)

Station 1 is connected to station 4 with sernet link.

Station 2 wishes to access something on QPC2 on station 4.

What I'm wondering is: could station 4 enter something like

```
DIR n1_s2_win1_
```

If someone has the necessary hardware, please try this for me!

Even if you can't DIR n1_s2_win1_ I wonder if you could do something to mask the 'double

networking' using either a DEV device to 'hide' one of them or an NFS_USE command (more details below)?

One extra little note, concerning Quill and other Psion programs for the QL

Most programs which need to print to a printer on a file server machine can accept a printer device name such as n1_SER1 or N1_PAR. Quill and a few other programs can only do so indirectly, if you precede the device name with an underscore to imply that it's a non-directory device (i.e. the name you enter is not a filename). So in Quill, while printing to PAR or SER1 works OK of course, to print over the network you have to use a name like _n1_PAR. I have absolutely no idea why this should be so, I remember reading about it somewhere some time ago and it seems to be correct. The only thing I can think of is that if you try to print to N1_PAR it assumes this is a filename, so prints to a file called N1_PAR rather than to a printer on the PAR port of network station number 1, so the leading underscore in _n1_PAR is used to flag the fact that it's not to be interpreted as a filename.

What happens on a QL without the FSERVE file server running?

You can still access the network, but other stations can't access you. So if you have a printer connected to your computer, but no server running on it, nobody else can print to your printer. But you can still send stuff to the network, as long as it's to a QL with an FSERVE job running on it (and remember that FSERVE stations need to have station numbers as low as possible, certainly no higher than 8 according to section 22.2 of the Toolkit 2 manual.)

You can also still use the NETI and NETO device name even if the FSERVE job isn't running on your computer.

If there are three computers, but only station 1 has a file server running, it should be obvious that station 2 and 3 cannot access each other's drives, screens, consoles, serial and parallel ports with the Toolkit 2 n2_ and n3_ devices, although they may still be able to use NETI and NETO to send data between themselves to some degree.

Seasoned networkers will notice a slight problem with networking in general on the QL, in that you can either access everything on a machine, or

nothing at all. There is no concept of 'shared folders' or anything like that available as far as I know, where you can effectively tell the rest of the network "you can access my printer but not my floppy disk drive" or "you can only access a few of the directories on my hard disk, the rest are private to me."

That said, the QL network is still very useful either in an office environment or a home environment with more than one computer, but where it is preferable for only one machine to have a large hard disk and printer, for example.

Another potential problem with the QL network is that if there is a user on a file server machine, they may well experience a slow down while another user accesses their machine over the network. This may prove annoying if other users frequently access slow drives, e.g. save large files to your floppy disk drives where your QL may appear to freeze up until saving is completed. This became obvious to me when my grandchildren spotted that copying files to my computer slowed it down (just to annoy me). So you may find it better to dedicate one machine as a main server, without a user as such.

Storing Programs on a Server

It is possible to store programs on a server and have EXEC commands load them from that device, by making use of the inbuilt default devices system provided by the DATA_USE, PROG_USE, SPL_USE and DEST_USE keywords.

It is quite acceptable to specify a network path such as n1_win1_programs_ in a PROG_USE statement, for example, so if you store your major programs in a directory called "programs_" on win1_ on network station 1, all other stations could apply a

```
PROG_USE n1_win1_programs_
```

statement, then any EXEC or EXEC_W commands should find the programs on the default drive, e.g.

```
EXEC MYPROG_exe
```

would do the equivalent of:

```
EXEC n1_win1_programs_MYPROG_exe
```

There might potentially be a problem if that program needed to load any configuration or data files, but most programs can be configured to know where their files live.

`DATA_USE n1_win1_datafiles_`

could do the same for data files and SuperBASIC programs. If that statement was issued on all other QLs, any commands which make use of the `data_use` default setting would route files to that directory on the server.

`SAVE myprogram_bas`

would then save the basic program to the server. Where this may be most useful is if the server is the only machine having a hard disk, so everyone can make use of it. Not all programs use the `DATA_USE` defaults, though, and some may need to be specifically configured to make use of it, so `DATA_USE` may prove to be less useful in this context than `PROG_USE`.

Print spooling can be useful in this respect. If you have ever used the `SPL` or `SPLF` commands to send a file to the printer as a "background job" you'll know how it can free up a QL by doing the copying to the printer in the background. On some systems, using a `COPY_N` command to send a file to the printer means that you are "locked out" of SuperBASIC until it's finished, whereas `SPL` sends the file in a more multi-tasking fashion, allowing you to resume use of BASIC before the whole file has been sent. By setting the `SPL_USE` default to a name which does not end with an underscore (it's treated as a filename or directory name if a default ends with a "_" character) this is where the printed output is sent, so if the server is QL station number 2, and that has the latest all singing all dancing posh printer connected to the `PAR` printer port on it, everyone could use it by setting `SPL_USE n2_PAR` on their own machine. From there on, issuing a command such as `SPL flp1_myfile.txt` would send that file to the printer on station 2's `PAR` port. All stations would need to issue the command – it applies only to the machine on which it was entered. An `SPL_USE` command does not affect the entire network (nor `PROG_USE` nor `DATA_USE` for that matter).

Having tried the `SPL` related commands, you may like to experiment to see if the `DEST_USE` command can be used to provide default destinations for `COPY` and `COPY_N` commands in the same way. One word of warning, be careful with destinations, since you may confuse the wild card toolkit commands such as `WCOPY` if you set the default destination to a non-directory device such as `PAR` or `SER1` or `SCR` or `CON`. Remember that names ending with a "_" character are directory names (i.e. handling filenames on that device) and any name which ends without a "_" character is a

non-directory device such as `PAR`, `SER1`, `SCR` or `CON` which do not normally allow filenames.

NFS_USE

Not every program can access the network using the "n" device name. Some QL programs can only have short and simple printer device names such as `SER1`, `SER2` or `PAR`. Some software can't save files over the network using a compound name of the form

`networkstation_drive_filename_extension`

(e.g. `n1_win1_filename_ext`). Some programs are limited to simple filenames such as `filename.txt` – Quill, Archive, Abacus and Easel normally only allow DOS-style 8.3 filenames, meaning that the body of the filename should be no more than 8 characters long, then an underscore and finally an extension no longer than three characters. A filename such as `ninechars_extn` would be too long to handle! This does not apply to the Xchange version of these programs in the same way.

So the designer of Toolkit 2's network extensions thoughtfully provided the `NFS_USE` command, to "hide the network from applications by setting a special name for a network file server" (I quote from the Toolkit 2 manual).

If you are familiar with the `DEV` or `SUB` devices, `NFS_USE` should be fairly simple to understand.

The command has this syntax:

`NFS_USE device,drive1_alias,drive2_alias, etc up to drive8_alias`

"device" is a 3 character name such as `MDV` or `FLP` which is to be masked to appear as an equivalent device on the network server.

Let us assume that station 1 is our file server. Station 2 has some awkward old software which only knows about microdrives, not floppy disks or hard disks, let alone network and file servers.

Station 2 does not use microdrives (does anyone use microdrives these days?), so what we could do is to re-map the device name `MDV` to refer to the file server. We need to decide where `MDV1_` is to refer to, where `mdv2_` is to refer to and so on. In this case, let us assume that `MDV1_` will be in a directory called `FRED1` on `win1_` on the server (`n1`), and `MDV2_` will be in a directory called `FRED2_` on `win1_` on the same network station number.

We could decide something similar for all 8 possible microdrive numbers, but programs rarely

access higher than MDV2_, so we'll stick with two devices for simplicity.

```
NFS_USE mdv,n1_win1_fred1_,n1_win1_fred2_
```

The above command is entered on the QL station 2, not on the file server machine.

What it means is that every time a program tries to save to MDV1_, it is fooled into thinking that n1_win1_fred1_ is really MDV1_ and that n1_win1_fred2_ is really MDV2_. As in previous examples, if the paths end with an underscore "_" character, they are assumed to be directory devices.

You need to be careful with other xxx_USE commands such as FLP_USE when you use NFS_USE, to avoid possible confusion arriving. Some disk interfaces may try to access their own floppy disks before realising that you've used NFS_USE to try to map them onto the server's hard drive. So once you've set the NFS_USE command to "hide" the floppy disk drives, you may also need a FLP_USE "FDK" command to rename the FLP1_ and FLP2_ disk drives to something like FDK1_ and FDK2_ to work around this!

As I write this, I realise I have not tried non-directory devices with the NFS_USE command, so if MDV3_ in the example above was set to

n1_SER1 I don't know if it would be allowed or how well it would work if you tried to PRINT to MDV3_! One for you to try out.

Another exercise for you to try would be to use NFS_USE with non-directory device names purely for printing purposes. Assume station 2 has a broken printer, so nothing connected to SER1 or SER2 or PAR. Station 2 realises that stations 1, 3 and 4 all have printers and so tries to use an NFS_USE command to remap his SER1 and SER2 to other users. Would this work? Try it for yourselves!

```
NFS_USE "ser",n1_PAR,n2_PAR,n3_PAR,n4_PAR
```

Could he now print to SER1, SER3 and SER4 and so have a choice of printers?

Network Applications

After looking around, I found that there are some QL network utility programs out there in PD libraries, programs like Netpal and Flexynet. A subject for a follow up article at some point in the future I suppose.

OK, that's it. I'm off down the pub to do some networking of a different kind.

[... and we look forward to read about your experiments with Netpal and Flexynet - never heard about these tools. - Editor]

Printing matters

Wolfgang Lenerz

This is taken from a long email I sent to the mailing list, but I thought that, maybe, it would be of interest to all of us.

The question of printing reared its (ugly) head again on the mailing list. This time, at first, it concerned ASCII output (mainly I thought at the time, from QUILL - but this was later widened to include other programs). The problem is that many modern printers don't accept pure ASCII output any more, and the gist of the messages was that as soon as users upgrade to a new printer, they wouldn't be able to use that with their QL anymore.

I thought that with PROforma, we already have a system whereby we can use more modern printers. Indeed, PROforma has printer drivers, for example, for Laserjets IV, which is another way of saying that it will drive PCL compatible lasers (for example, my Samsung).

For me, then, the problem was simply that a way should be found to send an ASCII file to PROforma. Of course, this presumes that the user installs PROforma, but without some effort on his part we will get nowhere anyway. I then had the misfortune of saying on the mailing list that writing such a filter wouldn't be too difficult. I was quickly put to task...

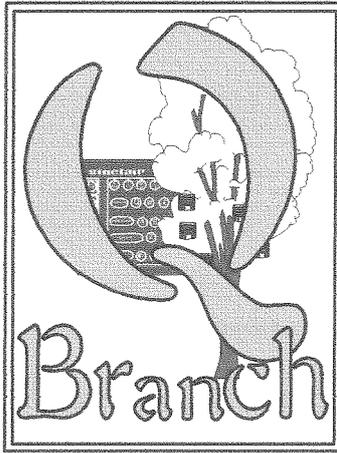
The FILTER

So, I programmed what I then called the PROforma Filter (PF) suite which can be found on my "website"

(www.scp-paulet-lenerz.com/14mljk24/wolf/download).

This suite came in several parts - I'll set them out briefly here, just to show what has been done up to now.

- First, there is the very PROforma Filter itself. It takes an ASCII file, including printer directives for switching bold on/off etc... and writes this to a PROforma printer driver, converting everything on the way. PROforma then makes the actual output to the printer.



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- Then there was the PROforma Filter Graphical User Interface (PF GUI). The PF is a background job, which you start with a command line such as

```
ex PF; "filename printer_id
char_size spooler_file"
```

etc... This is pretty difficult, so I made a GUI to allow the user to choose several of these options more interactively. Also, since the filter can preview to the screen, it MUST be kept separate from the GUI, else it can't use the entire screen for preview but would be limited to the GUI's screen.

- Then I made a printer driver for Xchange. Indeed, the PF expects that printer directives to switch bold on/off etc are sent in a certain way (eg. switches bold on, switches it off).

I felt at that time that these three components answered the need I had perceived: the user prints to a file, starts the GUI (perhaps via a hotkey) and sends the file through the filter to PROforma which then does the printing. However, when I announced this on the list it was not found satisfactory, mainly, I understand, for two reasons: One was that some programs cannot handle the printer directives as set out above, but need some kind of ESC/P facility (Epson compatibility). Two, some programs apparently cannot send output to a file, but only to a device.

Point one can be answered simply by adapting the PF. Let me point out that all of the sources are on my "website", so changing the routine that parses an input line to see whether bold or underline should be switched on or off is not that difficult (hint, hint). I know that Rich Mellor has taken up this task.

Point two above cannot be handled so easily. If you can only print to a device and not to a file, this whole system didn't make much sense.

Hence, another device was needed, to which the program can print. Thus the fourth component the PFF device (PFF) was born. At about the same time, Rich Mellor also drew up some very impressive specifications for a fully fledged printing system, including "things", devices with different names and options, filters etc... and published that on the list.

For various reasons, I thought that this system was unnecessarily complex, (but this is more a question of philosophy and design) and, notably, the "thing" seemed to me to be overly ambitious and, perhaps, the answer to a problem (independent job) which it didn't really solve.

So I preferred to keep things a bit more simple. I did, however, make the PFF device, but kept this to a much simpler philosophy than that proposed, even though this has now bloomed out to a far larger "Printer Control System". At the heart of this system is the PFF device.

PFF

PFF, the new device, is indeed a very simple device. It accepts input and sends this to a pipe. The pipe does all the buffering necessary and, since you can make pipes of a determined length, there is no need to fear that the job will not be able to print to the PFF device as that could run out of memory on smaller machines. At the outset, the pipes are limited to a length of about 10 K, though this will be made user configurable in a future version.

The disadvantage of this limited buffering is that the pro-

gram that is doing the printing (the "printing job") will seem to hang until the pipe is emptied enough so that all of the data can be sent to it. This however, is not different from other systems - and you can (later) always increase the size of the pipe if you have a larger system.

PFF also allows you to set a usage name, eg. PFF_USE "PAR" will cause all output directed to PAR to be sent to PFF.

The intermediary job

However, the PFF device itself is not enough. The consensus on the QL User mailing list, and with which I agree, is that a lot of work will have to be done via some kind of job, notably that of transporting the data to the filter(s). This ****could**** be done in the PFF itself, but you would have to work under such severe restrictions (as this would be either in the open or i/o calls of a device driver, or within a scheduler loop) that this would be not acceptable - if only for the fact that all other programs in the machine would be halted since all of this would be done in supervisor mode... So an independent job was called for.

This brought us to the question of how we can start this job once the user has initiated the printing. In my initial scheme, this was to be done by the user himself, who would have started up the PF GUI (perhaps through a hotkey). This however was felt to be too complicated for the poor end user who, some think, cannot be counted upon to remember to do this.

Even though I'd have a tendency to think that such an end user should be shot rather than receive an award for his behaviour, this is probably not

a viable solution, so we must go along with that user inability and do something about it (educate the user?). This means that we needed some kind of job to be started automatically when the user has started to print to the PFF device. Starting this job must be done by the PFF device itself since at that stage nothing else is involved in the printing itself and the user can't do this himself.

The problem is that, due to the nature of QDOS/SMSQE, starting a job from within the OPEN call to a device in a "legal" way is not a possibility ("legal" means by using the facilities officially provided by the OS for starting a job). This includes any other indirect ways, as long as these are being called as part of the OPEN call. The discussion on the list allowed us to eliminate various methods to achieve this. I had thought of several other possibilities but they also fell foul of being indirect ways of doing something we are not allowed to do directly but still being legal.

This means that I can see no way around to having a job that is already executing (and not being started from nothing) and somehow getting this job to do its work when printing is initiated. However, having a job that runs in the background, continuously scanning whether a channel was opened is wasteful of system resources. It would be better for this job to "sleep" and only be awoken when needed, thus using as little as possible system resources whilst being asleep.

On an SMSQ/E system, this would be no problem: Have a job set itself up as a button (thus being suspended most of the time), send it a wake event

(a legal way) when printing is initiated and voila, problem solved. Marcel Kilgus put a hole into theory even before I had really vocalized it by reminding me that events are an OS facility, and thus not available to QDOS users - and much of this discussion here concerns legacy systems....

Per Witte then made the important breakthrough contribution by telling us that we could make a change in the job header of a suspended job which would then become unsuspending. This is not an entirely legal way of doing things, but the least illegal way I can find. I personally preferred to change that job's priority from 0 to 8 and that is what I finally implemented.

Now the question becomes: what does this job do? For me it doesn't do anything really useful per se. It is an "intermediary job" and all it should do is - start another job.

The reason for this is that I think that this job should be set up by the PFF device driver when that is installed. All of the PFF device, including the intermediary job will be programmed in machine code. Doing some big print processing job in m/c is not my idea of fun, when we have a perfectly functioning S*Basic that is more or less ideal for this.

Moreover, doing it this way, this job can be kept very small, taking up very little memory during the time it isn't really doing anything useful, and communication between the device driver and the job will be easy. When executing, all that the intermediary job does is start the real processing job. For me, this processing job should be the PCP (Printer Control Program, which is what the GUI is now called).

Finally, the advantage I see in doing it this way is that the PFF device and/or the PCP can also be invoked from "print objects" which were mentioned by Jim Hunkins and which could be important for his desktop program QDT and, I understand, also for Launchpad. (In this respect, the question is: could the printing objects in both of these programs just dump the file into the PFF device? - if yes: Problem (nearly) solved...)

Since the intermediary job would be part of the PFF, it would be installed and started at the same time the PFF is installed. One less thing the user has to think about. Moreover, the name of the PCP (and where it can be found) would be configurable. This would also allow for other PCPs or processing jobs to be written.

The PCP

So now we come to the Printer Control Program. If you look at other operating systems, when you initiate printing, you get some kind of printer dialog, which allows you choose your printer, the number of copies to be printed etc. Why not do the same thing here? And the program to do that is the PCP. It already allows you to choose which PROforma printer driver to use. It could probably be adapted to Ghostscript, but I do confess to a total ignorance in all matters Ghostscripty.. PROforma even allows landscape printing, and I will adapt the PCP to propose such an option.

In this scheme, the PCP needn't even be loaded all of the time in memory, it could be executed (from hardisk, floppies, or a hotkey) as and when needed. It could also disappear as soon as printing is finished.

The PCP and PFF

Moreover, the GUI will allow the user to choose what filter and printer driver to use. To me that makes more sense than trying use a scheme that was proposed on the list, i.e. print to, say PFF1oeyx, where the letters denote some of the printing options (use this or that filter, print to this or that driver etc), for at least two reasons: remember, we're talking here about a hypothetical user too ... distracted to start up a print job and who is also using old programs. Will he remember these device settings? Probably not. Choosing from a list of options will certainly be easier! Also, nothing guarantees that the older programs which do not allow you to print to a file

will allow you to print to a device with a very long name!

Yet, one identified weakness in this scheme of things is that the user would have to choose the filter appropriate for what he is trying to accomplish. Is he trying to print an ASCII file to PROforma? Is he trying to print an ESC/P2 file to Ghostscript? He alone knows. So the choice must be his. To keep things more simple, I propose that the names of the filter files all reflect what they do (for example `win1_filter_ESC/P2_to_PROforma_obj`). If all filters are put in the same directory, the user could choose the filters relatively easily. If the user always uses the same program to print, he filters could be preconfigured.

In short, my scheme is as follows:

- The printing program prints to PFF
- PFF then wakes up the intermediary job.
- The intermediary job wakes the PCP and goes back to sleep again.
- The user chooses his options in the GUI.
- The GUI starts the filter.
- The filter prints to the printer using PROforma.

This is now nearly entirely complete, except for some more options in the PCP. You can find all of the software on the "website" mentioned above.

Counting QLs - some results - and MDV "secrets"

Simon Goodwin writes:

I got an old fashioned letter (indeed one in a post-paid envelope, shades of school) from Mike Bedford White, West Midlands QL/68000 user group officer and email luddite, with a list of QL serial numbers, following the article in the new Toady:

D06 003805

D06 004802

D09 012857

D11 037683

D11 037900

D13 049358

D13 059291

These last (along with my 100000+ instance from April) suggest quite a ramp-up in production early in 1985 - if it were not for the Spectrum returns, perhaps the QL could yet have dug Sinclair out of the hole?

Are you aware of the trick for dating microdrive cartridges, and the production variations? Dennis Briggs (RIP) researched this in detail in visits to Ablex and Thorn EMI; I've got some notes on that saga somewhere (looks) a quick scan through the images of Video Genie disks on this Amiga found the following, from Crash and Computer Shopper columns I wrote in 1985 and 1989. Do whatever you like with this - I hope it might help people digging through dusty stockpiles for a tape in good working order - as I still do sometimes when I need to blow something onto an EPROM with QEP-III and can't connect my Gold Card at the same time ;-). I made hundreds of Speedscreen ROMs with QEP-III, and my most recent EPROM programming activities have been

to blow custom code for performance car engine management systems into 27C256 chips which Dave 'Newt' Newell harvested from old PCs, where they held the BIOS!

Sinclair must have sold millions of microdrive cartridges to Spectrum, QL and One Per Desk users. The design changed several times, and later cartridges are substantially more reliable than the original ones. Every cartridge is date-stamped when it is made, yet few users know how to tell the age of a tape. If you pull the cartridge out of the box you should see four digits embossed in the plastic near the cushion that holds the tape against the drive head.

The code is very simple, once you know it - the numbers tell you the day and year when the cartridge was manufactured by Ablex in Telford. The first three digits are the number of days since the beginning of the year, and the last digit is the year from 1980. In

other words, a tape manufactured on 1st February 1988 would be marked '0328', as January has 31 days. If you can't read the number, try turning it the other way up - Ablex are not consistent.

The main events in the history of the microdrive cartridge were design changes in mid-1984, 1985 and 1987. In 1984 Sinclair changed the plastic moulding so that any excess plastic on the moulding ended up OUTSIDE the cartridge, rather than inside, in the cramped company of several metres of narrow continuously-looped tape. Plastic mouldings usually have a smooth side and a rough side - where the plastic was originally injected. Up until then, Sinclair had injection-moulded computers and calculators, which need to look smooth on the outside but could have any amount of cack on the inside.

But microdrive cartridges contain moving parts, so they need to be smooth on the inside!

Cartridges made from the middle of 1984 onwards sound and work better; you can tell later ones at a glance from the text 'RGD.DESIGN APP.' near the number. Older tapes don't have this message - at least, they definitely don't have it on the outside! The later ones are substantially more reliable. Sinclair know this - in at least one case, after persistent customer pressure, Sinclair replaced a job lot of early cartridges with the new type. A year later the moulding was changed again. The part of the cartridge that covers the tape at the top left side was affected, near to the roller wheel clearly visible inside the cartridge. The new moulding meets the tape at a diagonal, rather than at right-angles. This reduces the risk

of creasing while inserting the cartridge, but may cause loops to form when the cartridge is taken out of the drive. In 1987 ICL persuaded Ablex to beef up the spring behind the tape cushion. Later tapes have a much wider copper spring holding the tape against the drive head, which makes them more reliable. It was not uncommon for the original spindly springs to fall out or snap off. The length of tape inside each cartridge is said to have changed from time to time, although I have not been able to confirm this. In theory you can compare the length of tape in several cartridges by formatting them all in the same drive. The more sectors you get, the longer the tape - but this assumes that all tapes run at the same speed, and in practice that does not seem to be true. Drive motor speeds vary widely, so it's pointless comparing capacities between different drives unless you've matched their speeds. The method is explained below - but don't try it if you're ham-fisted! You can adjust the speed of a microdrive just like a cassette recorder.

Dismantle the QL and tip the drive up after undoing the single screw under the drive and two screws on the top of the drive, at the bottom left and near the top right corner. Do not loosen the two screws nearest the rubber drive pulley. Adjust the speed by pushing a sharp flat-bladed screwdriver - no more than 2mm wide, at least 10mm long - through the rubber seal under the metal-cased drive motor. You should find a regulator screw; half a turn anti-clockwise is enough to change the speed from that which gives 200 sectors on a typical cartridge, to 230. If the QL says 'format failed' on a

previously-tested tape, the motor speed is probably too high, so that less than 200 sectors were found. It makes sense to set both your drives to the same speed - a formatted capacity of 216-220 sectors should ensure reasonable compatibility with old and commercial copies. This is not an exercise for the faint-hearted - remember that the higher the capacity, the slower the access time and the greater the density of recorded data. Microdrives are quite tolerant of speed changes when reading, but there's no point adjusting the speed of your drives if you then find it difficult to read tapes formatted at the old speed. Don't say you weren't warned!

I remember Tony Tebby saying some people believed, though he did not, that the colour of the wheel inside the tape cartridge was a sign of effectiveness, or otherwise, and Dennis telling me how ICL got the drive rollers to dish outwards - like traction engine drive wheels - when Sinclair naively made them concave, encouraging the tape to run up the edge, or added a bump that creased the tape - to the point that people fixing returned QLs for Thorn would nick rollers off the ICL OPD production line to get QLs to work right.

Simon Balderson writes:

I'm responding to the article about how many original QL's were made. I bought mine from W. N. Richardsons in 1995. There is a sticker on the base of my QL which reads AR 105885. I don't know whether this is the serial number as another sticker fell off a number of years ago and may have been the actual serial number. Hope this is of some use to Simon Goodwin.

A Special Holiday Present for the QL Community: QDT is Finally Here!

Jim Hunkins

I am very happy to announce that QDT will finally be shipping in time for the holidays. Included with this issue of QL Today is a demo disk so that users can 'sample' what QDT is and can do. It should be available for sale by the time this issue is received by the readers.

Unfortunately, I will need to keep this fairly short as I am deep in work on getting everything ready and the last minutes changes for the demo. But here is a quick overview. Please see the documentation that comes with QDT for instructions and last minute details.

System Requirements

- SMSQ/E: ver 3.08 or later
- Hard Drive [Ram disk still scheduled but no time has been estimated]
- Screen Res: 800x600 or higher
- Memory: expanded

Systems Tested On

- QPC: yes
- Q40/60: yes
- Aurora: ? (but it should work fine with memory expansion)

What is QDT

For those of you who have not been paying attention over the last several years, QDT is a modern graphical/mouse driven desktop for the QL systems. It brings the idea of objects to your desktop. An object can either represent, for example, a program to run, a text file to edit, a graphic to view, or a folder with other objects within it. Notebooks are used to setup and tune the objects, along with having some control over some system features.

QDT will automatically install its pieces and even scan your hard drive for potential programs to add to the desktop. Anything it misses, it is easy to add yourself through a simple menu selection. Anything you don't want, simple delete it

from your desktop, again through a menu selection. You can rename objects and move them around to your hearts content. And if you don't like the icon, draw one yourself with the icon draw utility included.

The State of QDT

Simply put, QDT provides a very solid desktop functionality. All loose items and menu options are active. Many of the desktop and other notebook functions are now enabled, including automatic archiving and restoring desktops. I am happy to say that I was even able to get scroll bars into the folders if they are not large enough to display all the objects.

All drop down menus are active, buttons respond (occasionally with a not implemented yet - will change this as quickly as I can), and things are pretty much functional.

The biggest missing part has to do with some of the notebook functions, such as screen savers, system reporting, etc. But none of these pieces will prevent the user from going full speed ahead and really taking advantage of the desktop.

To give a sampling of what is not yet implemented, here is a short list of the major parts. Please see the documentation on the Full version or the web site for up to date details. I also have lots of ideas for little tweaks and convenient functionality that I can add as time and requests allow, such as automatic clean-up and positioning of objects in a folder).

Items Not Yet Enabled (Partial List)

- move between folders (including drag and drop)
- desktop theme manager
- background and resolution size changes
- screen saver
- misc additional system options (such as changing the QDT HotKey live)
- system and global information reporting
- non QDT default associations
- importing icons from other formats
- help system

**QDT will be
available
End of January**

**from
Jochen Merz Software
(EUR 45 / £32)
or
QBranch (£32)**

**! Please check the websites for
earlier availability - we try to
● release as early as possible! ●**

**Special introductory offer
(ends March, 31st 2005):
Buy QDT with any SMSQ/E
together and get EUR 14 /
£10 discount on the
standard SMSQ/E price.**

Demo Disk (v0.85)

The supplied demo will naturally have some restrictions over the full release. In addition, since it is being made available a week or two before the final version, the shipping version will have some additional functionality enabled. However, all the basic components are fully functional so it will be very useful to get a feel for what QDT is and what it will become as more features are completed and enabled.

Restrictions

	Demo	Full Version
max objects	15	500
max folders	5	100
max objs in folders	5	100
time limit to run	30 days	unlimited
updates	none	1 year at no charge (anything before v2.00)
QMenu	not included	included

QMenu adds right mouse button or keyboard shortcut access to full directory/file and drop down menus. If you already have QMenu on your system, the demo will give this functionality. If you don't have QMenu, then the demo will only allow for direct text input. The Full version includes the QMenu license and full menu activation.

Installing the demo (or the Full version) is very easy. Simply put the demo disk and/or its files into a known location and run the dtinst_bas program that comes with it. And then follow the simple instructions on the screen.

Full Shipping Version (v0.90)

As you can see, the demo will let you play but is not really very useful for most of us to use on a daily basis. However, I suspect that the Full version with the above limits hopefully will take care of everyone. The limits were chosen to allow quite a bit of the capability without using too much memory.

Updates and Tuning

As is obvious, there is still quite a bit of work to make QDT even cooler and, yes, more fun to use. As I get user feedback, especially on additional systems, I will be continuing to update and optimize the program and its utilities. My commitment is that for a period of 1 year, updates will be made available to registered users for free on my website <http://www.jdh-stech.com> starting early next year.

An area will be made available for sharing (uploading and downloading) icons and themes. For non-web users, the normal disk update methods by your dealers will be available periodically.

Thanks

Many, many thanks go to several Beta testers, to my advisors (Jochen, Roy and Marcel), to all those who put so much into SMSQ/E development and color capabilities (Marcel's sprite optimization and hi-color stuff is awesome), and to my graphics expert (Thorsten). Without their persistence, encouragement and efforts, QDT would not be here today.

Have fun!

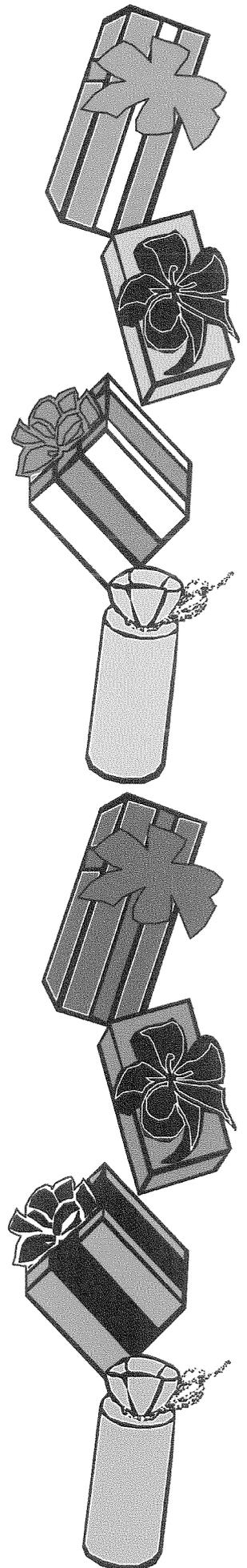
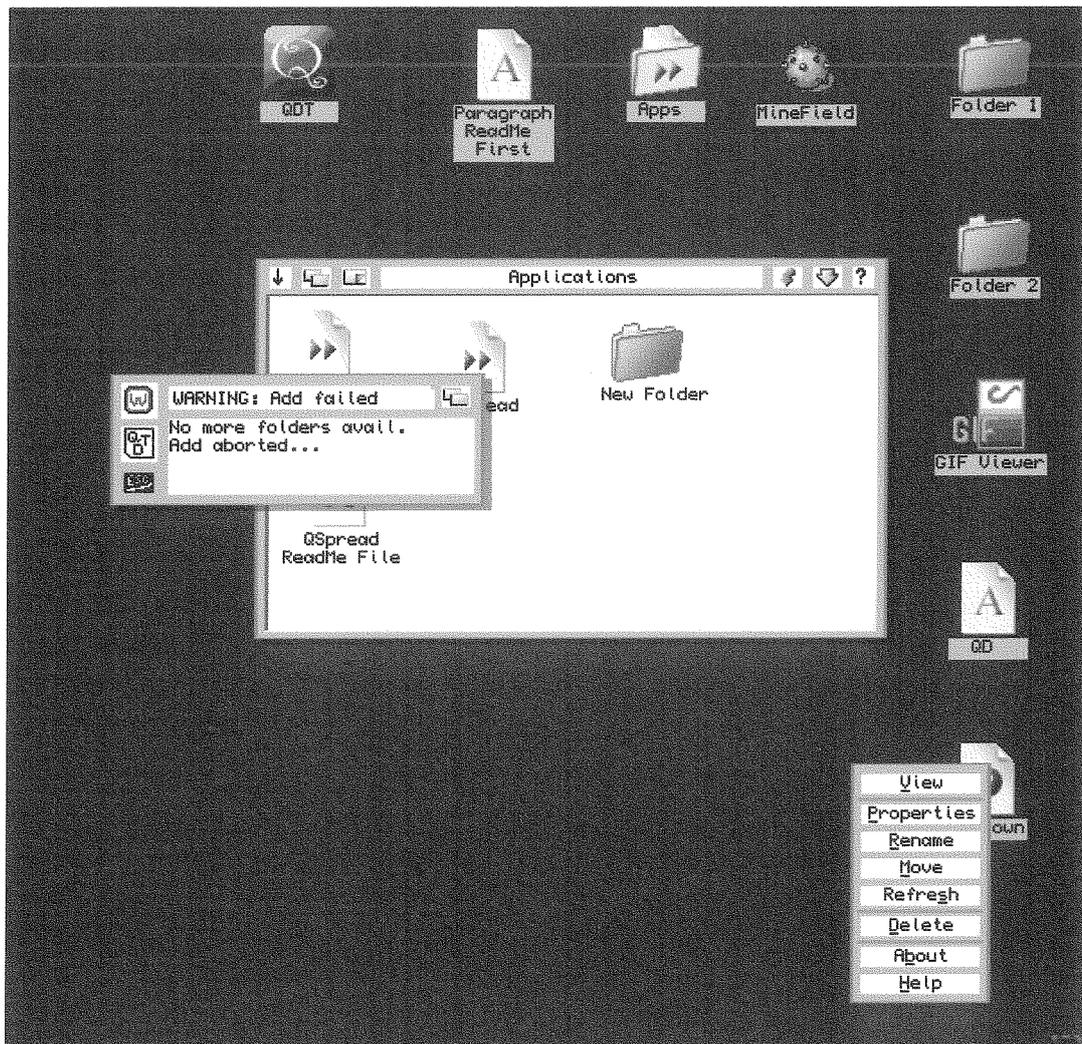
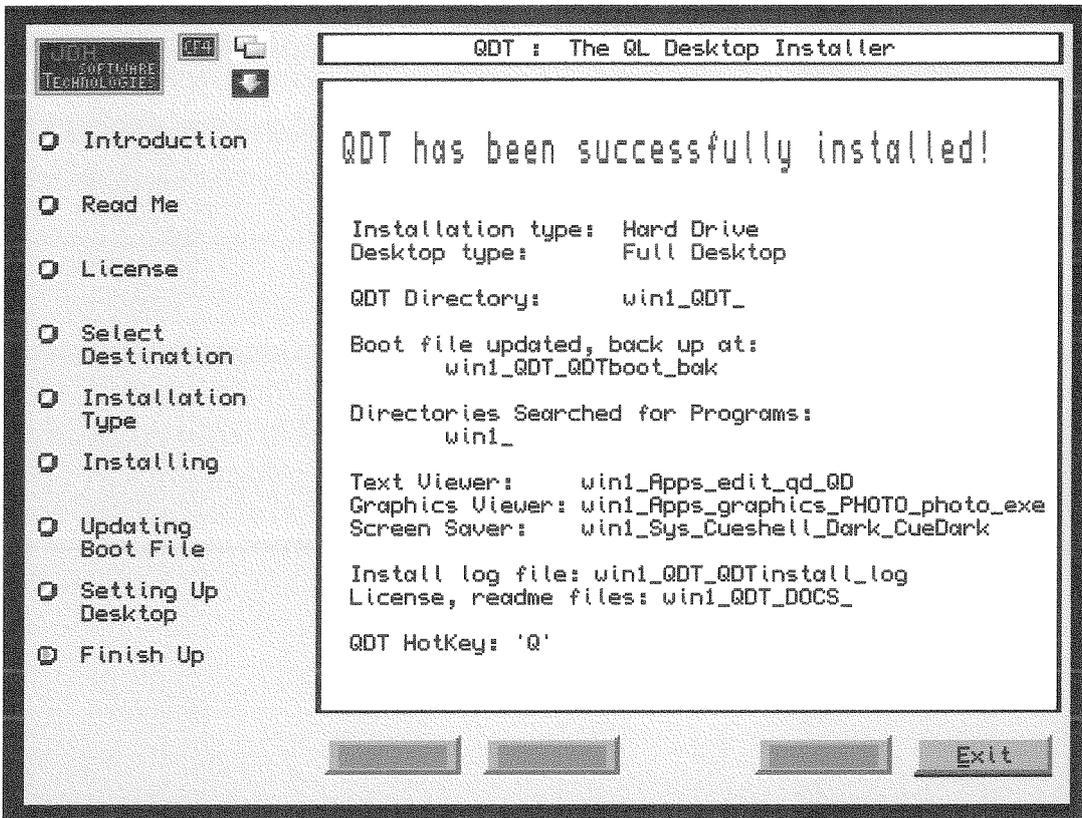
The Screenshots

The Cover shows several different objects on the desktop:

- Folders with and without scroll bars (bars only there when needed)
- Archive screen for desktop notebook showing choices and found archives
- Warning window saying that you are about to replace your current desktop
- IconClosed screen with IconDraw launched from it
- Edit folder (partially buried) launched from Apps folder
- QCoCo launched from Graphics folder (partially buried)

Final Installation Screen (top, opposite page): Shows final installation summary

Demo-Desktop (bottom, opposite page): Shows drop down menu from one of the icons and shows the warning if trying to add more folders than allowed



QDT Overview – Quick guide from the Beta-Tester

Roy Wood

Probably one of the first programs I bought for my QL was ICE. This was one of the original QL desktop programs and provided a whole new screen which could be used to control the computer. It consisted of a BOX which slotted into the ROM slot on the rear of the QL, a mouse (connected to the box) and a disk of software. With this and 'Cholce' (I think) many of the QL programs could be called and controlled by a mouse. You can see that I have always been a fan of desktop programs. ICE fell by the wayside fairly early on and I moved on to the Pointer Environment. The button frame did allow the user to call programs simply but it still had some limitations in the way it could be set up. In the early days I was known for having a screen half filled with buttons. Jonathan Hudson's 'Cascade' simplified the way of calling programs even more and I ran for many years with just the Cascade, clock and Sysmon buttons on screen. Then Jim Hunkins announced QDT.

I have to point out at the start that this is not a review. That will come later and not be done by me. This is because I will be selling the program when it is released but, since I have been using it from the time that the first Alpha versions came out and I have been demonstrating it at QL Workshops Jim asked me to write a bit about it. It is also probable that, of all goes to plan, there will be a cover disk with this issue with a demo version of the program.

So, having said that on to the good stuff.

What does QDT give you? Well it gives you a whole different way of accessing the files and programs you use from day to day and it gives you a different look to the desktop. In essence it allows the user to make a completely stylised front end suited to their own preferences. It also gives you the tools to create your own high definition icons in full colour and some users will want to buy it just for this alone.

The great thing about computers is their flexibility if treated in the right way. A bit of learning and a bit of common sense and you can set it up exactly how you want it to be and that is one of the essential elements of QDT. It is completely configurable. Once you have the desktop how

you want it you can save it and that is it – unless you want to change it. One of the good things about the way that QL system handle the mouse is that it is just a cursor and this means that those of you who, to quote the late Douglas Adams, think that 'Mice are small furry creatures that run around and make women jump on tables and scream in early seventies sitcoms' can just as easily use the cursor keys and the SPACE and ENTER bars to make it work.

The program is capable of installing itself and by this I mean that it will extract and copy the files needed and rewrite the Boot file all without your intervention – should that be your choice. There is also an Advanced, interactive mode, which allows you to make decisions on how it is installed. The BOOT program will unzip the files to the hard drive. Once the files have been extracted from the zip file the installer will start and the user is then prompted for keypresses during the installation.

The program will scan the hard drive and find all of the executable programs on it and then run these through a series of filters. It tries to make intelligent guesses about what these programs are and which folder they should reside in. Over the course of the testing stage I have been reporting back to Jim the various programs which should not be in any of these folders such as the chess clock from Black knight and a few of the executable components of larger programs suites. It is inevitable that there will be some we have missed so users should report back if they find icons for programs that either do nothing or – worse – crash the system. The user can, of course delete any programs icons like these from his system and then re-save the desktop.

Once the program is installed on the hard drive it will be ready to run. You cannot start it straight away because it does need a set of environment variables to be loaded so a reboot is probably the best course of action. On rebooting it will launch and give a set of folders down the right hand side of the screen.

The finished screen can be seen in the screen shots which accompany Jims announcement in this issue. Left click any folder to open it. Right click will bring up a menu allowing you to open it, edit its properties, Rename, move, Refresh, or delete it. It will also allow you to add either a new object, such as a file, picture or piece of text, or program.

The properties which can be edited for a whole folder include the name beneath the icon, the icons themselves (both open and closed) and DATA and PROGRAM directories set when that

folder is opened. At the moment these are not activated although they will be in a later release. For a program you can make the same icon and naming changes but you can also change the associated file extensions and types. There are plans to link these to set defaults and to the Fileinfo 2 information but this has not yet been implemented. You can also pass it a command string. I have, for instance set up an icon to point at QD with a command string of `\U B\e _bas\t QBASIC\D WIN1_MYPROGS_\h WIN1_QH_BASIC_HELP_`

This will set the usage to BASIC, the F10 THING to QBASIC, the working directory to WIN1_MYPROGS_ , and the Help files to Rich Mellor's Q-Help system.

For a Data object you have the same icon editing and renaming but you can tell QDT which program to launch to run the file and what type of file it is.

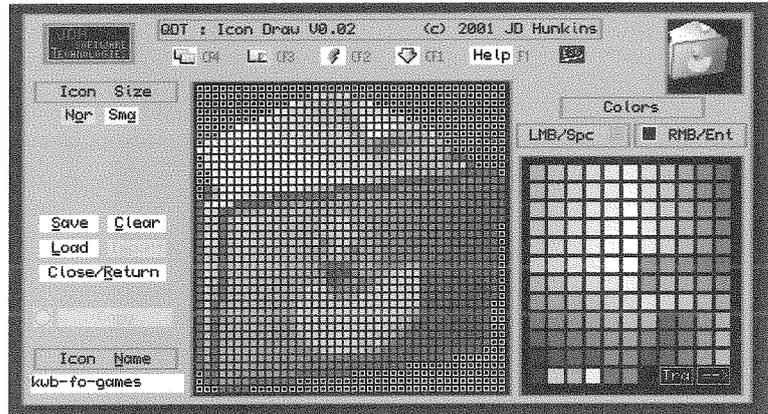
All of this is very useful if you have specific files that you work on constantly. I start jotting down ideas for the next Byts Of Wood as soon as I have put the last one to bed and that file gets added to and edited right up until the time when Jochen is sending frantic emails for me to send it to him. In pre QDT times I had to open QD and navigate to the current file but now it is right there on the desktop. I have also found it useful to an icon for ACP (Archivers Control Panel) on the desktop because I often have to zip and unzip files.

One of tools provided by QDT is the icon editing program.

This is a fairly sophisticated Icon Drawing program which works in 256 colours and can be used to produce some very nice looking icons. At the moment this

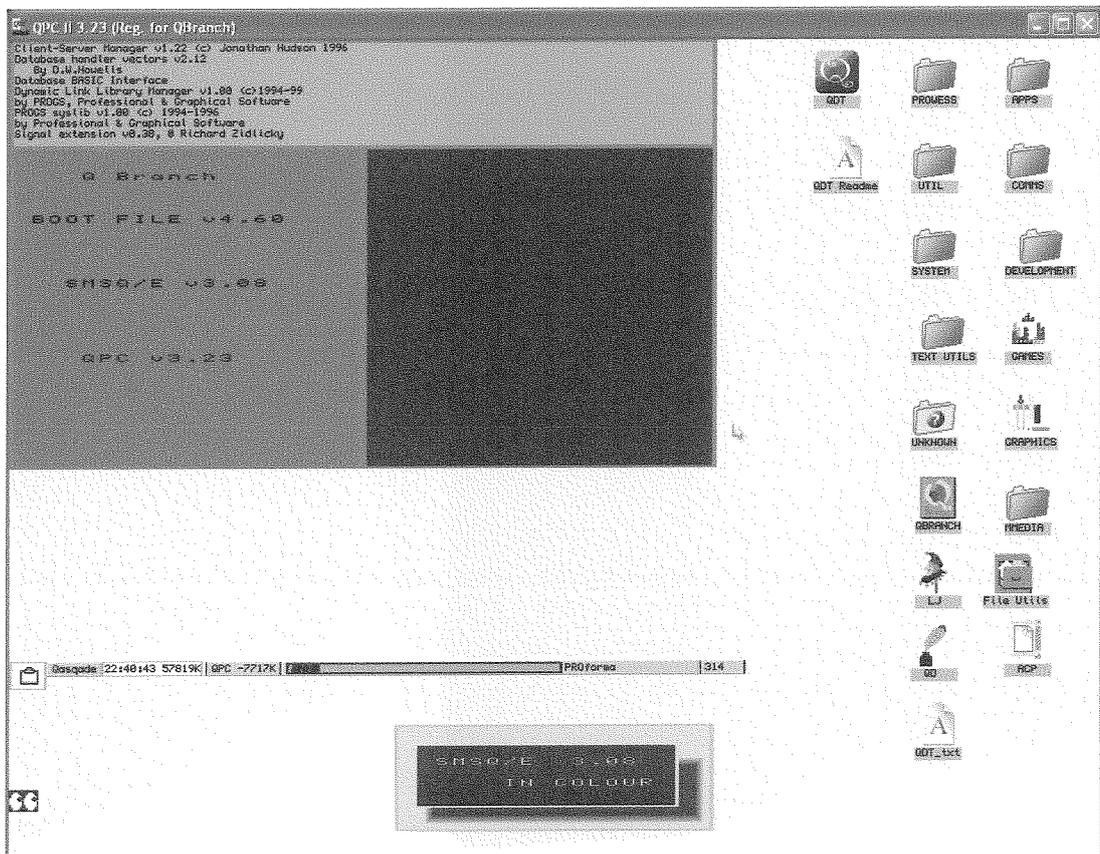
will only produce icons in the format used by QDT but Jim has said that it should be simple to write a filter to export those icons for use in other QL programs he is also interested in producing an import filter so we can load icons from other systems.

This system has been a long time in the making and during its gestation the author has made demands on the system which have called for changes and improvements to many parts of SMSQ/E. It is a program which will only run under



later versions of SMSQ/E and that is a deliberate step because it is designed to take the system further and hopefully will lead to more developments in the way that we use it.

We do expect a release very soon. That release will still have some aspects which are in the 'not



implemented yet' stage. I believe this is being released in this way more because he wants to see it out and being used than because he is anxious for any revenue from it. In actual fact we are hoping for a series of free updates as new features are added and the whole suite should grow very much in the way that SMSQ/E itself has.

Jim has plans for many new ideas including a 'hyper help' system, theme configuration utility,

HOTKey manager and a swathe of ideas he has had thrown at him by those of us who have had access to it during its development. Every show he attended and demonstrated it at he left with copious notes on new ideas.

The core functionality of the program has taken a lot of development and that is now stable leaving him with time to do the fancy work. Enjoy the demo and we hope you will invest in the future.

Programming in Assembler - Part 12

Norman Dunbar

Doubly Linked Lists Demo Code

In part 11 of this series, I gave you the demonstration code for singly linked lists, leaving you with a promise of the demo code for doubly linked lists. In this issue, I present you with that very code. Much of the code is similar to that for singly linked lists but there are changes required to cope with the fact that each node has two pointers – one going forward the other backwards.

The Obligatory Errors

In Volume 9 Issue 2 I described doubly linked lists and showed some code fragments for manipulating these. Well, as ever, I managed to get things slightly wrong – on purpose, just to see if you were paying attention – and there are two errors in the following code to add a node.

```
AddNode    cmpa.l a0,a1          ; Don't add the root node to its own list
            bra.s AddExit      ; Quietly exit if attempted
            move.l (a0),(a1)    ; Save current first node in new node's NEXT area
====>      move.l a0,(a1)      ; No PRIOR node for this node
            move.l a1,(a0)     ; Store address of new node in FIRST storage area
AddExit    rts
```

The code setting the PRIOR pointer to the root node's address is incorrect as the offset into the node to the PRIOR pointer is missing, the one line correction is shown below, so change the line I've marked above with '====>' to the following:

```
            move.l a0,prior(a1) ; No PRIOR node for this node
```

Prior is an equate defined to be the value 4 and indicates how far into each node the pointer to the previous node is stored.

The second error in the above code is four missing lines of code. We must make sure that the current first node in the list has its PRIOR pointer changed from zero to the address of the new first node in the list. Add the following code above the 'RTS' at label AddExit in the above fragment:

```
            move.l (a1),a0      ; A0 = address of original FIRST node in list
            cmpa.l #0,a0       ; Nothing to do if A0 is zero.
            beq.s AddExit      ; Exit with Z set = First node added to list.
            move.l a1,prior(a0) ; Store address of new FIRST node in PRIOR pointer
```

My original code was simply storing the root node's address in every new node's PRIOR which isn't much use really. The new code must check to see if this is the very first node added to the list. If so, there is no need to set the second node's PRIOR address as there isn't yet a second node. We do this by testing A0 for zero once we have set A0 to be the contents of the new node's NEXT pointer.

After both changes, the new code at AddNode should look like this:

```
AddNode    cmpa.l    a0,a1        ; Don't allow the root node to be added again
           beq.s    AddExit    ; Bale out quietly if attempted
           move.l   (a0),(a1)   ; Save current first node in new node's NEXT area
           move.l   a0,Prior(a1) ; Set the PRIOR node for this new node
           move.l   a1,(a0)     ; Store address of new node in FIRST storage area
           move.l   (a1),a0     ; A0 = address of original FIRST node in list
           cmpa.l   #0,a0       ; Nothing to do if A0 is zero.
           beq.s    AddExit    ; Exit with Z set = First node added to list.
           move.l   a1,prior(a0) ; Store address of new FIRST node in PRIOR pointer
AddExit    rts
```

The next error isn't really an error, but the code shown to delete a node from a doubly linked list scans the list from the start looking for the node to delete. This isn't strictly necessary if you control the adding of nodes to the list and subsequently finding them again – as in the following demo.

If so, you can simply use the address of the node to delete directly because you know from that where the prior and next nodes are in the list without having to scan through the list looking for them. However, don't forget to test for the possibility that you might be removing the final node in the list – if so, you do not want to be trying to manipulate its fictitious next node's pointers because these will be located in the ROM at addresses 0 and 4. This won't affect a normal QL, but QPC and others might just complain!

On With The Demo Code

Copy the file SingleList_asm that you created last time to DoubleList_asm. Much of the demo code is identical to last time, so I'll save even space and paper by only showing you routines that are changed or new additions.

As with the SinglList demo, the code is a small example of creating and navigating a linked list. The demo starts by creating a list of 5 nodes, each holding one long word of data being simply the node number 0 to 4. Each node is linked to the one after it and to the one before it.

The list contents are then printed on the screen showing the node address, the prior pointer, the next pointer and the data stored in that node. Once this is done, the node with data contents of 3 is located and deleted prior to the new list being printed out again. Sounds very familiar doesn't it?

I've had to trim the informational part of the screen output for each node to accomodate the extra address in the PRIOR pointer and to make sure that it all fits on one screen line.

As with the demo code for singly linked lists, I'm not physically deleting the allocated heap areas used for each node. This reduces the amount of code that appears in the magazine and reduces the need to chop down a few more trees. However, bear in mind that if you create programs which don't delete the heap areas when a node is deleted, that your memory usage will remain high throught the run of the program.

In my case, this is a small demo and QDOSMSQ does the tidying up for me at the end of the demo.

The first part of the code which has changed is the definition of the root node. In the single linked list, this was a single long word initialised to zero. In this demo we have a pair of long words initialised to zero. To make life easier, we also define a number of equates for use throughout the remainder of the code.

The root node must be initialised to zero in both its NEXT and PRIOR areas as outlined in the original article. This is the pointer we will be loading into A0 quite often in the demo and it holds the address of the first node in the list. At present, there is no list, so the contents are set to zero to indicate the very end of the list. The PRIOR pointer will always be zero because there is never a previous node to the root.

```

* -----
* A location to hold a single long word pointing to the first 'real'
* node in our linked list. This must be initialized to zero.
* -----
RootNode    dc.l    0,0                ; This is our root node with two pointers.

NodeSize    equ     12                ; Length in bytes of each node in the list
Next        equ     0                 ; Offset to NEXT pointer in a node
Prior       equ     4                 ; Offset to PRIOR pointer in a node
NData       equ     8                 ; Offset to the data portion of a node

```

The code in BuildList has been changed slightly too. In the single list version, the offsets were hard coded as numbers. This isn't very clever - if you change the offsets at any future point, you have to find all the places where the numbers are hard coded. In the new version, I use equates instead of hard coded values. This way, if I change my node structure, I only have to change the equates once.

```

* -----
* Build a list of 5 nodes each holding a long word of data.
* -----
BuildList   lea     RootNode,a0        ; Pointer to root node address
            moveq   #4,d7              ; How many nodes in D7 = 5 (DBRA remember ?)
            moveq   #NodeSize,d1      ; Each node is 12 bytes long

BuildLoop   bsr.s   BuildNode          ; Create a new node, address is in A1.L
            bne     all_done           ; Just die on errors
            move.l  d7,NData(a1)       ; Store data value - which is just our counter
            bsr.s   AddNode            ; Add to list
            dbra   d7,BuildLoop        ; Do the rest
            rts                          ; Done

```

AddNode has been changed to cater for the doubly linked list by initialising the NEXT and PRIOR pointers in the new nmode and in the root node, then checking if there was already any nodes in the list. If there were any nodes, the previous 'first' nmode in the list (ie, the most recent one added) needs to have its PRIOR pointer set to be our brand new node. This is done by loading A0 with the new node's NEXT pointer and testing that for zero, if the new node has no NEXT address, it can only be the very first node in the list.

We initialise as follows:

```

NEXT(Root) copied to NEXT(NewNode)
Root address copied to PRIOR(NewNode)
NewNode address copied to NEXT(Root)

```

If this is not the very first node in the list then:

```

Get address of NEXT(NewNode)
NewNode address copied to PRIOR(NextNode).

```

```

* -----
* AddNode - Adds a new node to a list. See text for details.
* -----
* Entry : A0.L = root node address, A1.L = New node address.
* Exit  :Preserves all registers, no error codes returned.
* -----
AddNode     cmpa.l  a0,a1                ; Don't allow the root node to be added again
            beq.s   AddExit             ; Bale out quietly if attempted
            move.l  (a0),(a1)           ; Save current first node in new node's NEXT area
            move.l  a0,Prior(a1)        ; Set the PRIOR node for this new node
            move.l  a1,(a0)             ; Store address of new node in root's NEXT area
            cmpa.l  #0,(a1)             ; Nothing to do if this is the very first node

```

```

    beq.s   AddExit          ; Exit with Z set = First node added to list
    move.l  a0,-(a7)        ; Preserve working register (root pointer)
    move.l  (a1),a0         ; A0 = address of original first node in list
    move.l  a1,prior(a0)   ; Store address of new first node in PRIOR pointer
    move.l  (a7)+,a0       ; Restore working register (root pointer)
AddExit   rts

```

The ShowNode code is the next part that has changed. It has had a couple of lines added to call a new routine – ShowPrior – which, as its name suggests, displays the address of the PRIOR pointer for the node being displayed on screen.

WARNING : The line 'BSR.S ShowNext' must also be changed to remove the '.S' from the BSR instruction. We've slipped out of range of a short jump now, so you'll get an error message 'Number Too Big' if you don't.

```

* -----
* Display the details of a single node in the linked list.
* On entry A0 = the node address.
* -----
ShowNode  move.l  a0,a5          ; The node address
          move.l  con_id2(a4),a0 ; The channel address
          move.l  a5,d4         ; The node address
          bsr.s   ShowAddr      ; Print node address
          move.l  (a5),d4       ; The NEXT pointer
          bsr     ShowNext      ; Print NEXT pointer
          move.l  Prior(a5),d4   ; The PRIOR pointer
          bsr.s   ShowPrior     ; Print PRIOR pointer
          move.l  NData(a5),d4   ; The node data
          bsr     ShowData      ; Print the data
          rts

```

In addition, I've abbreviated the message printed by ShowAddr to the following :

```

MsgAddr   dc.w    AddrEnd-MsgAddr-2
          dc.b    linefeed,'Node addr : '
AddrEnd   equ     *

```

The following short routine should be added just above ShowNext in the original code. It is called by ShowNode to display the address in a node's PRIOR pointer.

```

* -----
* Display the node's PRIOR address in memory.
* On entry D4 = the node's PRIOR pointer.
* -----
ShowPrior lea     MsgPrior,a1      ; Our prompt
          bra.s   ShowPrompt      ; Print it

MsgPrior  dc.w    PriorEnd-MsgPrior-2
          dc.b    ' PRIOR : '
PriorEnd  equ     *

```

The code in the ShowNext and ShowData routines hasn't changed, but the messages they display have. I needed to shorten the text to get everything on screen in one line per node. Please make the following changes:

```

MsgNext   dc.w    NextEnd-MsgNext-2
          dc.b    ' NEXT : '
NextEnd   equ     *

MsgData   dc.w    DataEnd-MsgData-2
          dc.b    ' Data : '
DataEnd   equ     *

```

The code in DelANode has been reduced quite dramatically to the following. As before we don't allow deletion of the root node itself and exit quietly if any attempt is made to do so.

Next we check to ensure that we actually have a list to delete from. If the root node's NEXT pointer is still zero, we have no nodes in the list and again, we exit quietly. In both these exit situations, we clear the Z flag to indicate a node not deleted error.

Deleting the node from the list (but, as before, not from memory) is actually quite simple. As A1 points to the node to be deleted we can find the node before it from the PRIOR(a1) address, and the node after it by the NEXT(A1) address. All we do to delete the node from the list is set the prior node's NEXT address to the current value in the deleted node's NEXT address and then set the next node's PRIOR address to the PRIOR address of the deleted node.

However, if we are deleting the very last node in the list, we must not attempt to change the (non-existent) next node's pointers as we may well end up writing to random locations in memory. In the last node, the NEXT pointer is always zero.

```

* -----
* Routine to delete a node whose address is passed in A1.L from the list
* whose address is passed in A0.L. On exit, Z flag will be set if deleted
* or cleared if not.
* Trashes A0 and D0 on exit.
* -----
DelANode    moveq    #oops,d0                ; Assume it's going to fail
            cmpa.l   a1,a0                  ; Trying to delete the rootnode ?
            beq.s    DelExit                ; Exit if so.

DelList     cmpi.l   #0,(a0)                ; If this is true, we have an empty list !
            beq.s    DelExit                ; Exit not found - we have an empty list.
            move.l   Prior(a1),a0          ; A0 points at the node before the 'deleted'
one
            move.l   (a1),(a0)              ; Make the prior node point to the deleted
node's
*           ; NEXT node, thus deleting the node from the
NEXT
*           ; chain through the list.
            cmpi.l   #0,(a1)                ; Deleting final node in list ?
            beq.s    DelDone                ; Yes, nothing more to do.
            move.l   (a1),a0                ; A0 now points after the 'deleted' node.
            move.l   Prior(a1),Prior(a0)    ; Make the next node point to the deleted
node's
*           ; PRIOR node, thus deleting the node from the
*           ; PRIOR chain through the list.
DelDone     moveq    #0,d0                  ; Indicate a node was deleted successfully

DelExit     tst.l    d0                     ; Set or clear Z flag
            rts

* =====
* The DEMO code ends here.
* =====

```

And that is all the changes you have to make. The DoubleList demo code should be assembled and run in the normal fashion. You'll be able to see that there are indeed 5 nodes in the list (in the BEFORE section at the top of the screen) then under that, the AFTER section shows a missing node with data content 3 - we have deleted it from the list.

Next time, we'll stray a little into some territory that I have never seen demonstrated in assembly language programming for the QL, I'm talking of recursive routines. Until then, keep your stack untangled !

QUANTA Questionnaire

Quanta Secretary John Southern has issued a Questionnaire with a recent newsletter. The idea behind it is to see what equipment QLers have and so on, to gain a snapshot picture of the state of the QL scene. QL Today urges readers who are members of Quanta to fill in and return this questionnaire. The information collected will provide a very useful snapshot of the state of the QL scene and hopefully help Quanta develop their policies for the future QL scene: www.quanta.org.uk

On a similar note, Tony Firshman of TF Services has made an online form available where you can fill in the details online. Readers who have internet access may prefer to fill it in online. Either way, we urge as many of you as possible to fill in a questionnaire because it will ultimately help us all by allowing Quanta to develop in a way which suits what the membership are doing at the moment.

Forthcoming QL Shows

Unfortunately, at the time this issue has to go to print, most confirmations are missing. As you can see, a lot of planning is going on, and we think we can soon report the fixed dates of the various shows. Here is the current list:

A "local" Eindhoven show is planned for March, but not confirmed yet.

There are also plans for an international Eindhoven show in June - more details as soon as we know about it.

The Hove show is booked (see last page).

We are trying to get a QL show organised in Spain in May or June and think about Madrid.

There will also be the 2-day event planned by Quanta - more details hopefully in the next issue. Care will be taken not to have a clash with the US show (which is also planned for later this year, unlike most US shows before).

No feedback regarding Berchtesgaden at all, unfortunately. Maybe Friedemann has had replies, but has not told us yet ...?



JUST WORDS!

Top Secret

For UK eyes only

This memo is about safety and security - your safety and security. Above all it is about ensuring that any codes in your possession do not come into the hands of unauthorised persons.

Reliable intelligence suggests that in the next few weeks you will be increasingly asked for details of your codes. Your duty is to complete your mission without disclosing these codes to the person wanting them or to any third party.

To assist you in this task software has been developed to guide your thought processes towards maintaining the confidentiality of your codes. To obtain this software follow these instructions carefully. Go to your next QL show, place a used fiver in a brown envelope and push it under the toilet door.

PIN-DOWN turns your PIN-codes into surreal rhyming phrases. If you cannot remember that, then remember the kangaroo that ate the blue dinosaur.

Read this carefully, memorise it, then eat it.

Geoff Wicks, 56 Peveril Crescent, West Hallam, Derbyshire DE7 6ND, U.K.

Tel: +44 (0)115 - 930 3713

email: gwicks@beeb.net

Web: <http://members.lycos.co.uk/geoffwicks/justwords.htm>

It would seem Simon Goodwin thinks I am in a tizzy about EPSON printers and I never even noticed. It is true that I have written a lot of things in recent columns (as well as the EPL 6200 review in issue 2 of this volume) but that is in response to the questions I get from customers and the general concern about printing that has appeared in the QL Users Group. There are a significant number of people out there in QL land who cannot understand why they cannot use any printer to print from their QL programs and even more who as puzzled why, if they have a printer which functions perfectly well under Windows on their PC, it will not print from QL programs running under QPC2 on the same machine. Most of ramblings in this column have been addressed to that issue.

I have, in previous columns, mentioned that HP printer drivers are backwardly compatible and that I suspected that many of their current printers would print from QL programs which had older versions of the drivers but, since I have never owned or had a chance to test an HP printer with my QDOS/SMSQ setups I cannot make any accurate statements about them. I did know that some of the older Canon Bubble jet printers also had the EPSON emulations built into their ROMs but was not sure if this practise had continued into those on sale today. I did try to get a friend to test one of these but there are no clear instructions on how to turn the emulation on for the printer he had and it

remained stubbornly unresponsive when poked at by various QL drivers. We did this on the telephone so it was all a little hit and miss.

What Prompts Your Choice Of Hardware?

There are enough printers in the shops to sink a moderately sized battleship and the choice is overwhelming. You have to make some choices based upon what you want to do and what kind of output you need. Today's printers can produce photographs, printed CDs and all do all manner of esoteric things but for most of us we want decent printed output from the PC coupled with some kind of useable output from the QL side. Quite apart from all of this there is the cost involved. Most of the money you spend is not on the printer itself but on the consumables. There is no doubt that the HP cartridges are more expensive than the EPSON ones (although the Canon consumables are cheaper). Other printers can be very cheap but you are usually well and truly fleeced by the cost of their cartridges. Mono lasers are cheaper to run than inkjets but when the need for replacement toner comes it is usually a bigger sum so may seem more painful. Colour Lasers printers are getting cheaper and cheaper to buy but then you will need four sets of toner. Even when we have considered the cost there is still the compatibility issue. Nothing is worse than spending some time considering the best prin-

ter to get, only to find out that it will not do part of the job. I had a similar problem with the EPSON C80 which looked like it would do exactly what I wanted. It did print very well from Windows and was very fast and quiet but would not do anything from QPC2 and only put out black and white output from the Q40. Careful investigation from Rich Mellor at EPSON found out that although it said it was ESC/P2 it was a cut down version which had only mono support. There is a world of difference between ESC/P, ESC/P2 and ESC/P raster, and it is easy to make the mistake of believing that they will all work.

I did get the chance to try an EPL 6200 which I was installing for one of my customers and I thought the output under Windows was very good. I also checked the output from QL programs and liked that too. Some people say 'Who wants to print from a QL?' This has been asked before but I suppose we all do for one reason or another. Some of us just want a listing or a quick bit of plain text. Some people need a database printout or an address label. For my part I want to print from LINEdesign and Text 87 and both of these programs have excellent ESC/P2 drivers which can produce good quality output and this is the main reason that I have been using EPSON printers. The HP drivers for Text 87 are not very up to date and I have had several problems with the HP drivers for ProWesS, although I must say that was when I was trying to print at Tony Firshman's house some time ago. The Epson output has, however, always been spot on so why should I be looking for something else?

Feedback

Finally, in this seemingly endless debate about the printer world, we come to the crux of all of this. Printer manufacturers are not exactly falling over themselves trying to sell us printers. This means that there are no large trucks queued up along Jochen's street unloading whole ranges of printers for review in these pages and, although Jochen and I are rich capitalists, often to be seen lounging in front of a roaring fire sipping brandy and smoking fat havana cigars, we do not have the funds to buy a range of printers to test. I get to try a few out when I do installations and I find that, on the whole, plugging my laptop into most modern printers and telling a QL program to print to it evicts either little response or reams of hieroglyphics.

Of course many of you out there in QL land do print and have working printers. We would love to be able to print your reviews of currently available printers that work with QL programs but, in spite of all our nudging, cajoling, and downright pleading with you for these your silence has been deafening in it's magnitude. In all seriousness we would like to hear about QL friendly printers and their availability. Come on then Simon. Stop worrying about my mental tizz factor and give us an article on printers that work. Mind you I don't just mean they will produce a dot matrix output from The Editor. Enough of this now - before it turns into the endless Quanta debate about printer drivers for Quill.

Other Old Machines

I attended the Norwich Computer show, put on by Tarquin Mills, recently. This was a plea-

sant affair with a reasonable QL showing in our little corner of the Hall. It was very nice to see Bill Richardson still looking good and actively running a stall there.

One thing that struck me was that most of these other machine had not really moved on from their original formats. There were Spectrums, Sam Coupes, ZX81s and other machines in abundance and, apart from some of them being built into better cases most of the stalls were selling old software and most of the running machines had the same displays as they had when they first came out. The QL seemed to be the only the machine that had shrugged off the old four colour CGA display and upped its resolution. It did, in fact, seem to be the only computer that had had anything really new written for it in the last 5 years.

Maybe we are foolish in pursuing the cause of the QL and trying to make it a more modern machine. Certainly some people still in the QL community seem to believe that the Pointer Environment is a heresy which should be avoided by all true 8-bittists. That, however, is not the reason that I have remained tinkering around with my various QDOS/SMSQ systems. On the whole we do try to change and improve our system and there is still a small but vocal core of users who can be heard on the user group list advocating and pushing for improvements. It could be that the Spectrum community is the same beneath the surface but, from what I saw at the Norwich show, the main emphasis seemed to be playing old games. Now there is a big market for old games but that has never been what the QL was about and it may be

the reason that we have taken a different path all these years.

Quanta And The Cash Thing

This kind of brings me neatly to a discussion raised on the user group email list and privately between myself and Geoff Wicks with regard to the use to which the Quanta treasure chest should be put. In reality the only people who can decide on this are those on the Quanta committee themselves and they are bound by strict rules some of which have to do with the constitution of the organisation and some of which relate to the legalities relating to tax free organisations. That aside those of us who are members of Quanta should really exercise their voice in how we think it should be run on our behalf so long as this is done within the democratic framework set up to do so. There is a lot of nonsense talked about democracy. People seem to think it is about the people saying how things should be run but really it is about people choosing who should do the running and that is a whole different issue. All of this is, of course, saying come along to the AGM and say something! Better still stand for the committee. You never know you might even get elected and be able to do something.

There have been a host of contributions on this subject which was mostly stirred into life by Geoff Wicks. The question is, to my mind, what use would an injection of cash be to our current situation? That is something which is hard to Quantify (!)

Had you asked me about this some years ago I would have had a ready answer but these

days I am not so sure. In fact Robin Barker did ask me this a few years ago when he was mulling over the loan that Quanta made to D&D. It was hard to give him an answer then because, given my situation, at war with the Grafts – or at least perceived to be so by the general public, I would have appeared biased but I did try to give him the most honest answer I could. I said to him that, if I had an offer on the table from D&D and one from Nasta I would go for the Nasta option. I said this, not because I wanted to shaft the efforts of D&D or sink the Q40/Q60 but because I felt that an updated Super Gold Card would benefit Quanta members the most.

I realise I am treading on slippery ground here but I felt that many of those in the root Quanta membership were still using native QL hardware or Aurora boards. A fast expanded memory with all the features that the Ultra Gold Card offered would be the best development for them. Above all it would cost them around £150 to get a fast powerful QL. It would not have all of the features that the Q40 option had but it would have the ones that were needed then. There was no offer from Nasta on the table then and Quanta went with the Q40/Q60 option. This has given a few people some very fast and efficient machines but it has also had the effect of moving some of those people into the LINUX arena and away from the QL. When Stuart Honeyball assessed the QL scene a few years after the introduction of the QXL he felt that it had been instrumental and dragging the users towards the PC and the same can, to a smaller degree, be said of the Q40/Q60. It can also be argued that those

people went chose to take that route were the ones for whom the QL was becoming too restrictive in its capacity and would have found the path anyway – with or without a QL crossover point.

Wish Lists and Rainbows

Duncan Neithercut put up a wish list of projects he felt that Quanta may help with. Amongst the items on the QL wish list were :

'Help QL users access the www through already existing software'

If, by this, they mean allow access to email from the QL I can sort of see that would be a good option since, like it or not, the QL-Users list is the single most active QL forum and one where many things get aired. Things may get a little heated and personal at times but you can always ignore those bits. The assets that count are an instantly accessible group of people to help you if you have a problem and a lot of very intelligent and differing viewpoints.

On the other hand if we are talking about web browsing, forget it. The web, these days, is a mass of Flash Animations and sites requiring browser add ons which we would also have to have to get true access. Even Mozilla, which has a team of writers and a lot of resources fails many of the sites I use. We would need Nasta's Ultra Gold Card an Aurora and a lot of programming to be able to read a fraction of the sites available.

'Commission articles for the newsletter to make it worth reading'

As I know from experience of this magazine it is not the application of money that will bring in the articles – I have have

never had a cent for my (almost) 10 year contribution to this magazine. If you want articles that are worth reading (and I am not saying here that this one always is) you need writers with an enthusiasm for the subject and ideas to put forward – and that is what we lack.

'Chase up copyright holders for non supported but still widely used QL programs - append your own list'

Not really a good option. There is a reason why they are not supported and out of copyright and that is that they are old and not too relevant to today's QL scene. We may still use them but then that means we have them. How many people are thirsting to buy or use old programs? Some older programs have been successfully updated but, on the whole, I think it is usually better to start from scratch. There was a lot of talk of Perfection but, in comparison to many of today's word processors, it is very lame.

'Nag/bribe/arm twist/pay/flatter some of the previously heavy weight QL programmers to contribute to current needs'

Nagging and arm twisting does not work in this case and the inducement of cash is, in some cases an insult. Mind you, a lack of good software is a major problem so if anything can be done for this I am all for it. Free or commercial. The reasons that some of our more prolific writers left the scene have been discussed here before. they boil down to

1. No money in it
2. Not enough users prepared to use new programs.
3. System not powerful enough or does not have the facilities
4. Licence not worded exactly how that person wants
5. Moved on to other platforms

- for many of the reasons above.

Solve some of these and you might just get the odd one writing again

ProWesS

Another item on the wish list was a proper printer interface (oh no not that again I hear you groan) and this was given a boost by talk of using ProForma as a basis on which to build a spooler. ProForma does have some of the most modern printer codes built in and it is, in theory, capable of handling the raster output required by many of today's printers. On the downside it also has not been developed for many years and would need the co-operation of the printer manufacturers in order to get the codes needed to write the drivers. In the old days you would get a book with all of this stuff when you bought the printer but these days you need to buy one from the manufacturer. There are, however, a lot of LINUX drivers out there so maybe we could hoist some code from them top get this going.

Joachim has said he will make the source code available for all of the ProWesS programs and make them all free in the near future. This is a good move, even if it does further reduce the Q Branch portfolio because it paves the way for someone to take on the mantle of developing the code - if there is someone out there who wants this mantle. ProWesS was a good step down the road but was always rather slow. Curiously it is still rather slow under QPC2 on my P4 3GHz PC so I am puzzled why that should be so. I have always been a great fan of ProWesS and I would like to see

more developments in this so I look forward to seeing if a free distribution of the code and programs will make people start to do things with it. I am really interested to see if this full and free distribution will attract more programmers willing to make improvements to it than SMSQ/E did. I am afraid I cannot see that but go on - prove me wrong!

If I seem to be ending the year on a slightly pessimistic note it is not because I am about to up sticks and quit. I do feel that we should be looking realistically about what we are doing here and maybe take some steps towards making things better. This, of course is not just Jochen, Tony, Quanta or I. It goes for anyone who actually cares about the system and what is happening to it. Maybe we traders need to develop more products but you readers need to speak up and to be counted. When there is a survey, questionnaire or competition there are very few replies. Even when asked to nominate people for prizes for the QL 2004 bash I got only one answer. If you want the system to still be here in a year or so you have to make an effort to. Lets give the QL the keys to the door.

The 2004 Christmas Collection

And now on to lighter matters. It has become traditional from me to offer up a list of films books and music to enliven Christmas for us computer users.

Among the blockbuster films to be shown will be:

Master and Commodore

Lost in Translation - the Quill printer driver story

Three Amigas

The Four Mousmateers

Dot Matrix - Reloaded

There will be late night tales of Intrigue with

The (Geoff) Wicker Man

Internet Users will be entertained by this musical offering: Many Poppups

and Jochen Merz will reprise his singing role in The 'Thing' and I

There is the tale of one man's love of his PC in

Dilwyn Jones Diary

with its sequel

The Edge Connector of Reason

Printers will feature heavily in the music at Christmas with a re-release of these classics:

EPSONNY and Share
'I've Got Queue Babe'

The Small (type)Faces

'Laser Sunday Afternoon'

The Best of The Inkspots

Fleetwood Mac

'IDE Rather Go Blind'

And in TV specials such as:

Canon and GolfBall Christmas Special

Big Brother

and cartoons:

Minolta Mouse

Coderunner and Wireless Coyote

Finally you can settle down with some classic books such as:

The QPAC of Notre Dame

A Tale of two Citizens

The Man in the Subnet Mask

Before offering up the hymn: Qubide With Me

And tottering off to bed.

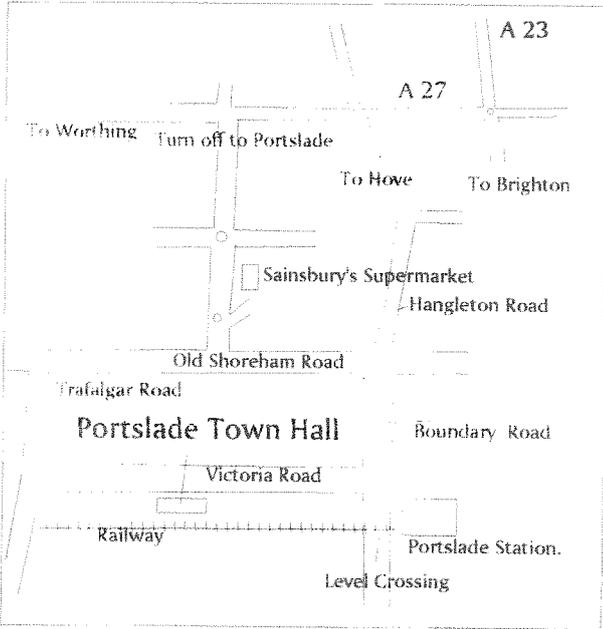
Have a good Christmas and a Happy New Year!!



The QL Show Agenda



Hove Workshop - (UK)

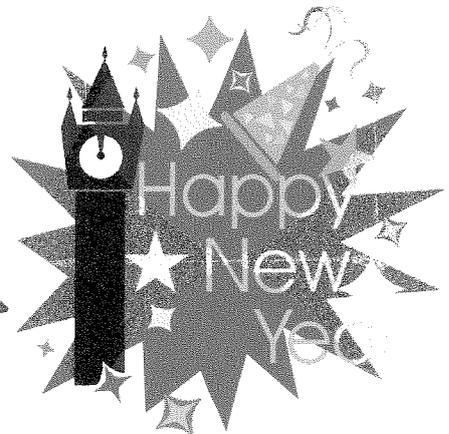


**Quanta AGM and Workshop
Portslade Town Hall
Hove, Sussex
April 17th 2005**

This years Hove Workshop will be held at, was has become our usual venue, Portslade Town Hall, just a few minutes walk from the Portslade Railway Station. It will also be the Quanta AGM so make a note in your diaries now. It is too early to say who will be attending the show but we expect a good turn out. If the weather is fine you can even take in a day by the sea the day before. Catering, as usual, will be by a bevy of lovely local ladies and Roy Woods hyperactive daughter.

**WAPPY
XMAS**

&



**FROM THE
QL TODAY
TEAM**