ABUG NEWSLETTER #53 NOVEMBER
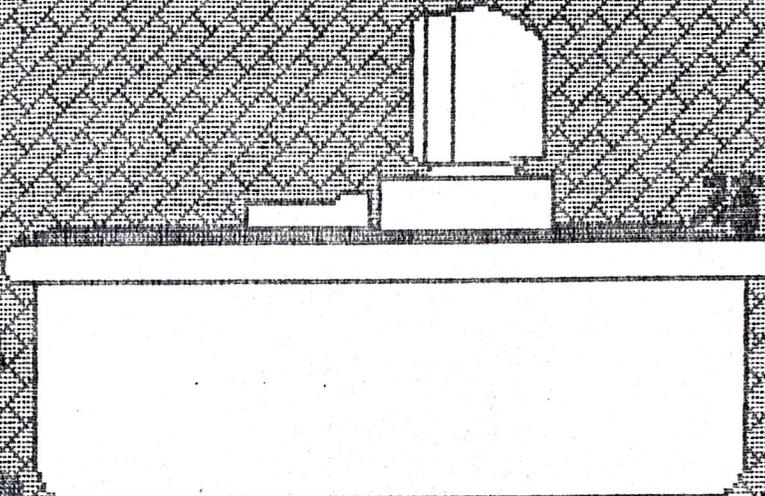
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DIARY

The next few meetings will be held on:

                    2 December
                    16 December   Christmas Buffet
                    6 January 1988
                    20 January

All meetings are held at the Sheffield Trades and Labour Club, Duke Street.

We are asking members to pay £1.50 towards the cost of the Christmas Buffet this year. Guests are welcome, but they will have to pay the full cost. This has not yet been finalised, but we should have it at this meeting or the next.

We should like names (and money!) by the next meeting (2nd December), so that we know how many to cater for - contact any member of the committee. There will be a membership check at the door on the night, so try to remember to bring your card with you!

LONG GONE!

Following Acorn's £1.37 million loss in the first six months of the year (last issue), Acorn's managing director, Brian Long, has resigned. Long was appointed two years ago by Olivetti, as part of their rescue bid. He was brought in to set the company back on its feet and he has now left, according to a press statement from Acorn "to pursue other interests, following the completion of his initial assignment".

Bruno Soggiu, the Olivetti-appointed chairman of Acorn, will take over as acting managing director, and control the day to day running of the company, until a permanent replacement is found.

The trade paper Computing reports that city analysts feel that Long's departure is "not a particularly positive development", and quotes a city electronics analyst as being "bearish" about the Archimedes sales prospects. Although recognising its advanced specification, he felt that it could face increased competition from Amstrad's PC, the Atari ST, and even the IBM PC itself. Also, other companies have plans to release RISC-based micros in the near future.

ARCHIMEDES PRICES CUT

Acorn have announced that the price of the Archimedes has been reduced by £100 (not just for the duration of the PCW Show, as I wrote last time), and they are also producing a version of the 310 machine bundled with MS-DOS 3.21, designated the 310M. Recent Acorn advertisements also offer 0% finance terms, which is equivalent to a 20% or more price cut for anyone contemplating buying on hire purchase or by credit card. They have obviously

realised that they have to start shifting boxes in appreciable quantities as soon as possible, before the competition can get their new risc machines in the shops.

The prices for the machines, as quoted by A & B, are now:

Model	Excl VAT	Incl VAT
305	£699	£804
310	£775	£891
310M	£835	£960
Mono monitor	+£50	+£57.50
Colour monitor	+£190	+£218.50

20 MEGABYTES ON A FLOPPY DISC

An American company, Brier Technology Inc, has developed a technique for storing 20 megabytes (Mb) of data on a standard 3.5 inch high density disc. Their drive, the BT 3020, has a track density of 777 tracks per inch (tpi), compared with a normal 80 track disc's 96 tpi, or a 40 track's 48 tpi.

Brier claim that they achieve the high data densities partly by dividing the disc's magnetic surface into two logical layers. Servo information (track, sector, etc) is recorded at low frequency on the lower layer, leaving the whole of the upper layer free to record data. This alone can almost double the capacity of a disc. For example, Opus have been advertising 1Mb (unformatted) disc drives for the Beeb for some time; however, when formatted these drives have the same 400Kb or 640Kb capacity (single or double density, respectively) as any other 80 track double sided drives! The missing 600 or 360Kb is taken up by the formatting (servo) information.

This 'double-layering', coupled with high precision the head positioning and advanced data encoding techniques, have enabled them to produce such an incredibly high capacity system - at least double that of any of the currently available 5.25 inch storage system. The company say that, with further development, a 40Mb drive may be produced.

If you want to buy one, or rather, if you want to buy 5000, they'll cost you $495 each (about £280), fitted with a Small Computer Systems Interface (SCSI). The retail price, fitted on PC or Macintosh expansion cards will be about $995 (£570). There are no plans to produce versions for the Beeb at present! High density 3.5 inch discs cost about $20 each in the States.

It is thought that the first uses will be for Winchester backup devices (cheaper than Bernoulli Boxes and more convenient than tape streamers), and for use in portables (less power hungry than a Winchester). The company hope to sell 140,000 in 1989 and 350,000 in 1990.

[Information from an article by Mike Seither in the October 1987 issue of the US magazine 'Mini-Micro Systems']   Dave Brown

WHAT'S IN THE MAGS?

A & B COMPUTING, December 1987, Vol 4, #12, 124pp, £1.50

Features:
        Choosing comms software / Buyers' guide to products released
        over the last 12 months / Archimedes sound, Music Editor, PC
        Emulator, Logistix / Programming in RISC assembler / Use of
        Concept Keyboard / Making music in LOGO
Programs:
        ARM Paint for Arc / 40 to 80 track disc converter
Software Reviews:
        Graphics adventures: The Hunt & Winter Wonderland / The Big
        Calculator (educational) / Arcade games, inc Omega Orb map
Hardware Reviews:
        Master ROM/RAM boards: HCR External, P&P 32K Auto-Write,
        Vine's Romboards 3 & 4 / Clare's Toolkit & Artisan (Arc) /
        Vine's Master Replay / Care's Smart Cartridge (Master) /
        IFEL's Wordwise Plus 2

THE MICRO USER, December 1987, Vol 5, #10, 156pp, £1.25

Features:
        Adventure programming / Desktop publishing / Adventure
        programs / 65Arthur (Arc) / November Ceefax guide / The Beeb
        overseas / Linking Beeb to an LCD screen
Programs:
        Chrysalis, Mr Ee & Arkanoid conversion to Master / Droid for
        the Opus / Lander cheat (Arc) / Santa and the Snowmen game /
        Macromate SWR macro utility / Music Composition Language
Software Reviews:
        Games / Zarch (Arc) / Minerva Deltabase & Minotaur (Arc) /
        Clare's Toolkit (Arc) / The Big Calculator / Physics
        educational programs / Watford TED teletext editor (ROM)

ACORN USER, December 1987, #65, 210pp, £1.30

Features:
        Graphics techniques / Graphics for publication / Graphics
        packages / Planning for education / Network management / DIN
        lead testing
Programs:
        Simple music synth / Guess a number game / Hex to denary
        converter / Reaction timer / Letter frequencies / Accessing
        files / ADFS broken directory cure / NLQ/italic printer
        driver / Variables preserved / Master slow-motion rom /
        Extensions to ADFS 'Find' / PCB designer / Plotter screen
        dump
Software Reviews:
        Games inc Zarch / C packages / Real-Time Graphics System
Hardware Reviews:
        Monitors

Beebug - on the October tape (available from the library):
Filer cataloguer / Exploring Assembler / Spooks and Spirits game
/ Regression analysis / Precision arithmetic / Super function
keys / Skeleton bulletin board / Giant Bounce graphics / Master
dynamic memory editor / Magscan Bibliography

Dave Brown

HELP WANTED

The following appeared on Ceefax a few weeks ago:

A project which aims to help people suffering from Friedriech's
Ataxia, a degenerative muscular complaint, needs programmers. The
plan is to convert software written for the BBC B so that it will
run on Amstrads.

Volunteers must be able to use machine code and have a good
working knowledge of the Amstrad's operating system.

Contact Dave Newsome at:
        33 Skye Edge Avenue
        Sheffield S2 5FX
        Tel: 760679

COVER

This month's cover was drawn by Ian Brown. If anyone would like
to have a go at designing and/or drawing a cover, please let me
know.

FOR SALE

Taxan Vision II high resolution colour monitor, only about 12
months old.   Can work in monochrome mode with an amber, green,
etc, display. £230.

Also, Magic modem: £50.

Phone Morris Smith during the day (9 - 5) on 062 981 3079, or see
him on club nights.