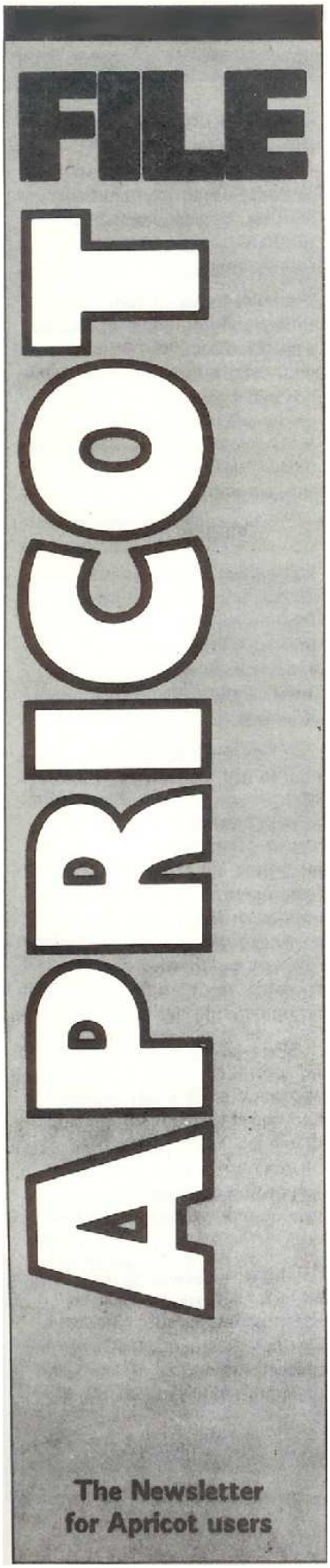
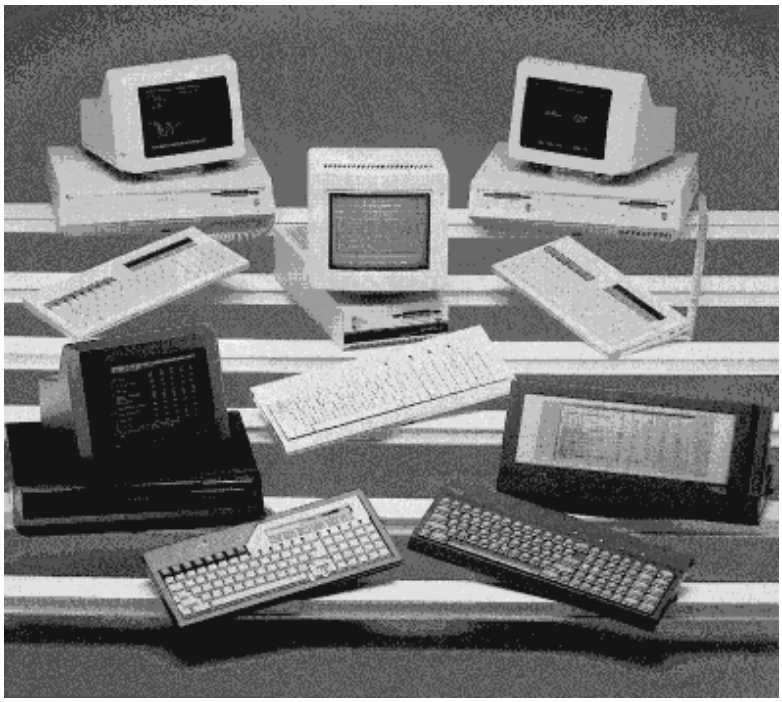


Apricot File 1_8



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Many additional thanks to Eddie Bromhead for scanning all of Release 3, 4 and extra inserts.

Release 1.8

May 1986

FILE APRICOT

The Newsletter for Apricot users

Apricot looks for growth

(again)

By Simon Potter

"That's the end of the divestments" said Apricot UK's Brian Androlia when we bumped into him the other day. "We won't be selling anything else." And MD Roger Foster confirms that: "We took a lot of action in a six-month period ... In most major respects that should be it".

Time now for the company to start looking for some more business in the future. An IBM-compatible Xen is one obvious route, but in the meantime the marque is getting extra models via the tweak-and-rebadge route — there's a new Xen CD priced at £2,599 fitting between the existing floppy disk Xen FD (£2,099) and the 20MB Xen HD (£3,099). Don't get too excited: the CD doesn't feature CD-ROM disks, it's just a Xen HD with 512K memory instead of a megabyte. It also gets a slower processor, clocked at 6MHz rather than 8MHz.

The intention seems to be provision of a competitor for IBM's recent price cutting on the PC/AT, particularly since it enables Apricot dealers to configure a working Xen for less than £3,000 — a sexy RRP in the 80286 market. "Apricot expects this machine to make a substantial contribution to sales of the Xen line", it says here.

The other policy announcement lately came at a dealer get-together in April under the name 'Software Supersell'. This is part of new concentration on vertical markets — Apricot says it will be addressing "up to 30" targeted markets via externally-developed Apricot-branded software, though the dealers were shown just four (two insurance packages, one each for farmers and solicitors).

The approach is pretty structured (or rigid — it just depends on your view). For instance, no more than 20 dealers will be nominated per market. The markets in question are being selected on the basis of sales potential, receptivity to promotion, the potential for multi-user applications (Apricot wants to sell Xens), and the dominant presence of small- to medium-sized businesses (Apricot's traditional forte).

Most computer manufacturers have toyed with the idea of a concerted push into specialised business markets, and most have given up in exasperation. It's been a lot easier to let qualified dealers and distributors handle things. But if Apricot can get it right, there *is* a huge potential sale out there ... ◆

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We're always interested in articles and other submissions for publication — particularly product reviews, 'how-to' articles, technical tips and amplifications on specific packages.

If you have something you'd like to say, contact the Editor first to talk about it. Thereafter articles can be submitted in two ways — transmitted via **electronic mail** (Micromail, Telecom Gold, The Source, or Easylink): or in word processor format on **disk** (we can take Apricot, Victor and IBM PC disks. And we can handle most WP formats, but it's safest to send an accompanying hard copy too).

Material for publication should be accompanied where appropriate by a self-addressed and correctly stamped envelope or mailer. We'll do our best, but otherwise we cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts, disks, etc.

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ISSN 0268-6066

M9	"|	vertical rule
T9	"|	vertical rule
W9	"|	vertical rule
X9	"	blank stops the repeating rule

A10	"This quarter's INPUTS to date:	heading text
I10	SUM(I17:I254)	sums Gross column — replicate for J10:S10
J10	SUM(J17:J254)	sums VAT column
K10	SUM(K17:K254)	sums Net column
L10	SUM(L17:L254)	sums zero-rated column
M10	"|	vertical rule
N10	SUM(N17:N254)	sums column for Sundries
O10	SUM(O17:O254)	sums column for Car
P10	SUM(P17:P254)	sums column for Office
Q10	SUM(Q17:Q254)	sums column for Subcontractors
R10	SUM(R17:R254)	sums column for Entertainment
S10	SUM(S17:S254)	sums column for Travel
T10	"|	vertical rule
U10	SUM(U17:U254)	sums column for Client 1 — replicate from I10
V10	SUM(V17:V254)	sums column for Client 2 — replicate from I10
W10	"|	vertical rule
X10	"	blank stops the repeating rule

A11	'-	repeated text for rule
M11	"------|	neat rule-end
N11	'-	repeated text for rule
T11	"------|	neat rule-end
U11	'-	repeated text for rule
W11	"|	heading text

A14	'-	repeated text for rule
X14	"	blank stops the repeating rule

A15	"DATE	heading text
C15	"CLIENT	heading text
D15	"Invoice	heading text
E15	"V	heading text
F15	"C	heading text
G15	" Method	heading text
H15	"CL	heading text
I15	"Gross	heading text — replicate I7:X7 to get I15:X15
J15	"VAT	heading text
K15	"Net	heading text
L15	"Zero-rated	heading text
M15	"|	vertical rule
N15	"Sundries	heading text
O15	"Car	heading text
P15	"Office	heading text
Q15	"Subcontract	heading text
R15	"Ent'mnt	heading text
S15	"Travel	heading text
T15	"|	vertical rule
U15	"Client 1	heading text
V15	"Client 2	heading text
W15	"|	vertical rule
X15	"	blank stops the repeating rule

A16	'-	repeated text for rule
I16	'-	repeated text for rule
M16	"------|	neat rule-end
N16	'-	repeated text for rule
T16	"------|	neat rule-end
U16	'-	repeated text for rule
W16	"|	vertical rule
X16	"	blank stops the repeating rule

A17		holds the date in SuperCalc 3's American format — enter as DATE(1,01,86) for 1 January 1986, for instance. You don't have to enter this since it requires up to 14 keystrokes; but it can be useful if you eventually wish to use the Arrange function to sort dates. It can save time to replicate a whole lot vertically and then edit one or two of the digits
C17		text — name of payee
D17		text — invoice reference
E17		VAT code
F17		posting code
H17		client code
I17		gross amount paid
J17	IF(E17=1,I17-(I17/1.15),0)	calculates the VAT element of what you paid, if it is VAT-rated (as indicated by a '1' in E17)
K17	IF(J17=0,0,I17-J17)	calculates net amount by subtracting VAT from gross — unless there isn't any VAT due (as indicated by J17 containing 0)
L17	IF(J17=0,I17)	copies the gross amount paid if the item is VAT-free
M17	"|	vertical rule
N17	IF(F17=1,I17,0)	copies the gross amount into here if the posting code (F17) is set appropriately
O17	IF(F17=2,I17,0)	copies the gross amount into here if the posting code is set appropriately
P17	IF(F17=3,I17,0)	copies the gross amount into here if the posting code is set appropriately
Q17	IF(F17=4,I17,0)	copies the gross amount into here if the posting code is set appropriately
R17	IF(F17=5,I17,0)	copies the gross amount into here if the posting code is set appropriately
S17	IF(F17=6,I17,0)	copies the gross amount into here if the posting code is set appropriately
T17	"|	vertical rule
U17	IF(H17=1,I17,0)	copies the gross amount here if the client assignment code (H17) is set appropriately
V17	IF(H17=2,I17,0)	copies the gross amount here if the client assignment code is set appropriately
W17	"|	vertical rule

Formatting

column A	text left
D2:D4	financial format
columns D:H	integer format
columns I:V	financial format
column B	width of two characters only
columns E:F	width of two characters only
column H	width of two characters only
global	Manual recalculation (saves time)

column is for when the thing is zero-rated: SuperCalc looks to see if there is anything in the VAT cell, and if there isn't it enters the gross sum in column L.

The postings bit works in the same way. SuperCalc looks to see if there is a number under the 'C' heading (from '1' to '6' in this example, covering Sundries to Travel). If there's a code there, it posts the gross sum into the appropriate column.

For instance, take a look at row 17 — our first entry. The equation under 'Sundries' in column N goes IF F17=1 (if the entry in the postings code column is '1', the code for sundries) then put I17 (that's the gross sum) into cell N17; and if the code isn't 1, put zero there instead. In the next column, for Car Expenses, you will see it tests for F17=2 — '2' being the code for your vehicle costs. And so it goes on.

And assigning expenditures to clients operates similarly; if you have entered a '1' or '2' under the CL heading in column H, the gross value is posted accordingly. If you have payees like Zola of Soho and don't want to post her, you can enter a '0' (or anything else) in the CL column.

The easy way

Well, that's it. Since this article is probably written in such a way that everyone will get it totally wrong, bunging me a disk and a fiver o.n.o. will get you the sample spreadsheet — with another similar one for checking up on how much your bank is ripping you off. Mail requests to me c/o the newsletter. ◆

We're interested in running more of this kind of practical SuperCalc application — so if you have produced a spreadsheet for financial, statistical or any other kind of endeavour that might have a general relevance, why not send it in to us?

Building the worksheet

Cell	Content	Comment
A1		a good place for file reference text, since if you use SuperCalc's 'See .CAL files' directory function you'll also be seeing the top line of text in that file. I also find if you put the filename right up there it is less easy to overwrite something else. For practical purposes you might call it something like 'JFM86' for the first VAT quarter of the year
C1	"Last update:	heading text
D1	TODAY	puts in today's date. If you have the spreadsheet set up for Manual recalculation, this won't alter until you hit the exclamation mark key
X1	"	blank stops the repeating rule
AC1	("We owe:")	selected as appropriate for use with D2
C2	IF(J9-J10>0,AC1,AC2)	the only equation which uses textual values. It compares the VAT inputs and outputs, and switches the comment from 'We owe' to 'They owe' accordingly. I think that's jolly clever, and it took forever to work it out on my own.
D2	ABS(J9-J10)	indicates how much is owed by subtracting VAT on inputs from VAT on outputs
AC2	("They owe:")	selected as appropriate for use with D2
U3	"ASSIGN TO:	heading text
X3	"	blank stops the repeating rule
C4	"Checksum:	heading text
D4	SUM(N10:S10)-I10	checks your entry simply by comparing the sum of N10 to S10 — the vertical totals — with the horizontal total at I10
X4	"	blank stops the repeating rule
A6	'-	repeated text for rule
X6	"	blank stops the repeating rule
A7	"SUMMARY	heading text
I7	"Gross	heading text
J7	"VAT	heading text
K7	"Net	heading text
L7	"Zero-rated	heading text
M7	"|	vertical rule
N7	"Sundries	heading text
O7	"Car	heading text
P7	"Office	heading text
Q7	"Subcontract	heading text
R7	"Ent'mnt	heading text
S7	"Travel	heading text
T7	"|	vertical rule
U7	"Client 1	heading text
V7	"Client 2	heading text
W7	"|	vertical rule
X7	"	blank stops the repeating rule
A8	'-	repeated text for rule
X8	"	blank stops the repeating rule
A9	"This quarter's OUTPUTS to date	heading text
I9		enter here the Gross value of your outputs (ie sales)
J9		enter here the VAT due on outputs
K9		enter here the net value of outputs
L9		enter here the value of VAT-free outputs

Review

Instant IBM compatibility

Alpha Disc's XF-800 reviewed

By Paul Lavin

The name of the game these days is IBM compatibility. If you've got it you can sell lots of computers: if you don't have it, you need to get it. Even Apricot has gained an appreciation for this maxim — albeit belatedly.

The IBM standard, such as it is, is a powerful force in the microcomputer marketplace. It has allowed software houses to introduce products knowing that there is a large and growing user base. Makers of add-on hardware can count on the fixed format of the IBM expansion slot pins.

Apricot has chosen to follow its own road. It uses robust 3.5in microfloppies holding 720K as opposed to IBM's fragile 5.25in floppies holding only 360K. Differences in internal architecture between Apricots and IBMs mean that even though they use quite similar operating systems, programs that will run happily on the IBM won't run at all on the Apricot.

Clone-compatibility

Apricot has been talking for some time about a product called Softclone which will run on the Xen to provide program compatibility. This bit of software is loaded into your Apricot before any other applications programs and sits resident in memory à la SideKick. When invoked, any software subsequently loaded looks around inside the machine and says to itself "Home Sweet IBM Home", and proceeds to do what it was designed to do. A neat bit of deception, that.

Supposedly this product is available in the States, bundled with the Xen, because IBM compatibility is crucial to acceptance of any new micro in that particular market. Unfortunately it's all so much vapourware as far as the rest of us are concerned — Softclone certainly isn't available in Britain at this time despite my alternately whinging at and threatening my Apricot dealer. (Stand by for late breaking news as I am endeavouring to beg, borrow or steal a copy on my next trip across the water.)

Softclone would provide an important type of compatibility. But it doesn't address the problem of disk format incompatibility. Trying to wedge a 5.25in floppy into the Apricot's diminutive orifice is not a healthy exercise for man or machine. Apricot has announced that it's solved this problem: the add-on 5.25in drive for the Xen will be available in November 1985. Er, January 1986. Oh, well, Spring '86 for certain. Maybe June?

Apricot had better wake up to the fact that an add-on 5.25in floppy drive has been available since March 1985 from Alpha Disc Ltd in Egham. The Alpha drive is compatible across the entire Apricot range from the humble F1e to the exalted Xen — in fact, a special cheaper model for the Xenophile is available, because that lovely foot-warmer power supply which feeds the Xen can be pressed into supplying the Alpha drive with the vital volts.

In the box

Alpha Disc has a collection of Apricot add-ons. The XF-800 is a box that can read and write all four common IBM PC formats (though *not* the PC/AT 1.2MB format); and you can also use it to FORMAT IBM disks yourself, albeit in only IBM format (the commonest). Alternatively (or as well) you can use it just to provide some extra disk capacity for your Apricot files.

What you get for your £495 (£395 for the Xen version) is a compact and surprisingly massive metal box measuring scarcely 2 x 7 x 12ins. The drive unit is attached to your pride and (?) joy via a ribbon cable that plugs into an card occupying one of your expansion slots. There is an illuminated on/off switch at the rear and a disk access light on the front panel.

Portable owners take note: that's your *only* expansion slot. With the Alpha drive you can say goodbye to extra memory, internal modem, or whatever. Other Apricot model users have expansion slots to burn.

The manual supplied by Alpha Disc is capable of human interpretation ... but only just. Alpha has tried too hard to get all of its myriad products between the same two covers to the detriment of the manual's useability. We're told that a revision is due shortly ... Fortunately the kit is well designed and an alert user won't go far wrong.

Installation is no more complicated than plugging in all the thingies (with the power off, please!) and running the software supplied. You will need to copy two files over to your working disks: XFIBM.SYS wakes up your Apricot to the fact that a new toy has just been attached and XFORMIBM.EXE provides the wherewithall to format your own 5.25in disks — you format them as 360KB IBM-type disks, equivalent to the more or less standard IBM PC with PC-DOS 2.

Notes

Row 17 is the first entry of an expense item. Replicate the formulae in J17:W17 down the whole worksheet so that subsequent entries are treated in the same way. As it stands, the SUMs in I10:V10 allow for entries to go down to the foot of the spreadsheet (row 254).

Some of the narrow columns are in there just to force a few vertical divisions, the others are just space-savers where the entry won't be more than one character long.

Set up the other column widths to suit yourself — the example uses 12 characters for the financial columns, for instance, because we have some large numbers and a pound sign to accommodate.

Add further clients if necessary in column W onwards by inserting additional columns.

The financial format isn't a problem for SuperCalc 1 or 2; you can just select /Format and opt for the '£' or '$' symbol. But that doesn't work in SuperCalc 3, and you'll have to define it (and SuperCalc 3 is the only version that puts in the pound signs, of course). Select /Format and 'D' for Define, then set up format no 1; exit from that exercise and use /Format to specify User-defined format no 1 for the relevant columns and cells.

Row 10 you have to enter manually. Of course, if you are running a sweet-shop you are going to have a lot more outputs. In this case, you would have to expand the whole thing and you had better stop reading all this. I run an export consultancy kind of business and don't sell Yorkies; and consequently I don't sell a great number of anything ...

The sample Purchase Ledger

	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	JAN 86	Last update:	3/ 5/1986									
2		They owe:	£270.23									
3												
4		Checksum:	£.00									
5												
6												
7	SUMMARY							Gross	VAT	Net	Zero-rated	
8												
9	This quarter's OUTPUTS to date:							£2500.00	£.00	£.00	£2500.00	
10	This quarter's INPUTS to date:							£2071.90	£270.23	£1801.50	£.17	
11												
12												
13												
14												
15	DATE	CLIENT	Invoice	V	C	Method	CL	Gross	VAT	Net	Zero-rated	
16												
17	1/ 1/86	Raymond Revue	3262	1	5	280426	2	£35.00	£4.57	£30.43	£.00	
18	1/ 1/86	Lex Garages	p325	1	2	cash	1	£23.00	£3.00	£20.00	£.00	
19	1/ 2/86	Post Office	3653	0	1	cash	2	£.17	£.00	£.00	£.17	
20	1/ 1/86	Bonusprint	AXE123	1	1	280427	2	£3.25	£.42	£2.83	£.00	
21	1/21/86	Dennis Jarrett	EXAMPLE	1	1	51515	1	£2010.48	£262.24	£1748.24	£.00	
22												

	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
1												
2												
3								ASSIGN TO:				
4												
5												
6												
7	Sundries	Car	Office	Subcontract	Ent'mnt	Travel		Client 1	Client 2			
8												
9												
10	£2013.90	£23.00	£.00	£.00	£35.00	£.00		£.00	£.00			
11												
12												
13												
14												
15	Sundries	Car	Office	Subcontract	Ent'mnt	Travel		Client 1	Client 2			
16												
17	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00	£35.00	£.00						
18	£.00	£23.00	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00						
19	£.17	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00						
20	£3.25	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00						
21	£2010.48	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00	£.00						
22												

	Z	AA	AB	AC
1			We owe:	
2			They owe:	
3				

Reviews

Read all about it?

Fat chance

By Chris Priest

- **The Apricot Personal Computer: by M de Pace (Collins, £8.95)**
- **Getting To Know Your Apricot: by Stephen Morris (Duckworth, £12.50)**
- **The Apricot: by Peter Gosling (Pitman, £3.95)**

Computer books are expensive, aren't they? The first two of these books give you 145 editorial pages each; the book by Peter Gosling represents the puniest value of all, being 110 editorial pages (thick paper, much empty space).

And only the Morris gives the impression that the author has actually used an Apricot for a reasonable period of time, although by now much of his book is out of date. (Page after page of fascinating information about the MANAGER, lots of helpful tips on the use of EDLIN, etc.)

I first read this book about a month after I had bought my Apricot PC, and in many respects I was an ideal customer for it: interested, willing to learn, still baffled by the manuals ... Even at that time I learnt only one thing from it I did not already know: that if you press the PRINT key you get a screen dump. Not much value from £12.50, I thought, particularly as the book hadn't warned me that pressing the PRINT key would make the inside of my Apricot produce a painful squawking noise, as if high-tension sparks were arcing across the CPU. (Has anyone else been bothered by this?)

The feeling I had from the book by Mr de Pace was that the Apricot was an assignment rather than something he felt impelled to write about. According to the book's prelims he has already published a few titles on other computers; and from clues in the text — generic passages on disk sectors, programming languages, operating systems, spreadsheets, and the like — it seemed probably to me that he took an easy route and went over material that was already familiar to him. That way he didn't waste his valuable time on matters that concern real Apricot users.

This again raises the question to which writers of computer books never seem to address themselves: who is the book *for*? Potential buyers? New users still wondering which cable to stick in which socket? Experienced users wishing to extend their facility with the machine?

All three of these books under review have the same vague feeling, the same blurred purpose, making half-hearted attempts to cover the need of every possible reader and in the process saying little of use to anyone. The de Pace book (on the face of it the most promising: major publisher, experienced author, recent publication date, and so on) is deeply unsatisfactory. Half of it is too general, and where the author turns to specifics he shares with manufacturers' manuals the sin of wishful thinking.

What this means is that he tells you what the software is *intended* to do ... and not what will *actually* happen when you try to use it. In most people's experience a wide gulf lies between the two, and if books on computers have a function I suspect that it would lie in this area. Pity no one has the wit to try it.

The worst book of the three is Peter Gosling's: and if you can conceive of anything as ridiculous as a computer book that makes you angry, this is it. What it amounts to is little more than a superficial rephrasing of the Apricot's manuals. It has no authority, no individual insight ... and no evidence of practical experience beyond a touching fascination with Basic.

If you doubt this sweeping generalization, I quickly point to the vast amount of space the author devotes to the unspeakably naff SuperPlanner (he'd know better if he had sat down and tried to use it), not to mention his coverage of SuperWriter (of the three books, incidentally, this is the only one that mentions this widely-used word processor in more than passing). Gosling's text is based almost entirely on SuperWriter's help screens, and thus is full of the same wishful thinking exhibited by the packages authors — without even being as comprehensive.

The copy of SuperWriter he was apparently lent to write this book was Version 1.00. And this was in 1985? With such an early implementation, not only would he not know about Execute files (to take the customary test example), he couldn't *run* them even if he did.

I submit the serious proposition that computer books of this sort are vandalism on the world's trees. Speaking from personal experience I know that publishers normally go to great pains to ensure that books they release are checked and edited with impressive attention to detail, usually commissioning readers' reports from other specialists. From the evidence of these perfunctory efforts, it seems to me that publishers of computer books must abdicate editorial responsibility to the presumed expertise of the authors they have commissioned. In at least two out of the three cases here they presumed wrong. ◆

In addition, you need to give the new drive a mention in your CONFIG.SYS file.

If it is not your in intention to leave the drive permanently attached to your machine, or if you have to share a single Alpha drive among several Apricots, conversion back and forth can be eased considerably by constructing two batch files and two alternate CONFIG.SYS files. CONFIG.ALT is the CONFIG.SYS file containing the device declaration for the Alpha drive; CONFIG.SAV is the repository for the original CONFIG.SYS script *sans* the Alpha drive device driver. As for the batch files, IBM.BAT contains the instruction 'COPY CONFIG.ALT CONFIG.SYS'; NOIBM.BAT says 'COPY CONFIG.SAV CONFIG.SYS'.

You run the appropriate batch file by typing its name (but not the BAT extension, of course) and then Reset the machine — don't forget to backup if you are using a RAMdisk!

This little procedure saves a lot of time when it comes time to play musical chairs with your Alpha drive. Thanks and a tip of the hat to Steve Cole, the sysop at the Gosport Apricot Bulletin Board for stimulating my neurones for the batch file/reset shuffle.

The Alpha drive can then be treated like any other respectable disk drive for reading or writing files, getting directories, accidentally deleting files, etc. It will be called drive B if you are using a single-disk machine or drive C if your Apricot originally had two drives. With an unobtrusive 'nerrp nerrrrp' the drive automatically detects any of the four existing IBM formats (who said 'standard'?).

In use

Except when doing creditable imitations of a bullfrog with laryngitis while accessing the disk, the Alpha drive is virtually silent in operation. It makes a welcome relief from my Apricot's turbine-like whine.

And for once a computer product performs as advertised. I have successfully used the Alpha drive to read disks created on an IBM with WordStar and ASCII files generated by Basic programs. My IBM has had the benefit of files I heretofore held on my Apricot disks. I have been using one for the past month and am delighted with it.

This drive is an excellent acquisition for anyone who has IBMoid equipment about.

Impoverished software houses across the land can rejoice. As promised, IBM programs will not run on the Apricot and *vice versa*; if everyone buys an Alpha drive, software sales may double because two versions of a program will be needed fully to exploit your new-found format compatibility. Such are the blessings of progress.

The limitations of the IBM disk format were quickly driven home. Those lovely shirtpocket-sized 3.5in disks hold twice as much as the ones used as IBM fodder. One would think that by only holding half the information that disk access time would be appreciably quicker. One would be wrong.

The 5.25in disks are much cheaper, however. And Alpha Disc also makes a special 800K formatting drive that could be very handy if you needed a cost-effective archiving engine. You could then have twice as many big floppies gathering dust on a shelf for a given investment. Or the same number of disks for half the investment. Take your pick.

If the shoe is on the other foot, so to speak, Alpha Disc can help as well: it makes a 3.5in add-on drive for the Big Blue juggernaut and its buddies. Instantly your fading-technology PC can have an up-to-date drive with 720K capacity — although at £295 plus VAT you would be well on your way to paying for a hard-drive card. A decision you might well congratulate yourself for until the heads crash while you are taking your once-a-year backup. *C'est la vie.*

If you are experiencing the single-drive blues with your Apricot F1, PC or Portable, Alpha Disc Ltd even does an add-on drive to bring you online to the wonderful world of twin drives. The admission ticket is £295 plus VAT. ◆

Alpha Disc XF-800

Description:	Add-on disk drive for any Apricot; reads and writes IBM formats, uses 5.25in disks
Supplier:	Alpha Disc Ltd
Address:	Unit 2 Thorpe Industrial Estate Crabtree Road Egham Surrey TW20 8RN
Telephone:	0784 35357
Price:	£495 (Xen version £395)
Configuration:	versions for all Apricots
Conclusion:	If you need IBM media compatibility, it does the job admirably.

A limited degree of paint-a-screen is available in dBASE III through SED, the screen editor that creates FORMAT files, but it is limited in scope and not fully integrated into the package.

For system developers, the main improvement in dBASE III Plus not found in the Apricot dBASE III is the ability to load and call assembler routines direct from the package while it is loaded. This should permit a further range of operations not possible with the more limited ability to run an executable program from disk, provided in dBASE III.

But the development in dBASE III Plus that's probably arousing the most interest in the IBM PC world is its networking capability. This includes full file and record locking; they are available both when using dBASE III commands interactively, and through stored sequences of commands. Three networks are catered for at present ... but unfortunately they do not include Point 32.

The complete set of new facilities in dBASE III Plus does represent a major enhancement over those in the 'standard' version of dBASE III. For Apricot users, who already have access to some of those enhancements, the major point of interest is likely to be how soon it will be possible to buy a networked version of dBASE III Plus for the Apricot — or rather for a network which supports Apricots. ◆

dBASE III Plus Commands

&&	Allows comment on same line as program text
@ x1,y1 TO x2,y2	Draws box round area delimited by co-ordinates given; if x1=x2 draws horizontal line, if y1=y2 draws vertical line
@ x1,y1 CLEAR TO x2,y2	Clears box/line delimited by co-ordinates given
CALL	Executes pre-LOADed binary module
CLEAR TYPEAHEAD	Empties type-ahead buffer
CREATE/MODIFY QUERY	Creates/amends query file (for showing results of specified query)
CREATE/MODIFY SCREEN	Creates or amends screen file and its associated format file
CREATE/MODIFY VIEW	Creates or amends view file (for displaying fields from two or more associated files)
DISPLAY HISTORY	Displays commands stored in HISTORY, one screenful at a time
EXPORT	Converts dBASE III Plus database and format file to PFS:FILE format
IMPORT	Converts PFS:FILE file to dBASE III Plus database, format and view file
LIST HISTORY	Lists commands stored in HISTORY
LOAD	Loads binary file module in memory
ON ERROR/ESC/KEY	Executes the specified command (may be DO) when a dBASE error occurs/ESC key is pressed/any other key is pressed
READ	Now modified to permit creation of multiple page screen forms when used in format files
RELEASE MODULE	Releases a binary file module
RESUME	Resumes execution of a SUSPENDed module
RETRY	Returns control to same command (rather than next command as RETURN does) after executing subroutine
SET CATALOG ON/OFF	Determines whether catalog in use is or is not updated
SET CATALOG TO	Opens or creates a catalog file, or closes current catalog
SET CENTURY ON/OFF	Toggles display of four- or two-digit year; four digit display permits entry of non-20th century dates
SET COLOR ON/OFF	Toggles between color and monochrome display modes
SET DATE	Sets date format; options include BRITISH, which is DD/MM/YY
SET DOHISTORY ON/OFF	Determines whether commands executed from program files are or are not recorded in HISTORY
SET FIELDS on/OFF	Determines whether all fields or only field-pool fields are used in commands such as EDIT or LIST
SET FIELDS TO	Adds fields to the field pool; together with SET FIELDS ON, provides shorthand for specifying subset of fields for use in sequence of commands such as LIST, EDIT, DISPLAY
SET FILTER TO FILE	Opens another query file and activates its stored filter
SET HISTORY TO	Specifies number of executed commands to be stored in HISTORY; permits `scroll back' through sequence, e.g. to check errors or when learning
SET MEMOWIDTH TO	Adjusts the output column width of memo fields
SET MESSAGE TO	Determines message appearing on message line in full-screen operations such as APPEND or EDIT
SET ORDER TO	Determines which, if any, open index file is master index without opening or closing indexes
SET STATUS ON/OFF	Engages/disengages status bar
SET TITLE ON/OFF	Turns catalog file title prompt on or off
SET TYPEAHEAD TO	Sets size of typeahead buffer
SET VIEW TO	Opens another VIEW file
SUSPEND	Halts execution of current command file or procedure

Notebook

dBASE III Plus

Previewed and compared

By Kathy Lang

Apricot users are sometimes heard to complain that American packages take an unconscionable time to be implemented on British computers, and their plaint is often justified. Occasionally, however, the wait is worth it, and brings unexpected benefits.

So it is with dBASE III, Ashton Tate's up-market version of the granddaddy of all data management systems dBASE II.

dBASE III was originally released in autumn 1984 for the IBM PC and close compatibles. At the time, a version for the Apricot was promised "very soon"; but development was in the event very slow — caused mainly, so rumour had it, by a drawing in of horns at Ashton Tate following George Tate's death. In the event, the next release was an enhanced version of dBASE III specifically for software developers: called the Developer's Release, this was bundled with copies of the run-time system.

Ashton Tate has now released another version of dBASE III under the name dBASE III Plus. dBASE III Plus has enhancements in three main areas. First, it includes as standard all the added features of the Developer's Release. Second, it has some useful improvements that will benefit novice users and those who want to get as far as possible before learning to use the full command language. The third area of improvement is a networking capability.

The tables show a summary of the main additional commands and functions. Other enhancements include a new screen image for ASSIST, the menu-driven front-end; and there is also a new applications generator, written in dBASE III Plus, to permit the design of simple systems without a detailed knowledge of dBASE III Plus itself.

For Apricot users, though, the news is bad. Ashton Tate in the UK, in the person of MD Carey Hobbs, is apparently very optimistic about its implementation on the Apricot; but dBASE III Plus is as yet available only on the IBM PC and close compatibles.

The *good* news is that just for once many Apricot users may not mind too much — the Apricot version of dBASE III already includes the facilities of the Developer's Release (apart from the run-time system). The new Plus commands and functions that are already included in the Apricot version are indicated in the table.

What of the remainder? Well, the main difference between the 'user image' of ASSIST on the Apricot and in dBASE III Plus is in the use of pull-down menus, well-known to Framework users. I wouldn't lose much sleep over the absence of these; but then I rarely use ASSIST anyway, except for exploring unusual parts of the package or when writing reviews.

dBASE III Plus Functions

All these functions except ERROR and MESSAGE are available in the Developer's Release.

ABS()	Absolute value of number
DBF()	Name of data file
DISKSPACE()	Amount of free space on disk
ERROR()	dBASE error code number
FIELDS()	Names of field in data file
FKLABEL()	Names of function keys
FKMAX()	Number of function keys
FOUND()	Logical result of data base search
GETENV()	MS-DOS environment variables
IIF()	Immediate IF function
INKEY()	Last key pressed during program execution
ISALPHA()	Tests for a letter input
ISCOLOR()	Tests for color mode
ISLOWER()	Tests for lower case input
ISUPPER()	Tests for upper case input
LEFT()	Result of substring search from left
LTRIM()	Character string with leading blanks removed
LUPDATE()	Date file was last updated
MAX()	Greater of two values
MESSAGE()	Message string of dBASE error
MIN()	Lesser of two values
MOD()	Modulus of division operation
NDX()	Names of open index files
OS()	Name of operating system
READKEY()	Key last pressed during full-screen editing
RECCOUNT()	Number of records in database
RECSIZE()	Size of database record
REPLICATE()	Repeats character string specified number of times
RIGHT()	Result of substring search from right
RTRIM()	Trims trailing blanks (same as TRIM)
STUFF()	String with portion replaced
TRANSFORM()	Converted character/number in DISPLAY, LIST, REPORT, REPLACE
VERSION()	dBASE III Plus version name

A more important enhancement in dBASE III Plus that's missing in the current Apricot version is the set of commands which enable you to use the 'paint-a-screen' approach with question-and-answer techniques to design screens easily. This applies especially to the group of VIEW commands, which aid the use of sets of related files — an area long neglected in the dBASE family. (It's not that earlier releases stop you manipulating related files, it's just that VIEW makes it a good deal easier.)

APRICOT XEN	Price	Product code
■ **Xen FD:**		
512KB RAM, twin 720K disks	£2099	XN51204
■ **Xen HD:**		
1MB RAM, 20MB hard disk	£3099	XN10020
Inclusive software — MS-Windows, MS-Write, MS-Paint, Applets, MS-DOS 3.11, GW-BASIC interpreter, ASYNC Comms, IBM Emulator		
■ **Monitors**		
12in mono: green phosphor, 800x400	£250	XM00012GP
... adaptor	£145	XB00001HG
12in mono: white phosphor, 800x400	£395	XM00012PW
... adaptor	£145	XB00001HP
12in colour: 640x200	£495	XM00012CM
... adaptor	£195	XB00002CM
12in colour: 640x350	£695	XM00012CH
... adaptor	£295	XB00003CH
■ **Expansion options**		
20MB internal hard disk	£995	XU00020
XP IBM-compatible expansion box	£199	XP00001
External 5.25in Floppy Disk	£299	XD00002
Xen-COM Pack — telephone, modem, software	£395	XB00010
80287 Maths Co-Processor	£295	XB80287
256K RAM Board	£195	AB25600
512K RAM Board	£295	AB51200
Mouse with cable	£99	AA0004S

NETWORKS	Price	Product code
■ **32/20 File Server:**		
512K RAM, 20MB disk	£3999	AT51220
Inclusive software: Microsoft Network software and utilities		
■ **Network terminals:**		
F1 — 256K RAM, 720K disk, mouse, 9in mono monitor, ACTIVITY, SKETCH, DIARY, GSX, GW-BASIC interpreter, ASYNC Comms, IBM emulator	£799	ZXFC25601
Network Board and Tap Box	£195	AB0020
Network Board with 256K RAM and Tap Box	£395	AB256LB
■ **Expansion options**		
MX80 [80MB External hard disk for 32/20]	£3495	MX00080
Bank tape streamer with 100MB cartridge	£1799	NA00001
Network Cable (500ft reel)	£70	NC000100

Note: These prices are those being quoted on the relevant section of Apricot's Micromail section of Telecom Gold. So theoretically they should be more up to date than the kind of pricelists stocked by dealers. But we wouldn't count on it; besides, there's quite of lot of discounting going on ... so keep your eyes peeled! ◆

Prices

Apricot's RRPs

...and just how much did YOU pay?

We've had a number of requests for an occasional list of current Apricot prices. These are the official ex-VAT Recommended Retail Prices as at 12 March 1986.

APRICOT Xi	Price	Product code
■ **Apricot Xi FD** [formerly Apricot PC]: 512K RAM, twin 720K disks	£1799	AC51204
■ **Apricot Xi HD** [formerly Apricot Xi]: 512K RAM, 720K disk, 10MB hard disk	£2799	AX51210
Inclusive software — ACTIVITY, SKETCH, DIARY, MS-DOS 2.11 (run-time version including GSX graphics system extension), ASYNC Comms, IBM PC Emulator, GW-BASIC interpreter		
■ **Monitors**		
9in mono [white case]	£200	AM00010S
9in mono [black case]	£200	AM00020B
12in mono [white case]	£250	AM00030S
10in colour [white case] *	£395	CM00010S
10in colour [black case] *	£395	CM00010B
* *... requires 7220 colour board*		
■ **Expansion options**		
MX10 External 10 MB hard disk [white case]	£899	MX00010FS
MX10 [black case]	£899	MX00010HB
MX Power Unit [required for MX10]	£99	MXPS240
8087 Maths Co-Processor Kit	£245	AB80870
256KB RAM Board	£195	AB25600
512KB RAM Board	£295	AB51200
Mouse with cable	£99	AA0004S

APRICOT COLLECTION	Price	Product code
■ F2 — 512K RAM, two 720K disk drives, Writer 22 printer, cordless Mouse		
... and 9in mono monitor	£1499	FFS51204
... and 12in mono monitor	£1549	
... and 10in colour monitor	£1749	
■ F10 — 512K RAM, 720K disk drive, 10MB hard disk, Writer 22, cordless Mouse		
... and 9in mono monitor	£1999	FX51210
... and 12in mono monitor	£2049	
... and 10in colour monitor	£2249	
Inclusive software: GEM Desktop, GEM Write, GEM Paint, GEM Utilities, MS-DOS 2.11 (including GSX), GW-BASIC interpreter, ASYNC Comms, IBM Emulator		
■ **Additional monitors**		
9in mono	£200	FM00009T
12in mono	£250	FM00012T
10in colour	£395	CM00010S
■ **Expansion options**		
MX10 for F1, F2	£899	MX00010FS
MX10 for F10	£899	MX00010HS
MX Twin	£149	MX00090
MX Power Unit [required for MX10 and MX Twin]	£99	MXPS240
TV Adaptor kit	£30	AA00002
256K RAM Board	£195	AB25600
512K RAM Board	£295	AB51200

The Workshop

SuperWriter Mail-Merge

Instant addressing via XQT files

By Lindsay Doyle

Wouldn't it be nice if you had an address file which you could use from within SuperWriter to insert a selected name and address automatically into a letter or to address envelopes?

Well, all the necessary functions do exist: they are hidden deep in the uncharted interior of my favourite word processor, but I shall describe two XQT files to do the job.

The 'Include Document' function

SuperWriter has a function called 'Include Document' — you'll find it under 'Library File Access' under 'Utilities' under 'Main Menu', and it is treated in my edition of the *SuperWriter Users Guide* (sic) on pages 116-119.

Unlike the 'ESC I' function, 'Include Document' has an option called 'Key Sections'; this is designed to allow you to select by keyword one piece from a file made up of a number of sections of boilerplate-type text (*'boilerplating' is an Americanism for the word processing function you might see referred to as 'standard paragraphs': you create and store chunks of text, then select particular lumps to be put together to make your document — Ed*). The selected piece can then be incorporated in the working document at the cursor position.

In the SuperWriter boilerplate text file, each such piece of text must start with the dim exclamation mark achieved by ^Q 2F or by MicroScreen INSERT MARK F. The keyword consists of anything you enter between the dim exclamation mark and the next Return (and if you think that *my* description is obscure, try reading the one in the manual).

If you think of such a piece of text as a record in an address file, it means that the records can be unstructured: each can be any length and any format.

Further, when it comes to finding the desired record, SuperWriter is insensitive to upper or lower case; nor does it require the use of '*' to specify an abbreviation. In other words, the keyword 'L' will find 'Lindsay', 'Lefkowitz' and 'llewellyn'; 'Ll' will find 'llewellyn' only.

Producing an address file

To generate your address file, simply use SuperWriter to copy out your old shoebox card index into a file. I call mine C-AD for Correspondence Addresses, and I have another called X-AD for Christmas Card addresses. Start each record with the dim exclamation mark and your choice of keyword on the first line, end each line with a Return, and leave one line between records.

Here's a sample of two adjacent records.

```
<dim !>DOYLEC
A Conan Doyle, Esq
Baskerville House
Baker Street
London NW1

<dim !>DOYLEL
Mr Lindsay Doyle
123 S. 456th Street
Kalamazoo
MI 12345
USA
```

To change or delete a record or to enter a new record in alphabetical order, you can just call up C-AD on SuperWriter and edit away.

Calling up a record

How can you select an address record from such a file and incorporate it in your letter or on your envelope?

It can be done manually, by a series of steps similar in complexity to getting the boat ready for action in the ZORK 1 adventure game. Alternatively it can be done with an Execute file; and this is what we will now consider.

First, however, I'll digress to explain how I use SuperWriter and why this particular set of functions is desirable for me.

I use SuperWriter for articles and letters as well as for writing books (under a pseudonym which shall be nameless). For each type of task I have one or more formats prepared as SuperWriter files.

There are sets called 1LET, 2LET, 3LET, and so on: those are different formats for letter-writing. One generates a business letterhead, another a home letterhead; and there are various choices of font and emphasis, depending on the intended use. For example, one uses emphasised superscript to get the absolute maximum of text on an air-letter form.

There are also sets called 1MAN, 2MAN, 3MAN, etc — manuscript formats to suit the varying

requirements of various magazine editors who still don't accept articles on disk.

To use any one of these formats, I enter SuperWriter, make a new file with the desired subject name, and then use ESC I 2LET (for example) to insert the appropriate format instructions at the top of the letter. When invoked at print time, these will reset the printer: set margins: select degree of emphasis: write the letterhead: and write the date — all without the intervention of any sentient entity.

The business letter even leaves space for the recipient's address and then types in "Dear Sir" followed by Return and a Tab.

The mail-merge XQT file

Having called up a format and inserted it at the top of my letter, I now want to enter the recipient's address, selected from my address file. It should go into the spot where the cursor has been left, below the date and above the salutation (or any other place that you wish).

Here is an Execute file to do this. Let's call it ADR.XQT; the odd capitalisations in the left-hand column are taken from the SuperWriter screens without change, so don't blame the typesetter.

Using ADR.XQT

What to do	What to type
1. Ensure that the cursor is at the point in text where the address is to be inserted	
2. Run ADR.XQT	ESC X ADR
3. Get to 'Main Menu'	^[<Return>
4. Select 'UTILITIES'	^K <Return>
5. Select 'LIBRARY'	<Return>
6. Select 'Include'	^J <Return>
7. Select 'Specify Include file'	<Return>
8. Enter name of address file	A:C-AD <Return>

At this point, SuperWriter has in memory both the working document and the address file. C-AD must be on disk A because of a bug which appears to prevent you from accessing B more than once.

9.	Select 'Include Keyed section'	^J ^J ^J <Return>
10.	Return control to keyboard	&
11.	Enter keyword	<Return>
12.	Display a record	
13.	Select 'Accept' or 'Skip' (don't use 'Quit')	
14.	Return control to ADR.XQT	&
15.	Revert to 'Main Menu' and 'Edit' mode, display text for further additions	^[^[^[<Return>

At the end of step 12, the selected keyword and its record is displayed and you are asked to 'Accept', 'Skip', or 'Quit'. You're temporarily out of the .XQT file until you press the '&' key.

If you 'Accept' by pressing Return, the address will be entered at the cursor in your working document. Then press '&' (don't take any of the screen options which appear to be being offered); this will return you to the .XQT file which will terminate itself by displaying the working file again, this time with the selected address inserted.

Using NV.XQT

What to do	What to type
1. Load NV	
2. Run NV.XQT	ESC X NV
3. Delete old address record	^[D B Y
4. Go to end of NV and add block marker	^B ^[/ ^L
5. Go to 'Main Menu'	^[<Return>
6. Select 'UTILITIES'	^K <Return>
7. Select 'LIBRARY'	<Return>
8. Select 'Include'	^J <Return>
9. Select 'Specify Include file'	<Return>
10. Enter name of address file	A:C-AD <Return>
11. Select 'Include Keyed section'	^J ^J ^J <Return>
12. Return control to keyboard	&
13. Enters keyword	<Return>
14. Display a record	
15. Select 'Accept' or 'Skip' (don't use 'Quit')	
16. Return control to NV.XQT	&
17. Select 'Edit' and display NV	^[^[^[<Return>
18. Go to end of NV and add block marker	^B ^[/
19. Return control to keyboard	&
20. Edit if desired	
21. Return control to NV.XQT	&
22. Go to 'Main Menu'	^[<Return>
23. Select 'PRINT'	^J ^J <Return>
24. Select 'Format and PRINT'	<Return>
25. Display NV	^[
26. Repeat on '&'	& ^[X NV <Return>

On the other hand, if you select the 'Skip' option by pressing the Space bar, this means that you didn't want the record that your keyword first selected — but perhaps you wanted to see the next selection or perhaps you wanted to enter a different keyword. You will find yourself in the 'Include Document Menu', where these choices are available as 'Include Next Section' or 'Include Keyed Section'. You can mess around in this menu as long as you like. When you are through, press the '&' key. (Don't use the ESC key or the 'Quit' option.)

Often you'll want to address an envelope for a letter you have just completed. Sometimes, on the other hand, the job at hand may consist simply of

addressing envelopes using all or selected records from the address file, as in sending Christmas cards.

The Execute file NV.XQT provides for either case. It is used with NV, a file you created that initially contains the commands to set up the printer for the desired envelope format. Each time NV is used, it has the previous address deleted and the newly-selected address record added to it for printout purposes. The format commands remain and can be changed by you from time to time as desired.

The format file NV

```
\LM 50, LW 30, PL 0
\* Change above envelope format line to suit
your requirements.
\*
\* Ignore old address record below, which
will be erased.
\*
\* To select an address the first time,
enter `ESC XNV.'
\* Thereafter, enter `&' to repeat.
\*
\* When selected address record appears
below, you may edit it,
\* then press `&' to print.
<dim slash> dummy record <dim slash>
```

Summary and comments

To select an address from a file called C-AD and enter it into the text of a letter, use ADR.XQT. Because of that bug in SuperWriter, the address file C-AD *must* be on the disk in drive A.

To select an address and print it directly on to an envelope, load NV and call NV.XQT. Again, C-AD *must* be present on disk A.

The XQT files here are printed with spaces between the characters and with gaps in the lines for clarity: *don't use spaces when entering them from the keyboard.*

On the other hand, *do* end each line with a Return (shown as <Return>) — the Return is part of the command. If no <Return> is shown, just continue entering the commands on the same line.

Avoid trouble by not using '&' in your text.

You can enter a record anywhere in the text that you leave the cursor. It will expand the text and insert itself.

You can include telephone numbers and comments in your address record, but delete them from your text before saving it. You can also add a line to each record which gives your preferred salutation — for example:

```
Mr. George Binkson
987 E. Westerly Road
North Southampton

Dear Binkie,
```

You can use this scheme (or part of it) for *any* information which can be accessed by a single keyword — not just addresses. ◆

Execute files

For those who haven't yet been exposed to them, files with the XQT suffix contain a series of key-press commands. So calling an XQT file is the equivalent of pressing that series of keys yourself — though the XQT file will be much faster and not prone to keying errors.

These XQT files can be called up from within SuperWriter's Edit mode by the command ESC X FILENAME (*without* the XQT suffix, you'll note).

You can include a good deal in an XQT file. In addition to entering all the normal alphanumeric characters and the control and escape keys, you can stop the action, call on the user to make a keyboard entry, and then continue.

The 'continue' key, '&', can also be used as a 'restart' control; having once entered and exited ESC XTHISFILE, pressing '&' will re-enter it without extra keystrokes. This technique is used in NV.XQT.

Epsons and envelopes

Yes, it is possible to address envelopes on the Epson FX-80 *without* smudging them and *without* removing the sprocketed paper.

Pull the envelope over the edge of your desk to give it a slight curl. Then, with the printing head at the left, insert the envelope into the printer from the rear, under the paper and roller at the right side so as to avoid the ribbon. Bring the envelope up at the front behind the raised scale bar to the desired printing height. Set the scale bar down to its working position. Then slide the envelope to the left, align its edge with the paper perforation line and the end of the scale, and engage the roller by pressing the release lever away from you.

Remember to disengage the roller to remove the envelope after printing.

Review

Make more of your hard disk

Infosoft's SPLIT reviewed

By Tony Weyman

SpliT (with a capital T) is a very interesting new facility for the Apricot hard disk user. Its suppliers claim that SpliT saves disk space and ADDUP, supplied with SpliT, will scan your hard disk and inform you of the exact saving you will make. This was the readout from my 10MB disk:

```
Total data in files is 4979886 bytes
Space taken up on this drive is 6103040 bytes
Space used if partitioned would be 5070336 bytes
Current wastage on drive is 19% (1123154 bytes)
Wastage on partitioning would be 2% (90450 bytes)
```

That looks like a saving of a megabyte or more. Pretty impressive, but there is no indication as to how this is calculated and whether it takes into account redundant subdirectory overheads versus new SpliT overheads.

SpliT personality

Once installed, SpliT is simplicity to use — in fact it is quite invisible to the user. Installation requires two steps. First, a line is added to the CONFIG.SYS file ...

```
DEVICE=PART.SYS
```

... and the file PART.SYS must be copied on to the root directory of the hard disk.

Second, partition(s) are created on the disk with the command ...

```
MAKEDISK A: nnnn
```

... where nnnn is the partition size in kilobytes. The instructions supplied are quite precise and should cause no problem to the average user. Partitions are allocated as files called A:\PARTITIO.Nnn where nn is the partition number. (If you list the disk DIRectory to check if MAKEDISK has worked, the files do not appear as they are hidden system files: CHKDSK with the /V (verbose) switch will put your mind at rest.

Each partition works like a separate disk drive and each 'disk' can have its own label. The partitions are treated in the same way as disks — you can log into them; you can copy files to and from them, both from unpartitioned areas of disk and from other partitions; disk utilities and MS-DOS commands such as DIR, DEL, SWEEP (available on DEALS FOR READERS disk AP003 and well worth getting) work as you would expect them to.

I used SpliT with FAST, DPATH, the internal modem (which needs MODEMAPR.SYS), the RAMdisk (RAMDISK.SYS), and other resident utilities — all without a hitch. A note of caution on RAMdisk, however: if PART.SYS is written into CONFIG.SYS *before* RAMDISK.SYS, the RAMdisk is no longer Drive C. Instead it's referenced by the first available letter after the partition 'drives'.

SpliT the difference

PART.SYS creates a new environment in which MS-DOS regards the hard disk as a number of virtual separate disks. The really clever bit is changing the cluster size to a single 512-byte sector (see my article in APRICOT FILE Release 1.5 on unDELeting for more about what this means).

This is an enormous saving on small files as they are no longer written to disk in chunks of 4,096 bytes (eight sectors) each. The saving on large files is less impressive as the maximum saving on any one file is 3,584 bytes — on a 50K file that's just seven per cent. The only reason I use a hard disk machine is because I need on-line access to large database files of 2MB to 3MB, and SpliT won't help these very much.

Further, there's a definite *dis*advantage with SpliT in that the SpliT partition sizes are fixed (though not permanently — they can be expanded without loss of data, but not while you're in the middle of another application!). Subdirectory sizes are allocated dynamically, meaning they expand automatically as the need arises (up to the maximum disk capacity). A full partition will return an MS-DOS 'disk full' error message and get the user into a temporary jam.

In theory file transfers and loading into memory should take longer than usual as more accesses will be needed but I didn't notice any delay.

SpliT decision

Having noted some of the drawbacks I believe the swings still outweigh the roundabouts and can see a definite place for SpliT if it's used wisely. In particular, it allows programs that have not been written to take advantage of MS-DOS subdirectories to access data files in other partitions on the hard disk (among them dBASE II, MSBASIC, SuperWriter, and lots more). Most, if not all, application programs will permit data files to be placed on a different disk drive from the program: SpliT fools them into thinking they are.

I also found SpliT very useful for creating medium-term storage areas for copying files with SWEEP while a floppy wasn't handy in drive B — just try copying to another subdirectory with SWEEP!

Special partitions could be created to hold all those small batch files and utilities. If these are set up *after* the file sizes are known, optimum usage of SpliT is obtained for the partitions are created to the exact sizes to hold these files and they will never require instant expansion.

On a 20MB disk, SpliT could be even more useful — the space saving should be much greater. With 16 sectors (8,192 bytes) per cluster, it could save 7,680 bytes on a small file ...

There are usually many small files (especially of the BAT variety) on hard disks; the saving in disk space may be well worth the £49 that OmrC asks for SpliT (Infosoft wrote it, OmrC sells it). I understand that APRICOT FILE is negotiating a special discount on DEALS FOR READERS, too, so it may be even better value by the time you read this report ... (*Yes, we have SpliT in the list as from this issue — Ed*) ◆

SpliT

Description:	Utility that allows multiple 'drives' to be set up on an Apricot hard disk system.
Supplier:	OmrC Computers Ltd
Address:	Morah House Tilford Road Hindhead Surrey GU26 6RH
Telephone:	042 873 5255
Price:	£49
Configuration:	Apricot Xi
Conclusion:	Potentially useful, cheap — RECOMMENDED

Writers in this issue

Dennis Jarrett is Editor of the newsletter. He was formerly the editor of 16 BIT COMPUTING, and his magazine credits before that include being founder- editor of OLIVETTI USER, COMMODORE USER, OFFICE AUTOMATION REPORT, PRACTICAL COMPUTING and WHICH COMPUTER? Books include THE IBM PC BOOK (not very thick), THE SIRIUS/VICTOR 9000 BOOK (very much thicker), THE ELECTRONIC OFFICE — A MANAGEMENT GUIDE (fairly thick), three titles about Commodore home computers (one thick, one a bit thick, one pseudonymous), and THE GOOD COMPUTING GUIDE (*really* thick and very cheap too at £2.95 — or £3.00 inc P&P from DEALS FOR READERS).

Lindsay Doyle escaped from the dungeons of MICROCOMPUTER PRINTOUT in the confusion following that magazine's demise, and had contributed just one piece to 16 BIT COMPUTING before that magazine also crashed. But we don't hold that against him: he now resides in a specially-furnished cell deep beneath the editorial offices of APRICOT FILE, and there he is motivated by the promise of occasional bread and water to generate a series of articles about using the Apricot PC and Xi.

Kathy Lang is a partner in Mayflower Computing Consultants, a firm which specialises in independent advice on word processing and small business applications. She was one of the mainstays of 16 BIT COMPUTING; she has also been published widely in the computer and business press, regularly takes part in conferences and seminars (and is an excellent speaker), and has a number of books in print.

David St John Wallis is a sort of psychologist who runs an export marketing consultancy, sells bits and pieces for the Apricot, and writes *enourmously* thick marketing books about the developing world which don't sell very well. He says the greatest achievements of his 44 years were getting a disk volume named after him and proposing to the Governor of Puerto Rico. We don't know if he was accepted.

Christopher Priest is the second half of Ansible Information — the first half being APRICOT FILE's columnist David Langford. In real life he is another novelist (latest book: *The Glamour*, published by Abacus — free plug); he wandered accidentally into the world of computer software, and doesn't regret it at all. Sometimes he dreams about wandering out again and writing another book.

Paul Lavin is an American who succumbed to the wiles of an English woman and the siren song of the long British raspberry season over three years ago. He is a legal consultant and has recently renewed his love affair with computeroid machines. Unable to get beyond the third attack wave in *Space Invaders*, he has become conversant with the world of business software and the excruciating application of the Data Protection Act to the unsuspecting small business computer user.

Bargains

Deals For Readers

This is our mail-order section, exclusively for readers of APRICOT FILE. **In the** DEALS FOR READERS **lists you'll find ...**

- **public domain software,** mostly games and utilities that aren't easy to obtain elsewhere — and many of these are unique to APRICOT FILE
- **deals on software,** typically useful items that aren't widely available
- **demo disks** for packages that we regard as pretty good
- **books,** mostly by contributors.

Each issue has new entries and (occasionally) price changes. So keep looking!

How to order

Simple: just send us a note or a purchase order with the item's name and the reference number as quoted in the list. We will normally be able to process orders within two working days.

Note that for orders totalling less than £50 we can only accept prepayments and only in Sterling, so a cheque or money order (made out to "TP GROUP") *must* accompany your order.

We can accept purchase orders *only* from companies and other organisations, and *only* if you want goods totalling more than £50. But if it's at all possible we would prefer cash with order — we just aren't big enough to provide the effort of chasing invoices and to cover the shortfall between despatch and delivery.

The prices quoted include VAT where applicable and despatch. Your order will arrive with a VAT invoice/receipt.

Overseas orders

Orders from outside the British Isles are at the same price. Anything we send abroad is free of the VAT sales tax, and since that 15 per cent levy just about approximates to the extra cost of overseas postage we thought we might as well simplify things.

This may however mean that bulky items or long-distance despatch will go by the postage rate that most closely fits the 15 per cent allowance — and sea mail can be interminable. So if you want to ensure swift despatch, or if there's any doubt, ask us to quote ...

Contribute!

We're always looking for contributions to further £15 disks. So if you've written something — a game, a utility, a helpful batch file — why not share it with other readers? And if the ideas and techniques therein would make a useful mini-article for the newsletter, we'd certainly be interested in printing it.

Public Domain Disks

These disks contain public domain programs and text files which we have sorted, selected and tested. In many cases we have debugged, amended and documented the material too.

■■■ NEW ■■■

Public Domain Library

Order no:	**AP000**
Price:	**£5**

In response to popular demand — all the contents files for all our Public Domain disks for a fiver.

Apricot Disk No. 1

Order no:	**AP001**
Price:	**£15**

Over 40 files. Highlights now include:
AUTOEXEC with an improved prompt
SDIR and FDIR sorted-directory utilities
VDEL and DELQ selective DELetes
WAIT and ASK two batch file commands, more useful than PAUSE
GRAFCHAR define your own characters
ESCAPES list of Escape codes for Sirius and Apricot
OTHELLO good version of the board game
LEADTRAK and ACCTRACK two sales lead management systems

Apricot Disk No. 2

Order no:	**AP002**
Price:	**£15**

Includes 79 files. Highlights:
ALTER and CHMOD change file attributes
BASICKEYS single key entry of Basic commands
DEBUG the Apricot version
EPSON sets alternative print modes
KNEW copies only new files
MENU easy batch-file menu system
MOVE moves files from one subdirectory to another
RENDIR rename subdirectories
SORTDISK sorts directories
TREEDIR displays a DIRectory of all files on a disk — in their subdirectories
WHEREIS searches disk subdirectories for named file(s)

Apricot Disk No. 3

Order no:	**AP003**
Price:	**£15**

A bumper bundle. Highlights:
SWEEP all-purpose file housekeeper
SCAVEN finds and locks out bad sectors
MEMDUMP browse through memory
TURBOKEY key redefinition for aficionados of Turbo Pascal
SUPERWRITER XQT FILES a useful clutch of macros

Apricot Disk No. 4

Order no:	**AP007**
Price:	**£15**

More indispensible tools and utilities. Highlights:
ASMGEN dissassembler
132-column screen configurator
Memory speed test benchmarks
Improved version of SETUP
DIARY year-planner

LABEL address label printer
BANNER prints fancy letterheads on daisywheel printer

Apricot Disk No 5

Order no:	AP009
Price:	£15

A total of 38 files plus full documentation — includes John Lyth's imaginative MS-DOS menu front end, a suite of dBASE II programs to control your bank account, CHECKER to verify inputting in MSBASIC, DEBUG.PAS, a clutch of Spellbinder utilities, IBMBASIC (BASICA to MSBASIC converter) ... and much, much more!

GSX User's Disk

Order no:	AP005
Price:	£15

The complete GSX tutorial from Lindsay Doyle — includes a library of ready-to-use Basic subroutines that drive GSX, a set of five printable Workshops in text form, many graphics demo programs, and Lindsay's improved HEXPAWN game IMPHEX.

Games No. 1

Order no:	AP004
Price:	£15

Includes the very tough flight simulator 747SIM (fly your own Jumbo) plus old favourites like AWARI, TOWERS OF HANOI, and many more besides. A very full disk

Games No. 2

Order no:	AP006
Price:	£15

Includes CLEWDO (solve the mystery), TRUCKER (get a cargo across the States on time), and some games for the younger Apricot user (SPELL and HANGMAN). Plus for the first time a GWBASIC version of STARTREK (noises and all) and BACKGAMMON. Some games unsuitable for F Series and Portables.

Games No. 3

Order no:	AP008
Price:	£15

Only two games on this disk, but both excellent and quite realistic entertainments. GREAT BRITAIN LTD is a political-economic simulation — be Prime Minister, balance the books, win the election if you can. And INHERITANCE is an interesting investment/gambling game; you could get hooked on both!

GWBASIC Games

Order no:	AP010
Price:	£15

A miscellany of graphics-based games, some old and some new (some borrowed and some blue) — including some special sound effects and graphics demos. Highlights: OPERATOR (try running a large mainframe computer system), hunt for oil with WILDCAT, depress yourself with NUKE-LA and ALIEN .

Chess

Order no:	AP016
Price:	£15

Only three games — but what games! For the first time on an Apricot, a challenging public domain chess game with superb hi-res graphics — even supports an 8087 if you have one. As an hors d'oeuvre we include a version of PACMAN, for dessert a golf game. A self-booting disk with a free bonus: the latest version of MS-DOS with BIOS 3.1. Not for F Series or Portables.

Programmer's Disk 1

Order no:	AP011
Price:	£15

Our first disk for programming fans. Star attraction is a public domain implemenation of LISP Falled XLISP; plus fifteen Turbo Pascal routines and utilities, a C cross referencer, an MS-BASIC programmers' toolbox, a program line indenter and useful batch file utilities.

Programmer's Disk 2

Order no:	AP012
Price:	£15

Features BSU, a program to unprotect protected MSBASIC programs; plus Ron Cain's Small C compiler, a trio of cross-referencers for Basic and C, an ASCII-to-Hex converter, a GWBASIC core dumper, the appendix that Microsoft omitted from the MACRO-86 manual, and a C source code checker.

Lotus 1-2-3 Disk No 1

Order no:	AP013
Price:	£15

No less than 25 WKS templates for 1-2-3, including the Asterix suite of business worksheets, and the macro library MACLIB.WKS

Lotus 1-2-3 Disk No 2

Order no:	AP014
Price:	£15

A heap of technical notes and external utilities for 1-2-3 plus seven WKS files including an address label macro and PRNTMENU.WKS to manipulate your Epson printer.

■■■ NEW ■■■

PC File III

Order no:	AP015
Price:	£15

Our first Public Domain application program — an Apricot version of the well-known general-purpose database/filing package. Menu-driven, great documentation (over 100K of it on the disk), superb power and speed, very easy to use; handles everything from mailing labels to multi-page reports. Exchange data with 1-2-3, MailMerge, many other WP and spreadsheet programs. Indexing on all fields, searches includes 'soundex', multiple selection criteria ... Complete with the latest IBM emulator (which is required!).

Demo Disks

Try before you buy? Here's your opportunity to check out our selection of some of the best Apricot packages — and to do so without a salesman hassling you to write a cheque for them.

BusiPost

Order no:	AD002
Price:	£15

British mailing list package — fast and flexible. Not available for the Apricot F Series and Portables.

Letterer-Set

Order no:	AD005
Price:	£15

Utility that lets you print on any dot-matrix printer any typeface that can be displayed on your Apricot screen.

MENUGEN

Order no:	AD007
Price:	£15

Here at last! A demo for this fine menu-creation utility — menu selections can run programs, call other menus, execute MS-DOS commands, etc.

MicroSight

Order no:	AD008
Price:	£15

Everything you need for digitising an image and several facilities for manipulating it.

PC Programmer

Order no:	AD009
Price:	£15

Program generator that lets you produce complex applications software

with minimal effort and no need to learn a programming language.

Praxis MicroChart Plus	
Order no:	AD010
Price:	£15

All-British business graphics package, ideal for presentation of spreadsheet data etc. Not available for the Apricot F Series and Portables.

Cardbox Plus	
Order no:	AD011
Price:	£15

Particularly good demo for one of the best 'flat-file' records-keeping packages. Not available for the Apricot F Series and Portables.

Special software

These are not public domain items, and they are not discount deals on the kind of software your dealer will sell you. Instead we have gathered a few titles that (a) we feel will be useful to the average Apricot user and (b) you won't find easily — or at all! — anywhere else.

FAST	
Order no:	AS001
Price:	£25

FAST is an accelerator for the Apricot screen: it bypasses certain screen interrupts. Simply running it in an AUTOEXEC.BAT will cause your Apricot to handle screen text up to twice as quickly. FAST doesn't affect CPU clock speeds and so it does not accelerate your graphics or supercharge your program execution times. But its effect on screen performance is pretty impressive.

FAST is very compact, less than 650 bytes; and it's modest price reflects that. For the money you won't find any better way of speeding up an Apricot with a single-line AUTOEXEC command. Not available for the Apricot F Series and Portables.

Polyprint	
Order no:	AS003
Price:	£30

Pretty printing from your Apricot on any matrix printer — POLYPRINT lets you produce near-letter-quality printing (almost typesetting quality, in fact) on ordinary dot-matrix printers that are capable of printing graphics (which these days means just about any low-cost matrix printer). Menu-driven, uses only nine keys. Comes with 12 selectable typefaces, some of them very fancy. Accepts ready-to-print output from any word processor; will also work directly from WordStar files without your having to save them on disk first. You must specify which printer you have when ordering — POLYPRINT comes customised for particular printers.

Polyprint Plus	
Order no:	AS021
Price:	£20

For existing POLYPRINT users only: 13 new typefaces and additional facilities including the new capability of mixing typefaces in the middle of a document.

The Apricot Catalogue	
Order no:	AS004 [ASCII]
Order no:	AS005 [Cardbox]
Price:	£50

A list of all the software and hardware we know of for the Apricot with prices, addresses, description (with our comments when we have experience of the package), contact names and numbers (including Telex numbers) where we know them. Regularly updated by us; currently well over a megabyte of information on six disks. The ASCII format can be read by most word processors or simply TYPEd, the Cardbox format can be read by Cardbox Plus and comes with a .FRM format (but not with the file manager program itself!).

A.S.D.	
Order no:	AS006
Price:	£57.50

Formerly known as P.A.S.D.: this is the latest (and much improved) version of the first (and only?) independently-produced package of upgrades to and tools for SuperWriter. A packed disk, and a good piece of work. Highlights:

- two-column formatting and print
- expansion, improvements, correction for the dictionary
- full documentation of SW.DEF plus a collection of useful formats
- improved (and more legible) display font
- keyboard configuration presets to speed up keying
- many XQT files to accelerate and simplify your routine work
- several batch files for disk housekeeping

AnsibleIndex	
Order no:	AS022
Price:	£86.50

Sophisticated SuperWriter indexing utility, even permits indexing of subjects and themes. Can handle documents chained across more than one disk, too. Only requires two marks per index item.

AnsiblePatch	
Order no:	AS023
Price:	£15

Patches SuperWriter to improve the legibility of displayed text on F series Apricots and Portables.

IANKEY Crash Course	
Order no:	AS007
Price:	£48

The very best keyboard tutor we've seen for newcomers — beats TOUCH 'N' GO into a cocked hat. Sensible design based on serious research; clear on-screen instructions; takes only three or four hours to teach the basics of touch-typing. Our review concluded "I strongly recommend it as excellent value for money" — especially from DEALS FOR READERS, because the normal RRP with VAT and P&P is £58.65.

IANKEY Two-Fingers to Touch-Typing	
Order no:	AS008
Price:	£48

An alternative keyboard tutor — converts a two-fingered 'hunt and peck' typist into a fast user; and it does so without wasting your time, forcing you to relearn the keyboard, or boring you stiff. Included in the enthusiastic review conclusions, and again available from us at a price £10 below RRP.

■■■ UPGRADED ■■■

FORTRAN Utilities	
Order no:	AS009
Price:	£50

A collection of assembler utilities for MS-FORTRAN applications, complete with test programs and link instructions. Now features direct access to system calls and an interfaces to GSX. Also includes:

- set date and time
- current date and time
- get/change default drive
- delete/rename disk file
- read/get character from keyboard buffer
- print characters on printer

SSDISK	
Order no:	AS024
Price:	£15

Fed up with the inadequate RAMdisk software that came with your Apricot?

S&S has produced a RAMdisk which is configurable up to a full 896KB with 128 directory entries per 'drive'.

DO-TO-ALL

Order no:	AS010
Price:	£15

Handy for hard disk users and anyone with multiple subdirectories: DO-TO-ALL lets you issue just one command that is to be applied to all directories — to delete all BAK files in your subdirectories, for instance.

The File Protect Pack

Order no:	AS018
Price:	£60

SECRET makes files invisible (or visible again) to DIRectory searches, READONLY sets the attribute bit so that they can't be deleted or overwritten, ENCRYPT encrypts and decrypts files according to your password, ZAP deletes them so thoroughly they can't be 'undeleted' at all

UNDELETE

Order no:	AS020
Price:	£20

The essential brow-soother — will attempt to recover files that have accidentally been DELeted, and does so with gratifying frequency. Not for hard disk systems, though.

■■■ NEW ■■■

SPLIT Disk Partitioner

Order no:	AS021
Price:	£56

Infosoft's clever disk partitioning utility for Xi hard disk Apricots — lets you 'partition' the hard disk so that it looks like up to 24 separate disks, each with a drive identifier and each with a size you specify. Thereafter the 'drives' can be treated as if they were real ones for reading, writing, copying, renaming, deleting files etc.

The FTU

Order no:	AS011
Price:	£125

The very best file transfer package we know of; we use it all the time, and that's not just because it's written by Friedman. A complete kit that enables you to transfer files between the three most popular machines — IBM PC, Apricot, and Victor/Sirius. Includes software for all three, and an 'intelligent' RS232 cable that will configure itself correctly for connection between any two of the computers. Our price is over £50 below RRP!

MXDUMP

Order no:	AS012
Price:	£75

Another classy little number from the programming pen of Friedman — produces exact screen dumps from your Apricot display on a standard Epson MX dot-matrix printer. Once loaded it sits quietly in MS-DOS waiting for you to call it (with a single keystroke). Lots of options: specify text or high-resolution graphics, normal or bold, standard-or double-width: and more ...

The Lotus Pack

Order no:	AS013
Price:	£65

Useful utilities from S&S Enterprises for Lotus users:

- THEPOUND lets you use all the displayable Apricot characters in worksheets — including the pound sign
- SOLID123 consolidates several 1-2-3 or Symphony worksheets into a total
- TRANSPOS transposes rows and columns
- 123RANGE lists worksheet ranges

The Printer Pack

Order no:	AS015
Price:	£40

Mainly for Epson-compatibles, mainly for spreadsheets:

- SIDELINE prints worksheets sideways so that wide spreadsheets fit on to the paper
- FXPOUND prints the pound sign on FX-type printers
- SETFXPR provides a set-up menu for printer functions

The WP Pack

Order no:	AS016
Price:	£50

Four handy S&S utilities for word processing:

- WSASCII converts WordStar files to ASCII format so that they can be read by other word processor
- WORDNO word counter
- READAGE calculates the reading age (ie the comprehensibility) of text
- SEARCH searches text for given phrase

The First-Aid Kit

Order no:	AS017
Price:	£25

Just what you need to make your computer more palatable to novice uses — the DOSMENU front-end option-choice menu and the HELP dial-an-explanation facility

The Games Box

Order no:	AS019
Price:	£25

Two games from Alan Solomon: ADVENTURE is the original 'Colossal Cave', CASH CRISIS is 'Space Invaders' with money

Other extras

Good Computing Book

Order no:	AB001
Price:	£3.00

A tubby and packed paperback for beginners. Mostly a reference dictionary of computing terms, but also lots of introductory info. Claims to offer "everything you need to know and nothing you don't".

Expansion Memory

256KB	AH002
	£130
512KB	AH003
	£185

High-quality add-in memory cards from a well-known manufacturer at prices we think you'll find hard to beat — bearing in mind that they include VAT and despatch. The 512K board is particularly good value, perfect for RAM disks and big SuperCalc worksheets. But both boards are socketed, so if you can get the chips you can populate the board up to the 512KB maximum yourself.

All prices include VAT and despatch. Send your order with payment to:

APRICOT FILE
TP Group
PO Box 509
London N1 1YL
England

Queries: 01-833 3501

Cheques should be made payable to TP GROUP.

We aim to despatch within 48 hours, but please allow 21 days for delivery before calling to complain ...

Note that we can only accept payments IN STERLING, that we must have PREPAYMENT except for official Purchase Orders, and that PURCHASE ORDERS can only be accepted for orders totalling £50 or more.

Classified

Free Small Ads

This Classified Ads section is free to APRICOT FILE subscribers.

How to send in your ad

Simple — just let us have a sheet of paper with the words. To summarise the requirements:

- indicate which classification you'd like it to appear
- use a typewriter or printer if possible — disk is even better. If you handwrite it, please try to ensure legibility
- the first couple of words will be in capital letters for emphasis. Indicate where you want the emphasis if it's not clear
- don't forget to include an address and/or phone number (we won't be operating a box number service)
- please try to limit yourself to 50 words or less
- let us know when you want the ad removed from the list!

Send your ad to:

APRICOT FILE
P O BOX 509
LONDON N1 1YL

Help

■■■ HELP FOR F1/F2/FP USERS: Gateway Users Group is new and exists solely for users of these machines. Details from Tony Hill at 85 Edna Road, Raynes Park, London SW20 8BS.

■■■ BIRMINGHAM AREA: any users of Apricot computers interested in forming a User Group for the exchange of ideas, software, etc please contact H Cohen on 021-454 2563 (evenings only) or write to 3 Fairlawn, Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3TL.

■■■ BUSINESS MICROCOMPUTER USERS ASSOCIATION invites you to their next meeting at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on 25 June 1986 from 1015 to 1600 on 'User Applications of Software Packages' and 'Principles and problems of Interfacing between Packages'. Buffet lunch included. Members £10, visitors £20; membership £25pa. Contact Tony Martin (secretary) on 01-236 0233.

■■■ SWITZERLAND: Apricot user would like to contact others, preferably in the Zurich area, to exchange experiences and help each other with problems.Contact John Solomir, Stockenstrasse 67, 8802 Kilchberg — phone 01/715 10 94.

■■■ HELP GROUP FOR: Apricot users within striking distance of Reading, Berkshire, and interested in forming a friendly group to give and receive help on programming, communications, software packages and anything else legal (!) are invited to contact David Holland on Reading (0734) 68860 — evenings only.

Sales

■■■ 9in APRICOT MONITOR green screen, black case, includes carrying case. As new, used only on Sundays, etc. Price £100. Contact Paul Lavin on 01-451 1951.

■■■ CARDBOX electronic card index system: no longer required, £75. Also once-used Apricot single-sided disks: boxed in 10s, £17.50 per box. Phone 041-332 2505.

■■■ TYPEWRITER/PRINTER (Olivetti ET121) with serial interface. Can be used as printer for computer as well as conventional typewriter — currently used with a BBC Model B, but never mind that! 17in carriage, excellent condition, several different daisywheels and coloured ribbons available. Helpful advice on its use can also be provided ... Best offer secures. Contact Mike Penny on 0594 516207.

Wants

■■■ LOAN OF PORTABLE DISKS WANTED — Dixons muddled up the disks I should have received, say there's two months delay on replacement, and have certainly omitted at least the Voice disk. Can anyone help? Contact Paul Anderson, 01-868 4499 ext 263 (office hours) or 02518 3470 (evenings).

■■■ DR LOGO — can anyone alter DR LOGO for the F1/F1e to run on the F2? I have tried Apricot deaOers without success and the long-promised £30 DR pack still hasn't materialised. Contact David Stirling at 28 Ingleston Avenue, Dunipace, Denny, Scotland.

■■■ HELP WANTED from manufacturer or distributor to market and sell a dental software package — running on Apricot PC, can modify for any hardware. Contact H Cohen on 021-454 2563 (evenings only) or write to 3 Fairlawn, Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3TL.

■■■ MOUSE WANTED for Apricot F1. Serial mouse preferred, but willing to consider infra-red Apricot mouse if cheap. Contact Dr Cartwright, tel 045 383 4576.

■■■ DATABASE/FILING PACKAGE (Palantir or Cardbox preferred) and A.S.D. Superwriter disk. Exchange IANKEY touch-typing tutor, GRAMMATIK grammar checker, PROOFREADER spelling checker (full working copies with documentation) — cash difference either way. Phone 095 786 261.

Contribute!

■■■ HELP WANTED BY APRICOT FILE — we need a clever assembler programmer with a XEN to write a short routine that slows down the screen display. All our games for the 8086 Apricots just zip by too quickly! Contact Roger Gann on 01-833 3501.

■■■ HELP WANTED BY APRICOT FILE — and another one: we have an excellent Chess game on the Apricot PC which needs converting to run with F1/Portable graphics ... Contact Roger Gann on 01-833 3501.

■■■ HELP WANTED BY APRICOT FILE — we have some good Sirius comms programs that need a little tweaking before they'll run on the Apricots (serial port addresses etc) ... Contact Roger Gann on 01-833 3501. ◆

Readers' Writes

Subscribers have their say ...

Cri de coeur

I would be very interested in hearing from people in the Gloucester and Forest of Dean area who have Apricots. They might be able to help me understand how to make ours work!

Could I make a plea on behalf of those such as myself who are not familiar with all the technological terms. There are frequently instances of the use of abbreviations: would it be possible to stick to the convention of writing the full text at the first mention of any words which are later shortened? And it seems to me that spaces in the right places are very important in MS-DOS; to communicate these clearly from written text is perhaps not easy, but are there not alternatives such as commas which could be used?

Mike Penny
Newnham on Severn

Point taken about the abbreviations — we'll try to be less unsympathetic in future. As for spaces being important, that's the reason we usually switch to a different typeface when we're giving program lines or citing MS-DOS commands: our standard text typeface is a kind of Times Roman and it's proportionally spaced, which means spaces are likely to occupy a variable amount of the paper. The smaller faces are variants of Courier, which isn't proportional — so spaces occupy one character space each time. (We don't use one of the obvious alternative characters because practically all the symbols and punctuation marks that wouldn't impair legibility too much are *also* signficant to MS-DOS.)

Mike's number for all you helpful Apricot owners in his area is 05945 516207.

Portable woes

I recently purchased a Portable on the assumption that the addition of a colour monitor would allow me to run ...

- my F1 on a monochrome and the Portable on a colour screen
- my F1 on colour (for ACTIVITY etc)
- my Portable on its LCD screen (ugh!)

I was somewhat annoyed to find that the colour display didn't work on the Portable (I tried it on the F1 and after some swearing I found it worked satisfactorily). Computerworld in Birmingham said that if I took the Portable to Olbury they would arange to have it fixed; but a service engineer phoned later to say they would have to replace the motherboard with a colour one at a cost of £400.

I thought I already had one, and so obviously did Computerworld. The manual says that if you have a connector for the monitor on the back of the machine it is a colour version — and mine has the connector.

You may be interested to know that another Apricot dealer told me the F series TV modulator is rubbish. And Apricot's Service Department says it won't work on the Portable ... but Apricot Technical Support says it will, no problem.

You have commented on the different levels of software supplied. My F1 was supplied with SuperWriter and SuperCalc. Since F1s are *now* supplied with GEM and not the Super software, it did not seem to me to be an odd request to ask whether GEM was available separately ... Apricot thought it odd. Neither my F1 nor the Portable was supplied with BTRAN, FORMAT, ASYNC or the IBM emulator. And Apricot says MS-WINDOWS will be included with the £30 Microsoft pack when it is available; but again nobody seems to have told the dealers ...

I am very happy with my F1 and my Xi. But I feel cheated on the Portable, and very frustrated that I cannot obtain satisfactory answers regarding software.

T J Dutton, Stoke Lacy

This one sounds like a summary of the classic Apricotisms, complaints (especially on the software/dealer side) that we've been hearing ever since we bought our first Sirius from ACT four years ago. And we didn't know about the motherboard possibility: as we said in our last issue, we thought it was Holy Writ that monitor connector means colour machine. Sounds like Apricot was just using up bits and pieces hanging around the factory. So beware! Ask for a demonstration! Write to Roger Foster if someone wants to charge you £400 for upgrading a machine that should have been the upgrade when you bought it!

Observations on BIOS 3.1

Having just received my beginner's crop of APRICOT FILEs, I rush to recount a few observations on BIOS 3.1. On the whole, it's a basketful of goodies

for the programmer — but perhaps less so for the user, at least until programmers learn to make use of it.

- **Believe it or not Dept:** Regular screen output is even *slower* than under BIOS 2.7. It took me *86* per cent longer to TYPE a large file. I suspect Apricot did this deliberately to encourage programmers to use the new generic BIOS screen driver instead. Or perhaps to make the Xen look better by comparison. I hope your FAST program works with 3.1 ...
- **A Screen in the Night Dept:** The *BIOS 3 Technical Reference Manual* (Beta release) says that Escape sequences are still supported "with an improvement in performance". The screen driver will do lots of nice things, and quite quickly too, but it's much more complicated to use than good old Escape sequences. As the manual implies, it is *not* for beginners: feed it a screen co-ordinate which is out of range and it will crash magnificently, even to the point of mucking up your disks. This is a good thing because it obviously doesn't waste time coping with sloppy programmers ...
- **Not So Great Escape Dept:** The Escape sequence ESC '*' N, where N is 0, 1 or 2, very neatly switched fonts in BIOS 2. It doesn't seem to do that any longer, contrary to what the manual says. Maybe I've omitted to 'enable font' or something. In any case, it doesn't strike me as any kind of "improvement in performance" ...
- **Silly Bugs Dept:** In the screen driver text module, using Extended User Virtual Screens, the Write Block function forgets to use the requested font in the top left character cell. Instead it uses the default font there: very annoying. A workaround is do an extra Write Character with the desired font in the first cel of the block. This bug seems a typical case of a BIOS writer ending an iteration loop with JGE (jump if greater than or equal to) instead of JGT (jump if greater than) or some similar triviality: if so, it should be patchable ... dare we ask Apricot for the details? Or does anyone have the cunning and patience to hack it out?
- **Turbo Forever Dept:** I am an incurable Turbo Pascal addict and have written Turbo interfaces for the new BIOS 3.1 modules, which I will gladly pass on. Without the full BIOS manual (which hasn't reached Sweden yet) they're not entirely trivial to use, though. I have also modified the Turbo Editor Toolbox for 3.1 — it works on an Xi, windows and all, and should work on all Apricots (though I haven't tried).
- **Fixed Bugs Dept:** When running WordStar under BIOS 2.7 my keyboard would unpredictably start repeating commas or full stops. Only the STOP key would stop it. This has never occurred under 3.1 ...

Sten Ternstrom
Kyrkbacken 21, ltr
S-17150 SOLNA, Sweden

Recommendations

I have recently purchased a package which to my mind is quite nice and very reasonably priced — Quest's **CASH TRADER/ANALYST**, a clever accounting system for the small business. I find it easy to use and well worth the price; it has a good tutorial, too. It can be ordered as a demo disk for £15, which allows the use of the tutorial and does show what the package can do: you can upgrade to the real version by paying another £125, and a further £25 will buy you a year's hotline support.

Another more recent package of note is **Work-Forth/86** by MicroProcessor Engineering. This is a new and complete implementation of Forth; it has a full screen editor and includes a macro assembler. For the Apricot a pre-installed version is available at £48. I am but attempting to learn Forth and therfore can offer very little judgement on the product, but at that price the risk is very limited.

How about reviewing these two?

John Solomir
Kilchberg, Switzerland

We have CASH TRADER scheduled for review. In the meantime, Quest is on 0276 681336 and MPE on 0703 775482.

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Add on IBM cards

BUS BOX is an interesting (if pricey) add on for the Apricot from a new company called **White Orchard Technology** — it's an externally connected unit that provides slots for IBM-type expansion cards, not unlike the fabled and as-yet unseen gismo promised by Apricot for the Xen. White Orchard's offering runs with any Apricot.

You get space for five cards; and since the thing has its own filtered power supply, you can optionally use it as a power distribution point for printers, monitors and even Apricots. The cards themselves can be just about anything, though obviously you'll need appropriate software to drive them: White Orchard is going for a graphics market (it's owners include **Concept II Research**, responsible for the classy ORMUS draughting system) and says BUS BOX has been tested with "a wide range" of graphics cards. But the company also claims it can drive cards for networking, comms, terminal emulation, the IBM PC multifunction boards, 8087 ... "BUS BOX will make all the functions of most IBM cards available on Apricot machines". We've asked for a review unit; meanwhile the thing costs (gulp) **£1,238** and White Orchard is on **0438 315415**.

Windows on the world

Microsoft's **Bill Gates** was in town last month for a conference on WINDOWS and its competitors (he wore a cream suit with flared trousers and black shoes — ugh). Questions about the less-than-stunning speed of MS-WINDOWS were turned aside with the comment that Windows will *really* come into its (their?) own ... when the Intel 80386 chip becomes the norm.

WordStar amnesty ends

MicroPro will end its amnesty on illicit use of of its products on 30 May. The company says the idea was "very successful" — but hints that it may now start looking for people to prosecute.

MMS fails ...

Micro Memory Systems, purveyor of add-on hard disks, has gone bust. It seems trading costs were too high to sustain a £5 million turnover. Liquidators Cork Gully say they hope to sell the operation as a going concern.

... MBS loses £3 million

The **MBS** group, which last year looked one of the brighter stars in the computer distribution business, has reported 1985 pretax losses of **£3.4 million** on a turnover up by half at nearly **£67 million**. Maintenance, systems and training all made money: it was the dealerships and the distribution network that suffered from "decreasing margins and hyper-competitive conditions" ...

The cheap super-calculator?

Wharton Information Systems has just published its *1986 Oasis Report* on the state of the UK personal computer market. Conclusions are striking — that last year saw a 75 per cent growth in unit sales (222,000 PCs sold): that the installed base of business PCs is now 440,000: and that the number of shared machines plus big gaps in penetration suggest a huge market still. Wharton says the corporate buyer provided the main impetus, particularly for an increase in the market share held by **IBM** (from 38 to 45 per cent). Main sufferers were **Apricot** and **Apple**. Principal conclusions: **"Olivetti** is the chief competitor to IBM ... Apricot [is] a cheap super-calculator".

Apricot services

A complementary report from another market researcher, **Romtec**, looks at the present and potential state of computerisation in the UK's service industries. **Apricot** is the leading vendor in two prime markets (**estate agents** and **property management**) and is second to IBM in two others (**market research** and **accountants**). Overall Apricot has a 26 per cent share of the service industries market, IBM has 33 per cent, no-one else has more than seven. But 1985 sales into the field shows IBM at 41.5 per cent and Apricot getting only 14.8 per cent ... Which makes an interesting aside to our Page One story in this issue.

F&S on Europe

And just for comparison, there the **IDC Europa** survey of PC-type sales in Western Europe — growing in 1985 by just 10 per cent, compared with 35 per cent the year before (that sounds more credible to us than Wharton's UK figure).

Why the slowdown? "Until now, the PCs sold have gone to new users ... it is inevitable that we would reach saturation ... it looks as though we have just hit that point". And there just isn't a replacement market yet (except possibly for Sirius owners?) — IDC reckons that will start to appear in 1987/8. As for the UK market, IDC gives IBM 32 per cent by value and 23 per cent by units shipped; Apricot has 10 per cent by both measures. Interestingly, **Amstrad** is given a 13 per cent share by volume and 3 per cent by value: not many market researchers have yet given Amstrad a stake in the business computer business ...

Spellbinders unite!

The latest issue of **Spellbound**, the newsletter of Dermod Quirke's **Spellbinder Users' Group**, is well up to standard — lots of hints, tips, explanations for users of the eponymous word processor. All good stuff for aficionados: info from **0636 77313**.

MicroPro's non-WP products

Remember all those **MicroPro** products with names like CalcStar, DataStar and InfoStar that were supposed to complement WordStar but never received much promotion? Last year the company said it was going to 'de-emphasise' those products; now it's backing a new company called **Software Classic** that will handle sales and marketing of them. Tech support remains with MicroPro. Software Classics is run by **Jacky Kearns**, former MicroPro sales manager and a nice lady.

Bargain printers

Apricot's rebadged **Epson P80** thermal printer was announced as a cheap and compact extra for the F series but seems to have disappeared from the price list. **Alliance Computers** is flogging off stocks of these mains-or-battery text-and-graphics Centronics-interface 45cps printers at extraordinary prices ... but only to the trade. Still, if you can afford to purchase ten at a time you'll get them for £50 each: Alliance is on **0733 77100**. Anyone interested in us buying a few to offer in the DEALS FOR READERS pages? They'd be about £70 with the P&P and VAT.

This might work: find a Black Hole disk with an HP driver on it (Black Hole disks are unsupported programs from Apricot, goodies that aren't guaranteed to work but which usually do: they're handed out to dealers) and DEBUG it. It should contain two-letter character strings like MA for 'move to absolute co-ordinates'; in general, these could be changed to the Watanabe's equivalent command (in this case, M).

Or you could get hold of a *GSX Programmer's Manual* — price about £25, available from Digital Research via dealers — and write your own device driver. The manual says this shouldn't be difficult (ho ho).

There again, the Watanabe commands are relatively easy to use. You could generate plot files with them; and to get a screen view or a printer plot you could interpret those files in a second program which uses GSX ...

8087 problems

Try this program on an Apricot fitted with an 8087 numeric processor:

```
X = 1.0E-30
DO 100 I=1,40
X = X/3.0
WRITE (*,'(15,1PE12.5)')I,X
END
```

I don't think it matters whether the program is in FORTRAN, Pascal or Basic. In principle the value of X should diminish towards the smallest number which can be represented (around 1.0E-38), then a result of zero should be returned until the loop ends. But with an 8087 fitted, we find that the underflow condition causes the machine to hang: two out of three of our FORTRAN programs run ten times faster with the add-in chip, and the rest don't run at all.

The problem occurs in the same way if you use double-precision, though down around 1.0D-300.

We thought we must have a duff chip, until a colleague demonstrated the same fault on his machine. And we're fairly sure that the problem doesn't lie with the compiler (MSFORTRAN 77, version 3.13 or 3.3b): if you wade into the .EXE file with DEBUG, you find a perfectly respectable sequence of Escape commands — the value of X is shunted out to memory each time around, then presented again for the next pass, until control fails to return from the FDIV command.

I suspect that when the number gets down to the minimum allowed value of exponent, the 8087 is able to output a result with reduced precision in the mantissa (ostensibly more helpful than the formally correct underflow zero); but it keels over when this same ill-formed number is offered as input.

It's laborious to have to have to write programs which check the likely size of the result before doing a division. Can anyone suggest a better solution? Or a convenient dodge? Is this perhaps resolved in the fabled 8087 Handbook (now sold out)? Was our basic mistake in taking science subjects after 'O' levels?

Don't assume the compiler isn't at fault — Eddie Bromhead tried the test problem with a number of compilers and came up with these results:

Compiler	Result	Last non-zero iteration	Value
MS-FORTRAN 3.13	hangs	16	2.32306E-38
DR FORTRAN	ok	31	1.40130E-45
RM FORTRAN	ok	31	1.40130E-45
PRO FORTRAN	ok	16	2.32306E-38
SSS FORTRAN	fails	16	2.3231E -38

Supersoft's SSS FORTRAN fails on iteration with an 'underflow' error message that unfortunately puts the code into a never-ending loop ...

The process of converting to and from the 8087's 80-bit 'packed real' format is probably something the library routines do. It follows that the Microsoft FORTRAN's routines are likely to be duff.

Both the Ryan-MacFarland and Digital Research compilers can use 'normalised' (IEEE-format) real numbers and a special 'denormalised' format for an extended range of numbers which would otherwise underflow. That should get over the reduced-precision input problem.

If you're stuck with MSFORTRAN you could try altering the status and control words which handle certain functions; that might help. ◆

The Q&A service is open to all subscribers. We have on tap a panel of experts, enthusiasts, pragmatists and walking wounded who are waiting to repond to any and all questions you may have — we'll try to get you answers in any case, and we'll print the more interesting of the problems. Just address your queries to:

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