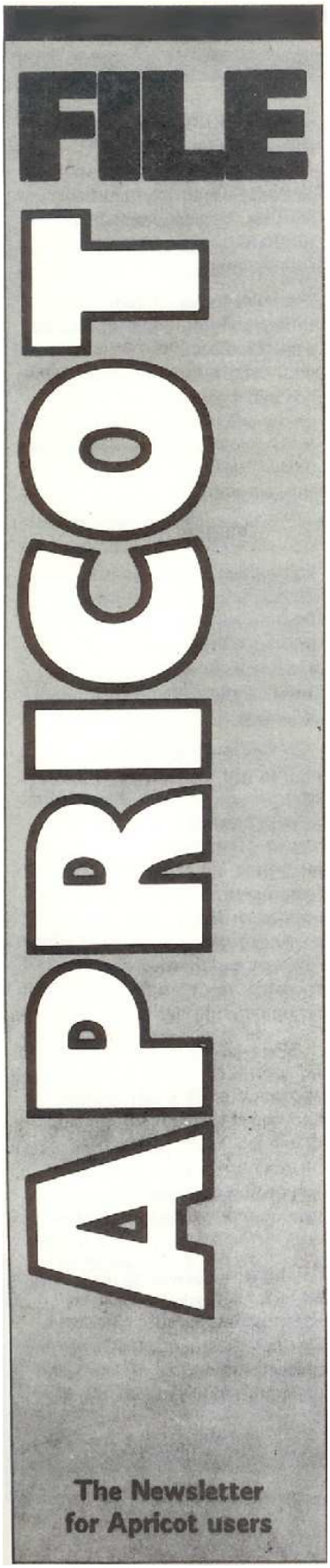
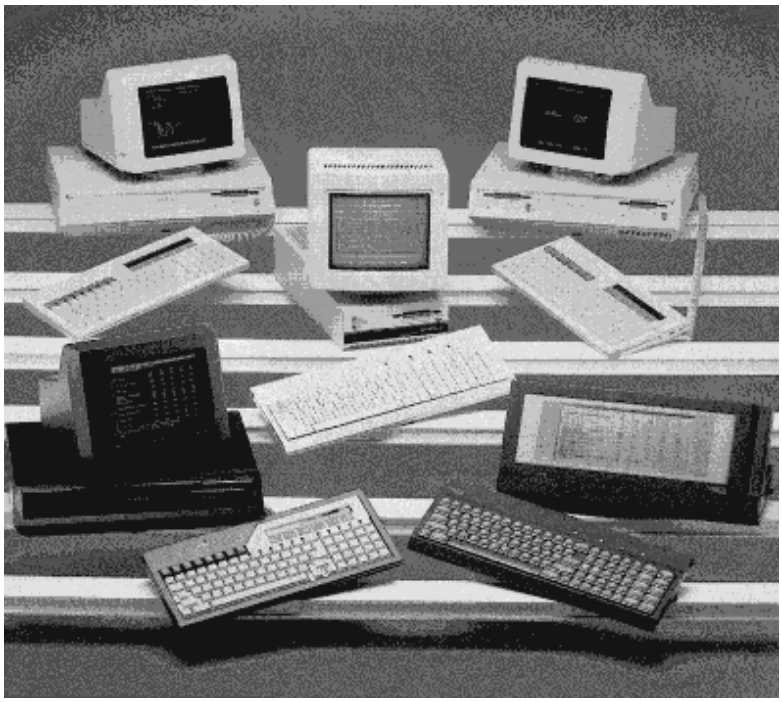


Apricot File 2_2



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Release 2.2

FILE APRICOT

The Newsletter for Apricot users

November 1986

Published and be Xenned

PageMaker for Apricot

By Simon Potter

Apricot dealers were reportedly quite chirpy after a recent 'Supersell' beanfeast at which Apricot announced the imminent availability of the Aldus PageMaker desktop publishing package. A system including a Xen-i and a laser printer should start at around £6,000.

Availability is some months away, and the package will *only* run on the Xen-i; but dealers we spoke to confirmed that this announcement fits well with the company's new marketing strategies of selling high-priced added-value systems into 'corporate' accounts. Apricot apparently expects PageMaker-based sales to contribute around £10 million to its 1987 revenues, which could mean seven to ten per cent of sales.

PageMaker is the most popular electronic publishing system available with the Apple Macintosh, which was a bit of a dog until Aldus produced some software that actually used the brilliant graphics capabilities of that computer. Just as VisiCalc sold more Apple IIs than Apple ever did, so PageMaker is probably responsible for the Mac's success — and for generating an entirely new market area for desktop computers.

Because Aldus customised its product to utilise the graphics, it hasn't been easy to convert it for generic PCs that don't have the built-in functions. But Microsoft's Windows appears to be well on the way to becoming the preferred graphics 'environment' for IBM-compatibles, and in September Aldus announced that it had a PC version of PageMaker which runs under MS-DOS 3.1 and Windows.

Apricot's longstanding relationship with Microsoft has obviously born fruit in the deal with Aldus. Certainly it makes sense of the company's Kyocera-built Apricot-badged laser printer; the paper-white monitor also looks a natural for desktop publishing, and so does the memory capacity and the fast processor of the Xen-i.

PageMaker isn't perfect, of course: unlike the package we use — the British-developed NEWSWRITER from Cognita Software — it isn't really geared to producing multi-page documents, and it's not great at copy-fitting (getting a given number of words into a given space). But it is excellent at mixing text in a variety of column widths, typestyles and sizes with graphics of various shapes and sizes on a single page — and that gives it applications from single-page handouts, menus and the like all the way up to newspaper-style productions.

Currently PageMaker also scores on visibility and (one hopes) debuggedness. But already some excellent competitors have been announced for the IBM PC and compatibles, notably Ventura Publisher from Xerox; and by the time PageMaker is ready to ship with the Xen-i, it may no longer be the best buy. ◆

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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).

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The Workshop

Apricot PC keyboards:

How to replace them

By Michael Dirom

Other Apricot computer-illiterates who have DEBUG.COM may be interested in a solution to the problem of loading custom-built keyboards and microscreen labels for use with SuperCalc 3, WordStar and other programs.

The main trouble has been that some programs automatically override any pre-loaded keyboard as soon as they are run (for instance, after the 'SC3' or 'RWS' command is entered at the prompt). SuperCalc 3 is used in the example that follows, although the same principles should apply for other programs.

The exercise described here involves labelling the MicroScreen, then putting these labels and the new keyboard into an AUTOEXEC or other batch file after DEBUGging the SC3 command file to delete the relevant parts. It works, however inexpert the method! Any shorter and/or more expert way of doing the same thing will be welcomed and adopted forthwith ... A braver and cleverer person would probably patch SC3.COM to include the new keyboard permanently. Incidentally, SmartKey will only alter one of the function keys — they are supershifted and all prefixed with the Escape character; so once you have altered one, all the others report the same function and cannot be changed to anything else.

Allocating new functions to the keyboard in the conventional way through KEYEDIT or ACTIVITY is slow but not particularly difficult, and has been described in too many publications to warrant a repetition here. The table however shows my personal preferences for SuperCalc 3, including the MicroScreen.

MicroScreen labels

The MicroScreen labels and commands in SC3.COM can be found by DEBUG as shown below. (CANCEL is superfluous anyway, as F8 — FINISH — or CONTROL-Z both do the same thing).

Use DEBUG to edit the hex codes in locations 300 to 370 inclusive ...

```
A> e 300
```

... and change them all to null (convert the hex-code pairs to 00). This will disable them, as one would expect, and they will not override the special keyboard after it has been loaded (which is what will happen until this is done). Then write them away with the W command.

SC3.COM's MicroScreen Labelling

```
1E28:0300 42 1B 55 1B 45 1B 57 1B-2F 07 1B 42 43 41 4E 43  B.U.E.W./..BCANC
    :0310 45 4C 20 20 50 4C 4F 54-20 20 56 49 45 57 1B 3C  EL PLOT   VIEW.<
    :0320 1B 56 1B 28 1B 34 31 1B-11 1B 34 31 00 80 B1 1B  .V.(.41...41..1.
    :0330 34 31 07 1A 1B 34 31 08-1A 1B 34 31 09 19 1B 34  41...41...41...4
    :0340 31 0A 14 00 00 00 00 00-00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00  1...............
    :0350 2A 1B 55 1B 45 1B 57 1B-3C 1B 2F 00 1B 56 1B 34  *.U.E.W.<./..V.4
    :0360 31 07 80 B8 1B 34 31 08-80 B9 1B 34 31 09 80 BA  1..8.41..9.41..:
    :0370 1B 34 31 0A 80 BB 1B 34-31 1B 08 00 00 00 00 00  .41..;.41.......
    :0380 CF CF CF CF CF CF CF CF-CF CF CF CF CF CF CF CF  0000000000000000
```

Preferred Function Key allocations

	Key	Keytop	Preference	Hex
	F1	HELP	?	3F
	F8	FINISH	^Z	1A
MicroScreen	F9	FormC	/FC(CR) [format col]	2F 46 43 0D
MicroScreen	F10	PLOT	^Y	19
MicroScreen	F11	VIEW	^T	14
MicroScreen	F12	PRINT	/ODALL(CR)	2F 4F 44 41 4C 4C 0D
MicroScreen	F13	RECALC	!	21
MicroScreen	F14	GlobF	/GF	2F 47 46
	HOME		=A1(CR)	3D 41 31 0D
	CLEAR		/ZC [zap contents]	2F 5A 43
	INSERT		/IR [insert row]	2F 49 52
	DELETE		/DR [delete row]	2F 44 52
Cursor	UP		^E	05
Cursor	DOWN		^X	18
Cursor	LEFT		^S	13
Cursor	RIGHT		^D	04

The labels for the MicroScreen (including instructions to light up the keypad LEDs) were produced with SuperWriter and saved as MSLAB.SC3; make sure the two label-lines are each exactly 40 characters and spaces wide — that's the width of the MicroScreen.

Create the escape sequence ^[by pressing the INS MARK key followed by the caret sign ^. Remember that nothing will happen until the escape character [has been typed in, when both sign and character will appear in reduced intensity. The file was saved in SuperWriter's System mode via the 'Change Output Format' selection.

MSLAB.SC3

```
^[U^[g^[W^[c^[/?
            SuperCalc-3 + MSLAB.SC3      ~
FormC  PLOT  VIEW    PRINT  RECALC  GlobF~
^[V
```

The keyboard and keypad functions were created with the Keyboard Table Editor in ACTIVITY Utilities. The panel shows the functions attributed to them, but these are a matter of personal preference and can be changed or extended.

The carriage returns shown as CR in the table are chosen from the thirteenth visible item on the keyboard source font to produce hex code OD (in fact it is the *fourteenth* true position, as the first is a blank space, being null). This happens automatically (as with all selections) when the pointer is moved to transfer the item from the source font to the first position under 'Normal' on the key-values-panel on the left, where NULL should be displayed after what was there originally has been deleted.

When allocating subsequent items, move the pointer to the same first position (which will now be occupied), then enter it, and you will find the new item has been added for you to the right of anything previously entered. This is a small point, but it held me up for a while initially as I tried to enter the second item at the next position the pointer will move on to — about an inch to the right of the first position.

The batch file to get this all to happen after loading the SuperCalc system disk was called SC-3.BAT (to avoid running SC3 itself).

SC-3.BAT

```
ECHO OFF
CLS
TYPE MSLAB.SC3
KEYS SC-3
ECHO SC3 special keyboard/MicroScreen loaded
KEYS RESTORE
```

Ensure that KEYS.EXE (version 2.0), MSLAB.SC3 and SC-3.BAT are all on your SuperCalc disk: then type "SC-3" at the prompt. When the prompt returns, enter "SC3" — and away you go with the newly-configured keyboard and MicroScreen. (You might prefer to put the SC3 command into SC-3.BAT too, or put it all into an AUTOEXEC.BAT file to take you straight into the program. ◆

Diary dates

On with the Shows

A round-up of potential relevance

November 1986

10-14 Comdex Fall *Las Vegas.* One of America's crucial twice-a-year expos for dealers and VARs. Required visiting for industry-watchers. *Organiser: Interface Group, tel USA (617) 449-6600*

11-14 COMPEC *London.* The long-established COMPEC has come back rejuvenated as one of the largest and best shows for micro users. It retains its bias towards dealers and system builders, but there's still a lot there for the average punter — especially among the smaller exhibitors. *Organiser: Reed Exhibitions, tel 01-661 4900*

18-20 Computers in the City *London.* Conference and show for financial and other City companies. *Organiser: Online, tel 01-868 4466*

18-21 Communications in Business *Glasgow.* First running of this show on comms equipment and services, including hardware and software. *Organiser: Montbuild, tel 021-225 5486*

26-28 PC User North *Manchester.* First try-out north of Watford Gap for a version of the PC User Show — for users of IBM PCs and compatibles, of course, but much to interest the rest of us too. *Organiser: EMAP, tel 01-608 1161*

December 1986

3-6 Communitech/Computer 86 *Hong Kong.* Computers and comms for the trade. This is usually one of the better Far Eastern shows, by all accounts, with much of interest. *UK contact: Andry Montgomery, tel 01-468 1951*

9-11 Videotex International *London.* Established conference and (modest) exhibition at Wembley for business users of viewdata systems and the like. *Organiser: Online, tel 01-868 4466*

January 1987

11-15 SaudiComputer 87 *Riyadh.* Key exhibition in what is still a boom market area. *UK contact: Andry Montgomery, tel 01-468 1951*

12-15 Middle East Computer Show *Bahrain.* Unfortunate clash of dates for anyone interested in the Middle East. This one is also important for the region, and has had four very successful outings to date. *UK contact: Andry Montgomery, tel 01-468 1951*

21-24 High Technology and Equipment in Education *London.* Explicitly-titled show at the Barbican; the organiser's other interests include *Educational Computing* magazine, and this event (held twice before) was formerly known by the rather more manageable monicker **Computers in Education**. *Organiser: EMAP, tel 01-608 1161* ◆

The Workshop

All about .XQT

Part Two: SuperCalc Execute files

By Gareth Hardwick

Execute files work with SuperCalc in much the same way that they do with SuperWriter. All you have to do is to enter the keystrokes you would normally use and save them in a file with the extension .XQT.

As with SuperWriter, there are various special characters to carry out certain functions. These are listed in the first table. The second table lists some of the special codes for use with the SETUP functions for Epson printers; many of these are standard and will work with any printer.

For simplicity, I have referred throughout this article to SuperCalc 3 with standard default settings. Some Execute files will not work with SuperCalc 1. I have also assumed that drive A is your program disk and that drive B is used as your data disk. If this is not the case, you may have to insert the drive name in front of some of the file names.

It was easy in the last issue to give a few examples of Execute files working with SuperWriter: most writers of documents have pretty similar requirements. To give universally applicable examples for SuperCalc is much more difficult — a spreadsheet is essentially a high-level programing language designed to interact with your input, and each spreadsheet user has highly individual requirements.

Starters

But as an example, let's look at a simple Execute file to load a spreadsheet called B:ACCOUNTS.CAL. The keystrokes required to load this file would look like this:

```
/               to select commands
L               to select Load
B:ACCOUNTS      name of file to load
Return          to enter the name
A               to load All of the
                spreadsheet
```

Although it is common to create your Execute files with SuperWriter or some other word processing program, it is perfectly feasible to write simple Execute files for SuperCalc with SuperCalc itself. This is done by treating each row of column A as a line of text; the resultant 'spreadsheet' can then be output to disk as a file with an .XQT extension.

So to create our Execute file, open up column A to a width of at least 10 — the column must be wider than the longest line of text — and enter this into cell A1:

"/LB:ACCOUNTS

And into A2, enter ...

"A

Now strip off the borders by hitting the following keys:

/ G B

And save the lot by ...

/ S B : 1 [Return] A

This will save what you have written as B:1.CAL in case you want to edit it again. Now, to save your actual Execute file, use this:

/ O D ALL [Return] D B:1.XQT [Return]

If you exit SuperCalc, you should find on disk B a file called 1.XQT. (You could of course give the Execute file that deals with the spreadsheet ACCOUNTS.CAL any name you like, but 1.XQT seems pretty straightforward and simple. You can then create other Execute files called 2.XQT, 3.XQT and so on for your most frequently-used spreadsheets.)

Now when someone peers over your shoulder and says they want to have a look at ACCOUNTS.CAL, all you have to do is blank the spreadsheet and type '/X1' — and there it is on the screen. From the system prompt, if 1.XQT itself is on disk A, all you have to do is to enter 'SC3 1'. Six keystrokes instead of seventeen!

You might also like to create a similar Execute file called 1S.XQT that saves your spreadsheet for you in the way you want.

If you frequently use SuperCalc to create Execute files or other text files, it is handy to have a ready-to-use blank spreadsheet called TEXT.CAL set up with the width of column A set at say 60 and the borders switched off.

Form-feeding

Because of noise and vibration, many offices have the printer some little way from the computer. In these circumstances it is useful to be able to send a form feed to the printer from the keyboard. You can do this with a simple Execute file. Here is a list of the keystrokes required:

```
/         to select commands
O         for Output
D         for Display
Return    to specify the default range
S         Setup
S         to input setup codes
CTRL-L    to send form feed to printer
Return    to exit Setup
CTRL-C    to return to spreadsheet
```

Because this includes control codes, it cannot be created with SuperCalc itself — you have to use SuperWriter or some other word processor that allows you to include control codes. The easiest way to insert these characters in your Execute file is to write it under SuperWriter and use the INS MARK key or CTRL-Q 2 as described last month. Then you'll end up with this on your Edit screen:

```
/OD~
SS^L~
^C
```

Save this file as FF.XQT — make sure you save it as a *system* file and not as a SuperWriter file. Have

another look at the file you have saved. It will now look like this:

```
/OD~
SS!~
^C~
```

Notice that the ^L has been replaced by a half-intensity exclamation mark — the form feed character — and a Return has been added at the end of the file.

That Return can be annoying as it may cause the cursor to advance to the next cell. To avoid this, copy the cell on which the cursor is currently sitting on to itself by adding /C and an additional Return at the end of the file. I also like to put in the code ESCAPE @ to reset the printer after the form feed. So my final version of FF.XQT looks like this on the SuperWriter Edit screen:

```
/OD~
SS!^[@~
^C/C~
```

Copy FF.XQT on to your SuperCalc data disk and try it by typing:

/ X FF [Return]

Printer setup

Execute files are particularly useful when you want to send a number of setup codes to your printer prior to printing.

Let's consider the situation where after a lot of sweating over a hot computer you think you are ready to print the final version of the Balance Sheet. Suppose that in cell A1 you have the text "BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 1986" and that the last relevant cell of the spread sheet is G40. The print head is at the top of the page. We want to print the heading in expanded mode and have the spread sheet printed out in compressed mode with a one-inch margin on the left. Here are the keystrokes we need to do this on an Epson-compatible printer:

/GB	to switch off borders
ODA1:C1,	to output text in cell A1 (assumed to run over to cell C1)
SS	prepare to send Setup codes
CTRL-J CTRL-J CTRL-J	to send three line feeds to the printer
Escape W 1	to set expanded mode
Escape l CTRL-E	to set left margin to 5
Escape G	to switch on double strike
Return	to exit Setup
P Return	to print and return to the spreadsheet
/ODA2:G40,SS	to output the main part of the spreadsheet and prepare to send Setup codes
CTRL-J CTRL-J CTRL-J	three more line feeds
Escape W 0	cancel expanded mode
CTRL-O	set compressed mode on
Escape l CTRL-Q	set left margin to 17
Return	to exit Setup
P Return	to print and return to the spreadsheet

Using SuperWriter, put these into a file called FINAL.XQT. Your Edit screen should look like this:

```
/GB/ODA1:C1,SS^J^J^J [W1^[1^E^[G~
P~
/ODA2:G30,SS^J^J^J [W0^O^[1^Q~
P~
```

Save it as a System file. If you call it up to the Edit screen again you will find the ^J characters have been replaced by half-intensity plus signs; don't worry about this, the file will still work.

Now run FINAL.XQT from your spreadsheet; and a nice copy of the Balance Sheet (or whatever) will be printed ready to bind into your annual report.

After running an Execute file like this that sends a number of Setup codes to the printer, it is a good idea to use FF.XQT to reset the printer before printing anything else. To do this, you could add this line to the end of FINAL.XQT:

/XFF~

Some Epson printer controls

Character	Effect
^J	Line feed
^L	Form feed
^O	compressed mode on (use 'O' not zero)
^R	compressed mode off
^[@	Master reset
^[M	Elite mode on
^[P	Elite mode off
^[W1	expanded mode on (ESC, W, one)
^[W0	expanded mode off (ESC, W, zero)
^[G	double-strike mode on
^[H	double-strike mode off
^[E	emphasised mode on
^[F	emphasised mode off
^[-1	underline on (ESC, hyphen, one)
^[-0	underline off (ESC, hyphen, zero)
^[N^F	skip 6 lines over perforation
^[N^L	skip 12 lines over perforation
^[O	skip over perforation off (ESC, letter O)
^[l^J	set left margin to 10 (use lower-case L, not numeral one)
^[l^Q	set left margin to 17 (use lower-case L, not numeral one)
^[l^E	set left margin to 5 (use lower-case L, not numeral one)
^[l^@	set left margin to 0 (use lower-case L, not numeral one)

Other ideas

The possibilities for using Execute files with SuperCalc are endless. They include calling up other spreadsheets to combine with the one you are working on. Another neat idea is to create a 'slideshow' of graphs illustrating different options in a proposed cashflow or results from different areas in your sales figures; the ampersand can be used to create a pause at the end of each display.

Another use is to turn the program into what Americans call a 'black box'. With an appropriately-structured Execute file it's possible for someone to prepare, say, a quotation without any knowledge of the actual working of SuperCalc. You could have a file called QUOTE.XQT that loaded the relevant spreadsheet and prompted the operator to type in the quantities and part numbers of the goods being ordered. The quote can be automatically output to the printer ready for posting to the customer.

To make it even easier to use, write a batch file called QUOTE.BAT consisting of the line

```
SC3 B:QUOTE
```

Then all the operator has to do from the system prompt is to type 'QUOTE' and press Return.

In fact, virtually every spreadsheet that you regularly use should have an Execute file to go with it. I would hope that this article has set you thinking ... ◆

Special characters for .XQT files

Character	Effect
^[	Escape
~	Return
^S	left arrow
^X	down arrow
^E	up arrow
^P	right arrow
^D	delay of half a second (right arrow on SuperCalc 1)
^C	cancel or clear
^T	view current graph
^Y	plot current graph

Notes

Even in SuperCalc 1, ^P is to be preferred to ^D for the right arrow so that files do not have to be rewritten when you upgrade.

Inserting the ampersand character & at any point in an Execute file causes the sequence of keystrokes to be suspended at that point and control to go back to the keyboard. The Execute file recommences when '&' is next entered from the keyboard. (The ampersand cannot be used on Execute files running under SuperCalc 1).

If you make a blank Execute file called Z.XQT, you can exit an Execute file when suspended by entering /XZ.

To abandon an Execute file when running, hit CTRL-C.

Contributors 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).

Roger Gann works full-time running the DEALS FOR READERS section of the newsletter as well as contributing words, ideas, humour, hints, legal advice, spittle for mass-mailings, etc. He was formerly the principal writer on 16 BIT COMPUTING; before that he was a builder (and a pioneer Sirius user), a lawyer, and a kind of grandiose bank clerk.

Michael Dirom was completely ignorant of anything to do with microcomputers until he purchased an Apricot PC in October 1984. Chronic heart disease forced him into early retirement in June 1985. He formed the Southern Apricot Group in October 1985 as a friendly self-help user group for those finding little help from the manufacturer, its manuals and dealers; the Group meets every two months to discuss problems and exchange knowledge. He lives off the beaten track in South Wiltshire.

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.

Gareth Hardwick runs WIRDS (Worldwide Information on Rural Development Sources), an information service for development workers in Third World countries. He is also a part-time lecturer at the Microcomputer Advisory Centre, Polytechnic of the South Bank.

David St. John-Wallis is a sort of psychologist who runs an export marketing consultancy, sells bits and pieces for the Apricot, and writes *enormously* 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.

Review

Apricot Pot-Pourri

OmrC's ScannerS reviewed

By Lindsay Doyle

ScannerS Disk 1 v 1.4 is a miscellany of Public Domain and proprietary programs. It comes as a double-sided disk (with no instruction book), hails from the awkwardly-named OmrC Computers, and costs £39.

There are 45 proprietary files (counting the .DOC files). A few of these are beneath notice, such as three types of beep; others have great potential. Except for a couple of batch files apparently associated with the process of making copies of the disk, which should have been deleted, the remainder of the disk contains 64 useful public-domain or Apricot-supplied items, some of which you no doubt have already.

Clearly the suppliers threaten to produce further disks of the same sort. If so, they should clean up their act. I refer to the shortage of proofreading, the description of non-existent programs, the presence of undescribed programs, the incomplete renaming of programs so that they have one name externally and another internally, and other like sins.

Speaking for myself, I like a little whimsy now and then; but I find that a set of instructions in which all occurrences of the letter 's' have been replaced with the letter 'f' verges on the fey ... The kindest thing that can be said for some of the remarks in the descriptive text is that the writer(s) must have been partaking of some hallucinogenic substance. Example: "How dare you say such things particularly while drinking Budweiser and playing with hydrants. May I suggest your mother ..."

What you get

In the accompanying list, those files marked 'proprietary' are the ones you are paying for. The rest are free (though some of the Public Domain programs ask for alms). The disk is not copy-protected. My comments refer to an Xi machine.

You ask me for my reactions to this multifarious collection. I answer, "Mixed, mixed". Even freebies should have either a .DOC file to explain them or built-in optional instructions, better the latter. Who has the time to experiment to find out what the originator had in mind, what the 'switches' are, and in what circumstances the program won't work?

Nevertheless, I counted 14 of the Public Domain files that I would like to have or do have and treasure already. Everyone will have his or her own preference; but CHMOD, BRANCH, DEBUG, and FORMAT are essentials to the serious user.

I didn't have time to look into TEMPLATE.ARC, the archived set of SuperCalc templates, so I can't report as to what they are; but perhaps some other happy purchaser will oblige.

The proprietary programs here all have reasonably good instructions included as .DOC files which can be printed and put in a binder somewhere — except for SCROLLER, which has a HELP screen that seems to disappear after one invocation. Read the descriptive text (ugh!) to find out which which machines can use QUIK and QUOF, as these can crash some.

My personal selection here would include CONFIG, DESTROY, LIBRARY, MAGIC, SCAN, and SLICE — and I would be satisfied to pay £39 for these alone. ◆

ScannerS Disk 1

Description:	Miscellany of Apricot utilities
Supplier:	OmrC Computers
Address:	Morah House Tilford Hindhead Surrey GU26 6RH
Telephone:	042 873 5255
Price:	£39
Configuration:	Something for any Apricot but not everything for all of them
Conclusion:	A mish-mash, but you should find it good value for some of the proprietary programs alone

Files on the ScannerS disk

Files associated with the descriptive text

OMRC.BAT	Runs AUTOEXEC for demo
AUTOEXEC.BAT	Runs descriptive text
#	Title page of descriptive text
##	Directory of disk: contains errors and omissions
###	Descriptive text for disk: contains errors and ads
###.BAT	Calls DISPLAY to show ### text

A selection of fonts, old and new

FUTURE.CHR
GW.CHR
ROMAN.CHR
IT.CHR
MEDIUM.CHR
MED.CHR
SCRIPT.CHR
OCR.CHR

Proprietary programs

BP. COM	Makes a beep: same as LOUDBP on my machine
LOUDBP.COM	Makes loud beep
SOFTBP.COM	Makes soft beep
CONFIG.RAM CONFIG.STD CONFIG.MDM CONFIG.BAT CONFIG.DOC	Rapidly changes system configuration from boot format to one of three options
DESTROY.COM DESTROY.DOC	Completely deletes a file as well as all reference to it in FAT and Directory sectors. The ultimate zapper
DISPLAY.COM DISPLAY.DOC	Another improvement on TYPE: I like SHOW better
E.BAT	Sends any escape character: suffers from many disk accesses. I prefer ESC.EXE
HELLO.COM	Adds personalized greeting on bootup, such as "Hi, there, big boy!" or "Greetings to all sentient entities"
HELLO.DOC	
K.BAT KOPY.COM KOPY.DOC	Copies changed files only. Has more switches than KNEW
LIB.BAT LIBRARY.BAT LIBRARY.COM LIBRARY.DOC LIBSORT.EXE	(Needs corrections.) Makes super-directory from directories of many disks
MAGIC.COM	Makes chosen file disappear from directory
MAGIC.DOC	Naufeating inftructionf
Q.BAT	Calls QUIK
QF.BAT	Calls QUOF
QUIK.COM	Speeds up screen display for some machines
QUOF.COM	Turns off QUIK for some machines: crashes mine
SCAN.COM SCAN.DOC	Creates directory with each file name followed by first three lines of text. Has Delete option, etc
SCROLLER.COM	(Called LIST in its own instructions.) Scrolls selected file up or down line by line or page by page. Many commands. HELP screen disappears after one use; doesn't work properly on SuperWriter files
SLICE.COM SLICE.DOC	Cuts up long files into 10K lengths for handling by SuperWriter et al
DESTRUCT	Instructions for UNARC.BAT. Too cutesy for words
UNARC.BAT	Un-archives TEMPLATE.ARC
TEMPLATE.ARC	SuperCalc templates
TRANSFER.COM	Shifts files between directories
POUND	Supposed to make a pound Sterling sign for daisywheel printers

Public Domain programs

ADDUP.EXE	Shows results achievable with SPLIT, a separately-available program for hard-disk partitioning (not included — reviewed in APRICOT FILE Release 1.9)
ALTER.COM	Changes file attributes
ARC.EXE ARC.TXT	Makes or restores compressed archives
ASK.COM ASK.DOC	Batch-file query utility — provides for setting batch environment error levels interactively
BOOTEDIT.EXE BOOTEDIT.DOC	For advanced configuration of boot disks
BRANCH.COM	Draws subdirectory tree
CAL.COM	Shows calendar for any month in any year
CHMOD.EXE CHMOD.DOC	Manipulates property bits in file directory
CPN.COM	Compares two files
CPU.COM	Checks your CPU clock speed
DPATH.COM DPATH.DOC	Mostly does for data files what PATH does for programs. Text still needs proofreading
ESC.EXE	Sends any escape character. Better than E.BAT
FGREP.EXE	Searches files for matching strings
FILEDIT.COM	Selects file sector for binary patching: no instructions on how to exit
FILES.COM	Some sort of SORT: no instructions
FREE.COM	Reports number of bytes free on specified disk
HC.COM	Converts hex format files to COM, EXE, or BIN and vice versa
LABEL.COM	Edits disk label or machine configuration
LS.EXE LS.DOC	UNIX-style version of DIR with many new options
NPROMPT.BAT	A PROMPT that shows current subdirectory, time, date, and MS-DOS version on bottom line. Updated only at next command, turned off only by another PROMPT command

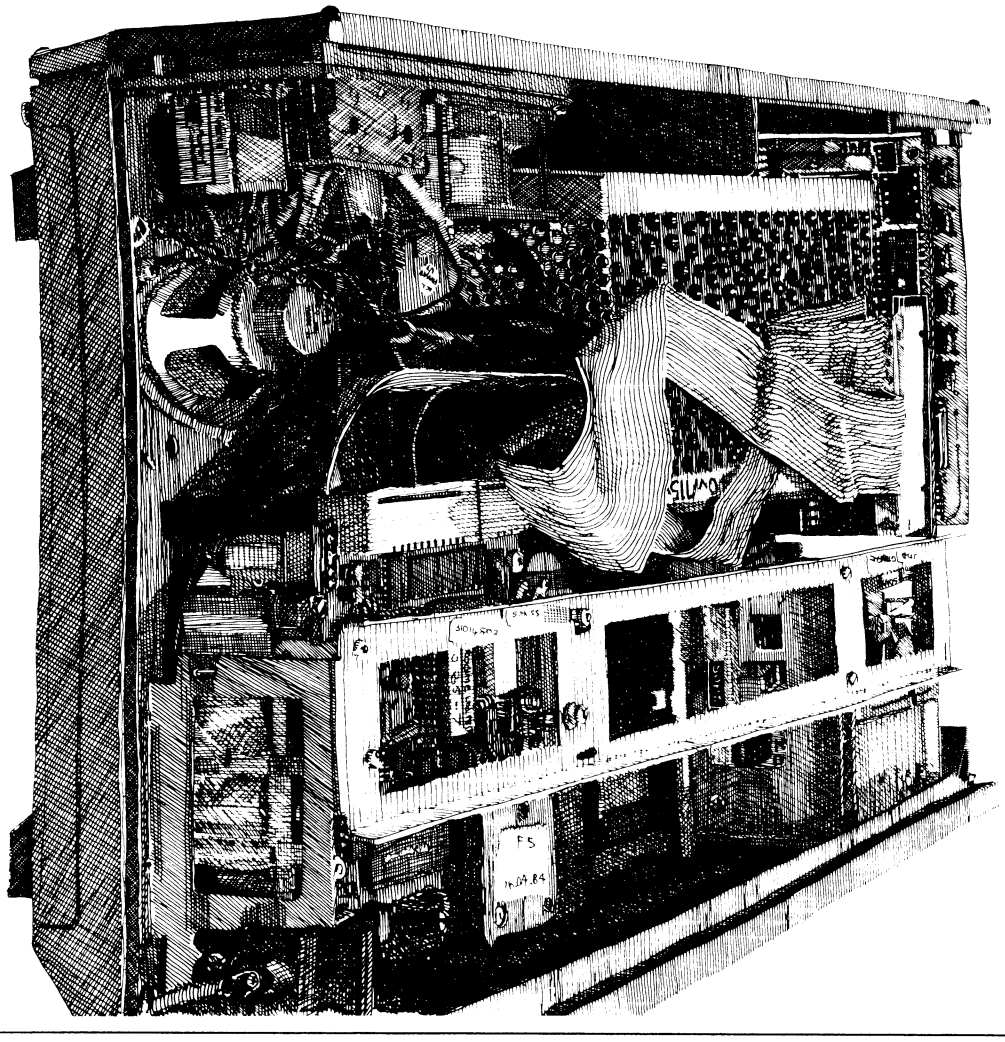
POPDIR.COM	'Recalls current subdirectory' after PUSHDIR. Why?
PT.EXE	Lists number of files in each file-extension type
PUSHDIR.COM	'For use with batch files to save current subdirectory.' Why? No instructions
QT.COM	Shows approximate time in words, as "It's just past ten to one"
RENDIR.COM	Renames a directory
SCAVEN.COM SCAVEN.DOC	Locks out bad parts of hard disk
SDIR4.COM	Another SDIR with various options and ways of crashing. Nice compressed printout
SECEDIT.COM	Edits selected disk sector: I couldn't make it work within my limited attention span
SHOWDEV.EXE SHOWDEV.DOC	Shows what 'devices' are present
STAMP.COM	Marks text file with current date etc
STRIP.COM	Removes high-order bit control characters from text file, eg to unWordStar it
SWEEP.EXE	Another directory utility, called PC SWEEP 2.00 in its directions — 30 switches, scrolls by lines. Truly a fructitious pantechnicon of utility
TEE.COM	'Redirection branch utility'. No instructions: sometimes crashes my machine
TOUCH.COM	'Updates named files': no instructions
VCOPY.COM	'Vericopy Version 1.0': no instructions
VDEL.COM VDEL.DOC	Another selective DEL: but SWEEP has everything including this, if you can remember all the switches
VOLSER:COM	Renames disk volume: I prefer VLBL
WAITUNTL.COM	Waits until selected time; prints HH:MM:SS each second, run together across screen
WHEREIS.COM	Searches all subdirectories for filename
WSD.EXE	(For NEC computers!)

Standard programs included for convenience

ACT001.KB
CONFIG.SYS
DEBUG.COM
FORMAT.EXE
FONT.EXE
RAMDISK.SYS

Miscellaneous

THISDISK	A directory of some previous disk, not this one
MOREFILE.BAT	(Should have been deleted)
MDSCAN.BAT	(Should have been deleted)
RO.BAT	Sets font to ROMAN



Classified

Free Small Ads

Apricot Sales

■■■ APRICOT F10 for sale — new, with software. Price £895 ono. Phone H Cohen, 021-454 2563 evenings.

■■■ APRICOT XEN FD needs a good home. Six months old, one careful owner; 512KB memory, dual floppies. Includes all standard software and a copy of A LA CARTE. Price £1,500 ono. Call 01-221 7612 office hours.

■■■ APRICOT PC with 512KB memory, dual 640K disk drives, standard software (MS-DOS, SuperWriter, SuperCalc). Good condition, not much used. Price £650. Contact Dave Illing, 0270 661427, evenings.

■■■ F1 INFRA-RED MOUSE with light pipe and software. Low mileage, well-behaved. £50 ono. Contact 0734 732512.

■■■ APRICOT PORTABLE with Starter Pack, MS-DOS, ACTIVITY, 640KB memory: £650 ono. PALANTIR word processor and Speller: £80 ono. Also EPSON HX20, no software, suit salesman: £150 ono. Contact T Dawson on 0292 77588.

■■■ SPARE 9in monitor for Xi for sale — green screen, black casing. Price £99, or will consider an exchange for interesting software. Also OPEN ACCESS for sale: £99 or exchange (now using KMan/2). Contact Charles Stirton on 01-940 1171 (day) or 01-940 8428 (evenings).

■■■ XEN HD with 20MB hard disk, 1MB RAM, paper-white monitor; plus SuperCalc and SuperWriter. Hardly used. Cost £3,500 plus VAT, will accept £2,500 plus VAT. Also available: WordStar 2000 and Epson LQ1500. Contact Mark Wardle on Gloucester 504294 (day) or 411402 (evenings).

■■■ 9in MONITOR for sale — green screen, black casing. Good condition. Price £50. Contact 06512 2667.

■■■ APRICOT Xi20S with 1MB RAM, 20MB hard disk, 12in monitor, Mouse, Internal Modem, Juki 6200 printer. Nine months old, hardly used. Price new was £7,000 — will accept £2,800. Also available: external 20MB hard disk and tons of software if required (not included in price quoted). Messages on 0772 719325.

■■■ SIRIUS TO APRICOT file transfer package. Official ACT version: cost £109, bargain at £45. Contact 061-428 5975.

■■■ APRICOT Xi, as new and boxed. 10MB hard disk, 720KB double-sided floppy, 9in monitor; SuperCalc, SuperWriter, SuperPlanner. Cost £3,444 — will accept £1,495. Dust covers and Securicor delivery included! Phone 061-428 5975.

■■■ 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.

■■■ XEN multi-user system with two 256KB Apricot PCs and Oki Microline 193 printer plus Delta 4 (networked), SuperWriter, SuperCalc. Cost £9,000 in March, will accept £5,750 now. A first-class system, but unfortunately the business did not materialise ... Details from 031-445 2218.

■■■ 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.

Other Sales

■■■ WORDPERFECT Ver. 4.1 for use with Xen-i or any IBM-compatible. Unopened and complete. A bargain at £300 ono. Contact I Bryce on 0603 630326 in working hours.

■■■ EPSON RIBBON CARTRIDGES for sale — brand new, boxed, made by Epson and Caribonum. We've found half a dozen that we bought for an Epson we no longer have ... Price £5 including postage, or all six for £25. Phone Roger Gann on 01-833 3501.

■■■ LAYOUT TABLE with plate-glass top, illuminated from below by four separately-switched strip lights. Has two drawers with locks. Measures 4ft 7in wide by 3ft 10in deep and 3ft high; suitable for artist, architect, photographer or similar. Must sell — £250 ono. Phone 01-968 5448.

■■■ PSION ORGANISER — original program and datapacks, RS232 link-up, documentation. Boxed. £40 ono. Contact Mike Nash on 01-671 8644 (home) or 01-584 5000 x 3545 (office).

■■■ COMMODORE CLEAR-OUT: another of our perennial Spring-cleans has thrown up a few items of stock relating to a previous venture in Commodore home computers. Specifically, we have a dozen or so copies of Dennis Jarrett's Complete Commodore 64 book, many cassette dust-covers, and several CBM 64 Basic compilers on disk. Free to a good home — ie a non-profit cause like a school. Contact Roger Gann on 01-833 3501.

Wants

■■■ WANTED for Apricot 10Xi: Expansion Box, Modem Board, Colour Board. Phone 0992 468870 evenings.

■■■ PC or XI wanted — must be cheap! Contact T Dawson on 0292 77588.

■■■ PORTABLE PROBLEMS — I have an Apricot Portable without monitor interface and version 1.6 boot ROMs. Can anyone in South London offer advice on modifying/rectifying these? Could swap software for help ... Contact Mike Nash on 01-671 8644 (home) or 01-584 5000 x 3545 (office).

■■■ SERIAL MOUSE wanted. Contact Charles Stirton on 01-940 1171 (day) or 01-940 8428 (evenings).

■■■ CHEAP TURBO PASCAL WANTED by student, to help with studies. Write to Martin Norman at 14 Spurr Court, Foxwood, York.

■■■ 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 dealers without success and the long-promised £30 DR pack still hasn't materialised. Contact David Stirling at 28 Ingleston Avenue, Dunipace, Denny, Scotland.

■■■ 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.

Help

■■■ SIRIUS-APRICOT TRANSFER: any program and/or data transferred from Apricot to Sirius format and vice versa. Just send your disks along with £5 for the first one and £1 for each disk after that: P&R Miller, 8 Hillside Close, Hednesford, Staffs WS12 4DG.

■■■ SANYO AND APRICOT: can anyone suggest how I might format 3.5in disks so that both my Sanyo MBC-555 and my Apricot can read me? Also, does anyone know where I can obtain Concurrent CP/M-86? Contact Bob Wilcock on 01-888 8304 (evenings).

■■■ 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. ◆

Review

The mail must get through

Two mailing list packages: ADDBASE and MAILER

By Paul Lavin

A common theme runs through the enlightened sages' advice on computing: delegate all the dull, mindless, grinding, repetitious slog to the silicon assistant and keep all the creative, interesting, sexy, prestigious work to the meat in front of the monitor. No chore fills the dull mindless etc specification better than doing a mailing operation.

Many word processing packages have in-built mail-merging utilities. The bargain-basement 'free' bundled SuperWriter, the ubiquitous and antiquated WordStar and the multi-talented WordPerfect are the three of which I have enough experience to wax lyrical.

But there are also several stand-alone packages that can help considerably with the pain of organising a mailshot. Among them are the cheap and cheerful ADDBASE from Oxford Computer Training; and the aptly named MAILER from the lads at Ansible Information.

For impecunious individuals intent on assembling a mailing list at rock-bottom cost, I also offer my own contribution QuickAdd; this is a little Basic program that will help you bury the Post Office in sales letters, birth announcements, Christmas cards and the like.

Anyone with more than passing familiarity with databases could also whip up an application to keep the names and addresses properly regimented; but I will not dwell upon those worthy pursuits myself. It's a bit too much like fly-swatting with a sledgehammer.

Basics

Although I am awed by the power of WordPerfect, I still find myself drawn back to Stupidwriter for mass-mailing work (nothing a fortnight in Majorca with the WordPerfect manual couldn't fix). SuperWriter is my preferred word processor for construction of the label or the form-letter template because it has the advantage of being able to use conditional commands for processing the salutation of letters: 'Dear Sir' letters get 'Yours faithfully', but individuals named in the greeting are properly 'Yours sincerely' at the close.

But the nucleus of any mailshot is the address list itself. Generally, database-speak is adopted to label each set of name, address, town, etc. as a *record*. Each of those items (name, address, etc.) is referred to separately as a *field*. Records are therefore composed of fields.

The organisation of records and their constituent fields comes in two generic flavours, *text* and *flat file*. A text record is also sometimes referred to as a 'return-separated' record because each of its fields is on a separate line — that is, separated by carriage returns. Individual records are usually separated by an extra return, leaving a blank line or 'null' field.

A flat file record uses one line per record with each record separated by returns. Flat files, which are typically generated by your favourite database or spreadsheet, will also be quite uniform as to the number of spaces comprising each field.

A variation on the flat file theme used by WordStar has variable length fields separated by a comma. Each record occupies a separate line.

Consistency of format is the key to preparing your address lists to keep from opening letters with "Dear NW2 5AP". Lists of up to a dozen addresses can be constructed with your favourite word manipulator without too much stress induced by line-counting (or, in the case of WordStar, comma-counting). When your projects start to expand to scores or hundreds of addresses, you need a little help keeping things straight.

ADDBASE by OCTL

Enter ADDBASE. For £30 you get a well thought-out addressing utility — and loads of support if, like me, you've got a rogue copy of WordStar. I have been using ADDBASE for light-duty work for the past two years with excellent results.

It outputs text files that can easily be converted to WordStar-type flat files by use of a global search and replace routine, if you must. It works a treat with SuperWriter right out of the box. The new version of ADDBASE will even embed the field and record separators needed by WordPerfect — or, for that matter, *any* field/record delineator your Brand X mail-merger requires.

The output of ADDBASE is configured so that it can be used to generate labels or to address letters. I use separate fields for first name, last name and title (Mr, Mrs, and so forth) so that I can personalise the greetings for the letters ("Dear Lord Arsfardle") as well as generate mailing labels and inside addresses on letters using the full name.

ADDBASE allows you to specify the number of fields you want to use in each record as well as the on-screen prompt used to galvanise your lethargic data enterer into appropriate action. It is menu-driven with clear screen prompting and is so simple to use that the brief manual accompanying it is superfluous; the manual does however have some helpful hints on setting up address files and advice on the care and feeding of SuperWriter and WordStar.

ADDBASE will automatically check address files for proper format, alphabetise your records and check for duplicates. Therein lies the rub in this otherwise neat little package: on a recent mailing job I had the tedious job of confirming that the Personnel Manager of every company on the list was not a duplication, because of the simple-

minded way that the application checks for duplicates. In fairness, ADDBASE does provide a way around this complication; but it is only useful with foresight, not once you've turned the beasty loose on your file.

It is often very useful to be able to search for certain records in your address file. Because ADDBASE keeps things in text format, you can search for 'London' in the town field or an empty country field (if you want only domestic addresses from a multinational list, for example). Matches can be output to the screen, the printer or another file.

Dummy fields can be inserted into your address lists to facilitate selection of individual records for special purposes (deadbeats, no-hopers, ne'er-do-wells and your spouse's relatives can be thus branded). ADDBASE can also be used to search for and delete records that you no longer want in your list.

ADDBASE is a compiled Basic program and cannot be expected to fly like the wind through your 10,000-record list: disk capacity and your patience are the only limitations on file size. ADDBASE is helpful, though, in that it will give you an indication of the amount of time it will take to sort your list out. You then can judge whether to go for a cup of tea (or, alternatively, a six-course meal) while it's doing your thing.

ADDBASE	
Description:	Mailing list manager for use with most word processors
Supplier:	Oxford Computer Training Services
Address:	St Josephs Hall Junction Road Oxford OX4 2UJ
Telephone:	0865 714826
Price:	£30 including VAT and P&P
Configuration:	any Apricot
Conclusion:	A bargain list-management tool

MAILER by Ansible

The newest product on the block with which to harass the Post Office is Ansible Information's MAILER. Available as part of the ASD2 disk (price £57.50, inc VAT and P&P, from DEALS FOR READERS) or on its lonesome for £45 (direct from Ansible), it's a fast and flexible mini-database address handler.

Messrs Langford and Priest are quite forthright about the object of MAILER: to simplify the preparation of mailing labels and to facilitate the production of occasional letters. Because of the free format of MAILER address files, the excessive format fussiness demanded by mail mergers is avoided. But in return you do lose the structure needed to personalise letters.

MAILER is of little direct help in constructing your address files, mostly because it does not need to be. Its files are kept 'flat' with comma-separated fields and return-separated records (if you like to use commas in your addresses, you can customise your field separators to forestall peculiar results).

MAILER will alphabetise your address file for you using the last word in the first field. You can either manipulate the contents of the field or use a 'hard' space to procure the desired result. No rigorous comma-counting is required as MAILER will print out a record without caring about the number of fields or the dimensions of their contents, up to the maximum of 250 characters. MAILER provides a numerical index of your addresses.

Complete control of the format specification of the label printing run is maintained by familiar SuperWriter commands. Additionally, labels can be printed across the web, two, three or more wide. A MAILER.DEF file can automatically provide a particular setup, much in the way SW.DEF stores your own quirky SuperWriter defaults.

MAILER has a search facility that is particularly powerful. For instance, it allows you to select any records that contain the word 'London' but not 'London Road'. Searches for empty fields, however, are not possible. Search output can be directed to the screen, printer or a nominated disk file.

If you want to use MAILER to provide the occasional inside address in a letter you will have to use a data file format that sacrifices parts of the search utility. In return you get not only the letter capability but also a handy address book and envelope addresser.

David Langford of Ansible mutters about supply and demand and disproportionately high printing costs for those who insist on buying MAILER alone; he'd rather see you get lots more product for just a little more money by buying the entire ASD2 ensemble. Indeed, MAILER is a real bargain as part of the ASD2 megadisk; but on its own its lack of flexibility makes it seem pricey. MAILER is all you need to do the Christmas cards or 'Dear Sir' letters but don't ask it for more.

MAILER	
Description:	Mailing list utility for SuperWriter
Supplier:	Ansible Information
Address:	94 London Road Reading Berks RG1 5AU
Telephone:	0672 62576
Price:	£45 if bought separately (direct from Ansible): or as part of Ansible's ASD2 disk, price £57.50 from DEALS FOR READERS. Both prices include VAT and P&P
Configuration:	any Apricot
Conclusion:	A powerful labelling utility that adds significantly to the value of ASD2.

The cheap DIY option

The diehard cheapskates who have hung on throughout this ramble into name-and-address land are to be presently rewarded with the aforementioned QuickAdd program. The same program runs on my IBM, Apricot and Tandy 200 briefacse portable. (It's the Tandy that sees the bulk of the action as it allows me to go to the library and poach likely victims from various business reference works without the annoyance of resorting to antediluvian paper and pencil with subsequent timewasting transcription.)

QuickAdd has only a modicum of editing ability, limited to throwing out an entire record in the event of an (ahem!) infrequent typo, before writing the record to the file. If you don't like my input prompts or need additional fields, modify it at your pleasure. The CHR$(13) in line 74 can be omitted if you don't require LF with CRs.

QuickAdd doesn't search, alphabetise, check for duplicates or do the windows. But it's free, compact (a Tandy consideration that causes some compromise in normal Basic programming conventions) and will give you consistently-formatted text records for producing pillar box fodder.

I might also add that QuickAdd is a breeze to use under pressing time constraints: the wife and I recently used it in the delivery room at Queen Charlotte's to create a birth announcement list whilst waiting for the guest of honour to make her appearance ... ◆

QUICKADD.BAS

```
1   INPUT "NAME OF ADDRESS FILE"; FILE$: PRINT
2   PRINT "IS THIS A NEW FILE?  (Y or N)"
3   R$=INKEY$: IF R$="" THEN GOTO 3
4   IF R$="Y"OR R$="y" THEN OPEN FILE$ FOR
    OUTPUT AS 1
5   IF R$="N"OR R$="n" THEN OPEN FILE$ FOR
    APPEND AS 1
7   DIM A$(11): A=1
9   X$=CHR$(34)+CHR$(34)
10  REM ZEROING THE STRING ARRAY AND INPUT
    COUNTER
11  FOR J=1 TO 11
12  LET A$(J)=""
13  NEXT J
14  L=1
15  REM INPUTING THE ADDRESS INFO INTO THE
    STRING ARRAY
16  PRINT: PRINT "RECORD NUMBER";A
22  PRINT: INPUT "LASTNAME"; A$(L)
23  REM TESTING FOR THE QUIT SIGNAL
25  IF A$(1)="999" THEN GOTO 99
27  GOSUB 111
30  INPUT FIRSTNAME"; A$(L)
32  GOSUB 111
33  INPUT "TITLE"; A$(L)
34  GOSUB 111
35  INPUT "POSITION"; A$(L)
36  GOSUB 111
37  INPUT "COMPANY"; A$(L)
38  GOSUB 111
39  INPUT "ADDRESS1"; A$(L)
40  GOSUB 111
41  INPUT "ADDRESS2"; A$(L)
42  GOSUB 111
43  INPUT "ADDRESS3"; A$(L)
44  GOSUB 111
45  INPUT "TOWN/COUNTY"; A$(L)
46  GOSUB 111
47  INPUT "POSTCODE"; A$(L)
48  GOSUB 111
49  LINE INPUT "COUNTRY? (CR IF UK)"; A$(L)
50  GOSUB 111
60  PRINT "IS THIS RECORD CORRECT? (Y or N)"
61  P$=INKEY$: IF P$="" THEN GOTO 61
62  IF P$="N"OR P$="n" THEN GOTO 11
63  IF P$="Y"OR P$="y" THEN GOTO 70
64  GOTO 61
70  REM CONTENTS OF STRING ARRAY PRINTED TO
    OUTPUT FILE
71  FOR K=1 TO 11
72  PRINT #1, A$(K)
73  NEXT K
74  PRINT #1, CHR$(13)
75  A=A+1
76  GOTO 11
99  END
109 REM NULL STRINGS REPLACED BY "" (NEEDED BY
    WORDSTAR)
110 REM AND INPUT COUNTER INCREMENTED
111 IF A$(L)="" THEN A$(L)=X$
112 L=L+1
113 RETURN
```

A note on BIOS 3.1

Those steadfast readers who muscled their way with iron-willed determination to the bitter end of my previous screed on WordPerfect (APRICOT FILE Release 1.11) must have registered shock and astonishment at my flaccid acceptance of the bizarre antics exhibited by the colour monitor on my Portable.

Well, the much-maligned BIOS 3.1 was the culprit. While there is much to be said for having the latest kit, that makes sense only if it functions at least marginally better than that which it replaces. 3.1 doesn't cut it on this score.

After reverting to the ROM-chip Version 1.8, my colour screen now works in colour and doesn't collapse to two lines when you fill the screen with text. No need to invoke WordPerfect's magnificent macro capability to automate 'scroll fiddling' once the 3.1's are nestled comfortably in the bottom of your spare parts drawer.

A note of further obfuscation needs to be added to this whole BIOS misadventure. There are apparently as many versions of RAM BIOS as there are ROM BIOS. Anyone care to speculate on which blend of arcane malprogramming comes the closest to functioning properly the greatest proportion of the time? Watch this space.

The Mail-Order Pages

Deals For Readers

Public Domain software, utilities, hardware bargains

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 Apricot hardware and software**, typically useful items that aren't widely available
- **anything else we think would be of value to readers**, such as relevant books.

Each issue has new entries and (occasionally) price changes. So keep looking! And we're always open to suggestions for additional items — if there's something you'd like to see in DEALS FOR READERS, **or if you've come across a handy utility or a good deal on hardware add-ins, let us know.**

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. There are three ways to pay: a Sterling cheque or money order (made out to "TP GROUP") *can* accompany your order, or you can use a Girobank transfer — our National Girobank account number is **59 028 1909**.

Or use a credit card. We can accept **Access/Mastercharge, American Express** and **Diners Club**; for a charge card payment we need a signed order that includes your name as it appears on the card and your card number.

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.

Sorry, but we cannot accept telephone orders.

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.

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 indispensable 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!

■■■ NEW ■■■

Apricot Disk No 6

Order no:	AP018
Price:	£15

Another disk chock full of utilities, 30KB of BATch file extras, essential MS-DOS utilities like DPATH (works like PATH but for data files like overlays and Help text — no more duplicating SuperWriter/SuperCalc/WordStar OVL and HLP files across subdirectories), the latest versions of SWEEP and WHEREIS, excellent archiving utility ARC, and a handful of programs designed to enhance your data security — even a few programs for inveterate hackers!

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. Now with an amended screen driver capable of supporting the Epson FX-80.

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 of these are 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. Now comes with a special chess character set for the Portable and F Series.

The dBASE II Disk

Order no:	AP017
Price:	£15

Full of dBASE II program suites. Includes programs to control membership records, a dBASE routine library, a label printing program, the ubiquitous mailing list program, a product tracking system, a form letter generator and sundry dBASE utilities. Essentially for keen dBASE programmers.

Programmer's Disk 1

Order no:	AP011
Price:	£15

Our first disk for programming fans. Star attraction is a public domain implementation of LISP called 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.

PC File III

Order no:	AP015
Price:	£15

Our first 'shareware' 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). For BIOS 3.1 only.

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 Apricots with BIOS 3.1, the F Series, or 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. 1

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, corrections 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.

A.S.D. 2

Order no:	**AS006**
Price:	**£57.50**

A second bumper bundle of SuperWriter goodies from Ansible, essential for SuperWriting but full of generally helpful Apricot extras. Includes DOCTOR (easy-to-use file recovery), MAILER mail-list program, a whole bunch of useful .XQT and BATch files, a disk labeller ... some 90 files in all. Enthusaistically reviewed by Lindsay Doyle in Release 1.11.

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.

■■■ NEW ■■■

VICAR

BASIC:	**AS026**
Price:	**£56**
TURBO PASCAL:	**AS027**
Price:	**£56**
MS PASCAL:	**AS028**
Price:	**£90**
dBASE II:	**AS029**
Price:	**£90**
dBASE III:	**AS030**
Price:	**£148**
C:	**AS031**
Price:	**£148**

Variables In Context Analysis and Reporter: another good piece of work from Iansyst — a clutch of neat programmer's aids that began life as a fairly conventional cross-referencer to track the names and usage of variables, but adds the ability to handle multiple source files (handy for applications which can extend across several programs) and importantly shows the complete context for a variable — not just a line number. Note that there are versions for several popular languages.

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.

TRANSEND

Order no:	**AS025**
Price:	**£86.25**

A superior file transfer package enabling you to transfer data between Sirius, Apricot and/or IBM via the RS232 serial port with speed and ease — and for modem comms too, including Viewdata. Handles subdirectories and features remote operation with the option of transferring files using XMODEM protocols. Price is for three disks covering those three formats.

The File Protect Pack

Order no:	AS018
Price:	£50

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.

SPLIT Disk Partitioner

Order no:	AS033
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.

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:	£57.50

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.

■■■ PRICED TO CLEAR ■■■

QUEST — The Adventure

Order no:	AS034
Price:	£10

A few copies only of this interesting semi-graphic adventure game, bought as bankrupt stock and discovered taking up valuable shelf space in the back office. Good fun — runs on any Apricot, though Portables and F series must have BIOS 3.1.

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 processors
- WORDNO word counter
- READAGE calculates the reading age (ie the comprehensibility) of text
- SEARCH searches text for a 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

■■■ NEW ■■■

A La Carte

Order no:	AS032
Price:	£340

An exclusive offer to APRICOT FILE readers at £100 off the recommended price: A La Carte is a superior windows-based 'executive desktop' system which has a database management system, word processing and diary. In her review in Personal Computer World magazine, Kathy Lang called it "neat and easy to understand ... full of thoughtful and unusual features". All this and you can also use A La Carte to 'front-end' other software. To be reviewed in APRICOT FILE too. Requires a minimum of 512KB, works best on a hard disk. Not for Portables or F Series.

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	AH004
	£130
512KB	AH005
	£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.

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 must have *prepayment* except for official purchase orders; and *purchase orders* can only be accepted for orders totalling £50 or more.

We can accept payment in Sterling by **cheque, Eurocheque, postal order** or **money order**): by **Girobank transfer** — our National Girobank account number is **59 028 1909**: or by **credit card** — we take Access/Mastercharge, American Express and Diners Club.

Doodles by David

Tips and tricks

From the working day

By David St.John Wallis

Dutch Apricot enthusiasts meet once a month on the third floor, past a sign which promotes the merits of Hanna, Kim Lee and Birgit with a bunch of bananas and some baby oil, sorry Vicar, and on the Krasnapolski side of the Ouderzijsvoorburghwal. Not, as you might have guessed, to experiment with new prophylactics: but instead to indulge in 'Advanced Applications'.

Daggbode has some 500 members (more than any UK user group, one shrewdly opines). If you understand Dutch — and Apricot Dutch is *double* Dutch, using phrases like "aan de gebruikersbibliotheek te zijn verstrekt ..." — you will probably get as big a thrill out of Daggbode. Want more info? Call Martin Illbrink in Holland on 079 315689.

In between orgies in the canals, they write programs. This is what their programs look like (particularly after I've mucked about with them):

```
1  R=RND
2  FOR LED=1 TO 200
3  R=R+1
4  PRINT CHR$(27)+"/"+CHR$(R)
5  NEXT LED
6  SYSTEM
```

This makes a good way of wearing out the tungsten in your MicroScreen LEDs. Run it with this batch file called LEDS.BAT or TRIVIAL.BAT or IMPRESSALLVISITORS.BAT or something:

```
ECHO OFF
ECHO Watch my LEDs
MSBASIC LEDS
```

Games with WordPerfect

The worst thing about WordPerfect's dictionary is that it didn't know my name. Here are some alternatives it suggested. For David — 'Deviate'; for St. — 'Sates'; for John — 'Horn'; for Wallis — 'Willies'. This is, however, not to be taken that in future I wish to be known as 'Deviate St.Horn-Willies'.

Oh, I looked up the APRICOT FILE luminaries too. For 'Dennis Jarrett' I liked 'Downiest Joyride' best. 'Roger Gann' came out as 'Roguery Goon'.

Despite those articles a couple of issues ago, WordPerfect is not only truly wonderful but good for a laugh too. Oh, the simple pleasures ... And it backs up automatically, does indexing, and has a good line in the sock-mending sagas of ordinary folk. Spent hundreds on Superwriter patches? Oh dear.

And finally! A use for SPLIT

Make a batch file which takes the best bits out of your subdirectories and dumps them on to a floppy. Next, copy the entire contents of the floppy into a SPLIT partition.

Now you can delete everything you just backed up on the A drive (you can still access the stuff; just go something like /Load,G:VATMAN,All). When the partition gets a bit full you can then use a disk sorter such as the Norton utility DS.COM or the DEALS FOR READERS program SORTDISK, both of which will sort a directory according to size, extension or date; you want to sort by date.

Then use VCOPY to copy all the old stuff into another partition. Now ARChive the old stuff; test the .ARC file; copy it to a floppy — and enjoy your whipped cream banana sundae safe in the knowledge that you have backed up your Winchester.

By the way, hugely impressive Tony Weyman is writing a miraculous bit of assembler for backing-up. Shortly to be released to selected gentlemen only, the target is that it will occupy not more than 24 bytes, will back up a Winchester in the time it takes to puff a reefer, and will restore everything in the time it takes to pull your hat over your eyes in the Reeperbahn.

White hot trivia

For those of you who are interested in the leading-edge stuff, this text was composed on an Epson HX20 portable using the Transam ITE ROM chip in a place called Konstanz in Switzerland. It was then squirted to an Apricot running TRANSEND in Britain; converted into WordPerfect format; edited a bit; saved as an ASCII file; and re-squirted via Telecom Gold to where the illustrious great Editor in Chief should have been watching his VDU instead of the reducing level of Jamieson's in the bottle next to it. Everything would have worked perfectly if he ever looked at his mailbox (his ID is 81:JET767, mine is 72:EPS007. Thought you'd like to know that).

Whimper

Well, I've come to the conclusion that readers of APRICOT FILE must be even more bird-brained than I am. No-one got the twelve balls problem; no-one solved the ABCD Apricots thingy. So to end this piece, this is to announce to my astonished reader that I am going to start selling WordPerfect at less than the dealer price. Or take up making wooden toys. Or start a third career with Hanna, Kim Lee and Birgit as the banana supplier. Why? The last readership survey said that no-one had ever read this column ... not even the Editor (*I was busy buying French grocery stores — Ed.*) ◆

Making money

After the recent public offering for **Microsoft**, co-founder **Bill Gates** has joined the ranks of the 400 richest people in the States (as published by *Fortune* magazine). Gates is now worth some **$350 million** on paper.

Beginners' Expert System

'Expert systems' — packages to build decision-guiding systems that work on the same basis as an expert advisor — are among the sexier areas of software development right now. After all, having the machine tell you what you ought to be doing is the very stuff of computing dreams. And expert systems are becoming both cheaper and more available, especially on smaller computers. If you want a modestly-priced intro to expert systems, you might consider the paying **£49.95** for **iL TRAINER** from **PAL Software**; it's based on a full-scale package called **INTELLIGENCE-1** and has all the features of its parent — except that you get the tutorial screens, and you're limited to one module of a hundred rules. Makes a change from the usual demo, anyhow; and there's an Apricot version.

BOS boss

Top moves at **BOS Software**, the business software supplier that was bought by its managers from CAP in 1981 and promptly flourished. Of the original three principals, **David Blandford** has left to set up an independent BOS-based development and marketing operation in Australia: **John Johnston** steps up to become MD and the previous incumbent **Alistair Jacks** takes a well-earned rest as Chairman.

Homework

Now this sounds like a good idea: the new part-time MBA course at Brighton Poly requires a degree of fluency with computers (you'd be surprised how many business management degrees don't). And the Poly is giving Apricot F1s to its 17 students, primarily for use as terminals. A generation of high-fliers raised on SuperWriter?

Hacking kills

According to writer **Steve Gold** in the new trade press magazine *Telelink*, American computer enthusiasts have driven to suicide a US journalist who 'infiltrated' computer clubs and told the cops some of the hackers' secrets. Seems they hacked various institutional computers and flagged the unfortunate man's name such that he was persistently stopped by the police, given a negative credit rating, had his house repossessed even though his mortgage was up to date ... Steve Gold, by the way, is a knowledgeable (and likeable) bloke who achieved some notoriety when he left a message in Prince Philip's Prestel mailbox to demonstrate the system's inadequacies.

Strategies by Apricot

The revised master-plan for Apricot involves three types of dealer — 'Apricot Specialist Dealers', big boys (preferably the Top 20 IBM dealers) who can sell into blue-chip accounts in the public sector and the City: 200 or so established and successful Apricot dealers, now labelled 'Apricot Business Computer dealers': and around 300 of the smaller guys, called 'Apricot Authorised Dealers'. The upper-echelon dealers get massive discounts (up to 40 per cent, we hear) and they don't have to guarantee order levels; they're expected to do the hard work of re-establishing the corporate image among the big spenders.

And it's the latter batch who will now be serviced through 'distributors' rather than buying their stock direct from Apricot; in the past few weeks Apricot has fixed up three such distributors — **MSD** (part of Brikat), the MBS subsidiary **DDL** (the mainline MBS operation has also signed up as an ABC dealer), and **Eltec** (which currently distributes Acorns and Amstrads, and used to handle the F series too).

Apricot is currently telling stockbrokers to expect a return to profits in the half-year figures due later this month — so at 55p or less, Apricot shares might be a good short-term bet ...

MLD users unite

Users of Mountford & Laxon's highly rated **MLD** CAD and draughting software have formed an independent User Association "to provide a forum for discussion and a means of distributing information of interest" — primarily through a regular newsletter. Info from chairperson **Gerry Bernado** at Technique & Design Consultancy on **0295 54758**.

CD-ROM standards

CD-ROM is one of the hot topics in hardware right now, providing computer-readable non-rewriteable versions of compact discs for publishing information. The so-called **'High Sierra Group'** consists of around a hundred firms from computing, publishing and compact disk manufacturing with an interest in the subject; over the past two years they've been putting together a set of standards for volume and file structures with a view to achieving some compatibility between CD-ROM disks and drives. That work bore fruit in the summer, and if you're interested in fitting the specs the easiest access is probably via the newly-published *CD-ROM Standards: The Book*. Produced by a High Sierra subcommittee, it also provides a very good overview of the current position, prospects and potential problems for 'optical publishing'. It's available for **£50** from **Learned Information** on **0865 730275**.

Centronics sold

Back in the Good Old Days, the *de facto* standards were being set by companies other than IBM. The connection for a parallel printer featured on most computers (including Apricots) is widely called 'Centronics-standard' because **Centronics** was the biggest maker of low-cost parallel-interface matrix printers in the early 1980s; but then the Japanese arrived, did it better and cheaper, and generally eclipsed Centronics.

Wiping a nostalgic tear from the eye, we now report that the printer-related assets of Centronics have now been acquired by one of the newer US printer makers, **Genicom** — itself born out of General Electric's printer division (in 1983), hitherto specialising in fast, pricey matrix printers, and currently turning over some $150 million a year. Subject to everyone's approval, Genicom is paying around **$75 million** for everything except existing stocks and cash assets. Last year Centronics did about $180 million worth of printer business, so Genicom might be getting a bargain; and Centronics has just started shipping one of the nicer second-generation laser printers, a decent enough unit by all accounts and discounted down to below £1,700 right now.