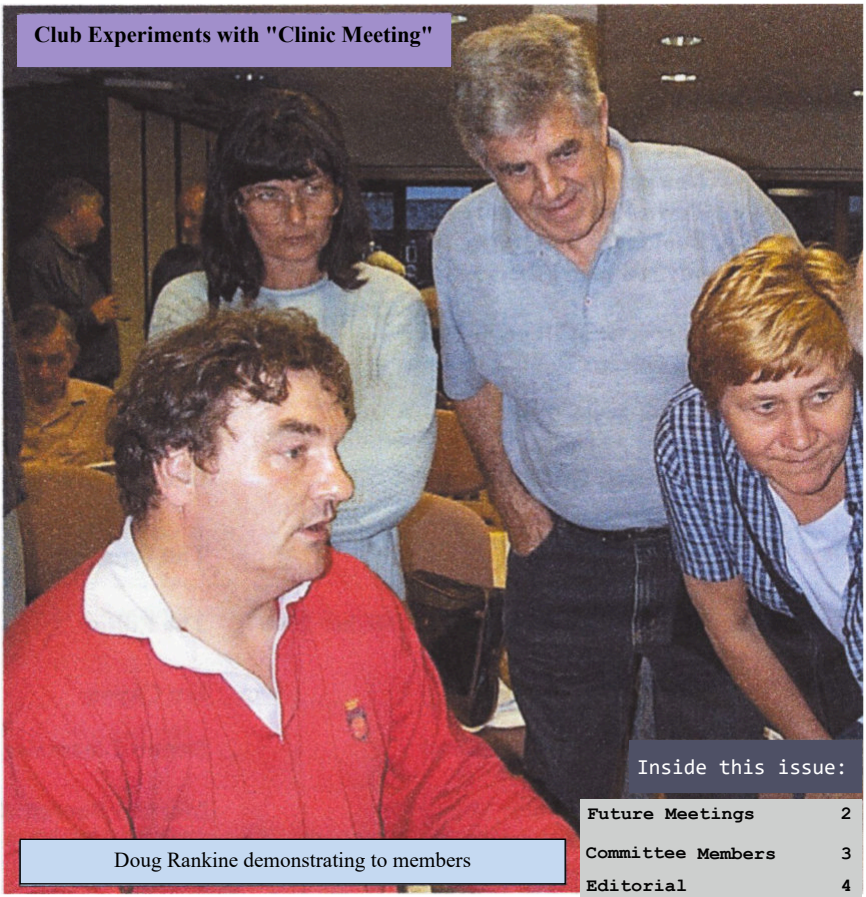
Issue-103

HOT KEY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2000

IOW PC USER GROUP

Club Experiments with "Clinic Meeting"



Doug Rankine demonstrating to members

Recently, IWPCUG endeavoured to make our presentations more interesting and innovative, with the idea of having various computers placed around the convening room, to allow those present at the meeting, to see various activities that can be performed on the computer. Doug Rankine was illustrating image editing with the aid of photographs, which he scanned into the computer, using various software, whilst Bob Groom was explaining how the Linux Operating System works. John Atkin, although unfortunate that there was no Internet link-up, showed how ICQ worked, whilst Brian Sexton was involved with a laptop, demonstrating the features of Symantec's System Works. Much was learnt by all those involved with this experimentation.

Inside this issue:

FUTURE MEETINGS

5th July	Editing e-mails The Club's Newsgroup	David Broughton Doug Rankine
19th July	Trip to the Houses of Parliament Tutorial plus Questions & Answers	David Broughton Doug Rankine
2nd August	Digital Pictures	Bob Groom
16th August	Joint meeting with the Isle of Wight Family History Society on Computer Programs for Family History. This meeting will be held at:- Newport Parish Church Centre, Town Lane, Newport - Entry is £1.50. Booking is not necessary but you are advised to get there early.	David Hawgood
23rd August	Barbecue at Denny's Place ##, ***** Road, Sandown	Dennis Linzmaier
6th September	"Lego in the 21st Century"	Tim Bateman
20th September	Microsoft Outlook Tutorial	Doug Rankine
4th October	Sound Bytes	Tim Bateman
18th October	Hot Key Production/Ms Publisher 2000	The Editor
1st November	Corel Draw Tutorial	Ian Capon
15th November	Microsoft Word Tutorial	Dennis Linzmaier
Sunday 19th November	Annual Computer Show Volunteers are needed to assist in the organisation of this event. Please contact Marylin Barrett on ###### to offer help	Marylin Barrett & Cliff Maidment

NB:
It is advisable to check for the latest details of events on the Meetings page of the club's web site. In many cases you will find more explanation of the meetings there.

The club's web site is:- http:/Avww.ddina.demon.co.uk/iwpcug/

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP- COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Honorary President: Sir Norman Echlin,
Chairman: Dennis Linzmaier,
Vice Chairman: David Broughton,
Treasurer: Bob Groom,
Secretary: Christine Jenkins
Membership Secretary/Marketing Manager: Douglas Rankin
Hot Key Distribution & Refreshments: Peter & Dorothy Wolletron
Hot Key Editor: Brian Sexton
New Members Co-ordinator: Maggie Butler
Riverside Centre Liason: Ian Capon
Meetings Reception Assistant: John Atkin
Show Organiser: Marilyn Barrett
Committee Member: Cliff Maidment
Disability Resources Co-ordinator: Helen Edom

EDITORIAL

Comment

It never ceases to amaze me as to the double standards that are found on the Internet, when it comes to purchasing products. After reading the June 2000 edition of PC Magazine regarding DVD-ROM drives. I was interested in purchasing either the Samsung DVD 6 speed or the 8/40-speed DVD/CD-ROM SD 608 only to find that the 6 speed DVD's have been discontinued and the 8 speed drives were in limited supply. (Even though the website of Samsung showed that these drives were still available). On looking at Price-Guide (**http://www. price-guide.co.uk/search_main.asp?Class-9**) to obtain the best price for a DVD-ROM, I found that, when contacting the various distributors listed, all stocks of **all makes** of 6 & 8 speed drives were no longer available. Only the 10 speed drives at a higher price were in stock. I then contacted the main suppliers of Samsung DVD-ROM drives, only to find the same story. I find this totally unsatisfactory and put this attitude of the manufacturers down to manipulative profiteering and greed.

Online Resources

WinTune

(comprehensive system diagnostic/performance tests)
http://www. winmag.com/wintune98

BrowserTune
(detailed diagnostics for browser, connectivity and UI issues)
http://www. browsertune.com/bt98

Microsoft's Troubleshooting and Technical info (requires free registration)
http://support.microsoft.com/support

Information on Win98's Built-in Tune-Up Applets
http://www.winmag.com/win98/25.htm

Win95 Tune Up Kit
http://www. winmag.com/library/1997/0601/tune01.htm

UTILITIES

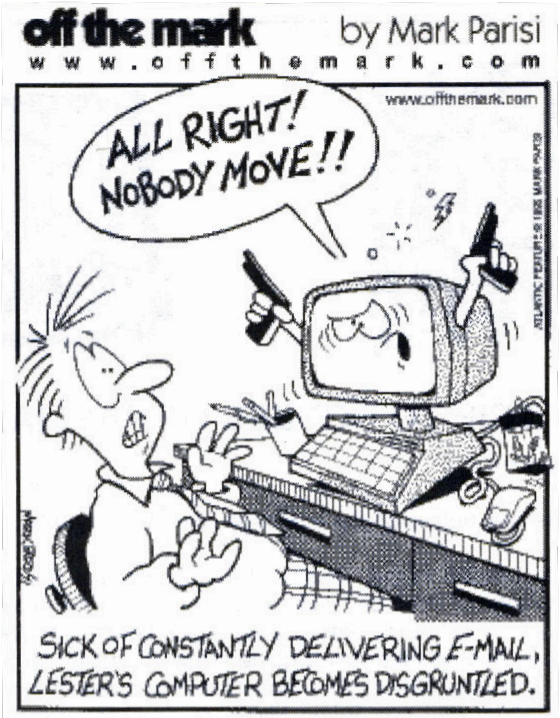
PC Pitstop
http://www.pcpitstop.com

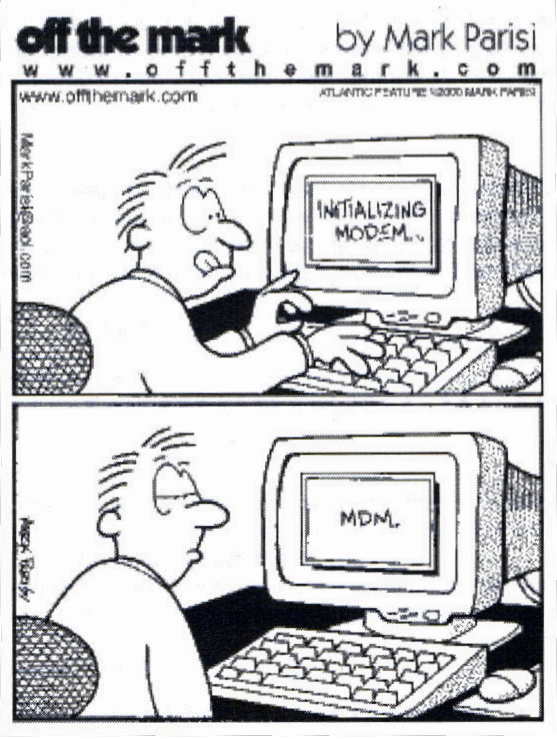
PC Pitstop can help you get your PC in top form -- running fast, stable and secure. PC Pitstop runs diagnostics on your PC to identify things that might help improve performance. The process is fully automated, private and safe. After the diagnostics run,tips are given for improving all kinds of things and the service is free.

ZoneAlarm
http://www.zonealarm.com

This utility is a personal firewall that detects attempts to probe/hack into your computer.

HUMOUR


off the mark
by Mark Parisi
www.offthemark.com
www.offthemark.com
ALL RIGHT! NOBODY MOVE!!
SICK OF CONSTANTLY DELIVERING E-MAIL, LESTER'S COMPUTER BECOMES DISGRUNTLED.


off the mark
by Mark Parisi
www.offthemark.com
www.offthemark.com
INITIALIZING MODEM...
MDM.

TRIP TO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Dear Colleagues,

Here are the final details on the proposed IWPCUG BEANO.

It is a trip to London to the Houses of Parliament. We will be catching the 8 a.m. ferry from Wootton Creek on Wednesday 19th July. The coach will be going round various towns on the island beforehand to pick people up. We will arrive in London about 11 a.m. and be taken on a guided tour of parliament at 11.30 a.m. This will take 1½ to 2 hours. We will then have lunch and return in the afternoon to go to Strangers Gallery and see Prime Minister's Question Time. After this we will be catching the coach home. The cost of the trip will be £20 per member, spouse or associate and £25 to non-members. 1 have tried to swing lunch on the terrace or a drink with the M.P. in the members bar, but 1 don't suppose I'll get away with it! If you know of anyone else who wishes to come with us please let me know as soon as possible.

I am sorry that this is going to clash with the club meeting that evening, but there is no other alternative for us, if we are to attend Prime Minister's QT. Dennis Linzmaier was due to speak at the meeting, but he wants to go on the trip, so we have arranged that David Broughton will lead a Questions & Answers Meeting.

Doug Rankine

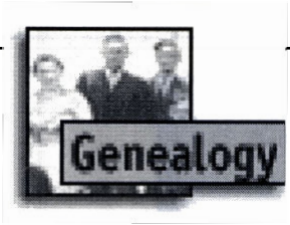
Tip

Make sure your drivers are up to date and specific to the hardware. If it’s not clear who made the card, look for the FCC ID: number and enter the number at:-

http://www.fec.gov/oet/fecid/

Then you can track down the manufacturer on the Web to find the proper driver. And be careful not to mistake the maker of the chip with the maker of the card.

Thanks to James Bodard



Computer Programs for Family History

David Hawgood will be giving a talk on computer programs for family historians at a joint meeting of the Isle of Wight PC User Group and the Isle of Wight Family History Society on Wednesday 16th August at the Newport Parish Church Centre, Town Lane, Newport, starting at 7.30 pm.

The meeting is primarily for the members of the two societies, though visitors will not be excluded if there is sufficient accommodation. There will be a charge of £1.50 at the door for members and £3 for visitors.

There will be no meeting at The Riverside Centre on 16th August. The 16th August would normally be the date of our annual Barbecue. Instead, the barbecue will be held on the following Wednesday, 23rd August.

David Hawgood is a physicist by training and worked on computer research, sales and systems for ICL for 20 years. He has been a freelance technical author and publisher for 18 years. He worked with computers for the Society of Genealogists and later was the first computer editor for Family Tree Magazine. He has written eight books on the use of computers for family history (three of them about the Internet). He is on the computer advisory committee of the Federation of Family History Societies.

David Broughton

Hot Key Cover Disk Changes

For many years our *Hot Key* magazine has had a "cover disk" every four months, in February, June and October. The 37%" floppy, with its limit of 1.44 Mbytes capacity, is now looking somewhat inadequate in this role.

The committee plan to replace the thrice-yearly floppy disk with a once-yearly CD-ROM. The first of these will go out with the November 2000 edition of *Hot Key*.

The prize puzzle, that has been in the form of a computer program on each floppy, may or may not continue, depending on the ability of the programmer to be able to produce three puzzles at a time. In any case, they will continue to appear as downloadable binaries from the web site, as in the past.

David Broughton

G-Mail

(gee I wish I had found it sooner!)

Text Messaging

G-mail is designed by BT to link your mobile phone with the net and with email. Using their ISP, called Genie, anybody can register free. After filling in the form and choosing a username it asks for your Mobile phone number and a few minutes later your phone receives a text message, via the Short Message System (sms), containing your personal security word (not to be confused with your password). Then the first time you try to send a message the system asks for your security word and once verified you can forget the word, as it never asks again. You are now free to send as many text messages, from the Genie Website, to any make of UK digital mobile phone, completely free of charge. (Unlike the Orange version in the June Hot Key where you are limited to 20 messages per month).

Message Mail

As a bonus, your username becomes part of an e-mail address that redirects e-mail to your mobile phone. For instance, my username is linzmaier so my "mobile" e-mail is linzmaier@sms.genie.co.uk and therefore any message sent to that address comes directly to my phone. As always, as well as pros there are cons, but there are only two; e-mails must be sent as plain text & the sms is limited to 160 characters. But then it is only to be used to contact someone not send them an essay! If you have a mobile phone, I recommend you try out this system. Go to the genie website: http://www.genie.co.uk for further information.

You can also register for the Genie Internet Service Provider and be entered in BT's current free prize draw. Have a look at the Prize Draw page for all the details or call 0800 214000 for your free Genie Internet CD-ROM.

Dennis Linzmaier

Tip

Get more info: If you used a PC before Windows 95, you may remember the MSD utility that gave you all kinds of information about your Windows 3.1 or DOS system. Well Win95/98 has a similar program. Using Explorer look in your Windows\MSApps\MSiInfo folder for a file called MSInfo32.exe. If it's not there try looking in Program Files Common Files\Microsoft Shared\MSInfo. Double-click on it to open it. You'll find MSInfo gives you tons of info about your system and its components, including type of system, available memory, swap file space and system DLLs and more

Change of Secretary

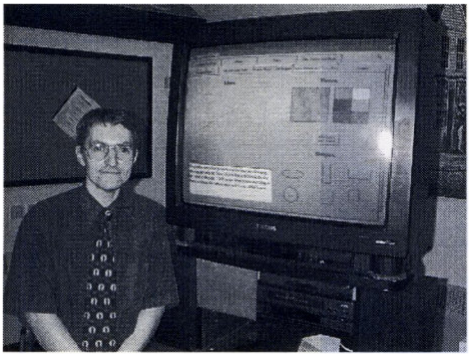
It is with some degree of sadness that Peter Wreford, who has served us with diligence as our Secretary for many years, will shortly be moving to the mainland to live, following the death of his wife. We all wish him well. He says he will be keeping in contact via e-mail and our web page.
Fortunately, Christine Jenkins (who has that fading skill of shorthand) has kindly offered to step into the role of Secretary for the remainder of the year. She will be commencing her duties from 21 June 2000. Many thanks, Christine.

David Broughton

ADDITIONAL MEETING

BARBECUE AT DENNY'S PLACE

There will be an extra meeting on August 23rd (at 7.30pm) at the home of our Chairman, and all members and their wives are welcome.
Map of how to get to Denny's place is on page 15.



"OBJECTS OF DESIRE"

Part 3

by Tim Bateman

(Continuing his article on Visual basic)

LABELS

The simplest object that displays text is the Label object and the most common use of a Label object is to identify different items on a form. Each label identifies the information next to it. Used in this way the Label object is usually set during design time. However, the Label object can be used to display any type of information and can be set either at design time or run time. An example of this can be seen in the Objects of Desire program where a Label object is being used to display the date and time.

Information in a Label can be left, right or centred, and the font colour and Label's background colour can both be changed using the ForeColor and BackColor property.

Example: Any writing next to 'a Text Box.

TEXT BOX

The vast majority of all the programs that are written in VB will perform at least two primary tasks: retrieve information from the user and display information to the user. This information is often in the form of text and can be something as simple as the names in a membership list or as complex as a specialized word processor.

There are several ways for the user to enter information and for the computer to display information. Although information can be displayed through either the Text Box or the Label Box the Text Box has a number of features that make it very versatile.

Locked

The Locked property is used to make a Text Box display information only. When set to True the Locked property does not allow any editing of the Text Box. However, even when a Text box is locked the user can select text and copy it to the clipboard. This is something a user cannot do with the Label Box.

Limiting The Number Of Characters

Usually a Text Box can handle any amount of text but there may be times when the programmer wishes to restrict the number of characters entered. This is done by entering a number greater than 0 in the MaxLength property. Entering 0 will limit the amount to 32,000.

Hiding The Contents

If the Text Box is being used for entering passwords it is useful to hide the password to prevent other users seeing it. Entering a character in the PasswordChar property causes the password character to be substituted for each character entered.

Example: My Computer/Control Panel/Internet Properties/Home Page Address

LIST BOX

Often, you may want to give your users a greater number of choices than might be feasible with Check Boxes or Option Buttons. With the List Box, the choices are set by the programmer; the user can select only from the items in the list, they cannot add to the list. Items can be added or removed either at design time or run time.

The size of a List Box remains constant and scroll bars only appear when there are more items than fit in the box. It is also possible to create a horizontally scrolling List Box which is called a Multicolumn List Box but this type of box is unusual.

COMBO BOX

Another object that displays a list is the Combo Box. The Combo Box has many things in common with the list box. For instance they can both present a sorted or unsorted list. The key advantage of the combo box is that it allows users to enter a choice that is not in the list. This means they can add a new item to the list and that item will then appear in the list.

Unlike the List Box, which is displayed all the time, the list within the Combo Box only appears when the arrow by the side of the Text Box portion is clicked. This means that the Combo Box takes up far less space than the List box. However, this can cause complications if the Combo Box is near the bottom of the form. Normally the list portion of a Combo Box appears below the text portion. But if the form is maximised the list portion would be lost off the bottom of the screen. The list portion avoids this problem by automatically appearing above the text portion. If the form is too small to display the list portion then the list will just drop below the bottom of the form. This is avoided wherever possible by placing the Combo Box well away from the bottom of a form as well as preventing the form size from being changed. Even with these precautions a Combo Box will sometimes overhang the bottom or top of a form. A very good example of this is the Combo Box in the Run Dialog Box. Place the box in the middle of the screen and, if you have more than 5 items in the list, the list will drop below the edge of the Dialog Box. Now move the Dialog Box to the bottom of the screen and try the same thing again. This time the list portion will go over the top edge of the Dialog Box.

There are three main types of combo box.

The Drop-Down Combo Box.

This presents the user with a text box combined with a drop-down list. The user can either select an item from the list portion or type an item in the text box portion. The Named field in the Find Dialog Box will allow users to either pick an item from the list or enter a new item. The new item is then added to the list for any future searches.

E**xample:** Start Menu/Find/File and Folders/Named field.

The Simple Combo Box.

This displays a text box and a list that is permanently displayed and does not drop down. As with the drop-down combo box the user can either select an item from the list portion or type an item in the text box portion. The Font Dialog Box within WordPad contains 3 Simple Combo Boxes. You can see that the text box and list is constantly displayed.. This is also a good example because it shows that a combo box can contain either numbers or letters.

Example: WordPad/Format/Font.

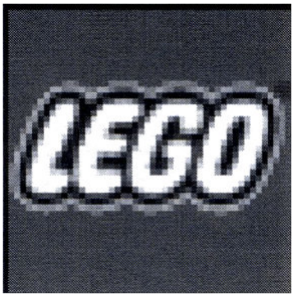
The Drop-Down List.

This displays a drop-down list box from which the user can make a choice. However, the user cannot enter an item that is not in the list. The Of Type field in the Find/Advanced Dialog Box will only allow you to pick an item from the list, you cannot enter an item that does not already exist, i.e. an item that is not a valid file type.

E**xample:** Start Menu/Find/File and Folders/Advanced/Of Type.

It is possible to set the initial choice within a Combo Box to either an item in the list or leave it blank. The initial choice then appears in the Text Box part of the Combo Box.

To be continued



LEGO - PAST AND PRESENT (Part 2)

by Tim Bateman

Robotics Invention System

The Robotics Invention System (RIS) is the flagship Mindstorms product. It includes the Robotic Command Explorer (RCX), IR communications tower, two motors, two touch sensors, one light sensor, a generous number of Lego elements, and a CD-Rom with the Robotics Invention System software (which includes the RCX Code programming language) that is available only for the **Windows 95/98 operating system.**

RCX Brick

The RCX Brick is the yellow programmable brick that's the brain of a computerized Lego model. The Lego Group is a major sponsor of research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab, and the Lego RCX Brick is inspired by the MIT Programmable Brick and related research. However, the two devices use different CPUs and have entirely different software systems behind their operation.

The RCX Brick is based on the 8-bit Hitachi H8/3297 series processor that is part of the H8/300L hardware family. It has 16K of ROM, 512 bytes of SRAM (for firmware) and 32K of external SRAM for user code and other apps. The user code is created on a PC and then beamed to the RCX using an Infrared transmitter that comes as part of the RIS.

Development of the MIT Programmable Brick

The MIT Programmable Bricks have developed over the last ten years, including both hardware and software systems. Some of the technology was developed specifically for use with children while other technology was developed with university-level applications in mind. Here is a brief history of the Programmable Brick.

The 6502 Programmable Brick

(1987 to 1989). The 6502 Brick ran its own Logo interpreter, ported by Brian Silverman from Logo Computer Systems' commercial "LogoWriter" product.

Electronic Bricks (1989 to 1991).

The Electronic Bricks were a set of small, dedicated pieces of functionality -- AND gates, OR gates, flip-flops, and timers -- coupled with motors and sensors.

The Pocket Programmable Brick

(1993 to 1995). The Pocket Brick is a return to materials designed for use by children. It fits in a pocket (dimensions are 2"x3"x4"), has 8 sensor ports and 4 motor ports, has omni directional infrared input and output built in. and has 8-bit sound input and output. This Brick uses 3 stacked boards with surface mounted components on two sides. The Brick has an internal 9 volt alkaline cell which is good for projects which use sensors but use motors only occasionally: for heavy-duty motor applications, a second "rechargeable battery brick" could be connected.

Unfortunately, the Pocket Brick was very hard and expensive to produce in quantity, so it was only used in small numbers.

The Model 120 Programmable Brick

(1994 to Present). The Model 120 Brick was designed as more economical version of the Pocket Brick and also to be suited for daily classroom use. It keeps much of the functionality of the Pocket Brick (6 sensor ports, 4 motor ports, infrared input, and simple sound output). Some other features can be added as external devices, such as a microphone or infrared output. It is about twice the size of the Pocket Brick, primarily due to incorporation of rechargeable cells for motor applications and a larger LCD display.

The Model 120 Brick is being used with kids and teachers in several elementary, junior high, and high schools. Both the Pocket Brick and the Model 120 Brick run a new version of Logo, called Brick-Logo that was created especially for kids' robotics projects.

The latest Programmable Brick has been nicknamed the Cricket. The Cricket is a tiny computer, powered by a 9 volt battery, that can control two motors and receive information from two sensors. Crickets are equipped with an infrared communication system that allows them to communicate with each other. Crickets can be used for robotic applications, but because they are so small, Crickets can be used for other investigations like body-monitoring and data collecting. They are small and light enough that they can be carried around in a shirt pocket, collecting data about body activities. A collection of Crickets communicating with each other can be used to simulate natural life. A network of Crickets positioned in an indoor environment can collect and share data about human traffic patterns, room temperature variations, lighting preferences, and other dynamic qualities.

The Cricket is based on the microchip PIC series of microprocessor. User programs are downloaded to the Cricket via its infrared communications system. The Cricket has a button that when pressed triggers it to run the program that was downloaded to it. LEDs on the Cricket indicate when it is running a program or sitting idle, the state of the two motor outputs, and indication of infrared transmission.

Crickets are programmed using a procedural language that includes commands like If, Repeat, and Loop. global and local variables, 8-bit numeric operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, comparison), motor and sensor primitives, timing functions, a tone-playing function, and a random number function.

FIRST LEGO LEAGUE

The First Lego League (FLL) is a joint endeavour between the non-profit For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology Foundation (FIRST) and Lego Mindstorms.

FLL's mission is to conduct friendly, high-tech sporting events that challenge its young participants (9-14 year olds), to design, program, and build fully autonomous robots using the Lego Mindstorms Robotics Invention System. Teams of children, and an adult coach, compete to create a robot capable of implementing unique solutions to complete an annual Challenge.

The FLL began competitions during the first two weekends of December 1999 with a series of Tournaments in nine states. The challenge was FIRST CONTACT, which required teams to build and program a working robotic arm similar to the one used by NASA astronauts constructing and outfitting the International Space Station. At each state Tournament, teams have the chance to compete for awards in areas such as: programming, mechanical design, strategy, problem solving, sportsmanship and teamwork.

Fun Lego Facts

1. The word "Lego" is from the Danish words "leg godt", which means "play well". Later it was discovered that Lego means "I put together" in Latin.
2. An estimated 400 million children and adults all over the world have played with Lego bricks.
3. More than 203 billion Lego elements have been moulded from 1949 to the present.
4. The Lego Company named a star in honour of its 65th Anniversary. The Lego Star is in the constellation of Ursa Minor, which also includes the North Star.
5. Two eight-stud Lego bricks (of the same colour) can be combined in 24 different ways.
6. Three eight-stud Lego bricks (of the same colour) can be combined in 1,060 different ways.
7. Six eight-stud Lego bricks (of the same colour) can be combined in 102,981,500 different ways!
8. The Lego Company was established in 1932 and is one of the world's largest toy manufacturers.
9. The Lego Company employs 9,000 people in 30 countries, including more than 1,000 people in the United States and Canada.
10. In the United States and Canada alone, there are approximately 1.7 million registered Lego Maniacs and there are Lego User Groups (LUG) throughout the World.

The Lego Website is at www.lego.com.
The Lego Mindstorms Website is at:-
www.legomindstorms.com

PRIZE PUZZLE CORNER - JULY 2000

by David Broughton

ANSWER TO THE MAY PUZZLE

"Three dongles weigh the same as a dingle and four dangles." Let N = number of doNgles, I = number of dIngles, A = number of dAngles. Then 3N =I + 4A. "Six dangles weigh the same as three dingles and a dongle". 6A = 31 +N. Adding these two equations gives 3N + 6A =41+4A+N. Taking 4A and N from each side to simplify leaves 2N + 2A = 41. Dividing by two both sides leaves the answer, N+A=2I. (The question was "How many dingles weigh the same as a dongle and a dangle?"). Answer = 2.

I received nine correct answers: from Peter Wreford, Rosemary West, Michael Hodge, John Bownas, Ilan Moth, Alan Mackenzie, Peter Greenhalgh, Ken Cameron and Dennis Linzmaier. Rosemary West was the lucky winner in the draw and received the £5 book token. That was a good effort. But enough algebra, you said.

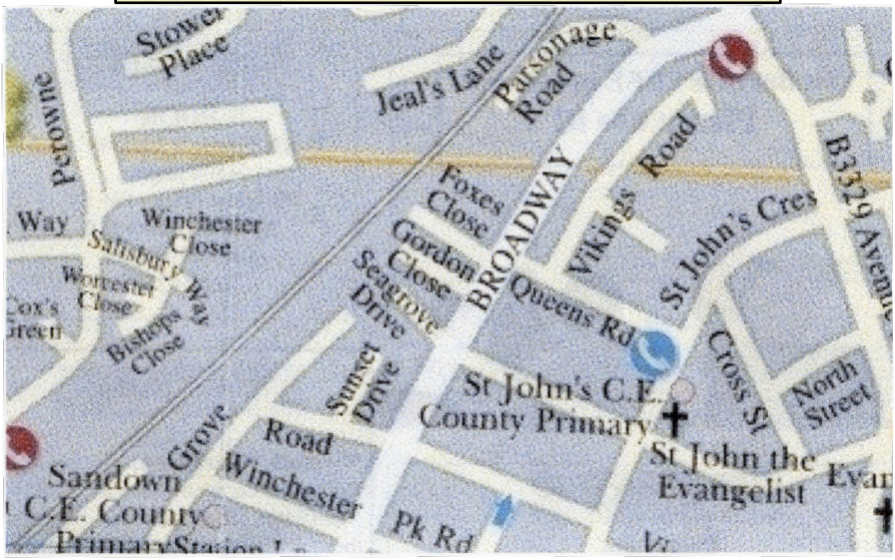
PROBLEM FOR JULY

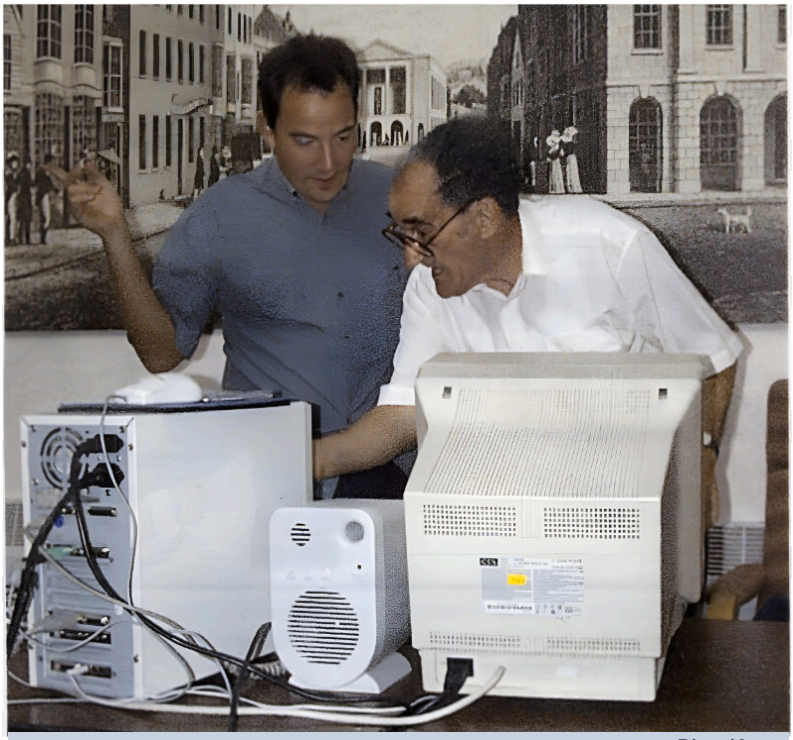
Here, then, is a non-algebra problem.

You can easily arrange nine coins in a 3 x 3 pattern so that there are three rows, three columns and two diagonals, making eight rows of three coins altogether. Now arrange the same nine coins to make a pattern of ten rows of three coins.

Send your diagram of the coins to me, (see page 3 for addresses) to arrive by 3rd August.

Major roads leading to No. ##, ###### Road, Sandown





David Groom and Bob Groom preparing for a recent meeting on Linux at Riverside

MEMBERS NOTICE BOARD

This Board is FREE to members
Please use it!

FOR SALE

BOOK
Teach Yourself Visual Café2
800 pages
Original Price - £36.50
Special Offer - £10
Contact - Editor
Tel: ######

FOR SALE

Computers
Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM —2Gb Harddrive
£155 (incl. Vat)
Pentium 200 with 64Mb RAM 32Gb Harddrive
£190 (incl. Vat)

Sound Cards - £12.50
Speakers - £12.50
15" Monitor - £50

Contact Dennis Parkes
Tel. ######

Special Notice

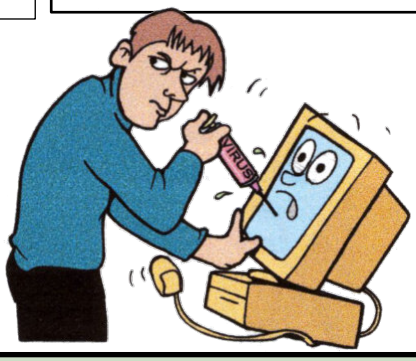
Novatech-Portsmouth, our nearest mail order company have a Weekly Newsletter. Plus you can win in their giveaway competition, where at least £1000 worth of computer equipment is won every week So far they have given away over £14,000 worth of computer equipment to the lucky winners of their prize draw.

Make sure you have entered for their Competition by visiting
http://www.novatech.co.uk

INVESTMENT CLUB

We have an opportunity for 5 new members to join us.
For further details contact:

Doug Rankine
Tel. ######



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