

INTERNATIONAL TI-LINES

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A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TI USER GROUP

4A's
A
JOLLY GOOD
FELLOW



T.I 99/4A
* * * * *
If you have a TI please
contact our Club Now!
DONCASTER 97724
BARNSELEY 78238
SHEFFIELD 98026
ROTHERHAM 36282

**T.I. COMPUTER
GROUP**

A new group set up for computer enthusiasts is attracting attention from all over South Yorkshire.

Known as the Malby T.I. Users Club the group has already drawn enquiries from all over the area and aims to provide a range of activities based on the T.I. Computer, for all ages and stages of skill.

Set up just 3 months ago, the Club now meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month at the Toll Bar, Malby, starting at 4.15 p.m. for younger members and going on to 10.15 p.m. for seniors.

Admission to meetings is 25p and further information can be obtained from Mark Lee, the founder member at 89 Rotherham Road, Malby.

**Don't
decry this
computer**

Sir,
I have been told how slow, how restricted, how under-unfriendly my home computer the TI99/4A is. The only thing is the people who say this are those who have not got one or have not seen what the TI can really do. With many of the modules available for the TI comes high-res graphics, four channel sound, and speed that would compare very favourably with most micros. Do you know of any other home computer that can read out its own listings to you? Or any that can actually SING with unlimited vocabulary? I don't.

I would be very interested to hear from anyone who owns a TI99/4A. They can contact me on Doncaster 787231, anytime.

MARK A. LEE
Colchester House,
Colchester Court,
Scaraby

COMPUTER CLUB GOES ON-LINE
Home computer enthusiasts can find a friendly welcome and a whole lot more at one of the district's newest arrivals, the Malby TI Home Computer Club. Only two months old, the friendly club offers members the chance to chat and exchange ideas — and to enjoy discounts on the hardware and software they buy. Malby TI Home Computer Club meets on the second Tuesday evening of each month, from 6-10.15 p.m., in a private upstairs room at the Toll Bar pub in Rotherham Road, Malby. New members are welcomed and there is no membership fee to find. The club caters particularly for users of the Texas TI99 4A unit and full details are available by telephoning Mark Lee at Rotherham 816654.

Letter
to The Editor

Malby C
Dewson, 1

Formerly OXON TI USERS

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OF THE
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TI USER GROUP

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The following articles have been held over due to lack of space:

FORTH 4 ALL by SCOTT COPELAND
 BEGINNING BASIC by PETER BROOKS
 BITS 4 BEGINNERS by PETER BROOKS



HAVE I YOUR ATTENTION NOW????

Ms C Brinkley (above) occupies 50 disk sectors for TI Artist and 54 sectors for GRAPHX (which actually produced this picture). She was supplied on 123 disk sectors in RLE DV80 format.

Huh? RLE? Yeh...RLE. It's RUN LENGTH ENCODED whatever that means.

What it DOES mean is that TI owners have access to hi res pictures drawn on and for other computers. RLE is intended for computer owners with a VIDTEX Terminal Emulator. There is no VIDTEX for the TI 99/4A but there is....

MAX-RLE by TRAVIS WATFORD.

This is a program which can read from disk picture data in four formats (and save a loaded picture in any of them). The formats are: Two RLE formats (DV80 and DF128) and Graphx and TI Artist Vn 2. You needn't bother telling the program what format the picture is in - it can tell that from the disk file.

MAX-RLE is on a disk called RLE/1, which also contains brief documentation and four hi res pics, including the above.

I also have four other disks. RLE/2 RLE/3 RLE/4 and of course RLE/5.

All are available at usual library prices.

AND I AM STILL WAITING TO RECEIVE ONE TINY PICTURE FROM A UK TI ARTIST.

What are you doing with your graphics programs out there? Graphics, programs, anything - let's show the world that we in the UK care too!

STEPHEN SHAW, 10 Alstone Road, STOCKPORT, Cheshire, SK4 5AH

Stephen

DISK DRIVE PROBLEMS.
(and the solving thereof!)

Rewritten and expanded from article in TI-LINES U.2:11.

My first contact with computing came in 1983, when my wife presented me with a TI 99/4A, bought at Dixon's, having been assured that availability of ancillaries was "Certain, as the Americans were using them in their schools" - this, it turned out, was after Texas Instruments had announced their pulling out of the Home Computer business.

I, like most new owners, played about with it, managed to de-bug a program in the User's Handbook, and took programs from various computer magazines.

In 1985, about Easter, I decided that "expansion" must be the name of the game, as my wife said she would like a Word Processor, and I thought I could use the many File Handling facilities for work in my profession. I therefore began, over the next few months, to accumulate various "extras", such as Peripheral Expansion Box, TI 32K card, MYARC RS232 card, MYARC Disk Control card, and two MPI half-height DD/DS disk drives (I already had a TI cassette recorder and an Amstrad 12" colour television as a cheap (and very good) monitor).

As the MYARC Disk Control card arrived without the Disk Manager disk (not the fault of Howard Greenberg, I must add!) I asked Howard to supply a box of disks already formatted - thus not discovering that my set-up would not "format" properly!.

When my next batch of disks were obtained, after receiving my Disk Manager disk from Howard, I began to wonder what had happened. One moment the system would "format", the next not. Peter Brooks, who had supplied the drives, very kindly replaced one of the drives, without making any difference, and then proceeded to embarrass me (I am sure, unintentionally) by testing it and finding it to be working - later installing it for someone else with all success.

My next line of attack was to substitute the 32K card with a known good one - no use - then to try to get the MYARC Disk Control card checked by Howard - it checked out normally!. Another card was loaned to me by Howard for trial - same problems.

So to the Peripheral Expansion Box power supply.

My drives, MPI Type 502 (Slimline), need $12V \pm 5\%$ and $5V \pm 5\%$. The voltages available for the drive(s) are nominally 12V on the purple wire, 5V on the blue, and 0V on the other two (orange and red). On my Box, they were 11.6V on the purple wire and 4.7V on the blue (I was not able to measure current taken "on load", so contacted Parco - they referred me to TI's Headquarters in Bedford.

After talking to one of their technicians, Phil Wingrove, I sent my power supply board to them, and was informed that it tested out normally, being only 2% down. Further conversation obtained a replacement transformer also, which I fitted in the hope of a complete cure. Guess what - now I had intermittent reading problems also, but was able to format a few disks after 10 attempts for 6 disks.

I felt the only thing to do at this stage was to get more information on the drives, but as MPI have pulled out of Great Britain, Peter was able to obtain little information, and I decided to telephone MPI in California. Guess what - MPI have stopped having anything to do with disk drives!!!

Now for a little good news - MPI told me that they have sold their disk drive division, including service responsibility, to IRW in New Jersey, and they kindly gave me the telephone number. I rang IRW at 7:30 p.m. English time, and was told they could supply a Development Manual which should give all relevant information, but that the manuals had not yet arrived from MPI, and they would send one on as soon as they were available.

Later enquiries elicited the fact that they in fact despatched the documentation on 31st December.

The manual, when it arrived on February 6th, was for half-height drives, but for the 'D' series drives - those with a Direct Drive motor!

Yet another telephone call to IRW established that they did in fact have a manual for the "Slimline" series, which was different! One of these was promised, this time Air Mail! The manual price was \$30, but I felt it would be worth it.

In the meantime, I heard about intermittent problems with the Flex Cable Interface card for the PEB, and rang TI in Bedford once more, with the result that I received a new Flex Cable card to try. The disk drive that would not "format" began doing so, but still occasionally "hung-up", possibly due to reading/writing difficulties. At least some of the problem(s) had been improved.

Surprisingly, after a short session of using the set-up, the reading difficulties became much less, usually managing to read successfully on a second attempt or after reading in a different program or file, then the difficult one again.

The long-awaited manual arrived on February 27th, and was found to be only an "interim" manual - certain illustrations were missing, as were the sections on "Troubleshooting" and "Optional Configuration". At least I now had a Technical Specification, even though it did not entirely agree with some of the information available in the U.K.

I contacted IRW again, and they very kindly sent me photocopies of the "Troubleshooting" section of the original 'D' series manual, as the principles were identical, but unfortunately, no information was available on "Optional Configuration".

I then remembered seeing an article in U.1:13, April 1st, 1985, (written by John B. Colson, originally published in Tic Talk (Rocky Mountain 99ers), February 1985), about improving the power output of the PEB power supply. I decided to try this, as all else had failed.

I decided to improve the current capacity of the 5V supply as well as the 12V supply, so contacted Richard Sierakowski to obtain the appropriate current regulators.

I think it is worth describing again the disassembly of the PEB, as some readers may not have the U1:13 mentioned above, so here goes.

Begin by making sure you have the following tools for the disassembly (I'll give others for the alterations later): Phillips small cross-head screwdriver (Posidriv is more likely to scuff the screw heads), and whatever screwdriver you used to install your "in box" disk drives.

Now make sure the PEB has been switched off for at least two minutes, allowing the charge on the power supply capacitors to dissipate, and unplug the power lead. Remove the lid by pushing the two spring clips on the back inwards, and tilting the lid forwards to disengage. Lift the lid up and backwards to remove it.

Carefully disconnect and remove all cards, and put them safely on one side.

Remove the screws holding the upper side of your disk drives in the box, then turn it over on a soft surface, bearing in mind that the clips stand proud of the back, and could be bent out of shape. Now remove the "under" screws holding the disk drives, and carefully remove them from the box, disconnecting their leads carefully also. Now comes the boring part - removing one screw from each end of the box, three at the rear of each housing section, and six from the underside flange.

The base and "innards" slide rearwards from the front and sides, which can then be put carefully aside.

To remove the power supply circuit board, which is easily visible next to the transformer (if you don't know what a transformer looks like, you should not attempt this modification yourself), unclip the cable loom nearest the front of the box first, then slide the plastic frame holding the circuit board sideways to clear the two screws holding it to the base of the PEB (you may need to slacken them off slightly), and then unclip the two cable looms from the rear of the circuit board.

Extra tools needed for the "electronic" work are: small soldering iron, SOLDER SUCKER (VITAL - I speak from experience!), small pliers, and, of course, solder.

You will see the IO3 12V regulator bolted to the board in the centre, and you will need to remove the board from the plastic carrier by undoing the four screws in the corners. Unbolt the regulator and, using the solder sucker, unsolder it from the back of the board, easing it off the front. The other, 5V regulator is a three legged, flat object, again bolted to the board by one bolt through its heat sink - be careful when unsoldering this - it is soldered to both sides of the board (hence the vital necessity of a solder sucker - I didn't have one, and had a problem re-establishing continuity. I also got some solder through one of the holes of the IO3 can, shorting and blowing the PEB fuse, as the holes are plated through - be careful not to use too much solder).

The IO3 regulator used in the original article was a ua78H12KC, and the one supplied to me by Richard was a ua78H12SC, but I don't know what the other one is - if anyone wants to swap both regulators, I could no doubt find out the details.

Reassembly is the reverse of disassembly (surprise, surprise), but I suggest that you check the board with nothing connected to its outputs, just in case you have created a solder "bridge" somewhere on it, only reassembling your PEB completely when you are sure all is well.

When I had done all this, and made new connecting leads from the Disk Control card to the disk drives, removing the contacts at position 16 in the connectors (my drives are connected "Motor On Select"), THE SYSTEM WORKED without a hitch.

From all the trouble I had originally, I can only assume that my power supply was not allowing enough amps to escape to the disk drives, even though the voltages may have been correct.

I would like to thank Peter Brooks, Howard Greenberg, Richard Sierakowski, and Phil Wingrove for all help and advice during the time it has taken to sort out my problems - perhaps I should have entitled this offering "Power Supply Anaemia".

(IRW's address and phone number are - IRW Customer Service Dept., 20, Audrey Place, FAIRFIELD, New Jersey, 07006, USA. (010-1-201-575-7110 EXT. 4231))

David Baines.

 T H E T I H O M E S O F T W A R E C O L L E C T I O N

Pricing for TSC disks has been reorganised, although the full Collection is still offered at £35 inclusive.

Check the TSC Catalogue (available free to ITUG subscribers on request) to find out what the TSC entries stand for. Make sure that you indicate clearly what your choice is, specifying the name of the disk/s you want.

GAMES:	TSC ENTRIES:	PRICING
TSC_DSK_A	GA0001 - GA0011	The number of programs on a disk can vary between about 7 and 11, dependent upon the sizes of the programs in terms of sectors used.
TSC_DSK_B	GA0012 - GA0022	
TSC_DSK_C	GA0023 - GA0032	
TSC_DSK_D	GA0033 - GA0043	
TSC_DSK_E	GA0044 - GA0055	
TSC_DSK_F	GA0056 - GA0066	
-----		The exception is the DEMONSTRATION disk, which alone is offered at £2.95 inclusive of post and packing
EDUCATIONAL:		
TSC_DSK_G	ED0001 - ED0009	The rest are priced as follows:
TSC_DSK_H	ED0010 - ED0017	
-----		£ 3.95 for ANY 1 DISK
DEMONSTRATION:		£ 6.90 for ANY 2 DISKS (SAVE £ 1)
-----		£ 9.85 for ANY 3 DISKS (SAVE £ 2)
TSC_DSK_I	DE0001 - DE0006	£12.80 for ANY 4 DISKS (SAVE £ 3)
-----		£14.75 for ANY 5 DISKS (SAVE £ 5)
MUSIC:		£16.70 for ANY 6 DISKS (SAVE £ 7)
-----		£18.65 for ANY 7 DISKS (SAVE £ 9)
TSC_DSK_J	MU0001 - MU0009	£20.60 for ANY 8 DISKS (SAVE £11)
TSC_DSK_K	MU0010 - MU0017	£22.55 for ANY 9 DISKS (SAVE £13)
TSC_DSK_L	MU0018 - MU0026	£24.50 for ANY 10 DISKS (SAVE £15)
-----		£26.45 for ANY 11 DISKS (SAVE £17)
UTILITIES:		£28.40 for ANY 12 DISKS (SAVE £19)
-----		£30.35 for ANY 13 DISKS (SAVE £21)
TSC_DSK_M	UT0001 - UT0011	£32.30 for ANY 14 DISKS (SAVE £23)
TSC_DSK_N	UT0012 - UT0022	£34.25 for ANY 15 DISKS (SAVE £25)
TSC_DSK_O	UT0023 - UT0033	£35.00 ENTIRE (SAVE £27.20)
TSC_DSK_P	UT0034 - UT0044	

All programs are recorded on Single-sided disks.

You may elect to be supplied with software on Double-sided disks, when you should deduct £1 from the prices shown above.

If you prefer, you may send in your own disks, in which case deduct 50p for each disk from the prices shown above.

For example, 8 disks supplied by you would work out at £20.60 - (8 x 50p = £4) = £16.60 nett.

All the above prices are inclusive of post and packing.

The pricing for programs recorded on cassette remains £1 per program, with an overall charge of 65p for post and packing.

PLEASE MAKE ALL CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "PETER BROOKS"