

TI HOME Tidings v1 No 3

There was a rumour that the first few issues of Tidings were copied by and mailed by TI in England

The boiler plate on the front "Not affiliated..." was required by TI to allow the use of TI in the group name - this was continued in the successor magazine TI*MES.

Other UK groups later expressed strong annoyance at the use of this wording with very long negative articles in their newsletters....

At the time this magazine was distributed only the NTSC 99/4 was on sale in the UK, requiring an NTSC television set. There were few owners of this very expensive kit.

TI HOME was Paul Dicks, not a true user group. He had support and encouragement from TI in Bedford, England

T.I. HOME Tidings

TIHOME is not affiliated with Texas Instruments in any way and is supported only by the group members.

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EDITORIAL

Well, at last there appears to be something happening on the TI front. Turn to the TI News page to see the news. It is really no more than we have hoped for, for a long time. Still, don't knock the goodies! Let's hope that TI's plans work out and this state of limbo ceases to exist. I am rather getting fed up with the total lack of mention of TI in the computing magazines I read.

I have finally managed to copy all the American programs onto tape and am prepared to supply programs according to the Program Exchange Policy. Remember, 4 for 1, so come on you programmers let's see a little action. Don't be bashful, somebody somewhere wants just the program that you are now writing.

I am publishing in this newsletter, a revised English Software Library and also a list of members. Perhaps there is someone within commuting distance of you who is struggling with problems that you have solved long ago.

You will notice that there are a couple of hardware supply companies in the list. If you are having difficulty getting hardware then do not hesitate to get in touch with them. Who knows, they might have the very thing you are looking for.

As for this newsletter, apart from your letters, for which I am very grateful, I would welcome articles on any subject connected with computing and especially with TI99/4 computing. Send them in, preferably typed but it doesn't matter, we don't all have a secretary at our disposal. At this point you might give a mental 'thank you' to Mary Ashdown who types and copies your newsletter.

I understand from TI of Bedford that the American groups have a membership of ~~6000~~ which gives you some idea of how far we are behind the U.S. However, TI have kindly taken a pile of 'fliers' from me which are being included in all new equipment sold and they propose to include mention of us on every occasion where it would be to our advantage.

I am hoping to see some of the 'goodies' that are due from TI and as soon as I do I will report on them and let you know what is happening in the TI world.

QUOTES FROM YOUR LETTERS:

I think you are doing a fantastic job with the TI Newsletter, at long last it seems things are really going to take off with the 99/4.

Unfortunately, at the moment my programming ability is not all that good, although I am experimenting I keep getting a lot of bugs. Still, maybe I can submit some workable programs.

Dave Hamilton
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QUOTES FROM YOUR LETTERS: (CONTINUED)

A slightly sour note this side of the Atlantic however is sounded by the apparent inability of TI UK to supply a lowly thermal printer. Attempts to locate a retailer who might still have one in stock have been to no avail.

With regard to the speech unit: the pronunciation of 'VARY' and 'VERY' pronounces the first in the same way we would pronounce 'very', and the second in the way we would pronounce 'beery'; if you have a sufficiently warped sense of humour, try 'BACK+BACK+BACK' - it gives a good imitation of a dog; good for breaking the ice at parties, even better at Cat Shows!

Have you ever experienced when the screen starts printing out its every thought, and won't respond to BREAK commands? On several occasions the phrase 'REVIEW MODULE LIBRARY' has gone shunting up the screen.

Pete Brooks
19 Hillside
Aldfield Estate
A.E.R.E. Harwell
Didcot OX10

I have been speaking to Mike Lunch and he tells me that the UK PAL model is now unlikely to be available until June.

More important, Mr. Lunch tells me that the product is in a stage of 'test marketing' for at least the rest of this year. Possibly there maybe a product launch NEXT year.

Note-if you have been using your modules for sometime (eg. over 12 months) the contacts may become soiled - and they are difficult to clean! Try switching off power, flooding the contacts with Servisol, and plugging in and out a few times. Leave 5 minutes before powering up again and using. Try several times before giving up.

Stephen Shaw
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I've given up trying to get a TI Printer, and I will have to seriously re-think my purchase of the 99/4 if TI USA don't buck their ideas up; it strikes me as a rather cavalier attitude to take to ignore the requirements of users outside the USA; why bother selling here in the first place?

The proposed TI Test-to-Speech unit was reviewed in PCW recently, the interesting thing was that it is NOT based on phonetic form the unit is preprogrammed with a range of 'alophones', which are groups of letters which produce particular sounds. I wonder if you can impart different accents to it - anglicized french with a northern accent usually produces a few laughs - it would appear that the pitch of the intonation may be varied to produce a voice on the scale Lee Marvin to Larry Grayson; the scope for anonymous telephone calls is enormous.

Incidentally, I hear that a certain ladies' college in Oxford has just bought a 99/4 for general use; if I can steer them our way I will do so. (And if I can steer myself their way, you won't see me for dust!)

Pete Brooks, Didcot.

TIPS FOR PROGRAMMERS

If you consider a program as a straight line starting at the beginning of your program and going onto the end, it is obvious that it is best not to depart from that straight line if you don't have to. Departures are inevitable, of course, but it is best to limit these departures as often as possible. The simple way to limit these departures is to frame every `IF X<>Y THEN 1000` (or some such) so that the greatest number of 'equals' go down the line and only the infrequent exceptions are diverted to another program location.

I admit that this is the remark of a programmer used to working in a multi-disc, multi-VDU environment where any `GOTO` or branch of any kind looses your control of the processor, but the general principle must apply in all types of programming.

A word on the `GOSUB` command. In commercial programming this resolves into the argument as to whether to use a macro or a subroutine. The basic rule is this; do not `GOSUB` unless the routine is to be used many, many times. If the routine is to be used only once or twice then put it into the mainstream of your program.

A useful tip is always to include the following lines in your programs.

```
32767 GOTO 32500
32500 PRINT "32767 ENCOUNTERED"
32501 GOTO 32501
```

This will cause the program to halt after putting out the message that you have probably made a mistake in editing.

Cut down the length of your programs by using all the possibilities of the `PRINT` command. For instance:

```
PRINT :::::
is equal to
FOR A= 1 TO 6
PRINT
NEXT A
```

The TI 99/4 takes about 120 characters on each line of program. Using the `PRINT` command you can get a good 3 or 4 screen lines on one line of program. For instance:

```
PRINT "MUSIC FOR THE TI":"ARRANGED FOR THE 99/4":BY PAUL DICKS":
"OF TIHOME"
```

This will give you 4 lines on the screen for only one line of coding.

If you are into advanced programming and have wondered what the shift key does to those keys that do not have a shift character then here is a list of the ASCII codes for those keys.

ASCII CODE

KEY

1	Shift A
2	" C
3	" F
4	" G
5	Not known (perhaps shift Q)
6	" R
7	" T
8	" S
9	" D
10	" X
11	" E
12	" V
13	The Enter key
14	" W
15	" Z

A natty way of doing without the scrolling when you are going to put a title page on the screen is to CALL SCREEN(2) just before you start printing the title page to the screen and then, when you have finished printing, CALL SCREEN(4). A bit crude, but it works.

If you are into computer music you may not have noticed that every note is half the frequency value of the corresponding note in the octave above. For example, A is 440HZ, therefore all A's are multiples or fractions of that figure. A is therefore 110, 220, 440, 880, 1760, etcetera.

It is worth studying the TI99/4 Reference Card that came with your computer. There are all sorts of goodies included that never get used because we get caught on the same dozen commands. Have a look, you will be surprised what is there. For instance, instead of writing:

```
IF A <> 0 THEN 1000
```

```
try
```

```
IF A THEN 1000
```

there are all sorts of permutations of this trick.

If you have a need to sort information, remember that the easiest method is the bubble sort. It is rather slow on the TI99/4 but it does work. It works by considering that the information is as beads on a string and it starts at the beginning of the string and reverses the order of any adjacent pieces of information that are in the wrong order. It continues this procedure until the whole string is in the correct order. An example of this procedure is as follows:

```

1   FOR F=1 TO 99
2   IF A(F)<=A(F+1) THEN 7
3   STOR1=A(F)
4   STOR2=A(F+1)
5   A(F)=STOR2
6   A(F+1)=STOR1
7   NEXT F

```

You will have to introduce some sort of flag to make the FOR-NEXT clause recursive so that the string is scanned a number of times until all the elements are finally in the right order. However, I think you will find that this is the simplest form of sort.

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FOR SALE

Disk controller and command module + 2 disk drives + cables	£650
TI 99/4 Termal printer + cable	£200
TI 99/4 Console + cables	...	...	...	...	£350
TI 99/4 Monitor	...	...	...	...	£200

The complete system for £1,300.

For an additional 10% on any of the above items I would provide a 90 day guarantee.

Please contact: Martyn G. Simpson
11 Main Street
Belton
Uppingham
Leicester

Tel: Belton 625 (STD 95386) evenings/
some weekdays or
Leicester 549922 ext 7731 or 7734

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TI NEWS

Mike Lunch tells me that the PAL version of the 99/4 will be launched about mid July on a test marketing basis. The price will probably be £399 for the console and the modulator. He is hoping to have stocks during July.

The system will be that the modulator fits on the back of a television set and the monitor plugs into the modulator. Switching is automatic so that when the computer is turned off the television will then work as normal. I gathered that it is possible to plug a video recorder in line so there is a possibility of being able to record programme output on videotape complete with sound.

The screen format on the PAL has the same amount of characters as the NTSC but the size is slightly different. The NTSC is in 3 x 4 proportion, whereas the PAL will be 2 x 3. One bonus, the random colour fringing, so annoying on the NTSC, does not happen on the PAL.

If you do not wish to have the family television set close to the 99/4, you can extend the output cable a fair amount, certainly enough to go across your living room. Theoretically, you need to extend both output cables but in actual fact you can get away by making a DIN to DIN extension lead, plugging one end into the back of the 99/4 and plugging the twin output cables to the other end. As you are then putting both video and audio signals along an unscreened wire you should lose some picture quality but Mike Lunch assures me that he has found the difference so small that it is not worth worrying about. Once you have your PAL version connected to your television set you can connect your television to the AUX connection on your hi-fi. For this purpose only use a headphone output from the television which was built in by the manufacturer.

I understand that samples of the Extended Basic Module will be available later this month. This contains not only extended basic but the ability to check on the size of memory, merge programmes, multi statements on a line and construct seven dimensional arrays. The mind boggles.

As soon as I can try any of this equipment I will report back on my impressions.

Best wishes

Paul