

HINTS

&

T I P S

Don't forget to keep sending
in your hints on anything
relevant to the Archimedes
range
(RISC OS 2 and particularly

MESSAGE TOKEN TERMINATORS

Terry Blunt

There is a potential problem with MessageTrans when using the SWI MessageTrans_MakeMenus. RISC OS 2 versions of the module would accept any control character as a terminator for the tokens, whereas the RISC OS 3 version insists on zero. Some older programs (including the demo in RISC User 5:9) fall foul of this and give a missing token error when used on RISC OS 3. To cure this, simply add a zero byte to the end of the token string, for example:

```
$bk%="MT1"+CHR$0
```

KEYPRESSES IN ERROR BOXES

Rolf Herschel

Under RISC OS 2, pressing Escape while an error box was on screen always had the same effect as clicking on OK, while pressing Return simulated a click over the highlighted icon in the error box (i.e. the one with a cream background). Normally this is OK, but the programmer can choose to highlight Cancel instead by setting bit 4 of R1 when calling Wimp_ReportError. Under RISC OS 3.10, however, Return still activates the highlighted icon, but Escape is now equivalent to a click on the non-highlighted icon. Thus in most situations it has exactly the opposite effect as it did previously.

SPEEDING UP DIRECTORY VIEWERS

David Spencer

To save time when opening a directory viewer containing many applications, hold down Ctrl whilst double-clicking on the directory's icon. This will prevent the !Boot file of each application being run. A convenient side effect of this is that any virus which acts on boot files will not be activated, so you could use this method to open a directory viewer to inspect the contents. A less convenient side effect is that none of the application icons will appear; instead, the default App icon will be used. The applications should still run properly, as their !Run file should repeat the actions of the !Boot file.

RISC USER DIARY EXPANDED

Ken Cowap

The RISC User Desktop Diary (2:9 and 2:10) is described as having the capability to open 10 note windows on the screen at the same time. However, only 5 may be opened before an error message appears. The solution is to amend the following lines of the program, replacing all 4s in each line by 9s: 1480, 1500, 1700, 2450, 3470 and 3480.

CARE WITH THE JOYSTICK PORT

David Spencer

On the A3010, care is needed to make sure that a serial port device isn't inadvertently plugged into one of the joystick ports, as both connectors are the same and they are close to each other. Unfortunately, if the serial cable is wired in a certain common configuration, plugging it into a joystick port will blow an internal fuse within the computer that has to be replaced by an Acom service centre.

IMPROVING TEXT ENTRY IN PROFORMAS

Richard Grant

I have a number of proforma documents which I keep as DTP files. These require the insertion of small items of information before printing, for example a contract of employment requires the employee's name, starting date, salary etc. To make it easier in a long document to spot the places where insertions are to be made, create a new text style (Impression) or paragraph style

(Ovation), and set the text colour to red. Use this style to place a descriptive word or words in the appropriate place, perhaps surrounded by square brackets, e.g. [Starting salary] .

When it comes to completing the form, the descriptive word can be deleted and the required text entered. This will, of course, be in red - for many printers (my HP LaserJet



Circular frames - Step 1



Step 2

(If included) this will not matter as the text will come out black. If your printer differentiates between red and black text, just reset the style colour to black before printing.

CIRCULAR FRAMES IN DTP

W. Briggs

An article in RISC User 6:2 described how to create special effect frames for use in DTP

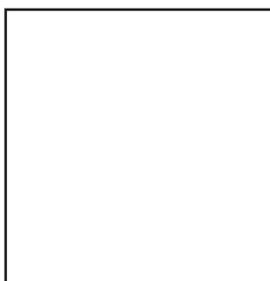
packages. I have discovered a much simpler and quicker way. Drop your image into Draw, then draw a circle or whatever shape you require. Now increase the width of the line so that a rectangular frame can be positioned around the inside of the line without going beyond the outside. Drop this shape over your image and then turn the circle or shape white. You now have an image cropped to the desired shape which can be re-sized inside a DTP frame. The illustrations show the steps involved.

RETRIEVING LOST PICTURES

Angela Bradley



Step 3



Having had a number of graphics deleted accidentally by another member of my family, I

Step 4

was able to recover them from the Impression documents in which I had used them. Hold down Shift while double-clicking on the relevant document icon, then open up the Chapter directory. The graphics files are then accessible for use or for transfer to another directory. With Ovation you can achieve the same result by loading the document, selecting the picture frame and then using the Save picture option from the File submenu.

CHECKING FOR A SPRITE S EXISTENCE

Andrew Cumming

The following function offers a method of detecting whether or not a particular sprite exists. This could be useful for any programs which handle sprites, particularly when displaying an icon which represents a file or application, as it enables you to find out if an icon is known for that particular filetype or application name.

```
DEF FNsprite_exists(name$)
  SYS "XWimp_SpriteOp",40,,name$ TO :flag%
  =(flag% AND 1) -1
```

This takes advantage of the X form of the SWI to suppress the error generated when the sprite name\$ does not exist. It is detected instead by testing the V flag in the status register; if this is set, an error is indicated.

You can use this to construct a function to obtain the name of an icon which can be used to represent a particular object. The parameters are the object leafname and the filetype (where a directory has a filetype of &1000 and an application &2000).

```
DEF FNget_sprite(file$,filetype%)
  LOCAL sprite$
  CASE filetype% OF
  WHEN &1000:sprite$="directory"
  WHEN &2000:sprite$=file$
  IF NOT FNsprite_exists(sprite$) THEN
  sprite$="application"
  OTHERWISE:sprite$="file_"+STR$~filetype%
  IF NOT FNsprite_exists(sprite$) THEN
  sprite$="file_XXX"
```

If no sprite can be found for the object, one of the default icons application or file_XXX is used instead.

REMOVING RISC OS CHIPS

Peter Jennings

Anyone who has tried removing computer chips with a screwdriver will know that it is best to apply leverage at both ends of the chip if it is to be taken out without damaging the pins. This is a problem when upgrading to RISC OS 3 because the chips are situated very close to the expansion board backplane. Damaged pins may not matter too much if the chips are to be discarded but it can be altogether different if one of the new chips has to be taken out again because, for example, a pin has become bent while fitting. Some reviewers have suggested removing the expansion board backplane to make access easier but a simpler way is to use an offset screwdriver, the type which has the blade set at right angles to the shaft. This is very easy to use as a lever at the backplane end of the chip while an ordinary, straight, screwdriver is inserted at the other end.

RUNNING BOOT FILES

Colin Murray

Buried within RISC OS 3 is a very useful command:

```
Filer_Boot <appname>
```

which will run the boot file of the application whose full pathname is given in appname. This makes it possible to load file sprites into the Wimp pool and set up run actions etc. for filetypes without having to open the directory viewer containing the parent application. For example, under RISC OS 2, Ovation files would have been displayed without a filetype icon, and it would not have been possible to run Ovation by double-clicking on a file, unless Ovation itself had been seen by the Filer. The Filer_Boot command is intended for use in boot files, where you would include lines such as:

```
Filer_Boot adfs:HardDisc.$Apps!Ovation
```

for any applications whose boot files you wish to run. If you wish to use hi-res sprites (e.g. Sprites22 files), you should also include a Filer_Boot line for SetIcons, since this must be seen before the hi-res sprites will appear.



TUNING YOUR MOUSE

David Spencer

RISC OS 3 contains a set of configuration options to fine-tune the mouse characteristics. Four of these control drag and double-click delays: `WimpDragDelay` specifies in tenths of a second the delay between pressing a button and a drag being initiated (irrespective of mouse movement). `WimpDragMove` specifies in OS units the distance that the mouse must move to start a drag (irrespective of time). `WimpDoubleClickDelay` and `WimpDoubleClickMove` perform a similar function for double-clicking except that moving the mouse by more than the specified distance will cancel the pending double-click.

The other two options are connected with the automatic opening of sub-menus: `WimpAutoMenuDelay` specifies the time the pointer must be over a menu entry to automatically open its sub-menu (assuming this option is enabled) and `WimpMenuDragDelay` specifies the period of time for an automatically opened menu during which the pointer can move over other menu entries without closing it.