Strange arrangement

Windows 95 is good, but not *that* good: Stephen Rodda attempts to solve a problem of Apple connectivity, installs a new keyboard, and answers questions from far-flung readers.

I have been running Windows 95 (build 490, about ten builds away from the release version) for some weeks now, and have found it extremely stable. One thing, however, has been niggling me: I have had NetWare file and print services turned on, to allow sharing of my hard disk under Novell NetWare instead of using the Windows Networking system. Whenever I restart my machine (after some tinkering or installation of a new program) the connection via Appletalk to my partner's machine gets lost.

I know that running Appletalk from NetWare concurrently with NetWare file and print sharing services is not the run-of-the mill configuration. I can also understand that Microsoft has omitted to test this arrangement, but I am surprised that nobody else has found this problem. Perhaps it's to do with Windows 95's stability.

Windows NT 3.51 has been installed, de-installed and installed again here. Nothing to do with NT; it was because I decided that I was going to try to rearrange my hard-disk formatting. It's never a bad thing to do the very occasional low-level format of a hard disk; the low-level formatting routine refreshes the side, track, and sector marks on the hard disk's surface, which, being magnetic, are liable to fade.

However, if your hard disk is IDE or EIDE, I'd recommend you not to follow this advice. You should never reformat an IDE or EIDE drive unless you have access to the manufacturer's formatting routine and unless you know what you're doing. When IDE drives first came out, people were reformatting them gratuitously and consequently losing the markings for the bad blocks, and changing the capacity (downwards, it has to be said) of their hard disks since the manufacturers had omitted to trap the format command in the drive's firmware. It's difficult to do this to an IDE-type drive now, as the formatting command is usually ignored. SCSI, however, is a different matter.

I recently got hold of a Hewlett-Packard SureStore Disk 2000LP 2Gb hard disk and I'm very pleased with it. But like my DEC DSP5200 2Gb disk, because it's larger than 1Gb, the top half of it is ignored by DOS. I have heard that there is an NTFS driver for Linux and in an ideal world there should be an NTFS driver for Windows 95. I suspect that we are going to have to wait for this to be sourced through a third party rather than for Microsoft to compromise the security of an NTFS partition by writing (probably only issuing) its own driver for NTFS. I shouldn't be surprised if there were an in-house NTFS driver for Windows 95. Because I needed more disk space (I do have an inordinate number of programs installed on my hard disk) I decided to use Adaptec's on-BIOS utility to reassign the number of sectors, heads and cylinders so that DOS could see the whole of the 2Gb disks in each case.
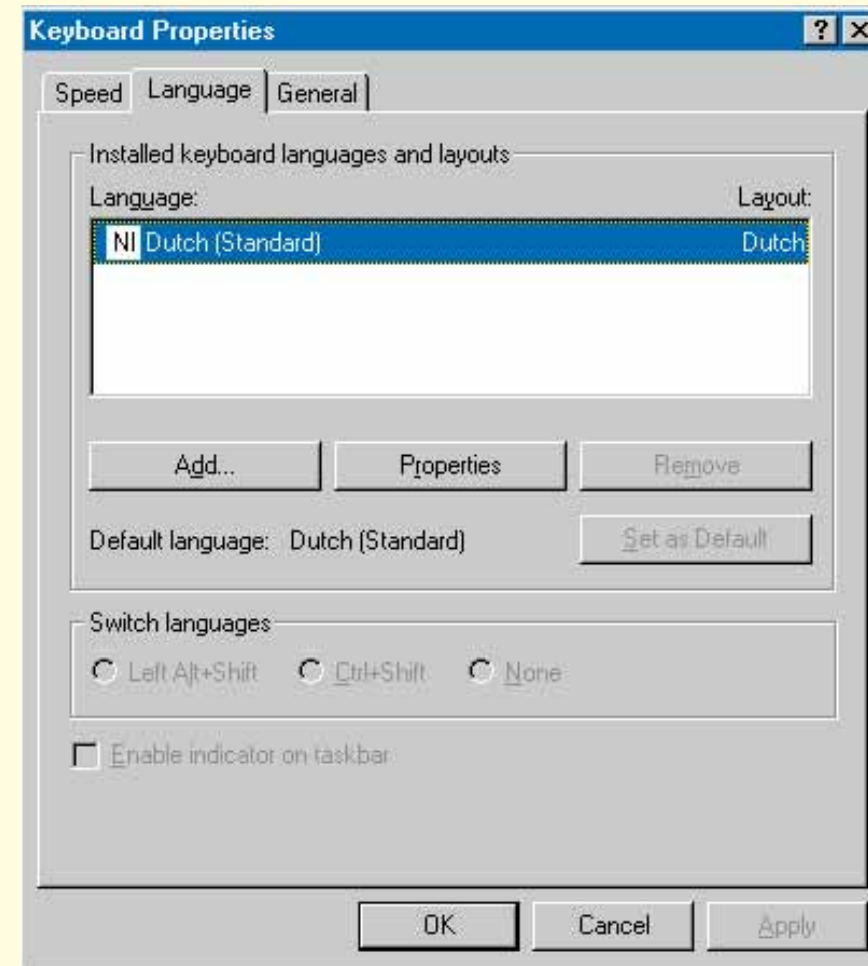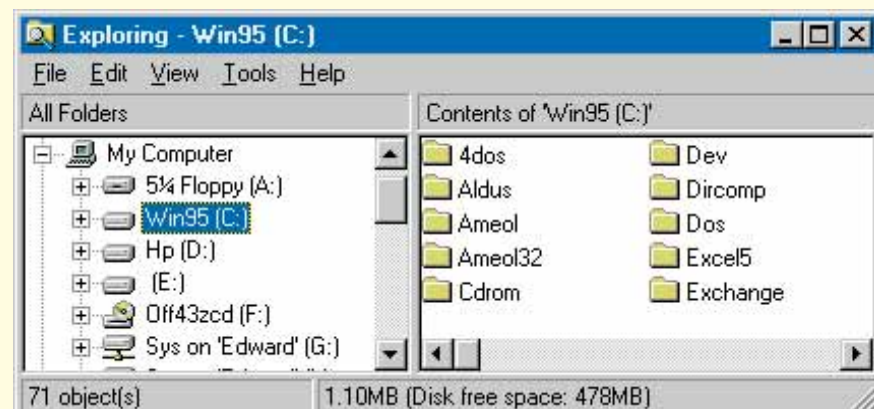
I hadn't originally done this because NTAS 3.1 didn't like the custom reassignment, and I wasn't in that great a quandary with Windows 3.11 as it didn't take up as much space as Windows 95. So I decided to bite the bullet.

Juggling act

I backed up the whole data to tape, verifying that it could be read, and more importantly, verifying the data against what was already on the hard disk. I also did a test restore of a directory approximately in the middle of the tape to a new directory, running a comparison against the original files which were still on the system. Everything reported being correct. One more backup later, I decided that I might save time restoring if I juggled the files around the two 1Gb NTFS partitions and tried from there. I also made sure that I had a bootable floppy with a copy of FDISK, SYS and FORMAT on it. It would not have been the first time that someone's been caught out without a bootable system and no boot floppy from which to restore the original files.

Having copied all the files to the HP drive, I ran a low-level format of the DEC. About an hour later it had completed, and I rebooted from the floppy. Of course the HP drive was formatted ordinarily, so the Adaptec objected to the fact that I had turned on sector translation but had formatted only one large drive to use this. I repartitioned the drive into one 1Gb DOS partition and formatted it. Then I set about restoring the data from the HP disk. Half of the data was on an NTFS partition, so I

Explorer showing all three drives on my system, a feat which DOS couldn't achieve

Netherlands keyboard driver installed in my system [see page 309]

had to reinstall NT.

I was impressed with NT's clean installation. It detected all my hardware (quite a strange bunch of stuff), except for the ancient Mitsumi single-speed CD which I added manually, and continued.

Everything read happily from the HP drive and I had restored the system in about two hours. Now it was the turn of the HP drive. I reformatted this and about 30 minutes later it reported that formatting was complete. I ran Windows 95 and

Tips: Microsoft Network

Did you know that you can force a new line in the same paragraph of MSN Chat by holding down the control key and hitting the Enter key?

When attached to the Microsoft Network, you can check for new MSN email by holding down Control and pressing 1 or Control M to check for all new mail in Microsoft Exchange, whether connected to MSN or not.

repartitioned the drive into two FAT partitions which had been my intention. I did this rather than partitioning it into one 2Gb partition because I wanted to keep cluster sizes down — I felt 32Kb clusters were a bit over the top. So I now have 3Gb of file space which is accessible to Windows 95, and 4Gb for Windows NT.

But there is always a downside. In this case it is that NT won't allow Macintosh space to exist on a DOS FAT partition. I either have 2Gb available to DOS and (about) 2Gb available for sharing to Macintosh, or I have 3Gb available to DOS and 1Gb for the Macintosh.

I thought that Miramar Personal MacLAN Connect could solve my problems with Macintosh connectivity. Unfortunately it doesn't operate with Windows 95, or at least as far as I could see, without destroying complete 32-bit operation (meaning that we would be loading the LAN drivers into low memory, which I have so far managed to avoid). I therefore, reluctantly, did not test it. I have now removed all traces of Windows 3.11 from my machine. It's a pity that I couldn't manage to get it working, but I'm sure there'll be a 32-bit version along soon.

Problem Solving

Letters are becoming rather prosaic, so there follows the edited text of a conversation I had in a chat forum on the Microsoft network with a Malaysian who signed himself SL.

SL: I hope you might be able to give me some pointers on a problem I'm having with Windows 95. I had Win95 installed on a standalone. I fitted the NIC and used WSWIN to set it up as a workstation. It then got stuck.

Don't use the old 16-bit Novell stuff. You really need to clear the whole thing out and start again, using Microsoft's own Net-Ware driver. Which version of Windows 95 are you using? Where's your NIC (Network Interface Card) located in memory? Make sure that it's not conflicting with anything. Also remember that funny things can cause problems, like CD-ROM adaptors with the port address and built-in bus mice which can conflllict with the IRQ.

SL: 300 and IRQ of 10. Build 347.

Nothing else at 300?

SL: No

I suggest you delete all references to the Novell drivers and start again. Perhaps it might be worthwhile just formatting the hard disk and installing from scratch.

SL: I'd rather not do that since I've already got Windows 95 up and running. I reinstalled Win95 and now it gets stuck at "Cannot find C:\Windows\System\ nwredir.vxd" and then hangs there.

Have you tried removing all references to networking, including the NIC and reinstalling it, remembering to do a cold boot in between?

SL: No. I'll do that now. How do I get it to boot without hanging, so that I can install it again?

Reboot, and when you get the message "Starting Windows 95" hit the F8 key quickly. Choose "Safe Boot" and then open the Control Panel and delete all its networking contents. You'll have to open the Networks icon to do it.

SL: [later] I've done that and now rebooting... Just reinstalling the ODI driver.

No. Not the ODI driver. It takes up valuable low memory. Just use the IP/SPX driver under the Microsoft heading in Add Protocol. It's 32-bit and therefore better.

SL: OK, it reboots and doesn't hang, but I still can't see the networking resources.

I'm afraid you'll have to reinstall from scratch. It's probably easier in the long run, especially with build 347.

SL mailed me a few hours later to say that he had done a complete reinstall, including a reformat of the hard disk. I'm pleased to report that he'd managed to get it working.

Barred from 32-bit

It was comforting to read your comments about Adaptec, SCSI and so on in August's *PCW*, having a non-blue chip PC with an Adaptec card and SCSI. I have a non-SCSI CD-ROM drive and I can't use 32-bit file access. This is a known bug. Is there a solution allowing full speed?
AF, Bristol

I'm afraid you'll have to wait for a 32-bit driver to be produced. There is the same problem with Windows 95 as far as IDE CDs and some EIDE controllers are concerned, and this is currently a bone of contention. You'll probably find that the Windows 95 driver will be released first, since this is the new hyped operating system. There is every likelihood that the Windows 95 driver will work with Windows 3.11. I found that the tools for the 32-bit Adaptec driver for Windows 3.11 also work with Windows 95, with the added feature that they also recognise my old proprietary Mitsumi.

I think Windows 95, like NT, pretends that it's a SCSI interface, and the Adaptec tools show it as installed. A strange situation.

The price is wrong

Why is it that Microsoft had the temerity to compare the pricing of the Microsoft Network with CompuServe's when most of their potential users (the ones outside the United States) will be paying approximately twice the price of CompuServe?

This was when the pricing strategy of the Microsoft Network was announced, offering US users 20 hours for $19.95. The UK price of £5.99 for two hours and £3.25 for each subsequent hour is considerably steeper than CompuServe. The amount for 20 hours' use comes to £64.49 per month, roughly equal to $100. Add to this the fact that many US users also get Internet connectivity and many get 28Kb access speeds, and CompuServe's £16 per month offer for 20 hours access seems very cheap in comparison.

After August 24th, MSN is going to be a very lonely place for us Europeans.

Going Dutch

I've recently installed a Dutch keyboard. It is a standard QWERTY one (these are the first few keys on the top left). Most other European keyboards are either AZERTY (French) or QWERTZ (German), which for the obstinate English would be very difficult to come to terms with.

The reason for the Dutch keyboard – apart from the fact that I live in the Netherlands – is that I've grown increasingly fed up with either looking up the accented character I want in a DOS manual, or stopping, running Charmap and copying and pasting the character from there. I know that Word for Windows has a special

Insert Symbol function, but life's too short. I can now access special characters directly from the keyboard without being *fatigué* of looking them up.

This happens much like the Macintosh keyboard, where the special accent keys are "dead" keys. Type one of them and nothing happens. Now type a letter which requires the accent you typed and hey presto, you have an accented character. I fail to understand why this can't be incorporated into all UK keyboards. The only problem with the arrangement is that things like brackets, parentheses and the asterisk have moved onto the keyboard, although the alphanumeric characters

remain where God intended them to be.

Can I put in a plea through this column for a multi-language version of the UK keyboard drive? I'm sure that there will be people who flock to this call. What with the coming of the European Union, why does anyone believe the British are not able to deal with accents?