



A fish called Brenda

View options, folder settings, save settings, and more, available to you only via the registry editor. Tim Nott tells you how to get at 'em, at the same time introduces you to his new friend, Brenda. He adds on some top tips, too.

How does it do that? Since last month, when we looked at some of the tricks you can use when opening and closing folders, I've been trying to make sense of how Windows keeps track of folder settings — if at all.

You've probably found it an equally frustrating experience; how on earth do you get it, say, to turn the toolbar on by default, or show items in a particular view and order? Why does Windows insist on re-opening any folders you had open when you close and restart? And given that you can close a folder and all its ancestors with Shift+close, why can't you do the converse; close a folder and all its descendants? And while we're at it, how can you close all open folders on the desktop?

Well, I must confess I haven't a clue about the last two, although if it's any consolation you can minimise everything on the desktop from a right click on the Taskbar. I have made some progress on the rest, though, even if at times it didn't seem like it.

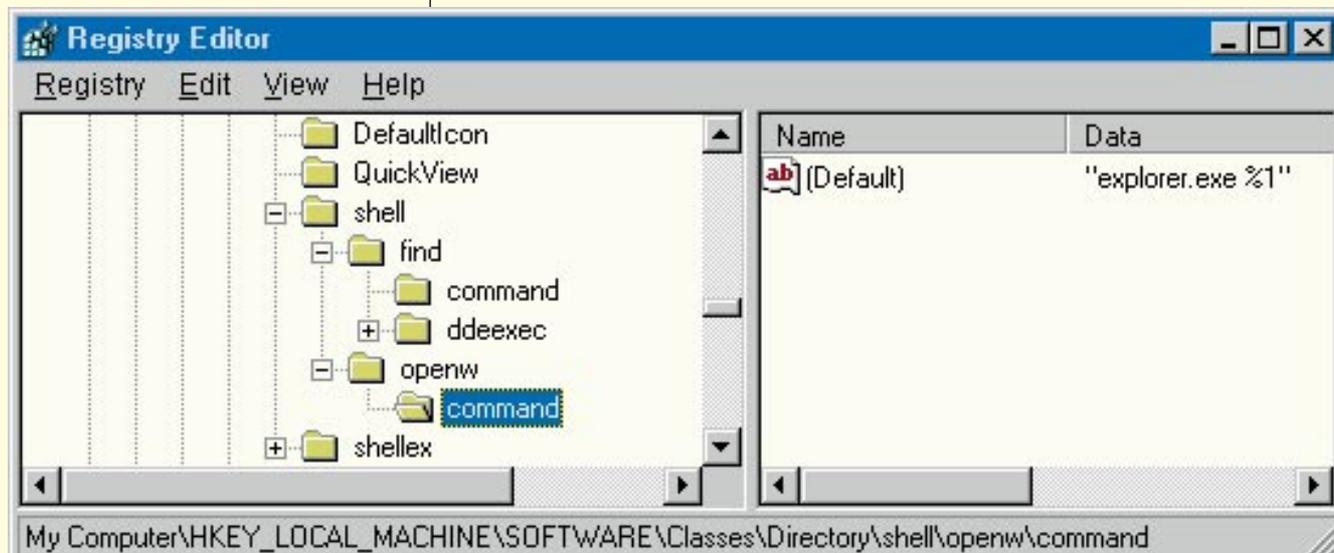
It's considerate of Microsoft to offer us various views of a folder, with large or small icons, list, or details. However, the differences between small icon and list view are subtle to the point of making you wonder why they bothered; the only notable difference I've found is that you can rearrange small icons, but not list items. Similarly you can have a toolbar, status bar, or not.

Once you've experimented with these options, it becomes evident that one size does not fit all. For folders that only contain other folders, I prefer to view large icons, and there's little point in having the toolbar

and status bar. For folders that contain data files, I want to see the size and modification date of each one, and have the toolbar and status bar to hand. And for the "My Computer" folder I want big icons and no toolbar, but I *do* want the status bar as it tells me how much space is left on a drive. You may have other preferences, but the important thing is getting it to work in the way you want.

If you are viewing folders using a single window, then each new folder will inherit the settings of the preceding one. This works upwards and downwards, so if you double-click on a nested folder, resize the window or change the view, then backspace up, the parent will have changed. If you go to the "View/Options" menu, choose the "Folders" tab, and select "Browse folders using a separate window..." you'll find that any changes you make to a folder's appearance will be

Putting a new command on a folder's right-click menu



saved. Thereafter, as long as you open that folder in a separate window, the view, tool and status bars, and sort order, should be the same. Even if you have "Browse in a single window..." as the default, remember last month's tip that holding down Control as you open a folder forces a new window (as does opening a folder or shortcut from the desktop) and this new window will have its "private" settings if they exist. (For another way of spawning a new window, see the *Top Tips* panel.)

The first thing, therefore, is to decide on a global preference, and having set the view option to single-window, open the "My Computer" folder and tweak it until it is the way you want your default view. Then change to multiple-view, and tweak all the folders you want to keep as exceptions to the rule, including "My Computer", if you want.

That at least is the theory. But it doesn't always seem to work that way and in the gloom of the practically non-existent documentation, it can still be hard to get things the way you want. In particular, the width of a folder window appears to depend on the quantity of the contents, which might make sense in icon view but is plain daft in details view when you want it to be constant. Column width in detail view also seems to be a law unto itself.

So they all rolled over...

According to an unofficial Microsoft source, Windows can retain 50 folder settings. But I can only seem to manage 29. It will continue to save new arrangements, but will discard the settings for the folder least recently accessed. And this brings us to a further problem: open a folder, resize or change the view, and Windows will obligingly save the settings whether or not you want it to, thereby bumping something else at the end of the list of which you might have been quite fond.

To stop your saved settings dropping into oblivion you need to edit the registry. You may like to read the rest of this month's column before you do this, but the section to make for is:

```
HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\
Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\
Policies\Explorer
```

You'll see an entry in the right-hand pane entitled "NoSaveSettings" with a value of "00 00 00 00". Double-click on the entry, and change it to "01 00 00 00". Close Regedit.

You've now frozen the saved settings. And, you'll find you've stopped the behaviour mentioned in the first paragraph — Windows will no longer insist on

Top Tips

Okay, you've backed it up in a variety of different ways, so lets HIT that Registry!

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Zoom | If you find the "animation" annoying when you minimise or restore a window, you can remove it. Go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Control Panel\ Desktop\ WindowMetrics, double-click on "MinAnimate" and set the value to zero. |
| Menu speed | Going up a level to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ ControlPanel\ Desktop, create a new string value called MenuShowDelay. Double click on it and give it a value in milliseconds. This controls the speed at which the start menu sub-menus open; the default is around 400. It's worth experimenting; too fast can be distracting as unwanted menus flash up. Set it to a very high value, and the menus won't cascade until you press the mouse button. You need to restart Windows for this to take effect, so... |
| Restarting your computer | If you select the "Restart..." option in the shut down dialogue, then hold down shift as you press "Yes", you will restart Windows rather than reboot from scratch. |
| Desktop icons (1) | There's a lot you can do here, but let's start with the Recycle Bin. Find it at HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\ CLSID\ {645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-00AA002F954E}. More simply, do a search for "Recycle". Open the "DefaultIcon" key and you'll see three entries — double-click to change the icon for each. You need to specify the path and filename of the new icon, and add a number, as some files contain several icons. For a standalone .ICO file the number should be zero; e.g. "C:\myicons\fish.ico,0" |
| Desktop icons (2) | While you're in the vicinity, click up a level to the "645FF..." key and double-click the "default" entry in the right-hand pane. You can then rename the Recycle Bin to something less silly. Mine is now a fish named Brenda, but I'm not sure why. |
| Opening folders | Another way to open a new window when "Browse single..." is the default. Go to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\ Classes\ Directory\ Shell. Create a new key with the name "openw". Double-click on its "default" in the right-hand pane and type in "Open New". Create another new key under "openw" called "command". Give this a default value of "explorer.exe %1". Don't include any of the quotes; regedit supplies its own when needed. Close the Registry, and you'll now find that right-clicking on a folder icon offers an "Open New" option. |

re-opening the folders that were open when you last shut down.

Editing Reg

Despite, in many respects, having far more user control from the Control Panel — changing menu and icon fonts, for example — there are still many options that can only be accessed by editing the Registry, or by getting a utility to do it for you. We've already dealt with "Save settings" and I've mentioned a few others in past columns.

Last month I mentioned the trick of showing icons for .BMP files as miniatures of the file, and in last September's issue covered the trick to creating your own "Tip of the Day". So perhaps it's about time we took a look at the Registry and its editor in more detail.

The Registry, while in theory replacing all the old .INI files, is not a text file. It consists of two large binary files,

USER.DAT and SYSTEM.DAT, which can only be accessed via the Registry Editor. Depending on your setup, you may not have this installed on the start menu but it should be in the main Windows 95 folder as REGEDIT.EXE

Safe hex

The important thing to remember is that if you thought editing the Windows 3.1 .INI files was a perilous business, then you ain't seen nothin' yet — you can really, truly, madly, deeply screw up your entire system by editing the Registry.

Fortunately, there are a few safeguards. Every time Windows 95 loads successfully, it makes backups of USER and SYSTEM.DAT with the .DA0 extension (that's a zero, not a letter "O"). Should Windows refuse to load, or report a corrupt registry, then restart the machine in DOS mode by holding down F8 at boot time or booting from the emergency 

startup disk you made when you installed Windows 95. (You didn't? Well put this magazine down immediately and proceed to Control Panel/Add-Remove Programs/Startup Disk.)

The following sequence of DOS commands will restore the registry from the backups:

```
attrib -h -r -s system.dat
attrib -h -r -s system.da0
copy system.da0 system.dat
attrib -h -r -s user.dat
attrib -h -r -s user.da0
copy user.da0 user.dat
```

A rather more organised way to safeguard the Registry is to use the Configuration Backup utility, located on the CD-ROM only at Other\Misc\Cfgback. With this you can keep up to nine Registry backups in compressed form. These are saved by default in the Windows folder but you can move or copy them elsewhere for safekeeping. You can only restore them from the Windows folder, however, and you have to be running Windows to do so. Furthermore, it won't back up multiple user configurations.

If you want to save all or part of the Registry in text-readable form, then choose "Export Registry File..." from the "Registry" menu. Give a file name, and choose whether you want to export the entire Registry or just the current branch. If

you don't specify an extension, then it will be saved with the .REG extension. The advantage of this is that you can restore the registry from a .REG file from DOS, using the version of Regedit on the Start-up disk.

There are additional reasons not to do this. Double-click on a .REG file, and it will attempt to re-import into the registry, which could be a disaster if you've been tampering with it. It's better to save it as a .TXT file, then a double-click (or right-click/open) will load it into Notepad (if smaller than 64Kb) or WordPad if larger. You can then examine the file without risk of damaging the "real thing".

A useful aid to keen Registry detectives who want to know where certain settings are kept is to export the Registry to "BEFORE.TXT", close Regedit, make a change with Control Panel or an application's "Options", then re-open the Registry and export it to "AFTER.TXT". You can then use the file compare from a DOS box. Make sure you're "in" the folder where you exported the Registry files, then type

```
"FC BEFORE.TXT AFTER.TXT >
CHANGES.TXT"
```

without the quotes. CHANGES.TXT will list all the differences between the two files.

Finally, there is nothing to stop you

backing up the registry files in the traditional way by copying SYSTEM.DAT and USER.DAT. As you can give them long file names, such as "I am just going to tinker with HKEY_CurrentUser... I may be some time" this may well be more helpful than using the Configuration Backup utility, which only gives you 31 letters of description.

Play with Powertoys

If the above scares the living daylight out of you anyway, I don't blame you. Even with copious backups and clean underwear, editing the Registry is somewhat challenging. This is where getting someone or something else to do it for you comes in handy.

Enter Powertoys, which you should find on this month's CD-ROM cover disc. Failing that, it's available from the Microsoft Network, the Microsoft Web site at <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/software/PowerToy.htm>, the Windows 95 conference on CIX, and various other sources.

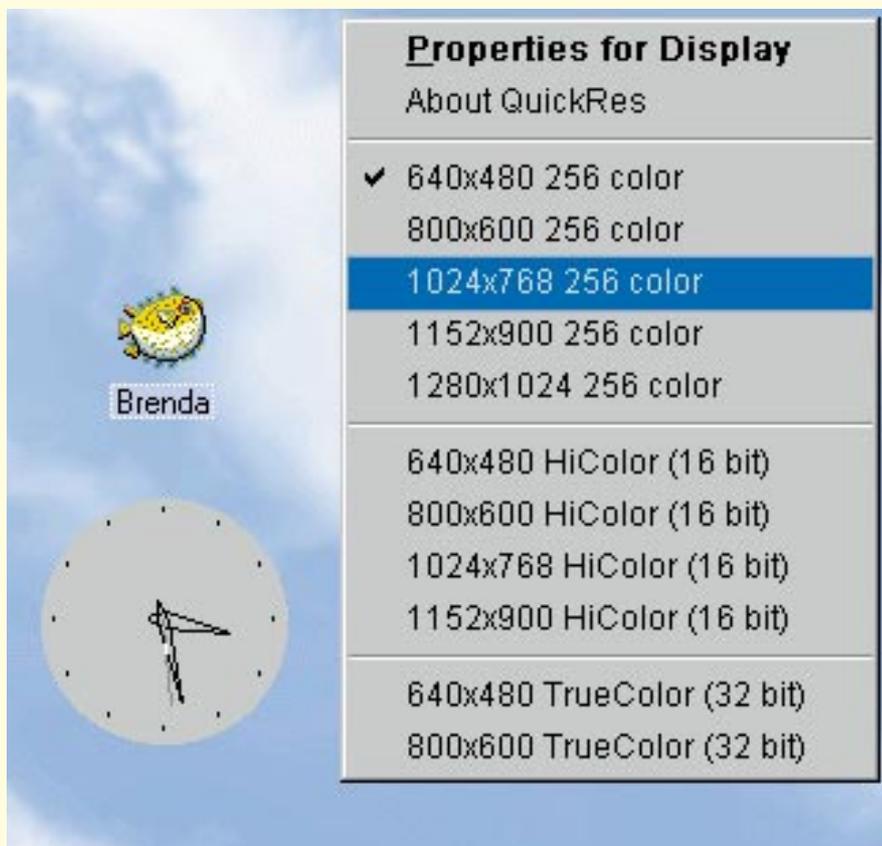
Powertoys is a collection of goodies produced by the Windows 95 Shell team, and released without charge or official support. Some are just showing off — the tired old Windows 3 clock makes a comeback but this time it's round. No borders, no title bar, just a circular window. Others might drive you mad; my particular loathing was Xmouse, which makes the focus follow the mouse pointer without clicking, in the X Windows style. Most, however, are absolutely brilliant and provoke the righteous shout of "Why isn't this a standard part of Windows?"

Switch on to Quickres

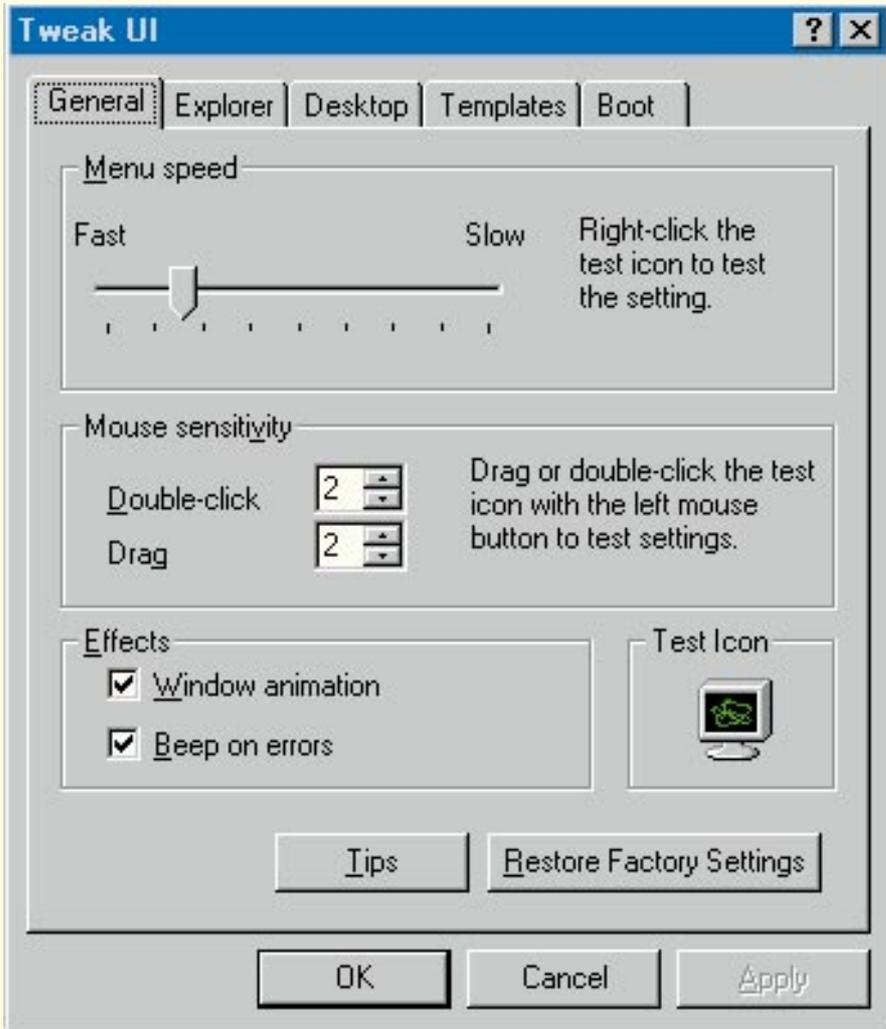
Quickres will, if your display card and drivers permit, let you switch resolution and colour depth without having to restart Windows.

This is something that's been so high on my wish list, and for so long, that I can only melt with gratitude. Stick it in your Startup folder and it puts a little icon in the taskbar "notification area" by the clock. Click on this, and a list of possibilities appears. Click on one, and everything goes black and staggers around for a few seconds then, hey presto! you're in the new resolution.

Cabview lets you peer into Microsoft



A round clock, instant resolution or colour depth changing, and a fish called Brenda



CAB files (the compressed wads of installation files) and extract individual items. There's an enhanced CD player, a "Send to..." add-on to despatch files to any destination, and more.

Oh my, it's TweakUI

Star of the show is TweakUI. This is a Control Panel add-on to reach parts of the Registry only previously accessible with Regedit.

You can disable the "Save settings" that I wittered on about, just by checking a box. You can remove the little arrows from shortcuts if that is your desire. You can remove the seemingly unshiftable items from your desktop and you can change the speed of menu pop-ups. All in all, these people are trying to do honest Windows 95 detectives, such as your humble correspondent, out of a job.

As these are unofficial, they are not supported by Microsoft and the readme files are full of disclaimers: *"The entire risk arising out of the use or performance of such products and documentation remains with you. In no event shall*

Reach beyond Control Panel without editing the Registry

Microsoft or its suppliers be liable for any damages whatsoever".

In particular, check out the TweakUI help file which is refreshingly candid about the bugs. Interestingly though, there's a disclaimer to the disclaimers, which states: *"Because some states/jurisdictions do not allow the exclusion or limitation of liability for consequential or incidental damages, the above limitation may not apply to you."*

So if this does stuff your PC and you do succeed in taking Microsoft to the cleaners, please let me know.

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