

# welcome



Our throwaway society has plenty to answer for, creating mountains of IT waste while developing nations treasure their leftovers. But with Western recycling organisations, such as Computer Aid, there shouldn't be any excuses

**A**s a child I used to hate Sunday lunch. I grew up on what would now be considered an appalling diet of baked beans, sausages and digestive biscuits. The exception was Sunday lunch: a 'proper' meal comprising roast meat, roast potatoes and boiled veg, all of which I hated. But I was imprisoned at the table until I'd made a passable attempt at finishing my plate – although I usually managed to negotiate release after eating 60 percent of my sentence.

"Do you realise there are thousands of children starving in other countries?" my mother would demand. "And you're wasting good food." When I was old enough to answer back, such a tirade would only elicit the response: "Here, you send it to them." This had the desired effect – for me – of being chased from the table.

Of course, relieving famine with food left over from Sunday lunch is impractical. But we could work towards relieving the developing world's famine for less perishable commodities such as computers.

While in the wealthy West we angst over legislation to regulate the disposal of our IT leftovers – the Waste Electrical and Electronic Directive, for example – 99 percent of students in the developing world will never so much as touch a computer during their educational lives.

Developing nations have a different attitude when it comes to the disposal of capital goods – in that they don't. Visit even a relatively sophisticated nation, such as India or Thailand, and you'll see buses and trucks from the 50s that are kept running by the myriad of machine shops that flourish in even the smallest villages.

Given an old 486-based PC and the right training, such needs-must ingenuity will give it many more years of useful life – and keep it out of a landfill site.

And the good news is that there are organisations in the west, such as Computer Aid International, that are very happy to collect our old computers and make sure they get into the right hands (see page 19).

It's as if someone had popped up at the Sunday lunch table, emptied the leftovers into Tupperware and hot-footed it to Ethiopia. ■

*Andrew Charlesworth, editor*

## reader information

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**Professional:** Mr A Luke, Staffs; Mr L Walker, Durham;

Mr S Marshall, Essex. **Springer Verlag book selection:**

Mr K Pavitt, Hants; Mr C Heywood, Gwynedd; Mr Ellerslie,

Solihull; Mr A Rajguru, Northampton; Mrs I Thomas,

Pembrokeshire; Mr S Vowles, Glos; Mr R Woods, Isle of

Wight; Mrs L Brady, Dungannon; Mr K Bloomfield, Suffolk;

Mr M Hubbard, Bedford. **Freereserve AnyTime subscription:**

Mrs M Newton, Notts; Mr J Drake, London; Mr G Lester,

London; Mr B Myers, Cheshire.

### May 03 competition winners

**WebFusion Business Pro account (12-month**

**subscription) plus IBM ThinkPad R32:** Mr M Calligan,

Manchester. **WebFusion Business Pro account (12-**

**month subscription) plus Palm M130:** Mr A Cooper,

Enfield, Middlesex. **WebFusion Home Pro account**

**(six-month subscription) plus SiPix StyleCam Snap**

**digital camera:** Mr N Nicholson, Dorset.