

# One Last Compile...

## *Nothing was stirring, not even a wheely-mouse*

It is a long, well-established, tradition that, once a year, columnists are allowed to get away with a 'Review of the Year' piece. This is usually a meandering, self-indulgent item that can be knocked out in about half an hour. Columnists see it as no more than they deserve after a year of churning out high-quality original material. Editors tend to accept it with a reluctant sigh and console themselves with the thought that at least it's better than those other seasonal fallbacks: the spoof versions of *A Night Before Christmas* and *A Christmas Carol*.

*'I am the ghost of Delphi Past', said the figure.*

*'Why, I'm just a boy!' exclaimed Ebenezer. 'Look at me typing in that search path, trying to keep it down to 255 characters!'*

Ahem. Without further ado, let's see what changed on my Delphi horizon this year.

Delphi 5 is the big one for most people. It's got some nice stuff in it, no question, and ADO is going to be very important, and frames look useful. The biggest thing for me personally will be code completion, because we skipped Delphi 4 and so I've missed out on its joys until now. And these are significant joys: writing functions and procedures has become almost guiltily pleasurable. Sections of code which were resigned to spending their life adrift in a mass of other bits and pieces behind an `OnClick` event suddenly find themselves gently transplanted to routines Of Their Very Own.

Because we suddenly went mad and bought the Enterprise Edition of Delphi, we received a copy of TeamSource. We liked this so much that we went out and bought some more copies. Folks, even if there are only two of you doing Delphi development, hell, even if

you work on your own, you'll be amazed at how much fun TeamSource is. For those of you who don't know, this is a tool for keeping track of your code, so that as you or other members of your team make changes the new units are checked into a central registry. Only recently I was bewailing the fact that I didn't want people looking at my mistakes. But what I didn't appreciate was just how massively useful it is when it comes to justifying your existence. At the end of a hard day, it's immensely satisfying to see a new version of `Widget.pas` sitting on the server, even if all the new version does is fix the bugs from the day before. I check in my code several times a day just to see the version numbers crank up. And logging in to see if anybody else has checked anything new in is almost as addictive as checking your email. Sad? Me?

*'I am the ghost of Delphi present', said the figure.*

*Scrooge frowned. 'I'm not interested in you until the first maintenance release comes out.'*

For me, 1999 has been the year of the WAN system. Suddenly it seems all of our clients are in several offices but want to 'share data', which is a euphemism for being nosy about what other people are up to. This has meant two new innovations for me: the Web App and the Client/Server App. The two have sort of gone

hand in hand, as although Delphi makes building Web Apps ridiculously easy, far easier than this ASP nonsense that VB people have to contend with, you soon run up against the limitations of what you can do in HTML. So you try and bodge around with JavaScript (yeukh) and a few third-party web extensions, but ultimately you're driven back into the arms of Windows. Except whereas before life was all about `TTables` and `FindKeys`, now it's all about `TQueries` and `CachedUpdates` and `TUpdateSQL` components. It's a little like having to drive a left-hand drive car on the wrong side of the road: it's sufficiently familiar that you feel you know what you're doing, yet it's also very easy to lapse suddenly and find yourself chugging along wondering why that big lorry coming at you keeps sounding its horn and flashing its lights.

*'I am the ghost of Delphi yet to come', said the figure.*

*'Tell me,' trembled Ebenezer, 'will Tiny Bill live? Or will that Linux affliction be the death of him?'*

*The ghost shrugged. 'Beats me', it said. 'I was just sent to remind you that yet again you have to go and get new copies of all your components.'*

And so Scrooge repented, and became a much nicer and better person, although occasionally he would still slip back to his old ways and use a `with` statement.