ORIC USER MONTHLY

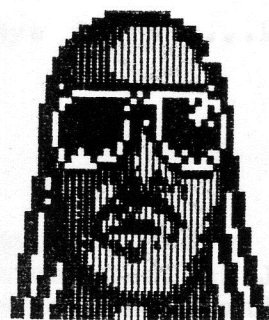## Number 34   June 1990

THANKS

ROBERT – ALL

THE

BEST

O U M
Oric User Monthly

Issue 34 : June : 1990 : 65p : Edited by Robert Cook

- -

Great cover, but what does it all mean ? Well, this is my very last issue of 'Oric User Monthly', quite possibly for good. No, that doesn't mean that OUM is about to screech to a halt, but from next month onwards OUM's new editor and distributor will be Dave Dick. Dave's address is:

65 Barnard Crescent, Aylesbury, Bucks. , HP21, 9PW.

I have to make a few points on this hand-over: firstly, this hasn't been a rushed or overnight decision. In fact, it has been planned for quite some months and hopefully this means that all will go smoothly.

Secondly, I personally am not going to leave the Oric world. I am departing to form a software house. Last month you were told that it was called 'Oric Software UK' (and the month before that 'Electric Software') but we can not use that name. Therefore we need yet another name, which has materialised into 'MIRAGE SOFTWARE'. This brand-new software house takes with it all five of OUM's current software titles and also three new games almost ready for release (see this months news section) and many many more to follow. Mirage Software will still run from my Birmingham address and the software will be on show at the Aylesbury Oric Meeting (June 23rd).
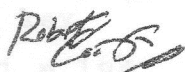
I'll also still be contributing very often to OUM's various sections, so my name is hardly going to disapear. I'm still available by post or tele- phone (up to 11pm) on (021)-451-1371 for any queries you may have and I'll be using my new found time to promote our software and the Oric in general.

I've also learned about by running OUM, and mistakes in the financial market have helped to organise 'Mirage Software' better.

To end, a very big thank-you to everyone who has subscribed or contributed and may you continue to do so, please give Dave Dick your support and send in any contributions you may have. Also many thanks to both Dave and also Jonathan Haworth who, as well as contributing and supporting me, have made this hand-over a great deal easier than it might have been.

Oh, those on this months cover include two of my all-time favourite musical artists, Paul McCartney (it is Paul, isn't it ???) and Madonna - but why no Debbie Gibson ?

Bye for now...keep in touch.

Robert Cook

Robert Cook

Editor: Robert Cook
Cover design: Jonathan Haworth
Dave's DATA and reviews: Dave Dick
RAMbling in the ROM: Jonathan Haworth
Printing: Teresa Cook (my mother, in case you were interested)

- -

NEWS

'Mirage Software' will be releasing 'Insect Insanity' on June 23rd at the Oric meeting, along with our other new release 'Grendel'. You never know, 'Krystal Worlds' could even be released at the show ! 'Insect Insanity' is absolutely perfect arcade hectic-action costing £ 3.99. 'Grendel' costs £ 3.99 and is a brilliant arcade/adventure (more emphasis on arcade) and 'Krystal Worlds' is an enormous text adventure game. Grendel (written by Alistair Way) will actually be available by mail-order (same price) from June 12th.

A big bonus here is that 'Insect Insanity' will be helping charity in it's sales. For every copy sold £ 1.00 will be donated to the World Wildlife Fund. Couple this with what is widely agreed as the best ever Oric game, and you've got a well worth purchase.

'Krystal Worlds' will cost £ 2.99.

* The fourth 'Alternative Micro Show' is to be held in November later this year, at the Staffs venue (as it was last year). OUM will be there with any luck, and so will 'Mirage Software'. Full details will appear in an issue of OUM in the near future.

That's it for the moment - things are quite lately !

HINTS + TIPS!!!

Here are some tips from Lee Akrill of Hull.

When you are drawing on the Oric HIRES mode the cursor starts at the position 0,0 and the cursor/pixel draws relative to the last point of origin. If you try the following then it will draw from the last point of origin as before but the numbers you input are relative to point 0,0.

```
DRAW 100-PEEK(537),0-PEEK(538),1
DRAW 100-PEEK(537),100-PEEK(538),1
DRAW 0-PEEK(537),100-PEEK(538),1
DRAW 0-PEEK(537),0-PEEK(538),1
```

Here are some other interesting bits & pieces from Lee:

PEEK (# 208) - key address if pressed, #38 if nothing is pressed

PEEK (# 209) - # 38 = nothing (as stated above)
- # A4 = left shift
- # A7 = right shift
- # A5 = function key (Atmos only)
- # A2 = control key

PEEK (# 220) - 0 = Oric 48k / 1 = 16k

PEEK (#24E) - keyboard initial repeat delay   (1 = low)

PEEK (#24F) - keyboard successive repeat delay   (1 = low)

DEEK (#2A9) - start address of data to/from cassette (Oric-1 = # 5F)

DEEK (#2AB) - end address of above

Thanks Lee, quite a bit to experiment on there !

Wanted: machine-code programs for marketing, royalties paid to authors.

HELLO AGAIN AND WELCOME TO SUMMER.
WHY AM I SO HAPPY? WELL MY DISC DRIVE IS UP THE SWANEE,MY DODGY
CARTILAGE IS STOPPING ME FROM RUNNING AND I'VE JUST HAD THE PHONE
BILL. YOU WILL THEREFORE FORGIVE ME IF OVER THE NEXT 2 PAGES I GET A
BIT CAUSTIC.

****

THE ORIC MEETING

THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE FOR A TICKET FOR THE COMING TOGETHER OF SOME
OF THE GREATEST EXPONENTS OF YOUR ORIC,PLUS ROBERT AND MYSELF. SEE
PREVIOUS ISSUES FOR FULL DETAILS. COACH PARTIES WELCOME.

****

REVIEW

GAME: CEOSOFT3 PUBLISHER CLUB EUROPE ORIC
OUTLET: JON HAWORTH PRICE: _8.99 - DISC ONLY.

'TETRIS' AND 'OTHELLO' WERE REVIEWED PREVIOUSLY,SO NOW TO 'MIZAR'.
FROM THE PEN OF DANIEL DUFFAU THIS 1984 EFFORT IS NOWHERE AS GOOD AS
HIS 'ROBINSON CRUSOE'.
THE GAME STARTS WITH A NICE COLORFUL INTRODUCTION TO WHICH YOU REPLY
'O'. THE REASON BEING THAT IT'S ALL IN FRENCH AND THE QUESTION THAT
YOU MUST REPLY TO IS "DO YOU WANT TO RISK YOUR LIFE?". TO WHICH YOU
REPLY 'O' = 'OUI' ='YES'. NOW THAT WAS EASY,WASN'T IT??
FOUR MESSAGES ARE RELAYED TO YOU ABOUT YOUR (VOTRE) MISSION(MISSION).
THEN TO THE SCENARIO. YOU ARE THE 'MATCHSTICK MAN' IN A NICELY DRAWN
SETTING. THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT IS PIERCED BY AN ALARM. WHEN IT
STOPS,YOU HAVE TO TOUCH A FLASHING BEACON ,WHICH OPERATES A DOOR TO
THE HELIPORT. YOU THEN CANTER (I USE THE WORD 'CANTER' BECAUSE THE
'CLIP CLOP' SOUND YOUR MAN TAKES SOUNDS LIKE A HORSE), TOWARDS A
HELICOPTER. YOU DRAG THE HELICOPTER OUT. IT STOPS,YOU DON'T,AND
THEREFORE HAVE TO RUN BACK TO IT AND JUMP IN. SOMEHOW YOU TAKE OFF.
HOW?? WELL IN MY FRUSTRATION I HIT EVERY KEY AND EVENTUALLY THE
BLADES TURNED. HOWEVER I DDN'T KNOW WHICH WAS THE MAGIC KEY AND I
HAVEN'T SUCCEEDED SINCE. THE IDEA IS SUPPOSEDLY TO FIGURE OUT WHICH
KEYS TO USE AND WHEN.
O.K, IT MIGHT BE A BIT TEDIOUS, BUT HAVING 'T E T R I S' ALONE WOULD
BE WELL WORTH THE MONEY.
AS A RATING: TETRIS - 10, OTHELLO -8 , MIZAR - 6 AND OVERALL 9 BIG
POINTS.

HEY DO YOU WANT ME TO PRINT A SMALL VOCABULARY IN NEXT MONTHS O.U.M
OF THE MORE WIDELY USED FRENCH WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS? JUST DROP ME
A LINE.

REVIEW

GAME - O.N.PACK FOR ORIC1/ATMOS. COST - ABOUT _4.50
PUBLISHER: O.N SOFTWARE OUTLET: A.ISAKSEN (NORWAY)
THANKS TO ARNT FOR THE REVIEW COPY OF TIS 4 PACK. THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THIS AND THE 'SALAMANDER' GAMES COMP. IS THAT THIS IS DEARER.
GAME 1 - " 3 X 3 "
   YOU GUESSED IT, NOUGHTS AND CROSSES. YOU VERSUS THE COMPUTER OR A
FRIEND. DIFFERENT SKILL LEVELS. THIS NO FRILLS PROGRAM,WRITTEN IN
BASIC PLAYS QUITE A GOOD GAME.
GAME 2 - "THE WAY TO KING KUNG FU"
   PERHAPS I'M BEING UNFAIR,BUT COMPARED TO 'KARATE' FROM 'GASOLINE',
THIS IS THE PITS (NOTE TO ARNT AND OUR NORWEGIAN FRIENDS - 'PITS' IS
AN ENGLISH WORD MEANING 'WONDERFUL').
THE INTRO WAS NICE,THE IDEAS GOOD e.g. HOLDS,KICKS,PUNCHES,KNEE-UPS;
IN FACT A TYPICAL DAY OUT IN BOURNEMOUTH WITH THE LEEDS LADS.
   I FOUND RATHER HARD,SLOW AND TEDIOUS - SORRY!!

GAME 3 - "M O O N   B U G G Y"
   IN ABOUT 9K OF BASIC THERE ARE YOU IN YOUR BUGGY   ON   A   NONDESCRIPT
LANDSCAPE JUMPING ROCKS AND MINES AND ZAPPING A SPACECRAFT.   THE   BEST
THING ABOUT THIS IS YHE TOP LINE OF   THE   SCREEN   WHICH   DISPLAYS   THE
MESSAGE THAT " THE TOP SCORE IS 1872 BY SNURT THE DOG".   IS   IT   REALLY
THE TOP SCORE OR WHEN THIS GAME WAS WRITTEN!!
GAME 4 - "H O R S E   R A C E"
   HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO 'BILLY MANNINGS' FUN FAIR IN   SUNNY   SOUTHSEA?
WHAT'S HE PRATTLING ON ABOUT NOW I HEAR YOU MUTTER. WELL WHEN I WAS   A
YOUNG LAD AND A BROWN ALE WAS 1s & 3d, I USED   TO   SIT   WITH   ABOUT   10
OTHER PUNTERS AND   THROUGH   RUBBER   BALLS   INTO   NUMBERED   HOLES.   THE
BIGGER TH NUMBERS THE QUICKER MY HORSE JERKED   IT'S   WAY   ALONG   THE
TRACK. BUT AT LEAST I COULD WIN A GOLDFISH AND THAT WENT DOWN WELL   AT
THE END OF THE EVENING WITH MY BAG OF CHIPS.
ANYWAY BACK TO THIS. YOU HAVE A FORM GUIDE AND YOU   BET   ON   A   HORSE.
WHEN THE RACE ENDS A WORD FLASHES ON THE SCREEN. IS IT :FINISH,WINNER,
RACE OVER,WEIGHED -IN,STEWARDS ENQUIRY? NO IT   WAS   NONE   OF   THESE,IT
WAS IN FACT ' G O A L'. PERHAPS GARY LINNEKER WON THE RACE.

SUMMING UP
======= ==
PLUS POINTS: HIGH SCORE TABLES ARE NICE, WELL TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH,
 O.K. IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN.
MINUS POINTS: UNFORTUNATELY ROBERT ONLY ALLOWS ME 2 PAGES.
I DO HOPE THAT THE NORWEGIAN'S TOOK NOT TAKE' TOO   MUCH   OFFENCE   FROM
THIS. YOU HAVE LAID THE GROUNDWORK AND HOPEFULLY   WILL   GO   ONTO   TO
IMPROVE ON THIS EFFORT. AFTER ALL IT WASN' T LONG AGO THAT   ALISTAIR
WAY WAS WRITING SOME NAFF STUFF.
ANWAY READERS DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING I   SAY.   SEE   THE   SOFTWARE   ON
DISPLAY AT THE 'ORIC MEETING'. BY   THE   WAY   ARNT,(IF   YOU   ARE   STILL
LISTENING TO ME),I DO LIKE CHESS MADNESS AND RECCOMEND IT.
                    ****

                       PREVIEW
                       =======
   YES FOLKS, IT IS HERE - ' G R E N D L E'.
ALISTAIR HAS DONE IT AGAIN. THIS WILL SAVE ME   QUIDS!!   MY   LAD   LIKES
THOSE   COIN-OP   GAMES   WHERE   YOU   GO   THROUGH   SCREEN   AFTER   SCREEN
DESTROYING THE ENEMY BEFORE THEY ZAP YOU. ALL THE USUAL   PITFALLS   EN
ROUTE AND EXTREMELY WELL DONE. TO BE RELEASED AT   THE   'ORIC MEETING'
AND A FULL REVIEW IN THE NEXT ISSUE.
                       ******
                     J E O 1
                     ======
WELL,AFTER ALL THE FANFARES THAT YOU HAVE HEARD FROM   JON   AND   MYSELF
OVER THE LAST YEAR WITH REGARD TO THE CLUB   EUROPE   ORIC   JOURNALS   ON
DISC/CASSETTE; YOU WERE PROBABLY NOT IMPRESSED BY   THE   FIRST   ONE   OF
THE CURRENT YEAR. THE SOFTWARE ON SIDE ONE WAS AMATEURISH TO   SAY   THE
LEAST. THIS IS PROBABLY BECAUSE NOW THAT CEO IS LEGAL,IT   CAN   NO
LONGER USE COPYRIGHTED SOFTWARE OF   QUALITY.   HOWEVER,THERE   ARE   A
COUPLE OF GEMS AND THE NEWS SECTION IS UP TO STANDARD.
I WONDER IF PERHAPS JON MIGHT RELEASE A   JEO   GREATEST   HITS   FOR   NEW
SUBSRIBERS. JON TRANSLATED A LOT OF   THE   GAMES   HIMSELF   AND   I   HAVE
SINCE HAD MORE TRANSLATED.
THE PAST 4 JEO'S HAVE INCLUDED: TENDRE POULET,CHAMPION   REVERSI,MASQUE
D'OR,3D GRAPH,CRYPT SHOW,YAM,COCK'IN,PHARAON,SINGERIE,PSYCHIATRIC   AND
THAT WHAT I AM USING NOW - EASYTEXT.
WELL JON, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

RAMbling in the ROM - 15

What a CLOAD of......

The problems sometimes encountered with tape loading on the Oric
are legendary. Here, then is a technical run round the system.

Tapes suffer two faults as recording media for computers, their
slow speed and unreliability. The slower the save, the better the
reliability, which is why the Oric offers two speeds - 300 baud
and 2400 baud (bits per second). These speeds are averages, as we
shall see. Poor reliability is due to several factors:

- The tape
  Magnetic tape can suffer 'drop-out' (irregularities in the
  surface coating). Note that saving at a slower speed is of
  no help here, since it extends the amount of tape used
  significantly, and hence increases the probability of
  finding a 'drop-out'. A tape also has physical limits which
  prevent it recording very high frequencies outside its given
  range. 'Computer' tapes are tapes selected for their almost
  total lack of 'drop-out'.

- The tape-recorder
  The machines that most of us use have a very limited audible
  frequency range (about 200-5000 Hz) which can impair a
  recording at 2400 baud. The azimuth angle (the angle between
  the recording head and the tape) often varies with age, and
  almost certainly from one machine to another, which can lead
  to a notable reduction in the audible frequency range. If
  the machine regulates the recording level too low, the hiss
  inherent in all magnetic recordings can also interfere with
  the signal.

- The Oric
  To make the output signal from the recorder usable by the
  6522 VIA inside the computer, the signal is filtered and its
 level corrected to 5 volts. This circuitry can impair the
  signal.

- The save/load software
  Finally there is the format used by the computer software,
  and the error correction routines. We shall see that on this
  point, Oric did not make the wisest choice...

Format of a bit, Fast Mode

It is here that the format used falls down due to its lack of
optimisation. You record at 2400 baud, but with a reliability
that is equivalent to recording at 4800 baud. The writing of data
to the tape is done by successive impulses, the interval between
which enables the nature of the bit received to be determined.

Let's call an interval of 208 microseconds T. Before each bit of
data, a pulse of length T is sent, followed by the bit, which is
characterised by a pulse of T for a 1 or 2T for a 0 (each pulse
inverts the level on pin PB7 (tape out) on the 6522 VIA). So, the
following diagram shows the sending of 011, for example:

```
↑|___0___↑____|__1_↑___|_1_↑___|___0___↑_____
 T   2T   3T   4T   5T   6T   7T   8T   9T   10T
```
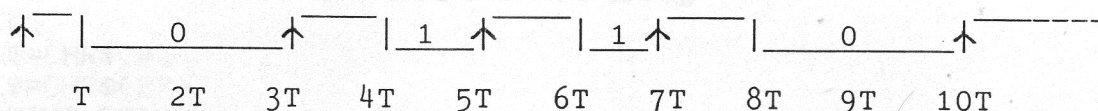
The arrows show the rising fronts detected by pin CB1 (tape in) on the 6522 VIA.

So, 2T is required to write a 1, and 3T to write a 0. The frequency therefore oscillates between 1600 and 2400 Hz. You can calculate the actual speed in Fast mode if you consider an average byte composed of 4 x 0 and 4 x 1, which gives, with stop, start and parity bits, approximately 2000 baud. That is 154 bytes per second, or 1k approximately every 6½ seconds.

The following diagram almost doubles the speed of transfer without affecting reliablity, although it involves a complication because CB1 would have to detect both positive and negative variations (again the arrows show CB1 detection):

```
↑___0___↓_1_↑_1_↓_1__↑___0___↓_____
 T   2T   3T   4T   5T   6T   7T   8T   9T   10T
```
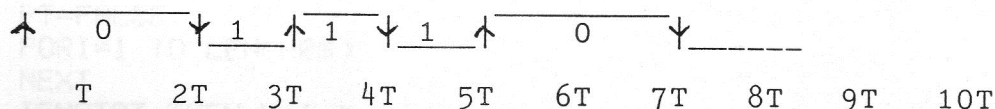
Format of a bit in Slow mode

This time a 1 and a 0 are of the same length - 16 blocks of length T for a 1, or 8 blocks of length 2T for a 0. A bit therefore always takes 16T, which gives us 300 baud. The actual speed of transfer is 23 characters a second, or 1K each 45 seconds.

The increase in reliability arises from the load routines, which we'll look at next month together with the format of a byte and how a bit is read from tape.

Poking in the library

There are no less than five new entries this month:

CPD-29 CASTLE	19k	Our second text adventure
CPD-30 YAM	23k	A good rendition of a poker dice game
CPD-31 3DGRAPH	11k	Stunning 3D object rotation
CPD-32 Q.V.C.	8k	an 80 - yes, eighty - column word processor for SEDORIC users, with usual controls, limited to 256 lines (about 3½ pages of A4)
CPD-33 DESKTOP	5k	again for SEDORIC discs, your very own 'WIMP' environment (eh?)

The last two are particularly interesting, and I can recommend them to all disc users. What, no more space?.....Just room to thank Robert for the astounding achievement of getting out 34 issues of a monthly magazine on time every time - some record in the Oric world!!

Jon Haworth

```
10 CLS
20 D$=CHR$(4)
30 E$=CHR$(27)
40 PRINT:PRINT"          "D$E$"J    CONVERSIONS"D$
50 PRINT:PRINT:PRINT:PRINT:PRINT:PRINT:PRINT:PRINT
55 PRINT"1.PASSING BINARY> DECIMAL"
60 PRINT:PRINT:PRINT"2.PASSING DECIMAL> BINARY"
70 PRINT:PRINT:PRINT"3.END"
80 PRINT:PRINT:PRINT:PRINT"YOUR CHOICE":
90 POKE618,3
100 GETR$:IFR$<"1" OR R$>"3" THEN PING:GOTO100
110 PRINTR$
115 IFR$="3"THEN END
120 ONVAL (R$)GOSUB1000,2000
130 PRINT:PRINT"PRESS A KEY...":GETR$:RUN
999 END
1000 REM* CONVERT BINARY TO DECIMAL *
1050 CLS:R=0
1060 PRINT:PRINT"ENTER THE BINARY NUMBER"
1070 INPUTNB$
1080 PT=FALSE
1090 FORI=1 TO LEN(NB$)
1110 NEXT
1120 IFNOTPT THEN N=I-1
1130 REM
1160 N=N-1
1180 FOR I=1TOLEN(NB$)
1190 DIGIT$=MID$(NB$,I,1)
1200 IF DIGIT$="."THEN1300
1210 R=R+VAL(DIGIT$)*2^N
1220 N=N-1
1300 NEXT
1310 PRINT:PRINT"THE RESULT IS  ";R
1320 RETURN
2000 REM* CONVERT DECIMAL TO BINARY *
2050 CLS:NB$=""
2060 PRINT:PRINT"ENTER THE DECIMAL NUMBER"
2070 INPUT SN:ND=ABS(SN)
2080 PE=INT(ND)
2090 REPEAT
2100 P2=INT(PE/2)
2110 R=PE-P2*2
2120 NB$=MID$(STR$(R),2)+NB$
2130 PE=P2
2140 UNTIL PE<2
2150 NB$=MID$(STR$(PE),2)+NB$
2160 IF ND-INT(ND)=0 THEN 2270
2200 DE=ND-INT(ND):NB$=NB$=","
2210 REPEAT
2220 DE=DE*2
2230 IF DE<1 THEN NB$=NB$+"0" ELSE NB$=NB$+"1"
2240 DE=DE-INT(DE)
2250 UNTIL (LEN(NB$)>33) OR (DE=1OR DE=0)
2270 PRINT"THE RESULT IS :":PRINTNB$
2280 RETURN
```

Here is a useful program that Dave Dick has adapted from the French magazine 'TheOric' which ceased publication some time ago.

The program converts hex. to binary form, and vice versa.

Have fun with it.

for sale/wanted

All for sale/wanted ads. we have been sent have now been printed, so if you think that we have omitted an ad. you have sent in then please contact us and we'll sort it out.

Wanted: ORION MC MONITOR with IOUG's printer output routine .

Wanted: Level 9's 'Snowball' adventure.

Both ads. enquiries to:

Derek Gomer, 49 Graig Street, Graig, Pontypridd, Mid-Glamorgan, CF37, INF.

- -

No software charts this month - back soon !

Note: All cheques/postal orders now made payable to "D.DICK".

- -

I have an enquiry myself to all technical wizards out there ! Is it at all possible to write (or has anyone tried) a piece of software that allows you to use a MIDI keyboard with the Atmos ? Any help here would be wonderful.

- -

Did You Know ?   ?   ?   ?   ?

The PING, EXPLODE, etc. commands were designed by Paul Kaufman. There were originally about 30 of these to be operated by SOUND followed by a number from 1-30 in brackets. However, when attempts to put them into ROM began, they found a lack of memory and we're left with the 4 we have today !

The receiver for Tansoft only declared the company bankrupt in 1988.   ?

Dr Paul Johnson, the Orics designer, still has the 'Oric - computer of the year' award on his wall at home.

'Oric Owner' had a distribution total of about 15,000 copies per issue.   ?

The French software house 'Loriciels' was the 1st over French software house. Logiciel being French for 'software', they changed the ogic to oric because they supported the Oric (after all, Oric software was 80% of the French software market at it's peak). The name remains, the Oric support doesn't.   ?

- -

To finally say goodbye, here is a short list of my favourite pieces of software for the Oric:

Games

1. Grand Prix (Mirage Software)
2. Insect Insanity (Tansoft)
3. Zorgons Revenge (IJK)

Utilities

1. Composer (Sector 7)
2. M.C.S.
3. The Quill (Gilsoft)

They are only how I feel at the moment, my opinions change monthly !

- -

Okay, here we go. Mirage Software will officially start trading on June 23rd at the Oric Meeting. I'll see many of you there where you can, if you want, grab some software from us. Give Dave Dick all your support as new editor, it's a tough job ! I've enjoyed my role here and I've learned alot, and hopefully my new software venture will succeed too ! You may well be reading a full 'OUM' story in a month or two when I get around to writing it. Bye !

Oric User Monthly, Dave Dick, 65 Barnard Crescent, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP21,9PW.