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USER

MONTHLY

with Alternative Micros
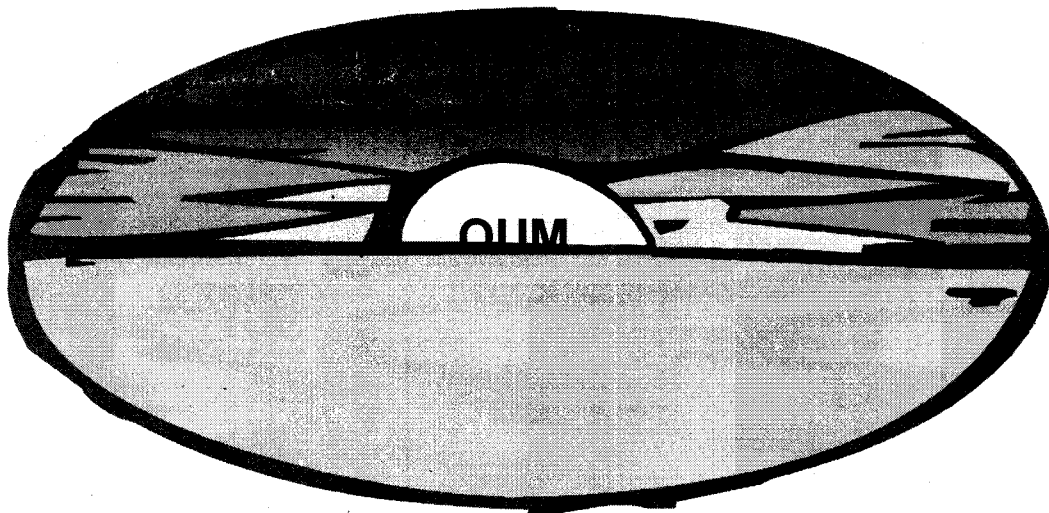
The end of twelve glorious years...

The Editorial

Hello and finally welcome,

to this, the September, and final issue of Oric User Monthly.
After many years at the helm it is time to bid you farewell, and allow the guys at Rhetoric to keep you posted on all things Oric in the future.

It has been one hell of a roller coaster ride, and along the way I have made many friends, and perhaps a few enemies - such is life!!

I thank you for your support, and would like to wish each and every one of you whatever you wish yourselves. I will still be in touch - I still have a few Oric related tasks to complete.

In January 2000 I will send you all a newsheet, which I think will almost certainly herald the end of my ties with the Oric.

It really has been an enormous task in finishing off this issue. I am extremely late with it, but felt I had to put as much effort and information in as possible. I know all the funds will be exhausted with this issue, but am quite prepared to put a few quid in myself as a thank you for the joy that the Oric and you readers have given me over the years.

People have asked me what I will do in my spare time - "What spare time?" is my reply.

I am currently working up to 10 hours a day (6 days a week) in my new position at work, and I do at least 2 Discos a week, leaving me enough time for a lie-in on a Sunday morning, a few hours on the Internet, and a game of Squash on a Monday. Still no time for the Golf and the numerous other things I want to do with my life.

And so for the last time, here is what you will find within these pages.

INDEX

OUM # 1

On page 15 of this issue Jon Haworth states that a reprint of issue 1 of OUM will be included with this issue. Due to financial restraints this will not be the case. If you require a copy, then please send an S.A.E. Readers from outside the U.K. should contact me by post or e-mail to receive a free copy.

ROBERT COOK

Those wishing to contact Robert Cook may e-mail him at:
          1stchoice@assessors.fsnet.co.uk

ORIC MEET '99

It is all water under the bridge now, and therefore I have decided not to do a full report on the July Oric Meet. Suffice to say that Stephen Meachen was the Karaoke King, and Ken Duddle didn't arrive until we were packing up at 4.30 p.m.

Many thanks to all those who turned up to bid farewell, and cheers for the bottle of Whisky.

NEWS....NEWS.....NEWS

RHETORIC

The second issue of RHETORIC was recently published. With this final issue of OUM you will receive a subscription form to RHETORIC - please give it a try.

I recently had a letter from an OUM reader. I've given much thought as to whether to publish it, but rightly or wrongly have decided to go ahead and air the thoughts. However, I will not name the writer.

" I took out a subscription to RHETORIC. Given the choice I would prefer to read OUM. Some bits of the new magazine were nice, such as the scrolling routine on page 3, but there were too many references to Clive Sinclair and his computers. I heard other people at the MEET say there was too much about Clive Sinclair in the new magazine. That's not good for an Oric magazine."

- Mr.XXX

Well, there you go Rhetoric team, though I'm sure you'll find that as with the case of OUM, for every disgruntled reader you'll find half a dozen satisfied ones. Keep on working on it, and listen to your readers.

CLUB EUROPE ORIC

Recently the CEO posted a message on the Net stating that articles to the CEO would be re-produced in whatever language they were sent in. Good news for British readers if articles are sent in English.

Now comes the problem - where oh where is the CEOMAG?????

I, and I assume nobody else in Britain has received a copy this year. What is happening???

OUM INDEX

Many thanks to all who have ordered the final OUM INDEX. I am still taking orders at £1.50 each. I will soon be working on updating it, and hope to send them out before the end of the year.

PROJECTS

Robert Crisp is hoping to use his BBC system, and an Oric system for a number of hardware and software projects, and below we set out some ideas that he would like to work on:

1) LISTER - a program in machine code for the BBC, listing a program on the printer, breaking the output into A4 pages, and giving each page a title and a page number. Later the program will be converted for the Oric.

2) DATA TRANSFER - a hardware and software project to pass data between the BBC and Oric using the printer ports. This has been mentioned in OUM, but the details were never published. This would allow me to write code on the BBC and transfer it to the Oric.

3) TELEPHONE DIALLER - A program for BBC and Oric in machine code. To allow the user to type numbers into the computer and make it sound as if they were typed on a telephone.

ADVENTURELAND

Hans Persson has recently been in touch with Robert Cook and myself regarding using Robert's adventure games such as THE HAUNT and KRYSTAL WORLDS on his site about adventure games.

You can check out Hans's ADVENTURELAND site at: http://www.lysator.liu.se/adventure/

CONTACT LIST

I did promise you all a Contact List, and still propose to do one - I will fund this, and hope to start duplicating them soon. If you DO NOT want one, then please contact me A.S.A.P

THE BACKLOG

I still have software orders to complete. I still have back issues of OUM to send out. All will be completed. As I always say - PLEASE BE PATIENT!

ORIC LIVES

Bits'n'Bobs

ON THE MOVE

Andre Widhani, who wrote TETRIX for our Atmos, has recently moved to:

Wandsbeker Chaussee 180d, 22089 Hamburg, Germany

Caption competition

John Peach says: 'DogOric Tired'

An Oric Story

From Richard Chevet (sounds like a Chelsea footballer) in France comes his story of the application he applies his Oric to.

For many years Richard has been an amateur firework display firer, responsible for the firework display of a little town on a national holiday. This task is automated with electrical wiring connecting fireworks to a command-box driven by an Oric-1.

The command-box only fires shots sequentially, when Oric tells it to, which is done one by one.

The Oric also commands lightning effects synchronized with a music tape. This part is the heart of the Oric application.

The music is recorded in stereo : one way for music (played to the audience) and the other for digital datas in the Oric K7 format. The Oric reads datas continuously and drives ligthning effects and fireworks shots. The advantage of this system is to allow to synchronize music, lights and fireworks with very good accuracy.

The amount of data to keep a good lightning effect animation imposed to have a transfer rate double of the standard K7 fast mode of the Oric (near 300 bytes/sec). This was made by changing timer tempos in the ROM (He coded his application in an EEPROM, replacing useless routines like sound and graphics ones). The tests showed a good reliability of these routines(save to K7 & reload from K7, load from PC playing a program-generated wav file).

The big difficulty of this system is to generate the datas synchronized with the music on a same stereo tape. This is made by a program in Visual-Basic which allows the user to graphically design the lightning effect animations and the firing orders to be coded in the wav file. This program is in fact a kind of wav editor, generating Oric K7 sounds to encode datas.

Unfortunately, this system has a weakness : if the data transmission chain is not perfect (if a single bit is lost or added), all the following datas are incorrect. I let you imagine what the show would look like if the lights and fireworks were randomly lit!

Even with the use of a VCR with Hi-Fi stereo capabilities as the sound player, the datas are not all correctly read by the Oric (they are if the Oric is directly connected to the PC). I think the best thing to do is to design a data format (sequence of bytes) to allow

an automatic resynchronisation in case of a small loss of informations (one bit added or suppressed in one byte out of dozens).

For those who ask themselves "why not using the PC as the music/data player directly connected to the Oric during the show?",the answer is that a K7 player is much more reliable (thanks Windows)and portable than his PC (medium tower with 17" monitor) and less fragile too (the show takes place outside, in the fields).

Richard developed the Oric EEPROM on the PC with a cross assembler and tested it with Euphoric.

If anyone wants further informations about this application, or to make comments, suggestions, criticisms (constructive), you can e-mail Richard at:

rchevet@club-internet.fr
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CLOADx10

Fabrice Frances has just written

CLOADx10.

Simon Artguy loaded "DPTLQ" in 23 seconds on his Atmos, with no errors.

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Letters to the Editor

Hi Dave,

finally the last issue of OUM, what is it that they say 'all good things come to an end'. I am sorry that I haven't been with OUM from the beginning, but I am here at the end.

I have a few regrets:

1)   that this was the last OUM meet
2)   that I didn't come to the meets until the last two
3)   that for this one I looked at the map and saw that

Milton Keynes was closer to Aylesbury than London, as the crow flies. But the crow didn't have to get from one side of Milton Keynes to the other side and wait to about 10am for a bus so it would have been quicker to go to London. However it was worth it to be there for the last meet, and to meet and talk to Peter Bragg about a digital camera he did an earlier article about. He actually had the camera with him and could confirm my ideas about its operation.

This time I didn't stay overnight (see last years report!)

Best wishes to all those involved with OUM over its life, writers, readers, competition organisers, and respondents and I trust as many of you as possible transfer to the new Rhetoric. I also hope that we do keep contact with Dave, and not wait for Dave to make contact.

All the best on a happy and long retirement Dave,

                    - John Foggin (Ashington)

Dear John,

It was marvellous to meet up with you and everyone else.

It may be a retirement from OUM, but I am currently very busy on the Oric front still, and my other interests, and full time job keep me working extremely hard. Still not enough hours in a day!

                    - Dave

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Dear Dave,

Here is the article. I just got some photos back so ended up doing a cartoon after noticing Peter Thomburn was standing the same way each time. Not sure if it will print OK but it looks all right in greyscale on the screen!

Well I guess it is that time has come.

I was so glad to find OUM. I always knew there was great software out there for the Oric. I started off with half a dozen tapes which I played and played. After a couple of years dabbling with a Speccy I got back to the Oric, found OUM and have spent the last 6 or 7 years really enjoying the Oric. I started programming again and discovered the software I had missed in the eighties. The magazine has been great fun to read and I hope my little contributions have at least made someone out there smile a bit.

I must thank all that have contributed over the years, including those that won't read this The biggest thank you must go to you though Dave. Without your energy, drive and persistence we would never have got this far.

For the future we have Rhetoric. Anyone interested in the Oric is welcome. Anyone giving up on the Oric is asked to pass on unwanted hardware/software to me. I am hoping to redistribute any donations (to add new member) and to build a stock that will keep existing users up and running for some time yet!

All the best mate Thanks for all your help. Keep in touch and don't forget to send any disks you have kept over.

                    - Steve 'MUSO' Marshall (Maryport)

Dear Steve,

It was always nice to meet up and communicate in other ways with you and Ally.

I am sure we will be in contact for many years to come, as will be the case with many other friends I have found through OUM.

I still have many Oric related things to pass onto you, and am still getting phone calls from new contacts.

                    - Dave

More Letters

Dear Dave,

Enclosed is the machine code article for the last issue of OUM. I haven't recieved the combined July/August issue as yet, but I assume that the deadline for the September issue must be about now and as I have finished it, I thought that I might as well send it off. I enjoyed the Oric Meet and was staggered to go home with an old laptop PC. I haven't had a chance to try it out properly as yet, but initial checks appear to indicate that it does work, except that the nicad appears to be a bit knackered. Obviously the machine is a bit prehistoric, but at least it will provide an interesting insight into the PC environment.

I have had a bit more time in recent months and have been making a lot more use of the facilities available on my Acorn RiscPC computer and finding that some of them were also available on my older A5000. That's one of the problems of never having enough time, to read the manuals thoroughly in the first place and to explore all the possibilities. I am sure that a lot of computer users buy and discard machines so frequently, that they rarely see what the machines are really capable of.

I hope to contribute to "Rhetoric", but probably not on quite such a frequent basis as I did for OUM. Certainly, you have provided "Rhetoric" with a hard act to follow. As for myself, I do have other projects, some of which I have already started on. I am also making a bit more use of the internet. I down loaded the group photo taken at the Oric meet from the internet and it convened to an Acorn sprite, with excellent results. In addition, I have now have a flat bed scanner, which is a bit more versatile and easier to use than the old hand held one. It comes with "Twain", software, which looks just like the "PC" version of "Twain" and will apparently produce all the common file formats, so I should be able to scan and send the results to friends who are "PC" users.

Well, thats about it I suppose, the end of the line for "Oric User Monthly". Many thanks for all the hard work you must have put into it. I know that you intend to put out a newsletter at the end of the year, but I trust that we will continue to hear from you, after that, if only occasionally, either via the internet or perhaps through "Rhetoric". In the meantime, best wishes to you and your family for the next millenium and for the future.

> All the best
>> - Peter N Bragg (Sutton)

Dear Peter,

On behalf of all OUM readers I would like to thank you for your contributions to the Oric cause and OUM. You will always be the 'Gentleman' of the team.
>> - Dave

+++

Dear Dave,

I'm working hard to finish my Oric Internet communications package in time for year 2K. Soon after, the PC will be obsoleted by our Oric! (Just joking of course.......)
    Anway, what is exciting with this package is that it revives the old days of BASIC hobbyists: BASIC programmers will be able to write Internet applications very easily.....so I hope you will follow this new adventure and be proud to demo your Oric on the Internet?
>> - Best wishes,
>>> - Fabrice Frances (France)

Dear Fabrice,
> What Oric???????????

Best wishes to you and your family, and many thanks for your help and inspiration.
>> - Dave

Machine Code for the Oric Atmos
(Part 87)

Peter N. Bragg

The Conclusion of the Story ?

The series has looked in detail at the Oric's 6502 Instruction Set and has covered the construction of a hardware project, which provided an additional "user port" for devices such as a computer mouse. The project finished up by having a detailed look at the software for that computer mouse. The last issue showed a "crib card" which I have found to be very useful when programming, because it provides the essential elements of the 6502 Instruction Set on one small reference card. The card as printed is the actual size I use, but of course it can always be enlarged, by copying it, on one of the photostat machines to be found in shops and local libraries, if you prefer it that way.

Write the Software

The aim of the whole series, was to expand the knowledge, and inspire readers to try a little bit of programming for themselves. Those who simply buy their software "off the shelf" have a fair choice, but are always going to be limited to the software that will make a good profit for those who sell it.

If on the other hand, you can write software, the sky's the limit. It was fairly obvious that Oric International were about to go down the pan, when I bought my first Oric Atmos. I was already writing a lot of software and knew then that I would have no problems if software for it, disappeared from the shops.

Programming a computer in any language can take quite a bit of time, but then that applies to anything worthwhile. However, it is not too hard to pick up the technique and it is a great way to pass time, if you are forced to wait around for long periods, for any reason. The ability to make and produce things for yourself, instead of having to rely on paying someone else to produce something that is not quite what you wanted, is always well worth the effort and brings much confidence and a lot more freedom of choice. It will certainly expand your horizons with respect to all computers.

Watch your language

This series concentrated on machine code, which is exactly the same as assembly language and binary code/numbers. They are all names for exactly the same computer language and are simply three labels, one for each of the three different ways, we can write that language. What we write as assembly language or hexadecimal numbers is read by the computers microprocessor as binary numbers. It is much easier for us to write any programs in assembly code or hexadecimal numbers (usually referred to as "hex codes") because they are far easier to read than the much larger mass of "1s" and "0s" which would be needed to make up the same program in binary code.

Machine code is a solid state language, because its instruction are built into the microprocessor silicon, That instruction set may be extended in later versions of the microprocessor, but it is very unlikely that any of the instructions present in the early versions will be changed. This means that software written for that microprocessor, will run on any machine that uses it as its central processor unit (CPU). That is why software written for Oric's 6502, will also run on the BBC Micro, Atari and Commodore etc. That stability is important, because it takes time to write decent software in any language and if a lot of work went in to your software, you will want it to last a reasonable time and run on as many machines as possible, before it is made obsolete, by new hardware.

Machine code/assembly language is also the fastest, most compact and least limited of all computer languages.

When it comes to other languages (ie. Basic, Pascal and C++ etc.), they are in fact software themselves and contrary to popular opinion, are all made up from prefabricated and labelled blocks of machine code/assembly language. Like most prefabricated items, they can make programming easier if used in the right applications. The downside is that they are more limited outside those applications and they will always need more memory and be slower than any machine code/assembly language.

They are supposed to be easy to read, but that's a matter of opinion. Their real advantage is that they can be changed to cope with different hardware setups, which means that you can use the same language on different computers and microprocessors. However, that flexibility often results in different versions of the same language, so you still cannot guarrantee that software written on one machine will run on another.

My personal preference is for the stability, speed and compactness of "hard" based machine code against the flexibility offered by the "soft" based languages, such as Basic and C++. "You pays your money and takes your pick"! Of course it is worth remembering that you can also mix languages in use. A good example is the use of machine code in Basic programs.

Notes on writing software

The listings that were printed out in OUM, for the computer mouse software, give you a fair idea of how I write computer software. I have used the same layout successfully for many years. Originaly, my listings were all written in pencil, but now it is easier to use software, built into Acorn RiscOS, to produce them. If you look at the listings for the mouse software, you may find that it is worth noting one or two points, which could be useful when writing your own software.

I always head every sheet of the software listing with three items, the title, the date and finally the name of the machine it is written for. The title is self explanatory, but it pays to keep it brief, particularly if the listing runs to many sheets. As for the date, that is usually the date I actually started on the writing of that software, not the current date, because that piece of software may take weeks to write. Later versions and updates get a new date, which makes it easy to sort out which version of the software, the listing is and when that version was written. I never bother with version numbers.

As for the listing itself, the hex code and the addresses are the only things that go into the computer, everything else including the assembly listing itself, is simply there for information, just like "REM" statements in Basic. You can make things a lot easier for yourself, when writing software if you write a good decription of how it works as you go. That program information is very important, because inevitably you will want to update/modify any software later. The question is, how much information will you need then. This is something that depends on you, the software writer and how good your memory is. It is a waste of time to write too much.

I use a simple principle. I write the listing as briefly as possible, describing it as if I were explaining it to someone who is a complete stranger, but who otherwise knows just about as much about machine code as I do. That allows me to keep it fairly brief, without needing to explain terms and operations that are likely to be obvious when read later.

If you looked at the date on those computer mouse listings you may have noticed that it was written more than eight years ago and in fact it is true to say we all move on and become strangers to the person we were years ago. However, when I looked back at my original pencilled notes, they soon brought it all back, so they must have been quite successful in that respect.

I use exactly the same principles to write for other processors such as the 32 bit ARM processor and they work just as well for those machines, as for the Oric. The fashion now amongst Acorn users is avoid using numbers in any form, for locations, addresses or even Basic lines. They use so-called "meaningful" labels instead. The trouble is that one persons idea of "meaningful" is quite often very different from anyone elses and the meaning may even be lost to the original software writer as time passes. As a result, writing software has once again become the domain of the so called expert !! and the program listings they produce are often difficult for others to understand.

I find it much easier to use numbered locations (addresses), or line numbers in Basic, because they automatically provide a useful map of the software routines and their operations and this applies to all software I have written so far and I am also sure that this will continue to be the way that I do it, whichever machine I write software for.

Finally, I have said it before, but it bears repeating. When writing software, always break it up into small routines. This has two advantages. First if there are any errors and you can bet your life there will be, you will find it far easier to check each routine in turn to find out if it is doing exactly what it should be doing.

Second, it enables you to build up a kind of library of routines, which will save time and make future software writing much quicker and easier. Many routines from my old Microtan 65, found their way into the BBC Micro and then went on the Oric Atmos. After all, there is little point in re-inventing the wheel over and over again.

That's it Folks

That just about brings us to the end of this series. When I started, I reckoned it might run for ten months. Nine years and eighty seven plus articles later, I realise that was a slight underestimation. I think Dave has made a really great job of the "Oric User Monthly" over the years and it was very interesting to see how the magazine expanded and improved, during the many years he was editor, without it becoming remote from the readers. While I cannot judge whether my own articles were successful, I must admit that I did gain a lot from writing the series.

Initially, most of my articles were typed out on the Oric Atmos and printed out as draft on a dot matrix printer. Later, a book for the Acorn Archimedes, by Roger Amos, inspired a closer look at facilities offered by the Acorn operationg system. That allowed me to use more illustrations in the Oric machine code series. That also opened the door to other ideas and projects, that had never occurrred to me, when I first read the Acorn manuals. Now as a result, I have started on some of those ideas and projects.

That highlighted something else that I have always felt. Manuals and books for the Acorn machines were large, glossy and contained a lot of information, but they were nowhere near as interesting and useful as those for Oric computers, relatively speaking. The one possible exception to that was the very first manual for the BBC Micro. I think that Oric users got far more out of their manuals and books than other computer users and it is one of the main reasons why the machine has survived so long. For the future, there is "Rhetoric". Having already subscribed, I also hope to be able to make some contributions and I wish Simon, Steve and Jon the best of luck in that venture. The collection of OUM mags will also provide a useful source of reference for a long time to come and of course there is the Internet which I haven't used a lot as yet, but I am sure that will increase in future.

Many thanks to all those who provided feedback and letters and I hope that my articles have inspired at least some of you to have a go at writing your own software. It is well worth doing, whatever language or machine you use. To Frank Bolton especially, I would like to say, your articles were interesting and useful and I personaly gained from them, so never give up. As in peace, the price of language is eternal vigilance. I am also very grateful to my wife Anne, who even while she is busy working through an Open University course on music, has always made the time to check every single article for errors, it took a great deal of effort on her part and she certainly nailed a large number of my typing "glitches".

I shall miss "Oric User Monthly", but it's surprising how much time those two or three pages on machine code took to write, so there is the compensation of having a bit more time for some of the other projects I have in mind. My own Oric has not had a lot of use in the last few months, but is all set up and ready to switch on and is certainly likely to be kept operational for the forseeable future.

As for the future, don't wait to have it imposed on you, make it yourself as far you can, right now !!
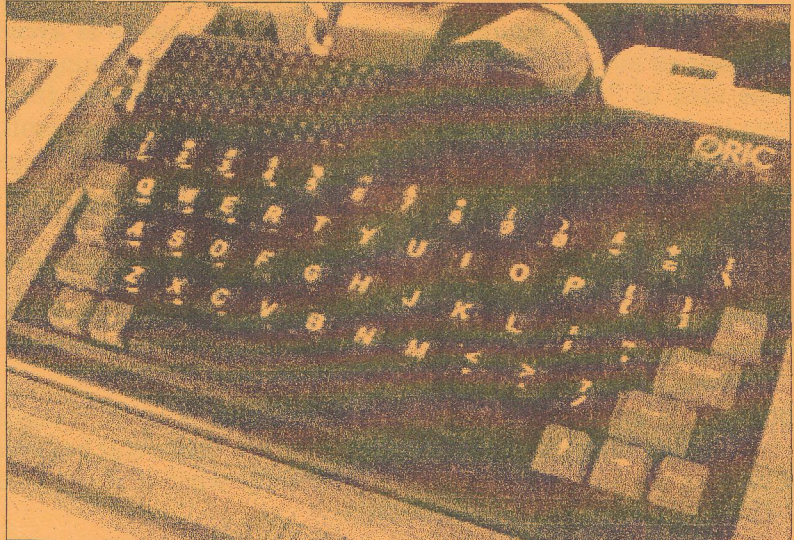
Peter M Bragg

August 1999
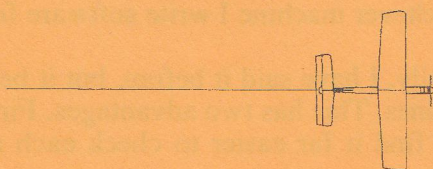
The (Incomplete) Oric Adventurer's Guide to the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy - Phew!

Those of you out there that still switch on your Oric to marvel at what can be achieved on such a small, aged (in computer terms) machine may have had a look at the wonderful Pinforic. A fine example of what modern technology, (and the odd Frenchman), can do to bring something new to our Oric screens.

OK, so not everyone is keen on adventures. Me included! But anything that works its way out of the mind of Douglas Adams is worth a look at. The wonderful radio series that was HHGG got turned into an LP record, a book, a television series, a book ('a trilogy in four parts' was added to a few years ago by yet another book to produce 'the increasingly inaccurately titled trilogy'), and the computer game. And a towel. (You'll have to read the book to understand). Now the internet has allowed Douglas Adams to create his own HHGG where surfers can send in their own submissions to go into the 'book'.

Back to the plot. Adams is one for getting involved in things and when he was approached to buy the rights to produce an adventure game based on his radio series, he insisted on writing the text himself. The resultant game is one that is a cut above the rest and is great fun to play even if you don't do very well because the responses are worded to be entertaining; not just 'I can't do that' or 'I don't understand "get lost"'.

Douglas likes to make you work so HHGG isn't an easy game. Some bits are really frustrating and need a good bit of thought to solve. Here's where we are going to help you out and show you through the first few bits, (so DON'T READ THIS if you want to play the game yourself).

Boot up Pinforic and stick in your HHGG disk. You'll find it is then Thursday, and it is going to be the worst day of your life.
TURN ON LIGHT, GET UP or 'stand', TAKE GOWN, WEAR GOWN, OPEN POCKET, TAKE ANALGESIC AND FLUFF, EAT ANALGESIC, TAKE TOOTHBRUSH AND SCREWDRIVER, SOUTH, TAKE MAIL, SOUTH, BLOCK BULLDOZER or just 'lie down'.
You are now in the path of a large bulldozer which is hurtling towards you. Play it cool and WAIT. Ignore Ford Prefect when he turns up to offer you his towel. WAIT until Prosser comes and lies in the mud for you.
SOUTH WEST (into the pub), EXAMINE SHELF, BUY SANDWICH , DRINK BEER, DRINK BEER, DRINK BEER, (Those of you that went to the meet may be familiar with this routine! Those of you familiar with the story will know you are about to jump into hyperspace so you need a good muscle relaxant.) EAST, FEED DOG, (Give it the sandwich), WAIT (if necessary - for the Vogon ships to arrive to destroy the world. Ford drops the device that is going to save you, so... TAKE DEVICE, PUSH GREEN BUTTON.
You should now be sitting in the Vogon Constructor ship; in the dark. EAST, SMELL, SMELL SMELL, SMELL, EXAMINE SHADOW, EAT PEANUTS. You should be feeling a bit better after eating the peanuts. The next sequence is one of the classic problems encountered by adventurers. It can be solved by trial and error. You must have picked up the mail back at the start though, or it doesn't work. Here's what to do to catch that Babel Fish. *[N.B. This is yet another example of the influence HHGG has had on the world. The translator found on the Altavista searchengine site is named after the Babel Fish encountered here !]* REMOVE GOWN, HANG GOWN ON HOOK, TAKE TOWEL, COVER DRAIN WITH TOWEL, TAKE SATCHEL, PUT SATCHEL IN FRONT OF PANEL, PUT MAIL ON SATCHEL, PRESS BUTTON.
By a curious quirk of fate, the Babel Fish lands right in your ear, taps into your brain and translates for you !
TURN SWITCH, you will then need to take a note of the word you will need from the Captain's Poem. (First, second or third) TAKE GOWN AND TOWEL, TAKE SATCHEL, WEAR GOWN, WAIT if you aren't already in the chairs listening to the captains poetry. Vogon poetry is, of course,

The (Incomplete) Oric Adventurer's Guide to the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy - Phew!

the worst poetry known in the universe, (except for the odd bit written in England. But that had just been demolished to make way for a Hyperspace bypass so it doesn't count !)

Oh freddled gruntbuggly thy micturations are to me
As plurdled gabbleblotchits on a lurgid bee.
Groop I implore thee, my foonting turlingdromes,
And hooptiously drangle me with crinkly bindlewurdles,
Or I will rend thee in the gobberwarts with my blurglecruncheon , see if I Don't !

Ah ! I couldn't resist putting it in. Fond memories of a time when computers had proper black keyboards and your average 8-bit had better graphics and sound than your IBM machine. In those days men were real men, women were real women and small furry creatures from Alpha Centauri were *real* small furry creatures from Alpha Centauri. [sigh] But back to the game.
ENJOY POETRY, WAIT, until you get thrown back in the hold. Ford tries to talk the guard into taking a career move, (and therefore NOT throw you out of the airlock). TYPE "*****", fill in the word you got from the poem. The one in the game - don't use the one above!
TAKE PLOTTER, WAIT. You and Ford will then get thrown out into space to face certain death.

Fortunately nothing in this life is certain. Most things are just infinitely improbable and so you just happen to get picked up by a new space ship that is driven by the new Infinite Improbability Drive, (which is of course, infinitely improbable).
EAST, HEAR, HEAR, HEAR, HEAR (I think 'listen' works just as well), SOUTH, SOUTH. Ford should lead you to the bridge. We find the drive isn't working and so need to set about fixing it. Time for some tea !
DROP PLOTTER AND GUIDE AND DEVICE, TAKE CHISEL, DOWN, SOUTH, SOUTH, SOUTH, SOUTH, SOUTH, SOUTH, LOOK, LOOK, TAKE PLIERS AND RASP, (No, don't make a rude noise! Pick up the rasp ! It's a kind of file. No, not a computer file. A ... oh never mind!) NORTH, DOWN, DROP CHISEL AND PLIERS AND RASP AND SCREWDRIVER AND TOOTHBRUSH, UP, SOUTH, TAKE DRIVE, NORTH, NORTH, WEST, PUSH PAD, TAKE CUP,(That'll be the tea!) EAST, UP, DROP CUP AND DRIVE, PLUG SHORT CORD INTO SMALL RECEPTACLE, and then, PUT LONG CORD INTO LARGE RECEPTACLE, PUT DANGLY BIT IN CUP.

So there you are. That is about as far as we are going to go. You have the Infinite Improbability Drive ready to turn on. From here you can jump to one of several locations. Different items will need to be collected and taken to other locations. You will meet such dangerous creatures as the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal. Remember, it is so stupid it assumes if you can't see it then it can't see you !!! Just keep playing it and you should work things out. I've shown you past a couple of the hardest bits.

The books are still in print and well worth a read. (The fifth book is rubbish though.) The modern-day Douglas Adams adventure is the Starship Titanic game now available for PC gamers. It is said to be terribly difficult which would not surprise me knowing the sort of conundrum Adams can conjure up !

So here we are at the end of OUM. It is a shame games like this have only come onto the Oric at this late stage. I hope you keep up with the latest innovations in the Oric world. Believe me, there is more to come yet! Rhetoric is going to do its best to keep you informed and entertained. It was infinitely improbable that it would ever get going, so it looks like it may be around for a while !

A big thank you to all that have read my articles. I hope you could work your way round all the typing errors to find some interest !

Steve Marshall

e-mails to the Editor

Hi all,

    Tired of waiting tape loading ? Your transfers need vitamins,just download tap2cd from
http://oric.ifrance.com
and your real Oric will be able to CLOAD 10 times faster.

Trying to build an archive of all Oric programs ? Just fit them all on a single audio-CD !

Cheers to all,

        Fabrice Frances

****

Dave,

    Thanks for e-mail.

Moved from Cotteridge in February so please excuse me being out of touch - not sure what OUM's you have sent me since then. I haven't received any but that's my fault, not got around to sorting a post di-vert.

Lot's has happened as far as I'm concerned. Re-started my business in March 1999. Learned a lot of crucial lessons and, so far, experience has proved a valuable asset. Once bitten and all that.

Hope you & family are well. Look forward to your reply. Cheers mate.

           - Robert Cook

****

Hi all,

    there has been several people who asked about the transfer of tape images to a real Oric, so I've uploaded a tool that does the trick: tap2wav converts tape images (.TAP files) to sound files (.WAV), you just need to connect your Oric to your soundcard.

It is available on

        http://oric.ifrance.com

Don't forget to read the documentation file, the success of your transfer might be in this doc...

Cheers to all,

        Fabrice Frances

+++

Dear Dave.

I hope that you can print this e-mail in the final issue even though the deadline has been passed. I was thinking about the OUM just a few minutes ago, and would like to send this message for all the other Oricians.

When I first got my Oric-1 in the autumn of 1984, precicely 15 years ago, I had never thought that I would still be an active Oric User. And I was right because I have not been an active user for a few years, but I still have the Oric system set up in my old bedroom. As I am about to move, I will pack down the Oric in a few months time. Anyway, I will always remember the Oric, as I have spent a lot of time using it over the years. Oricians have played games that I wrote, such as "Mind Madnez" and "NHL Icehockey Manager".

Since I became an Orician 15 years ago, the Oric User Monthly has been my main source for information about the Oric. I have been a member of OUM since 1989, and every single issue since then has been kept in my constantly growing collection of OUM magazines. With your mix of humour and serious Oric related stuff, the OUM has always been fascinating to read.

On behalf of all Oricians, I would like to thank you for taking up so much of your time to submit OUM. No other people have put as much time as you into keeping the Oric alive, and your work has always been appreciated. Thank you, Dave!

I have had the pleasure of meeting up with you a few times, and I really enjoyed the 1998 Oric meet in Aylesbury.

Finally, I would like to give my greetings to all other Oricians, especially the ones I have met in real life, i.e. David Wilkin, Peter Bragg, Staale Eikebraaten, Peter Thornburn, Jon Bristow, Jon Haworth, etc.

With kind regards, Arnt Erik Isaksen (Norway)

more e-mails

Dave,

I felt I had to make a contribution to the last OUM. I've been a subscriber for years and could never come up with any inspiration to write an article so I made a supreme effort to think of something original and thought a poem might be a bit different.

I've never written any before (and it shows!) so I apologise for the rather amateur effort but hope it captures the mood of the moment.

Thanks for all your work over the years. I've always enjoyed the monthly read.

All the best for the future.
Paul Farnese - Poet Laureate (Failed)

Who will ramble in the ROM now that OUM has gone.

What shining knight on eight bit steed will guarantee our monthly read

And from within its stapled pages keep alive those bygone ages

When Oric was the king.

Who will organise the Meet now that OUM's deceased.

Who will rally that motely crew - Dave Dick's army - Oricians few,

Midst soldering irons and floppy disks,lager cans and fish and chips

To raffle the day away.

Do I hear two voices brave to take the mantle from our Dave?

Two stalwarts of the Oric scene who'll boldly go where Dave has been.

Let's give our best to Si and Jon to drive our Oric on and on.

Rhetoric is born !

====================================

Hello,

Yesterday, I had a look at Brian's posers in the last OUM and particularly to number 4. (a man can drink a bottle in 1.5 hour, his wife can drink a bottle in 2.5 hours. How long will it take to both of them to drink a bottle ?)

I am not certain of my answer, which is : less than an hour !

Here are my computations :

In one hour the man drinks 2/3 of the bottle (1/3 per half an hour) during this time, his wife drinks 2/5 of the bottle (1/5 per half an hour).

This makes 10/15 for he man and 6/15 for the woman = 16/15 in an hour.

It is said that epidemiologists lack accuracy, here is a proof !

What is the right way of calculating ?

BTW, I can drink a bottle in 1.5 YEAR, generally ending in pouring it on the salad or the chips (french fries, for US readers).

This could explain why I am not able to answer the question.

Too Bad Brian is not connected to the Net.
Amities oriciennes

Jean Boileau.

====================================

Hi,

The question is not clear. Assuming it means how long would it take a bottle to disappear if both were drinking at their full rate:

He drinks at 1/1.5 per hour, she at 1/2.5, so their combined rate is

$1/1.5 + 1/2.5 = 2/3 + 2/5 = 10/15 + 6/15 = 16/15$ or $1\ 1/15$;

at that rate, a bottle would disappear in $1/(16/15)$ or $15/16$ of an hour, or $60/16$ minutes under an hour. $60/16 = 15/4$ or $3\ 3/4$; therefore $56\ 1/4$ minutes, or 56 minutes 15 seconds.

Of course, there may be some trick in the question, to do with theinteraction between husband and wife and so on ... (-:

--   J.P.Gilliver

====================================

Hi, Dave, Came across a recycling centre near here. It's kind of like a charity shop but full of furniture and bikes all piled up. In one corner there was a pile of BBC computers and a few BBC Masters. They are out of schools and most are a bit dirty or battered and have stickers on them etc. I picked up a Master for £3.
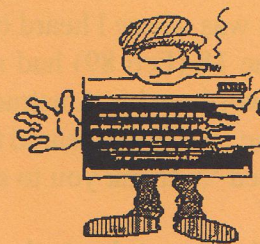
There are also a pile of (small) monitors mostly green screen. One was an Apple one several were RM Machines.

Anybody interested should get in touch and I'll get them the best I can see.

- Steve 'Muso' Marshall
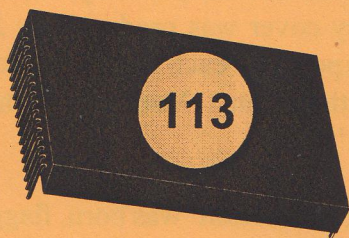
RAMBLING IN THE PAST

113

'Write something different', said Dave, 'for the last issue...' I knew what he meant - after years of disassembling the ROM just another wodge was hardly a fitting end to the appearance of 'Rambling' in OUM.

Of course it didn't start like that - I used to write something different. I have to go back a long way now to remember how I first started writing Oric articles. Who recalls Archimedes?

On holiday in France in 1985 I picked up a magazine from a newsstand - 'Theoric'. Joy of joys, a mag dedicated to the Oric, just as Oric Owner was no more (it last published in December 1984). I subscribed, and for 2 glorious years it landed faithfully on my doormat. All this happening in France - but who knew about it over here?

The UK Oric mag scene had had a rather chequered history. There had always been 'amateur' mags, starting with TUG (Tansoft User Group) which published each month from November 1981 to October 1983, thirty-six issues, and was also responsible for 'Oric Computing', five issues of which were published between November 1983 and June 1984.

The place of 'Oric Owner' was taken by Gary Ramsey's 'Independent Oric User Group', which published 'I.O.U.' intermittently from April 1985 right through to April 1989, a total of 23 issues. In June 1986 (and we're getting to the point of the story...) a new English magazine was launched by the Thomson brothers. Called 'Your Oric', it was to run bi-monthly until June 1987, with a final issue in December 1987 coinciding with the end of 'Theoric'.

It was in Issue 4 of 'Your Oric', December 1986, that Archimedes took his bow, reporting to the English readership current happenings in France - new software, the Telestrat - there was much to write about, not least since I had two issues of Theoric to compress into each article! 'French Leave', as it was called, ran in each issue of Your Oric thereafter - all 4 of them. I did write a 'French Leave' for Your Oric Issue 9, but of course it never appeared. That seemed to be that, with a swift end to my career as an Oric writer.

What I did not know was that in September 1987 Robert Cook had launched 'Oric User Monthly'. That first issue was four pages of A4 and a hand-drawn cover. But Robert started a tradition that OUM has maintained ever since - it published every month without fail. Issue 17, January 1989 contained this in the editorial:

> "Inside OUM this month is also a new review section. 'Dave's Data' is a new monthly feature..., the brains behind it being Dave Dick from Aylesbury."

Robert also thanked Allan Whitaker for printing OUM's address in his latest HGC price list - and that was where I heard of OUM. I was obviously in contact with Robert fairly swiftly, because Issue 18 (Feb 89) had a cover! Inside, Robert wrote "The fancy cover was produced by Jon Haworth on his Amstrad using Desk Top Publishing package, expect one each month". And in Issue 19 there appeared the 'French Leave Finale' held over from the defunct 'Your Oric', which ended '....thank you to all who took an interest in my ramblings.'

And so it was that in the next Issue 20, April 1989 that 'Rambling in the Rom' was born, flagged by me as 'the first of an occasional series'. If only....

Robert Cook's last issue was number 34 in June 1990, and so the modern era of OUM began under Dave's leadership in July 1990. I see that 'Rambling' that month ended with this little story, well worth repeating in this last issue of OUM:

> The prgrammers of the Oric ROM, Andy Smith and Chris Shaw, finally reached the point where the prototype macine (a Tangerine Microtan with lots of bits and wires added) booted up successfully and sat there saying 'Ready'. Neither of them knew Basic, so the call went out for someone to type in a program. Paul Kaufman responded, and the first program was typed in:
>
> ```
> 10  PRINT "LOUISE HAS LOVELY THIGHS";
> 20  GOTO 10
> ```
>
> Louise (Barry Muncaster's secretary) was apparently not amused!!

It's a sad moment, this. Dave has guided OUM for over nine years now, so it really is the end of an era. He has sustained the mag at times almost single-handedly, and brought it to a dignified and planned conclusion. Yet he himself has never appeared..... So my last trick is to thank Dave, and present him here for posterity.....

As a little bonus, Dave willing, the next two pages will be a reprint of that very first Issue of OUM back in 1987.

And what of 'Rambling...'? I hope to complete the disassembly via the pages of 'Rhetoric', to which you are all subscribing, aren't you? For now, a wistful goodbye from me to the pages of OUM.

Email: jon@cambr.force9.co.uk
Oric Mailing List: oric@lyghtforce.com

Jon Haworth
3 Petersfield Road
Duxford
Cambridge
CB2 4SF

More from the postbag and e-mails

Dear Dave,

Thanks for the June OUM received today - a thoroughly entertaining read.

Particularly liked the "Back to Tangerine Basic part 1" article - there was a lot in there I didn't know and it was interesting stuff. I wonder how many other companies, keen to get a micro out in the early 80's (and wanting to claim "Microsoft Compatibility") resorted to such antics.

I also notice you seem to have been having problems getting Euphoric to run.

Hmmm. Before this week I found all my DOS programmes (and the latest version of Euphoric in particular) ran perfectly in full-screen. However I have just taken delivery of a new monitor... My old one was just that - 10 years old - and so a slow, low refresh, non plug-n-play model. It had given great service but an upgrade was needed. With my new whizzy multimedia monitor with it's high refresh and crystal-clear screen everything has gone heywire.

Now any full-screen DOS programme starts okay but the process sends the new monitor into sleep mode! This must have something to do with P'N'P and refresh-rates being too low, but I haven't found a cure yet. All I can do is drop out into DOS and try from there. Mind you Euphoric has even started locking-up there too now...!

Well, I can understand your reasons for stopping OUM et al. You're quite right, after all who could expect to carry on doing *real* computing these days on an Oric? They are just "computer archaeology" nowadays. However, that's not to say that these machines we cut our computing teeth on, don't have a valid place in our affections. Given the age of the hardware now it's probably more sensible to carry on using emulators and the like, and packing the old hardware away for posterity.

It's a bit like the old Sci-Fi ploy of using machines to store real people's minds when their bodies have gotten a bit past it. Storing the BIOS or ROM or ULA or whatever of an old micro as a data file is one sure way to preserve it infinitely.

As long as there's an internet archive somewhere we can be sure that the future won't forget our little micros.

All the best,
Nigel Alefounder

Dear Nigel,
          It was good to welcome you back, if only for a short time.
                    - Dave

+++

Dear Dave,

I just wanted to write a final letter to OUM, to thank you for all of your efforts over the past few years.

While I'm sad that OUM is being discontinued, I realise that it could not have continued for ever. Computers can easily absorb time and effort, and I'm sure that OUM must have taken a lot of your time and effort. For many years, I have promised myself that I would take some time off during the summer and spend some time walking on the moors like I used to before I got married and interested in computers. This summer I have managed to spend some nice evenings on the local moors. Even on the famous Ilkley moors I have managed to visit some parts that I have never visited before, and I used to spend a lot time there when I was a teenager.

In my opinion, OUM has greatly improved in quality of presentation over the past few months. It will be a pity to see it go. I would like to thank you for your help over the years in supplying Oric related items, ranging from the ROMs and ULAs in the early days of my involvement with Orics , through to the more recent items such as back issues of OUM and the odd bits of software and documentation. Some of the recent letters and emails that were printed in recent issues of OUM are very interesting, I liked the ones from people outside Britain who had developed hardware add-ons, like graphic upgrades and disk interfaces for the Oric. Such items could have formed the basis for a series of articles in an Oric magazine.

The part of OUM that I will miss the most is probably Jon Haworths Rambling in the ROM. I always read it every month and often back issues out to check on some parts. It will be a pity that the series will not get finished in OUM. Peter Braggs Machine Code series was another part that I always read.

I was glad that I was able to get to the last Oric meet. It was nice to meet all the people who I had got to know at the previous meets. It was surprising how many people said that although they owned Orics, they didn't have time to get them out and use them. In addition to my self at least 2 other people (including Robin Kimberly, I think) owned up to having them and not using them. Seeing Jon Haworths 'see-through' Oric revived my interest in creating my oen One in a see-through case. I have an odd Oric circuit board and key-board, both need repairing.
- Robert Crisp (Leeds)

Dear Robert,
          Thank you for your final contribution, and for the many interesting letters you have sent in the past.

                    - Dave

=================================

Brian's Page

Well D-Day is finally upon us , and you are now reading the final
full issue of OUM . I would like to take time to thank everyone who
have replied to my pages in particular , I have enjoyed compiling
them . I hope those who have won the odd prize or two , have
enjoyed them . For this issue I have requested three pages , in
order that I can answer last issues posers , set this issues , and
not to leave you on tender hooks , give the final solutions . Enjoy
the last of my contributions , and feel free to keep in contact with
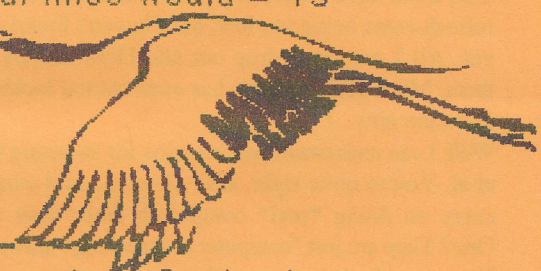any computer related matters - Yours   *Brian Kidd*

Answers firstly to last issues posers ....

① A : ∧   If you replace the symbols with the value of
their side totals , then , all horizontal ,
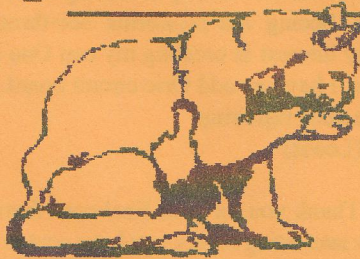vertical and diagonal lines would = 15

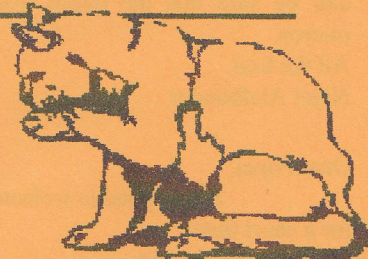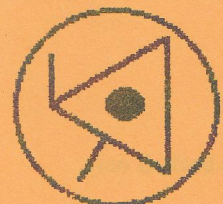② Panther , Antelope , Llama

③ 8 * 7 = 56 tickets required

④
	Hours	Reciprocal	Decimal
Man	1.5	1/1.5	0.667
Woman	2.5	1/2.5	0.400
(Add)			1.067

Take reciprocal 1/1.067 = .9375 hrs
= .9375 * 60
= 56.25 minutes

⑤ 7.2 lbs (12.96 lb / ({$^1/_4$ * 7.2 lb = 1.8 lb }) = 7.2 lb)

⑥

Brian's Page

POSERS

①

	A	B	C	D
	10	9	8	7
	6 17 4	8 14 2	7 22 3	7 ? 2
	17	11	7	7

What number should go in D ?

② Solve the clues , then re-arrange the letters in the shaded squares to find the word I'm looking for .
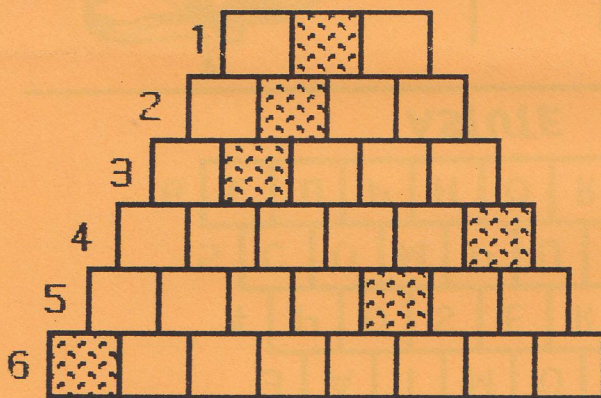
1) On it's last issue .
2) Forname of Mr. Dick .
3) The answer to poser like this set a few issues back.
4) What this page consists of.
5) To work out solutions with an Oric or such .
6) A PC Oric .

▨) Intellectual.knowledgeable

③ ---- ◄
WARD
TRODDEN
GRADE
RIGHT
STAIRS
STREAM

What 4 letter word can prefix all the other given words ?

④ Place the following letters in the grid , to make as many 3 letter words as possible , that can read in any direction :

A A B D G O O O T

Brian Kidd , 49 Harlequin Drive , Newport , S. Wales . NP20 5GJ

FOR THE FINAL TIME !

Solutions

④

B	A	T
A	O	O
D	O	G

Bad . Bat . Bog
Dab . Dog . Dot
Bob . God . Got
Tab . Tod . Tog

③ **DOWN**

② **ASTUTE**

1	O	U	M			
2	D	A	V	E		
3	A	T	M	O	S	
4	P	O	S	E	R	S
5	C	O	M	P	U	T	E
6	E	U	P	H	O	R	I	C

①
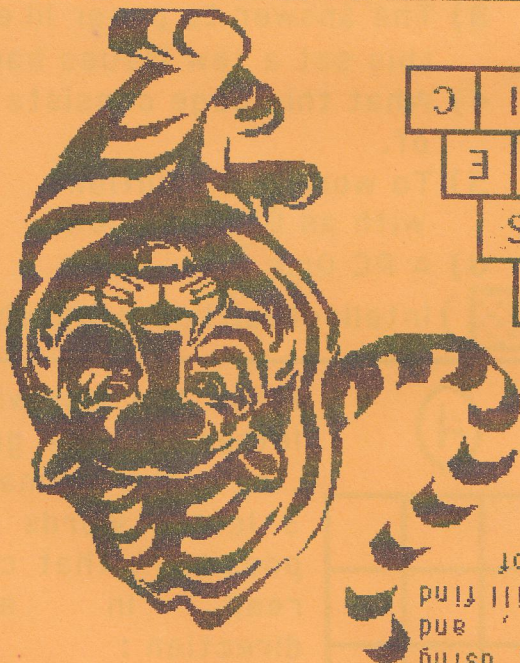
$7 \times 2 - 7 + 7 = 14$

Try variations , using
x , + , - , and
eventually you will find
the middle sum of
each diagram.

```
    7
 7 14 2
    7
```
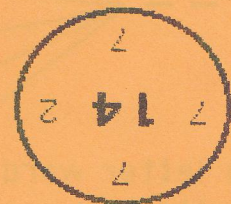
NEARLY THE BACK PAGE

It is nearly time to say farewell, but first a pot pourri to finish off.

CALLNET
 Check out the following: www.callnet0800.co.uk
 They supposedly offer free telephone calls on the net with BT at all times.
I've enrolled, and am waiting to hear.

DIGITAL
   One of the recent innovations with my Sky Digital system is the ability to send e-mails to both other digital systems and to people with computer e-mail set up. So if you are on Sky digital, then try e-mailing me at: dave@oum.softnet.co.uk
                         Or   daveoum@freecall-uk.co.uk
I'm not sure if this facility is available with Sky for those on cable or for On-Digital users.

HELP FRANK
 Frank Bolton has a couple of things that he seeks your help with:
 A) He would like to scan PC pictures to an Oric e.g. Transfer Hires e.g Clipart
    (I think this sort of thing has been done)
B) Frank is looking to buy an 80Track Double sided 5.25" disk drive.

   Frank can be contacted by e-mail at: pepa.frank@diamond.co.uk

OUM and the ORIC WEB RING
 The Oric User Monthly web site is a good starting point for those new to the Internet and its address is:
                  http://www.soft.net.uk/oum
 Our site hasn't been updated since last March, but has still attracted over 3200 visitors since the counter was set up. Last week there were 32 visitors. The most popular times to visit were early evening, and favourite days were Mondays and Tuesdays.
The UK visitors totalled 861, whilst 462 came from France, and amongst the others were 30 from Bulgaria, 7 from Croatia, and 1 from Mexico.
 We are part of the Oric Web Ring, which has 19 sites on board.
There are many excellent Oric sites on the ring. A few I have checked out recently include:
 "ORIC SOFTWARE"- Alexios's site with narrative, screenshots, and downloads. Whatever happened to Alexios?
 " PEACERS PAGE" from Oguzhan the Turk has plenty of variety.
 "La Page ORIC De SIMON" has adventure solutions, archives, tools etc.
 "JIM and BAM's HOMEPAGE" has an Oric cheats directory, downloads, reviews, and items for sale.
 "GEOFF PHILLIPS HOME PAGE" has plenty of technical stuff.
 "TWILIGHTE's HOME PAGE" by Jonathan Bristow is full of goodies.
 Finally to the man who started it all. Check out "WELCOME TO ORIC WORLD" - Fabrice Frances.

===
THAT's ALL FOR NOW!!!!!!!!

The Final

A. lternative F. ront C. over

A.F.C.

TIME
stands still for
no one

O.U.M.
R.I.P.

Thanks to all contributors , for their work on OUM , throughout the years.