

NEWSLETTER

Thoughts on the year, and on many more to follow

Is it *only* a year, or is it *really* a year since I arrived? Two ways of looking at the same period, but whichever you choose one thing is certain: it has been an eventful year.

The disappointments which I had to announce last April were happily followed by an opportunity to report a financially successful first six months of the year. With a final push in what often seems to be, for us, the more difficult half of the year, the expectation is a successful twelve months.

We started the year selling many Master computers and rather fewer Archimedes systems. We finish by selling many Master machines — we're soon giving away the 200,000th — and many more Archimedes: not yet as many as we would all like, but definitely on the way to our targets.

In January there were only a few Archimedes applications, indeed, that was the reason why many LEAs were not committing themselves to Archimedes. We will shortly have our 500th application; and that objection, together with the one that says that MS-DOS is the way forward, has gone away.

In the beginning there was Arthur; now we have the superb RISC OS — the real way for ISVs to develop. We are just about to launch our first UNIX machine, another very important string to our bow.

At the beginning of the year I talked about ARM-based intelligent air conditioning and now Sanyo is making my prediction come true. The tape is out for the first sample of ARM3, and the floating point co-processor is back as a success.

And all of this has been achieved with costs kept under control and high productivity from most quarters.

The fun of major revenues and a name to be proud of is within our grasp. To



achieve this we still have a lot to do. Developing a broader and potentially exciting UNIX range; taking Archimedes where we have always known it can go; further exploiting our worldleading RISC technology; exploiting our existing markets and finding new ones.

It won't be easy. There's still a great deal of work ahead but it can happen if we all pull together to create our own success.

We're now celebrating our first ten years — no small achievement in this business. As we look forward to the next ten it is with the realisation that at the turn of the century the computer industry will be the most important one in the world. And we intend to be a successful part of that industry.

Please, let's work with each other to find solutions and not problems; and let us all have a happy, successful and prosperous new year.

Harvey Coleman

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News for the world: from our news releases

Archimedes takes Hampshire into the future

Hampshire Education Authority has ordered more than 1000 Archimedes 310 machines in the first phase of its move to equip all Hampshire schools with Archimedes computers. This first influx of machines will be installed in the county's 114 secondary schools and sixth-form colleges. As part of the Authority's efforts to maintain close links with industry, the



Chairman of the Post Office, Sir Bryan Nicholson, recently opened one of the most advanced schools technology centres in Britain. The Post Office has provided £65,000 to enable Wavell Comprehensive School in Farnborough, Hants, to develop purpose-built IT suites equipped with Acorn products.

A little Xtra help in Calderdale

The Halifax Building Society is helping with the IT training of its future recruits by providing over £50,000 worth of Acorn computer equipment to schools in the Calderdale region. The Archimedes computers will be used for all aspects of IT, and should help pupils to develop a more positive attitude to IT.

Acorn still No. 1 in Education

Acorn remains the leading supplier of computers to education in the UK said Harvey Coleman, speaking at the RESOURCE ESG conference in Doncaster. While apologising for casting scorn on a competitor's advertising campaign, 'an action we've resisted for the last 18 months', Harvey Coleman urged LEAs to sort out the facts from the fiction. 'For example, we read in a recent newsletter published by Research Machines that a total of 33,000 Nimbus PC186 systems had been sold in over three years. Just 19,000 had gone to schools. These

figures hardly justify RM's present misleading claims since we at Acorn have, so far this year, supplied more than 35,000 machines to education alone.'

Acorn computers dominate Destech

Acorn computers were to be seen on three quarters of the 70-odd stands featuring computer-based devices at this exhibition of educational design and technology at the NEC in Birmingham.

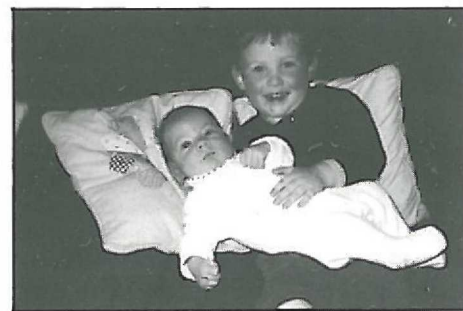
ARCshare speeds up Econet processing

The addition of one Archimedes computer, combined with the new ARCshare communications package, can reduce the processing time on an Econet local area network by up to fifty times. The software, developed by the European Communications Group, sister company to Kelator, enables the Archimedes computer to act as a mainframe providing both local and batch processing.

New names, new babies

We congratulate the following members of the company who have added to their families in the past few months:

Parent's name	Child's name	Birth weight	Birth date
Simon Woodward	Harriet Sarah Woodward	6lb 4oz	11 March
Derek Lee	Charles Lee	8 lb 12 oz	19 April
Paul Garside	Guy Garside	8 lb 13 oz	12 May
Dave Lamkin	Rowena Jane Lamkin-Smith	8 lb 6 oz	16 May
Bob Coates	Jonathan Philip Coates	8 lb 13 oz	2 July
Tim Caspell	Matthew Peter Caspell	6 lb 15 oz	8 July
Tom McNamara	Laura Jane McNamara	'over 7 lb'	1 September
Ian Laurence	Megan Elizabeth Laurence	8 lb 0 oz	1 October
Mark Stephens	Benjamin Robert Stephens	7 lb 7 oz	3 October



Pictures of Megan Laurence at five days old, and Matthew Peter Caspell in the arms of his elder brother.

New names, new faces

We welcome the following people who have joined Acorn since the last issue of the newsletter:

Name	Department	Job title
Melissa Ray	Corporate Communications	Assistant (BAVE placement for 2 months)
Christine Channon	External Peripherals	Clerical Administrator
Stuart Payne	Customer Services	Software Specialist
Pauline Smith	Purchasing	Purchasing Assistant
Keith Ruttle	Software Systems	Section Leader, Networking Software

Bringing a Touch of Class into the office

Keely starts her day at 4.30 am in the large kitchen of her parents' pub. Twenty-five loaves are waiting to be buttered, the fillings have to be mixed and spread, and the hundreds of sandwiches packed before she can set off on her rounds.

The first stop is Acorn's Fulbourn Road office, where staff come running at the clang of her bell. "The most popular order has got to be sausage rolls" she reveals. "Acorn must employ the first known sausage roll addicts. Prawn and avocado sandwiches always disappear here, with blueberry cheese and cucumber another hot favourite." There are less common though regular demands for cream cheese with peanuts and celery, or cream cheese with bananas and sugar.

Keely feels very much at home in Fulbourn Road, since she has been coming every morning for years now. "I don't know many of the staff by their names — but I can put a sandwich to a face. I might think of one as 'the sausage and egg man', another as the 'cheese and tomato' girl. Funnily enough, most people are not very adventurous in their choices. They each have their own three favourites, and rarely try something new."

Once the Fulbourn Road appetites have been satisfied it's back to the car and on to the Newmarket Road site. Keely also provides the meals served in Unit 5, the Training Centre. "The kitchens there are beautiful, a real pleasure to work in. I cook all the food at home in the early morning, and then bring it in to be



heated up in time for lunch. Unfortunately the kitchens at Fulbourn Road aren't really large enough for my needs — but I hope the hungry staff are just as satisfied with my cold buffets."

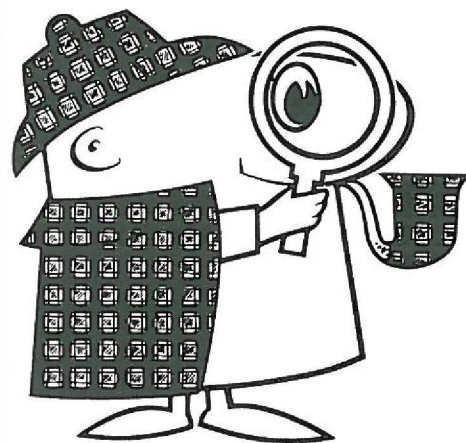
Keely's working day ends at about 3 o'clock, but she still seems full of energy. The day I spoke to her she was just catching the last few moments of Neighbours before whizzing down to London for a quick shopping expedition. Then back home to snatch some rest before the next long day.

Alert, Alert, Security Alert

There has been a serious spate of thefts over the last few weeks, with wallets, credit cards, software packs, and even a computer disappearing from Acorn offices.

Please make sure that you lock away all your valuables and personal possessions whenever you leave your office. A thief needs only a few seconds to pocket the goods. And don't forget to ask for an equipment loan pass from reception if you are taking any equipment out of the office or between sites.

Under these distressing circumstances the company has a duty to tighten up its security arrangements. Please help to prevent crime by observing all the security rules. They are there to protect you too.



Acorn's UNIX workstation — the news leaks out

Over the past few weeks around a dozen computer journalists have found their way into David Slight's office in Newmarket Road for a private preview of the first offering in Acorn's range of Unix workstations. Although on the surface the new product looks very like an Archimedes machine, it has the Standard UNIX software on its 50 Mb hard disc, an Ethernet expansion card and Sun's Network Filing System. Thus it can be linked on an Ethernet network to Sun, VAX and Macintosh computers.

RISC OS is supplied with the machine so that it will be able to run Archimedes software as well as UNIX (and, of course, MS-DOS applications with the PC Emulator). It will have the X.Windows



graphical interface, and Acorn has concluded an agreement with IXI for the Cambridge-based company to port

X.desktop, its WIMP environment, to run on the ARM processor. This interface will enable people who are new to UNIX to open it up and operate the machine usefully from the word 'go'.

The workstation has already been demonstrated at a series of open days in selected university departments, where it has been extremely well received. It will be on view to all comers at the Which Computer? Show in February.

David Slight joined Acorn about five months ago from a systems house in Vancouver, where he had settled after spending 8 years in America. Born in England, he now has dual Canadian/British citizenship, so he can hop across the Atlantic whenever he gets fed up with the English weather. David's knowledge of the developing UNIX market and his appreciation of the attractions of Acorn's product gave the UNIX Department the confidence to spread their net wide, instead of restricting their offering to a single market area. Thus the planned range of UNIX workstations evolved.

Secs swop successfully

Intrepid Jill Osler swapped countries and bosses to spend two cold weeks in November working for Mauro Righetti in Ivrea. She had had a mere 36 hours of Italian tuition when she boarded her plane, and found that the ability to say 'The train for Rome departs from platform 3' was no use when she had to explain to a voluble Italian that her boss was in a meeting and would not be available until the 'afternoon. Luckily there were two English speakers in the next office whom she could shout for when her words got tangled. One is still phoning her in England to 'practise his English'!



Jill Osler

Jill's desk at Acorn was occupied by Mauro's secretary Laura Lacchio. She found life in the Fulbourn Road office much freer than in the 7 storey office block she usually works in. 'It is much less formal here, more friendly. And there is not so much bureaucracy - at Olivetti

there are many forms to fill in and get signed for approval.' The hours are different too. In Italy Laura starts work at 7.50 am and carries through until 4.30 pm, with 40 minutes for lunch.



Laura Lacchio

Jill was amazed that Ivrea is Olivetti - there is almost nothing else in the town, 'like Corby used to be with British Steel', she commented. The Olivetti buildings even feature on the local postcards.

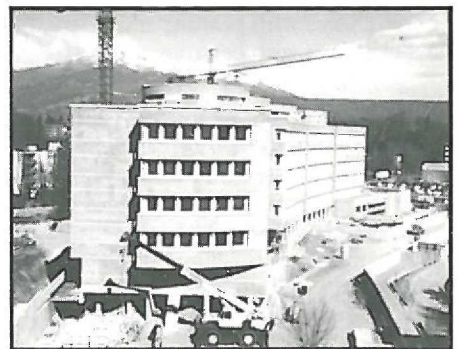
Inside, Jill had to type letters and memos for Mauro in both English and Italian. She worked on an M24, which is very user-friendly for secretaries but does not have the capabilities of her BBC Micro; for example, it couldn't produce fancy type styles. She was looked after by Daniella Bortolotto in Finance, whose Italian parents live in London. 'If it hadn't been for Daniella I would have been stuck in my hotel all the time' says Jill.

On her first day, she found she was expected to take the bus back to her hotel. What no-one had told her was that she needed to have bought a bus ticket before getting on the bus. There was

nothing for it but to walk. 'I was alone in a foreign town, it was foggy and freezing. I think that if a bus to the airport had come by I would have climbed straight on,' she admits.

In her small hotel, where she was the only female guest, Jill made friends with a Mafia Don from Sicily who put her under his 'personal protection' and with five Russians who were spending four months at Olivetti as a result of 'perestroika'. 'I helped to break the cold war' she claims.

Laura was spared the terrors of an English hotel. She stayed with Marina Martin and was looked after so well she felt she hadn't left home. However, getting used to the English currency was a problem. 'I spent so much money when I went shopping at the weekend, because I wasn't sure how much things really cost.'



Olivetti's new offices

Jill had to speak Italian most of the time - sometimes it was a 'real struggle'. She was thrown right in at the deep end since the driver who took her from Milan airport to Ivrea spoke no English. 'I can't sit in a car with someone for five minutes and not talk to them, and this was a one-and-a-half hour drive.' Only when Daniella took her sightseeing was she allowed to have a day off and speak English. 'I understand a lot more Italian now', she says, 'and I've learned the business words which are really what I need.'

Snaps & Snippets

Ho, Ho, Ho: a vacuum from Santa?

Jeff Gorton hid behind a long white beard again on 14 December when he handed out presents from his sack to children at the Acorn Playgroup in Cherry Hinton. He then tucked into a glass of wine and several spoonfuls of jelly under his moustache before starting the lonely walk across the playground to his waiting sleigh.

The playgroup moved from a bus into the

portacabin donated by Acorn nearly five years ago, and changed from the Cherry Hinton Playbus to the Acorn Playgroup. The company's interest in the scheme has continued over the years - when a cry went up for cardboard boxes for the children to play with, Sandy Boyd was glad to send along enough for their needs, and a donation has just been made towards the cost of their new wet'n'dry vacuum cleaner.

More trees for Treetops

This drawing by pupil Geoffrey shows the Mayor of Thurrock planting a sapling oak tree in the grounds of Treetops School, Essex. Katherine Pierpoint presented two sapling Cerris Turkey Oaks to this school for children with learning difficulties to replace trees that had been lost from their beautiful grounds during the great storm last year.

