LOG ON

- ▶ Win a satellite TV receiver
- ▶ Learn with Micronet
- ▶ Electronic Yellow Pages
- ▶ Cricket on Prestel

NOW APPEARING ON A SCREEN NEAR YOU!

Starring YOU – Supported by a Cast of Thousands –
Featuring Novice, Wizard, the Strange Little Girl, Rat, Ghosts ...
Showing on the Micronet, Prestel, Telecom Gold Screens for Shadists Everywhere ...

SHADES THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE MULTI-USER GAME...

The game that's unique! Forever changing. Always different.

Can YOU outwit the brains of real human opponents rather than a pre-programmed computer chip?

Can YOU face and overcome adversity to rise through the ranks and wield power over the land.

More than a game! Meet people. Make friends.

Join in the many quizzes or even play in the football match. You have unrivalled opportunities for multi-user, real-time communications with many, many other computer owners.

Get extra help on the special Novice Nights.

But don't be fooled – all may not be as it seems!!!!

LOGIN TO SHADES NOW...
On Micronet/Prestel-type: ★ **SHADES** #
Or on Telecom Gold-type: **SHADES** c/r

Shades

LOG ON

Issue No 12   Summer 1990

CONTENTS

THE MAGAZINE FOR

MICRONET

M E M B E R S

Log On was produced by:

Editorial

In the previous issue of Logon we talked about some of the changes we were making to Micronet, in line with the feedback we've had from you all in letters, mailboxes and surveys. Some of those are now in place.

The new daily front page index, backed up by daily updates all round Micronet, has already proved very popular. Trash, our latest multi-user game, is already establishing itself as a firm favourite.

Micronet Staff at the All Formats Computer show.

We're featuring TV in this issue: through a great satellite TV competition offering you a complete package to get in on the fast-growing world of deregulated television. We know 'Netters like to be ahead of the times with all types of technology - not just microcomputing - and we're proud that Waveguide, the Sub-IP area devoted to broadcasting - has been right in there with the news and latest developments for nearly four years now. There's a special feature about the database on page nine.

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find news of a major new Prestel development - the Electronic Yellow Pages service. No more trips to the library if you need to find a shop or business outside your own local area! And there's a feature on SportsEye, for those who prefer to laze in an armchair and watch the cricket.

Finally, an apology! Quite a number of subscribers seem to have received their copy of Logon very late last time. Apparently large quantities of the magazine got held up at the Post Office. We're sorry about this delay, which was beyond our control: but it was gratifying to know so many readers look forward to getting their copy of Logon. Do let us know what you think of the current issue, and drop me a line on page 800020002 of Micronet if you've any suggestions for future articles in the magazine!

YOUR MICRONET MEMBERSHIP CARD

Perceptive readers will notice that the current issue of Log On contains a piece of plastic as well as the usual mix of articles about Micronet! It's a brand-new idea, and we hope it meets with your approval. It is, of course, the Micronet Membership Card.

The card shows the Micronet logo, and a space for your name and mailbox number. We know that many of you enjoy going to computer shows and pub meets around the country; by displaying your card when you go, you not only demonstrate your commitment to the comms revolution, but also make yourself immediately known to any other "Netters" who are in the vicinity.

As Marketing Manager David Rosenbaum says, "We want to emphasise that Micronet's a club as much as it's an information network. What better way to show that than have a membership card!"

Apart from a means of identifying yourself as a Micronet member, we hope in time to be able to provide other benefits linked to the card. There are several possibilities under consideration at the moment, and you can be sure that any results will be fully reported both online and in Log On magazine.

VINCE MERRILL

There's a change of face at Amster's Cage, Micronet's hobbyist database for users of the Amstrad CPC and WPC range of computers. PC Base editor Dave Dorn has been running the area in tandem with his main job for a while now, and is to be joined by Vince Merrill, a keen Amstrad enthusiast who's also contributed from time to time to Micronet's editorial coverage.

Vince works for Lloyd's of London, the world-famous insurance company, though we understand he will not be underwriting subscribers' hardware as a sideline! Instead, he'll be publishing articles and letters for the devoted CPC and PWC users amongst you. Amster's Cage can be found on page 800934 of Micronet, or by typing *CAGE#. Why not drop in and make Vince welcome?

Immortals Hall of Fame

Who's at the top of the role-playing heap? The Wizards and Witches of Shades, that's who: those brave and determined characters who made it all the way to the top of Europe's biggest multi-user game.

Congratulations are due to the following courageous souls who dared all to win glory and immortality in the Land of Shades.

- ◆ Bella
- ◆ Lagolas
- ◆ Bluemede
- ◆ Mrsa
- ◆ Diana
- ◆ Orddu
- ◆ Fluffles
- ◆ Paradoxa
- ◆ Glenda
- ◆ Sparhawk

May your zappers never wither nor your powers ever wane!

Chatlines and Log On

The following statement about Chatlines was published online on the 5th June:

"Many of you have asked us why we have not given you more information about the suspension of Chatlines.

"We are sorry we were unable to keep you as fully informed as we would otherwise have wished, but considered the issue of such importance that we undertook a full review of Chatline policy and monitoring procedures. Clearly, this took some time.

"In the past, Chatlines were monitored on an ad hoc basis. This has not proved sufficient as a means of preventing abuse or misuse of the service.

"BT has a responsibility to ensure that services it operates are free from such abuse and that is why Chatlines have now been closed.

"We are currently investigating effective practical methods of operating fully-monitored Chatlines on Micronet.

"We thank all those of you who have written in with comments and suggestions about the Chatlines.

"They've been immensely valuable to us, and although we have not always been able to reply individually, we hope you will continue to let us know what you think.

"However, we would like to emphasise that no decision has been taken at this time as to whether or not fully-monitored Chatlines will be reinstated.

"We hope to resolve the situation soon and ask you to bear with us patiently while we work to do so."

We would also like to apologise for the late arrival of Log On this Summer. The issue you are reading was delayed because a number of articles had to be re-written or changed at the last minute, due to uncertainty over the position of Chatlines. We hope to have our schedules back to normal for the Autumn issue!

Diary-1990

Nobody brings you news from the major computer shows faster than Micronet, so if you can't attend a show yourself, make sure you follow the daily news reports when they're on!

This is the diary of shows over the next few months.

JULY	
July 3-5	Letronix 90, University of Leeds

SEPTEMBER	
September 7-9	BBC Acorn User Show, Horticultural Halls, Westminster
September 13-16	European Computer Entertainment Show, Earls Court
September 25-28	Business Computing 90, Earls Court

Apart from the computer shows, there are many other events you'll want to mark in your diary: especially the social gatherings of Micronet members up and down the country.

These are usually arranged by members on an ad hoc basis, and details can be found on the TMMC database, page 800952, or, for multi-user game enthusiasts, on InShades magazine, page 81053.

Playing Games with Kevin

As Micronet continues to expand the various games and entertainment services on offer, we also welcome yet another new face to the team.

Kevin Smith has been appointed Marketing Manager at Micronet for games, which means he'll be looking after all the ads, brochures, contracts and funding for games like Trash, Shades, Casino and Starnet.

Kevin comes from Aylesbury, and in his distant past worked as a market researcher for a brewery. He says the job involved travelling around every pub in the area and sampling their beer and food. Nice work if you can get it!

Apart from his background in beer, Kevin is also a keen gamer himself. His main interests lie in postal chess - he had an impressive ranking until work pressures forced him to take a back seat on chess - and Play By Mail games, particularly football games. But he's also been wandering incognito around Shades and Trash, getting used to the multi-user game world.

More than just cricket!

From googlies to bogeys, from double-faults to dinghies, SportsEye Editor Nick Bendall takes you on the Prestel Tour de Sport.

Your fingers fumble on the terminal, your forehand is plastered with beads of sweat and your heart misses so many beats a passing colleague publically pronounces you clinically dead.

Is this the effect of a new computer virus, you may wonder? No, the Test match is on and you've no way of knowing what the latest score is, especially in the light of England's unexpected performance in the West Indies! I mean, they almost drew, didn't they?

This threat to one's mental stability is further accentuated by June's bloated schedule of major sporting events, including the World Cup in Italy, that timeless institution Wimbledon, and, yes, more cricket.

The remedy is quite simple. Just key up the Prestel sport magazine, SportsEye, on page 646 (keyword *SPORTSEYE#). If you're immobilised in an office or stuck at home you can watch live coverage of major events and follow the scores as they happen.

Alternatively you can watch the highlights on TV half-an-hour before midnight, after the score is known, buy a brand-new satellite dish and sneak it into the office, or actually watch the matches themselves with a couple of hundred quid for the plane ticket.

Apart from the live coverage, there are other services too. Whether you can't operate without a regular dose of sport every five minutes, or you're a person who only feels the odd, sporadic whimper of interest - during Wimbledon, perhaps - a gentle browse through SportsEye's designer green database should yield something.

As one would expect there is plenty of football on offer. Not only are matches often followed ball by ball, but there are daily results, tables, fixtures, pools news, and full-length features to satisfy even the most fanatical soccer fan. Additionally, the Football League have recently compiled a database stuffed with the latest news, information and gossip straight from the horse's mouth.
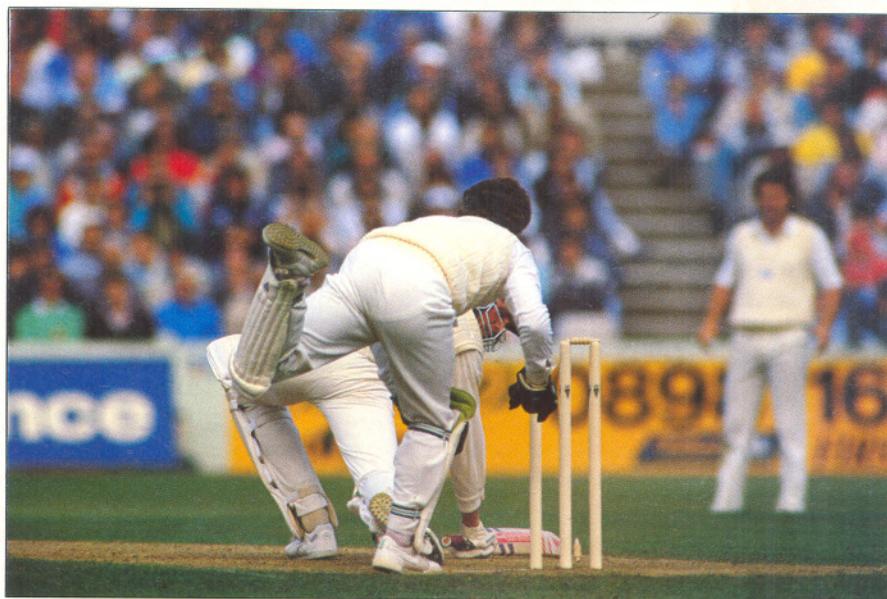
For those who feel oppressed by the sheer volume of football that pervades society today, there's other material on offer.

Wimbledon, as mentioned above, will be covered literally shot by shot this summer. SportsEye also boasts one of the most comprehensive up-to-date horse racing services around. Live results are amalgamated with a welter of information including best bets, selections, hot news, a gallops work watch, ante-postal update, top Euro-pattern race sires, daily and overnight horse ratings and much more. Well-known institutions like the Jockey Club have access to this.

For the golf enthusiasts, Equity & Law offer a latest results service for the PGA European Tour complete with a 1990 calendar, a leaderboard and a comments section from Ted Dexter. SportsEye also contains Sony's ranking system which displays the world's top twenty players plus news details of the major world tournaments.

Sailing buffs are catered for by Yachting World magazine's extensive monthly section and there is almost daily reporting of the progress of the globe-trotting yachts in the Whitbread Round The World Race which is currently nearing the closing stages with the final lap to Southampton under way, as I write.

If it's aquatic activities you want why not cast a line into Hook- Line, Prestel's angling database brought to you all the way from the Emerald Isle? This array of sports, plus many more, are supplemented by a games and famous quotations section, a sports shop where you can order goods from home, a travel area giving you the chance to watch events live around the world, and a letters page to put your views.

Apart from mass appeal subjects like the ubiquitous football and rugby, minority sports and news topics are also catered for in the guise of parascending, yoga, handicapped sailing and many others. And, last but certainly not least, there's the chance to write in and put forward your own questions to famous sports personalities through our People Live interviews. Past celebrities include Ted Dexter, Graham Dilley, Ali Bacher, Colin Moynihan, Bill Beaumont and Eddie the Eagle.

The good news is that SportsEye is still growing, though it's only been in operation for a year, and there are plans for still more expansion in the future. So next time England are decimating the West Indies (?) or Wales looks set to win the World Cup (??) plunge into Prestel's depths and get those scores as they happen!

Smash Trash Hash

Manticore roots around in the bins of Trash and comes up with some tips for Micronet's new multi-user game.

The worlds of Trash are full of the strangest puzzles. Micronet's multi-user SF extravaganza is already gaining a vast following of committed Trashies as they unfold the secrets of the Multiverse in which it's set.

The surreal humour of the game is in a class of it's own: from fire-breathing cabbages to fantasy castles built entirely from Lego bricks, from space cockroaches to Clarabelle the Cow, the dazzle and range of Trash is captivating in itself. But underneath the humour and wild atmosphere of the game lies a cunning network of puzzles and quests as players progress towards the ultimate level, Lord of Trash.

Trash works rather like a single-user adventure game, where you type in commands in 'ordinary' English - GO NORTH, PULL THE LEVER, LOOK AROUND and so on. But you can also talk to other players on the game, interact with them, hug them, help them, or throw things at them. And, of course, race to solve those puzzles...

The first puzzle most players will encounter is the jellyfish. Jellyfish are an ecological hazard of the Multiverse. Their natural habitat, the sea, has been so polluted with sweet wrapping that the jellyfish have mutated into four refreshing fruit flavours. Lugging jellyfish back to the Atomic Furnace for incineration is a favourite occupation for new recruits to Trash, as it can be done over and over again for a steady supply of cash and points.

But there are many other things to do in Trash besides destroying mutant jellyfish. When you first play, the initial areas may seem rather small. This is because you haven't yet found out how to open up new parts of them! Be inquisitive: push all the buttons, crank all the handles, and pull all the levers!

Experimenting is by far the best way to learn in Trash. The number of commands is fairly small - you can easily print off the list from the Trash Database and stick it up by your computer as a reference guide. It's where you use them and what you apply them to which counts!

For example, if you try putting the dustbin lid in the rottener, the rottener will spit it out. This tends to imply that there might well be an object the rottener will accept...and rotten! Locked doors will open to the right key, so if you find a key, try it out on all the locked doors you can find. Sooner or later you'll strike lucky.

Objects carried by other players can provide clues to the beginner as well: at least, even if you don't know where it comes from or what it is for, you know the thing exists! So use the INVENTORY command on other players to see what they are carrying: the pearl, for example. Then, another time, try using your clairvoyant powers to type WHERE PEARL, and the results may give you some clue to where it is or what it's for.

Impassable areas are a problem for many new players: it can be frustrating to keep falling down gaping crevasses or being zapped for stepping on the cracks in the Herddfieldsud Shopping Precinct. But there's a remedy which many players forget. The GAZE command allows you to peer into the next location to see what's there. If you are standing on the edge of a deep pit, GAZE DOWN might give you a clue as to what awaits you at the bottom.

Finally, remember to examine everything, look inside containers, and whenever you feel in need of a good laugh, login to Trash on page 8680 and get your brain cells in gear!

TEN TIPS FOR GOOD TRASHING:

❶ The lower the value of an item in credits, the more likely it is to have a use somewhere.

❷ Examine everything, including other players and mobiles!

❸ Make a note of anything unusual you hear or see. Even if it doesn't make sense at the time, it may later on!

❹ Type HINTS during the game for a solution to the jellyfish puzzle!

❺ The only good cabbage is a fried cabbage.

❻ Check out the basic rules before you play: either on the Trash Database (page 8680) or EAST from Trash Control in the game.

❼ Use GAZE to check potentially dangerous moves before you make them!

❽ Be polite to high-level players. They may give you clues to puzzles in return for a little assistance on their quests.

❾ Read the Trash Database (page 8680) regularly for hints on play, especially the Tip of the Week!

❿ Even if you seem to be getting nowhere, keep exploring the various worlds. Who knows, some players may have opened up an area you haven't seen before; just knowing it exists can provide new clues!

An improved Yellow Pages is coming to Prestel! Ian Burley explains how Electronic Yellow Pages will actually work.

Let your modem do the walking!

The new version of Electronic Yellow Pages (EYP) is the culmination of over ten years research and preparation by Yellow Pages, and the result isn't a simple computerised version of the 66 regional directories. Electronic Yellow Pages utilises computerisation to offer important enhancements to the standard directory books.

EYP is basically a massive database containing all 1.8 million business phone numbers and addresses. Naturally, the EYP database can be kept more up to date compared to its paper counterpart. But more importantly, EYP advertisers can regularly update their service descriptions and EYP users have powerful search facilities to locate the services they require.

In the beginning...

The story goes back to 1979 when EYP first became an IP (Information Provider) on Prestel - electronic access to yellow pages was an obvious avenue for the future and Prestel was one vehicle for that goal. Five years later the first internal trials took place and a limited public trial service started in 1987.

Experience gained with the trial services also revealed that a surprisingly large number of residential users were accessing the trial EYP service and system developments bore this fact mind. Overall, it's estimated that EYP currently enjoys a potential 4.7 million users.

EYP & YP Today

As a result of feedback gained, the new EYP bears little relation to the original trials. The goals for EYP were eventually defined as the provider for THE up-to-date comprehensive source of national classified information. This would require a national database with no geographical boundaries, and access to the database would have to be as simple as possible and compatible with a very wide range of computer terminals.

1.8 million business phone numbers are listed in Yellow Pages nationwide and these are currently distributed in 25 million directory books - that's 42,000 tons of paper - a year. Conservationists might be relieved to hear that three trees are currently being planted for every tree used up to make paper for all those phone books.

Besides listing phone numbers and addresses for all registered business phone lines, Yellow Pages offers advertising space for those companies and commands the largest single number of advertising clients of any media in the UK.

The new improved EYP service offers several advantages over the book version. Customers aren't restricted by where they are, so in effect you have all 66 Yellow Pages books at your disposal, so there's no problem if you need the number of a plumber in Glasgow and you happen to be in Swansea, for example. Addresses on EYP are also fully post-coded.
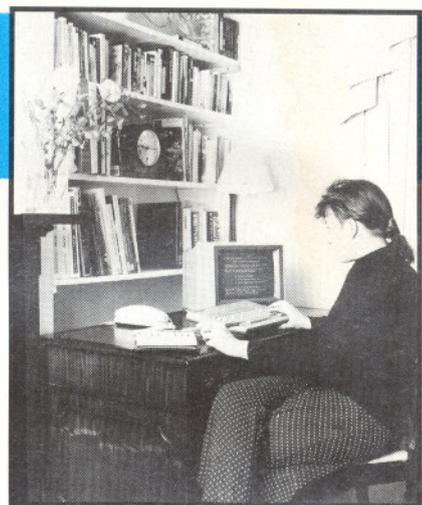
On the technical side, two terminal types are supported; viewdata (Prestel) and VT100 (scrolling text). The system has been set up so most users won't have to worry about data bit lengths and parity bits.

EYP on Prestel

Access to EYP on Prestel is via a gateway, which connects the user to the EYP database computer. Once you're through, you will asked to enter either VTI or VAM to indicate whether you have a VT100 compatible scrolling text screen (VTI) or a Prestel compatible viewdata screen (VAM).

Having completed this simple task, you will be presented with a Front Menu. For example, Option 1 gets you to the location screen and you can go on from there to enter search details like location, service or product required and company name.

If your search has been successful, you can view the details of businesses located with the ?V command. Important commands to remember are ?F to return to the front menu for a new search and ?E, which gets you out of EYP and back into Prestel. Naturally, the system offers online help for both new users and those who might have difficulty remembering all the powerful commands!

Of course, the best way of learning how to use EYP is to try it out - so keep an eye open for online announcements of when the new version will become available.

WIN your own Astra satellite receiver

This Summer's Log On competition prize is a terrific satellite receiver from Pace Micro Technology. Better known to 'Netters for their modems, such as the popular Pace Linnet, the company is also Europe's largest manufacturer of satellite TV receivers.

We're giving away one of their magic boxes as our competition prize. It's the Pace SS6000, a high specification 32 channel stereo receiver. It comes complete with infra-red remote control, independently tuneable audio frequencies, software selectable contrast and baseband output for each channel.

Decoder and TV 'SCART' sockets are provided, along with audio output and UHF 'loop through' connectors. Plus, of course, output sockets for direct connection to external speakers - particularly useful for music lovers.

Of course, a receiver isn't much use without a dish, so we're throwing in a high performance satellite dish as well. The total package would cost you around £280 in the shops, but you can win one absolutely free by entering our competition.

All you have to do is answer five questions correctly, and fill in the tiebreak. Please read the competition rules before you send in your entry. When you have decided on the answers and your tiebreak solution, fill in the special response frame on page 81186 (or *LOGON COMPETITION#) and send us your entry online.
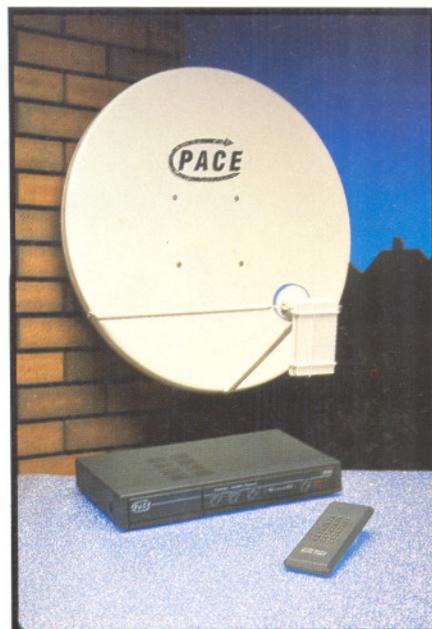
1   How many channels has the Pace SS6000?

2   Which UK satellite TV company uses Astra?

3   Name one of the two Waveguide editors.

4   Does the Pace SS6000 have remote control?

5   Name a popular PACE modem.

Tiebreak: Satellite TV is great because...(complete the sentence for the tiebreak)

Standard Competition Rules

1 The competition is open to all Micronet subscribers except employees of British Telecommunications plc and Pace Micro technology Ltd and their immediate families.

2 Entries are limited to one per Micronet account and all entrants must be fully paid-up Micronet subscribers at the time of the draw.

3 All entries must be received by 12am on Monday 13th August 1990. In the event of more than one person correctly solving the competition, the judges will award the prize to the entrant whom they consider to have provided the best tiebreak answer.

4 The judges' decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into.

5 All entries become the property of British Telecommunications plc, and none will be returned.

6 It is a condition of entry that competitors agree to be bound by the rules.

7 All winners will be notified by mailbox, and the results will be published in the following issue of Log On, subsequent to notification.

Four Years On the Box

Waveguide, the daily TV and Radio magazine, is one of the longest-running databases on the Prestel system. Chris Bourne investigates.

Nearly everybody's interested in television, and with the boom in cable and satellite stations, as well as big improvements on the technological front, it's not suprising that 'Netters seem almost as fascinated by the workings of the airwaves as they are by the world of microcomputing.

John Cull and Ian Campbell have been feeding that interest for nearly four years now. Waveguide, their magazine, started life as a labour of love on Micronet's Gallery area.

It was a great success, and soon expanded to find a home on Viewfax, which for several years was the only real competition to the then independent Micronet 800 on the Prestel system for consumer-based information.

When Viewfax expired a couple of years ago, JC and Ian were immediately invited to move their magazine - now one of the most popular 'amateur' areas on the system - across to Xtra!, Micronet's open access leisure database, where it's been happily operating ever since.

Waveguide's always been much more than a listings area: in fact, although it has carried listings in the past, those are now comprehensively catered for elsewhere on Prestel. Instead, Waveguide offers one of the most up to date news and information services you could hope to find in the frenetic world of broadcasting.

Particular attention is paid to satellite TV, an area frequently ignored by newspapers whose proprietors aren't involved in the business, and hyped up by those who are. In conjunction with the two galleries, Square Eyes and Astra, which cover BSB and Astra (Sky) services, the Net offers just about all the information you'll ever need about the two UK satellite channels!

When 'Netters who'd joined the Sky Pioneers scheme for early delivery of Sky dishes and decoders found delays intolerable, Waveguide took up the cudgels on their behalf with a vengeance,
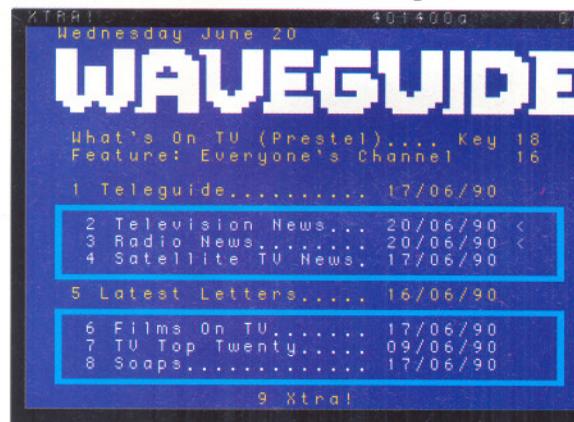
Waveguide: page 401400

extracting the information and passing it on to readers.

Indeed, JC and Ian are extraordinarily dedicated to their magazine, which they run entirely in their free time. They're probably the only editors in the world who operated a slush fund in Vegemite, the Aussie version of Marmite.

The story concerns efforts to get hold of the advance plotlines of one of the major soap operas. JC located an Aussie expat involved in the programme, and persuaded him to cough up the information in return for a supply of Vegemite, flown in from Australia by Qantas, the company for whom JC works when he's not running Waveguide.

Waveguide provides details of five soaps at present: Coronation St, Eastenders, Neighbours, Home and Away, and Emmerdale, which changed its name recently from Emmerdale Farm because farms were seen as boring by viewers! (Try telling that to fans of The Archers...) Plots are given for at least a full week ahead: Waveguide used to cover Dynasty and Dallas as well, before the series were axed by their US creators. It's an enduring moan of Waveguide readers that Prisoner Cell Block H - THE cult soap of the moment - doesn't get the Waveguide treatment. This is because it's at a different stage in the story in all the various ITV regions, some of which broadcast several episodes a week, making it impossible to cover in that way on Waveguide!

At the heart of Waveguide's success, though, are its readers. The Letters area, updated twice a week, is one of the most lively such areas on the system. Perennial topics include Star Trek and Dr Who, the plight of pirate radio stations, pleas for help in tracking down ancient video recordings, and regular cries of "Why Don't They Repeat Blake's 7!"

To judge from the number of TV and Radio professionals who get involved in writing to Waveguide, what started as a little hobby for JC and Ian has mushroomed into a highly respected magazine.

I'm sure all Waveguide's fans will join with us in raising a glass to JC and Ian, and wish them "Four More Years" of broadcast bulletins!

MICRONET
after The Blitz

Paul Blitz is fanatically keen on Micronet. Pete Robson (just as keen, but much less talented) attempts to keep up…

As a computer novice I asked Andy, a more knowledgeable friend, for help with my Beeb. He recommended Paul Blitz, whom I knew only slightly - "He's the BBC expert." I prayed fervently that Andy was right as chips and sockets from the interior of my cherished computer (it had been left to me in a dear friend's will) flew, in apparently irretrievable disorder, all over my lounge carpet.

Andy WAS right, and from that moment a friendship started that has provided me with immeasurable help, a number of upgrades, countless cups of tea, a godson, experiences such as hanging from the roof of Winchester Hospital (I get dizzy standing on a chair) and leading a bank robbery, and, not least, an addiction to the delights of Micronet.

Paul is short and stocky, and endowed with boundless energy. Though he was born a Yorkshireman, and spent five years of his childhood in Australia, he is nevertheless tolerated in Hampshire now. He is a Support Engineer with Racal-Milgo Ltd. near Basingstoke, working very specifically on dial-up modems for sale through the distribution network.

Away from work he devotes much time and energy to Winchester Hospitals Radio. As their Chief Engineer he is currently engaged in designing and building a brand new studio suite - hence my "aerial" activities referred to earlier!

Although some of the equipment for the new studio, such as tape-recorders and microphones, can be bought in, much of it needs to be purpose-built; one of Paul's first jobs, therefore, was to build the radio station its own PC to keep detailed records of the hundreds of cables and the various layouts, and to draw and file the many circuit diagrams. "Later", he adds casually, "it can be used for word-processing".

He has a knack for fund-raising too. He's the sort of chap whom you can still like when he's just taken a quid off you for a charity duck race that took place yesterday. Robbing a bank as a way of raising funds was also his idea; somehow it was me that got lumbered with the difficult bit, while he broadcast the break-in to the whole city!

Paul Blitz

His first computer was a home-made affair, based on a Z80 processor, with 4K of memory. This was followed by a third-hand Intel system with 8" floppy disc-drives. Next he achieved respectability with the purchase of a BBC 'B' set-up -"it was wonderful to be able to run other people's programs" - before finally downgrading (my word, not his) to a PC.

Our first Micronet account was shared: he used it, I paid for it! His first modem was a Prism acoustic coupler which had to be used at night since the slightest sound caused line-noise; while I still manage with the Prism 1000 which I bought for ten pounds at a Show, he now uses one costing a hundred times as much: part of his evaluation work for Racal-Milgo.

"There was little support on the 'Net for PCs when I acquired mine", he recalls, and likes to think that his complaints acted as something of a stimulus. "There are two PC areas now, you know". As if I didn't -I like to get on PC Support occasionally when they're having problems and tease them that they'd be better off with a Beeb!

Paul is more constructive, however: he likes to weigh in with help, as a user, in both areas. It was natural, therefore, that when the call came from Dave Dorn (editor of PC base) for him to write some technical articles on advanced data-comms for the Soft-Tech area, he agreed. He thoroughly enjoys grappling with any problem, and has a wealth of knowledge accrued from building up his own PC from odd bits acquired at jumble sales and the like. He loves taking anything and everything to pieces, and it is obvious from a recent visit to my house by one-year-old Michael Jonathan Blitz that son is going to follow in father's footsteps!

After checking PC Base and PC Support each day, Paul reads the Micronet News pages, commenting that he feels there could be even more news. Then he likes to move on to Micromouse "because Steve Gold writes interestingly, often from fresh or unusual viewpoints".

If he has time he likes to look at Legal Eagle as well; he regrets though that he has been forced to give up gossiping with other 'Netters through lack of sleep! Just as well, really: long-suffering though his wife is where computers are concerned, I'm not sure that even Debbie would tolerate his chatting-up female 'Netters at four in the morning!

Soft-Tech
Feature Series

LEARNING WITH MICRONET

One of the benefits of Micronet is the way information can be made available in short, easy to digest chunks. Paul Needs describes how, with Micronet, you can learn a new computer language or even how your modem works.

Many 'Netters' are not just computer users, but also like to `get their hands dirty' and program their machines as well. Others are driven by a desire to understand their hobby, and are therefore interested in how this world of communications works.

Soft-Tech is Micronet's home for features on all aspects of computing, and has carried series on MIDI, Communications and programming, plus other articles of general interest - irrespective of what computer the reader owns or uses.

Programming

For some years, particularly since the advent of the home computer, most machines have been supplied with a version of a computer programming language. This has usually been the Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code - known more popularly by its acronym - BASIC.

Although widely used - it's easy to learn, and usually supplied free with the machine - BASIC is not deemed suitable by many programmers for any 'serious' programming work.

The reasons that languages like 'C' are attractive to professional programmers apply just as strongly to those who like to write their own programs, either for the challenge or purely the fun of writing and using their own software. It's powerful and flexible, and although apparently difficult to understand at first, it allows use of libraries of functions which can be included from disk into any new program.

Another advantage is that programs in languages such as C, BCPL and Modula 2 are relatively easy to transfer to computers other than the one which was used to write and develop the program. Although particular issues such as file handling and screen displays may need to be written specifically for the target machine, the basic principles (pardon the pun!) hold true.

In other words, if you can program on an Amiga, there's no reason why your program can't be adapted to run on an IBM - without needing to re-write the whole thing from scratch because of the different families of micro-processors used by each machine.

Micronet's series on both 'C' and Modula 2 take the reader from the beginner level through to having a good understanding of how the language works and its syntax, as well as giving short routines which illustrate techniques or principles. Key page 8000208 for more.

Communications

Although we all use modems to access Micronet, the actual mechanics of how a modem works, what all the esoteric V29s and so on mean is a mystery to many. Micronet is, at the time that Log On goes to press, publishing two series on computer communications and how it works.

The first of these, written by Micronet's ST Editor David Foster describes comms to the beginner - so if you're interested in what your gear does but have never dared to ask - this is the place to start.

The second provides the reader with a great deal of advanced, detailed information on communications. Written by Paul Blitz, it assumes a degree of understanding which one could gain from the series mentioned above, and goes on to explain how some modems cram so much data into a telephone line, and yet still understand what they receive. We've certainly learned a lot from this! Comms. is on page 8000202.

What do YOU want?

All the series mentioned above have come about because readers have asked for such articles to be published. We want to know what other series you'd like us to schedule over the next year. Do you want to know how printers work, or is there a computer language which you're interested in which we haven't covered? Would it be of interest to you if we were to publish a series on general programming practises such as structures?

If you have a suggestion to make about the coverage you'd like to see, key *800020002# and send them in!

MICRONET (EX)   8000208a   0p

COMPUTER
LANGUAGES
We can't teach you how to program but our experts will show you where to begin and explore the basic principles.

Key 1 for our complete series on programming in C.

Key 2 for our complete 32-part series on Modula 2.

8: Micro mags   9: Soft-Tech Features

11
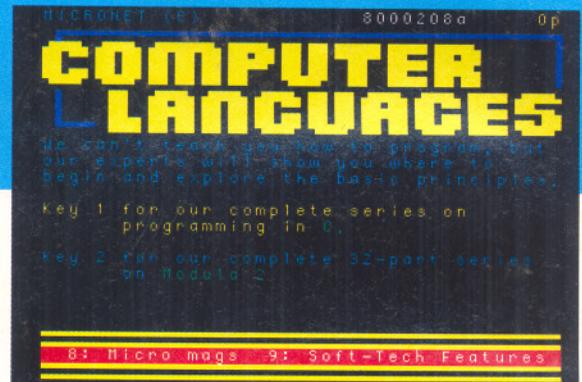
Paul Vigay, BBC Micromag Editor

BBC Micromag

Things have progressed since the advent of Micronet back in 1983, when 16K was considered a vast amount of storage and an ARM was something that connected your hand to your shoulder.

The BBC micro, though, has survived through the many ups and downs of the home-computing era to become a durable and reliable machine ideally suited to comms. In fact the original spec for the machine insisted upon the availability of a viewdata mode especially for the task.

It soon built up a loyal band of followers. In fact, I consider BBC owners to be unique in their dedication and 'club like' following of the machine and it's makers Acorn. Go along to any computer club and, whilst others are talking about which games they've copied or hi- scores obtained, they'll be a small group of people crowding around a lone Beeb discussing some intricate area of it's internal working.

The Beeb is very much what I call a 'user-friendly' computer. Whatever the problem, your trusty Beeb will sort it out. I try to run and organise the BBC Micromag on this informal and club-like philosophy. The BBC Micromag is one of the longest running areas on the Net - not without its own share of ups and downs. Since I joined the Net, just over a year ago, there have been even more developments in the Acorn field, not least the growth of the Archimedes market.

Covering such diverse topics as programming, hints and tips and getting the best from various programs, I have tried to keep a user group feel to the mag, whilst catering for many varied tastes. I

am very much a fan of the Beeb and of the new range of Archies - often resulting in comments from other Net staff, such as Anorak. Not that I scored full marks in Log On's 'Anorak' quiz (*close, Vigay, close! Ed.*)

You can always be sure to find the latest program reviews in the mag, along with any up-to-date news concerning Acorn products. I am always looking for new areas to support such as the notepad area, later pinched by other magazines!

So. How does the mag run ? A couple of months ago, I was freed from Micronet Towers (alias Network House at Apsley) back into the sane world, where I live in London. The average day begins by downloading the previous days letters and putting my brain into gear to answer the many interesting and varied letters - the hardest thing is thinking up new insults for other machines!

By around ten I'm ready to go back on-line and send in my answers. Using my Archie 420 armed with !Hearsay software I am now prepared to do battle with the London line-noise. Next, it's back to being a complete anorak and working out what's going to be the next update. To ensure the best possible service to Netters and the widest coverage, it's time to scour mags and bulletin boards for all the latest news, programs and general gossip. Phone around software houses, grill them about bugs in the latest versions of their software and query them about why I haven't received 'xyz' for review yet.

Most articles and feature may include programs to download via the Telesoftware pages, and in fact I try to grab all the latest and best programs around so that Netters

can be sure that anything they download will be worth the effort. And of course they're all checked before put up as TSW, so you can be sure they all work without any errors.

Much of my time is also spent using different packages to ensure that I am familiar with them in case of query or problem. After many hours playing with the intricate details of a new package I'm ready to write my review. Whilst I try to describe the actual workings of the product under scrutiny, I also try to hunt down any peculiarities or possible problems with it.

That way you, the Netter, can be sure that the product you buy actually does what they claim and will be forewarned about any little quirks it may have. Of course, you can always send a letter on the Beeb letters area if you do get stuck later - and be sure of a solution in just 24 hours.

To complement the BBC Micromag, Netters also have access to Acorn's very own SID database, to send queries or find information from Acorn themselves, or an area edited by Beebug, Britain's biggest user group for the machine.

What of the future? Well, you can be sure of one thing. Acorn support won't drop while I'm here, and I'm constantly on the lookout for good and interesting ideas to expand the BBC Micromag. With more software to download and more informative articles you can be sure of getting the best service from your Acorn and the Net for many years to come.

The BBC Micromagazine is on page 800100, Keyword: *BBC#

Online Libraries

Save yourself the walk to the post office and download software directly to your own tapes and discs.

Some of the disadvantages of Mail-order PD Software is that once you've made your choice, you either have to telephone and give your credit card details, or worse; send your order via the post. That's not all though. Waiting for your discs to be sent back to you via the mail has to be one of the more frustrating parts of mail order software.

What is "Public Domain"

Public Domain software means the programmer or author has decided that he doesn't wish to receive payment from users. In some countries, the state of "Public Domain" actually exists, and the copyright of the software is actually waived so that it becomes public property rather than that of an individual. However, here in the UK, the complex copyright Acts do not allow for this kind of provision, so the intellectual ownership of the program remains with the author. He or she then allows it to be freely distributed at no charge.

In many cases, the programs will be some exercise which the programmer wanted to do, or a utility written for his or her own use. Thought to be of interest or use to other users with similar requirements, the program finds its way onto a bulletin board, and then commences on the road to being available just about everywhere!

Shareware Software

This is quite different to Public Domain, in that the author or owner of the program actually would like some payment in return for their work - which if the program is of high quality is quite fair, when you think about it!

The difference is that instead of using retail chains, and thereby increasing the cost to the end user, the programs can be distributed freely via BBs and other means.

When you obtain such a program, you're free to try the software to evaluate it for yourself. However, unlike PD software, if you use the program regularly, then you are expected to register your copy with the author - and pay.

In return for the payment, the writer will almost always send the latest version of the program, plus a complete set of documentation. Other support, notably copies of any upgrades, is another way in which the registered user benefits by doing the right thing.

The sums involved are generally quite small - from just a few pounds up to perhaps fifty. If one thinks that a fifty pounds shareware program would probably end up costing as much as 5 times more if it were sold through conventional distribution, one can see that Shareware can offer excellent value for money.

Unfortunately, the UK has a poor record in the Shareware field. Very few people cough up the dough for programs they have downloaded and use, and what could otherwise be an ideal principle suffers because an author is loth to distribute a program and get little or no return whatsoever.

Bulletin Boards

Comms-literate computer users have been busily retrieving software from online services for some time. Bulletins boards have always been a good source for free, high quality programs. Dedicated BB Sysops (SYStem OPeratorS) spend many hours of their spare time checking programs that they receive, and making them available for the users of their boards.

Some BBs have even become networked, so that each forms a part of larger, in some cases global, network. New programs, which have been uploaded to just one of the connected systems, are then automatically distributed to all the other member systems. In this way, a new utility uploaded in, say, the USA can very quickly become available to BBS users in Australia or the UK.

The down side can be that the best BBs are often very popular, and therefore users' online time has to be restricted to a limited period each day. This is quite fair, in that it allows as many people as possible to get online and download programs, and also contribute to the software library, or the messaging areas and discussions.

Nevertheless, it can be very difficult to actually get online to the more popular boards, and for many people it would involve an expensive long-distance telephone call in order to do so.

Troughing

One practice that many System Operators - or Sysops - feel strongly about, is "troughing". A trougher is someone who logs on to a system, downloads everything in sight, and never contributes any programs which they may have in return. What's more, the trougher will seldom contribute to, or even read the message boards. The Sysop quite justly feels that the board is being abused, and no contribution to the system is ever made by these people.

A fundamental of BBs is that users should and do contribute. If they do not, a board can quite easily become stagnant, and the Sysop feel that he is wasting his or her own personal time and equipment. The only result is that the bulletin board could die out - which would be a great shame.

NEW PROGRAMS ON THE 'NET

Listed below are some of the latest additions to Micronet's library. Remember, if you have a program you'd like to share with others, that you've written or is PD, send a copy on disc to the address on page 3.

IBM Compatibles:

Dimmer.zip	Dayplan.zip
Planets.zip	Diction.zip
Whereis.com	Boost.zip
Citydesk.zip	

Commodore Amiga

BBS	Call
Xoper	Numberone
Shortcut	Startup

Atari ST

Vkill	Time
Mouse	Acc-sel

Acorn BBC & Archimedes

Combine	!C
Xmas4Vr	Root03

Spectrum

MDVRename	Kickstart
Flyformatter	Cartmend
REMstore	Firescroll
Arnold	+3 Comms

As we go to press, we are about to commence uploading a large number of programs for Amstrad machines, and copy our C64 library to the new Telesoftware database, Keyword: *TSW #.

▶··MICRONET···· ▶··DIRECTORY····

▶ *MAZ# 800046666

A - Z QUICK GUIDE: A fast-access index to all the main features of Micronet. With over 13,000 pages of information, you'll need it!

▶ *ADVENTURE SPOT# 8105

ADVENTURE SPOT: Help and advice for intrepid adventure gamers. The area includes InShades, the popular magazine for Shades players.

▶ *CAGE# 800934

AMSTER'S CAGE: Daily coverage of Amstrad CPC and PCW micros, with news, reviews, and comment. Also the home of the invaluable Cage Comms ROM!

▶ *BEEBUG# 800909

BEEBUG Still the biggest and best BBC micro user group, the beebug area offers news, reviews, and a variety of excellent software.

▶ *BAZAAR# 82899

CLASSIFIED ADS: There's always a bargain to be had in our classifieds area. Computer systems, cameras, video gear, motorbikes. . . anything!

▶ *CASINO# 8684

CASINO: All the fun and none of the risk, as you play the regular casino games in this Australian on-line simulation.

▶ *CLUBSPOT# 810

CLUBSPOT: Run by the British Association of Computer Clubs, ClubSpot hosts a wide range of mini-magazines run by enthusiasts for enthusiasts.

▶ *M COMMS# 8008083

COMMUNICATIONS INDEX: How to get in touch with other people through Micronet: Mailbox, Telex, Interlink...it's your choice!

▶ *M COMPLAIN# 800406006

COMPLAIN: We hope you don't have any complaints. But if you do, we want to hear them, so we can put things to rights as quickly as possible.

▶ *M COMPLIMENT# 800406005

COMPLIMENT: of course, we like to hear when you think we've got it right, too: and any ideas you have for improving the services we offer!

▶ *M GAMES# 868

GAMES: (Games on Micronet a new area). All Micronet's games accessible from one page.

▶ *M NEWS# 8001110

COMPUTER NEWS: The fastest computer news service in the UK. Updated every day with the latest stories, this is one area you can't afford to miss.

▶ *M CUG# 800652

GAY CUG A closed user group for gay members, The Cug offers daily news, letters, help and advice to gay men and women.

▶ *DIALTALK# 81195

TELECONFERENCING: DialTalk is a powerful facility which enables you to talk online, publicly or confidentially, to groups and individuals.

▶ *EDUCATION# 165

CAMPUS 2000: Prestel's comprehensive education area offers specialist services to teachers and students, as well as careers and computing advice.

▶ *ENROL A FRIEND# 800020001

ENROL A FRIEND: Save money on your subscription by enrolling your friends as Micronet members! After all, the more folk you know online, the more fun you'll have!

▶ *INTERLINK# 86874

TELECOM GOLD: Access BT's high-powered business network at a special discount through Micronet, and enjoy facilities such as Fax, Infomatics and much more.

▶ *GALLERY# 81122

DO IT YOURSELF: Run your own electronic magazine, and read other members' pages, in Micronet's unique home publishing area!

▶ *CHESSBOX# 380

CHESSBOX: For the chess enthusiast, ChessBox offers you the opportunity to play Chess online, BCF approved chess tournaments and even against grandmasters!

▶ *INTERBUSINESS# 7007

BUSINESS ADVICE: Interbusiness is a professional service to the small businessman, offering advice on tax, law, finance and employment.

▶ *ED# 8001170

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Editor Paul Needs is always ready to speak his mind, and so are Micronetters! Why not join he debate yourself.

▶ *MAILBOX# 7

ELECTRONIC MAIL: The heart of the Prestel network is the Mailbox system. Recently overhauled, the new system makes it even easier to send your message.

▶ *MICROMOUSE# 800951

COMMS NEWS: Steve Gold, the UK's leading comms journalist, writes exclusively for Micronet every day in Smalltalk, about the world or communications.

▶ *MIDISPOT# 800989

MUSIC CITY: As computers become more and more a part of the music business, Micronet brings you all you need to know about the latest products and techniques.

▶ *PC SUPPORT# 800936

Daily letters, reviews and news for users of IBM and Amstrad compatible PC's. The area includes a special public domain and shareware software service.

▶ *1# 1

PRESTEL FRONT PAGE The start for all your explorations of the vast Prestel database, including NewsDay, Games City, SportsEye, and Look!

▶ *SHADES# 8118

SHADES Micronet's addictive and absorbing Multi-User Fantasy Adventure. Play with and against real people as you struggle to reach the rank of Wizard!

▶ *SOFTTECH# 8000201

SOFTTECH FEATURES: General computing features for all machines, including comprehensive reviews of printers, modems, monitors and other peripherals.

▶ *SPECTACULAR# 8009121

SPECTRUM: Daily updates about all things Spectrum, from the old rubber key models to the new Plus 3. Spectacular includes special comms advice for speccy users.

▶ *STARNET# 811211

STARNET: Compete against other Micronetters for control of the galaxy in this long-running strategy game. Full instructions and advice provided online.

▶ *TRASH# † 8680

TRASH: It's your role to travel to strange parts collecting rubbish to reach the rank of Lord or Lady.

---

† Trash is a Third Millenium System Game.

▶ *M TELESHOPPING# 811613

ELECTRONIC SHOPPING: Join the retail revolution and buy goods directly via our online shopping system. General goods as well as computer gear are available.

▶ *TSW# 600

TELESOFTWARE: Hundreds of FREE programs are available for all the major machines as Micronet Telesoftware. Full instructions online.

▶ *TELEX# 8

TELEX FACILITY: Send a Telex anywhere in the world via Micronet, at fraction of the price it would cost you if you had to buy your own machine.

▶ *TMMC# 00952

TMMC CLUB: The Midnight Micronetters' Club is open to all members; a social forum for meeting people on and offline, making friends, and having fun.

▶ *M VIRGINS# 800953

NEW MEMBERS: The Virgin User area contains simple, clear advice and instructions for getting around the system, and making the best use of it.

● ● ● ● ●

▶ *WAVEGUIDE# 800900

TV AND RADIO: All the news and gossip from the world of TV and Radio. Waveguide even brings you advance info on the plots of your favourite soaps!

▶ *M NEW# 0

WHAT'S NEW: With 13,000 pages there's something new to see every day on Micronet. The What's New index tells you about the very latest updates.

▶ *XTRA# 40140100

ENTERTAINMENT: The original Xtra! magazine combines topical comment, music reviews, cookery and humour in one vibrant area.

▶ *VOLTAGE# 401012

HI-FI NEWS: Voltage brings you up to date news and reviews of hi-fi, video, TV and other consumer electronic goodies.

▶ *SIXTEEN# 800916

16/32 ST: For users of the Atari ST computers, 16/32 offers daily letters, reviews, news and a second-hand bargain basement area.

▶ *MONEY EXTRA# 80096

PERSONAL FINANCE: Expert advice on personal finance, consumer rights, mortgages and tax, including the popular Legal Eagle online legal advice service.

Contact

There are many different ways to contact Micronet, depending on why you wish to do so.! Here are some of the important response frames and telephone numbers: using the appropriate one helps us help you much more efficiently.

Machine specific queries:

Acorn .... *8111888#
Amiga .... *8111886#
Amstrad .... *8111880#
Atari ST .... *8111885#
Commodore 64 .... *8111886#
PC compatibles .... *8111882#
Spectrum .... *811188#
Z88 .... *8111884#

General queries

To change account details, or make a general query or complaint about Prestel *33333#

If none of these areas seem to help this problem, you can always mailbox us directly on 018221122 for general enquiries or 223681485 for technical enquiries.

Micronet queries & problems:

Complaints about Micronet .... *8000406006#
To compliment Micronet .... *8000406005#
Problems with Telesoftware .... *600#
Problems with Interlink .... *86874#
Wrong routes? .... *8000406007#
Problems with Shades .... *8118#
Suggestions .... *800020002#
Letters to the Editor .... *81118#
Help for beginners .... *8009539#

ALSO: For all problems, queries and assistance phone 0442 237237.

ENROL A FRIEND INTO THE EXCITING WORLD OF MICRONET...

AND WE'LL CREDIT £10 TO YOUR ACCOUNT

Just tell your friends and relatives about Micronet or better still show them. If they decide to become a quarterly subscriber, then we will credit *you* with £10 for each person that joins.

Simply return the coupon or send details on-line via page 800020001 or key ✱ Enrol a Friend #.

It couldn't be easier. You simply nominate them – we'll do the rest.