key*notes*

Online Enquiry Tracking System

key*notes*

Volume 27, Number 1

contents

feature articles:

Key*notes* on the web

Back copies of Keynotes can be found at:
http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/offdocs/keynotes/

From the Editor

Welcome to the first Keynotes of the academic year. As usual, the summer vacation has seen a huge amount of upgrading activity. On page 3 Brian Souter writes about improvements to the PC classrooms and study areas. It's worth noting that the new specification for classroom PCs surpasses that of some current office PCs. Robert Demaine outlines, on page 7, the changes to the network.

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The schedule for the Autumn term's Staff and Graduate courses can be found in the middle of this Keynotes. Visit the Information Desk to register for courses.

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On page 4, John Robinson gives a direct appraisal of the WordPerfect Office 2000 suite, recently made available on the PC network, identifying new features and some potential problems.

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Joanne Casey

Mail Attachments
Joanne Casey

This information applies to supported campus PCs.

Attachments created by Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint may be read by the relevant Microsoft Office 97 viewers. These viewers do not allow editing and cannot pass on the macro viruses to which Microsoft Office software is prone. There is also a full version of Powerpoint, so any .ppt files can be edited as well as viewed.

Attachments in Adobe Acrobat format, .pdf files, may be read by the Acrobat reader.

Web format, .html files, can be read by the Netscape Navigator browser, and if you are using Netscape Messenger mail, this will happen automatically.

Rich Text Format, .rtf files, can be read by Word Viewer and read or edited by Word Pad and WordPerfect.

WordPerfect and Quattro Pro files can be read and edited.

As yet, we don't have Office 2000 viewers. If you receive Office 2000 attachments, you are advised to ask the sender to save them as an earlier version and resend them.

Reader survey
Joanne Casey

In the next issue of Keynotes we will be including details of a readers' survey. It is hoped this will enable us to ensure we are meeting the needs of our readership.

Your comments are of course welcome at any time and can be sent to me at *jmc8@york.ac.uk*.

Staff News
Mike Jinks welcomes new members of staff

Congratulations to Robert Demaine on his appointment as Head of Infrastructure. The previous Technical Service Group, managed by David Atkin who left us in July, has been renamed the Infrastructure Group to reflect its emerging role. Some internal restructuring is also proposed to integrate the central systems and servers with the desktop devices, particularly PCs. Robert is well known in the University; he joined the Computing Service in 1983 and has been Head of Networking until taking up his new post. The resulting post of Head of Networking will be advertised shortly.

New Computing Service members of staff. Left: Systems Security Advisor, Arthur Clune (standing), MIS Support Officer, Nicola Normandale and Software Technician, Daniel Shelton (see Keynotes Vol. 26 No.6). Right: Personal Systems Support Programmer, Samantha Vines.

Dr Arthur Clune joined us at the beginning of July as the System Security Advisor. System security has been growing rapidly in importance and we reached the point where some dedicated resource was necessary, both for the central systems and to advise departments. Arthur joins us from the Mathematics Department where he was a Research Fellow in the Networks and Non-linear Dynamics Group, whose work includes the simulation and analysis of telecom networks.

Nicola Normandale joined us in June as MIS Support Officer. Nicola comes to us from the commercial sector, having worked in IT for such household names as ASDA and Next before joining Nestle.

Linda Hearn has joined us as a secretary. Linda previously worked for Northumberland County Council in the Social Services Department.

Samantha Vines is our new Personal Systems Support Programmer. Sam is a York Graduate who has worked for Computer Science Corporation at the BAE Systems (AIRBUS) site at Filton in PC deployment and support.

We welcome our new colleagues and trust they will have a stimulating and enjoyable time at the University.

news in brief

Online Enquiry Tracking and Reporting
Michael Clark writes about new ETS features

The Computing Service runs an Enquiry Tracking System (ETS) to monitor the progress of all problems and queries submitted to the Department both via the Information Desk and through direct contact with specialist

However, because ETS is an in-house development, it is possible to incorporate extra features into the system which improve the quality and level of service offered to users by the Department.

information comes to light regarding a particular enquiry which could be helpful to the member of staff dealing with the problem, it can and should, be sent directly to ETS from this page.
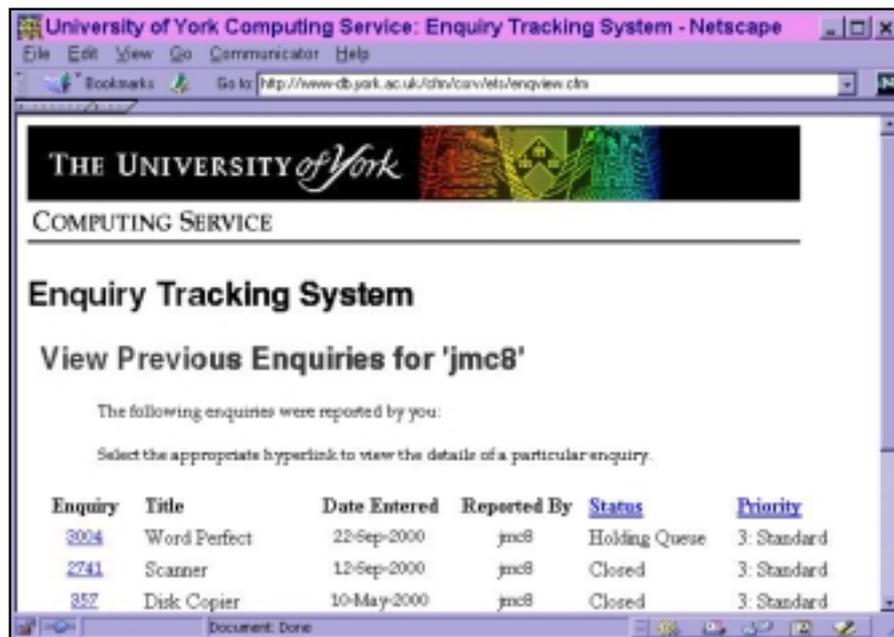
staff members. The system is web-based and has been developed in-house to a detailed bespoke specification using ColdFusion web application development technology to meet the needs of both Computing Service staff and external users. ETS was launched within the Computing Service in March of this year, to replace the ageing character-based system UHL, which was running on the VMS system.

Up until now, users in the University may not have noticed any real differences in the way enquiries are handled by the Computing Service. Problems and queries can still be reported in person, by telephone or via e-mail.

To this end, a new service has been introduced, which provides two useful functions. Firstly, instead of using the traditional communication methods, users can enter enquiries directly into ETS via a form on YorkWeb. This facility has been introduced in an attempt to glean as much relevant information as possible about a specific enquiry. This should reduce the need to contact the user for more information, and hopefully speed up the enquiry resolution process as a result.

The second feature allows details of enquiries previously reported by users , including the current status and details of any work carried out so far, to be viewed online. Also, if any further

When entering a new enquiry, users receive an automated e-mail notification, which contains the reference number for the newly generated enquiry. It also contains details of how to view the enquiry details online. Any subsequent e-mails originating from ETS, be they requests for further information or notification that an enquiry has been resolved, will also include these details.

This new service can be found at: *http://www-db.york.ac.uk/cfm/csrv/ets/engintro.cfm* and a link to it is provided from the Computing Service home page, by following the 'Help Pages and Guides' and 'Problem Reporting' links.

Classroom News
Brian Souter

At the time of writing, we are on track to complete the upgrade and maintenance of our classrooms and study areas by the start of the Autumn Term. The main aim has been to replace our old equipment and furniture in the J B Morrell Library, Langwith College Library and Goodricke College Library, and to move our Alcuin PCs to room A/D270 to make way for the building works. We have also undertaken general maintenance of all the remaining rooms, including an annual clean of the PCs.

In the J B Morrell Library we have moved to an area behind the Enquiry Desk on the 1ˢᵗ floor, again to make way for building development. This has allowed us to install 14 units, comprising newly designed desks and modern PCs. In Langwith College Library we have moved into the old bookstore area and installed 21 units, and in Goodricke we have taken over the entire ground floor of the old College Library and installed 46 units.

Each of the new PCs is a Viglen Genie 2+ with Piii700MHz processor, 128Mb RAM, 10Gb hard drive and internal 100Mb Zip drive. The new tables have been designed to be more comfortable and ergonomic without compromising on the total number of units or security.

In Goodricke, we have placed the old classroom printer in G/169 and installed a second one downstairs in the new room. There are some concerns that the printer in G/169 may increase disruption during lectures and we will withdraw it from service if these concerns are realised. Similarly, we have moved the colour flatbed scanner and the 35mm scanner from the Langwith College Study room to a more spacious area in Derwent D/104. If access to these scanners conflicts with the use of this room for Unix workstations then we may need to reconsider.

Coping with Power Cuts
Joanne Casey explains what to do

The recent power failure caused immediate inconvenience to users and some further problems, as the failure of the uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) disrupted the smooth running of the servers.

The Computing Service is looking at its own procedures for dealing with the knock-on effects of any such future problems, but there are a number of steps which users can take to alleviate difficulties.

If there is a major power failure, switch your machine off and don't switch it on again until the power is back and has been steady for 10 minutes. It will take some time to re-establish the network, and any trouble in your local wiring cabinet may delay the process even more.

If the outage is very long, say an hour or more, it will take significantly longer to re-establish the network, as the emergency power supplies will have run out and all systems will have been closed down.

The Information Desk will be busy during any such incident; you should only ring them if nearby machines are back to running normally and yours is not.

It is possible that any file writing going on when the power went off will have corrupted the file. Your PC will almost certainly prompt you for a scandisk on reboot, which will allow you to check for any problems. Remember files held centrally are regularly backed up and that many applications have timed backups at regular intervals. As a precautionary measure, it is worth setting this time fairly short as it doesn't interfere with your work.

WordPerfect Office 2000

John Robinson writes of good and not so good new features

The latest version of Corel's office suite (WordPerfect word-processor, Quattro Pro spreadsheet, and Presentations drawing and display package) has recently been made available on the Windows 95 network. The suite as a whole is known as WordPerfect Office 2000, and the components as WordPerfect 9 etc.

New features in WordPerfect

The new suite has a number of useful new features:

• dynamic preview of formatting changes allows you to see the effect of different potential formatting options without actually modifying the document. If, for instance, you highlight a paragraph, then pull down either the font name or point size menus, WordPerfect 9 displays a box showing the selected text (rather than just 'AaBbYyZz') in the different formats as you scroll down. It will also alter the selected text on the screen, so you can check the appearance and line breaks. If you decide not to alter the text, just click back on the document to close the pull-down menus.

• customized printing options allow you to alter the printed size of the document at the last moment. If you have an A4 page you would like to use as a poster, then after **File | Print**, click the **Customize** tab and click **Poster**, and select an enlargement ratio. WordPerfect 9 will print out multiple sheets which you can cut and paste (using old fashioned Earth tools) to make a larger sheet. Similarly you can easily print reduced scale thumbnails of all the pages of a document.

• conversions to and from other packages (eg Microsoft Word) are reported to be more comprehensive and robust. WordPerfect will remember if a document was originally imported from a Word format, and asks you if you want to save it in the same format.

• you can now produce Acrobat Reader (.PDF) files directly from WordPerfect (**File | Publish to PDF...**), without needing any extra software such as Distiller. This is useful for putting complex documents containing graphics and equations on the web, as an alternative to HTML files.

• a number of menu items have been moved around, so that, for instance, the sub-divide page has moved to a button on the **File | Page setup**, **Margins/Layout tab**. If you are used to using Microsoft Word, there is a new menu layout which follows that of Word more closely.

• the **Format | Make It Fit** feature can now be applied to a portion of the document, rather than just the whole. So if you need a 'one page summary' at the start of a report, WordPerfect 9 will squeeze the format in various ways to put just the selected text on one printed page.

• the top and side cells of a table can be 'skewed' to give a three-dimensional appearance, using the **Format** option when you right click a table, and selecting the **Skew** tab.

• for details of other new features, see **Help | Help Topics, Index**, and type **new**.

You may have read that WordPerfect 9 can be programmed using Microsoft's Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) techniques; in light of Melissa and other viruses which exploit this technology, we have decided *not* to install this feature. WordPerfect 9 can still, of course, use WordPerfect's own macro language.

Changes to Quattro Pro

The spreadsheet program Quattro Pro has seen a few changes as well. Here again, the menus have been re-arranged, but these are well described in the Help topic "Where did it go?". The most obvious change to the display is a small blue triangle in each cell that contains a formula.

The conversion of Excel files is improved, and there are options under **Tools | Settings** to make the behaviour of the package more like Excel or earlier versions of Quattro. If you select the Quattro 7 menu, this item is no longer available, so it looks like you can't go back, but in fact right-clicking the menu bar itself allows you to pick up the Quattro 9 menu.

Documentation and Web pages

As well as the on-line Help, there are manuals in Acrobat format for each of the components. These can be found in the **!Help and Documentation** menu item on the Start menu for each function.

There are hints and tips for using the new version of WordPerfect on the web, at: *http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/help/wp/pages.sup/wp9/topic.htm*. The easiest way to

reach these is from **Start | Programs | Text Processing | ! Help and documentation |WordPerfect 9 Hints**. Most of the hints for WordPerfect 8 are also applicable to WordPerfect 9. Another way to get to the web pages is to use the University's web search: for instance, go to the University's home page, click **Search**, type **endnotes**, and click **Search !**, and you will see a number of links to web pages about how to format endnotes in a WordPerfect document.

And now for the bad news

Usually newer major software releases are expected to fix old bugs and introduce new features. OK, the new version may be bigger and hence slower than the old one, but you'll be buying a new faster PC soon, so who cares? What you don't expect is that the software gets *worse* and things which used to work well become, in effect, useless.

Well I am afraid that *has* happened with WordPerfect Office suite in a number of areas.

The one which causes me most annoyance is WordPerfect's Internet Publisher. I have used this for many years (since WordPerfect for Windows 6.1) to produce web pages to support all sorts of software. You can see the results in the help pages referred to above – they are fairly simple, mostly text and some graphics for icons, the odd list or table. For this sort of work, I find WordPerfect 8's Internet Publisher very easy to use, and I have created lots of pages without using any HTML coding. But with WordPerfect 9 this feature has become much worse. The new version will not even

read its own output: if you save a web page with a list in, when you re-open it in WordPerfect the format has changed. Previously a horizontal rule was displayed as a black/white pair of lines (giving an attractive 3-d appearance), but now only a white line is drawn, which becomes invisible if the background colour is changed to white. Because of these problems, I am forced to write web page documents about WordPerfect 9 using WordPerfect 8.

There are other problems to do with graphics, particularly with equations and Encapsulated Postscript diagrams. There is an annoying delay in the Help appearing for the first time in a session, but this is possibly due to how the suite has been installed on our network, rather than a shortcoming in the package itself.

Switching between versions

There are features in both systems which are not available or do not work well in the other. I imagine therefore that both systems will be available for the remaining lifetime of the Windows 95 service, and some users may change between using the two versions quite often. There is no problem with this, but remember that some features like QuickCorrect and QuickWords use data files which are specific to one version. You will also find that opening a file from Explorer or Netscape uses the last version you installed (or for which you use the Reset Application) procedure. If you want to force

a specific version to be used to open files in this way, there are icons in **Start | Programs | Text Processing | ! Help and Documentation** to set this up.

Sophos Anti-Virus
John Illingworth

We have just embarked on our second year of the Sophos Anti Virus licence agreement. I think it's worth reminding you that this software is available for staff and students to run on their own PCs. Anyone with a York staff or student user id can download the latest version from Yorkweb, at: *http://www.york.ac.uk/services/ cserv/sw/sophos/ sophos_antivirus.htm*. This should be done every month, as new virus signatures are distributed on the first Monday of each month. It is particularly important for those using Microsoft Office components, as the commonest viruses at the moment are macro viruses for these products. You can download to your home PC over the Internet, but a toll-free internet connection is recommended, as it is over 5Mb. The web site has details of the different downloading methods.

To put your mind at rest, Sophos makes no appreciable difference to performance or load time and only takes about 10 min a month to keep up to date.

Do it – it's worth it!

Computing Service LDAP Project
John Byrne

Earlier this year the Computing Service set up a project to implement a new central facility called an LDAP Directory. Service. LDAP stands for Lightweight Directory Access Protocol. In simple terms an LDAP directory is a database which can be distributed across the Internet but which is seen as a coherent whole when accessed via one of its servers. LDAP clients such as web browsers, diary managers and so on can communicate with LDAP servers to read and write data. In addition to providing data access, servers communicate with each other to ensure efficient distribution and management of the underlying database.

LDAP technology is modelled on an earlier technology called X500, but has been simplified and adapted for use with the Internet. It has become increasingly popular in recent years and is now used by many organisations to support key IT processes.

LDAP databases are organised in a hierarchical manner, much like your computer filestore, but instead of having folders and files, they are made up of 'container objects' and 'leaf objects'. Container objects can store a mixture of leaf objects and other container objects. Leaf objects store collections of names and values. Relational database users can think of containers as tables, objects as records and names as fields.

LDAP directories are designed for very fast access and are commonly used in processes such as user authentication, access control, and storage of machine settings and user preferences. They are also suitable for applications which retrieve data much more frequently than storing it.

LDAP databases are organised in a hierarchical manner, much like your computer filestore, but instead of having folders and files, they are made up of 'container objects' and 'leaf objects'.

The LDAP Project group is currently working with two systems – Microsoft's Active Directory and the iPlanet/ Netscape Directory Server. Active Directory is central to the Windows 2000 system and is mainly being used to support basic Windows 2000 functionality, however it is also expected to be used to evaluate diary management software as part of another Computing Service project. The iPlanet Directory Server is currently being used to develop the following services and applications:

User authentication

where supported PCs and central UNIX systems will use LDAP during the logon process.

Web access control

where content providers will be able to restrict document access to specified groups of users.

White pages information

an enhanced version of the current online telephone and email directory.

Support for address book management

for client applications such as Netscape Messenger which can access LDAP directories

Support for diary management software

for evaluation of diary systems which use LDAP to store user and group information.

The group is considering a wide range of issues arising from the introduction of this technology and further articles will appear in due course.

In the meantime if you would like further details please contact John Byrne in the Computing Service.

User Guides
Joanne Casey

New User Guides have been produced for this academic year, in a fetching pink for taught course students and tasteful orange for staff and research students. These should be issued, along with a copy of the Regulations for the Use of Central Computing Facilities, to all new users. They will also be of use to existing users who have not had a new User Guide for the last year or two. Copies are available from the Computing Service Information Desk.

Netscape Upgrade
John Byrne writes of more upgrading...

Release 4.75 of Netscape Communicator – Navigator, Messenger, and Composer – is now available on supported connection PCs. The following plugins, which allow easy viewing of extended web resources, are installed with Navigator:

Plugin	Version	Content
Java Plugin	1.3	Java applets
IBM techexplorer	3	TeX, LaTeX and MathML
WHIP!	4	Autocad
Chemscape Chime	2.0.3	ISIS/Draw chemical structures
RealPlayer	8	Video/audio
QuickTime	4.1.2	Apple Quicktime formats
Authorware	5.1	Macromedia Authorware
Shockwave Flash	4.0	Macromedia Shockwave
Shockwave Director	8.0	Macromedia Director
Acrobat	4.05	PDF
Cosmo Player	2.1.1	V R M L

Although we would much prefer users to be able to install their own plugins, there are limitations within Netscape which make this impractical on a shared network. Please contact the Information Desk if you would like to request a plugin. Providing there is evidence of a general demand, and no technical, legal or financial constraint we will attempt to install it at the next upgrade.

Information Literacy in All Departments (ILIAD) 2000/2001
Sue Hodges

In the light of feedback workshops with both tutors and students, this year's ILIAD for University programme has been modified. It has been streamlined into four sessions, which will run during weeks three to six of the Autumn Term. The sessions comprise: Computing at York, Researching and Evaluating Information Sources, Word Processing for Academic Purposes and Presenting Information using a Computer. As before, the programme may be taken via either a taught course or self-study. For the first time self-study materials will be available throughout the whole of the academic year, rather than just in the Autumn Term.

We now also plan to run ILIAD for the Workplace courses throughout the whole of the academic year, beginning in the Autumn Term with the popular Office Skills.

Further information is available from: *http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/iliad/*.

Networking News
Robert Demaine

In networking terms this summer must rank as one of the busiest ever. After months of detailed evaluation work, Gigabit Ethernet products from Extreme Networks were selected to take over from the Newbridge ATM-based solution at the core of the network. An Extreme Black Diamond switch router, capable of routing nearly 100 million packets per second and often the platform of choice for large Internet Service Providers, sits in the Computing Service machine room, linked to five smaller cousins around campus at speeds up to 1000Mbits/second. But it is not just a matter of performance – the new network has also been designed to be as resilient as possible, so that in the event of a link failure, a backup will kick in to maintain service. Constraints of time and budget have meant that it has not been possible to replace the Newbridge equipment entirely. We estimate that about 50% of campus users have now been migrated to the new infrastructure.

Changes to the core network have been complemented by a major programme of upgrades to the "edge" of the network i.e. to the equipment in the wiring closet at the other end of the cable in your office. Formerly this would have been a hub – a box where perhaps 24 users would share a single 10Mbits/second link and all traffic would be broadcast onto every port. Many hubs have been replaced over the summer by new high-performance switches which handle traffic more efficiently and support speeds of up to 100Mbits/second.

news

Computing Service Address

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Computing Service            Telephone:   Switchboard (01904) 430000
University of York                        Direct dialling (01904) 43 followed by ext no.
Heslington                   Fax:         (01904) 433740
YORK YO10 5DD                Email:       username@york.ac.uk
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Also, try the World Wide Web: http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/

Information Desk

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              Telephone:   ext 3838
              Email:       infodesk
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The Information Desk is open from 9am to 5.15pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 4.15pm Friday (*may be closed for training Wednesdays 2pm-3pm*), for problem solving, advice and information, fault reporting, network connections, file conversion, sales, course bookings, registration and documentation. Printed output can be collected from the lobby entrance which is open from 8am to midnight.

Computing Service Staff:

Director:	Mike Jinks	3801	*kmj1*
Deputy Director:	Peter Roberts	3802	*pdr1*
Departmental Secretary:	Lorraine Moor	3801	*lsm1*
Head of Infrastructure	Robert Demaine	3808	*rld1*
Head of User Services:	John Illingworth	3803	*jji1*
Head of Technical Services:	Doug Moncur	3815	*dgm1*
Head of MIS:	Kay Mills-Hicks	2101	*kmh8*
Head of Systems:	Andrew Smith	3809	*abs4*
Operations Manager:	Brian Souter	3814	*bs1*
Information Officer:	Joanne Casey	3805	*jmc8*

Sue Bolton	2102	*sjb28*		Paul Hodgson	4347	*ph25*	
Mike Brudenell	3811	*pmb1*		Geoff Houlton	2100	*gph2*	
Lisa Burkinshaw	3818	*ljb4*		Jenny Jackson	4455	*jj5*	
John Byrne	3812	*jdb1*		John Marsden	3832	*jpm1*	
David Chambers	3742	*dac6*		John Mason	3813	*jrm13*	
Michael Clark	3745	*mpc3*		Darren Munday	3821	*dam6*	
Arthur Clune	3129	*ajc22*		Nicola Normandale	4695	*ncn1*	
Paul Conacher	4346	*pac1*		Colin Rea	3817	*cr9*	
Steve Downes	3741	*sd21*		Chris Reece	3807	*car7*	
Debra Fayter	3839	*daf3*		John Robinson	3833	*jsr1*	
Ken Finch	4452	*kf1*		Sam Scott	3817	*svs2*	
Rob Fletcher	3816	*rpf1*		Daniel Shelton	4349	*ds23*	
Kevin Gardner	3739	*pkg4*		Samantha Vines	3749	*sccv1*	
Chris Gowland	3823	*cg1*		Nick Walker	3897	*njw8*	
Peter Halls	3806	*pjh1*		Timothy Willson	2123	*ftmw1*	
Linda Hearn	3800	*ldh8*		Michael Woodhead	3825	*mw28*	
Sue Hodges	3839	*sh32*					