

key notes

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Managing Mailing Lists



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key notes

Volume 24, Number 3

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From the Editor

Any users leaving York at the end of the summer, whether for good or just for the summer vacation, should spare some thought to putting their computing affairs in order. Doug Moncur's feature article Managing Mailing Lists, pages 4-5, and Brian Souter's Undergraduate Leavers on page 8 contain helpful advice.



An issue which has excited much comment to the Service, and discussion in usenet newsgroups has been the trial of advertising on classroom PCs. More information is given opposite.

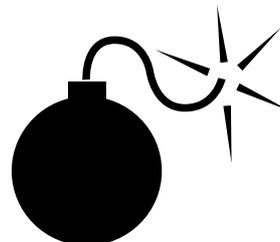


Computing Service says goodbye to Chris Joy, who has landed a job in the big city. For this and more staff news see page 2.

Joanne Casey

millennium countdown

29 weeks to go!



Are you prepared? See <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/offdocs/y2k.htm> for further information.

Advertising on Classroom PCs

Joanne Casey

A small subset of the classroom PCs are being used for the trial of an advertising scheme. This trial will last for the duration of the summer term. The company Simply Internet Ltd is running the scheme, and will provide adverts that are of interest to students, such as jobs, services, and products. The University and the Computing Service have a veto over the inclusion of any advertisements.

The University has been approached with various advertising proposals: Information Committee agreed at its February meeting to this trial. A monthly fee is paid for each PC on which the program is installed. Currently the trial, which will run for three months, is on 100 PCs. The scheme could provide substantial income.

One problem has been encountered so far; the icon was designed to be 'always on top' - that is, it remains visible when users are working in an application. Although it can be moved to anywhere on the screen, this has proved to be a source of irritation to users, and of concern to the Computing Service. The issue has been raised with the company, who have agreed that users will be able to 'kill' the icon by typing <ctrl><alt> then selecting "clickme", and clicking "end task". The Computing Service is keen to hear the views of users on the subject, which should be passed to Andrew Smith (abs4). These will be collated and referred to Information Committee. At this stage it is not possible to enter into correspondence with those who wish to comment, but users should be assured that their views will be considered.

Computing Service Millennium Action Plan

Dave Atkin

We have now built our Millennium Test Network (a smaller replica of the live network) which we are using to test the rollover to the year 2000. This testing includes the hardware and software components which are required to provide all the basic central services, and also many items of applications software.

If you have a specific testing requirement, eg some software you wish to try out on one of these test

systems, or large datasets involving date information, contact Rob Fletcher (rpf1).

For background information and details of how to check if your PC is likely to have millennium problems, see

<http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/offdocs/y2k.htm>

Upgrade to Kings Manor Networking

Robert Demaine

Work is under way to provide a significantly improved network link from Heslington to the King's Manor campus. Under the terms of a contract negotiated by YHMAN (Yorkshire & Humberside Metropolitan Area Network) the University is to purchase a 34Mbit/sec connection to replace the existing 2 x 2Mbit/sec links.

Using new equipment from Newbridge Networks (a pair of 36060 Modular LAN Service Units for those interested in such things), the new link will effectively extend the University's ATM network

infrastructure to the city centre campus, improving overall performance and making possible the use of delay-sensitive applications such as high-quality video. The new link will be commissioned over the summer vacation and be in service for the next academic year.

In the future it is anticipated that a small amount of the available bandwidth will be used to carry internal telephony between Heslington and King's Manor, saving the cost of the current dedicated leased line for telephone traffic.

Staff News

Mike Jinks

After two years with us, Chris Joy has left for a new post in the 'City' where he will utilise his system security expertise in the banking sector.

Apart from being responsible for the central computer servers and for the setting up of the new SGI workstations in D/104, Chris has taken on the major role of improving the security of the University's networking infrastructure with the implementation of the firewall. The first phase of this has been completed, as have some aspects of phase two but his departure will inevitably slow down developments in this area. We wish Chris all the best in his new post.

David Chambers has joined us as a Computing Assistant. David worked in the operational support of the IT Services for York Waterworks and has been involved in help desk activities as well as more general support/training functions. We now have a full complement of Information Desk staff and we wish David every success as he joins the team.

ILIAD - A Student's View

Susanne Hodges

We were pleased to spot recently the following endorsement in the 1999 - 2001 Alternative Prospectus, produced by the Students Union:

'ILIAD: If you come to York go on this course. Information Literacy In All Departments trains you how to use the network and some of its programs and is vital to your success at the university. Communication is increasingly done by email and most tutors expect word-processed essays so for a mere ten hours of teaching (or none with the books-only route) and £15 you can benefit a great deal. This is a genuine student view and everyone who didn't do this course doesn't know how valuable it could have been.'

Similar happy views were also expressed in our 1988/9 course evaluations.

For more information on the ILIAD programme, please visit <http://www.york.ac.uk/service/cserv/training/iliad/objectives.htm>.

Open Day

Joanne Casey

At this year's Open Day the Computing Service provided two information stands, one in Computing Service, and one in Central Hall. Fliers in the form of floppy disks were handed out to passers by, and proved effective: we attracted a great deal of interest with almost 500 visitors. Prospective students were able to learn about our services, surf the web, design their own web page and speak to staff. The ILIAD program attracted a lot of interest from computer-shy users. For the IT literate, the burning questions were speed of connections and the availability of dial-up access to the campus network.

Computing Help on YorkWeb

Joanne Casey

A wide range of user support can be found on the Computing Service web pages at <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/advice/>

Our Hints and Tips section provides quick answers to frequently asked questions, and is updated regularly, often in response to questions from users.

Our guides on the web range from PDF versions of quick reference guides, to full sets of course notes. Again, this is a service we are constantly expanding. These are accessible to all users on campus machines and to York users accessing the network externally, on provision of a user name and password.

Other help facilities include a glossary of computing terms, and provision to report a problem on line.

Bibliographic Software Evaluation

Vivienne Hemingway

Computing Committee has recently requested a re-evaluation of PC bibliographic software with a view to the possible replacement of Papyrus as the University's supported Bibliographic database software.

A project group has been established consisting of members of staff of the Computing Service and the

Library. At this early stage we are soliciting information on what bibliographic software is currently being used in departments, and what features would be required in a replacement to Papyrus.

If you have any comments you would like to send us, or if you would like to be involved in evaluating, please e-mail vwh1@york.ac.uk.

Information Desk News

Brian Souter

Six months ago we were looking forward to making a number of improvements on the Information Desk to provide a more effective and reliable service. The loss of two key members of staff in quick succession has made it a real struggle since then just to stand still. The recruitment phase is at least now complete with Paul Hodgson joining us in March and David Chambers in May. Just another month or so to allow for their training and we should be back to where we were!

Behind the scenes we have continued to consider improvements which largely revolve round replacing the telephone system and the enquiry logging system, and introducing a web based form to improve e-mail access. We are very keen to produce an integrated system which will give the desk staff access to user profile information, service support details, network and inventory data, and a knowledge database. All this has to interface with the enquiry logging system and an internal order processing system. With an NT-based telephone system this integration can even be taken a step further.

To date we have decided to recruit a programmer for one year and work will start in the Summer. We

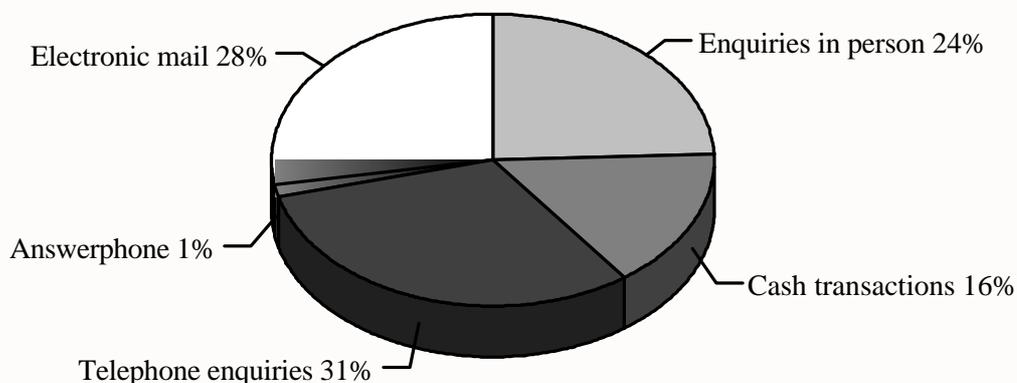
plan to take advantage of the latest programming tools which provide web interfaces to databases. Ongoing evaluation of available telephone systems has reduced the choice to two and we hope to make a decision shortly.

Apart from allowing us to integrate caller information into our desk interface, the new telephone system will provide additional features to reduce the problems of contacting a busy information desk. These will include better messaging to give current information on our services and the facility to leave messages for our staff to call back. Improved call management will also allow us to route calls to support staff.

All these changes have to be considered along with how we manage our staff in order to deal with the volume of enquiries received at the desk. The pie chart below shows the number of transactions during the Spring Term. It details an almost equal number of people calling at the desk, telephoning or sending e-mails. We have to manage these queues and have the correct number of staff in the correct place to deal with them. This takes us full circle back to the importance of having a full complement of well trained staff.

Information Desk Usage

Spring Term 1999



update

Managing Mailing Lists

Doug Moncur

Mailing lists are a really good way to share information and conduct discussions - whether scholarly or otherwise - on a wide range of topics. However mailing lists are very reliant on your having a valid email address and enough filespace to receive the message - after all, the program that sends out the messages to subscribers is only a computer program. It doesn't know you're having a fab time para-gliding in Oludeniz and that you really do want the messages on Tokarian hand weaving.

The mailing list program will send the stuff until the mail delivery fails and it will then send a complaining 'Could not deliver to this address' message to the list administrator. At this point the list administrator will probably unsubscribe you from the mailing list, which solves their problem but leaves you with a full mailbox, which means no one else can send you email.

If you're leaving York, you may nominate an address to have your mail forwarded on to. Mail is in fact only forwarded on for the first month, after which time the York mail server sends a message back to the originator. This can be a bad thing for email lists as some of them are configured such that the list distribution process on the server appears as the originator of the message. The result is that it gets this message and, only being a dumb program, assumes you want to post the message - which in turn generates another response etc, etc. Hopefully the human administrator will notice, kill the problem and unsubscribe you. If you're very lucky they might even resubscribe your new address.

The solution is to unsubscribe from your York address and resubscribe from your new address before you leave York. When you subscribed to the mailing list you would have been sent a message telling you how to unsubscribe yourself. Being human you've probably lost this. The procedure will depend on the type of mailing list you are subscribed to. Note that throughout you should substitute your own forename for *firstname*, your surname for *lastname*, and the name of the list concerned for *listname*.

Mailing lists from mailbase

If the messages from your mailing list come from something@mailbase.ac.uk this means that the list is resident on Mailbase, the UK academic list server. Mailbase uses an extended set of commands so dealing with mailbase lists can be much simpler than dealing with classical list servers.

Joining a mailbase list

Send a message containing the following text to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk:

```
join listname firstname lastname
stop
```

Eg:

```
join stellar-astronomy Karen Hodgetts
stop
```

Leaving a mailbase list

Send an email with the following text in the body of the message to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk:

```
leave listname
stop
```

If you are a member of several lists and you wish to unsubscribe from all of them at once, send an email with the following text in the body of the message to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk.

```
leave all
stop
```

Suspending mail from a list

The suspend command can be used to temporarily stop receiving mail from a list. Send a message containing the following text to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk:

```
suspend mail listname
stop
```

To suspend mail from all the mailbase lists you have subscribed to, send a message containing the following text to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk

```
suspend mail all
stop
```

Resumption of suspended subscriptions

To resume a suspended subscription, send a message containing the following text to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk:

```
resume mail listname
stop
```

If you want to resume all your subscriptions at once, email the following command to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk :

```
resume mail all
stop
```

Classical list servers

All commands must be sent to the list server, not the mailing list itself. The first problem you have is that there are hundreds of 'classical' list servers and you need to find the correct one in order to send it commands.

One way, if you know the name of the mailing list, is to go to <http://www.liszt.com>, which is a directory of mailing lists, and type the name of the list into the search box.

If it finds the list, *liszt* will display some information about subscribing to the list, including the address of the list server. This is typically an email address something like listserv@machine.someplace.edu.

Classical list servers usually contain in their names one of the following:

listserv
listproc
majordomo

These names refer to the type of list server software the machine is using. However listserv, listproc, and majordomo all have a small set of common commands.

Unsubscribing from a classical list server

Log into your York account and send a mail message to the listserver (not the mailing list) containing only the following text in the body of the message:

`signoff listname`

Some listservers allow the use of unsubscribe as an equivalent command to signoff.

Subscribing to a mailing list from a classical listserver

From the account from which you wish to receive mail from the mailing list, send a message to the listserver containing only the following text:

`subscribe listname`

Signatures

Some classical listservers will try to interpret any signature embedded in your mail message as valid commands. This is of course very silly of them and can cause problems. It may merely generate a spurious error message when attempting to process the signature but sometimes it can cause your entire command sequence to be rejected.

If this seems to be happening, try resending the

message without your signature. If you can't temporarily get rid of your signature, either by deleting it out of the body of the message you are sending or by temporarily disabling it in your mail client software, try the following:

Put a double hyphen followed by a space (--) in the line immediately before your signature. Some list server software treats -- as 'ignore everything after -'. Eg you could change the message

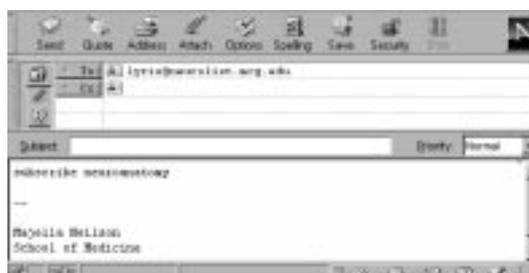
subscribe neuroanatomy

Majella Neilson
School of Medicine
Poppleton University

to

subscribe neuroanatomy

--
Majella Neilson
School of Medicine
Poppleton University



Alternatively some list servers - in particular majordomo - support the end command, which means 'end of command sequence'.

To use the end command in the previous example you would change the message to:

subscribe neuroanatomy
end

Majella Neilson
School of Medicine

Getting more help

All list servers - ie listserv, listproc, majordomo and mailbase - will send some sort of basic command reference information if sent a message containing the following text:

help

Software Licensing

John Illingworth

Software has a lot in common with books - you may own the paper that your copy of the latest Booker prize winner is printed on, but you certainly don't own the story. Equally you may own the plastic CD, but Travis (or their minders) own the songs.

You may be confident that all software supplied by the Computing Service on centrally managed systems is licensed for use on those systems. However it must not be copied onto any other system or taken home and you can't load it onto stand-alone departmental or individually owned computers, without committing some kind of offence.

Some of the software may be distributed to individuals but this must be done via the Computing Service Information Desk. The licences that allow this are different for each item of software - some of them demand that the computer upon which you mount the software must be the property of the University. Some don't care who owns the computer so long as it is on campus. Some have no interest in the location or ownership of the computer, so long as the user is a member of staff or a student of the University, and is using the software for educational

purposes. Some define educational purposes more tightly than others. There are licences available for purchase by staff or students, but the staff concerned must be part of the teaching process. For instance, Microsoft say:

"Teachers (Full Time or Part Time) currently practising at any qualifying Education Establishment. Teachers must provide proof of status (Letter from Institution). (1 copy/per app/per person)."

Whereas Inprise, (formerly Borland) are a little more relaxed and allow "teachers, lecturers, tutors, professors and support staff" to make use of their staff/student deal.

The definition of a student is clearer, it's usually someone registered on a course leading to a qualification at a recognised institution.

When looking at an educational software deal, check what you are getting. Some suppliers (Corel, for instance) do an excellent deal, but what you get isn't quite the same as what the retail customer gets, it's an "academic edition" usually comprising a full copy of the core

product, but missing some of the extras.

Any deal brokered by CHEST (Combined Higher Education Software Team) will have conditions based on the CHEST Code of Conduct (<http://www.chest.ac.uk/conduct.html>) but may differ in detail. If the CHEST deal is an unlimited site licence, that still doesn't mean you can pass software on to other staff or students, all copies must be issued and noted by the Computing Service as a condition of the licence.

In the past we loaned copies of disks or CD-ROMs for users who qualified for a deal, but this often resulted in queues, as many people find it very difficult to return loan disks. We are therefore instituting a CD-ROM copying system (where the licence allows) for which we will make a small charge (less than a full price CD, but more than Naxos).

Space in Keynotes is limited and all software licences are different, so if you are interested in obtaining software at educational rates, consult the Information Desk.

New National Datasets Service System

John Robinson

MIDAS (<http://midas.ac.uk>) provides access to a variety of datasets covering the social sciences, economics and the physical sciences. As reported in the January issue of Keynotes, the current host machine, a multi-processor Sun CS6400 system, will shortly be replaced by an E6500 system with more compute power and disk space. This new machine will be largely compatible with the current one,

and users should have little difficulty over the transfer. Usernames and passwords, and data files will be copied to the new machine. See <http://www.midas.ac.uk/news.html> for details of the timescales for the transfer. A few users, who apparently have not logged into the old system for over 18 months, have been contacted by email to enquire if they want their account transferred.

Access to the machine and the datasets is free. Staff or students wishing to register for this service should contact John Robinson (jsr1, 3833) to complete the registration form and be given a username. In addition, access to many of the datasets requires a further registration with the data provider, often the Data Archive at Essex (<http://dawwww.essex.ac.uk/>). For some datasets you can register on-line.

Printing In-House Reports

Jenny Jackson

A large number of In-House Reports have been written by the MIS Group. They are tailored to meet the specific needs of certain groups or individuals. These reports reside in an area known as York Reports. The reports can be accessed by selecting option 99 from the main MAC menus and then entering the response York. There are a number of options which follow once a report has been chosen and executed. One option is to print the report, which requires responses to a number of prompts. Firstly :

Enter queue name or SLV for printer on PC or Local Network:

This requires the name of the printer queue you wish to print to eg PR\$ADMIN (the central Computing Service line printer). Choose the printer which is convenient to you, this must be a valid printer on the Alpha computers.

The next question is:

How many copies? :

simply enter the number of copies you require. You will now be presented with the following:

Enter	L	for postscript Landscape
	P	for postscript Portrait
	C	for non-laser condensed
	K	for postscript Landscape
		(width 255)
		return for non-laser:

In the majority of cases, if a report requires special printing instructions you will be informed of this when executing the report, for example:
"This report is designed for Landscape printing with the following parameters...",
 if this is the case follow the instructions using the parameters supplied on the screen.

In some cases you will receive the message:
"This report is designed for 132 width paper",
 This means the report has been designed for option **L**. If there are no instructions then it can be assumed that the report requires option **P**.

Do not use options **C** or **K** unless the report specifically tells you to. These will not work for the vast majority of reports.

If the printer you have chosen is a non-laser printer, enter return at this point (you will skip the following prompts). Otherwise select the print format that is required.

The following prompts will now be displayed:

lines per inch (as a rule enter 6) :

Unless the report has given specific instructions choose 6 or you may just return at this point and the value will default to 6.

characters per inch (as a rule enter 12) :

Again choose 12 unless instructed otherwise or just return to this prompt.

Lines per page (as a rule enter 42(L) or 64(P)) :

You may return to this prompt unless you have been instructed to enter a specific value. This will automatically default to the required values.

At this point a message should appear informing you that a job has been sent to the print queue.

If the printed report is blank, check - using the View option - that the report contains data. Make sure you have used any special print criteria and that you have entered a printer name which is valid on the Alpha computers.

MIS Training

Kay Robinson

Training courses in the use of the DWH will recommence in the autumn term. However, during the summer vacation we will be holding some data warehouse workshops for users who already have some experience of the data warehouse and Paradox. The

workshops are being held on a pilot basis, to provide a forum for users to bring along their own specific data extraction and reporting problems. MIS staff and the Database Administrators will be on hand to provide technical assistance and advice.

Participants should leave the session with reports and database queries that they can use in their job straightaway. Places on the workshops can be booked through the Information Desk and the standard booking fee of £10 will be charged.

Databases and the Web

Kay Robinson

The Computing Service has recently initiated a new project to evaluate and purchase software which will enable users to write web interfaces to databases. The requirements for this software are coming from many departments to support research, teaching and administrative

processes. The software that is selected will enable users with programming skills to use languages such as Java and Perl to write web database applications. Other tools, such as Cold Fusion and Tango which are aimed at non-programmers, will also be evaluated and implemented.

Training courses in the use of the tools will be developed and included in our course schedule in the next academic year. More details and progress with the project will be reported in the next issue of Keynotes.

MAC and the Millennium

Kay Robinson

Formal testing of the MAC system has commenced using a test Alpha system which has been set up on the University test Y2K network. At the time of writing, the clock has been advanced as far as August 1999

and various problems with financial year end (not related to millennium compliance) have been overcome. The intention is to roll the clock forward in stages as far as July 2001. We will be paying particular attention to the

rollover date and to the leap year in February 2000.

By the end of May 1999, all of the MAC system software will be certified as millennium compliant by our suppliers.

Undergraduate Leavers

Brian Souter

If you are leaving permanently at the end of the Summer term, there may be one or two things you need to sort out with your computer account. Although we will set your account to expire automatically and save any files for up to one year, you may wish to take copies or to delete unwanted files.

The expiry date for undergraduate leavers this year will be Saturday 10 July - the day after Degree Day. You should see a countdown to this expiry date when you login. If you have a requirement to use your account beyond this expiry date, or you are returning to the University in the Autumn, you can apply for an extension. You will need to collect a form at the Information

Desk and have it signed by your Head of Department.

If you have any associated accounts for which you are responsible - such as a society account - then you should consider transferring these to someone else BEFORE you leave. Any accounts owned by you will expire at the same time as your personal username.

Your e-mail may also need some attention before you leave. At the very least, you should unsubscribe from any mailing lists. If you are unsure how to do this, see pages 4-5, or look on the web at: <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/listserv.htm>.

Once your account expires, any e-mail will be rejected unless you have set a forwarding address. If you expect to have another computer account which can receive e-mail, then take a look at the following web page on our Electronic Information Desk: http://www-db.york.ac.uk/cgi-bin-auth/edesk_email.

And finally, you will need to give some thought to closing your Personal Charge Account. If your account is in credit then we will be happy to make a refund, if it is in debit then you must pay the difference before leaving. Call in at the Information Desk once you are certain you will no longer need to do any printing.

Computing Service Address

Computing Service University of York Heslington YORK YO10 5DD	Telephone: Switchboard (01904) 430000 Direct dialling (01904) 43 followed by ext no. (01904) 433740
	Fax: (01904) 433740
	Email: <i>username@york.ac.uk</i>

Also, try the World Wide Web: <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/>

Information Desk

Telephone: ext 3838
Email: *infodesk*

The Information Desk is open from 9am to 5.15pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 4.15pm Friday (*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	<i>kmj1</i>
Deputy Director:	Peter Roberts	3802	<i>pdr1</i>
Departmental Secretary:	Lorraine Moor	3801	<i>lsm1</i>
Head of Technical Services:	Dave Atkin	3804	<i>dla1</i>
Head of User Services:	John Illingworth	3803	<i>iji1</i>
Head of Personal Systems:	Doug Moncur	3815	<i>dgm1</i>
Head of MIS:	Kay Robinson	2101	<i>kr7</i>
Operations Manager:	Brian Souter	3814	<i>bs1</i>
Information Officer:	Joanne Casey	3805	<i>jmc8</i>

Sue Bolton	2102	<i>sjb28</i>	Sue Hodges	3839	<i>sh32</i>
Mike Brudenell	3811	<i>pmb1</i>	Paul Hodgson	4347	<i>ph25</i>
John Byrne	3812	<i>jcb1</i>	Jenny Jackson	4455	<i>jj5</i>
David Chambers	4347	<i>dac6</i>	Bob Marriott	4454	<i>bdm2</i>
Paul Conacher	4346	<i>pac1</i>	John Marsden	3832	<i>jpm1</i>
Mark Cook	3897	<i>rmc12</i>	John Mason	3813	<i>jrm13</i>
Robert Demaine	3808	<i>rld1</i>	Darren Munday	3821	<i>dam6</i>
Steve Downes	3741	<i>sd21</i>	Helen Parker	3800	<i>hp7</i>
Debra Fayter	3839	<i>daf3</i>	Colin Rea	3817	<i>cr9</i>
Ken Finch	4452	<i>kf1</i>	John Robinson	3833	<i>jsr1</i>
Rob Fletcher	3816	<i>rpf1</i>	Sam Scott	3817	<i>svs2</i>
Kevin Gardner	3739	<i>pkg4</i>	Andrew Smith	3809	<i>abs4</i>
Chris Gowland	3823	<i>cg1</i>	Timothy Willson	2123	<i>ftmw1</i>
Peter Halls	3806	<i>pjh1</i>	Michael Woodhead	3825	<i>mw28</i>
Vivienne Hemingway	3818	<i>vwh1</i>			