

Micro User goes on cassette for blind

A NEW resource has been created for blind BBC Micro users with the availability of *The Micro User* on audio cassette every month in conjunction with the Talking Newspaper Association.

It is the latest in a chain of developments for blind home micro owners which started in 1980 when Dr Tom Vincent of the Open University set up a project called Computing for the Blind.

The hardware he decided upon was the BBC Micro with a Votrax type speech synthesiser and this enabled him to produce a software package, *Taling Basic*, which allowed blind users to write programs in Basic just like sighted people.

The program was very user friendly and immediately became popular with the up and coming new breed of blind BBC Micro enthusiast.

Other specialised software flowed from the Vincent stable, notably a talking word processor which enables blind users to find the last word or part word they keyed if they were interrupted in their work.

More recently a screen reader has been developed by Paul Blenkhorn of Birmingham University's research centre for the education of the visually handicapped.

This allows the user to find out what is on the screen by means of a talking cursor. For example, when in screen read-

ing mode, T takes the user to the top of the screen and D is used to drop down a line.

It is an important breakthrough because it can be used with commercial word processors like Wordwise Plus, and marks the transition from custom made to off-the-shelf software.

Last year a further advance was made when the screen reader was adapted to occupy sideways RAM, leaving the whole of the BBC Micro's memory available for the user's program. The blind are now able to use most text based software, including adventure games.

In 1983, David Calderwood, a blind BBC Micro

user who had worked with Tom Vincent in evaluating his project's software, started the Visually Disabled User Group which runs a database of resources and a software library for members.

Calderwood also edits a quarterly magazine on audio cassette, *Computer Talk*, which carries software, news and contributions from members.

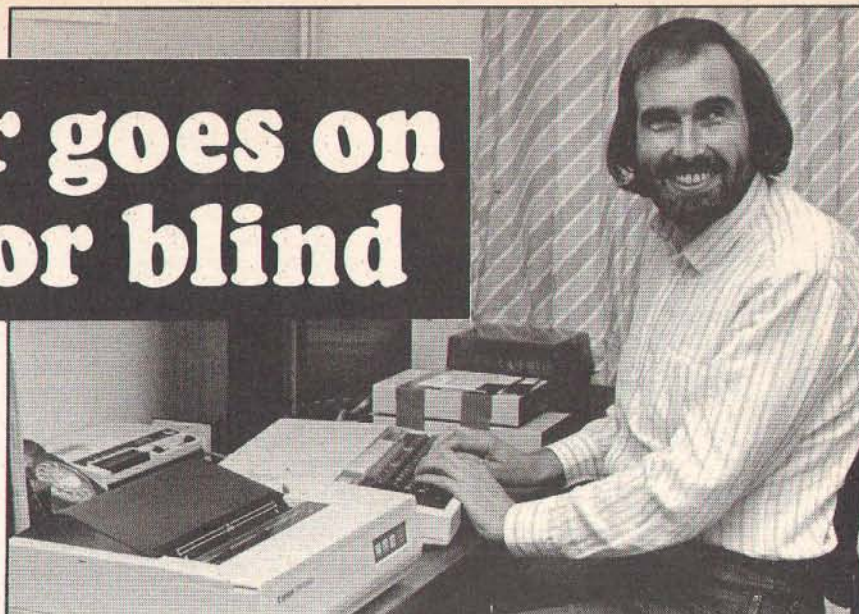
"Members have made a number of exciting breakthroughs in communications regarding the use of Prestel, teletext and RTTY", says Calderwood.

"The help of *The Micro User* in allowing its contents to be placed on tape will give further encouragement to blind

computer owners and keep them better informed about developments in the industry.

"For their part I expect these new blind 'listeners' to *The Micro User* will start contributing their letters and ideas alongside those of sighted readers".

Readers of *The Micro User* who know of visually handicapped people who might be interested in computing with the BBC Micro can send for a demonstration of the VDU Group's system and details of membership to David Calderwood, Wenallt, Harlech, Gwynedd LL46 2UE, enclosing a good quality C90 cassette and return postage and packing.



David Calderwood... runs database and edits an audio magazine for the blind

Hamsters on the keyboard

SERVICE station manager Philip Bridges wants to see Hamsters spreading throughout the UK.

That is the new nickname for ham radio fans who are now using BBC Micros to enhance their use of radio.

Southampton based Philip is editor of the newsletter for Amrac - Amateur Radio and Computers - which serves licenced radio amateurs in the Hampshire, Sussex and Wiltshire areas.

"About 40 of our members are BBC Micro owners", said Philip.

"Although most of our members live in the South of England we do have a couple of members in the North. What we should like to see and stimulate is growth in this exciting new technique.

Handling inquiries is Tony Trigell (call sign GJAF) of Gleness, East Boldre, Brockenhurst, Hants SO42 7WD.

Movie pack

SLIPPERY Slug has released its first software for the BBC Micro.

Movie Maker is a ROM-based graphics language producing animated films, but it can produce displays for almost any purpose.

The pack contains a cassette tape with an introductory movie on it and costs £29.90.

Oscars? Easy as ABC...

THE ABC Easy Word Processor by Acornsoft won two Oscars in the British Microcomputing Awards.

The writing tool for young writers from seven years and upwards gained the top award in both the home educational and the schools software sections.

The awards were presented by Dr. David Owen and the competition was jointly sponsored by the Sunday Times and Personal Computer World magazine.

Receiving the award from Dr Owen is Acornsoft marketing manager Jeremy Preston.

