

## Software course for teachers

The second pack in the Open University's *Micros in Schools* project is a training program for teachers which discusses software design and helps them to select the best programs from those available commercially. The course is intended for those teachers experienced enough to connect up a computer and run a fairly complex program. The first OU pack on educational computers, *Awareness*, would bring a user up to this level. The course requires some 40 to 50 hours' study and is suitable for both primary and secondary school teaching.

The pack starts by showing how a small Logo program is constructed and how the user can modify its operation and make short procedure calls. Educational programs are discussed, including simulations, models and

information retrieval programs; drill and practice; adaptive programs and intelligent systems.

This leads to a critical analysis of three commercially published computer-assisted learning packages so that the teacher can understand the qualities that make good software good.

*Educational Software* includes a study book, activities book and course reader, programs on disc and three commercial packages. There is also an audio cassette.

Version of the course are available for Apple II, which includes an offer for a generous discount on Apple Logo; and for the RML 380Z which includes its own RML Logo. Versions for the RML 480Z, the ZX Spectrum and the BBC model B computers are being prepared. Details from *Micros in Schools Project*, Open University, Milton Keynes.

## Walter Tusting Cocking

It is with much regret that *Wireless World* announces the death at the age of 77 of Walter Tusting Cocking, C. Eng., MIEE.

Walter Cocking was first associated with the journal in the early '30s when, as a young experimenter, he developed a number of wireless circuits. He first worked as a freelance experimenter and writer and later he was invited to use the *Wireless World* laboratory facilities. Shortly afterwards, he became a full-time member of staff. In the days before the second world war, he established his reputation as a first-class engineer with an eye for detail and an ability to convey his developments in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

Before the existence of an electronics industry and supporting component

manufacturers, it was his contention that we should publish nothing unless the constructor could make all the special parts himself. Thus, when he developed and published the first constructional articles for television, he gave precise instructions how to wind the scan coils, first having made the flared winding mandrel out of blocks of wood. Such was the quality of his engineering.

At the outbreak of war, he had already published a number of books, including his definitive work on television, *Television Receiving Equipment*. Not surprisingly, he was 'co-opted' into the army, where he was involved in secret work on military projects throughout hostilities. He never discussed this work, even years later. He liked to tell the story of coming back to Dorset House, the home of *Wireless World*, years later, to be greeted by the newspaper seller at the door with 'Evening Standard as usual sir?'. The equally undramatic Cocking simply said 'thank you'.

In the post-war era, with the editor (H. S. Pocock and later F. L. Devereux) Walter Cocking made an enormous contribution to *Wireless World*, helping to maintain and improve the engineering standards and integrity of the journal. Pursuing his goal of excellence in engineering, he developed an audio amplifier using triode valves in push-pull (PX4s) that preceded the famous Williamson amplifier.

Whilst continuing to provide constructional articles and other more theoretical material, he edited the famous *Wireless Engineer*. Under his editorship, this achieved such a reputation for quality and integrity that a number of overseas universities accepted publication of a paper or thesis in it as being of appropriate standard to award the author a degree.

Later in his career, Cocking became editor-in-chief of *Wireless World* and of the successor to *Wireless Engineer*. He retired in 1972 but maintained constant contact through letters to the editor. A truly great technical journalist, Walter Cocking was a tremendous influence on all who worked with him and will be sadly missed. TJB

## Interactive video discs for union education

It can't be very often that a trades union gets a pat on the back from a Conservative minister. Such however is the case when the Electrician's Trades Union installed an interactive video disc player in their Union Training College at Cudham. The system is to be used to train union members in microelectronic technology and the system is to be developed jointly by the union and Epic Industrial Communications with the Department of Industry providing two-thirds of the £150 000 costs. The union and Epic will provide the balance and will market the system to industry and training institutions, next year.

At the announcement of the project, Kenneth Baker, Minister for Information Technology, said, "I am very pleased to see this project launched. A trade union, an enterprising British firm and an exciting new technology are working together in a way that should be a pattern for all".

The system will combine laser video discs with one or more microcomputers to produce a package of information

graphics. According to the Managing Director of Epic, Eric Parsloe, "The system will provide a low-cost solution to a major industrial training and productivity problem and should certainly give the UK a lead in Europe".

Frank Chapple, General Secretary of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union, commented; "The EETPU is the only union to have its own training facility for running courses in new technology. Through this development the union has been able to offer a first class service that ensures that members are able to keep pace with developments in industrial technology and provide industry with the appropriate skills needed to install, commission and maintain modern plant and machinery. The joint development of the interactive videodisc learning system combines a training program on microelectronic technology with the very latest in teaching techniques and adds to the uniqueness of the union's programmes supplemented with computer-generated text and

achievement".

The videodisc learning system will be able to illustrate difficult electronics concepts and will show industrial applications of installation, maintenance and repair. The disc will contain a mixture of still frames, sequences of operation with a voice commentary and live action sequences. The computer graphics will include circuit diagrams for fault diagnosis. The union will use the system to supplement their tutors and for self-paced student learning.

The hardware to be used has not yet been selected. One option is to combine a Phillips Professional Laservision player with a BBC model B micro, using the Microtext language but other approaches are also being considered.

Epic have produced other interactive video systems including a project for an electronic manual for Rolls Royce and a diagnostic disc on gastroenterology for a drugs company.