

To kick off this **new section** we take a trip back in time to unearth the burning issues that previous PCW journalists tackled. Compiled by Matthew Howard.

20 YEARS AGO October 1979



It was a very exciting time for the young PCW (just over a year old), as the first Japanese PC had arrived in the UK. The article 'Japan Muscles into Micros' featured

the newly released Sharp MZ-80K, aimed at the Commodore PET market. The big question of the day was: 'Could the Japanese make up the year and a half lead of their competitors?' Looking back, perhaps that should have been: 'How little time will it take for the Japanese to challenge the market leaders?'

One of the first programmable calculators was reviewed by Dick Pountain, who was amazed that it could fit inside his pocket. He was highly enthusiastic about the 'good-looking' CASIO FX501P and predicted it would eat up the market for calculators below the 'almost a micro' class. Today, you can buy a scientific calculator with small change but in 1979 the FX501P set you back a hefty £84.95.

In a section called 'On the Line', consultant David Hepditch discussed the practical technicalities of Marshall McLuhan's concept of the 'Global Village'. McLuhan realised how the increasingly widespread use of personal computers in the home and office, supported by advances in telecommunications, made for some exciting possibilities. It was a prescient forecasting of the adoption of the Web. ■

15 YEARS AGO October 1984



The Commodore Plus/4 was benchtested with the magazine headliner 'Field Goal or Fumble?' below a burly US football player. The compact-sized Plus/4

was deemed a potential hit with home users and small businesses – a worthy successor to the Commodore 64 and a decent rival to Sinclair's QL. With built-in applications running under BASIC 3.5, the Plus/4 was a snip at under £250.

In an article headed 'Mind Over Matter', PCW compared artificial intelligence to the human brain. Research was under way to build a computer to mimic the awesome processing structure of the human brain and PCW revealed there were strong similarities between recent innovations in computer technology and the way the brain works. Among the major features of the human-like AI system was the full compatibility within its structure of a program's subserving functions, such as attention, memory, learning and concept formation.

Also new on the market was the Apricot F1, an inexpensive colour business micro 'with tons of bundled software' at £1,300. The Intel 8086-based machine (clocked at 4.77MHz!) was targeted to replace jaded Apples, PETs and Sanyos, and it boasted 256K of RAM and 32K ROM. The reviewer worried that its Sony 3.5in disk drive might overheat, and its unconventional mouse might better be termed a rat. ■

10 YEARS AGO October 1989



'Apple's portable Macintosh has arrived!' was the news 10 years ago this month. After two years of rumours, PCW had secured a world exclusive with a

Macintosh Portable benchtest. It boasted a 16MHz Motorola 68000 processor, 1Mb of RAM, an 'impressive' monochrome yellow-tinted screen, a lead acid battery, and a trackball – it weighed in at only 6.8kg. All for just £4,500!

In the dark old days of Windows/286 and Windows/386, PCW put HDC's new Windows Manager suite through its paces, and found 'little to criticise – and little competition'. It concluded: 'HDC's product is a vast improvement over native Windows' and 'adds an attractiveness missing from the OS'.

PCW also checked out the Badger 386 accelerator board that let you run a 386 computer (maximum 16MHz) at the top speed of a much more expensive 486 (maximum 33MHz). It was considered a good buy at £1,295. But hold on, Stop Press! Suddenly, Badger's manufacturers

TBI announced a Badger board with a 486 daughter-board. Quick someone, add a box-out!

A timely article outlined how the Soviet Union was tackling the PC revolution by writing Russian versions of popular software packages. At that time the Soviet Union was thought to be 'catastrophically lagging behind the West' in the field of computer technology – for economic and political reasons. Our article came just before the fall of the Communists and leaves one wondering how much the West's widespread adoption of PCs was the straw that broke the back of the Russian political system. ■

5 YEARS AGO October 1994



The era of Group Tests was now all the rage. We featured 15 Budget Lasers from under £400 where a price war was developing. Of the 15 models tested the cheapest was the

Mannesmann Tally T9104W at £325. Highly recommended were the HP LaserJet 4L at £462 and the NEC Silent Writer Super Script 610 at £350.

Terence Green took the wraps off Windows NT 3.5. Code-named 'Daytona', it added several features to make Windows NT a better multi-tasking network citizen in workgroups.

We also interviewed industry heavyweight Philippe Kahn, founder of Borland. There was a time when Borland was one of the big software companies alongside the likes of Microsoft and Lotus. 'Upsizing' was high on Kahn's agenda – building a company's software infrastructure around the currently installed base. Five years later, with Kahn having gone through his slimmed-down Starfish phase – the glory days are but a dim and distant memory.

Perhaps most surprising of all was PCW's slaving anticipation for the Intel 90MHz and 100MHz Pentiums, set to run rings around the first PowerPC chips and completely outclass anything AMD or Cyrix had to offer. Our recently tested 550MHz Pentium IIIs emphasise how rapidly Intel has advanced the power at the core of the PC market. ■