



pda

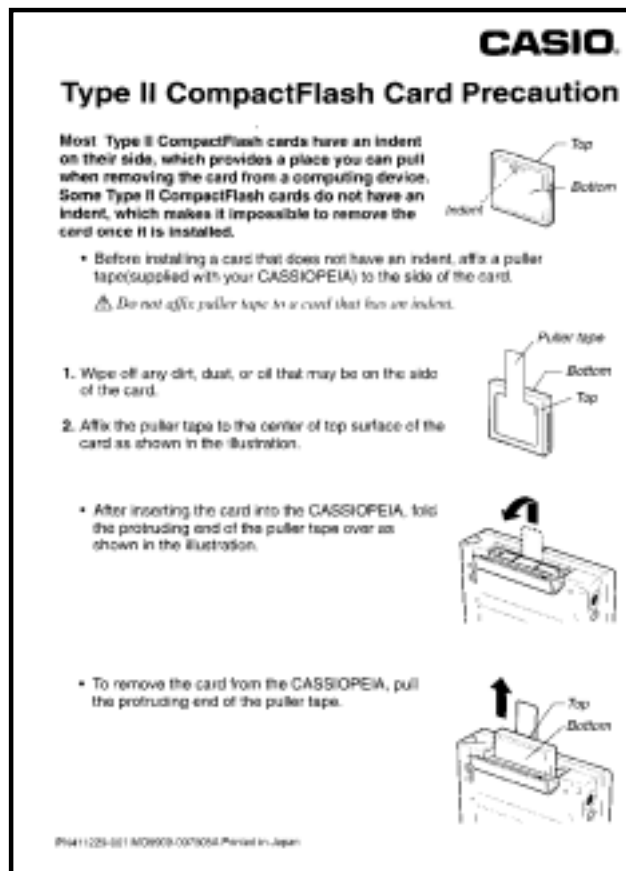
# Fear of ejection

Mark Whitehorn reviews your attempts to stop the **IBM Microdrive** getting stuck in your PDA.

I've been plugging IBM's Microdrive shamelessly in this column, because of the amazing difference it makes to the way you can use a PDA. However, IBM warns that the Microdrive shouldn't be fitted to any CF Type II slot that doesn't have an ejector mechanism. Although I had gingerly, but successfully, inserted and removed one from a Casio E100 with no such mechanism, I made it clear that I couldn't recommend this course of action.

A recent email from Andrew Rayner ([arayner@cablenet.co.uk](mailto:arayner@cablenet.co.uk)) pointed out that there is a bit of plastic in the box for the Casio E105, that can be stuck to the CF Card and used to remove it. Andy Berry quickly followed suit, and even attached a scan of the instructions (screenshot 1). He even suggests, horror of horrors, that a piece of sticky tape may also work.

So the problem is solved is it? I think not. We now face the gloriously intriguing semantic problem of determining the exact definition of an 'ejector mechanism' (and you thought this was just a PDA column). From my admittedly pedantic point of view, the word 'ejector' suggests pushing from the inside and the act of pulling on a bit of sticky tape doesn't warrant the term. My dictionary agrees with me, defining eject as to 'throw out from within', so perhaps it's more of an extractor mechanism ('draw forth' says the dictionary, which



Screenshot 1: So that's what the tape was for...

talking to the developers, is that there is a tiny hole in the Microdrive's casing that must not, under any circumstances, be covered or blocked by anything or 'Something Nasty' will happen. Exactly

## FixIt offers such features as automatically updating UK telephone area codes

sounds about right). Does the sticky solution qualify as an acceptable ejection mechanism with IBM? Who knows what goes on in the mind of Big Blue.

Semantics apart, I suspect that IBM is waiting with a probable gotcha. 'Do not', it says in the blurb, 'apply additional labels'. Is adding a sticky bit of plastic applying an additional label? Again, who knows? I don't. What I do know, from

what was not specified, but I would guess it comes under the general heading of 'letting the smoke out'.

But does all this expand the use of the Microdrive to include the Casio E100/105 PDAs? My cagey response is to leave the decision entirely to you. If you go ahead and anything untoward occurs, you have three parties that you could potentially sue, Casio, IBM and the

sticky tape manufacturers. I hope to remain firmly excluded.

### Call change

I covered the annoying changes to phone dialling codes in an earlier issue of PCW, for which I wrote some Access code (available for download from [www.penguinsoft.co.uk/mdbs](http://www.penguinsoft.co.uk/mdbs)).

There is now good news for anyone with a database of phone numbers held in a Psion - software called FixIt for EPOC is just a download away and, what's more, it's entirely free.

FixIt is a search-and-replace utility which is designed to convert

telephone area codes, and it offers such features as automatically updating UK telephone area codes (including mobile telephone numbers), adding new area codes and editing and deleting existing ones. It supports both Data and the new-style Contacts databases, will import and export your database files and is compatible with the Psion Revo, Series 5/5mx, Ericsson MC218 and Oregon Osaris.

This freeware solution from Purple Software is great for anyone struggling with the updating process. The address you need is [www.purplesoft.com](http://www.purplesoft.com).

### Get connected

Connectivity is a big issue and it isn't going to go away. I have talked before about how you can connect a PDA to the big wide world, but there are still issues that cause people grief. This isn't, in my

experience, helped by some of the product descriptions that are being pumped out by manufacturers. These can often contain more detail than you could possibly ever need, without actually giving a good overview of the functionality offered by the product.

A case in point. James Stephens emailed me about connecting a WinCE machine to the Internet. He wants to know the basic difference between a modem card and a GSM card and asked which is better.

Right, let's use the new offerings from Xircom to illustrate this. The company's new CompactCard Modem 56 GlobalAccess (above left) is a CFII device for use with Windows CE palmtop machines or, with the optional caddy, with WinCE handhelds. Once installed, you can plug the cable into a normal phone socket (the kind you'll find in the home), and it lets you connect to the world at 56Kbits/sec. So far, so good.

Now, you move from your house to the middle of a field. Hmmmm, no phone socket. You pull a mobile phone from your pocket and... the modem card is completely useless because it won't talk to a mobile. However, if you had opted for the CompactCard GSM device (above right) you could just slot it into the WinCE device, then, lo and behold, that will talk to the mobile phone.

Essentially modem cards and GSM cards offer exactly the same overall functionality (in terms of connecting to



*The one on the left is the modem card and the other is the GSM card. Yes, we know that they look identical, but the names are different and they can be used in different ways to give the same end result*

I leave it up to you to check out [www.xircom.com](http://www.xircom.com) for more details.

### Printing blues

Caroline Bucknall ([caroline@nbucknall.demon.co.uk](mailto:caroline@nbucknall.demon.co.uk)) wrote in with a couple of problems. She owns a Jornada 820 and has found that the position of the Alt and Fn keys means that caps lock or page scrolling is a two-handed job. This puts a damper on the notion that the Jornada is a handheld device, since both hands are required to work the keyboard! Is there any way to get a single keystroke function for caps lock or page scroll, perhaps by swapping the Alt and Fn keys?

She also says: 'I have spent almost £50 on a printer cable for the Jornada, in the hope of making a direct link to my Brother HL730 printer. According to the literature, this should work perfectly, since the print

[compuserve.com](http://compuserve.com)) who's having less of a rough ride in setting up and getting started than Caroline. Roderick says that he decided on a Jornada 680 for reasons of PC compatibility, and has had his fears allayed about the availability of additional software (he thinks Route Planner is excellent). He also says that the area he was worried about was a lack of software development tools, and was particularly concerned at the thought of learning a new set of API calls and the like for WinCE. However, he found [www.orbworks.com](http://www.orbworks.com), which is a C compiler for WinCE costing less than £19 and can only sing its praises.

He also points out that there is a Forms Builder that generates C code for Windows which can be found at [www.networkdynamics.co.uk](http://www.networkdynamics.co.uk).

### Happy accident

Steve Walley ([steve@walley66.freemove.co.uk](mailto:steve@walley66.freemove.co.uk)) has discovered by accident a way of both speeding up searches and compacting the database in Psions after sorting. Here's what to do:

- Sort the database.
- From the existing database, select the menu option Create New File. This will set up a blank database with the existing layout.
- From the new database, select menu option More, then Merge In.
- Delete the old database.

You will note that the file size decreases dramatically and the knock-on effect is that searches are carried out faster. Also note that with a large database the Merge In can take quite a time to load.

### Do you feel lucky?

Graham Taylor ([graham@taylor999.screaming.net](mailto:graham@taylor999.screaming.net)) emailed me about two

## Stick with a modem card unless you really do need to work in the middle of a field

an ISP) they just let you use a different conduit for the information.

So, which is better? Well the GSM card has appeal because of the mobility, but you are likely to pay more for the calls (although the differential is being seriously eroded even as I write.) Rather more serious is the fact that the GSM card only talks at 9.6Kbits/sec, so stick with a modem card unless you really do need to work in the middle of a field.

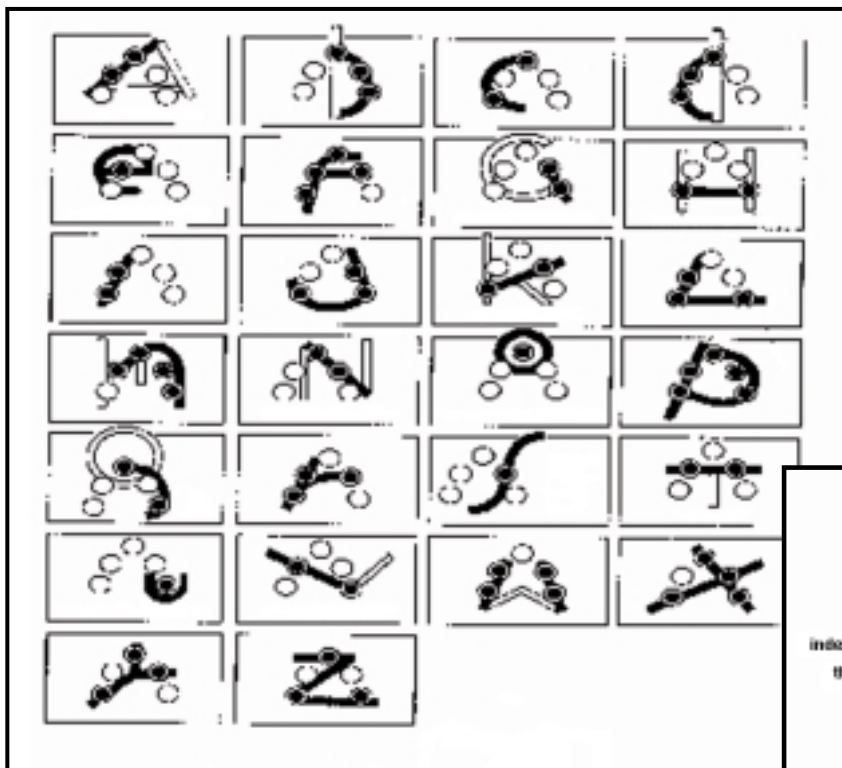
Incidentally, I've carefully refrained from checking the documentation to see which type of slot/mechanism combinations are deemed suitable by Xircom: once bitten, twice shy. Therefore,

drivers supplied with the Jornada are claimed to work with any printer that supports PCL Level 3 emulation and above - the HL730 emulates PCL Level 4. In spite of this, printouts always have errors, like bits of bar code randomly distributed across the page, partly obscuring the text or whatever else is being printed. I have contacted both the Brother and HP helplines and predictably, each blames the other! Can you help?

Well, no, I'm sorry I can't, but does anyone out there have any suggestions?

### Jornada again

I've heard from another Jornada user, Roderick Starksfield ([RStarksfield@](mailto:RStarksfield@)



small CE freeware programs he has written. LottoPick 99 is a random lottery number generator and Psychic Sid is able to work out the number you're thinking of. Both are downloadable from [www.militia.co.uk](http://www.militia.co.uk).

### Chips ahoy

Ed Davies ([edavies@nildram.co.uk](mailto:edavies@nildram.co.uk)) contacted me in response to a minor remark passed in the March column concerning the Hitachi HD6303X chip used in the Psion Organiser II LZ. It was tentatively identified as a version of the Z80 chip but, says Ed, it is much more like a Motorola MC6800.

Accuracy is to be treasured, even on such a small point, so thanks for the information, Ed.

### MicroWriter

Another passing mention in an earlier column that provoked several responses from readers was the MicroWriter. This is a one-handed, character-entry technique that

*Screenshots 5 (above) and 6 (right): I agree that most of these are easy to learn, but some require a minor degree of brain stretching*

appeared on an early machine called the MicroWriter Agenda (screenshot 4). Those who switch to this system end up as major converts and Andrew Renton ([andrew@ppbramford.u-net.com](mailto:andrew@ppbramford.u-net.com)) pointed me to [www.bellaire](http://www.bellaire).



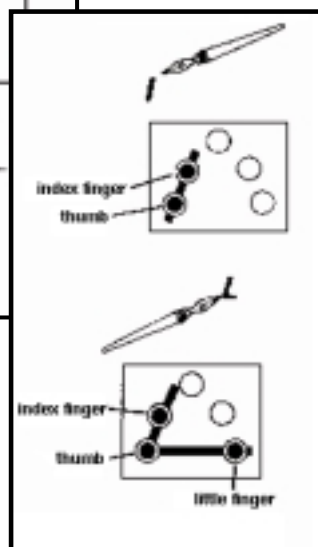
Screenshot 4: MicroWriting is alive and well and living in Bellaire

[demon.co.uk](http://demon.co.uk) which is a site dedicated, not only to maintaining Agendas, but also to a MicroWriter chord board for the PC.

Among other useful bits of information on the site is a diagram of the finger/button combinations that are used to generate the separate characters (screenshots 5 and 6). The website suggests you can practise these on the arm of your chair to see if you agree that they are intuitively easy to learn. The MicroWriter chord keyboard is known as CyKey (pronounced Psyche) and is available in both left and right-handed versions.

### Widget world

Widget Software, a company that specialises in PDA paraphernalia, has recently changed its address to the more global [www.widget.com](http://www.widget.com) (it used to end .co.uk). For anyone who hasn't yet dealt with Widget, it stocks a huge range of handheld computer software and accessories, as



well as a range of products that it develops in-house.

Shoulder holsters and coloured cases for Psions were among the company's early temptations, and Widget still produces a large selection of carrying cases for all the major PDAs. It now, however, also offers CompactFlash cards, ranging from four to 80MB, metal desk and car stands as well as plenty of other add-ons. The company's software titles include the Timebase time-tracking system and the Widget Leisure Pack (now available for colour palm-size PCs running Windows CE).

A browse around the site is always an interesting experience, but be warned, it does hold considerable dangers for your bank balance.

## CONTACTS

Mark Whitehorn welcomes your comments on the PDA column. Contact him via the PCW editorial office or email [pda@pcw.co.uk](mailto:pda@pcw.co.uk)