

**SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC**  
**SCHOOL OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING**

ET0104 Embedded Computer Systems Laboratory

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**Laboratory 7 - Graphics Display Technology**

**Objectives**

- Set up ETS to generate an application that uses graphics and a local filesystem.
- To prepare images for viewing in an embedded system
- To transfer images to an embedded system

Small sized graphical LCDs have steadily decreased in cost due to large numbers of devices using such displays like handphones, PDAs, and the various portable entertainment devices. In this lab, we will prepare images so they can be displayed on a small graphics LCD. We will transfer these devices to the embedded system and look at a simple application to display these images. We will also incorporate a filesystem, so that an embedded system can manage files.

Displaying and managing graphics files on Embedded Systems

Because of the very flexible way humans interact with graphics, GUI software is complex and occupies large amounts of memory. In ETS, we display graphics using the Portable Embedded Graphics (PEG) software. Though it is not as fully featured as say Windows, it provides attractive graphics capabilities with small memory requirements. We shall restrict ourselves to just displaying static images, but you should be aware that it is capable of handling controls, like various buttons, edit boxes and even touch screens. To go into the intricacies of creating and designing such applications is beyond the scope of this course. Because of this complexity, PEG is coded in C++. Concepts like classes, inheritance, virtual functions are heavily used, as is the message passing paradigm used to control such displays. But we hide all this detail and concentrate on getting a simple application working. PEG is also available for other processors.

It is not practical to embed images into C programs because of their size. Because of this, we will now make use of the ETS file system. This works in the same way as a typical Windows/DOS FAT32 system. However, we will limit ourselves to a "8.3" file naming convention, because of software restrictions.

In the rest of this lab, please note the following:

The embedded system will be referred to as the Single Board Computer or SBC. The system which runs VC/ETS will be referred to as the Development System or DS. Because we are using different software to accomplish various tasks, the terminology for each will differ.

Dual boot

To accommodate file transfer which uses DOS, the SBC is capable of dual booting. Upon reset, a single beep is emitted by the BIOS. After a while, the startup program will issue two beeps, and the LED will blink. If the keypad is pressed within 3 seconds, the file transfer program will load. Otherwise, the ETS monitor program on the SBC will load which will enable C programs to be downloaded and execute on the SBC.

As before, all items to be clicked or typed are marked in ***bold italics*** font.

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**A. ETS Graphics and Filesystem Setup**

1. Create a new project and call it *lab7*.
2. In the Kernel settings, Click on *Filesystem* and *GUI*.

Available Components

- ☒ **Kernel Settings**
  - ☒ ApplicationMemoryPr
  - ☒ BasicKernelSettings
  - ☐ ConsoleScreenDriver
  - ☐ CRTDLL
  - ☒ DebugMessageSettir
  - ☐ DLLLoader
  - ☐ EmailClient
  - ☐ EventLogging
  - ☒ Filesystem
  - ☐ FloatingPointEmulato
  - ☐ FtpServer
  - ☒ GUI
  - ☐ HTTPFS
  - ☐ Keyboard
  - ☐ MicrowebServer
  - ☐ Mouse
  - ☒ MultithreadSupport
  - ☐ PCMCIA
  - ☐ RTWINAPI
  - ☐ Serial
  - ☐ SNMP
  - ☒ StructuredExceptionI
  - ☐ TCPIP
  - ☐ TCPIPV2
  - ☒ Timer
  - ☐ USB
  - ☐ WinInetAPI
- ☒ **Monitor Settings**
  - ☒ ApplicationLoader
  - ☒ BasicMonitorSettings
  - ☒ HostCommunications

3. Now we want to make sure ETS will display at the correct In the Selected Components column, click on GUI.

4. In the GUI Dialog, click on: **320x200**, **256** colours and **All 256 Color Drivers**.

Visual System Builder 13 (Unnamed File)

Available Components

- ☒ **Kernel Settings**
  - ☒ ApplicationMemoryProte
  - ☒ BasicKernelSettings
  - ☒ DebugMessageSettings
  - ☒ Filesystem
  - ☒ GUI
  - ☐ Keyboard
  - ☐ Mouse
  - ☐ MultithreadSupport
  - ☐ Serial
  - ☐ StructuredExceptionHan
  - ☐ Timer
- ☒ **Monitor Settings**
  - ☒ ApplicationLoader
  - ☒ BasicMonitorSettings
  - ☒ HostCommunications

Screen Options

Screen Size: **320x200** Video Driver: **All 256 color Drivers**

Color Depth: **256 Colors**

☐ Force this color depth

GUI Options

GUI Thread Priority: **80**

GUI Thread Stack Size: **32768**

GUI Timer Period: **20** Message Queue Size: **40**

☒ Use Mouse ☒ Shutdown GUI when last window closes

☒ Use keyboard ☒ Restore video mode at GUI shutdown

☐ Enable Unicode Support

5. Close the box in the usual way when done.

6. Open up the workspace and add `lab7.cpp` into your project. Also, include in the other support files like `EcsGUI.cpp`, `LCD.cpp`, `Keypad.cpp`. There are subtle differences between how VC++ handles C and C++ programs. If you create functions in this project, do use the CPP extension.

7. Build and Run the application, which invites you to choose one of 3 images to display.

8. Examining the source code is useful here. Note that the images are located at the `C:\images` directory of the SBC (not the DS!). Note the use of `'\\'` in the C++ program to denote the path separator character.

## **B. Preparing images for the SBC**

Desktop systems can read a file header and determine how the system should display it, resizing and recolouring to fit the capabilities of the hardware. This involves a lot of resources. Embedded systems, with their modest memory and storage, do not have this flexibility. Usually, the resolution of the display and the colour depth is fixed. So in order to use our own images in our system, we have to *prepare* our images to the desired format.

Also, while the JPEG format is very popular, it takes a processor with a fair bit of memory and floating point capabilities to handle it. This is because of its sophisticated encoding techniques. Alternatively, a popular graphics file format is the BMP or bitmap format. Most BMP files are uncompressed so there is a fixed relationship between the number of bytes in the file to each pixel in the image.

The LCD used in the lab is 2.5" in size. This can accommodate a small sized image. But we are making use of VGA compatible hardware and the nearest VGA mode uses a screen size is 320x200 pixels which is more than enough. In this mode, the VGA specification allows 256 colours to be displayed. So images to be displayed on our system will be 320x200 pixels, with a 256 colour depth. Considering these in more detail:

### **Image bit depth**

We should recall that “photo-like” images need 24 bits to display an image, but “animation-type” images like cartoons require much less bits. However, it is surprising what an 8-bit image can display when down sampled from a 24-bit image.

### **Aspect ratio**

If we were to just convert an image the desired resolution, severe distortion will occur. For example, an image taken in a poster or “upright” position would look “squashed” when converted to a landscape or “lying down” position. It may be better to cut or “crop” a portion of the original image that has a aspect ratio closer to the desired one.

### **Software used**

We will use a software known as FastStone (available as freeware, with thanks to the author) which allows you to resize and change the colour depth of your images. It can also add annotations like text and simple graphics to your image.

To acquaint ourselves with the capabilities of this software, we will prepare an image for use on the embedded system. It is SPGrad.JPG and can be found in the:

D\ECSLAB\images directory.

1. Use the default picture viewer program to look at it's resolution and note its:

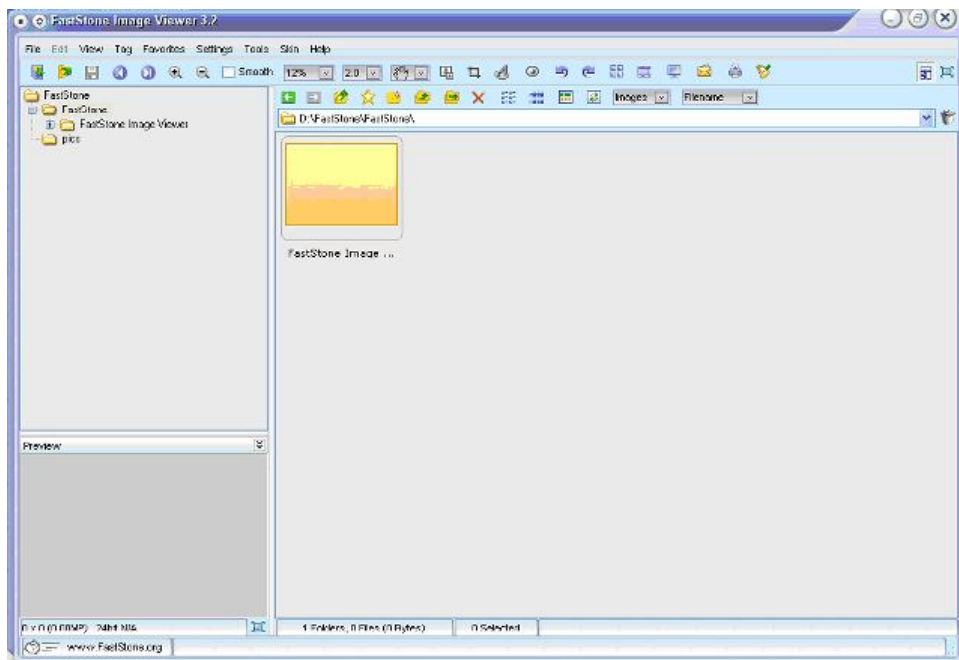
i) aspect ratio ii) colour depth

Compare this with our target requirement, which is 320 by 200 with 8 bit colour. We will now see what is the best way to achieve our target requirement.

2. Start the FastStone program double clicking on the FastStone icon.



This is what you will see when you first load FastStone.



FastStone start up screen

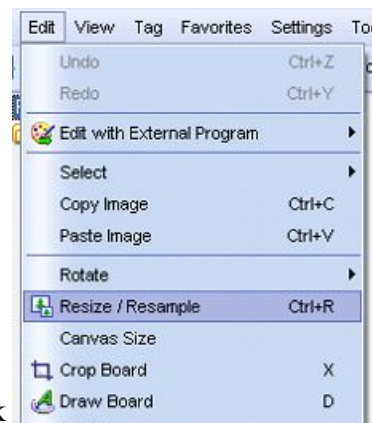
Please NOTE that the appearance *may not be exactly the same* as what you see here, as the software will remember the last directory it worked with.

### Resizing the image

To illustrate the issues at hand, we will first resize an image right away. The supplied image, named SPgrad.JPG needs to be 320x200 pixels with an 8 bit colour depth, or 256 colours.

3. To do this, select the image by left clicking on it once. And then click on **Edit** then in the drop down menu, **Resize / Resample**.

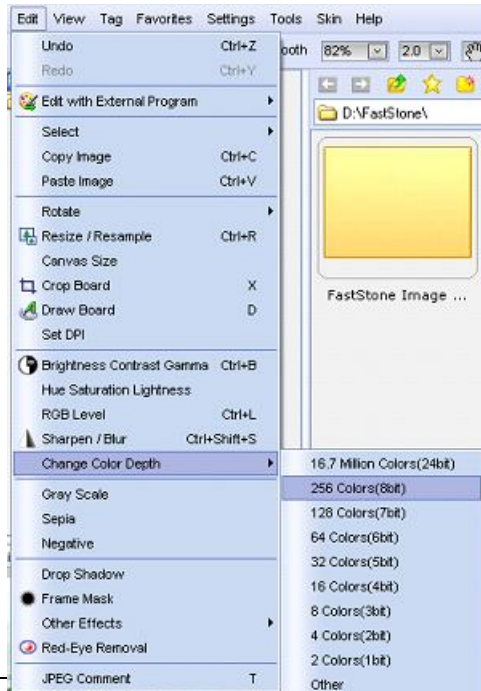
Ensure that “Preserve Aspect Ratio” is unchecked. With pixels selected, change the width to **320** and the height to **200** and click **OK**.



Note: The shortcut for this function is Ctl-R.

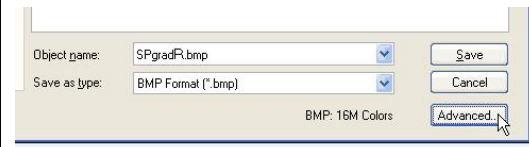
## Reducing colour depth

4. To reduce the colour, click **Edit** again, then in the drop down menu, **Change Colour Depth** and select 256 colours (8bits).

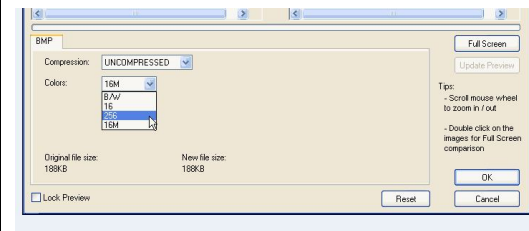


5. Begin to save the image. Click **File / Save As**. For the file, type **SPGradR.bmp** in the BMP Format, in the same directory as the original file.

6. In the Save dialog, click on **Advanced**



7. In the BMP tab, select **256** colours.



Finally **OK** the dialog.

The image will be saved and shown in the preview window on the bottom left hand side of your screen. NOTE: the file size should be about 65 Kbytes in size.

One of the first things you will note about the resized image is that the round balloon looks oval now.

This is a consequence of the aspect ratio being changed.



Resized image with altered aspect ratio



### Aspect ratio


The image that has been resized looks “squashed” as the aspect ratio of the original image is 1.33 (2048/1536) while that of the new resized image is 1.6 (320/200). This resizing step that you have just done is to illustrate the guidelines one has to follow in order to properly prepare an image for display in an LCD screen used by the SBC. However, in some cases, the distorted image is tolerable.

### Cropping an image

In order to maintain a desired aspect ratio for resizing, one has cut off a part of the original image to achieve the aspect ratio of 1.6. The term used is “crop”.

Before doing so, we should do some calculations. Say we want to keep the image width, then the new dimensions for the desired will have to be 2048 x 1280 (2048/1.6).

5. First highlight the image you want to crop. Then, click **Edit**, select **Crop Board**.



6. Using the crop tool, select an area of 2048 by 1280. Choose which area to remove. This can be done by the mouse by entering the dimensions at the bottom left corner.

The dotted box shown can be moved to indicate which part of the picture to retain. The dark area is the part that will be cropped away. In the figure, we crop the top part of the image, leaving the bottom behind. Click **Lossless Crop to File**.

Finally, resize this newly cropped image to 320x200 and in 256 colours. Save as **SPGrad8B.bmp** in the same directory as the original, using the Advanced options.

The figures in this new image will now have a sense of being proportionate, as the aspect ratio has been retained.

For comparison, you may wish to examine the three images you have worked with.

**Original - SPGrad.JPG**



**Resized, aspect ratio not retained -  
SPGradR.BMP**

**Cropped to aspect ratio, then resized.  
SPGrad8B.BMP**

Note that when the smaller images are compared, they look less sharp than the original. This is because of the downsampling process.

Note: It may be a good idea to take note of the shortcut keys for several of the more common functions if you might be working on many images. This can help reduce overall working time.

### **C. File Transfer**

In the earlier labs, we note that all the data needed was available in the main program. As we shall see, when the amount of data becomes large, we need a file system to manage the data. ETS allows us to access files by linking in file system software. Now we have to transfer data from the host to the embedded system. In today's devices, the USB port is widely used. But it should be noted that incorporating such a feature will certainly result in higher hardware cost. It is not possible to incorporate USB using software alone because of the high speeds involved. In this case, we go back to the venerable serial port. File transfer software allows us to transfer data easily. We will use the trial edition of FastLynx 3.3 which works on Windows 9x, NT, XP and even on DOS based systems.

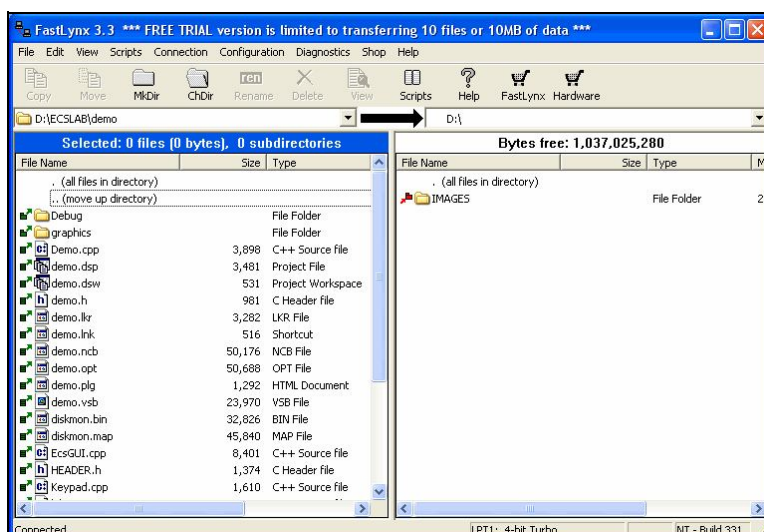
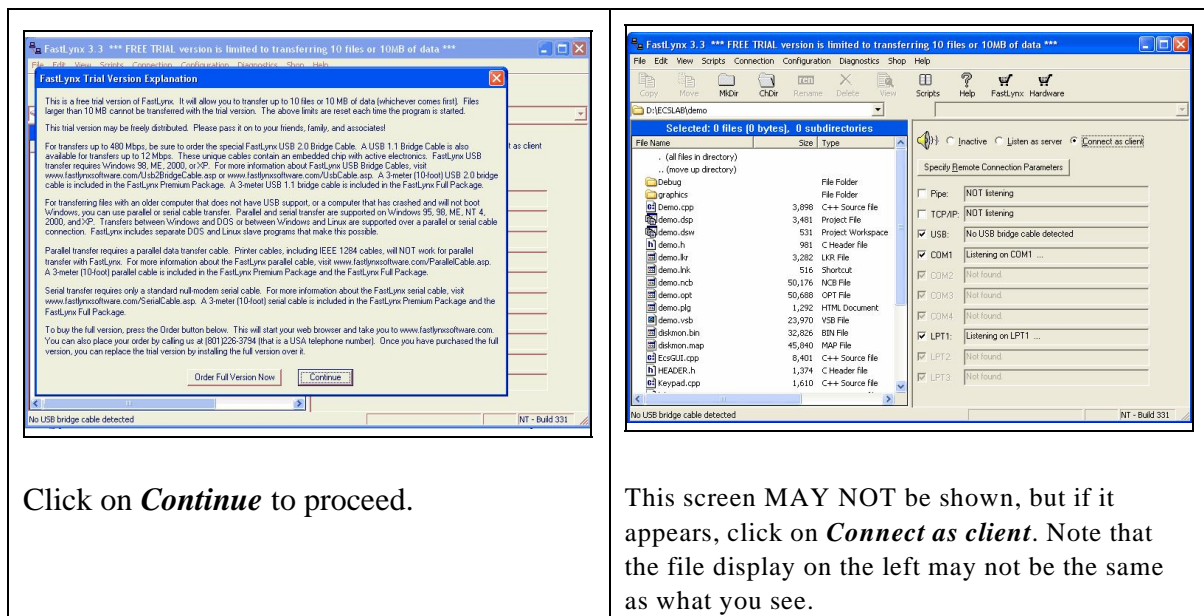
When transferring data, one terminal is designated as a server which receives commands. This will be the SBC, where we have installed FastLynx server. Because it is running in DOS mode, all files follow the “8.3” file naming system.

The other terminal acts as a client and is the DS. We use FastLynx to:

- i) View the contents of this directory
- ii) Create a new directory
- iii) Transfer files between SBC and DS.


1. Start by resetting the SBC. We have included a DOS program that will prompt you by sounding two loud beeps. Press any key on the keypad within two seconds. You will hear a confirmatory three beeps and FastLynx on the SBC will load. Otherwise the ETS monitor will load (which allows you to transfer your application to the SBC).

2. On the DS, click on the FastLynx icon  and you will see the initial screen.



You will then see the transfer window, which has two file displays.

Note:

1) On the LEFT file view is the DS, the current directory and its contents. You can navigate by clicking on the **.. (move up directory)** or clicking on the folder icon  to go IN to the directory.

The currently active window has a **BLUE** title area.



2) In the RIGHT file view is the SBC acting as a Server, showing the current directory and its contents. You can navigate it in the same way.

Note the BLACK ARROW which shows the direction of data transfer. To change the currently active computer system, just click anywhere within the file area.

### Creating a new directory

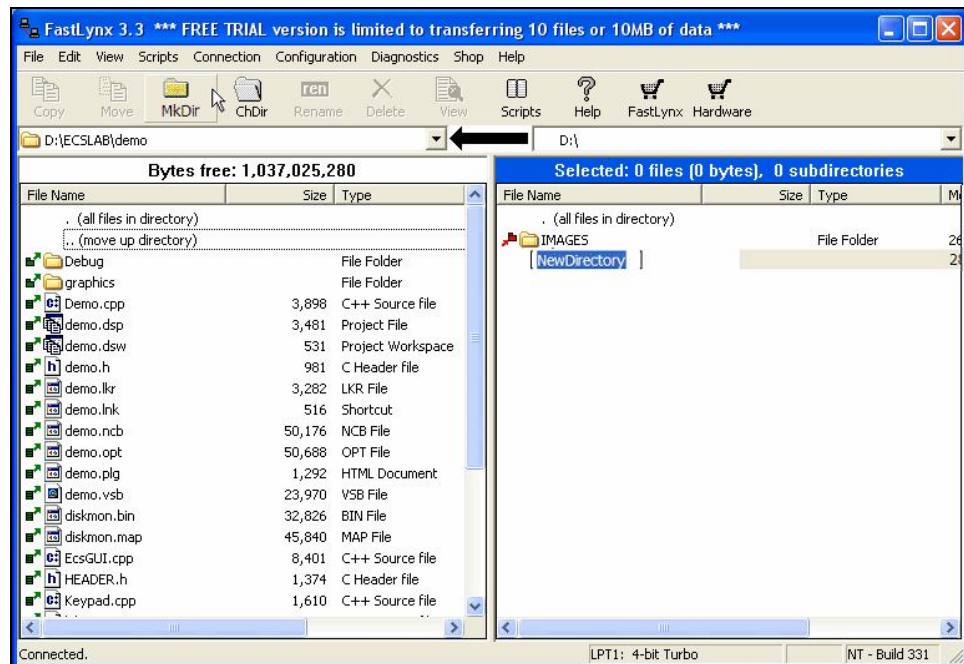
Here we create a directory called NEW at the server.


#### REMEMBER:

The LEFT display shows the current directory on the DS or client.

It displays the contents of the *current* directory and may differ from what you see.

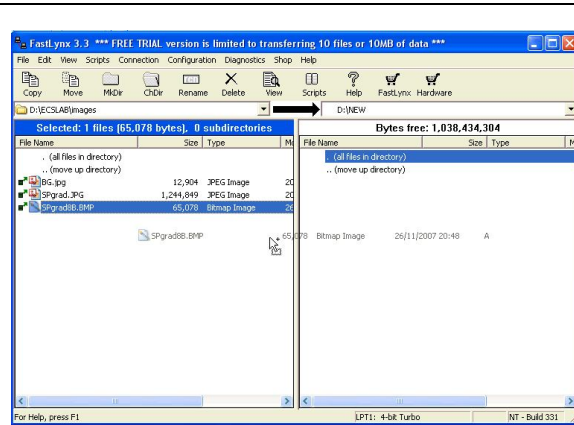
The RIGHT side shows the SBC or server



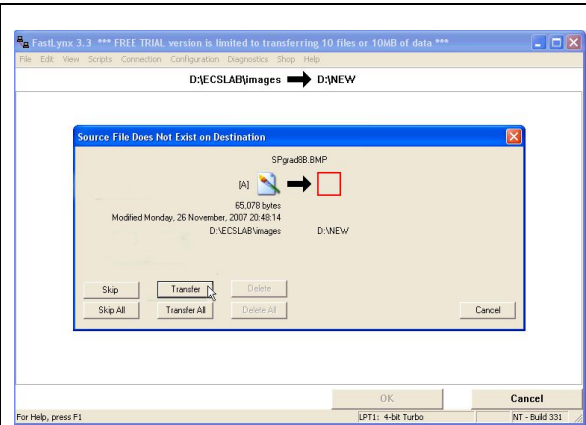
- 1) Activate the Server file window (right display) by CLICKing anywhere within it. An existing directory called IMAGES contains images used in the demo for the assignment. However, we will create a new directory to familiarize ourselves with the functions of FastLynx.
- 2) Click on the Mkdir icon  on the FastLynx toolbar.
- 3) A highlighted area with the text NewDirectory will appear. The text cursor will appear here. Overtyping the text, so the new directory name is **NEW**. To finish, press <- .

### Transferring Files

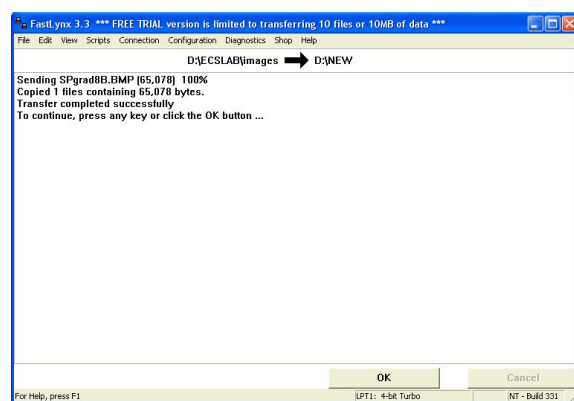
Now we want to transfer files into the directory D : \NEW\ on the server (SBC). First of all, we need to locate the files on the DS. Double-click on the DS file display until you are viewing the directory D : \ECSLAB\images, where the files to be transferred are located.



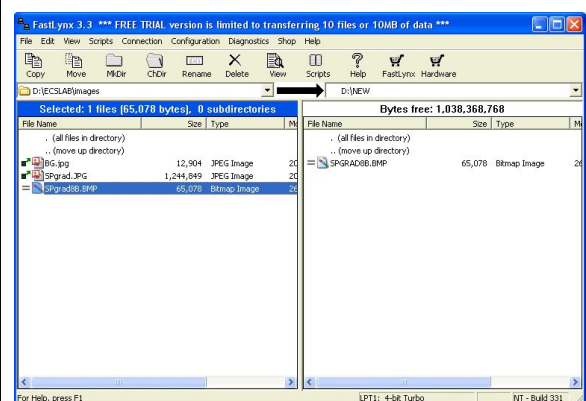
1. Select the file or files (use Shift / Control click or drag the files) to be transferred. They will be highlighted.
2. Now **CLICK** and **DRAG** the highlighted files to the Server window.



3. Release the mouse button and click on **TRANSFER**.



4. Dismiss the box by pressing **OK**.



5. Your final display should look like this.

6. In order to prepare the SBC to receive your ETS application, you need to reset the system. Download your application as in the previous labs.

## REMINDER TO BACKUP

Please remember to backup all your files, both on the DS and SBC as others will use the same platform.

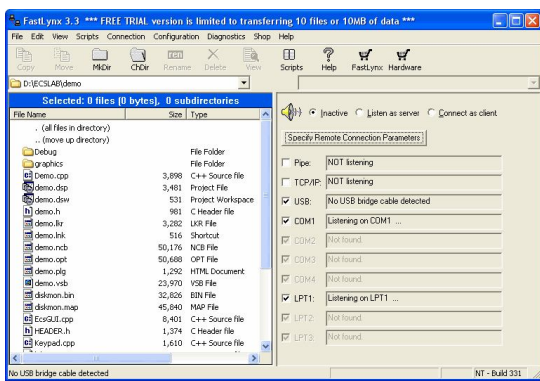
## D. Modifying the display program

We now want to test out the effect of your changes. Before doing so,

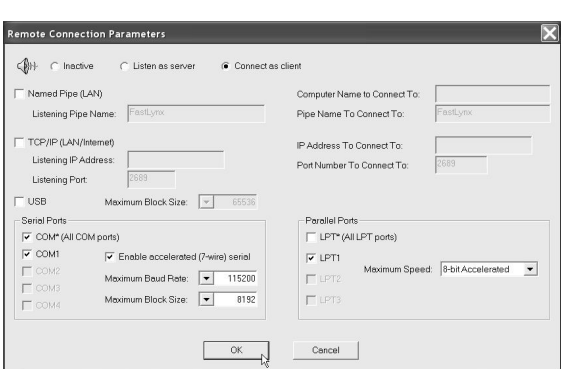
1. You need to **RESET** the SBC so it boots into ETS. When prompted by two beeps, simply ignore it for 3 seconds, then proceed to download your program in the usual manner.
2. Modify `lab7.cpp` to display the file `SPgrad8B.BMP`. Modify the program so there is a *new* option to display it.

## Setting options (optional step)

To check the settings of FastLynx, you will need to Disconnect. If you have not done so, type or select ***Connection / Disconnect*** from the menu.



Select ***Specify Remote Connection Parameters***



You should make sure you are connecting over LPT1. **OK** the prompt.

It will bring you back to original screen.