



Where you bin?

Hanging around the Recycle Bin, probably, wondering what on earth it's for. Tim Nott takes the lid off this enticing little mystery. He takes some Notes as well, and gets FAT.

Many people seem confused about that fine bit of desktop furniture called the Recycle Bin. The following dialogue should help. For added effect, read it in a variety of silly voices.

Q. What is the Bin and how does it work?

A. It's a holding area for deleted files. When you send a file to the Bin, it stays there until you empty the Bin or...

Q. So my hard disk is filling up with stuff I don't want?

A. If I can finish... or the Bin is full, when items get permanently flushed on a first-in first-out basis. You can control the size of the Bin as a percentage of disk space, either globally or on a per-drive basis, from the Recycle Bin properties dialogue.

Q. Can I empty just some of the contents?

A. Certainly — open the Bin, select the files you want removed and delete them. The quickest way of clearing the entire contents is to right-click and "Empty" on the Bin icon.

Q. As in real life, I keep missing the Bin. I end up copying, moving or creating shortcuts on the Desktop instead of dropping the files cleanly in the Bin.

A. Just because you can drag items on to the Bin icon, it doesn't mean you have to. It's much easier to right-click on the file(s) and pick "Delete" or select them and press "Delete" on the keyboard. If you really want to drag and drop, open the Bin first to give yourself a bigger target.

Q. Why did Microsoft put the Bin on the Desktop? And how can I get rid of it? Or even rename it to something less twee?

A. Good question. It can be hidden with the System Policy Editor (see September's column) or TweakUI (see October's column). If you don't have either of these, and feel brave enough, then back up the

Registry and run Regedit. Go to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\
Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\
explorer\Desktop\NameSpace

Depending on your setup, you'll see several keys below this, one of which is {645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-00AA002F954E}

Deleting this key will remove the Recycle Bin icon from your Desktop. The problem with these methods is that you have to dig into Explorer to access it, and it will (misleadingly) report that it "belongs" to the current drive or partition, if you have more than one. If you want to rename it, back up the Registry, run Regedit and go to:

HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\CLSID\{645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-00AA002F954E}

Double click on "default" in the right-hand pane and change the name in the dialogue box that appears.

Q. I have several Recycle Bins — one on each disk partition and one on the Desktop. Can I delete the redundant ones? If so, which?

A. The Desktop Bin is a "special" folder that shows everything in the Bin. The actual files themselves are stored on a per-drive basis in folders named "Recycled". These all appear to have the same contents from Explorer, but if you use File Manager

The (renamed) Recycle Bin properties. You can limit the size overall or on a per-drive basis

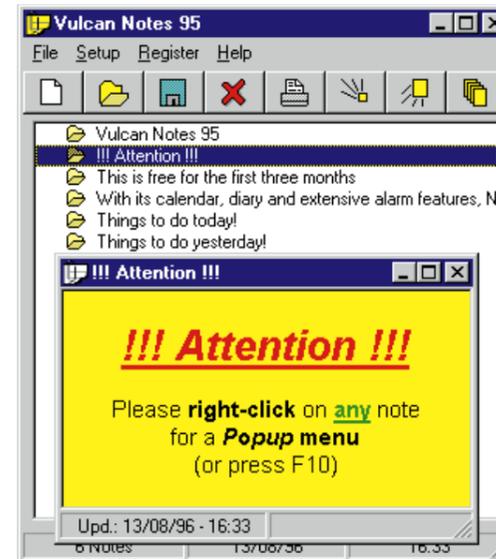
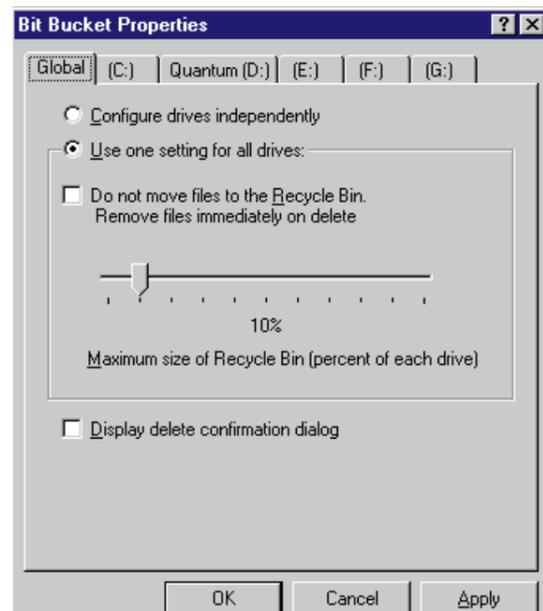
you can see what is really going on: as well as the deleted files (which have cryptic names), an "Info" file records the original name and path for each file. So leave them all alone.

Q. How do I retrieve something from the Bin?

A. If you've just deleted it, right-click in any folder, or the Desktop, and choose "Undo delete". Open the Bin, right-click on the wanted file and select "Restore" to put it back where it was. You can drag files out of the Bin to any open folder, or the Desktop.

Q. I don't make mistakes. If I want to delete something, I want it really deleted and I want it to stay deleted. How?

A. Four ways. If you Shift + Delete a file, it bypasses the Bin and goes straight to oblivion. Alternatively, right click on the Bin, select "Properties" and check the "Do not move files to the Recycle Bin. Remove files immediately on delete"



Vulcan's main window, with a sample note inset

to create the file, two to be able to rename it and two more clicks to open it. By which time, I've forgotten what it was I was going to type or paste in.

Moving on, I then found it much simpler, although less exciting, to have a shortcut to Notepad on the Desktop, with the properties set to "Start in..." my C:\WINDOWS\DESKTOP folder. A double-click to create, and a "File/Save As..." to name it, with the destination already set to the Desktop. This worked fine for a while, until I found I either had to excavate below various

windows to find the various Notepad icons, or confine my word processing and other activities to the right-hand three inches of the screen.

Plan C saw a radical departure. I created a new folder on the Desktop called, with unashamed explicitness, "Notes".

Doubtless I shall hear from Lotus' solicitors, but I like to live dangerously. I could have created the folder elsewhere and put a shortcut with the icon of my choice on the Desktop, but I decided to save that little treat for another day. I then redirected the Notepad shortcut "Start In" to here, set the Notes folder view to "List" and moved all the Notepad files into it. With this stroke, I reached the long-sought objective of just one row of icons on the Desktop.

There are, of course, better ways to manage this. Over the years, several electronic versions of sticky yellow (I'm not allowed to use the P-word for legal reasons) notes have appeared. And I think I've tried most of them. Winpost was my favourite for years, but its author, Higgy Higashyma, took a job with Microsoft and ceased developing it further. In April, I mentioned another product, which had two rather crippling limitations. You can only have one note, and its unauthorised use of the P-word means I'm not allowed to mention it.

So, I've been looking at two newish shareware note products. In the red corner, weighing in at 291Kb, from Colorado, USA, comes Vulcan Notes 95 (Vn95.zip on our CD-ROM). In the blue corner, all the way from Chester, England, comes the latest version of John Rennie's Notez, a wiry 151Kb under the name of Ntz324.zip.

immediately on delete" box, which makes this the default. Using DOS or File Manager to delete files also bypasses the Bin.

Q. As I said, I know what I'm doing, and get very annoyed when Windows asks me for confirmation on delete. How do I stop this?

A. You can turn off "Display delete confirmation dialogue" from Properties, but this only applies to sending items to the Bin. If you bypass the Bin, as above, or empty some or all of its contents, you're stuck with the confirmation dialogue. There's one rather curious exception to this. A single .EXE or .COM file is deleted without further ado.

Q. Er, how do I undelete something that has been bypassed or deleted from the Bin?

A. You close down Windows and restart in single MSDOS mode. You use the Lock, Undelete, and Unlock commands. You run a risk of losing Long File Names, but this is the least of your worries, as you also run a risk of shutting yourself out of Windows and screwing up your system drastically. But then, as you said, you don't make mistakes. For further reading see Clive Akass' column on page 34 of PCW March 1996. And in a dictionary, check "hubris" and "nemesis".

Nota bene

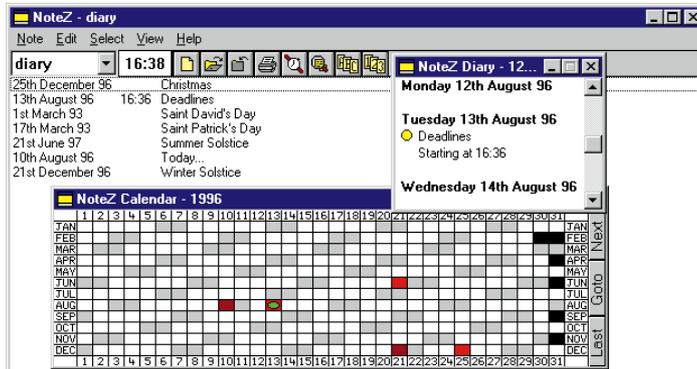
One thing I find myself doing a lot is making notes. Bits and pieces from email and the internet; details of commissions and deadlines, ideas, reminders, shopping lists — you name it, I scribble it. In the puppy-love stage of my relationship with Windows 95, I took a shine to the way you could create a new text file on the Desktop from the right mouse-button menu. This infatuation did not last. It takes three clicks

windows to find the various Notepad icons, or confine my word processing and other activities to the right-hand three inches of the screen.

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NoteZ main window with the calendar and diary inset

search (but no replace) feature where notes containing the search string are highlighted in the list. You can

“logical” drives, or use disk compression software that packs everything into one big file. Or, depending on your point of view, one big disaster-waiting-to-happen.

FAT32 supports partitions up to two terabytes. Yes, I had to look it up as well, but a terabyte is a mega-megabytes, which will probably be just enough for Windows and Office 2005. Cluster size is down, with a sub-8Gb partition using 4096-byte clusters. Other good news is that it is more robust, working from a backup copy of the table, and there is no limit on the number of entries in the root directory. It also allows dynamic resizing of partitions without data loss, but this won't be available in this release. (To go off at a slight tangent, there is a commercial utility called Partition Magic which does just this with a normal FAT.) The bad news is that you won't be able to dual-boot. Only Windows 95 supports FAT32, not Windows 3.1 or previous DOS versions.

Windows NT users have had these advantages for some time, with NTFS, which allows compression and password-protection on a per-file basis. So why didn't Microsoft offer this as the way forward for 95 users? The official answer is that it “Would have precluded the use of many MS-DOS mode games and applications.”

This seems a patronising message. The platform for business users is NT Workstation, at about £250 a seat. Windows 95, at about £60, is just for game players and home users. The fact that it's the SoHo and family users who need built-in security to stop children or colleagues messing with their files, remains to be addressed.

At the double, left click

Let's have a happy ending this month, with a great little tip from Richard Ansdell of Coventry. In Explorer or any other window with column headings, move the cursor to a join in the column headings so that the cursor changes into a two-headed arrow. Instead of dragging, if you double left-click, the column expands or contracts to fit the widest entry.

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Vulcan is simple enough to use. The “master” window contains a list of your notes. You can have up to 100 and each one takes its title from the first non-blank line in the note. Above the list are buttons for creating new notes, opening an existing text or RTF file into a new note (the original is left), saving, printing, deleting, and showing or hiding all notes. You can also do all these things, and more, by right-clicking on any open note. The whole thing consists of just one executable, and each note is saved as a separate file. You can “alarm” notes to serve as reminders, and they are automatically saved when you quit.

The USP (unique selling point) is that notes can be formatted much as a word-processed document, with alignment, font, colour, bullets and so on. The file format is a subset of Rich Text Format (RTF), but unlike the latter doesn't support things such as graphics or multiple columns, so perhaps we should call it Comfortably-off Text Format. There's a facility to search (and replace) text in all notes. The note with the searched string is brought “on-top” with the string highlighted. Unfortunately, this doesn't work on minimised or closed notes.

Like Vulcan, NoteZ, apart from its data and help files, consists of one .EXE, but it does add its .INI file to your Windows folder. It starts to get complex, as when you first start the program, three windows appear. A calendar, diary and a list of notes. This, and the lack of status bar or pop-up hints, sent me scrambling for the Help file, but I soon had everything under control.

NoteZ's USP is the way notes can be organised into folders — the samples include a rather mouth-watering collection of Italian recipes — and with its calendar, diary and extensive alarm features, NoteZ has more leanings to a personal organiser. Like Vulcan, it stores notes in RTF, and will open and save RTF files. Although the formatting facilities aren't quite as extensive, you can mix fonts in a note. There's a

open them all at once, but the strings themselves aren't highlighted.

NoteZ sticks an icon in the system tray: double-clicking creates a new note, and a right-click offers further options. Another touch I liked very much is the way you can drag and drop text between notes and other applications, which is something you can't do in Vulcan. Dislikes? There are no “Tooltips” on the buttons and there's no quick way of hiding all notes.

So there you have it. On the one hand elegant simplicity, on the other, feature-packed complexity. It's a question of personality, I reckon, as to which you prefer. Try the picnic test. Do you take along a bulky Swiss Army knife to cover all eventualities? Or do you prefer the bare necessities of a sharp blade and a corkscrew in a slim, sculpted handle?

Chewing the FAT

This autumn will see the release of FAT32 as part of OEM versions of Windows 95 — that is, installations that are pre-installed on new PCs. So what is it, and how does it affect us? The original FAT (File Allocation Table) dates from 1977 and was originally designed for storing data on floppy disks. Since then it has been fattened up to include hard disks, but it has several limitations which FAT32 seeks to overcome.

Two problems with the existing FAT concern large hard disks. First, FAT will only support disks up to 2Gb — a gigabyte being either 1000 or 1024Mb, depending on whether you're buying or selling. Secondly, FAT stores small files very inefficiently: each one takes up a “cluster”, which is the smallest unit the FAT can allocate. The larger the disk, the larger the cluster size. A 250Mb disk uses 4096 bytes per cluster, and a gigabyte-plus disk uses 32768 bytes. Which means an 800-byte shortcut is rattling around like a pea in a cabin trunk. The partial solution to this problem is to partition the disk into smaller,