# THE LAST FIVE YEARS

There have probably been more positive QL developments in the five years since the QL's 2009 silver jubilee than most QL-ers realise, but also several disappointments.

At the end of 2009 the QL was featured in a BBC television drama, Micro Men, about the battle between Sinclair and Acorn to gain a lucrative contract for a BBC computer. The battle was won by Acorn although it was a near thing. An interesting twist was that Acorn was frustrated that Sinclair had the popular games computers, whereas Sinclair was frustrated because his computers were not seen as business machines. That was where the QL came in.

Paradoxically it is games where, in the last five years, some of the more interesting QL developments have occurred mainly though the efforts of Rich Mellor of RWAP Software. He has embarked on a program of cataloguing and preserving retro QL games and has successfully restored and re-released some old favourites.

Another games development was the release of a GD2 colour and SSS sound game, QJewels, by Tobias Fröschle. (www.dilwyn.me.uk/games/index.html) Aficionados describe it as being noisy and addictive.
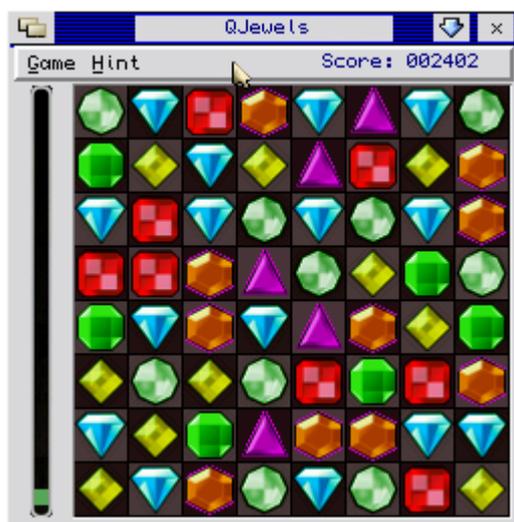
Rich Mellor has also successfully exploited the internet with a "Sell My Retro" website (www.sellmyretro.com) run on eBay lines. It has proved to be a popular site attracting a variety of Sinclair users and has kept RWAP software as a profitable company.

Other websites have been renewed and updated including those run by Dilwyn Jones (www.dilwyn.me.uk) and Bob Spelten (http://members.upc.nl/b.spelten/ql) The Just Words! website was completely rewritten and relaunched and has steadily increased its hits. On the negative side Quanta has still been unable to get itself a working website

after 10 years of trying. Despite spending £692 of members' money over a two year period, at the end of 2013 the site was in a worse condition than it was 5 years previously.

The most unexpected QL internet event was the founding of the QL Forum (www.qlforum.co.uk) by two people who had returned to the QL community. It soon proved its popularity and at the end of its 3rd year had just under 200 members and just under 5,000 postings.


They were not the only returnees to show a commendable initiative. Another was Adrian Ives who set up a hardware company, Memory Lane Computing, and who pioneered a QL SER to USB interface. He also did some work on a project conceived by Peter Graf for a SD card reader that would fit into the microdrive slot of a black box QL. Unfortunately the company was short-lived as Adrian found the QL community too small to allow him to purchase components at economic prices.

Peter Graf continued development on the QL-SD with it nearing completion towards the end of 2013. Some problems remained with (Super) Gold Card systems.

Most of the software developments have been on emulators. Both QemuLator and QPC2 have been revised and the latter is no longer a commercial product. Wolfgang Lenerz released a new program, SMSQmulator, running on Java systems (www.wlenerz.com/SMSQmulator).
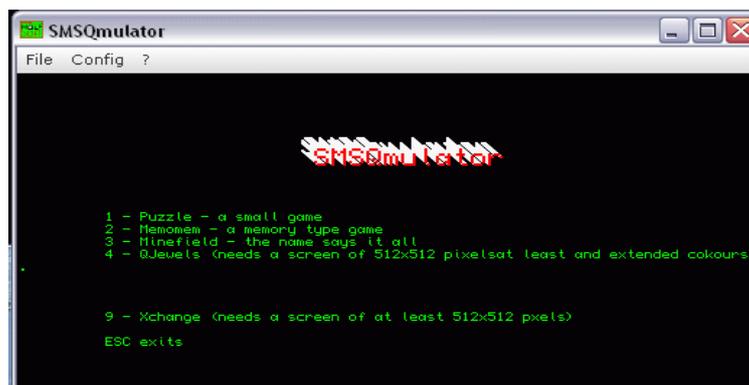
Almost coinciding with the release of SMSQmulator came the news of a loosening of some of the restrictions on the SMSQ-E licence to give users greater freedom to use, modify and distribute the source code. Redistribution and use in source and binary forms, with or without modification, was permitted provided the copyright notice, a list of conditions and a disclaimer notice were retained.

In January 2013 came the news of the death at the age of 94 of Bill Richardson, one of the QL's best loved former traders. Bill's association with Clive Sinclair began in the days of the Spectrum when he took on the duty of repairing returns. Initially he had little to do with the QL , but seized his opportunity when he was able to cheaply purchase 4,000 QLs originally destined for Iran.
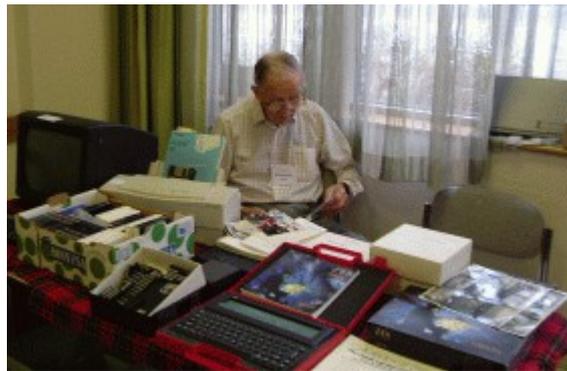
Bill attended his last QL show in 2006 and one user commented:

"His stand was always a profusion of software, hardware and little bits and pieces, manna from heaven to the eager convert."

Another departure came towards the end of the year with the final issue of QL Today. The magazine was first published in 1996 at a time when QL publications were in serious trouble. Within a space of two years three QL magazines had collapsed, but against all odds QL Today survived to become the longest published QL publication with the exception of the Quanta Magazine. However following a steep rise in postal costs and a shortage of regular writers the publisher and editor decided they would rather close the magazine than let it slowly deteriorate and with the risk of letting down the readers. QL today went out in style with the bumper 48 page issue and a cover DVD containing, among other material, a complete archive of every issue of the magazine.
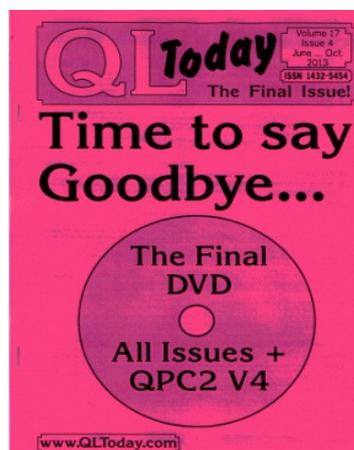
The Quanta Magazine gained a new editor in 2011 after having been without a permanent editor for 7 years. The new editor, Lee Privett, was another returnee to the QL scene. Under his editorship the content has continued to improve, but the magazine suffered from having too few regular writers. Towards the end of 2013 half of Quanta members had opted for the electronic version.

It was not just the Quanta Magazine that went electronic. Dilwyn Jones produced electronic versions of several QL reference manuals. It is now possible to take a whole library of QL technical material to a show using an e-reader or tablet computer.

Quanta itself has had mixed fortunes. Throughout much of the last decade members were reluctant to serve on the committee, but for the last five years it has had a stable committee of 6 or 7 members. All but one of the committee members live in the North West or Wales and the organisation has become increasingly centred on Manchester. The last show in the south was in 2007 and the committee have more or less admitted they no longer have the financial resources to run shows outside Manchester.

Following problems concerning the status of a co-opted treasurer, Quanta embarked on a major revision of its constitution. This had never been subject to a large scale revision and was seriously out of date recognising only two QL systems, the black box and the Thor. (Technically any mention within Quanta of either QPC or the Q60 was off topic prior to April 2012!) A major change in the new constitution was the possibility of the participation in all meetings electronically. Quanta plans to hold its 2014 AGM by telephone conferencing.

At the beginning of 2012 Quanta raised its subscription for the first time since the mid 1980's. It was a modest rise from £14 to £18 plus a postal supplement for those members opting for a printed magazine. Although £14 in the mid 80s was the equivalent of £35 to £40 at today's prices many members objected to the rise by voting with their feet. Quanta membership fell from 175 in December 2011 to 104 in April 2013.

10 years ago the 2003 AGM minutes recorded:

"Quanta to be remodelled in the future, maybe as a web based organisation. The future level of subscriptions will not sustain current expenses.."

What went wrong?