2016 - NOT SO QUIET AFTER ALL

At first sight 2016 was another quiet QL year, but under the surface there were several things happening with the emphasis being on software rather than hardware.
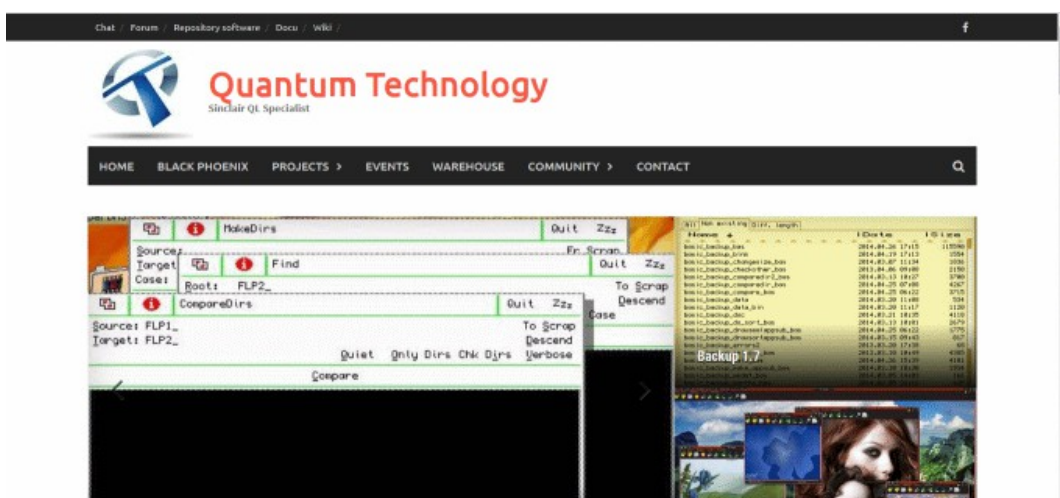
The big news stories, both good and bad, came from RWAP. Rich Mellor is the only QL trader to have survived almost as long as the QL and in 2016 celebrated his 30th anniversary. He has achieved this by adapting to new ways of working with a heavy emphasis on the internet and on the whole range of Sinclair products.

In 2007 he set up a QL Wiki and this led to the start of a project to catalogue and save as much QL software as possible. This often involved strenuous efforts to locate former QL software authors and seek their permission for re-release. Over a recent 2 year period over 120 classic titles were released as freeware mostly downloadable from the Dilwyn Jones' website, and another 29 commercially.

It was the latter that caused problems leading to the abrupt termination of the project in 2016. Accusations were made, mainly from Spain, that Rich was letting his commercial activities hinder QL software preservation. It was stated that all QL software should be downloadable whether or not it was in breach of copyright. Some sites had attempted to do this and had found themselves under legal duress to take down copyright software. Rich has been subject to a sustained 2 year campaign of harassment on various forums, which echoed similar trolling activities against people in the Spectrum world using legal means to preserve classic software.

In practice most trolls are on the periphery of the QL community, although Just Words! personal troll in QL Heaven is a well known and active member of the QL community.

Software preservation is still continuing in an Italian project co-ordinated by Simone Moltolini, although he has also had some harassment from trolls.

Italy proved to be a land to watch during 2016. Giorgio Garabelli launched a website containing in depth articles in both Italian and English. There was also a further Italian Meeting with the possible of an "international" session in English via Skype.

www.hunggartorino/it/ql

In the UK Quanta experimented with a series of mini-workshops held in a private house.

Hardware took a back seat during 2016, the main hardware topic was ageing problems with the Q60, paradoxically the youngest member of the QL family. The two main issues were battery and monitor problems. The former was caused by the battery being built into the RTC, and the latter by modern flat screen monitors that the Q60 is unable to use. The old CRT monitors are becoming worn out and obsolete. Peter Graf initiated a discussion on five possible solutions but no easy answer was found. One suggestion was that it would be better to concentrate on the development of the Q68 card.

Only two new programs was produced during the year, but there were numerous updates to old classics.

Qbar, written by Dilwyn Jones, is an autohide task bar displaying a list of running jobs allowing the user to pick or remove those jobs. Marcel Kilgus released a movie player for QPC2.

https://dilwyn2.wordpress.com/2016/02/

2016 saw the first update of QPC2 for two years mainly adding alpha blending for graphics and rename support for the DOS device. Marcel Kilgus also updated SMSQ-E and documented the updates. He also made EasyPtr freely downloaded and wrote of his experiences with the program.

www.kilgus.net/2016

Other updates were a repackaged version of Brouhaha Forth by Martin Cruz; QcoCo and SCRview by Bob Spelton; and regular new versions of SMSQmulator and SMSQ-E by Wolfgang Lenerz. Wolfgang also made his former commercial programs The Wall, Bailed and Basic Linker freeware.

www.dilwyn.me.uk/language/index.html

http://members.upc.nl/b.spelten/ql
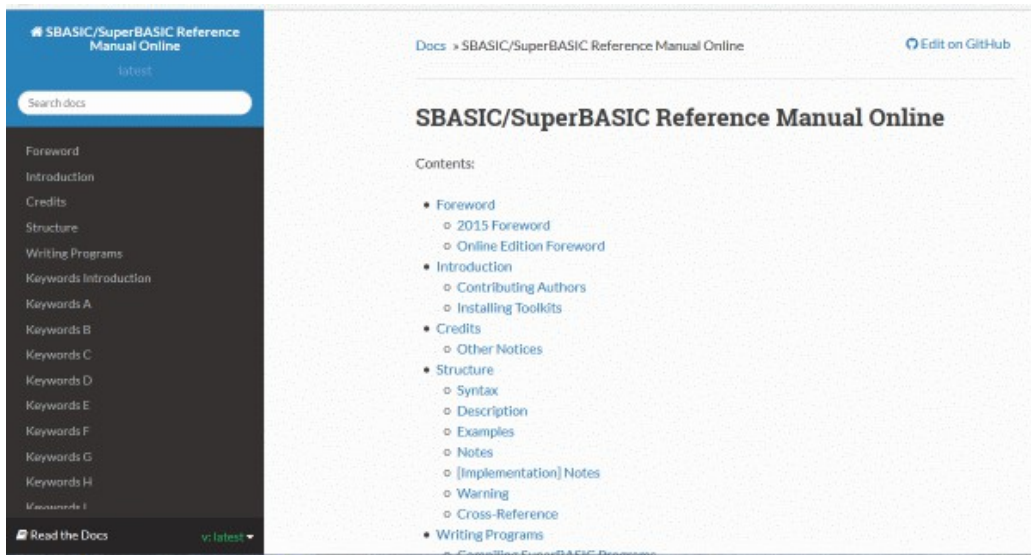
www.wlenerz.com/qlstuff

QL information sources continued to improve, with RWAP's Basic Manual becoming downloadable; a new edition of Norman Dunbar's assembler language e-publication; a reworked version of the QDOS/SMS reference manual by Derek Stewart; and a larger version of Urs König's The Distribution.

http://superbasic-manual.readthedocs.io/en/latest

www.qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk/downloads/

www.wlenerz.com/qlstuff

http://www.sinclairql.net/

During its life RWAP's Basic Manual has undergone many changes. Originally it was published as two massive ring binders and then appeared as a CD. In 2014 it became available as an online reference work and in 2016 it became downloadable in html, epub and pdf versions thanks to the efforts of Norman Dunbar.

During 2016 there was some revival of interest in the QL-users email group, although there would appear to have been a change of emphasis. Rather than lengthy discussions on a wide range of topics, it has become more technical with an emphasis on problem solving. There is a smaller number of regular contributors who can probably be called the "hard core" of QL users.

The Just Words! website has also seen changes as the QL content is attracting fewer hits. Instead the site has become firmly established as a source for word lists with high placings in the search engines and hits coming from the whole world. During 2016 Just Words! was twice approached for permission to use word lists in third party programs. The original work done for the QL lives on in different jackets!