

You'll probably be familiar with, or at least aware of, handheld Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) or palmtop computers, which you can use as a diary or memo pad and also to run genealogy software, such as *GedStar-Plus*, *GedWise* and *My Roots*, reviewed below. Palm PDAs are similar to pocket PCs, but they have smaller processors, less memory and the most popular run an operating system known as *PalmOS*, developed by a company now known as

palmOne, whereas pocket PCs use *Windows*.

HARDWARE - THE PALM TUNGSTEN E PDA

Specifications

PalmOne, which seemingly has dozens of PDAs in its range, has recently brought out its **Tungsten E**, which is notable in several respects. It comes at a remarkably low price, £149, (although it sacrifices a few bells and whistles compared with palmOne's other palm

computers) and it has a 125MHz processor, a backlit high-resolution 320 x 320 pixel colour screen, 32Mbytes of memory and infrared transfer.

It also comes with a complete multimedia suite for listening to audio files, as well as viewing images and video clips (this needs an expansion card, sold separately). What's more, it fits easily into a pocket or a purse. You do need a desktop or laptop to install the PDA's software, *Palm Desktop*, and to keep your PDA and computer data files synchronised.

The screen, stylus, buttons and icons

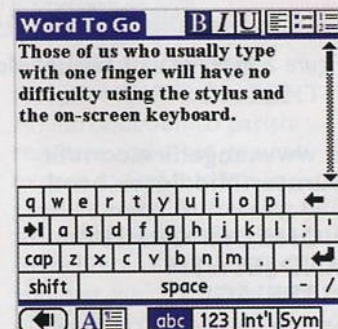
The screen is divided into two areas: at the top there's the view screen and at the bottom there's the data entry screen, also called the silk screen. Both are touch-sensitive and you navigate your applications and select or enter data using a metal stylus or your fingernails. The stylus clips into the side of the Tungsten E and you might be advised to buy a pack of spares. There are also four touch-sensitive icons for the main menu, current application menu, synchronisation key and Find or Search command.

Hardware buttons give you direct access to the Calendar and Diary, Contacts, Note Pad and Tasks. Other built-in applications include a Memo writer, Calculator, Expenses recorder and a Clock. There's also a Photo album where you can view your photos singly, or as thumbnails, add notes and run slideshows. It comes with software to transfer your

Microsoft *Word*, *Excel* and *PowerPoint* files to your palmtop.

Data entry

Making entries can be done in three ways. Sometimes, as in the Note Pad, you can write directly on the view screen. Or you can write on the silk screen using a stylised alphabet (rather like shorthand, but more intuitive). Or, for most applications, you can call up an on-screen keyboard, picking out the letters using the stylus.



The Tungsten E's virtual keyboard.

Overview

The Palm Tungsten E is a versatile, easy to use and affordable PDA, which is well worth looking into. You can get it from a variety of outlets including Palm's web pages at www.palmone.com.

PRODUCT FEATURES

- 1 Display
65,000+ Color 320x320 Transfective TFT Display.
- 2 5-Way Navigator
- 3 Calendar
- 4 Contacts
- 5 Tasks
- 6 Note Pad
- 7 Rechargeable Battery
- 8 Stereo Headphone Jack
- 9 Palm Expansion Slot
- 10 USB Port for HotSync® Cable
- 11 Infrared Port
- 12 Stylus
- 13 Speaker

Simulated screen image

Protective Cover
(Not shown above.)
Snap-on, clear plastic cover protects your screen from wear and tear.

The Palm Tungsten E PDA's product features.



First assemble your photos in Palm Desktop on your PC then you can view them on your Tungsten E.

GENEALOGY SOFTWARE

Now, the reason you are reading about Palm PDAs in these pages is that you can get some excellent genealogy software for them. We shall be looking at the three top mainstream programs, *GedStar*, *GedWise* and *My Roots*. They all collect data from a GEDCOM 5.5 file usually produced by your main family tree software on your computer and all present similar views on the PDA screen.

Among the views you will encounter is a list of everyone in the database, from which you can select the individual to view in detail plus, for each person, a family view; a list of events; and his or her ancestors and descendants. Family views show spouse, marriage information and children. They all show lifespan years in the list of events to help distinguish people with the same name.

GedStar and GedStar-Plus

There are two editions of *GedStar*, currently in version 5.2. The basic edition takes GEDCOM files and converts them into Palm-compatible files. *GedStar-Plus*, reviewed here, can also convert data directly from the Windows programs *The Master Genealogist v4* and *v5* and *Legacy FamilyTree v4* (in fact, it successfully imported data directly from my copy of the latest *Legacy Deluxe v5* as well). Download the fully functional trial version of *GedStar* to confirm whether it is compatible with your existing genealogy software.

Although you can't change the data in *GedStar* directly, you can export the contents of any view, including notes, to the PDA's memo writer; make any additions or notes, then transfer it back to your PC to cut and paste into your main notes or family tree software.

From the Family view you can select parents to see their Family view, or select one of their children to see their details. Tap on an individual on their Family view and get a Details view that will show you all the information in the database for that person, including sources. On a colour screen, names are colour coded to indicate whether there are descendants. You also get a Soundex calculator and a direct relationship calculator. The 'On this Day' menu item tells you which relatives were born, married or died on that day. *GedStar* is very easy to use with almost intuitive navigation and logically presented information. It also supports multiple databases on your PDA.

Alfred George Hallam	29 Jul 1868 – 4 Jan 1931	P S
Florence Annie Ford	7 Jan 1883 – 6 Apr 1948	P S
m:	29 Aug 1929	F-97
Birmingham, Warwickshire		
8 children		
Violet Hallam	1909-1909	
Raymond Alfred Hallam	1910-1969	
Roland George Hallam	1912-1961	
Kathleen Ellen Hallam	1914-2002	
<input type="button" value="Lst"/> <input type="button" value="Sour"/> <input type="button" value="Srch"/> <input type="button" value="Nxt"/> <input type="button" value="Sel"/> <input type="button" value="i"/>		

GedStar's Family view.

GedStar \$13.95 (approx £7.78)
GedStar-Plus \$19.95 (approx £11.13) GHCS www.ghcssoftware.com

GedWise

Looking very similar to *GedStar*, *GedWise* also has an 'On This Day' menu item and offers a Memo Export feature, which transfers birth, marriage and death data for a selected individual to a Palm Memo so that you can edit it. Like *GedStar*, *GedWise* has a fully functional trial version that creates a viewable database of the information in your PC genealogy software, using a GEDCOM file.

With *GedWise*, you can include in your PDA genealogy database: all events, including multiple entries; all alias names; all citation, source and repository information; multiple notes for each individual, as well as a separate note for every data item. There's a dedicated Place Search function for finding a place name in primary birth, marriage and death events. If you're running Windows 95 or later, this is the viewer software for you. At the time of transfer you can choose to exclude source data, repository information or notes - all in the interests of saving memory space. You can also export all the information in your main genealogy software to *GedWise*.

The List view displays all the individuals in the database, together with their lifespan. It also displays aliases, although as separate entries in the list. The Individual Summary view is essentially a Family view, with alternative sub-views for Events and Children and from which you can get to the Individual Detail view and the parents' Family view. You can also access any marriage notes on the family, plus any individual's notes. The Date Calculator allows you to calculate a date, given a start date and the elapsed time duration. The Relationship Calculator will work out the blood relationship between any two individuals.

Descendancy Chart	
Taylor, Thomas	1834/1896
+Pickard, Elizabeth	1841/1927
- Taylor, Thomas	1876/----
- Taylor, Lily Rebecca	1877/----
- Taylor, May	1881/----
- Taylor, James	1885/1961
+Smith, Edith May	1884/1962
- Taylor, James	1904/1904
- Taylor, Thomas	1906/1953
- Taylor, Jessie May	1910/1993
- Taylor, Alfred James	1914/1978
<input type="button" value="Done"/> <input type="button" value="Go To"/> <input type="button" value="Top"/> <input type="button" value="i"/>	

GedWise's Descendancy chart.

GedWise Battery Park Software www.batteryparksoftware.com \$17.99 (approx £10.03)

My Roots

Unlike *GedStar* and *GedWise*, *My Roots* - the only PalmOS genealogy application for both Windows and Mac users - is also the only PDA genealogy application that allows both viewing and editing of your genealogy records directly on the PDA, letting you amend them while you're out and about. Then, when you get home, you can transfer your modified GEDCOM back to your computer with no retyping.

Information can be viewed in the same way as with *GedStar* and *GedWise*. As with those programs, *My Roots* starts up in whatever view you were looking at the last time you shut it down. It has a List view that, if there are general notes attached to a person, lets you view them from the list. Selecting a person takes you to their Personal view, showing parents, number of siblings and events. You can switch to the Family view from there, bring in the spouse and children and, unlike the other two programs here, add more children. It is possible, in fact, to edit all fields throughout the database. Ancestors and descendants can be displayed in a four-generation 'tree' and you can navigate to any other person in a single tap. Usefully you can sort the list of people by name, date of birth, or date of death. The Family view lets you switch to either parent's Personal View showing all siblings and, separately, facts and events.

My Roots also has a free downloadable trial version.

The Family		All
Beck, Emma	1814-	
Beck, Ernest James	1912-1980	
Beck, Gemma	1987-	
Beck, George	1805-1806	
Beck, George	1770-1852	
Beck, George Abery	????-	
Beck, George Froom	1825-1871	
Beck, George Henry	1855-1882	
Beck, Henry Froom	1802-1872	
Beck, Henry Isaac	1835-1836	
Beck, Jo	????-	
<input type="button" value="New"/> <input type="button" value="Done"/> <input type="button" value="Filter"/> <input type="button" value="Name"/> 632		

My Roots List view.

My Roots Tapperware www.tapperware.com \$19.95 (approximately £11.13)

Overview

If you want to be able to edit your information on a PDA, in a genealogical framework, you need *My Roots*, although *GedStar* and *GedWise* can export to the PDA's memo function and are also worthy contenders for your money. *GedStar* is perhaps a little more intuitive, as well as avoiding the problems of GEDCOM conversion for users of *The Master Genealogist* and *Legacy*. ■