

Issue 193

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ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER
GROUP



HOT KEY

SPRING 2016



Denise, Catherine & Bill Nally who gave us a talk
in January on the subject of Special needs,
communication and eye gaze computer control

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The Isle of Wight Personal Computer User Group

We welcome anyone who has an interest in computers and related technology and what you can do with them.

We are a group which seeks to exchange ideas and new information.

Membership is £12 per annum

Our meetings are normally held on the first Wednesday of each month at

The Riverside Centre, Newport from 7.30 to 9.30 pm

Visitors are always welcome.

A charge of £2 is made per meeting, which includes tea or coffee during the break.

If you would like to know more about us, you are most welcome to come along to one of our meetings, or you can contact one of our Committee Members listed on page 3.

The Club web site address is www.iwpcug.org

We also have an e-group discussion area on
Yahoo groups: iwpcusers@yahoogroups.com.



FUTURE MEETINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
4 May	Developments in Microcomputing	C Griffiths
1 June	Internet Security	PC Consultants
6 July	Internet Trading	Judy Thaxter & Steve Sutters
3 August	Summer BBQ	

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP COMMITTEE

Chairman : David Groom

Treasurer : Phil Rogers

Secretary : Susanne Bone

Membership and Database Secretary : Roger Skidmore

Committee Member : Steve Sutters

Committee Member : Soren Johanson

HotKey Editor : Bob Groom

Committee Member : Mike Hoar

Note: Committee members contact details removed prior to publishing on the internet

Suggestions for new events, topics or speakers for talks are always welcome. Please contact Steve Sutters, or any committee member, with your ideas. If necessary we may be able to find a speaker for your subject.

Chairman's Report

Firstly I should start with an apology for the late arrival of this edition of HotKey. I'm afraid that the need to remove and dispose of some very large Leylandii damaged in the storm over the Easter weekend (which needed to be done before the electricity line to the house could be restored) took precedence over production of HotKey!

We held our AGM in February, the minutes are on the club website. One item of note was John White's suggestion of a table-top sale of surplus computer equipment, we are pursuing a date, likely to be in May / June when we shall hold such a sale, probably at the Riverside Centre. I said we would explore the use of Facebook more to advertise our meetings. We promoted one meeting on the Facebook group "Computers, laptops and mobile devices Isle of Wight", but had no response, so will try a less specific group such as "Isle of Wight Events" in future.

After the AGM Judy Thaxter approached the committee and said she would be willing to serve on it, she was duly co-opted on at our March committee meeting.

We have had a some interesting talks to start off the year, and looking at what we have planned for the next few months (see the calendar on page 2) I feel we have a good range of speakers and topics lined up.

David Groom

Joining the Yahoo Group

Send an email to: **iwpcusers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com** with "join" in the subject line.

All members are encouraged to join this group (which costs nothing and is private to club members) in order to keep in touch with events and to join in with the discussions.

You can also keep in touch by regularly visiting **www.iwpcug.org**

Zorin OS

One of the joys (or depending on your point of view one of the most frustrating things) about Linux, is the variety of different distributions available. (A distribution is a particular collection of various parts of the Linux system, bundled together, often with a unique styling, and marketed under a particular name). I started my foray into Linux with RedHat, had a look at Suse, and for a number of years have been using Ubuntu.

I do occasionally look at new distributions (or 'distros'), partly out of curiosity, and partly because even a popular distribution like Ubuntu can be a bit of a steep learning curve for anyone used to Windows. Normally I try out a new distro, but soon revert to Ubuntu. Recently however I came across Zorin OS, and I rather like it.

To quote from the Zorin OS web site “Zorin OS is a multi-functional operating system designed specifically for newcomers to Linux. It's based on Ubuntu Linux, so you can rely on it for rock-solid performance, dependability and support”. It has an exclusive piece of software, the Zorin Look Changer, which lets you change your desktop to look and act like either Windows 7, XP, 2000, Ubuntu Unity, Mac OS X or GNOME 2 for ultimate ease of use.

Originally released in July 2009, it is now on version 10 (released in August 2015). It comes in two basic versions, “Core” and “Lite”, and the Core version is available for both 64Bit & 32Bit processors. The minimum system requirements are for the standard desktop edition of Zorin OS: a 1 GHz x86 processor, 10 GB of Hard Drive space, 512 MB of system memory (RAM) and a Graphics card capable of 640x480 resolution. For Zorin OS Lite this is reduced to: 266 MHz x86 processor, 5GB of Hard Drive space, 256 MB of system memory (RAM), and a Graphics card capable of 640x480 resolution.

Installation was straightforward, it appears to be exactly the same as the standard Ubuntu installation routine, but with a different colour theme.

Upon booting up the system the screen and default theme are an appealing blue colour (see image on back cover). Along the bottom of the desktop is a status bar at the right hand side of which there's a familiar display (a clock, a loudspeaker, a battery indicator and a network icon together with a power off

icon). Towards the left there is a large button and then thumbnails showing an icon for Firefox, what appears to a folder, and an icon to what is presumably an email client, the desktop has two icons on it, one marked home and one marked trash.

A click on the icon at the bottom left of the desktop brings up a reasonably familiar looking menu, on the left-hand side of which are groups of programs and the right hand side of which shortcuts to my home folder, documents, pictures, music, etc. The default system comes installed for the number of games, Firefox, Libreoffice, a media player, and a large number of other programs. Interestingly I note that Wine comes pre-installed, which should allow installation of a number of Windows programs.

My first impressions are that on my rather elderly laptop the desktop is quicker to respond than Ubuntu was, but this may just be subjective. I certainly like the menu system and can see that for someone new to Linux this may be quite an easy operating system to use.

Disappointingly, despite its early promising impression, continued use proved problematic. On occasions the laptop would boot up, but hang before the desktop was fully loaded, on other occasions the desktop would load, and everything seemed OK until I decided to shutdown, when the desktop refused to go away! I'm sure this is just incompatibility with my laptop hardware, it is after all 11 years old, and perhaps crucial is the the fact it has an Nvidia based display adapter, which always seems to give problems on Linux computers. Maybe the problem was I was using version 10 of Zorin OS described on its web site as "cutting edge", perhaps I should have tried version 9 described as "Rock-solid and dependable".

So I downloaded version and installed it on the same laptop. So far I've not had any problems. It does not look quite as nice as version 10 since it uses a different icon set, but it still looks OK, and more importantly it works without problems on my old laptop. So if you are looking to try a new Ubuntu distribution, and are perhaps a little nervous of some of the more established distros then do give Zorin OS a go. Maybe I may even convince Roger Skidmore to try it as a replacement for Linux Mint!

[Late note - since writing this article a version 11 has been released, but I have yet to try it for long enough to see if it is better than version 10]

David Groom

My Travel Blog - How things change

Some of the longer standing members of the club may remember that in 1998/9 I set up a web site to record the details of my year long trip backpacking around the Pacific region (www.dmgroom.com). The aim was primary to keep family and friends informed of my progress without the need to send lots of letters back to everyone. (The term “blog” had not been used at that stage, its first recorded use being in April 1999, so mine was simply an “online travel diary”).

In those days updating of the web site was a pretty laborious process, the only internet access I had was in internet cafes. There were no blogging platforms like Wordpress available, so the whole site was hand-coded using text editors, with the HTML file then being uploaded to the web site. The process of getting pictures on was even more complex, and looking back it seems almost prehistoric. I only had film cameras with me, a 35mm SLR, and a compact APS camera. I got the films developed wherever I was at the time, then posted them back to Dad, with a note of which photos I wanted him to scan and then email back to me. I then FTP'd these images onto my web site!

As for the structure of the site itself, CSS was very much in its infancy and JavaScript was very simple, only used for things like web counters and pop-ups. The plus side was that hand-coding the site was relatively easy, the downside was the web site was rather bland.

Anyway, the reason I'm reminiscing about all this is that hopefully I am taking a short break soon, and I was thinking once again I might record my travels on my web site. But how things have changed in 16 years!

I now would have the option of using something like Wordpress to run the travel blog, no need to use text editors and then uploading the file, all the editing could be now be done online. I may well take my Android tablet with me, WiFi is now so commonly available in hotels and cafes, that the need to seek out an “internet cafe” will probably not be necessary. As for photographs, I will no longer be carrying film based cameras, photos may be taken on a range of digital cameras, my phone, or my tablet, with the ability to add them to the blog almost instantly.

There is other major difference, social change. Back in 1998/9 the idea of publishing so much of your personal life online was new. Many people could not understand why I would do it. However now, with the incredibly widespread acceptance of social media, many people post the most trivial aspects of their life as a matter of routine, so the idea of posting travel photos and comments brings almost no comment

at all. It's also likely I think to cause a change in the styling of my writing. The 1999 blog was very much just a case of writing what I had done, and where I had been, with very little in the way of what I was feeling about the places I was visiting. I expect that anything I write now will be a little more expressive.

I am left however with one dilemma. What should I do about the 1999 blog? Should I preserve it as it is, in the state I left it in 1999, or should I bring it up to date, with larger images, a revised layout (making it accessible to tablets and smartphones), and even the possibility of editing the text to make it more alive (I have a 194 page handwritten journal which contains much more details than I posted online in 1999). In any case, some minor change will be necessary to incorporate this years trip into the menu structure.

David Groom

Windows 10 – Was I Tempting Fate?

In the January edition of HotKey I closed my article on my experience of upgrading to Windows 10, with the words “But so far I am pleased I made the upgrade”. Within a month my feelings would change! From mid February I have been experiencing a number of problems.

I lost my start menu! The one thing which everyone had said was the best feature of Windows 10 is now denied to me! But I've also lost the ability to use search, so I can't even search for programs I use regularly. In order to access the program I either have to put a shortcut to them on the desktop, or navigate to the directory where I hope the executable file will be, and click that to launch the program. I also can't remove program icons from the taskbar, set Firefox as my default browser, along with a number of other issues.

From research on Google, and the fact that this problem has already appeared in two editions of PC Pro magazine this year, it seems I am not alone. I have tried all the “fixes” suggested on Google, but none of them work. Tantalisingly, every now and then the start menu might reappear for a day, only to be gone the next time I log in.

The first reports of this problem seem to have started around August 2015, and yet Microsoft have still been unable to cure it. It really is a most frustrating situation.

The only possible solution seems to be to create a new user account, and then to start using that account. I had to copy across all my files from my current user account's directories to make them accessible to the new user, find a way of migrating my emails and contacts to the new user, then migrate my Firefox settings (though I had

to manually add in the 10 Firefox extensions I currently use), then I'll have to get my desktop to look like the old one. Most frustratingly one program I used had installed itself into my old user directory, so this had to be reinstalled to make it fully accessible to the new user. No doubt in the next few weeks I will find there will be a few other things I have to do as well, which really does not in my mind make this a "solution".

The really frustrating thing is that I can't imagine the problem is that fundamental, presumably it is either a problem with the registry, or with some configuration file which is specific to my user account.

David Groom

Car Sharing / Lifts

It is possible that a number of our members do not attend our monthly meetings because they find transport to Newport difficult and the committee have wondered if it might be possible to arrange lifts for those members. With a membership as large as ours it is not always obvious who might like to attend but has difficulty with transport, and secondly, who might live nearby and be able to offer them a lift.

As a first step, if you would like to attend the meetings, currently can't get to the Riverside Centre on a Wednesday evening and would like to see if there is a nearby member who might offer you a lift, then could you please get in contact with me. We will then try and find a member who might be willing to give you a lift.

Where to Twitter?

Social networking giant Twitter recently raised eyebrows, and caused its stock price to continue falling, by parting ways with four key executives. Leaving were the top executives for products, engineering, human resources, and media partnerships.

This follows the recent layoff off of more than 300 employees, or about 8 percent of Twitter's workforce. Since the company's founding in March 2006 and the launch of the service in July 2006, it has yet to turn a profit despite

having more than 300 million active users worldwide.

Twitter's claim to fame is the 140-character limit of its messages. This allows for the communication, in the words of Twitter co-founder and current CEO Jack Dorsey, of "a short burst of inconsequential information." Twitter's famous 140 characters translate into about 30 words or two relatively short sentences. Or four sentence fragments. Twitter is thus sometimes called a microblogging service.

The character limit is both a strength and weakness. When using Twitter you're forced to be succinct. But you may need to be superficial as well. In announcing the recent management shakeup, Dorsey tweeted not his words as text but an image of his words, since he needed well more than 140 characters.

Twitter's terminology has become commonplace. Twitter's messages are "tweets," and sending one is "tweeting." If you subscribe to people's updates, you "follow" them. A "hashtag" is a way to mark keywords or topics in a tweet. A "trend" is hashtag-driven topic that has become popular, or is "trending."

Whether you love or hate Twitter, or are largely indifferent, it's undeniable that Twitter is a phenomenon. It exploded exponentially in popularity in the years after its launch and soon became a bona fide societal force worldwide.

Twitter was instrumental in helping organize the Arab Spring of 2011, the U.S. Occupy movement, and various other social protests around the world. Boston police tweeted news of the arrest of Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. The Islamic State, also called ISIS or ISIL, uses it. Twitter is banned in China, North Korea, and Iran and has been periodically blocked in Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, and Venezuela.

The service is well suited for popular culture. When pop singer Michael Jackson died in 2009, so many tweets went out that Twitter servers temporarily crashed.

Currently, according to Twitter Counter, the Twitter accounts with the most followers are Katy Perry with 80 million, Justin Bieber with 73 million, and Taylor Swift with 69 million. But politicians, business people, scientists, journalists, and others from many walks of life are popular too. President Barack Obama is in fourth place, according to Twitter Counter, with 68 million

followers.

Not everybody is enamoured with the Twitter phenomenon. It can contribute to narcissism, with tweeters feeling that everybody is waiting breathlessly to read about their every thought or experience. It can inhibit social development in the real world, with online contacts so easy to come by. It can sap productivity at work or school, with tweets an ever-present temptation. Similar criticisms are levied at other social media networks.

Twitter having 320 million active users sounds impressive, but this pales in comparison with its largest competition, Facebook, which has 1.5 billion active users. Other competitors in the U.S. include LinkedIn and Instagram.

Facebook is the most versatile of the four, with the widest scope of services. LinkedIn is the most business oriented. Instagram is focused on photos and short videos.

Twitter's growth has slowed over the past 18 months, and a big concern of investors and analysts is that as it's currently constructed it may have largely tapped out its potential market.

To try to turn things around, Twitter has been or is considering adding various features and tweaking existing ones. "Moments" compiles photos, video, and messages about news events. You can now broadcast live video from GoPro with the help of Twitter's Periscope app. But neither appears to have much potential for being huge successes.

Twitter consequently is also thinking about the unthinkable, in the minds of Twitter purists. It may expand the length restrictions on tweets beyond the 140-character limit that has defined the service since its inception. Comments made by Dorsey have fueled speculation that Twitter will increase the maximum length of tweets to 10,000 characters. That's about 2,000 words, or nearly three times the length of this article.

Twitter has its challenges ahead. But its millions of users remain a formidable force. It isn't expected to disappear in the foreseeable future. Over the coming months, however, it may change significantly.

Microsoft Pushing Windows 10 Hard

Do you like Windows 7? Many people do. In organizational settings, some custom programs are customized for Windows 7. A small percentage of printers and other peripherals work with it but not its successors. With some people, it's just inertia. If it ain't broke, why fix it?

But Microsoft doesn't want you to use it anymore. It wants you to upgrade your Windows 7 and Windows 8 systems to Windows 10, and it's pushing hard. Despite its lush profit margins and storehouse of cash, Microsoft wants to save money by not having to support earlier operating systems.

First, it broke precedent by announcing that for consumers wanting to upgrade their existing Windows 8 or Windows 7 machine, the cost during the first year after its release would be nothing. This is a good thing.

Not so good is Microsoft bugging you with periodic nag pop-ups that this upgrade is available. Even worse is Microsoft's recent announcement that it will automatically upgrade Windows 7 and Windows 8 systems through Windows Update over the next months unless you tell it otherwise. Telling it otherwise isn't completely straightforward.

To prevent Microsoft from automatically installing Windows 10 on your Windows 7 computer, you should do these things:

- 1 Open Windows Update through your Start Menu.
- 2 Click Change Settings.
- 3 Under Important Updates, choose "Check for updates but let me choose whether or not to download and install them".
- 4 Under Recommended Updates, check "Give me recommended updates the same way I receive important updates".
- 5 Click OK.

Step number four above is the one that's not intuitive since Windows 10 will become a recommended update. Microsoft is being so aggressive that even after you do this, it will indicate you have a problem with Windows Update through its Taskbar icon "Solve PC issues." Just ignore this.

Microsoft previously stopped "mainstream support" of Windows 7 in January 2015. This means that Windows 7 doesn't benefit from new features, and you

can't call Microsoft for free help. But Windows 7 still receives all-important security fixes. Microsoft plans to maintain Windows 7 "extended support" until January 2020, when security fixes will no longer be provided.

With Windows 8, Microsoft made one of the biggest business miscalculations in history. By putting a tablet and smartphone interface on its PC operating system, it sought to boost sales of its own tablets and smartphones, which lagged far behind competitors. But the result was sabotaging sales of PCs made by others while doing nothing for the sale of Microsoft's tablets and smartphones.

Before Windows 7, the darling of Windows aficionados was Windows XP. But Microsoft stopped supporting XP in April 2014, which meant it stopped releasing bug fixes, including those related to security. For a large number of people, particularly those in the corporate world, this eliminated XP as a viable product.

In a marketing contrivance, Microsoft named the successor to Windows 8 not Windows 9 but Windows 10. Windows 7 follows Windows Vista, Windows XP, Windows 2000, Windows NT, Windows Me, Windows 98, Windows 95, Windows 3.0 and 3.1, Windows 2.0 and 2.1, and Windows 1.0.

Windows 10 was released in July 2015, Windows 8 in October 2012, and Windows 7 in October 2009. Microsoft seems to alternately release a brilliant major version of Windows followed by a brain-dead version. Windows 95 was good, Windows ME bad, Windows XP good, Windows Vista bad, Windows 7 good, Windows 8 bad, and Windows 10 good.

Microsoft learned from its mistakes with Windows 8. It brought back the much missed Start menu, where you can start programs from the bottom left of your screen. Additionally, Microsoft's "modern apps" no longer try to take over, letting you use them in a desktop window if you like, which makes sense because the product is named and has always been named Windows.

With Windows 10, Microsoft isn't abandoning its wishes that everyone use Windows on smartphones and tablets as well as desktop and laptop PCs. Windows 10 switches interfaces depending on the type of device it's used on. It looks one way on devices in which users primarily use a keyboard and mouse or other pointing device, such as a desktop or laptop PC. And it looks another way on devices in which users primarily use a touchscreen, such as a tablet or smartphone. With convertible laptops/tablets, it asks users what they want.

Microsoft should follow the spirit of this by making it easy, not difficult, for users to use what they want, Windows 7, Windows 8, or Windows 10.

Paducah Parenting Magazine

Important Note - If you find your computer has automatically been “upgraded” to Windows 10 then you can undo the upgrade, but only within the first month.

David Groom

My New Old Smartphone (A rave)

I’m not the sort who checks their email whilst walking along the road. All my internet activity is done on a full sized PC with a full sized keyboard and 2 full sized monitors of 24” and 22”. I have always preferred using a desktop to a laptop let alone a mobile!. I'm surprised that so many people use a mobile phone for their internet connection. I can think of 1 advantage – portability, and the following disadvantages:

- A smartphone that can surf the internet well is expensive, so even more heartbreaking if lost, dropped or stolen;
- Have led to motoring accidents as idiot car drivers pay more attention to their phone than driving;
- The battery life can be as little as under a day;
- There is a greater risk of personal data being stolen if used when out and about;
- Not as easy to use as a desktop or laptop PC.

Almost all smartphones have touchscreens these days which lead to a greater number of typos (typing errors) than when using buttons.

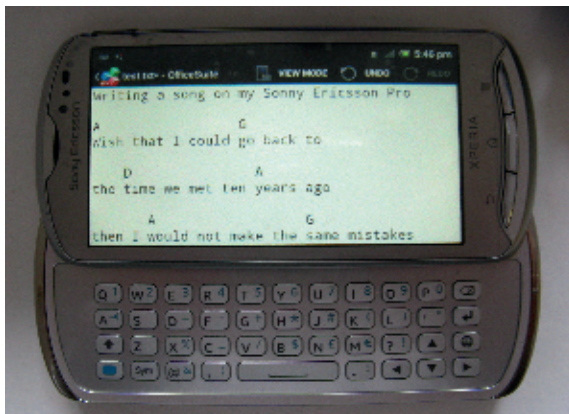
I only needed to ring and text on my mobile so surfing the world wide web was not needed on my phone! There is another use for mobiles which is as a portable word processor. Sometimes it is too sunny and warm to be indoors. If I have a song or article to write in nice weather I like to get the majority of the content on the phone, then download to a word doc. for final editing. I bought a Nokia C3 with a qwerty keyboard to do this. Trouble was the keys were tiny, hard to see and use, and the screen was small at only 2.4” diagonally across. Spilling beer left dark patches on it too. So I searched Ebay for a phone with a bigger qwerty

keyboard (or should that be keypad?) and screen. Phone manufacturers make hardly any button key qwerty keyboards these days and the Blackberry's keys are almost as cramped as my old Nokia's.

The best phone I found was a new 2011 Sonny Ericsson Xperia Pro. The main features for me are:

- A superb slide out qwerty keypad
- 3.7" LED backlight LCD (so less eyestrain)

Microsoft Office app pre installed (I find the test.txt app works best for word processing as the word doc. insists on double line spacing).



I managed to get a new cheap one from China for only £64. I downloaded the latest Android operating system from my Win 7 pc and installed updates in no time. Tried data roaming using Tesco's version of O2 and 5 pounds disappeared from my sim in half an hour (never again!).

Dumbing down

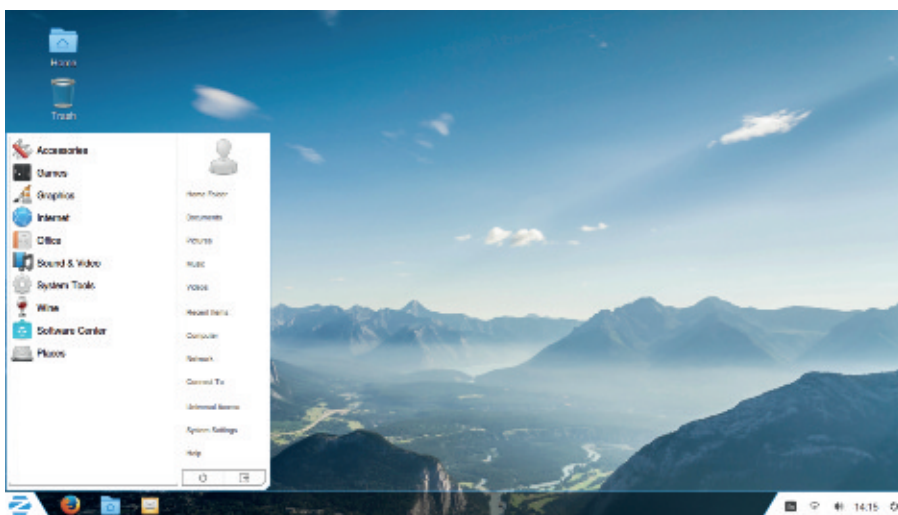
After turning off internet connectivity options and turning the display brightness to 50% the battery life went from 24 hours to 3 days. I also tried uninstalling most of the apps but could only turn them off and not uninstall them because they were pre installed (common with Android phones).

After my adjustments the boot up time has gone from a minute to 40 seconds which is about 40 secs faster than my desktop pc. The little upstart!

Stephen Sutters



Johnathan Burt gave us a talk at
our March meeting on the subject of
Steganography



The Zorin OS Desktop see page 5.

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