

Issue 175

OCTOBER 2011



ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP

HOT KEY

AUTUMN 2011



Members and guests enjoying the
summer BBQ

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The Isle of Wight Personal computer User Group

We welcome all owners and users of IBM compatible Personal Computers.

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

Membership is £10 per annum

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

The Riverside Centre, Newport from 7.30 to 9.30 pm

Visitors are welcome.

A charge of £1 is made per meeting, which includes tea or coffee during the break

The Club Website 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>
Nov 2	Mini Talks	Various Club Members
Dec 7	Christmas Meeting	
Feb 1	Club AGM	

In addition to these, there are more meetings that have not yet been finalised.

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP COMMITTEE

Chairman : David Groom

Treasurer : Phil Rogers

Secretary : Susanne Bone

Membership & Database Secretary : Ray Boote

Committee Member : Roger Skidmore

Committee Member : Steve Sutters

Committee Member : Soren Johanson

HotKey Editor : Bob Groom

Note: contact details removed before
publishing to internet

Suggestions for new events, topics or speakers for talks are always welcome.

Please contact any committee member with your ideas.

If necessary we may be able to find a speaker for your subject.

Chairman's Report

Our August meeting was the summer BBQ, the weather was kind, and we had an enjoyable evening. Though there were not as many members as I would have liked in attendance, it was nice to see some “other halves” coming along. We also had a few visitors, maybe one or two might join us for our regular meetings.

Those of us who came along to the September meeting (see photo on the back page) were treated to an interesting talk from Len Brett, detailing some of the experiences from his working life. I had a lot of positive feedback from the members who attended, saying how enjoyable they found the evening. Well done Len!

Activity on the E-group seems to have slowed recently, hopefully this is due to the fact that not many of you have any current problems you need help with, rather than the fact that you feel the E-group is not a way of getting problems resolved.

As is frequently the case we are looking for contributions from members, either in the form of articles for HotKey (as I write it is possible that this issue of HotKey may be reduced to 12 pages due to lack of content), or by way of giving a talk at one of our monthly meetings (either for a full or part meeting).

In 2005 we took a deliberate decision to reduce our bank balance, and so we decided to reduce membership fees to £6 per annum. Subsequently it was agreed to raise the fee, to £10 for 2011, and £12 for 2012. Reviewing the budgeted income and expenditure for 2012 it would appear that this increase alone will not be enough to stop us running out of funds. As a committee we have looked at all our costs, and with few exceptions there is not much room for savings. We believe that the best way forward would be to increase the meeting attendance fee from £1 to £2. We are however open to other suggestions. In any case no decision will be made until after the AGM in February, but I raise the issue now to give you all time to consider the position.

Cover Disk

New this month

Advanced SystemCare Free - has a one-click approach to help protect, repair, clean, and optimise your PC. With over 100 million downloads since 2006, this award-winning, free PC repair software is a "must-have" tool for your computer. 100% safe with no adware, spyware, or viruses; a PC maintenance program that's incredibly easy to use.

ZoomIt – a tiny utility from Microsoft which apparently works on all versions of Windows. When you run the program it loads into the system tray and allows you to magnify the screen. It also has the neat feature that you can draw on the screen, and annotate the screen with text.

Major Upgrades

Firefox continues with its fast release schedule. In March I gave you version 4 of Firefox, in July we had Firefox 5, and this month I have included version 7! The main improvement seems to be in memory handling, and the fact that 'http://' URL prefix is now hidden by default in the address bar.

AVG Free - gets an upgrade from AVG Free 2011 to AVG Free 2012.

Other Changes

Adobe Reader, AdAware, AVG, CCCleaner & Spybot have all been updated to the latest versions.

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.

David Groom

When You Could Use Some Good News

An international crisis or two involving war, terrorism, monetary instability, famine, and natural disasters always seems to be happening somewhere in the world. National problems surrounding the deficit, employment, housing, the environment, and consumer affairs never end. Local, troubles including crime, government corruption, labour issues, fires, and road closures seem to be an everyday reality.

It's no wonder that daily newspapers appear at times to be filled with bad news. The reality also is that people enjoy reading about the troubles of others and that doing so can sometimes prevent you from having troubles yourself.

But people have also always complained about what they regard as the overemphasis on negativity in the news, and this applies today as well, regardless of how you get your news, from a printed newspaper, television, radio, personal computer, or mobile device such as a smartphone.

If you want to balance what you see as negativity with positivity, places exist on the Web today where you can read only good news.

Good News Stories (www.goodnewsstories.org) is a free ad-supported site that gathers positive news stories from around the world. According to its About page, “This site was born out of a frustration with mainstream news sites only reporting negative news in the main instead of focusing on the positive side of things. Good News Stories will only report on happy and upbeat news to put a smile on the face of people worldwide.”

The site's opening page presents you with a selection of what's regarded as the most important stories. You can also find stories according to geographic location and such categories as business, education, health, and politics. As with many news sites, you can leave comments, but first you have to register with the site, which is free.

Good News Network (www.goodnewsnetwork.org) presents positive news stories through both text and video. Its mission is “to provide a Daily Dose of News to Enthuse”. Like Good News Stories, it acts as a news aggregator, collecting upbeat news from around the globe. The news stories in its “Most Popular” section are free, but to read other articles you need to subscribe, which starts at \$2 per month.

“Negative news is an important staple of any well-informed citizenry and necessary for society's evolution”, according to Geri Weis-Corbley, the site's editor and publisher. “But today we are in dire need of a well-balanced media diet. Local TV news, especially, has been continually feeding us junk food. We need to be informed by a world view that is not dripping with sensationalism and attuned to the police scanner.”

Happy News (www.happynews.com) is also a good repository of feel-good information. Its emphasis is on “virtue, goodwill, and heroism”, and it collects news of this nature among other ways through “citizen journalists” who report from around the world.

This free ad-supported site also includes video clips, optimistic quotations from philosophers, regular columnists, and how-to tips on subjects ranging from quitting smoking to saving for college. A “Happy Products” section offers news of products such as chocolate and Earth-friendly candles. As with the two previous sites news is categorized, into areas such as national, health, and heroes.

With HelpOthers.org (www.helpothers.org), the emphasis is more on deeds than words. Site visitors share stories of “real-life acts of kindness”, with the object being to inspire others and “pay it forward”. The site also includes “kindness ideas” regarding things you can do for others to help make them happy.

The site features an “Idea Contest” in which you're asked what you would do to bring more kindness to your community if you had an extra \$100. Each month the person who's judged to have submitted the best idea wins \$100. If you have any questions about anything at the site, you can send a message to one of its “kindness experts.”

HelpOthers.org doesn't feature ads or require subscriptions to gain access to extra content. For funding it relies on donations, which individuals can make through PayPal or by mailing a check, and on contributions from companies and foundations.

As with anything on the Web, not everything is always as it seems, even though the intentions may be quite good.

Karen Hammond

Computer Disasters: Preparing for the Worst

Expect the best, prepare for the worst, according to maxim. This plays out in interesting ways with personal computers.

Computer disasters run the gamut, resulting from such causes as computer viruses, hard disk crashes, accidentally erased files, accidentally reformatted disks, sabotage, theft, lightning strikes, fires, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and even terrorist bombings.

The recent trio on the East Coast (of the USA) of rare earthquake, rare tornadoes, and common enough hurricane emphasizes the reality of natural disasters.

A ruined computer or broken hard drive may not be anywhere near as tragic as the loss of life, but computer disasters can and have cost people lots of money and hassle, and when crucial data was irretrievably lost, they've even caused some businesses to fail.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, according to another relevant maxim.

Here are some important, and relatively easy, preventive measures that any computer user, whether in a business, professional, or home setting, can take.

Back up your data. This has always been and remains the single most important disaster prevention measure. Even if your computer or other device gets trashed, as long as your data is intact, you're good to go on a new device.

USB flash drives, also called flash drives or thumb drives, let you store lots of data on a device you can pop into your pocket when heading for safe ground. Kingston Technology (www.kingston.com) offers its brand of DataTraveler flash drives with capacities from 2 to 256 gigabytes targeted to consumers, businesses, and government agencies.

Though backing up through a "cloud" service over the Internet takes more time, it's safer since the data is already off site. Some are free, some cost.

BackBlaze (www.backblaze.com) charges \$5 per month or \$50 per year to back up unlimited data from one computer. Amazon Cloud Drive (www.amazon.com/clouddrive) lets you upload as much as 5 gigabytes of data for free, with charges for additional data.

Keep the electricity flowing. When you lose power, an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) provides enough electricity to let you save documents you're working on and power down properly to avoid problems or, depending on the type, to keep on working. APC (www.apc.com) offers UPSs for a wide variety of users, from those working in home settings to data centers.

For portable devices, a battery pack can charge laptops, netbooks, tablets, and smartphones when the power is out. XPal Power (www.xpalpower.com) offers a range of power packs, from the XP600, which you can carry in your wallet or purse to charge a cell phone, to the XP1800, which can charge three portable devices at the same time.

Consider worst-case scenarios. When you don't have backups or the backups are faulty, all's not necessarily lost. If you're a do-it-yourselfer, software programs can sometimes recover trashed data, a less expensive option. If you're not technically oriented or if the problem is beyond your technical expertise, companies can do the work for you, a considerably more expensive but more reliable option.

R-Tools Technology (www.r-tt.com) offers a range of programs for Windows PCs, Macs, and Linux computers. It's R-Studio program, which costs \$79.99, handles different kinds of hard drives and different operating systems.

Seagate Recovery Services (services.seagate.com), part of hard drive manufacturer Seagate Technology, can recover data off trashed hard drives from any manufacturer. In existence since 1989, it works with businesses and consumers, offering priority as well as economy service. If it can't recover your data, it refunds your recovery fee.

Seagate offers good advice on what to do and what not to do when you realize you've lost data, which is similar to the advice offered by other data recovery services.

If your hard drive is making unusual noises, you should shut it down immediately and not power up again. Even just running programs can write new data over data you don't want to lose.

If you can't access your hard drive, first eliminate the simplest possible causes, such as loose cables. As long as the hard drive isn't making unusual noises, sometimes simply restarting the computer can fix the problem.

Like other data recovery services, Seagate recommends that you don't use do-it-yourself data recovery software, which it says can make it more difficult for it to recover data and possibly cause further data loss.

Better than having to make the decision of inexpensive data recovery software or expensive data recovery service is to avoid having to use either. Back up crucial data, and make sure the backups are good.

Karen Hammond

Joining the Email Group

Send an e-mail 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.ipcug.org**

Computability Programs

Programs initially installed on a computability-IW computer

When we set up a newly checked-out computer we almost always re-install Windows XP and then a variety of basic programs.

First to go on is AVG 11 from HotKeys disk. Next ensure an Internet connection either with RJ45 connection or WiFi "N" dongle. Then do Windows service release updates up to SR3 (usually from CD), and then all the latest updates for XP which are available online. There are often various hardware drivers missing at this point. Windows supplies some generic ones itself and sometimes they come on a disk thoughtfully retained with the machine. Otherwise it is a case of hunting on the various manufacturers' websites or more recently we use Driver Genius which does what it says on the tin (usually).

A basic setup like this leaves much to be desired so next comes some utility programs and then everyday work programs.

For basic utilities we supply 7-ZIP, flexible replacement for WinZip file compression utility. Next Belarc Advisor - for checking specification etc. of computer. There is a free burning program called ashampoo_burning_studio_6_free - free basic CD burning/copying tool from Ashampoo. Then CCCleaner version 225 for removing junk. For some reason newer versions seem to slow down boot-up time; v 225 is fine. For uninstalling programs Revo uninstall does a neat job. Malwarebytes is currently the most popular anti-malware program. As a general purpose tune-up program we install Tune Up Utilities - older free versions usually available. These keep your system tidy and defragged without really trying. FoxitReader is less cluttersome than Adobe Reader, so much preferred.

Other less essential utilities are SyncBack - synchronised backup of files - set to copy new and changed only. FSViewer from FastStone - very neat image viewer with basic photo editing ability. For a better browser Firefox 3.6 - now into version 4 and 5 but later ones don't like the very excellent

Google Toolbar. USBDeview is the only programme I know of which will remove installed USB connections - useful if you've put the hardware in before installing the drivers and wish you hadn't! InternationalPrimoPDF - for creating PDF files, free and seems to work OK

I like LP-Recorder-Setup-free-412 - easy-peasy sound recording. Use with free version of LP Ripper to trim tracks. And Avery DesignPro - amazing label programme free from Avery. US version defaults to Letter size but allows versatile label design; UK version is more UK friendly but uses fixed label designs.

Of special note is xplorer2_lite - my default twin panel file manager with thumbnail viewer and text editor. Cannot live without this one.

The main office suite is of course Open Office.Org, or now LibreOffice.

These programs are mainly free - well, they have to be to go on a Computability computer. Some are on the HotKey disc; others you will have to search for but Google is pretty good at finding them. If you are totally stuck for one then email me

Roger Skidmore

Photo competition

Thank you to all those who entered the autumn photo competition on the theme of “The Sea”. The winning entry is printed on the back page, congratulations go to Pat Luckett who took the photo.

The theme for the winter photo competition will be “wireless”, entries have to be received by me by 13 December.

Are we too reliant on the internet?

[Note to readers, this article was expanded by David Groom from an original submission by Steve Sutters.]

This summer we saw on our TV's some disturbing scenes of rioting. What started as a peaceful protest was hijacked by mostly young rioter's intent on theft and vandalism. In the aftermath there were comments made that the likes of Facebook and mobile messaging had enabled the protests to spread and gain a momentum they otherwise would not have done, and that really the "authorities" should have shut these networks down.

I suppose the same arguments were used in the spring in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt, (and I have no doubt that similar arguments may have been made in the past about newspapers).

I do not blame Blackberries mass messaging function or the social networking sites. The internet and mobile phones have made communication easier but people will use any means at their disposal to message each other. Should the internet and all telecommunication systems be shut down in case rioters use these tools to organize and meet? Of course not. Why should everyone suffer because of a relatively small criminal element in society?

Increasingly all our lives are becoming more dominated / enhanced / influenced / reliant on "the internet", to an extent that in the past no other single medium achieved. We use Skype for voice calls, email as a substitute for letters, web sites as a substitute for encyclopedias and newspapers, and, dare I say it, Facebook as a substitute for real face to face interaction with friends. Do we give enough thought to what would happen if one day someone decided to "turn off" the internet? Is it even possible to "turn off" the internet?

I had always understood that one of the design goals of ARPANET (the forerunner to the internet of today) was to have a network which was capable of being resistant to the destruction that might happen in a major war. This goal led to its design where there was no central server through which all traffic flowed. If this is the case then surely it must be impossible

to “turn off” the internet. On a global scale this is probably almost likely to be 99.99% true. However as we move down to more national, regional, and local scales the guarantee of internet connectivity becomes less and less certain.

A repeat of the 1997 hurricane could bring down power and telephone cables. Our internet provider might “go bust”, how quickly could we switch providers? How many connections to the internet backbone does the Isle of Wight / UK have, and would it be possible to turn these off, or for them all to be damaged at once – I have no idea. What is clear however, is that like all disaster planning we should at the very least consider the possibility we might not have access to the internet, to reflect upon the effect that might have on us, and then decide if there is any action we need to take now to mitigate the effect of the loss.

Note: whilst researching this article I came across a report by the European Network and Information Security Agency entitled “Resilience of the Internet Interconnection Ecosystem”, it is included as a PDF on the cover disk. It is however 239 pages long, so you may be interested in the executive summary which I have also included on the cover disk.

Keyboard Short Cuts

Especially when working on a laptop, it is frequently much simpler and quicker to use the keyboard to perform some routine operations than it is to use the touch-pad or even a mouse if one is installed. So let us see what we can do on our keyboards.

Nowadays, keyboards have 2 (sometimes 3) keys that most of us never use. These are the “Windows” key (sometimes duplicated) and the “Startup” key.

For the sort of operations that we are talking about here, ESC, CTRL, ALT, TAB and some of the Function keys (F1, F2, F3, etc.) are used.

In the following examples WIN+D, for instance means “hold down the Windows key and press D”. On some keyboards it is necessary to use a “determined” press rather than a quick “stab”.

The examples that are included here are those which I have been able to test and work satisfactorily in Windows XP, but there are many more that can be used in Windows 7 or in Vista. Not all of these examples will work in all of the programs

that I have on this computer and it does seem that the “freebee”, or it could be called “less commercial” applications are less likely to respond correctly.

Try these for starters:- (in no particular order)

1..Open the “Start” menu by pressing WIN (a second press will remove it). Use the “up, down, left, right” arrow key to to navigate through the list and the press ENTER.

2..If there are a number of windows open WIN+D will minimise them all. Then ALT+TAB will scroll through the and the selected one will open when the ALT key is released.

3..To search for files WIN+F opens the dialogue box. Type in as required and press ENTER. Then ALT+F and down to “Close” will close it.

4..If you know the full name of an application WIN+R will bring up the Run box. Type as needed and press ENTER. Example, typing in “calc” will bring up the Calculator.

5..The TAB key will navigate through “dialogue boxes” and Web Pages.

6.. In many applications CTRL+Z will “undo” the last action. This works in my Image Editing programs, and in Open Office.

7..Screen Shot. In image editing programs the “Print Screen” key will put a copy of the whole desktop as an image onto the clip-board. ALT+Print Screen will copy only the active Window. In most image editors CTRL+V will paste the clipboard.

8.. WIN+E will open a “Windows Explorer” window.

9..ALT+F4 will close an application provided there are none of that applications Windows open.

10.. CTRL+P will print a document or a web page. (not tried that one !)

You will find many more of these Short Cuts on:-

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/301583> and

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/keyboard.shortcut>

Editor



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