

Issue 182

JULY 2013

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP



HOT KEY

SUMMER 2013



Buzz Austin gave us a talk on
“Disability and IT, the wider perspective”

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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 it.

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

Membership is £12 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 £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 Website address is **www.iwpcug.org**

We also have an e-group discussion area on

Yahoo groups: **iwpcusers@yahoo.co.uk**



FUTURE MEETINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
July 3	MAD - Aid	Sean Colson
August 7	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

Note: contact details removed prior to publishing to 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.

Chairmans Report

We are now halfway through the year, and by the time you read this our next meeting will be the Annual Club BBQ, please note the earlier than usual start time of 7:00pm, and the fact that I do need a rough idea of the numbers attending. More details are on page 8.

Attendance at our meetings seems to have stabilised in the low twenties, irrespective of the meeting topic, time of year, or weather outside! With the IWPCUG now on Facebook we hope to publicise the meetings more widely, and hopefully get a few more visitors each month.

Our events calendar on page 2 currently doesn't show many booked events, we do have a number of ideas in the pipeline for September and October, so keep an eye on the club web site.

The Yahoo group seems to have been a bit quiet recently, though most of the time when a question is raised an answer is found, so it does seem to have its uses. Do remember it is there as a resource for us all.

There is no cover disk this month.

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.

David Groom

IWPCUG joins Facebook

Following discussions at the AGM, and last months talk by Anthony Luxton of AFX Design, the committee have agreed that it is time we have a presence on Facebook. In reality it is probably something we should have done a year or two ago.

Our clubs page can be found at www.facebook.com/IWPCUG , the prime aim of us joining Facebook is to publicise the IWPCUG to as wide an audience as possible, and encourage visitors to come along to our meetings, and then hopefully some of those visitors will become members. It is not intended that our Facebook page will replace either our current web site, or the Yahoo E-group.

Each of our meetings (with the exception of the BBQ) will be posted as an event. In order that notice of these events reach as wide an audience as possible I would encourage all of you who are members of Facebook to share that event with as many of your Facebook friends as you can. It is important that you “share” rather than simply “like” the event as this gives notice of our meetings a wider distribution.

Peter Johnson has kindly agreed to administer the page for us.

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

Laptop or Tablet?

If you're looking to buy a new portable computing device, now or later, you'll likely consider old-school laptops along with newfangled tablets.

Tablet computers have taken the market by storm, and they're appropriate for many people. But for those who significantly engage in information creation as well as consumption, and for many business users also, laptop computers often remain the better choice.

Tablets do have their advantages. They're smaller, lighter, and typically less expensive than laptops. Their popularity is undeniable. Tablets are projected to surpass laptops in U.S. sales for 2013 -- 240 million tablets versus 207 million laptops -- according to market research firm NPD Display Search (www.displaysearch.com).

Increasing tablet sales are contributing to the decline in PC sales. Overall sales of PCs -- laptop as well as desktop computers -- fell 4.9 percent in the fourth quarter of 2012 compared to 2011, according to market research firm Gartner (www.gartner.com).

The causes of this decline, according to Gartner, were a weak economy and strong tablet sales. "Tablets have dramatically changed the device landscape for PCs, not so much by 'cannibalizing' PC sales, but by causing PC users to shift consumption to tablets rather than replacing older PCs," says Mikako Kitagawa, principal analyst at Gartner.

Top-rated tablets include Apple iPad (www.apple.com/ipad), Samsung Galaxy Note (www.samsung.com/GalaxyNote), and Google Nexus (www.google.com/nexus).

So why would anyone choose a laptop today?

To gauge why, and to get a better feel for laptop trends, I reviewed a laptop from Acer (www.acer.com), the third largest PC maker in U.S. sales, behind Hewlett-Packard (www.hp.com) and Lenovo (www.lenovo.com). Acer has a big presence in office supply, discount, and other retail stores.

I looked at an "ultrabook," which is a relatively new category of laptops that are thin and light, with plenty of portability, along with being a step up from tablets in functionality. Ultrabooks typically come in three sizes, based on approximate screen size: 11-inch, 13-inch, and 14- to 15-inch.

But if your plans for traveling with your laptop involve little more than occasionally moving it from office to conference room or from living room to kitchen, a better choice may be a "desktop replacement" laptop, which typically has a 17-inch screen that for many people is easier on the eyes.

The popularity of tablets has drastically diminished the popularity of the smallest of the laptops, the "netbooks."

In contrast to tablets, laptops have a separate keyboard, making it easier to type, and a larger screen, making it easier to see. Laptops are also typically more powerful and versatile than tablets, which makes them more attractive to businesses.

The Acer S7-391 Ultrabook I looked at has a 13.3-inch screen and weighs 2.87 pounds. This compares to 9.7 inches and 1.44 pounds for an iPad.

The unit comes with a dual-core processor, 4 gigabytes of memory, and a 256-gigabyte hard drive. Like many better laptops today, the hard drive is a next-generation "solid state" drive, which means that it works like a USB drive rather than a traditional hard drive. With no spinning disks, it's faster, quieter, and more resistant to bumps.

Another trend with laptops, also exemplified by this unit, is that it comes without a CD/DVD optical drive, making it lighter. As happened earlier with floppy drives, optical drives may be on their way out. They're becoming less relevant because of the increasing ease of accessing programs and content and backing up data using "the cloud," the Internet.

Like tablets and smartphones, this unit comes with a touchscreen, reducing touchpad or mouse use, which represents a third laptop trend.

Despite improvements in voice recognition, inputting still typically involves typing. With a tablet you type on its screen, or you can buy a stand-alone

keyboard. In either case the ergonomics aren't as good as with a laptop. Because people tend to slump when using them, tablets can cause more neck and shoulder problems than laptop or desktop computers, according to a Harvard School of Public Health study (www.hsph.harvard.edu).

Conversely, desktop PCs are more ergonomic than laptops, further exemplifying the tradeoff between portability and ergonomics. Similarly there's a tradeoff economically. iPads 4s start at \$500 and go up to \$830, for instance, while Acer ultrabooks start at \$550 and go up to \$1,650. Average ultrabook prices are projected to drop to \$500 in 2016 as their technology matures, according to market research firm GBI Research (www.gbiresearch.com).

Even with the encroachment by tablets, manufacturers will likely continue selling lots of laptops. For many people, the added power, efficiency, and comfort justify the cost.

Karen Hammond

The Annual Club BBQ on Wednesday 1 August

This will be held again at Bembridge Lodge, 114 High St, Bembridge. Starting at 7:00pm (note the earlier start than normal meetings), there is a map on the club's web site.

It would assist catering for the event if you could let me know if you are planning to come, no definite commitment needed, I just need some idea of the numbers expected. It would be appreciated if you could either call on 873853, or email david@vectis-webdesign.com before 29 July.

As usual the invite is extend to members' wives / husbands / etc.

David Groom

Puzzle

A farmer has n cows that he takes to market and sells for n pounds each. With the proceeds of sale he buys an odd number of sheep at 10 pounds each and a pig at less than ten pounds. How much did he pay for the pig?

David Broughton

Welcome to another rant (then rave)

One thing I really hate using is complicated software that is not intuitive to use. I'm in a band and sometimes need to send a music file to other band members that is bigger than the 15Mb that TalkTalk allows or 25Mb that BT's Yahoo allows. I just wanted a free, simple and quick way to send files of well under 100Mb and did not want to have to wade through pages of instructions either.

First I tried Dropbox which is a well established file sharing service which allows 2Gb of free file sharing space. I found the user interface hard to understand. Did manage to send a couple of files after about an hours faffing about but it was far from obvious and there were so many hoops to go through with choosing a shared folder, creating a link etc. that I decided to look around for other ways. It's not just me, as a lot of reviewers said it was unintuitive and awkward to use.

SugarSync had a lot of praise and again it allows free storage (up to 5Gb!) so I installed that on my PC. The interface is clearer and simpler (though the manual at about 75 pages made me dread the time I might have to spend with it). Again there was no obvious way from the start to send files and still lots of hoops to go (syncing folders etc.) before I could.

The icing on the cake with these two is the regular junk mail I get saying about new features and inviting me to use them. Aaaaaaaaaaahh!

I was beginning to think there was no such thing as a simple way to send files when a friend said try WeTransfer (not Wet Transfer as he called it !!). This allows up to 2Gb file transfers. This has a simple box on the opening screen (No sub menus? Wow!) Filled out my email address then a band members email, loaded a file, clicked transfer and..... hey it can't be this easy? where's the catch I thought. There wasn't one. All files have been reliably sent so easily. It's fast too. Just sent a file in seconds that took minutes using SugarSync.

If only more software was as clutter free and minimalist. More icing on the cake - had no junk mail from them. Another reason why I love it.

Steve Sutters

Windows 8.1

On June 26 Microsoft made available details of the first major update to Windows 8, and put a preview version of Windows 8.1 available in the Windows Store. It is also available as an ISO file to download from the Microsoft web site. I've not used it yet so my comments below are based on Microsofts' press release and other online reviews.

First a word of warning from Microsoft themselves: "We strongly recommend that only experienced PC users download Windows 8.1 Preview or Windows RT 8.1Preview. Before you download the preview, you should weigh the pros and cons of installing software that's still in development. If you install the preview release, you'll get to try out the many new features, but you might also encounter errors that you wouldn't encounter using a released version of Windows". So if I were you I, and you already have a working version of Windows 8, I wouldn't rush to the Windows Store to download the preview.

One thing that many users will appreciate is that Windows 8.1 will allow people to start in the desktop mode automatically. You can also use the same background image for the desktop as for the start screen, which should make switching between the two easier. In desktop mode, there is a button that resembles the old Start button, but this isn't the Start Button of old. The classic multi-step application launcher is still missing. Windows 8.1's Start Button is more of a shortcut to the Start Menu- you know, the screen with the little colourful icons. A right-click on the so-called Start Button pulls up a quick launch menu of shorts. The menu displays a list of administrative tools like Power Options, Event View, Disk Management and Windows Shells.

It's easier to personalize Windows 8.1 Preview. You can set the lock screen to your favourite photo, or turn the lock screen display into a slide show of your pictures. You can choose from more beautiful, vibrant colours, as well as fun backgrounds. The Start screen gets new large tile sizes for select apps like Weather and Finance so you can see more information at once. Now more than two apps can now share the screen. No longer are you restricted to a large window and one slender side panel (an 80%/20% split), but two apps can each take up half the screen, or, depending on what the app's developer has allowed, any portion you choose. The number of apps you can simultaneously display depends on how large the screen is and its pixel density.

The Windows Store has been redesigned. By each App's page you'll see a three panel view, with the description on the left, a large image area for app screenshots in the middle, and ratings and reviews on the right. Before you had to select tabs to get at all that info.

One of the biggest bugbears of Windows 8 is the search functionality. When searching the app only returns results from "Apps" by default and users have to manually click to search for settings and files. With 8.1, unified search will return as default, "Smart Search" powered by none other than Bing - searches your query on the internet as well as in your files, settings, and apps. If you don't want to search "Everywhere" (the entire Web and your device), you can choose from a drop-down menu of settings, files, Web images, or Web videos.

When using the desktop you can turn off the trigger in the top right corner that shows the charms bar when you use your mouse, and the one in the top left corner that shows a thumbnail of the next app running in the background.

When you use the Search charm on the desktop it opens the Search pane on top of what you're doing, rather than throwing you out to the Start screen.

Some of the Apps have been updated. The Camera app now has Photosynth panoramas built in; tap the panorama button and start moving your tablet around to stitch together images into a scene that can cover as much of 360 degrees. The Photos app has far more editing options allowing you to adjust things like brightness, contrast, shadows, and highlights.

The web browser, Internet Explorer, moves up to version 11, a couple of key interface updates stand out, especially in the browser's new-style, full-screen incarnation. You can now use as many tabs as you want, and these tiles scroll along the bottom, nearer to the address bar for easier access, rather than at the top. HTML5 support improves, and surprisingly, the browser now supports WebGL. It also is expected to include better touch performance and faster page loading times.

Windows 8.1 will come with support for 3D printing. So you'll be able to print from any app that supports 3D printing, with drivers automatically downloaded and installed just as they are for paper printers.

Microsofts' cloud storage, SkyDrive, is connected more deeply to your PC or tablet. Start with 7 GB of free storage, and easily upgrade to more.

Users can tether Windows 8.1 mobile broadband-enabled PCs or tablets into a personal Wi-Fi hotspot.

It is anticipated that the final release version of Windows 8.1 will be available later in the year, and will be free to existing users of Windows 8.

David Groom

Surfing, In Person, To Others' Homes

Imagine going on a trip and staying not in hotels but in other people's homes, for free. That's the premise behind Couchsurfing (www.couchsurfing.org), a free Internet-based "hospitality exchange" service.

Staying overnight in a stranger's home, or letting a stranger stay overnight in your home, might seem like a strange, and risky, thing to do. But it can be a great way to meet people on the road, and meeting people when traveling is the best way to travel. It can also be a great way to meet travelers from all over the world. And the service provides ways to minimize any inherent risks.

Couchsurfing is the largest of similar such services, with others including BeWelcome (www.bewelcome.org) and Hospitality Club (www.hospitalityclub.org). Couchsurfing describes itself as "a community of over 5 million members in 97,000 cities - and every country - around the world."

With Couchsurfing, you can find hosts in two ways. First, you can search for hosts living in or near a city or town you're planning to visit, optionally filtering the list according to such factors as gender, age, suitable for children you may be traveling with, pets allowed, and smoking prohibited. You then send a "CouchRequest" to a suitable person or people, spelling out why you think they would be a good host for you.

Second, you can publish your itinerary, consisting of the cities or towns you plan to travel through, and wait for hosts to invite you. The first way is generally more successful.

Couchsurfing provides various ways to judge the relative riskiness, or lack of it, of its members. All members must write a profile about themselves, which includes a personal description, how you participate in the site, your Couchsurfing experience, your interests, your philosophy, the types of people you enjoy, how you "teach, learn, share," and one amazing thing you've seen or done.

Your profile can optionally include a photo or photos of you, which is recommended. It's easy to upload photos from your computer or other device.

When you stay at someone's home, or when you host someone who stays at your home, you're encouraged to leave a "reference" for that person, which includes a positive, negative, or neutral rating plus whatever verbal description you want. Once you start accumulating references, your acceptance rate increases.

Couchsurfing also lets you become "verified," which is how it makes its money. By paying a \$35 "donation," you're listed as a verified member, which the site also suggests builds trust.

Finally, the site makes it possible for you to become "vouched," which is its highest standard of trust. You can do this by being deemed "extremely trustworthy" by three other members who know you personally and who have each become vouched themselves.

When I first started with Couchsurfing, I sent CouchRequests to anybody, including a 19-year-old college undergrad, explaining she looked just like my daughter, that she could regard me as a slightly eccentric but totally cool uncle, and that she should ignore my request if it felt weird in any way. I never heard back from her or other younger people, so I started filtering my requests to those older than 32, 36, or 40, depending on how many hosts were available in any given city or town.

In the beginning I sent requests only to women, feeling they would be more hospitable, but I wasn't getting any acceptances back, so I expanded this to women, men, and couples. I was offered hosting at first with maybe one out of ten requests, but after I start accumulating positive references from my stays, my success rate improved. Thus far I've been hosted by an equal number of men and women.

The Couchsurfing site recommends that guests bring hosts a gift. But the hosts I stayed with say that guests rarely do. Gifts can include a service offer such as computer help or a cooked meal.

Some hosts have houses, some apartments. Some have a guest bedroom, some literally have a couch you can sleep on or a living room or den floor onto which you can place your inflatable mattress.

The Couchsurfing membership is skewed toward younger people and the more liberal and offbeat. But it also includes folks in their fifties, sixties, and even seventies and those who appear to be more conservative and traditional.

Couchsurfing is a great way to experience a place you're visiting through the eyes of a friendly native and a great way to roll out the welcome mat to a visitor passing through your area.

Karren Hammond

Mailinator

While researching one possible possible article for HotKey I came across the term “Mailinator”, not being familiar with what this was I searched on Google and came across a useful little service.

What is Mailinator?

Mailinator is a different kind of email service. The biggest difference is that you don't need to sign up. Within certain limits any email name you can think of can exist at Mailinator.com. Want to use chairmaniwpcug@mailinator.com? You got it. The email addresses are created when email arrives into them and they are just waiting for you to check your inbox.

Since you don't need to sign up and register at Mailinator it is important to realise there is no security on the reading of emails, anyone who knows, or who can guess, the Mailinator email address can read the email. For this reason, and another reason explained below, it might be best to use an unusual email address. For instance when researching this article I looked at the common address of david@mailinator.com, and I could read 30 emails sent to that address. Not surprisingly the address chairmaniwpcug@mailinator.com had no emails sent to it.

Why use it?

Every so often you may need a quick email address for a single purpose, and you may be worried that if you give out your real email address you'll receive spam. Another situation which I could foresee is if you were away from your usual computer, and needed to receive a quick email then you could ask someone to send it to a Mailinator address.

How long are emails stored?

Emails are deleted after a maximum of one day, but may be deleted sooner. At present it appears that each “mailbox” stores a maximum of 30 emails. This is another good reason for choosing an unusual email address, if you choose an address which is unlikely to be used by anyone else then you have more chance the emails will be stored for the whole 24 hours. Since the david@mailinator address is, I guess, quite a common one for people to use the 30 emails which I referred to earlier were all received by the system in the previous 73 minutes, older messages had already been deleted.

What email address should I use?

I've already explained above one reason why you may want to use an unusual email address. If you want an obscure or unusual name, and you can't think of one of the top of your head, you can use one which is displayed you every time you visit the Mailinator home page. This is a randomly generated name, for instance suggestions given were PunchyRascal@mailinator.com, StinkyImp@mailinator.com, and RottenMcGee@mailinator.com

Limitations

Email names (the bit before the @ sign) must be 25 characters or less, all file attachments are removed, and the email size must be less than 120Kb. It is also possible that some websites, realising that you are trying to avoid signing up with a “real” email address will refuse to allow you to sign up using a Mailinator address, though in the case the “alternate domains” explained below may help.

Other Points

On the home page of Mailinator, just below the box where you check your emails, is a section headed “Alternate Domains”, at the time of writing this article if I look at the Mailinator homepage an alternate domain listed is sogetthis.com. If I were to send an email to chairmaniwpcug@sogetthis.com, it would be received by mailinator, and I could pick it up as if it had been addressed to chairmaniwpcug@mailinator.com .

Something which sounds similar, but in fact is not, is the “alternate inbox name”. You may have been worried that by giving out an email address like chairmaniwpcug@mailinator.com you would alert those who you had given the address to that this was an address you used, and they would be able to check email received by that address too. However if you go and check the inbox for that address then you will also see listed an alternate address for this inbox of M8R-jl1wq01@mailinator.com. Any mail sent to the email address M8R-jl1wq01@mailinator.com will be received into the inbox of chairmaniwpcug@mailinator.com, and according to the FAQ's on the mailinator web site won't be viewable at M8R-jl1wq01@mailinator.com. The only problem is that when testing this I found that mail was able to read by entering the alternate address of M8R-jl1wq01!! I've emailed the site to enquire about this but have not yet had a reply.

David Groom



Antony and Sam from AFX Design, who gave us a talk in June on how social media might be used to drive traffic to web sites



Vic Shears and Richard Burkill each took half of Mays meeting to give us a mini talk

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