

Issue 192

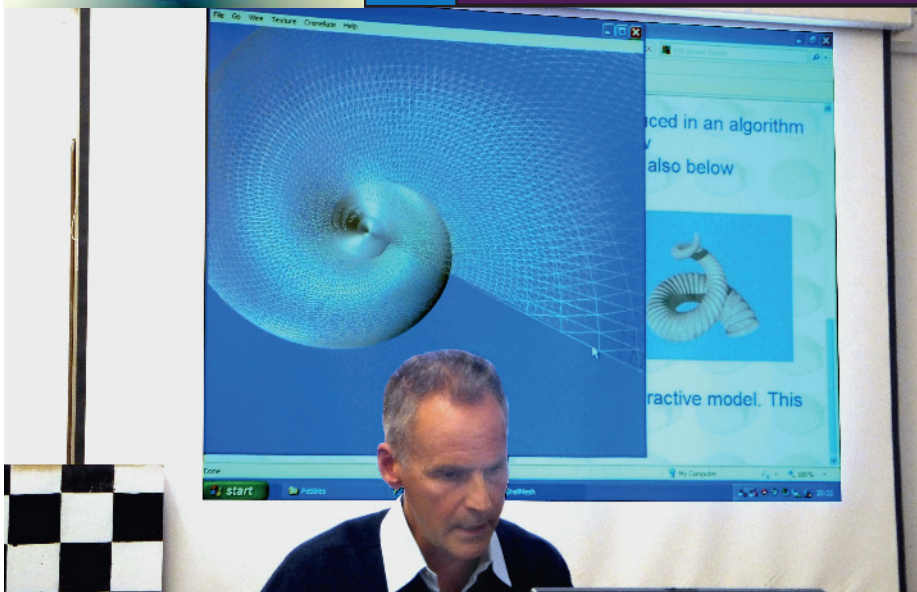
JANUARY 2016

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER
GROUP



HOT KEY

WINTER 2016



For the first half of our November Meeting
Richard Burkill demonstrated how to use 3D
modelling to create shells, and seascapes.

In This Issue

Pages

Future Meetings.....	2
Committee Members.....	3
Chairman's Report / Taking Screen Shots & Screen Recordings.....	4
Taking the Plunge into Windows 10.....	6
How I got the time right on the Yahoo Groups Calendar.....	7
Notice of AGM.....	8
A Quest for Speed & a Search for Memory.....	9
Getting the Most From Your Batteries.....	11
Steve's Rant.....	14



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 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 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>
6 January	Special needs, communication and eye gaze computer control	Bill & Denise Nally
3 February	AGM & Speaker	
2 March	TBA	

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

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 Report

Firstly may I wish you all a very healthy and happy 2016.

Our AGM is next month, so a quick reminder that if you want to join the committee, then please do speak to Su. If however you wish to assist in a less formal role, maybe contributing an article to HotKey, or finding or suggesting a speaker, or even bringing a new member along to a meeting, then that would be welcomed too.

We have put this edition of HotKey together a little earlier than usual, I'm always a little embarrassed to hand the PDF to the printers and ask for it back in a few days, particularly over Christmas /New Year, and therefore have made an effort to produce this edition early, one drawback of this is the calendar of events is looking a little sparse, but we have speakers in mind so I am sure this will get filled.

David Groom

Taking Screenshots & Recordings of Your Programs

When doing presentations, explaining programs to others, or writing help manuals it is often useful to be able to include a screen shot of the program you are referring to. For the last few years I have been using a program called Icecream Screen Recorder which, in its basic version, is a free download.

Of course it is possible to take screenshots without any additional software. If you press the “Windows Logo Key + PrtScn” this saves a copy of the screen to an image in the Screenshots directory, which is a sub directory of the “Pictures” directory. Or a quick press of the “PrtScn” key on your keyboard takes a copy of the whole screen, which is then available from the clipboard. Alternatively if you click the title bar of any window, then press “Alt + PrtScn” a screen shot of this window is copied to the clipboard.

Alternatively you might use the Snipping Tool, which has been a feature of Windows since Vista. The Snipping Tool can take screenshots of an open window, rectangular area, a free-form area, or the entire screen. Snips can then be annotated using a mouse with different coloured pens or a

highlighter, saved as an image file, or sent by email.

So, given that there are these inbuilt methods of capturing the screen, why would I use a program like Icecream Screen Recorder?

Although the Windows Snipping Tool allows you to draw lines on the captured image it does not allow you to draw text. Icecream Screen Recorder has the ability to draw lines, text, rectangles and circles on to the screenshot you have captured. I do sometimes find the ability to annotate the screenshot with a small text message quite useful.

The second reason to use the program was that I was looking for a way to capture a video recoding of what was happening on the screen, and this is not possible with the standard Windows methods outlined above. Video recordings are useful for a number of purposes. You may be experiencing problems with a particular piece of software and may find it helpful to email a video of what you are doing to the support department. You may be on a Skype call with relatives, and want to save it so other family members can see it later. Or you may be about to demonstrate a particular piece of software to a group, and may either be unsure if you will be able to get it fully working on the day, or just feel a video is a good back up plan.

Capturing Video really is quite simple, start the program, and then click the “Capture Video” option. You can then draw on screen a rectangle to select the area of the screen you want to record. Once you have done this a dialog box pops up, and should you prefer to capture the whole screen you have that option available as a selection. To start recording click “Rec”, and a countdown of 3-2-1 appears on screen, and then the recording of the screen starts. A small toolbar remains, with tools which allow you to draw lines, rectangles, circles or text on screen, in a variety of colours. When you want to stop the recoding click the stop icon, and the recording is saved. There is also an option to pause and resume recording. The free version of this program is limited to a 10 minute record time limit, and will only save files in the WEBM format. However VLC media player has an option to convert video to other formats, so this is not a problem.

David Groom

I've Taken the Plunge into Windows 10

I have been talking to various people and groups about Windows 10 for some time now, but anyone who attended my talk on it in September may remember that I said I had not upgraded my main office computer, and would wait a while before doing so. Well in early December I finally made the decision to upgrade.

I had a number of reasons for waiting a few months after the release of the OS in July. Firstly I wanted other people to install it first, try it out, and then to give Microsoft an opportunity to iron out any bugs, secondly any upgrade always carries with it the possibility of ending up with a non-functioning machine (hence Microsoft's warning to take a backup before upgrading). The last, and most important reason, was that my office computer, which had been running Windows 8, had developed a problem with shutting down (it quite often hung on shutdown) and I was concerned that since any upgrade to Windows 10 would involve multiple reboots then the shutdown problem might cause the upgrade to fail part way through. However in early December it appeared to me that Microsoft's gentle reminders to upgrade my system were becoming more and more frequent, so I decided to take the plunge.

The upgrade took 3 hours, and involved some reboots, but (rather to my relief) at the end I had a working Windows 10 system on my computer.

As far as I can tell most my software is still functioning, and this is despite the fact that I have some programs which were only designed for Windows XP. The reason I said "most" in the previous sentence was that after the upgrade I had a system message telling me that "Speccy" (a program which shows a lot of detail about the computer and its programs) had been removed because it was not compatible with Windows 10. However I downloaded the latest version of Speccy and it seems to run fine.

One slight oddity is that whenever I print anything, although it seems to work OK, I get a dialog box pop up saying "Could not connect printer to port". Even though I have removed the printer software and reinstalled it I still have the problem, so it needs a little more work to track down the cause of this.

As for the reluctance of the computer to shutdown, which I was experiencing under Windows 8, well that has been cured!

I have to admit its nice to have the start button back, doing what I have always expected it to do. I've started to configure the panel which pops up to the right of the menu when the start button is clicked, removing tiles of programs I don't use and replacing them with those I use frequently I'm also extremely pleased that when I move the mouse to the extreme right of the screen I no longer get the charms bar popping out and interfering with what I was doing, a particularly annoying feature of Windows 8!

I'm yet to use some of the new features such as task view, the enhanced command prompt, or even Edge (the new web browser). But so far I am pleased I made the upgrade.

David Groom

How I got Yahoo Group Events to show the correct time

You may remember that for a while the email reminders sent by Yahoo for our monthly meetings had the wrong time for the meeting (I even commented on this in the Chairmans Report in the last issue of HotKey).

At least one member also uses Yahoo Groups to create events, and he has suggested I tell you how I corrected the problem. It really is very simple when you know where to look!

Log in to Yahoo, and then click the Mail icon. Next click the small calendar icon towards the top left of the screen. This should display your own personal Yahoo calendar. Next Click the settings icon (it looks like a gear cog) towards the top right of the page, and then choose "Calendar Options" from the drop down. Now set your time zone correctly.

That's all there is to it.

David Groom

NOTICE OF AGM

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Isle of Wight PC User Group will be held on Wednesday 3rd February 2016 at 7:30 PM at The Riverside Centre, Newport.

Nominations are requested for the positions of: Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary, and up to eight other committee members.

Please send your nominations to the Secretary, Su Bone. Seconders are not necessary at this stage.

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA**

1. Consider matters arising from the minutes of the previous AGM, held on 4th February 2015 (www.iwpcug.org/secure/minutes/AGM2015.pdf).
2. Receive reports:
 - 2.1 Chairman
 - 2.2 Treasurer, including approval of the Club Accounts
 - 2.3 Secretary
 - 2.4 Membership Secretary
 - 2.5 Other activities: Computability, HotKey, Website, Egroup, Facebook
3. Elect a Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, and Membership Secretary.
4. Elect other Committee members (up to a maximum of eight persons).
5. Set the Annual Subscription.
6. Appoint an Independent Examiner.
7. Any Other Business.

A Quest for Speed and a Search for Memory

As I sit at my modern PC, I finally feel like a contented man. It has two fast processors, plenty of permanent storage and ample working memory. But it hasn't always been like that.....

Back in the mid seventies, two teachers set up an after school computer club. I jumped at the chance, not knowing quite what to expect. My enthusiasm was not dampened even when it became clear that the computer was at UCL (35 miles away) and we were to be connected via a temperamental modem and a long queue of jobs from the university and other institutions. Response time was therefore often measured in hours and mistakes were punished ruthlessly with a simple "Error in line 10. Program Aborted." This curt retort came via a character based teleprinter. I apologise for the lack of detail regarding hardware types; all I can remember was the software: BASIC. This was a perfect language for us to learn and could be used at home by marking graphite lines on IBM style 40 character cards. It could take from one Tuesday evening to the next for an error to be discovered; we are now used to PCs returning code errors in nanoseconds.

By the time I went to university (1980), my college had purchased one desktop machine for the use of 400 undergraduates. Booked by the hour, it could store programs on an ordinary tape cassette, and had the luxuries of a screen and a keyboard. This was truly space age. Used mostly by us mathematicians and some physicists; it was always difficult to get a slot, except in the mornings!! I do remember an English literature undergraduate asking if it could do anything useful such as writing poetry. I did write her some using BASIC, but she was not impressed.

In 1983 I began work in finance where most calculations were still being run on mainframes and we could only feed in parameters to existing programs. However my office had purchased an IBM PC running Lotus 123 which was the first widely available spreadsheet. This software was perfect for producing flexible projections and could be enhanced further by writing code in Lotus's own language. Managers soon saw the benefits of "what if" type calculations with fancy printed output and graphs. But I was soon having problems with lack of memory and speed.

I went travelling and reached Australia in 1987 where I was lucky enough to get a job on the 14th floor of an office overlooking Sydney Harbour. At that time, I was slightly ahead of the game and they seemed to like what I could do with spreadsheets. Before long I was back here in a less spectacular office where PCs had really begun to take off but they were still slow and lacking in memory. We would run models on a dozen PCs overnight making a total of 150 hours runtime. I decided that we should utilise the mainframe power as it would often sit idle from 2am to 7am. I learnt FORTRAN and started coding in earnest. The operators would sometimes ring in distress, “Your program is looping”. It was not – they were used to lots of input/output with little CPU. These programs were almost the exact opposite, running for hours before producing any output.

Once again I left to travel before ending up in the city, this time programming in C++ and writing programs to monitor bond and option prices, then alerting dealers to buying or selling opportunities. I was allowed to do some work from home and in 1999 they set me up with an early ADSL line. Again I left; the work was quite interesting, but the people.....

I realised that I could have a role as a middle man since there often seemed to be a real problem with the link between the technical finance people and those who did the coding. So now I started contracting as someone who could communicate with the professionals, knew maths and could code or write specifications. Mathematicians know a few tricks for solving difficult problems and are not scared of logarithms or the odd twelfth root!

Meanwhile at home, I went through a series of PCs which always seemed deficient in at least one bit of hardware (normally too slow a processor). I often had plenty of time between contracts, so I learnt how to write windows based programs, which was probably the biggest leap that I ever took. From there I gained a strong interest in 3D graphics, learning to program in Java3D and DirectX as a result. Nearly all my computer skills are self taught but I owe much to those two pioneering teachers. Many thanks Mr Myers and Mr Bibby.

Richard Burkill

Getting the Most from Your Batteries

With our ever-increasing reliance on high-powered smart phones and other portable digital devices, the lowly battery is getting more and more attention. From charging stations at supermarkets to new battery technologies on the horizon, batteries are cool.

Supermarkets such as Whole Foods, clothing stores such as Urban Outfitters, and even some restaurants and ski resorts are installing cellphone charging stations from companies such as ChargeItSpot (www.chargeitspot.com). Often, the service is free to customers, with the establishment paying ChargeItSpot to help them cement customer loyalty. You can go from 5 percent batter power before lunch to 25 afterward, beyond the point where you're worried about soon having your digital lifeline unusable.

Battery manufacturers are working on batteries that can be nearly fully charged in the time it takes you have eat lunch. Chinese tech giant Huawei (www.huawei.com) has announced new quick-charging batteries that charge up to ten times faster than normal batteries. The batteries are still in the developmental stage. One technology may make it possible for batteries to be charged to 68 percent in two minutes.

The technology behind the rechargeable batteries in today's portable devices is lithium-ion. Lithium is one of the most interesting elements out there, the third one in the periodic table, after hydrogen and helium, and the lightest metal. Unlike most other elements, some of the lithium in the universe was formed during the Big Bang, at the beginning of time.

Used in batteries, lithium-ion is a more advanced technology than nickel-cadmium, which is a more advanced technology than alkaline batteries. Unlike lithium-ion and nickel-cadmium batteries, alkaline batteries can't be recharged. Lithium-iodide batteries, which aren't rechargeable, are used in devices such as heart pacemakers and can last for 15 years.

Batteries have been around only for about 200 years. The Italian Alessandro Volta, after whom the term "volt" was named, invented the first practical battery in 1800. It consisted of copper and zinc. What all batteries do is convert stored chemical energy into electrical energy.

Lots of misconceptions exist surrounding today's batteries, which can prevent you from getting the most out of them.

It's not true that you should always let a battery drain completely before recharging for maximum battery life. This was in fact the case with nickel-cadmium batteries. But lithium-ion batteries don't need this.

What you should do is periodically drain the battery. Advice differs, from once a month to once a year. Just run the device until it shuts itself off. Then recharge it.

Batteries won't discharge 100 percent even when the screen indicates a 0 percent charge. That's the reason why when you hit the power button the device turns on long enough to tell you to recharge.

It's not true that leaving your smartphone or tablet plugged in will overcharge it. These days most devices are designed to stop charging once the battery is fully charged.

All rechargeable batteries have a finite life before they have to be replaced. Lithium-ion batteries can be recharged about 500 times before their maximum charge begins to decline. You'll notice this when you begin having to recharge sooner and sooner.

There are steps you can take in minimizing battery usage, to prolong the battery power of your device on any given day.

Keep your software up to date. The latest operating systems have all kinds of tricks to conserve battery power.

Be mindful with apps such as Facebook and Instagram, which are battery hogs. iPhones, for instance, let you see which apps use the most juice. Press Settings then Battery. You can optionally turn off background data use with apps that don't need to be continually downloading data in the background. Press Settings, General, and Background App Refresh.

Avoid extreme temperatures. The ideal temperature range is 62 degrees to 72 degrees F., though devices can generally be used safely in temperatures from

32 degrees to 95 degrees. Heat above 95 degrees can be outright harmful, so avoid car trunks in summer. I killed one laptop battery this way.

Turning down your screen brightness will prolong battery life, as will setting it to black and white if this is an option. Of course, brightness and color can be useful features. Another option is turning off wireless connections such as Bluetooth and Wi-Fi if you're not using them.

Use the right device. If you're primarily reading books, get an ereader. With their black and white screens and specialized functionality, they have a battery life that's measured in days, not hours.

Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of the book *Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway*. He can be reached at reidgoldsborough@gmail.com or reidgold.com.

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.

Steve's Rant

My rant today is about complicated sound recording software.

Last winter after installing a fanless power supply and a virtually silent case fan to my PC, I thought what a brilliant music recorder it would make as it would add so little noise to the recording environment. The search was on for the best software for me.

I use sound modules for keyboard sounds and have a drum machine so did not need to have plugins (software synths and drums). Also I don't tend to use effects other than the ones built in to my equipment so had no need of them either. All I wanted was basic multitrack recording (making lots of recordings and playing them back together).

Word on the internet is that Audacity is one of the best free programs. After using it I found it fine for basic stereo recording but once I tried multitracking with it I came across a number of problems. These included the tracks being out of sync. with each other and the music speeding up and slowing down. It has a lot of critics too on internet forums so I reckoned that paid for software was likely to have fewer problems.

Most music software can be downloaded for a trial period or with reduced functionality for free to give the purchaser the chance to try it out before buying. I tried several well known programs and none of them seemed simple to set up and the user interface tended to have so many controls that they looked like a maze. Below is a sample of some of the features of even basic music software.

Some of the functions of software plugins include distortion, resonators, equalizers, synthesizers, drum machines, echo, reverb, compressors, chorus, virtual amp, limiter, phaser and flangers. Each have their own form of manipulating the soundwaves, tone, pitch, and speed of a simple sound and transform it into something different. To achieve an even more distinctive sound, multiple plugins can be used in layers, and further automated to manipulate the original sounds and mould the sounds into a completely new sample.

I ended up buying Cubase Elements 8 for £61 as the recording screens were some of the clearest and two of my friends liked using it and could help with

problems. The main manual is 686 pages long and although there are obvious sections to look through for basic tasks, I still spent hours trying to set up the right channels etc. for recording and I had to keep referring to the manual as I could not remember all the many steps involved. Most music software is incredibly powerful and by using the built in instruments and effects all someone needs is a controller keyboard, microphone, guitar and perhaps bass guitar to make extremely high quality recordings.

Many musicians today work in the virtual environment of computer based recording and for someone who does not have the space or money for hardware instruments and enjoys extreme manipulation of sounds then it works well for them. Does take many hours of learning to get to grips with. Hours that are not spent practicing. Also one has to use it regularly to keep familiar. It is not like riding a bicycle

Anyway I do still use Cubase Elements 8. I have become more familiar with it and do use it to record a few tracks to listen to at home or send to other musicians as music files. I would not like to record a whole song with it. That would involve far too much faffing about! Just wish that software companies would produce basic recording software that had very few functions or at least a quick guide with far fewer pages for musicians with basic needs.

Now for the Rave

Some people prefer hardware recorders. These are all-in-one boxes you just plug sound sources into and export music as audio, data files, CD's etc. I know the viewing screen is much smaller than a monitor and they do mean having another box of electronics. However they are far simpler and faster to use with dedicated buttons for transport as well as having real faders for adjusting volume levels.

My trusty Tascam 788 has given me about 12 trouble free years. I expect I will be getting the 24 track Tascam DP24 some time in the new year when I have saved up £321.

Look forward spending more time playing keyboards and less time wrestling with recording software in 2016!

Stephen Sutters



Jonathan Burt gave the talk in October on the subject of PC Utilities. The slides for his talk can be downloaded from www.iwpcug.org/downloads/JAB_Utillities.pdf



Denny Linzmaier gave us a talk at our December meeting on how to stay safe online, using proxys etc. As usual for Denny's Christmas talk he also tested our brains with a little quiz

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