

Issue 232

Autumn 2026

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP



HOT KEY

OCTOBER 2026

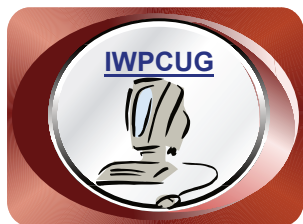


The summer BBQ was held at Bembridge Lodge
for our July meeting.

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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 from 7.00 to 8:30 pm. Until further notice these will be held online via Zoom.

Visitors are always welcome.

If you would like to know more about us, you are most welcome to attend one of our meetings, or you can contact one of our Committee

Members who are listed on page 3.

The Club web site address is www.iwpcug.org

We also have an e-group discussion area on

Groups.io: <https://groups.io/g/iwpcug>

Details of how to join are on page 4.



FUTURE MEETINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
7 October	Using AI to Develop a Phone App	David Groom
4 November	3D Printing	Rick Newlands
2 December	Christmas Meeting	Denny Linzmaier
6 January	TBA	
3 February	AGM followed by Q&A session	

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP COMMITTEE

Chairman : David Groom

Secretary : position unfilled

Treasurer : Mike Hoar

Membership and Database Secretary : Roger Skidmore

Committee Member : Steve Sutters

Committee Member : Susanne Bone

Committee Member : Dr Peter Huckle

Treasury Supervisor : Phil Rogers

Note

**Contact details removed prior to
publishuimb 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.

Chairman's Report & Editorial

Our meetings calendar is now full for the remainder of the year. It would be especially nice to see a high turnout for the November meeting when we have a new speaker talking on the subject of “3D Printing”, something we have not covered before.



The summer BBQ was an enjoyable affair, and it was especially welcome to see Peter Warren and his wife who came over from the mainland to join us.

At the September committee meeting Dr Peter Huckle was co-opted onto the committee.

Over the past few months I've been playing around using AI to develop apps for phones. I've been using two different methods, one is outlined in this issue of HotKey on pages 11-13, and the second method I shall be talking about at this months' meeting.

David Groom

USB to Audio Jack Adapter



Available on Amazon for £3.37 the adapter provides two 3.5mm audio ports - audio input (microphone) & audio output (speakers or headphones), which can then be plugged into a USB port. I've recently purchased one and hope it will overcome some sound issues I had during a recent Zoom meeting.

David Groom

Joining the Email Discussion Group

Send an email to: iwpcug+subscribe@groups.io, you will receive a confirmation email. Follow the instructions in that email, and then wait for your approval request to be approved by one of the moderators.

All members are encouraged to join this group (it's free and private to club members) so you can keep in touch with events and join in with the discussions.

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

Interesting Points From Past HotKeys

Reading through so many back issues of Hot Key whilst I was recreating them to put on our web site (see last issue) was interesting.

From a design point of view there was greater use of clip art with articles, a wider range of fonts being used, with some articles in Arial and some in Times New Roman, and the odd letter or word in a completely different font. There also appeared to be no “house style” on whether articles were simply left aligned, or were left justified.

The January 2000 edition noted that the club web site had been going for more than 2 years. In May 2000 there was an article about the difficulties of putting an electronic version of HotKey on the web site. PDFs were considered, but then rejected in favour of reproducing the pages as HTML

By July 2000 it was decided that the regular 3½" floppy cover disk that was sent out with HotKey was no longer adequate, it would be replaced by a CD!

There were many articles from Ken Fermoye, this was a name I didn't recognise, who was he? The answer came on page 4 of the October 2000 edition. Our then editor Brian Sexton had come across the newsletter of the Greater Tampa Bay Personal Computer User Group in the USA, and had discovered Ken was a regular contributor. Brian approached Ken and asked for permission to reprint articles which he was happy to give.

On page 8 of the 100th edition of HotKey April 2000 David Broughton gave a “centenary review”. The club had started to produce a magazine in 1990. The first edition was A4 size and had 14 pages. Interestingly enough, the second edition, published for the summer was A5 format as it is today, though that size did not last, as the autumn edition for that year was back to A4 format with fewer pages. Content tailed off somewhat in early 1991, but later that year David Broughton volunteered to produce a regular magazine paving the way to the birth of Hot Key, a name which he came up with. The first edition of which came out for October 1991.

Back in the early 2000's there seemed to be a preoccupation with backing up our computers. We write less about that now, perhaps we just assume everyone is doing it.

David Groom

AdBlock Annoyances

After I completed most of the coding for the members' advert section of the website I asked Roger Skidmore to test it. He commented that he was not able to see the larger images when he clicked on the thumbnails. I looked at the coding and found no errors, I opened the webmaster tools window in both Firefox and Google Chrome and again no errors were found.

I asked Roger if I could come over to his place and look at the website on his computer . When looking at the members' section I noticed a little icon in the top of the Firefox browser, clicking on this showed it to be from the Adblock plug-in and it reported that it was blocking the loading of 4 images, these were the larger images that would now not be displayed. There was however no indication of why these images were being blocked.

Armed with this information I went back to my office and installed the Adblock plugin into Firefox. Lo and behold the images were blocked on my computer, again no reason why. I did a Google search and one suggestion was the plug-in would block images if the location of those images on the web server included names it didn't like - names such as “/advert” for instance. Now since the images which were being blocked were images of items members had put up with their advert, as a web designer it seemed logical to me to place the images into a directory named “/ad_images”. I changed the name of the directory which stored the images to “main_images”, reloaded the webpage and Adblock no longer had a problem.

I have a number of issues with Adblock over this behaviour. Firstly I can see many logical reasons why a web designer may want to use a directory such as “/ads”, “/advert” etc, and for it to block these images seems nonsensical. Even more nonsensical is the fact that Adblock itself gave no reason to the user on why these images had been blocked, and did not ask whether the user wanted to allow the images to be displayed. As a web designer how do I know what other plug-ins may block parts of website that I have designed? I can't possibly install every single plug-in available for Firefox and test a website against it. It was only because I know Roger that I was aware that was a problem in this instance.

Incidentally the thumbnails are stored in a directory called “/ad_thumbnails” and Adblock had no problem with images in that directory!

David Groom

QR Codes revisited (see original article [HotKey No 176](#))



and David
Groom vCard:



Those above were created using <https://www.qrcode-monkey.com> using Dark Blue: #005ab8 and have been given links if you don't have a scanner on your phone. [Affinity Publisher also can produce QR codes. Ed.]

David and Denny's excursion into QR codes was in 2012, but QR codes have seen an explosion since Covid and the universal adoption of smartphones. And it's going to get worse! You can have QR codes on anything now – T-shirts, cufflinks, earrings, coasters, as well as cinema tickets, admission checks, menus, payments...

A QR code is a string of data which your phone or scanner will interpret in a number of ways. You can decide how you want this to happen when you create your code. Some codes are "static" – they just sit there and do one thing, or "dynamic" when they probably connect to an intermediate web site which (for a price) will log its activity, number of hits, etc, before passing your request on to the ultimate destination.

A QR code is probably a JPG or PNG graphic file and can be printed wherever you like. Brochures, posters, sticky labels (app.avery.co.uk), or

merged using MS Word. Copilot says: “**Microsoft Word *can* create mail-merged QR codes directly from raw data.** Word does this using its built-in **MERGEBCODE** field, which can generate a QR code on-the-fly for each row of your Excel data.” - yet to be tried.

For the history and evolution of Bar and QR Code development do review Jonathan Burt’s excellent Zoom presentation to us on 2nd September 2026. His PowerPoint presentation can be found at www.iwpcug.org/docs/2026-09-02_Barcodes.pdf.

Further information is always available from Copilot and Wikipedia.

Roger Skidmore

Puzzle Answer

On page 4 of the last issue was an old puzzle provided by the late David Broughton, which was originally printed in HotKey issue 97. The solution to the puzzle is below.



This puzzle concerned a boat on a river. The speed of a boat relative to the water must be added to the speed of the water to get the combined speed. In one direction the two speeds add up to 1 km/minute. When going against the current the current is negative and the two speeds total $\frac{5}{7}$ km/min. If you add these two speeds ($\frac{7}{7} + \frac{5}{7} = \frac{12}{7}$ km/min) the speed of the current cancels out and you get twice the boat's speed. Half this ($\frac{6}{7}$ km/min) is therefore the boat's speed. It will therefore take 5 divided by $\frac{6}{7}$ minutes to do 5 km in slack water. That is $\frac{35}{6}$ minutes or 5 minutes and 50 seconds.

This problem is similar to the classical problem of a car that goes at 20 mph for half the journey and 30 mph for the other half. The average speed is not 25 mph as one might at first think, but 24 mph. The formula is $2ab/(a+b)$. Here, a and b are 20 and 30. In the January HotKey problem a and b are the time periods 5 and 7 minutes, the distance of 5 km being irrelevant.



While deciding the best way to produce and manipulate PDF files I came across a fantastic free program called PDFgear available for download from <https://www.pdfgear.com/pdfgear-for-windows>.

I think it has a slightly odd looking interface when you first start the program (see back page), it's very task based. In all there are 19 "tools" available, grouped into "Hot Tools", "Convert from PDF", "Convert to PDF", "Merge & Split" and "All Tools", clicking on one of these groups in the top menu then displays the relevant tools immediately below, and you then click that tool to actually do anything. The first thing which happens when you click a tool is you can add a file (or files), then depending on what the tool does it either processes that file(s), or then opens another window with the file loaded, in which you then can proceed to do more work.

Alternative if you have a PDF file you want to do something with you can click the big red "Open File" button, this then opens the PDF in

another window with a wide range of options. You can for instance remove some pages from a multi-page PDF or add a new page into an existing PDF document. One interesting feature is you can view the PDF as a slide show, the PDF opens full screen, and as you click the screen it displays the next page.

I first came across the program when I was searching for how to get OCR text from a PDF, and sure enough the program allows you to do that. Open a PDF file, click the "OCR" icon and PDFgear will produce a PDF file with the original PDF as one layer and searchable text on a different layer. It's not quite as customisable as the process I described in the last issue of HotKey but it is a very quick way of getting searchable text into a PDF which originally just contained scanned images of text.

There are many more tools in the program, which I haven't been able to fully describe in this article. If you regularly work with PDF's I would encourage you to give it a try.

David Groom

AI to the Rescue

In recent months months I've twice used AI to help with hardware issues.

The first was a new issue which cropped up after I changed a few settings on one router on my network; I could no longer access the internet if I typed in a domain name, though a ping to a remote IP address worked. The network has grown ad-hoc over time, and probably if I designed it from scratch it would not look like it does now. I asked ChatGPT for help, but hadn't really explained my network set up to it, so it probably took longer to diagnose the problem. Anyway after some considerable back and forth with ChatGPT it finally identified an issue with my local DNS server (see [January 2021](#) issue). A few changes to the configuration file and all was back working.

The next issue was a longstanding problem with my Windows 10 computer. It failed to recognise any USB device. This has been the situation for many years. When it first occurred I had identified that this wasn't a fundamental hardware problem, since if I booted from a live CD for an Ubuntu OS it recognised the USB hardware. It was clearly Windows causing the problem. I had tried to resolve it when it first

appeared, but after many fruitless Google searches and suggestions taking many days I gave up, and resorted to using USB devices on the Linux computer I have on my network. Spurred on by my success above I decided to ask Claude.ai for help. It recommended many tests, and changes, some of which I remember doing many years ago, and after a very long session it essentially said it had run out of all options for fixing the current situation. But it did suggest installing a PCI USB expansion card. I had ruled this out myself years ago when it appeared the problem was not a fundamental hardware issue, but Claude suggested if I got a card with a different manufacturers chipset it might resolve the issue. I identified a candidate on Amazon and showed it to Claude, which said it was a good choice. Three days later the card appeared and I excitedly installed it and booted Windows. My USB memory stick was recognised, I was very pleased. Two minutes later it stopped being recognised, and my USB printer was not recognised either! I decided to reboot the computer and, "touch wood", since then all has been OK. Only time will tell, but so far I've been able to use a webcam, flash drive, keyboard, and sound adapter (see page 4).

David Groom

Using Flutterflow & ChatGPT to Develop a Phone App

First, a little background.

Flutter is an open-source UI framework developed by Google for building applications for mobile, web and desktop from a single codebase. It allows developers to create attractive, responsive apps for platforms such as Android, iOS, Windows, macOS and Linux.

Dart is the programming language used by Flutter. Also developed by Google, Dart is designed for building fast, modern applications and provides the programming logic behind Flutter apps. Together, Flutter and Dart allow developers to create cross-platform applications without having to write separate code for each operating system.

I am not familiar with the Dart programming language and therefore decided to use **FlutterFlow**, a visual, low-code development platform for building applications using Flutter. It runs in a web browser and provides a drag-and-drop interface that allows you to design app screens, connect databases such as Firebase, configure navigation and actions, and build much of the application without having to write code manually.

FlutterFlow generates **Flutter/Dart code** behind the scenes, so it can be used to create real mobile, web and desktop applications. Developers can also add their own Dart code and custom functions when the visual tools aren't sufficient.

In simple terms:

Dart → the programming language

Flutter → the framework used to build the app

FlutterFlow → a visual development tool for building Flutter apps

For the app I am developing **FlutterFlow is essentially the development environment I am using, while Flutter and Dart provide the underlying technology.**

The advantage of FlutterFlow is that much of the development is almost drag-and-drop. You can create new pages in the web-based environment and then drag what are known as **widgets**, or building blocks, onto the page. These might be text and images, or more complicated components such as lists, buttons and forms.

For a simple app there may be no need to write any code at all, and possibly very little need to use AI. I have to admit, however, that initially I did not find

FlutterFlow's interface particularly logical, and so I asked ChatGPT to help me work out how to do things. Had I realised at the beginning how much I would end up using AI, I might well have chosen a different approach!

FlutterFlow also offers AI-assisted development, including integration with external AI tools, though some of these features require more expensive plans.

While developing the app I can preview it within FlutterFlow's own environment. This allows me to test not only the visual appearance of the app, but also movement from page to page and whether the underlying logic is working correctly.

At the moment I am using the free version of FlutterFlow. The next level up currently costs \$39 a month. So far, it appears that I can do pretty much everything I need on the free plan. This has allowed me to carry out most of the development without paying for the software.

One of the advantages of FlutterFlow is that when I eventually reach the stage where I want to make the app available through the Google Play and Apple App Stores, it provides tools for building and deploying the app. At that stage I will need to upgrade my FlutterFlow plan, as well as needing to have developer accounts with the relevant app stores.

If I had wanted to develop a simple app, I probably wouldn't have needed to use ChatGPT very much at all. The occasional question such as "How do I do this in FlutterFlow?" might have been all that was necessary. The app I wanted to develop, however, is rather more complicated.

My intention is to create an app for members of the salsa club I help run. At the moment we use WhatsApp for communication, but there are some limitations. For example, members can message each other directly, and there have also been concerns about privacy because of the way phone numbers are exposed. I also thought that an ideal app for the club should include a calendar of events.

It is fair to say that the requirements of such an app are probably rather greater than would be ideal for my first foray into app development! Consequently, I have been using ChatGPT an awful lot.

My development process is essentially to do whatever I can in FlutterFlow until I get stuck, and then ask ChatGPT for assistance. Sometimes it will ask me to upload a screenshot of the particular part of FlutterFlow I am working on. It can then analyse the screenshot and give me suggestions about what I need to do next.

I can also download the Dart code generated for a page and give that to ChatGPT. This allows it to see what FlutterFlow has actually generated and, in some cases, makes it easier to diagnose a problem or suggest how I should achieve something using FlutterFlow's visual development environment.

Early on there were some instances when it seemed FlutterFlow itself was causing problems, and I had to close the browser and then open it and reload the project, which seemed to fix things. ChatGPT confirmed this was known issue with some sarcastic comment along the lines of "Welcome to development with Flutterflow!"

Because of the complexity of the app, ChatGPT has also suggested that some parts require custom code. In these cases it has been able to write the Dart code for me, which I can then incorporate into the FlutterFlow project. This has been particularly useful because, although I am comfortable with computers and have experience of other types of programming, I am not a Dart or Flutter developer.

Early on in the process I very quickly ran out of my free usage allowance on ChatGPT, so I upgraded to the **Go** plan, which currently costs £7 per month. Since upgrading, I have generally been able to continue working without running into the daily usage limits that affected me on the free plan. A more expensive **Plus** plan provides access to additional capabilities and models, including more advanced coding assistance. Some of the AI development features available within FlutterFlow also require a higher-level FlutterFlow subscription.

One thing I have discovered with ChatGPT is that a very long conversation can eventually become difficult to continue. A few weeks ago, one of my development conversations had become so long that I could no longer continue asking questions in that particular chat and had to start a new one. ChatGPT was able to access some information from the previous conversation, but it wasn't quite as seamless as simply continuing the same conversation. This is something worth bearing in mind when using AI to assist with a long-running development project.

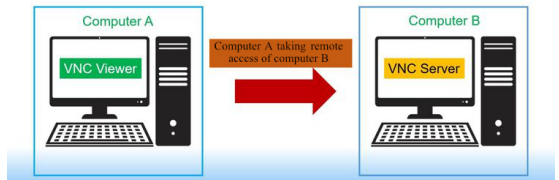
Overall FlutterFlow combined with ChatGPT has made it possible for me to tackle an app that would otherwise have been far beyond my current programming knowledge, without me needing to learn a completely new programming language and framework before I could even start building the app.

David Groom

What is VNC?

I'm quite surprised to find we have not had an article on VNC before. VNC stands for “Virtual Network Computing” which Wikipedia describes as “a graphical desktop-sharing system that uses the Remote Frame Buffer (RFB) protocol to remotely control another computer. It transmits the keyboard and mouse input from one computer to another, relaying the graphical screen updates, over a network. Popular uses for this technology include remote technical support and accessing files on one's work computer from one's home computer, or vice versa.”

VNC works on a client/server model. A server component is installed on the remote computer (the one you want to control), and a VNC viewer, or client, is installed on the device you want to control from. This could be another computer, a tablet, or a mobile phone.



I've been using VNC for some time on my home network. Back in [January 2021](#) I wrote about how I was using a Raspberry Pi to act as a local DNS server. The Pi sits on the floor and I very rarely have to attend to it. But on the occasions when I do want to do some work on it I don't want to have to plug in a monitor, keyboard and mouse, and VNC overcomes this. I set up a VNC server on the Pi, and have a VNC client, TightVNC, on my Windows computer. When I need to work on the Pi I open TightVNC in Windows, connect to the VNC server on the Pi using its IP address and a password, and then the TightVNC screen shows the Pi “desktop display”, and my mouse and keyboard can control the Pi. This can be seen on the image on the back page, where you can see the TightVNC window (displaying my Pi screen) above the window in which I'm currently writing this article on my Windows desktop computer. It is also possible to view the remote computer in “full screen mode” which means the Tight VNC viewer windows hides its own toolbar and takes up all the available space on the local computer, and so is a lot less distracting and much more similar to if you were actually using a monitor directly connected to the server computer.

[TightVNC](#) is a free download, and has a windows installation file which allows you to select whether you want to install the client, the server or both,

its one of the simplest VNC programs out there, and as I said earlier I've been using it for some years.

UltraVNC is also a free server/client download, which is supposed to offer a few more options than TightVNC. The one I am most interested in the ability for the viewer to choose which “monitor” is shown if the server is running on a computer with multiple displays. At the time of writing I'm having limited success in getting this feature working.

David Groom

For more information on VNC see discover.realvnc.com/what-is-vnc-remote-access-technology

MyIPTV for Windows



I have long enjoyed being able to watch CNN (U.S. Cable News Network) on Linux Mint via their “Hypnotix” program. It was a long time before I discovered this (thanks to ComputerActive) and was able to pass on to our Ukrainian clients so that they could watch Ukrainian TV via IPTV.

What is IPTV? It is short for Internet Protocol TV which I am sure you can Google for further information. Basically, it is free TV over the Internet.

But can you get it in Windows? Yes, via various programs but my favourite is Microsoft's own “MyIPTV Player” available free from the Microsoft store. Download and install it. The tricky bit is setting up your playlist. I wanted the same as Linux Hypnotix so I asked Copilot and the answer is in the box below. Not that hard to copy out and enter in the “Remote channel list URL” under Settings>Add Playlist.

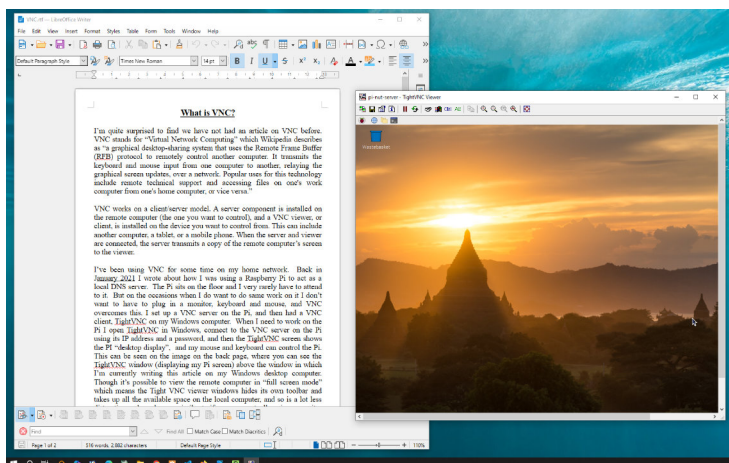
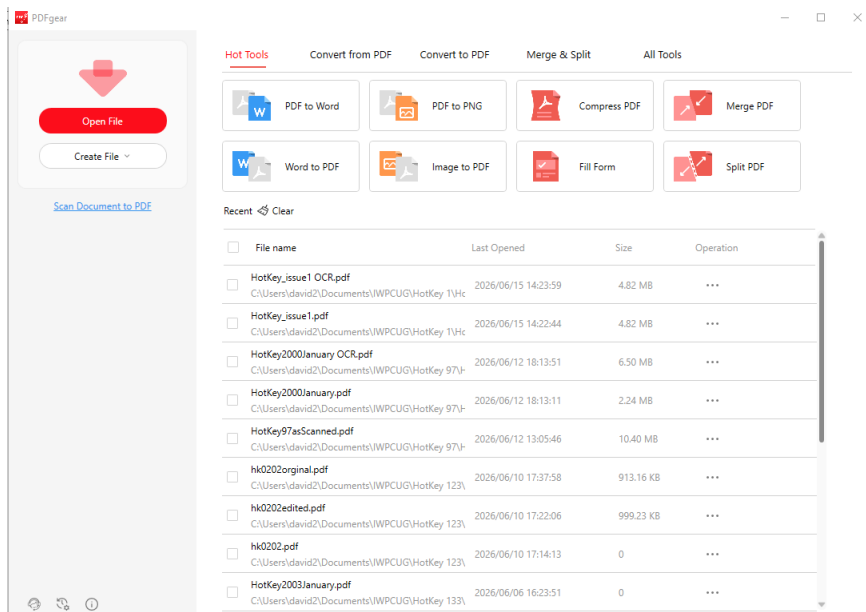
<https://raw.githubusercontent.com/Free-TV/IPTV/master/playlist.m3u8>

There are loads of programs there – some work, some don't. I liked CNN because it is intelligent, liberal and engaging, but unfortunately it no longer functioning on MyIPTV player.

Enjoy!

Roger Skidmore

Other playlists can be found at <https://github.com/iptv-org/iptv> Ed.



A screenshot of my Windows desktop, the right hand window is TightVNC viewer connected to my Raspberry Pi (see page 14).

We try to publish HotKey quarterly in April, July, October and January
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No responsibility can be accepted with respect to any advice or suggestions
in this journal, and the views expressed are those of the contributors.