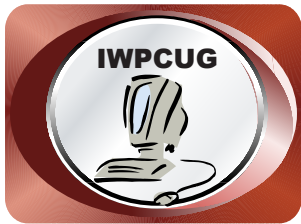In November Buzz demonstrated the use of the virtual background feature of Zoom, here we seem him apparently in jail!

# 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 9.00 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 come along to one of our meetings, or you can contact one of our Committee Members listed on page 3.**

The Club web site address is **www.iwpcug.org**
We also have an e-group discussion area on
Groups.io: **https://groups.io/g/iwpcug**
Details of how to join are on page 4.

## FUTURE MEETINGS

| Date | Subject | Speaker |
|---|---|---|
| 6th Jan | Encryption | Jonathan Burt |
| 3rd Feb | AGM & Question Time | |
| 3rd March | TBA | David Groom |
| 7th April | Spam and Managing Unwanted Emails | Jonathan Burt |

## ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP COMMITTEE

**Chairman :**  David Groom

**Secretary :**  Susanne Bone

**Treasurer  :**  Mike Hoar

**Membership and Database Secretary :**  Roger Skidmore

**Committee Member :**  Steve Sutters

**Treasury Supervisor :**  Phil Rogers

**Note:**

Contact details removed prior to
publishing on the internet

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

# Chairman's Report

May I start off by wishing you a very happy new year year and on behalf of the committee I hope you had as merry a Christmas as was possible in these difficult times.

Once again, over the past 3 months, we have brought you a range of topics via our monthly Zoom meetings, and a look on the calendar on page 2 will show what we have planned over the next few months.

With the disruption to our meetings during the spring it completely slipped everyone's mind to have last year's AGM minutes approved by the members at either the March or April meeting, as a consequence this will be the first item on the agenda at the AGM in February. The AGM will be held in February via Zoom and we will ask for voting in the usual manner by a show of hands.

A quick reminder that the committee decided to waive the subscription for the year starting 1st January so you will all automatically have your membership renewed.

Lastly I hope you enjoy reading this issue of HotKey, with articles aimed at all levels of ability.

**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

# 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 2021 at 7:00 PM via Zoom.

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. Approve the minutes of the previous AGM, held on 5th February 2020, (https://www.iwpcug.org/secure/minutes/AGM20v1.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.

## Windows Reliability Monitor

The Windows Reliability Monitor provides a day-by-day and case-by-case snapshot of the health of your system. It's especially handy if you're trying to hunt down problematic software that could be causing instability in your computer. It tracks the history of your computer - any time an application crashes, hangs, or Windows gives you a blue screen of death. It also tracks other important events, like when software is installed, or Windows Updates loads a new patch. To open the tool type "Reliability" into the Windows search bar and then click the "View reliability history" option. The back page of this issue has an image showing the status of my computer for the last 20 days - there are far too many red crosses for my liking!

**David Groom**

# Our IWPCUG Email Discussion Group

By the time you read this the Yahoo Groups mailing list (often referred to by us as the "E-Group") will have ceased to exist. Yahoo have been reducing the functionality of their groups for some time and finally discontinued the service on 15 December 2020. Sadly we lost the archive of past messages on Yahoo Groups sometime ago, it would have been nice to have retained this in some form).

The committee evaluated a number of alternatives, and have settled upon Groups.io for our new E-Group. Groups.io works in much the same way as the old Yahoo Group. If you want to be able to receive messages posted to the group, and to post yourself, then you will have to subscribe to the new group. Many of you have already subscribed, if you have not then send an email to iwpcug+subscribe@groups.io you will get en email back from them asking to confirm your request, follow the instructions in that email. Your request will then have to be approved by one of our group moderators before you become a member of the group.

You will then start receiving any messages posted to the group by other members. To post to the group yourself you can simply send an email to iwpcug@groups.io .

You can get a little more functionality if you set up an account with groups.io and log in to the groups.io web site. This will allow you to change how emails are sent to you, the options are:

- Individual Messages -You will receive each message in an individual email.
- Full Featured Digest- Group up to 12 messages together as one email instead of being sent individually (rich formatting).
- Plain Digest - Group up to 12 messages together as one email instead of being sent individually (plain formatting).
- Daily Summary - You will receive a daily summary, delivered in the morning, of the group's messages from the previous day.
- Special Notices Only - You will only receive special notices from the moderators.
- No Email -You will receive no emails.

Though, given the number of messages posted to the group, I can't really see a need for anything other than "Individual Messages" as the appropriate setting.

Through the groups.io web site you will also be able to see an archive of past messages (with the ability to search for past messages), and set an automatic footer to be attached to each email you send.

There is a very comprehensive help section on the groups.io web site available at https://groups.io/helpcenter , though not all the features listed are available to us as we are using groups.io for free.

One feature which is available on groups,io but was not on Yahoo is the "hashtag". A hashtag is a word or phrase that contains no spaces and is prefixed with the hash character #. You can "tag" a message with a hashtag by including it somewhere in the message's subject line. According to the help center hashtags have several uses within Groups.io, including controlling certain behaviours of topics and messages. Moderators can apply various settings to hashtags; those settings are then applied to topics that are tagged with those hashtags.

Group members can use hashtags for:

• Searching: On the group's website, you can search on hashtags to easily find all messages tagged with them.
• Example: If a group uses a hashtag called #intro for new member introductions, clicking on #intro in the hashtag list on the group's website displays a list of all messages in which new group members have introduced themselves.
• Muting topics: You can stop receiving email messages in topics that are tagged with a particular hashtag. For more information, see Muting or unmuting topics and hashtags.
• Following topics: If you have selected "Following Only" on the Advanced Preferences panel of your Subscription page for the group, you can follow (receive messages posted in) topics that are tagged with a particular hashtag.
• Receiving web/app notifications for specific topics: If you have enabled web/app notifications in your Groups.io account, you can turn on web/app notifications for individual hashtags.

To be honest I'm not sure how useful hashtags will be, we will just have to wait and see.

I do encourage all of you to join the new group and actively participate in it.

**David Groom**

# Fonts2u

Some years ago I did a very simple program for the Blind Society for printing talking book address cards with the return address and clients' ID in barcode format on the reverse. The idea was to scan the several hundred returned packages and log them in. I did this in Q&A 16 bit database years ago and was very pleased with myself.

Don't think they still use this but I dug out my old bar code scanner the other day to see how I could use it. Scan all my books in? Log all my CD's? I used Avery Label program then to print the barcodes on the talking book address cards, but could I do this in MS Access now?

It was easy when you know how - www.fonts2u.com have a host of free fonts and graphics, among which is *IDAutomationHC39M.ttf* and *Code39.ttf* - both fonts which render characters into bar codes. Both are "Code39" which is the most popular barcode flavour. If you type your number with asterisk fore and aft, make it a fairly big size and then apply the barcode font it will come out as a barcode readable.

I got on better with *IDAutomationHC39M.ttf* which you have to pay for now - it used to be free and it must be this early free version which is available on Fonts2u.

Why would I want to be able to do this? Well, I was maybe thinking of putting a barcode on the PC User Group labels so we could scan you on arrival since everyone arrives together at 7.25 pm. Or... well, I don't know really **. But the talking book project could be done again in MS Access (not by me) and the labels printed in Access instead of using Avery Label design program. Well, this is what lockdown does for you!

**Roger**
**Skidmore**
NEWPORT
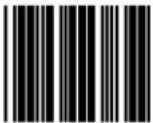
**Only joking, but it does work

# Running a Local DNS Server

First a little bit of background.......We tend to think of web sites, mail servers, and other computers located on the internet as having an address such as www.example.com, but for much of the time that data is transmitted back and forth the actual name of the server is not used, but rather its IP address.

An Internet Protocol address (IP address) is a numerical label assigned to each device connected to a computer network. For instance, the IP address of the server running the iwpcug.org web site is currently 5.10.29.105 .

So how does a computer find out the IP address when it needs to?  When a web browser wants to know the IP address to send a query to, to request a web page, it first asks the computer on which it is running "do I already know the relevant IP address?"  If it does, then all well and good, if not then it needs to ask a Domain Name Server.  Most consumer hardware connected to the internet is set to automatically use the DNS of their ISP, especially when using an ISP-issued router. But you don't have to stick with that. In the Spring 2018 Issue of HotKey I explored alternative DNS providers.

This all works quite well until your local network gets a bit more complicated, and you want to be able to connect to local machines using a domain name. For instance on my local network I have two web servers running, on one server all the domain names end in '.home', and on the other all the domain names end in '.home3'.  The public DNS system knows nothing about these servers so I need to make some changes locally so my web browsers can access these sites.  For twenty years or so the method I used was to edit the 'hosts' file on any computer which I wanted to use to access these servers.  The 'hosts' file is an operating system file that maps hostnames to IP addresses, so it would contain a line for each web site on my server, the contents of my host file are similar to:

```
192.168.1.34          site1.home
192.168.1.34          site2.home
192.168.1.56          site1.home3
```

On my main desktop computer there are 214 such lines in the hosts file mapping local IP addresses to domain names on my network, each domain name being a different web site on my development web servers.

Adding entries to the hosts file works quite well, but with two downsides. Firstly I need to add the entries to the host file on all the computers which I may want to use to access my local web server, so in addition to my main

desktop machine I would have to repeat the entries on my laptop, and on my spare desktop machine, a tiresome, but not insurmountable task. The second problem was that on an Android phone or tablet there is no easy way of editing the hosts file. So if I wanted to see how a web site I was developing looked on a mobile phone or tablet I was a bit stuck, with no way to look at the web sites running on my local servers.

What I needed to do was somehow run my own DNS server to serve up the IP addresses of websites on my local network.

I already have a Raspberry Pi constantly running on my network. It monitors the uninterruptible power supply and sends a signal to all my computers, and my NAS server, to shut down if there is a power failure. Since the Pi was continuously running it seemed to me that it would be the ideal machine to try to use, and I wondered if it would be possible to use the Pi as a DNS server. The solution turned out to be surprisingly simple, though I will have to admit that it took me a while to figure out exactly the right configuration settings to use.

I had to install a program called **dnsmasq** on the Pi, and then configure it appropriately. Although it only needed four entries in the dmsmasq configuration file, it took a reasonable amount of research over a number of days to identify what those four entries should be!

Having set up the Pi to act as a DNS server the one final change I need to make was to tell my router to use the Pi as the preferred DNS server.

Now if I type a web address into any browser on a machine on my local network it first looks to the Pi to get the relevant IP address. If the requested domain name is one of the domains I have configured in the dmsmasq configuration file then the Pi knows about it and tells my web browser to use the local IP address. If it is not one of those domain names then dnsmasq tells the local computer to use a public DNS server to get the relevant IP address.

I'll be honest and admit I'm not sure I yet have the most optimal settings in the dnsmasq configuration file, but on the basis it is working I think it unlikely I'll make any further tweaks.

Whilst I appreciate not everyone may have a need to have a local DNS Server I hope the above article is a reminder that small low cost, and low power, devices can be put to a number of good uses.

**David Groom**

# My New Go-Faster Computer

Recently I tried to watch an estate agent's virtual tour around an acquaintance's house. Just being nosy, I guess. My 10 year old quad core Gigabyte system configured with 32 bit Windows 10 (upgraded from Windows 7) staggered and spluttered and left me gasping at the bottom of the stairs. However, my Samsung S10 mobile phone galloped through her house. So, my phone was faster than my computer.

This was an indignity I could not suffer; something had to be done. The reason my present system is 32 bit is that I am very loyal to my legacy software, particularly my Q&A 16 bit DOS database which has seen me through probably 30 Christmas card deployments. And my 16 bit "Remind 2" DOS popup birthday/reminder program. I knew 64 bit operating system was lurking on the horizon, threatening all my comfort and security.

With further lockdown around the corner I felt this had to be the time. Taking the lead from a friend's 12 year old son who had just upgraded to go-faster gaming hardware (to further his C# games programming activities) I took the plunge and put my order in with Novatech.

MSI Tomahawk 540 with Ryzen 5 3400G processor and Coraisr Vengeance LPX 2x8GB 3200 MHz RAM (see the back cover for a screenshot of some of the details). I reckoned I would take a chance on stuffing a clone of my existing hard disk into the new system and see if I got lucky with my Win 10 installation finding the necessary drivers. But first, while I got used to the new hardware, I would install Linux Mint 20 Cinnamon Ulyana as I find Linux very versatile at finding drivers. Success! Off to a good start. Then to put the clone (one I prepared earlier on 10 year old Gigabyte hardware) into the (front loading) drive caddy.

Well, apparent success. But then disaster – the supplied driver disk would not install and I was left with a severely compromised computer. The answer turned out to be that although the hardware would run a 32 bit installation, the manufacturers of the motherboard had neglected to develop 32 bit drivers for their wonderful go-faster board. Something neither they nor I had foreseen. I checked with Novatech and it seems none of these modern gaming motherboards supplies 32 bit drivers – I suppose they imagine that no-one wants to work with an outdated operating system hamstrung by a mere 4 Gb of memory.

It looks like I will have to move on as well. I have at last exported my Christmas card list (etc.) out of Q&A by a circuitous route into MS Access.

Something I should have done a long time ago. (BTW, it seems MS Office 2016 is now relatively cheap to buy on USB stick and so far does everything including MS Access.) But even on my 32 bit system there's very little I will miss if and when I do swap over to my new system.

And now with Windows 10 properly installed, is the new rig faster? I should say so. Will it run virtual estate agents' guided tour? Of course. And have I changed over to it? Well, all in good time because actually, there isn't much in everyday computing that still isn't served well on my old system.

<div align="right">

**Roger Skidmore**

</div>

# <u>Windows 10 Jump Lists</u>

Continuing on from my article in the last issue of HotKey "Three Often Underused Windows 10 Features" I now want to highlight "Jump Lists" something which I have to admit I had not really been unaware of, and which seems particularly useful.

If you either right click a program icon in the Taskbar, or right click a program icon in the menu, then a window will appear with various options relating to that particular program. This can speed up your use of that program. The options which appear will depend upon the program in question.
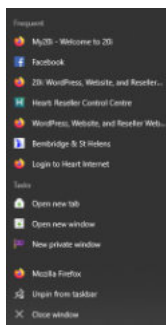
So for instance looking at the image to the left, which is the the jump list for Firefox, we see it shows frequently opened websites, open a new tab, open new window, and open new private window. So if there is a web site you want to go to and it is one you access frequently you can start Firefox with this web site already loaded by using the entry in the jump list. The alternative would be to open Firefox, then either look for the web site in a bookmark, or to start typing its URL in the address bar.

The jump list for File Explorer has entries for recently opened directories (which should be a time saver on many occasions) as well as for pinned entries.

Using jump lists will not save you hours of your time, but it should help make your Windows 10 experience a little more speedy.

<div align="right">

**David Groom**

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# HotKey Index & Search

I have finally got round to compiling an index of some of the past issues of HotKey, and then writing the web site code for searching this index. This can be seen on the club web site at https://www.iwpcug.org/hotkey/search.php .

At the time of writing I have currently indexed the issues for April 2004 – October 2020, and the index contains 348 articles. You can search by keyword, author or a combination of keyword and author. When compiling the index I added relevant keywords to the database if the subject matter of the text was not apparent from the title of the article. For instance a search for the keyword "IWPCUG" brings up 14 results of articles relevant to the IWPCUG even though that keyword only appears in the title of 5 articles. If you put '∗' in the keyword field it will list all the articles in the index.

Over the coming months I shall expand the index backwards to cover older issues. If you have any comments please drop me an email, or post something on the E-group.

**David Groom**

# Our Website is Famous!

Whilst looking at which pages of our club web site are listed on Google I came across a link to a post on the OpenOffice forum site.
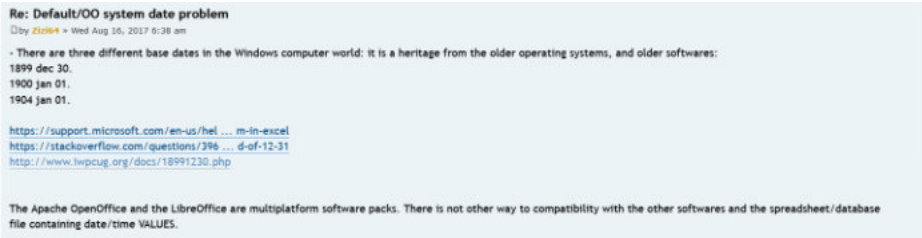


It is interesting to note that a page on our web site is in such illustrious company as the Microsoft support site and Stackoverflow. The page in question was written by David Broughton and explains how dates are stored in Microsoft spreadsheets and databases.

The original post on the OpenOffice forum can be seen at:
https://forum.openoffice.org/en/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=89928#p424767

**David Groom**

# Broadband Speed (Again)

In HotKey three years ago (January 2018 edition, page 6) I wrote that, for me, it did not seem to be worth upgrading to a fibre broadband offering as there was no great promised increase in speed from the approximate 14Mbs I was getting on copper ADSL("Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line"). The reason being that the current fibre offering is Fibre To The Cabinet ("FTTC") and the majority of my connection would still be over copper cables from the cabinet to my house.

Prompted by the fact that a friend of mine had been offered a new router and broadband package by Plusnet and had seen her broadband speed dramatically increase I did a check on ISP's web sites looking at what speed I might now get, and this indicated possible speeds of 48Mbs download. This was further confirmed by a check on the BT Broadband Availability web site www.broadbandchecker.btwholesale.com showing possible speeds of 52Mbs download and 6-9Mbs upload. I must stress that this is still using FTTC and not Fibre To The Premises.

I'm not clear why there has been the jump in speed possible on my line over the last three years, though there are at least two causes. The first is that it is possible that in 2018 VDSL ("Very high-speed Digital Subscriber Line") was not available in the area, and that the only technology was ADSL which is not so fast. The second possibility relates to the fact that a number of so-called VDSL2 profiles have been defined, which differ in the width of the frequency band used to transmit the broadband signal. Profiles that use a wider frequency band can deliver higher maximum speeds.

| Profile name | Bandwidth used (MHz) | Maximum speed (Mbps) |
|---|---|---|
| 8c | 8.5 | 50 |
| 17a | 17.664 | 100 |
| 30a | 30.0 | 200 |

If BT have changed the profile on the VDSL line then this would lead to a speed increase though my research showed they changed from profile 8c to profile 17a in 2012, so this does not seem an explanation.

In order to benefit from the increased speeds I need to move to a FTTC broadband plan, and it looks like I may be moving away from my current ISP as I can get a better deal elsewhere.

The moral of the story is to periodically review the possible broadband speeds you can get on your phone line, and the various plans available from ISP's.

**David Groom**

# Sticky Notes

If, like me, you either find your physical desktop covered in scraps of paper with notes on it, or even worse you try to commit things to memory, then maybe it's time to take a look at Sticky Notes.

Microsoft has included a Sticky Notes program in Windows for years, but now in Windows 10 it has a couple of enhancements from earlier versions. I wrote a little about the program in the last issue of HotKey but thought I would explore it a little more now.

To start the program either click on the Start button, scroll down the All Apps list and then click on the entry for Sticky Notes, or simply type the phrase "Sticky Notes" in the Cortana search field and then click on the entry for Sticky Notes.

Exactly what appears on your screen when you open the app will depend on the state the program was in when you last closed the app, since there are two types of windows created by the app, the "Notes List" and individual "notes", and you can have both open, or one or the other. When you open the program it will launch in the state it was in when you closed it.

The "Notes List" window contains a list of all the notes you have created, a '+' sign in the top left to create a new note, and a link to the settings of the app. Double clicking an existing note in the list opens that note. Once you have created a note you can leave it floating above the desktop. You have some limited text formatting options (bold, italic, underline, and bullet list), the ability to add an image, and the choice of seven background colours for the note.

In the settings of the app you have the option of signing in to your Microsoft account. This will enable you to synchronise your notes across any Windows device you sign in on.

Once the program is open, you may want to right-click the icon on your taskbar and then select "Pin to taskbar" for easier access to the app in the future.

If you have the OneNote app on your phone (iPhone or Android) you can sync Sticky Notes on your desktop with notes created in the "Sticky Notes" section in the app on the phone.

**David Groom**
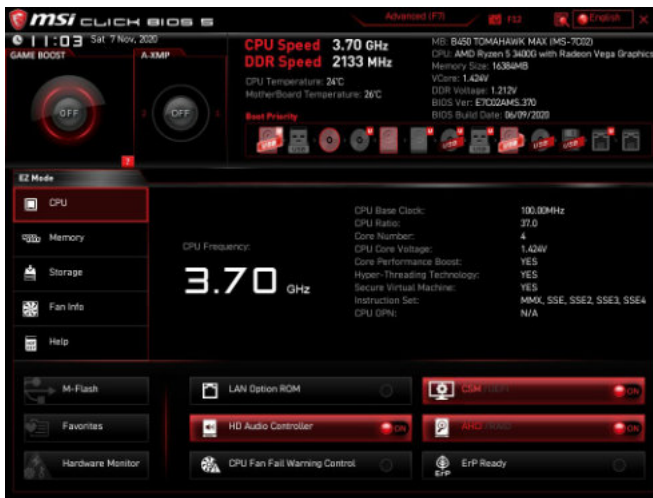
Details of Roger Skidmores new computer, see pages 11-12
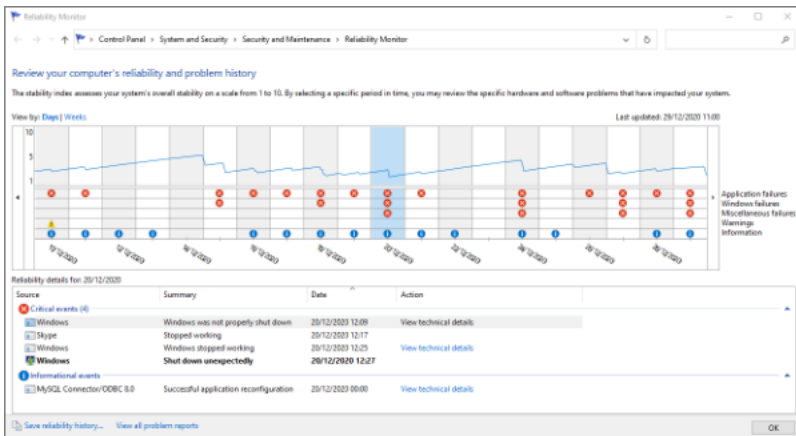


The Windows Reliability Monitor shows the health of your system - red crosses are not good.  See page 5.