

Issue 227

SPRING 2025



ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER
GROUP

HOT KEY

MAY 2025

Low-power?

- Whilst, the general view is that Mini-PCs are low-powered, and initially they were, some now come with more powerful components, for example, this mid-range Mini-PC:
- A Geekom Mini IT12 has the following specifications:
 - Intel Core i5-12450H processor of the 12th generation (8 cores, 12 threads), 18 MB cache, up to 4.40 GHz.
 - 16GB 3200MHz RAM
 - 512GB PCIe SSD
 - Intel Iris Xe Graphics
 - USB 2.0, USB 3.2 *3, USB 4 *2, 2.5GbE LAN & WiFi 6E, HDMI 2.0 *2, 3.5mm Headphone Jack and SD card reader
 - Windows 11 Pro

Whilst more powerful than some Mini-PCs, don't expect to be playing any high-end games on it!

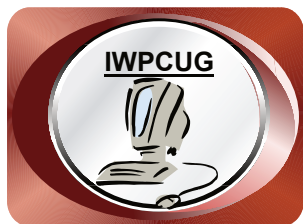
Jonathan

Jonathan giving us a talk on Mini-PCs at our May 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 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 15.



FUTURE MEETINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
4 June	TBA	
2 July	Summer BBQ	
6 August	No Meeting	
3 September	TBA	

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: Sven Alleblas

Committee Member : Susanne Bone

Treasury Supervisor : Phil Rogers

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

Once again I need to start the chairman's report with an apology for the late delivery of HotKey.

This edition marks a new chapter in HotKey production, it being the first ever edition to be solely produced in PDF format. The AGM in February considered the state of the clubs finances. Our major expenditure being the production of a printed edition of HotKey, not only the actual print costs, but with second-class postage going up, it now cost over £2 for each edition of HotKey we mail out. With a low number of paying members the annual subscription rate would have to have been set quite high to cover production of HotKey moving forward, and a decision was made to switch to the PDF only version. Whilst we may all like to receive something in the post I do hope you still continue to enjoy HotKey; and there is the benefit that links to websites mentioned in the text will be much easier to follow when it's simply a matter of clicking on the link.

The AGM also voted in the committee for the coming year, with no changes in its membership from the previous year. With the elimination of our major expense it was decided not to collect a subscription for the following year.

We had some discussion at the AGM on the problem of finding speakers for our monthly talks, but without any resolution of the matter, and we increasingly rely on the same few speakers (Jonathan Burt in particular). Although we did consider whether it was finally time to wind up the IWPCUG it was decided that we would continue to soldier on doing the best that we could.

One advantage of the switch to a PDF version is that we can be more flexible in the number of pages in each issue, and if I can't find enough content to fill the standard sixteen pages that we are used to I will send out HotKey in a shorter version. Another advantage is that we can use colour on all pages.

Our June members meeting will be a normal meeting on Zoom, we are very much hoping that we will have a barbecue in July, though as ever this is weather dependent. I can't at the time of writing say whether this will be held in Bembridge or in Newport, please keep an eye on the Egroup for updates.

If in August we will, as last year, have a break from meetings, resuming with our Zoom meetings in the first week of September.

If you missed our May meeting I would thoroughly recommend looking at the recording, a link to which was posted in the Egroup earlier this month. Jonathan Burt explored the mini-PC market, and showed us a number of examples which may well be able to fulfill your computing needs should you be in the market for a new PC.

libib 

Libib is an on-line cataloguing program designed mostly for library management, but they provide a free “taster” program which is of some value. See <https://www.libib.com> for more info, or read the back pages of “ComputerActive” magazine 7-20 May 2025.

All those books, DVD’s and CD’s which you’re never quite sure you have organised can, if they have bar-codes, be very easily listed on a Libib website by using their program with a barcode reader. (Barcode readers can be very cheap online – mine is wireless and will also read QR codes so is a bit posher, but a basic one is not much more than a tenner).

Scanning into a “Books” collection, Libib will use the barcode to look up the online info for that book and place the info into the online data listing complete with cover picture, and then open another data field for the next book, and the next... It gets quite addictive. (Allow time for Libib to find the data before scanning the next item.)

Libib will then generate a personal web URL you can show your friends, such as <https://www.libib.com/u/rogerskid>

You can enter data with barcode reader, manually or by CSV file, and you can save/backup the data you have created by downloading a CSV file. What you can’t do with the free version is more complex library management, etc.

I’m a lists sort of person so I think this is great fun. You can do the same sort of thing to a more complex level with “[**DataCrow**](#)” if you can work out how, but for now this is keeping me amused.

Libib also works with mobile phone.

Roger Skidmore

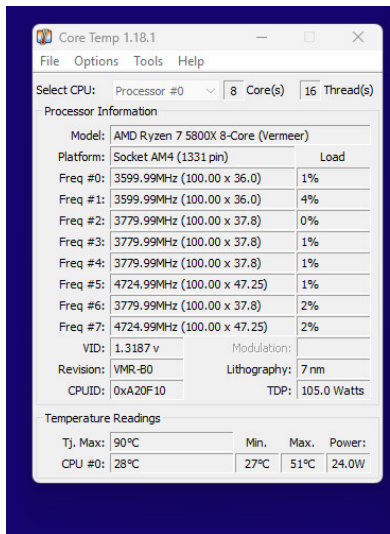
How Cool is your PC?

Core Temp (<https://www.alcpu.com/CoreTemp>) is a compact, no fuss, small footprint, yet powerful program to monitor processor temperature and other vital information.

What makes Core Temp unique is the way it works. It is capable of displaying a temperature of each individual core of every processor in your system! You can see temperature fluctuations in real time with varying workloads. Core Temp is also motherboard agnostic.

All major processor manufacturers have implemented a "DTS" (Digital Thermal Sensor) in their products. The DTS provides more accurate and higher resolution temperature readings than conventional onboard thermal sensors.

Using "CoreTemp 1.18.1" I got the following results:



Totally idling I can find a CPU core temperature of as low as 27 degrees, but the moment I try a screen capture, the activity raises the temperature a bit. Various internet results suggest that even 60 degrees is OK for idling, but then one friend was surprised I didn't achieve little more than room temperature.

When booting up I might get a result of 75 degrees which quickly settles down and eventually reaches idling temperature if it's not doing anything obvious. My CPU cooler is a Noctua tower with two fans running and of course I can hear how much work they are doing, except when idling. Should I change

the heat paste?

How cool is your CPU?

Roger Skidmore

PC Consultants Receives The King's Award for Enterprise

We offer our congratulations to PC Consultants which has been honoured with a King's Award for Enterprise for Promoting Opportunity, one of 197 organisations nationally to be recognised with a prestigious King's Award for Enterprise. This honour made even more significant in the fact that the company was one of only 10 nationally to receive the award in the Promoting Opportunity through Social Mobility category.

Founded in 1993 by Sean Colson & Mike Parsons (also founding members of the IWPCUG), PC Consultants provides providing unrivalled IT service, support, sales and consultancy to businesses and private clients across the Island, UK mainland and internationally.

This most prestigious award reflecting the company's focus on providing IT opportunities for individuals irrespective of personal circumstances and academic achievement; consciously recruiting staff from non-typical, disadvantaged backgrounds. Exemplary, because it is not an adjunct to the core business, but part of the company's DNA.

Within this, PC Consultants has an inclusive and supportive work culture, with everybody contributing to the well-being of others. The workforce determining their career pathway, whereby individuals can identify and review with their mentor or line manager and implement their own training requirements or other needs. The fact that members of the senior management are all beneficiaries and, therefore, exemplars of the 'initiative' demonstrates the impact.

Jonathan Thornton commented: "There is no greater recognition than receiving the Kings Award for Enterprise, and we are immensely proud of this award. An incredible achievement, not only for the company, our team and clients but proof that that commercial success and social mobility are not mutually exclusive."

The Award programme, now in its 59th year, is the most prestigious business award in the country, with successful businesses able to use the esteemed King's Awards Emblem for the next five years.

Music & PC's

When I first built my desktop computer I also wanted to use it with playing and writing music mainly with keyboards so I had my PC keyboard in front of 2 keyboards and 2 monitors for the PC. This setup was great for learning songs from YouTube and writing music using word processing software but there were drawbacks to this all in one approach. I had to lean over the typing keyboard to get to the music keyboards and when we had a band practice I could not normally see the bassist because one of the monitor screens was in the way. A few months ago I decided to move the PC setup into the middle room where it is now a dedicated PC area on a big table. There are now less leads and equipment in the lounge so less high tech clutter which is better for socialising and means I can see everyone in the band better!

Talking about music technology, there has never been a better time for using PC's for playing and recording music. Processor speed and memory means any sound can be recorded and played back by just pressing a note on a keyboard with superb realism. This does not mean there are no problems. Because of software conflicts music programs can freeze and it's best to simplify the system by having a dedicated music PC for greatest reliability.

A friend of mine has a great many programs installed on his computer including many 'virtual' synthesizers and I have yet to play sounds or record using his PC and for there not to be a problem. Typically no sound which takes an hour or so to fault find the problem. Then all is well till the next time and the next problem. I think there is just too much on his PC for reliable music use.

I still use my PC for writing music but leave the recording to a dedicated multi track recorder. Simpler to use and I never get a problem.

Steve Sutters

New and Old High Tech Equipment

Interesting to hear Jonathan's comprehensive talk on mini computers They have now reached a level that would satisfy most PC users needs. Mine is working as well as ever 5 months from when bought, but one of my monitors packed up so I looked around for a second small one. Chose a 13" OLED monitor which was good value at £100 from eBay which looks great with more vivid colours and deeper blacks than my main monitors VA panel. If readers have seen the OLED TV's at Curry's they will see the fantastic picture quality. I expect they are being fed with 4K signals so the image still looks detailed close up but I expect 1080p still looks fab at average viewing distances. With starting prices for both 27" monitors and 48" TV's at around £500 they are more affordable than they used to be!

I want to get a big OLED screen for TV and PC but at present 42" is the smallest OLED TV size which is too big for my lounge so I intend to buy a 32" monitor and connect it to my YouView box as the TV tuner.

I use my Samsung smartphone for web browsing when I'm not in the lounge which works fine apart from having to put up with the number of intrusive adverts. They sometimes cover most of the screen and sometimes I try to stop the same ad appearing multiple times by reporting it to 'Ad choices'. I then get a message of 'we will try to stop this ad appearing again' and it still gets shown multiple times. They aren't trying very hard! A talk on ad blockers would be very welcome.

On digital photography I've had excellent value for money by buying old tech. My Nikon D40 (came out in 2006) takes pin sharp photos even in low light so no need to use the flash with my prime lens's. They have focal lengths of 35mm, 50mm and 300mm (about 9 x optical zoom). Although the camera is only 6 megapixels the images on my 1080p monitor can be enlarged 1 1/2 times and still get 1:1 pixel mapping. The camera was only £52 in as new condition but the 3 lenses (new and second hand) came to about £300. Not hard to spend lots on quality photographic equipment. A new Nikon 300mm prime lens is around £2000! The newest and best is never cheap but as the saying goes many a good tune played on an old fiddle.

Stephen Sutters

DistroSea

Earlier in the year Roger briefly mentioned DistroSea <https://distrosea.com>

This an online platform that allows you to test drive over seventy Linux based operating systems with 500+ different versions. Their aim is to allow someone to be able to test various Linux distros easily within a web browser without having to make to make a live USB and installing on their own personal computer.

On the home page there are icons for all the distros, from Alma Linux to Zorin (literally from A to Z). All the familiar distros are there, along with many I had never heard of. DistroSea uses virtual machine (VM) technology to allow multiple distros to run on a single host system. Each Linux distro runs in an isolated VM with its own virtualized resources (CPU, RAM, storage). It uses noVNC libraries to allow you to interact with the distros in your browser. noVNC is a web-based VNC (Virtual Network Computing) client that connects to the graphical environment of the Linux distro running on the server and streams it to the user's browser. This allows full interaction with the distro as if it were installed own your own computer.

As a quick test I clicked on the Alma Linux icon. The next page gave me a brief introduction to the OS, along with buttons to click for eight different versions. It has to be said that the brief introduction was not that helpful. I clicked on the icon for one of the versions and was informed I was number 2 in the queue, with a wait time of 2 minutes. The message showing my position in the counted down to one, and then, well within the two minutes, changed to “A session running Alma Linux is started for you. Click continue to access your session.”

Having clicked on the “Continue” icon I was then presented within my web browser a screen which very much looked like the familiar boot up screen for a Linux distribution, and soon was given the choice to “Try Alma Linux”, or “Install Alma Linux”, the same options you would get of you were booting your own computer from a LiveCD oy USB media. It should be remembered that when using DistroSea the option “Install Alma Linux” does not install it on your computer, but on the virtual machine running somewhere in the cloud. I clicked the option for “Try Alma Linux”.

On the left of the screen I noticed a little tap, clicking on this brought up a few options, perhaps the most useful of which was the ability to run in full screen mode, which hid the web browser components on the screen, giving a much more “native feel”.

Shutting down Alma Linux returned me to the DistroSea website where I could choose another distro to try.

I tried out some other distros and noticed that the smaller distros were easier to use and interact with, presumably because of limited resources in the VNC. Another thing that I noticed was that I may have been lucky with being number 2 in the queue, with a wait time of 2 minutes when I tried Alma Linux. Subsequent attempts to try a distro took a longer wait time, prompting me to give up waiting. Maybe I need to try earlier in the day!

It should be noted that by default there was no internet connection available within the virtual machine. If you log into the DistroSea website before trying a distro then an internet connection becomes available.

Overall I was impressed with DistroSea. It is an excellent way of seeing what a particular Linux distribution will look like: how does the desktop look, what does the application menu look like, what programs are installed, etc. It won't give you an idea of how well the distro will perform on your own PC, but is an excellent way of seeing which distro you might like. It also has to be said that for those unfamiliar with Linux, and who have never wanted to try using a LiveCD to experience Linux, it is an excellent way to see what Linux is all about.

On the back page of this issue of HotKey is a screenshot of Zorin OS running within my web browser after the installation has completed and shows that within the Zorin installation I have opened Firefox, and navigated to the IWPCUG website.

David Groom

Microsoft Turns Fifty

Last month one of the defining names in modern technology turned 50. Microsoft—once a fledgling software venture founded by two college dropouts—has grown into a global tech powerhouse that helped usher in the digital age. This anniversary isn’t just a celebration of five decades in business; it’s a reflection on how one company helped shape how we work, live, and interact with the world.

When Bill Gates and Paul Allen launched Microsoft on April 4, 1975, their mission was visionary—even radical. “A computer on every desk and in every home” seemed fanciful at a time when computing was reserved for mainframes and university labs. Yet their belief in the personal computer, and their determination to write the software that would power it, laid the foundation for a revolution.

From Code to Culture

It began with BASIC for the Altair 8800. But Microsoft’s true breakout moment came in the early 1980s when it struck a deal to supply IBM with the operating system that would become MS-DOS. In doing so, it positioned itself at the center of the exploding PC market.

Then came Windows. What started as a graphical interface for DOS eventually became the most widely used operating system on the planet. Windows 95, with its now-iconic Start menu and chime, cemented Microsoft’s place in homes and offices across the globe.

Just as transformative was the rise of Microsoft Office. With Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, Microsoft redefined productivity. These applications became the bedrock of modern work, taught in classrooms, deployed in businesses, and used to write resumes, analyse data, and pitch ideas.

By the turn of the millennium, Microsoft had become more than a software company—it was a cultural touchstone. For better or worse, it represented the mainstreaming of technology.

Reinvention at Scale

Of course, no 50-year journey is without missteps. Microsoft’s dominance drew antitrust scrutiny in the late 1990s, and the 2000s brought stiffer competition from the likes of Google, Apple, and Amazon. Products like Windows Vista and the first Windows Phones failed to resonate. For a time,

it seemed Microsoft might be losing touch with a new generation of technology users.

Then came a turning point: Satya Nadella.

When Nadella took over as CEO in 2014, he brought a subtle yet profound shift in culture. Gone was the old defensiveness. In its place: openness, agility, and a cloud-first, AI-forward mindset. Microsoft embraced the very things it had once resisted—open-source software, cross-platform development, collaboration with former rivals.

Azure, Microsoft’s cloud platform, quickly rose to challenge Amazon Web Services. GitHub became part of the Microsoft family. Visual Studio Code turned into a darling of developers. Even Microsoft’s decades-old rivalry with Linux softened, with native Linux support now built into Windows.

A New Digital Frontier

Today, Microsoft is no longer just a maker of operating systems and office software. It’s a leader in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cybersecurity, and enterprise cloud services.

Its deep partnership with OpenAI, and the integration of advanced AI into products like Bing and Microsoft 365, is reshaping the way people search, write, collaborate, and create. AI assistants, natural language interfaces, and cloud-driven applications are becoming standard—driven, in no small part, by Microsoft’s strategic bets.

The company’s gaming division, too, has grown into a force of its own. From the early days of the Xbox to the massive acquisition of Activision Blizzard, Microsoft now commands a major role in the interactive entertainment industry.

The View from 50

Fifty years in, Microsoft remains one of the most valuable companies in the world—not just in market capitalization, but in influence. Its tools power governments, classrooms, hospitals, and startups alike. Its operating systems run on billions of devices. Its decisions shape entire industries.

And yet, perhaps most remarkably, Microsoft has managed to stay relevant by refusing to cling too tightly to its past. It has evolved from a desktop-first software giant into a platform-agnostic, innovation-driven ecosystem builder.

As it looks to the next 50 years, Microsoft faces a new era of challenges: the ethical frontiers of AI, the geopolitical complexities of global tech, and the environmental impact of data centers and digital infrastructure. But if history is any guide, the company has both the resilience and the ambition to keep reinventing itself—and the world around it.

This isn't just a retrospective. It's a reminder: legacies are not built in a moment—they're earned over decades. And Microsoft's, half a century on, is still very much in progress.

Creating a Computer Related Comic Strip

Many years ago we used to periodically have a small computing related “comic strip” type image in HotKey, and I did put one on the back age of the last edition. It is however difficult to find such images which have a suitable copyright for inclusion in our magazine.

I decided to turn to AI! I asked ChatGPT “is there a GPT to create a comic strip ” It gave me a number of answers, and then asked me “Would you like me to help you write a comic strip script right now or generate some example comic panels? If so, tell me your theme or characters! ” And I replied “Can you create a comic strip script with a theme of computing problems. ” It told me that a lot of people were using image generation generation at the moment so there would be a wait.

I then said “I just want a script that I can use with comicmaker.ai ”. [Note that the use of comicmaker.ai was one the number of answers I had been given referred to at the start of the second paragraph above]. ChatGPT then created the following script:

Panel 1: The Setup

Scene: A cozy home office. A programmer (Alex) is sitting at a desk, confident and smiling.

Caption: "After three cups of coffee..."

Dialogue (Alex): "Okay! Today, I squash that bug for good!"

Panel 2: The Error

Scene: Close-up of the computer screen showing a crash with red text: “Segmentation Fault – again.”

Dialogue (Alex): "What?! But I didn't even change anything!"

Panel 3: The Descent

Scene: The desk is now messier, sticky notes everywhere, Alex pulling their hair.

Caption: "Four hours later..."

Dialogue (Alex): "If I comment out this function and reverse the loop logic... maybe it'll work?"

Panel 4: The Twist

Scene: Alex steps away, exhausted. Their cat walks across the keyboard.

Computer Screen: "Build Successful."

Dialogue (Alex, off-panel): "Wait... what did you just do?!"

I tried using comicmaker.ai with the script, but although I could create a character and a scene (basically a background to put the character into) I could not create an actual comic strip!

However some hours later I returned to ChatGPT to find that having told me there would be a long wait for image generation it had created the image you can see on the backpage. I cant help feeling that a comic strip based on the script created by ChatGPT would have been more interesting, maybe that's something for the next issue of HotKey.

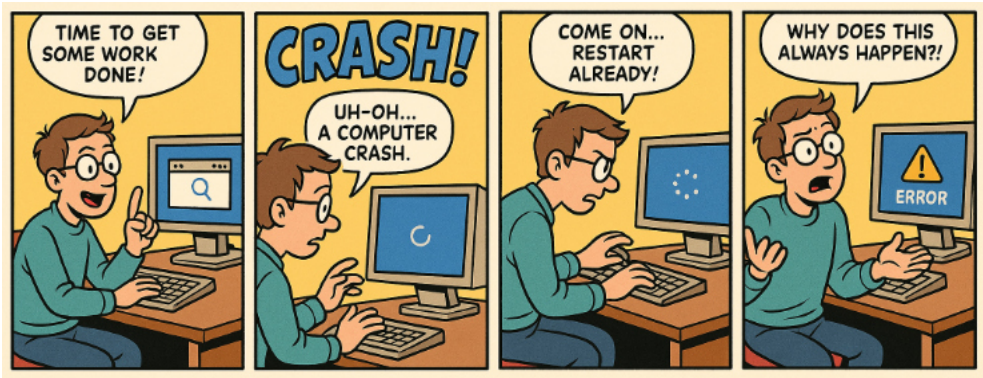
David Groom

Joining the Email Discussion Group

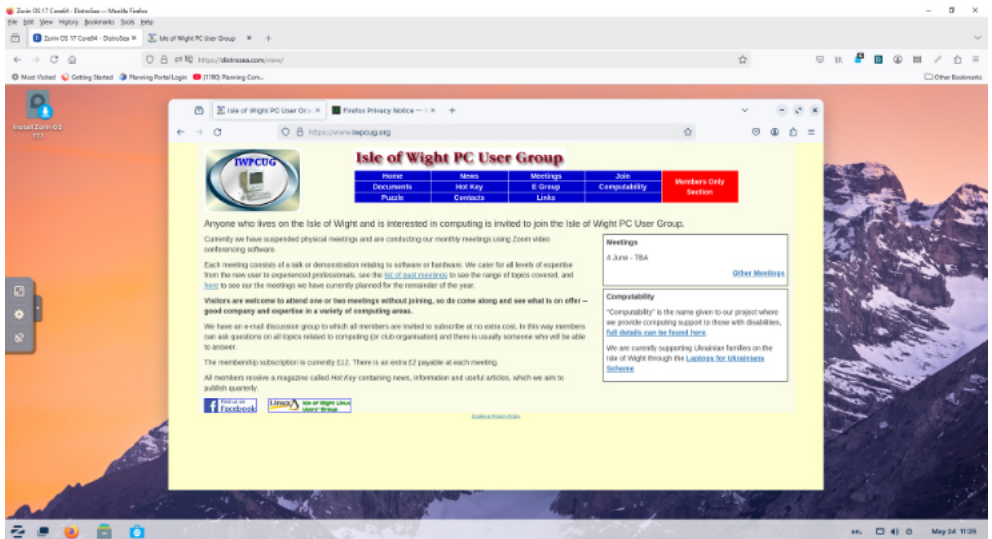
Send an email to: [**iwpcug+subscribe@groups.io**](mailto:iwpcug+subscribe@groups.io), you will receive a confirmation email, follow the instructions in that email, and then wait for your approval request to be approved by one of the moderators.

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**](http://www.iwpcug.org)



Using ChatGPT to create a comic strip see page 14-15.



Zorin fully installed on the VNC, with a web browser open showing the IWPCUG web site. Note also the tab at the left of the screen to give full screen viewing. See pages 10-11.

We try to publish HOTKEY quarterly in April, July, October and January
This edition was produced using Affinity Publisher.

No responsibility can be accepted with respect to any advice or suggestions
in this journal, and the views expressed are those of the contributors.