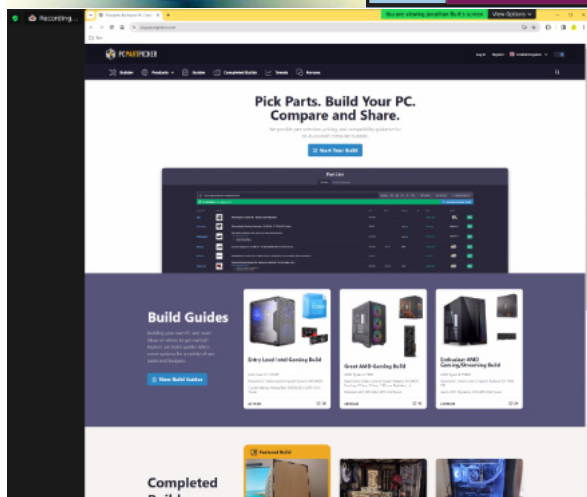# ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP

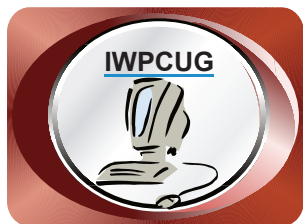# HOT KEY

January 2024

At our January meeting Jonathan Burt demonstrated the PCPartPicker website. Roger Skidmore's summary of PCPartPicker can be found on page 12.

In this issue   Pages

The Isle of Wight Personal Computer User Group

IWPCUG

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
3 January	PartPicker	Jonathan Burt
5 February	AGM followed by Q&A session	
6 March	The Art of Donald Knuth	Dr Peter Huckle
3 April	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

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.

Chairmans Report

The AGM of the IWPCUG is in February, you will already have been sent a copy of the Agenda and the minutes of last years AGM by email in the eGroup.

One item on the AGM is to consider the future of the IWPCUG. Numbers attending our online Zoom meetings have dropped, and it makes it hard to approach people (especially those who are not members) to ask them to give a talk to maybe only 11 people. It's also becoming harder to fill the pages of HotKey, partly because there seems to be less happening the the world of personal computers.

However of the upside, we do still meet, and those that come along do I hope get something out of it, and occasionally, I also hope, people find something of interest to them in HotKey.

We have meetings planned for the next few months, as shown on page 2.

Lastly apologies for the late delivery of HotKey, getting my accounts and tax return in took a bit longer than I anticipated.

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 7th February 2024 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 Chairman, David Groom. Seconders are not necessary at this stage.

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

1. Approve minutes of the previous AGM, held on 1st February 2023, (https://www.iwpcug.org/secure/minutes/AGM23v1.1.pdf).

2. Receive reports:

    2.1 Chairman

    2.2 Treasurer, including approval of the Club Accounts

    2.3 Membership Secretary

    2.4 Other activities: Computability, HotKey, Website, Egroup, Facebook

3. Consider the future of the IWPCUG

4. Elect a Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, and Membership Secretary.

5. Elect other Committee members (up to a maximum of eight persons).

6. Set the Annual Subscription.

7. Appoint an Independent Examiner.

8. Any Other Business.

DuckDuckGo App on Android

Last year, after a discussion with a friend, I installed the DuckDuckGo browser on my Android tablet. Installation of the browser also installs a facility to block tracking by most of the other apps on your Android device. Of the 115 apps on my tablet DuckDuckGo claims to be able to stop tracking on all but eight without affecting the usability of those apps (included in those eight left out were apps from Facebook and YouTube). It does allow blocking of trackers on the other eight, but says this may affect the app's behaviour.

I opened BBC Sounds, and listened to a podcast for 30 minutes. At the end of this period I decided to have a look at the statistics to see what had been blocked by the DuckDuckGo app. Apparently BBC Sounds had attempted to send information to two companies (Microsoft and Urban Airship), this included trying to send to Microsoft over 20 pieces of information including details of my birthday, a unique identifier (presumably of my phone), city, my network connection type, GPS coordinates, and my Android advertising id. Urban Airship was to be sent details of my network carrier, the time zone, my email address, my unique identifier, together with details of my device.

DuckDuckGo also reported that it had blocked tracking attempts within the AccuWeather app, which had attempted to send 36 pieces of information about me to Google and 19 pieces of information about me to comScore. The information attempted to be sent to Google included my first and last names, GPS coordinates, my email address, my time zone, charging status, the operating system, my gender, and my device boot time. It is difficult to see any reason why a weather app would need to send any of that sort of information back to Google.

In truth I only installed the app as a test to see who the apps sent information to, and what information it would be attempting to send. But having seen the extensive list of details which some apps try and collect, and then forward on to third parties, I have to say I believe I will now leave the DuckDuckGo app on my tablet and also install it on my phone.

It should be noted that the DuckDuckGo app tracker blocking facility does not appear to be available on an iPhone, maybe iPhone apps send less tracking information? One further point is you can't use the tracker blocking facility if you are using a VPN on your device. I generally use Nord VPN whenever I am connected to a WiFi network I don't know, and therefore on many occasions it won't be possible to use the tracker blocking.

David Groom

Exploring Nextcloud: A Versatile Solution for Home Use

Introduction: In today's digital age, the need for efficient and secure data management within homes has become increasingly important. Nextcloud, a powerful open-source platform, offers an array of features that can transform your home into a private and secure cloud storage environment. This article aims to introduce you to Nextcloud and explore how it can be used to enhance your home computing experience.

What is Nextcloud? Nextcloud (**https://nextcloud.com/athome/**) is a self-hosted cloud storage and collaboration platform that allows you to store, share, and access your files, documents, calendars, and more from any device with an internet connection. It provides an alternative to relying on third-party cloud services by allowing you to set up your own personal cloud on a server of your choice. Developed with a strong focus on privacy, security, and open-source principles, Nextcloud puts you in control of your data.

Setting up Nextcloud at Home: To start using Nextcloud at home, you'll need a server or a computer that can act as a server. It can be an old desktop computer, a Raspberry Pi, or a dedicated network-attached storage (NAS) device. Once you have your server ready, follow these steps:

1. Install Nextcloud: Nextcloud provides detailed installation instructions for various operating systems on their website. Choose the appropriate method for your setup and follow the step-by-step guide to install the server software.

2. Configuration and User Management: After the installation, you'll need to configure the basic settings of your Nextcloud server, such as setting up an admin account and creating user accounts for family members. You can define storage limits, password policies, and access privileges for each user.

3. File Storage and Synchronization: Nextcloud allows you to upload files directly to your server, either through the web interface or by using desktop and mobile applications. It provides automatic synchronization across devices, ensuring that the latest version of your files is available everywhere.

Key Features and Benefits:

1. File Sharing and Collaboration: Nextcloud enables easy file sharing with others. You can create public or password-protected links to share files or folders with friends and family. Collaborative features such as document editing, commenting, and version control make it ideal for joint projects or

family organization.

2. Calendar and Contacts: Nextcloud includes a robust calendar and contacts app that syncs across devices. You can manage your schedule, set reminders, and share calendars with family members, ensuring everyone stays organized.

3. Data Security and Privacy: By hosting your own Nextcloud server, you have full control over your data. It is stored securely on your premises, reducing the risk of unauthorized access or data breaches. Additionally, Nextcloud offers encryption options to protect your files during transmission and storage.

4. App Ecosystem: Nextcloud boasts a rich ecosystem of applications that extend its functionality. From note-taking and task management to media streaming and password management, you can tailor your Nextcloud instance to suit your specific needs.

Conclusion:

Nextcloud provides a versatile and user-friendly solution for creating your own personal cloud storage environment at home. By hosting your data on your own server, you gain complete control over your files, ensuring privacy and security. Whether you're looking to simplify file sharing, enhance collaboration, or manage your calendar and contacts effectively, Nextcloud empowers you to take charge of your digital life from the comfort of your home. Embrace Nextcloud, and unlock the full potential of your personal cloud storage.

Generated by GhatGPT with some editing by David Groom

Opensource.net - Opensource.com

Those of you who pay much attention to the source of many of the articles published in HotKey will note that they originally come from **OpenSource.com**. There used to be many articles per month, and whilst I felt many were not of much interest to our group I usually managed to find at least one to put into HotKey. However the last article published on their website is dated 15 April 2023.

In June last year they published a short note at the top of their web site saying "You may have noticed that it's been quiet here on Opensource.com lately.

That's because there's a new project in the works, and while there aren't many specific details to announce yet, there's plenty to talk about….. Stay tuned!"

And since then there has been no updates on the web site!

A little poking around on Google gave some more background. Opensource.com had been managed by RedHat, an American company which provides open source products, and is perhaps best known for Red Hat Linux, one of the best known (and used) Linux distributions, though perhaps now eclipsed by Ubuntu. In the summer of 2023 RedHat made some employees redundant, including the team which managed the Opensource.com web site.

But, then, the Open Source Initiative (OSI), which usually focuses on open-source licensing, came to the rescue, launching a new site based on the old foundation **OpenSource.net**. Apparently Red Hat has fully supported this transition, select articles from the former website will be republished on the new site (although given that that the articles were published under an open-source licence then there would have been no way of stopping them being republished). Further buttressing the project's continuity, Seth Kenlon, Opensource.com's community manager, will help with the new site.

Sadly the new site, OpenSource.net, doesn't yet seem to have the same quantity of articles being published on it, but maybe over time more will arrive.

David Groom

Airtable

Airtable is a collaborative online database, rather than a spreadsheet such as Google Sheets. Airtable can function in much the same way as Microsoft Access with tables and related tables, but optionally displayed either passively or interactively on the web.

For example you can list your collection of vinyl albums with associated detail looking like a spreadsheet, and you could add the individual tracks with relational links to each album - in a variety of display modalities.

Why would you want to do this? Well, it's a versatile and free database for home users like us, but you might want to share your vinyl album list with your friends. Being versatile you can let your friends do the usual sorting,

selecting and categorising on-line, but you choose whether they can add albums to your database, probably indicating their ownership, of course.

And yes, you can import data from various sources and add pictures and other attachments.

It's free for basic functionality but paid-for with enhanced functionality for business. Find tutorials on YouTube, of course.

This is the link to Roger's collection of vinyl albums (he hasn't added individual tracks as a related table - but he could).
www.iwpcug.org/url/airtable1

As a complete nerd I have created an Airtable table of Airtables:
www.iwpcug.org/url/airtable2

Roger Skidmore

What Makes Linux a Sustainable Operating System

In today's interconnected world, access to technology and the internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity. However, only some can afford the latest devices and software. The digital divide, the gap between those with access to technology and those without, remains a pressing issue. Fortunately, Linux has emerged as a powerful tool for narrowing this gap.

Here are some ways the Linux kernel helps bridge the digital divide, empowering individuals and communities with limited resources to thrive in the digital age.

Extend the hardware lifecycle

Linux has long been noted for adding life to aging hardware. That ability has been a boon to those folks who use computers every day.

I've helped many folks refurbish and refit older computers using Linux in the past. Linux-based computers consume less power and start up much quicker. The Gnome desktop is great, but many older computers are better suited to LXDE or XFCE environments, which require fewer resources to run.

Organizations like FreeGeek have made it their core mission to bridge the digital divide. These groups have repurposed older computers, keeping them

out of landfills and putting them in the hands of users who need them. Those programs don't happen without Linux.

DD-Wrt, OpenWrt, and Tomato are all Linux solutions that keep older network hardware out of landfills while providing users with added security, privacy and performance from their routers.

Lightweight Linux distributions like Porteus, Lubuntu, Linux Lite, and Linux Mint XFCE have low hardware requirements making them ideal for refurbishing older hardware.

New opportunities

Linux has created opportunities that would not otherwise exist. Students and hobbyists alike have started successful careers in computer science with no investment, thanks to lessons learned on old computers.

These systems run enterprise-grade software, such as the LAMP stack, which facilitated the transition to web 2.0. It was one of the first Open Source software stacks for the web. Today, it powers WordPress, Drupal, and Joomla installations. In fact, Linux powers over 96% of the world's top one million web servers. Linux also manages e-readers, smart televisions, smartwatches and more. Linux is the OS for well over 70% of the world's smartphones. Even NASA's Perseverance Rover, which made history on Mars this year, runs on Linux.

The cloud, which fuels most of today's applications, could not exist without Linux. Most of today's web and smartphone applications run in Linux-based containers.

The future

But most appropriately, Linux and open source are a force behind the United Nations Sustainability Goals (SDGs.) Linux continues to be a critical resource as we work to build a greener world.

Don Watkins
published at **https://opensource.net/inux-sustainable-operating-system/**
under a
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PC PartPicker

Those of you who didn't get a chance to join us for the January Zoom meeting may be wondering what PartPicker is. The following article was written by Roger last year, but hasn't yet appeared in HotKey.

Thinking of buying a new PC? Designing it yourself? Why not try "PartPicker", **https://uk.pcpartpicker.com**, a website to help you get the best customisation at the best price?

PartPicker lists all the various components in various categories, e.g. motherboard, graphics card, case - in fact all the parts you would like to pick for your ideal desktop computer and ideal budget. It will also tell you where to get the best price and most importantly whether the parts you have chosen are compatible. (It always tends to warn against possible required BIOS upgrades in case your processor is too new for your motherboard.)

Once you have chosen the parts for your ideal PC you can save this assemblage with a name like "My Dream PC" etc. You can then share this with a friend to see what they think about it. For example here is the link to the PC Build which Jonathan Burt talked about in January: **https://uk.pcpartpicker.com/list/JXhQL9**

A suggestion would of course be to buy all the parts from one place, and maybe ask them to assemble and test it for you. This may cost more than getting the cheapest from various sources, struggling to assemble it yourself and then finding it doesn't work! But it will give you an idea of what you can achieve, and it can be fun anyway, even if you don't need a new one.

Roger Skidmore

Recent Developments

I don't know if others from our group have been receiving fake **'We are unable to deliver your package'** messages. I have had thousands in 2023 that all go to my gmail spam folder. I know they are from scammers as I have not ordered anything from them. Some of their spelling is atrocious like the one addressed to **'Britich restdents.'**

Funniest anti virus notification informed me that **'our computers will become vulnerable to attack from viruses if you don't update your anti**

virus protection. I felt like replying with **'but I want your computers to become infected from viruses so keep up the good work'.** I didn't reply as I did not want to alert them to the stupidity of their threat.

I've been using a Sony Ericsson Xperia Pro (MK16I). This is a slide mobile phone and I chose it as it has a physical qwerty keyboard which is brill. for texting. It is extremely awkward and slow to access the internet with, and many apps will not run on it (not surprising as it was released in 2011). I could not join the WhatsApp tennis group and receive their notifications. Finally forced to buy a modern smartphone after being harassed by an alcoholic mental case. The police advised me to get a security camera so I could get video evidence if he came round. I bought a EZVIZ C1C-B wireless camera with microphone.

The old phone could not scan the QR code to install the EZVIZ app so the search was on for a basic smartphone that would run modern apps. I wanted a phone that would accept replacement batteries and found the Samsung Galaxy XCover 5 which the makers say is 'fit for field and factory working, with complete protection against dust and water'. It is also one of the few new smart phones that has removable batteries. Also supports 5G connectivity. With a new price of about £200 fully guaranteed it wasn't too expensive and now I can record people coming to my front door.

My old dual core PC is really struggling with Zoom meetings and the video and sound keep freezing (despite having the latest update). So I tried joining the last meeting with the new Samsung phone and what a difference! Silky smooth video and no sound dropouts.

I still prefer the physical keyboard of the old phone and the battery lasts longer (not surprising as the Sony has a bigger 5.3" screen) but in so many ways smartphones have moved on and the older ones just don't support modern apps. Time is running out for the Sony phone anyway though as my old phone provider (O2) is planning to switch of 3G in 2025. O2 does not have immediate plans to switch off 2G but in the longer term, all mobile network operators have agreed with the UK Government to switch off 2G by 2033. So after 2033 (at the latest) I will not even be able to send text messages with it.

So expect a lot of (sub 4G) mobile phones to be thrown away between now

and 2033!

The electric bike with the balanced charged home made battery is going well and I am at present adding cells to the existing 52v battery to bring it up to 72v. Hoping to break my existing 40 mph maximum speed record on level ground (on private land and with the owners permission). I've learned a lot about using recycled 18650 cells so if any member wants advice on using them do get in touch.

Stephen Sutters

Frustrations at Lack of Updates

On page 15 you will find how even old equipment may have a use, and one reason for this is that it still works! But I do find it annoying when otherwise good equipment doesn't work because of a software issues.

The first example of this is my TV which I purchased second-hand. Although the TV received via the aerial works fine, I should be able to connect the TV to the internet and connect to YouTube and the BBC etc. But since the TV was manufactured the URL's which YouTube and the BBC use have changed, and so the TV won't connect. It wouldn't be that difficult for the TV manufacturer to release a software update with the correct URL's, but it has not done so, presumably because its an old TV.

The more annoying case concerns an internet based "radio" receiver which was based on the Reciva network. Its a nice looking radio, and from memory the sound quality was OK. It allowed me to listen to internet radio stations from all over the world. The Reciva Internet Radio service was owned by Qualcomm and provided an online database of internet radio streams, that enabled various manufacturers products to provide internet radio. Sadly Qualcomm discontinued support for their Reciva based Internet Radio services in 2021. Since then the receiver can't now obtain the list of "radio" stations to find any to play.   So a perfectly good piece of equipment is now junk. Or is it? More details to follow in a later edition of HotKey.

David Groom

Everything Has a Use to Someone

As the saying goes "one man's rubbish may be another's treasure". Over the last 18 months or so I've been clearing out a lot of things, and have been surprised what some people will actually buy on eBay. Below are some of the computing related things which I have sold. As you can see from the sale prices I achieved my motive is not financial. My motivation for selling these items, and not simply disposing of them at the tip is twofold. Firstly it reduces waste, and secondly I don't like to throw something away which someone else may find useful.

A HP Vectra 486b 25N sold for £40. I'm not quite sure how old this computer was, but as an indication I can tell you that the operating system was Windows 3.1. I was quite surprised that it still worked when I plugged it in. It was interesting to use Windows 3.1 again, in some ways still familiar, but it soon became obvious how much the Windows interface has progressed in 30 years! I have no idea why someone may want such an old computer.

Twenty-two 5.25" floppy disks sold for £9.99. To be honest I did think these might sell for more due to possible scarcity, but I hadn't been able to test any of the disks as I no longer had a 5.25" drive to test them with.
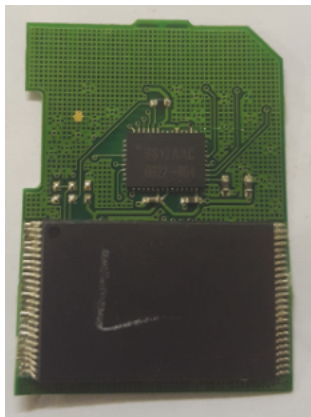
A job lot of ninety 3.5" floppy disks sold for £12.60. I hadn't actually considered floppies would have any value, and I probably had already thrown away a hundred or more of them before realising that someone may still want them. The last major manufacturer of floppy disks stopped making them in 2010, but machines that rely on them (from embroidery machines to plastic moulding, medical equipment to aircraft) live on, relying on a dwindling supply of disks that will one day run out, so used floppies have a value.

For more details on why the "Floppy Disk Just Wont Die" see this article: **https://www.wired.co.uk/article/why-the-floppy-disk-just-wont-die**

Somewhat more surprisingly an Olympus C-1000L Digital Camera, which has less than a 1 megapixel sensor sold for £10.99, whilst a Fujifilm FinePix 2800 with a 2 megapixel sensor sold for £10.99.

It has taken time to photograph, list on eBay, securely package, and then dispatch these items, but I am glad they had not just been thrown away. Sadly there have been other items which even I think are obsolete, and these have gone to the tip.

David Groom

Before I threw out an old SD card I thought it would be interesting to see what was inside it. Its surprising how many connections each chip has, considering the card itself only has nine "pins"