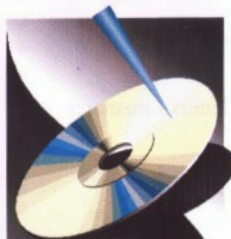


# ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP



**HOT KEY**

**Issue 120**

**NOVEMBER SHOW EDITION**

**2001**



A scene from a previous computer show at Riverside

## Inside this issue:

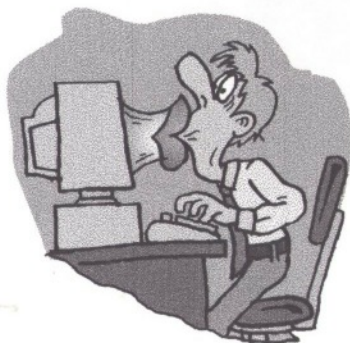
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**WELCOME  
TO THIS YEAR'S  
ANNUAL COMPUTER SHOW**  
*Sponsored by The County Press*

## FUTURE MEETINGS

<b>21st November</b>	New Products	Mark Worrall
<b>5th December</b>	Internet Evening	Dennis Linzmaier
<b>19th December</b>	Christmas Party	Riverside Centre
<b>2nd January</b>	Corel Draw & Corel Photopaint	Ian Capon
<b>16th January</b>	PDA's (Personal Digital Asst.)	Dennis Linzmaier
<b>6th February</b>	<b>A.G.M. followed by Questions and Answers</b>	
<b>20th February</b>	Linux Update	Bob Groom
<b>6th March</b>	World Wide Disability E-mail Groups	To be advised
<b>20th March</b>	Building a Computer	Dennis Parkes
<b>3rd April</b>	Net Meetings & Instant Message Systems	Dennis Linzmaier
<b>17th April</b>	Spreadsheets	David Broughton

## HUMOUR









W

elcome to the 12th IWPCUG's Annual Computer Show.

This year brings together specialists in the field of IT and there are some new exhibitors at the 2001 Show who will have many items of interest on show.

If you are at a loss on what to buy for Christmas presents, then this Computer Show, once again should give you an opportunity to bless your family or friends with the right gift. There will be something for everyone including computers, printers, CD Rewriters, sound cards, modems, mice etc.

### IWPCUG STAND

If you would like advice on which computer or software to buy or you have a problem our staff at the stand will be pleased to assist you. If you would like to join our Computer Club, we are offering a £2 discount on our membership fee of £12 per year, to people who join on their visit to the Show.

### COMPUTABILITY

IWPCUG have a section that loans computers and gives training to people who are physically disabled or have learning disabilities. This group will be represented at a stand at the Show and will be offering advice on special computer aids and services for the disabled. Come and have a chat to the staff on duty and encourage them in their worthy work for the disabled.

### THE INTERNET

An on-line Internet Stand will be available in Area 3 where you can discuss with the staff on duty any questions that you might have. The Internet has become a vast area in the computing world with many different service providers and the number of websites on the Internet has expanded enormously, to incorporate thousands of shopping sites plus many search engines, which can help you with advice on any topic and sometimes be a great help when you are stumped. There are also umpteen newsgroups to join if you would like to know more about a particular piece of software or general questions on hardware.

We hope that you will enjoy the Show and find the exhibitors' stands of interest and value to you. Take the time to stop and chat to each exhibitor so that you can perhaps find out something that you were not aware of before you visited the Computer Show. As well as information, there are always bargains to be had, not least, new friends to be made. So take the opportunity that you have of asking questions and improve your knowledge of Information Technology. The computer has become an important household tool but how many of us are using this technology to the full?

The club meets on the first and third Wednesdays of the month at The Riverside Centre in Newport at 7.30 pm. All levels of experience and knowledge are welcome, from novice to expert.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Membership is £12 per year but if you join at the Show the subscription is only £10.

You can still join by post for £12 using this form. Please send this completed form with your cheque (made payable to "The Isle of Wight PC User Group") to:  
The Membership Secretary, IWPCUG, 2 Westview, Hulverstone, Newport, I.W. PO30 4EH

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Forename \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Job \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests/favourite software \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Associates:**

You may add here the name(s) of other person(s) as Associate Members who live at the same address (Associate Members do not pay a subscription) or an organisation that you will represent:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby apply to become a member of the IW PC User Group.  
I agree to abide by the constitution.

DATA PROTECTION ACT, 1984. I agree that any of the details given on this form may be held on the Group's database and may be disclosed to any other member of the Group. I undertake that such information concerning another member of the Group will not be disclosed to a non-member except with the further permission of the member concerned.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

# SOME NOTES ON FILE TYPES

by David Broughton



There has been some confusion recently over what is meant by "plain text" files. An example was the expression "send it as a plain text HTML file" which seems at first sight to be a contradiction of terms. How can a file be both "plain text" and HTML?

The confusion over file types stems from the fact that what one sees on the monitor screen when a file is displayed depends very much on the software that is displaying it. All files require some kind of formatting and this must be picked up either from the file itself or the software must do its own formatting according to context.

## PLAIN TEXT

Plain text files are the simplest of files that contain a minimum of format information. Each character is stored in one byte as a 7-bit code. These characters consist of the letters of the alphabet, both upper and lower case, plus numerals and punctuation signs. The only formatting information is in the form of control codes, the principle one being a newline character. Plain text files are sometimes called ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) files.

## THE INTERNET

The Internet only handles plain text. Files containing other format information and codes other than plain text (i.e. characters

requiring 8 bits) must be coded into plain text. Graphics files, for example, which use all 8 bits of every byte, are coded using a base 64 coding system. This converts every three bytes of 8 bits into four bytes of 6 bits that can then be represented by the letters of the alphabet and numerals plus two punctuation signs. The coding looks something like this:

```
59CjS59Ovbr169iza9Ovbr37+BPgIYT368Q
lfcQfPXNJ9B+BvY34H28dcegwfTx5B7A0rI
UYoNcRgfgITWqKKAguJ4o4sgwgjhwhK
```

The pound sign used in most Windows software is an 8-bit character (the value is 163). Whilst many people are able to transmit the pound sign successfully in e-mails, there is no guarantee that it will work. My suggestion is to use UKP after the numeral; for example "3.99 UKP". Most people will have seen money quantities, in e-mails, without the pound sign in front and may wonder why it is missing. Basically, the reason is that the pound sign is not part of plain text.

## ATTACHMENTS

When an e-mail contains an attachment that is base-64 encoded, obviously, the recipient does not want to see the coding. The e-mail software takes care of the conversion automatically in the background when the attachment is opened. But you can see the coding if you wish by viewing the e-mail with an editor like Notepad. (More about this below.)

## THE META-LANGUAGE HTML

An HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) file is a plain text file with formatting using the meta language HTML. A meta-language is a set of rules using the main language that implies a special use when interpreted by the particular software it is designed for.





## WHAT YOU SEE DEPENDS ON THE SOFTWARE

To emphasise the point, how a file appears on the computer monitor depends on the software that is used to display it. Thus, an HTML file displayed with a web browser will display the file formatted according to the meta-language HTML. If the same file is viewed in, say, Notepad, it will be displayed as plain text and so will include all the meta-language tags and other language constructs that only an HTML person would be able to understand. Generally, it would be difficult to read.

A very simple case would be to display a particular piece of text in a bold font. Since there is no plain text version of a bold font one could use the symbols `<B>` to denote where the bold font is to start and `</B>` to mark the end. The `<` and `>` symbols are meta-language symbols because they use the main language (plain text) in a special way. Viewed as plain text (in, say, Notepad) you will see `<B>` and `</B>` but if presented to some software that understands the meaning of these symbols (such as a web browser) it will show the text between them in a bold font.

Note that this implies that the symbol `<` cannot be used in its conventional sense, meaning "less than". So the meta-language has to have some means of representing the less than sign when needed for its original purpose. This is no problem. The pound sign, incidentally, is coded as `"&pound;"` in HTML or alternatively `"&#163;"` which shows how extra symbols can be incorporated into a restricted alphabet. Here, the ampersand symbol (`&`) is being used in a special way.

HTML is the language used by Web Browsers, providing a sophisticated set of formatting options (such as lists and tables) that are not easy to provide with plain text alone. It also has provision for a variety of fonts, sizes and colours of text. But the HTML file is plain text and can be transmitted over the internet as it is (i.e. not coded into base 64 or any other coding scheme).

If you viewed a graphics file (say, a GIF file) in Notepad, you would see gobbledygook because Notepad has no knowledge of the format used for graphics files. Let a web browser or graphics program open it, however, and you will see the image because it understands the coding.

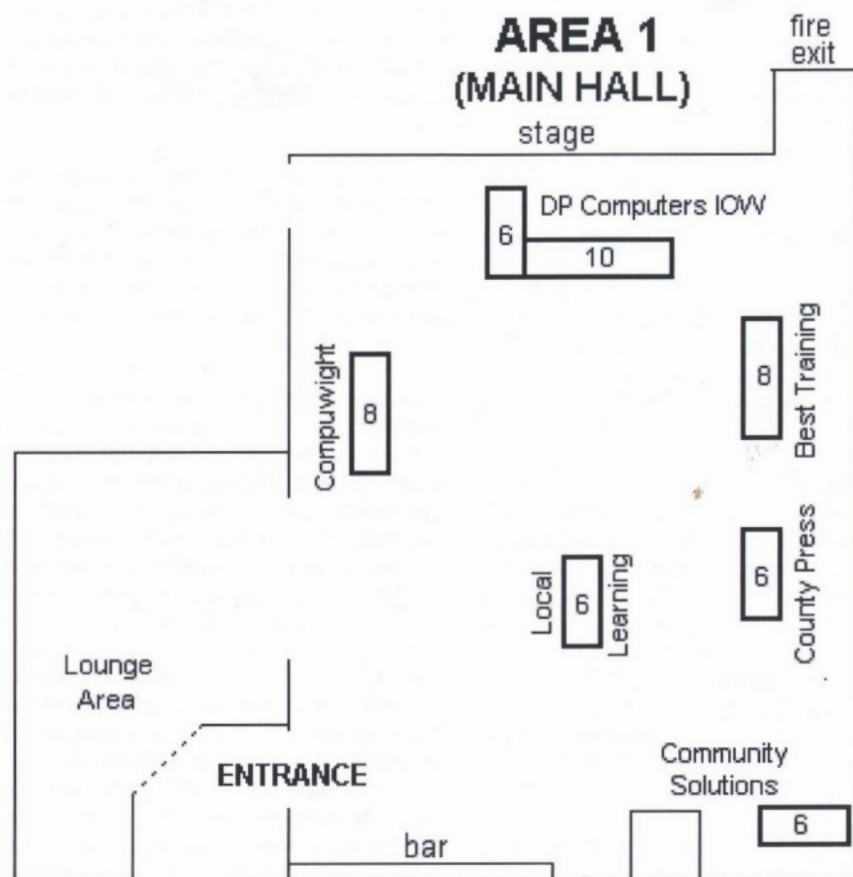
Now send the GIF file as an attachment in an e-mail over the Internet and it will be coded in base 64 with the file type GIF. This will be mentioned in the header information of the attachment coding. When the e-mail is received, the software will show, for example, a paper clip symbol to denote the attachment. Clicking on this symbol starts a chain of events as follows: first, the base 64 coding is decoded to produce a binary GIF file. This is placed in a temporary location on the hard disk. The name and place of the file is passed to the operating system which uses the file type information (GIF) to choose an appropriate piece of software to open the file. The software chosen is determined by the file associations table (more about that below). The graphics program opens the file to display the image.

You don't need to send a file as an attachment if it is already a plain text file (though you can). The file could simply be inserted as part of the e-mail's plain text.

*Continued on page 10*

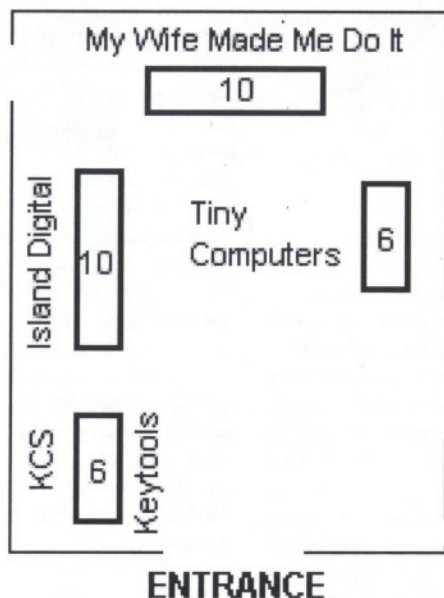
## IWPCUG ANNUAL SHOW - Table layout chart

(Numbers show the table lengths in feet)

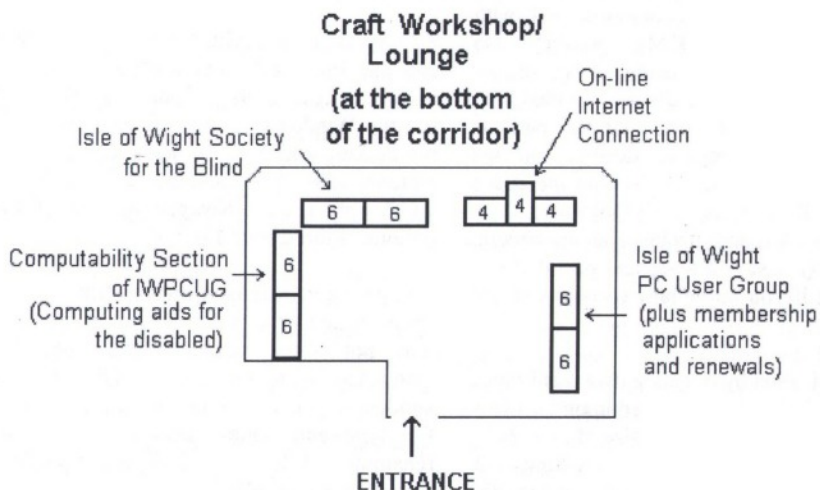


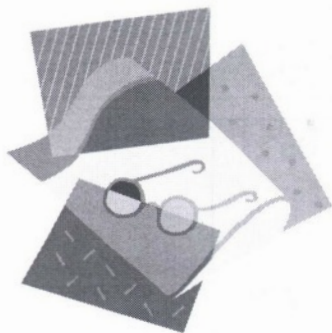


## AREA 2 (HUNNYHILL ROOM)



## AREA 3





An HTML file, being a plain text file, can be inserted into an e-mail in this way. This will display at the other end as plain text by the e-mail software. This might not be very interesting to the general user. But to a web page author it could be something that is wanted for cutting and pasting into a web page.

Insert an HTML file as an attachment, however, and when the recipient clicks on the paper clip symbol, a web browser will start up to display it formatted.

Neither of these types of e-mail should be confused with "HTML e-mails". What is usually meant by HTML e-mails is e-mails composed with software that has the capability to encode the composed text, with its formatting, into HTML, possibly also containing images, making a multi-part email. Multi-part e-mails are divided into their various parts and which part is displayed when received depends on the received software's capability and the user's options. If there is an HTML part, it is usually decoded and displayed as the default. But there is always a plain text part that you can get at if you know how (depends on the software).

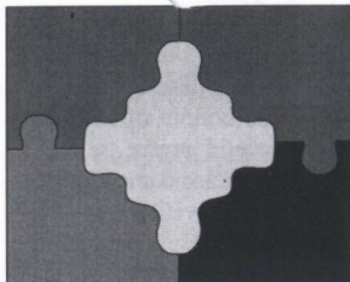
But HTML used by e-mail software is limited in its capability. It is frowned upon by many because it: 1. Increases the size of e-mails by a large factor, from three to ten times. 2. Forces the recipient to view the text as the

composer composed it. If this was in a tiny

or unusual font the reader may have difficulty reading it. The usual font size options are disabled on some e-mail packages when HTML is the source. It has the advantage that images can be sent, embedded with the e-mail text, but this tends to make the e-mails even larger. The images are coded into base 64 as separate parts of the e-mail. 3. Some viruses transmitted by e-mail are coded in a form of HTML. This is a serious matter because some e-mail software, like Outlook Express, has as default a preview pane set on. This displays the e-mail in a separate pane as soon as the e-mail is selected from the main list. If such an e-mail contained a virus it would have been automatically activated and you are in trouble. To switch off the preview pane in Outlook Express, on the View menu, click Layout. Then make sure the box labelled "Show preview pane" is not ticked. This will prevent you from accidentally activating a virus. If you suspect a virus in an e-mail you can view it using Notepad or other plain text editor that will not be able to interpret the special formatting tags. Although the HTML text will be difficult to read, there will always be a plain text version as well that is easily read. The Notepad view, by the way, will show all the header information which you have to skip over first.

To view an e-mail with Notepad, highlight it and use "Save as" from the File menu and save it in a temporary folder somewhere. I use the Windows desktop. I then switch to the desktop and drag the file's icon over the Notepad icon. You can also set up an "Open with" option with Notepad as one of the options. More about this below.

An alternative way is to start up Notepad and open the .eml file. Clicking on an .eml file will not work because .eml files are associated with the e-mail software. So another way is to rename the file to a .TXT file type and double click that after the renaming. Files type TXT are associated with Notepad usually.



## FILE ASSOCIATIONS

I have spoken a lot about file associations so perhaps more explanation is required. The fact is, one of the ways a computer can be more easily operated is to use a file associations table and this is what Windows and most other user-friendly operating systems use. It consists of a table of file types and software applications so that most file types used in the computer can be associated with the software that is appropriate. Take the word processing program Word, for example. The file type for letters and documents produced by Word is .DOC so that if you double click on a file of this type, the operating system looks up its table of file associations and starts up Word, feeding the file name to it as a parameter as if you had started up Word without a file, clicked on Open in the File menu and navigated to that file.

More than one file type can be associated with the same application software, but only one application software can be associated with the same file type. However, sometimes you may want to use a different piece of software to open a file. Although you can do this in the old fashioned way (start the application software first and read in the file with "Open"), the software can be placed in the file associations table but not as the default. To use alternative software for any file type, you must first set up the name of the software in the file associations table for that file type and include it under the action "Open with". Then when you right click the file you will get a selection of applications for opening the file which will include those you added. The file

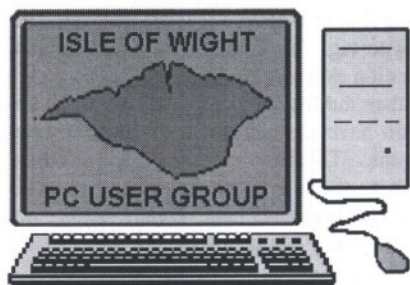
associations table can be seen by clicking on My Computer and then View and selecting Folder Options... Then select the File Type tag. In Windows 95 and 98 the Application software is in alphabetical order rather than the file types, which is awkward so that you have to scan down to find the one you want. This was corrected in Windows ME where the file types are in alphabetical order. The Windows help screens will guide you through any changes you want to make to this table.

## FILE TYPES

I have spoken a lot about file types but not fully defined them. Originally, in the days of DOS, file types were up to three characters after the dot of the file name and called the file name extension. Windows 95 and later versions allowed long file names that could contain dots -- dots within the file name part. This can be confusing because the file type is the last set of characters that follow the last dot. So if there is more than one dot you could be fooled into thinking that the file type is different from what it is, especially as, by default, Windows does not show the file type in file listings. The advantage of this to a virus writer can be imagined. I nice little EXE file (executable) can be named "My picture.jpg.exe" containing a virus. The user sees this as "My picture.jpg" and expects to see the picture when it is double clicked. But in fact it is not a jpg file but an exe file and you get infected with the demonic doings of the virus writer.

To make sure you see all file types, go to Folder Options from My Computer/View (also available from the Settings menu that comes up from Start) and select the View tag. Scroll to the message "Hide file extensions for known file types" and make sure the box next to this message is not ticked. Then remember an important rule: Never double click an attachment that is an EXE file unless you know for sure who the sender is and that the attachment was intended (because sometimes, even if you know the sender, the sender may not realise that an attachment has been sent).





## About The Isle of Wight PC User Group

The Isle of Wight PC User Group exists to help Island residents in the use of computers in their everyday lives and as a hobby. The disabled are particularly encouraged to explore the facilities that computers can provide to enhance their lifestyle.

The club meets twice monthly at The Riverside Centre, Newport, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

The club is open to all who are interested. The talks range from Do-It-Yourself hardware changes to how to operate popular items of software and use the Internet.

The subscription is £12 per year but as a special concession for visitors to the Annual Show, you can join today (18 Nov. only) for just £10 (for the remainder of the year 2001 and all of 2002). The club's stand is in Area 3

which is known variously as the "Workshop" and the "Phase 3 Lounge". It is the room at the bottom of the main corridor. If you would prefer to make your mind up later, please come along to one of our meetings as a visitor.

• The club has a website at:-

<http://www.ddina.demon.co.uk/iwpcug/>

where you will find a list of future meetings, the Constitution, a list of Committee Members, an application form to join and much, much more. In particular there is a section devoted to what we call "Computability". The web site gives details of computing aids that can be obtained for the disabled. In practical terms, the club's Computability activities provide help to Island residents (not just its own members) to get the best they can from owning a computer. Many of these residents are loaned computers on a trail basis with one-to-one instruction from our volunteers. Helping such people is not only a useful contribution to society but is also a rewarding activity for the volunteers.

The club's magazine, **Hot Key**, is issued monthly. (The edition you are reading is a special version produced as a guide for the Annual Show.) Hot Key contains articles on software and hardware with advice for those new to computing; in fact, it tries to reflect the talks given to members at the meetings.

More information about Hot Key and the club is on the web site.

**Compiled by David Broughton  
Show Organiser**



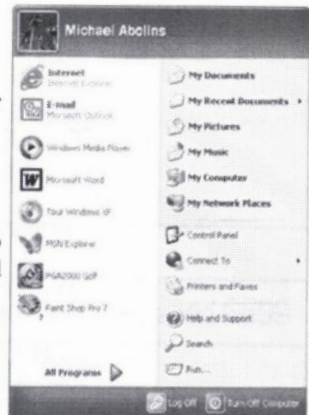
Microsoft Windows XP offers you many new features and its excellent overall performance, which includes dramatically faster boot and resume times, along with highly responsive applications

Windows XP is the best-performing Windows operating system ever created. Microsoft recommends that computers running Windows XP have at least 128 megabytes (MB) of random access memory (RAM) installed.

While Windows XP does not require a state-of-the-art processor for a good user experience, the minimum is a 300-megahertz (MHz) Pentium II-class processor; the system can benefit from faster hardware. The operating system, particularly the Windows XP user interface (UI), is sensitive to the quality of the video subsystem and video drivers. On-board video memory will ease the processing burden on the general purpose RAM used by the operating system and applications. And because individual drivers can cause problems for system performance, Microsoft is working with the industry to ensure that high-quality drivers are available for the broadest cross section of devices possible.

## Features

- **New look** - The user interface has been completely redesigned to make things simpler. However if you prefer the look and feel of the traditional Windows interface, you can revert to the normal look and feel of Windows.
- **Stability** - The new Windows engine based on the Windows 2000 platform is the most dependable system to date. It also has improved hardware support and enhanced Internet security in the form of the built in Internet Connection Firewall.
- **Easy to operate** - Apart from the new Welcome Screen, Windows XP offers multi-user support so that more than one person can easily use the same PC and presents different personalised log-on icons on the Welcome Screen for the various users.
- **Entertainment** - New features have been added to Windows XP, which offers support for multiple devices, such as digital cameras, video, music players, PDAs and scanners, plus you can store and edit pictures, movies and music to a better degree.
- **One Step CD Burning** - Put a blank CD into your CD-RW drive and drag your files into the appropriate folder. Start burning and that's it. Easy to use and quick.
- **Driver Rollback** - If you install the wrong driver, which may cause problems, simply right click on the hardware in device manager, click on properties and select the driver tab and rollback to a previous driver installation.



## **RAFFLE**

The top prize in the raffle is a multi-media computer with colour Deskjet printer.

**Tickets are £1 for a strip of five tickets.**

The raffle will be drawn at 3.30 pm. Proceeds from the raffle will go to help disabled people in the use of computers to enhance their lifestyle -- part of the activities of the Isle of Wight PC User Group.

### **TECHNICAL DETAILS of the first prize:**

Processor: Celeron 800 MHz  
 Power Supply: ATX 300 Watts  
 Coloured Midi Tower Case  
 AGP Slot  
 56.6 V90 AMR Modem  
 5 PCI Slots  
 128 Megabytes of RAM  
 PC133 Dimm  
 8x4x32 CD-Read-Write  
 8x DVD (CD Compatible)  
 17" AOC Colour Monitor  
 Windows 98 SE Operating System  
 160 W Stereo Speakers  
 Multi Function 4D Trackball mouse  
 Windows 98 Keyboard.  
 HP DeskJet 640 Colour Printer  
 .. plus the DVD now showing!

Supplied by D.P. Computers IOW with one year warranty.  
 Worth £800 retail.

## **MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS**

If you sign up at the IWPCUG stand in the "Workshop" (Area 3) you will be entitled to a £2 discount on the yearly subscription to the Computer Club. This also applies to current members who wish to renew their membership for 2002.

The fee will be £10 instead of the usual £12 per year





## Mobile Computer Services

"When your computer needs attention you want to phone for help in your own premises, at a time convenient to you. Not disconnect it, take it to the nearest shop and wait for it to be repaired, then transport it back and hope all is well."

### Call Steve France for:-

- Repairs & Problems
- Upgrades
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Full Multimedia PC-1.1Ghz AMD Processor, Delivered & Installed **£699**

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**Phone: 280529**

**Mobile: 07780 672228**

**Email: [sales@compuwight.co.uk](mailto:sales@compuwight.co.uk)**

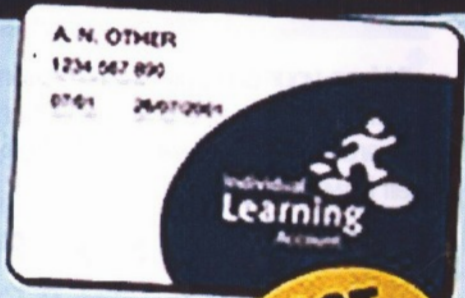
**Web: [www.compuwight.co.uk](http://www.compuwight.co.uk)**

# BEST COMPUTER TRAINING



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