

Issue 167

Autumn 2009

**ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER
GROUP**



HOT KEY

AUTUMN 2009

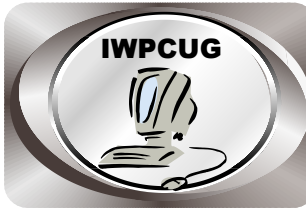


SUMMER BBQ

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The Isle of Wight Personal computer User Group

The Isle of Wight PC User GROUP

Welcomes all owners and users of IBM compatible Personal Computers.

It is a group which seeks to exchange ideas and new information.

Our meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at **The Riverside Centre, Newport** from 7.30 to 9.30 pm

Visitors are welcome. Membership is £6 per annum

A charge of £1 is made per meeting, which includes tea or coffee during the break.

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 Website address is **www.iwpcug.org**

We also have an e-group discussion area

Yahoo iwpcusers: **iwpcusers@yahoo.com**

See page 5 for how to join

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
4 November	This will be a number of short presentation by some of our members on various subjects. This is the first time that we have tried this.	

See our Website for more information as it becomes available

ISLE OF WIGHT PC USER GROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman : David Groom

Vice-Chairman : Cliff Maidment

Treasurer : Phil Rogers

Secretary : Susanne Bone

Membership & Database Secretary : Ray Boote

Committee Member : Roger Skidmore

HotKey Editor : Bob Groom

Contact details removed prior to
publishing on the internet

Suggestions for new events, topics or speakers for talks are always
welcome.

Please contact any committee member with your ideas.

If necessary we may be able to find a speaker for your subject.

Chairmans Report

Well the summer is now well and truly over, and we are moving into autumn and towards winter.

As with the weather, I feel the same may be said of our club. The editor speaks elsewhere in HotKey of the thinner nature of this issue, and you will note from page 2, that we don't have a long list of future engagements set up. Once again it may be time to explore the future of the Isle of Wight PC User Group, and I will no doubt return to this theme in the January edition, which will be the last one before the AGM.

In the meantime I look forward to the November meeting which will take a different approach from the norm, with a selection of speakers talking for a shorter length of time.

Laptop Adventure and Vista

Well, these days if you don't want to do anything exceptional then you can almost certainly do everything you want on a laptop - and a student edition at that. No longer do laptops have any basic limitations.

With a desktop it's just a case of how much power you want and how much you can afford to spend; with laptops you have to decide how lightweight you want to go and how small a screen/keyboard you can put up with. "Netbooks" tend to be less powerful, have smaller, finer screens, have small keyboards and no optical drive. At the other end you get a desktop replacement, almost including the kitchen sink, and something you wouldn't want to carry in your shoulder bag too far.

Screen size is something to watch - the width isn't so much a problem but screen depths vary and 768 pixels deep doesn't seem very much com-

pared to most desktop displays. Go for at least 900 pixels deep unless you really want Cinerama letterbox profile for your Word document.

I started by ordering an Acer 6530g 17" laptop which cost under £500 and was seriously impressive. Screen res was 1990 x 768 which felt too shallow but the main problem was its connectivity. After sending it back I learned that Microsoft Vista was almost certainly the culprit and I regretted losing it. I replaced it with a Dell Studio 15 which again had bad connectivity.

I installed XP instead and that solved the problem. Acer technical support finally owned up to Vista being a major cause of all their connectivity issues (plus there's no Outlook Express in Vista). The Dell still only has a screen depth of 768 but that was part of my learning curve, and I think I would have preferred the Acer anyway.

So the conclusion is to realise that laptops present a different range of choices from desktops; study what screen resolution you want with a laptop; buy the best you can afford and avoid Windows Vista - most companies will offer XP if you ask them.

Roger Skidmore

HOW TO JOIN THE E-GROUP

Send a blank e-mail to: **iwpcug-subscribe@yahoo.com**

All members are encouraged to join this e-group (which costs nothing and is private to all club members) in order to keep in touch with events and join in with discussions.

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

Windows 7 - An apology

It has been suggested that my talk on Windows & last month was a bit on the sceptical side. I have to admit that I did lace my comments with large amounts of sarcasm at what seemed to be some frivolous "gimmicks" added in to the new operating system.

The strange thing is that the very first thing that I did when I next booted up my Ubuntu computer was to try and make it look more like Windows 7, with its transparent window borders, etc.

The next day I was back to using Windows XP, and needed to compare two nearly identical documents. I manually dragged two windows across my desktop, trying to align them and get them the same size, and how I wished it had the Aero snap feature of Windows 7 which does it automatically.

On hindsight, probably the only great leap forward in operating systems which Microsoft has released has been the leap from DOS to Windows 3. Since then almost all the new releases have been improvements over the previous version, not perhaps enough in itself to make you rush out and upgrade, but enough that when you have been using it for a while that you would not wish to return to the previous version. (Windows ME and Vista excepted!).

In conclusion the promised stability enhancements, the lower system resource requirements, and yes, even some of the "gimmicks" make Windows 7 something to look forward to.

David Groom

Cover Disk

There is no cover disk this month. There should be one in the next issue, due out in January.

Prize Puzzle for October 2009.

DECODE THE POEM

The 4 lines of apparent jumble below is a well known poem using a substitution code. A substitution code is where each letter of the alphabet codes to another letter consistently. Spaces and line breaks have been retained; punctuation has been ignored.

DJO WIVULS NULSOF GFUDOE KLT JKVULS GFUD
WIVOE IL LIF KRR DJC PUODC LIF GUD
EJKRR RMFO UD ZKQY DI QKLQOR JKRN K RULO
LIF KRR DJC DOKFE GKEJ IMD K GIFT IN UD

Hint: Try guessing the shorter words first.

Please send your decoded poem to me, David Broughton, by email (david67@clara.co.uk) or by post (Willscroft, Copse Lane, Freshwater, PO40 9BZ) to reach me by Wednesday 4th November 2009

Answer to Summer puzzle

3 0 7 4

0 1 6 0

5 2 0 6

8 4 4 0

This was easy ! I received a record number of correct answers.

Answers were received from Andy DeBauch, Christopher Broughton, Michael Hodge, Gwynn White, John Moxon, Clem Robertson, David Groom, Susanne Bone, John Stafford and Richard Birkill

The lucky winner in the draw was Susanne Bone. Thanks for all your answers

File Management

File management continues to be top of my list of perceived weaknesses in computer management activities. I have in HotKey recently advocated "PowerDesk" as being the best Windows Explorer replacement but now I find that the best candidate is a programme called xplorer2.

This comes in free or fully-fledged paid for versions. The free version is fine but the few extra refinements (especially jpeg viewer) fully justify the paid for price standing at £19.13p. This is much cheaper than Power Desk and hugely more economic of download size. Faster, too.

Go to <http://www.zabkat.com/> or http://www.free-downloads.net/programs/xplorer2_lite_toolbar_bundle to download xplorer2_liteTB_setup.exe 3.5Mb.

The basic view is of the main directory tree on the left hand side with two right hand panels, each of which can be directed at a file/directory structure. The graphics viewing panel is in the bottom left hand corner. The programme is hugely configurable which may make it seem at first more complicated than PowerDesk but with a little effort you get this rewarding feeling of power and control!

Roger Skidmore, Isle of Wight
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Smaller HotKey

You will notice that this edition of HotKey has only 12 pages instead of our normal 16. We could not fill 16 pages due to a lack of articles that have been provided, and due to the way it is printed in booklet form, 4 pages had to be deleted, and it is quite possible that this will have to be the future norm.

This is a very disappointing situation, especially in view of the slight increase in numbers attending our meetings.

Something needs to be done about this. !!!

Editor

What is an iso file?

An ISO image is an archive file (also known as a disk image) of an optical disc in a format defined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). This format is supported by many software vendors. ISO image files typically have a file extension of .iso. The name ISO is taken from the ISO 9660 file system used with CD-ROM media, but an ISO image can also contain UDF file system because UDF is backward-compatible with ISO 9660.

As with any other archive, an ISO image includes all the data of files contained on the archived CD/DVD, or any other disc format. They are stored in an uncompressed format. In addition to data of the files it also contains all the file system metadata, including boot code, structures, and attributes. ISO images do not support multi-track, thus they cannot be used for audio CDs, VCD, and hybrid audio CDs, which are usually ripped as audio files. However, for disks that contain a single track of data followed by tracks of audio, such as video game disks, the first track can be ripped as an ISO, and the rest as audio files.

A valid ISO image is an uncompressed collection of various files merged into one single file, according to definite and standard formatting.

The most important feature of an ISO image is that it can be easily rendered or "burned" to a DVD or CD by using media "authoring" or disc "burning" software. It can also be opened using archival applications such as 7-Zip file manager or the WinRAR shareware archiver.

There is an advantage from a software distributors point of view of using this format. Since the various source files and directory structures are merged into one single file then it is not possible to edit or corrupt the structure. Furthermore the various "special" files and structures needed to make a CD bootable can easily be incorporated.

For further information on the format see
www.ecma-international.org/publications/standards/Ecma-119.htm

So how do you burn an image to CD?

Well, Linux has its own iso burner software built in, but at present on Windows machines you need extra software. Windows 7, to be released on 22 October 2009 should come with its own ability to burn ISO images.

Some of the better known paid for software comes from Roxio and Nero, whilst shareware alternatives might be ISO Buster or Magic ISO. (A quick search on Google should find others).

With these software tools you simply select the ISO image from your hard disk, and burn it to a new CD. The only user defined option normally available is to determine the speed at which you want to burn. It really is a very simple process.

David Groom

The first half of this article is largely taken from Wikipedia and is licensed CC-BY-SA

Two Interesting WebSites

In the October 2007 HotKey I wrote about a program called “ShipPlotter” that I was using, with my computer and a special VHF radio, to receive the AIS signals from all ships within about 60 nautical miles and to plot the current positions of these ships on a map, essentially in real time.

Currently, all ships of over 300 tons are legally required to carry the equipment necessary to transmit all their particulars and position every 3 or 4 minutes when in an area of regular marine traffic. This includes all ports and normal busy sea-lanes. The equipment sends the data in an international agreed form at a output power that normally allows reception up to a minimum of 20 nautical miles.

With my set-up I could often get data from vessels up to 80-100 NM.

Now the interesting part!

The University of the Aegean, in Greece, has “recruited” hundreds of people from all over the world, who have the right equipment and can leave it operating continuously and can send their data over the internet, to a central database.

All the received data is “co-ordinated” into a world-wide, real-time “marine traffic map” which is subdivided into, currently, about 100 separate areas of shipping activity. The ship positions are placed on Google maps and these can be enlarged down to street level in most ports.

The precise area visible can be moved by the mouse and when a particular ship is selected, clicking on this will bring up all the ships details including name,

type, size, owners, registration details, destination, precise position, etc. Clicking on this data panel will, in many instances, bring up a picture of the ship. Simply entering a ship's name will bring up the particular map that the ship is currently displayed on.

The positional accuracy is such that one can even see which particular berth at a port a ship is occupying.

Currently, the facility covers all of Europe and Scandinavia down to North Africa, most of the East and West coast of the United States and the southern part of Canada, China, Japan, the eastern coast of Australia, part of North Island New Zealand, the southern end of Africa, two ports in South America and a few odd areas dotted around. A few days ago there were over 11,000 ships displayed. If any of you have friends or relatives taking a cruise, you would be able to follow their course (not quite by the minute but certainly by the hour) and determine where their ship is berthed in the various Ports of Call at a particular time.

The two pictures on the back page show the vessels berthed at Portsmouth and at the same time, those in Auckland, New Zealand.

The website is called “www.marinetraffic.com”.

It is a very complex site and some of the facilities take a few seconds to work (at least they do on my computer !)

The coloured squares on the images indicate the positions of vessels, with different colours for each type of vessel. The Pilot boat was in Portsmouth.

The other Website does a simliar sort of thing for aircraft flights.

A few weeks ago the son of one of my friends was flying to Washington DC, and my friend was able to track the complete flight from Heathrow to Washington except for a few hours when the aircraft was in the Greenland area.

One needs to know the Carrier and the Flight Number and date, and preferably the departure and arrival airports.

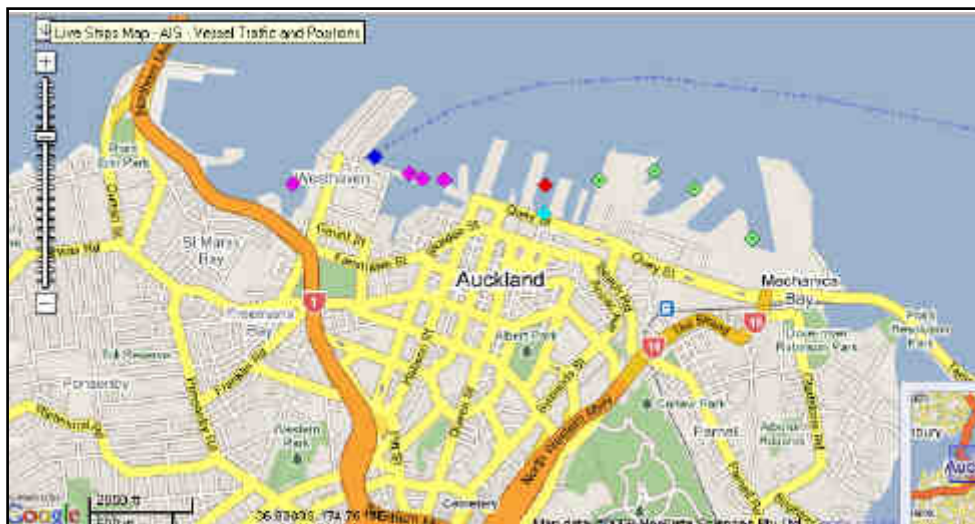
This site is somewhat difficult to use, and does not always quite work as expected. Last Wednesday our Chairman was returning home from a short vacation in Minorca. I had the carrier, flight number etc. but entering them was not simple. It did not recognise Thomson Airways or the depature airport Mahon or the arrival airport Gatwick and I needed to go to another page of the site to find that the carrier was known as TOM, Mahon was MAH and Gatwick was LGW.

As soon as I put these, in the carrier and airports were accepted.

When the departure information came up, I was repeatedly told that “ this flight has not yet departed ” but on another page it gave me successive “progress” messages and at the scheduled time, “aircraft has landed”. On the depature panel it had still “ not yet departed ”!!

This site is “ www.flightstats.com/flightTracker/trackFlight.do ”

I believe that it works better with flights between major airports and countries.



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