Notes on meeting 12/04/2017

We had an excellent turnout for our second meeting at the **Scout Centre in Stowmarket** on 12th April; 18 attendees and no apologies.

Everybody managed to get on line with their various devices. Due to the excessive light, some members had difficulty viewing the projection during the presentation. Whilst the windows have excellent blinds, the roof lights are not covered. I've had a word with Martyn Bonner and he has agreed to try to get some shading for the next meeting.

Matters Arising from last meeting:

1) We reviewed the 'short URL' item discussed last time.

- There are several methods for creating short URLs. Here's a list of some of the most popular https://www.lifewire.com/shortening-long-links-3486603
- If you receive a shortened URL from an unknown source it's wise to check it out first. If you paste it into the search box here, https://unshorten.it/ , it will show the original URL and how trustworthy it is. Try it with this one http://tinyurl.com/kvpm9dn . There was another site listed in last month's presentation, qv., but that one doesn't rank the trustworthiness.

2) Regarding the February topic, 'An interactive session on Google Drive and Google Docs'

- A couple of our members use Google docs regularly, but the majority only occasionally or not at all.
- Most of the functions were listed in the last email (qv)
- How do Google Office functions compare to the likes of 'Libre Office'?
  - Libre Office is an open source, free, suite of programmes fully compatible with all the MS Office programmes
  - If you're happy using it then there's no strong reason to change to Google Docs etc.

3) Last month's topic, 'Computer and General Security Update' – April 2017

- Hopefully you received the PDF version of the presentation sent 12/04 which details the large range of issues we covered that day.
- To remind you, it's also available on our web site at https://tinyurl.com/STARU3A

Agony Corner:

1) 'I've just logged on (to my lap top) but I can't type anything into the Google search box'.

- Whilst the initial suggestion was that a recent Windows 10 update may have caused the fault, further investigation showed that the keyboard was totally unresponsive and now probably needs a technical repair.

2) 'Windows 10 has killed my lap top (again!). It won't accept my password and doesn't recognise the # sign. I'm considering reverting to Windows 7!'

- The key board seems to be locked onto the American version. If this is a repeated fault with Widows updates it may be that there are some corrupted system files.
- There are options to refresh or restore Windows 10. This Microsoft page gives some guidance https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/software-download/windows10startfresh
- Whichever method is used it's always wise to back – up any valuable documents and pictures before you start.

3) 'Regarding ransom ware and the necessity of good back-ups as discussed at the last meeting, I read that even backing up to cloud storage may not be safe since the synchronisation can facilitate the encryption of these file also. What is the better option, cloud storage or a local NAS (Network Attached Storage)?'

- All this is a major topic in itself, and yes, *synced* files in the cloud can be compromised as well as the source deskbound ones but there are paid for cloud *back-up* services which are encrypted but not synced and hence safe from ransom ware, eg Mozy, http://mozy.co.uk/product/mozy/personal.
- There is some safeguard in the fact that some syncing cloud services like Dropbox keep 'previous' versions of files for a while and these could be unaffected and recovered intact.
- NAS drives are actually basic computers often with two or more storage drives. Whilst large versions are mainly used by businesses, a desktop NAS is designed for use, say, by a small business, or branch office of a large business or a home office. At home a desktop NAS device enables household members using networked computers to share a storage system and files. NAS storage can also be considered as a type of local 'cloud' back-up. See attached PDF copy of a recent Computer Active article on the subject (in email to members).
- In truth, there's probably no 'best' answer to the question. The main way to protect your precious documents and photos is to use several different methods and most, if not all, should be completely 'off line' other than when the back-up needs to be connected to the original source.
- Are Apple devices also susceptible to ransom ware and the like? In the past unlikely, nowadays, yes.

4) 'Can I download/record streamed video from Amazon Fire Stick?'

- In theory, no. In fact the whole point of streaming is that you can pick up where you left off.......but what if I want to save something to view when I'm off line?...
- The protocols built into streaming services means that no propriety video download programmes (such as 4K Video downloader, below) will enable download/save....
- It is possible, however, to use screen capture software as the movie or whatever is playing on your PC. I use a programme called Movavi Screen Capture https://www.movavi.com/screen-capture/ . For illustrative purposes I have a short snippet of the original Westworld film as capture from Amazon Prime video which I can show at the next meeting. Dave Potter recommends 'Any Video Recorder' http://www.any-video-recorder.com/ which works in the same way.
- It's important to remember that screen captured video streams have to be played all the way though in real time to record whereas a video downloader like 4K below saves the file in a fraction of the time.

- In Issue 486 of Computer Active, 12th October 2016 there's a comprehensive article entitled 'Record and keep TV, music, software and ebooks – without paying a penny' – well worth searching out. A real find in this is the free 4K Video Downloader which easily downloads and saves YouTube videos free of adverts, www.snipca.com/21942 . I tried it and found it easy to use with plenty of options regarding the saved video output. I will use a copied YouTube video in next month's 'Smart Home' session.

5) 'What can you tell us about Amazon Prime?

- It may seem obvious but you do not have to have a Prime subscription to buy products from Amazon
- An Amazon Prime subscription costs £79.00 per year and includes free 24 hour delivery on many items as well as access to several other Amazon services including Amazon Prime Video. Here is a comprehensive Amazon explanation page https://tinyurl.com/l2usbt6
- The service can be trialled for one month for free and if you cancel before the end of the month you won't be charged.
- A cross section of views from the members showed a fairly even split between those who used it heavily and those who didn't use it at all.
- If you've got a decent internet speed, the Amazon Video films and TV series are very good value and often provide a complementary selection to those on Netflix.

Next Meeting 10th May:

Topic for the Day: Is yours a **'Smart Home'?** These days we are bombarded with offers to invest in technology which allegedly will transform or lives.
Have you made the leap yet or are you too apprehensive to try – or indeed, do you think 'No, that's not for me'?

Just prior to the last meeting I read a newspaper insert promoting Maplin's range of smart technology gadgets and coincidentally the BBC Click programme broadcast that day investigated *'the rise of the robot butler, looked at whether voice-controlled personal assistants live up to the hype and at the potential dangers of living in a world where all electronics are controlled by voice.'*

We discussed this at the meeting and agreed that there is a topic of interest for us in the concept - **so we'll try something different this time**. I've provided everyone with a copy of the Maplin sales leaflet (PDF attached to original email for members) and a link to a short version of the BBC Click programme 'Do androids dream of chocolate cake' https://tinyurl.com/ky574j7 on BBC iPlayer (it's only 15 minutes).

This gives you plenty of **time to study the information** before the meeting and then we can hopefully have an informed discussion on what you've learnt rather than getting it for the first time at the meeting.