

Notes on Meeting 10/05/2017

After the excellent attendance in April, there were just 8 of us for the meeting on 10th May, with 9 apologies.

Matters Arising from last meeting:

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

- Mentioned last time were Movavi Screen Capture <https://www.movavi.com/screen-capture/> and 'Any Video Recorder' <http://www.any-video-recorder.com/> which works in the same way. For illustrative purposes I showed a short snippet of the original Westworld film as captured from Amazon Prime video.
- Mentioned also was the free 4K Video Downloader which easily downloads and saves YouTube videos free of adverts, www.snipca.com/21942 and one of the videos shown in today's session was saved in this way.
- Some additional information on saving streamed content is that it's now possible to download and save some BBC iPlayer programmes. Most are time limited to 30 days from the original showing but some documentary series (like 'Click') will remain active almost indefinitely. It's necessary to download the iPlayer app and I demonstrated the procedure on screen.
- Also, Netflix have recently announced that some of their content is now downloadable for viewing off-line.
- Following the correct procedure it's also possible to download and save some Amazon Prime content, all the details here <https://tinyurl.com/mg6m3yp>

Agony Corner:

1) 'Windows 10 Creators' Update. Dave Potter related his experiences so far...

- Out of interest, downloaded the update direct from Microsoft as soon as it became available.
- The experience was far from satisfactory; sites like eBay wouldn't open correctly, system froze on Google and whilst the browsers MS Edge and Opera seemed OK, Chrome would not work.
- Had to resort to rolling back to the previous Windows version in order to run these things correctly.
- With a new hard drive in the PC, tried again with a 'clean' install and everything now seems OK, and in fact seems very little different to the previous version (at least for the average user).
- John Haseltine reported that the Creators Update had appeared on his machine unasked. The installation was quick and uneventful and, again, he sees very little difference.
- Dave also mentioned Spybot-Antibeacon which will, at a stroke, disable all the privacy intrusions imposed by Windows 10.....<https://tinyurl.com/nzjh8aa>

2) The above developed into a discussion about VPNs (Virtual Private Network) and back-ups, as mentioned at the last meeting.

- Cyber Ghost is a well known example, https://www.cyberghostvpn.com/en_us and the 'Opera' browser has a built in VPN.
- I've recently started using CryptSync, free at <http://stefanstools.sourceforge.net/CryptSync.html> and 'Second Copy' was also recommended by David Plester, <http://www.secondcopy.com/products.html>, free trial but \$29.95 to purchase (further checks show that encryption of the backed up files is optional in this programme).

2) 'Recently, my Hudl tablet went into safe mode and restricted most of my normal activities. After a while it started to work OK?'

- You have inadvertently *activated* Safe Mode and at a later date, again inadvertently, *switched it off*.
- Safe Mode is a state that all Android devices can enter which disables all downloaded apps and blocks access to online browsing. You can use this to remove Apps which may be causing a problem.
- The full procedure for switching Safe Mode on and off is on the Tesco Tech help page for Hudl 1 at <https://tinyurl.com/lqfaxi4>

3) Office 2016 from eBay for £4.99!

- John Hasletine described how he recently obtained – legally – a copy of the Full Office Suite for a knock down price.
- These programmes have, allegedly, been associated with PCs that have now been scrapped. Contact John for further details.

4) 'One of the lights on my router continuously flickers, even when the PC is off. Am I being hacked?'

- Highly unlikely, because this is completely normal
- The unusually busy activity light when your PC is off is probably due to neighbouring networks, smartphones and a myriad of other wireless devices polling for wireless connections and vacant channels. It flashes more because the channel previously used by the PC is now showing as available.

5) 'Following a Widows update, the relationship between the 'My Photos folder and the Windows Photos Library became disconnected. Not in itself a problem because I don't normally use the Library, but for some reason my backups failed to sync the Photos Folders'.

- I changed my regular back up programme from Karen's Replicator to Cryptsync (see 2 above) and whilst the anomaly in folder names is still there, I did manage to create an effective backup.
- Starting from scratch, it took about 14 hours to copy over the whole My Documents folder but thereafter it's extremely fast as only new or changed files are processed.
- This is achieved by having the power supply to the USB hard drive energised for just a short time each day to allow the back-up.

6) 'Again possibly following a Windows update, the task bar on the desktop froze and became unresponsive'.

- Was easily corrected by opening Task Manager (Ctrl+Alt+Del), Processes, Windows Processes, Windows Explore, Restart. This was a quick fix, but the problem reoccurred frequently.
- Research on Google suggested that the Windows log file may show a corrupted programme. It did. Fortunately it was a little used programme so I uninstalled it.
- The problem went away for a while, then started again! This time no faulty file showed.
- Further research suggested that a feature of Windows 10, the 'Recently Used' files list may be causing the problem. I deactivated that and the problem has now gone away.
- Latest! There is still a problem with Explorer. Occasionally, all the icons on the desktop get a black box around and sometimes the desk top background picture is totally replaced by black.
- I can reset with the Task Manager as above. I've now given up trying to find a permanent solution!

7) 'For ease of viewing I like to sync the photos on my Windows 7 PC to my iPad. Of late, this process does not work correctly. All the pictures on my PC are in a carefully constructed tree of folders with several subdivisions as they go down. Now, on syncing, just the top level folder shows and all the remaining pictures are stripped out of their folders and all jumbled up together?'

- We were not able to resolve this at the meeting although the fateful words 'up-date' were mentioned.
- Some research in Goggle suggests that this is a common problem. I discovered this forum where it's discussed at length and with some bitterness to Apple, but unfortunately there doesn't appear to be a clear cut way, other than starting all over again, to resolving this issue <https://discussions.apple.com/thread/7445242?start=0&tstart=0>.
- Or you could try Flickr!

8) Do you need to rename a lot of files, usually photos, at the same time?

- Often when pictures are transferred from your camera to PC, they are identified by obscure names like 105-0504.jpg, IMG-0125.jpg or P1020581.jpg so that whilst the meta data in the file carries the exposure date the name itself is meaningless.
- Whilst Photo viewing programmes like IrfanView and Faststone Image Viewer have tools for renaming, the job can easily be done directly in Windows file Explorer.
- Say for e.g. you wish to identify a group of picture, say 50, taken on a U3A outing in August 2017. Make sure that they are in the order you wish and grouped together then click on the first, hold shift and then click on the last. This selects all the pictures.
- With the arrow over the first picture in the selection, right click then 'Rename'. The file name will then be editable. Select the first part, IMG-0125 (or whatever) but be sure NOT to include the full stop or jpg. Then type 2017-08 U3A Outing, then Enter.
- Your files will then be listed 2017-08 U3A Outing (1).jpg up to 2017-08 U3A Outing (50).jpg

Wannacry ransomware attack on the NHS:

I've had one or two enquiries about this incident and what, if anything we can do to protect ourselves. What it is:-

- This worldwide ransomware attack, called Wanna Decrypt, also known as WannaCry, encrypts files on the machine, effectively locking them.
- A message appears on screen with a ransom demand, countdown timer and Bitcoin wallet to pay the anonymous virtual payment into.
- People were asked to pay ransoms of \$300 (£230) or more to regain access to their computers.
- While at least 47 NHS health trusts across England were affected, no home computers have been known to be affected.
- The initial presumption was that it was XP systems affected but it transpires that Windows 7 PCs may also be involved.

How can I protect myself:-

- We looked at ransomware in detail at our Sept 2016 meeting and again as part of our Computer Security session in April this year (qv).
- Always make sure that your Windows system is set to accept automatic updates. This attack apparently targeted a vulnerability in un-updated Windows systems.
- Never click on links or downloads in unexpected emails (although Wannacry itself does not require anyone to do this to be infected).
- Make sure your antivirus software is up-to-date and regularly use additional tools like Malware Bytes, ADW Cleaner and the Adware Removal Tool.
- Always have at least two back up copies of your documents and photos on media *not permanently attached* to your PC. Programmes can be reinstalled but encrypted documents may be lost forever.
- If you are working on your machine any an attack starts, switch off the power immediately to reduce the chances of proliferation throughout your network.

- Finally, don't pay up. There's no guarantee you'd get the result you want and probably you would also finish up on a 'suckers list' for future attacks.
- Co-incidentally, the latest Computer Active dropped through the letterbox today and their feature article is on this very subject. For the benefit of those who don't get the magazine I've scanned and made a PDF for your attention – attached to original email.

We'll discuss this further at the next meeting.

Topic for the Day: Is yours a '**Smart Home**'? These days we are bombarded with offers to invest in technology which allegedly will transform our 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'?

On this occasion I had circulated all the session content prior to the meeting (in the last email) in the hope that by now everyone would have formed an opinion so we could have an informed discussion rather than seeing the content for the first time today. *Unfortunately, only one of those present had done so*, so it was necessary to go through everything from the beginning.

First we watched the BBC Click programme, 'Do androids dream of chocolate cake' at <https://tinyurl.com/ky574j7> then went through the Maplin promotional leaflet, 'Home Smart Home'. Here is the Maplin web page equivalent to that leaflet, <https://tinyurl.com/y7hmqadx>

In the event, we had quite a lively discussion and in general our rather sceptical audience felt that we could do without most of the devices on offer. A few observations.....

- The remote 'Nest' control of home heating was considered to be largely unnecessary as we were quite happy that the normal domestic heating controls met our needs. However, one member did say he would like to be able to control his heating remotely as he was quite often away from home for variable periods of time.
- Absolutely no one was interested in their fridge contents doing their own online ordering when they needed replacing.
- We were not interested in talking to a device to switch our lights off, let alone change their colour.
- One item was identified as potentially useful, the Ring Video Door Bell. This allows you to answer your front door from anywhere, at any time. Ring's motion detector notices when someone is on your property and notifies you on the smartphone app. You can use camera to watch live stream footage and see who it is. The built-in microphone and speaker lets you communicate with whoever is at your front door via your smartphone.
- We watched a promotional video for the Amazon Echo Dot, 'Alexa'. Whilst initially doubtful of its usefulness it was conceded that it could be a helpful device for, say, those living alone, working from home or indeed providing company and help for someone confined to the house for health reasons. Make up your own mind<https://tinyurl.com/y7hmqadx> !

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 14th June, 2.00 pm at the Scout Centre.

A suggestion was made.... '**How I use my computer to save/make money**'. This looks like a good opportunity for everyone to have their say. I look forward to your particular ideas!

Advance notice. We will have this meeting in June then the next on 12th July, then we'll take a summer break in August.