Review of Meeting 20/12/2017

For our special 'bring a plate', pre-Christmas party there were 9 present with 4 apologies.

We had a good selection of food and everyone was certainly already in the Christmas party spirit!

I didn't realise that we had covered so much ground at the meeting until I sat down to prepare this email!

Since the last meeting (13/09/2017) ....

- There had been a few accesses to the **Discussion/Forum** page, mainly from the regular users, and we looked over a few of the entries.
- I've removed the 'subscription' offer of notifications as these did not seem to be working. Since every post has to come to me anyway for approval, I've now created a notification email of our own which is sent when anything changes. Everyone was happy to continue to receive this.
- The web site is run on Wordpress.com which has been free to us since it was started in 2008. A couple of years ago, Wordpress made an agreement with Google that it would allow 'acceptable' none intrusive advertising as a way of funding the free option.
    - o As I always access as a Wordpress site 'owner' I do not normally see these, but one of our members raised the issue with me and he was finding it irritating.
    - o This was discussed around the table and the consensus was that, as we get the site for free, it was a small and acceptable price to pay..
    - o It would be possible to remove the ads at a cost of £36.00 per year. As this affects the whole site and not just our pages, I'll raise the issue with the Committee at the January meeting to see whether they think it's worth funding this.
- Some of the replies to questions had been posted as new comments rather than as specific replies. This make it difficult to follow a thread....... whilst there is a description of what to do, it can easily go wrong. Exactly as it shows on the page....
    - o **Comments** | Add your own →. This is at the top of the list and is for new questions or comments only.
    - o **Reply** is at the end of each question and this is where to click to make your reply and several replies make the thread.
- On the main C&T page I've colour highlighted the web sites, like gcflearnfree, where you can look for immediate help.
- Regarding U3A Computer group forums in general, I've had a look around and found just one or two.
    - o A fairly local one to us us South Woodham Ferres in Essex. This is a large U3A and a series of fully fledged forums, including a Computer Group one, were set up in 2011
    - o You can peruse the results here ... http://swf-u3a.org.uk/BB/viewforum.php?f=1
    - o What is particularly interesting is that 99% of both questions and answers on any of the subjects are posted by the same person, the moderator who set the whole thing up, jgw321 as the one who poses the subject or asks the question and JoGo as a participant who replies!
    - o Perhaps this should comfort/encourage us in that we, as a much smaller group, don't seem to have a lot of people using the Q&A page. (Please see below for plan of action arising from this.)
    - o In the Autumn Newsletter, an invitation was given to all Stowmarket U3A members that, should they want any help or advice, then they could contact me for the password. To date, there's not been a single response.
- On a similar topic, I've been contacted by someone from Cambridge U3A, of all places, wanting to know how to set up a successful Computer Group. In spite of the great wealth of technical knowledge in that U3A, general help on computer matters is given on an ad hoc basis by a group of ladies in the office.

Agony Corner:-

- "I have a message to say my Premium trial (of Malware Bytes) expires in 5 days. It says upgrade to avoid losing real time protection. Either I "Upgrade now" or "Activate license". Do I just click on upgrade? Will it still be free?"

- - Just ignore it! The messages are just there to scare you into buying the premium version. The free version will continue to work as normal.
- "Your e mail sent last evening will not download on my iPad.   As it indicates there is an attachment, is that where my problem might lie?"
  - The email did not have an attachment but did include a picture in the body. A search on Google suggests that it's a common problem and that there seems to be as many ways to solve it as there are reasons why it happens. Here's just one:-
  - *Your iPad does not download the attached emails automatically. At the bottom of the email there will be a "Download Full Message" button. Once you click that the attached pictures will appear. When you then forward the email, you will be given the option to include or not include the downloaded attachments.*
  - Either way, the email should open OK on your lap top.
- "I had a problem with my Tesco Hudl 2 tablet (now obsolete). A few weeks ago it wouldn't start even though the battery was fully charged. It would just give a flash of light and then – a blank screen"......
  - I enquired at the phone desk in Tesco. It was suggested that I try pressing the start button and volume button together – I did this and it worked!
  - On my next visit to Tesco I asked 'why/how'? I was told that this is a reboot trick which is common to all Android phones and tablets. (DP - and to iPhones as well).

Items of interest..... I'd had one or two PC related incidents since the last meeting that I thought may be worth passing on

- I had a Logitech blue tooth cordless keyboard and mouse, but increasingly the keyboard became slow to react or sometimes would not respond at all. As I'd had it for sometime I thought it was time to replace it.....
  - I order a new set and disposed of the old one – but it became increasingly obvious that the new set up was as bad, if not worse than the old, as the mouse was misbehaving as well.
  - As usual, I scoured the web for reasons and a solution. It seems to be a common problem with a plethora of 'solutions' – I tried many but nothing worked.
  - One standard piece of advice was that the blue tooth transmitter should always be in one of the main USB slots on the PC and not on a hub. In spite of this and as a last resort I decided to plug the transmitter into one of the USB sockets on my monitor...........and everything has worked perfectly since!!
  - So I've bought a new keyboard needlessly. Further research suggests that there can be interference with any USB 3 slots, whether in use or not, on the machine. If this is the case then moving away from the PC seems a sensible thing to do.
    - This prompted two more related keyboard problems experienced by members......
      - After a Windows update the wireless keyboard stopped working. Same with a replacement key board. Windows refused to update the driver and would not restore to a previous state. It eventually turned out to be due to a corrupted registry entry which needed expert knowledge to sort.
      - It was also pointed out that mobile and digital house phones can also interfere with wireless keyboards if too close.
- It had not been offered but I decided to install the Windows Fall update (1709) on the lap top. I found it on available updates and clicked through....
  - Would not download/install for hours and hours, hanging at 60%.
  - Checked web – it's a common problem and there's all sorts of advice, most included resetting/reinstalling Windows. Did not want to do this.
  - On the Windows update page (in Control Panel) clicked 'Trouble Shooter'. This found and fixed several registry problems.
  - Windows Fall update then installed, no problem, in about an hour.
    - We then went on to look at some of the new things in 1709. The new Photo app is quite impressive in the range of things it can do.
    - DP also warned about 'Cortana'. If you have a microphone attached to your machine and Cortana active, it can transmit anything you say back to source. To avoid this disable Cortana in settings and/or switch your microphone off when not in use.
- I have an external hard drive for daily data backups and the power supply is timed to bring it on for just 1 hour per day. I needed to be able to start then stop the backup programme, CryptSync within this time.

- o I discovered the Windows Task Scheduler which allows you to do just this.
- o Then created two batch files in Notepad, one to start and the other to stop Cryptsync, the prepared two items in Task Scheduler to do this.
- o Explaining how to do this is too detailed for this email, but coincidentally there's a very interesting article about Task Scheduler in the recent Computer Active, Issue 519, page 50. It doesn't mention batch files but can find out about these by a simple search on Google.
- We had a quick check and found out that only two members present did not read Computer Active on a regular basis. Those who do were unanimous in that it is an invaluable tool to keep up with all things PC – and more.

The way forward....

We had a detailed discussion on how we should progress with the group. All were agreed that we didn't want to fold all together but we needed reorganised how we go about things. We finally decided that we should keep the forum/discussion page going and supplement this with, say, a meeting every 3 months. These meetings would be very much like todays with a general catch up and not necessarily a topic for the day (unless a member volunteered with a particular pet subject). We should also encourage other U3A members to take advantage of any help we can collectively give.

At this point, Ann made a suggestion that, perhaps, we should make the next meeting an open to any U3A member. We could invite them to come along for help with their PC/phone/tablet or laptop and give advice on an individual basis – and this was agreed.

We did plan for Wednesday 14th March - I sent an email to Martyn Bonner to book the room on that day and also asked if it would be OK if we overflowed into to main hall if necessary (in the past he'd said that this was OK). He replied that they now had a booking for the main hall and after a further exchange of emails it transpires that the hall is now regularly booked for *every* afternoon except Friday.

I think that this would be a problem for us at any time, not just for an 'open day - help and advice' meeting. With the main hall in use the car parking would be more difficult, if not impossible, but more importantly I doubt if we could have a comfortable meeting in the small hall whilst an inevitably noisy event was going on next door.

I've checked with a few of our key members and confirmed that they are available on the following Friday afternoon, so the booking is now:-

Friday 16th March, Scout Centre main hall, 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm. Room cost £27.90.

I'll mention this in the Newsletter and announce it at today's meeting. I'll point out that there may be a small charge to go towards the room hire cost.

Please note, Martyn has told me that the previous hall booking does not finish until 1.30 pm so to avoid car parking problems we shouldn't arrive too early.

Hope you can make it

Regards

Peter