Notes on meeting, 14/12/2018

There were just 8 of us at our pre-Christmas get-together, with 13 apologies.

Whilst few in number we had a fun meeting, boosted by our 'Bring a Plate' goodies.

We reviewed the notes from the previous meeting on 21st September (previously distributed) spending some time particularly on the Microsoft Office alternative programmes.

Agony Corner:

There were no new queries, but Harold reported on his very recent experience with his **new mobile (smart) phone**. Like many of us he wants this for emergency use but discovered recently that it's far from intuitive.
"I received a call and (logically) pressed the phone icon, but nothing happened and I lost the caller. I did some research and found that I should press and drag the button to the right to accept or press and drag to to the left to decline. The point is that nobody makes you aware of this on purchase of the phone!"
This is not an unusual experience as, co-incidentally, this exact question and answer appears in the latest (Issue 545) of Computer Active (page 65).

This led on to a long discussion about this problem and smart phones in general. I've since done some research on Google and find that there are numerous ways to answer a call depending on the make, model number and, in the case of android phones, the Android version number – so it appears that there is no single answer. Dave P suggested that you should Google search for the user guide, e.g. 'Huawie P20' where you should find all the answers. The exact link should of course be in the Quick Start guide supplied with most new phones.

It seems that several around the table were unfamiliar with many of the functions of a smart phone. We had a somewhat hilarious example of exchanging text messages using the voice type function which proved that you need to speak slowly and clearly to avoid embarrassing translations of the voice to text message!

The forgoing became part of the discussion regarding the future of the Group (see below)

Tools you may not be aware of, we discussed.....

Windows 10 Photos: This is much improved over recent Windows 10 updates, and replicates a lot of the features of Picasa 3 (now un supported by Google and replaced by Google Photos)

- The initial screen opens with 'Collections' of all the pictures on your PC with a timeline on the RHS.
- The next menu option is 'Albums' where Windows has created some it thinks you may like – you can ignore, of delete or save as you wish. You can also create your own Albums when Windows will take you through the process.
- Then comes 'Videos'. This picks up on ones from your video library but also creates short slide shows from you pictures with a particular theme. A very interesting one for me recently had been entitled 'Sunglasses' – and it is exactly that – a collection of pictures where some or all of the subjects are wearing sunglasses. These video slide shows can be edited, saved or rejected as you wish.
- Next is 'People'. Like Picasa the app can detect people's faces but doesn't need them to be named (then be tagged of course). For example, I find that I have 39 photos of Harold on my machine, 28 of Irene, 27 of Joyce, 26 of Jean, 17 of Philip and 3 of Rick!

- Finally, is 'Folders'. This automatically selects the 'My Pictures' folder on the PC but you can add any other folders you wish.

DuckDuckGo: One member wished to know more about it.

- This is an alternative search engine to Google search, not a browser in itself.
- It can be added as an extension to Chrome or as (I believe) a stand alone
- The claims are that...
  - It Blocks advertising trackers, keeps search history private and does not use personal data.
  - Dave said he had been using it for some time (alongside the Opera browser) and was very happy with it. He said that an important feature was that it reported search results in order of relevance, not by how much web sites had paid Google for prominence.
- After the meeting, I considered adding DuckDuckGo as a Chrome extension, but hesitated when I discovered from reviews that once it is installed, it makes itself the default search engine which cannot be toggled with Chrome and is very difficult to remove. As I use the Chrome bowser exclusively, I decided not to bother.
- Have a look for you self at https://duckduckgo.com/about

The Group's future:

Prompted by the small number attending this and previous meetings, together with the fact that not a single query has been raised on the web site forum since June of last year, we had a discussion (again!) about the future of the group.

We discussed how people's needs have changed over the years...

- The group has be active in one form or another since Stowmarket U3A started in the early '90s
- It was a time when a few people had computers and those who did were happy to talk and share their experiences with others.
- I joined in 2007 and at that time the group was led by Wendy Morgan and hosted by Harold at the Woodfield Bowls Club. On most occasions one of the members would give a talk on a topic of their choosing, often 'Word', 'Excel' and even the new experience of 'Googling'! Often, photography related topics such as slide show creation, video manipulation Picasa and even PhotoShop were introduced. For many years we had guest members from Blackbourne and Hadleigh U3As
- As time went on, more members got their own computers and were interested to learn more, particularly in relation to the internet – but there was no WiFi available at the Bowls Club.
- We were fortunate in late 2008 to obtain the free use of the Computer Suite at Stowupland High School – which opened a whole new era for us. We still continued with the pattern of members' talks but with the added advantage of internet access (albeit with some restrictions).
- I took over as Convenor in 2010 and developed the group along the lines of Agony Corner then a talk on a particular topic (details of all these, from then until now, can be found on our web site). I note that on one occasion in 2013 we had 22 attendees!
- Things went quite well at the school but eventually due to the need to frequently cancel because of holidays, exams and rebuilding works we decide to move. In mid 2015 we moved to Bacton Village Hall but whilst the facilities were good and there was theoretically unrestricted access to the internet, it was very unreliable (on more than one occasion John H helped out with his mobile MiFI). After being let down several times, we decided to move again. After much searching in early 2017 we finished up at the refurbished Scout Centre in Stowmarket. This has the advantage of free parking and an excellent WiFi.
- In spite of this, by the end of 2017 attendances were falling and fewer members were willing or able to prepare a talk. A working party was set up to devise an on line forum – but after an initial

surge very little interest has been shown, initiatives to encourage beginners to join were launched – even to the extent in offering one to one sessions to other members of the U3A.

- Toward the end of that year and to reflect the increasing use of tablets, 'smart' phones, 'smart' TVs and 'smart' homes in general we decided to change our name to the 'Computing & Technology' group. However, my own case-load of newsletter, web site and the need to prepare a topic each month for C&T, then the follow up email was becoming too much, so I offered to stand down so that someone could take my place . Unfortunately, no one was able to take over so we decided that rather than wind down the group completely, we would, in 2018, have just quarterly meetings. This included, mid-year, an open session (well publicised) for any U3A members to come along with their queries and problems – in the event we only had 2 visitors!
- In discussion, it seems that far from members needing help with their PCs (which was the historical purpose of the group), smart phones and tablets are taking over (witness Agony Corner above. The group seems to be redundant as, to all intents and purposes, all anyone needs is a subscription to Computer Active, a web site such as 'gcflearn free', https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/ and of course Google!

We had more or less decide to pull the plug completely, but eventually decided to give the group one more chance.

Accordingly, I've booked the **Scout Centre for Friday 15th March, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm.** There will be no specific subject but it will take the form of a **workshop** for everyone to join in with both their own problems and help others with theirs. We will then decide what happens thereon.