Notes on Meeting, 13/12/2019

We had 12 members at our pre Christmas meeting, with 8 apologies.

Since the last meeting, I've received 2 member resignations in quick succession – the first because the content was 'too basic', the second because everything is 'too advanced', perhaps suggesting we must have just about the right balance!

Thanks to everyone for bringing along a party plate of seasonal goodies, getting our celebrations off to a good start.

Last meeting: I supplied a lot of attachments with the notes on the 13/09 meeting and included several links to other items of interest. If yours has gone astray the full details can be found on the web site at https://u3astowmarket.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/2019-09-13-email-report.pdf (with links to the aforementioned attachments).

We did a quick review but there were no matters arising.

Online Forum: There have been no queries posted since the last meeting (calling into question its usefulness?)

New items and queries:

1) In response to my request for new things to do on your phone or tablet, Ann showed us the 'Tile' Bluetooth tracking device which can be attached to keys, bags and the like or even cats, say. Using an app on Android or iPhone 'lost' items can be found and also, in reverse, the phone can be located from a tile. The new 2020 version with replaceable battery will be available on Amazon in January for £14.99 - https://tinyurl.com/wfkwgyq

2) A couple of years ago, we had a session discussion on the 'smart home' and associated gadgets. At that time there was very little enthusiasm amongst members for such items as the Amazon Echo with 'Alexa' and the Google Home speaker. These devices have since become very popular, so I asked if any of our group had decided to give them a try and what they thought of these devices.

- We have two enthusiastic users of Amazon Echo devices (with Alexa) but nobody yet is using a Google Home device (Hi Google). Here's a web site comparison - https://www.techradar.com/uk/news/amazon-echo-vs-google-home (if you can put up with the adverts!)
- From the Amazon blurb, 'Alexa is a cloud-based voice service, and using Alexa is as simple as asking a question. Just ask to play music, make calls, set alarms and timers, ask questions, check your calendar, weather, traffic, sports scores, manage to-do lists, control smart home devices and more....' and the same of course applies to Google Home.
- We have one regular user of 'Siri' on an iPhone, but there's an ever present fear of on line data (cloud) storage across all these devices.

3) A reminder about updating Windows 10. The latest version, an update to v 1909, is quite innocuous.

- It's important to regularly check – don't assume everything will happen automatically. Often you have to force an update on a minor matter before a more major one will download and install.
- Don't assume that all will be OK by just closing your lap top lid. It's wise to force a 'restart'to get things moving – as one member found out at the meeting.
- It's been reported that W10 won't update to the latest version if you have old versions of AVG or Avast antivirus installed as they're not considered safe.
- Consensus around the table was that the current 'Windows Defender' (installed with Win 10) being free, is a more than adequate alternative to paid for alternatives – particularly when supported by weekly, say, checks with the Malware Bytes anti-malware programme.

4) New local learning resources

- **Age UK** are promoting 10 week courses in 'tablet skills' in Stowmarket, Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. The donation of £25.00 includes the lessons and provision of a Kindle Fire 7 tablet. One of our members has already completed this course and found it 'brilliant'! Full details in the attached PDF (*to original email*).
- **Stowmarket Library:** Tablet and smartphone help – drop in with your device for help and advice from West Suffolk Sight's tech team, first Tuesday of the month, 2 pm-5 pm. Internet training sessions for beginners: book in advance, 01449 700 549

- **At home:** BT 'Skills for Tomorrow'. This is new to me but looks like an ideal way to learn IT/computer based skills at home. Here's the link to get started, https://www.bt.com/skillsfortomorrow/daily-life/mastering-the-basics.html . I'd love to hear if anyone tries it out and how worthwhile it is.

5) New Stowmarket U3A logo

- We looked at our U3A web site in with the redesigned header logo reflecting the decision to change our name from S.T.A.R (Stowmarket & District U3A) to 'Stowmarket U3A'.
- This lead on to a discussion about the difficulties of using use of non standard fonts, in this case 'HandelGotDLig' (an official U3A font). Word documents viewed on a machine that does not have it will present Word's best guess and give garbled results. There are ways around this, too detailed to report here.
- Looking around the site, we amused ourselves by looking at some old newsletters, e.g. 2007 when Harold was Chairman and Philip the Secretary.
- I try and keep the site as accurate and up to date as possible but if anyone one finds any errors or omissions, I won't be offended if you let me know!

6) Further tips and resources to explore

Sharing and controlling other computers: In the past we have looked at sharing software such as 'Join Me' and 'Team viewer'. These programmes allow one person to give access to another to control their computer (say to sort out a problem) or for the reverse. A recently discovered, easy to use, method is Google Remote Desktop.

- This can be installed easily and adds a Chrome extension for quick access. You can find all the details here https://tinyurl.com/tz3evxn
  - See screen shot attached for options (*original email*), Remote Access and Remote Support.
  - Dave checked and found that Google Remote Desktop can be installed on another browser, specifically the 'Brave browser' - so presumably others as well.
  - This topic raised the question – What exactly are Chrome extensions? Answer – basically, add-ons to make thinks easier and/or quicker. We looked at a few installed on the lap top. A full explanation can be found here https://tinyurl.com/ud87xc8 , Google Chrome Extensions, what they are, how to install and what to watch out for.
- Make a Google Account Without Gmail. We recently had a query on this topic – here is some more information to help out https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Google-Account-Without-Gmail
- Google Location History: We looked at how Google can track you (your Android phone, laptop or tablet) using Location History. We talked about the pros and cons – but Location History is turned off by default for your Google Account and can only be turned on if you opt in. Read the details here https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/3118687?hl=en

Next Meeting

I've booked the next meeting at the **Scout Centre for Friday March 13th, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm.** I will send out a reminder closer to the time. In the meanwhile, don't forget that you can raise any query on the forum page to seek advice from all members, https://u3astowmarket.wordpress.com/groups/computing-technology-discussion-page/