In his recent talk Chris spent some time stressing the need to keep a home network secure.

He warned that the device in your home that connects to the Internet is your 'router', NOT your computer. If anyone can connect to your router they can download material in your name and without your knowing – until the law knocks on your door!

As part of the process of setting up a home network it is essential to ensure that the network is protected from being hi-jacked by someone who would like to take advantage of a free ride and be anonymous whilst doing so.

It is illegal to use someone's network without permission so no-one will ever take advantage of yours, will they? Of course not! So you will be happy to take responsibility for any illegal material downloaded through your router. (As far as the rest of the world is concerned it must have been you.)

These days, routers are usually supplied with a secure 'key' that must be used in order to set it up and to access it. If it doesn't, then be sure to create one.

The router picks up an IP (Internet Protocol) identity number from the internet and allocates identity numbers to all the devices on your home network.

XP users might already have a home network (default name Workgroup). A new Windows 7 network will have a default name of "Homegroup" that is more appropriate.

The home gadget that attaches directly to the internet is called a modem that, on the home side, also connects to a router. BT for instance combines both items into their home "hub". If a wireless facility is included (as in the BT home hub) the whole thing is called a wireless router.

Confusingly it is sometimes referred to as an AP (Access Point). This seems reasonable as it is the point of access to the internet that includes a wireless facility.

However, the term is more accurately used to identify any stand alone wireless transmitter that 'talks' to a computer on a network.

The system is not confused because it has the unique (IP) identity number and a whole load of ancillary information about the device. As always it is the human element that introduces the fuzziness to the naming!

Chris went on to illustrate what is involved in setting up a network and how the operating system helps along the way - as does the software associated with the devices.

Home networks will rapidly become more popular (if not essential) quite quickly and we will, no doubt be returning to the topic from time to time.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 23rd March. Chris will be giving Part 2 of his talk about setting up a personal website. Visitors and new members always welcome. For more information ring Howard on 029 20708439.

In Brief

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