

The Chairman's pleasant duty was to welcome six new members to the first meeting after the summer break before giving an introductory presentation.

You don't often see a baby in a nappy playing with a laptop – but they can. They will press buttons until something interesting happens and keep trying for more of the same. Eventually they get the idea of cause and effect: that “If I want such-and-such to happen, then I must do this.” It takes a while, but that's OK; at their stage of life they are expected to make lots of mistakes.

Grown-ups are different. They have done their learning in life and expect to be able to cope with whatever arises. Faced with a computer and not knowing which of the keys to press next makes them feel uncomfortable.

Even if they are already familiar with some of the things computers do, they might be complete beginners on other areas.

Howard's presentation explained that the club recognised the varied levels of experience and that the next couple of meetings were designed to give a bit of a boost on the basics if needed (and a reminder to the rest) to help them feel comfortable.

He reviewed the types of talks given in the past and noted that members are encouraged to help decide the topics for future talks

At the end of the presentation he noted some of the developments during the summer break such as the increased competition in the mobile telephone market by the expansion of features build into the new telephones and the range of applications (Apps) available for them.

...He pointed out that advertisements for computers no longer stress their speed. This is because they are all now so fast that high speed is taken for granted. Ads now emphasise the choice of colours for the case and other features instead.

The market in mobile phone 'Apps' was discussed, noting how many were being generated in teenage bedrooms and might become mainstream because they fill a need in the market that phone owners' didn't know existed. Some are now being produced by firms to promote their products.

Also noted was the current debate on the neutrality of the Web. Some companies want to charge for the content they provide. It is hard to see how the Internet can remain completely free: there is a considerable cost to maintain it and commercial interests are having difficulty in making it pay.

Some large companies want to 'spin' the search results by putting their products at the front of the search results. This is causing protest from those who fervently believe that the searches should produce results without any commercial bias. The debate is just starting and will run and run.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 28th September at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth. 7.30 pm for 8.00. Steve will show how to control your computer's appearance. Visitors and new members always welcome. For more information ring Howard on 029 20708439.

In Brief

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