

The press has been talking for sometime about the advent of Windows 8, Microsoft's new operating system. It isn't available yet, (guesses tend towards October 2012 for its release), but a Consumer Preview Version was made available in late February for those who wanted to try it out.

Such a release allows thousands of users world-wide to try out the unfinished system and tell Microsoft what they like and don't like – often in no uncertain terms. It makes sense for Microsoft to do this because they get priceless feedback from interested parties. This enables them to make many modifications/improvements before the final release.

Microsoft has done this for previous releases, generally to our benefit. When they once failed to do it properly they caught a blast of adverse press that they will not wish to repeat.

Steve undertook to look at '8' and talk to us about it in language that we could understand.

As its number 8 indicates, there are early versions, the current one being (unsurprisingly) Windows 7. Windows 7 is coming up to its third birthday and is quite different in many ways from its predecessor-but-one Windows XP, but is still based on the underlying fundamentals set up for Windows 95 (in 1995).

Seventeen years is a long, long time in computing development. Digital photos; music, mobile phones, Internet, broadband, ipods, tablet computers, sat-nav. have all been added to the repertoire - and more recently, touch-screen technology and Apps (cheap, tiny fun applications) and digital book readers. Oh, and just a few more games.

You must have seen someone flicking through App icons on an iphone or ipad and doing amazing things without a mouse in sight.

Windows 8 is designed to integrate many of these features under a single operating system to serve all the types of hardware.

...The presentation showed a screen that was more closely related to a tablet screen, covered in tiles representing applications which were turned on by touch. The operation looks slick and effective, but if you are not used to mobile phones with Apps and a camera, you will have to adjust to get the full benefit, if you want it.

You can operate in PC mode with keyboard, monitor and mouse if you don't have, or want, a touch screen. Microsoft says that any machine that will run Windows 7 will run Windows 8.

A lot of people still choose to continue with the earlier Windows XP for as long as possible. Young people are keen to update, but we suspect older folk will resist having to re-train every few years.

It's a simple matter to 'Google' Windows 8 and browse to get a flavour of what it looks like, but it will change considerably before final release. We'll keep an eye on it.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 27th March 2012 at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth. 7.30 pm for 8.00. Kevin S will be explaining E-Bay. For more information ring Mike on 029 20309579.

