

Penarth Computer Club Dinosaurs welcome 15th September 2013



Visitors sensibly took advantage of a free evening to find out about the club. Some self-described dinosaurs knew little about computers – or did not yet own one. All were welcomed and two slide presentations made.

The first described the club and assured them that we fully understand their difficulties, whether they concerned how to expand their abilities or seeking advice on how to decide on what to buy.

It was stressed that meetings were planned to be informative, friendly and FUN. No one was going to be pushed to learn. Although invited to become members they could attend as occasional visitors if preferred.

Anyone who has a question about the content of a talk is invited to interrupt to ask the question. Any term or expression that is not understood should be queried on the spot and will be explained. In that vein plain English explanations were given about the ‘motherboard’ and its function and what an Operating system is and what it does. Another question opportunity was given at the end.

Howard’s second presentation started with three golden rules for everyone from absolute beginners to experienced users.

NEVER ANSWER ‘YES’ TO A QUESTION YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND. If you do not understand what the computer is about to do you might not know how to reverse it if you don’t like the result. The safe response is to say ‘no’ and think about it or seek help.

BACK UP YOUR DATA. Files can get lost or unintentionally deleted. To guard against loss, copies can be made and stored elsewhere. It is an important topic and we return to it from time to time. It is the user’s choice to balance the effort to make the copies against the gravity of the loss.

KEEP LEARNING. The way you initially learnt to do something might not be the best way for you. You will discover how to do things you had not realized were possible.

In that context Howard ran through a personal selection of ten things he wished someone had told him when he started.

1. Learn to manipulate windows (There are 30 ways. At least).
2. Keep only shortcuts on your desktop for safety’s sake.
3. Select files or objects using the Shift and Control keys or “Ctrl+A”
4. Re-arrange lists by clicking on the column heading. Makes finding things easier.
5. Move around long lists using the slider bar.
6. Customise where applications store files. Simplifies backing-up.
7. Options on drop-down lists are not absolute. Intermediate options can be typed into the selection box.
8. Spellchecker will accept a wrong word if it a real word. Check before issuing.
9. Use Autocorrect creatively to type stock phrases.
10. Learn how to use wildcards in searches for best effect. (? and *).