

The Aspect Newsletter

32 - Autumn 2016

Official IT Supplier to the



SWALEC Cup Winners 2015



"Aspect, good morning."
Is it? IS IT? It's not very good from where I'm standing, chum. Have you seen this cover you've stuck me on? A bit orange-y??!! You could hide a family of Oompa Loompas on here! uh-huh.... uh-huh Yes, I know you have an orange logo ... Yes, it is a very warm colour (oh good grief) Uh-huh, but the collective opening of all these newsletters could burn a hole in the ozone layer...

IF ORANGE really is the new BLACK ...



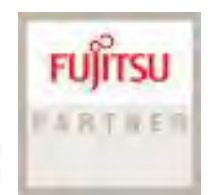
... then Aspect must be trendy. Who'd have thunk?

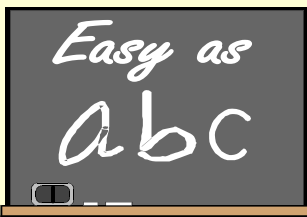
Welcome to an Autumn issue that clearly rolled straight off the pumpkin patch. If you're reading this in hard copy, trust me (and the squirrel), it's exponentially more virulent on screen. And if you're wondering what this cover has to do with IT and telecoms technology ... the squirrel's got Bluetooth. We rest our case.

It's been a busy few months in the world at large. We voted to leave Europe, then fought tooth and nail to stay there as long as it involved football. Andy Murray won Wimbledon again. We got a new Prime Minister. The Olympics happened and Team GB needed a Securicor van to transport all their gold. (Go us!!)

You may notice that this edition of the newsletter has a definite security bent (but we've got some liniment for that now, so it should clear up soon). We'll keep drumming on about it for as long as it takes - viruses are evolving all the time and we can't stress enough how you just can't assume that having anti-virus protection means you're immune. We don't want to turn you into total paranoiacs with tinfoil helmets, but you need to exercise some healthy caution.

Y'all be careful out there, y'hear?





Tips from Aspect BC

Q. I lost my internet connection and I was told to reset my router. I can see this tiny little hole marked reset, but

A. NO!!! No, no, no, no, no!! When you're told to reset your router, what that means is to turn the power off and - after a suitable interval, say 5 mins - back on. OK, kudos to you for spotting that teeny-tiny hole labelled 'reset' on the router, which you generally have to poke with the business end of a paper clip, but the reason they make it so awkward is because *that* reset sets the router back to its factory defaults. In other words, it wipes all your connection settings. So leave this well alone. If you can't find an actual on/off switch on the router, just pull out the power jack.



This next bit isn't a tip, exactly, more a point we'd like to make:-

When somebody sends you an email and you don't receive it, or you send an email to someone and they don't get it ... **do not automatically assume the fault's on your side.** Why shouldn't it be *their* fault?

We can't count the number of times clients tell us "they said there must be something wrong with our systems". Really? And why is that? Because 'they' have systems that are certified 100% infallible, yes? (If we knew how to write a dismissive snort, we'd do it here). Very often, when we investigate, we discover that 'they' have been black-listed so can't send out, or that your email has reached 'their' servers perfectly well, thank you very much.

So don't let them brow-beat you. Tell them, yes, you'll have it investigated, but there's no reason to assume it's your fault. Doesn't matter if they can send to and receive emails from other people - trust us, that *still* doesn't mean the fault must be on your side.



Comments? Anything you'd like us to include or feature? Want hard copies of any previous issues? Just email me at:

arlene@aspectbc.co.uk



(NB. Issue 31 is still on the website if you missed it).



A Safety Message from Vassilly

I am have extra newsletters space this time with proper official letterings! Payrolls lady say is important safety message that Aspects is try to get across to clients, but clients is not get it. She say everyone is read Blog, so maybe they is pay attentions to safety message if it is come from me. (What am I? Tufty Squirrel? And what is with ugly purple colour ...?) Okay, okay...

Listen up peoples!! (I am grab attentions, yes?)

When you are get emails, **READ THEM.** (Really? *This is safety message?? Oh, is not finished ... okay then*) Yes, read them properly. And do not be going clickety-clickety-click all over them. Be taking hand off mouse, because bad things is live in emails. (Like weasel? *Oh, like virus. Got it.*) Yes, do not be starting with the clickety-clicks unless you are sure, sure, sure that is proper good email from proper good person, and not bad person pretending to be good person. (*Whoo. This is complicated safety message.*) No clicky-clicks on links. No clicky-clicks on attachments. If anything is look even little bit funny ... *piaow! piaow! piaow!! (What? Fine ... bo-ring)...* be pressing Delete button.

You are wonder what is happen if you are go clickety-click on bad email? Well I am tell you. **VERY. BAD. THINGS.** Weaselly virus is make nest in computermabob and is look out at all files it can see, all over network, and is start to lock them all up. Is no way to unlock except to pay money to rat-fink weasels. And we are sooner die, yes? Death before dishonour!! (*Too much maybe??*) Okay, be paying attentions, because here is important thing:- weasel is make itself at home in computermabob, yes, and is stay there. It is not go anywhere. It is lock up files from there. So, when we are put sick computermabob in quarantines, weasel is trapped! And if we are use backup to roll server back to before virus, network is tickety-boo again. Take that weasels!! And we are all do server backups, yes? **YES?!!** (Nod heads, peoples).

And what of files on computermabob that weasel is nest in? Well ... if you are not have backup, then is either pay rat-fink weasels or (*sad face, everyone*) files is just ... *lost...*

But, you are argue, we are have software for the preventing of viruses, so we are safe, no? (*Why is they argue with me? I am giving top-notch purple safety advisings here out of goodness of heart.*) No peoples, is not safe. Weaselly viruses is cunning. Is only one sure way to stop weasels, peoples, and this is by being smart and full of carefulness!!!

So okay, maybe you are make mistake and do bad thing by accident. How are you tell? Well is lots of signs. Maybe you is find files is not open or is have funny new names. Maybe you is get popping-up messages on screen. Maybe you is get honking big message that is say "we are encrypt all your files, pay up or you are not get them back, mwaaah-haaah-haaah!!!" These are all point to bad thing being happen. So do not be letting bad thing happen! Or we are send Sergei round to breathe in face!! (*Ohhh why not? Is good threat. Breath is blister paint at forty paces.... Sigh. Oh very well...*)

If you are make mistake, then as soon as penny is drop, get PC off network fast. How? Pull cable out. (*What? Really? Is more than one cable on computermabob...? Hunh. Who knew?*) Okay, pull out network cable. Is grey one. Goes into wall. Go look for it now. Yes, now. (*What? You think is time to be finding out where is lifejacket when ship is already sinking?*) When PC is safe off network, tell IT peoples. This is Aspects for most of you. If it is *not* Aspects for you, well ... well it should be, so there.

Peoples, is always better to be safe than sorry. If you are do bad thing, be acting quickly. Is very full of importantness. Every minute you are wait, weaselly virus is gobble up more files. Yes, is embarrassing to admit mistake, but you are only human (*this is plenty embarrassing already*). Is impossible to hide tracks (*♪ who let the weasels out?! Who? You!!! ♪*), so own up super-quick while is still chance that damage is not bad.

Remember old Kalahari saying - "ostrich who is stick head in sand is ask for kick up butt".

Vicious weaselly thing!!



Here's another NOVEL quiz!



Well the last one seemed to be a big hit... which was slightly unexpected.

Pictured below is another set of famous authors, along with the title of one of their most definitive works.

Put their surnames into the grid where indicated, and reading down the blue squares will spell out the title of a play by Shakespeare (well he's trending this year, so we thought we'd join in). As previously, the authors are pictured in chronological order of birth, so take care to put their names in the correct place in the grid.

Answers are on the website; link is on the newsletter page.



1547 - 1616
Don Quixote



1659 - 1731
Robinson Crusoe



1771 - 1832
Ivanhoe



1797 - 1851
Frankenstein



1802 - 1870
The Three Musketeers



1812 - 1870
Great Expectations



1818 - 1848
Wuthering Heights



1828 - 1905
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea



1860 - 1937
Peter Pan



1866 - 1943
The Tale of Peter Rabbit



1866 - 1946
The War of the Worlds



1875 - 1940
The Thirty-Nine Steps



1882 - 1956
Winnie-the-Pooh



1900 - 1949
Gone With the Wind



1904 - 1991
Our Man in Havana



1916 - 1990
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory



1919 - 2010
The Catcher in the Rye

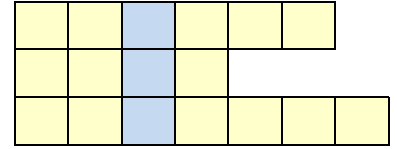


1926 - 2016
To Kill a Mockingbird

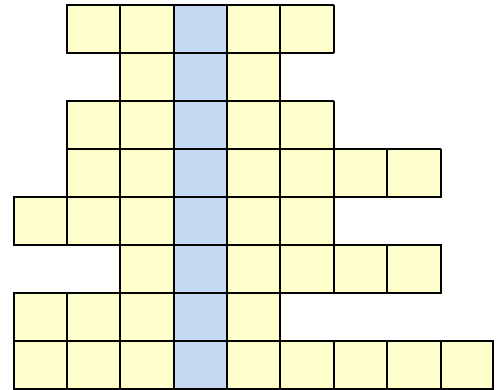


1948 - 2015
The Colour of Magic

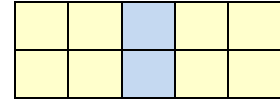
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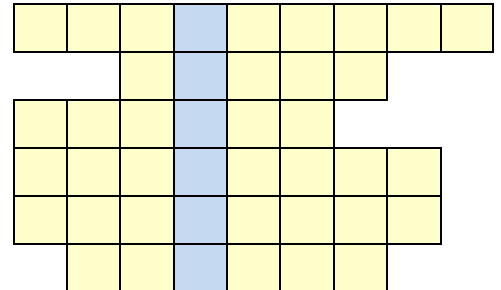
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DIY computer infection kit

As part of a recent social experiment (for which, read "let's see how dumb people are"), 300 USB thumb drives were dropped randomly across a university campus in Illinois. They wanted to see how many people would pick them up and plug them in.

Answer? 98%.

So far, so bad enough. But of those, 45% actually *opened* the files on the drive as well.

Don't these people watch TV? Read the news? *Think?* And bear in mind this is a university, so ostensibly populated by people with a modicum of intelligence. In their defence, some said they were looking for details so they could return the drive to its rightful owner, which is admirable, but still ill-advised.

Honestly, you might as well accept a call from "Windows Technical Support" and let them take remote control of your PC....



"Today, children, we're going to be doing sums. All right then ... Edward, if I have 30 pennies, and I add absolutely no pennies whatsoever ... how many pennies do I have now?"

"Still 30, miss."

"Ooooh, no, sorry, Edward. I actually have 33 pennies now."

"How does that work, miss?"

"How indeed, Edward.... how indeed..."

.... and yet here's the summary from a supplier's recent invoice. No rounding involved.
 $30 + 0 = 33$

Total (ex)

£8.30

£8.00

Sub-Total: £16.33

I'm putting in for no pay rise whatsoever ...

Vassilly's Blog

Fri 24 June

Is day after Referendumb-dumb-dumb. Yes, loyal fans, you can tell I am not big fan of Brexit, for I am come to this country four years ago as hard-working migrant. I am ask Payrolls lady if I am still OK to stay here. She say we will talk again when she is stop laughing about 'hard-working'.

Fri 1 July

Rabbit is back. It is turn up last Friday too and everyone is say "awwww, sweet". Why? Just because it is have twitchy nose and whiskers? I am have twitchy nose and whiskers. So why for is rabbit sweeter than me? Payrolls lady say is because rabbit is mute.

Mon 4 July

Every day is bring news of more resignations. Politicians, football managers, car show presenters ... is like epidemic. Payrolls lady is ask if I am maybe catch it but I am assure her I am loyal Aspects person. She is turn away then, so I am not positive, but I think she is say bad word.

Mon 11 July

We are have exciting weekend of sporting stuff. Andy Murray is win Wimbledon. Wales team is not win Euros but is still come home as heroes. (You are ask why Meerkovo is not qualify for Euros? Is because team is rubbish. Players is all have four left feet and goalkeeper is not understand that "watch out for attacks" is not mean stand sentry on top of crossbar. Is embarrassing when peoples think country is called Meerkovonil).

Fri 15 July

Payrolls lady and IT Boss Man is go away on holidays. Already I know is going to be very sad week.... unless I am work out how to disable CCTVs at Aspects. Otherwise, will put major crimp in skivings because she will check. (Yes I am *arrive* as hard-working migrant, but I am learn to conform with UK ways. Take that, Brexiteers!)

Mon 25 July

Payrolls lady and IT Boss Man is back. Tanned and grumpy. Stop it, peoples - you are know very well this is just general description. Is not nice to ask which is which. (FYI, is interchangeable).

Tues 2 Aug

Q. What is black hole and Wales weather have in common? A. They is both suck. Smiley TV lady say is rain more yesterday than all of July, like this is fun fact. Is time to book holiday. I am phone Ryanair to see if I am still banned this year (see issue 27). They say I am banned in perpet ... in perpet ...they say I am banned forever. I am hear is also picture of me at Channel Tunnel with warning not to carry because of rabies. Rabies!!! I was little bit cross maybe because lorry-driver is make fun of accent, but I was not *rabid*. Anyways, I am hear Wales is get heatwave soon, so I am decide on staycation. Is same as vacation but is have better hygiene.

Mon 8 Aug - Fri 19 Aug

Holidays!! (Is true, Wales is have heatwave, but is very short. And is have buckets of rain at both ends).

Mon 22 Aug

Bring out bunting, loyal fans, for I am back. Is also Telecommmmms Boss Man's birthday, so Payrolls lady is draw picture of cake on wall planner. This is take dieting too far.

Wed 24 Aug

Engineer David the First is visit again. He is collect summer newsletter, which is have Blog I am write after last visit. Is one where I am say to bring Kit-Kat next time. *Sigh*. So is no Kit-Kat today. ☹

Mon 5 Sept

Is first day back for schools. I am learn that this is mean three things. (1) Roads is busy-busy with something called The School Run. (Try going to school in Kalahari, peoples, and get daily chase from jackals. THAT is a school run). (2) Rain is go away (I am think maybe memo is get lost on this one. Is greyer than Sergei's vest out there). And finally (3) - is time for my newsletter to bring informations and fun into your lives. I am instruct Payrolls lady to jump to it and get printing.... I am think is not possible to do what she is instruct me to do.

You are probably see that I am have second column in newsletter. This is by special request from Payrolls lady. She say peoples is listen to me. This is surprise, because she never is. Inch by inch, peoples, I am take over newsletter!



Tech Support Nightmares...

Proving there's still no statute of limitations on stupidity



"I'm not sure what my password is."
"Forgotten it, huh?"
"No, I reset it today, but the cat walked across the keyboard while I was doing it, and I'm not sure what he set it to."

"So which version of Word are you running?"
"I don't know the one on the computer ... Microsoft?"

"OK, if you can go to the address bar and type <https://www.google.com> please?"
"... t-p-s-c-o-l-o."
"No, don't *type* colon. Hit the colon key."

"My computer came up with an error message. Can you fix it?"
"What was the error?"
"Oh I don't know. I closed it."

"Yeah, hi, I'm trying to plug this cable into my modem but it won't fit."
"What shape is the end of the cable?"
"Purple."

"My password isn't working."
"What password are you trying?"
"I don't know."

"Could you just confirm your password for me please?"
"APPLE1993."
"Are any of those capitals?"
"Just the letters, not the numbers."

And just to prove you can have an idiot at either end of the phone line

"Yes, hello, I've just set up a broadband account with you but I can't seem to get on the internet."

"Let me check this for you, sir ... yes, I see that we need to have your account activated. Please go to this website to activate your account."

"But I can't get on the internet."

"Please sir, you must go to this website in order to activate your account details."

"But .. I .. can't... get on ... the ... internet."

"Yes, and I am explaining that this is because your account is not activated, so I am asking you to please go to this website, sir."

" ... ??? ..."

"I think there's something wrong with this power supply."
"Oh? Why's that?"
"Well I spilled something in it yesterday, but I disconnected the cable real quick and let it dry out. But when I plugged it back in, the computer caught fire."
"Oh wow!"
"Yeah, I know. I put the fire out."
"So I guess it's safe to say that the power supply is trashed then?"
"Well yeah, because I thought it might be a fluke, but I plugged it back in and the computer caught fire again."

Emails with Word attachments

To re-iterate something we mentioned in the Spring issue, spam filters are becoming increasingly twitchy about passing emails with Word attachments. The actual *danger* was primarily in macro-enabled Word documents, but we're seeing more and more emails being stopped when they're carrying nothing more than a straightforward Word attachment.



Once again, we'd recommend you PDF any documents before sending, just to ensure their safe passage, and if anyone's going to be sending to you, advise them to do the same.

I thought technology was meant to be labour-saving?



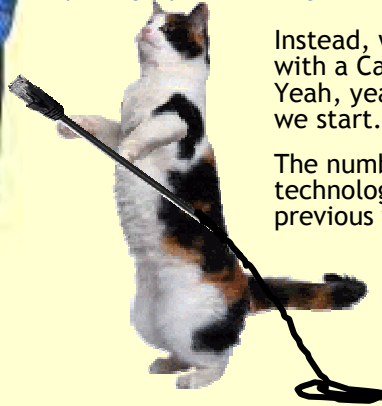
I'm EXHAUSTED....

Jargon Busting : # 26

Cat5e/Cat6/Cat6a cabling



(It was suggested that I try to explain Quantum Computing in this issue. I declined. Two reasons: one, it's unlikely you've heard of it so why bother trying to explain it, and two, I'm reliably informed that I'd need to be a cross between Stephen Hawking, John Forbes Nash and Sheldon Cooper to grasp it. So we'll give that a miss for the foreseeable future ie. forever).



Instead, we have cabling! Whoo-hoo! OK, well first off, as with a Cat4 hurricane, the 'Cat' is short for Category.... Yeah, yeah, it makes a mockery of our illustration before we start. So sue us. It's a cute picture.

The numbering does follow the progression of the technology, so picking it up from Cat5 (yes, there were previous versions), it went from 5 to 5e (enhanced), then 6 and ... well you'd think it'd be 6e, wouldn't you? But no. It's 6a (augmented). We despair of working out naming conventions, we really do. For idle information (ie. we don't care because we've yet to come across any of them) there's also Cat7, 7a and 8.

So what the heck is the difference? Well, **bandwidth**, really. Cat5 and 5e rate at 100MHz, Cat6 at 250MHz and Cat6a at 500MHz.

But going for the newest isn't always best or even necessary. There's a lot of fallacies surrounding cabling, such as needing Cat6 if you want gigabit speeds. It's not true at all. Cat5e will happily carry gigabit. Where you would have to step up to Cat6 is if you had a 10-Gigabit Ethernet, but that's not all that common yet.

So what else would you like to know about cabling? (This begs the question - did you even want to know as much as we've told you up to now?) Glossing right over your answer with reckless disregard for your boredom levels, here's some other cabling-related jargon:-

Twisted pair - as in unshielded twisted pair (UTP) cable, which is the standard kind of cabling you'll have running round your office or from your PC to the wall. Now you'll need to pay close attention here. A twisted pair is two wires ... still with us? ... *twisted round one another*. Hey, sometimes it just is what it is. The point of a twisted pair is to reduce electromagnetic induction or crosstalk between pairs of wires.

Stranded .v. solid wire - the UTP cable and patch leads in common use in offices tend to be stranded ie. made up of a bundle of small wires wrapped together. Solid is cheaper to manufacture, but stranded is more flexible, tends to be a better conductor and has a greater bend radius. And please note, the term is bend *radius* for a reason. If and when you need to bend the cable, it should still be in an approximation of a circle. No pointy angles. Cables do not like pointy angles. They break inside.

"Do you want the computer to remember this password?"

With our little brains jam-packed full of things we need to remember these days, it's very tempting to offload anything we can. So when your computer offers to remember a password for you, should you say yes?



Or more to the point, when should you say No?

We'd recommend that you never allow your computer to remember passwords for internet banking, PayPal or the like. These applications tend to warn you at the time that you shouldn't be saving the password if the machine is shared with other users, but frankly we wouldn't let it save the password even if we were the only user. If your computer/laptop should be stolen or hacked, you're leaving yourself wide open. Similarly, if you use your PC or laptop to make a remote connection back to your office, you shouldn't let it remember that password either.

While we're at it, we'd also recommend you don't use the same password across the board for these kinds of applications, nor any one of your 'common' passwords. Every time you read of security breaches from Hotmail, LinkedIn, Facebook and so on, one of the big concerns is that the thieves will take a user's password and try it in all sorts of other places. And very often, they'll get in, because we're too lazy to bother with more than one.

Frankly, while it goes against all notions of security, you'd be better off choosing lots of different and cryptic passwords and writing them down on a piece of paper you keep somewhere completely separate from your PC (ie. *not* on a Post-It stuck to the screen or inside your laptop bag). Heaven knows you probably have less chance of it being lifted from there compared to having it hacked online.

What are the dangers of WHITE LISTING ?

(To remind you, whitelisting means that you rubber-stamp an email address or domain in your spam filters as being safe ie. do not check, do not scan, pass straight to Inbox).



APPROVED

It's a common thing to do. It's even quite common to whitelist your own domain name (see **** below**). So what's the problem?

The problem is that if one of these whitelisted email addresses gets spoofed, you've just given the resulting spam emails a free pass into your Inbox.

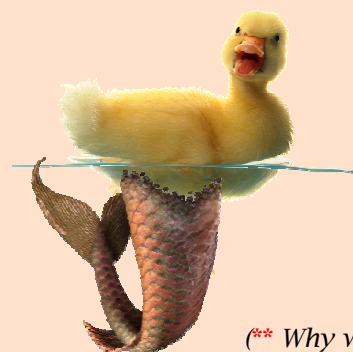
And the problem with *that*, beyond the obvious one, is that you're going to look at these emails and think, "oh, I know that sender, nothing to worry about here ..." and possibly ignore every other signal your brain is sending you, such as "kind of a weird subject line though", or "wording's a bit formal for him".

The choice is yours, really: if you want to keep using whitelists to make sure that you don't miss out on eg. enquiries from your website, orders from your main clients etc, then you **must** increase your levels of vigilance when it comes to opening emails. We'd also recommend you have an SPF record for your own domain (see last issue's Jargon Buster). It's not fool-proof, as sadly it seems not all mail servers do bother to check, but it's a very good step.

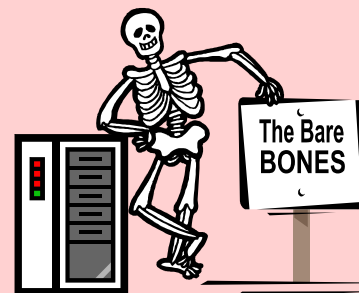
So the moral of this tale is that just because it lands in your Inbox and seems to come from someone you know, it *still* doesn't mean you can blithely open it. Or to put it another way ...

.... even if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, underneath it might still be a phish.

Bottom line, people, **there really is no such thing as a safe sender**. You **HAVE** to pay attention.



*(** Why would you ever receive an email that's come from your own domain? Scans from your copier, fax-by-email, contact forms from your website ... having these configured with a sending address that matches yours isn't unusual.)*



How do I set an Out of Office reply for my emails in Outlook?

Ye-e-es, possibly this one would've been better featured in the summer issue, in advance of holiday season, but we refuse to be slaves to convention...

Click [File](#) on the top menu. On the next screen, ignore the menu down the left and look at the next column. One of the options is [Automatic Replies \(Out of Office\)](#). Choose that, and you can then set your automatic replies to be sent out either with immediate effect, or between pre-set dates/times. The latter is a good way to do it, as you don't have to remember to turn it off again on your return. There's nothing more annoying than emailing someone in February to be told they're out of the office in the previous December.

There are two tabs - [Inside My Organization](#) and [Outside My Organization](#) and you need to put entries in both. Yes, even if there are only two of you in the office so your counterpart could hardly fail to notice when you're on holiday, you still have to put something under each of the tabs.



Virus Protection - Best Practices

Businesses often ask us to assist in coming up with policies for preventing outbreaks of viruses, particularly ransomware. (FYI, putting the unlucky unleasher's head on a spike in the car park *pour encourager les autres* is generally frowned upon). Yes, you need to make sure you have the proper tools in place (desktop anti-virus, email anti-virus/anti-spam) but you also have to remember that (a) they're not infallible and (b) they haven't got a snowball's chance in hell if you're going to have users bypassing them by eg. opening up emails from their personal accounts in the office.

It's all down to user education. We've never seen a virus outbreak yet that was down to malice. Users have only ever been guilty of a lack of attention or a lack of understanding. The latter is eminently treatable. The former ... well you could always keep the spike in the car park. That tends to concentrate the mind wonderfully!

Remember that Aspect offer fully managed anti-virus, anti-spam and web protection services at extremely affordable monthly costs. We'd be happy to discuss them with you - just give us a call.



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Aspect Diary

We begin this issue on the day after The Referendum, when the news was just sinking in & the country was glued to the car crash that was UK politics in the aftermath. At Aspect, we're content to take the long view. So we've opened negotiations with my parents to relocate to their garage in anticipation of Scottish independence.

Ironically, on the same day, we had an economic migrant turn up outside the office, clearly having been told the grass was greener =====> By the following week, there were 2 of them. Whether this is indicative of a sudden surge in migration or just the well-known adage about rabbits, who knows....?



It looks like the fall-out of Brexit is going to be around for a long time, but for now, we'll move on ...

We were asked recently for a power extension lead. We offered a 5-metre one, to which the client asked "How long is that?"..... Tell you what, you go away & have a think about it & let us know if the answer comes to you, OK?

17 Aug: one of the hottest days of the year. A-a-aand the first of the Xmas party flyers came through. 'Tis the season not-to-think-about-Xmas, fa-la-la-la-la. Well, OK, so we did write this year's Xmas story during the heatwave, as it happens, but that's just when inspiration hit.

FYI, it's Jack & the Beanstalk...

OK, OK, OK, enough about Xmas. Bad enough that the schools will barely be back when we're sending this out & calling it autumn. If you want, we could rename the Spring issue as Early Summer & Autumn as Late Summer. The weather will still be rubbish while you're reading them, but at least you'll feel like you had a long summer.

We were treated to sight of a BT Open Reach engineer's actual notes a week or so back, after resolution of a broadband issue. Wow. Just ... wow. It ran to half a page of stuff like "18:24 OGEA 259****2 / MFL=N/ A DLM Reset ...". A bit of formatting might've helped, but this just went on & on in a single stream of visual white noise. No wonder ISPs need to take a minute before they can give you an update. We'd need to go & have a lie down.

We finish with news that Microsoft are now storing their Windows 7 updates on a thumb drive shoved inside the space boot of an astronaut orbiting Pluto. Well OK, no they're not, but you could've fooled us. Searching for, downloading & installing updates now needs to start one day, run overnight & carry on through the next day. Yes, we get that they want everyone to embrace Windows 10 instead, but ... seriously?

Well that's about it for this issue. See you next time when The -Festival-That-Should-Not-Be-Mentioned rolls around (& we don't mean Glastonbury. Clue: ho-ho-ho).

