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KNUTSFORD REX PROBUS CLUB
IT Group
Windows Update Bulletin
By Jim Flett

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1. We have had several discussions at IT Group meetings about the Windows 10 operating system for PCs. The system is regularly updated by Microsoft, usually on the second Tuesday of each month (US Pacific time zone), normally the following Wednesday in the UK. Updates usually happen in the background, and you will only notice them when you try to shut down your PC or laptop and you get a message "Update and shutdown" or "Update and restart". You can initiate an update yourself by opening the "Settings" window and clicking on "Update & Security". If you have a fairly recent version of Windows 10 you will be offered an option to delay the installation of an update, to avoid interference with your work, or to give other people the time to find the bugs and for Microsoft to block the roll-out of the update to other users (it has happened).

2. Updates are designated "Quality updates" or "Feature updates". Feature updates are normally released twice a year, spring and autumn, and contain new features which are claimed to make your work easier. The quality updates normally include bug removal patches or security improvements, and may happen more than once a month if a major security fix is required. Feature updates may amount to a complete replacement of the operating system, may take a long time to install and may reset some of the default states of your PC, such as printer settings.

3. This bulletin is triggered by the release of Feature Update version 1909, which installed itself on my PC on 13th November. You can check which version is running on your PC by opening "Settings", clicking on "System" and scrolling down to "About" in the left hand pane. (A quick way to open "Settings" is to press the "Windows" key and the letter "I" on your keyboard simultaneously.)

4. If you have a fairly recent, well-specified PC or laptop then Version 1909 should install on your machine without any trouble. However some computers have solid state storage instead of a hard disk and in some cases the storage can be limited to 32GB. That is enough to run the Windows 10 operating system, but there is not enough room to cope with the manipulations required in an update. Such computers have probably been stuck on Version 1803 (spring 2018), ever since Microsoft decided to require more minimum space for Windows 10 and its updates. Monthly quality updates of Version 1803 continued to be installed on the limited machines in parallel with the more elaborate feature updates 1809 and 1903 which installed smoothly on more highly specified machines.

5. Microsoft introduced a policy of limiting support to home customers for each version of the operating system to about 18 months. Support for Version 1803 and its quality updates was therefore due to end on 12th November 2019. However, on the most recent update day (13/14th November) feature update 1903 (spring 2019) was rolled out in a version which would install, albeit slowly, on machines with limited storage. This means that if the update to 1903 was successful those computers will be supported until 8th December 2020.

6. As the owner of a small "netbook" computer with limited storage (for holiday use) I was relieved to have it updated to Version 1903 which will be supported until December 2020. But I was stimulated to conduct some internet research into Microsoft's update policy. I started with "Ask Jack" on The Guardian website, see:

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/askjack/2019/sep/05/how-can-i-force-my-windows-10-laptop-to-update

This linked to 3 useful "blog posts" from John Cable, who is Microsoft's Director of Windows Servicing etc, see:

https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2019/05/21/how-to-get-the-windows-10-may-2019-update/
https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2019/07/01/evolving-windows-10-servicing-and-quality-the-next-steps/
https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2019/11/12/how-to-get-the-windows-10-november-2019-update/

Finally, there is a useful Wikipedia page which contains a list of all the Windows 10 versions, see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows_10_version_history

JF
15th November 2019