Gerald's Column
by Gerald Fitton

Recently I have been discussing the subject "What will you use your next computer for?" Perhaps it is because I have used this title for the series, I have received a great deal of email and a few letters relating to the future of computing. Whilst there is no doubt that many of you are finding my accounts of streaming audio and video interesting and want to know more, one recurring theme is "How can I get my own domain name and website?" Generally those who ask want to put their own audio or video files on their personal website. Consequently I have decided to devote this month's article to a very basic description of 'how to do it'.

Partly as preparation for this article and partly for the amusement of myself and my grandchildren I decided to purchase my own domain name and set up a skeleton website. The intention is to 'have fun' with my family (grandchildren0 and friends (such as you, my dear readers).

fitton.org.uk

As you will see from this section heading I now have a domain name. The opening page of my 'fitton' website will appear in your browser if you enter in http://www.fitton.org.uk.

However, unless I give you further information (see later in this article) it is unlikely that you'll get past this first (index.htm), opening page.

Please bear in mind that I am using this website for purely experimental purposes so you won't find any important content here; my main motivation is to provide fun and education for my grandchildren and my friends.

Why "org"?

It is because "org.uk" is an unpopular choice for those wanting a domain name. This is reflected in the fact that "org.uk" is free whereas the more usual "dot com" domain names cost about £10 per year. My motto here is "More fun for less!"

The following domains are available:

fitton.biz
fitton.br.com
fitton.cn.com
fitton.eu.com
fitton.qb.com
fitton.qb.net
fitton.no.com
fitton.qc.com
fitton.sa.com
fitton.se.com
fitton.uk.com
fitton.uk.net
fitton.us.com
fitton.uy.com
fitton.za.com

The following domains are unavailable:

fitton.com
fitton.net
fitton.org
fitton.co.uk
fitton.org.uk
fitton.me.uk
fitton.info
fitton.tv

Back to domain search.

** Prices are now shown inclusive of VAT throughout the checkout process **

tel: 0870-446-0292 | fax: 0870-446-0291 | email: customer.accounts@hostplus.co.uk
(c) 2005 HostPlus, a DeeNine Internet Services Limited company.

The other reason, apart from cost, for choosing "org.uk" is that all the other "fitton.???" domain names seemed to have gone to somebody else already. The screenshot below shows the situation after I booked "fitton.org.uk"; all the domain names on the left are still free if there are any readers who are seeking a "fitton" domain. The more popular (and inexpensive) ones on the right have already been taken.

The ones which remain now are very expensive. By this I mean that they cost many tens of pounds per year to maintain. I remember one was "fitton.uk.com" at £30 per year + VAT. I can't remember the price of the others right now but that is probably not important to you, particularly if your name is either Joe Smith or Bill Mannington Smythe. If either of these is your name then you will know why it's not important!

Out of interest I checked on "beverley" and found that all the cheap ones had gone and that "beverley.uk.net" (still available) was a £30 per year domain name.

The following domains are available:

beverley.br.com
beverley.cn.com
beverley.eu.com
beverley.gb.net
beverley.no.com
beverley.qc.com
beverley.sa.com
beverley.se.com
beverley.uk.com
beverley.uk.net
beverley.us.com
beverley.uy.com
beverley.za.com

The following domains are unavailable:

beverley.com
beverley.net
beverley.org
beverley.co.uk
beverley.org.uk
beverley.me.uk
beverley.info
beverley.biz
beverley.tv
beverley.gb.com

Back to domain search.

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tel: 0870-446-0292 | fax: 0870-446-0291 | email: customer.accounts@hostplus.co.uk
(c) 2005 HostPlus, a DeeNine Internet Services Limited company.

If you find yourself in a situation where all the obvious (inexpensive) domain names have been taken, then you must be more innovative about your name. For example I could have tried "glfitton" but, instead I tried "beverley-p" (the "p" is for "paul") and, if you look at the screenshot, you'll see what I discovered.

Price Breakdown

Domain Price: £0 per year (for beverley-p.me.uk)

Package Price: £49.98/two yearly (for Basic Hosting)

Discounts: £0.00

Sub Total: £49.98 (ex VAT)

Total VAT: £8.75

Total: £58.73

Paul (our editor), or you if you want to be perverse, could try something like "paul-beverley". If either he or you do this then you will find that the price of the domain name "paul-beverley.com" will cost you £0.99 per year.

Anyway, back to my research. When I searched for domain names which were not in use I found that "fitton.org.uk" was available and was free of charge provided that ... There always has to be a proviso if something is free, doesn't there? Read on.

Hosting

As I understand the word (note that I am a beginner so I could be wrong) "Hosting" implies such things as a web site and email addresses.

Although I had a look at several offers of hosting from different organisations, I don't claim to have chosen the best or cheapest but I did choose one which I could afford. The whole package, including VAT, is less than £60 for two years (two years is the minimum). The final clincher for me was that DeeNine, from whom I bought the package, is a local Swindon firm and I am a great believer in supporting local traders wherever possible, even if it costs me a little more.

So what's in a Hosting package? Read on.

The domain name

Of course, the domain name "fitton.org.uk" is an essential part of the package and is thrown in for free. Without the hosting package (that is for the domain name only) the fee would have been a little under £10 per year (the same applies to "beverley-p.me.uk") so you could reckon that, of the £30 per year, £10 has gone towards the domain name and the other £20 per year is for the hosting element.

Packages

In the previous screenshots I have shown the DeeNine price for what they describe as "Basic Hosting". It is, as its name suggests, fairly basic. This doesn't worry me in the least. I am intent on having fun (and for my family and friends to have fun) rather than using my fitton.org.uk website for selling goods or services.

I invite you to have fun with me at http://www.fitton.org.uk using this "Basic Hosting" package from HostPlus, a subsidiary of DeeNine.

In later articles I shall describe some of this 'fun' I and others are having with this package. I must emphasise this important point. My 'fitton' website is in no way intended to be commercial. It is totally for providing us all with some fun and education. Wish us luck?

There are other more expensive packages with lots more facilities should you need them.

In this article I shall describe the features of this "Basic Hosting" package. It is my guess that most of you who just want to have fun (with your next computer or even the one you have now) will not yearn for missing features. We shall see; I invite your comments.

Web Space

Of course, web space is important. This is where you put all your files for others to read. This "Basic Hosting" package provides 50 MB of web space.

A textual document running to a few pages will consume something less than 10 KB.

The size of files containing pictures, photographs or drawings will be an order of magnitude larger, around 100 KB.

If you want to include a few audio files, speech or music, then these take you up another magnitude. A sound file of 1 MB will give you a several minutes of good quality sound.

Up another magnitude for movies to, say, 10 MB for a few minutes of good quality video.

Streaming Rate

As I have said in earlier articles, it is the streaming rate which you choose for your audio and video files which determines your need for web space.

There is no doubt that if all you put up there is text then you'll find it hard to get to 10 MB let alone 50 MB. You will be able to put a lot of your family photos on your site before you seriously eat in to your 50 MB. It is when you start getting round to sound and video that you will begin to feel the pinch.

In one of my earlier articles I suggested that a resolution of 640 x 480 for a video file would give you an acceptable quality when streamed at a bit less than 1 Mbps (these are bits and not Bytes). Using my approximation of 10 bits = 1 Byte you will see that 50 MB of web space will give you a little less than 10 minutes of streaming video.

"Basic Hosting" will limit your activities only if you want to put lots of movies on your website. If this is what you want to do then it is likely that you will decide to pay for more web space. From the emails I have received there are a couple of dozen of you who want to do this. One of my correspondents wants to sent videos to her grandchildren in Australia. Most email packages limit files to about 10 MB so her solution is to upload the large (greater than 10 MB) video files to her website for downloading in AU land!

Bandwidth

So called "bandwidth" is about web site usage. It is usually measured in GB per month. The "Basic Hosting" package of DeeNine (or HostPlus) provides a bandwidth of 1 GB per month. What this means is that the whole of the 50 MB web site can be downloaded about 20 times in a month before the bandwidth limit is imposed. Of course, this 1 GB per month can be distributed in other ways such as 200 downloads each of 5 MB.

Bandwidth will only become a limiting factor if you make your website too attractive to people who want to download audio or video files. Beware, don't advertise that you have a most intriguing 10 MB video which everyone who visits your site will want to download.

Of course, you can upgrade to a site with more bandwidth if you really want this to happen. For example "Advanced Hosting" will give you 8 GB per month of bandwidth.

Email Accounts

The "Basic Hosting" package has the facility for you to create 50 email accounts. Each of these accounts is separate and distinct. Technically they are known as POP3 accounts. Each has a separate user name and POP3 password. Let me explain:

	Basic Hosting	Value Hosting	Pro Hosting	Advanced Hosting
Free Domain Name	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DiskSpace	50mb	100mb	50mb	Unlimited
Email Accounts	50	100	500	Unlimited
Bandwidth/mth	1GB	1.5GB	6GB	8GB
Auto Responders	50	100	500	Unlimited
SubDomains	10	50	200	500
mySQL Databases	1	5	10	20
Email Forwarding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web Forwarding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PHP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Perl/CGI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FrontPage Extensions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web Stats	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
24/7 FTP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web File Manager	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web Based Email	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Unlimited Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Instant Setup	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Full Control Panel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
GD/Imagemagick	No	No	Yes	Yes
pdfLib	No	No	No	Yes
Free CGI Scripts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yearly Price	N/A	N/A	£39.99	£49.99
Two Yearly Price	£39.98	£59.98	£79.98	£99.98

Two completely separate accounts could be abacus@fitton.org.uk and alpha@fitton.org.uk.

In order to download emails addressed to, say, alpha@fitton.org.uk, I would have to load into my email client my email address (alpha@fitton.org.uk) and the password I used when setting up that POP3 account. I would also have to specify that the emails would be found on the POP3 server with the Internet address mail.fitton.org.uk.

Of course, emails sent to any of these addresses can be read using webmail rather than an email client provided that the POP3 address (mail.fitton.org.uk) and password are entered.

I assure you that all my four grandchildren will have lots of fun, as will I, sending each other emails and receiving emails from their friends at their unique POP3 email address. These POP3 email accounts can be accessed anywhere in the world (on a laptop in New York for example) provided that the user knows the details of their own account.

Email Forwarding

Rather than set up a new email account in your email client (the email program on your own computer) you can stick with your existing email account name and tell the host (in my case this is the mail server at mail.fitton.org.uk) to forward anything it receives for alpha@fitton.org.uk to my (already existing) gerald.archive@ntlworld.com address.

The disadvantage of not setting up a separate account in your email client (ie on your own computer) is that emails which you send out (in reply) will not appear to be sent from alpha@fitton.org.uk but will appear to be sent from gerald.archive@ntlworld.com.

Auto Responders

This is an email facility provided on the host computer. If you go away on holiday for a week or two you can set up a message on the host computer so that anyone who sends an email to,say, alpha@fitton.org.uk will receive a message. You can write whatever you like in the message. For example I might write something like "I'm on holiday right now but I'll be back in business on the 25th December 2005. Please write again after that date."

In all the hosting packages, every one of the POP3 email addresses has its own unique auto respond facility which can contain its own unique message. Perhaps on another occasion I shall let you have a play by sending me an email to which you will receive an auto response - but not this month for I have something else to offer you.

Protected Directories

This is of the features which is offered as part of the "Basic Hosting" package.

If you visit http://www.fitton.org.uk it is unlikely that you will get past the front (index.htm) page unless I give you some more information. This is because I have chosen to make every link from the front page password protected.

For example, if you click on the picture of Gerald in the hope of accessing what I have called "Gerald's Private Pages" then you will be asked for a username and password. Of course there are password cracking utilities which will get past this barrier but I would regard that as advanced stuff which it is unlikely that you possess.

Instead, and just for fun (by which I mean that you should have the fun as well as me), I have created a simple "Archive" icon on the front page. Well, to be honest, I haven't done it yet but I will do before Paul tests it out on Monday or Tuesday. If you click on this Archive icon then you will be asked for a username and then a password. If you manage to read to the end of this article (not far to go now) you will discover the username and password with which I have protected this private area. After you have entered these two pieces of data into the space provided, only then you will be allowed further into the site.

Don't get excited! There is nothing of great importance there, just something to show that you've got there. If you succeed, and even if you don't for one reason or another, then please send me an email to gerald.archive@ntlworld.com telling me whether you had fun or, possibly, learned something - or if you were completely bored to bits!

Communication

I shall retain the Abacusline website at http://abacusline.demon.co.uk for a while as my 'public' website. I am still experimenting with my NTL website and, of course, my newest 'fitton' website.

However, I would like you to email me at my new NTL Broadband address, <gerald.archive@ntlworld.com> and not at the 'abacusline.demon' address. Your email will reach me more quickly at the NTL email address.

Archive Private Area

Finally, for those of you who have had patience enough to read through to the end of this article and want to have fun looking at the Archive subdirectory on my new website at http://www.fitton.org.uk, in order to enter it you will need the username and password. I shall change these every month. The username is "archive" (all in lower case) and the password is "amusement" (both without the inverted commas). You can rest assured that Paul will have tried it out and that whatever is on there is suitable for your children to see!

Above all - have fun.