

Gerald's Column

by Gerald Fitton

I have explained how to become independent of your current ISP (an Internet Service Provider such as NTL or BTWorld) by purchasing a personal Domain Name (for example 'fitton.org.uk') from a Hosting Company (such as EasySpace or PlusNet). You can create a mailbox such as 'gerald@fitton.org.uk' on your host's mail server; you can access this mail through any ISP (when you are away from home) using any email client such as Marcel or Outlook Express. Last month I explained how you can receive and send emails through any ISP using any browser such as Fresco or Internet Explorer using webmail.

This month I am going to describe how I use a different ISP to send and receive emails (for example emails sent to 'archive@abacusline.co.uk'). Rather than describe how to use, say, AoL (America on Line) at a friend's house I have decided to describe something which at first many of you will consider a remarkable choice. Bear with me. I shall describe how I use my mobile 'phone in conjunction with my PDA or laptop to browse the internet and to communicate by email when I am anywhere - or, indeed, in the middle of nowhere!

The First Step

Be sure to buy the right type of 'phone!

I bought a Samsung Z500. Well, that's not quite true. I didn't pay anything directly up front for the 'phone because O2 (formerly BT Cellnet) gave it to me as a free upgrade.

Before upgrading to the Samsung I had a 'Pay Monthly' package which has been discontinued; it allowed me free 'phone calls and SMS (Short Message Service - which is limited 160 textual characters). I decided to upgrade my 'free calls' package to take advantage of the extra facilities of the Samsung Z500 'phone. These extra facilities include MMS (Multimedia Message Service which supports much longer text messages, graphics, prerecorded audio clips, prerecorded video clips, etc, up to 100 KB per message), Email Client, Internet access (web browsing) and Video Calling. This upgrade increased my monthly bill from about £12 to £20 but included the free upgrade of my 'phone.

Be sure to buy the right type of 'phone! Many do not have the facilities provided on the Samsung Z500. Some 'phone networks do not support some of these facilities. I am not too familiar with 'phones and networks but I do know (from experiences with a friends) that some combinations can not be set up to do what I am about to describe.

'Free' Emails

The provision of 'free emails' by say, NTL as part of their TV package (don't confuse this with their broadband package which is superb!) and by some other ISPs is generally regarded rightly with disdain. I assure those who have doubts about 'free email' packages that the facility provided by O2 has nothing second rate about it.

It supports not only the use of the email client and web browser built into the 'phone itself but also any email client and webmail (using any browser) set up on any computers (be it desktop, laptop or PDA) linked to an O2 networked 'phone.

O2 as an Email Host

After you have received your mobile 'phone and got the basic package of voice calls and SMS working, the next step is to go to the O2 website and get your extra facilities activated. This is a relatively painless procedure where you send them a valid email address and your mobile 'phone number. They send a 'Command Message' to your 'phone within seconds; you choose to run this command file and it configures your 'phone.

In a separate but related procedure (which you can do on the O2 website or using a 'phone) you choose a Username (I chose "abacusline") and a Password (which I am not going to divulge to you). As part of this procedure, O2 send you a number (like a PIN) via an SMS message (it too arrives within seconds) which you have to send back to them to confirm that the person on their website (you) is the person who has the O2 'phone beside you.

Once you have a valid Username and Password you can switch off the 'phone and use your desktop computer to go to <http://www.o2.co.uk>, click on the link "My O2" and then log in with your Username and Password. You will see the screen shown below. I have helped a friend set up their Vodafone mail hosting; the arrangement is similar.

The screenshot shows the O2 website's 'My O2' user interface. At the top, there is a banner with the O2 logo and the text 'Understand your O2 bill.' Below this, the navigation menu includes 'PERSONAL' and 'BUSINESS' tabs, and a main menu with 'HOME', 'PRODUCTS & SERVICES', 'SHOP', 'FUN', 'TXT', 'INTERNATIONAL', 'O2 ACTIVE', and 'HELP'. The user is logged in as 'Gerald' on '8 Feb 2006'. The left sidebar contains a 'MY MESSAGE PAD' with options for 'SEND TXT', 'E-MAIL TO MOBILE', 'ADDRESS BOOK', and 'E-MAIL'. Below this is a 'MY O2' section with links to 'My Personal Details', 'My Alerts', and 'View My Bill'. The main content area features several promotional tiles: 'Email' (free personal email account with 20MB storage), 'Address Book' (maintain contact information online), 'Video Calling' (share content with others), 'Email to Mobile' (receive text message alerts), 'Send TXT' (send messages from the web), 'Games' (welcome to a new era of gaming), 'Mixipix' (cartoon messaging service), and 'Facestore' (add voice to a character). A 'Go To' search bar is located on the right. The footer contains a 'Other Countries' dropdown and a 'GO' button, along with a copyright notice for 2004 O2 Limited.

This screenshot may be a bit small when printed in the Archive magazine so I have extracted a clip from it which is shown in the next screenshot.

UK 8 Feb 2006 HOME PRODUCTS & SERVICES SHOP FUN

My O₂
Hello, Gerald
→ logout

MY MESSAGE PAD ↑ ↓

- SEND TXT
- E-MAIL TO MOBILE
- ADDRESS BOOK
- E-MAIL

MY O₂ ↑ ↓

Email
Your free personal email account with 20MB of storage space.
→ FIND OUT MORE

Look at the "My O2 Hello Gerald" (top left) and you will see that I am recognised by O2. Also you will see that my O2 mailbox is limited to 20MB. I must emphasise that this 20MB is not webspace but a much more than adequate space for storing emails. There is no personal <http://www.abacusline.o2.co.uk> (or similar) website hosted by O2.

Using Webmail

When I click on the E-MAIL icon (from the previous screenshot) then I access my webmail page. If Paul's printed version is large enough you will see that I have sent a message from my 'gerald@fitton.org.uk' email address to my 'abacusline@o2.co.uk' email account and that I have opened it using the webmail facility provided by O2.

O₂

PERSONAL BUSINESS

UK 8 Feb 2006 HOME PRODUCTS & SERVICES SHOP FUN TXT INTERNATIONAL O2 ACTIVE HELP

My Space
Hello!
Welcome to o2

EMAIL

- Inbox
- Compose
- Address Book
- Preferences
- Personal Folders
 - Inbox
 - Drafts
 - Sent Mail
 - Sent
 - Tests
 - Trash
- Email FAQs
- Email Logout
- Send TXT

Inbox
→ Delete → Expunge → Forward → Move To - Select Folder - 1 Messages, 1-1 Shown
→ Refresh View

<input type="checkbox"/>		From	Subject	Received	Size
<input type="checkbox"/>		Gerald-in-UK	Email Hosting at O2	8 Feb 2006 9:58	1.0 KB

Inbox » Email Hosting at O2
→ Reply → Reply All → Forward

From: "Gerald-in-UK" <gerald@fitton.org.uk>
To: "Abacusline O2" <abacusline@o2.co.uk>
Cc:
Subject: Email Hosting at O2
Sent: Wed, 8 Feb 2006 09:57:58 -0000

It is possible to host emails on the O2 server.

Gerald

I must emphasise that this screenshot (showing the webmail) does not in anyway at all rely on using the mobile 'phone. It was accessed using a web browser from my desktop machine connected via NTL broadband to the internet.

On my desktop (and other machines such as my iPAQ PDA) I can directly access my O2 mailbox at 'abacusline@o2.co.uk' just as I would access any mailbox (for example my mailbox at 'archive@abacusline.co.uk') at any other domain (such as 'fitton.org.uk' which behaves the same way) hosted by any other organisation (EasySpace, NTL, PlusNet, etc).

I can use all the usual webmail facilities. For example I can include attachments (pictures, audio clips and video clips); I can create an address book; I can send an email to any email enabled mobile 'phone.

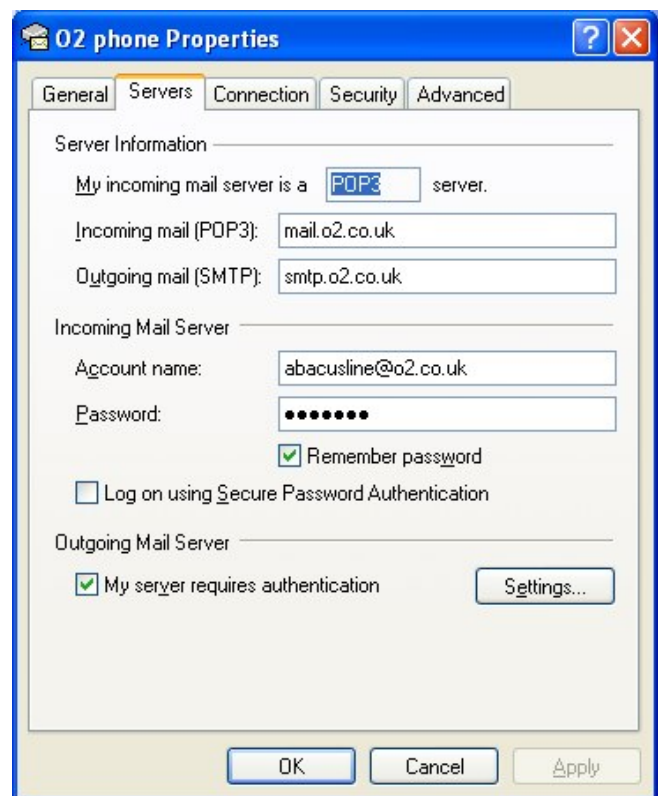
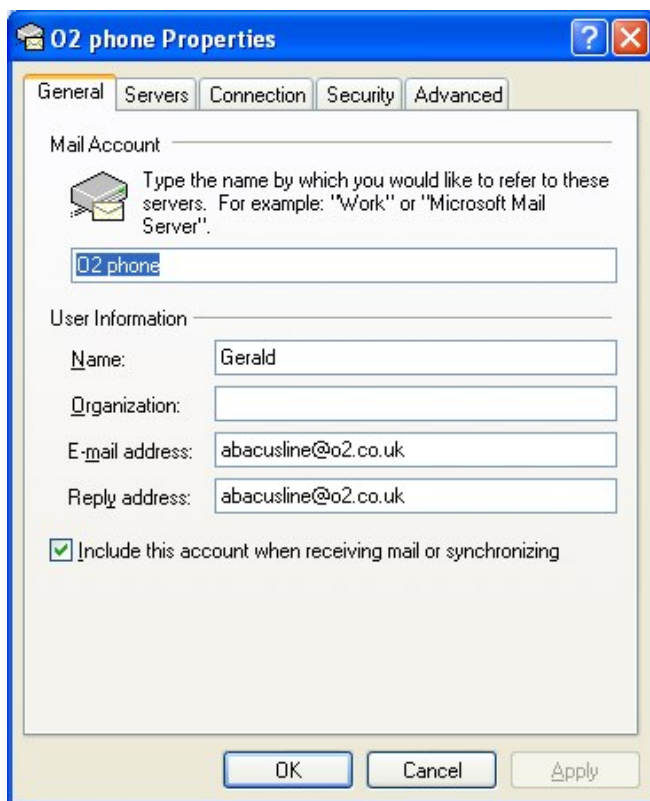
Alternatively instead of webmail I can use an email client (described later in this article).

The only limit is that the O2 mailbox must not contain more than 20MB at any one time.

Using an Email Client

In my house I have installed a WiFi access point connected to my NTL broadband modem. I have set up some of my machinery (in particular my HP h4150 iPAQ PDA and my Dell C810 Windows laptop) to use this WiFi connection to upload and download emails to and from my 'abacusline@o2.co.uk' mailbox.

In an earlier article I described how I set up an email client on the iPAQ PDA so, to ring the changes, I shall describe how to do it using Outlook Express on my Dell laptop.



Look at the two screenshots. These menus are accessed by clicking on Tools - Accounts - Mail - Properties. I can choose whatever name I like for the "Mail Account". This name is used by Outlook Express to tell me which mailbox it is accessing.

I have used "Gerald" as my "Name". I could equally have used something like "Gerald Archive" or "Gerald GoldLine" but I use those Names for other mailboxes.

In "E-mail address" it is important to write exactly the email address which I chose when I set up the account (and mailbox) on the O2 website. I usually fill in the "Reply address" although it is not strictly necessary if it is the same as the "E-mail address".

On the O2 website you will find all the information needed to set up the email client. The POP3 "Incoming mail" uses the server 'mail.o2.co.uk' and the "Outgoing mail" server uses 'smtp.o2.co.uk'. For incoming mail I have to be recognised by my "Account name" of 'abacusline@o2.co.uk' and I have to enter my "Password".

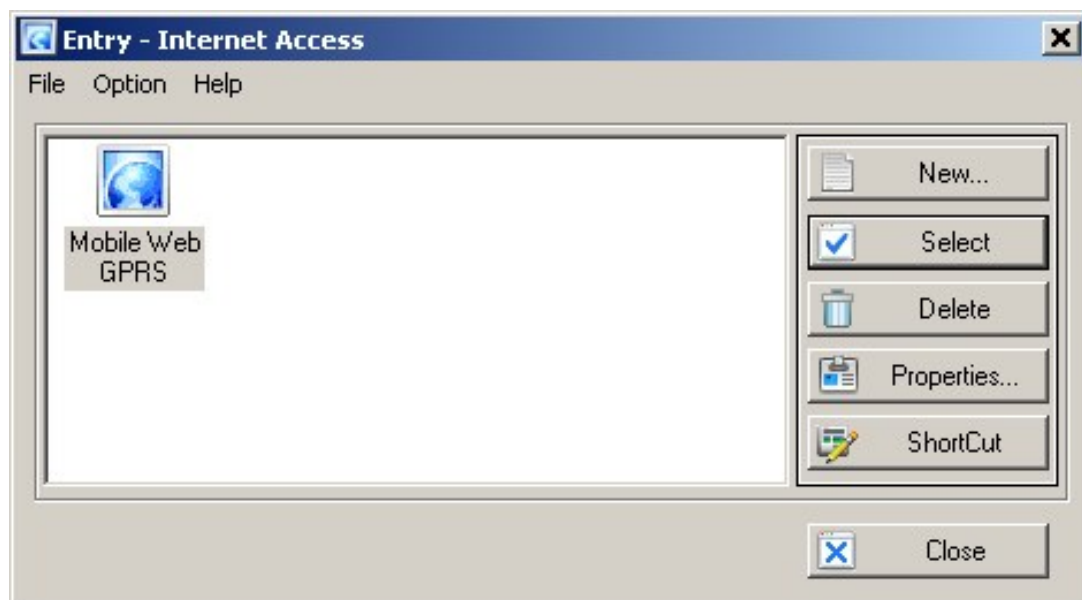
Some servers, more as every week goes by, require authentication for mail sent to their smtp server (to which you send your mail) so, in order to be ready for this I tick the box in the section "Outgoing Mail Server". I don't know the ins and outs of this but the phrase "open relay" (whatever that means) seems to be relevant to this feature.

Finally, although I have not included a screen shot of this, in the "Advanced" submenus I choose to leave copies of my emails on the server (in my 'abacusline@o2.co.uk mailbox') from most of my machines (including the mobile 'phone). I have set up the email client on what I regard as my 'Master' machine so that after 10 days they are deleted automatically (this prevents me exceeding the 20MB limit). Leaving copies of all emails on the server ensures that if I access my mailbox from, say my iPAQ, the emails will still be there when I look for them from my laptop or desktop machines.

Laptop to O2 Mobile ISP

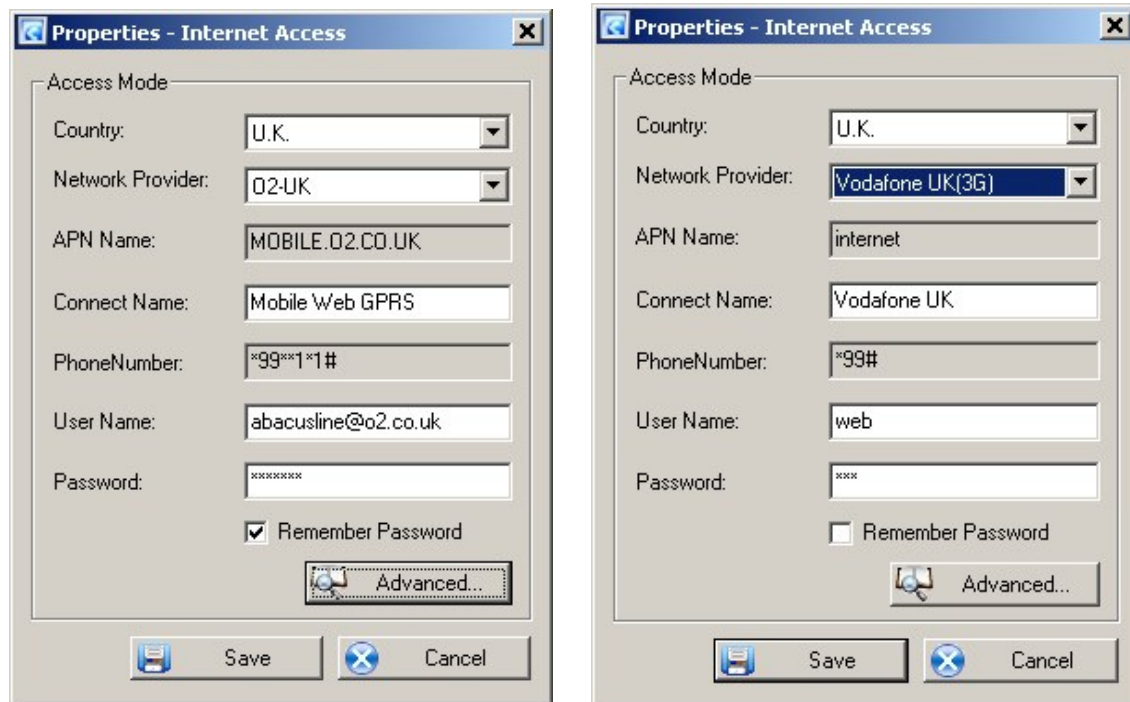
My laptop is a secondhand Dell C810 running Windows 2000; I use Internet Explorer as my principal browser and Outlook Express as my principal email client. One of the reasons I have made this choice is that am regularly asked to help friends and neighbours and I need to keep my hand in with the way these packages work.

Samsung provide a CD with their Z500 mobile 'phone. Running this CD on the laptop allows me to use a cable (which runs between the USB port of the laptop and the 'phone) as the means of linking the two.



Once physically linked, clicking on Setup returns the rather uninspiring screen shown in the screenshot. It does show that the 'phone is connected to the GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) mobile network rather than the slower WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) network.

This uninspiring screen is the entry point for setting up the Samsung 'phone on any mobile network. Look at the two screenshots below.



I have set up my own Samsung Z500 to work with O2 and I have set up my friend's Z500 to use the Vodafone mobile network. When I say "I have set up" this is a bit exaggerated because Samsung have done all the hard work.

Clicking on the down arrow at the end of the "Country" box allows me to select "U.K." I have been assured that I can go all over the world (with my laptop and Z500) and send and receive emails with little or no trouble - but perhaps some expense! The down arrow alongside "Network Provider" produces a list which includes not only "O2-UK" and "Vodafone UK(3G)" but many other 'phone network providers as well. If you want to know what the list includes then please write to 'archive@abacusline.co.uk' and I'll let you know whether your mobile network provider is supported by the Samsung utility.

The "PhoneNumber" field is filled in automatically from the Samsung CD. You will see that for the "O2-UK" network it is the rather strange number "*99**1*1#" and that the "Vodafone UK(3G)" number is "*99#". My research indicates that this number varies not only from network to network but also from mobile 'phone to 'phone.

I have completed the "User Name" and "Password" fields for my O2 account but I have left the default "User Name" and "Password" showing in the "Vodafone UK(3G)" screenshot. If you have accessed the Vodafone website and created for yourself an email account then you will have a "User Name" and "Password" for these fields.

I do not need to change the email client in any way to use the 'phone rather than NTL!

iPAQ to O2 Mobile ISP

Rather than use a cable (USB to 'phone) as I did with my laptop I have used a Bluetooth connection to link the HP h4150 iPAQ PDA to the Samsung Z500 mobile 'phone.

The method is very similar except that, instead of using the Samsung CD to 'drive' the physical connection and select the appropriate magic "PhoneNumber" I had to set up the Bluetooth link and configure details such as the mail servers and "PhoneNumber" manually. The experience of getting it all working on the laptop helped considerably.

The iPAQ sees the Samsung 'phone as a dial-up modem with the rather strange 'phone number "*99**1*1#". Otherwise it behaves exactly like any other dial-up connection with a speed just over 100kbps.

Once again, I do not need to change my iPAQ email client settings in any way whatsoever. I can use the email client via the 'phone in exactly the same way as I use its WiFi facility in conjunction with my NTL broadband.

In Use

The physical USB to 'phone link allows access from the Dell C810 laptop to the internet at a little more than 200kbps and the Bluetooth link from the iPAQ at around 100kbps.

As soon as the connection is established between the C810 and the 'phone it is possible to browse the internet with any browser (eg Netscape Navigator), to download streaming audio and video (at up to 200kbps) and to use webmail. It is also possible to use any email client (eg Eudora) to send and receive emails. Indeed, apart from the slower speed, you wouldn't know the difference between using the 'phone and using a WiFi broadband link.

It is not necessary to use the 'abacusline@o2.co.uk' email address with the O2 'phone. Indeed, I have used it not only with 'gerald@fitton.org.uk', 'archive@abacusline.co.uk', 'lwt@abacusline.co.uk', 'goldline@abacusline.co.uk' but also many other email addresses I keep up my sleeve for an emergency. The combination behaves exactly in the same way, with the same browsers and email clients as it does when I am using NTL as my ISP.

In January 2006 I used the C810 + Z500 combination to help a friend look for a holiday. It took her several days to decide which holiday she wanted and, as a consequence, I logged over 10MB of downloads. I did expect that my £20 per month subscription wouldn't cover this extravagant use of bandwidth but, to my great surprise, I haven't been charged a penny more! Of course, this may be a mistake by O2. It may catch up with me sooner or later or it may be some flaw in their charging system. It may be part of an introductory package or even part of my existing package. I simply don't know and care little. I like it!

Summary

If you do not have an ISP or if you are considering changing your ISP then you could do a lot worse than paying O2 for a mobile 'phone package which includes the O2 mobile ISP and free email hosting which can be used with any ISP, for webmail and any email client.

You can still buy domains with websites such as 'abacusline.co.uk' or 'fitton.org.uk' and set up mailboxes such as 'gerald@fitton.org.co.uk' on servers which host those domains. These mailboxes (and webspace at your domain) can be accessed through O2 mobile ISP.

I have been asked (by a friend) whether it was possible for him to upload html, jpeg and (streaming) video files to his website using 'ftp' via a mobile 'phone'. So I went to his house; we hooked up his computer to my mobile 'phone; it worked fine.

To his great surprise the upload was faster using my Samsung Z500 'phone than with his ADSL broadband connection. We discussed the "A" in ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line). Typically a 1Mbps broadband connection downloads at around 1Mbps but uploads at only one tenth of this speed, 100Kbps. It would seem that the 'phone is a symmetrical connection. Perhaps this is so that it can run 'Video Calling', a two way live video stream between two suitably configured, 3G mobile 'phones.

In summary: O2 provides an excellent, free email hosting service which does not require you to use the 'phone to send and receive your emails; you can use any ISP to access your O2 mailbox. O2 (and other mobile network operators) provide an ISP service via the 'phone (if you have a suitable 'phone) with which you can use any computer running any email client.

The same email client using the same account details (eg 'lwt@abacusline.co.uk') can be used with whichever ISP (eg NTL broadband or O2 mobile) is most appropriate to your situation. If you are at home then you might use, like me, NTL cable broadband. When you are at the top of a mountain sending digital pictures of the view then O2 mobile is the ISP which is most appropriate.

Fireworkz for Windows

The release on CD of the 32 bit version of Fireworkz for Windows, V 1.33, looks as if it something users of Fireworkz have wanted for a long time if only because it supports long filenames. More details (prices etc) can be found at <http://www.abacusline.co.uk>.

Communication

For Archive correspondence, please write to me at <archive@abacusline.co.uk>. For Living with Technology, please use <lwt@abacusline.co.uk>. Finally, for technical assistance with PipeDream or Fireworkz, please write to <goldline@abacusline.co.uk>.

Please do not write to me at <gerald@fitton.org.uk> because, unless you are on my 'white' list, your email will bounce.

The website I use for Archive matters is at <http://archive.abacusline.co.uk>. This is a third level subdomain (there is no "www" in the URL) and it is password protected with the Username "archive" and the Password "amusement". So please be 'amused'.