

The meeting on Monday 14th February 2017 will be at 7pm the **Members Only Special Offers**  
 St. John Balcombe  
 (formerly The Hobgoblin, nee The Wood)

21 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6HE



Sir John Balcombe 21 Balcombe Street NW1 6HE  
 Newsbyte                      Paul Foster

Announcements    The AGM is in March, we are open to any volunteers for the committee or to help with meetings

Main Topic                      SIGs, postponed from January  
 iPad beginners –            Chris Mahon  
 Photography –              Craig Jobbins  
 Technical Corner –        Eoin O'Clearigh

Raffle Prize                      Sandisk Wireless  
 Memory Stick

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# A Prairie HomeKit Companion

In "A Prairie HomeKit Companion: Core Concepts" (3 November 2016), I discussed the general principles of HomeKit automation, such as Accessories, Rooms, and Scenes, and offered a general overview of HomeKit. In this installment, we'll explore some of the details involved in setting up the software, and then we'll put it all together in "A Prairie HomeKit Companion: Controlling Accessories" (16 January 2017). If you're impatient, I have a compact guide to HomeKit in "iOS 10: A Take Control Crash Course."

**General Advice** -- Before you begin, you need at least one HomeKit device. In "A Prairie HomeKit Companion: Core Concepts" (3 November 2016), I recommended two categories of HomeKit device:

A smart plug, such as the Elgato Eve Energy or the iHome SmartPlug. You plug one of these inexpensive smart plugs into an electrical outlet to turn it into a smart outlet. Then you can turn any device plugged into it — a lamp, heater, or fan, for instance — on or off by controlling the plug.

A smart lighting system, such as the Philips Hue. The Hue system is much more expensive than a smart plug, but it offers capabilities that a smart plug and lamp combo can't, such as dimming and color changing. For more on the Hue, see "Getting Started with the Philips Hue Smart Light Bulbs" (1 August 2016).

I recommend these devices for two reasons: they're immediately useful and they're not scary. A smart lock or a thermostat is a big investment that might require professional installation, but anyone can install bulbs and plugs. Plus, if you program your lamp incorrectly, it could annoy you by turning on or off at the wrong time, whereas a mistake with a smart lock or thermostat could result in you being locked out of a cold house.

Remember that not every home automation gizmo is HomeKit-compatible — Apple must approve all HomeKit devices, which is an expensive and time-consuming process for manufacturers. Apple publishes a full list, and if you have any doubts, check the box for the "Works with Apple HomeKit" badge.

Finally, when you first launch the Home app, you'll be prompted to create a Home, name it,

and choose a background photo. Don't stress about these choices, because you can easily change them later. The name "Home" and the default background picture are sufficient. You can set up multiple Homes, but for the sake of simplicity, I'll assume that you have only one.

**Setting Up Accessories** -- To take advantage of Home, the HomeKit control app built into iOS 10, you have to add your HomeKit Accessories to it. As I explained in "A Prairie HomeKit Companion: Core Concepts," Accessories are the actual home automation devices.

First, power on your Accessory. The next step depends on your device. You have to set up Hue lights in the Hue app itself and then add them to HomeKit from the app, as I explained in "Getting Started with the Philips Hue Smart Light Bulbs." However, you can set up many standalone devices, such as the Elgato and iHome plugs, directly in the Home app. Here's how to do that:

In the Home or Room screens, tap the plus button in the upper right.

*Tap Add Accessory.*

If everything is working correctly, your Accessory should appear on the Add Accessory screen. Tap it.

Next, you'll be prompted to either type in or scan the device's HomeKit code. That code can be found either on the device or in the box. Some devices, like those from Elgato, provide their codes on convenient cards. Be sure to save those codes, ideally in a secure vault like iPassword, because you need them every time you set up the devices.

*The final screen offers a number of options:*

**Identify Accessory:** Tapping this button activates your Accessory so you can spot it in the real world, often with some sort of blink or flash. This is handy if you're not quite sure which device in your house you're working with. That might seem ridiculous, but just wait until you're setting up multiple smart bulbs with names like SMARTBULBFN2187.

**Accessory Name:** By default, this is the factory name of the device, like "Eve Energy 810D." I recommend changing it to something more descriptive, like "Music Room Lamp."

**Location:** From here, you should choose the Room in which your Accessory will live.

*continue reading this article at TidBITS#1354/30-Jan-2017*

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## Computer Backups: A simple, cheap starter for peace of mind

External disks are cheap and this is all the hardware you need to implement an automatic daily backup strategy. External disks are cheap and this is all the hardware you need to implement an automatic daily backup strategy.

Spam, Spam, Spam — in the Monty Python Canteen — or Backup, backup, backup on your computer — there's no substitute for a backup and it's worth repetition. You can't have too many of them.

I am constantly amazed that few of my friends consider the need for a backup. Those who are Mac users probably do use Time Machine and, of course, they subconsciously rely on iCloud backups of their personal information data. But this form of backup is largely subconscious and most people forget about it.

These days we shovel more and more vital stuff, including photographs, into our computers and simply trust to good luck that it will always be there. It is trust misplaced, however. Unless you have a deliberate backup routine you will surely one day face a disaster. Time Machine could be your saviour, but there is no guarantee of this.

I regard Time Machine as a last resort. Since it is automatic, you never really find out if it is working properly until the time comes for a complete restore after some disk disaster. Most times you will be lucky with Time Machine but whatever the pros and cons of TM, there is no harm in having belt and braces.

I believe in a separate backup strategy that should get me out of trouble if the worst happens. At this time of the year, new resolutions and all that, it's a good plan to turn your thoughts to backup.

Carbon Copy Cloner will automatically run a scheduled backup of your internal disk and will copy only files that have changed since the previous run.

*"This means that if your internal disk fails completely you can connect the backup drive and instruct the computer to load from there."*

While I have a fairly complicated set up, born of experience, with multiple backups and selective

copies, including an offsite disk, you can start at a very basic level and learn as you go.

### *What you need*

Setting up an efficient backup system is very easy and there is no excuse for not doing it now. You won't regret it. This is what you need in the way of hardware and software:

An external disk, ideally offering at least twice the storage capacity of your internal disk. If you have 500GB of internal storage, choose a 1TB disk for as little as £48.

An application to manage the transfer of data, intelligent enough to copy only the changed data to your backup. This is called incremental backup and reduces the time.

CCC keeps a log of the status of all runs and will warn you if anything has gone wrong or needs attention.

External storage is cheap these days. You don't need solid state disks for backup, just a common-or-garden mechanical disk of 5,400 rpm will do. Speed doesn't much matter, so no need to go for the faster 7,200 rpm or the much more expensive solid-state devices.

Backup software is essential. There are three primary choices for Mac users (I don't know much about Windows but there are similar utilities): Carbon Copy Cloner (CCC), SuperDuper! and ChronoSync. I use CCC simply because it does the job efficiently and I am familiar with its workings after many years. It has proved totally reliable. You can download it for a free month's trial but if you like it you will need to shell out £33.75. It's a small price to pay for peace of mind and, when an external disk is included, your system can be up and running for about £80.

### *Getting started*

Essentially, look first at the disk of your Mac and decide what you wish to back up. In CCC you simply tick the folders you need to secure (or, in fact, UNtick the ones you don't want since everything is included by default). At first, it's a good plan to back up everything — providing a full facsimile of your internal disk. You can even tell CCC to make it bootable. This means that if your internal disk fails completely you can connect the backup drive and instruct the computer to load from there. You have lost nothing, you have access to your data and all you

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All the articles on this page come from Michael Evans [www.macfilos.com](http://www.macfilos.com). These and many others are well worth reading.

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**It is produced solely by, and for, LMUG members.**

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need to do is get the old internal drive replaced before reinstating your data from the backup. In the meantime, you can carry on working from the backup disk.

It is easy to select and deselect individual folders to create a custom backup. Initially, I recommend doing a full backup until you are familiar with the operation.

There are now some good reasons to exclude specific data from backups. For instance, many of us rely on cloud services such as Dropbox to store much of our data. This data is available on demand at any time, so there is a cogent case for excluding the Dropbox folder (which, in my case, runs to over 100GB) from the regular backups. You can easily accomplish this in CCC by unticking Dropbox in the file list of your Mac.

Once you've decided what you wish to back up, the next task is to select the target — obviously the external disk drive you just purchased. Finally, set up a schedule. I would recommend instructing the backup to start during the night when you are asleep and unlikely to be using the computer. For most people once a day is sufficient but you could choose a more frequent schedule if you are the cautious type. The first backup will usually take a couple of hours or so but subsequent incremental copies will take minutes. CCC identifies what has been changed and copies only new information.

Incremental backups, which save time and avoid excessive disk running time, make backing up easy. CCC, as with other systems, will keep records of all deleted files until you run out of disk space on the backup — at which time it will

delete the oldest files and carry on running.

*Simple but sure*

So there you have it: The simplest form of external backup to give you belt and braces in addition to Apple's Time Machine. There is much more you can do. For instance, if you are not too bothered about having a bootable copy you can economise by excluding all the operating system files — they are reinstated automatically from Apple as soon as you enter your Apple ID. Applications can be excluded also because they can be reinstated from the App Store or downloaded again from the developer's website. But be aware that you will need to re-enter licence information. And there could be categories of data that you have stored elsewhere and do not need to duplicate.

On balance, though, I recommend a full backup until you are familiar with the way CCC works. External media is cheap these days and there is little point in trying to be too clever.

As I mentioned, I have a more complicated backup strategy. For instance, my Lightroom database is itself stored on a fast external drive and therefore has to be backed up to second and third external drives. I even have one drive which is stored off site and connected once a week to receive incremental updates. Call me paranoid, but it's a spam, spam, backup, backup world if you want to be fully protected.

Don't be put off by tales of multiple backups and complexity. Start with a single backup disk and implement a daily copy. The peace of mind is sublime.

For a more in-depth assessment of backup strategies and Carbon Copy Cloner read this article in Apple Insider: