East SIG Report (Part 2) - July 2015

After the break Dave Botherway demonstrated the latest preview version of Windows 10. For members who weren't at the last meeting Dave summarised the previous months presentation on the notification icon that had begun appearing on eligible Windows 7 and 8.1 PC's. As a MicroSoft Insider Program tester Dave believes the latest preview version of Windows 10 being demonstrated here, is very close to the final version to be released from 29th July.

Features demonstrated included:
- Booting to the desktop
- The new Start Menu
- Task View
- 4 way window split
- The "Settings" windows which replaces the "Charms Bar"
- Cortana, MicroSoft's digital assistant
- MS Edge browser which replaces Windows Explorer

Dave's found Windows 10 was easy to install from the ISO as a standard install and the preview versions have been 100% stable. Time to install will be approximately 30 minutes for a clean install or 60-90 minutes for an upgrade. Dave found two of his favourite older program which haven't been updated for years such as Eudora and Coolbeans happy run on Windows 10.

Windows 10 Preview Version 10162

Windows 10 will be available as a free upgrade for eligible Windows 7 and 8.1 PC's for up to one year from 29th July. The screen captures below are from the Latest Preview version 10162 downloaded in mid-July. As the release date draws near it's likely most of these features will appear in the final release which at the time of writing is only 2 weeks away.

- Windows 10 boots straight to the desktop (Figure 1), not the "Metro/Modern" screen as in Windows 8.

Figure 1 - Windows 10 Desktop as seen after boot up.

- The new Start menu (Figure 2) combines the best features from Windows 7 & 8. The Windows 7 Start menu returns and is resizable. The program list "All Apps" is a vertical scrolling list and is in alphabetical order. When Dave Botherway demonstrated Windows 10 at the East SIG this was a feature he disliked.

On the right side of the Start menu is the "Metro" look of Windows 8 with resizable program tiles and familiar "live" tiles introduced in Windows 8. I've added a few test programs and resized their icons to quarter size as seen in the screen capture below. The Start menu can be resized as I have done below or resized even further to take over the whole desktop if you wish. You can see in the screen capture below that the desktop (Figure 1) is still visible behind the Start Menu.
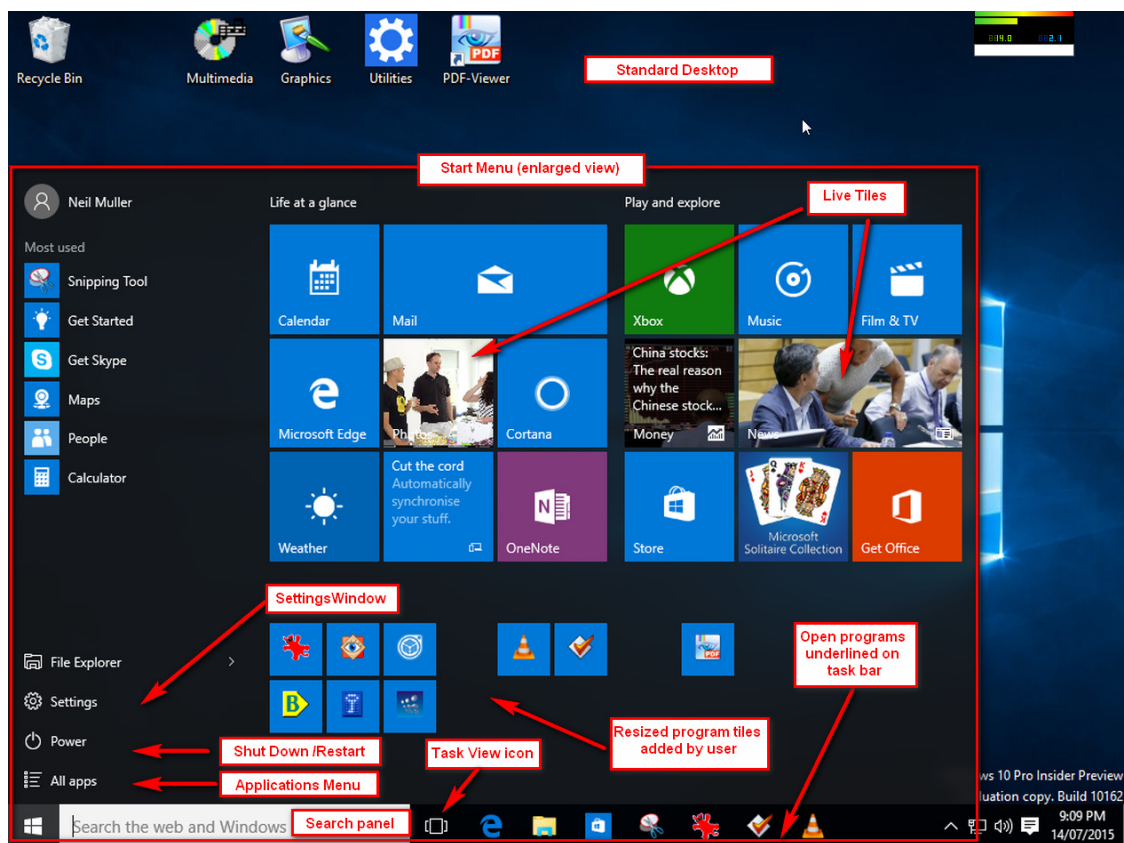

Figure 2 - Click the Windows icon to display the New Start Menu outlined in red.

- The "Task View" icon (Figure 3) located on the task bar will be a very useful feature I believe. When clicking on "Task View", mini versions of all open windows are displayed on the desktop in the same proportions as when minimized. Clicking one of these windows opens it to its current size. It's a little like "aero" in Windows Vista but more user friendly.
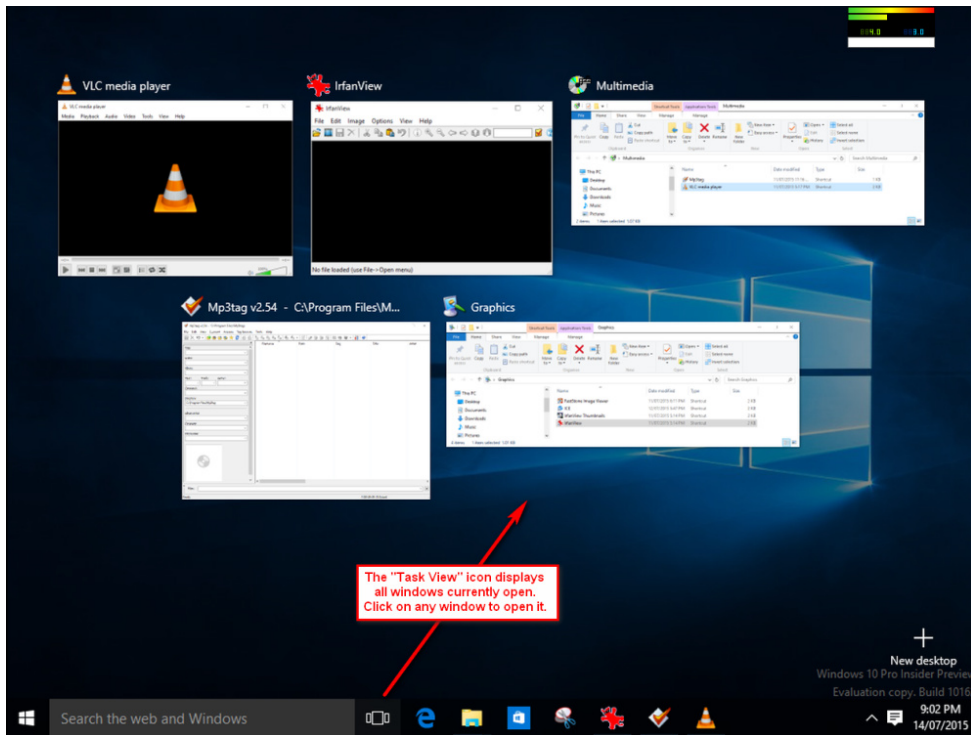
Figure 3 - Windows 10 Task View

- Commonly used features such as System, Devices, Security, Backups etc. are grouped together in "Settings". The "Settings" window (Figure 4) is accessed from the Start menu (Figure 2), and replaces the "Charms" bar of Windows 8.
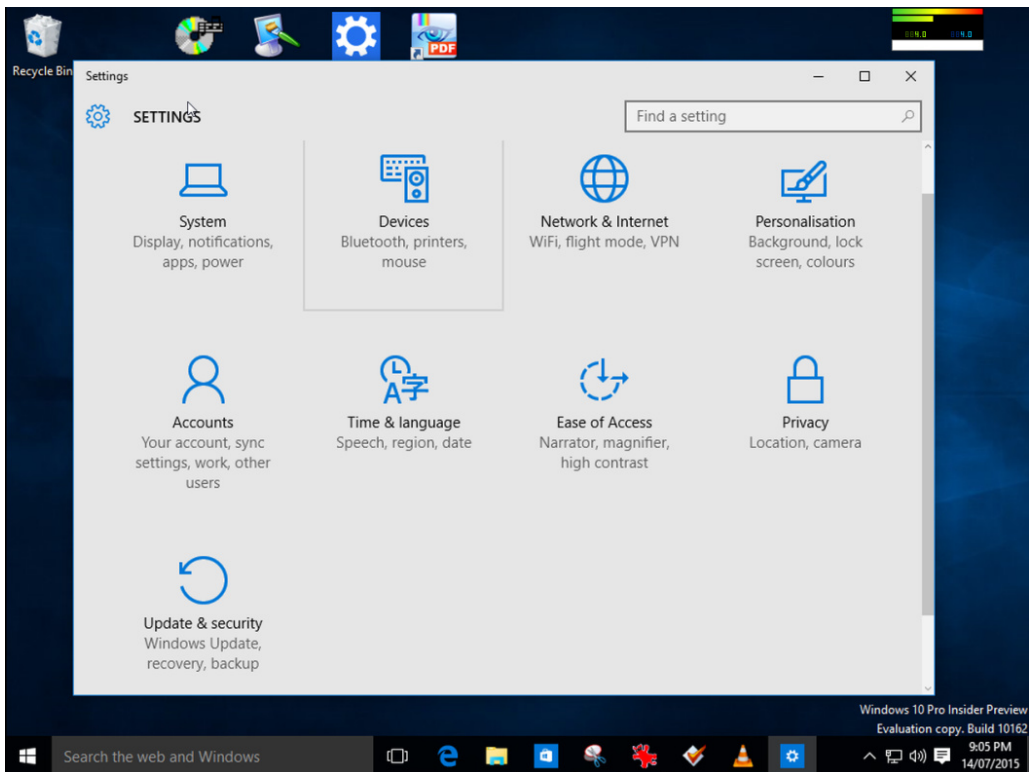

Figure 4 - Windows 10 Settings Window

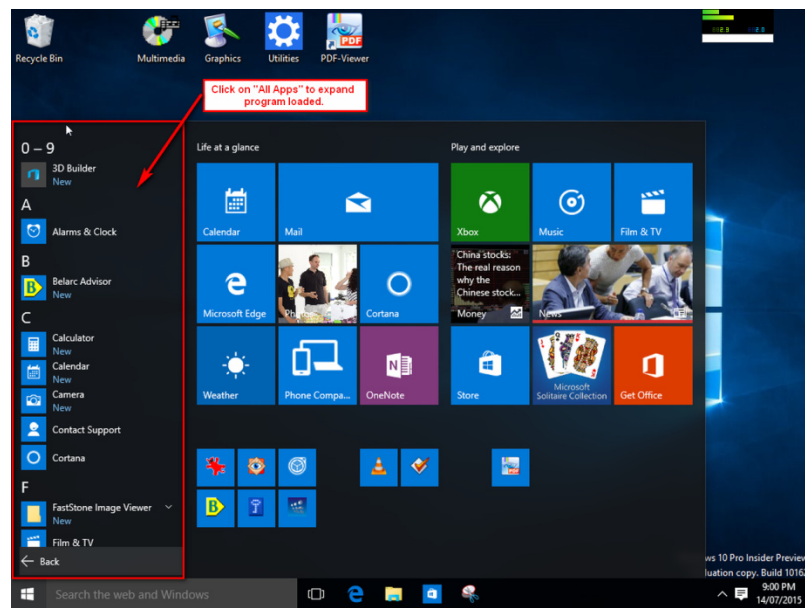- The "All Apps" menu (Figure 5) scrolls vertically and displays all your programs in alphabetical order.

Figure 5 - Windows 10 All Apps menu seen in expanded view

- New to Windows is Cortana (Figure 6). Cortana processes spoken commands and responds with voice instructions. It may not be available immediately to Australian users, the reason given is that it is not yet fluent in Australian English! Dave Botherway demonstrated Cortana at the recent East SIG using a workaround and "one he prepared earlier". I think all members of the audience were very impressed by the accuracy of Cortana's interpretation of Dave's spoken requests and the accuracy of answers given.
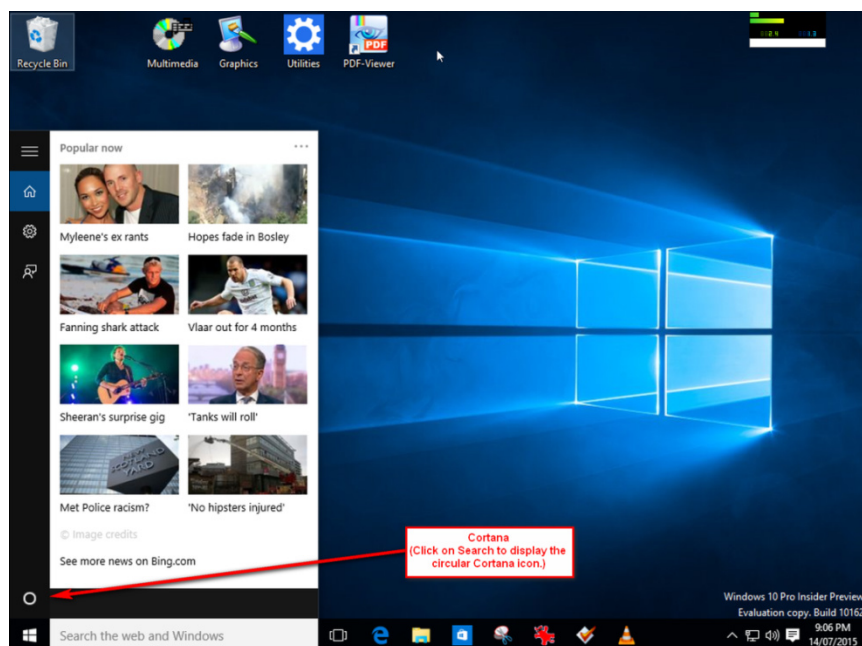

Figure 6 - Windows 10 Cortana digital assistant

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- MicroSoft Edge (Figure 7) is the replacement browser for Internet Explorer. It has a cleaner look, is faster and has a "reading view" to improve readability of web pages. You can add notes to the webpage being viewed and even send that amended page to friends.
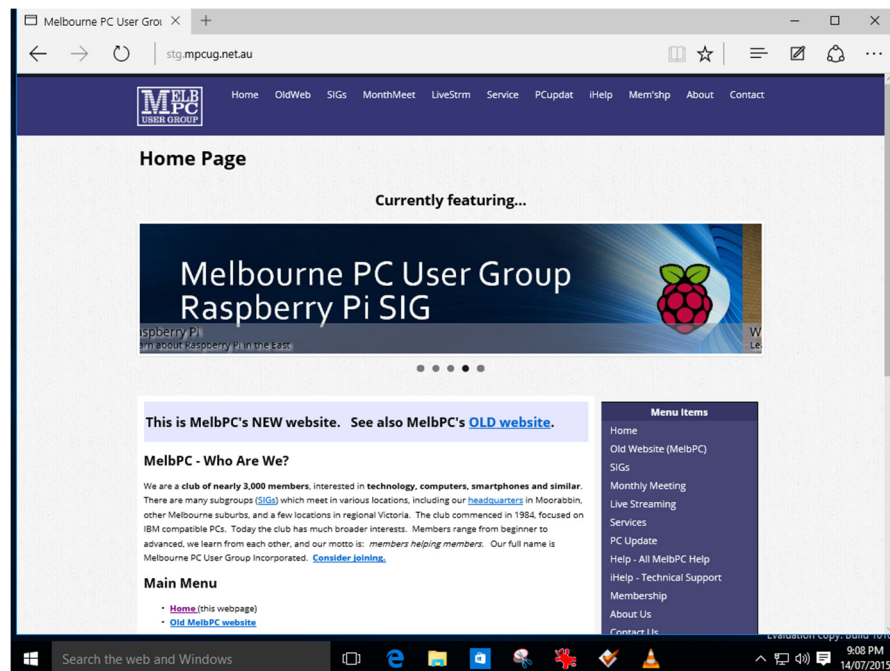

Figure 7 - Windows Edge browser

Other new features in Windows 10 are:
- You can now have a four way split screen of open windows by dragging Windows to the corners. (As the author of this report, I personally prefer a program called WinSplit Revolution. It offers 2, 3 or 4 windows split, has greater functionality, variable windows sizes and works on Windows 10. See article Free Gems - PCUpdate Oct 2011).

- Windows Hello does away with passwords relying on finger prints or face recognition.

- Xbox One games can be played over a network on your PC.

MicroSoft has announced that the free upgrade to Windows 10 will have lifetime support for the installed device. It will be available from, not on, July 29th. Some of the software necessary for the install will be downloaded in advance and the remainder later without the user having to do anything. Typical downloads will be 3GB for 32 bit and 4GB for 64 bit versions of Windows. Once all the software is downloaded to your PC, you will be asked when you wish to install. You can wait months if you wish as you don't have to install straight away. Corporate upgrades will now be progressive updates, rather than the previous destructive upgrades.

Other Windows Insider testers have found Windows 10 is easy to install from the ISO as a standard install and the preview versions have been 100% stable. Time to install will be approximately 30 minutes for a clean install or 60-90 minutes for an upgrade.

From My experience I haven't found anything that I dislike in Windows 10 and a lot I do like. I will initially move my secondary PC to Windows 10 as soon as it is available and after time will then consider whether I'll upgrade my main desktop PC running Windows 7 to Windows 10.

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