

## **Club Night April 2010**

By Dr. Rachel Hooke

Doug Cubin gave an overview on satellite navigation systems (sat-navs). Love them or hate them, these technologies are here to stay, no matter how much you insist that traditional map-reading, sense of direction and plain common sense are more useful.

Doug's company designs software to help manipulate road data for sat-navs and other systems. There have been various navigation systems over time, including early mechanical ones.

The first Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite was launched in 1978. Each satellite is built to last 10 years, but many have been up there for longer than that and are probably still working. The amount of "space rubbish", such as redundant satellites and other objects orbiting the earth, is increasing.

Sat-navs are now the number one target for thieves breaking into cars. You should detach your device and take it away with you. You should also remove the sticky ring it leaves.

There are many tales of sat-navs taking people the wrong way down inappropriate routes. More and more novel local signs are being installed. High vehicles can still get caught under low headroom if they are not careful. Underpasses, bridges and complex situations (such as Spaghetti Junction) can cause problems with the sat-nav reading the wrong road. Hence, you still need an old-fashioned back-up and to take your brain out of neutral.