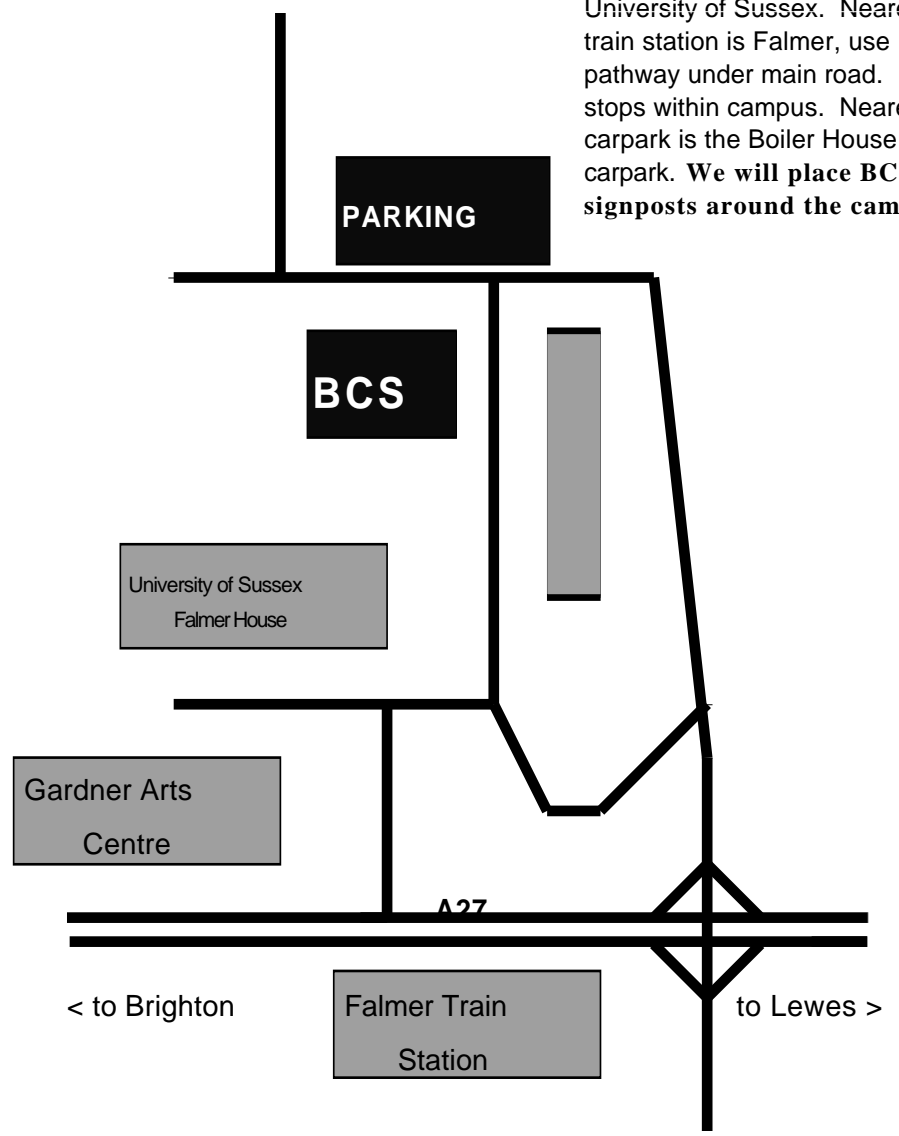


HOWTO - Find Us

University of Sussex Engineering
Lecture Theatre One.

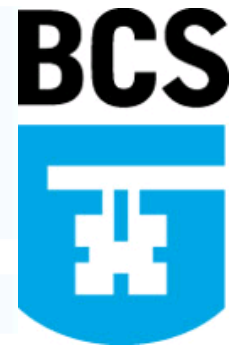
A27 Falmer, follow signs to University of Sussex. Nearest train station is Falmer, use pathway under main road. Bus stops within campus. Nearest carpark is the Boiler House carpark. **We will place BCS signposts around the campus.**



aBaCuS

Sussex Branch Newsletter

February 2003 Issue 26



A Message from the Chairman

First let me apologise to all of those who came to our January meeting to hear Colin Upstill tell us about the Grid. It was unfortunate that Colin fell ill very shortly before he was due to come and his back-up Speaker had committed to another appointment. However I hope that you enjoyed Karl Scotland's presentation on the use of agile methods at the BBC.

I had seen Karl's presentation before as part of the agile Sussex programme and I was much impressed and very pleased to be able to secure him at short notice. In my 25 years in the IT industry I have seen many new methodologies come and go. I had become tired of being told that everything old was bad and only the new was good but I notice that Karl uses a mixture of the old and the new. This reveals a maturity of approach that has been lacking in the past. He uses techniques from simple postcards pinned on the wall through to wikis for communicating amongst his team. It seems to me that he aims to develop the best techniques rather than simply the latest.

I am very impressed with the new agile methods. I won't say that I am a convert to them because I do not reject the old methods. The much maligned waterfall method did work. I have used it successfully. What has changed is the nature of the problem and the waterfall method is simply not appropriate for the kind of problems that IT professionals are being called upon to solve today. When I began my career in IT we had people called systems analysts and they were so called because they analysed systems. The systems already existed and were generally paper based. This meant that the user knew exactly

what he wanted to achieve because he had a team of people already doing it. Thus it was possible to visit the user, analyse what his team was doing (the system) and produce an identical system running on a computer. For this the waterfall method was ideal.

Today there are very few paper based systems left which could be re-engineered using IT. Nowadays IT is used more as an enabling technology. It enables things to be done which could not be done before. Under these circumstances the user often has only a vague idea of what the final system will do and this is where the agile methods come into their own. Karl's work on interactive television at the BBC is driven by a need to firm up a relatively vague requirement in a short space of time and it's an excellent example of the kind of problem that faces the IT professional today.

It amused me to speculate that agile methods might go back a lot further than one might at first think. I wondered what sort of development methodology was being used at Bletchley Park by Alan Turing and the other mathematicians working on the Colossus computer. I expect that, out of necessity, it would have needed to have been fairly agile!

The next branch meeting, which he is going to take place on Wednesday the 19th February, is an unusual one in two respects. Firstly it is going to take place in the library at Longhill School in Rottingdean. Secondly our target audience will not be IT professionals but do not let that deter you from attending. You have probably heard of the ECDL which is a user level qualification that has been promoted with great success by the BCS. In fact it has made the BCS very wealthy! Longhill school has applied for special status as centre of IT excellence and we have been invited to

present to school managers and suchlike from Longhill, and other invited schools, the advantages of ECDL. So, if you are working in the educational sector try and persuade your colleagues who are not directly involved in IT to come to this meeting and learn more about how they can use IT to leverage their work and make themselves more efficient. As usual attendance is free and there will be a buffet before the meeting which will start at 7.30. As a society we must not rest on our laurels and we need to promote the ECDL not only for its earning capacity but also for the prestige and publicity that it draws to the society so please encourage as many people as you can to come to this meeting.

I have had a couple more responses to my question about accessing my ethernet network over several computers from an ISDN line.

Trevor Baxter wrote "You should be able to set your OS up to do Internet connection sharing With an internal card. I had mine set up that way until I got a spare Cisco router to play with. If you use 2000 or XP Pro on your machine as I do set-up the connection sharing then just point your Other machines at it as the default gateway."

Basil Rickard wrote "We run a 4 PC Ethernet LAN at home, connected to the Internet through an Eicon DIVA ISDN modem. Modem is a misnomer, for modem, read router. Unlike ADSL there is no contention. ISDN at 64K (if you do not already have it) may turn out to be surprisingly faster than an alleged 56K modem

running over a dirty line - virtually no errors and re-transmissions on ISDN. It may be worth while finding out what protocols and compression algorithms are supported by your ISP since it may effect your choice of router, your ability to run at 128K and the call costs of doing so.". My thanks to them both for their contributions.

I have heard via the grapevine that some of the people to whom this electronic version of Abacus is being sent to do not wish to receive it. If that is the case please contact BCS head office and ask for your name to be removed from the Sussex branch mailing list. You will then not receive Abacus any more. However you will not receive any other communications from the branch either and you will have to rely on visiting our web site to keep up-to-date with branch news. One recipient was quite vitriolic about a previous edition of Abacus referring to it as "spam". This branch has distributed a newsletter as far back as I can remember and all that has changed is that we are now distributing it electronically. It has always been produced by volunteers and therefore may not be to the high standard of a professionally produced magazine. The subject line of this e-mail clearly states what it is and if you don't like it you are not forced to read it!

And a final note - we are going to have another go at running a presentation on the Grid later in the year.

Rupert Harper

Your Committee

Chairman, Public Relations, Meetings Co-ordinator

Rupert Harper, 168a The Street, Clapham, Worthing, BN13 3UU.

Tel: 01903 871401; email:rupert@harpertec.co.uk

Hon Secretary

David Braund, 17 Coopers Close, Burgess Hill, RH15 8AN

Tel: 01444 243599; email:david@raven17.freereserve.co.uk

Hon Treasurer, Education Liaison

Norman Sansom, 44 Fitzjohn Road, Lewes, BN7 1PR

Tel: 01273 47240; email:j.n.sansom@bton.ac.uk

Branches Board, Universities Liaison

Roy Newell, 21 Hartlington Villas, Hove, BN3 6HF

Tel: 01273 881957; email:ranewell@pavilion.co.uk

aBaCuS Editor, Membership Secretary

Stephen Ticehurst, 43 Lynchet Close, Brighton, BN1 7FP

Tel: 01273 541260; email:sticehurst@bcs.org.uk

YPG

Marrisa Parsons email:m_rabbit@hotmail.com

Committee Members

Gavin Ritchie, 22a St. James Street, Brighton, BN2 1RF

Tel: 01273 605834; email:gavin@brightonsx.freereserve.co.uk

Adrian Thomas, email: a.thomas@sussex.ac.uk

Peter Wilkinson, 116 Mill Lane, Portslade, East Sussex, BN41 2FH

Tel: 07041 471146 email:peter@stratagemuk.co.uk

BCS Sussex Mailing List

We email to BCS Sussex members using lists received from BCS headquarters. This mailing is occasional, read-only, and details only available to the newsletter editor and the chairman. If we have your email details on record, you will be reading this newsletter online as an email, otherwise you will reading the standard paper-based newsletter. If you would like to change this, or if you would like to receive both versions, please email sticehurst@bcs.org.uk with your preference. Alternatively, you can download PDF versions via anonymous ftp at <ftp://ftp.moleville.co.uk/bcs/>





Meeting Programme

7.30 for 8.00 every last Wednesday of each month
Further details from <http://www.agilesussex.org>

Meetings are a mixture of formal presentations and informal gatherings

AgileSussex is a specialist group of BCS Sussex. Our mission is to encourage Agile methods in software development in Sussex, helping development teams be more productive, bring valuable software to customers fast, be responsive to change, and culture a good working environment.

Two streams are now planned. Formal meetings and informal pub meetings. The formal meetings will be held in ENGG Stage 1, University of Sussex, 7.30 for 8.00. The pub meetings will be held in the back room at the Lord Nelson, Trafalgar Street, Brighton, 8.00 till late. The informal meetings will be semi-structured and the agenda will depend on attendance.

The current dates for your diary are included here, further details from the [agilesussex](http://www.agilesussex.org) website and reminders will be posted to BCS Sussex mailing list subscribers nearer the time.

- Feb 26th - pub.
- Mar 26th - An XP Transition, Dave Putman.
- Apr 30th - pub.
- May 28th - SPIN Group, Rapid Process Improvements, Ian Seward.
- Jun 25th - pub.
- Jul 30th - pub/no meeting during summer.
- Aug 27th - pub/no meeting during summer.
- Sep 24th - XP at APS Berk case study, Mark Young.
- Oct 29th - pub.
- Nov 26th - Agile Map, Agile Sussex.
- Dec 31st - no meeting.

BCS IT Excellence Awards

Recently announced by BCS, IT Excellence Awards to mark the vital contribution of British IT to the nation's business and economic success. The BCS IT Excellence Awards brings together two formerly established Awards programmes into a single, high profile event to reflect and celebrate the nation's IT industry as a leading global player. Entries are now open for the Awards leading to a glittering Awards Gala Dinner at London's Park Lane Hilton in September.

David Clarke, BCS Chief Executive, said "Two of the most exciting events in the BCS calendar to date have been the Society's IT Awards for Excellence and Innovation and the equally important BCS Management Awards. These recognised the respective roles of ingenuity and managerial skills in enhancing IT to increase business efficiency and improve customer service. The BCS has now decided to bring these two significant events together within a single annual ceremony. This, I believe, will generate even greater recognition of British IT achievement."

There are a range of different categories to choose from, each recognising innovation, success and achievement. Awards include IT Director of the Year, Young Practitioner of the Year, The Lifetime Achievement Award, and several Technology Awards for Applications, Services, and Systems.

The entry process is designed to be as straightforward as possible, involving registration followed by the completion of an entry form. All the short listed finalists will be required to make presentations to the judges. All finalists will be invited to the glittering Awards Presentation before an audience of more than 700 IT professionals and other VIP guests.

The closing date for entries is April 17. Further details on how to enter are available from Alberto Sbicca at Quest Media, phone 020 73781188 or email alberto.sbicca@quest-media.com.

Text taken from BCS press releases at <http://www.bcs.org.uk>

BCS Sussex Winter/Spring Programme 2003

7.15pm for 7.30pm @ Engineering 1 Lecture Theatre
University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton

Free to members and non-members. Further details from the Meeting
Co-ordinator. Updates available from www.bcssussex.org.uk

19th February, 2003 ECDL in the Community

To be held at the Longhill School, Falmer Road, Rottingdean, Brighton, Sussex. The European Computer Driving Licence has become a user qualification of international importance. It enables people to demonstrate their competence in computer skills. The ECDL is designed for those who wish to gain a basic qualification in computing to help them with their current job, developing their IT skills and enhancing their career prospects. Many school teachers are struggling to integrate new technology into their working lives. This talk will be aimed at headmasters and school managers and will explain the benefits of their staff acquiring the ECDL. Further details about the ECDL can be obtained from <http://www.ecdl.co.uk/>. Japonite, the Joint Advisory Panel on Information Technology in Education, is a group made up from four different bodies (one of them being the BCS) whose mandate is to use their knowledge to enhance the teaching of ICT skills in the UK. They have looked into the case of schools needing further ICT skills, stating that by 2006 almost 90% of jobs will require some ICT skills. Using a computer as a teaching tool requires the user to have some technical skill of the system under use, this is normally the teacher. It is suggested that lack of computing knowledge by those who teach us is a limiting factor and could even explain the slow uptake of computers in school against the fast take up of computers in industry. For further details on Japonite and their work, including details on work being undertaken at Longhill School, can be obtained from <http://www.japonite.org.uk/>.

*talk to be presented by
Chris Slocombe, BCS*

12th March, 2003 Intelligent Space Instruments

Professor Gough is head of the Space Science Centre at the University of Sussex, looking after all group projects. The Space Centre researches and embraces Information Technology, its uses for instrumentation, on-board and ground-based data processing. From their centre they have launched over 80 computers into space, and once launched there is not much that can be done if a computer system reports back an error or a "blue screen". Therefore, research in this area is ongoing in order to make the computer systems more reliable and powerful using multi-processors, parallel-processing, and fault tolerant systems. Once a launch has taken place, the software running on this hardware, both on the rocket and on the ground, need to keep up with the huge amount of data being collected, data that may only be collected once. For this, areas such as artificial neural networks, artificial intelligence, and digital signal processing are researched. The Space Centre is very much involved, with over £2M raised for research funds and Professor Gough being awarded the NASA Achievement Award. Further details on the numerous space projects that the Centre has worked on, visit their website at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/space-science/>

*talk to be presented by
Professor M.P. Gough, University of Sussex*

21st May, 2003 Progress at the BCS

The BCS Sussex Branch AGM will precede this meeting. Over the last couple of years the BCS has been restructuring itself. John will explain how new ideas and initiatives such as the forums will help BCS members.

*talk to be presented by
John Ivinson, President of BCS*