



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This year has been unusually busy for me since I signed up for a distance learning MSc in Investment Banking at Reading University. I must admit to having overestimated how much studying I would be able to do in the evenings or whilst commuting on the train to London. Something had to give, so I forfeited the time in which to play around with new technology and develop the killer software products that will make me a fortune. Ha-ha!

The course has yet to prove itself. The main reason for undertaking it was to improve my business knowledge so that I could answer some of those taxing (excuse the pun) interview questions, like what is accrued interest? Or what is the difference between an American and European option? I won't bore you with the details but if you're curious to know the answers then send me an email or try a search on the Web.

On the subject of software product development, I decided to do a bit of research recently on who does what in computing in the Sussex area. I had an idea to invite local companies that develop software to come and speak at our meetings. I didn't spend too long doing my research, but my initial impression was pretty depressing. Most computer companies in Sussex seem to just provide help desk services, software sales, computer sales or general bespoke development (usually centered on providing websites). There are of course major users like Amex, Schering and companies that incorporate computers and software

into their products, such as simulation or telecoms companies. But there seem to be very few companies that develop software products for resale in the same way that American companies such as Microsoft do. Perhaps I wasn't looking in the right places. If you know of any companies out there that are developing software products and would welcome some exposure through the BCS then please let me know.

In the long run it would be useful to have our own catalogue of major suppliers / consumers of ICT in Sussex. This would help me find speakers, and might help people looking for work, finding sales opportunities or locating suppliers. Searching with Google just didn't give me the results that I wanted. However, this branch does not have the resources right now to maintain such a database. Maybe when I've finished my MSc and start getting bored again sitting on that train...

I hope as many of you as possible will come along to our meetings over the next year. I know it is all too easy to stay at home after a busy day at work, but please do try to support our efforts. Our meetings are for the benefit of everyone in the branch, not just a few. If you feel we are not providing the right content then just let me know and I will do my best to change it.

Finally I hope you all have a good year.

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2006 – 2007

11th October
The Top 5 Insider Attacks

15th November
Digital Signatures and Encryption

7th February
Professional Development in the IT Industry

7th March
Virtual TV Production Technology

18th April
Mapping IT Project Risks

9th May
Branch AGM and Open Evening

Meetings held at the Chichester 1 lecture theatre, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton.

7:00pm for 7:30pm

Free admission
Drinks & light refreshments provided

EDITOR'S LETTER

In case you have not heard yet, 2007 will be a special year in the history of computing. We're not talking about the forthcoming release of the Microsoft Vista operating system. Rather, it is the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the BCS.

People tend to date the invention of the computer to *within* their lifetime. For most of us though, this perception is mistaken. Granted, it is just within the last few years that home computers have become mainstream domestic commodities, encouraged by the growth of the World Wide Web and the availability of broadband Internet access. Because the technology advances at an exponential rate, we forget the fact that computers have actually been around for a long time.

It is remarkable that the BCS is now older than the majority of its members, who have an average age of forty. Indeed, over 70% of its current members had not been born when the BCS was formed in 1957. In the same year a new programming language called FORTRAN was unleashed by IBM, and Ken Olsen founded the Digital Equipment Corporation.

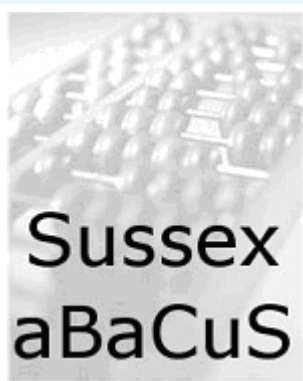
The invention of the modern computer dates back even further to 1939 when the Atanasoff-Berry Computer (ABC) was designed and built by Professor John Atanasoff and graduate student Cliff Berry at Iowa State College. Although the ABC was not fully-functional, it did later win a patent dispute regarding the invention of the computer. Atanasoff proved that John Mauchly had come to see the ABC shortly after it was completed. Mauchly subsequently co-designed the first general purpose electronic computer, the ENIAC, in the 1940s.

In those days, computing was an esoteric discipline, of concern to a handful of scientific and academic communities. One such faction was the London Computer Group, founded in 1956. The BCS began as a club when the LCG merged with an association of scientists a year later. The BCS was incorporated as the British Computer Society Ltd in October 1957, with 1,300 members. That month also heralded the dawn of the space age, when Sputnik 1 became the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth.

Today the BCS has 44 branches within the UK and more than 15 international sections. It is the leading body for those working in IT, with a membership in excess of 55,000 people in over 100 countries. However, we must not be complacent about our success. For instance, only 15% of the members are women, so there is plenty of scope for improvement.

One of the key roles of the BCS is to generate public awareness and appreciation of the economic and social benefits in IT. Another stated aim is to build IT professionalism in the UK to the level that is seen to exist in other professions. The Sussex branch of the BCS supports these goals. We plan a series of informative public talks each year. For BCS members, attendance of these meetings counts towards their continuous professional development. We also run our own website, promoting the activities of the BCS and our branch. All this can only be achieved thanks to the commitment and enthusiasm of the volunteers on the branch committee. Keep up the good work everyone!

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We email aBaCuS to BCS Sussex members using details from membership records. This mailing is occasional, read-only, and details are not shared. If we have your email details on record, you will receive this newsletter online as an email, otherwise you will receive the standard paper-based newsletter. If you would like to change this, or if you would like to receive both versions, please email peter.lappo@bcs.org with your preference. Alternatively you can download print-ready copy in PDF format from our website at <http://www.sussex.bcs.org.uk>.

Notice is Hereby Given - *BCS Sussex AGM 2007*

“Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the British Computer Society Sussex Branch will be held at **7.30pm** on **Wednesday 9th May 2007** in the Chichester 1 Lecture Theatre, University of Sussex”

Agenda

- Apologies
- Minutes of previous AGM
- Chairman’s report
- Treasurer’s report
- Election of Branch Officers

There is no provision for Any Other Business in the Rules, but any further items of business for the agenda should be notified to the Hon. Secretary. Nominations for Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Committee Members should be sent, in writing, signed by a Proposer and Seconder who are members of the Society and the Branch, to the Hon. Secretary. The nominee should agree to his/her nomination. A suitable form on which to nominate Officers/Committee Members is provided here.

British Computer Society Sussex Branch Election of Officers and Committee Members

We hereby nominate (print name) as
Sussex Branch: [Chairman/Hon] [Secretary/Hon] [Treasurer/Committee Member] at the election
to take place at: The Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 9th May 2007.

Proposer (print name) Mem number

Signed

Seconder (print name) Mem number

Signed

Completed form to be sent to David Braund, BCS Sussex Branch Hon. Secretary, 17 Coopers Close, Burgess Hill, RH15 8AN.

BCS SUSSEX BRANCH 2006–2007 PROGRAMME

7.00pm for 7.30pm, Chichester 1 lecture theatre, University of Sussex, Brighton • Friendly and informal • Everyone welcome • Free admission • Drinks and light refreshments • Networking opportunities • Attendance counts towards your Continuing Professional Development • Further details from the Meetings Coordinator • Updates listed at <http://www.sussex.bcs.org.uk>

11th October: The Top 5 Insider Attacks **PETER WOOD, CHIEF OF OPERATIONS, FIRST BASE TECHNOLOGIES**

Over the past decade, Peter Wood and his team at First Base Technologies have conducted numerous network penetration tests (to simulate hacker attacks) and audits for some of the largest organisations in the UK. During this extended period they have found clear evidence that most networks share the same five common vulnerabilities, all of which could be negated by good planning and a reasonable level of security awareness. Each of these vulnerabilities will be discussed in this presentation and illustrated by real-world examples, with suggestions for ways to minimise your exposure to attack.

15th November: Digital Signatures and Encryption **COLIN TUCKLEY, FREELANCE SOFTWARE ENGINEER**

A talk about digital signatures and encryption: What are they? Why do we use them? How do they work? Colin Tuckley, a chartered engineer with a BSc (Hons) degree in computer science, will present an overview of the subject. The emphasis will be on how digital signatures and encryption applies to email. Colin, who has a keen interest in this topic, will outline some practical systems in current usage.

7th February: Professional Development in the IT Industry **NEIL WINFIELD, PROGRAMME MANAGER, THALES TRAINING & SIMULATION**

Continuous professional development throughout a career has always been important. In the IT industry this is even more essential due to the fast changing nature of technology. People working within the IT industry need to be at the cutting edge in order to remain in demand with employers. Neil Winfield will talk about different forms of career development, the importance of undertaking some form of professional development and the benefits associated with it. The presentation will also discuss the route to professional membership within the BCS and ultimately chartered status.

7th March: Virtual TV Production Technology **DR GRAHAM THOMAS, PRINCIPAL RESEARCH ENGINEER, BBC RESEARCH**

A Virtual Studio allows computer-generated scenery to be used in a TV studio whilst maintaining the freedom to move cameras, adjust lighting, and even pull focus. This lecture will review some of the technological challenges that have been overcome to make Virtual Studios practical. You will be shown examples of programmes that have been made using technology developed by the BBC. Recent developments in extracting 3D information from real scenes for applications such as merging real and virtual content, and automatic camera control, will also be discussed.

18th April: Mapping IT Project Risks **BOB HUGHES, PRINCIPAL LECTURER, UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON**

Many advances in IT and software development techniques can be seen as being attempts to address particular project risks; this is certainly the case with agile techniques. Some risks emerge from the external environment of the project and may be impossible to predict—let alone reduce—but strategies can be in place to respond to them. Other risks arise from internal factors, for example from knowledge gaps within the project stakeholder communities, and are potentially more controllable. This talk introduces the techniques of cognitive causal mapping as a means of helping project stakeholders to identify project risks and agree on the measures to deal with them. The application of the technique will be illustrated with some industrial case studies.

9th May: Branch AGM and Open Evening

Often we don't find enough time just to talk with everyone who attends our meetings. Therefore, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the BCS, we've planned an informal open evening after our branch AGM this year. It will be an ideal opportunity to socialise with other people, reminisce about days gone by, and listen to the anecdotes of some senior members. Don't worry though; you don't need to attend the AGM. Just come along and join us for an enjoyable evening of good company with food and drink at 8.30pm, after the AGM has finished. We look forward to having a pleasant chat with you!

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

We are delighted to offer another full and diverse programme this year. However, we always need to plan ahead into the next year. One of our most time consuming jobs is that of organising a series of talks for the coming year. If you can suggest a topic (or would like to speak yourself) then please let us know.

The rules are simple. The committee will consider anything that we think is appropriate for a branch meeting of the Society. To appeal to a wide audience, presentations should be engaging as well as informative. Topics of popular interest include:

- ▶ Computers and education
- ▶ Health and safety in computing
- ▶ Management case studies
- ▶ Research topics
- ▶ Socio-political aspects of computing
- ▶ Software engineering and design
- ▶ Software methods and practices
- ▶ Technical talks on emerging technologies
- ▶ Technology case studies

The list could go on, so do not feel constrained by these suggestions.

All speakers at the Sussex University venue receive a fixed fee of £50 for travel expenses irrespective of where they live. Of course we provide food and drink for everyone at the talk. We will consider talks given by vendors but blatant sales pitch is unacceptable unless you are prepared to pay for the room (which helps the University) and make a donation to a local charity. By the way, we will also consider "edutainment" events, like our Harveys Brewery tour on 4th October 2006, even if they may require payment by members.

THE CHAIR'S REPORT

Committee News

Another year goes by and, as usual, I wish to thank my committee for all their help in running the branch.

This year we have a new Treasurer, Adrian Thomas, who is doing a fine job and still finds time to organise the rooms and food for our meetings. My thanks go to our outgoing Treasurer, Norman Sansom, who provided many years of exceptional service. He is now moving on to bigger and better things at HQ.

My thanks also go to David Braund who has provided another year of excellent service as our branch Secretary and website wizard (see below).

And last, but not least, a special thanks to Stephen Ticehurst who provided many years of service as the aBaCuS Editor. This is something of a thankless task, but it is nonetheless important since the newsletter provides a valuable communication channel to our members. Steven Ward took over this role last year and, given that he knew nothing about it, produced an aBaCuS with the minimum of fuss.

Finally I would like to express my appreciation to all the committee members, including the newcomers Natalia Beloff and Neil Winfield.

BCS 50th Anniversary

I would like to remind everyone that 2007 marks the 50th anniversary of the BCS. Special events will be taking place in addition to the normal BCS programme. Our branch will be arranging something to celebrate the occasion. We have had some ideas which I can't tell you about just yet (since nothing has been confirmed) but it will involve food and drink! If anyone would like to help us organise this event please contact me.

Sussex Branch Website

David Braund has done a wonderful job this year running our new website. It can be found at <http://www.sussex.bcs.org.uk> but if you type *BCS Sussex* into Google you will find it very easily. Some of our previous talks and newsletters are available on the site as PDF files if you want to read more.

Newsgroup

We have decided to close our email discussion group, which was intended to improve communications between BCS Sussex members. The number of people that signed up was very low and the level of traffic has been virtually non-existent. We therefore concluded that it is not worth continuing with this experiment.

Continuing Professional Development

We are retaining the CPD (Continuing Professional Development) scheme because it has proved to be very popular. Certificates are issued to any BCS members who attend our talks. What purpose do the certificates serve? Well, being able to demonstrate an active commitment to CPD outside of the workplace could prove useful to anyone seeking a good appraisal, negotiating a pay rise or otherwise trying to improve their career. I am glad that our efforts at providing stimulating lectures are being appreciated and valued by our members.

Can You Help?

I'd like to make my regular plea for new committee members and for speakers at our talks. Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering for a post on the committee, or would like to give a talk yourself. Also, branch members are invited for their comments, contributions or suggestions for future editions of this newsletter. Please contact the editor, Steven Ward.

2005–2006 Programme Summary

This year I had the honour of starting our series of lectures with a talk on applying Extreme Programming on small one-man projects. We had hoped that more undergraduate students would attend. Nevertheless there was a good turnout, all of whom I hope learnt something useful.

The next talk was interesting from two perspectives. Firstly, the e-Citizen Challenge was presented by four people; David Braund and Roy Newell, both from our local branch, Wilf Voss from BCS HQ and Dan Jellinek from Headstar. Secondly, their talk was about

politics; mercifully not about left and right wing policies, but instead about how politics could be done online. Locally there is a strong online presence in the form of the Brighton and Hove Forum. This newsgroup discusses a wide range of local issues. Anyone with a Computer Science or Politics degree can join the group. I'm just kidding of course! Everyone is welcome to join. To register simply go to <http://forums.e-democracy.org/brighton-hove>.

Due to family commitments, I missed the next talk which was kindly given by Desmond Bokšan-Cullen in place of a speaker who cancelled at short notice. Desmond talked about the enhancement of television closed captioning for deafened and hard of hearing people. He showed a prototype of his intriguing "Tiles" system, which adopts a semiotic approach in the design of iconic symbolism and closed captioning.

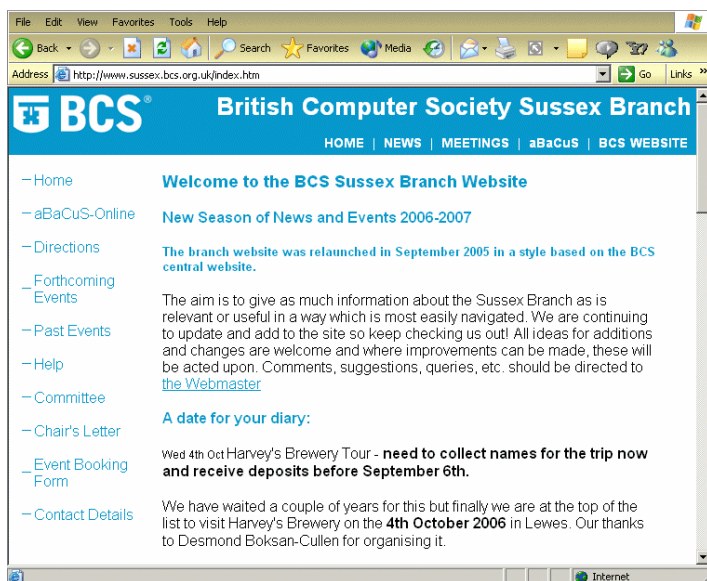
We had a slight change to the programme forced on us in March when the University was unable to provide our usual lecture theatre. Therefore, we booked a video session with the Sussex University Media group, and turned David Cuthbertson's excellent talk on Understanding IT Complexity into a DVD. It is not going to enter the video charts unfortunately, since we do not have the budget to turn it into a blockbuster movie. However, we want to make it available on the Internet so that it can be streamed and watched again.

Regrettably the BCS do not provide video streaming, so we will have to arrange something ourselves (probably from a computer at the end of an ADSL line, which won't be ideal in terms of speed).

Our penultimate talk of the year was Information Hiding by Derrick Grover. This was a fascinating talk about how to hide information in images or other computer files. Derrick also digressed slightly by looking at information patterns and secret meaning in texts like the Bible. Suffice to say that all sorts of clandestine messages can be revealed about the Illuminati, the Holy Grail and the end of the world, given sufficient computing power – and enough imagination! An entertaining and informative evening.

Our final talk was entitled Professionalism in IT and was given by Charles Hughes, President of the BCS. In a sequence of slides, Charles outlined his plan for how the BCS will play a leading role in making IT *the* profession of the 21st century. He explained how the BCS would achieve that goal by establishing standards for professionalism in the IT industry, in the same way that other professions are regulated by their authorised bodies. Basically the aim is to ensure that IT professionals have the necessary skills and appropriate qualifications, abide by a code of conduct and undertake continuous professional development. I'm sure that none of us would argue with those objectives.

THOUGHTS FROM OUR WEBMASTER



Check out our great website at www.sussex.bcs.org.uk

The title 'Webmaster' sounds a bit like a circus ringmaster; someone with a top hat and whip, a control freak who bosses the performers and audience alike. The reality is more akin to an odd-job man; checking that all the signs are still legible, putting up some extra storage space from time to time, and knocking off any dust from the surfaces. Nothing gets dustier faster than a neglected website.

Running a website is similar to software development: 10% planning, 10% design and 80% maintenance. Keeping the website fresh and relevant is what keeps the punters coming back for more. The best way to get it right is to give the punters what they want. So don't be shy, send us your ideas and we'll try to oblige. Remember: it's not the Webmaster's site – it's yours. e-Democracy rules!

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