

EDINBURGH BRANCH



Chairman's Report for 2008-2009

Branch meetings

The mainstay of the events organised by the BCS Edinburgh Branch is our Wednesday evening lecture series. This year we have tried out some changes to our programme schedule. Traditionally we ran our talk programme between October and our AGM in May, with a break over the summer. Our programme was usually fixed up to a year in advance and published on a programme card in September. This year we switched to a regular rolling series of talks throughout the year held (normally) on the second Wednesday of every month; including the summer months. In order to provide up-to-date and topical subjects for our talks we only plan about three to four months in advance. We no longer produce an annual programme card, but instead rely on e-mail and our Branch web site to communicate our programme to our members.

As well as a change of schedule, we have also changed venue. We have exchanged the Georgian elegance of the Royal Scots Club for the brand new University of Edinburgh Informatics Forum building. We are very grateful to the School of Informatics for allowing us to use their facilities.

For the record, our programme over the past 12 months has been ...

11th June 2008	Visit to Edinburgh Airport Traffic Control Tower.
3rd July 2008	HECToR – The New UK National High Productivity Computing Service Dr Mark Parsons, Commercial Director, EPCC
13th August 2008	Cancelled
4th October 2008	BCS Edinburgh Branch visit to Bletchley Park
8th October 2008	The Three Ghosts of Microsoft Security Joint meeting with IET Scotland SE Local Network. Stephen Lamb, Microsoft UK.
12th November 2008.	Exchange of Ideas: Agile/XP and User Experience Adrian Williamson and Jim Williams
10th December 2008	SFIaplus Mike Chad, Deputy chairman BCS Membership committee
14th January 2009	A Revival of Data Dependencies for Improving Data Quality Professor Wenfei Fan, School of Informatics, The University of Edinburgh (This was a repeat of the BCS Roger Needham Lecture 2008 by the award winner).
11th February 2009	People, your greatest asset, your greatest vulnerability? Nigel A. Jones, director of the Cyber Threat Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN)
11th March 2009	Women in Technology - What's the problem? Heather Jackson, Chief Information Officer, HBOS plc
15th April 2009 8:00 pm	<i>Sidney Michaelson Memorial Lecture at the Edinburgh International Science Festival</i> A Gentle Introduction to Climate Modelling, Observing and Projections Professor Simon Tett, Chair of Earth System Dynamics and Modelling, University of Edinburgh.

A highlight of the year was our Branch visit to Bletchley Park back in October. We had around 38 members and friends travel down to Bletchley for what turned out to be a very full and interesting day. We were especially fortunate to have John Harper and Tony Sale demonstrating the rebuilds of the Turing Bombe and Colossus machines.

The Sidney Michaelson lecture is our flagship public lecture of the year and, as in the past, is run as part of the Edinburgh International Science Festival programme. This year's attendance was around 90 people.

We have continued to record audio “pod-casts” of some of our talks. These are available on our Branch web site, along with the speakers’ presentation slides.

Branch Professional Awareness Courses

We have run two Branch Courses this year: one on ITIL and one on Rich Internet Applications (Adobe Flex). Attendance was 13 and 10 people respectively. The ITIL course was run down in Dumfries and Galloway at the request of a local BCS member.

We will continue to organise Branch Professional Awareness Courses in the coming year as we see a need. We are always eager to get suggestions for new courses.

BCS-in-Scotland

The BCS-in-Scotland group consists of the chairs of the four Scottish branches, together with BCS Specialist Group chairs resident in Scotland and other prominent BCS individuals in Scotland. Its purpose is to improve the BCS presence and visibility in Scotland. This has not been a particularly active year for the group. Our proposal to have the BCS fund a part time person in Scotland to provide a direct channel into the devolved institutions in Scotland is still in suspension while the Society stabilises its finances and launches its transformation programme.

We did have a meeting with BCS President Alan Pollard on 10th February. This was during his visit to Scotland for meetings with Edinburgh University Informatics, ScotlandIS and Jim Mather, Minister for Enterprise. We believe that Alan left convinced that Scotland was a different country with substantial local interests and connections that the BCS was not serving. Alan has reported back on a good discussion with BCS Chief Executive David Clarke and that they were planning to accelerate development of a solution to the “Scotland issue” sooner rather than later. However, this is unlikely to happen until the dust has settled on the BCS transformation programme.

At a local level the BCS-in-Scotland group has continued to sponsor the ScotlandIS Young Software Engineer of the Year award (second prize).

And finally ...

All the people on the BCS Edinburgh Branch Committee are volunteers and donate their time and energy free of charge. Without them we would not have a BCS Edinburgh Branch nor a programme of events and courses.

At this AGM two stalwarts of the Edinburgh Branch Committee are announcing their retirement. Mr George McDermid and Mr Peter Barker are stepping down after an incredible 39 years each on the Committee. Both have made a considerable contribution not only to the Edinburgh Branch, but also to the Society as a whole. It is only right that the BCS recognises this service and therefore we have proposed Peter and George for a BCS Service Award. At the time of writing, this proposal is still working its way through the BCS HQ award process. We hope to have an announcement within the next month or two.

On a personal note, I have now been Chair of the Edinburgh Branch for three years now and it is time to move on. I am stepping down at this AGM and proposing Paul Rattray as the new chair of BCS Edinburgh Branch. I am happy to remain on the Edinburgh Branch Committee in what ever role my colleagues deem appropriate.

Mike Hurst
13th May 2009