THE COMPUTER CONSERVATION SOCIETY

CCS/06/2003

Minutes of the Thirteenth Annual General Meeting, held at 2.00 pm on Thursday 29th May 2003 in the Director's Suite at the Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2DD.

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1. Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed about 70 members to the AGM.

2. Minutes of the 12th AGM.
   Agreed subject to changing the 2nd paragraph of minute 2 to amend "mathematical" to "statistical" in line 3 and delete "from Imperial College".

3. Chairman's Report
   In the Christian calendar, today is Ascension Day. How appropriate that today is the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest. While that in itself is not directly relevant to computing, it has some general and applicable significance. It represented a major achievement in overcoming a challenge regarded as substantial by the climbing fraternity. It stretched the limits of the then-available technology for high-altitude climbing, and it was a journey into the unknown in several respects. Since that first ascent, Everest has been climbed many times, so that there seems less magic about the challenge. The relative ease of current journeys does not, however, detract from the achievement of the pioneers.

   So with Computing; the universality of PCs/PSAs/Mobiles etc and, perhaps, their ease of use (to some, anyway) might suggest that the challenges which were faced in the early days are not only forgotten but were, perhaps, illusory. Not so, I feel.

   Last week's FT had an article which noted that mainframes are coming back into use, at the expense of 'servers', and it bemoaned the lack of relevant skills among the current generation of practitioners. It is only, apparently, among people aged over 50 that one can find the ability to program in Cobol and control the big behemoths which many of us thought had been written off. Perhaps there is, after all, a generally recognised life after retirement - but we knew that, didn't we.

   A few years ago I had occasion to produce a cv, and I started with what I thought were the notable bits - first with the claim to have 'made computers work in a commercial environment when it was a real challenge to do so.' That claim leads me to ask for input to a possible article in Resurrection - what do you, practitioners from those early days, regard as your achievements when you were faced with the unknown, or the inadequacies of technology, or the seemingly impossible demands on the technology of the time and its capabilities. If we don't tell today's generation what we faced up to and overcame, nobody will henceforward appreciate the difficulties we experienced. So please e-mail or write to me with serious or anecdotal memories of personal challenges and achievements with the 1st and 2nd generations of computers.

Celebration of the first ascent of Everest calls to mind anniversaries of 'first steps' in Computing, in which CCS has had, and continues to have, a role. We were involved in the rebuild of the 'Baby' 5 years ago. We are now seeing significant achievements in the rebuild of Colossus and the Bombe at Bletchley Park, and our next year's programme will see a focus on other early achievements in the industry, to be expanded after this agm.

So CCS continues to be very active in its many projects. In its regular programme of meetings, in London and in Manchester, a variety of aspects of early computing has been explored, most notably the recent recount of the development of Orion, and a tour de force by John Harper in describing (at BP itself) the progress of the Bombe rebuild. We look forward to a continuing, stimulating programme in the forthcoming year.

As this is my last report as Chairman, I want to express my thanks to all the members of the CCS Committee for their commitment and efforts. I would note as visible results the progress of Colossus and the Bombe - the latter marked by the presentation of a plaque to the team by the President of BCS at the recent Specialist Group's Assembly at Bletchley Park, which strongly featured the CCS. That plaque added to the magnificent award by BCS of £20,000 over 2 years to the Bombe project.

We welcomed to the committee, as new members, Michelle Collier-Moore and Kevin Murrell, who have transformed the Computer Museum at BP; Jeffrey Darlington of the PRO, Xerxes Mazda of the Science Museum (the new manager of Collections Access), David Anderson of the University of Portsmouth, and Peter Barnes, the first Hon Secretary of the BCS. Doron Swade, who is no longer with the Science Museum, has agreed to continue on the committee in a personal capacity. Three past presidents have retired - Sandy Douglas, Graham Morris and Brian Oakley, and so have John Southall, the retired Registrar of BCS, and Adrian Johnstone. My thanks go to all of these for their long service, and especially to my predecessor, Brian Oakley, who has continued to give a great deal of time as well as help to me personally. I must also particularly thank the officers of the Society, especially Hamish Carmichael who, as Hon Secretary, has been enormously helpful to me personally.

4. Treasurer's Report.

The treasurer reported that the Gold Account had increased over the year. The BCS HQ allocation of £3,500 had met almost all the costs of Resurrection. A small surplus had been earned from the subscriptions to the Annals due mainly to exchange rate movements. Working party expenditure was down reflecting a reduced level of activity. The Bombe project had been supported until the BCS support had arrived.

Jeff Hillmore suggested it would be clearer to treat the BCS HQ Allocation as income on the I&E account rather than on the Balance Sheet. The Treasurer concurred.

Members were thanked by the Treasurer for their support through the voluntary subscription of £10. The meeting agreed to leave the suggested subscription unchanged.

5. Election of Officers
   Chairman – Roger Johnson. Proposed by Ernest Morris. Seconded by the Committee. Elected by acclamation.
   Other officers and committee members – re-elected en bloc.

   Chairman renewed the invitation to anyone interested in joining the committee to contact him following the meeting.

6. Any Other Business
   Jeff Hillmore proposed a vote of thanks to Ernest Morris, as retiring chairman, for his hard work and commitment as Chairman. Approved by acclamation.

7. The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 2.25pm