

THE COMPUTER CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Annual General Meeting 2010

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Constitution

A new CCS Constitution was approved at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 15 October 2009; the Society's year now runs from October to September. This report covers the extended period May 2009 to September 2010.

Projects

Technical progress in the various CCS projects is reported regularly in *Resurrection*.

The *Turing Bombe* and *Colossus* continue to be major attractions at the cryptography museum and the National Museum of Computing respectively at Bletchley Park. Both rebuilds have been maintained and further developed under their respective leaders who, with their teams of volunteers, have done much to uphold the objectives of the CCS.

The *SSEM* (the '*Baby*') at the Manchester Museum of Science & Industry (MOSI) has spent much of the year in storage while the museum undertakes major rebuilding. We hope the *Baby* will be back on display to the public before the end of 2010. In the meantime, the volunteers that support the rebuild, looking for something to do, have turned their attention to restoring the museum's *Hartree Differential Analyser*. This new CCS project is being led by Charles Lindsay.

The *Pegasus* at the Science Museum has had a less fortunate year. In July 2009 a small fire broke out in the power supply unit causing major concern both to the project and to the museum authorities. Health and safety considerations required a prolonged and major effort to report on the state of the machine, including consideration as to the viability of *Pegasus* as a working exhibit. As the oldest working computer in the world, and noting that another static *Pegasus* is preserved at MOSI, it was eventually agreed to the machine being re-restored. Fortunately, this did not prevent us from celebrating the 50th birthday at a special seminar in May 2010. We are optimistic that *Pegasus* will be back *in steam* in 2010-11.

After five years sterling service, Arthur Rowles stepped down a leader of the *Elliott 401* project, his position being taken over by Chris Burton. Unfortunately further progress has been inhibited by fall-out from the *Pegasus* problem, and the need for the Science Museum to review the health and safety implications of both machines. We hope for resumption of restoration work in 2010-11.

The *ICT 1301* project located at Pluckley in Kent continues to make steady progress, despite an attempt by the local authority to classify the machine's location as qualifying for business rates. A sustained campaign supported by both the BCS and the BBC won the day.

Following many years research by CCS Secretary Kevin Murrell, agreement was reached with the Birmingham Science Museum to move the *Harwell Dekatron Computer* to the National Museum of Computing to facilitate its restoration. As a new CCS project, the work is being led by Tony Frazer and is progressing at an impressive rate. On completion, it is likely to oust the Science Museum's *Pegasus* as the world's oldest working stored-program computer.

The centenary of the birth of Alan Turing falls in 2012, and the CCS is working with the Science Museum to mount a public exhibition to mark the occasion.

Publications

Dik Leatherdale, who took over in 2008 as editor of *Resurrection*, has continued to give the CCS the benefit of his enthusiasm and expertise. Under Dik's leadership, *Resurrection* is appearing at a steady rate of four issues a year, and remains the CCS primary record of its activities as well as being an outlet for much historical material.

During the last year, we have reviewed whether there was scope for a more scholarly outlet in our area of activity. To this end, we approached the Editor-in-Chief of the *Computer Journal*, the major and fast-growing BCS journal in computer science, with a view to exploring whether he would have an interest in publishing peer-reviewed papers on computer history. The suggestion was met with instant enthusiasm, and immediately three papers associated with the celebration in 2009 of the 60th anniversary of the Cambridge EDSAC were accepted. Although published online, they have yet to appear in print.

As part of the 50th birthday of the Science Museum Pegasus, Alan Thomson has master-minded the re-publication of the CCS booklet on Pegasus written and recently updated by Simon Lavington.

Web site

Alan Thomson has continued for a further year as web site editor, being successful in ensuring that the site remains up to date. Alan is also working on achieving a degree of integration between the CCS and the BCS web sites.

Events

The 2009-10 London events programme, ably managed by Meetings Secretary Roger Johnson, continued to inform and entertain members and guests over a range of topics. Specific events worthy of special mention were an afternoon of *Historic Computer Films*, a celebration of *50 years of ALGOL* (in a meeting jointly organised with the BCS Advanced Programming Group), and an event to mark the *50th birthday of the Pegasus* in the Science Museum.

Events organised by the North-West Group included *An Overview of Some CCS Projects* by Chris Burton, and we arranged for this to be repeated at a joint meeting with the BCS Edinburgh Branch later in the year.

For many years, the North-West meetings have been organised by the long-serving Ben Gunn. Ben decided to retire in 2010, his duties being taken over by Gordon Adshead. The Society is grateful to Ben for 17 years of service to the Society.

We continue to be grateful to our two associated museums in London and Manchester for acting as hosts to CCS meeting programmes.

David Hartley
CCS Chairman