

British Computer Society  
Coventry Branch  
2020 AGM



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020, at 6:00pm, by webinar.**

**Present:**

Adewale Ajibade	Rich Bishop	Ada Chan
Irene Glendinning	Iliyana (Lilly) Hristova	Callum Huntington
George Ion	Shettima Lawan	Peter Mason (Chair)
Dianabasi Nkantah	Adrian Pauling	Joanne Pyne
John Rendall (Secretary)	Don Stewart	Gary Walton (Treasurer)

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Peter thanked everyone for attending. George explained that he is a third-year cyber-security student at CU London; he was welcomed to Coventry Branch.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were formally received from the following:  
Margaret J. Low, Yuri Vershini

**3. Minutes of the 2019 AGM**

**3.1. Minutes**

Motion to accept the minutes

Prop: Joanne Pyne      Sec: Dianabasi Nkantah      : Motion carried: ratified copy to be sent to HQ

**3.2. Matters Arising**

None.

**4. Chairman's Report**

**4.1. Report**

Motion to accept the chairman's report:

Prop: Irene Glendinning      Sec: Adrian Pauling      : Motion carried

**4.2. Matters Arising**

Peter explained that the Report now followed a very short and formal style as requested by HQ. He provided an overview and some more details of Branch activity; it has been a quiet year imposed by Covid-19; however 191 registered for the Christmas Lecture. We had to cancel two of our meetings due to the lockdown; those being interactive/training type meetings, and we joined with Hampshire Branch for the Outgoing President's meeting.

Peter also highlighted that we had a very poor response to our Branch Survey asking what Branch Members wanted from the Branch...however we had a very good online attendance for our first webinar...so maybe people don't actually want to meet.

Congratulations were extended to Yuri who was elected to the BCS Council as a representative of the Regional Branches; so Coventry Branch have our people up at the top levels of the BCS: Irene having been involved in previous years.

Peter also thanked John for his work as Secretary, which has now included running training sessions with some of the speakers to ensure they can use the webinar software which has seemed to work quite well, and to Gary for his work as Treasurer, managing the accounts.

Peter further thanked Irene and Margaret for their help in making arrangements for our meetings at Coventry University and University of Warwick respectively, especially as this is now getting more difficult as the Universities have changed the rules for facilities and catering etc. Peter highlighted that the Christmas lecture was a great success but right up until the day before we had no idea how it was going to be catered and it was only because Irene was able to sort it out – while she was overseas – because the price of the university catering had gone through the roof, and Irene did not return to the UK until the day before. Irene thanked the Coventry University colleagues for their help in sorting it, but agreed that it had been a problem, Peter highlighted that this is a risk.

Further, Peter highlighted that we need more active member: we had 14 people attending the AGM, and typically we get 14 people attending open meetings; we just need more people to take an active part as it is becoming more difficult for us to get speakers, we are running out of our contacts. Peter confirmed that he had “used up” all his contacts and had nothing more to offer, this is something that we will have to work on going forwards, how do we develop some more contacts and get some more people involved? This too is a risk the Branch faces.

With regards the meeting schedule, this has been impacted both by our lack of contacts and Covid-19; while we have managed to fill up to Christmas, our meeting programme is by no means full. We are negotiating with a well-known personality for our Christmas meeting, to be held jointly with the IET and IMA, however for next year we have only a couple of meetings “pencilled in” for January and February (2021) and not yet confirmed.

Peter also confirmed that he was standing down as Chair... as he can no longer contribute as much as he feels he needs to.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

### **5.1. Report**

Motion to accept the Treasurer's report:

Prop: Joanne Pyne                      Sec: Don Stewart                      : Motion carried.

### **5.2. Matters Arising**

It was noted that there was an “overspend” on catering, caused by a carry-over of an invoice from the previous financial year as HQ had closed last-year's budget before the invoice was received – it had been forgotten and we also forgot to chase for it from Coventry University.

It was further noted that because the University of Warwick student prize is presented in June, whereas the Coventry University student prize is presented in November, they come out of different year's budgets. Irene proposed to ask Coventry University if they wished to have a prize from us.

The view at BCS HQ is that student prizes do not do a lot for BCS membership; however branches that historically presented prizes are still allowed to carry on presenting them. It was noted that the student prize is three years membership and a cash amount, however they have to apply for the membership, and quite often they do not cash the cheque.

## 6. Election of Officials

### 6.1. Elected Officials

Post	Nominee	Proposer	Secunder	Result
Chair	:			
Secretary	: John Rendall	Irene Glendinning	Gary Walton	nem. con.
Treasurer	: Gary Walton	Peter Mason	Joanne Pyne	nem. con.

### 6.2. Committee

John had been in touch with the committee; it was only Jerry and Joanne who had requested to stand down. During the meeting Lilly, Rich and George offered to join the committee. Accordingly, the committee list is now:

Rich Bishop  
Ada Chan  
Irene Glendinning - Equality and Diversity Officer  
Iliyana (Lilly) Hristova  
Margaret Low – Education Liaison Officer  
Peter Mason  
Dianabasi Nkantah  
Adrian F. Pauling – local IET Liaison Officer  
Don Stewart  
Yuri Vershinin

Irene confirmed that we do not need to vote in the committee.

Peter confirmed that elected officers (Chair, Treasurer and Inclusion Officer) have to be full Members of the BCS (MBCS) and that Chair, Secretary and Treasurer have to take Unconscious Bias training if they have not already done so.

John took an action to confirm with Branches Liaison the situation with “non-BCS Members” joining the committee, and to confirm everyone’s membership status.

Joanne highlighted that as she was helping administer the Branch LinkedIn account and also helping to maintain the Branch website, access to both would need to be rescinded.

Irene highlighted that as we had failed to elect a chair, one of the other elected Branch Officers would have to fulfil the role, accordingly this would be Gary the treasurer.

Peter summarised by highlighting that now we have all these people on the committee we need people to be able to contribute; they must have contacts or people who they could propose for meetings.

Gary advised that his Director has said that he is willing to give a talk.

## 7. City of Culture

Irene confirmed that she and Margaret had been working on City of Culture (CoC) and had got quite a long way talking to quite a few people about putting on some kind of event looking at Computer Arts,

which sounded quite exciting, both people in Coventry and at the V&A...and then it all went very quiet after lockdown. However, what they had established was that the actual “Year of CoC” was jam-packed with events and there was no capacity to add anything new to the actual programme. However, if we were happy to go slightly outside of the Year of CoC we could put on some kind of event – however it is all up in the air now and it is all different. The idea of the original event was a meeting and a talk about Computer Art, but we could now have some kind of physical exhibition of art – however it is slightly more difficult now, but not impossible.

Peter highlighted that this was a one-off event that is not going to happen again and we ought to try to get involved in it – we have not had anything we have been able to get involved in other than our monthly meetings for a while and having something outside that – like we used to do with the Schools Competition – may help with getting more people involved in what we do. Irene advised that one of the things Margaret was proposing was for the schools to get involved in 3-D printing etc. as a form of computer art and other practical things which directly linked the branch to the event, which sounded quite exciting.

Irene proposed that she and Margaret pick this back up where they left off and see where they get to.

## 8. Any Other Business

Gary asked is anyone had any ideas how we encourage people to join the BCS.

Peter advised that he saw this as two separate things:

1. We have an enormous number of people allegedly assigned to the branch -700 plus on our mailing list - and we never see any of them; what do people actually get from their membership? What do they want from their membership? This is one of the problems we have.
2. Getting more members – which is what BCS is trying to progress; one of the discussions which keeps coming up is ‘what does the BCS do for you?’, and how can we ‘sell’ it to a student or new graduate as being something they should do?

Joanne asked if these members had actually paid their membership fees. Peter confirmed that they had paid their subscriptions to be members of the BCS and they have either opted to be assigned to Coventry Branch, or they have been automatically assigned due to their residential address and that is the nearest one.

Joanne further asked if they could elect which branch they want to be a member of, Peter confirmed they could and Irene pointed out that Coventry may be their second branch. John reminded everyone that they could login to ‘MyBCS’ and change it if they wanted to.

Peter stated that there should be many people out there, but we don’t see many of them, however it was interesting that we are getting so many more people signing up for the online event; Gary mooted that it may be because of the time, as the online events are relatively early people may not have got home and had something to eat.

Irene suggested that there was nothing to stop us having online events even after lockdown, we can still have the online presence with GoToWebinar, even if there is a physical presence. Gary identified that we would need someone to “film” it ; Irene advised that it would be using GoToWebinar, however both Coventry and Warwick Universities have Zoom.

A preference for Zoom over GoToWebinar was expressed due to it being more intuitive and “you can have a nice background”. John indicated that this was limited by the abilities (processing power) of your computer – when he tries to use a background half his face disappears.

Peter reminded us that it depends on what people want to get out of it; for example we didn’t have our event with Michael Grant – we shared with Hampshire Branch instead, and accordingly it was all

virtual (with Michael in London) so why do you need Coventry Branch when it's all online. So, what is the purpose of what we are doing? Irene indicated that conversely we are not limited to local speakers, we could have speakers from anywhere. So maybe what we need to look at is mixing the two; filming someone doing a live presentation and streaming that to give our members the choice of attending or watching online.

Don highlighted that there are types of event which lend themselves to physical presence; things where you are getting demos or e.g. putting a VR headset on, which would not work in the online environment, you would not get the same experience. Although most of our events are not like that, perhaps these are things we may need to try to offer more of; the things you have to be physically there for to make them interesting. Irene confirmed that some of the events we have had have been immersive and you could not do that online as the experience would not be the same.

Peter suggested that we may have two different type of events; a real demonstration with hands-on, we may decide not to film it because it is just too hard, however if it is just somebody standing up giving a talk we can offer it online; we probably have the resources for that now. Additionally, that could be a way of encouraging more people to attend: they get an interest in the one type of meeting then they come along to the other type. Quite often the meetings where we do have things being demonstrated do have the bigger turn out in any case; there are certain subjects that people will turn out to and we get a bigger audience.

Don re-iterated his concern with having everything online is that the point of their being a branch disappears because events could just be run from the centre as webinars and nobody needs to be anywhere, and if you watch it on record then you don't even need to be there at the time it is happening.

Rich pointed out that the Federation of Small Businesses has the same problem, accordingly when they put on regional events they make them specific to their region, however advertise them nationally so they are not repeated over and over again, however there are things that would be unique to Coventry that we could shout about that would bring in a wider audience.

Peter confirmed that traditionally branch has tried to provide local speakers for local people, however maybe we could "sell it" as giving them a wider audience, for example we had people from a Coventry company talking about internet caching, we could advertise to the BCS and get people from all over the country to attend. Irene highlighted that even if we have local speakers talking about non-local issues that no-one else has, these issues may be of interest to other branches, for instance our speaker in November is actually speaking about an international interest that is not widely publicised and that could well be of national interest. Accordingly, anything we organised for CoC may be of general interest.

George asked about our relationship with the Cyber Security Computer Science Society at Coventry University, as he is a member of the Cyber Security Society at CU London and a member of the Student Union and would like to speak with his colleagues from Coventry and if they want they can join the branch. It was confirmed that we have worked with the "Computer Clubs" to allow them to come to our meetings, indeed we ran a number of papers evening at which they presented. We are always open to that; however it has tended to be that we have not had any response of late, students don't appear to want to do that kind of thing anymore.

Irene reported that every university that wants one can have a Student Chapter, Coventry University had set one up about 5 years ago, each year the BCS ask to be put in contact with the Student Chapter and Irene passes the request on to the department and does not get any reply...however we would

like to have a Student Chapter at Coventry University (Coventry), however the Coventry University (London) could also have a Student Chapter...or they could have a Student Chapter across the two campuses. Irene confirmed that she would be happy to talk to George outside of this meeting about that.

**Secretaries Note: from last-year's AGM: "It was accepted that any such societies need to have interest coming from the students themselves, and needed to be co-ordinated by first year tutors from the respective universities, rather than from the committee."**

Irene proposed a vote of thanks to Peter for his two years as Chairman ... and asked him to stay on a bit longer until we can find a replacement!

Adrian confirmed that NATS had given him permission to re-use his slides for a talk to Coventry Branch; John thanked him (this will be planned in for 2021).

Formal Meeting closed 18:59 with thanks to the attendees.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Rendall', written on a light green background.

John Rendall, CEng. MBCS CITP MIET  
Coventry Branch Secretary  
15th October 2020