

BEDFORDSHIRE BRANCH

COMMITTEE MEMBER ACTIVITIES 2014-2015 – Sue Brandreth

This year I have acted as Membership Secretary, Events Organiser and Education Liaison Officer.

Working together with other committee members, we have held another successful series of meetings at various venues in the Bedford area. These events can be viewed in our 2014-2015 programme calendar and on the Bedford Branch website.

I have worked closely with higher education establishments in the Bedford Branch catchment area – the University of Bedfordshire, Cranfield University, the Open University, and the University of Buckingham. At the University of Bedfordshire I have been closely involved with the initiation and development of the highly successful University of Bedfordshire BCS Student Chapter. The programme of activities this year included a wide range of talks, meetings and visits to local companies. A highly successful symposium was held in February on the topic of Women in Computing – with seven renowned speakers travelling to Luton from as far afield as Portsmouth sharing their experiences of working in the IT industry.

A major coup took place at the University of Bedfordshire in March when the newly formed BCS Student Chapter arranged for the Director of Google's Self-Driving Cars Project at Google(x), USA, Dr Chris Urmson, to talk to staff and students in the Postgraduate and CPD Centre.

This was a massive success as recognised by David Jazani, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science and Technology, who said "Probably one of the most interesting talks that I have attended was given by Chris Urmson, Director of the Google Self-driving Car project. The dream of getting into a vehicle, pressing a few buttons unfolding a paper (or as it is nowadays a tablet) and immersing one in the news whilst the clever vehicle transfers you from one location to another, is getting closer and closer - well at least in California. But bringing these developments to the University of Bedfordshire by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable person was immersive."

In July the University of Bedfordshire took part in the BCS Appathon as organised by the BCS Women Specialist group with the aim of introducing people of all ages to the programming. This event was part of a Guinness World Record attempt for the largest number of people simultaneously learning to code an Android app. The aim of the event was not only to break the record, but also to encourage young people, particularly girls, to consider a career in IT.

The year has culminated in the new University of Bedfordshire's BCS Student Chapter being awarded the BCS Student Chapter's Most Successful Event Award, as well as the University of Bedfordshire's Student Union award for Most Improved Student Society.

In July 2015, in conjunction with the Northampton branch of the BCS, a Family Day was arranged to The National Museum of Computing, Bletchley Park. This repeated the success of a previous event held in July 2014. The day proved very successful with an attendance of over 50. The feedback from attendees was excellent.

I hope to continue acting as the Branch's Education Liaison Officer in 2015-2016.