Sir Brian Jenkins

Interviewed by

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It's Monday July the 4th 2016. Welcome to the Archives of Information Technology. We're in the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists in London. People come along different paths to come into the computer industry, or to be associated with computers, and our guest now, Sir Brian Jenkins, came to the path through being an accountant. How did you manage that process?

Well fortunately, I was simply told to do it. So, there was no real thing… We were beginning to realise in the accounting profession that computers were going to have a very important effect on the recording of data and the presentation of data and the control of these sort of things, and so that's why somebody had to do that, start that off. And my senior partner asked me to do it.

And this was in 1960?

In 1966.

1966. And you had no background in computers?

Nothing before I started working.

So where did you start?

In my life?

Yes. Where did you start finding out about computers?

Oh well, simply, at that time. I was, at that time, a senior manager in Cooper Brothers, which as you know is one of the big accountant firms. And, so I was used to accounting, I was beginning to realise that machines were having more of an influence on all this. But until Henry Benson, Lord Benson, asked me to do this, I really had, hadn't worked in any form or other with computers. And so it was a completely fresh start when I was asked to do this job.

[01:41]

How did you educate yourself, then, about computers in that period?

Well I went to a fortnight of what I thought was going to be, or what we thought was going to be, teaching me how to programme, so I could get some feel for that. In fact I got myself on rather a high level course where they were transferring from FORTRAN to whatever came… [laughs] It was all rather above my head. So, literally, we worked on it at home. I understood the basic principles of the Boolean logic, and I understood the basic on and offs of the switching, and realised pretty early on that the whole thing depended on that. And then, first put into practice after my few weeks of being, somebody trying to teach me this stuff, we started doing it ourselves. And, I learnt quite quickly that way when I had to program my first programs. [laughs]

[02:37]
And did you have computers in Coopers then?

We must have done, but they weren't in any sense related to the work we were doing for clients. Of course we were helping on the consulting side, we were helping people put in computers and software, but in terms of, of actually doing the work I was doing, which was the auditing of companies' accounts, it was still very exceptional to find a company that was relying to any marked extent on computers. So, we, we came into it bit by bit like that, where we had to respond to our clients as they did it. Once started use of computers grew and widened fast.

And can you recall who your first clients were?

Yes, I can recall my clients. My biggest one was the Post Office, and the Post Office… But we were particularly focusing on the telecommunications side. And they were using computers quite a lot, but on the whole it wasn't in their accounting area so much as their development of their systems, particularly the international systems of, how the hell do you cope with international calls. How do you share and account for income on traffic passing through several countries. So, it, it… Then, our slightly smaller clients, I remember when Babcocks got their computers in, and Joe Lyons and so on. It grew then quite quickly. By the time we get to the end of the

Sixties or the, relatively early Seventies, our audit procedures, the procedures we adopted to make sure all was going well, presumed computers, whereas before then they presumed it was manual, or, early machine type thing, and only by exception would you find a computer. Whereas, quite soon, as I say, a matter of a few years, it switched round so that you assume your clients are using computers for a lot of their accounting work.

And they had written their own programmes presumably, or had programmes written for them?

Yes, I, I…

Because there weren't any packages yet.

Well, it was pretty well like that. And, of course one of the… I forget what the phrase was we used now for those companies that offered this service of building their computer systems, it's gone quite out of my mind. Doesn't matter. But there was still quite a lot of that. And I don't, I don't know, that probably still exists I suppose, again, for those who were doing work for smaller companies, but in those days, they were doing it for, for big companies, big companies were outsourcing their, their computer needs.

[05:20]
And the Royal Mail had a massive system for billing, didn't it, for telephone billing?

Yes.

And therefore you were able to get accounting information from that?

Oh lordy me, yes. I mean they, one of them, the principal reasons for them doing these things was simply to get into the efficiency of computer processing. On the whole in those early days, nobody really trusted the results, and so there was a good deal of checking the results that the computer produced. And, and always before systems went live. Parallel running was very important to make sure that what you

were bringing in that was new produced the same results, though it worked in a different way. Although one of the drawbacks, looking back on those days, which I came on to some years later, was, there was too much simply mechanising what was already being done. In other words, not enough opportunity was being taken of saying, now we have machines that can do it in any way we decide to, them to do it, provided we have the skill to tell the people who are doing it what we want, and the technology is up to that. And, it remained, right through to my later years involved in computers, in the 1990s, that, it always seemed one of the, you'll probably talk about this later, but one of the big problems was to, the interface between the, the top level of users and the computer people. And where real success came was where you had top user people and top IT people who got on well together. And then… And I had some experience of that. That became the real answer.

[07:10]
Right. Right. Do you recall a time at which you sat back and said, 'OK, we can now trust this technology'?

Well, I'm not sure the question comes up that way. The way the question emerges is, we had to develop the skills to be able to understand the computer systems that were being used, and the way they were being controlled, and measure them, measure that, what they were doing, against our definitions of what was proper. And, so, you, therefore you were always looking at what the client was doing, and then to make a decision as to whether that was reliable or not. And you tested it of course to a, to a certain extent. That became quite interesting too, because, in the pre-computer days you tested the data, because, people were doing it and they, they could do each one differently, and so you had to look at that. What we were struggling to do, and I think after my time got probably rather better at, was to say, well look here, these damn things don't make mistakes. [laughs] What they do is, they may not do it the way they should do it, I mean do you know, in which case, all of them are not doing it the way they should. And so we, we shifted our, what we were looking at as auditors, but away from the data, and more towards the, the systems, how they were developed, how they were protected, particularly, the big example's always the standing data, because, companies, a lot of companies didn't fully recognise the, the control implications of, if you've got a price wrong, then that's going to be wrong for

everything that uses that price, because, it's slavishly doing it each time. So how do we make sure that the right tests, right information of right tests are going in originally? And that became a, what we called in our jargon the system development controls, in other words, how does this company make sure itself that when it puts in a new system, that it's reliable? And then we can look at that, rather than say, 'Well don't worry about that black box, we don't really understand that at all; we'll just pick up some stuff that's been produced and see if it's right.' [laughs] Which really wasn't getting at the heart of the problem. Sorry, am I making sense?

Yes, indeed, complete sense.

I'm trying to talk about things I haven't looked at for 30 years.

[09:45]
Yes. And so, you put your name, or your partners' name, on these accounts and say, this a, what's your phrase, true and fair?

True and fair.

True and fair.

If you look at an audit report it says a number of things. But the thing that we have to do at the end of the day is, on the one we're making sure that what they're doing is legal and what they're doing is allowed; then, are they doing it completely and accurately? And that's what brings us into the controls. How are they controlling that everything they buy has been properly authorised, that, you know, and, it goes through the routines which, where both client and us have said, that's fine, provided that's happening. So that's, doing, on doing that that we shifted our attention more to the way they developed these systems, the way they made sure that when they pressed the button go, they were well tested and going to work. Because once that happened, and provided they had also got the controls over the programs and so on so that they weren't changed in a, incorrect or unauthorised way, you could pretty well rely on the fact it was going to slavishly do what it was told all the time.

Yes.

So it shifted our… And so, in those early days we had a phrase that we always used, either you were auditing around the computer, or through the computer. And there was a lot of argument about this, that and the other. And, what we were doing was progressively shifting from auditing around the computer to auditing through the computer in the sense of saying, how do we make sure this computer, what's the most efficient way to make sure the computer is doing this job as it should do? And rather than looking at the output it produced, you looked at the way they controlled how it went in in the first place.

So that's a lot of responsibility, to be able to sign off accounts. Because you're saying to the public, we, the third parties, are reporting to you, the shareholders, that this management has done this correctly.

Yes.

That's a lot of responsibility.

It is. And, we had to, most of my time in those earlyish years was directed at, how did the auditor satisfy himself that the thing was substantially correct? And, that, that was a change. So we were really starting from a, from a zero base, to build up what was the best way to, or a sensible way for the auditor to, to make sure these things were reliable. And that's how I come to write my book.

Indeed. You had to build, then, a team.

Yes.

Because you couldn't do this yourself.

No no no.

Where did you recruit the people from?

On the whole, almost for everyone recruited internally from our audit staff. A number of the firms did it by making quite a lot of use of their consulting experts in EDP. We approached it a different way. So what we're talking about here is audit. The way the stuff is being processed, and what's being relied on, has changed, but the, the attitude and the skill we're looking for is an audit skill, and, that worked quite well. And we had, we had two, we had our, as it were, our standard auditors, and we had a smaller, much smaller group of, of computer trained auditors who really had been through, I think we used a six-week course for that, which we constructed ourselves, to make sure they were comfortable with computers and comfortable with the effect they would have, comfortable with what was to change, things they should do. And, we finished up I think, towards the end I think, in my firm, we had about 100 of these people around the country.

And you were managing them?

No, I'm happy to say I got somebody to manage them by then. [laughs] I wasn't, I wasn't managing it for very long. But I was, I was the partner in charge of it, so I had to build a team, manager downwards, to do this.

And they were spread across the country, they weren't centralised?

Spread across the country. That was simply reflecting the way we operated as a firm; other firms may have done it a different way. But we had computer trained people and computer audit groups as we called them in probably, about ten locations around the firm, around the country. And because we were an international firm with offices all round the world, we finished up with helping the training and so forth of the teams in the same way as we did all round Europe and, and the Commonwealth.

That's a massive organisation.

It is. Well yes it is I suppose. There were a lot us involved. And, I was, I wanted to do two things to have available as figures for you, because I know you like the figures, and I couldn't track 'em down. They didn't seem to matter quite so much to

us when we were doing it. I reckon I was involved personally in the training of thousands of people in the firm. Still to this day, I wander round and somebody says, 'God, I remember you [laughs], talking to me at Warwick that year.' And, and also… What was the other thing I was going to say? Oh yes. And the books that we wrote. I can't get a figure for the total sales of that, but, one of my chaps who did a lot of work on it for me said to me, 'We reckon it can't be less than 30,000 books of…' And you get a feel for the scale of this thing, that was just my firm, although, we were among those who were really noted for being very involved in this, in this area of computer auditing. So, it was, it was very, it was very large.

[15:45]
What prompted you to write the book?

Well, I wasn't writing from scratch, in the sense that, a partner of mine, Tony Pinkney, had written the first book on computer auditing ten years earlier in about 1965, and, it was a bestseller, and, it was 129 pages long, I remember noting that. And then, I and others who helped me wrote the second edition and published it in 1978. I've got it here to show you if you want to see it at some stage.

Yes, certainly.

And, it was by then 500 pages. So it just shows how, the explosion of computers and what they were doing. And, that one, as I say, became a sort of a, a sort of standard text.

We'll go back to the book.

This is the second edition, which, which we did in 1978. So still quite early, in the life of computers.

Lovely.

And, just because I thought, to complete the picture, we did another three editions of that book, but this was the final one, in 1992. And already it's, it's, this edition's

become almost unrecognisable against the 1978 one. This is all online, you know, real-time stuff.

Yes.

That's still pretty batch-oriented

[pause in recording]

[17:23]
We'll start on the book again.

Yup.

Perhaps you would like to hold it.

Yes.

So… Sorry.

Why don't I put this down out of the way.

Yes. So Sir Brian, you decided to write a book about an audit approach to computers.

Yes.

Why?

Because it was needed. The computers were, at this stage, we're now into the mid-ish 1970s, are becoming a regular thing around the place. And so, the Institute of Chartered Accountants, who had published this book, was written by myself and partners in Coopers, felt they had to, the Institute felt it should, as the professional body, produce more authoritative material, that it could then use to demonstrate what we were doing, and b) to enable our members who, not being in as big firms as us

perhaps, wouldn't have the resource to produce the stuff themselves, could, could obtain it from the Institute. So that's, that's what we were doing. And…

Was it difficult to write it?

[laughs] I'll, I'll, at some point on this I must bring in the one indiscreet thing, mustn't I? But, it's… I wrote it, I wrote it… I did actually write the first draft of this mainly myself, but it was very much drawn from our existing material that was in use day-to-day in the firm. This is a, this is called '*a practice manual*', and that's what it is. And, the book, the book found favour, and became, a term, a bestseller for this sort of thing. And I said, because it was the only way I could stop people sort of looking at me and sort of saying, 'Well you're a clever chap,' I said… Well if you read it, you will find that in each chapter it gets logic, so on, gets looser as the chapter goes on. And, I said, well this wasn't at all surprising, because I wrote great chunks of this book on aeroplanes, first class, across the Atlantic, and the champagne flowed. And the chapters got worse and worse. Shouldn't talk about that.

And, I'm interested to see why, you're almost giving away your secrets here, aren't you?

Yes, yes you are. But that's… The, the decision is taken in relation to, and this is not just our firm, this is true I think of the profession generally, is that inevitably the new ideas and the new things will come from one firm or another, and the interests of the public and the profession are that that should be spread. So, always recognising the need for an individual firm to, you know, to get the benefit of the work it's done, the expectation is, it will be shared around the profession. And so, that's why it's not my firm that publishes this book, it's the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

So you are acting really as a profession?

Yes.

It's quite a good practice.

It's one of the nice things, if it still exists, I'm sure it does, about a, a learned profession if we can call it that, that it does make its work available to the profession as a whole, and in that way get it spread across the whole of business or whatever it is.

So this became the standard work, and it was used internationally.

Yes.

Was the book translated?

Yes.

Into?

It was translated into, initially, for some strange reason I don't know why, the Scandinavian languages. And then French, and Dutch, and, was issued, well as a standard book, in, of course throughout the Commonwealth, so, particularly Canada and Australia and New Zealand. And so, it became very much an international book, for quite a long time.

[21:23]
You're a real pioneer, aren't you?

Well thank you for using that word. I never knew it at the time, but, now, when you do hear the word pioneer, I feel very grateful that, a number of people do think of me as a pioneer, including, bless her, the *Financial Times*, which is…

What did the Financial Times say of you?

'The Institute of Chartered Accountants has just appointed its first computer age president, a real pioneer in the subject,' [laughs] for computers.

[22:00]
Did you move away then from computers, in the 1970s, in the later 1970s?

Yes, what happens, and, this was not anything uncommon, is, here was I, I started as a manager, then I was fortunate and promoted to a partner, so then, more of the burden was taken by the manager. And then other partners got involved as well. And by the mid-Seventies, I've handed over to my successor, and I've, in a sense, then, finished with the computer. It isn't quite like that. [laughs] Because I was still very much in demand for speaking about computers, and, and indeed writing about them, and there was a lot of stuff I was, I was doing right through until about, 1990 I should think, somewhere around about that. And the last really big one I did was in 1992 at the big conference in Washington.

What were you speaking about?

I was speaking about the profession in the United Kingdom, and what it was doing and where it was going. And this was to, every four years there's an international accounting congress, and that particular year it was in Washington, and, it was about 3,000 people. And so I, that was the biggest audience I ever spoke to I think. And, but then I, I was beginning to withdraw from it, and I should think I'm totally out of it by, 2000. But I'm no longer involved. I, I can't, I can't speak about it now, I don't know what it's all about now, I don't understand it. And, it is fascinating how this thing changes so rapidly.

[23:48]
It does. You became a director of Royal Ordnance in '76 to '83. Is that right?

Yes.

Tell me about that please.

Well, this was as a non-executive director, and they were early to have non-executive directors, and I think the, the background to that was that, again the chap who asked me get competent in computers had, in the war had completely redesigned the method of control and accounting in the Ordnance Factories. And so they then made sure

they had a non-executive director, and, then, they asked me to do it for a spell, which I did and I enjoyed it.

What was their computing like?

Typical for the time. In an accounting sense neither leading edge or behind the times. What basically I was there for was to bring a general business view to what effectively was still largely a government body.

They brought in expertise quite often then, didn't they?

Yes.

On the outside, from Thatcher's period on.

Oh that's right. And, and indeed, they privatised and, and started behaving like an ordinary commercial company, from, I remember, whenever it was, I can't remember the date, but, let's say, certainly, probably during Thatcher's years, that's when it all was kicked off, yes.

[25:19]
And, you became Chairman of the Woolwich Building Society in 1995.

Yes.

And, you, did you have a good relationship with your IT people there?

Yes. That was one of our great strengths, that, our chief executive there was a chap called John Stewart, who was both very keen on IT, very talented in it too, rather what I was saying earlier, he was a businessman who understood IT. And as a result he, he and I worked very closely, because, I like to think I was a bit like it myself. And we, we redesigned our, or we developed our, what the computers were doing for us in the Woolwich, very significantly, and got as a result, really did get a competitive lead in the market with people transferring their accounts to us, which did last through until

we were, we were taken over by Barclays. And, and there was a lovely phrase which, that was in the *Sunday Times* I think at the time, when Barclays, the Barclays offer came in, and they were talking about, or the press were talking about, well, you know, what do people think about the Woolwich? What went the *Sunday Times* I think it was, 'The prettiest girl in town.' [laughter] And I got this lovely, you know, they give you a piece of, whatever you call, a paperweight, glass paperweights when something like that happened. And, I suppose it was a merchant bank did it for us, and gave us a lovely cheque, a full cheque supposedly signed by Barclays, and the payee was 'The prettiest girl in town', and the amount was five billion eight hundred million pounds. Which was what we got for the Woolwich. [laughs]

And what did the Woolwich innovate so that it, customers were coming to it?

It was the first to break the problem of silos in the bank. In other words, the banks were finding it very difficult, when they were approached for something from a customer, to know what else they were doing with that customer. And what we were able to do in this thing called Open Plan, we could immediately produce on screen a complete picture of the relationship with that client. Seemed a very simple sort of thing. But the problem is in these banks I think, they're so big, that change on any scale is extremely difficult, particularly if you can't afford to get it wrong. [laughs] Our success was largely due to treating IT as a strategic Board matter, having our top IT Director on the Board & ensuring all our executive directors had sufficient understanding & commitment to maximising efficient & forward looking IT. We considered this approach so important that I took it as a major initiative when I became President of BCS under the heading "IT on Board"

With companies such as the Woolwich which had a long tradition, had been around for a long time, and it had been operating in silos, that must have been very difficult to break those silos down, because people don't like that type of change.

Exactly.

How did you do it?

Well, I fortunately, as Chairman I wasn't tremendously involved in that. But, I think one of the reasons is, we were sufficiently small, we weren't a small business, we had four million customers, went straight in as a FTSE 60 company when we

demutualised, but, we were small enough in our management terms that these silos hadn't sort of built up to the same extent. So, there weren't so many level two managers under threat if you, if you did this sort of, the old change thing. So I think it was partly size, but partly I think it's just because, both the IT and the user people saw the value of doing this, and let's get on with it.

[29:52]
Yes. And from about the same period, in fact a year later, you became closely involved with the British Computer Society.

Yes.

'96.

'96.

What prompted that?

Well the same thing, I was asked if I would allow my name to be considered. I suppose an arrogant thing to say, but it was true. It was very much dear David Mann, who had been President of the British Computer Society, and we had worked quite closely, particularly on the, which of course before that, was the, the livery company, which I was very involved in. And, I think they, they felt partly that I, I think they just felt they wanted, it was the fortieth anniversary, I think they, they wanted somebody who was not just a, a technical man, I think probably. And, so I did it. [laughs]

So you did it, again. You were asked to. And you were President from '97 to '98.

Yes.

What was the theme of your presidency?

IT On Board.

Tell more about that.

It's what I've been talking about. It was just the jargon that was dreamed up for saying, you know, we must, we must encourage the IT side in the business. We must get the best people involved in the IT. They mustn't just be, pick up the phone, say, 'I've got something I want you to do,' bang. They must be part of the, of the setting of the strategy, which is what we were doing in the Woolwich. And so, we, that was what I was, I felt I could do as I was a chairman of a company, saying how important this was. And, I had also gone on to say, I hope very much that would also we could flow that through and it would encourage more young students to focus on IT, rather than the more traditional ones, as well as the more traditional things of accounting and, and law and so on. And, that seemed to us to be very important. And it was all wrapped up, at that time as well, with, we were seeking to get closer to being a profession, and, a profession in the proper sense of that word, in other words, with a discreet and recognisable body of knowledge, and secondly, the will and ability to make sure that everybody's doing that, and if not, get on your bike. Which is the way the chartered accountants work, the way the solicitors work, and so on. And that's how they get and deserve I think to be self-regulating professions. It doesn't need too much government interference; they can rely on the disciplinary process, people, in the profession to do it. So, we were pushing that quite hard. And I think that has gone through quite well, largely, now. BCS has, I'm so out of touch, but has also now, it's the chartered institute of, what is it, the, the chartered… IT profession, I think, I forget the precise name. CITP. Chartered Information Technology Professional. And, to say that, I don't think they have yet perhaps, well I'm not the person to speak about this, I don't know how far they've got with actually this ability to enforce their best standards, but I know that's very much their objective. And, so I, I think, and hope and expect, that that profession is, is developing as a profession. Because I think it would be a very good thing.

[33:22]

[34:26]

And in the year 2000 you were part of the Foundation for Science and Technology, and you still are I think.

I've retired from that.

Right.

It was, I was never very much involved with that. I got involved because, it was in relation to the livery company, that we found we had things, things in common. And we were interested in the livery company to pick areas that we felt we could usefully develop things. And the Royal Society was, was thinking similarly. And so we, we had some joint projects with the Royal Society, which were very interesting, and, but, that was not really our sort of mainstream activity.

[35:20]
And, you took quite a big hand I believe in forming this Worshipful Company of Information Technologists.

Yes, absolutely.

Why did you think it was necessary?

[pause] [laughs] That's not… I don't know how long we've got. Put it this way. I mean, the, the livery company's a very old and strong ingredient in the total position… You know all this. Are you a liveryman?

No, no.

Of, of the City of London. It's mediaeval in origin, and so a lot of people say, well it's a crazy thing, all you do is have lunch and dinner. But, what happened was, the City came under a lot of criticism in the 1970s for, as it were, enjoying themselves but not actually contributing very much. Which, it wasn't really true, it was just, they didn't like to, to talk too much about the charitable work and the educational work they were doing and so on. Well one thing that was recognised, and this was a guy,

recognised very strongly by Kenneth Cork, if the name means anything to you. Kenneth was a, he was the top undertaker, if you follow me, he put all the companies in trouble to bed. But he, he also was a very keen liveryman, and he could see that part of the problem with the livery company was, they were all old-fashioned. You'd got the mercers and the grocers and the barbers and the… Nothing more than that. And so he started trying to encourage the modern professions to form livery companies. Which they did. And, if you look at the list of livery companies, there are about 110 now. And, when the war finished there were about 70. So it's quite a lot have come in since the war. And it's the, the actuaries, the accountants, the solicitors, all the modern professions. But nothing on IT. And so, a small group of us said, it was really pioneered by Bernard Harty, who was the Chamberlain of London, and the Chamberlain of London is, God knows, the equivalent of the CFO, he runs the bloody, money. And he was a very bright guy. And he, the other jobs, typical City, the Chamberlain of London not only looks after all the money, but he controls the livery as well. [laughs] And so, he said, 'We really ought to see whether we can get an interest in a livery company for the computer profession,' or computer, wasn't called a profession then, but, but for people working in computers. And, and so we did. And funnily enough, I've got sitting in here because I'm going to speak to the clerk about it later, I've got the, the thing for the very first meeting we had in 1985, and, it became very popular, and has done a huge amount of positive work. And in particular, not the one that's talked about so much, and maybe there's no need for it, there was no group other than the British Computer Society who were in any way sort of, doing anything for the industry as a whole. You've got a strong software association, you've got fairly strong hardware groupings, and you've got the British Computer Society, the sort of, the learned thing. But there was nothing… And so, what a livery company does, really attracted people, because it was a means of being part of, of a bigger thing, and being encouraged to make a contribution, a public contribution, which of course also are major, the businesses in particular were quite keen to be seen to be acting for the public good.

[39:00]

And you became Lord Mayor.

Yes.

Because, again, you were asked to?

[laughs] I was asked if I would be interested in being considered for doing the job.

You were elected in 1991 as Lord Mayor of the City of London.

Yes.

And your theme was, the City Serving Europe.

Yes.

Which seems to be a very good theme.

Yes.

And you visited lots of capitals…

Yes.

…and opened up discussions, and promoted the City.

Yes. And that year was particularly significant, because it was to be the finalisation of the Common Market, or whatever the phrase used then was, in services. So it was very important that the City was seen as being the tops.

So you became an ambassador…

Yes.

…to add to your skills.

Yes.

Do you like being an ambassador?

Yes.

Why?

Well it's, people.

You meet people.

You meet people. And you, you know, the chances are, you have an opportunity to, to achieve something, because if you can get on reasonably well with people, then, that works out. We were very very lucky because everywhere we went we were welcomed, and, it was quite useful, because I could go around saying, which was, a) which was true, London is, is the biggest financial centre. We were already beginning to say in the world, we could certainly say it in Europe, and in the world, my, I was looking back over my papers, the later papers were saying in the world. And, you know, you should come and act with us, because, this was particularly true, said the Scandinavian countries, where, or the perimeter countries where, no way they could have real relations in financial sense with, with New York or Tokyo. They did it through London. They, we built the relationships with London, and then London tended to act on their behalf.

And you were one of the Mayors not to live in Mansion House.

Yes. I can't even say I'm the only one not to. Somebody else didn't. [laughs] No, you're quite right.

It was being refurbished at the time.

Yes.

Do you regret that?

[hesitates] Well, yes, I mean obviously you do, because I mean, you know, you've been thinking for years about the possibility it might happen. Looking back now, I don't think we missed it all that much.

For two reasons I think. First one was, that we were put into a small house, they did it up very nicely, and, so, the entertaining we could do on our patch was pretty limited. We could use the Guildhall of course, which was so much bigger. But that actually was quite nice in a way, because, it meant you couldn't be criticised for, for having relatively small things going on. And also, the other side of it was that, when you were out, as you were all the time, every night, you know, and sort of, lunch, and, it's quite difficult sometimes to get away. And it's particularly difficult if you're in the Mansion House, because it was your house, you see. [laughs] You can't say, 'I'm going home now.' But if you were around in one of the livery halls that we were borrowing for those, you could always sort of say, well, 'So kind of you, but, we've got an awful start in the morning. I wonder if you would excuse us if we left you now.' And, so, both those... I think people who came enjoyed it, they enjoyed the smaller scale of it.

[44:20]
Do you like ceremonial?

Yes.

Why?

Well I like it because I think it's, it's colourful, it's positive, it's remarkably well done in this country. And I also very much like the reasoning behind it. When you see what's happening, you either know because you've heard about it before, or you get told, the reason for that, and you find it's something that's been going on for several hundred years, and it only carries on because basically, because enough people do see the value of the thing. So, I'm really, I'm very fond, I'm very… I don't like it simply because I dress up. In fact I'm giving up that now, I've given up, I won't wear tails again.

You won't wear tails again?

No. Trying not to.

No more penguin suits.

[laughs] No more penguin suits

[45:14]
What's your greatest success do you think?

I don't think of it like that at all. I know I've been terribly lucky, and I think, that luck, I always feel, is most extraordinarily expressed really in the sense that I, very very few have had the good fortunate to be both head of their profession and Lord Mayor. There was only one chartered President before me, and he died during the job. [laughs] And, so, that's, I think it's the fact that, people have wanted me to do those, you know, President of the Institute, Lord Mayor, President of BCS, Master of the, of three livery companies, is just… I'm boring you now.

Oh you're not.

It's just a wonderful thing. And I, I just, you know, I sometimes say, well, I'm a very lucky man, and I suppose, out of that is, being successful. But, I don't feel any, I've made any, done any major specific thing. I don't, I don't feel that.

People make their own luck, don't they?

Yah.

And you made your luck.

Yes.

And you were a pioneer.

Thank you very much.

Thank you very much.

[pause in recording]

[46:33]
Welcome back to the Archives of IT. And we still have with us, I'm glad to say, Sir Brian Jenkins, who was born Brian Garton Jenkins, in 1935. Where were you born?

I was born in Beckenham, which is still just, not quite in South London. It's in Kent.

And what did your parents do?

My father was a, was a, ran a florist business, and my mother was, as most I suppose were in those days, she looked after him and everything else.

And do you have brothers and sisters?

I have a brother.

Older?

No he's younger.

He's younger?

And we, we don't see much of each other.

And the reason is?

Oh, just, that's the way life goes I suppose.

That's the way life goes. You, you were educated where?

Tonbridge. And, after that, when I left school I went straight into the Army as one had to in those days, in the Royal Artillery. And then, I went up to Oxford, Trinity College, Oxford.

And you were, during the war you were evacuated.

Yes.

To?

Scarborough.

How was that?

That was very nice. Except that, you couldn't go on the beach, it was all a mass of barbed wire. And they were quite worried about Scarborough, and that's why they had troops there, and it was because my father was there, we went up, and, during the war, that, they were terrified the Germans would bomb Scarborough again or, possibly even land. So we had a garrison in Scarborough all through the war. Although people we saw most of were the Italians, because they were up farming, as prisoners of war.

[48:11]
So your father served in the Second World War?

Yes.

What was he?

He was a Major in the Royal Artillery.

And you joined the Royal Artillery as well.

Yes.

And you were in Gibraltar.

Yes.

Saving Gibraltar from the Spaniards.

[hesitates] Yes, although I always, my, I always grin when I think about Gibraltar, because I used to, we used to tease each other by saying, 'I tell you, it was bloody tough on the Rock.' [laughs] In fact it was just like a holiday.

Just like a holiday. And, why did you do your National Service first?

That was the way it went, unless you asked, and it was granted, that you should go to university first. In my case they simply said, 'Get in the Army.' So, [laughs] and so I did that first.

[48:53]
What did your parents give you?

Well, very loving parents.

What remains in you of them?

I, I wouldn't, I'm not sure I'd know how to answer that particularly. I mean… My mother was a very, tolerant I think, fair to say, and, hopefully I'm a bit like that. And, my father had really, we didn't know him very well from after the war, and so I can't really comment on that I think.

[49:30]
Right. What did you get from the Army?

I got a very favourable impression of discipline, and, opportunity, because when you joined up, as I did, you would start that first evening in a barrack room with 30 young men, boys, many of them, quite a lot crying through the night, and, you wondered how ever anything could be made of this group. And then eight weeks later we were all so fit and positive and working together, that it was absolutely marvellous. And, a lot of people I speak to, we all agreed that that was a wonderful thing about National Service. The difficulty was of course that once the training had finished you more became a man on the ground waiting for the Russians to come.

And did you rise in the ranks?

I was commissioned. And, and so I was a Second Lieutenant.

In an Artillery battery?

In an Artillery battery.

[50:40]
Right. So then you, you left, and, you left now as a more mature person…

Yes.

…having been through that discipline process.

Yes.

And also having authority yourself, as a Second Lieutenant.

Yes.

What did that teach you?

Well, I hope it taught me how to live and cope with people of different ranks, and in particular, those who you were responsible for, and, that was, was quite difficult in a way, because, I was, remember, I, there was I, I was only nineteen when I was commissioned, and here I was with hoary old chaps in their thirties who were calling me sir. And, also, the… Actually I've completely forgotten the other thing I was going to say. No. It may come back to me in a moment. But, keep going.

[51:31]
So in 1957 you went up to a completely different culture.

Yes.

Trinity College, Oxford to read Modern History.

Yes.

What was that transition like for you?

Well, interesting, in the sense that, you were moving into an academic environment, which was, quite exciting if you had good tutors, and an environment where you had quite a lot of spare time. But on the other hand, you had matured quite a bit in the Army, and, therefore, a lot of us, stayed friends, reckoned that we didn't actually get as much out of university as we should have done. I don't mean that in a sort of, a sense of wanting, being greedy; just simply, one didn't take part in things. I mean the notion of, taking part in the Dramatic Society or something, whereas I had enjoyed it enormously at school, by the time I got to Oxford I was thinking, back, here I was, I'd been an officer at nineteen, I had over, I forget how many million pounds of kit under my care as it were with the, with the big anti-aircraft guns. And so it was a, it was a slightly odd thing, and as a result I think quite a number of us never felt we got as <u>much as we should</u> out of Oxford. And a great, great shame, because, maybe I had deprived someone who would have done much better of a place.

What drew you to accountancy?

[laughs] My, my girlfriend really, or my girlfriend's father. I had had ambitions to go on the stage, but my godfather had talked me out of that pretty rapidly, he was a producer, a London producer, he said, 'Well you know, you'll never get anywhere with that.' And so then I had a word with my girlfriend, and, she said, 'Well you'd better have a word with my father,' who was a solicitor. So, I had a word with him, and he wrote back to say, 'Well I don't think you're up to being a solicitor, but you could try accountancy, and I know Henry Benson, why don't you go and see him?' [laughs] And so that's how it all started.

[53:31]
Then in 1967 you met Lady Ann.

I met Ann in 1965. We married in 1967.

And you have, three children?

Two.

Two. Julia.

Yes.

What does Julia do?

Julia's a consulting anaesthetist, and quite a feisty one.

And Charles?

Charles, he is a couple of years younger, and he has, he has done extremely well. He works in the City of London, but not, not as a trader or anything like that. He, he works for a big Swiss firm who over the last two or three years have been organising themselves so they're more Anglo-Saxon in the way they operate. And, Charles is in HR, and so he has got the job of making sure that this Swiss asset manager is

following good Anglo-Saxon corporate governance, all round the world. So he travels a lot.

[54:29]
I have in front of me your CV.

Yah.

With all the posts that you have held.

Mm.

I've never seen such a, a varied and numerous number of posts. What drives you?

Well, that, that list you've got is a particular one where, for some reason which I don't altogether recall now, we were asked to put down everything we did, for some reason. But some of them, some of them are quite… We were never short of things to be done as it were. And quite a lot of them are, are reasonably important. I just found it very difficult to say no to things, I think, probably.

And they're very varied as well. Crimestoppers, you were a trustee for four years.

Yes.

Guildhall Historical Association, President. And still are, are you?

Just finished.

Just finished.

Just finished.

Gresham College Council, a director. Society of Young Freemen.

These are all… Crimestoppers was a slightly different one, because I felt I owed something to the chairman there I think, and that's why I did that. But the others are all bits of the City, and so when you go into the City, you find you're being, you know, 'Would you like to join this?' 'Like to join that?' And, and so you do, you take on quite a lot of, of City things.

Are you backing out from them now?

Yes. I am. I've reached an age where it's ridiculous that I should be involved in these things.

Why, in your wisdom?

Well, I don't think wisdom's one of my strengths. [BJ laughs] Certainly. I said, I, I got my last… The one you didn't mention which maybe, I don't know why, but my last sort of really big job was the Prior of the Order of St John, and the Chairman of St John Ambulance, which I started doing at 70 and which was, probably a bit too old I should think. And when I got to 75 I finished my six years with them, then I rather arrogantly said, 'When I'm asked to do things now, I think on the whole I shall say no.' And I'm happy to say that nobody has asked me to do anything.

You were Governor of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Yes.

Is that important for you?

No, I approve of it. And, I, I keep, I keep in touch with what they're doing to an extent, but, I was never very involved in a practical way.

[56:52]
When you were Mayor, you made a focus on Europe.

Yes.

We have just voted Brexit.

Yes.

What does that make you feel?

Well, when somebody tells us what Brexit means, we may know. But, it was quite interesting, because, that was a completely different environment then. This was in 1991. And, the theory was, at that stage, or the, the plan was, that the Common Market in services would be completed in 1992, when I was Lord Mayor. It was already happening in manufacturing, but the services, which I may say has not yet happened today. But that was the plan. It was going to come into force. And so, London being a very important financial centre had to prepare itself for this, and so for the first time for, for a long, long while, London, which had always been in a sense beyond competition to a considerable extent certainly in Europe, found it had to sort of, close ranks a bit, to show that London was a, I remember a very naughty, probably not allowed to, this won't get through the redacting I expect, but, I used to, in my speeches, say, 'Well, you know, there's all this talk about London's past it. Well I can tell you,' I said, 'there are more people working in financial services in London than the entire population of Frankfurt, or indeed the entire country of Luxembourg.' [laughter] This always got a good laugh. So, we, it was quite interesting, because we found that we could close ranks, the Americans were very good at coming in with us, and the Continentals. Two of my greatest allies were, one a German, well both were German actually, and remain friends, and they said, 'What, you mean, we wouldn't do our business in London? You've got to be joking.' [laughs]

And if those German friends phoned you up now, and they said, 'Sir Brian, we understand the British have voted for Brexit,' how would you explain it?

Well, to be honest, I've no idea how I would explain it. [laughs]

Thank you Sir Brian.

Is that enough?

That is lovely.

Was that all right?

Yes of course it was.

[End of Interview]

Supplemental Data

"Focus on IT in the City" and "The Missing Link"

An important part of the work of the modern livery companies has been to support their industries & trade. In my year as Master WCIT decided to develop two specific initiatives to reinforce the position of IT in the City. The first initiative was to publish "Focus on IT in the City" a 50+ page report. Its objective was to promote & enhance the role & value of IT as an integral component in the current & future success of the City as the world's leading international financial centre. We got together a group of suitable senior members of the Company to write brief but authoritative papers on the main business activities of the City – banking, securities trading, insurance, derivatives, fund management & private banking – together with the principal IT users among the support services & infrastructure of the City – legal & court systems, accounting & audit, media & information & telecoms & information systems. The report was launched at a large conference in the Bank of England and was important in securing positive help from major IT companies & practitioners.

The second initiative was to develop a means to bring the worlds of Science, Technology & finance closer together. A joint working party from the Company & the Royal Society proposed a scheme to encourage greater collaboration between them. "The City Science & Technology Dialogue" was launched in Mercers' Hall at a lecture entitled "The Missing Link" chaired by the then Governor of the Bank of England.