



Bridget Blow CBE

Interviewed by

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Welcome to the Archives of Information Technology. It's the 21st of November 2018, and we are in London, at the British Computer Society. I am Elisabetta Mori, an interviewer with Archives of IT.

Today I'll be talking to Bridget Blow. She is an experienced independent non-executive director and chairman with special skills in technology, turnover and profit growth, corporate deals, human resources, change management strategy, business transformation, and governance. Since 2016 she has been Non-Executive Chairman of GTP3, an entrepreneurial new company building and operating data centres in Birmingham. Since 2015 she has been Senior Independent Director of All England Netball Association. She was Non-Executive Chairman of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Deputy Chairman and Senior Independent Director of the Coventry Building Society, Non-Executive Trustee and Chairman of the Audit Committee for the Birmingham Hippodrome Theatre Trust, Non-Executive Chairman of Trustmarque Solutions, and Harvard International Plc. She was President of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and she was also Non-Executive Director of the Bank of England, and Chief Executive of the ITNET Plc.

[01:35]

Welcome Bridget. We're going to start, where you were born, if you can tell us a little bit about your childhood, and if you can describe your parents, what were their occupations, and maybe something about your grandparents.

Well... Hi. I was born in Nottinghamshire, and my parents were actually both civil servants. My early life really was influenced by my father being moved around. He ran all the electrical, electricity, for an airfield, so, making sure the runway lights were running right through to the married quarters. And he got, he had periods of overseas work as well as in the UK. In my early life he was in, we were in Lincolnshire, and I went to a village school to start with, a village primary school, and then I moved, when I was about six we moved to live on one of the RAF camps, and I went to an RAF primary school. And I was absolutely delighted when I passed my Eleven Plus, and I was going to go to the local girls' high school, and, he got posted again to Kenya. And I said, 'Gosh, I don't want... You know, I've passed my exam. I want

to go to this school.' They didn't have a boarding house, but, to cut a long story short, I went to a grammar school in Lincolnshire that had a boarding house with about 35 children in the boarding house. And they went off to Kenya. And I used to go out for my holidays. So that was quite a, quite a big thing for an eleven-year-old.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

I have got one sister, who is about five years older than me. And, my grandparents, my, I don't remember much about my father's parents, but my mother's parents, her father worked for British Rail in the admin, and my mother worked for the Department of Pensions, I don't know what it was called at the time, but, yeah.

[04:04]

Which classes did you most enjoy, and which were your most successful subjects at school?

Oh I enjoyed maths the most, and, you know, I was the most successful at it.

But you went to grammar school?

But I went to grammar school, yeah. Yes, where the teachers still wore their gowns, you know?

Did your family background in any way influence your choices in subjects at school, maybe?

No, I don't think my... I think my parents were very supportive. They... I think they just wanted me to do well. Like a lot of parents after the war, they wanted their children to have what probably they didn't have.

[04:51]

So, how closely were your studies related to your work later on?

[pause] Well I suppose they were... They were quite. Because when I, when I got into IT, I had to learn the programming language. I had to, I went off for training to be a, what we called a systems analyst at that time. And I also had project management. So, I had really quite a lot of education to do with the job, although it wasn't formally, you know, in full-time education.

And what was the first computer you remember?

Well it was an ICL mainframe. I worked for a council in my, it was my first job, IT job, and, they hadn't got the computer yet. They were training us as programmers. And we had to go 25 miles down the road to another local authority to use their computer in the evenings when they weren't using it.

[06:00]

So, after high school, what happened?

Well, what happened was, I was wandering around thinking, what shall I do? And, because I liked the maths, and, I remember thinking I might be a quantity surveyor. Anyway, again, I went to the, I went to the... I got a, a chat with the local authority, because they had a department of surveyors, and they showed me around and talked to me about it. I think, it was a bit of a novelty for them because I was a girl. And they then showed me into the chief architect's office, who was the head of the department, and he sat me down and said, 'I'm not sure it's a very good idea. We don't get many girls being a quantity surveyor, but we are getting a computer next year, and I think you should apply to be a programmer.' And that's what I did. I got a job as a programmer.

So, they thought that you being a woman, would work better as a programmer, or...?

I... I can't analyse it. I've no idea whether he thought it was because I was a woman, or, or what it was [laughs], but, actually, it turned into a good idea. It was quite a good idea, so I'm not worried about it. [laughs]

And what do you remember of that training?

Well it, it was a mixture of being sent away, I think we went to ICL to learn COBOL, as well as, you know, running trials to start with. And it wasn't long before we got onto the real thing, when I was writing housing systems and payroll systems.

Because, you couldn't buy packages then. So I went round the whole, you know, I got involved in computerising we called it, each of the systems, the major systems in the local authority, you know, collecting rates et cetera.

What years are we talking about, more or less?

Well, we're talking about... What, you mean the date?

No, the, the decade.

[laughs] The decade. This will be in the Seventies.

[08:08]

OK. So during the Seventies you started your training, and, what happened after?

Well, what happened was, I got bored with it. I had developed as a systems analyst and a project manager, but, I got bored with the, you know, there's only so many local authority systems. And I decided that, I needed to go and work for a software house. And, I had heard about F International, that you could work... Because I was still geographically placed a bit oddly in North Lincolnshire, and I understood I could be home-based. Anyway, they were... They took me on in a full-time job. Most of FI at the time, they were part-time ladies, but I was taken on as a project manager, and I used to travel all over the country as a systems analyst and project manager, and then get the system produced by the part-timers all home-based. So, I, I used to manage people mostly over the phone, although we did have team meetings when we got together at the client premises, usually during the testing phase. And, I got to be very good at understanding whether someone was upset just from their voice tone on the phone.

So you developed a skill that was maybe helpful, or...

Well it... It's never left, and, you know, I still find it quite useful, mm.

[09:38]

So, what led you to work for ITNET?

Well I got headhunted from FI Group. I had done well there, I had been there, I think, thirteen years, and gone from being a project manager to a, a board director, and they needed a, they were looking for a systems director. Because it was basically that, you know, it was outsourcing, and running people's existing systems, and they wanted to get into developing new systems for all these clients. So I joined them as Systems Director. And, the chief executive left after about, eighteen months, and I was promoted to his role as Chief Executive. And then, before we all knew where we were, Cadbury Schweppes, who owned ITNET, were looking for some, a bit of cash, because they had recently bought Dr Pepper, and got into debt, and they weren't comfortable, the Cadbury Schweppes sort of culture wasn't comfortable with a lot of debt. So they decided that they could sell ITNET. So, before they did that, we said, 'Well how about you allow us to do a management and employee buyout?' And they said, 'Well you've got x months, and you've got to pay the going rate, otherwise we'll do a trade sale, because we need the money.' Anyway, to cut a long story short, that happened, and we did this management and employee buyout, backed by 3i and two other private equity companies. So then we were expanding our, the IT outsourcing business as well as the systems development by that time. We, the company grew from about 450 people to two and a half thousand in the next ten years. So it was... And then of course, the private equity people were looking for an exit, so, we toyed with, lots of suitors came along to try and buy the company, but, it, it didn't, it wouldn't have worked. They didn't want to pay the price really that the private equity people wanted. And so, we floated the business on the Main Market of the London Stock Exchange, and, sort of, went off on our own as it were. And that, that was quite exciting. So, in this period of time, I began to do less IT-orientated work, you know, managing the business, and more managing the external, because twice a year I had to go round institutional investors, worry about the share price, et cetera.

[12:30]

And we are talking about which decades?

We're now into the, into the, the Nineties. We floated in '98.

And then what happened? You kept growing?

Well, then we, we... Well, the dotcom bubble burst, if you remember, in the early 2000s, and, as it happened, the market was tightening. So we were what I would say was a medium-sized outsourcing business, not large. The turnover was just over 200 million. And what happened was, the big boys like IBM needed to, to get more sales, and they started coming down into our market. So we decided that the best thing was to sell the business. And again, so again, we, we, we had a few suitors round. And then Serco kind of came out of the blue actually, and offered us a good price, so we decided to take it. But they made it a condition for sale that I then went to work for them as Technology Director for a year. So, I go back then into more IT mode. And I was sort of, predominantly, some of their contracts, which were worldwide, had IT in them, and I was basically troubleshooting and flying round the world sorting that out most of the time. Which was interesting, but not really what I wanted to make a career of. So, after that first year I decided to move away and take up a non-exec director career. Which had started a bit when I was at ITNET, because I was offered to be a non-exec director of the Bank of England in 2000, and I have enjoyed the experience. And actually, I felt it was better at it probably than I had expected to be, because, I was pretty well known for, for knowing everything about everything, if you know what I mean. And as a part-time non-executive director, you're not there a lot of the time, so you can't know everything. So, you have to work, you know, the executive team are running the business for you, and it's more about strategy, and supporting them, and monitoring them. And I found I quite enjoyed that. So, since then I've made a career of this non-exec directors.

[15:14]

Between 1996 and 2001 you had a series of prizes and nominations. Can you tell us more about that?

Yes. The first one was, I became the NatWest Midlands Businesswoman of the Year, which, I was quite surprised about, and a little sort of, embarrassed really. But it was good that they were doing it, because at that time there were not many businesswomen, and I think the idea was to promote, and made lots of women... And, and at the event, it was predominantly women who were invited to come, so we had this huge place, a lunch, completely filled with women and about three men, you know. And it was, it was actually quite important I think for, for women generally. And then I, then I got involved in the Veuve Clicquot, I was a finalist in Veuve Clicquot, and... Oh, and, yes, the British Venture Capital Association, they run buyouts of the year, and one of, I think 3i wanted me to enter that. So I entered that and won the large buyout venturer of the year. And, when they presented the prize, I was the only woman there, and the, I forget the, who, the presenter, he's quite big on TV, he made comment of the fact that, he said, 'We don't get many women coming to this event [laughs] and winning.' So that was, that was quite good as well.

Which year was that?

That was 2001.

[16:58]

So, have you been involved in pro bono, in any pro bono activities related to your career? Like, what inspired you to get involved, and what were the principal outcomes of your involvement? You already talked about...

Yeah. Well, in the non-exec field, if you work for a charity or a not-for-profit organisation, quite frequently you, it's an unpaid role. And I felt that it was important to give back to Birmingham what... Because I, you know, Birmingham had given me a hugely wonderful career, you know, and I felt it was quite important to do that. So, I think early on I took on the Hippodrome, which is actually a very large theatre and very, probably one of the most successful theatres outside of London. And, there I did, you know, I was on the Audit Committee, and did general business, but, they did, while I was there, we did revamp the IT systems, because it was quite important, the marketing, is to get it much better. So, instead of just saying, sending, handing out flyers to people and just saying, we're here, we've got a website, book your ticket, if

now somebody goes to a performance of a musical, then, we can follow that up the next day with an email saying, 'Did you enjoy yourselves? And, would you like to book for the next musical which is coming up?' And that has actually, being able to build up the data of what people's likes are et cetera, does help with the marketing. And people, people like it actually, being reminded of things that they might like. So, that was quite a big, a big thing for them, and spent a lot of money on it for a, a charity, and, it went well.

Have you got any episodes you remember of this experience?

The... I suppose... I mean we did, we did also do something very similar with software at the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra as well. That was later. I suppose the, the other pro bono things I've done, like being President of the Chamber of Commerce, they're all, they all benefit with improved IT, improved websites. And more recently, at netball, we're in the middle of, I'm a non-exec director there, again unpaid, because it's a not-for-profit organisation, we're in the middle of revamping the whole of their IT. And they have a very large membership base, but, they're also needing to raise more funds because the Government grant that they get is diminishing, as it is for all sport organisations. They want to build up more like, shopping on the website, buying tickets for internationals. The Netball World Cup is next year, so they want to be able to do that. So we're in the middle of, of doing all that, and it's very interesting, and I'm, I'm the board director that, you know, sort of tells the board, yes it's OK to sign this off. [laughs]

[20:34]

And what led you to work for Trustmarque?

Oh Trustmarque was a completely different thing. That was a private equity backed IT business that sold mainly Microsoft software, when I went there.

What's your connection?

Well, they... The headhunter... No. Sorry. The private equity people knew me from ITNET, and they rang up and said, 'We'd like you to be chairman of this

business that we've just bought out.' So I went along to be chairman, and, basically, for a software vender, the margins, the margin for that sort of business is a lot smaller than if you run a, a people delivering software services and, specialist, you know, skills. And so we decided to switch it from being, to leave it as a software seller, but also to make it a software house that could build new software, put programs together to, to get people, you know, to buy more from us. And so we, we switched the chief executive to somebody who had got those sort of experiences, and, and built up the company. And in fact did sell it for a better PE. So, it was a, a successful, I think, six years.

And we are talking about the 2000s.

Yeah, that would be from about, 2006 to, '13 or '14, something like that.

[22:24]

And, in the meantime, in 2007 you joined the Coventry Building Society.

Yes. It's probably important to say that, at one time I had six non-exec positions all going at the same time, which was, which was fine, because I wasn't chair of all of them, but just a piece of advice to anybody listening is, you know, you... It's difficult if you have a lot of chairman roles, because if things start getting quite tricky at one of them, you do have to spend more time. And there was an odd week where I didn't actually have any time off at all, I was working seven days a week, which was probably not what I was wanting to happen. But anyway, one of them that was quite interesting was the Coventry Building Society. And I went there in 2007, when the building society sector you might say was quite quiet, you know, savings, mortgages. And then, I had only been there about six or seven months and then Northern Rock went pear-shaped. And, the regulator, you know, started stepping up its activity, and, it was a completely different business to be a non-exec director of after, you know, after I had been there about a year. I was Chairman of the Remuneration Committee, but also, whenever there was an IT thing to talk about, I was the only one on the board with any IT knowledge and experience. So, I was quite busy all the time I was there until, two thousand and, I can't remember, was it... 2016, that's right. So I was there, actually quite a long time. As I was... In the last few years, we decided that a

lot of the, again, marketing was driving us, needed new systems, because the, the mortgages and the offerings generally were becoming much more innovative, and we needed systems to back that up. So, we recruited a lot more people, quite a hotshot IT director, and I helped with, you know, acclimatising them to the building society, and generally acting as interpreter between the board and the IT department.

[25:10]

Have you got any memory of the time, some episode that, as an example of your role there?

Well, I think the, the example I would give, as happens, all boards get asked to sign off quite a lot of money for new IT systems, and they're naturally nervous, because all the things they, they hear from the press and the media is that these, you know, the larger the IT system the more likely it is to go wrong. So, they do tend to, to lean on somebody who, you know, has been there and done it and got the T-shirt. What I encourage the IT people to do is, phase their, phase their developments into bite-size chunks, so that the board can sign off less money and chunk it, if you see what I mean, view the results of that, and then move on to the next. And that actually has, has I think helped, because it gives the board then confidence in the project and the people.

[26:30]

So in 2008, instead, you became President of Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and, still again in Birmingham, you already talked about, a little bit about it, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. So you have a strong relationship with the City of Birmingham.

I do, yes.

Would you like to tell us more about that?

Well, again, it was about, I got involved really because I wanted to put something back in, but then it, you know, people get to know you, and then they start saying, 'Can you just do this, can you help us with this?' And, that's what happened. And,

and even now, if somebody wants to know... I also, the Council, Birmingham, City Council, were a big customer of mine when I was Chief Executive at ITNET. So, I'm often called on to, you know, 'How should I approach the Council about this?' And, you know.. So, yes, I'm a bit of a sucker for, you know, if somebody rings up and says, 'Can you help us with this in Birmingham?' I usually do if I can. One of the things that I'm quite proud of doing now is, I work in a care centre three hours a week on a Monday evening, and we, I'm basically, the cook for a soup kitchen. So basically, this is for, homeless and hungry come in, we give them warmth, we give them a soup, a main course, and a, and a pudding, and we, you know, we serve it to them. And we have a bit of a chat with them. And, I think that's quite important as well. And one of the things we want to do there is, have some laptops in the corner so that we can help them try and get housed, or get a job, or whatever they need. Yeah.

[28:26]

In 2014, instead, you received a CBE for services to business in the West Midlands. Would you like to share your memories of that episode with us? About, like, the ceremony, or...

Well it... Well it, it first of all was a delightful surprise. And, actually I was quite nervous, because you, you have to go to Buckingham Palace, and you feel you've got to wear the right thing, you know? And...

What did you wear?

I wore a red dress and a red hat. [laughs] And...

Were you accompanied by anyone, or were you alone?

Yeah, my daughter and her boyfriend came, and my nephew came with me. Yes, you can have three guests. And, yes, and Prince Charles... You queue up, and, and you see Prince Charles. You have to do a little curtsy, and he pins it on, and, you have a few words, and then, out you go. It's, it is, I found it quite nerve-racking. But it was, it was wonderful as well. I mean, it's nice, the recognition is, is really nice. The fact that, the most important thing here is that the people who put me forward in

Birmingham thought that was the right thing to do, so that's a very warm feeling, that, you know, they feel that I've done something for them. So that, I'm delighted about it.

What was the reception of this in your family?

Oh, well, I think it's just... They... Because I've done all these other things, they just sort of, you know, well it's just another thing. [laughs] Do you know what I mean? But they were very pleased for me, yes.

[30:13]

And the next year, you also received an honorary doctor, you became Honorary Doctor of Science, and you were awarded this by Aston University.

Yes. Aston University is very connected with business in Birmingham. I would say it's the most connected university with business that I know of. And, I think, when they're giving their, because they are, they, they give out these honorary doctorships when they're doing their awards and ceremonies. And, mine was obviously with the business school. And I think... And you're asked to give a little speech. So I gave them a little speech about, being a middle manager actually, because, I think that's one of the most difficult things in life, in your career. And, and so yes, it was, again was, it was quite interesting. Thoroughly enjoyable actually. There are a lot of foreign students there, and ethnic minorities, and they, when they come up to get their degree presented, they're doing whoops and, you know, they're very noisy, which doesn't tend to happen in the, in the more, English type ceremony, you know, in other universities. So, yeah, no, it's an association that I'm very pleased with.

[31:52]

So, going to the present, now, like, since 2016 you are Non-Executive Chairman of GTP3, again in Birmingham.

Mhm.

So, can you tell us a little bit more about the company, and what your roles are?

Yes. That, that came about in a, an interesting way, in that, there were two, two property investors who, who had done a bit in Birmingham, got together with a, an IT business to build a data centre. And, they also needed some private equity backing. So there were a number of different elements here. And they decided, I think the private equity company probably is, it's usually down to them, said, 'We need an independent chair if we're going to come in and lend you all this money.' And, I think the local Savills guy knew of me, and, wrote me a letter, and said, 'Would you be interested?' So I rang him up and said, well, you know, 'I'm happy to meet, you know, if people think it's a good idea, let's, let's see how it goes.' And so, yeah, I, I said I would do it for them. And, yeah, it's been, it's been quite interesting. It's a very high tech data centre, and, we have an anchor tenant, but I think, what we really need to do is develop a bit more, which in due course we will, and then we can get, we can service the, the City of Birmingham and the, the people who need data centre space there, better than they're probably served now. So it's all, you know...

In development.

In development really. We... The data centre is built, but, it's only just built, and, there's still a lot more land there, which we're probably going to develop one way or another.

[34:01]

Did you have any mentors in your life?

No, I, I don't think there was anybody in particular, but I've always, if you like, taken a lot of notice of what the management are doing.

Can you give us an example?

Well I'm quite a good listener. So, how they, you know, how they run a meeting, I would watch. I learnt how to run meetings by watching what I thought worked well and what I think didn't work well, not doing that. And the same with running the business, and communicating to, to the staff. I think, all of those things are quite

important. And when I was a chief executive I used to go round, we had 66 sites in this outsourcing business, and I used to go round and do about, six sort of, satellites, where, sort of, regional talks about the state of the nation, because we were listed, and, what was happening, and, talk about the local issues, and do a Q&A. And I used to do that six times every six months, to... And then, actually, later, we decided that one of them I could do by, we'd do it via the IT. So everybody would log on, and we would do the question and answer like that. And actually that worked well, because they could, I don't know how we wangled this, but, they could do it more anonymously. And so the questions got a bit more what they really wanted to ask, you know? Which, which I think's a good thing.

[35:45]

You currently are also a member of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists, the Chartered Management Institute, and the British Computer Society.

Yes. I think, they're... They are... They represent the things that matter to me, in terms of career, but they also I think, the theme running through them is, women in technology I would say. I mean... Well and management. I, I feel it's, part of my duty is to promote to younger women that it's possible to do these senior roles, and that they shouldn't allow anything to get in the way, and they should have the confidence to go for it.

But what do you think should change in society to achieve that?

[pause] I'm always puzzled as to why... We shouldn't have to do that, should we? And I think, looking back, I never thought about it. I didn't think there was a, there was anybody stopping me doing something. I can now look back retrospectively. While it was happening I didn't realise. But I can now look back and see perhaps where I was held back, or, I should have side-stepped, or... Do you see what I mean? I was quite lucky, obviously, because I went to F International, which is Steve Shirley's, and we were all women, and that no doubt helped my career immensely. So I, I think you... I think, there's, there's a, to me it says, instead of banging on to the world and saying, 'You've got to change,' maybe women should make the most of

what there is out there, and just use it to get where they want to get to. Because I've been doing it, so, you know, that, it can't be magic. [laughs]

[37:51]

So, what do you think are the biggest challenges and issues related to IT for the next five years?

Well, I think there's... I think society needs to get a grip on IT, to help it with productivity, better service. And, you know, the NHS springs to mind here, because, really, they, I, in my view they haven't really grasped this. And perhaps they've been held back by having a, in the Noughties they had that big project that didn't go well for them. But nevertheless, their admin could be, I think, slicker. And I suspect that, they could think about more innovatively the nursing as well, in that, it's, it's very manpower-intensive. And I'm not sure that we can't have, you know, patients both in hospital but sitting at home with a laptop or something where they, and they can be wired up rather like a Fitbit, and the doctor knows who he needs to see and who he doesn't need to see just by reading the, what's there. And, and a computer could actually sort out a priority list for him at nine o'clock in the morning. So I'm not sure that we're quite getting there. And I don't think there's any major robotics in that. I think, you know, I think we could do that. So I think we're, we need perhaps the will to do that. And my hope is that it will happen, and that in 20 years' time, you know...

Do you think there are any issues about privacy or like, the possibility of being hacked? I mean, these are sensitive...

Well, they are sensitive, but presumably, that's right now, because I think they hold, they, you know, a GP holds the records of everything that's ever been written down about you on a computer now, I mean they have got that far. So there is. I think maybe, maybe the mistake before was having, you know, they wanted to have them all joined up, didn't they. So they wanted... You know, if, if I, if my GP in Birmingham has got my details, but I get run over, my leg gets run over in Exeter, they can just go online and see. Maybe that's, maybe it shouldn't be as freely available as that, because you could, you could easily introduce a protocol where, the Birmingham, release it, couldn't you? So I, I don't think... I mean I think we're

halfway there now. What do you want? Do you want to be... I think there's a choice for society. Do we want to be treated quickly and efficiently, or, do we want privacy at all costs? But then that gets into the ethics of, not only IT but robotics, doesn't it?

[41:04]

Yeah, I mean, robotics is a huge thing. What are your thoughts about it, and what are your forecasts about it?

Well... I think it'll get... I think the take-up will be slower, because it's already slower than it needs to be. And there's something about the productivity as well. Maybe society is holding itself back, either consciously or subconsciously, because it doesn't want to have massive unemployment, which is what might happen if we really got, got it going on the old robotics. Then what do you do? So there have been experiments in some countries where everybody gets a monthly salary, whether they're working or not. [pause] So it will need paying for. So that, this is a massive change for society, and whether that, you know... I assume we will have to get there. Something will force us into it, I think.

Yeah, but on the other hand, you have to design robots, you have to make them work, so you create new jobs where you...

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, it creates more IT jobs, but I'm not sure it will create enough of them. [pause] That would be nice. That would be nice for that to be, to solve itself like that, but I, I'm not sure that people think it will.

[42:29]

So, how do you think IT will impact the whole society in ten years? So, not just robotics, not just about, like, NHS, but in general, what are the... What are your thoughts about, like, the relationship with society?

Well, I think that, clearly with, you know, the mobile phone, Facebook, and all of these things, it's permeated people's lives tremendously. And some of us may think that's great; others may think, if this continues, you know, humans will become like robots, and be, not talking to each other, but emailing each other, or texting each

other. So there's a, it seems to me that society has sort of, hasn't quite worked out whether it thinks this is a good thing or a bad thing. Maybe someone will invent something that makes it more acceptable. I don't know. I thought I knew about this five years ago, but I think it's, I think it's more tricky to call now. And the idea that we might have drones flying around our heads delivering packages is also, doesn't sound practical, does it? But the, but the technology... I mean, it's all got to be ordered, and whether, whether we're ready to pass, whether our legislative system is ready to pass laws that will make all this work beautifully, that's also a worry isn't it.
[laughs]

[44:14]

So moving back to you. Like, what was your proudest achievement over your career?

Well I think, most probably it was listing ITNET on the London Stock Exchange Main Market, because it was quite clear while I was doing that that nobody I met had ever seen a woman be the chief executive of a company doing that. And so...

What year was that? Can you...

It was 1998.

And what else do you remember about that time?

Well I remember going round... Because you have to promote the company, and go to all these potential investor meetings, you know, in the City of London, which is obviously something I hadn't done before. And it, it was quite clear while I was doing it that they hadn't met anybody like me before. And so it was, it was a novel experience, unforgettable really. But it went all right. I, I, you know, I carried on... We had some very long-term holders, once they did buy in, so, they obviously thought it was all right.

And were you, like, doing this all, like, alone, or did you have a strong team around you?

Well I had a, a finance director, and a company secretary. We did the bulk of the work. And then we had a broker help us, you know, with the City bit, and, with the process. Yeah, so, so that was how it worked. Mm. [pause] It takes about six months.

[46:00]

So... Can I ask you, what advice would you give to someone entering the IT industry today?

I think that's quite a hard question, because... Because things are, have speeded up, you know, from the old mainframe days. So things are moving along at a pace. And I think probably, they need to, they probably need to switch jobs quite a bit, and, and make sure that they've, they acquire, not only the IT skills for different IT areas, or whatever interests them, but also that they get business sector exposure. Because, you become a much more IT effective person if you understand your client's business. I think that's quite important. I was quite lucky that, you know, there was... Well if you go to a... That was, that was my thinking about going to a software house, and that, that was right.

[47:23]

And would you like to give special advice to women?

Well I think I've already mentioned women. But I think women should just, assume that they can do whatever they want to do, and get on and do it. And only worry about being stopped if they are stopped. I think that's, you know, I think, if you don't see the slight, or whatever it is, you will just carry on doing what you're doing. Because, you know, I think women are particularly suited to understanding what their clients want. I think we're quite good listeners, and, I think, we get it, if you see what I mean.

Thank you Bridget, it's been a real pleasure talking to you today.

Thank you.

[End of Interview]