BSides Newcastle 2023

On 29th September 2023 I attended Bsides Newcastle as a volunteer, so it was a different experience to the ones I've attended previously as an attendee. Bsides are security conferences hosted for and by the InfoSec community, so they rely on organisers, volunteers and speakers giving up their time for free to make the event happen. Having attended several previously I thought this time I'd give back to the community by helping out.

A week prior to the conference there was an issue with the original venue that had been booked and it was no longer possible to use it.   With only a week to go before the event the organisers did an amazing job of not only finding a new venue but one that was perfect for the job. From the possibility of no con or a cut down streamed version the full event was restored. The Conference went on with all the scheduled talks and activities as everyone frantically toiled behind the scenes to make it happen, much like a swan that glides along the water while feverishly paddling away below the surface all looked good to the attendees.

The day before the event we had access to the building to start setting up some of the talks and sponsor areas ready for the next day.   The new venue was 'North East Futures UTC' which usually house a state funded University Technical College, located in the centre of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It's a lovely building with a mix of the old existing structure and more modern architecture.

On the day of the conference, we had access to the building only half an hour before the doors opened to the attendees, so we quickly got ready to welcome them in. A number of volunteers were there to hand out swag bags to everyone as they arrived. A usual item to find in a conference swag bag is a con t-shirt but not here.   For Newcastle 2023 it's cooking aprons. Colour coded too. Orange for organisers, yellow for volunteers, brown for speakers, white for vendors and pink for sponsors.

Whilst some helpers were greeting people with swag bags my first job of the day for me was to tidy up some 3D printed tentacles and add a split ring to make them into keyrings. This I set forth doing without question as it's BSides Newcastle after all. After that I went to provide assistance to Cooper with the Audio/Visual along with three other volunteers.   Cooper went over the steps we would need to follow, but fortunately everything is set up so that there isn't much to do, and any errors can be fixed afterwards.

Due to the last-minute change of venue and the time taken to get everything in place the schedule was started with a slight delay. First up in Track one was the BSides NCL Team Welcome with intros and information on what was to happen through the day.   Finished off with a singalong with new lyrics to the tune of 'No F**** To give' which people tried their best to follow along to.

Next up was the Keynote which was 'They know more than you, then do it for the big companies! Or do they?' presented by Lee Morton. This was a story of when he checked the details on his DBS check to find the details of a convicted sex offender with weapons charges was returned because the name was a bit similar.

After that I was needed to look after the recording of the talks in Track Three. As everything was set up by Cooper there wasn't any technical knowledge required, thankfully, I just needed to make sure

the titles of the talks were updated, and the camera stayed pointed at the presenter. In Tack Three there was:

Marcus Tenorio with 'Look at me! I'm the manager now: Becoming a Security Engineer Manager, common pitfalls, lessons and more. Marcus talked through the difference of being an engineer and an engineering manager.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvafrrxM-3I

Michael Lamb with 'The Thinking Analyst: Unlocking Core SOC Analysis Skills. Michael went on to explain how the skills needed are like the 'Thinking Soldier', someone who doesn't need instruction to follow through on something, can analyse risk and generally see the bigger picture.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=td56z2i57Tg

Gerald Benischke with 'Precision Munitions For Denial Of Service'. Due to some time changes there was some confusion over what was on where so this talk started with a very small number of attendees which grew quickly halfway through so Gerald did a very good, fast recap of the first half essentially doing a talk and a half.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B809fxyFjYI&list=PLGNAv5vjY3498gfWxXtHLqbzI9VU7PS58&index=11&pp=iAQB

Melina Phillips who presented remotely with 'Dude, check your privilege! – Privileged Account Management Solutions and how they could either become your bestie or totally ruin your day.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFv0-6DzFNU&list=PLGNAv5vjY3498gfWxXtHLqbzI9VU7PS58&index=13

Jake Keast with 'Russian Roulette: Hacktivism in the Middle East'.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dscUUnX7UY4&list=PLGNAv5vjY3498gfWxXtHLqbzI9VU7PS58&index=15

Then it was time for lunch, packed lunches and delicious deep dish pizza's and a time to catch up with people and see who attended what talks.

After lunch there was a 'Scrannote' by Jerry Gamblin on 'Open-Source Vulnerability Intelligence: A Key to Proactive Defence'.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SJP_ebBnq8&list=PLGNAv5vjY3498gfWxXtHLqbzI9VU7PS58&index=16

Following that I stayed in track one to help with the recordings of the Lightning Workshop Speakers which were 3 attendees that did a workshop on presenting a lightning (short) talk and then present it. All did very well.

After a break it there was the BSidesNCL Alumni Panel featuring Rosie Anderson, Jerry Gamblin, Ian Thornton-Trump and Kimberley Hendry on the Mandela Effect – Cyber Mythbusting.

Next, Organizers Ben Docherty and Sam Humphries celebrated the life of Duncan McAlynn. Duncan previously presented at BSides Newcastle and passed away earlier in the year, so this was a heartfelt farewell to someone they very much cared about.

On to the Locknote, Rosie Anderson on 'Ideas Lives Forever'.

And finally, it was the BSidesNCL Team for the Closing Awards, and also a last singalong by some very brave members of the audience.

A snippet of the day is here:

https://youtube.com/shorts/Fz94_l2Dp4Y

All the talks can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGNAv5vjY3498gfWxXtHLqbzI9VU7PS58

Lyrics to 'No Hacks Left to Give' in case you fancy your own little sing-along (to the tune of 'I I've No More F***s To Give!' by Thomas Benjamin Wild Esq).

I've splunked, splunked splunked and I've splunked a bit more
I've Sed and Grepped and regexed to win this cyber war
I've PocketSIEMed and Exabeamed
In hopes of some success
But the inevitable fact is that it leads my distress
I've no more hacks to give
I've no more tricks to try
I've hunted threats for so long it's made me wannacry
I've no more ports to scan,
I've no more shells to pop
I've blown the CISO's budget and now he's said to stop
I've scanned, scanned, scanned to find an open port
But all the ports are closed so I've now had to abort
I've probed, I've poked, I've scripted, in the hope of some new shell
The inevitable fact is I'm stuck in no-shell hell
I've no more tools to use
For access to deny
I've tried to go tool shopping
But there's no more tools to buy
To stop all the abuse
More tools I tried to get
I'm over my SOC budget and in security debt
The effort has just not been worth the time or the expense!
I've exhausted all my energy, for minimal recompense!
The distinct lack of acknowledgement has now begun to gall!
And I've come to realize that I don't give a hack at all!
I've no more scope to give
I've no more Sploits to do
I've been hunting for scripts all day but they're all in python2
I've no more locks to pick
I've no more gates to tail
I've tried all of the windows but in access I did fail

I've no more mails to spoof
In order to blackmail
I've used up all my clickbait on the CISO's phishing mail
I've no more hacks to give
I've no more hacks to give
No more hacks.
No more hacks.
I've no more hacks to give