

Bsides Lancashire 2023



On 30th March 2023 I attended Bsides Lancashire, which took place at the Margaret Fell Lecture Theatre, Lancaster University. This was the first Bsides for Lancashire and the day involved technical tracks, a careers village, an innovation village, and an afterparty.

First up there was a video introduction from Rik Ferguson as he was unable to make it in person. This started with his 'excuse' presented in the format of the Star Wars opening crawl which was fun way to get the show on the road. Rik went through a run down of the day's events which can be found here [Bsides Lancashire Schedule](#)

The first keynote speaker was Holly Grace-Williams with 'It's not getting any better but it's not getting any worse', on AI and how it can be useful but there is lots wrong with it right now. Holly explained how breaches are not a singular attack, there are several stages. One of these stages can include Ransomware as a payload but ransomware is not an attack in itself. AI is a tool that can be used to automate and speed up attacks and, also, it can enhance pentesting when used as a tool.

Next, James Bore's presentation, 'An Introduction to Information Theory for Information Security', discussed the way information flows from sender to reader. With some mind boggling mathematics James explained how information has lots of noise when it is transmitted, referencing the Shannon Weaver model and how it affects technical information.



Time then to peruse the vendor stalls and look in on the Hands-on Hacking Hub where there's an A320 simulator being set up.

At 11.30 there was a special guest in the main stage area. Richard from NCSC talked about the numerous different roles and skills needed in the industry. When asked what the biggest technical risk is at the moment Richard first suggested 'everything but then settled on AI. Not for having an impact on jobs but how it will affect society and the influences it will have on people with disinformation.

Back to the Innovation village for Nick Prescott's talk on 'Cyber in Asymmetric Warfare'. The asymmetry is low sophistication on one side and Nation State on the other. There was a discussion on costs which in the US can be seen to have increased due to legal costs after the event.

Next up was Randeep Gill with 'Fantastic Attack Types and How to Find Them' which discussed types of attack, behaviour-based approach and the question of what's normal. And then it was time for lunch which was a choice of scouse or butter pie, with a buffet of sandwiches and delicious cakes. It was a much needed break and a chance to chat with other attendees.

After lunch was another special guest in the main stage area, Alastair, from the National Cyber Force who work to take action in cyberspace to protect the UK's interests. Alastair discussed the need for diversity within the cyber security area including people who understand people and are also cyber aware and able to communicate well. Diversity helps bring together different perspectives which helps with problem solving.

After lunch we heard about 'AppSec on a Shoe String' from Sean Wright. Sean talked about the tools available for application security when there are budget constraints. That's not to say commercial tools shouldn't be used. It's about picking what works best when you're taking a budget into account. Check out the recording of his talk for examples of the tools available for application analysis, dependency mapping, vulnerability management and training.



The last Keynote of the day was Chris Roberts which started off with ticking boxes. Chris said that we have one job in this industry and that is to protect those around us. He asked a lot of thought provoking questions and that's what we need to do more of. Look at where the attack vectors are, look at the supply chain then ask more questions.

Before the talks finished for the day there was one last session which was a panel discussion about why it's important to have this kind of event in the Northwest and why you'd want to work in cyber. An interesting point was made in regard to soft skills and how you explain them on your CV and maybe Impact Skills would be a better description.

As the day drew to a close there were some accolades and thank you's from the team that brought the first Bsides Lancashire to life and then it was on to the afterparty. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole day and the after party and look forward to the next one.

For anyone who missed the event some of the talks can be seen here
<https://www.youtube.com/@BSIDESLANCASHIRE>

I'll certainly be catching up on the ones I've missed.

