

LUGS ON TOUR

CHAR(14) & PGDay

Josette Garcia gets some serious database action in Buckinghamshire.

CHAR(14) is a 'must attend' international conference for anyone interested in Clustering, High Availability and Replication, plus all forms of parallel, distributed and grid architectures. The joint conferences were organised by the UK PostgreSQL User Group.

Some of the talks included "Replication in Security" by Magnus Hagander – Magnus is a member of the PostgreSQL Core Team and a developer and code committer in the PostgreSQL Global Development Group. He currently serves on the Core Team and as President of the Board for PostgreSQL Europe. I managed to follow the history of replication up to replication streaming. Unfortunately the rest was well above my head (see: www.2ndquadrant.com/bdr)

There next followed "Logical Decoding for Auditing and Replication" by Gianni Ciolli, a principal consultant for 2ndQuadrant Italia. He has been working with Free and Open Source Software for more than 15 years. He was co-founder and then president of the Prato Linux User Group

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(Plug); he has organised many editions of the Italian PostgreSQL day, and in 2013 was elected to the board of ITPUG, the Italian PostgreSQL Users Group.

Bi-Directional Replication (BDR) by Andres Freund. What is BDR? It is the latest Asynchronous Multi-Master Replication for PostgreSQL.

BDR is an Open Source project that follows the same license as PostgreSQL (TPL), which is an early form of BSD open source licence.

Simon Riggs talked about the Future of Replication. His views on the future of Bi-Directional Replication and its inclusion into the PostgreSQL core code.

Char(14) was followed by PGDay – some attendees left, some arrived but I can say that most people stayed for both days.

PGDay

Mike Fowler – Migrating Rant & Rave to PostgreSQL – engaging with your customer in every possible way. Mike narrated the pain of migrating from MySQL to PostgreSQL. He found that all the pains were well worth it!

Magnus Hagander presented the new features of PostgreSQL 9.4, which is to be made available in August or September.

Business intelligence with Window Functions by Gianni Ciolli – please note the absence of "s" after Window. Not only has Gianni got the most beautiful Italian accent but he is also extremely funny.

Simon Riggs gave an update on the AXLE project – Advanced Analytics for Extremely Large European Databases. The AXLE project is an EU funded project to greatly improve the speed and quality of decision making on real-world data sets. AXLE aims to make these improvements generally



Horwood House venue, near Milton Keynes, home of Bletchley Park – now the National Museum of Computing.

available through high quality open source implementations via the PostgreSQL and Orange products (<http://orange.biolab.si/>). Do visit the AXLE website for more details on <http://axleproject.eu/>.

I must admit that the content of this conference was well above my understanding. I should have been bored but the attendees and the organisers were so kind that I never felt out of place or not wanted.

The speakers came from Italy, Switzerland, the USA, Germany, Czech Republic and Sweden bringing information, tricks and latest developments. I believe PostgreSQL is one of the most used databases, so why are there so few attendees at the yearly conference? It doesn't make sense. If you are a PostgreSQL user, I really hope you'll come to Char(15) and PGday 2015.

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Deer Shed Festival Science Tent

Andrew Gregory, worried about the future, is pleased to see that the kids are all right.

Music festivals on television always look so grubby. Yes, it's good to get several bands you like in one place, but they also attract hippies, henna, batik and tie-dye. And bongo drums. Bloody bongo drums. We were delighted then to learn of the existence of the Deer Shed Festival, now in its fifth year of glorious sunshine near Thirsk in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

The festival essentials were all there (beer, Johnny Marr, burgers), but what piqued our interest was the festival's science tent. Deer Shed is a family-friendly event, and rather than leave the kids to pointless displays of tribal drumming (Which tribe? It's never specified!), the organisers had filled a tent with demonstrations of science – Python, Arduino, astronomy and more.

Connor and Paul from Pimoroni had made the trip to show kids how to build little shrimp kits – tiny, functioning circuits made out of ordinary components. Next door to them, a crowd of six-year-olds were drawing circuits on cardboard, plugging in LEDs and practically jumping up and down with excitement when the circuits

dried and they what saw they'd made. This is a world away from any electronics lessons we had at school. Forget the theory, just show them the blinkenlights and they're hooked.

Over on the other side of the tent, Dan, a Raspberry Pi certified educator, was giving Python programming lessons for – you guessed it – *Minecraft*. This was so popular that slots for the weekend were fully booked within 15 minutes of the science tent opening, and we can see why.

The children playing with *Minecraft* looked to be around 10 years old, and Dan had them coding different block types. A few lines of Python saved into a configuration file and players were wandering the *Minecraft* world leaving a trail of flowers behind them (perhaps the hippy nonsense had pervaded the science tent after all), or flying through the sky leaving a spiral of watermelons. After that, you're only a variable away from being able to change block types on the fly from within the game.

More science

The universities of Teeside and York brought along a mobile



Deer Shed Festival is held in the grounds of Baldersby Park, built for communications technology pioneer George Hudson. deershedfestival.com

planetarium each; again, these were wildly popular. And the Teeside University representatives excelled themselves with CST: Teeside, a mocked-up crime scene complete with evidence to solve the case.

For parents of small children who want to let their hair down with kids in tow, Deer Shed is great. For the atmosphere, the brilliant local beer (no flat Carling here, thanks very much), the performances and everything else, it's well worth it. If you're at a loose end in late July next year, come along!



Far left: The science tent was packed for the whole sun-drenched weekend.

Left: Sebastian Jacques helps Paul from Pimoroni out with a simple circuit.