



**Alumnus** Piers Wilson  
**Subject** MSc Information Security  
**Graduated** 1996  
**Place of Work** PricewaterhouseCoopers  
**Position** Senior Manager, Risk Assurance



Piers currently works as a Senior Manager in the Information and Cyber security practice, specialising in technology and architecture, data loss prevention, compliance, privacy, cloud and mobility. PricewaterhouseCoopers Risk Assurance team brings a multi-disciplinary approach to information and cyber security and helps clients to do business with confidence by identifying, and managing risks more effectively.

# Great minds go on to great places

## What were your reasons for choosing RHBNC?

I finished my BSc in Mathematics and Computer Science in 1994 and then spent some time working in the US and the UK. I had applied to three Masters courses; one in networking, one in computer graphics and the RHUL course in Information Security – they were all topics that I found interesting at the time; I later found that I'd read a book on cryptography written by Fred Piper at RHUL for an essay on random number generation during my first degree, and then when I was awarded a research grant to study at RHUL it became an easy choice.

## What was your priority; the College or the course?

Really it was the Information Security course; you can chose campuses that are in certain locations or have particular facilities, but once you leave it is the course that carries you into your career.

Back in 1995 there weren't really any other institutions running courses in Information Security – so the college was 'the place' to go for this subject. In fact, it still is – there are other offerings now; probably a dozen or so similar courses around the country; yet RHUL still has the leadership position as the course to aim for. It has launched a great many people's careers and has an immensely broad alumni network many of which are still in touch and meet regularly.

## What else attracted you to the College?

The location and campus are brilliant; it is close to London, yet not hampered by being right in the centre. The woods and green spaces of the campus make it a really pleasurable place to spend a portion of your life. Everyone is always impressed by the Founders building. It's hard to fault it as a place to study or live. I still visit regularly.

## How has Royal Holloway changed since your time here?

It doesn't seem to have changed much, there are a few more halls and parts of the campus have been redeveloped. It is an even better campus now than back in the 90's. The course has gone from strength to strength – there are now more specialisms to study and more flexible ways of attending. In Information Security you have to keep things up to date and current as threats and challenges change all the time. The course is still run by a lot of the same people though, and the campus has kept its feel – I love being back there.

## Have you kept in touch with any of your lecturers?

I'm still in touch with many of them; I'm probably on campus about once a month on average, there are a few of us that are part of a research group on cyber security, there are half yearly networking dinners on campus and every two years there is

an alumni conference. I also sit on the board of the Institute of Information Security Professionals (IISP) along with Fred Piper, who ran the course there when I was studying, so I see him fairly often through that organisation too.

## What has been your career path since graduating?

When I left RHUL I started working in Vodafone's Communications Security & Advanced Development department. It was a great role, defining security policy and the requirements for security around network security and fraud. I then joined a small company called Insight Consulting; the technical services team was fairly embryonic – the company's pedigree in risk, compliance and security management coupled with the emerging technical services I was helping to create gave us a really compelling proposition. Having progressed through the ranks, I then ran the Technical Assurance Team which supplied government and enterprise customers with technical security consultancy and penetration testing services.

I have since moved to PricewaterhouseCoopers – to add experience, resource, expertise, leadership and capability to the Information and Cyber Security team where I now sit.





# people with passion

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I am also a Director of the IISP (Institute of Information Security Professionals) and I represent them within the talent management committee of the UK Cyber Security Challenge.

### Please tell us about your current role.

I'm a Senior Manager at PricewaterhouseCoopers within Risk Assurance, within Information and Cyber Security. I drive, create, evolve and shape the technical security propositions that are then delivered by the various sector and region specific business units. I'm currently working on projects for both the Government and London Top-tier teams.

### Has RHBNC/ISG helped you get where you are today?

Absolutely, in a great many ways. The course gave me key, leading edge skills; so I became immediately in demand and valuable. These have carried me through my career and it is still so well respected that the qualification carries enormous weight and credibility. The alumni network and ongoing spirit of community are immensely valuable and a real asset to anyone who is lucky enough to become part of it. The involvement of industry speakers during the course enabled me to get an internship to undertake my dissertation project, which gave me access to information and resources, coupled with some real work experience on my CV, as well as giving me the opportunity

to deliver something really special and clinch a distinction for my MSc and to move into a good role in a great company when I finished.

### What does it mean to you to be an alumnus of RHBNC?

Being part of the alumni network is incredibly useful, ISG have really worked hard to foster this community, and there are regular dinners, conferences and other events. Plus many of them are active within the security community so we tend to meet at other events and through other channels. The value of the degree, in terms of the knowledge and prestige, the reputation of the college and department are really enhanced by the strength of this community.

### Why do you choose to support the College financially?

Through the course in Information Security I've ended up in the reasonably lucrative and challenging career I now have.

Also I met my wife on campus (she was studying Psychology) and we now have three children so pretty much everything good in my life is down to the course and my time at RHUL. I have no strong links with my first university anymore; so supporting the university both myself and my wife attended seems only fair.

### Why do you choose to support the Annual Fund?

I think education is key and as so much of what I have ended up with in my career and family life is down to the time I spent here so it seemed like a natural thing to support.

### What do you think of our alumni events?

ISG run regular network dinners which I nearly always go to; there is also a two yearly conference, which I've spoken at each time. It is a great event, and for the money is easily one of the best security conferences – both in terms of content and attendees.

There is also a London alumni chapter that meets regularly; I helped Fred Piper launch this – speaking at the inaugural meeting – and it is still running, although I'm not as regular attendee at that as I'd like due to other commitments. So the alumni community is one of the course's and College's biggest assets – it is a very active, supportive and involved community.

### Why would you recommend us as a place to study? Do you recommend us to your contacts?

I'd always recommend RHUL and the Information Security course; it is still the pre-eminent place to study and the value of the course, the brand and the alumni network are hard to challenge.



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