Pro-Biz

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WALK AND PUB LUNCH , THE THREE HORSESHOES, LALEHAM TUESDAY 3rd MARCH 2026



On a pleasant springlike morning 13 people and dog Gaia started off from the Three Horseshoes, along the road but soon turning off into the large green open space of Laleham Park. The paths across the park – enjoyed by Gaia - led us to the river Thames.

We then followed the riverside at a gentle pace for quite a distance. The river was running fast but recent flooding had subsided, and along the way we passed a variety of interesting styles of houses on both banks, some of which looked quite at risk from floods.

We reached Penton Hook Lock, but it was not possible to cross to the island there due to potential danger from diseased ash trees. After retracing our steps for a short way, we cut across to join a road that took us back to the pub where we were joined by six more people for lunch.
We all sat at a single long table, and the food was good and enjoyed by everyone.

LUNCH TALK: "NATIONAL MUSEUM OF COMPUTING, BLETCHLEY PARK" by RACHEL BURNETT, TUESDAY 18TH FEBRUARY 2026

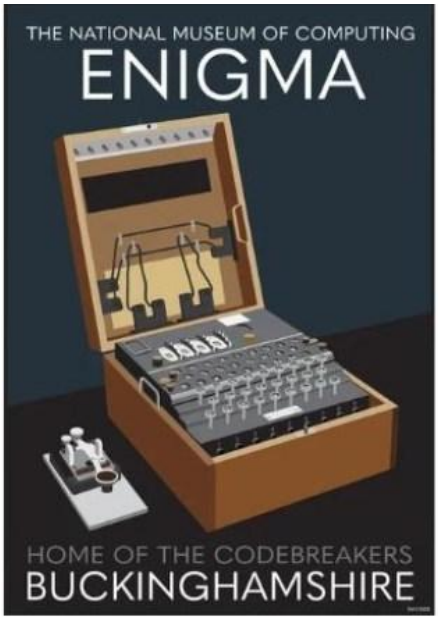


Rachel Burnett, who introduced the topic, has an impressive pedigree of working with the British Computer Society, and the National Museum of Computing at Milton Keynes. Rachel served variously as trustee, chair and president with these organisations. She took us on a journey through the history of British computing, and the individuals who created it. These innovators, three of whom would be awarded Nobel Prizes, were pivotal in the astonishing rate of progress over its short history. One, however, was more modest, but no less talented. Tommy Flowers, a Post Office engineer, cooperated with our local notable Alan Turing in the design of the 'Counter' project, and the aptly-named 'Bombe'. In spite of establishment opposition, and using large amounts of vacuum valves, they created 'Colossus', the first programmable electronic computer, central in persuading Hitler of the accuracy of the Normandy hoax by the Allies in WW2, and in the subsequent success of the D Day landings, the Bismarck operation and North Africa campaign. This, and the code-breaking work with 'Enigma' at Bletchley Park, underscored the claim that this shortened the war by two years, and saved many thousands of lives.

After these wartime feats, development continued apace; early room-sized brutes, reliant on fragile and unreliable vacuum valves, gave way to increasingly-compact machines like 'ENSAC' at Oxford in 1947, the first working digital computer, which produced improvements in code changes in the order of 3500 to 5000X. Then the 'Baby' at Manchester in 1948, with an ability to store information, 'ATLAS', 'LEO' and 'ACORN' along with the Ferranti Mark1 with its virtual memory: these led to commercial applications, with the Lyons company, of Corner House fame, an early client. Secrecy, however, cloaked operations until 1975. Rachel concluded by pointing out the many features on offer at the Museum, and some thoughts about the future.

An interesting and illuminating talk. Thank you, Rachel.





FUTURE EVENTS

TUESDAY 7th APRIL: Walk and Pub Lunch, Hampton Court Golf Club, Home Park, KT1 4AD

TUESDAY 21st APRIL: Club Luncheon and AGM