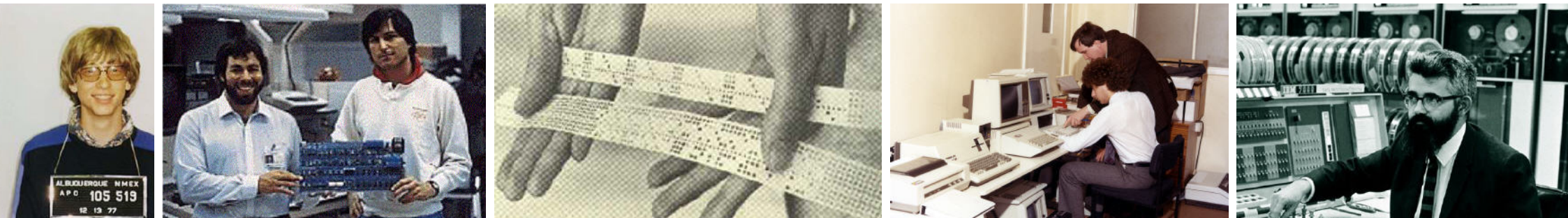


The Centre for Computing History

Plans for a Museum Dedicated to the History of Computing



Computing History

Introduction & Outline

The primary objective of the Computing History project is to create a permanent public exhibition telling the story of the information age.

Why?

The first 'Home Computer' was the Altair 8800. This machine was unveiled in January 1975 on the cover of Popular Electronics magazine. It sent a shockwave through the computing fraternity and with good reason. The development of the Altair - a watershed moment - was directly responsible for the birth of the computer industry.

The impact of the information revolution is immeasurable. It has created a global society; entire cultures remain in transition. Our thinking, our means of communication and the way we organise our lives have been irreversibly transformed. It is now virtually impossible to envisage a world without computers.

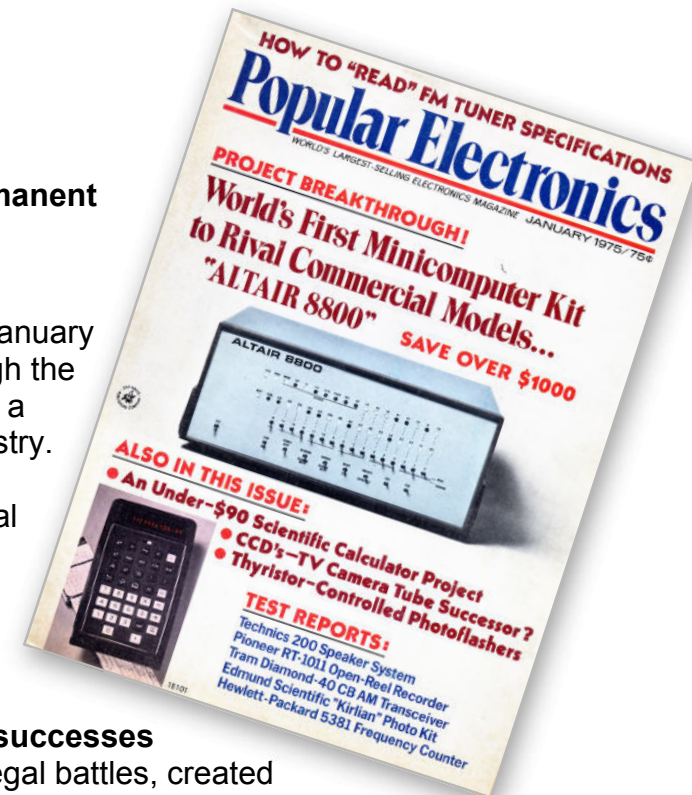


The computing industry has witnessed some of the **biggest business successes** and **worst business decisions** in history. It has spawned notorious legal battles, created the world's **wealthiest man** and engendered breath-taking innovation.

It is a story as compelling as any Shakespearean Drama encompassing passion, intrigue, betrayal, wonder, risk and vision. It is a story waiting to be told in this country.

There are no dedicated 'computing museums' in the UK. The closest we have in this country is Bletchley Park. But, even Bletchley Park only has one section dedicated to vintage computers, whilst the general exhibition is more WWII oriented.

Significantly, there is now a generation growing up who know little or nothing about the dawn of the information age. They are fascinated to learn that computers in 1975 had less power than today's mobile phones!



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Aims & Features

The aims of the “Computing History Centre” are to:

- Create a permanent public exhibition telling the story of the Information Age.
- Preserve and present a collection of important computers and related artifacts.
- Spotlight the people behind the inventions.
- Record and save the information necessary for future generations to understand how it happened.
- Perpetuate and reinvent a sense of wonder.
- Inspire the next generation.

Proposed Features of “The Centre for Computing History ” include:

- To act as a repository for computers, related artefacts and documentation.
- To present graphical displays of the time, the people, milestones and the machines.
- To explore the social impact of computers.
- To have interactive educational demonstrations of the basics of how computers work.
- To provide a ‘hands-on’ section allowing visitors to use specific vintage machines.
- To act as an educational facility and research centre



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The Collection

The core collection, of over 1,000 historically relevant artifacts dating from 1956 onwards, has been acquired over a period of twenty years and sourced from many countries. It includes:

- Computer hardware [over 150 computers]
- Software
- Computer games
- Related documentation and items

Some Highlights are :

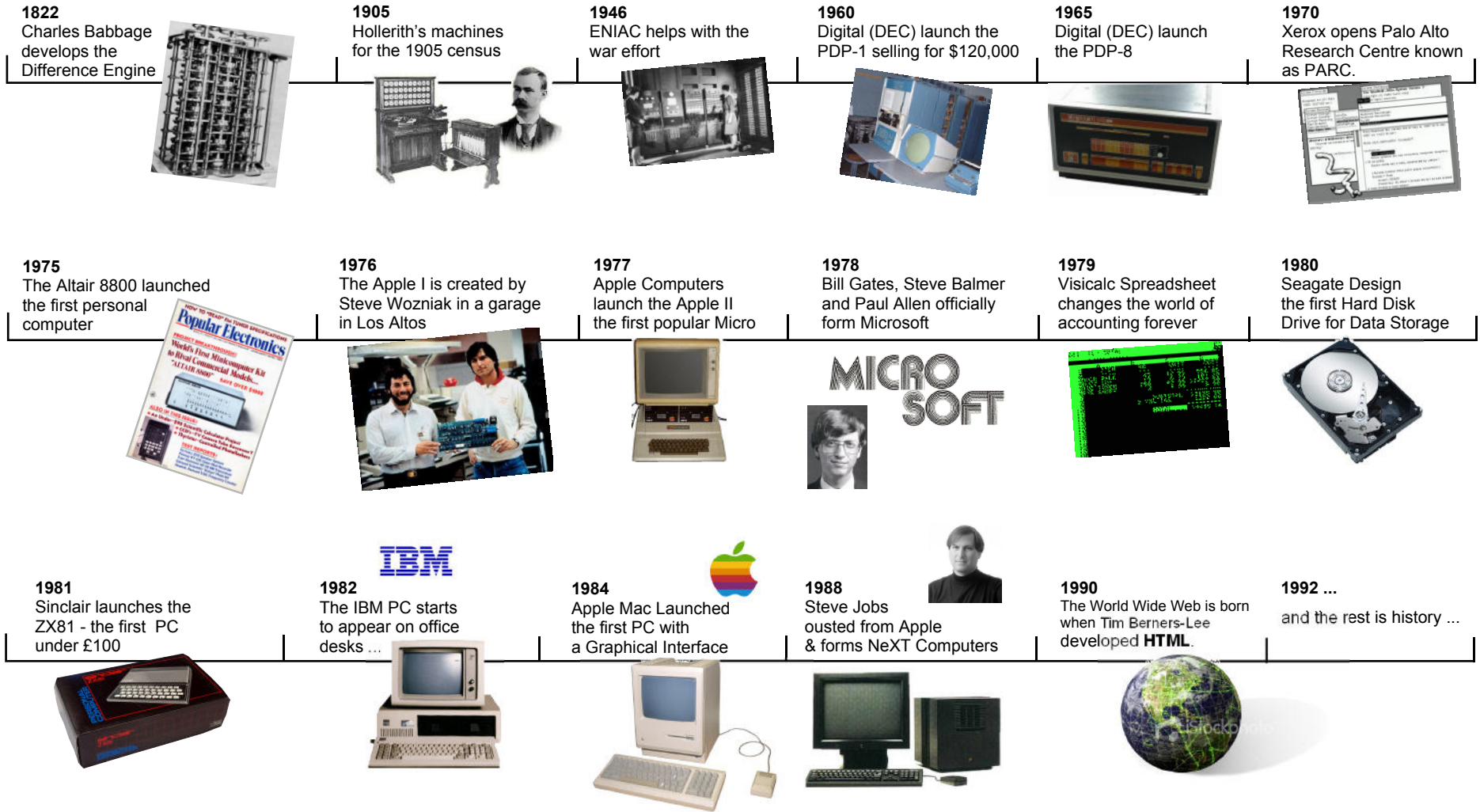
- Altair 8800 – One of the first of the first home computers – Serial Number #3 [1975]
- The original ‘Popular Electronics’ magazine announcing the above ...
- Minivac 601- the oldest computer in the collection [1961]
- Apple Lisa - 1st example of the graphical user interface [1978]
- Computer Games Consoles - Pong and the Atari 2600 with Space Invaders and Pac-Man
- Posters, Videos, Signatures, Books and other Related Items



“Computers are the single most important invention – at least of the second half – of the twentieth century.”

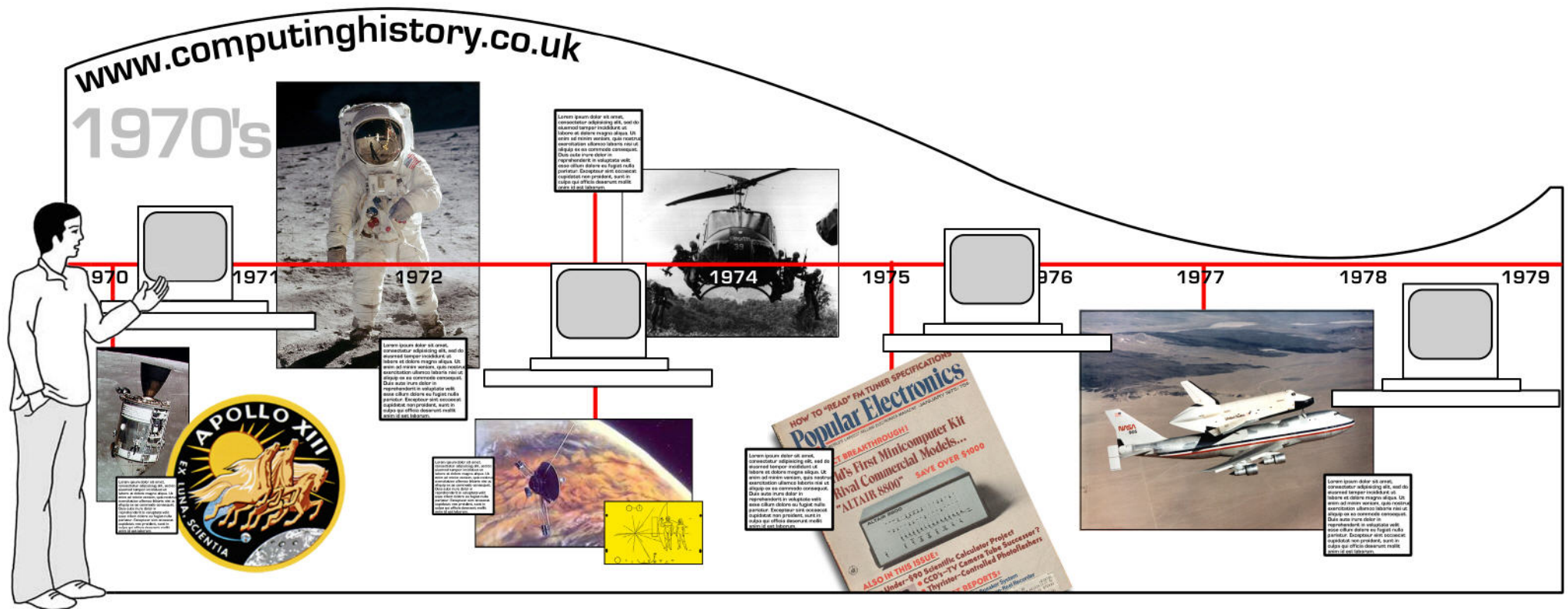
Computing History

Computing Timeline



Computing History

Computing Timeline - Example Wall Freeze



Computing History

Why?

Why Haverhill?

Haverhill is a prime location for such a project. Its proximity to Cambridge and the shared locale contribute to its appeal. Charles Babbage - the father of computing - who invented the famous 'Difference Engine', read Mathematics at Trinity College and Peterhouse. Cambridge was also the home of both Acorn Computers, developers of the BBC Micro [used in all schools] and Sinclair Research with its Famous ZX81 and ZX Spectrum computers. These are, arguably, the two most important British companies in computing history. Cambridge is now the home of Microsoft's research facility. Other reasons include :

- An important core collection already exists here in Haverhill
- It would vastly improve Haverhill's cultural offer *
- Haverhill situated in East of England - "ideas region" *
- Haverhill is more economically viable than more high rental venues
- Haverhill is a home to several high-tech companies
- Haverhill offers the potential for a link with the University of Cambridge and University Campus Suffolk *
- Haverhill's proximity to Stansted

*The 'Computing History Centre' would add enormous weight to Haverhill's current heritage offer. The St Edmundsbury Heritage Review 2005 identified the need for further cultural provision for the people of Haverhill. It recommended, in view of Haverhill's changing circumstances and population, the further development of cultural services should be addressed either as part of the Haverhill Master Plan process or directly with partners.

*EEDA has redefined the five counties making up the east of England as the 'ideas region'. The CHC would sit well with this ideological focus.

*The possibility of linking with UCS could have a number of benefits for the town. As well as strengthening the case for locating a UCS satellite learning centre in Haverhill, the partnering of the two services would result in revenue savings, enhance promotion, raise visibility and add value to each offer e.g. The Sainsbury Centre, UEA.



The Apple III was doomed to fail with its high price tag, unreliability and with the Macintosh on the way ...



Computing History

Example Exhibits

The First PC Computer

The Altair 8800 personal computer. Practically near useless yet computer enthusiasts lusted after these machines. The Altair 8800 encouraged Bill Gates to write his first version of Basic, and the rest is history.



Altair 8800
The First Personal Computer

Computers & Games

Computer games and consoles. The first 'pong' games, the Atari games console, space invaders and pacman will all feature in this exhibit to attract kids both young and middle aged !! - Revenue could be made by making some of the games coin-operated.



Atari 2600
Games Console

More & More Storage

Our need to store more and more information has lead to bigger and bigger storage devices that take up less and less space ... how is that possible. From a 39" disk through to 8" floppy disks, laser disks and CD-ROM's, this exhibit will show the advances we have made ... and how much further we can go ...

Apple and the Killer App

The Apple II computer designed by Steve Wozniak and marketed by Steve Jobs was a hugely important computer. It sold thousands upon thousands ... Why? Because it had a 'killer application' known as Visicalc. Dan Bricklin's spreadsheet changed the face of accounting and 'running the numbers' forever ...



Early
Apple Logo
(But not the first !)

Point and Click

Who designed the mouse and the 'point and click' way of using computers that we are all familiar with today? Apple? Microsoft? ... Neither! It was a photocopier company called Xerox. If only they had recognised the potential of what they had. Was this the computer industry's worst decision after IBM's?

Apple Lisa with
a Graphical
Operating
System



Computing History

Future Development?

Internet Café

Offering Internet access and a place to sit down relax with a cup of coffee for business people in the area. Revenue could be made by charging for Internet access but more likely by selling drinks and snacks either by staff or vending machines.

Vintage Computer Fairs

The UK currently has no vintage computer fairs. These are where enthusiasts show off their projects and collections and buy and sell vintage computer equipment. Fairs are very popular in the USA and across Europe. The centre could act as a draw for this type of event in the UK. An entry fee would be payable and a charge for the exhibitors.

Data Conversion

A service could be supplied for converting data from legacy computer formats into current formats. This could be expanded to include analogue audio and video formats to current digital formats.

Lectures & Conferences

Assuming enough space for an auditorium, lectures and conferences could be held where speakers would give lectures and host discussions/seminars on specialist computer subjects.

Think Tank

The centre could be developed to offer a meeting place for engineers and programmers to come together and discuss projects and problems. These sort of meeting places are highly popular and successful in the USA. Our proximity to Cambridge is very advantageous.

LAN Parties

A LAN party is where gamers get together to play games over a local computer network. Often competitions are organised to find the top gamer. LAN parties are a popular alternative to online gaming where players compete in isolation. An entry fee would be payable.



Computing History

Conclusion

The story of the Information Age and of all the engineers, innovators, inventors and creative visionaries who made it happen is inspirational. It is still waiting to be told in this country.

The “Computing History Centre” project is:

Possible

Relevant

Timely

If it doesn't happen here in Haverhill, it will happen elsewhere in the UK within the next few years...

Computing History

Jason Fitzpatrick

The core collection of the Centre for Computing History has been collected by Jason Fitzpatrick.

Jason is the Founder Director of *Pure Energy Multimedia*. Established in 1997 and based in Haverhill, Suffolk, the company successfully surfed the Dot Com boom - and bust – and has now acquired a first class reputation for delivering high-impact results. It is particularly proud of its excellent client and staff retention. Jason has overseen its growth from 1 to 7 employees and further expansion is planned for 2007. He combines a sharp commercial mind with a deep understanding of the ways in which technologies can be pushed to create new possibilities. Possessing an unyielding commitment to quality and innovation, he early on recognised the need to integrate communications processes. He sees the enormous potential in the business capabilities of the web and especially its usefulness as a front line marketing medium.

Having acquired his first computer in 1980 at the age of 10, Jason acknowledges how deeply grateful he is to have had the good fortune to be born at exactly the right moment in time; this age of electronic technology suits him perfectly. He delights in every step forward made possible by each new development in computers. He is, however, no happy amateur, but a keen professional who has no problem with the challenges that a technological based business brings, including its demand for just the right measure of strategic and creative thinking.

His academic background is in electronics, in which he gained an HND. Apparently, his final papers were flawless – he received one of the highest marks ever recorded by his college – repeating an earlier performance in 'A' level Physics. Along with his several competencies, he is proficient in 9 programming languages.

And, for the real technophiles, Jason is the proud owner of over 150 vintage computers including a Minivac from 1961 and an Altair 8800. The Altair 8800 is widely regarded as the world's very first personal computer and inspired the computing revolution. Produced in 1975, the first has disappeared, the second is owned by technical journalist Mark Stephens, the third by Jason and the next is on display in the Smithsonian Institute, Washington.