TNMOC Newsletter

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Life's a Blur

The Museum is developing very rapidly and it's all been a bit of a blur recently, so please accept my apologies for the delay in this newsletter. We are now getting into our stride, however, so you can expect regular updates and you can sign up for them here if you aren't already on our mailing list: **http://tiny.cc/tnmocnl**.

We have lots of new exhibits to show to our increasing numbers of visitors. I hope you've seen some of the media coverage about us – if not you can catch up on our new website: **http://tiny.cc/inthenews**.

We will be open every day over the Easter weekend from Friday to Monday, 1pm to 5pm. We'd really like to see you there! You might even be able to have a sneak preview of our fantastic new PC Gallery due to open officially in May. It's a sign of things to come at the Museum.
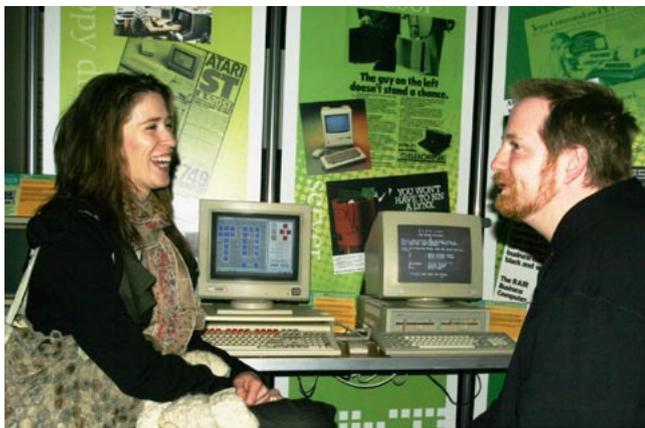
Kevin Murrell
TNMOC Trustee and Director

TNMOC – The Musical

One of the many highlights of past six months was the performance of *Obsolete?,* a musical composition by Matthew Applegate/ Pixelh8 using the sounds from a wide range of the Museum's vintage computers.

Imogen Heap with Matthew Applegate at TNMOC after the performance. Imogen gave Matthew his first big break by inviting him to open for her on her concert tour.

Matthew first turned up at TNMOC last summer and started recording the clunks and whirrs of Colossus. We were fascinated if somewhat bewildered, but he obviously knew what he was talking about musically and technologically, so we let him get on with it. He even managed to persuade us to revive some machines that he thought would make great sounds.

With a grant from The Performing Rights Society Foundation, TNMOC hosted two performances of *Obsolete?* in The Ballroom of The Mansion at Bletchley Park in March. And what great evenings they were – with standing room only on both nights and a very enthusiastic response from the very diverse audiences.

The recording of *Obsolete?* should be available as an MP3 through iTunes in May. We will keep you informed.

You can see BBC coverage of the event here: **http://tiny.cc/obsoleteonbbc**.

Be there first!

We've just started a Sponsor a Valve on Colossus website. It hasn't been publicised widely yet, but we are telling you about it now so that you can claim a prime spot if you wish.

You can sponsor pixels and put your logo, photo or name – with a link to your website if you wish.
It's all explained at **www.colossusonline.org**.
Please help us in our work.
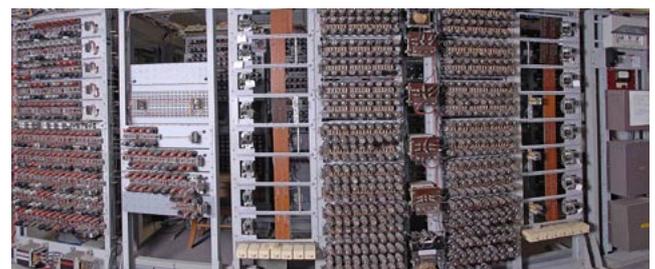
A side of Colossus you may never have seen – the back, not accessible to the public.

The world's first purpose built computer centre, home to **The National Museum of Computing**

Peter Vaughan, Volunteer

You would think that Peter Vaughan has been at TNMOC for eons, but he's only been a volunteer for 18 months. He has just headed up one of his biggest Museum tasks yet – the conversion of the new TNMOC website from a design shell into a living, breathing taster of the Museum.

Peter, who lives in Luton, is a software engineer by day, but his Saturdays (and increasingly many of his evenings) are Museum days. He likes to get involved in all aspects of the Museum and to get things fixed and working. He thinks that one of his most rewarding achievements to date was bringing IRIS, the air traffic control system, back to life with fellow volunteer, Ben Trethowan.

"We spent six months painstakingly putting it back together, working with very little information. It was a great day (3.15pm on 26 Sep 2008!) when we got it fully working again and it felt like a major achievement not just for Ben and I, but for what the Museum stands for.

"I think it's fascinating learning about so many old machines, their history and even using them. You'd think that the Museum would be quite a geeky environment. It can be with so many knowledgeable and passionate volunteers around, but actually there's lots of room for others who like project management, and all the behind-the-scenes activities that make the Museum tick."

Peter Vaughan with IRIS,
the air traffic control system he helped to revive.

Peter is one of the dozen or so regular volunteers who show up almost every Saturday without fail to revive old machines, plan and prepare new displays and show visitors around. "The Museum is a fascinating place," he says, "and I really enjoy getting to know all the people who are involved and hearing the many fascinating stories from visitors who actually worked with our machines."

More on IRIS: **http://tiny.cc/tnmociris.**

Life before computers

Colin Barnes of the Slide Rule Society with Fowler's circular slide rule and a 1930 Halden Calculex pocket watch style slide rule.

It's not all computers at TNMOC. The UK's largest display of slide rules was unveiled at the Museum in February in conjunction with the UK Slide Rule Society.

Some people may not have fond memories of these pre-computing devices, but this display could change their minds. The design and craftsmanship of these original handheld devices dating back three centuries is remarkable.

There are more than 40 slide rules on display and if you ever want to calculate the amount of whisky in a barrel or the live weight of a cow, this display is not to be missed!

Soon after the display was publicised, we received an offer from Canada of a 1900 Arthur Ellis cylindrical slide rule from someone whose grandfather had worked on the SS Turbina as an understudy to Sir Charles Parsons, the inventor of the steam turbine.

More about the slide rule display: **http://tiny.cc/tnmocsliderules.**