

# TNMOC Newsletter

Issue 12 June 2009

[www.tnmoc.org](http://www.tnmoc.org)

## The hottest and now the coolest museum in the UK

The new **PC gallery** is now officially opened and attracting a huge amount of attention from visitors whose numbers we are counting with newly-installed automatic people counters.

While that has been pulling in the crowds, we've been hard at work at a great new display for the Autumn and in completing – or should I say accomplishing the end of the beginning of – the mammoth task of organising our Archives.

Less exciting perhaps, but thought-provoking has been the installation of an **air conditioning system** to allow our less than green vintage machines to run without fear of melting. Struggling to find enough electricity in the whole of Block H to run the machines let alone cool them, we started wondering if computing really is that much greener these days. The TNMOC ICL 2966 mainframe generates 20kW of heat -- about six three-bar electric fires, or just 200 PCs. Many companies now have far more than 200 PCs. Do they really need to generate that much heat?



We've had progress with other projects too:

**The first 40-column punch card machines** have just arrived on loan from National Museums Liverpool. They are being carefully cleaned and will be part of a new gallery provisionally entitled Debits & Credits. Work to restore the **ICL 2966** continues and two more drives have been powered up – a major feat in itself. The **Elliott 803** core store fault has at last been remedied. For 4k of memory that was a lot of work!

**Kevin Murrell**

**TNMOC Trustee and Director**



## The PC Gallery – “Teenage Heaven”

The PC Gallery officially opened in May and is proving very popular. On a recent much-tweeted visit to Bletchley Park, Stephen Fry had a good look around TNMOC and when he saw the PC Gallery thought he had entered “Teenage Heaven”. <http://tiny.cc/tnmocfry>

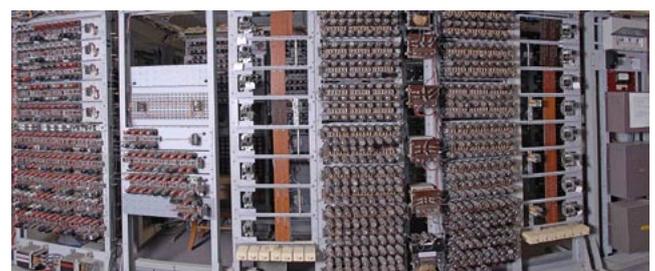
With everything from a PDP8 to an iPhone, the gallery is attracting lots of visitors eager to get their fingers working once more on keyboards of the past.

At the launch time we appealed for an **MK14 computer**, a kit and Sinclair's first computer. It retailed in 1977 for just under £40 and about 50,000 were eventually sold. With 256 bytes of RAM it provided a first home computing experience for many. A complete kit has been donated and now has a very special place in the Gallery. <http://tiny.cc/tnmocpc>

## An uncoded message

Sponsor a valve while it's incredible value! In the previous newsletter we told those close to TNMOC that we'd soft-launched the Sponsor a Valve on Colossus website [www.colossusonline.org](http://www.colossusonline.org). Soon there is going to be a hard launch -- but before that the price per pixel will rise. So, if you want to see your name in lights, get there soon to get the current bargain rate. It won't be there for too much longer.

You can sponsor pixels and put your logo, photo or name – with a link to your website if you wish.



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**

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## Ben Trethowan, Volunteer

It was six years ago that Ben Trethowan first saw the fledgling computer museum section at Bletchley Park. Even though he then lived in Portsmouth – and still does – he was so inspired by what he saw that he immediately enquired about volunteering opportunities. A few months later he joined up, and hasn't looked back since.

Today Ben devotes an astonishing 13 days per month to the Museum while he studies and does a part-time job as a Systems Engineer. He makes the 200 mile plus round trip to the Museum almost every Saturday; when most of the other volunteers show up, and also does a lot of work from home.

“At first I helped in the fascinating equipment restoration work that was going on and in setting up the exhibitions. Since then I've moved on into some surprisingly interesting administrative work. I now handle most of the growing number of offers of equipment – as the Museum's reputation has spread, the offers have increased, and it's always a thrill to be offered a rare piece of vintage technology.

“For me the TNMOC experience is very diverse. It offers me a unique opportunity to restore and use vintage computers; to work with other people with the same fascination with technology as me, and to talk to the public about some of the items which they can see.”

Ben is really keen that TNMOC achieves Museums, Libraries and Archives Council accreditation (MLA); and recently developed a Health & Safety document which will contribute towards this. It was almost a disappointment when the inspectors quickly realised his work was so good that they didn't need to go through it with a fine tooth comb.



Ben Trethowan in health and safety mode.

## New archive in accessible compact storage

It's taken several months of hard labour, but TNMOC now has a huge archive of computer software, documentation, disks, cassettes, DVDs, films, videos ... 390 boxes in total and growing steadily.

They almost swamped the room they were in until Compact Storage Ltd [www.compactstorage.co.uk](http://www.compactstorage.co.uk) offered a fantastic donation of mobile shelving. Suddenly the room capacity almost tripled and we have room for 570 more boxes.



John Sinclair searches for a rare mouse in the newly-shelved archives.

Erik Batley, managing director of Compact Storage, said: “We've had lots of business from computer companies over the years, so it was fitting that we make a donation to The National Museum of Computing.”

Highlights of the Archive include the complete ICL manufacturing archive on almost four million 35mm aperture cards and the complete Digital microfiche collection of over 10,000 films.

The collection began only two years ago with fewer than 50 boxes. Today, Alan Batey, TNMOC's archivist, is now leading the task of indexing and expanding the Archive and making it accessible to *bona fide* researchers.

A fully-equipped office has been built alongside the Archive for researchers.

To request access to the Archive email [info@tnmoc.org](mailto:info@tnmoc.org) explaining the nature and purpose of your work.