Computers, Internet, Email, spreadsheets and word processing are all computer programmes and utilities that are in use in most offices and homes in today's electronic environment, yet some people still do not have a home computer or avoid using them, even at their place of work.

Do I hear some words like Bah!! Humbug! And other vociferous retorts and responses like "I have been using my old typewriter and a pen and paper for so many years why should I change now "!! are some voices of protests from those who do not own a personal computer and certainly have no intention of walking into their local PC World or other high street electrical outlet to consider purchasing a "Personal Computer" to catch up with the modern age of technology.

Since the entrepreneur, Sir Alan Sugar introduced the first personal home word processor in the 1980's, the technology of the personal computer has since moved forward at an alarming pace, and yet some of us may fit into that category as a "stick in the mud", and if you go online and search for this phrase, you will find a site called "The phrase finder" which lists the meaning of this phrase as "one who is slow, old-fashioned, or un-progressive; especially : an old fogy". I know it grates on some of us to be called an "Old fogy", and having personally passed the 60 year old landmark, I would even consider myself in that category, but I do not mind, my personal computer is my best friend, sometimes my enemy when it decides to do totally the opposite to what I wanted it to do and not to co-operate, but it's the name of the game if you have the stamina to live with it. Yet still, my personal technological biggest failing is that I still cannot figure out how to programme the Video recorder to record a programme from the TV, and I always get it wrong, so we all have our human failings somewhere in this world technology, so I certainly have no intention of putting anyone down because of their reluctance to own a home personal computer.

This editorial piece is just to give you an idea of the origins of a computer and how it was used for certain applications and how technology has progressed in this area.

For those who do not own a personal computer for home use, you are missing out, as there is no end to the facilities that a home computer has to offer, to include the internet, an amazing web of subjects, that even the most obscure and bizarre collectors of unusual artefacts can find a like minded individual or subject matter. As an example, lets say you are you are a collector of "toe nails", you will even find a like collectors through the search engines, and if you think I am kidding, then try a search on the internet for, say a "collector of toenails", and you will get 4,840 hits !! Although there is the murky side of the internet, from pornography to, regretfully, anti Masonic sites, but putting these aside it does provide a wonderful insight to what is going on in the world outside your own front door. I have used the search engines in my researches for most articles that I have written for the CAMSG Newsletter, so whatever your interests or "floats your boat", there has got to be a web site that will cater for you. For those who are interested in bargains, right through to collecting Masonic artefacts, then, the renowned web site called "Ebay" will list many Masonic items for sale from all legitimate sources, from individuals through to professional collectors, looking for that elusive collectable Masonic item to add to their personal collection.

However, if you do not fancy being a "web crawler", then the basic facilities, which all computers of today, include word processing, data base programmes, suitable for your Lodge Membership lists, spreadsheets for the Treasurer to prepare his income and expenditure account for the Lodge, your own diary, which will give you reminders every day on your computer screen, and this list is endless.

For me, a computer does play a major part in my day to day life, both for my work as Secretary of the Chingford Masonic Hall and for all my membership in the various Masonic Orders.

It also helps me to keep in touch with members of my Lodge, who have an email address, and with other people I have been fortunate to get acquainted at Masonic meetings, and with whom we share like interests. You may consider that sending an email is not so personal, but you can write in an email words you exactly want to say over the telephone, rather than leave an abbreviated message on the answer phone. You can also send documents, photographs via email.

Most of who are Freemasons are by nature traditionalists and are very proud to be so. Freemasonry is an order which thrives on its own traditions, and woe betide anyone who tries to change it.

In our present existence we represent a generation, which has seen more fundamental changes in life style than any preceding one. Innovation in technology has moved at an alarming pace, and this has influenced our lives enormously.

Modes of dress, working habits and leisure activities have changed beyond recognition to our grand

parents were they alive today. Dr Samuel Johnson is quoted as stating that "Change is not made without convenience, even from worse to better". One of the major questions we have to ask ourselves is "does Freemasonry fit well and easily into Modern Society?

I was told that one of the great attractions of modern Freemasonry was that it was only necessary to know two dates, namely 1717, the foundation of the Grand Lodge in London, and 1813, the formation of the United Grand Lodge. The more sophisticated might wish to add to this 1751, the date of the foundation of the Ancients Grand Lodge. So, three dates, 1717, 1751 and 1813 and there it was you thought you had the history of British Freemasonry.

Regardless of anything else, there can be no doubt that 1834 marked a further sea of change in British Freemasonry, encapsulated by the publication of the first edition of the "Freemasons Quarterly Review". A further devastating change occurred with the withdraw of a Group of Canadian Lodges from the United Grand Lodge in 1855 and the formation of the Mark Grand Lode in 1856, who recently celebrated their 150th Anniversary, in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent at the Royal Albert Hall on the 26th October 2006.

The emergence of a late Victorian consensus was marked by the Appointment of Edward Prince of Wales as Grand Master in 1878. The subsequent period marked a plateau of English Masonic History. Whether one might see the 1930's as a further turning point, I would suggest that Freemasonry that had emerged in 1878 has remained in essence unchanged right the way through until the 1960's, which marked the beginning of the latest and current phase of Masonic History.

As we are well aware in this modern age of the 21st Century, everything is now electronically driven by modern technology, to include transport, on land sea and air, mobile telephones, satellite communication, facsimiles machines, dictating machines, and of course the personal computer, and so the list is endless.

First of all let us imagine the resources for a Secretary of a Lodge at least 100 years ago, which would have been certainly limited, with the Secretary of each Lodge or Chapter having to meticulously write the minutes after each Lodge Meeting, and being written in their beautiful copperplate Victorian handwriting, and ironically some still do to this day, although possibly the handwriting may have become a little less charismatic.

There are many fine examples of such beautifully written Masonic documents and minutes and other forms of artefacts on display in the Library at Freemasons Hall and it is certainly worth a visit if you have not ventured on a guided tour.

Today, some of us, or perhaps a majority of us have the use of home computers, with built in word processing, spell checking, databases for address lists, lodge membership lists, publishing software for preparing and printing Lodge Summonses, and this list is now becoming endless, as those who are adept in this new technology continue to take on new challenges with their home personal computer.

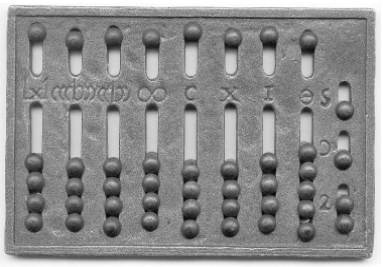
As an example, you can even obtain software from the Royal Mail so that you can pay and print the postage straight on to an envelope, without all the bother of going to the post office to purchase stamps. Today's technology caters for everything a modern day or 21st Century Secretary of a Lodge would need.

We now know that the personal computer is also a vital communication tool for sending electronic messages, and in today's jargon is known as an email, which must be the quickest and cheapest way of sending and receiving messages and correspondence.

For those of us who are between Tricenarian and Nonagenarian (Just in case you are trying to figure it out, it is the years between 30 and 99), and probably some of you are approaching the latter, may not wish to understand the use of computers, due to their own personal limitations or have difficulties with modern home technology. In fact, according to a recent newspaper article, entitled "The Silver Surfers conquer their fear" related to a clerical officer who quit his job because he did not want to use computers. It goes on to say that "Technology use across the age groups in the UK is on the rise, even though a recent report said older generations are still alienated by technology.

Despite his reluctance to use a computer the individual is now so confident of his computer skills, that now helps other elderly computer virgins to break through that barrier and buy a home computer and to get online. It is also believed that elderly people freeze in front of a computer because the fear doing some irrevocable damage to it, but perseverance is what you need, and for the computer refusers among us, perhaps a little bit of the bravado and plunging into the deep end is what you need.

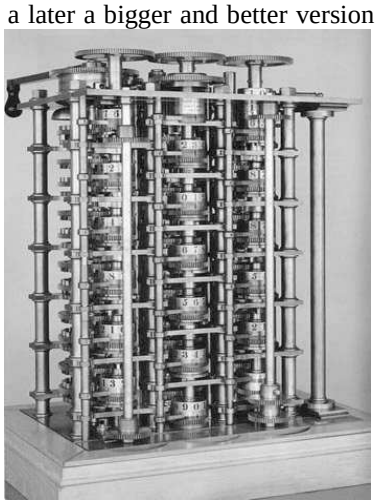
In writing this paper I thought it would be of interest to include a brief history of the technological advancements, especially in respect of personal home computers and how this modern technology has evolved. For example it is difficult to imagine counting without numbers, but there was a time when written numbers did not exist. The earliest counting device was the human hand and its fingers. Then as larger quantities (larger than ten human-fingers could represent) were counted various natural items like pebbles and twigs were used to help count. Merchants who traded goods not only needed a way to count goods they bought and sold, but also to calculate the cost of those goods. Until numbers were invented, counting devices were developed and used to make everyday calculations.



Picture left (a reproduction of a Roman Abacus)

The first actual calculating mechanism known to us is the abacus, which is thought to have been invented by the Babylonians sometime between 1,000 BC and 500 BC, although some researchers are of the opinion that it was actually invented by the Chinese. The word abacus comes to us by way of Latin as a mutation of the Greek word *abax.* In turn, the Greeks may have adopted the Phoenician work *abak,* meaning "sand", although some interpreters lean toward the Hebrew word *abhaq,* meaning "dust".

So what happened next? In fact very little happened until the 19th Century until Charles Babbage an English engineer worked on his "Difference Engine" version 1, and a later a bigger and better version No.2. It was a machine that could perform mathematical calculation's, and it was a real technological advancement for its time. In the 1840's Babbage went onto another more complex invention, an Analytical Engine, at that time a revolutionary device on which his fame as a computer pioneer now largely rests. The Analytical Engine was intended to be able to perform any arithmetical calculation using punched cards that would deliver the instructions, as well as a memory unit to store numbers and many other fundamental components of today's computer.



Photograph right (Babbage's difference engine)

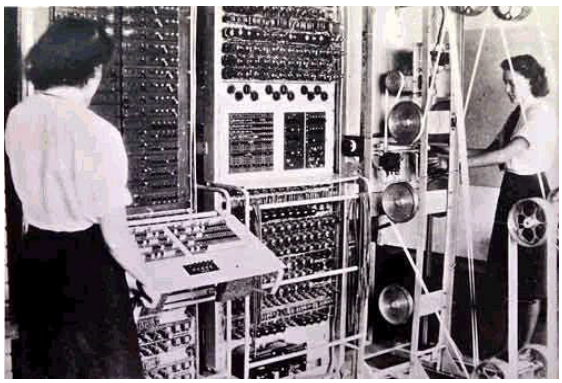
During that period the remarkable British mathematician, Ada Lovelace completed a programme for the Analytical Engine, but neither it, nor the Difference Engine No.2, ever got finished during Babbage's lifetime and he died in 1871. There were other differences, in the form that he did not have electronics or even electricity, and he still thought in the base to 10 arithmetic. But more fundamental is the rigid separation of instructions and data in Babbage's thought.

Lets now move on to just under one hundred years later to the 1930's and 1940's. In 1939 a small team of code breaker's arrived at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, with a mission to crack the backbone of the German military and intelligence communications, the Enigma cipher. The Germans thought Enigma was unbreakable. The combination of rotating wheels, electrical contacts and wires meant that the odds against anyone who did not know the machine's settings and being able to break Enigma were 150million million million to one!!

(Photograph left - an enigma machine captured from the Germans during the WWII)

Bletchley Park achieved a breakthrough when the Poles passed on their knowledge on how the machine worked. This helped the code breakers to exploit a weakness in Enigma - that no letter could ever be encrypted as itself. Alan Turin, one of the mathematicians at Bletchley Park realised that "cribs" offered a way of cracking Enigma. A "crib" is a piece of encrypted text whose true meaning is known or can be guessed.

German messages were formulaic in places and in the first line often contained standard information, for example weather conditions. Once a crib was known, it was still necessary to check thousands of potential settings to read a message and to do this Turing designed an electro-mechanical code breaking machine called a "Bombe" Each "Bombe" simulated the actions of 10 Enigma machines, and was able to check all potential settings at high speed. Further code breaking success enabled Bletchley Park to exploit "Lorenz" a highly sophisticated cipher used personally by Adolf Hitler and his High Command.



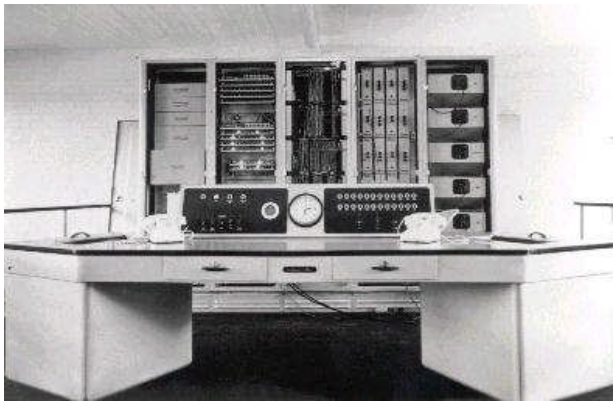
But many messages still took several weeks to decipher - therefore a computing machine was needed. The result was "Colossus", the world's first programmable electronic computer, designed by the mathematician Max Newman.

Picture left (Colossus at Bletchley Park)

Colossus was the size of a living room and weighed about one tonne. Its 2,400 valves replicated the patter of an encrypted Lorenz message as electronic signals. This breakthrough in computing remained a secret for many years, to the extent that two Americans took the credit for inventing the computer in 1945. But the creation of Colossus proved to be a key contributor to the success of the D Day landings in June 1944.

A decade later, in April 1956, Premium Bonds were launched by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer Harold Macmillan, in order to reduce inflation and encourage thrift. Premium Bonds were and still are a unique way of saving money, instead of interest payments, investors get a chance to win a cash prize. Premium Bond numbers are selected by ERNIE (no not Ernie who was the fastest milkman in the West, as sung by Benny Hill), but the electronic ERNIE, short for "Electric Random Number Indicator Equipment", and made is public debut in 1957.

It was the size of a van, and the top prize was the £1000, still a lot of money in those days. Technological advances meant that when ERNIE 3 was introduced in 1988, it was reproduced to the size of a personal computer. Interestingly enough if the original ERNIE machine was used today, it would take 73 days to complete the draw, as against two and a half hours for the latest version of ERNIE to select its winners, with all the premium bonds being considered for the chance of winning



the top prize of £1m each month, or more than one million other tax-free prizes, worth from £50 to £100,000.

Photograph left (Ernie (Electronic Random Number Indicator Equipment)

There are other classic examples of technological advancement in computers. Twenty or so years later in the 1970's, in fact in 1978, the first Sinclair computer came onto the market, costing £40.00 (Forty Pounds). It was classified as a true computer and not an upgraded calculator and was advertised as being "less than half price of any key board addressable microcomputer". Sinclair then produced the world's smallest and cheapest computer at the end of January 1980.

As mentioned earlier, entrepreneur, Alan Sugar (now Sir Alan Sugar) founded Amstrad in 1968. He may be from humble East End Roots but Alan Sugar has achieved a net worth of over £800m. The son of a tailor, he left school at the age of 16 and started a short lived career in the civil service as a Statistician, soon choosing to sell electrical items instead. At the age of 21 he founded Amstrad (**A**lan **M**ichael **S**ugar **TRAD**ing), and launched his first mass market Home Computer, designed in the United Kingdom, and in 1985 went on to launch the first mass market dedicated Word Processor. In 1989 Amstrad launches the first mass market Satellite Receiver/Dish package for Sky TV and in the same

year launches the first combined fax, telephone and answering machine, and to date continues to be a market leader in electronic components including integrated Satellite receiver and decoders for Sky TV.

We should not forget the most notable entrepreneur in 21st Century technology is the American, Bill Gates. He has created the world's largest company, he is the world's richest man and has become the biggest individual charitable giver in history. He established Microsoft in 1975, so called because it provided microcomputer software.

In the 1980's he provided a computer operating system that became known as MS-DOS, for IBM's new personal computer. In a contractual masterstroke, Microsoft was allowed to license the operating system to other manufacturers, spawning an industry of "IBM-Compatible" personal computers which depended on Microsoft's operating system. For all those who do own a personal computer, or even at your place of work, will mostly rely on Microsoft software and operating systems.

Another one of the most celebrated inventors of today's modern technology advancements is Sir Tim Berners-Lee, a British computer scientist who is credited with inventing the World Wide Web. He also created the first web browser and editor, and he launched the first web site on 6 August 1991

Here are some interesting facts about the evolution of the computer:-

HM the Queen sent her first email in 1976 from an army base. In 1997, the Queen launched Buckingham Palace's first website.

Pope John Paul II, in his message for the 36th World Communications Day, and in a paper issued on Sunday 12th May 2002, the theme was "Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel", it included the following statement, "with the communications and information revolution in full swing, the Church stands unmistakably at another decisive gateway", and goes on to state that "The Church approaches this new medium with realism and confidence, like other communications media, it is a means, not an end in itself. The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelisation if used with competence and clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Above all, by providing information and stirring interest it makes possible an initial encounter with the Christian message, especially among the young who increasingly turn to the world of cyberspace as a window on the world".

In the final dialogue of this paper it comments "And this is *(the internet)* what will make the Internet a genuinely human space, for if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man. Therefore, on this World Communications Day, I dare to summon the whole Church bravely to cross this new threshold, to put out into the deep of the Net, so that now as in the past the great engagement of the Gospel and culture may show to the world "the glory of God on the face of Christ" (Corinthians II, 4:6) May the Lord bless all those who work for this aim (*From the Vatican, 24 January 2002, the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales)*, John Paul II

picture left - Pope John Paul II with a laptop computer

Pope John Paul, was well into his eighties when he issued that statement, and the photograph above surely gives the message that computers are not just for the young at heart, but for all ages and organizations' in today's society. Pope John Paul, died Sunday 3rd April 2005, aged 84, after 26 years of the papacy.

The most popular use of the Internet is to send electronic mail, or e-mail. It is estimated that e-mail volume surpassed 1 trillion messages in 1995, and approached 7 trillion messages in the year 2000. In some ways, e-mail might be thought of as simply a very fast mail delivery service, raising no more copyright concerns than the regular mail that has existed for centuries. The difference is that with e-mail, you can send messages to dozens, hundreds, or thousands of people at a time. You can keep subscription lists of people you contact regularly. E-mail isn't just text anymore, most e-mail programs and services allow the sender to attach a digitized file, which can be just about anything - a picture, sound video clip, or computer programme. Given the ease with which such information can be scanned, uploaded, or otherwise input to the computer, it's easy to see why the Internet is fast becoming the primary means of distributing information - including copyrighted works - around the world.

In 2003, one of the most annoying aspects of the internet, spam was then 25 years old. The use of the term “spam” which has subsequently become applied to junk mail, is thanks to a Monty Python sketch in which customers of a restaurant are offered spam with everything.

Grand Lodge has had a dedicated site for a number of years and was re-launched in 2002 in its present state.

Most of the Provinces in Great Britain have their own web sites as do overseas provinces, districts and Lodges. They provide useful information for all Secretaries and members of Lodges, they are certainly an invaluable source of information of what is going on in your own Province. There are also many private Lodges that have their own web sites, as do the Chingford Masonic Hall.

In conclusion, we as Freemasons, are often to anxious to establish that we are guardians of an esoteric truth, a pure and accepted Masonry , that has passed down unchanged through time, and although Freemasonry might not be a religion, it is not only a spiritual journey, but of personal discovery, and by adopting today‘s technology we will certainly go some way to improve our communication skills with the rest of the world and, we certainly need to disassociate ourselves from the label of a club for “old fogeys” and let the world know that although all of us who are Freemasons will still retain our mysterious rituals and ceremonies, we are able to communicate via today’s modern technology, the home computer. If you have not yet ventured to purchase a home computer or a lap top, there is still time to become a member of that exclusive band of people “The Silver Surfers Club” and manage our modern day lives with these technological advances to assist with some of our Masonic duties.

For those who consider themselves to be in the "senior age element, you will be interested to know that the "Silver Surfer Week" was held this year, staging free fun workshops to introduce older people to the Internet. Around 100 organised sessions were held throughout the county to provide older people with some handy hints on making the most of the Internet.

The workshops took place as part of Silver Surfer Week from 19-25 May 2007, a countywide initiative.

Around 100 organised sessions were held throughout the county to provide older people with some handy hints on making the most of the Internet. Many people including everyone from complete beginners to those wishing to expand their 'net knowledge' had the opportunity to participate. Everything from basic skills such as how to use email or more specialised sessions relating to a particular theme like booking a holiday were on offer. All the sessions were held in friendly informal environments such as libraries, community centres and schools.

Ofcom has a directive to support Age Concern’s Silver Surfers initiative.

If you have not had the inclination to make this step, then I hope this article has gone some way to try and convince you that, age is of no difference when it comes to getting online to enjoy the facilities that modern computerisation has to offer, especially in Freemasonry.

Allan de Luca