# EDSAC Reborn: A computer detective story

## told by

## Dr Nigel Bennée FBCS CITP

The EDSAC Replica Project
The Computer Conservation Society

7.30pm, Monday 29th February, 2016
Wolfson Hall Lecture Theatre, Churchill College, Storey's Way, Cambridge

**The Lecture:**

**Dr Nigel Bennée writes:**

The EDSAC computer occupies a pivotal place in the history of our computer dependent age.
The EDSAC Replica Project was initiated at the end of 2010 with the goal of building a working replica of EDSAC as it existed when it successfully ran its first program on the 6th May 1949. The machine is on view at the National Museum of Computing at Bletchley Park.

This talk tells the story of the recreation of EDSAC, focussing on the two questions:

"Why are you constructing a 65 year old computer?" and

"How did you do it?".

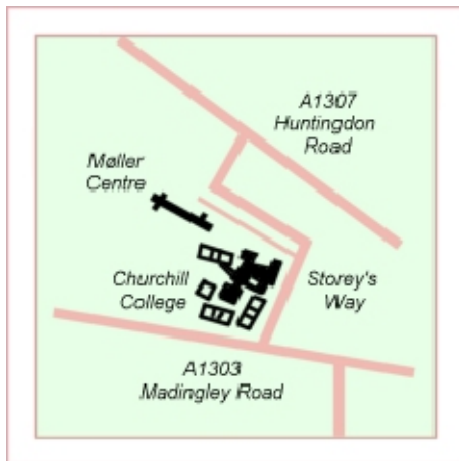The story has a happy ending.

## About the Speaker:

Nigel has tinkered with thermionic valves since the age of 10 when his Father was persuaded to let him use a mains power supply to drive his circuits. This decision was brought about by Nigel demonstrating to his Dad that he could illuminate a 60w mains light bulb quite adequately with a suitable combination of series and parallel discarded "portable radio" batteries.

He naturally mainly studied sciences at school and obtained a BSc Special in Physics at Sir John Cass College, University of London in 1963. He went on to obtain a PhD in Nuclear Physics at Birkbeck College in 1968. After eleven years as a Branch Head in the Mathematics and Computer Division of the SHAPE Technical Centre in the Hague he returned to the UK and together with his wife Eileen created and ran a small business applying whatever technology was available to the problems of incompatible IT equipment and other devices. His latter official working life was spent consulting on IT Security and Risk Management.

On "retirement" he became a volunteer in the EDSAC Replica Project which he currently regards as a full time job.

Nigel is a Fellow of the British Computer Society and a Chartered Information Technologist. He has been a member of CSAR for 34 years and a member of council since 2008.

## Practical Matters

Those attending the CSAR lecture may park in the Senior Car Park on Churchill Road, which is off Storey's Way.  More parking is available further along Churchill Road, and in the Möller Centre at the far end.

CSAR lectures are open to all; CSAR members are admitted free.  Pupils and students may register for free membership at the lecture reception desk.

Non-members are asked to make a nominal contribution of £3.00.

Coffee and biscuits are available in the Wolfson Foyer from around 7pm.  For further directions, see: www.chu.cam.ac.uk/about/visitors/directions.php

Attendees are welcome to dine in the Hall at Churchill College (self-service, 5.45-7.15 pm), and to have snacks and refreshments in the College Buttery before and after events.