Hursley Museum Services – September 2019

Current Activities

The last three months have been quite busy in the museum. Restoration work has continued on the 5496 card punch / verifier. The cover micro-switch has been replaced so the motor now stops after about 20 seconds of inactivity. The area around the main belt has been cleaned, revealing a belt in better condition than we had thought. A sticky keyboard turned out to be a paper clip hanging on one of the restore bail solenoids and sometimes jamming the restore.

We have started work on two further restoration projects. The dial recorder that came from Oslo has been cleaned up and lubricated. The clock mechanism is working fine, and runs for 7 days per wind up. The remaining recording mechanisms seem to be good too, although we are still trying to work out exactly how to set it all up. The list of patents on the serial number plate shows dates between 1911 and 1916, however the serial number suggests the build date was 1935.

We've also started on the 2741 input / output golf ball typewriter, which was almost completely seized up from years of non use and lack of maintenance. This item was rescued from a 2741 terminal that was going for scrap in the early 70s, as it had been replaced only weeks before as a brand new printer. Slowly but surely we are un-seizing it a bit at a time, and hoping that the adjustments, particularly tilt and rotate, have not moved over the years.

Sometimes only a hammer will do….   Dial recorder

Back Office Organisation

At long last we have installed more racking in one of our hardware stores, allowing the cluttered mess on the floor to be catalogued and neatly stored away. I guess we start filling the floor again!

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Donations & Loans

The museum donated a PC keyboard to IBM Sweden to help restore a PC-XT to full working order. The working XT is now on display in the IBM customer reception area of IBM's Kista office in Stockholm.

We have been offered 22 boxes of as yet unspecified items from the IBM 7090 by Martin Campbell-Kelly at TNMoC. We have agreed to take this and will now need to work out the best way of transporting to Hursley.

Last year the Royal Hampshire County Hospital borrowed a number of artefacts from us for their exhibition celebrating the 70th anniversary of the NHS. This was so successful that they are repeating the exercise this year. We have now sorted out a number of artefacts for them to borrow.

Display Rooms

The Hursley room has been reorganised, moving the Lloyds CashPoint model to a more appropriate position in the timeline of S/360 and S/370. A new item is now on display - some pieces of an experimental memory device code name MICA from 1966. The concept involved using a 10" copper plate with various thin film deposits to form memory cells. The samples we have were used in the evaporation trials.

The Hursley Room   MICA

Other

We received a request from the BBC as to whether we have any equipment that demonstrates the Y2K problem. We do have a PS2, itself not affected, running a piece of software that is not compliant. We have sent screen shots and offered a copy of Think magazine dedicated to the subject, but that's the last we've heard.

# Hursley Museum Services – September 2019

Anniversaries

CICS 50th

The museum has not been involved in the CICS anniversary celebrations. We have rescued some of the give-aways.

Apollo 11

We've updated the web site home page on the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11 to reflect IBM's participation in the Apollo project. July 1969 also saw the first moon landing by the crew of Apollo 11. NASA upgraded its ground-based IBM mainframes in 1968, the year before Apollo 11, to an IBM System/360 Model 50, which cost USD45K per month to rent. IBM also built the Instrumentation Ring or Instrument Unit (IU) to a NASA design. This was placed on the top of the third stage of the Saturn V and contained all the guidance, control and sequencing hardware for the main launch vehicle. This was largely developed in Federal Systems Division and built in Huntsville, Alabama. The IU was the nerve centre for the launch vehicle, determining when to fire the rocket motors, when to jettison them and where to point them. Equipment included devices to sense altitude, acceleration, velocity and position, and the computer that laid out the desired course and give instructions to the engines to steer Saturn V on that course.
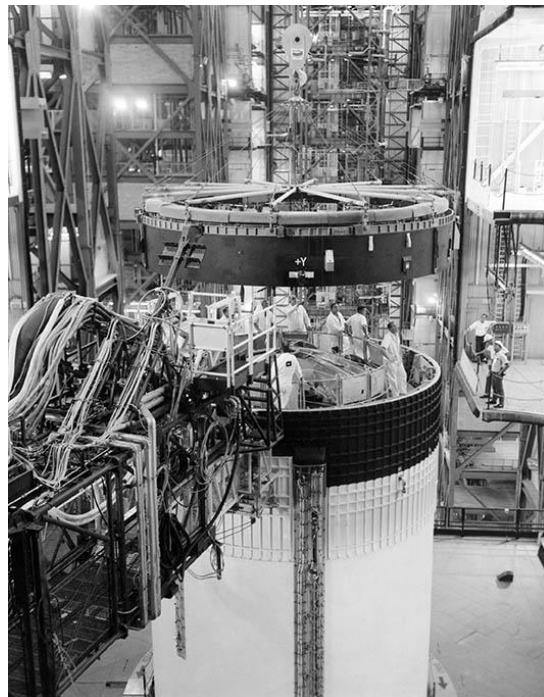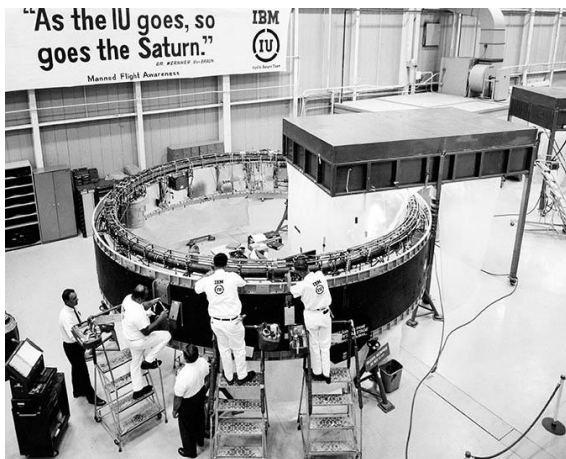
The IU weighed a little over 2 tons, with a diameter of about 6 metres and a height of one metre. The electronics were liquid cooled using a water / methanol mix. There were three sub-systems in the IU: Launch Vehicle Digital Computer (LVDC), Launch Vehicle Data Adapter (LVDA) and an analogue flight computer. LVDC hardware had a 2.0448 MHz clock and 32K x 28-bit RAM.