THE SPECIAL VISITOR FROM BLETCHLEY PARK TO HANSLOPE PARK

– or the Moment the Computer Started!

This specially commissioned statue of Alan Turing OBE (1912-1954), sculpted in Welsh slate by Stephen Kettle, was unveiled at Bletchley Park on 19th June 2007. Alan Turing was voted by Milton Keynes citizens as their top 'Hero and Pioneer' for the 'Our Place MK' exhibition in Middleton Hall on 23rd January 2008 – the city's 41st birthday.

Alan Turing, who arrived at Bletchley Park in September 1939, is universally acknowledged for his brilliant code-breaking work which effectively shortened the war, saved countless lives, and paved the way for the computer age that followed.

John Bowring worked at the time for the Signals Corps at nearby Hanslope Park which Alan Turing – known there as the 'Prof' – visited every week. John believes he can pinpoint the moment when Turing conceived the idea of the modern computer:

'The lads in the workshop decided that the 'Prof' ought to come and see how the other half lived. So they grabbed him on his way into the Park House and frogmarched him down to the workshops. 'Now you'll see the real work, Prof!' One of the lads picked up a valve and said, 'Now Prof, this is what we call a thermionic valve. It's an electronic device…' He just stood there goggle-eyed, then all of a sudden his face changed. He just went rigid, stared into the middle distance, and still holding this valve in his hand, said 'You know, I could make a computer with these.' We think that's where the computer started…'

(From 'Bletchley Park People' by Marion Hill)

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