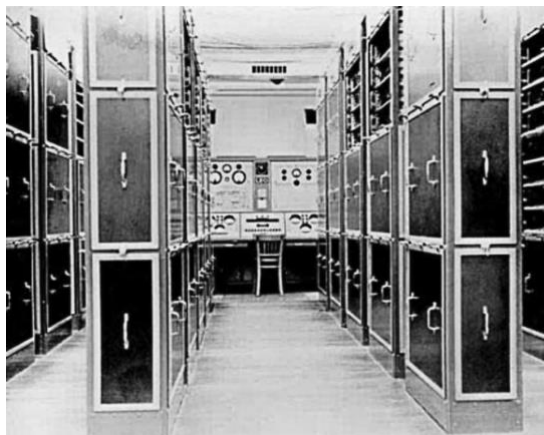


LEO - Lyons Electronic Office – the world's first business computer



After WW2, Britain's largest catering company, J. Lyons & Co, famous for its corner houses and tea shops, set out to improve its office efficiency. It had the pioneering ambition to harness the developing power of computers – hitherto used for military and academic purposes – to speed up its regular accounting chores.

In 1947, the far-sighted Lyons board contributed funding to a team at Cambridge University which was working on a computing machine called EDSAC. From this partnership was born LEO – Lyons Electronic Office.

On November 29th 1951, in Cadby Hall, North Kensington, London, LEO ran the world's first routine commercial job on any computer – as verified by Guinness World Records.

LEO's success at Lyons led to the creation of a separate company, LEO Computers Ltd, which built and sold enhanced versions of LEO to such blue chip companies as Ford, Shell-Mex & BP, British Oxygen and Stewarts & Lloyds, as well as the Post Office and other government departments. Several machines were sold abroad in Australia, South Africa and the Eastern Bloc. Another initiative was the operation of service bureaux for organisations, several of which went on to buy their own LEO.

Now, more than 70 years later, the LEO Computers Society is working with its partner, the Centre for Computing History in Cambridge (CCH) and with others to preserve, protect and promote the history of this remarkable machine and its successors.



The LEO Computers Society, a charity with more than 750 members worldwide, sees its role as guardian of the history of LEO, recognising the special place that it has played in the history of British computing.

In 2018, the Society formed a partnership with the Centre for Computing History in Cambridge (CCH), and together we gained important funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Our project, '**Swiss Rolls, Tea and the Electronic Office**' created valuable resources available free:

- a large LEO archive at CCH, accessible online at <https://www.computinghistory.org.uk/pages/50348/Welcome-to-LEO-the-first-business-computer>
- an award-winning short documentary film – on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rzu68nRVwtE>
- an award-winning online interactive app recreating LEO I <https://www.leo1.co.uk>
- a selection of teaching materials aligned to the National Curriculum

Following this project, we continue our efforts to keep the LEO story alive. Our current plans include the securing of funding for continued archiving at CCH, developing ways to ensure that young people in schools and colleges are made aware of the remarkable LEO story and collaborating more with the many museums, libraries and archives housing LEO material.

Through our website www.leo-computers.org.uk , you can find:

- ❖ News about our events both on-line and face to face.
- ❖ Regular updates on our projects and a Newsletter- LEO Matters.
- ❖ Details of books to buy online about LEO. We have two excellent histories and our own anthology of reminiscences 'LEO Remembered – by the people who worked on the world's first business computer.
- ❖ Information about how to join this very active Society, open to anyone with an interest in LEO.

Please join us and get involved!

Contact Secretary@leo-computers.org.uk for further information