

SHOALHAVEN PC USERS GROUP

April 2021

*Club Meeting scheduled for
Friday, April 16 at 7.30pm*

Special Interest Group Sunday 18 begins at 1.00 pm

Note arrangements for both meetings to comply with current Covid19 protocol.

A slightly different letter but I hope it's OK

Our March meeting.

...from column 1

Several of us missed the meeting due to health issues (generally now under control) but these notes from Jack and Russell should bring us up to date on what they said and did while we were absent....

There were fifteen members – no visitors. We discussed the possible necessity of covering your camera when on a video call. We also had a brief discussion on the ‘non-fungible token’ (NFT).

The highlight of the evening was a twenty minute movie on “The Evolution of the Aspect Ratio” The narration was done by John Hess, a well-known American film and television director and producer. There seemed to be a huge interest in this topic as it developed into a meaningful discussion afterwards.

Cheers,

Jack.

And from Russell...

Questions and Answers:

Jack Korten asked what members thought about web cameras on computers being covered when not in use – he noted that it was a reasonably common practice in Europe. He also noted that Apple didn't recommend using a ‘slider’ on laptops as they could damage the laptop when closed. There was a general discussion but no general consensus on the practice.

Nicoline Vaughan noted a problem she had had when making an online enquiry about Bitcoins. A general discussion followed with no definitive outcomes. Merle brought the word ‘*ethereum*’ into the conversation – ethereum is a technology that's home to digital money, global payments, and applications. It is open access to digital money and data-friendly services for everyone.

Continued next column...

There was a general discussion about the use of Facebook, some members being reluctant to use it. One member commented that we were all old-fashioned and that we should just use it!

There was also a general discussion about the use of PayPal with several members describing their method of using it.

Other:

Jack Korten showed a collage of photos that sold for \$69 million. The collage was made up of the daily photos taken by a person over a period of 13 years.

Jack Korten showed an interesting video from Filmmaker IQ titled ‘*The History of Aspect Ratio*’ which prompted discussion on various aspects of the history of movie development.

Jack Korten then showed a series of illusory portraits by Victor Molev where the portrait was recognisable at a distance but on closer examination transformed into a different picture.

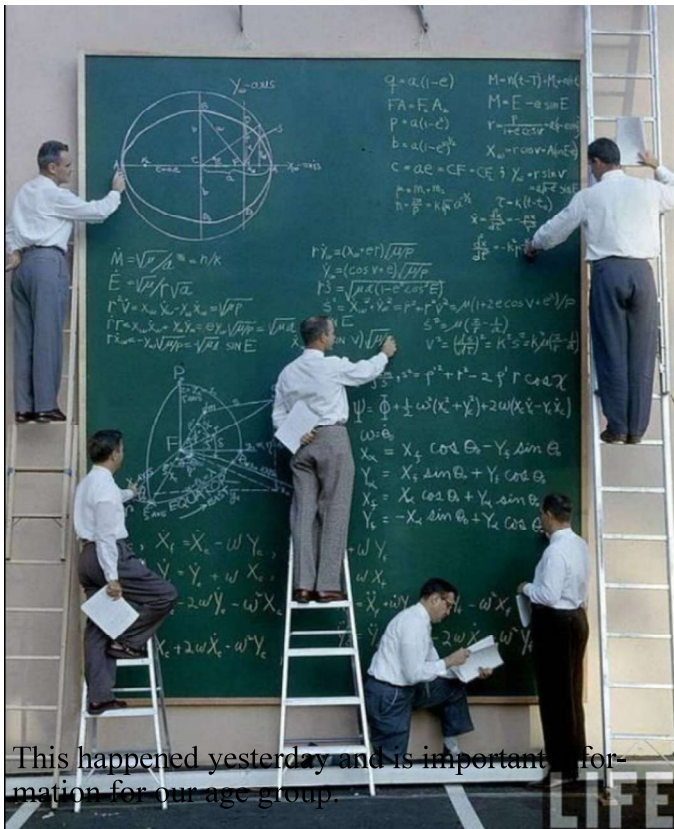
The meeting closed at 9:05pm



When the cat's away, the mice will play!

Is a Mechanical Analog Computer “a Computer”?

Analog computers are not the same as digital computers. In modern language when we say “computer” we are talking about digital computers. Despite the semantic differences a mechanical analog computer or “analog computer” is a term used to describe analog precursors to the modern digital computer (and even modern analog computers) that use physical phenomena such as [electrical](#), mechanical, or hydraulic qualities to model the problem being solved by the computer. Thus, the Antikythera mechanism is a “mechanical” analog computer. The device, along with the astrolabe can also be referred to as a mechanical astronomical calculator.



Within our lifetime these scientists were attempting to understand and calculate how to navigate space and safely return to Earth.. When they eventually made a successful landing on the Moon, computing power was incredibly primitive by today's standards, highlighting the skill and capability of the human brain.

This is a posed depiction of reality for LIFE magazine but it reminds me that the ability to think and ‘*find a way to make something happen*’ has given us today a privileged life beyond the comprehension of those who made it possible.

Think of it next time you talk your watch, your phone or other device that keeps you up-to-date on any subject you choose..

The blank space below needed something to perhaps interest at least one reader.

For your benefit, I’ve included it...

TECHNOLOGY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

The identification of the history of [technology](#) with the history of humanlike species does not help in fixing a precise point for its origin, because the estimates of prehistorians and anthropologists concerning the emergence of human species vary so widely.

Animals occasionally use natural tools such as sticks or stones, and the creatures that became human doubtless did the same for hundreds of millennia before the first giant step of fashioning their own [tools](#). Even then it was an interminable time before they put such toolmaking on a regular basis, and still more aeons passed as they arrived at the successive stages of standardizing their simple stone choppers and pounders and of manufacturing them—that is, providing sites and assigning specialists to the work.

A degree of specialization in toolmaking was achieved by the time of the [Neanderthals](#) (70,000 BCE); more-advanced tools, requiring assemblage of head and haft, were produced by [Cro-Magnons](#) (perhaps as early as 35,000 BCE); while the application of mechanical principles was achieved by pottery-making [Neolithic](#) (New Stone Age; 6000 BCE) and Metal Age peoples (about 3000 BCE).

This is the last space to be filled in this edition. I was curious and extracted a couple of paragraphs...

<https://www.britannica.com/technology/history-of-technology/Technology-in-the-ancient-world>

Scientists may have solved ancient mystery of 'first computer'



Researchers claim breakthrough in study of 2,000-year-old Antikythera mechanism, an astronomical calculator found in sea



Computer model of how the Antikythera mechanism may have worked. Photograph: UCL

Ian Sample *Science editor* @iansample

Fri 12 Mar 2021

21.00 AEDT

From the moment it was discovered more than a century ago, scholars have puzzled over the Antikythera mechanism, a remarkable and baffling astronomical calculator that survives from the ancient world.

The hand-powered, 2,000-year-old device displayed the motion of the universe, predicting the movement of the five known planets, the phases of the moon and the solar and lunar eclipses. But quite how it achieved such impressive feats has proved fiendishly hard to untangle.

Now researchers at UCL believe they have solved the mystery – at least in part – and have set about reconstructing the device, gearwheels and all, to test whether their proposal works. If they can build a replica with modern machinery, they aim to do the same with techniques from antiquity.

“We believe that our reconstruction fits all the evidence that scientists have gleaned from the extant remains to date,” said Adam Wojcik, a materials scientist at UCL.

While other scholars have made reconstructions in the past, the fact that two-thirds of the mechanism are missing has made it hard to know for sure how it worked.

The mechanism, often described as the world’s first analogue computer, was found by sponge divers in 1901 amid a haul of treasures salvaged from a merchant ship that met with disaster off the Greek island of Antikythera.

The ship is believed to have foundered in a storm in the first century BC as it passed between Crete and the Peloponnese en-route to Rome from Asia Minor.



The Antikythera mechanism is estimated to date back to around 80 BC.

The battered fragments of corroded brass were barely noticed at first, but decades of scholarly work have revealed the object to be a masterpiece of mechanical engineering.

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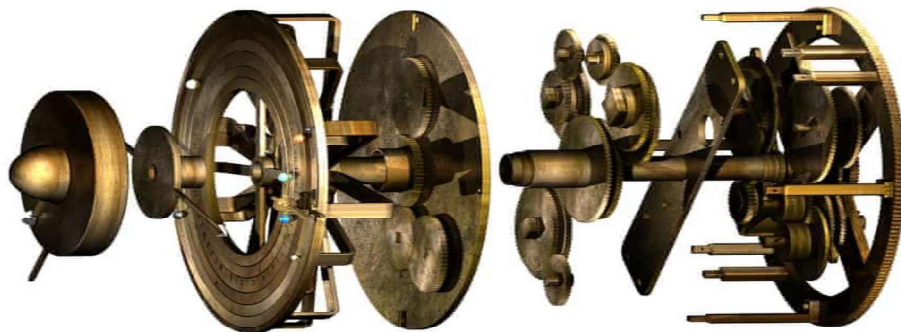
Originally encased in a wooden box one foot tall, the mechanism was covered in inscriptions – a built-in user’s manual – and contained more than 30 bronze gearwheels connected to dials and pointers. Turn the handle and the heavens, as known to the Greeks, swung into motion.

Michael Wright, a former curator of mechanical engineering at the Science Museum in London, pieced together much of how the mechanism operated and built a working replica, but researchers have never had a complete understanding of how the device functioned. Their efforts have not been helped by the remnants surviving in 82 separate fragments, making the task of rebuilding it equivalent to solving a battered 3D puzzle that has most of its pieces missing.

Writing in the journal *Scientific Reports*, the UCL team describe how they drew on the work of Wright and others, and used inscriptions on the mechanism and a mathematical method described by the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, to work out new gear arrangements that would move the planets and other bodies in the correct way. The solution allows nearly all of the mechanism’s gearwheels to fit within a space only 25mm deep.

According to the team, the mechanism may have displayed the movement of the sun, moon and the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn on concentric rings. Because the device assumed that the sun and planets revolved around Earth, their paths were far more difficult to reproduce with gearwheels than if the sun was placed at the centre. Another change the scientists propose is a double-ended pointer they call a “Dragon Hand” that indicates when eclipses are due to happen

Computer model of the mechanism’s gears. Photograph: UCL



The researchers believe the work brings them closer to a true understanding of how the Antikythera device displayed the heavens, but it is not clear whether the design is correct or could have been built with ancient manufacturing techniques. The concentric rings that make up the display would need to rotate on a set of nested, hollow axles, but without a lathe to shape the metal, it is unclear how the ancient Greeks would have manufactured such components.

“The concentric tubes at the core of the planetarium are where my faith in Greek tech falters, and where the model might also falter,” said Wojcik. “Lathes would be the way today, but we can’t assume they had those for metal.”

Whether or not the model works, more mysteries remain. It is unclear whether the Antikythera mechanism was a toy, a teaching tool or had some other purpose. And if the ancient Greeks were capable of such mechanical devices, what else did they do with the knowledge?

“Although metal is precious, and so would have been recycled, it is odd that nothing remotely similar has been found or dug up,” Wojcik said. “If they had the tech to make the Antikythera mechanism, why did they not extend this tech to devising other machines, such as clocks?”

If interested, look also at:

<http://factmyth.com/factoids/the-antikythera-mechanism-is-the-oldest-analog-computer/>

Thanks Jack

Important Vaccine Information



A friend had his dose of the vaccine at the vaccination centre after which he began to have blurred vision on the way home.

When he got home, he called the vaccination centre for advice and to ask if he should go see a doctor, or be hospitalized.

He was told NOT to go to a doctor or a hospital, but just return to the vaccination centre immediately and pick up his glasses.

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales.

The teacher said it was impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, 'When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah'.

The teacher asked, 'What if Jonah went to hell?'

The little girl replied, 'Then you ask him'.

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note and posted on the apple tray:

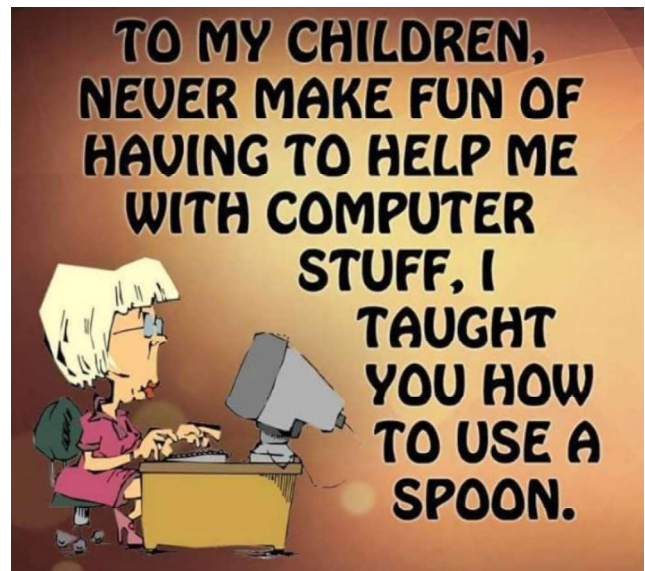
'Take only ONE. God is watching.'
Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies.

A child had written a note, 'Take all you want. God is watching the apples.....!'



Bomaderry Bowling Club
Worth Going Out
Of Your Way For

A word of advice from Gail



...And how to wipe your own backside.

And from Jack:

New words, Oxfam Dictionary

Errorist: Someone who repeatedly makes mistakes.

Askhole: A person who constantly asks for your advice, yet always does the opposite of what you tell them.

Nonversation: A completely worthless conversation, wherein nothing is illuminated, explained or otherwise elaborated upon. Typically occurs at parties, bars or other events .

Destinesia: When you get to where you were intending to go, you forget why you were going there in the first place. Not to be confused with being stoned.

Unkeyboardinated: Lacking physical or mental keyboard coordination; unable to type without repeatedly making mistakes.

That's about it for this month. folks

Stay safe

Frank

Richard Findsen
South Coast
PC Doctor

Computer Consultant

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