



Preserving Canada's Nuclear Heritage

NEWSLETTER

Number 2
October 2018

First Chalk River Computer Recovered!



In 1957 Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories (CRNL) acquired its first “electronic” computer. Known as the Datatron, Bendix, Burroughs 205 or Electrodata 205, it included a 3 m-long mainframe cabinet, many vacuum-tube based plug-in memory modules, a large memory drum, a control console with a paper tape drive, and a motor-generator power supply. Versions of the control console, with its multiple blinking lights, have been made famous by several science fiction movies. The CNRL computer was retired from service and disposed of in 1965.

A very early member of the CRNL computing group, Arden Okazaki, has donated the Programming and Equipment Manuals for the computer. However it was unclear what had happened to the computer itself. In June 2016 Society members visited the local storage sheds of Walter Woytowich, a retired AECL employee who has saved a large collection of obsolete scientific materials from the scrap dealers. Walter revealed that he had purchased the computer from Crown Assets and that the mainframe, at least, still existed. Unfortunately it was heavy and had been exposed to the elements for the past half century and as a result, was in very poor condition. Walter had stored the 150 plug-in modules in an enclosed

shelter, however. We found several of them in June 2017, and a further search in July 2018 located the control console. Walter generously agreed to donate the console and several of the plug-in units to the Society. Early in September, a work party removed the extremely-heavily constructed console from its safe resting place and transported it to our interim storage facility. This photo by Jim Ungrin shows the other members of the work party together with the console.

2018 Annual General Meeting

The Society will hold its 2018 Annual General Meeting at the W.B. Lewis Library in Deep River on Wednesday, October 10 starting at 7:00 PM. The agenda will include an update on progress, a financial report, and election of Board members.

Board Planning for the Future

The Board has prepared a five-year Strategic Plan outlining the steps and timetable towards a physical museum. The Board has also prepared a five-year Business Plan describing the financial needs of the Society and how they might be met. Much effort will be needed to bring the vision to life, and all offered help is most welcome.

Society Directors and Officers

Michael Stephens (Board Chair, President)
Morgan Brown (Secretary)
Don Barrington (Treasurer)
James Ungrin (Director)
Allan Symons (Membership)



Sprucing up our Interim Home

Society members have made minor repairs to improve the appearance and usability of our interim storage facility at 51 Poplar Street in Deep River. In response to requests posted in the North Renfrew Times, local residents have donated a new computer and various items of furniture including desks, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, storage and display shelving, a computer desk, and a brochure rack. Although we are still lacking a multi-shelf cabinet for storing maps, pictures, and large documents, we now have essentially all the furniture we need for this phase of our endeavour.

How you can get involved

Show your support and keep up-to-date by visiting our website and social media accounts.

If you have an item to donate, please call: Jim Ungrin (613-584-3055), Michael Stephens (613-584-9210), or Morgan Brown (613-717-1588).

We also need your help whether you're an expert or not! The success of the Society depends on the level of support it receives from local residents. We currently require help with:

- cataloguing, researching, and writing the history of individual artifacts
- cleaning up, repairing, and organizing artifacts for display
- assisting with our website
- helping write articles and newsletters
- putting sustainable funding in place
- investigating options for a permanent home

Recent Additions to the Collection

Artifacts - During the Society's first year, it has received donations consisting of a wide variety of artifacts. These include newspaper clippings from as early as 1945, hundreds of early photographs of "the Plant" and Deep River, book collections, and physical artifacts (e.g., instrumentation, models, medals, posters, etc.) Documenting and cataloguing these donations has been a daunting ongoing task. More than 200 artifacts have been documented and catalogued. They have been assigned unique numbers, QR code stickers have been generated and attached to each artifact so the description of the item can be read with a cell-phone app. A number of larger items from both the laboratories and NPD reactor have been identified for transfer to the Society in the coming year. One of these, an inspection tool for monitoring the wall thickness of the repaired NRU reactor vessel, measures over 13 m in length and will have to be truncated to fit within our available space. We are still looking for a dummy CANDU fuel bundle.

Books - More than 400 books and periodical issues have been received and catalogued in a large database. These include major donations from the libraries of L.G. Elliott, W.B. Lewis, J. Veeder, J.A.L. Robertson, D.L. Smyth and P. Dmytrenko. M. Brown and M. Stephens have donated large collections gleaned from past Whiteshell and Chalk River Laboratories library discards. It is planned to make the books and many contributed brochures available to visitors in a Reading Room in the museum.

Documents - The challenging task of cataloguing and organizing the large trove (over 10 linear meters) of donated documents remains. The Board has decided, based on professional advice, that the Society does not currently have sufficient resources to meet the human effort required to establish and manage an official archive. Documentary material received will instead be catalogued in a more general manner for preservation and research.

Society Presentations Available

Let us know if you belong to groups that would like to have a Society member make a presentation on our activities. We are always interested in spreading news of the Society and encouraging participation from new members. Contact Michael Stephens (613-584-9210) to make arrangements.