Allen W. M. Coombs

Born October 23, 1911, Bristol, Gloucestershire, UK; early computer engineer responsible for the construction of the Colossus computer system designed by Alan M. Turing and others.

Education: BSc, Glasgow University, 1932; ARTC,[1] Strathclyde University, 1932; PhD, Glasgow University, 1936.

Professional Experience: engineer, research branch, British Post Office (now British Telecom), 1936-1973.

From 1936 to 1973, Coombs was employed by the British Post Office (now British Telecom) on various projects in its research branch, most of them still classified. He spent some of the World War II years in association with the project to design and implement the Colossus computer for Bletchley Park for the government code and cipher school together with Thomas Flowers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographical

Coombs, Allen W.M., "Colossus, and the History of Computing: Dollis Hill's Important Contribution," *Post Office Electrical Engineer's J*, Vol. 70, Pt. 2, July 1977.

Coombs, Allen W.M., "The Making of Colossus," *Ann. Hist. Comp.*, Vol. 5, No. 3, July 1983.

Lavington, Simon, *Early British Computers*, Digital Press, Bedford, Mass. 1980; see Chapter 5: "The ACE, The 'British National Computer."

Randell, Brian, "The Colossus," in Metropolis, N., J. Howlett, and Gian-Carlo Rota, *A History of Computing in the Twentieth Century*, Academic Press, New York, 1980, pp. 47-92.

Significant Publications

Coombs, Allen W.M., "Mosaic, an Electronic Digital Computer," *Post Office Electrical Engineer's J*, Vol. 48, Pts. 1-4, Vol. 49, Pts. 1, 2, 1955-1956.

Coombs, Allen W.M., "On the Construction of an Efficient Feature Space for Optical Character Recognition," in Meltzer, Bernard, and Donald Michie, eds., *Machine Intelligence*, Vol. 4, Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1969.

UPDATES

---

[1] Later designated ARCST (Associate of the Royal College of Science and Technology).