

TWGGGS Activity Day 7th July Computing: Back to the 20th Century What was life like without modern technology?

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I interviewed my mum, my grandma and grandad.

What decades did you grow up in? Mum:

In the 1970s and 80s. **Grandad:** 50s & 60s. **Grandma:** 50s and 60s

Did you have a TV?

Mum: Yes, TVs were huge and heavy then, not flat screen like they are now and we didn't have a remote control - you had to get up and push a button on the TV to switch channels! We also didn't have TV on demand, Sky, or anything like that. We had a colour TV in our living room, but as a teenager I got a black and white portable TV for my bedroom, just like this one:

Grandad: Not until I was about 8.

Grandma: Not until 1960 when I was 12.

If so, how much did you watch? Mum: I used to watch kids TV after school and then a couple of programmes after dinner - maybe about 3 hours or so. **Grandad:** It was a novelty when a TV turned up but didn't watch a great deal, preferred to be out in the street or over the park playing with friends. Watched a little more when in teens. **Grandma:** Hardly any.

What were programmes like then? Mum: There were only 3 channels - BBC1, BBC2 and ITV, until 1982, when Channel 4 started. There wasn't any breakfast TV (that didn't start until 1983). Most channels didn't start showing programmes until about midday

and then TV shut down at about midnight. The BBC used to show this Test Card when it wasn't broadcasting. It used to give me the creeps! Children's programmes were only on at certain times of the day: after school and on Saturday mornings. We used to really look forward to them and talk about them at school the next day. My favourite programmes were: Grange Hill, Blue Peter, Swap Shop and the Pink Panther.

Grandad: Less choice and variety. When I watched in my teens, I liked comedy, sport and of course Top of the Pops.

Grandma: The programs were in black and white and there was only one channel (BBC). Programs started at 5pm with Children's Hour and finished about 10.30pm with the national anthem. There were documentaries (like Panorama), some dramas and variety programs with singing and dancing. No reality TV.

How did you listen to music? **Mum:** Music technology has changed a lot in my lifetime. We used to listen to LPs and singles on a record player. We also listened to the radio. My favourite radio show was the Top 20 chart show which was on every Sunday afternoon. In the 1980s, cassette tapes became more fashionable and I remember getting my first Sony Walkman cassette player. Eventually CDs took over, before digital music replaced those in the 2000s!

Grandad: In the early days, I listened to records in 78 format, played on an ancient gramophone that needed to be wound up by hand. Later on TV and radio, then on a Decca gramophone, which played Singles and LPs.

Grandma: On a record player.

How did you buy music? **Mum:** You couldn't download digital music then, you had to buy a physical record, cassette tape or CD. I loved it though, I used to spend lots of my pocket money on records from Woolworths in the town centre! LPs in particular used to have some great artwork on the cover, and often they would print the lyrics inside. I played certain records and cassettes so often that they broke!

Grandad: I didn't buy music!

Grandma: Vinyl singles and LPs (long players) from the record shops. They had booths where you could listen to the music before you bought it.

How did you do research/find out information you needed before the internet?

Mum: We had a few encyclopedias and reference books at home, but we mostly had to go to the school or public library to find information that we needed. In some ways it was easier though, because there wasn't so much information to read!

Grandad: Little opportunity/ways to research things. Knowledge gained from School, TV, Radio and Encyclopedias.

Grandma: From books and magazines.

How did you do your maths homework? Did you have a calculator? **Mum:** It wasn't much different in the 1980s from how it is now: we had 'scientific' calculators exactly like yours when we started secondary school. It was tricky if you hadn't really understood what the teacher had told you though, as there was no internet where you could look up YouTube videos to help you!

Grandad: By mental arithmetic/hand calculation, logarithms and latterly by slide rule. Calculators were not invented for common use until about 1970 when I was over 20.

Grandma: With a pencil and eraser....no calculator.

How did you make phone calls?

Mum: We had a home phone to make calls and that was it! No texting, WhatsApp - nothing like that! I used to spend hours on the phone talking to my friends. I had to write down or remember their phone numbers, as there was no speed dialling. I didn't get my first mobile phone until the late 1990s.

Grandad: We didn't have a phone at home; if needed, we used a public phone box.

Grandma: From a telephone box on the corner of our street.

How did you first learn how to use a computer?

Mum: We had computer lessons at school, which I hated because it seemed really complicated and a lot of effort for not much reward. In the mid 1980s, everything was black screens with green writing and lots of complicated commands! It looked a bit like this:

Grandad: Through learning on the job at work and later on, at home when we had one.

Grandma: My children taught me.

Did you play any video games as a child? If so, what were your favourites?

Mum: I wasn't really into computer games as a teenager, but I really loved Chuckie Egg (below left) and we had a portable Pac-Man game:

Grandad: No, they didn't exist.

Grandma: No

What was using money like as a child? Did you do everything with cash?

Mum: Digital banking and debit cards didn't exist and cash machines weren't that widely available until later in the 1980s, so you had to make sure you got enough cash out from the bank. We also had cheque books, which were useful if you ran out of cash. Credit cards were around in the 1980s, but you didn't tap them on a reader, the shopkeeper had to take a copy of your card using a special machine and then you signed the copy.

Grandad: Parents gave me a little money, not regular pocket money, used for comics and sweets in the main and the odd trip to the cinema. There was only cash, not sure my parents even had a bank account.

Grandma: Yes, there was only cash. It was before decimalisation, so we had 12 pennies to a shilling and 20 shillings to a pound. We also had half-crowns, sixpence, threepenny bits, halfpennies and farthings (1/4 of a

penny)10 shilling notes and pound notes.....it was very complicated!

Are there any household appliances that you have now that you didn't have growing up?

Mum: We didn't have a microwave, tumble dryer or portable vacuum cleaner.

Grandad: We didn't have a fridge until perhaps when I was in my teens. I recall an early Hoover that didn't really work, my mother preferred to use a brush and a push manual carpet cleaner. Used to heat water in a kettle on the gas stove but later had an electric kettle. Certainly nothing electronic. Didn't have central heating, that is the one thing we have now that I wish we have then.

Grandma: An automatic washing machine (We had one that washed but didn't rinse and had a mangle on the top); Tumble dryer; Electric kettle; Toaster; A microwave oven; Coffee maker; Food mixer/liquidiser; Juicer; soup-maker; Vacuum cleaner.

Are there any items of modern technology that you couldn't live without now/or that you wished you had had when you were a child?

Mum: I love on-demand TV and the ability to pause and record so easily! And I love Spotify, although it took me a while to come round to music streaming and I do sometimes miss having a physical LP or CD. I'm sure I would have loved to have a mobile phone as a child!

Grandad: We rely on phones and computers to stay connected but wish we didn't. Cannot think of anything I would have preferred to have had as a child.

Grandma: All of the above.

Do you think life was better or worse without modern technology? **Mum:** That's a difficult question! I think a bit of both. Technology has made life so much more comfortable, as well as more exciting and interesting, but it can also stop people from interacting with each other and the world around them and it can make people lazy!

Grandad: Definitely worse. Although we are now well connected and informed, it often leads to discontent. I believe on the whole people were happier without modern technology.

Grandma: Life was much harder without modern technology.

Do you have any other comments about modern technology?

Grandad: It controls people and their lives far too much and it will probably get worse.

Grandma: I'm all for modern technology....as long as we use it to enhance our lives and not allow it to dominate.

Mia: Thank you for answering all my questions!