

LEO PIONEERS NOMINATED AS CANDIDATE FACES FOR NEW £50 NOTE

The British duo that led the hardware and software development of the world's first business computer, are the latest nominees for consideration as the face(s) of the Bank of England's new £50 note. Like the first business computer itself, John Pinkerton (hardware) and David Caminer (software) are not household names such as the Hawkings and Turings, but their influence in launching the era of business computing was "just as immense and fully deserving of the wider recognition that the £50 note would give," according to Peter Byford, chairman of the LEO Computers Society.

For most of two decades after November 1951 following the first business application - a bakeries valuation job - to run on LEO (Lyon's Electronic Office), the LEO team led the world, including the Americans, in business computing. Along the way they built a company, LEO Computers Limited, to sell LEO machines at home to the likes of Ford and the General Post Office and internationally to leading companies in South Africa, Australia and behind the Iron Curtain, until ultimately they were absorbed into English Electric and thence into ICL, the last hurrah for the British computer industry.

LEO was a uniquely British achievement, based as it was on a scientific computer, EDSAC, developed by Cambridge University. The fact that it initiated and developed by a privately owned company famous for its teas, cakes and Lyons Corner Houses with their smartly dressed waitresses known as "Nippies," was both unlikely and eccentric in a peculiarly British sort of way.

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