Charles Babbage

Who was Charles Babbage?

- He was an English mathematician and inventor
- He designed the world's first computing machine

Biography for children

The story of important figures in the history of computing

Charles Babbage (1791 – 1871)
Why is Charles Babbage important?

- He believed that machines could be designed to do complicated calculations quickly.
- His ideas led to the world’s first programmable computing machines.
- His designs contain many of the parts that modern computers use today.

His early years

- Born 26th December 1791
- The son of a London banker
- Charles was a sickly child, often too unwell to go to school
- He was often taught by private tutors
- One, from Oxford, helped his love of mathematics grow
He went to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1810
Elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1816
Helped found the Astronomical Society in 1820

In 1814 he married Georgiana Whitmore
They had eight children
Only four survived to adulthood

Charles’ son, Henry Prevost Babbage, built some pieces to his father’s design after his Charles’ death

One went to Harvard University and inspired the first ever electro-mechanical computer – The Harvard Mark 1
Charles Babbage and Computers

- He invented the Difference Engine in 1822 which was a machine for calculating tables.
- In 1834 he designed a steam powered engine called the Analytical Engine, a computing machine that could be programmed.
- Ada Lovelace created an algorithm designed to be executed by it and is known as the world’s first computer programmer.

The Difference Engine
Science Museum, London

- The Difference Engine and Analytical Engine were never built when Babbage was alive but a working Difference Engine was built to his design in 2002 and is on display in The Science Museum, London.
- His Analytical Engine had many of the parts a modern computer has today and it is for this reason that he is known as the “father of computers.”