

The Ada Lovelace Bicentenary Lectures on Computability, December 2015 – January 2016

[Doron Swade](#) (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Myths and Method: Ada Lovelace, Charles Babbage, and the first computer program

Monday, 18 January, 11:30-12:30

Any celebration of Ada Lovelace as a ‘computer pioneer’ is founded on a single publication, her Notes, published in 1843, on Charles Babbage’s Analytical Engine. Lovelace includes as an example a description of how the Analytical Engine could calculate Bernoulli numbers and for this she has become known as ‘the first programmer’. I propose to examine the basis of this claim. For this I will review the trajectory of Babbage’s calculating Engines - his motives for designing them, his aspirations for their use, and their design - interleaving into this Lovelace’s own work. Finally, I examine the substance of Lovelace’s contribution to computing. I suggest that Lovelace deserves to be celebrated as fully as she is, but not necessarily for the reasons most frequently given.



Watch the video

