

## TASC Talk – Aug/Sep 2017

### Rise of the Robots

The word robot comes from the Czech word “robota” or forced labour, and was first used in a play by Karel Capek, R.U.R or Rossum’s Universal Robots’. The Oxford English Dictionary on line gives this following definition of Robot –

“A machine capable of carrying out a complex series of actions automatically, especially one programmable by a computer”.

Robots are considered by many to be a recent invention, however modern electronic robots can trace their roots to primitive automatons and other mechanized contraptions that first came about in the Middle Ages and the ancient world. Many of these creations were mere curiosities, but others were working humanoid and animal robots that used weights, water or ingenious clockwork systems of springs and levers to perform rudimentary tasks. From Leonardo Da Vinci’s android to a French-made artificial duck.

In Science Fiction, robots always tend to look a little like human beings for instance in Fritz Lang’s classic 1927 film, Metropolis, a robot woman was created looking very womanish but made of metal. In fact later in the film the lady robot was morphed into a life like flesh and blood woman.

And in the 1956 film the Forbidden Planet which is also one of the best known Sci-fi classics around, Robby was a chunky humanoid robot capable of some amazing feats but was incapable of doing any harm to anyone due to some early health a safety protocols built into its programming.



The earliest real life robots of any use did not look anything like this but tended to look more like the sort of robots you see in car plants, putting windscreens onto car bodies or precision welding parts of a car together.

I seem to remember one of the early BBC Tomorrow’s World programs demonstrating the capabilities of an early example of this type of robot, Unimate.

In “Rise of the Robots” I took a look back at the early days of automation, where we are today, and what may happen in the future, and most importantly will our children and grandchildren have jobs to go to when “SkyNet” takes over. We also had a spirited discussion about many of the points brought up during my presentation.

“I’ll be back” – Marius Stuart