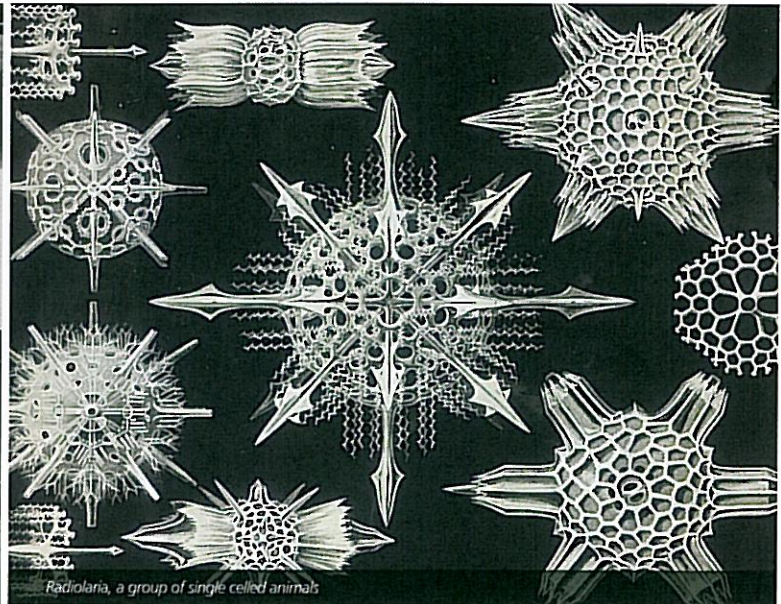


## Exploring Turing's poignant final paper

This month The Manchester Museum launches an important new exhibition examining a little-known aspect of the work of Alan Turing, contributing to the celebrations around the centenary of his birth.



The University of Manchester School of Computer Science in the 1950s



Radiolaria, a group of single celled animals



Alan Turing

'Alan Turing and Life's Enigma' is an exhibition about Turing's least-known and final work. This was an exploration into how living things develop their shape and structure from simple balls of cells, a subject called morphogenesis. The exhibition combines Turing's own notes with objects from the Museum collection and is inspired by 1950s design.

As a young mathematician in Cambridge, Turing helped pave the way for the development of the computer as we know it. During the Second World War he worked at Bletchley Park and helped to crack the Enigma code used by German military forces. After the war, he worked on the development of computers. He

came to The University of Manchester in 1948, where the world's first working electronic stored-program computer, the 'Baby', had just been built.

From 1951-54, Turing used the more advanced Ferranti Mark 1 computer to explore morphogenesis. He presented his main ideas on this in an incredible article published in 1952, when he suggested that everything from the spots and stripes on animal furs, to the arrangement of pine cones and flowers, could be

explained by the interactions between two chemicals. How complexity could arise from simplicity. The full impact of Turing's amazing insight continues to generate debate among scientists today.

Turing's brilliance was recognised during his lifetime, but he was a gay man at a time when same-sex relationships between men were illegal in Britain. In 1952, he and another man were convicted of gross indecency. As part of his sentence, Turing had to undertake a year-long 'treatment' of female sex hormones.

Ironically, Turing was studying the effects of chemicals on development at the same time as the law was forcing him to use chemicals to change his own body. A year after the treatments ended, Turing was found dead at his home in Wilmslow. He had been poisoned by cyanide, apparently taken on an apple.

Nick Merriman, Director of The Manchester Museum, said: "'Alan Turing and Life's Enigma' is an intriguing and surprising look at Turing's work, an important part of the celebrations which are taking place nationally to mark his centenary. Turing produced a body of controversial work right here on Oxford Road, literally next door to where the exhibition takes place, and we are proud to be honouring him with this exciting exhibition."

**'Alan Turing and Life's Enigma' runs from  
24 March – 18 November 2012  
Admission is free.**

[www.museum.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk)

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