Maths 50 Year Anniversary Reunion

October 4th 1964 was the day 37 of us arrived at Queen Mary College as then was named to start 3 years of Maths. Those were the days before the ‘new’ Maths block was built and lectures were held in the Queens’ Building, food was only available in the Refectory, rowing meant Chiswick and rugby was played some distance away at Ditchley. The only College accommodation then was out in South Woodford in the wilds of Essex. It was thus decided it was time to bring back some of these memories in 2014 as a 50 year Maths Reunion.

Fortunately a 40 year reunion had been organised in Chester. This reflected the fact that no one now lived in London, a large proportion were now living well north of Watford and the organiser lived just down the road. Particularly fortunate though was that by then, we had traced all bar five of our number. Four we did locate now lived overseas in places like the USA, Canada and Israel and only one was known to have died since. College records then were pretty thin, though as a starting point at least they had a full list of names who had graduated. Most people were located through access to internet products like Friends Reunited and Google. Old diaries that had been kept in the 1960’s also proved useful and an element of luck helped. Also fortunate was that a lot of the girls had married QMC students from other faculties and their married name was thus known.

The question was what we should do this time. Bea Nagy in the QMUL Alumni department provided a lot of the answers. She gave us lists of local restaurants and activities, as well as a suggested path through QM and we agreed to run this over September 30th and October 1st - almost exactly 50 years since we arrived. Following a number of e-mails amongst us we eventually enticed 21 people back for at least some of these days, including a few partners. We even persuaded one to return from Switzerland.

We decided to start on the Tuesday afternoon with a tour of the Olympic Park which none of our number had previously visited. This proved to be slightly disappointing as the main arena was closed while work was being done in preparation for the arrival of West Ham United. In the evening we adjourned to Maedah Grill, a Turkish restaurant near the London Hospital. This proved to be a very enjoyable place and we had our own private area there. Though no alcohol was served at the Maedah, we made up for this by a visit to one of the better Whitechapel pubs, though even after 50 years this did not mean a lot!

On Wednesday morning we met up with Bea and Rebecca who is a student ambassador in the Maths department, for a tour of some of the campus. Needless to say, most of the time we saw our old haunts but we did see the new Library and accommodation by the canal. What was very pleasing was that academic staff from Maths hosted a very enjoyable drinks and nibbles reception for us at the end of the morning in the Maths block. This was followed by lunch in Mucci’s, were the most noticeable thing was to meet Prof. Ian Roxburgh who had arrived at QMC about the year we left and has been there ever since. One of his colleagues told us he is still using the same lecture scripts!

Finally we joined a walking tour of Stepney, run by Rachel Kolsky of Go London Tours, which Bea had suggested. This certainly took us to parts of Stepney we had previously never seen, as well as adding a lot of information to our local knowledge.

So what next. There is some concern that after another 10 years we will find noticeably more of us will no longer be with us at a typical age then of 78. We are thus considering a 55 year reunion. We can thoroughly recommend running reunions on these anniversaries and certainly Bea and the Alumni department need to be the starting point.
(the above review was provided by Graham Barnes)