Celebrating 125 years of Electronic Engineering

Over 100 alumni gathered at Queen Mary University of London on Saturday 13 April 2013 to mark 125 years of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the College.

Of the alumni attending the event, 75 years spanned the time between David Watson starting his degree in Electrical Engineering 1936 and Oliver Shepherd graduating in 2011. Professor Mark Sandler, current Head of the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) was joined by four former Heads, among many other guests. The day comprised tours of the Mile End campus (including an on-site nuclear bunker built for teaching and research in 1964), as well as exhibits and talks. Guests at the evening dinner were treated to a musical performance from members of the Centre for Digital Music - QM’s world-leading multidisciplinary research group in the field of Music and Audio Technology.

Alumni also had the chance to hear about current research highlights, such as the latest developments in antennas research; intelligent sensing, which involves using computers to track the movement of people, and networks used in traffic analysis and mobile and wireless communications.

Director of Research and lead academic organiser of the alumni event, Professor Clive Parini has been part of the Antenna group for more than 30 years. He said: "Electrical engineering is largely about the generation, distribution and application of electrical power for domestic and industrial use, from light bulbs to electric motors. Through the transistor, silicon chip, radio and software, this type of science powers our modern world."

Queen Mary’s Principal, Professor Simon Gaskell, said: "I am delighted to take part in the celebrations to mark 125 years of Electronic Engineering at Queen Mary and hear our alumni’s memories. Queen Mary has been at the forefront of teaching electronic engineering and this pioneering attitude has been developed even further with our ground-breaking Joint Degree Programme with the Beijing University of Post and Telecommunications (BUPT), which was the first of its kind to be approved by China’s Ministry of Education and currently enrols over 2000 students on the Beijing Campus."

For many alumni, the event reawakened memories of their time at the university.
Stephen Gardner (BSc Eng 1984) commented: "It was great to meet my old classmates from so many years ago. It was also lovely to see so many of the teaching staff that were a key part of QM at the time we were there, particularly Professor Olver who was my final year tutor."

Chris Buckley (BSc Eng 1963) summed up the feelings of many of the attendees: "I just want to thank you for the splendid occasion that the 125 year celebrations were. It was so nice to see the "old place" again and, of course, all the changes that have occurred since I left in 1963. Clearly a lot of people put a tremendous effort into making this the event it was, from the excellent administrative arrangements, the interesting tours, talks and exhibits, the super food and drink, and the great friendliness of all the staff who went out of their way to make us welcome."

Electrical Engineering was first taught at East London College in October 1888, and in 2008 the Electronic Engineering Department joined forces with the Computer Science Department to create a single School. Today, 125 years later, the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science is home to nearly 100 academic staff, over 100 Post Doctorial Researchers and over 200 Research students. Additionally, EECS teaches around 750 undergraduates and 120 Masters students on UK-based taught programmes and a further 2,000 on three degrees in Beijing.

Some photos of the event are available to view on Facebook.