

Physics

Alumni Newsletter

01/2010



Queen Mary
University of London

The new Head writes:

I am very pleased to report on news from the Department as the new Head of Physics, a post I took up in September 2009. I had the good fortune to inherit a Department on a rising trend. One of the most noticeable changes in the recent past has been due to the continuing refurbishment of our building. This has improved the facilities dramatically, and there are further works planned. There is much other news to report, here and also on our website. We welcome visits by alumni and very much hope that you enjoy hearing about the Department.

Best wishes,
Professor Bill Spence

Alumni news

Just prior to taking over as Head, I was involved with upgrading our website which I encourage you to visit. We have a fledgling alumni area and would be very happy to hear news from any alumni which we will post on the site at www.ph.qmul.ac.uk.

The Physics Building was formally renamed as the G O Jones Building at a celebratory ceremony last June. Many alumni attended and we were delighted to welcome Mrs Betty Jones, wife of the late G O Jones, at the ceremony. A number of other members of the Jones family were also present. Photos of the celebrations can be viewed on our website.

You will be interested to hear that we are holding an event on dualities in string theory on Saturday 27 March. An invitation is



Then Acting-Principal, Professor Philip Ogden with Mrs Betty Jones

included with this mailing. This will be the first in a series of events where alumni and friends of the department can learn more about our research and interact with our academics.

Recruitment and teaching

This year we had an impressive result with recruitment, with our first year classes exceeding 80 – this is certainly more than we have had for at least 20 years and may well be a record! So far applications for next year are up 26 per cent on the same time as last year, so we are keen to see if this will translate into triple figure first year classes for 2010-11. We have improved the way we deliver modules and have adapted well to the increased numbers. We were also very pleased to hear that the results of the most recent National Student Survey placed us very highly, with 93 per cent of our students satisfied with the quality of the course.

Research

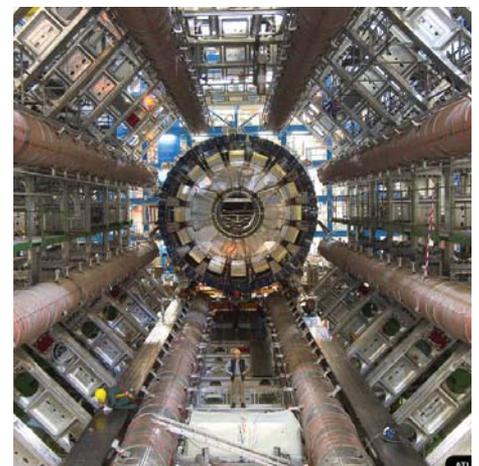
This is an extremely exciting time for our particle physicists with the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) coming into use, plus the new T2K neutrino experiment in Japan starting up. We have introduced a new 'Physics with Particle Physics' programme to attract students inspired by these developments. We have also just recruited two new lecturers: Dr Marcella Bona from CERN and Dr Jeanne Wilson from Oxford, who are working on the LHC and T2K experiments respectively.

A new Condensed Matter Physics group has been formed in the Department, with recently appointed Dr Kostya Trachenko from Cambridge and Dr Alan Drew from Fribourg, joining seven existing faculty members.

Professor Michael Green, currently at the University of Cambridge, was named as the successor to Stephen Hawking for the prestigious Lucasian Chair there. Michael did much of his famous work on string theory whilst at Queen Mary up until the early 1990s, and oversaw the building of the theory group here. Now renamed the Centre for Research in String Theory, the group currently has more than 25 members in total and recently won a major grant of over £1.4m.

Our Astrophysics programme, our second most popular after straight Physics, will also be boosted by the new pictures coming in from the VISTA telescope which Queen Mary has been heavily involved with, plus the continuing attractions of the images of Saturn from Cassini, again with key Queen Mary involvement.

The influential Shanghai University world ranking of Physics Departments put us at eighth in the UK and 78th in the world.



The LHC from the inside

Physics diversified I

Britain's Got Talent seems like an unlikely place to find a Queen Mary physicist. The 2009 competition winner, the dance group Diversity, is led and choreographed by Ashley Banjo, a second year Natural Sciences student at Queen Mary. Ashley has deferred his studies and was last seen on Sky One as a dance judge.



Ashley Banjo of Diversity (back row, fifth from left)

Staff changes

We were sorry to see two retirements this academic year: Kate Shine left after many years as a much-valued Departmental Secretary, and Professor Eric Eisenhandler retired, again after many years of contributions to the Department.

We have been very pleased to welcome Roger Massey as a new Teaching Administrator and Kevin McCabe as a Student Support Administrator – both have been doing sterling jobs dealing with our student and staff needs.



Sculpture by Thomas Bayliss Huxley-Jones on the exterior of the G O Jones Building

Physics diversified II

One of our string theorists, Dr David Berman, has become a highly-prized contributor and collaborator to major artists and exhibitions. David has been involved with the Royal College of Art, the Royal Academy, the ICA, various art fairs around Europe and, most recently, a collaboration on the world famous Cartier Award for Art. There are also rumours associating him with the Tate Modern.

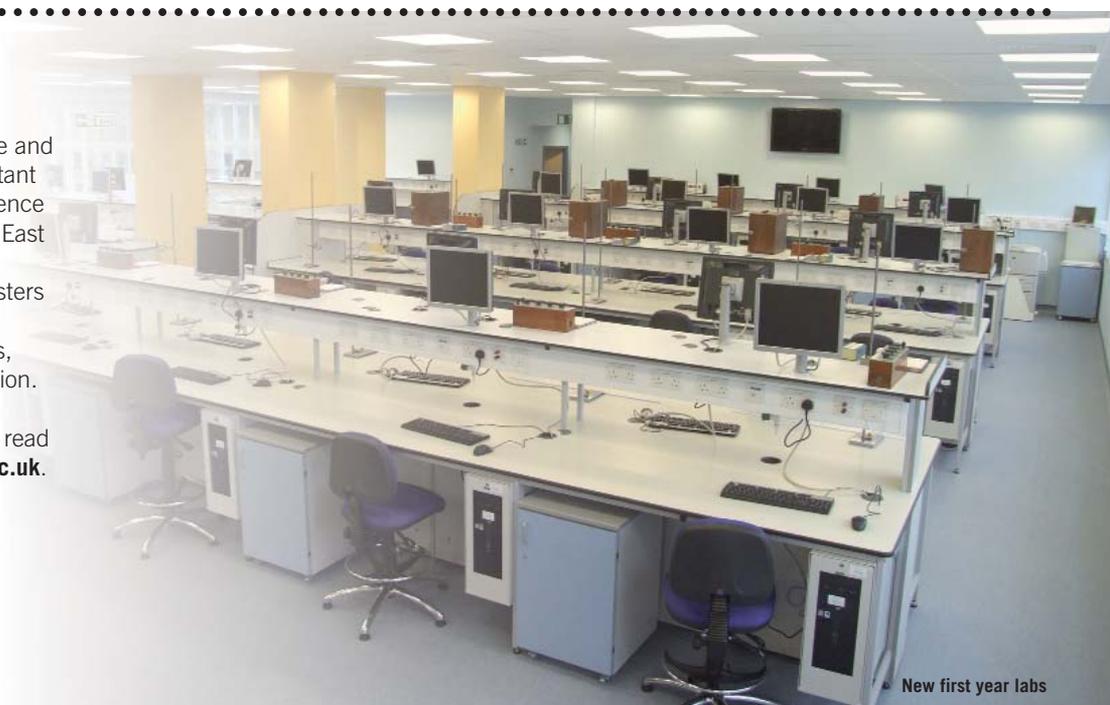


Dr David Berman (left) with Guardian reporter Sam Wollaston at the Regent's Park Frieze Art Fair

SEPnet

We are part of a network of six partner universities working together to advance and sustain Physics as a strategically important subject for the UK economy and its science base in south-east England. The South East Physics network, or SEPnet, supports research collaborations, a new Euromasters programme, employer placements and summer internships for undergraduates, as well as outreach work across the region.

All of the above news and more can be read about on our website at www.ph.qmul.ac.uk.



New first year labs