

## Visit to Cavendish Laboratories, Fitzwilliam Museum & Cambridge Colleges

The ITP partnered with the Institute of Physics to offer members the rare opportunity to tour the famous [Cavendish Laboratories](#), [Fitzwilliam Museum](#) and a few of Cambridge's splendid old [University Colleges](#).

The Anglia Branch of the Institute of Physics hosted nearly 60 people for a fascinating day tour, under the friendly hands of Dr Bill Proud<sup>1</sup> and Dr Lisa Jardine-Wright<sup>2</sup>. Refreshments, friendly guidance of all events, lunch, college tours and entrance fees and taxi transportation were all included for ITP members. With so much to see and absorb, smaller groups were formed and each escorted through the museum at Cavendish.

The [Cavendish Laboratory](#) was opened in 1874, at a time when there was a realisation that experimental work (usually undertaken in private dwellings by solo researchers) could blossom if it migrated to centralised and focussed research communities. Advanced physics was soon to leap forward and generate other benefits such as the training of scientists and engineers. This responsibility was put under the direction of [James Clerk Maxwell](#) (the University's first Cavendish Professor of Experimental Physics).



The story of the Laboratory and its illustrious members, leaders and the 29 Cavendish Nobel prize-winners is now part of history and our heritage - Maxwell, Rayleigh, Thomson, Rutherford, Bragg, and Mott. Suffice to say that the foundations of modern physics, crystallography, DNA, radio astronomy and modern material research lies here and still developing at a pace.



Supporting the experimentation was a host of technical apparatus built with the skill of technicians and master craftsmen that has become part of the equipment of everyday scientific life, from cloud/bubble chambers to electron microscopes. It was a rare privilege during the tour of the museum to see and be so close to the apparatus used by the giants of physics, and usually only seen in textbooks.

At the conclusion of the Cavendish Laboratories visit, everyone was delivered by taxi to the [University Centre](#) for lunch. Enjoying spectacular views across the River Cam the University Centre is in the heart of the City of Cambridge.



Only a short walk after lunch was the Fitzwilliam Museum where the groups were expertly looked after by a host of Blue Badge Guides. Their introduction to the museum, which is privately owned by the University, was educational, entertaining and absolutely captivating.



Within the Fitzwilliam Museum is probably one of the greatest art collections in the UK and is recognised world wide. Founded in 1816, with a bequest from the Seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion, the museum is home to many important paintings and manuscripts which included works by Monet, Titian, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Canaletto and original music by Handel and Purcell.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the collections grew and now includes sculptures, furniture, armour, pottery and glass, oriental art, illuminated manuscripts, coins and medals and antiquities from Egypt, the Ancient Near East, Greece, Rome and Cyprus. To my mind the most memorable is a collection of works by the French Impressionist painters including Monet, Renoir, Cézanne and powerful paintings by Picasso.

The final stage of the day trip was an introduction to the [University Colleges](#) (of which there are more than 30) and their role in University life. The older colleges are mostly in the centre of the city and newer ones outside. The colleges are self-funded and individually managed but they all have as their main functions the provision of accommodation and an environment for the students to network and socialize. The oldest college, founded in 1284, is [Peterhouse](#). The newest is [Robinson College](#), opened by the Queen in 1981, is unique in being the only one to have been intended, from its inception, for both undergraduate and graduate students of either sex.





Despite the onset of a wetter afternoon, groups enjoyed the visits to [Trinity College](#) and [St John's College](#) under the knowledgeable guidance of the blue badge holders. But as with all good things, they had to come to an end and the day finished with a taxi ride back to the Cavendish Laboratory. ITP members left with a range of excellent memories and gratitude to the organising team for such a superb day.

To register your interest in future trips to Cavendish Laboratories please email [anglia@theitp.org](mailto:anglia@theitp.org).

*ITP (Anglia Committee)*  
2008

---

<sup>1</sup> *Chair of Surface, Microstructure and Fracture Group and Chair of IOP.*

<sup>2</sup> † *Post Doctorial Researcher, lecturer, Course Director for the Institute of Continuing Education, Cambridge University and Vice Chair of IOP*