

Distinguished Visitor – Prof. Martin Campbell-Kelly

Professor Martin Campbell-Kelly (Warwick University) was a SICSA distinguished visiting fellow in April 2012. Campbell-Kelly is an authority on computing history. He was hosted by Jeremy Singer at the University of Glasgow. The week long visit, although short, was extremely busy and highly productive. Campbell-Kelly offered to give presentations on a range of topics, but by popular request, he spoke about Alan Turing in two public lectures.

The first lecture was held at the School of Computing Science, University of Glasgow. The enthusiastic audience comprised academics, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and a number of invited children from local schools. Campbell-Kelly highlighted Turing's role in the early development of the British computer industry. He ended by describing the Deuce, which was the first machine installed at Glasgow University, based on Turing's design. Campbell-Kelly was delighted to identify a mysterious black box as a vacuum tube signal amplifier, which was salvaged from the Glasgow Deuce machine when it was decommissioned, and has been handed down from professor to professor ever since.

The second lecture took place at the Informatics Forum in Edinburgh. Although numbers were smaller, there was still a lively interest in the work of Turing. A third lecture had been scheduled at St Andrews, but unfortunately this was cancelled due to a clash with another event there. Further collaborations during Campbell-Kelly's visit included small group discussions about programming language history and spreadsheets.

In conclusion, this was an excellent opportunity for the SICSA community to get a valuable insight regarding the history of computer systems engineering. Campbell-Kelly enjoyed his visit and expressed interest in maintaining contact with SICSA academics in the future.