

Professor E.M.S.Deeley 1927-2018 (KCL 1946-1991)



Ted Deeley, c1991.

We remember and mourn our dear Friend Ted Deeley. Born in London on the 19th December, 1927, he started at King's in 1946. He studied Physics, and earned a first class honours degree (BSc Natural Science) at King's in 1948 and was awarded the Granville Studentship in Physics. He then registered as a Full-time Postgrad/Research Worker in Professor Randall's Biophysics Unit. In 1950 he obtained a PhD – "Electro-dynamical methods of computation". He was appointed a Nuffield Research Fellow (1952-1956).

In the period 1947 to 1970, he published a series of papers (22) on advanced instrumentation applied to various aspects of biophysics measurements. His 1955 paper "An Integrating Microdensitometer for Biological Cells" has been cited some 300 times. What became known as the "Deeley Box" is believed to have been based on that work. This was a significant improvement over earlier devices and was an important advance for cell biology and for characterizing normal and malignant cells.

In 1956, he was appointed as a Lecturer in the Electrical Engineering Department, so moved the short distance from the Physics Department to us.

Their loss was our gain. That is where we first encountered him, teaching Electronics in our Second Year. The back story here is that we had signed up in 1955 to read Electrical Engineering. However, the syllabus was traditional Engineering in the broadest sense. It included: Mechanics; Hydraulics; Surveying; and Heat Engines. The laboratory still had a rig for testing a tram chassis. Then Ted arrived to teach us Electronics. At last, we Electricals had a subject we could really enjoy. Then in our Third Year, Ted supervised several of us working on electronics projects.

He loved Teaching, he was an enthusiastic Researcher, and would spend endless time patiently explaining and carrying us along with his enthusiasm.

Everybody liked Ted.

This writer stayed on, and had the privilege of working with him for the next decade. Ted differed from other advanced Researchers. Most would specialise in a single topic for their whole career. However, Ted, with his physics background, was able to investigate and contribute to a wide range of “Electrical Engineering” topics. His research interests, after 1970, resulted in some 30 papers. These included: control theory; novel electronic circuits; analogue computing; and low frequency electromagnetic field solution methods applied to non-linear magnetic materials. This last attracted the attention of several CAD magnetics software companies. And so it was that when Bill Trowbridge, then at the RAL, Oxon, started the Compumag series of Electromagnetics Conferences, in 1976, Ted was to be found in the front row. Indeed, he had the singular record of attending all but one of those Conferences. No matter where it was in the World, you expected to see Ted.

Everybody liked Ted.

Frequently, the Conference served as a jumping off point for his next Adventure, e.g. While in Brazil, in 2009, he took the opportunity to venture on a journey up the Amazon.

In recognition of his contributions to electrical engineering knowledge, he was appointed a Reader in 1963, then Professor in 1986. He officially retired in 1991 – but remained as a regular visitor to King’s to continue his Researches. We note that 11 of his research publications were in that post-retirement period, the last in 2000. Publishing in seven decades is something few of us manage to do.

This tale of the Academic Ted, segues nicely to the Second Ted. He was a very private man. He allowed his two Worlds to only very occasionally slightly overlap. In that second World, he was an extremely active, lifelong supporter of the Scouting Movement. His track record of outdoor activities is remarkable. In addition to all the normal Scouting pursuits, the list encompasses: long distance gliding (Gold Badge, BGA, plus others); skiing; white-water rafting; bird-watching; hill-walking; and climbing. We also learnt that he directed the local Annual Gang Show, to packed houses.

Music was another interest. Indeed, on 16th August, 2018, his full life tragically ended in a car crash on his way back from the Harrogate Gilbert and Sullivan Festival.

The last time Ted appeared at King’s was on June 8th 2018. He was our guest at the KCLEA 60th Anniversary Reunion of the Class of 1958 Lunch at Bush House. It was great to see him again after so many years. Little did we know that it would be the last time.

He was a very Modest Man, a Gentle-Man, a True Scholar. He had a quiet sense of humour until he laughed and shook the room! He was, in his unassuming way, a Life Force. He had a Great Generous Spirit. Nothing ever daunted him.

A friend said “He was a huge part of our lives and the loss will be enormous”.

Everybody liked Ted.

All of us, from both of his Worlds, will greatly miss him. Our lives are markedly the less for his Passing.

This obituary was written for the King's College London Engineering Association Newsletter.

Edited by E.M.Freeman from contributions made by many friends. 15:11, 12th September 2018 .