after general student and loved teaching. When undergraduate teaching in
the Laboratory was extended and the opportunity arose to introduce
a hardware laboratory for practical work, Neil duly devised experi-
ments, procured equipment, even negotiated for bench space and the
lab was established. It was an immediate success and continues with
only minor modifications today.

“When a student survey criticised his lecturing he didn’t take
umbrage as many might have done, but set to work to organise his
notes and improve his presentation. Even this last term, when he was
growing weaker, he still insisted on coming in to deliver his beloved
lectures on graphics. Only when he was actually kept in hospital
would he let me stand in for him. At the end of the course he
received a standing ovation and this year’s student survey carries the
usual complimentary remarks, only one student added a caveat to the
effect that ‘This refers to the part of the course lectured by Dr
Wiseman, not Dr Robinson.’

“Other universities tried to tempt him with professorships, but
Neil loved Cambridge, the University and the Laboratory, and had
no inclination to move. In 1983 he became a Fellow of Wolfson
College and in 1986 a personal Readership in Computer Graphics
was created for him.

“Even his illness this past year could not suppress Neil’s enthusi-
asm for work. As well as lecturing, he has continued to supervise his
students and to contribute to research projects on self-timed logic
(actually using ideas from the tunnel diode work of 30 years earlier)
and on the autostereo display and its applications in medicine. He
endured his illness with great dignity and even humour. When I vis-
ited him at home just after he had come out of hospital for the last
time, I happened to be wearing this jacket and, although he was weak
and in pain, Neil somehow found the energy to tease me about the
fact that I was unduly smartly dressed. He was Neil to the end.

“When Roger Needham broke the news of Neil’s death to the lab-
oratory, he described Neil as being ‘of the fabric of the laboratory.’
For over 40 years Neil has been focal to much of what has happened
in the laboratory. His door was always open, he was always ready to
listen and to advise. I have only realised this past fortnight how
much I used to look forward to hearing his voice along the corridor
so that I could go and chat. But now the door is shut and we have lost
hundreds of post-graduate Diploma students and thousands of people
whose lives he touched. We are all the better for having known him. Thank you, Neil.”

Neil Wiseman Memorial Fund

Neil Wiseman was an active member of the Computer Laboratory
for over 35 years, and was a major and excellent supervisor of
research students. He supervised over 40 PhD students, taught hun-
dreds of post-graduate Diploma students, and thousands of under-
graduate students, in addition to undertaking his own research in
computer graphics. Neil was an inspiration to many, a tireless sup-
porter of his students and a friend to all who came to know him.

To commemorate Neil’s life and work we have started a Research
Studenship Fund in the Computer Laboratory. We are seeing an
increasing number of people who want to be research students here
but do not have complete support—very typically they have support
for living expenses but not for fees. This often affects students from
Europe, the USA and other countries overseas, but can equally apply
when UK research councils have funding fluctuations. Neil always
believed that Cambridge benefited from a diversity of students, and
knew from experience that funding for unusual cases was often dif-
cult. The fund is our way of continuing Neil’s interest in these stu-
dents and at the same time giving something back to Cambridge.

The Fund will create a permanent bursary for a Research
Student’s fees, and will require an investment of 100,000 pounds
sterling. If additional funds can be found, more than one bursary will
be supported. Fewer funds would mean that the bursary offers part
payment of fees.

Donations are being sought now. A major donation from a local
charity has already been agreed in principle. Many colleagues,
research students, diploma students and graduates have promised
donations and a number of computer companies with which Neil had
a connection have expressed support.

Payments should be made to the University of Cambridge and
details of charitable tax relief which can be used to augment dona-
tions are available on request. For further information, please contact
one of the following:

• Dr Stewart Lang srl@cl.cam.ac.uk
• Dr Peter Robinson gr@cl.cam.ac.uk
• Dr Neil Dodgson nad@cl.cam.ac.uk
http://www.cam.ac.uk/University of Cambridge/
http://Computer Laboratory/A
New Museums Site
Pembroke Street
Cambridge CB2 3QG England
or fax us at +44-1223-334678.

Grosch Claims Title
of “Oldest Living Computer”

Herbert Grosch points out that he was made a computer at the
University of Michigan Observatory in February, 1936. In March of
that year, he co-authored a paper, “Elements and Ephemeris of
Delporte Object 1936 CA,” published by the observatory that sum-
marizes his computations. This may prove he is the oldest computer
still computing. He invites congratulations, comments, and evidence
of any earlier living computers, which may be sent to him at P.O.
Box 4990, University Park Branch, Las Cruces, NM 88003.

While the editors of the Annals decline to take part in claims of
priority, they look forward to some vigorous correspondence.

The History of Computing Science

Keith Smillie recounts personal recollections of how computing
science found a place in the traditional structure of a university

The 1950s—Origins

Computing began at the University of Alberta long before the first
electronic digital computer was introduced. In 1929 Professor J.W.
Campbell of the Department of Mathematics published a small book
of mathematical tables, some of which he had himself prepared on a
hand calculator. In the 1940s there were only one or two electric
desk calculators in the whole department, although students taking