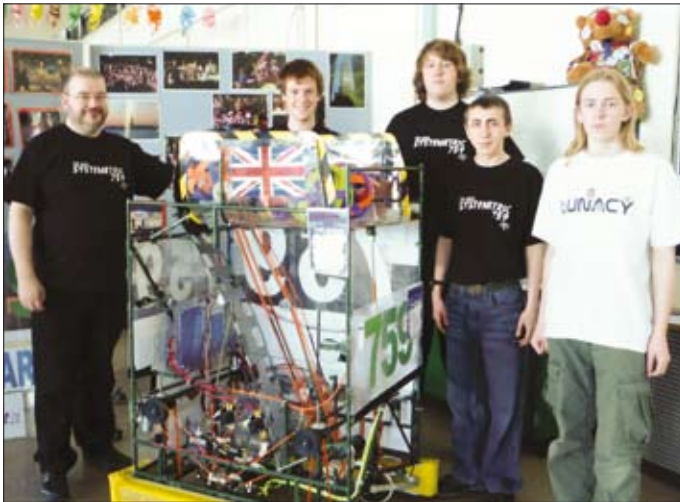




*Profs. Littlewood and Baumberg demonstrate optical equipment.*



*Families construct dragsters in the make-and-do area at the event.*



*The Hills Road Sixth Form Technobotts team presents its robot.*



*Awe-struck children meet a Dalek during "Science on Saturday".*

## Festival of light illuminates Cambridge families

Saturday afternoons are generally reserved for impassioned sporting activities and fighting through the crowds to get in the shopping. However, a clear demonstration of the breadth of interest in science was shown by the 2000 or so members of the general public who visited the Cavendish Laboratory as part of "Science on Saturday" during the Cambridge Science Festival. The two-week long event is renowned for its huge range of activities and talks from well-known scientists, and it provides students with a showcase to present their research to the public.

The Cavendish Laboratory opened its doors at 2.00 p.m. and the crowd built up

steadily during the day. Other departments also held events and enjoyed similar crowds.

Within the Cavendish, a carefully arranged series of activities was on offer to ensure that all age ranges and abilities were accommodated. The flagship lecture was "Centuries of light" given by Prof. Peter Littlewood and Prof. Jeremy Baumberg. This 50-minute presentation about the properties of light involved many demonstrations of physical properties such as diffraction, backed up by the historical and scientific significance of those effects.

For the very young there was a make-and-do area where numerous elastic bands were used to propel the dragsters

that were built from paper and tape. These were raced against one another on a carefully policed track that faced many invasions by enthused under-fives and their parents.

Cambridge Hands-on Science, or CHaOS, as it is more commonly known, did a sterling job of demonstrating a fascinating range of physical phenomena to adults and children alike. Water-powered rockets streaked across the sky, causing sudden variations in the flight paths of the ducks from the local pond and some additional watering of the lawn on this bright, cloudless day.

Schools were represented by the Technobotts of Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge, who showed the high level of

sophistication that motivated school teams can produce, while other members of the sixth-form presented their human-sized robot, which can pick up, carry and accurately deposit balls over a large area.

The planetarium, a long-standing favourite, was packed from 2.00 p.m. until 5.30 p.m. and East Anglia Branch representatives carried out experiments showing how to maximise the quality of images from telescopes.

Comments were universally positive and many family groups left, dragsters in hand, to visit other science festival activities later in the evening or simply to go home and reflect on the day.

**WG Proud**, Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge