

our garden won the Royal Horticultural Society People's Choice Large Garden award.

Taking part in this project improved our team's ability to communicate our research with people from a wide range of backgrounds and interest. It also improved our confidence in public speaking. We even learnt some basic horticulture and now know the difference between a Hydrangea 'Early Sensation' and a Verbena Brompton!

**Matt Posner, 3rd year PhD student
Optoelectronics Research Centre,
University of Southampton**

The successful encounter of Physics with Faith

What do Science and Religion have in common? Is it possible to engage with both viewpoints of Physics and Faith in a meaningful way? Can Faith be used as a hook to engage with those who normally wouldn't be interested in Physics?

Our team here at St Mary's, a SEPnet associate partner, was awarded an IOP Public Engagement Grant in 2015 to explore these ideas. We organised a series of events consisting of talks delivered by our physicists and theologians followed by an informal audience-led discussion.

The first two events were held at St Mary's with the final event held at a Catholic parish in South London.

The audience at these events was broad, from A-level pupils studying philosophy or physics to clergymen and active members of local parishes.



Most of the audience had never attend a science event before and found faith a safe medium to explore complex concepts such as the Big Bang theory and quantum physics through more familiar concepts such as creation and human consciousness.

These events also helped to dismiss the misconception that physics and faith do not have anything in common and that physicists are always atheists and dismissive of faith.

Our goal of inspiring and enthusing Christian communities' and demonstrating there are concepts in physics that needed some leap of faith was a challenge but the feedback was excellent showing we had been successful. This has encouraged us to start new series of Physics and Faith in 2016.

Elisabetta Canetta, Senior Lecturer in Physics
Ali Mozafari, Visiting Lecturer Physics, St Mary's University, Twickenham, London

SEPnet 2015 Public Engagement Awards

My favourite event from last year was hosting the SEPnet Public Engagement Awards. Here we got to celebrate and reward physicists from across the region who have carried out some amazing Public Engagement projects over the last few years. The best thing about the award was that it's a chance to show how varied Public Engagement can be! Each of the winner also received £100.

The first category was the Newcomer Award. This award is given to those new to Public Engagement. It has been won by PhD students and post-docs over the last few years. The winner was Dr Jillian Scudder (Sussex) due to her amazing work on her blog. Flip over the other side to find out more!

We also awarded Michael Tarr (Portsmouth), a third year PhD student, with a Highly Commended in this category for his amazing work supporting all sorts of Public Engagement projects in his department. The panel recognised