

2014.10.29

## ESSILOR CELEBRATES 40 YEARS IN THORNBURY, UK

UK Federation of Optical Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and Association of Dispensing Optometrists recognise historic contributions of two key Essilor people.

In 2014 Essilor celebrated 40 years of lens operations in Thornbury, south west England. The site combines the headquarters of Essilor's UK activities and a prescription laboratory which digitally surfaces large volumes of ophthalmic lenses.

The Thornbury lab was set up in 1974, soon after the historic merger of Essel and Silor, in order to serve the UK lens market which at that time was exclusively controlled by the National Health Service. Its new lab operations helped to introduce into the UK the adoption of plastic lenses which quickly became greatly favoured over traditionally heavier glass lenses.

To mark Essilor's 40 birthday, a series of events were organised - from the official opening of a heritage trail at the site to a staff fun day over the summer. People from across the Essilor organization, past and present, contributed to a special celebratory film and booklet which form part of the site museum along with other memorabilia reflecting the long history of Essilor and its UK operations.



In a final celebration in early October, a special tour was organised for retired Essilor UK directors. During this event, the UK optics industry presented two awards. The first was an Honorary Life Membership - the highest honour awarded to an individual - to Bernard Maitenaz, inventor of the Varilux progressive lens and ex-CEO of Essilor. The second, a certificate of special

recognition presented by the Association of Dispensing Optometrists, was given to Marc Alexandre, recognising his contribution to the dispensing of Varifocal lenses in the UK during his time at Essel UK from 1964 to 1976. Essilor UK also marked the occasion by giving all the retired Essilor executives a specially commissioned medal of distinguished service to the company.

“We are very proud to have had such important individuals with us here at Thornbury to celebrate our 40 years,” said Mike Kirkley, Managing Director, Essilor UK. “The teams have been inspired by their presence and learned so much about our history, in particular the human stories that have made Essilor what it is today.”

The UK was the first locations beyond France where the Société des Lunetiers (the origins of the Group) set up a subsidiary back in 1881.