

History Activities Coordinator

Anthony Davies

Goals

I believe that it is valuable to try to increase the interest in the many historical achievements of our profession particularly among early-career professionals, who are often poorly informed and bored by such history yet to "invent the future" they need to know the past. Reactions to IEEE Historic Milestone dedications is one success measure, and promoting these has been a substantial part of my recent activities.

Status and Past Contributions

Most of my activities have been related to the encouragement of History Milestone proposals, primarily in the UK and Ireland Section. The greatest achievement was the dedication on 1st April for a milestone to Blumleins stereo sound recording and reproduction inventions of the early 1930s at Abbey Road Studios. This had the strong and generous support of the Abbey Road Studios management, with an attendance of some 100 people, including many of the real experts, and included lectures and a very effective technical seminar. It must have created very good publicity for IEEE [1,2]. A number of other proposals are in various stages of progress. Now that the GHN has been, in effect, merged to become ETHW.org, there is access to the historical awards of ASME and ASCE which are primarily in USA - so I have been collecting information on other historical-plaque schemes (primarily in UK), and my information is likely to be published in the November IEEE History Newsletter. I presented a paper on the first hydro-electric system to be used for domestic lighting in the Southern Hemisphere (Reefton, New Zealand) at a history conference at Newcastle-upon-Tyne [3], and have continued in giving several invited talks for IET on technology-history topics (mainly military-related).

Outlook

Most of my activity is in conjunction with the UK and Ireland Life Members Affinity Group. I also do what I can to encourage collaboration with the History of Technology people in IET and the staff in IET Archives.

Points of concern

I plan to continue to encourage History Milestones in Region 8 - many possibilities have been identified and there must be many more a major difficulty is finding champions locally with the stamina to see the proposals through to completion. Another shortcoming is that many of the Section Histories on the GHN (and now ETHW) website are very short and lack important information, and there is a continuing need to encourage Sections to provide this information before it is lost for ever. I have been assisting the Sweden Section Chair with that. Recently it was discovered that two of the existing History Plaques (one in England and one in Scotland) appear to have "disappeared" this clearly goes against the concept that the plaques should be in places where IEEE members and others can visit and see them. We are trying to solve this mystery, but it highlights the ongoing responsibility of Sections to try to ensure the continued availability of their existing Milestones.

- 1) A.C. Davies, "Stereo Sound Recording and Reproduction - Remembering the History", IEEE Signal Processing Magazine, Sept 2015, Vol 32, no 5, pp 14-16 (DOI:10.1109/MSP.2015.2440191)
- 2) Turk at http://motherboard.vice.com/en_uk/read/the-man-who-invented-stereo
- 3) A.C. Davies, "A Southern Hemisphere comparison with Cragside", IET History of Technology Conference, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, 6th June 2015