History Activities Coordinator   Tony Davies

Highlights from the past

- The UKRI Section is continuing with plans for several History Milestone Proposals. Good progress is being made with one for stereo sound reproduction, based on the inventions of Alan Blumlein.
- In January, I presented an invited paper on British Army and Air Force wavemeters at a conference at Oxford University on "Making Telecommunications in the First World War". This and much other relevant information is being assembled on a website, associated with University of Leeds, where the School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science has research funding for a large ongoing project on this subject. See
    - http://blogs.mhs.ox.ac.uk/innovatingincombat/ and particularly
    - http://blogs.mhs.ox.ac.uk/innovatingincombat/events/#20140124
- I have been encouraging and trying to help other R8 Sections in preparing proposals for History Milestones - a simplified guide to the process is now on the R8 website on the Member Activities pages.
- A proposal for recognition of Heinrich Hertz' experiments had been completed and is awaiting a decision. If favourable, it will be the first IEEE History Milestone of the Germany Section.
- The Ukraine Section has received funding from the IEEE Foundation to prepare and submit eleven Milestone proposals - a few of these are nearly ready, although the events in the Crimea, etc. may result in delays in progress with these Milestone plans.
- Several topics for Milestone proposals have been identified for the Hungary Section.

Future activities

- Although I am no longer a member of the IEEE History Committee, I do receive all the documentation and keep in touch with their activities (acting as a 'corresponding member'). The Committee has its first (of two) face-to-face meetings on 8-9th March 2014 and so by the time of the R8 Committee meeting in April, there may be interesting matters to report from that meeting.

Points of concern / Topics for future discussion

- An IEEE Milestone at Bletchley Park commemorates World War Two code-breaking and the Colossus computer built to assist with this. There is an ongoing problem at Bletchley Park where a large fence has been erected between the part where visitors pay and enter, and the area rented by the National Museum of Computing, who operate the re-built Colossus computer and show some other aspects of code-breaking. As a result, many visitors will not see Colossus, and those who want to will have to pay an added entry fee.
- Several organisations and historic collections have been ejected from the Bletchley Park Site (the Vintage Military and Amateur Radio Society will no longer be allowed to hold events there, and a large collection of Winston Churchill material has also been sent away from the site. This, and many other changes, has resulted in a substantial dispute and adverse publicity. If the outcome is not favourable, it might be appropriate for IEEE to reconsider the location of this Milestone Plaque. I am keeping the IEEE History Center informed of this matter.
- Plans for cooperation between IET Archives and the IEEE History Center and the GHN website have been under discussion for over a year: no tangible progress can be reported, but a number of suggestions have been made. IET is involved in a two-year refurbishment of its building in London (Savoy Place) and this has led to some uncertainties over plans for the IET archives and library - many items having to be placed in storage for the time being.
- There were some discussions underway about an MOU for cooperation between IEEE and IET, which were, in effect, discontinued some time ago: it is hoped that it will be possible to re-start these discussions soon. From the IEE viewpoint, this does NOT fit the framework of a National Society Agreement because the formal position of IET is that it is not a "National", but a "Worldwide" Society.

Tony Davies

1st March 2014