WiringMatters
Your insight into BS 7671 www.theiet.org/wm

Interview with Colin Reed

Colin Reed I.Eng. MIEE has been a long-standing member of JPEL/64 and is the outgoing Chairman of Panel B Thermal effects, one of the four panels that feeds into the wider JPEL/64 committee, responsible for BS 7671. Colin retired from chairing Panel B in March, so we took the opportunity to catch up with him and celebrate his career.

Tim Benstead, new Chairman of Panel B (left) and Colin Reed, retiring Chairman of Panel B (right)

Colin, you've spent much of your working life in the electrical cable industry. What do you find most interesting about this area?

The ever-changing nature of the electrical industry and the developments of new technology, such that you are always learning new things.

You must have seen a lot of change in the cables and installation techniques and requirements over the years. What has been the most interesting change?

I joined the cable industry the year it changed from imperial cable sizes to metric. This was a major change at the time for those even older than me. In more recent years it must be the change of core colours of cables from RED, YELLOW, BLUE, BLACK to BROWN, BLACK, GREY, BLUE which involved coordinating a large number of originations such that the change went ahead on time and safely.

What has been the most challenging moment of your career?

In the early days I was responsible in my company for producing all the detailed cable designs for Sizewell B nuclear power station. It was at the time when desktop computers first

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became available in helping or maybe complicating ones work. Taking into account when I first started work I had log tables and a slide rule, it was a steep learning curve.

You've been through several editions of BS 7671, from the 14th Edition through to the most recent Amendment 3 to the 17th Edition. Was there any one Edition that particularly stands out in your mind?

Two really.

The first was when we amended the regulations to use the international current rating and installation in IEC 60364 instead of using purely UK stated ones. This change may not even been noticed by the average user of the regulations as work had been going on in the background for quite a few years at IEC level to align these ratings and methods in order to give a smooth change over.

The second was Amendment No 1 to the 17th edition as this was the first that I was chairman of panel B, and at that stage you realise both the extent of the work involved and how you have to manage the committee so that everyone contributes to the final document taking into account their area of expertise.

JPEL/64 Committee outside Savoy Place

You would initially have been a member of the IEE's Wiring Regulations Committee before it changed to IET. What other significant changes have you seen in the electrical industry?

The rise of new technology and industries such as wind and solar power creating new opportunities and unfortunately the decline in others such as, steel, coal and building oil rigs for the North Sea.

How do you think wiring and cabling will change over the next couple of decades?

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Like many industries it must change with time, new technology and additional regulations. The industry is becoming greener in the products it produces and will continue to do so. It will also change by taking into account security of supply, d.c. power in the home and I am sure there are many more changes that have not been thought of yet.

What advice would you have to young professionals interested in a career in the standard-setting industry?

Always ask questions and do not be afraid to do so. I have found that all experts are delighted that someone is interested and are more than willing to share their knowledge, I know that I am.

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