

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Tony Harris



Left to right; Lewis Westbury, Tony Harris, Peter Dickson

What does your new role at iLECSYS Rail entail?

My primary role at iLECSYS Rail is to add additional technical support to the already strong engineering and sales teams. I will be promoting the signalling power product and services to the existing customer base and introducing them to new customers and specifiers through my own contacts in the industry. Additionally, I will be exploring the possibilities of introducing some new products to the range and enhancing the already wide ranging product portfolio.

What were you doing before you joined iLECSYS Rail?

As you may expect from someone of my vintage, I have had quite a journey to get to iLECSYS Rail. I started out as a HVAC/BMS design engineer and project manager back in the early 70's. This led on to control system integration and control gear distribution in the early 90's. At this time, I got into petrol station forecourts and designed fuel distribution systems that have been and still are used on many motorway service stations to this day. In 1994, I was introduced to the rail industry and became involved with signalling power distribution. It was British Rail in those days! I came up with the concept of the "Power Enclosure", which over time, has evolved into the Class II products we are familiar with today. For various reasons, mostly outside of my control, my rail journey has taken me through several companies starting at Control Systems & Equipment (CSE Rail), going on to MGB Engineering and most recently Unipart Rail. It has been an interesting journey and there are quite a few stories that could be told!

What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

I am most looking forward to working as part of a team that has a common goal. I share Lewis's ambition to achieve "world domination" of the signalling power product market. Although iLECSYS Rail and myself have been going to the market from different directions, now that we have joined forces, I can use

my knowledge and experience to enable us to offer a product range, project solutions and technical support which is second to none.

What do you think is going to be a key focus in the rail industry in 2020?

The first part of 2020 will be all about getting messages to the market that iLECSYS Rail can provide a full range of products and services in support of Network Rail's CP6 programme of works. There are few new signalling projects but there will be many signalling upgrades to the existing infrastructure. The SIN 119 legacy upgrades will form a major part of the works for 2020. The SIN 119 upgrade program will be enhanced to provide more "resilience" to signalling trackside assets. The designers and specifiers are currently working on their projects which will come to the installation phase in the second half of the year. This is when we can expect orders to pick up and we must be ready for that.

What has been your proudest work moment so far?

Now there's a question! There have been a few along the way and most of them are personal to me. In the rail industry, I guess getting the first order for a power enclosure stands out as it meant that my idea had been accepted by the establishment and it was a bit of a game changer at the time. Another highlight came a few years later, when over £1m worth of power enclosures were sold in one year. That was good feeling. I don't like being told that something is not possible to achieve. On one of those occasions, Network Rail told me it was not possible to get a Class I auto-reconfiguration switch gear system into a standard location case. When I showed them the prototype, I remember the silence from the person who said it could not be done. That prototype eventually evolved into the Class II FSP 03 we have today. A similar thing occurred when a certain Network Rail employee was forced into silence when I showed him a plastic power enclosure. I had trouble wiping the grin off my face! Outside of rail, I was proud to receive a Design Council Award for a product that I had designed for distributing "aromas" in buildings. It was used in the Millennium Dome for the year 2000 celebrations.

How do you relax on a weekend?

My weekends are normally dominated by football! My dad introduced me to the mighty Wycombe Wanderers when I was a small boy and I have supported them ever since. I have been a season ticket holder for ever and both my sons and now my grand daughters have followed suit. Along the way, I adopted Tottenham Hotspur as my second team and follow their fortunes. I had a long playing career and finally hung up my boots when I got past 50. I like my cars and until recently, I had a Lotus Elan as a weekend run about. Maintaining it got a bit fiddly so I swapped it for a Mini Cooper S convertible, much more sensible!

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