

## LAUDATIO CHRIS BISSELL

*A. Van Cauwenberghe*

Christopher Charles BISSELL, born 12 May 1952, obtained his first university degree, a BA (Bachelor of Arts) in Natural Sciences and Medieval Languages and Literature, at Cambridge University in 1974. The combination of these two major subjects looks already very peculiar and will set the tune for his further career.

In 1993 he obtained a PhD degree at the Open University for his work on "Inventing the language: stability theory and the emergence of the discipline of control engineering".

Meanwhile he got qualifications from the Institute of Linguists in French, Italian and German. He has also a good knowledge of Dutch and published already in our mother tongue.

Since 1984 he was a lecturer and later (in 1994) a senior lecturer in Electronics at the Open University, where he developed courses in signal processing, control engineering, telecommunications and mathematics. Since 1996 he is Head of the Department of Telematics at the same university.

From his multitude of external activities, suffice it to mention:

- Chartered Engineer (Ceng) and Member of the Institute of Measurement and Control
- Member of SEFI (Société Européenne pour la Formation des Ingénieurs) curriculum development working group
- Higher Education Funding Council Quality Assessor for German and for Electrical Engineering (1995-96)
- Visiting Lecturer, Cranfield University (MSc Signal Processing) (1996)

Prof. Bissell is not only a well-known specialist in automatic

control and signal processing (authoring 3 textbooks), a linguist, an educator but also very active in the history of technology, mainly in the areas of control engineering and control education. He is the author of many publications (24 altogether) in this field.

Prof. Bissell has keen interests in both worlds of culture:

- the natural sciences and engineering, as well as
- arts and humanities

and found an elegant way to bridge the gap between both by studying his history of technology. His thesis is that such history cannot be told as a simple, linear, narrative based on any one particular viewpoint. On the contrary, there are many interwoven stories, which are contingent in time and/or space.

From all this we may rightly conclude that Prof. Bissell is a brilliant engineer, a man of science and technology with wide cultural interests. As a young professor, working in a country which was the birthplace of the industrial revolution, he got interested and became proficient in the history of automatic control, a discipline that largely contributed to the shaping of our modern industrialized society.

The Sarton Committee is happy that he accepted to deliver a Sarton Memorial Lecture in Ghent, one of the very first towns on the continent, where the industrial revolution took roots.

