

Richard John Taylor

1945 - 2009



Richard Taylor – the man who built Quantel and changed the face of Television.

Richard Taylor was educated at Greshams School, Norfolk, and at Manchester University, where he received a BSc in Electrical Engineering, and a Masters Degree in Electronic Engineering.

His career started well at EMI in 1967, where he started to develop his ideas of digital image acquisition and processing, but it was when he moved to become Managing Director of Quantel in 1975 that he created a thirty-year wave of changes in all aspects of Broadcast Television, leading with both engineering and creative excellence.

With his special combination of skills – engineering, marketing, creative, commercial and , by no means least, leadership – coupled with a razor-sharp mind, natural integrity and determination, Richard created a unique enterprise which is still a source of great pride.

To this day, the sense of excitement and engineering achievement remains. Richard built, and maintained, a team of free-thinking engineers which successfully took on the best of the world with a series of machines which simply outflanked any previous known technique. Synchroniser, zoom machine, Standards Converter, Still Store, Library, Paintbox, Harry, Mirage, Crystal, Henry, iQ, Inspiration – a chain of machines under the leadership of one man. About 185 patents were filed in Quantel's name – Richard's own contribution is evidenced by his presence as a named inventor on all of the really important ones.

In 1976 Quantel achieved a world first when the Olympic torch was compressed into the corner of the stadium picture as it was carried through the streets of Montreal – Synchroniser - and everybody loved the magical, painting-by-numbers Crown Paints commercial – Harry. And, as Richard's work developed over the years, Quantel was honoured by many great visitors. It was part of Richard's special ability and attention to detail that each one left understanding Quantel and appreciating Quantel's style. No-one can forget how HM the Queen won the Derby - Paintbox – or how Mrs Thatcher, then Prime Minister, shook hands with Mr. Arthur Scargill – Paintbox again.

Quantel's extraordinary commercial success was used to create an environment for imaginative engineering. The resulting flow of new products kept the company in the forefront of a very competitive industry for more than three decades; as early as 1981, this commercial success was recognised when Richard was appointed OBE “for services to Export”.

Richard also received many personal honours for his engineering and creative contributions. He won the Montreux Gold Medal in 1981, the Royal Television Society Chairman's Gold Medal in 1985, the Eduard Rhein Prize in 1986 and the David Sarnoff Award in 1990. He was also honoured with Fellowships of the British Kinematograph Society, the IEE, the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers and the Royal Television Society.

Equally important to Richard were the awards which Quantel and its engineers gained. He led Quantel to nine Queen's Awards, nine Emmy Awards, and two more Emmys for the NBC Olympics graphics support led by Paul Kellar, Richard's long-term Director of Research and close friend. In 1988 the Fellowship of Engineering honoured the Quantel engineering team with the MacRobert Award for Paintbox and Harry citing “outstanding contribution by way of innovation in engineering which has enhanced UK prestige and prosperity”.

Richard's last range of products for Quantel, iQ and Inspiration, was as good and as innovative as anything which had gone before. In December 2005, after a series of vicissitudes in ownership and control, Richard left Quantel. The engineering team then dispersed; Richard went on to set up the Taylor Kellar Partnership. His last project was his successful defence, as Expert Witness, of a major Patent case for Markem and Herbert Smith. On the key point of the invalidity case, the Honourable Mr Justice Floyd stated in his Judgement that “On this issue I have no hesitation in preferring the evidence of Mr Taylor.”

In December 2008, he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. With the help of his wife Judy, and their children, James and Emily, his iron will sustained him to the very end, but, after a few days of his final illness, Richard died, with his family, at the Sue Ryder Care Home in Nettlebed on 26th June 2009.

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