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.....  
CELEBRATING  
**100**  
YEARS OF SERVICE  
.....





# 100 YEARS OF SERVICE

THE STORY OF THE ELECTRICAL WHOLESALERS'  
FEDERATION AND THE BIRTH OF THE EDA

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is a happy coincidence that I should find myself President of The Electrical Distributors' Association at the celebration of its Centenary - almost one hundred years after BEMCO joined twenty-four other wholesalers to become the first members of the then named Electrical Wholesalers' Federation.

From the start, the EWF set out to become a unifying element in a fledgling market that had already seen the formation of trade organisations to represent the interests of manufacturers and installers.

While the inter-war years saw the proliferation of local, family-owned wholesalers coming into the building trades distribution sector, the period since the Second World War has been one of consolidation.

National wholesalers have emerged and established their position through acquisition and organic growth and independent wholesalers have moved into Buying Groups in order to protect their competitiveness.

The membership of the EWF waxed and waned until, in 1998, it was decided that a re-branding exercise was in order. The purpose and methods of the organisation were put under the microscope, refocused and the Electrical Distributors' Association was born.

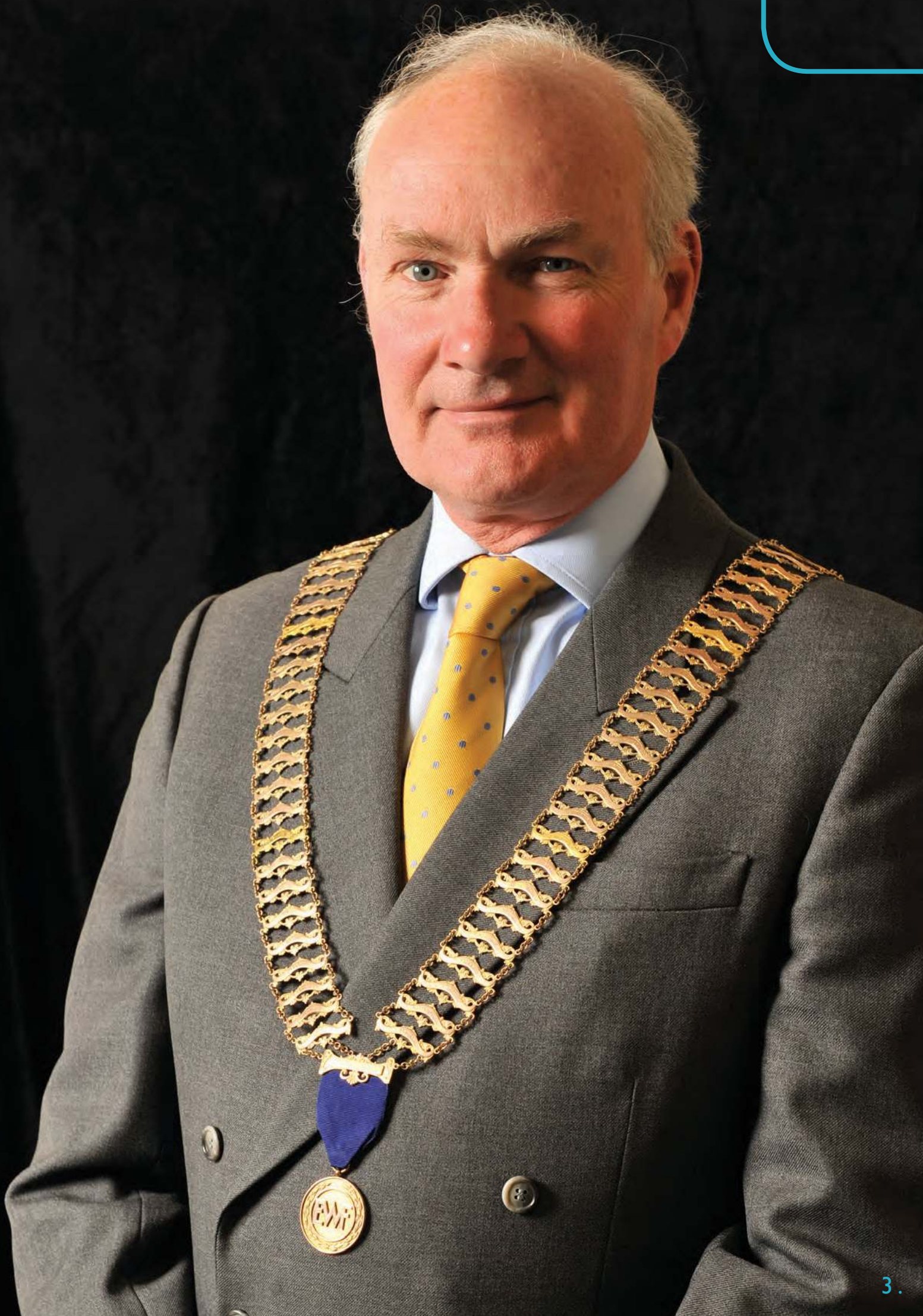
Services, which now include Business Forums, networking events and an industry leading staff training programme, have all contributed to delivering a membership that stands at an all time high.

This is a proud moment to be part of an Association that has successfully weathered such a turbulent century. I commend all those who have played their part.



**Simon Barkes**

President – Electrical Distributors Association, 2014





(Left) Gustav Binswanger (later Gustav Byng),  
(Right) Hugo Hirsch (later Sir Hugo Hirst)

## INTRODUCTION

### How did electrical wholesaling come about?

It all started in the 1880's, when a German immigrant, Gustav Binswanger (later Gustav Byng), established an electrical wholesale business, G. Binswanger and Company, in London. In 1886, a fellow immigrant, Hugo Hirsch (later Sir Hugo Hirst), joined Byng. This small business found early success with its innovative method of supplying to the trade a range of electrical products over the counter.

Not stopping there, the company acquired its first factory in Salford, manufacturing telephones, electric bells, ceiling roses and switches. In 1889, the business was incorporated as a private company known as the General Electric Company Ltd.

So, not only did this pair of entrepreneurs create the first known UK electrical wholesale enterprise, but laid the foundations for an electrical empire which was a dominating force throughout the industry for decades to come.

The need for local availability and swift supply of electrical products and equipment grew apace. Industries of all kinds began to use electricity in their factories, mines and shipyards. Electrical contractors and retailers emerged to service the needs of industry, commerce and domestic markets.

One vital link was missing from the supply chain. A merchant was needed who could buy in quantity from the manufacturer, house the goods and make them available locally, over the counter, or for delivery to the customer. Interest in this role came from a wide variety of professions and trades. Electrical engineers, electricians, engineers, distributors of gas tubing, mantles and glassware saw profitable opportunities in a new and exciting industry. They took up the challenge with enthusiasm. So, the electrical wholesaler was born.



Original logo for the General Electric  
Company, circa 1889

# THE SEEDS ARE SOWN

It was February 1914. A European arms race fuelled fears of impending war. Typically, British politicians were divided on how to stop the race developing into a catastrophic European conflict.

On 4 February 1914, unfazed by the approaching conflict, five men of vision sat down in the office of the British Electrical Equipment Co Ltd in Norfolk Street, Strand, London, to discuss the formation of an 'Electrical Wholesale Protection Society'.

This was against a background of a fast growing electrical industry and the widespread emergence of electrical wholesalers ('factors') to service the needs of contractors and retailers as well as large and small users and the consumer. Competition between these companies was fierce (as it was with manufacturers who were dealing direct with trade, commerce and industry). What the wholesale trade lacked was unity and foresight.

Manufacturers had already formed powerful trade associations to further their interests and enforce their trading conditions on the industry as a whole. In 1901, electrical contractors had formed the ECA to represent their vital industry sector.

It had become apparent to leaders of a number of prominent electrical wholesaling companies that something had to be done to unite their diverse fellow distributors and to form an association strong enough to fight the corner for their members in the face of the dictates of the authoritarian manufacturing organisations.

The enlightened men who put themselves forward to set up this association were:

F. Sumner-Smith ..... B.E.E.Co Ltd  
Mr. Feld (sic) .....Feld Brothers  
R.W. Smith ..... Drake & Gorham  
A.G. Beaver .....Sun Electric Co  
A.F. Leslie ..... (Asst. to Mr S-Smith, Acting Hon. Sec.)

*The first meeting of the EWF took place in London in February 1914 and was attended by four companies. One of these was the Sun Electric Company which went through a number of takeovers becoming ITT Distributors and Senate and now Rexel.*



"Our industry has changed beyond recognition over the last 100 years. Since our attendance at the inaugural

meeting of the EWF, Rexel businesses have always played a part in helping to shape the electrical distribution market, whether serving on the board or participating in events. It gives us a forum to discuss our experiences, debate legislative and economic issues, and to share the responsibility of educating our staff and customers about energy efficient, sustainable product solutions and alternative energy sources, to create a brighter future for everyone."

John Hogan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Rexel UK Ltd.

The minutes of the first meeting of the Federation, with Mr. Sumner-Smith in the chair. The first entry reads: "At a Preliminary Committee Meeting in connection with the formation of a Wholesale Protection Society..."



## THE MISSION

The aim of this new body was 'to protect the interests of *bona fide* electrical wholesalers from any action or dispute between themselves, manufacturers and retailers.' It would generally encourage and promote the interests of all *bona fide* wholesalers.

To protect *bona-fide* Electrical Wholesalers who are members of the E.W.F. from any actions or disputes which may arise between themselves & Manufacturers &/or Retailers & to generally promote the interests of all those who are engaged in a *Bona-fide* Wholesale or Factory business, & to generally encourage & promote the interests of the Wholesale Electrical Trade.

Extract of original objectives

The Objects and Regulations were drawn up and agreed upon. The pressing task was to build up membership.

The Federation was to be managed by a committee, consisting of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and eleven elected members. They would have the power to co-opt up to six members. (In this, the first year of the First World War, a committee member later apologised for his absence, as he had been called up to serve his country!)





After considerable discussion, the historic decision was made that the title of the new organisation should be The Electrical Wholesalers' Federation.

EWF Presidential Chain of Office with engraved links for each of the EWF Presidents

# THE SEARCH FOR NEW MEMBERS



Following a mailing to prospective members, by May 1914, 25 companies had agreed to join and a General Meeting was called for 9th June, to take place in London. Rather loftily one might think, it had been agreed by the founding committee (all London based) that 'there should be no distinction between London and country firms'.

In April, 1916, the design of an EWF badge was approved and supplies of an electro (precursor of the logo) were issued to members - free of charge - to use as an imprint on their letter-headings.

In the meantime, the horrendous war continued unabated and wholesalers experienced difficulties in obtaining goods against a background of restricted supplies and the priority given to armament manufacture.

However, the committee continued actively to promote the interests of the new Federation.

In 1917, the EWF leadership congratulated themselves on the recognition of the association by the industry 'as a responsible organised body representing strong interests in the electrical trade'.



The electro (above) was provided free to members to enable them to create an imprint of the EWF marque



Early federation members  
Top (L-R): Mr. F.C. Barnett, Mr. G.O. Donovan, Mr. H.H. Berry  
Bottom (L-R): Mr. J. Altman, Mr. S. Rose, Mr. W. Donovan

Sloan Electric Company of London was one of the first companies to join the newly formed Federation. It was elected as a member in 1915 and paid an annual subscription of £30! This company is now part of Edmundson Electrical Ltd a major supporter of the EDA.



As with many things in life, the more you put into something the more you derive from it. Edmundson Electrical is heavily involved in all aspects of the EDA from the Board of

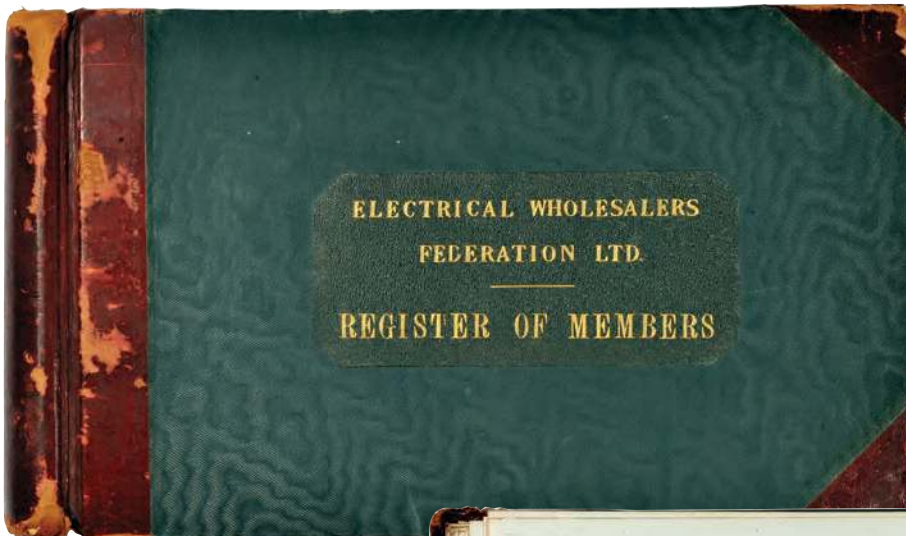
Management to Training, Forums, Networking Events and the EUEW. Our participation in these activities has brought major benefits to our business and employees over the many years of our continuous membership of the EWF and the EDA."

**Gordon Love**  
**Managing Director**  
**Edmundson Electrical**

Membership at this stage remained a disappointing twenty-five, nine of these being in London. However, more companies were soon to join in Scotland, the North East, Leeds, Liverpool, Salford, Sheffield, Nottingham, Midlands and South Wales. The Committee asked for the wholehearted support of existing members to recruit new entrants so that the Federation could be seen to represent a large proportion of the electrical wholesale trade.

A group of wholesalers in Newcastle had considered setting up their own association but, after earnest deliberation, decided to join the EWF. They exerted a powerful influence on the Federation, providing a number of Presidents over the years and encouraging the formation of Sections in Scotland and the North.

In April 1918, anticipating the end of hostilities against Germany, fears were expressed that, post-war, manufacturers might attempt to cut out wholesalers. This resulted in the improbable suggestion that the Federation should consider setting up its own factory to manufacture accessories. The idea faded into oblivion. However, the proposal that collective buying should be discussed took fifty years to be re-examined.



Extract from the original Register of Members showing company details, date of election and annual subscription

NAME	ADDRESS	Representative	Deduction From Record	Date of Election	Date of Resignation	Other Particulars	Sectional Area	SUBSCRIPTION					
								Year	Amount Paid	Date Paid	Amount Due		
Scattergood Johnson Ltd	79, Cookridge St Leeds.	J. J. Burgess	28/10/23	27/10/24			Leeds	1921	£25	3.3.21	12.10.0	Members	
										12.7.21	12.10.0	Assoc	
										1922	12.10.0	12.10.0	William
										1923	12.10.0	12.10.0	24
										1924	12.10.0	12.10.0	Harc
										1925	12.10.0	12.10.0	
										1926	12.10.0	12.10.0	John
										1927	12.10.0	12.10.0	George
										1928	12.10.0	12.10.0	

*Transferred to New Register  
Vol 82*

# CONSOLIDATION AND RECOGNITION

By 1920, the consolidation process was well on the way. The Federation's advertising campaign had been effective. Most manufacturers and their associations recognised the organisation as a legitimate industry body. In addition, the ECA was keen to co-operate with it.

*By 1920, other electrical industry organisations recognised the EWF as a legitimate body and one of these was the ECA which was very keen to co-operate with the young Association.*



"I am delighted to see the EDA celebrating their centenary as they play such an important role in the electrical industry's supply chain, effectively providing a bridge between the innovative products provided by manufacturers, and the contractors that constantly strive to provide innovative solutions for clients and consumers alike."

**Steve Bratt**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA)

It was in the same year that it was agreed to give 'substantial support annually' to the then Electrical Trades Benevolent Institution. This close involvement with what became the EIBA (now Electrical Industries Charity) continues to this day.



*In 1920, it was agreed to give 'substantial support annually' to the then Electrical Trades Benevolent Institution, later EIBA, then EEIBA and now Electrical Industries Charity. This strong support continues to this day.*



"From the 1920's to the present day, the EDA has been closely associated with the Electrical Industries Charity, in all its incarnations. We are grateful for the unfailing support of EDA members who have given so generously over 10 decades, allowing the charity to continue its work supporting all people in the electrical industries through life's challenges."

**Pauline Cooke**  
Executive Group HR Manager, RWE Npower plc,  
President, Electrical Industries Charity

# NEGOTIATIONS COMMENCE

*Early in its history, the EWF held meetings with the Tungsten Lamp Association, the forerunner of ELMA, which today has evolved to the LIA. In 1922 representatives were invited to their annual dinner. Discussions with LIA continue today and the Association has helped considerably in the creation of EDA's lighting training modules.*



“Like the switch and the light bulb, which have been inextricably linked for over 100 years, the LIA and EDA collaboration will be even more important in this new digital age. Congratulations to the EDA as it celebrates its 100 year anniversary.”

**Alasdair McRury**  
Managing Director European Operations  
Holophane Europe Ltd  
President of the LIA

*An important group in the early history of the Federation was the Cable Manufacturer's Association (CMA), forerunner of the British Cable Association (BCA) and in 1922 representatives were invited to the annual dinner for the first time.*



“The British Cables Association (BCA), as representative of UK cable manufacturers, would like to congratulate the Electrical Distributors' Association on reaching its Centenary this year.

Having been connected with the EDA for almost 100 years, the BCA recognises and values its hard work for, and dedication to, the electrical wholesale distribution industry. We have always had an excellent working relationship with EDA's member companies and the staff, and we thoroughly enjoy meeting them all socially. We look forward to our long and established relationship, as both the BCA and Approved Cables Initiative (ACI) continuing.”

**Paul Atkinson**  
Chief Executive Officer, Prysmian Group UK  
President of BCA  
& Chair of Approved Cables Initiative

Early meetings took place with the Cable Makers Association and the Tungsten Lamp Association (forerunner of ELMA). In the latter case, complicated discount structures and the intransigent attitude of the dominant manufacturers in this sector did not make for easy negotiation and were a constant source of aggravation for many years to come.

In 1922, for the first time, the EWF invited representatives of the electrical press, CMA, ELMA and the ECA to their Annual Dinner, traditionally held in London after the AGM. The numbers attending this event grew dramatically over the years and it became one of the highlights of the industry calendar.

At the AGM, the president, H. Bowden-How spoke somewhat emotionally of the transition of competitive wholesalers “from adversaries to members of an association in which we could sit around one common table for friendly conference and, in the case of some, a positive self-denying sacrifice for the benefit of their confreres and the trade in general”. A rousing sentiment, indeed!

Membership had grown to 75 by 1925, and the subject of the eligibility of Associate Members raised its head again, only to fade into the mists of time.

The enactment of the Electricity (Supply) Act in 1926 was a milestone in the history of the electricity industry. The EWF played a leading role in fighting to ensure that preferential terms given to municipal authorities did not exceed contractors' quantity terms. Close contact was maintained with kindred trade associations on this issue, and with both Houses of Parliament.

Despite Bowden-How's sanguine statement a few years previously, all was not sweetness and light within the Federation ranks. In 1928, George Beaver headed a prominent group of founder members in a move away from the Federation. They were unhappy with the lack of a constructive policy to deal with the constantly debated issue of price cutting. They formed a rival organisation, The Electrical Merchants and Manufacturers Association (E.M.M.A.). It was four years before they decided to wind up this body and return to the fold, the issue of price cutting unresolved. Beaver was welcomed back and immediately re-elected to Council, on which he served loyally for many years. He became a wartime President in 1941 and 1942.



# BIRTH OF THE SCOTTISH FUNCTION

In 1931, the Scottish Section invited Council and senior representatives of the CMA and ELMA to attend a meeting at Turnberry. The gathering was so successful that it became an annual function, involving the Scottish Section, Council and manufacturer guests. Its value and popularity has grown over the years. It has become a privilege of membership and another important landmark in the industry diary.

*In 1931, the Scottish Section invited the EWF Council and senior representatives of the CMA (now BCA) and ELMA (now LIA) to attend a meeting at Turnberry. This hugely successful gathering, known as the Scottish Function, is now an important diary date in the annual electrical industry calendar.*



“I feel honoured to Chair the Scottish Section in the EDA’s Centenary Year. The Scottish Function traditionally has given the Scottish Members the opportunity to invite senior industry figures to a networking event that I know has helped develop many fantastic relationships over the years.”

**Gary Mason**  
Edmundson Electrical Ltd  
Chairman – EDA Scottish Section, 2014

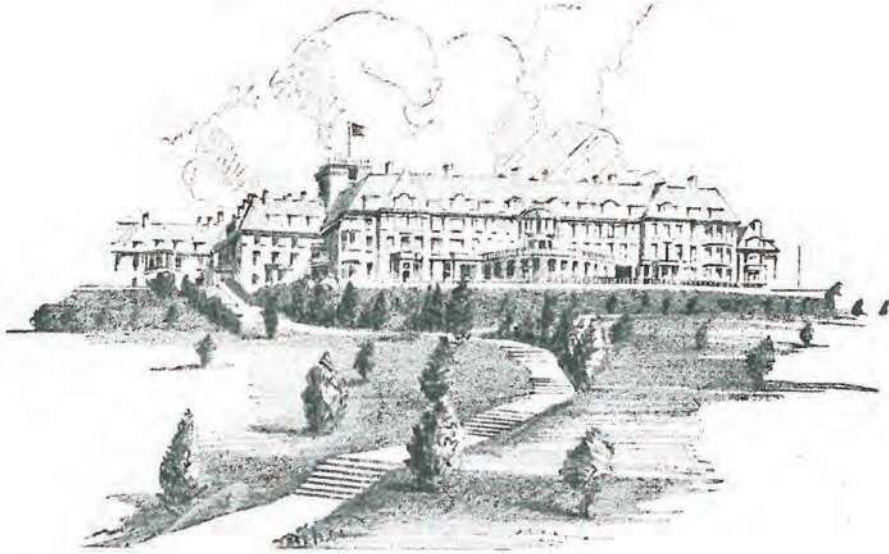


Scottish Function, Turnberry, 1951



Scottish Function, 1964

# GLENEAGLES.



**Gleneagles Hotel, Perthshire.**

The Men's Golf Trophy, as well as the Ladies', is fiercely contested at the Scottish Function. This EWF Trophy was first won jointly in 1952 by J.S. Bunting and W.H. Swain. Last Name on the trophy S.T. Bull 2005. A new trophy was introduced in 2006 to take account of the new name of the Association and because there was no more room for engraving.



'The Boot' the highly coveted trophy awarded to the participant who has made a noteworthy contribution to 'The Walk', one of the highlights of the Scottish Function

The Electricity Fair Trade Council was formed in 1933, helping to regularise the discount structure to the Supply Industry and, eventually, removing the much discussed threat to the status of the wholesaler.

The EWF has, throughout its existence, guided its members through the cyclical ebb and flow of the economy. The worldwide Great Depression of the thirties was the longest period of downturn ever experienced and its effects even outweigh those of the current recession. Attendance at meetings increased, no doubt because of the uncertain conditions of the times. Federation support for the EIBA was also greater than before in response to the growing demand for assistance.



Captain W.R. Gledson

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The outbreak of the Second World War had an immediate effect on the Federation. The offices were moved out of central London to the calmer waters of Henley-on-Thames. The President, W.R. Gledson, a Territorial Officer, was immediately called up for service and his Vice President took over. However, it is recorded that Captain Gledson, in a gesture of true dedication, tore himself away from his fight with the Führer in order to attend the 1940 AGM. This was held in London, despite the hazardous conditions prevailing.

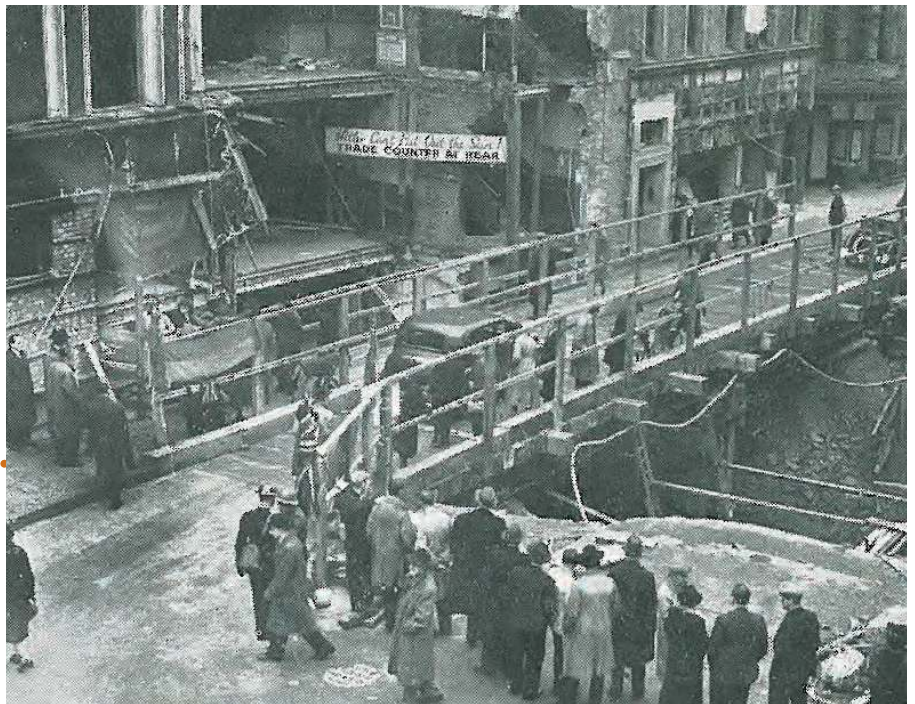
By this time, the Director and Assistant Director, two ex-Presidents, were fully occupied in dealing with the multiplicity of controls introduced by the wartime government.

The Federation was called upon to advise members on the administration of Purchase Tax, steel control prices and many other bureaucratic restrictions. It was acknowledged that wholesalers proved themselves invaluable to the government as a pivotal point in this tax collection task.

Between 7th September 1940 and 21st May 1941 there were major air raids on sixteen British cities. It was inevitable that many electrical wholesalers would suffer in these actions. More than twenty of them sustained damage to their premises during this phase of the Blitz, a number of buildings being completely destroyed.

Setting a long-lasting precedent, 1942 saw the introduction of a sliding subscription scale, according to turnover. This principle, although much re-jigged and inflation-proofed, has stood the test of time.





Sunco's Tottenham Court Road branch before and after bombing

It was recorded that this period of the war 'brought out the best amongst the membership'. On many occasions they came to the rescue of their fellows, lending them stock and, in some incidents, use of their warehouse space.

In the case of Beaver's company, Sunco, his Tottenham Court Road premises were devastated by a bomb landing in the road outside, taking out the entire frontage. The day after the explosion, the trade counter was functioning at the rear of the building.

# THE SECOND WORLD WAR ENDS

By the end of the war in 1945, membership had risen to 150. The Federation office returned to London and the staff were faced with the onerous task of dealing with the deregulation of the abundance of government controls. This was a complicated and detailed procedure and kept the Federation executives busy guiding members through its intricacies. Unusually, government departments recognised the valuable part that the EWF had played in this lengthy exercise.

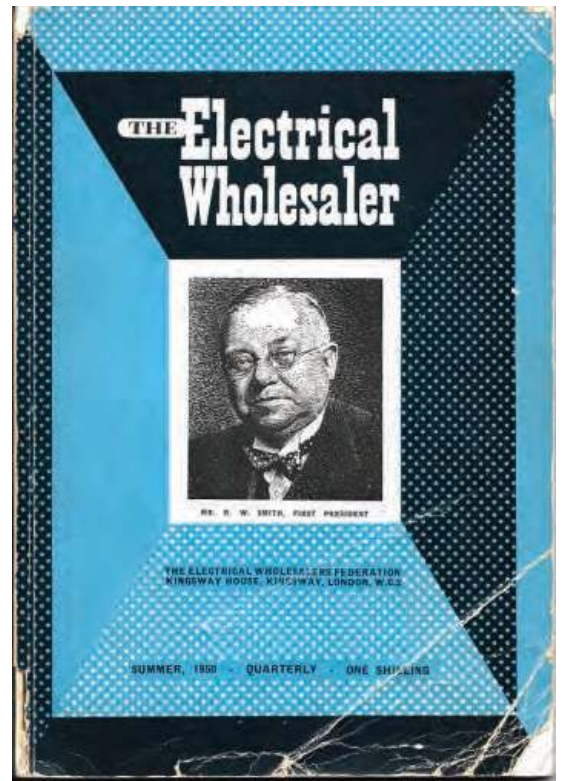
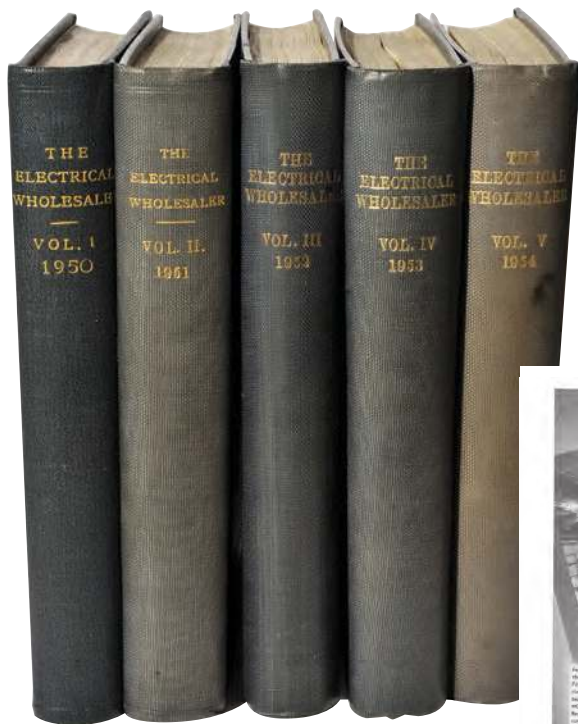
Another important facet of Federation activities was created at this time, the exchange between members of statistical information. Hesitation over disclosure of confidential commercial information was prevalent and the procedure went through many changes in detail over the years. However, the practice has survived and flourishes to this day.

The electrical power industry in the United Kingdom was nationalised by the Electrical Industry Act 1947, when over 600 electric power companies were merged into twelve Area Boards. This raised fears amongst members that terms offered by manufacturers to this new and powerful body (as well as the National Coal Board, created in 1946) might preclude wholesalers from supplying them. However, this apprehension proved unfounded.

By 1949, the central administration was beginning to settle down after the disruption of the previous volatile years. Members, too, were recovering themselves and taking a fresh interest in Federation affairs. A record attendance had been registered at the 1947 AGM and growth continued in the years ahead.



In January of that year, a significant event occurred, the publication of the first edition of "Electrical Wholesaler". This quarterly publication was created and edited completely 'in-house' by the Director and his staff. It contained information on Federation activities and articles of interest. The journal was issued free to members and executives of allied associations, and it was available to non-members on subscription. Manufacturers were eager to advertise in the magazine, which proved to be a prestigious and profitable publicity tool for the Federation.



THE  
**Electrical Wholesaler**  
KINGSWAY HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C.2.

Vol. I No. 1. Winter, 1950.

**Editorial.**

**W**ITH this, the first copy of *The Electrical Wholesaler*, a new venture is born, sponsored by the Electrical Wholesalers Federation.

It could be claimed that the origin of the publication was the E.W.F. home journal, *One Page*, which has circulated quarterly amongst the membership, and is now defunct.

*The Electrical Wholesaler* is not a home journal and it is available to all interested to take out an annual subscription, not excluding Wholesalers who are not members of the Electrical Wholesalers Federation.

Its primary object must be to serve the interests of the Electrical Wholesale trade and for that reason we must look forward to the support of all Wholesalers who are in a position to provide articles of interest and information concerning Electrical Wholesale Distribution.

As with nearly all new ventures there is room for improvement and for that reason constructive criticism will be welcomed from all and sundry.

**SEASONAL GREETINGS.**

The year just closed has held many problems but reviewing the position broadly the industry at large may well congratulate itself on the progress made in a changing world.

We shall endeavour this year to resolve the many difficulties still outstanding and can only hope that further

Government interference in industries will not add to the existing problems.

To everyone in the Electrical Industry, and particularly to the Electrical Wholesaler, we wish a happy and successful year.

**IS OUR HOUSE IN ORDER.**

In the *Electrical Times*, an article recently appeared under the pen-name of *Candidus*, with the above title. Though we are unaware as to the writer's name it is evident that he has had experience of Electrical Wholesaling.

The article led to correspondence between the Electrical Wholesalers Federation and some Manufacturers and the points that emerge are worthy of consideration. The main complaint, if complaint it could be called, was the lack of support given by Electrical Wholesalers to small manufacturers introducing new products. It is suggested that new products which have practical and technical advantages not hitherto available are regarded with apathy by many Electrical Wholesalers, with the result that the Manufacturer fails to elicit support and is either faced with setting up a direct to dealer distribution scheme or embarking on extensive advertising which might not be warranted.

One Manufacturer made the suggestion that the Wholesaler could do much to assist the Manufacturer, of new products by setting up in a com-

## 1950's

The Fifties heralded many changes throughout the industry.

The growth of national wholesalers had commenced, a process which was to have a dramatic impact on the wholesale sector; the membership and income of the Federation. More on that subject later.

Suggestions from some sections that they should hold alternative gatherings to the well-established and popular Scottish Function did not find favour and were firmly rejected. This was, and is, a unique gathering and is sacrosanct! As has already been mentioned, the idea of publishing a Federation catalogue was also dismissed.

At this time, minutes of meetings were recorded in great detail. It was clear that personal and commercial rivalries surfaced frequently, as might be expected. A range of issues occupied the discussions: Membership criteria, association of members with contracting and retailing companies, manufacturers' terms to large users, chain stores and electricity boards. Cable and lighting matters dominated the debates. The commodity committees and the Director were kept busy dealing with a variety of members' concerns.



Scottish Function, Gleneagles, 1950



WK Rennie, Scottish Section President speaking at Gleneagles, 1950



The President, Mr JWE Rutherford, being congratulated on winning one of the golfing competitions as a runner-up – Gleneagles, 1950

## THE BRITISH RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES ACT OF 1956

S. R. DENNISON  
Queen's University of Belfast

### I. INTRODUCTION

IN AN article in the October, 1958, issue of this *Journal*, Professor Jewkes discussed the main features of British monopoly policy between 1944 and 1956. The present article is intended to carry the story a little further in the light of the first decisions of the Restrictive Practices Court, established under the Act of 1956,<sup>1</sup> which did not start operations until the fall of 1958.

As Professor Jewkes has shown, although the Monopolies Commission established under the Act of 1948<sup>2</sup> provided a great deal of information on monopolistic practices in Britain, it was not very significant in regard to the control of monopoly or in "the practical steps taken to increase competition." Although it may have been a necessary first stage in what was in effect a reversal of British policy, it had four main defects as an instrument of control.

First, each case had to be considered on its own merits, and, in the absence of any specific legalities or illegalities in the Act, it was quite independent of all other cases. Various consequences flowed from this. For one thing, even with an expanded Commission investigating as separate groups several cases at a time,<sup>3</sup> it would be many years before a significant part of the restrictions in British industry would be covered. For another, there was the matter of equity, pointed out by a minority in the Commission's first report (on Dental Goods) that practices common in many industries might be condemned and stopped in only one or two, with the rest continuing to operate under the same restrictions. Finally, no industry could know whether or not its practices would at some future time be found to be against the public interest; however much it might wish to conform to the public interest as it might be conceived by the Commission, it could not know what this would be until such time as its practices might be investigated.

Second, control of such practices as were found to be against the public interest depended entirely on administrative action by the Board of Trade or other appropriate government department. This again introduced uncer-

<sup>1</sup> Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1956, 4 & 5 Eliz. 2, c. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Monopoly and Restrictive Practices (Inquiry and Control) Act, 1948, 11 & 12 Geo. 6, c. 66.

<sup>3</sup> This was a change introduced by the amending Act of 1953.

Extract from British Restrictive Trade Practices Act of 1956

### Abolition of Resale Price Maintenance (RPM)

The Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1956 made it illegal for manufacturers to act in collusion jointly to maintain resale prices for their products to consumers.

This parliamentary enactment caused great confusion and trepidation throughout the whole industry and in the wider UK commercial world. Its consequences completely transformed the structure of retail trading and, amongst other things, seriously affected wholesaler involvement in the domestic appliance market.

The harmful consequences of the legislation required consultation and co-operation between all kindred trade associations.

The Annual General meeting of 1956 was a lively and momentous one. The main topic was the cumulative effect of the abolition of RPM on trading in the high street. Multiple retailers of domestic appliances were becoming a serious threat to their smaller competitors and the wholesalers who supplied them.

Closer to home, the opening in March 1961 of a Grandways store in Leeds was a warning to the industry of the threat posed by the abolition of Resale Price Maintenance. This event was referred to as "the first fully fledged serve-yourself discount store to open in this country". It openly challenged the policy of RPM. (The Grandways chain sold everything from food to televisions. The group grew rapidly. The last site to open was Giant Grandways in 1990.)

It was also reported that a large Scottish grocery group was selling electrical appliances to the public on a cash and carry basis.

A telegram was sent to BEAMA, urgently requesting that this practice should be halted to protect the interests of wholesalers and their retail customers.



EUEW Conference 2000, Chester:  
EUEW Chairman, Jose Menendez  
(France) with Bob and Pauline  
Fawcett and Nigel and Pam Ellis  
plus another guest

## EWF AND EUROPE

The European Union of Electrical Wholesalers (EUEW), was founded in Paris in 1955 on the initiative of the French, German, Dutch and Belgian wholesaler organisations. The formation of this body took place prior to the Treaty of Rome which was signed in 1957, creating the European Economic Community (EEC).

In 1957, the EUEW invited the EWF to join its ranks. Members' reaction to this was mixed. Being an island race, we do not participate in continental activities without great deliberation and debate. Vigorous discussion continued until 1960, when a number of leading members convinced the doubters that the invitation should be accepted. The EWF went on to play a prominent part in Union affairs.

Four EUEW Presidents have come from the UK over the years:

Norman Sellers	Caselco Ltd & Reay Electrical - 1967-1969
Gordon J. Yardley	Newey & Eyre - 1981-1983
Bryan Barks	BEMCO - 1991-1993
Simon Barks	BEMCO - 2003-2005



*The EWF (now EDA) joined the EUEW shortly after its foundation in the late 1950's and plays an active role in meetings and activities. It has hosted the EUEW's annual conference on five occasions and has provided four presidents.*



"The long-term partnership with the EWF and EDA has been fundamental to the work of the European Union of Electrical Wholesalers. On behalf of the EUEW we congratulate you on your centenary year."

Jens Anderson  
President EUEW – 2013-2015

"That the Electrical Wholesalers Federation shall accept the invitation received to join the European Union of Electrical Wholesalers".

Original minutes from Annual General Meeting, 24th March 1960, showing the decision to join the EUEW

# 1960's

Striking a different note, the Chairman of the Federation's EIBA (now Electrical Industries Charity) committee, suggested that members should follow the lead of his company and introduce a staff deduction scheme of one penny per pound of net wages per week in aid of the charity. This idea was received well and a number of members set up the scheme in their companies.

This was the year in which the giant General Electric Company merged with Radio and Allied Industries. In 1963, Arnold (later Lord) Weinstock became Managing Director. He embarked on a programme of rejuvenation within GEC. In a drive for efficiency, he made cut-backs and implemented mergers injecting new growth into the company.

(In the late 1960's, he was to revolutionise the industry as GEC acquired Associated Electrical Industries (AEI) in 1967, which encompassed Metropolitan-Vickers, British Thomson-Houston (BTH), Edison Swan, Siemens Brothers, Hotpoint, W.T. Henley and Birlec. He also returned the company to its eighty-year old wholesaling roots by acquiring Walsall Conduits Ltd.

All this had a lasting effect on the British manufacturing industry and the electrical wholesaler.



Lord Arnold Weinstock

**THE ONLY BABY COOKER WITH 2 'SIMMER CONTROLLED' RADIANT RINGS**

**G.E.C. LITTLE TREASURE**  
Aimed at today's fast growing market—flats, bed-sitters and smaller homes!

<p><b>TWO RADIANT RINGS.</b> Independently controlled. Each heats and cooks quickly and is 'simmer controlled' to give a wide range of heats at a touch.</p>	<p><b>EXTRA LARGE GRILL.</b> Measures 12" x 8" . . . uses one or both radiant rings with heat deflected downwards by special deflector.</p>	<p><b>GROUPED CONTROLS.</b> One heat control panel conveniently placed at top of cooker.</p>	<p><b>SEPARATE INDEPENDENT OVEN.</b> Heated entirely by its own element—thermostatically controlled—with pilot light.</p>	<p><b>NO SPECIAL INSTALLATION.</b> 4' 8" of lead is already wired into the cooker ready for you to fit a 13 or 15 amp 5 pin plug. An electrical interlock prevents the total loading going above 2,800W.</p>
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Available from your G.E.C. Distributor—ask him for display material and literature so that you can make the most of this brand new opportunity in the cooker business—a small size cooker with big cooker features.

**G.E.C.** SELLS AT ONLY **20 GNS**

G.E.C. DOMESTIC EQUIPMENT, THE LANGLEY HOUSE, HANGER LANE, EALING, LONDON W6

# 1964 THE GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR OF THE EWF

The Federation chose Harrogate as the venue for its 50th Anniversary celebration conference. The memorable event was very well supported by the membership and was highly successful.

A revised subscription scale was devised, which took this state of affairs into account.



## The Camera at the Conference

Pictured here are some of the scenes and events at the Electrical Wholesalers' Federation's Golden Jubilee Conference, held at Harrogate from May 6-9.

**A** Mr. F. J. Blackwell exchanges a word with Mr. G. Conradi.

**B** The President, Mr. T. S. Weston, presents the Yuille Cup to Mr. W. J. J. Newling, collector for the London & Home Counties Section. The Cup is presented each year to the Section which collects the highest average per member for the E.I.B.A.

**C** Mr. Nevill Marsh, introducing the Open Discussion. On his left, the President, Mr. T. S. Weston; the Director, Mr. P. B. Etheridge; and Mr. A. R. A. Wood, Vice-President.

**D** Mr. Ray Berry poses a question during the Open Discussion on the Thursday afternoon.

**E** Mr. George W. Smith demonstrates floral decorations to the ladies. The attentive audience includes, in the front row, from left to right: Mrs. A. E. Page, Mrs. J. Kerr, Mrs. W. H. McIntosh, Mrs. J. A. Cartwright, Mrs. B. Pickup, Mrs. H. G. Palfreman and Mrs. H. Finch.

**F** Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Hirst chat with the President, Mr. T. S. Weston, and the Mayor, Councillor S. C. Tomkinson, during the Mayor's Reception.



**G** From left to right: Mr. R. M. Gledson, Mr. N. S. Sellers and Mr. J. G. Christopher mark their cards during the golf competition.

**H** A group of the ladies prepare for the golf competition on the Friday morning.

**I** Mrs. S. A. Secombe and Mrs. D. A. Ashton ready for golf.

**J** A keen audience for a good drive off the first tee.



**K** Mr. S. F. Steward (left) chats to Sir Keith Joseph (centre) and Mr. H. D. Denman (right) at the reception prior to the Dinner.



Striking a more practical note, the Inter-firm Comparison was up and running, as was the Sales Index. They functioned well and were a valuable addition to Federation statistical services. A new "Electrical Wholesaler" journal was conceived by the Publicity Committee and a publisher was appointed.

In this year of festivity, a more serious situation occupied the thoughts of Council. Over recent years, the pace of takeovers and mergers had grown apace. Many individual members had been acquired by the expanding national groups. This had reduced the number of independent members to such an extent that subscription income was falling. Something had to be done - and quickly.



L The President and Mrs. Weston and the Mayor and Mrs. Tomkinson receive Mr. and Mrs. Noel G. Smith prior to the Golden Jubilee Dinner.



M The President, Mr. T. S. Weston, speaking at the Golden Jubilee Dinner. On his right sit Mr. and Mrs. S. F. Steward. On his left Mrs. Weston and Sir Keith Joseph.

N Mr. A. R. A. Wood, Vice-President, speaking at the Dinner. On his right, Mrs. Wood and Sir Keith Joseph.

O Mr. F. Smits, President of the European Union of Electrical Wholesalers, speaking at the Dinner. On his right, Mrs. Smits, and on his left, the Director, Mr. P. B. Etheridge, Mrs. and Mr. S. F. Steward and the Lady Mayoress.

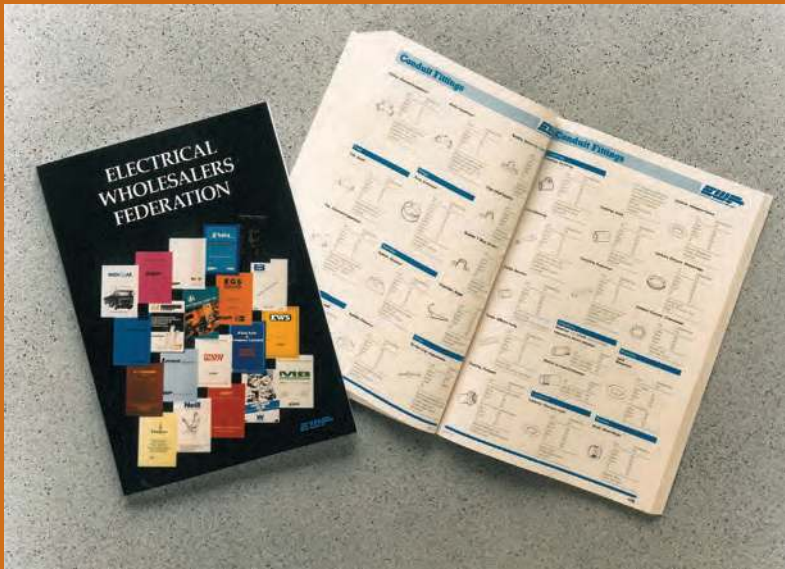


P Mr. F. Smits presents an inscribed silver cigarette box to the E.W.F. on behalf of constituent associations of the European Union.



R Mr. M. Wilkinson, runner-up in the Motor Treasure Hunt, receives a map for future reference.

Q Mr. S. F. Steward replying to the toast of "The Guests".



# EWF CATALOGUE LAUNCH

# THE START OF THE EWF CATALOGUE

A supporter of the EUEW returned from a General Assembly enthusiastically reporting on his conversations with officials about their standard catalogue. He quoted this discussion as one of the benefits of membership of the Union. Agreement was reached rapidly to go ahead with an EWF project, and a production team was formed from the membership ranks. A 224 page volume was planned. The publication would allow members to have a customised cover and a dedicated section to their own specification. The detailed and lengthy task of preparation commenced.



## TOPICS

### Almost Sold Out— E.W.F. Catalogue

A MAJOR event occurred in the history of the Electrical Wholesalers' Federation on December 1—the Federation's Standard Wholesale Catalogue was published. The first edition, which runs to over 50,000 copies, was ordered by members before publication. This excellent catalogue is basically a 224-page loose-leaf work in A4 size. Each page bears the E.W.F. crest. The copyright is vested in the E.W.F.

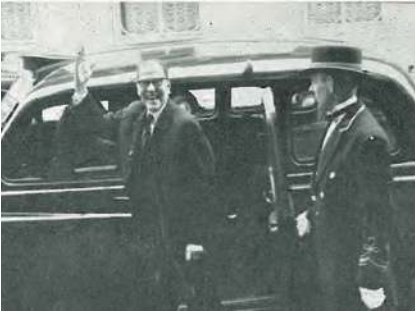
The Resale Prices Act 1966 consolidated its 1956 predecessor and, when passed, considered all resale price agreements to be against public interest unless proven otherwise. This threw the industry into even more confusion over its pricing policies. Despite the legislation, some manufacturers proposed to maintain RPM.

# THE EUEW IN THE UK

In May 1965, the United Kingdom hosted the EUEW General Assembly for the first time, despite the lack of enthusiasm displayed by many members.

The EDA has hosted the annual EUEW Conference in the UK five times:

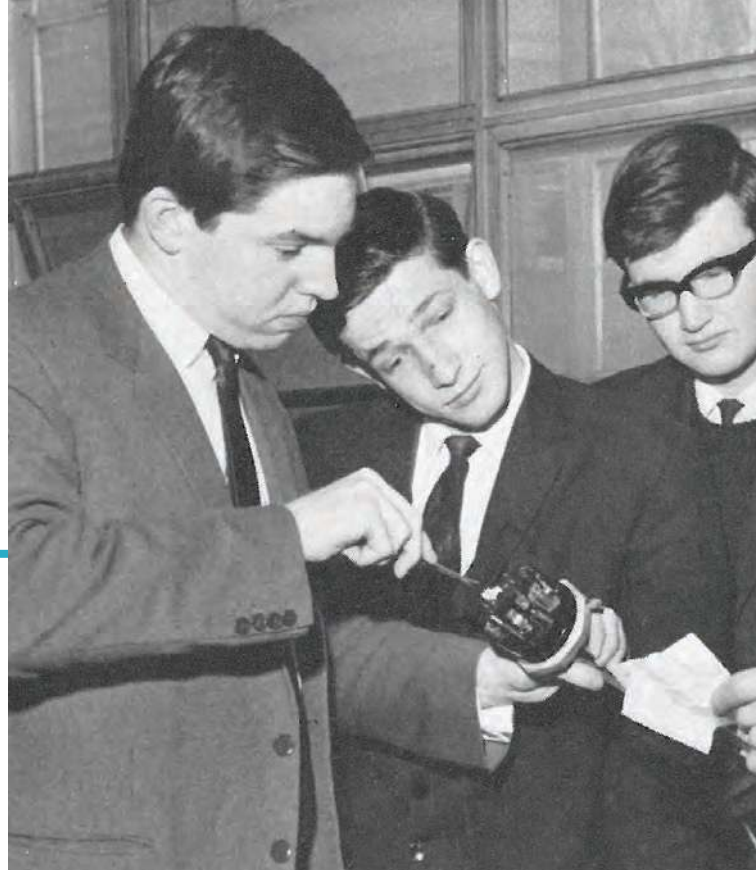
- 1965 London
- 1974 Gleneagles
- 1988 Eastbourne
- 2000 Chester
- 2011 Edinburgh



Conference photographs extracted from Electrical Wholesaler Magazine from July 1965



Extract from Electrical Wholesaler Magazine from July 1965



Apprentices get hands-on product knowledge training as part of the EWF apprenticeship scheme

## APPRENTICESHIPS

Adding to a busy programme of activity, it was agreed to concentrate more effort on education and training. An apprenticeship scheme was introduced. This involved releasing staff to college and the award of a certificate.

### Training The Future Wholesaler



*In this article, Gordon Johns reports the frank opinions of the pupils who have just completed the first two-year E.W.F. training course and evaluates the effect of specialised training on the industry's bright recruits.*

**A**N experiment which has been conducted in the electrical industry over the past two years will shortly end with an examination of 12 young wholesalers by the City and Guilds of London Institute. The first training course instituted by the Electrical Wholesalers' Federation has almost been completed. For a day a week for two years, these 12 young men have travelled from their companies to the College for the Distributive Trades in Charing Cross Road, London, to be lectured on a variety of subjects connected with wholesale distribution. They have already sat one examination and passed it, and they are the nucleus of some 20 boys who enrolled for the course two years ago.

One, for instance, thought that further courses on salesmanship would be a valuable addition to the syllabus on the grounds that, as competition increased, the wholesaler's salesmen would need to know more about selling and be capable of doing more than just collecting orders. The point was taken up immediately by another, who, without prompting, brought up the subject of r.p.m. He thought it certain that the price maintenance structure would crumble and the wholesaler, as a result, would be forced to adopt modern methods and, particularly, modern sales techniques. Economics and commerce, it seems, had aroused considerable interest and three of the 12 expressed a desire to know more about these subjects.

Extract from Electrical Wholesaler Magazine 1965

A prophetic discussion took place in 1968. The suggestion that the Federation should involve itself in group purchasing had been mooted many times over the years. It was clearly an impractical proposition. However, it was suggested that, "There might be merit in individual members getting together privately to form their own buying groups." It was known that very big groups could get additional discounts which gave them advantage.

A busy and productive decade was rounded off by a successful conference, involving manufacturers and industry allies.

In 1969, the Computer Application Committee announced an exciting and ground-breaking achievement. Coding of products was virtually complete, and had been accepted by the trade and incorporated in the Price Reporter Service. The first member would 'go live' with his sales ledger programme in the near future.

**WHO PAYS FOR THE EMPTY SPACE ?**



Every function of distribution must have an economic justification. There is certainly no justification for half-empty transport.

The Manufacturer who distributes through the Wholesaler is not faced with the problem of finding enough orders to make his journey profitable.


Unlike the Retailer, the Wholesaler is prepared to buy stock in bulk, thus minimising the Manufacturer's marketing worries.

Make sure your distribution costs are kept to the absolute minimum—distribute through the Wholesaler, who will find wide and varied markets for your products.

**EWFF** ELECTRICAL WHOLESALERS FEDERATION  
KINGSWAY HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON.

**WHOLESALE**

**WHERE CREDIT IS DUE**




The amount of working capital available to the Retailer, governs the extent and variety of his stock—an extremely important factor in his ultimate turnover and profit. Direct trading with Manufacturers often calls for relatively large-scale buying and consequent long-term lock-up of capital.

Turn your stock, and your capital, over more frequently by buying through your Wholesaler. He buys in bulk for you from a great number of manufacturers; he sells in small quantities, thus acting as your stockkeeper; he gives you reasonable credit and the opportunity to select from amongst competitive Products all under one roof; he cuts down your book-keeping and helps build up your turnover.

Buy in the simplest and most efficient way—through your Wholesaler.

**Wholesale distribution is essential to efficient marketing**



ISSUED BY THE ELECTRICAL WHOLESALERS FEDERATION  
KINGSWAY HOUSE, KINGSWAY, W.C2

## FINANCIAL CRISIS CONCENTRATES MINDS

The issue of national groups came to a head in October 1969. This was sparked off by the formation of the first consortium, created by a number of family-owned members who were anxious to retain control of their companies against the current background of takeovers by national organisations.

A Special General Meeting was called, 'To consider and, if thought fit, to alter the subscription structure from 01/01/70, due to the continuing trend of grouping by members'. The decrease in subscription income caused by this development had created a budgetary crisis.

Consultation with larger members had brought about agreement to raise the top level of the subscription scale on condition that the increase was spread over all subscription categories.

It was pointed out that, if group membership was sought by consortia, they would be restricted to one vote. If members wanted individual votes they would have to pay individual subscriptions. A telling point.

After much discussion, the increase was agreed.

no more  
halfcrown  $10' = 50p$   
 $\frac{1}{2}$  new penny  
 $10p$   $100$  pennys in a pound  
1 new penny  
 $1' = 5p$   
sixpence =  $2\frac{1}{2}p$

## 1970's

The Seventies found the Federation wrestling with change. Membership had decreased, and additional takeovers would further reduce the numbers. The feeling was that the limit of subscriptions had been reached. Income from other sources had to be sought.

A variety of initiatives was examined. The catalogue continued to be a valuable source of funds, the publisher of "Electrical Wholesaler" was persuaded to pay a royalty, as was the Conference organiser. A Group Insurance Scheme also contributed to the pot.

On the practical front, members were faced with the challenge of decimalisation, metrication and the colour coding of cables. The commodity codes being well-established, a number of companies were going ahead with their computer programmes.

Commercially, the supply of electrical goods to cash and carry outlets was causing concern. It was made clear that it was now illegal to do more than express disapproval to manufacturers.

At this time, it became apparent that drastic measures had to be taken at the centre if the Federation was to survive.

A new Director and Secretary were engaged and immediately set about administrative re-organisation. New premises were found, staff reductions were made, but pay and conditions were improved for those who were retained. Within a year, efficient control of office management and expenses reduced costs and produced a welcome surplus of funds.

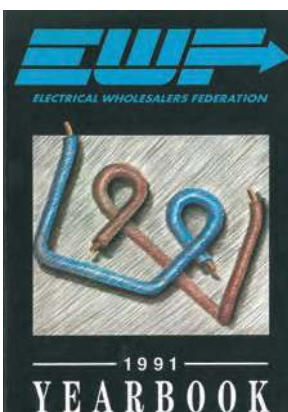
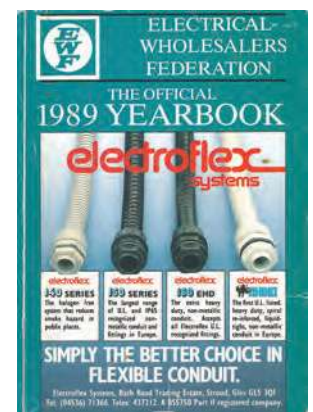
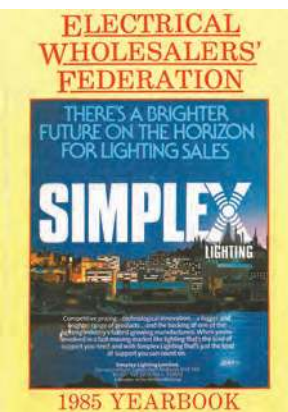
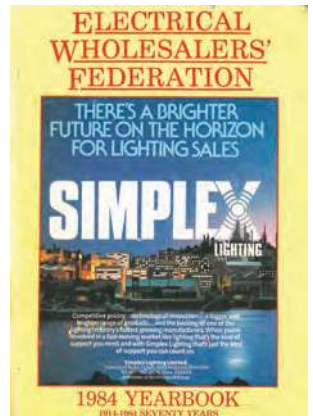
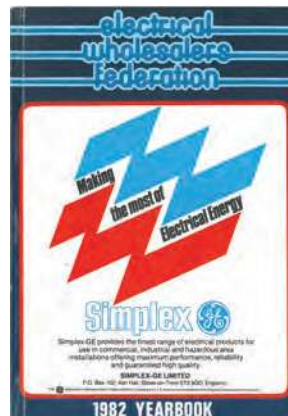
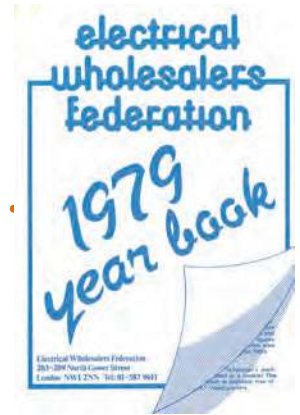
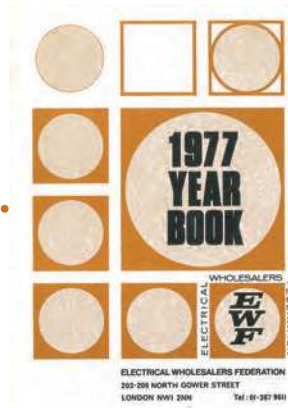
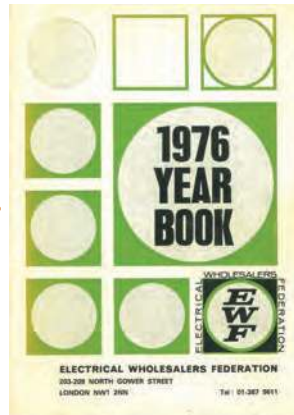




An Editorial & Publicity Committee was formed in 1973. One of its priorities was to oversee the editorial content of "Electrical Wholesaler", the official journal of the EWF. This was a challenging task, as the quality of editors varied over the years. One, a somewhat eccentric individual had many lapses in journalistic quality and accuracy. A Scotsman, he relished attending the Scottish Function. On one occasion, onlookers watched with fascination and horror as his energetic performance of a reel caused his trousers to descend slowly beyond the level of decency.

Another occupant of the editorial chair set out to be a hard-hitting and challenging journalist, frequently attacking industry bodies with whom the Federation was aiming to foster closer relations. Anticipating the likely reaction of the committee, he would invariably arrive at a meeting armed with the drafts of two leading articles in the certain knowledge that his first, the controversial one, would be rejected out of hand, only to be replaced by the second. Meetings with him tended to be interesting and lively ones.

Additional Income was provided by the publication of the Year Book, containing details of members and their branches, kindred organisations, articles of topical interest and, of course, advertising. This prestigious and practical publication remains a key industry reference document.





## TAX AND INFLATION

On 31 March 1974, Purchase Tax, introduced at the beginning of the Second World War, was replaced by Value Added Tax. VAT was originally a French idea, started in the 1950's. The tax was established in the UK when it joined the European Economic Community.

In the early days it was at a relatively low level of no more than 10%, with the exception of petrol and – briefly – electrical appliances. These were deemed to be luxuries in the days before Britain struck North Sea oil. They were subject to a 25% rate. Naturally, this was not welcome news in the domestic appliance business. However, in Margaret Thatcher's first term in office, the luxury rate was scrapped and merged into a higher standard rate of 15%, (In 1978, VAT relief on bad debts was granted.)

A major problem faced by the industry in the 1970's was inflation. This began in late 1972 and did not end until the early 1980's. It averaged 13pc and hit 25pc in 1975. This created nightmares for anyone involved in buying and selling.

“



“BEAMA and the EDA have been working together for many decades. Recent examples include providing detailed input to the technical accuracy

of EDA training modules and continuing the tradition of exchanging views through senior BEAMA members meeting with the EDA Board to discuss issues, hot topics and future opportunities. This parallels the close relationships between EDA's members and BEAMA's manufacturers who work closely together to provide outstanding products and service to their common customers.”

**Rodney Turtle**  
President

**British Electrotechnical and Allied  
Manufacturers' Association (BEAMA)**

”


At this time, another new subscription structure was introduced to account for inflation. The top turnover level was set at £270 million plus.

The growth of purchasing groups threw up a number of anomalies and hindered their recognition within the Federation structure. Non-Federation members within a consortium posed a problem and meetings were held at this time with the CEOs of those organisations. After much discussion, it was agreed that consortia would be offered a form of membership if they had 100% membership of the EWF.

Texas Homecare was established in 1972. It revolutionised the UK retail market, with the introduction of the 'DIY shed'. The growth of this ground-breaking method of trading developed rapidly and wholesalers regarded with trepidation the prospect of losing valuable small contractor business to these large warehouse outlets. At the same time, the growth of the 'corner shop wholesaler' was also causing concern. However, over the years, the membership survived this competition and wholesalers' trade counters still remain busy, professional and productive outlets.

Product Knowledge Workbooks were introduced for staff training in 1978. The setting up costs were paid and an advance grant towards production costs was made by the DITB. Business Education Council courses in Distribution were put on a par with other qualifications in business education in order to broaden the appeal of distribution as a career.

It was recorded that the 1979 EWF conference was a great success. More than 500 delegates attended and the introduction of manufacturers' discussion booths had worked well.



## THE INDUSTRY CHANGES AND THE FEDERATION'S ROLE IS QUESTIONED

When the EWF was founded in the early part of the 20th century, one of the first battles to be fought was with the dominant lamp manufacturers. Lamps formed an important and competitive part of the wholesaler's turnover and this grew throughout the ensuing decades of market development.

Following the Monopolies Commission's second report in 1967, lamp manufacturers abandoned recommended retail prices and turned to net trade pricing. From this base, a variety of discounts was offered. The traditional high street electrical retailer suffered in the consequent battlefield situation. Non-traditional outlets, capable of high volume sales, squeezed their market share. From cash and carry operations, the business moved into the supermarket and DIY warehouse shelves.

The UK manufacturing base was declining and importation from the United States, Europe and China was on the increase. At the same time, technological advances were being made in the design of low energy consumption lamps. The result was the introduction of the compact fluorescent lamp (CFL), a revolutionary light source which took some time to be accepted, but which is now commonplace in its infinite varieties.

All this market activity, coupled with the movement of much electrical manufacturing from the UK, naturally concerned the electrical wholesaler and led to much intense discussion with suppliers.

## 1980's

In March 1983, despite the on-going recession, more than 550 industry delegates attended the EWF Conference, "Progress with Profit". This event was staged at the Kensington Exhibition Centre. Once more, the large manufacturers' booths area effectively encouraged manufacturers and Federation delegates to mingle at the opening reception and during pauses in the programme.

Conscious of the need to promote the Federation to prospective members and the industry in general, a publicity document was published in 1983. Betty Boothroyd, MP (soon to become Speaker in the House of Commons) agreed to head the presentation ceremony. This was held on board the Thames riverboat 'Nautica', providing an opportunity for EWF members, the press and industry guests to socialise whilst gently cruising down the river. This was to be the precursor of the EDA's Summer Event which was introduced for the first time in July 2000.



Despite all this activity, it became clear that the Federation needed to make changes in its objectives and organisation. A Policy Guidance Committee was formed to examine all aspects of the Association's activities. The resignation of a major group member in 1986 further concentrated minds. (Another national group was to follow it later.)

The 1987 conference plans were set aside and economies introduced.

During this period, the Standard Catalogue and the Year Book continued to provide funds for the depleted Federation coffers. Later, technology was to overtake its function and publication ceased.

The first of the Association's Summer Events was held on 12th July 2000. The EDA sailed up the Thames to Henley's Temple Island with an assorted crew of wholesalers, manufacturers and the trade press. Once there, they mingled amicably in idyllic surroundings.  
*(It is reassuring to note that, so far, not one guest has been lost overboard during EDA river cruises.)*

## 1990's TIME FOR CHANGE

During the early 1990's, the subject of Manufacturer Affiliation had been raised. (This option had been considered during the first meetings of the EWF Committee in 1914!) A discussion document was produced and the idea was floated round the Sections, but was not received with great enthusiasm by all members. Despite this, consideration of the proposal continued. The entire industry had gone through many changes during the previous three decades. Ownership of both wholesalers and manufacturers had shifted towards the United States and Europe.

Amalgamation of large companies had taken place in all sectors. Many historic names had vanished. Communications and IT technology had accelerated beyond every expectation.

The pace of life had quickened immeasurably and pressures increased.

All this contributed to the urgent need for the EWF to move into the 21st Century presenting a new, revitalized image.

By the late Nineties, a great deal of consultation having taken place, Council was ready to make a move towards this fresh start. A discussion document, "Blueprint for Change" was well received by the sections and was unanimously adopted at the AGM.

The two large wholesale groups who had left the fold in previous years had agreed to return in the light of the proposed transformation. Another hitherto hesitant national group was also expressing interest in the new body.

So, the scene was set for breaking the mould. The aim to modernise, streamline and strengthen the 85 year-old Federation was to result in a re-named, reorganised and comprehensively representative organisation.



# 1998 THE EDA IS BORN

## The Electrical Distributors Association is Born

The 'New Look' Board of Management of the EDA met on 22 June 1998. This small group of former Councillors, reinforced by fresh minds, would be responsible for seeing through the programme of radical changes that had been so carefully drawn up after much consultation, thought and discussion.

Council and the Sections were to be replaced by the Board of Management. Minutes of Board Meetings would be brief and succinct and communication with members would be by quarterly reports rather than minutes.

Individual Board members assumed responsibility for Forums, Manufacturer Affiliation, Market Development, Events, Learning and Development, Catalogue, Communications, Finance and European Liaison. Learning and Development, in particular, would provide a foundation on which to build a stronger, better-qualified layer of potential management and attract young people to enter the industry.

Communications with members would be brought into the 21st century by more frequent use of fax and e-mail. A website was planned.

In early 1998, the EDA moved to offices in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Manufacturer Affiliation would be launched in 1999. A document outlining the scheme had already been prepared. The press were reacting to these changes with interest.

A new Sales Index was planned and support for this was growing amongst the membership. (Following its introduction, it was expected to represent 95% of members' turnover by January, 2000.)

The good news was that the 1999 Catalogue achieved a record print order and made a significant contribution to the funds and the EUEW General Assembly, hosted by the UK in Chester, was considered to be, "the best yet".

In the meantime, members were coping with the challenges presented by deflation, the continuing recession and pressure on margins. Keeping pace with the speed of technological advances in product development, communications and computer technology also tested their skills.



The new logo for the EDA



# NEW CENTURY FRESH START

## MEMBERS OF THE EDA





## AFFILIATED MEMBERS OF THE EDA

The re-constructed Association entered the 21st century full of energy and enthusiasm. The planned changes went ahead swiftly. The first manufacturers to be approached all agreed to become Affiliated Members and others who had been approached were showing interest in joining the scheme. Communications in all directions were lively.

In its early days of change, one of the most valuable electrical industry documents was published, the EDA Key Contact Directory. This gives contact details of members of the EDA Board of Management, key executives of all EDA member companies, affiliated manufacturers and service suppliers. It combines with the EDA Year Book in providing important, much used publications.



# EDA SERVICES

The new EDA website went live on schedule and has proved to be a valuable communications tool. Within a year of its inception, it was achieving 10,000 hits a month. The website provides a comprehensive access point not only to the Association's services, but links to members, affiliate members and industry allies. Keeping up with modern techniques, the EDA even 'tweets' on Twitter.

A further advance in regular publicity was introduced, when "Electrical Wholesaler" journal offered to include a regular EDA column in its monthly publication.

Despite difficult trading conditions, the years that followed saw the Association energetically putting into place the building blocks of its new structure.



An important service introduced under the new regime was the EDA Business Support Helpline. EDA members and Affiliates can use the Helpline to get free advice, guidance and information on a variety of complex subjects vital to running a business, from Tax, Employment and Health & Safety matters, to Commercial Legal matters. This valuable professional service is freely available to members at the end of a telephone line.

One of the basic changes made at the time of the transformation from the EWF to the EDA was the creation of Regional Forums. These are led by Facilitators, working with the Training & Marketing Manager at HQ. They organise events which would provide opportunities for members not only to meet together, but to receive presentations by industry figures on topics of current importance to the membership.



Well-attended EDA Business Forums bring together industry supply chain partners to learn about new technology, legislation and training initiatives and offer great opportunities for networking

# PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Apart from growing the membership, a prime task was to set up the EDA Learning and Development Portfolio. This aimed to provide members and affiliates with tools for the development of their staff.

The Apprenticeship Scheme combines literacy and numeracy with technical knowledge and provides an opportunity for young people to look to the future armed with recognised qualifications. Product Knowledge courses, recognised by City & Guilds, introduce staff to the products they will be handling. These are supported by work book modules, over 1300 being successfully completed annually.

All this is designed to improve the quality of service given to the customer as well as encourage young people not only to enter, but stay within a vibrant, forward-looking electrical industry.

The importance of this training feature in the Association's range of services is emphasised by the historic Annual Dinner being re-titled 'The Annual Awards Dinner'. At this event outstanding students receive their awards certificates in front of an audience of more than 500 members and guests.



Chris Palmer, Rexel UK  
Past Chairman of EDA Learning & Development Working Group







## LOOKING BACK AT A CENTURY OF SERVICE

What has been achieved during this century of service to the electrical industry?

First of all, the electrical wholesalers' trade association has survived, despite the many challenges it has faced over the years. Others, such as the Radio Wholesalers Federation, succumbed to fierce competition and sank without trace.

The original objective of protecting and furthering wholesalers' interests has widened into shaping an organisation which exerts a more positive influence within the industry.

Membership has grown rapidly and dramatically since the transition to the EDA, bonding national groups, consortia and individual members. Today, over 100 companies are members of the EDA, including the three large national groups, three buying groups and several independent wholesalers. These businesses combined operate from 1560 outlets throughout the UK and their turnover exceeds £4 billion annually.

The involvement of its suppliers in membership and in the events and services it offers has proved to be a unifying element which has transformed its role and image.

The modernisation of its structure has sharpened and focused the conduct of and reduced the frequency of meetings. Communication with members and the industry has improved immeasurably, using the variety of resources now available. The exchange of statistical information has thrived.

Companies now have the educational tools available to encourage young people to make a worthwhile and satisfying career in the industry.

In short, the Electrical Distributors Association, which now accounts for around 85% of its industry sector and includes the biggest names in the industry, provides a vital link with kindred bodies, the trade press and the industry charity. All are connected by this alliance of commercial competitors, large, medium and small, who set aside their rivalries and combine to influence the environment in which they conduct their business.



EDA Board of Management, March 2014

**Back Row, Left to Right:**






































Tom Jones, Lockwell Electrical, Vice Chairman; Terry Yallop, CEF; Margaret Fitzsimons, Incoming EDA Director;  
Simon Barks, BEMCO, President and Chairman of the Board; Ray Evans, Outgoing EDA Director; Ray Smith, Edmundson Electrical

**Front Row, Left to Right:**

Martin Whitby, Rexel; David Schofield, Stearn Electrical Ltd; Chris Gibson, Rexel UK; Bob Robertson, R&B Star

**Not pictured** - Geoff Kerly, Kew Electrical and Andrew Johnson, Lincs Electrical, who were elected to their Board positions at that meeting


**EWF PRESIDENTS**

1914 - 18  R.W. Smith Drake & Gorsham Wholesale, London	1919  W. Donovan, MIEE The Donovan Electrical Co. Birmingham	1920  A. Albrecht North British Engineering Equip. Newcastle-on-Tyne	1921  H. Boden-How Hallamshire Electric Co. Sheffield	1922  A.G. Beaver The Sun Electrical Co. London	1923  G.O. Donovan, MIEE The Donovan Electrical Co. Birmingham	1924  J. Gledson J. Gledson & Co. Newcastle-on-Tyne
1932  J.W. Dodds The EGS Co. Newcastle-on-Tyne	1933  D. Foster William White & Co. London	1934  J.F. Irvine J.F. Irvine & Co. Dundee	1935  Alderman J. Mayall Mayall & Co. Birmingham	1936  H. Clarke Hallamshire Electric Co. Sheffield	1937  A.B. Wildsmith Young & Wildsmith London	1938  W.Yuille William C. Yuille & Co. Glasgow
1948  H. Riley John Riley & Son (Electrical) Sheffield	1949  J.W. Rutherford, FCIS Adamson & Co. Newcastle-on-Tyne	1950  J.M. Hollander, BSc, MIEE Electro-Mechanical Supplies Coventry	1951  W.J. Bensley Sloan Electrical London	1951  G.W. Cartwright John T. Cartwright & Sons Glasgow	1952  W.H. Swain Hirst, Ibbetson & Taylor Manchester	1953  E.A.V. Peckham G.S. Peckham London
1961  J.H. Hirst Hirst, Ibbetson & Taylor Manchester	1962  H.D. Denman Denman Electrical Supplies Bristol	1963  T.S. Weston T. Stanley Weston & Co. Glasgow	1964  A.R.A. Wood E.A. Wood & R.A. Poole Birmingham & Coventry	1965  N.S. Sellers, BSc, Ceng, MIEE Caselco Ltd & Reay Electrical Leeds & Stockton	1966  G.E. McIver Lawson & Turnbull Aberdeen	1967  R.W. Hollidge, FCIS Stearn Electric Newbury
1975  W. Balmford Jrn, BSc, FIEE, FSICA Walter Balmford London	1976  D.S. Rose, JP The Wholesale Fittings Co. London	1977  S.A. Secombe Newey & Eyre Birmingham	1978  D. Wilson Walsall Conduits	1979  M.L. Beswetherick Newey Electric Newbury	1980  F.S. Aldred Edmundson Electrical Knuttsford	1981  L.H. Rose The Wholesale Fittings plc London
1990/91  John Neill Robert Neill & Co. Sheffield	1991/92  Stuart Dixon Stuart Dixon Electrical Dist. Dagenham	1992/93  Jim Banks Russells Supplies	1993/94  Geoffery Barkes BEMCO London	1994/95 & 1995/96  Bob Robertson R&B Star (Electrical W/Salers) Catford	1996/97  Stephen Rose The Wholesale Fittings Co. London	1997/98  Syd Wilkie William C. Yuille & Co. Glasgow

**EDA PRESIDENTS**

1998/99  Roy Henry Eldis Electrical Birmingham	1999/00  Richard Rose WF Electrical plc Dagenham	2001/02  Ray Evans Stearn Electric Newbury	2003/04  Nigel Power Rexel Senate Potters Bar	2004/05 & 2005/06  Ray Evans Stearn Electric Newbury	2006/07  Russ Cama Hagemeyer (UK) Birmingham	2008/09 & 2010/11  Martin Whitby Rexel Senate Potters Bar
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1925  A. Holman Holman & Co. (Engineers) Glasgow	1926  G.P. Dennis, MIEE G.P. Dennis Liverpool	1927  F.C. Barnett The Wholesale Fittings Co. London	1928  T. Stetton, MIEE, MIMechE Haslam & Stretton Cardiff	1929  J. Wilson Jarvis Bros. Middlesbrough	1930  A. Albrecht North British Engineering Equip. Newcastle-on-Tyne	1931  Alderman G. Harold White Central Electric Co. Manchester
1939  W.R. Gledson, BSc J. Gledson & Co. Newcastle-on-Tyne	1940  T.D. Woods Downes & Davies Liverpool	1941 - 42  A.G. Beaver The Sun Electrical Co. London	1943 - 44  A. Glenister Holland House Electrical Co. Glasgow	1945  W.H. Swain Hirst, Ibbetson & Taylor Newcastle-on-Tyne	1946  C. Hall Marr The EGS Co. Newcastle-on-Tyne	1947  A.C. Baker, AMIEE Simpson Baker & Co. Bristol
1954  W. Crisp Young & Wildsmith London	1955  R.E. Silvey Santon (Wholesale) Newport, Wales	1956  T.D. Woods Downes & Davies Liverpool	1957  C.H. Blackburn, ERD, ADC E. Dawson (Lampfactors) London	1958  H. Riley John Riley & Son (Electrical) Sheffield	1959  F.J. Blackwell Electrical Wholesale Supply Leicester	1960  G. Conradi, MIEE British Central Electrical Co. London
1968  G.J. Yardley, FACCA Newey & Eyre Birmingham	1969  F.J. Blackwell Electrical Wholesale Supply Leicester	1970  E.H. Maltby Edmundson Electrical Knuttsford	1971  A.G. Denman Denman Electrical Supplies Bristol	1972  A.C. Mattock J. Dyson & Co	1973  J.H. Hirst Hirst, Ibbetson & Taylor Manchester	1974  B.R. Barks BEMCO London
1982  A.S. Bevins STC Distributors	1983  F.A. Bartlam Rifina Co. Tewkesbury	1984  R.M. Gledson Newey & Eyre Birmingham	1985  J.E. Banks Russells Supplies	1986  M.J. Yarnall Walsall Conduits	1987  J.M. Scott Scott-Coppola Electrical Dist. Edinburgh	1988/89  J.B. Monks JBM Electrical Distributors

# PRESIDENTIAL DEDICATION

A celebration of the men that lead the EWF and EDA for its first 100 years.

2011/12  Brian Smithers WF Electrical plc Dagenham	2012/13  Brian Smithers Rexel UK & Ireland Potters Bar	2013  Dean Henry ElectraBrands (Eldis) Birmingham	2013/14  Simon Barks BEMCO London
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The EDA would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution to this Centenary Book made by Mike Beswetherick. The literary world's loss is the electrical wholesaling industry's gain!

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