

The Future of Power Electronics



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It was timely to organise a Workshop entitled "The Future of Electronic Power Processing and Conversion". The Power Electronics community has accomplished so much in a couple of decades; where will we be in another ten or twenty years? It was also timely to hold the Workshop in South Africa when it is emerging from a period of political isolation. It was however inspirational to locate the Workshop at the Kruger National Park. The splendid setting, so different from our accustomed environment, released us from our accustomed lines of thought. On the one hand the location emphasised how far our industrial societies have taken us, but on the other hand it reminded us to reconcile our industrial aspirations to the natural imperatives of the planet.

The motivation for the Workshop came from Professor van Wyk and it was sponsored by IEEE. It was attended by 50 delegates drawn from all over the world. They ranged from the young to the eminent, with interests and specialisations in all branches of power electronics. The Proceedings of the Workshop is to be published by the IEEE and will be available shortly.

The abiding memories of a good conference are of the social arrangements as these are instrumental in stimulating the informal discussions and conversations amongst friends and acquaintances, old and new, that give a gathering of colleagues a special purpose. At Kruger Park the arrangements were a triumph. The evening barbecues under the stars, with the more established dishes supplemented by specialisms such as crocodile stew and ostrich steak, produced a magic atmosphere. So magic in fact that empty wine bottles were miraculously transmogrified into full ones.

To summarise the outcome of the formal sessions in a sentence or two is impossible. The opinions of the delegates were wide ranging, contentious and speculative, but were uniformly optimistic about the significance of Power Electronics for the future. Judged by the traditional standards of the electric power industry, power electronics is still in its infancy and can look forward to a demanding, exciting and important future.