

Issue 63 www.wrti.org.uk

# Inventique®

The newsletter of Wessex Round Table of Inventors February 2006

**25-26 February NORTHWEST INVENTORS EXPO [ideasnorthwest.co.uk](http://ideasnorthwest.co.uk)**

## Next WRTI meeting WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY

**WRTI MEMBER Brian Flynn** will talk about developing and commercialising his Balfour Beatty-backed computerised traffic cone placement/retrieval invention, followed by one of our popular WRTI Inventors Clinics (time permitting).

● **Non-members wishing to attend should contact: [secretary@wrti.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wrti.co.uk)**  
**Map: [www.streetmap.co.uk](http://www.streetmap.co.uk) (SO14 0RP)**  
**[www.wrti.org.uk/events](http://www.wrti.org.uk/events)**

## Start Your Own Business

A FREE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER with separate editions for Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Dorset, Surrey and Sussex, *Start Your Own Business* is published to encourage entrepreneurship and provide help to anyone thinking of setting up on their own.



Contents include proven ways to start a successful business, a directory of local help and advice, hints and tips, local start-up success stories, networking links, local news and a diary of events. ■

### ● Start Your Own Business

**PO Box 466, Eastleigh  
Hampshire SO50 0AA**  
**Tel: 02380 740 400**  
**[enquiries@syob.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@syob.co.uk)**  
**[www.syob.co.uk](http://www.syob.co.uk)**

# Feminine nurture

GUILDHALL HOSTS AWARDS EXTRAVAGANZA

**T**HE BRITISH Female Inventors and Innovators Network (BFIIN) holds its 7th annual conference and exhibition at the Department of Trade & Industry, Victoria Street, London on 20 February – followed by a glittering awards ceremony in London's Guildhall on 21 February.

Adopting the slogan *Empowerment Through Technology*, and held under the auspices of the Global Women Inventors & Innovators Network (GWIIN), this year's event highlights products and processes attempting to gain recognition in a number of different categories, including, the chairman's discretionary award, inventors and innovators in industry, product development,



exceptional creative products, capacity-building initiatives or projects, and Young Inventor and Innovator of the Year.

British Female Inventor 2005 was Deborah Leary, whose anti-contamination

stepping plates allow police or forensic teams to enter a crime scene without destroying evidence.

Adrienne Jones was named British Female Innovator 2005 for her Biocycle, a biodegradable product for protecting saplings and seedlings in the arboriculture industry.

GWIIN categorises invention as discovering, designing or creating something new, and innovation as an improvement or change of an existing product, system or method. ■

● **[www.bfiin.com](http://www.bfiin.com)** **[www.gwiin.com](http://www.gwiin.com)**

## INNOVATION CLINICS

**Are you thinking about developing a new product or process?  
Have you invented something and don't know what to do next?**

**Through its series of free Innovation Clinics, Business Link Wessex provides confidential and impartial guidance on such subjects as investigating an innovative idea, developing a new product or process, working with universities, exploiting inventions and intellectual property rights.**

**Innovation clinics are held in the Bournemouth, Portsmouth and Southampton regions.**

● **Advice Hotline: 08454 58 85 58**  
**[innovation@businesslinkwessex.co.uk](mailto:innovation@businesslinkwessex.co.uk)** **[www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk/events](http://www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk/events)**

Wessex Round Table of Inventors meet at 6.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month at Southampton Solent University, East Park Terrace SO14 0RP

## VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

AT ONE VERY early meeting of the WRTI, long-time member and serial inventor Les McCall brought along a number of beautiful leather-bound books containing issued British patents dating from 1919 that he'd rescued from destruction in Manchester.

We spent a very interesting evening examining the books and being amazed at how relevant some of the patents were to current problems. Yet many of the ideas had never been exploited due to a lack of manufacturing technology or method of control at the time – both areas which have now been transformed.

Patents are often thought of as expensive things that the average person can't afford to defend, but ever since that meeting I've also thought of them as a reference library of ways of doing things that might resolve current problems, and would urge the innovators among you to search [www.espacenet.com](http://www.espacenet.com) or [www.patent.gov.uk](http://www.patent.gov.uk), or browse newspaper archives for back issues.

Patent examiners are not perfect, and do-it-yourself searches of prior art from the pre-computer era may stop you wasting your money on a patent application that has already been applied for, or on setting up manufacturing for something that someone else can then stop you making. Prior art may also allow an opposition to an modern application or even a granted patent.

In addition, filing a patent on a really new idea states what you knew and when you knew it, even if you can't afford to see it through. This can act as protection against the next person to have the same great idea but who can afford patent costs; if you let it be published you will always be the inventor (the names on old patent applications are there for us all to see).

But most of all, trawling through old patents is a much more useful and interesting way of spending your leisure time than sitting slumped in front of the television.

Sincerely, Richard

RICHARD LITTLE, WRTI Chairman

INVENTORATOR Paul Abbott

# Bolton goodies...

PILOT NATIONAL 'JUNIOR INCUBATOR' CENTRE

**T**HE FIRST initiative of its kind in the UK, the Bolton Technical Innovation Centre is a £2.3m purpose-built academy for young people aged 9 to 19 with great ideas, who need access to cutting-edge technologies and technical and business expertise.

Established to nurture innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprise, the TIC encourages young people from all 120 schools in Bolton to tackle those ambitious projects their schools cannot attempt.

In developing the centre, I was inspired by Professor Sir Harry Kroto, winner of the 1996 Nobel Prize for chemistry, whom I heard on Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* talking about his childhood in Bolton; he said that at the age of 14 he had nowhere to go to pursue his ideas.

Another inspiration was James Dyson, a keen supporter of design and engineering education. We see our mission as inspiring the next generation of Krotos and Dysons at our centre.

## The Noble factor

Finding revenue funding for the TIC is of course a challenge, as it is for all risk-takers, and is something I term 'the Noble factor'. Richard Noble couldn't get backing from British companies for his land speed record attempt, yet spectacularly beat the American competition

(and also became the first person to break the sound barrier in a car). New sponsors approached Noble only after this success: it seems British pioneers have to win before receiving the backing to help them compete.

Conventional funding supports what already exists, such as target-driven schemes to improve examination results in schools, for instance, but this can be false economy: while science examination results are up, the numbers of young people choosing science careers are not, and this is now a serious problem. We face terminal decline if we don't do something about our falling numbers of scientists, engineers and technologists in the UK.

## Capital requirements

Thanks to capital funding from the Northwest Development Agency, and the support of Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, the Defence Diversification Agency, NESTA and local company Plasma Profiling, Bolton TIC already boasts a rapid-prototyping plasma cutter, virtual modelling and 3D CAD and CNC machines. We hope to install a jet engine and virtual reality simulation in future, and have also begun working with the Department for Education and Skills.

Tomorrow's innovators and entrepreneurs will drive our future economy and our national pride, so today's young innovators are a precious national resource. We need to inspire them – but we also need to support them. ■

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● Paul Abbott is the founder and general manager of Bolton TIC.

**Bolton Technical Innovation Centre  
PO Box 559, Bolton BL4 0WA**

**Tel: 01204 372204 Fax: 01204 372213  
paul.abbott@uktic.org www.uktic.org**



**25 & 26 February, SATURN CENTRE  
Greenbank Technology Park  
Challenge Way, Blackburn BB1 5QB**

# DATA PROTECTION ISSUES - 1

**Y**OU SHOULD CONSIDER the likely impact of data protection at the earliest stages of setting up a business, writes Rosanna Cooper. Even sole traders processing individual's data – such as names, addresses and personal email addresses – need to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (DPA). This series of articles give an overview of the issues surrounding data protection, including aspects of e-marketing.

It is important for your organisation to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, as the DPA lays down principles which any organisation processing the data of individuals must comply with. The sanctions for breach of the DPA include fines being levied on the data controller with overall responsibility for processing individual's data.

You must not process any personal data unless you notify the Information Commissioner of certain particulars, including your organisation's name and address, the purposes for which the data are to be processed, any proposed recipients of the data, and countries outside the European Economic Area to which the data may be disclosed.

## The Data Protection Act

The constant need for businesses to process personal data means that the DPA impacts upon most

## ROSANNA COOPER CLARIFIES THE LEGAL POSITION FOR INVENTORS AND ENTREPRENEURS

organisations, irrespective of size. Furthermore, the public's growing awareness of their right to privacy means that data protection will remain an important issue.

The DPA makes a distinction between 'personal' data and personal 'sensitive' data. Personal data includes data relating to employees, customers, business contacts and suppliers. Sensitive data covers an individual's ethnic origin, medical conditions, sexual orientation and eligibility to work in the UK.

The data protection principles set out the standards that an organisation must meet when processing personal data. These principles apply to the processing of all personal data, whether those data are processed automatically or stored in structured manual files.

## DPA definition of Data

Data is defined as information which is processed by computer or other automatic equipment, including word processors,

databases and spreadsheet files, or information which is recorded on paper with the intention of being processed later by computer; or information which is recorded as part of a manual filing system, where the files are structured according to the names of individuals or other characteristics such as payroll number, and where the files have sufficient internal structure so that specific information about a particular individual can be found easily.

## DPA definition of Processing

The definition of 'processing' is very broad. It covers any operation carried out on the data and includes obtaining or recording data, the retrieval, consultation or use of data, and the disclosure or otherwise making available of data. ■

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Continued next month

● Dr Rosanna Cooper is a partner at RT Coopers, a commercial law firm focusing on inventors and business start-ups.

(RTC)  
**RTCoopers**  
Solicitors

5 Telfords Yard, 6/8 The Highway,  
London E1W 2BS

Tel: 020 7488 2985 Fax: 020 7488 2102  
enquiry@rtcoopers.com  
www.rtcoopers.com

## HUMORESQUE: New definitions

from Dave Challice dchallic@bournemouth.ac.uk

**BORINGOLOGY:** The study of unexciting phenomena, the results of which take decades to v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y become clear – and are found to be unexciting.

**PHENOMENOT:** The latest, greatest, whiz-bang whatever that's not what it's proclaimed to be.

**PHENOMENUTS:** Those people who rush straight out and buy phenomenots.

**PHONESIA:** The affliction that strikes when you dial a telephone number and forget whom you were calling, and why, just as they answer.

**SCREENAGER:** A trainee in the IT department.

**WAPATHY:** A lack of interest in wireless technology.

**ZEN MAIL:** E-mail messages that arrive containing no text.

## Business Plan workshops

FREE business plan workshops are available on 7 Feb, 2 March, 4 April and 4 May for individuals and companies who have never written a business plan before or need to improve their existing one or are considering entering the Oxford University Business Plan Competition (*Inventique*, January'06).

To attend, register online for each individual Business Plan Workshop at:

● [www.science-enterprise.ox.ac.uk/html/activities\\_events.asp](http://www.science-enterprise.ox.ac.uk/html/activities_events.asp)

## NEW CLASS OF POLYMERS CREATED

BY PUTTING together the building blocks that make up ordinary plastics in a new way, University of Michigan researchers have created a new class of lightweight, rigid polymers that they predict will be useful for storing gasses such as hydrogen in fuel cells, and for uses in computer or catalytic applications.

The trick to making the new materials, called covalent organic frameworks (COFs), was coaxing them to assume predictable crystal structures – something that had never been done with rigid plastics.

“Normally, rigid plastics are

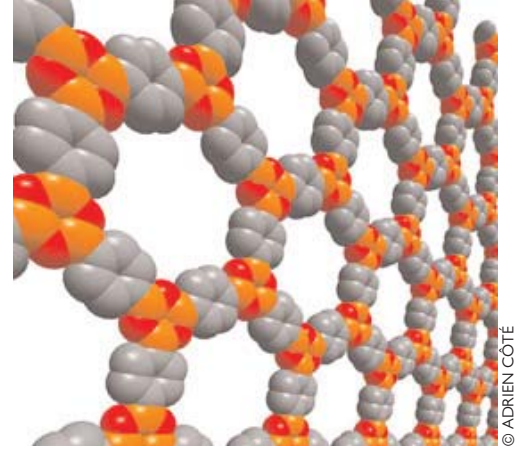
**Right: Crystalline sheets produced in covalent organic frameworks (COFs)**

synthesised by rapid reactions that randomly cross-link polymers,” said researcher Adrien Côté.

Côté and colleagues tweaked reaction conditions to slow down the process, allowing the materials to crystallise in an organised manner instead of assembling randomly.

As a result, the researchers can use X-ray crystallography to determine the structure of each type of COF they create and assess its properties.

“Once we know the structure and



© ADRIEN CÔTÉ

properties, our methodology allows us to go back and modify the COF, making it perform better or tailoring it for different applications [such as hydrogen traps],” said Côté. ■

● [www.umich.edu](http://www.umich.edu) Source: R&D Magazine  
The US Dept of Energy has released its *R&D Roadmap for the Hydrogen Economy*: [www.hydrogen.energy.gov/pdfs/roadmap\\_manufacturing\\_hydrogen\\_economy.pdf](http://www.hydrogen.energy.gov/pdfs/roadmap_manufacturing_hydrogen_economy.pdf)

## AERODYNAMIC TRICKS KEEP BEES AIRBORNE

**THE NOTION THAT ENGINEERS** once ‘proved’ that bees can’t fly has become an urban myth, writes *Helen Phillips*. So partly to restore the reputation of the profession, Michael Dickinson decided to investigate the forces at work during honeybee flight.

In 1996, Charlie Ellington at the University of Cambridge showed how vortices rolling along the leading edge of the wing were the vital source of lift for most insects. But this can’t explain how a heavy insect with a short wing beat, such as a bee, generates enough lift to fly.

Dickinson and his colleagues at California Institute of Technology in Pasadena filmed hovering bees at 6000 frames per second, and plotted the unusual pattern of wing beats. The wing sweeps back in a 90-degree arc, then flips over as

it returns – 230 times a second. The team made a robot to scale to measure the forces involved.

It is the more exotic forces created as the wing changes direction that dominate, says Dickinson. Additional vortices are produced by the rotation of the wing. “It’s like a propeller, where the blade is rotating too,” he says. Also, the wing flaps back into its own wake, which leads to higher forces than flapping in still air. Lastly, there is ‘added-mass force’ which peaks at the end of each stroke and comes from the acceleration of the wing after it changes direction.

The work may help engineers come up with designs for rotating propellers or more stable and manoeuvrable aircraft. But most importantly, “it proves bees can fly, thank God,” says Dickinson. ■

● [www.caltech.edu](http://www.caltech.edu) Source: *New Scientist* magazine, 3 Dec’05

## ● ‘ROBOCAR’ IS STREETS AHEAD

THE FINAL SHOW MODEL of an innovative city concept car developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) will be presented to General Motors (GM) in the next few months.

The MIT city car has taken the 42-member team four years to develop to pre-prototype stage, and has architectural principles incorporated into its design and engineering. The project is led by William Mitchell (MIT’s former head of the school of architecture), architect Frank Gehry and GM.

Professor Mitchell foresees shared, easy-to-drive, pollution-free cars that can be customised at will, so the MIT team came up with a stackable, shareable, electric two-seater.

The MIT concept car replaces the traditional engine with electric-powered, independently controlled and omni-directional wheel robots, which contain the motor, suspension, brakes and steering within each wheel assembly.

The vehicle also replaces traditional chassis

and sub-frame units with an exoskeleton – which can be individually customised – connecting the wheels, storage and passenger cabins.

These innovations removed the need for an engine block or drive shaft, while the drive-by-wire telemetry makes the traditional steering column obsolete. Similarly, bulky dashboard units are replaced by wafer-thin programmable displays that cover both the interior and exterior of the car like a layer of paint, allowing signalling and display units – and even the car’s colour – to be customised at will.

Chief safety features include replacing seat belts and air bags with responsive seats, based around a spine in the seat-back whose ribs restrain and protect passengers if the car senses an accident. The cabin would absorb the energy of any impacts by using new materials – possibly including magnetised fluids which move from a liquid to a solid state in nanoseconds.

Whether the city car concept appears on garage forecourts as designed by MIT or



The MIT Smart Cities research team’s drive-by-wire, stackable car

whether the technologies are taken forward individually remains to be seen. But it is easy to envisage a transport system incorporating the MIT city cars in tandem with the ATS ULTra personal rapid transport system (*Inventique*, December 2005). ■

● Source: Alok Jha, science correspondent  
*The Guardian*, 29 Dec’05 [www.guardian.co.uk/blogs.zdnet.com/emergingtech/index.php?p=119](http://www.guardian.co.uk/blogs.zdnet.com/emergingtech/index.php?p=119)  
[www.media.mit.edu/events/di-2004-10-22/wjm2004-1022.pdf](http://www.media.mit.edu/events/di-2004-10-22/wjm2004-1022.pdf)

© FRANCO VAIRANI / MIT DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

# To b2b or not to b2b

Business 2  
Business Shows

TWO THOUSAND VISITORS are expected to attend *Business South 2006*, a major business-to-business (b2b) show being held on 1-2 March at St Mary's Stadium, Southampton. Admission is free of charge.

The event will feature over 100 companies from across the region, together with a range of experts providing free business seminars.

A special *Meet the Buyer* zone will allocate exhibitors and visitors a space to present their services to representatives from large buying organisations such as the Ministry of Defence, Southampton City Council, Hampshire County

Council and the Henty Group.

Keynote speakers in the seminar theatre include Anne Duncan, chief executive of Yellowfin Ltd and Ernst & Young Regional Entrepreneur of the Year, who will talk about entrepreneurship in the 21st century, what makes an entrepreneur, and how innovation leads to success. Stuart Greenfield of Leepeck Greenfield will present an 'Idiot's Guide to Marketing,' and getting the basics right for SMEs.

An e-village sponsored by Business Link Wessex featuring 40 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) companies from

across the region will occupy the third floor of the venue.

Denise Barlowe, head of business development at Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said: "This show will enable businesses to showcase their products and services on a scale not previously seen in the area, as well as providing an important networking opportunity."

● **To pre-book admission passes online:**  
[www.business2businessshows.com](http://www.business2businessshows.com)

● **To exhibit at Business South 2006:**  
**Emma Furlong, TJW Exhibitions**  
**Tel: 01823 250 930**  
[emma.furlong@tjw.co.uk](mailto:emma.furlong@tjw.co.uk)



## SPACE, ARCHITECTURE AND THE BRAIN

SPACE, and our relationship to it through the arts and sciences, will be the theme of the fifth Art and Mind Festival to be held at the Theatre Royal, Winchester and surrounding venues from 10 to 12 March. Exhibitions, performances and symposia will explore the theme from evolution to neuroscience, and its expression through architecture and the arts.

Speakers at the event, entitled *Space, Architecture and the Brain: where and how we find ourselves*, include architect and author Charles Jencks, John Zeisal from the American Institute of Architects, international designer Johnny Grey, and Mike Wheeler from the University of Stirling.

Discussion groups will explore visual cognition, the architecture of oppression and the interactive future, and will include readings of *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard.

An 'anti-gravity' theatre performance will be staged, plus a musical event that will use the entire building space at Winchester Cathedral as an instrument.

Art and Mind was founded in 2004 as an arts/science partnership in order to bring eminent artists, scientists and thinkers before the public to examine the way we experience and create contemporary culture.

● **Space, architecture and the brain, 10-12 March 2006**  
**Box Office and programme leaflets: Theatre Royal, Winchester**  
**Tel: 01962 840 440** [www.artandmind.org](http://www.artandmind.org)

### NEWS IN BRIEF

● **STUDENTS 'EAGER FOR ENTERPRISE'**  
Increasing numbers of students are expressing an interest in setting up their own business, a report by businessdynamics suggests.

The 2005 survey of 450 14-to-19 year-olds for the *Student Attitudes to Business* report found that the majority (85%) thought learning about enterprise at school was "a good idea". It is now compulsory for secondary schools in England to provide at least five days of enterprise education a year.

While welcoming the aims of the new curriculum requirement, teachers said there was a lack of clarity about the scheme, into which the government is investing £60m

annually. Some teachers felt ill-equipped to teach the subject

"Teachers really do feel they need help," said a spokesperson for businessdynamics, the business education and enterprise charity for young people (*Inventique*, Jan'06).

"You have to keep this in context," said a spokesman for the Department for Education and Skills. "businessdynamics have also said our enterprise education strategy is working.

"This is proved by their survey in 2001, showing 32% of young people wanting to run their own business, while this year's report shows an increase to 53% – the highest figure ever recorded in a

businessdynamics annual survey.

"To continue our commitment to this initiative, we have committed £60m a year to enable schools to focus on enterprise education. Efforts are also being made to get schools to share best practice."

According to the report, the number of girls indicating a desire to go into business is on the rise, with 51% saying they want to be entrepreneurs – only four percentage points fewer than the boys.

In 2004, the divide between the sexes was much greater, with only 35% of girls interested in an entrepreneurial career, compared with 55% of boys.

● **Source: BBC News**

"In America, we don't have failures; we have learners" – Anon

# www.wrti.org.uk

THE INVENTORS WEBSITE

**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE** World Wide Web Conference

## WWWay to go...

TIM BERNERS-LEE TO SPEAK AT EDINBURGH EVENT

**I**N REVOLUTIONISING the method by which we communicate, learn, trade and govern, the World Wide Web has transformed society within a period of twenty years – with new capabilities set to influence us over the next decade.

The 15th International World Wide Web Conference – to be held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, Scotland between 23-26 May – will bring together the technical innovators, entrepreneurs, IT decision-makers, academics, developers, businesses and standards bodies to help shape and develop the future direction of the World Wide Web.

WWW2006 speakers include Tim Berners-Lee, director of the World Wide Web Consortium and inventor of the world wide web, Motorola chairman David Brown, Gillian Kent, director of MSN.co.uk, Tim Faircliff of Reuters, Phillip Hallam-Baker (principle scientist at VeriSign Inc) and Richard Granger, IT director for the NHS.

### Wwow!

Held in the UK for the first time, the conference is organised by the School of Electronics and Computer Science (ECS) at the University of



Southampton, in association with the British Computer Society. Sponsors of the event include Infosys, MSN and Siemens.

ECS is the largest academic department of its kind in the UK, and has a worldwide reputation for its research in computer science, electronics and electrical engineering.

### The next wwave

Debates and seminars clarifying and exploring topics under umbrella headings such as business success, education and science, health, the next wave and security will be chaired by scientists including Leslie Carr and David De Roure from the University of Southampton – and by other specialists from AT&T Labs, University of California at Berkeley, Chinese University of Hong Kong, HP Labs, IBM Research Centre, Australia's Southern Cross University, Stanford University and Yahoo! ■

● [www2006.org](http://www2006.org)

### WEBSITES OF THE MONTH

[www.rsc.org/scienceandtechnology/awardsandfunding/azlist.asp](http://www.rsc.org/scienceandtechnology/awardsandfunding/azlist.asp)

A complete list of all Royal Society of Chemistry awards (including its Innovation Award), funding, medals and lectureships.

[www.myownbusiness.org](http://www.myownbusiness.org)

A free online training course for starting and growing a business, which receives over 200,000 visitors a month and is linked on the USA's Small Business Administration website. The World Bank has translated the course – featured in *Entrepreneur* magazine, *The New York Times* and *Business Week Online* – into four languages across five continents.

### BOOK OF THE MONTH

**Obsessive Genius**

by Barbara Goldsmith

Phoenix ISBN: 075381899X £8.99

Marie Curie was perhaps the most important woman scientist of the 20th century. Barbara Goldsmith's absorbing biography lays bare both the public world of her scientific endeavours and the inner world that propelled her. It covers everything from her path from radium to sonar, to her winning two Nobel prizes in spite of being so affected by public criticism about her personal life that she was taken away from France, with the help of suffragette friends, to recover in the UK.

– Maggie McDonald,  
*New Scientist magazine*

WRTI PATRON Trevor Baylis OBE CHAIRMAN Richard Little [chairman@wrti.co.uk](mailto:chairman@wrti.co.uk)

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN Professor Richard Penson [deputychairman@wrti.co.uk](mailto:deputychairman@wrti.co.uk) SECRETARY Mike Overy [secretary@wrti.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wrti.co.uk)

TREASURER Mike Wright [treasurer@wrti.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@wrti.co.uk) MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Professor Richard Penson [membership@wrti.co.uk](mailto:membership@wrti.co.uk)

INVENTIQUE EDITOR Frank Landamore [editor@wrti.co.uk](mailto:editor@wrti.co.uk) WEBMASTER Mike Overy [webmaster@wrti.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@wrti.co.uk)

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Edited, designed and produced by Frank Landamore, 42 South Way, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1LY on behalf of WRTI.