

# Inventique®

The newsletter of Wessex Round Table of Inventors

July 2004

**WRTI ANNUAL KEYNOTE LECTURE****WEDNESDAY 14 JULY**

at 6.30pm, room HC024  
Herbert Collins Building  
Southampton Institute  
East Park Terrace  
Southampton SO14 0RP.

**NON-MEMBERS WELCOME  
FREE ADMISSION**

**GUEST SPEAKER**

Professor Andrew Self,  
Pro Vice-Chancellor,  
Enterprise Exchange,  
Kingston University.

## AGM to vote on new constitution

ALL WRTI MEMBERS are urged to attend this year's Annual General Meeting, which will be held in room HC024 of Southampton Institute's Herbert Collins Building on Wednesday 14 July.

In addition to the election of the club's officers and committee (including proposals for a new club secretary and a new membership secretary), members will have the chance to vote on a proposed new constitution, and make suggestions for the future of the WRTI.

The AGM follows the Annual Keynote Lecture 2004 presented by Professor Andrew Self, which commences at 6.30pm. ■

## Brian's a winner at Innovention 2004

COMMUNICATION AWARD TO WRTI MEMBER

**W**RTI MEMBER Brian Stickley won a prize for his inventions at the *Innovention 2004* show held at the ultra-modern INTECH Centre, Winchester on 25th June.

Five other WRTI members were represented at the exhibition.

Brian was presented with a special £500 Communication Award by Fareham Borough Council for developing Talking Products™ out of his company in Romsey.

**Recording in progress**

Talking Products Limited have developed a wide range of devices – including Talking Tins and Talking Labels – which allow customers to record personal voice messages, which is of unique benefit to the visually impaired and partially sighted community, allowing them to identify items by touching a button.

“Because these are voice-recordable products, there are no language barriers to worry about,” Brian enthused. “Whatever is recorded is played back.”

Distribution deals with the RNIB were agreed last year, and the National Association for the Visually Handicapped in the USA



© TALKING PRODUCTS LTD

**Brian Stickley has developed a wide product range for his unique company.**

also recommends the products, which are now marketed throughout Britain, Europe and the USA.

Almost 7.5m Europeans and 20m Americans suffer some form of visual impairment. Intriguingly, only 2% of the visually-impaired community read Braille.

**Another SBS success story**

Brian created Talking Products Ltd after winning a Smart Award with the aid of Business Link Wessex (who hold a 5% interest in the company) to develop a prototype of his idea at Southampton Institute.

A new product line, Talking Gifts (for corporate promotions), will be launched later this year. ■

● **Contact:** [brian@brs.uk.com](mailto:brian@brs.uk.com)  
**Tel:** 01794 516677 **Fax** 01794 516451  
[www.TalkingProducts.com](http://www.TalkingProducts.com)

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



## VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

PRIOR TO OUR June meeting, committee members were involved in preparing material for *Innovention 2004*, which took place at the INTECH Centre, Winchester on Friday 25th June. I was very pleased that a number of club members volunteered to help out on the day: it was a terrific exhibition.

Dr Dan Taylor, last month's guest speaker, stepped in at short notice to provide a fascinating presentation on pupilometry (an area of expertise which I doubt any other member of our club knew much about).

Dan freely admitted that it has been a tough path, starting with a research topic which gained him his PhD, through a research phase (where he gained a Smart award) followed by development supported by a SPUR grant.

Since the area of application was so specialised, Dan's small company had to rely on endorsements from medical practitioner experts in his area of eye research. (Plainly his tenacity had to be total, so it was pleasing to hear that sales are steadily building and the company has just exceeded £1m turnover.)

It is interesting to contrast this highly specialised approach with other, often market-driven, techniques.

Although the attractions of these are fairly evident, one ought not forget Henry Ford's observation: 'If I had listened to my customers I would simply have designed a faster horse!'

Finally I hope you will all make the effort to attend this year's keynote lecture by Professor Andrew Self, a leading mover and shaker in the world of invention. Take my advice: be there.

Sincerely,

David

PROFESSOR DAVID NICHOLAS MBE, Chairman

INVENTORATOR Virginia Rabbitts

# Insider's guide...

ONE INVENTOR'S ADVICE ON GETTING STARTED

*To market to market to buy a fat pig, Home again, home again, jiggedy-jig!*

**I**T ALL SOUNDED so easy when we were singing nursery rhymes as children, didn't it? We only slowly realised, as adults within the world of lone inventors and innovative products, that it took tremendous effort spread over many years to succeed in actually getting a product onto the retailers' shelves.

Where to start with an idea which you think may be new or novel? First, inventors should never mention their idea to others unless they have a signed confidentiality agreement. (I was lucky, in that both my grandfathers – who were always dreaming up products – instilled this in me at a tender age.)

Then contact the Patent Office (tel: 08459 500 505) and request their big information pack, which includes advice on patents, copyright and design and trademark registration. Read it all.

Check if your idea is original by researching trade suppliers, distributors and retailers for similar products; internet search engines such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) are a great help in this.

Next, find out if any 'prior art' exists. Prior art is where somebody else has already thought of 'your' idea and either filed a patent for it or previously published it elsewhere. They don't need to have actually made the product: patent applications have been rejected because similar ideas were depicted in old cartoons.

You need to make a preliminary 'Search' for prior art. You can obtain quotes from reputable patent agents or attorneys to make a search for you (see *Inventique*, May 2004), or do it yourself via the Patent Office website ([www.patent.gov.uk](http://www.patent.gov.uk)).

But nothing can beat the feeling of sitting at a desk, going

over old patents. I spent four days personally searching the records at the British Library (tel: 0870 444 1500, [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)) in the days before the internet, to find that my idea had no obvious classification.

If you *do* find prior art of 'your' idea, you might confirm this with your patent agent (if you have one) – then dust yourself off and congratulate yourself on not wasting any more time or money on it.

### Time to take stock

If you *don't* find any prior art, this does not mean that none exists. But it should encourage you to properly consider what it will cost – in both money and time – to proceed with the idea.

What should be included in your patent application? At this point you must decide whether to: **Get as much help as you can** from the Patent Office and other sources and file your application yourself (not recommended).

**Draft your own application** based upon an existing one (as I did), do the best job you can, then take it to a patent agent to do it properly. This method can help focus the mind, and patent agents may take your efforts into account and reduce their fees accordingly.

**Pay a patent agent** to write your patent application for you.

I always use a patent agent, finding this a safer way to file such a contentious document, which needs to be as near perfect as possible. ■

© Virginia Rabbitts 2004

● *Virginia Rabbitts is an electrical engineer and managing director of Rabbitts of London Ltd, a company created to exploit her first commercial invention (for which a patent was granted in 2003).*

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# THE LEGAL FORCE OF NDAs

HARRY COLE OUTLINES HIS VIEWS TO *INVENTIQUE*

**I**N A LANDMARK appeal case concerning breach of confidence, Lord Greene, a former Master of the Rolls, stated: “The mere simplicity of an idea does not prevent it being confidential, and indeed, the simpler an idea the more likely it is to need protecting.

“If a case of breach of confidentiality is to succeed, three principle elements need apply: the information itself must have the necessary quality of confidence about it; the information must have been imparted in circumstances importing an obligation of confidence; and there must be an unauthorised use of that information to the detriment of the party communicating it.”

## Testing, testing

The most significant attribute information must possess before it can be considered confidential is ‘inaccessibility’. The test often used by courts to decide this involves an assessment of whether any special labours would be necessary for a member of the public to reproduce it.

This clearly demonstrates the importance of using non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements (NDAs); they are the ultimate method of protecting ideas, know-how, discoveries or other new, modified or valuable patentable or non-patentable concepts.

NDAs are legally binding upon the parties. If you don't use NDAs whenever disclosing your ideas, it would be extremely difficult to prove in court that the disclosure you made placed the other party under any obligation of confidence, whereas your signed NDA is your legal proof that such disclosure was made under a notice of confidentiality.

So what makes a well-drafted confidentiality agreement? It is fair to say that, if an innovator asked twenty different lawyers, patent agents or licensing practitioners to draft them an NDA, they would surely receive twenty different

versions with costs ranging between £150 to £500 or more. Below is a summary of key elements to include (it is not a definitive list). ■

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Rosanna Cooper returns next month.

● *European licencing practitioner Harry Cole is a consultant on intellectual property, creator of the Inventa international standardised confidentiality agreement and author of Ideas or Inventions Can Make Fortunes – How To Make Yours!*  
harry.cole@jerseymail.co.uk

## Confidentiality agreements – ten top tips

- The receiver of the information is placed under a legal obligation of trust and is bound by the terms of the agreement not to make unauthorised use of information.
- Both Parties should be described and recognised by disclosing their names, status and address. Those signing your NDA must have their company's authority to do so.
- The submitter should declare that s/he is the creator or owns title to the subject matter and that the disclosure does not trespass upon the rights of third parties.
- Include mutual undertakings not to disclose confidential information (why should a company undertake to keep your secrets, if you won't undertake to keep theirs?).
- Do not over-describe the subject matter before signing an agreement. The receiver may not sign it if you have unwittingly disclosed as much as he needs to know.
- If a patent application has been filed, don't disclose the 'know-how' without using an NDA: this could be more valuable to a company than your actual patent.
- Not all companies will sign your NDA, or will insist that you file a patent application first (in case they are already be working on a similar idea). But if a company confirms in writing that they will respect your confidentiality and you have filed a patent application, this would constitute an implied 'obligation of confidence'.
- The receiver can assume no right to a license to exploit the information received. But it would be unreasonable to expect a company to undertake a technical evaluation of your idea at their own expense, then refuse them a license if one was requested.
- Law and jurisdiction. Include a similar form of words to the following in your agreement: 'The construction, validity and performance of this Agreement shall be construed and interpreted in accordance with the Laws of [state country]'.
- Include clauses confirming that the agreement is binding on heirs and assigns; that a particular clause being unenforceable in another country would not affect the validity of the whole document, and that no variation of the agreement is possible without the consent of all Parties.

**Innovators are advised to seek independent legal advice on matters which concern them.**

## Mike fires up rural inventors

**MIKE KEENAN will relate the story of how he invented his flame-retardant materials (think fire-proof buildings, paper or skin) at a meeting of the Rural Inventors' Club on 6 July. The club, which was formed by ex-WRTI member Graham Rawlinson nine months ago, meet at the Sun Inn, Plaistow, West Sussex at 8pm on the first Tuesday of every month.**

● Tel: 01403 871159

Graham@dagr.demon.co.uk



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## CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE The Enterprise Exchange

# University of initiative

FROM INNOVATIVE COMPANIES TO MAs FOR IDEAS

**T**HE UK ENJOYS more inventive genius per capita than any other nation on earth. Statistics indicate that the UK's innovators are responsible for over 50% of the world's most important inventions. These distinctive capabilities are not realised through easy access to cheap labour, land or raw materials, but through a culture based on knowledge, skills and – in particular – creativity.

Kingston University's Enterprise Exchange is one of the university's many services to business, acting as a meeting point between the worlds of education and commerce and sharing knowledge, resources and opportunities in order to help enterprises and individuals realise their full potential.

The Enterprise Exchange portfolio includes work-based learning programmes (which award fully accredited qualifications) and knowledge- and technology-transfer partnership programmes.

However, the special interests of the UK innovation industry may arguably be most directly served by the Exchange's partnership initiatives; it is working alongside the British Inventors Society, Business Link, the Trevor Baylis Foundation and others to enable entrepreneurs and inventors turn their incredible ideas



into credible products and services.

Nearly fifty innovative companies – from Automatics Tooling Ltd to Wykeham Farrance International Ltd – have already been successfully rolled out through this programme.

The Exchange's impressive roster of academic and technical staff are headed by Professor Andrew Self, pro vice-chancellor (Enterprise), Dr. David Stokes, enterprise director (Innovation) and Marguerite Lipscomb, enterprise director (Knowledge Transfer).

Specialist expertise and resources at Kingston University also include the Small Business Research Centre – one of the UK's leading centres of research into small business, entrepreneurship and innovation – and the Centre for Economic Research and Intelligence, which provides analytical and strategic intelligence and solutions to those involved in development activities. ■

● **Contact: The Enterprise Exchange**  
Kingston University, Surrey KT1 1LQ  
Tel: 020 8547 2000  
[www.kingston.ac.uk/enterprise](http://www.kingston.ac.uk/enterprise)

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Inventing the American Dream

A History of Curious, Extraordinary, and Just Plain Useful Patents  
by Stephen van Dulken  
241pp, British Library, £18.95  
ISBN 0712308938

*'Stephen van Dulken tries to examine a nation through the things it makes and consumes...'*

*'It is a haphazard guide to the most material culture of all.'*

– Stephen Bayley, The Guardian

## MEMBER SERVICES

Entries in this column are free to WRTI Members, who should mail their details to the Editor (see panel at foot of page).

**CONCEPT TO MANUFACTURE.** Help with presentation, prototyping, technical & manufacturing issues. Contact: Innovate Product Design, 01722 410 295

**FREELANCE EDITOR/DESIGNER**  
30 years book, magazine and partwork experience. Contact: Frank Landamore on 01273 475 184  
[franklandamore@hotmail.com](mailto:franklandamore@hotmail.com)

**ELECTRONICS CONSULTANT** with 30 years experience, specialising in wireless and positioning technologies. Contact: Mike Overy, 01420 562378  
[mike.overy@zen.co.uk](mailto:mike.overy@zen.co.uk)

**ELECTRONICS ENGINEER** Concept to proof of principle. Ex-scientific civil servant. Own lab. Contact: Mike Wright, 01428 722833  
[mike@fwright21.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:mike@fwright21.freeserve.co.uk)

**WRTI is seeking a Treasurer.**  
Interested members should email: [secretary@wrti.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wrti.co.uk)

**WRTI CHAIRMAN** Professor David Nicholas MBE [chairman@wrti.co.uk](mailto:chairman@wrti.co.uk)

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** Richard Little [deputychairman@wrti.co.uk](mailto:deputychairman@wrti.co.uk) **SECRETARY** John Gibbs [secretary@wrti.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wrti.co.uk)

**TREASURER** Mike Overy [treasurer@wrti.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@wrti.co.uk) **DEVELOPMENT OFFICER** Les McCall [devofficer@wrti.co.uk](mailto:devofficer@wrti.co.uk)

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# wrti

Wessex Round Table of Inventors

## PRODUCT

## GRAVITY PUMP™

## DESCRIPTION

The Gravity Pump™ is a maintenance-free water pump, powered by the flow of the stream or river into which it is submerged. It can lift water to a height of 25 metres, has a pumping capacity of 5,000 litres per day and is 66% cheaper to produce than existing aid-agency (hand) pumps.

## INVENTOR

Shamal Barzanji, irrigation engineer.

## STAGE REACHED

Working model produced. Successful field trials completed at Southampton Institute. Prototype, CAD drawings, photographs and CD available.

## IP PROTECTION

Granted patents.

## OBJECTIVE

The company is seeking investors and industrial partners to exploit the product commercially on the world market.

## CONTACT

Shamal Barzanji, Gravity Pumps Limited, Maritime House, Southwell Business Park, Portland, Dorset DT5 2NB Tel: 01305 826099  
shamal@gravitypumps.fsnet.co.uk

*www.wrti.org.uk*  
THE INVENTORS WEBSITE

# wrti

Wessex Round Table of Inventors

## PRODUCT

X-STREAM PUMP™

## DESCRIPTION

The X-Stream Pump™ range includes a series of ‘edge-driven’ devices. The basic unit comprises an annular ring which supports inward-facing impeller blades with no central boss, which has particular advantages when pumping fluids containing suspended material (brewing solutions, slurries, foodstuffs etc). Recreational applications include a surf-board propulsion system and a bow-thrust unit for yachts.

## INVENTOR

Shamal Barzanji, irrigation engineer.

## STAGE REACHED

Concept demonstration unit produced. Prototype, CAD drawings, photographs and CD available.

## IP PROTECTION

Granted patents.

## OBJECTIVE

The company is seeking investors and industrial partners to exploit the product commercially.

## CONTACT

Shamal Barzanji, X-Stream Pumps Limited,  
Maritime House, Southwell Business Park, Portland,  
Dorset DT5 2NB Tel: 01305 826099  
shamal@gravitypumps.fsnet.co.uk

*www.wrti.org.uk*  
THE INVENTORS WEBSITE

# *wrti* Wessex Round Table of Inventors

## PRODUCT

SNORCOM™

## DESCRIPTION

In what can be a hazardous environment, communication between sports snorkellers is limited: visual contact can be difficult and vocal communication almost impossible. Snorcom™ is a two-way communication device for sport snorkellers. It uses a series of audible beeps to attract attention, indicate intentions or items of interest, or sound an alarm. No other system of this type appears to be commercially available.

## INVENTOR

Mike Wright.

## STAGE REACHED

Working model produced.

## IP PROTECTION

Pending.

## OBJECTIVE

To attract technical comment and assess interest.

## CONTACT

Mike Wright, Sorrento, Limes Close, Bramshott,  
Liphook GU30 7SL Tel: 01428 722833  
mike@fwright21.freeserve.co.uk

*www.wrti.org.uk*  
THE INVENTORS WEBSITE

# *wrti* Wessex Round Table of Inventors

## PRODUCT

## DOUBLE ACTION KEYLESS CLUTCH

## DESCRIPTION

A keyless chuck for gripping tools such as drill bits in rotating machinery. The chuck operates in two stages, the first providing rapid opening and closing, the second providing a powerful tightening action with little effort. This double action chuck overcomes two drawbacks of conventional keyless chucks, which require many turns to adjust them and which do not grip very tightly.

## INVENTOR

John Gibbs.

## STAGE REACHED

Working concept model produced.

## IP PROTECTION

Patent pending.

## OBJECTIVE

Seeking investors, industrial partners or licencees to exploit the product commercially.

## CONTACT

John Gibbs, 14 Atherley Court, Hill Lane,  
Southampton SO15 7NG

*www.wrti.org.uk*  
THE INVENTORS WEBSITE