

SMART MOVE

The DTI has chosen the Eastern Region Technology Centre to organise this year's SMART Awareness Seminars for the Eastern Region.

The Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology (SMART) is a competitive award scheme which aims to encourage innovation, enterprise and wealth creation.

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the
Enterprise
initiative

The competition is open to all small companies employing fewer than 50 individuals and those people in the process of starting a new company to exploit an invention, or modernise a traditional industrial process.

All technology disciplines within the DTI's remit are eligible but applications in biotechnology, communications, instrumentation, computer-aided manufacture and other advanced technologies are particularly encouraged.

The series of six workshops will be taking place during February and March at Cambridge, Harlow, Ipswich, Luton, Norwich and Peterborough.

News of Area Offices

Following the recent announcement of ERTC Area Office locations for Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, the remaining counties in the region can expect news of their own local 'access points' in the next few weeks.

With Hatfield Polytechnic and Luton College hosting the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire offices respectively, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk are eagerly awaiting confirmation.

Speaking to Technology and Business, ERTC Director, Brian Leeming said that initial discussions had been held with potential hosts for the three remaining counties and that general locations had now been agreed.

The Essex office will be situated in Colchester, whilst Ipswich will be the Centre's base in Suffolk. As expected, the Norfolk operation will be run from Norwich.

It has already been agreed that the ERTC's central office in Cambridge will provide a local service for Cambridgeshire in addition to its region-wide function.

Mr Leeming said that it would not be long before the entire regional service structure was in place. Three key members of the management team have already been recruited (see this page) and other appointments are to be made soon.

Due to final preparations and the need to install new equipment, the Hertfordshire office will not be fully manned for the time being. The Bedfordshire office telephone number is (0582) 482551. Businesses and organisations in other counties who wish to make immediate contact should telephone the Central Office on Cambridge (0223) 894194.

Further news of Area Offices will be appearing in the press shortly.

REGIONAL TEAM TAKES SHAPE

The RTC's Regional Technology Transfer Team is now taking shape with the announcement of three key appointments.

The first two Local Managers have taken up their posts; John Baxendine in Hertfordshire, and Mike Anstey in Bedfordshire. They are joined by Dr. Ilse Vickers who becomes the Centre's Resources Manager.

JOHN BAXENDINE joins the ERTC from British Gas on a special two year secondment and will take charge of the Centre's programme in Hertfordshire.

John is a Scottish Chartered Accountant, having been born in Edinburgh and educated at The Edinburgh Academy. After qualifying he remained in the profession until 1964, when he left to join the then Scottish Gas Board. In 1971 he joined Eastern Gas Board as Chief Internal Auditor.

In 1978 he became Regional Customer Accounting Manager and has been responsible for major investment in software and computer programmes leading to significant improvements in efficiency and cost reductions. During his period of office, gas customers increased by 40% to 1.4 million whilst staffing numbers fell by over 30%.

He will be based at Hatfield Polytechnic.



Mike Anstey

DR ILSE VICKERS has been appointed to the key position of Resources Manager for the ERTC based at Abington Hall, Cambridge.

Ilse Vickers was first educated at a West German college of trade and commerce before becoming interpreter and consultant to German and British export companies.

She gained a first class honours degree in English Literature in 1981 and was awarded a PhD in 1988. Her combined business and academic background is an ideal qualification for her new responsibilities which include the identification of technology transfer resources and expertise, and enabling greater interaction between education and industry throughout the region.

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**Eastern Region
Technology Centre**

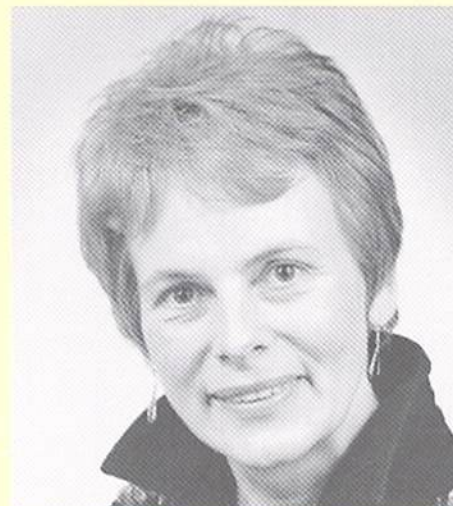


John Baxendine

MIKE ANSTEY is the first local RTC Manager for Bedfordshire. He began his career with three years as a manufacturing company trainee, leaving to attend University. After gaining a degree he spent nine years as a college lecturer, teaching mainly computing and computer related subjects.

Since 1983 he has been developing, patenting and licencing computer technology products, and has undertaken consultancy work for a number of major companies. He has been granted British, American and other foreign patents for his work and is a regular contributor to both commercial and technical journals.

He will be based at the Putteridge Bury site of Luton College.

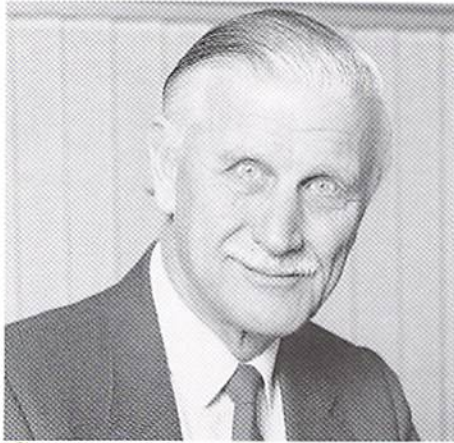


Dr Ilse Vickers

Supporting Technology Growth

As a major supplier of energy, British Gas is totally committed to the promotion of business interests throughout the country.

British Gas
Eastern



By Geoff Eccles OBE, Chairman –
British Gas Eastern

That is one of the reasons why our company is pleased to be associated with the establishment of the Eastern Region Technology Centre. The future prosperity of the United Kingdom depends on the strong development of all businesses – both large and small – and the new Technology Centres will help to ensure that British industry makes the best possible use of technological developments.

To help the Centre get started, we have

seconded one of our top managers, John Baxendine, to the project. John was previously the Customer Accounting Manager for British Gas Eastern, overseeing accounting arrangements for almost 1.4 million customers, and he brings a wealth of business experience to the project.

As well as John's involvement, Alex McDiarmid, Regional Director of Engineering, has accepted an appointment as one of the first Directors of the ERTC. Through these two direct contacts British Gas Eastern is supporting the establishment of the Regional Technology Centre. In conclusion, we wish the new Regional Technology Centre success, and prosperity to the businesses it assists.

Mr. Geoff Eccles, Regional Chairman of British Gas Eastern, joined the gas industry on leaving school at Brighouse in Yorkshire and subsequently qualified in gas engineering at Bradford Technical College.

After serving in the Royal Air Force he held various posts in distribution engineering at Rugby, Wolverhampton, Derby and Birmingham before being appointed Grid Engineer with West Midlands Region in 1967. Towards the end of 1971 Mr. Eccles was appointed Deputy Pipelines Engineer with the Gas Council's Pipelines Department and subsequently became Pipelines Engineer in 1980.

He became Deputy Chairman of British Gas Eastern in March 1984 and Regional Chairman in October 1987. He was awarded the O.B.E. in the New Years Honours in 1986. ●

From Tomorrow's World to Science Museum in Two Years

The world's first commercial version of the Scanning Tunnelling Microscope (STM) was first demonstrated to an enthusiastic audience of scientists towards the end of 1986 by WA Technology. In 1987 it featured in the BBC Television programme "Tomorrow's World" – and has now taken its place among the other research instruments of outstanding significance at London's famous Science Museum.

The Scanning Tunnelling Microscope (STM) provides scientists and technologists with the means to image and analyze surfaces on an atomic scale. It has opened up wholly new possibilities in a wide and expanding diversity of fields, from physical chemistry to materials science. Microbiologists are using the STM to investigate the structure of microbes and organic molecules – including the now famous double helix of DNA.

Inventors of the STM principle, Dr Binnig and Dr Rohrer of IBM, were awarded the 1986 Nobel prize in physics. But the small British company, WA Technology of Cambridge, beat the world's top instrument manufacturers in developing this research concept into a commercially available instrument. Their achievement was recognised when they won the coveted Finniston Award for innovative engineering.

Dr Denis Vaughan, curator of the microscope collection at the Science Museum, said "I am

delighted to have this instrument for display in the Microscope Gallery alongside the replica of the first electron microscope for which Dr Ruska shared the Nobel Prize with Dr Binnig and Dr Rohrer in 1986."

WA Technology is now one of the world's leading STM manufacturers. ●



WA Technology's Barry Ambrose hands the STM to curator Dr Denis Vaughan.

Photo: courtesy of Science Museum

Returning to Boost the Economy

The Report of the Women into Information Technology Campaign notes that "The largest single source of suitable potential trainees are women in the 25 to 45 age group who are currently out of the labour force bringing up a family or in low-grade, part-time employment which is below their capabilities.....".

Returner recruitment and training programmes are therefore essential to halt the de-skilling process.

One of the primary causes of this de-skilling is the rapid pace of technological development. Employment in Information Technology in central East Anglia has grown by approximately 7% in the last five years and the 'Single Market' of 1992 is expected to increase this expansion to over 10% per annum over the next decade.

Labour Market information stresses the need to target training provision for older women and women returners and recognises that this means addressing the issues of supporting payments for courses, child care provision and developing flexible training packages.

This not only involves supporting education and training initiatives but also implementing flexible working patterns, part-time working and job-sharing. In addition employers can exercise good practice by providing workplace nurseries or through place purchase and subsidised nursery placements. In exchange for these provisions the employer is able to recruit a mature, experienced and committed employee to the workforce and the economy is better by one additional contributor. ●

The Cambridge Women's Resources Centre opened in 1983 and provides local women with vocational training and guidance as well as recreational facilities. It specialises in vocational business computing courses and runs 3-month full-time courses for women aged over 25 years who are actively seeking employment.

The courses use a range of IBM compatible personal computers and provide trainees with a thorough grounding in a full range of business computing skills and modern office practice. C.W.R.C. operates a free-of-charge creche for under fives. There are no course fees, but neither are any training allowances paid. Trainees' travel expenses of up to £10 per week are reimbursed. The vocational courses are consistently over-subscribed.

Employers can liaise with organisations such as C.W.R.C. and take the initiative themselves in order to halt the skills shortage which faces them at this present time. Alternatively, the C.W.R.C. offers consultancy to companies interested in recruiting women returners, or in preparing training and personal development programmes to ease the transition. ●