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THE MATERIAL WORLD

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PROGRAMME INFO

Thursday 16:30-17:00

Quentin Cooper reports on developments across the sciences. Each week scientists describe their work, conveying the excitement they feel for their research projects.

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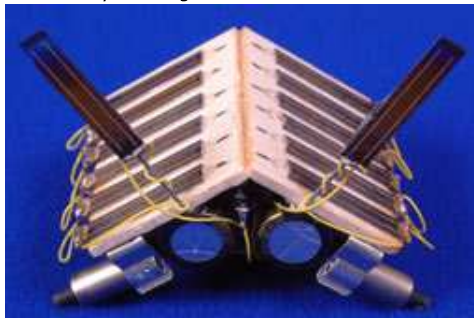
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QUENTIN COOPER

PROGRAMME DETAILS

Thursday 09 August 2007



Solarbot: Solar-Powered Robot from the Bristol Robotics Laboratory ©Bristol Robotics Laboratory

During August *Material World* is broadcasting four programmes made in association with the Open University. For more information about science courses at the Open University, click [here](#)



"For me science isn't a subject, it's a perspective. There are fascinating scientific aspects to everything from ancient history to the latest gadgets, outer space to interior decorating; and each week on *The Material World* we try to reflect the excitement, ideas, uncertainties, collisions and collaborations as science continues its never-ending voyage into the unknown".

Quentin Cooper

This week, Quentin goes to the University of Bath to meet science students who've signed up for the Open University's "Technology in Action" course.

"Technology in Action" is a week-long residential course. During the week, the students get hands-on experience of five areas where technology is playing a leading role in our lives: monitoring water quality, energy conversion, bridge building, waste management and robotics.

Quentin joins students on the robotics course. The course tutor is Jon Rosewell. Jon is a Lecturer in Information and Communication Technologies in the Faculty of Technology at the Open University.

Jon sets the students a challenging task. They have to design a rescue robot that can work in a hazardous environment.

Using *Lego Mindstorm*, the students first have to equip their robot with light and touch sensors. They then have to programme their robot to find "Ted the Led", a small teddy bear hidden in a side alley in a large, covered box.

Quentin also talks to Professor Chris Melhuish, Director of the Bristol Robotics Laboratory (BRL). BRL is one of the UK's leading robotics research centres. Chris tells Quentin about some of BRL's current research projects. These include robotic autonomy and the interface between robots and humans. Chris is also developing a robot called "Whiskerbot". "Whiskerbot" uses artificial whiskers to mimic the way rats assess their environment.

NEXT WEEK: *Geology: the second of our Open University Summer Specials*

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