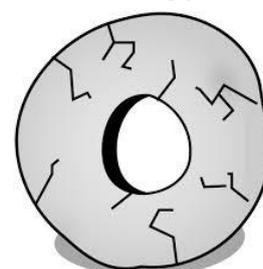


# West Dartmoor U3A

Meeting Report	Prepared by Brian Gibson
Ian Barclay	Why on earth did they invent that?

September's talk was given by Ian Barclay. He is a retired professor from Liverpool John Moores University. He has a special interest in technology. His talk called, 'Why on Earth did they Invent That?' took us on a journey through technological inventions down the ages. Today we take for granted many items which are the result of the hard work of individuals and their ingenious ideas. Some of the items are now essential for modern living. Others seem to be for sheer amusement. A few leave us asking ourselves the question, 'Why on Earth did they invent that?'



Most earlier inventions were dreamed up by individuals who went on to develop a product, being responsible for every stage in its manufacture. Sometimes the idea came out of the blue. The idea came without the sweat and toil usually associated with a development. An example is 'cat's eyes'. Here it was the natural inquisitiveness of the inventor which led to the development of the product we know.

Every so often Ian quizzed us showing us a drawing of an invention asking us what we thought it was. We did not get any of these correct. Also we were asked when we thought a particular invention was first used or first patented. Sometimes we were wildly out, inventions being much older than we had imagined. I thought we were pretty good at guessing



that the wheel was first around in about 2000 BC. The umbrella was used by the pharaohs in 2400 BC, spectacles were about in 1451, the sewing machine was on the market in 1846, earlier than we guessed.

Our attention was held throughout the talk and we came away feeling that it was an hour well spent.