

The summer term is always a busy time with the finals of many Design and Technology Competitions being held around the country. These competitions offer students the chance to spend more time, and use their creativity and powers of invention, on projects that are not usually possible within the formal curriculum time. They also bridge the gap between school and industry/commerce, with many of the problems being set in a 'real' industrial context.

Five such competitions are: The School's Challenge, The Young Engineer for Britain, The Young Electronic Designer Awards, Dorset Technology Fair and the British Gas School's Technology Challenge.

### ■ The School's Challenge

The finalists were on display at the Royal Show held at the National Agricultural Centre, Warwickshire, for four days in July. All the students, over 850 in total, had been set

'challenges' or problems by industry who then worked alongside the students to solve the problem and realise a solution. These ranged from Woodhouse High School who designed a woodland trail to help blind and visually impaired people to Aylesford School who wrote and performed a song to encourage people to improve the environment. Other notable finalists were the combined teams from Rugby High School and Lawrence Sheriff School who conducted a survey of buying habits and designed a new line of leisure goods for the supplies department of the Young Farmers Club. A second team from these schools designed a conservation garden for the blind which was a project set and sponsored by Severn Trent.

### ■ Young Engineer for Britain (Midland Region Final)

This year's final produced the greatest number of entries to date. The standards were very high, with many projects focusing on engineering-related problems. These ranged from a device for changing a car wheel to a very advanced engine diagnostic system that employed state-of-the-art electronics. There were other notable projects not from the engineering context.

One was a 'bowls lifting device' that enabled a bowling green wood to be picked up without bending down. It was well researched with prototypes tested and a business plan produced. This project is very marketable and the standard of work and presentation was commensurate with anything a small design/manufacturing company would produce. A second notable project was a 'soft toy clown' to help partially sighted children to learn about the different clothes fasteners they would need to use in everyday life. This was very well made and it encouraged you to try to work the fasteners to find out what the response from the 'clown' might be. Let's hope we can see more work of this type finding its way into national competitions.

Left: Charles Venables, Lewis Amor and Peter Milner, winners of the infant category in the Dorset Technology Fair 1993, demonstrated their robot which had many moving parts based on string and stick puppet principles.

## Design and Technology Competitions for Schools

