

## Hawkins opens office in Reigate



■ Since our last newsletter Dr Richard Fletcher has taken over as MD and Rod Newbery has "gone back to his day job" as a full time expert for Hawkins on fires, engineering and road traffic accidents.

Richard is an electrical engineer who joined Hawkins in 1992.

It has been another busy year, which has seen our seventh office open in Reigate and our Leeds office become fully established.

"The opening of our Reigate office enables us to provide a better service to the busy South East and overcomes the travel problems sometimes caused

by working out of our London office" said Richard Fletcher. "Clients have already responded well to the opening of the new office and I encourage anyone in the area to drop by and meet the team for themselves."

## Meet the team at our new Reigate office

■ The Regional Office Head at Reigate is Dr Andrew Prickett who is a material scientist. Andrew joined us in 2001 working out of our London office. He specialises in fires, water leaks and materials failures.



**Reigate Office Head Dr Andrew Prickett**

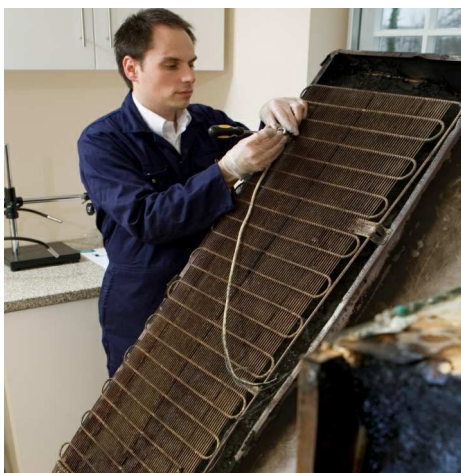
Andrew commented, "I am pleased to have the opportunity to manage my own office and to lead our team of investigators".

"We look forward to meeting and working with clients, old and new, and will be holding a reception in the summer in order to get to know local clients better."

**"...We look forward to working with and meeting clients, old and new..."**

The second member of the team is Ian Giddings who joined Hawkins in 2006, initially working with Andrew in London.

Ian holds a degree in mechanical engineering with electronic systems and specialises in fires, explosions and engineering failures.



**Ian Giddings inspects a fire damaged freezer**

Ian was an associate engineer at Satchwell Control Systems and then worked for seven years as a forensic scientist before joining Hawkins. He will soon conduct his 500th investigation.



**Office Manager Helen Child**

Office Manager Helen Child ensures the smooth running of an extremely busy office.

Helen joined Hawkins in 2006 and worked in the London office for the first few months. "No two days are the same", says Helen "and we all need a flexible approach to give clients exactly what they need".

It is an unusual job. Not many normal offices also house a laboratory and an exhibit store or regularly take

delivery of mangled or fire damaged objects such as the remains of the fridge freezer shown left.



**New recruit Claire Forryan**

Claire Forryan, the third investigator in Reigate, joined us straight from University in the autumn of 2006 having achieved her Doctorate in Physical and Theoretical Chemistry at Oxford and a Masters Degree in Forensic Science from King's College, London.

Claire is currently dealing mainly with suspected fraudulent claims, which are becoming an increasing part of our work. Losses within this category that might be fraudulent include paint spills on carpets and furniture, TVs that hit the floor for little apparent reason and staged burglaries.

"It is surprising just how much evidence we can gather from the, sometimes limited, information provided", says Claire and she finds great satisfaction in "...discounting some of the more fanciful accounts of how damage is alleged to have occurred".

**"...discounting some of the more fanciful accounts of how damage is alleged to have occurred."**

# Pedestrian killed by passing tipper truck



Close-up of the support leg that caused the accident

■ A tipper truck carrying building supplies from a depot to a building site caused the death of a pedestrian walking on the pavement. It appeared that the tipper truck's nearside support leg had not been stowed correctly so that as the truck was being driven the leg swept the pavement area, eventually hitting the back of a pedestrian and causing fatal injuries.

Preliminary investigations suggested no faults with the support leg's locking mechanism, thereby implying that the leg had not been stowed correctly by the driver before he began his journey. Whilst the tipper truck was stationary and the support leg was locked in its stowed position it was noted that the leg could not be moved into an extended position.

However, further investigations revealed a worn and partially defective locking mechanism that, when the vehicle was moving, allowed the support leg to extend outwards if the vehicle was subjected to a sideways force whilst decelerating;

such circumstances could occur if the vehicle clipped the nearside kerb during braking.

It transpired that the driver of the tipper truck had correctly stowed and locked the support leg in place before

the journey. However, the leg became extended when the truck clipped the kerb during braking whilst passing an oncoming vehicle on a narrow lane. The fatal accident happened shortly afterwards.

## ENGINEERING INVESTIGATIONS

Engineering losses are perhaps the most complex to categorise ranging as they do from road traffic accidents to product liability and from structural failures to electrical malfunction. Examples of recent cases include:

- ▶ Failure leading to a fire and explosion at an oil depot
- ▶ Collapse of a concrete tank due to corrosion of the steel reinforcing bars
- ▶ An accident on a "Log flume" amusement park ride
- ▶ Fault causing the unexpected discharge of a halon fire extinguishing system
- ▶ Crane failure
- ▶ Failure of the switchgear at a TV transmitter station
- ▶ Failure of a blow moulding machine
- ▶ Access cradle failure on a motorway bridge causing 5 fatalities

We have chosen a case study involving a complex motor vehicle to illustrate another facet of our investigations (see left).

# Hawkins

Fire  
Engineering  
Contamination  
Road Traffic Accidents  
Electrical  
Mechanical failures  
Railway accidents  
**and more...**

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