

# Millbrook Technology Campus in Southampton: an incubator full of surprises

Southampton university's incubation centre helps researchers commercialise cutting edge technology

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If you pop into a university's technology incubation centre you may be in for a surprise.

There you will find the three Germans, in offices once used by a Dutch multinational, who first came to Britain to perfect their English and found no reason to leave.



Dr Graham Murray at Bac2's office in Southampton

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Welcome to Millbrook Technology Campus in Southampton. The former Phillips Electronics offices that shout 1970s corporate blandness more than twenty first century cutting edge technology, are full of surprises.

Walk the corridors and you come across entrepreneurs working away on everything from plastic electronics, to low power semi conductor radio transceivers, from disease DNA identification to 3D hip replacement mapping technology.

The three Germans are Christian Maul, founder of [Redlux](http://www.redlux.net/) (<http://www.redlux.net/>) , Wolfgang Bruchner, co-founder of [Cascoda](http://www.cascoda.com/) (<http://www.cascoda.com/>) and Dennis Doerffel, founder of [Reap Systems](http://www.reapsystems.co.uk/) (<http://www.reapsystems.co.uk/>) .

They are all part of Southampton University's business outreach programme that with universities in Bath, Surrey and Bristol, operate incubators under the [Setsquared Partnership](http://www.setsquared.co.uk/) (<http://www.setsquared.co.uk/>) brand.

The model is to take both university spin outs and outside start-ups, house them in flexible office space, facilitate access to university resources and tutor them in the dark arts of business plans, market research and pitching to investors.

David Bream, Setsquared director, said: "We can run this on a very, very low cost model because the output is very high quality. That quality attracts the technology mentors and the professional service advisers who offer their help for free"

Take Mr Maul. He has developed a machine that can measure and map 3D surfaces in a fraction of the time that existing machines map in 2D, detecting flaws within two micro meters (a human hair is 100 micrometers wide). The machine's first application is to orthopaedics, slashing the time it takes to check metal on metal or composite on composite artificial hips. He already has one happy customer, with four more in the pipeline, and is now looking for a hand on investor.

He says he benefits from being in an incubator. "I tend to be a bit shy. Instinctively I would have been tempted to do the technology without talking to the customer," he says. "It was these people [pointing to Mr Bream] who gave me a kick up the bottom. Without that I would have developed a very different machine that might not have met customers' needs."

The Germans are not alone. Brit Graham Murray, founder of [Bac2](http://www.bac2.co.uk/) (<http://www.bac2.co.uk/>), is hard at work on his conductive composites that have the potential to transform the Black Country from last century's metal bashers to the world's future polymer pressers.

Mr Murray is targeting the fuel cell component industry first, with plastic electronics also in his sights. His materials conduct electricity as well as aluminium, which is used in everything from household appliances to military equipment to house electronics. Mr Murray's composites are also lighter and cheaper. "Why make a metal box when you can mould one," he says. His aspiration? "I really want to sell plastic components to Taiwan with made in Britain stamped on the box."

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