News Roundup

STN SCOTTISH TECHNOLOGY NEWS

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Archaeoptics safeguard St. Paul's Statuary

Glasgow-based laser scanning firm Archaeoptics has completed work on St. Paul's Cathedral to monitor the effect weather and pollution have on the building.

The work, undertaken as part of the massive conservation project on the West Front of the cathedral, involved scanning seven four metre high statues and a massive 100 square metre panel of high relief sculpture at sub-millimetre resolution.

In itself, this was a massive undertaking never before attempted in the field of 3D laser scanning. However, to complicate matters further, the scanning had to be undertaken on scaffolding nearly 150 feet off the ground, during winter where high winds, nearly sub-zero temperatures and driving rain were the norm.

The accuracy of the laser scans depends on both the scanner and the object. Archaeoptics uses an integrated camera and laser, acquiring 125,000 3D measurements per second, to scan objects and generate 3-D images. Depending on the distance, the device can scan down to micron-precision.

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"It's been the most physically exhausting job we've undertaken", said Alistair Carty, Technical Director of Archaeoptics. "Not only did we have to contend with the technical issues of using this class of 3D scanner in daylight, but the exposed location of the statues completely put us at the mercy of the elements."

Over 4000 scans were acquired over the course of a five week survey totalling over 1,400,000,000 measurements.

Archaeoptics also recently extended its range of services to include high-accuracy measured building survey and landscape survey using a new 3D scanner. The new scanner has already been in heavy use around the UK and enables Archaeoptics to scan objects from hand-size right up to entire buildings.

This new technology was recently put into use on The Standing Stones of Callanish on the Isle of Lewis. The stones, which are thought to date back as far as 3000 BC, form the second largest stone circle in Britain.

Archaeoptics was employed to scan the site by local businesswoman Emma Mitchell of the Original Callanish Blackhouse Tearoom who wants to create accurate scale replicas of the site for an educational, multimedia tourism project.

Emma hopes to have the project up and running in time for the next lunar standstill in 2006. This celestial event, where the moon appears to pass through the stone circle, takes place roughly every 18 and a half years and attracts stargazers and hippies from all around the world.

Alistair said: "We have still to analyse the data from this project and see what it turns up, although this was more a recording exercise than an attempt to get to the bottom of the mystery of its origins. Of course, any new light shed will be welcomed by the archaeological community and be a bonus to the original project aims."

Alistair, who is a computer scientist, spotted the potential for 3D scanning while working as

Peter Shakeshaft, who has spearheaded the development of the Archangel Informal Investment for the past five years, is handing over the reins to newly-appointed Chief Executive, John Waddell.
Peter Shakeshaft steps down >>

Former T-Mobile Vice President to oversee global expansion
WeeWorld, the creators of the popular 'WeeMee' personal digital identity, has appointed Celia Francis as its new Chief Executive Officer.
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a consultant for a company that carried out depth reconstruction from actual film for Hollywood.

He and his wife Dr Carolyn Sleith, a chemist, set up Archaeoptics in 2000 to combine their interests in archaeology and 3D graphics and have since established an envied reputation for high-quality 3D scanning.

They have worked on a wide range of prestigious projects, from protecting the last remaining sculpture by the Ancient Greek master Praxiteles, to recently monitoring delicate architectural features at Rievaulx Abbey, near Helmsley, North Yorkshire. In 2002, in conjunction with Wessex Archaeology, they discovered new carvings at Stonehenge.

For more information visit the Archaeoptics website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (102 kb)

Love of coral leads to Scots firm's expansion

A passion for cultivating and studying coral reef among wealthy executives and marine life lovers worldwide has had an unexpected spin-off for a Scottish optics company.

Apex Optical Technologies has developed a new optical viewing system for Norwich aquatic specialists Ogles Ltd designed for reef keepers – people who rear brightly-coloured corals and polyps in giant tanks up to three metres long.

The product has been a big hit worldwide, in particular in the US, Japan and Germany, with some of the three million people who have adopted the unusual hobby.

Professor Des Gibson, Co-Founder of Apex,

explained: “Reef watching is very popular with hobbyists and wealthy executives, who find looking at coral swaying in the water a great way to deal with stress.

“It can be a very expensive hobby. Some of the tanks cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to buy. In the past owners found it difficult to monitor the coral in detail to check for signs of disease. Microscopes are too close range whereas a telescope would be at too great a distance.”

The Mesoscope™ is a compact new optical viewing system that enables objects immersed in water to be viewed at high magnification with exceptional clarity. The optical innovation has been jointly patented by Apex Optical Technologies and Ogles Ltd.

The mid range focussing capability – 0.3 to several metres - sits between standard focus ranges for microscopes and telescopes, thus the trademarked name Mesoscope™.

Apex spent seven months designing and prototyping the Mesoscope™ before the product was launched into the market by Ogles Ltd. Apex has four manufacturing partner companies in China who provide production capability for the Mesoscope™.

It is expected that around 10,000 Mesoscopes™ will be sold by the end of next year into the reef keeping market through Ogles Ltd. In conjunction with Ogles, Apex Optical Technologies is also exploring educational, scientific and industrial markets for the Mesoscope™.

Professor Gibson said: “This is a conservative estimate. The Mesoscope™ is really catching on and we are constantly being asked to design new accessories such as digital camera attachments and assorted eye-pieces. The reef keeping market tends to have a lot of money to spend on gadgets.”

The company, which was founded by Professor Des Gibson and Dr Ewan Waddell last August, was set up to fill a gap in the market for the customised design, development, prototyping and production of optical systems.

It recently opened premises in Photonix, West of Scotland Science Park in Glasgow, where it is working on projects for customers including the European Space Agency, a German based medical imaging company, a Cambridge based biomedical sensor company and a North American ophthalmic lens manufacturer.

Professor Gibson, who is also a director in several other companies involved in optical coating technology, expects turnover to be in the region £1.2m within the next three years. He said: "There is a lot of demand for bespoke optical products and we are confident we will be able to increase our workforce from three to 10 highly skilled people within three years".

For more information visit the Apex Optical Technologies website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (91 kb)

Major conferences come to Scotland

Autonomous humanoids and dynamic photonic crystals, future display developments and medical applications of nanotechnology are just some of the hot topics to be discussed when four major international conferences come to Scotland.

Thousands of experts from around the world are expected to attend The 19th International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence, the EuroNanoForum 2005, the 31st European Conference and Exhibition on Optical Communications (ECOC) and EuroDisplay 2005.

Neil Francis, Scottish Enterprise Cluster Director for Micro and Opto Electronics, said: "It is a real coup for Scotland to have attracted four such prestigious conferences in one year and bears testimony to the country's growing reputation in these fields of scientific expertise.

"Not only will these conferences give our academics and companies a chance to showcase their wares to a global audience, they will also give a boost to the local economies of Edinburgh and Glasgow."

The world's largest and most prestigious conference on Artificial Intelligence starts on July 30 in Edinburgh and runs to August 5.

Leading speakers will include Professor Stephen Jacobsen, University of Utah and Sarcos Research Corporation, "Designing Robots: From Artificial Limbs to Powerful, Energetic, Autonomous Humanoids" and Professor Alison Gopnik from the University of California – "Babies and Bayes Nets, Causal Inference in Computers and Children".

In September EuroNanoForum2005 also comes to the capital. It will showcase European developments in nanosciences and nanotechnology for medical applications – bringing together many disparate disciplines with a focus on healthcare.

It is set to be the biggest nanotechnology conference in Europe in 2005, attracting an audience of 1000 delegates.

ECOC 2005, which is being staged between 25-29 September at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) in Glasgow, is on track to be a record event with exhibitors from across four continents already signed up for the exhibition. Countries such as Estonia are being represented for the first time, while the conference is also reflecting a significant upturn with nearly 900 papers approved for delivery during the event.

"The breadth of turnout expected this year underlines the fact that ECOC is among the world's most important exhibitions in this industry," said Simon Kears, Nexus Media Communications Marketing Manager.

Returning to the U.K. for the first time in almost a decade, the 25th International Display Research Conference: EuroDisplay 2005 takes place from 19-22 September at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre in Edinburgh, Scotland.

It offers a golden opportunity to learn about the latest developments in the electronic information-display technology, to network with top display-industry professionals from around the globe, and to view cutting-edge products from the world's leading display manufacturers.

Further information on these key conferences can be found on the relevant conference website. Follow the links below:

- International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence - Edinburgh, 30 July-5 August
- EuroNanoForum 2005 - Edinburgh, 5-9 September
- EuroDisplay 2005 - Edinburgh, 19-22 September
- ECOC 2005 - Glasgow, 25-29 September

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This story is also available as a pdf (91 kb)

The sky's the limit for EngD graduates

Former RAF man Tony Kirkham's career is really set to take off after he was awarded an engineering doctorate from the Institute for System Level Integration.

Dr Kirkham and fellow EngD doctorate graduate Dr Mark McKeown were recently presented with their EngD degrees at a graduation ceremony at the University of Glasgow.

The Institute is one of 15 UK EngD centres and is the only centre dedicated to electronic systems design, making the graduation not only a very special event for the Institute, but important for the Scottish electronics industry and the UK EngD programme.

Dr Kirkham was sponsored throughout the programme by Epson (Scotland Design Centre) and undertook research into the methodologies and design issues associated with the co-design of software, firmware and hardware functionality in silicon in SoC design.

Before enrolling on EngD, Tony had a successful career with the Royal Air Force firstly as an air traffic controller and then as a systems engineer working on radar and flight data processing systems.

On leaving the RAF, Tony worked as a consultant before spotting an ad for the EngD course in New Scientist in 2000.

The EngD programme has allowed to Tony to publish several papers, present at major conferences in Europe and Japan and have a patent application completed. Tony remains with his sponsor, Epson, and is currently working on a commercially confidential project which has a direct link to his research.

Originally from Northern Ireland, and a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, Dr McKeown was sponsored by Amphion Semiconductor (now Conexant) in Belfast.

Mark worked as a DSP design engineer with Amphion before transferring to EngD where he carried out research into reconfigurable semiconductor IP solutions for mobile communications systems.

Following graduation, he moved to AePONA, another Belfast-based company carrying out work directly related to his research. AePONA specialises in telecommunications standards, protocols and technologies and next generation telecommunications systems.

The remaining students from the 2000-04 EngD cohort will graduate in December 2005.

For more information visit the Institute for System Level Integration website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (97 kb)

DA signs deal with Jamster

DA Group plc has agreed a worldwide distribution deal for its Yomego mobile messenger product with Jamster, best known for launching the Crazy Frog video and ringtone.

Jamster, which operates across Europe, Australia and the USA, will distribute all four of DA Group's Yomego, character ranges: StereoTypes, WeeMees, Football Fanatics and Fantasy Babe.

Each Yomego character can be created and animated on mobile handsets, used as a wallpaper, video clip, caller ID and as a messenger to accompany and even read-out text messages.

Yomego will be available to Jamster subscribers in selected countries during quarter three via the Jamster company websites and other media promotions.

Mike Antliff, CEO of DA Group plc, said: "The deal with Jamster is particularly important. The endorsement that it brings is fantastic, and to have access to its massive global network puts Yomego on a new and very exciting level.

"Crazy Frog may not have been to everyone's

taste, but Jamster's reading of the market cannot be underestimated: with that ringtone the company demonstrated that it was totally tuned in to its customers.

"Our Yomego messaging products have attracted international interest and there is a growing belief that this is the most commercially attractive application of our patented technology and creativity.

"Yomego has been at the centre of an increasing number of contracts and negotiations. Networks and content companies are seeking rich content to support the new generation of picture phones, but equally brands across the whole spectrum of the entertainment business are looking at ways to capitalise on mobile communications. Characters that are fun, entertaining, easy to use and technically robust have tremendous potential in this arena.

"This is a particularly exciting time for DA and I see the deal with Jamster as the achievement of another important milestone."

The Glasgow company recently revealed it has narrowed its losses, reducing them by 24% to £2.01m. Mr Antliff said at the time that there is a renewed sense of 'confidence and optimism' boosted by a series of new contracts with companies like Vodafone and the BBC.

For more information visit the DA Group website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (77 kb)

MED appoints Miller to board

MicroEmissive Displays has appointed William Miller, a former Senior Manager at the Motorola electronics group, to its board as Chief Operating Officer.

The Edinburgh company, which said last month that it was not happy with the yield of the display manufacturing process, has appointed Mr Miller to oversee research, product development and manufacturing.

Mr Miller, 49, brings over 21 years experience in semiconductor manufacturing and further strengthens the company's executive team as it gears up to meet the challenges of high growth consumer markets such as Digital Still Cameras and Wearable Viewers.

He joins MED from Motorola's UK Semiconductor operations where, as Vice President and General Manager, he developed and implemented manufacturing business strategy during a period of significant change within the company resulting in improved profitability, reduced infrastructure and costs.

Bill Campbell, Chief Executive of MED, said: "His experience of running major semiconductor plants will be enormously valuable to us and demonstrates our ambition to build MED's global, polymer based microdisplays business."

The appointment comes a month after Jeff Wright stepped down as Chief Technical Officer. Wright was one of the founders of Micro-Emissive, along with Ian Underwood, in 1999.

MicroEmissive is in the Guinness Book of Records for having produced the world's smallest TV set.

For more information visit the MicroEmissive Displays website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (90 kb)

MD of National Semiconductor (UK) Ltd wins industry award

Gerry Edwards, Managing Director of National Semiconductor (UK) Ltd, has been presented with the JEMI UK award for his outstanding contribution to UK high-technology manufacturing.

He was given the honour at an awards ceremony at the Semiconductor 2005 conference in Edinburgh at the end of June.

The award was presented by Iain Hyslop, Chairman of JEMI UK Ltd, which represents the interests of manufacturers and suppliers of equipment, materials and services for semiconductor production across the UK and Ireland.

He commented: “Gerry Edwards is one of the leading lights in the semiconductor sector and we are delighted to present this award for his contribution to high-technology manufacturing.”

Edwards has spent most of his working life in the semiconductor industry. From Motorola in East Kilbride, moved to Texas Instruments in the US and to Inmos, a new start up business in Colorado.

Returning to the UK with Inmos, which was later purchased by ST Microelectronics, he spent the next 10 years at their plant in Newport, playing an instrumental role in making the plant cost competitive.

In 1992 Edwards was approached by Philips Semiconductors to head up their sub-micron facility in the Netherlands, where he spent the next four years. During this time the plant was awarded The Solid State Electronics Plant of the Year.

In 1996 he moved back to Scotland to take up the post of Operations Director at National Semiconductor in Greenock.

In March 2000 he was appointed Managing Director and in December 2000 was promoted to Vice President of Operations.

He said: "It is a real honour to receive this award which is not just for me but for everyone at National Semiconductor. "I joined National in Greenock in 1996 and am proud to have

played my part in the continued success of the plant and to have helped the business to adapt and move with the times."

For more information visit the National Semiconductor website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (85 kb)

IDS in line for two awards

Infinite Data Storage, which develops compact optical disk drive and connectivity technology, has been nominated for two major European electronics industry awards.

The Fife-based company has been short-listed in the 'Design Application' and 'Supplier of the Year' categories of the Elektras.

The Elektra 05 Awards recognise the most innovative semiconductors, the most enterprising distributors, the most environmentally aware, and the most employee focused companies.

The winners for each of the 14 award categories will be announced at a gala dinner at London's Grosvenor House Hotel on September 27.

Douglas Kinloch, IDS Vice-President of Business Development, said: "We are very pleased to be nominated in two categories, particularly when you consider the strength and depth of the success of the other companies also nominated."

The nomination comes at a busy time for the company which has recently landed a major licensing deal to supply embedded DVD firmware to an international company.

Kinloch explained: "This software means you can push a button on the device and burn a disc without a PC. That means, for example, all photos from a digital camera can be burnt directly onto a disc. Unfortunately we are bound by confidentiality agreements not to say who our customer is at this stage."

IDS develops devices such as optical disk

drives for customers including IBM. It employs 40 staff, mostly at its base in Dunfermline, with a handful in the US, Japan and Malaysia.

Having modified its strategy in 2003, IDS now offers bespoke products based on its core technologies to major consumer electronic, PC and imaging firms, as well as licensing certain elements of its IP.

As a result, the company is now securing contracts to specifically tailor its design efforts to fit with the customer's existing or new product lines.

"The change in approach has opened up a number of successful opportunities for us and enabled us to exploit our core IP strength by matching it to a proven capability in product delivery. Our recent investment round will help us to accelerate the development process and ensure we are on track to meet the supply demands of our new contract wins," commented Jim Leslie, Managing Director of IDS.

The company has raised £8m since it was established in 2000, including a £2m cash injection last year from several sources.

There has been speculation that IDS is considering flotation but Kinloch dismissed the rumours saying that he "is not aware of any plans to float".

He said: "If you are a small company and you have been around for a while people start to ask if you are planning to list on AIM. It's too hot and sunny and we're too busy at the moment to think about things like that."

For more information visit the Infinite Data Storage website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (99 kb)

Nallatech signs agreement with US computer giant

Nallatech, the FPGA high-performance computing solutions specialist, has entered into a strategic agreement with one of the world's leading computer companies.

The agreement with the Californian-based Silicon Graphics Inc (SGI), which employs 2600 people in 25 countries, will further extend the Scots company's market reach to a huge audience around the globe.

The companies plan to offer new products and services based on SGI's reconfigurable system technology and Nallatech's Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA) computing technology. FPGA based computing is described by the companies as a 'revolutionary' class of supercomputers. These systems can process vast amounts of data at high speed, with applications for the homeland security and defence industries. Other key markets include oil and gas, bioinformatics, medical imaging and data distribution and visualization systems.

Allan Cantle, CEO of Nallatech, which is one of Scotland's fastest growing technology companies with 65 staff, said: "This is undoubtedly the most significant strategic agreement in the company's history. It is a significant milestone for Nallatech and will stand us in good stead in proving our technology to a global market. Linking with SGI lends tremendous credibility to what Nallatech has been doing over the last 12 years and rubber stamps our technology model."

The agreement came about after one of Nallatech's largest customers suggested the two companies had complementary skills and should work together. "We have been getting to know each other for the past 16 months and have found that there is a good cultural fit between the companies," said Cantle.

Nallatech has over a decade of field expertise and knowledge in FPGA computing, delivering

technology with the ability to 'deep-scale' using multi-FPGA systems coupled with tool suites and development environments.

The collaboration is a natural extension to SGI's research and development initiatives focused on tightly coupling FPGAs into its shared-memory NUMAflexR architecture, to provide an application-adaptive high-performance computing environment.

"Working with Nallatech, we continue on SGI's path toward delivering a revolutionary class of supercomputers that will catapult users into a new era of computing," said Dave Parry, Senior Vice-President and General Manager, Server and Platform Group at SGI.

"Ultimately we plan to offer reconfigurable computing technology as one of the primary vehicles for accelerating application performance within SGI's renowned high-bandwidth, low-latency multiparadigm computing architecture."

"With this collaborative effort, Nallatech and SGI plan to deliver nothing short of the world's best FPGA-based computing solutions," said Cantle.

"Organisations that require highest levels of performance, reliability and flexibility in demanding processing applications will benefit from our shared resources and innovative technology."

Cantle said engineering will be ramped up in Cumbernauld as a result of this new agreement and hopes to rival last year’s worldwide revenue growth of 80%. He added: “I expect that we will look to recruit in a modest way over the next few months.”

He added: “We may also have news of one or two other agreements within the next three months or so.”

For further information visit the Nallatech website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (90 kb)

Archangels appoints new Chief Executive

Peter Shakeshaft, who has spearheaded the development of the Archangel Informal Investment for the past five years, is handing over the reins to newly-appointed Chief Executive, John Waddell.

After many years as a driving force within the syndicate, the former gatekeeper believes the time is right to play a less prominent role and reduce his day-to-day commitment.

However, Shakeshaft will remain on the syndicate's board and continue to serve on the boards of several Archangel companies.

Peter Shakeshaft commented: "After being on the frontline for many years, I am looking to substantially reduce my executive commitment and being able to work mainly from home – although I will be available to support John Waddell in his new role. In John, I believe Archangel has found an ideal successor, with the necessary credentials to take the syndicate – which is already the largest and arguably most successful group of its kind in Scotland – to the next level of its development."

A qualified solicitor, John Waddell joined Noble Grossart Limited in 2001, after serving for over 11 years with Christian Salvesen plc as in-house lawyer and on the management board, followed by three years involvement in strategic planning with the Bank of Scotland. Prior to that, he spent five years in commercial practice.

Archangel Chairman, Barry Sealey added: "John Waddell's wide-ranging and relevant experience makes him eminently qualified to take Archangel forward as it continues to mature and grow. Our portfolio of companies now represents significant potential in terms of value creation for investors while, at the same time, there is ample capacity for further investment."

Last year, Archangel Informal Investment, which was formed in 1992, invested £8.6 million in early-stage companies. These included Scalar Technologies in Livingston, which has developed systems for ultra-thin coatings of films and polymers, Arrayjet, Lab 901, Touch EMAS and Optos.

Its portfolio now comprises 30 companies with an estimated investment value of £50 million.

For more information visit the Archangels website.

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This story is also available as a pdf (88 kb)

Former T-Mobile Vice President to oversee global expansion

WeeWorld, the creators of the popular 'WeeMee' personal digital identity, has appointed Celia Francis as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Ms Francis has worked in the mobile sector for a number of years, most recently as Executive Vice President of Business Marketing for T-Mobile International.

She previously headed T-Mobile's Product Marketing in the United Kingdom and worked with IDEO, the world's largest product and services development consulting company.

Ms Francis holds an MBA from the MIT Sloan School Of Management and a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University.

She will lead the company as it embarks on a period of global expansion through strategic

alliances, partnerships and presence around the world.

She will also help to build the company's user base and consolidate WeeWorld's position as one of the world's leading visual communities and the WeeMee as the first comprehensive mobile and Internet digital identity.

Mike Kinsella, the previous Chief Executive and one of the founders of WeeWorld, remains with the company and will be leading WeeWorld's mobile strategy.

WeeWorld has created a unique service within the mobile and online sectors, providing sophisticated visual communities, based on easily-created, customisable cartoon versions of oneself for social networking online while remaining anonymous.

A WeeMee can also be downloaded to desktop or mobile and used in email and picture messaging. In the past 18 months, the company has completed deals with some of the world's largest companies – including Microsoft – and the WeeMee is now at the heart of many of the world's biggest online and mobile communities including MSN, Friends Reunited, Classmates and many more. Nearly five million users around the world have created their own WeeMee and thousands more continue to do so daily.

WeeWorld recently completed a new round of institutional investment from the European fund of Benchmark Capital, one of the world's leading investors in innovative new technologies.

The company intends to use the investment to extend its presence globally, creating new sales offices in key territories and doubling the company's technology workforce in its new Glasgow headquarters.

Ms Francis said, "I'm delighted to have joined WeeWorld at such an exciting period in the company's history. It has established an excellent reputation with the biggest players across the online and mobile industries and has built a unique and enviable user base. "We now have to build upon this very solid and credible foundation to ensure the company remains at

the forefront of the rapidly evolving mobile industry and put a WeeMee on the screen of every mobile phone."

For more information visit the WeeWorld website.

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