

MailOnline

'I'm living in poverty': Inventor of the wind-up radio calls for stronger patent laws after being carved out of profits for his gadget

- Trevor Baylis claims he has no choice but to sell or remortgage his house
- Inventor, 75, says patent law loophole means he lost out on profits
- He invented 250 products but relies on income as after dinner speaker

By [Louise Eccles](#)

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He is regarded as one of Britain's greatest inventors after creating the wind-up radio in the 1990s.

But 20 years on, Trevor Baylis says he is 'totally broke' and has to sell his beloved home.

Despite the success of the wind-up radio, the 75-year-old says he has received very little of the profits.



Trevor Baylis, pictured in his workshop at his home on Eel Pie Island, Twickenham, said despite the success of his wind-up radio invention he is now living in poverty and will now need to sell or remortgage his beloved home

He claims a quirk in patent law meant the business which manufactured the radio was able to tweak his design and take control of the product.

Now Mr Baylis, who was awarded the OBE in 1997, wants the Government to introduce stronger legal protection for inventors.

Under current laws, patent infringement is a civil rather than a criminal offence.

The pensioner, who lives alone on Eel Pie Island in Twickenham, South-West London, said: 'I've got someone coming around in the next couple of weeks to do a valuation on my house.

'I'm going to have to sell it or remortgage it – I'm totally broke. I'm living in poverty here.'



Mr Baylis, who received an OBE for his invention, wants stronger laws to protect inventors

The inventor lives in a one-bedroom home overlooking the Thames with his pet labrador.

He built the house, which boasts its own mooring berth and a five-metre swimming pool in the entrance hall, in the 1970s for £20,000.

A keen jazz fan, he was drawn to Eel Pie Island because of its reputation for hosting influential jazz and blues artists in the 1960s.

Some 120 people live on the island.

Mr Baylis, who was recently named among the 50 greatest inventors in British history, said: 'If people are not going to be rewarded for their inventions, then why should they invent at all? This nation was built on inventions and manufacturing.'



He created the radio so third world countries could learn about AIDS prevention without needing batteries

'People such as James Dyson have done very well, but not many of us have all the business skills we need to bring a product to market. Students need to be taught about intellectual property in schools.'

After inventing the wind-up radio, Mr Baylis went on to produce wind-up versions of a torch, mobile phone charger and MP3 player. He has invented more than 250 products, including a shoe that generates enough electricity as you walk to charge a mobile phone.

He called on the Government to introduce tougher laws, in line with the US and Germany, which would allow people who steal intellectual property to be jailed.

Mr Baylis added: 'The Government should offer financial support, advice on developing people's inventions, and help to keep that manufacturing here in the UK.'

'It would make money for the British economy.'



The wind-up radio inspired other inventions like the wind-up torch and wind-up phone charger

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I feel for Trevor as I too had a patented idea of mine ripped-off in the 1980's. As it is a civil offence I was told that I would need at least £10,000 on the table (a lot for my small company in 1985) for professional fees just to try and mount a case. And, even if I won, the other company may just declare themselves bankrupt and leave me with the full legal costs. A pyrrhic victory they call it. Since that time I have never patented anything else. A Patent tells everyone how your idea works so far better to save the Patent fees and make some money before they catch up. Then go and invent something else. This way at least you can make a living which Trevor clearly hasn't.

- [David](#) , Pwllheli, United Kingdom, 18/2/2013 00:43

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He invents things that have transformed people's lives- especially those in poor, remote locations, and he's broke, yet trash like Chris Brown, Rihanna and the entire Kardashian nest are wealthy because....? Because the world has gone WRONG people.

- [Penelope](#) , Australia, 18/2/2013 00:41

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Trevor Baylis claims he has no choice but to sell or remortgage his house.meanwhile lots of lazy people who have not contributed anything to society live comfortably off state benefits.

- [Danger Mouse](#) , Manchester UK, 18/2/2013 00:40

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Who one Earth is going to plug their phone into a shoe? No wonder he's broke, and there is no way he is in the top 50 inventors from the U.K.

- [Mooncheese](#) , El Dorado Hills, United States, 18/2/2013 00:37

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A true inventor, but not given what he deserves..so sad

- [me](#) , There, 18/2/2013 00:36

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A bit more detail in this article wouldn't go amiss.

- [David Bourke](#) , Rochester, United Kingdom, 18/2/2013 00:35

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it all boils down to greed . where theres money to be made the ordinary man will get shafted by the big companys

- [I'm just saying](#) , Devon, 18/2/2013 00:35

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Surely this is a wind-up?

- [AmINothing](#) , Manchester, United Kingdom, 18/2/2013 00:33

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Very sorry to hear this has happened to Trevor Baylis. This is bad news for up and coming inventors.

- [Trevor](#) , monmouth, 18/2/2013 00:31

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How we treat the greatest people in this country. In America he'd be a multi millionaire by now. What a disgrace.

- [mikefanta](#) , norwich, United Kingdom , 18/2/2013 00:29

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