



Flash of inspiration: Titahi Bay inventor John Poppleton checks out his 'phonebook highlighter', one of his earliest creations. He has set up an inventors' headquarters and meeting place and a website that offers advice to would-be inventors. Picture: ROB KITCHIN

Sea's waves feed the brainwaves

COLIN PATTERSON

GIVING up a regular job to become a fulltime inventor is like jumping into a canoe and rowing out into the big unknown, says Titahi Bay man John Poppleton.

Two years after saying goodbye to a 23-year career as a firefighter, Mr Poppleton has yet to successfully market any inven-

tion or earn income from one — facts that neither surprise nor dismay him.

"I know where I am going but it takes time. I keep on persevering and looking for opportunities.

"I'm lucky in a way, because I have a partner who works."

Mr Poppleton's big hope is an

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easy-squeeze toothpaste tube which eliminates the problem of toothpaste splattering when it is forced out of a tube.

Colgate, New Zealand's biggest supplier of toothpaste, is based in Australia and Mr Poppleton has a friend pushing the product on his behalf.

Eight months ago, Mr Poppleton bought a boatshed on Porirua Harbour and transformed it into the Inventors Studio, a place of reflection and creativity.

Hearing the waves lapping around was stimulating, he said.

"I did not want to go into an office.

"Here you can look out the win-

dow across the harbour and be inspired."

The Inventors Studio also serves as headquarters and meeting place for the Wellington Inventors Network, where the region's creative brains can talk about work among their peers.

"Inventors are constantly hitting brick walls because they don't know the right avenues. But if you network with others, you can utilise their networks and experiences."

Monthly meetings attract about 15 active members. "We don't have any million-dollar success stories — at least, not yet."

Inventors are born not made. "Because it's in your blood, you

are constantly coming up with different solutions to a problem. It may not be a new-fangled idea but a different perspective on solving that problem.

"Coming up with ideas is easy. Finding the right person at the right time to market them is harder."

Mr Poppleton has also set up a website to provide inventors with practical advice on patents and marketing.

He is developing an inventors' exhibition, to open at Pataka, Porirua's Museum of Arts and Cultures, next January.

"I would also like to set up a Kiwi innovation museum in a pyramid on the Desert Road."