HOWARD STONE:

To illustrate the power of the Whitworth network, Howard Stone likes to tell the Albuquerque story.

It begins in 1999, the year Stone embarked on his Whitworth Scholarship journey. He was at an industry event in London when he met a man named Alan Ross, who had just received his Whitworth medal. The pair spoke for 10 or 15 minutes.

Six years later, Stone secured some work in New Mexico, America.

“I worked in Albuquerque for a year and a half and, would you believe, there’s a scholar who lived in Albuquerque. I emailed him out of the blue, said: ‘I’m coming over, are you free to meet me?’ I went out there, Alan and his wife took me around, my family moved out there with me and every Saturday we all went out for breakfast on old Route 66”.

Stone, the current president of the Whitworth Society, says the scholarship also opened a door for him to a nine-month project in Dubai. As someone who came across the programme by spotting a poster on a college wall, he could never have imagined the value it would bring to his life.

Stone says Whitworth Scholars are leading in every sphere of engineering. Some are recent graduates, others are professors or senior researchers. There are leaders of industry and business owners. The work they are involved in ranges from building giant infrastructure, like roads or bridges, to researching the resistance an embryo encounters in the fallopian tube.

“We have some amazing people inside the society,” Stone says proudly.

Like Sir Joseph Whitworth, Stone left school early to become an apprentice. Later, he studied his way through a mechanical engineering degree, a doctorate and an MBA.

Now a business owner and consultant, he admires the ability Whitworth had to make tough decisions and find practical solutions to problems. Another story Stone enjoys telling is the one about how Whitworth (inventor of the Whitworth Rifle) managed to plot the trajectory of a rifle bullet back in the 19th century.

“You don’t have high speed cameras, you don’t have the laser techniques we have today,” Stone explains. “Being a Victorian, he built a shooting range in his back garden, put a piece of paper every 10 yards, fired the gun and then put the pieces of paper together again to measure the hole and how the trajectory of the bullet went. You can have a huge impact on how guns work all over the world just by doing one simple test.”

To engineers considering applying for the Whitworth Scholarship, Stone gives the same advice he dishes out to his three young daughters.

“I’ve been fortunate to get scholarships from multiple places because I’ve gone out and found them, not because they came to me,” he says. “You are only limited by your own imagination.”