Claims:

1. A device for use in locating and repairing a pipe leak, comprising a flexible elongate probe, the probe having a head portion at a distal end thereof adapted for insertion into a fluid containing pipe, the head portion being equipped with a sensor for detecting a nearby fluid leak in the pipe and means for holding and releasing a sealing element at or nearby the detected fluid leak location.

2. A device according to claim 1, wherein the sensor comprises a microphone or hydrophone.

3. A device according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the means for holding and releasing the sealing element comprises a clamp or grasping mechanism.

4. A device according to claim 3, wherein the means for holding and releasing the sealing element is either mechanically coupled through the flexible elongate probe to a user operable actuator at the proximal end of the probe or electronically coupled through the flexible elongate probe to a user operable actuator at the proximal end of the probe.

5. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the head portion is further equipped with a camera and light to enable inspection of the inside of the pipe.

6. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the head portion of the probe device is elongate in form, at least to the extent that there is a longitudinal separation between the means for holding and releasing the sealing element and the sensor.

7. A device according to claim 6, wherein a flexible barrier formation is be provided at a location on the head portion intermediate the sensor and the means for holding and releasing the sealing element.

8. A device according to claim 7, wherein the barrier formation is located close to the sensor, the barrier formation permitting fluid flow in the pipe but impeding longitudinal passage of the sealing element.

9. A device according to claim 7 or 8, wherein the sensor and flexible barrier formation are located at the proximal end of the head portion, and the means for holding and releasing the sealing element located at or near the distal end.

10. A system for locating and repairing a leak in a pipe, comprising:

a pressure sealing insertion chamber adapted for attachment to a stop tap fluidly coupled to the pipe;

a probe device capable of extending through the pressure sealing insertion chamber and having a head at its distal end;

wherein the probe device head is equipped with a sensor for detecting a nearby fluid leak in the pipe when inserted therein, and means for holding and releasing a sealing element; and

an actuator configured to selectively release the sealing element from the head of the probe device when actuated.

11. The system according to claim 10, wherein the pressure sealing insertion chamber is adapted for attachment to, and sealing of, a stop tap such that the stop tap can be opened without substantial fluid flow from the pipe.

12. The system according to claim 10 or claim 11, wherein the probe device head has an ogive shape and includes a cavity to house the sealing element and an aperture through which to release the sealing element.

13. The system according to claim 12, wherein the means for holding and releasing the sealing element comprises a spring-loaded clamping mechanism configured to hold the sealing element in the cavity.

14. The system according to claim 13, wherein the actuator includes a Bowden cable coupled to clamping mechanism.

15. A method for locating and repairing a leak in an underground water pipeline, the method comprising:

closing a stop tap attached to a service line;

attaching a pressure sealing insertion chamber to the stop tap;

providing a probe device with a distal end inside the pressure sealing insertion chamber, the probe device distal end having a head with a releasable sealing element;

opening the stop tap and urging the probe device head through the open tap valve and into the service line in a direction opposite the main flow direction in the pipe;

locating a leak site in the wall of the service line and releasing the sealing element from the probe device head when it is at or nearby the leak site.