

SUMMER 2016

# NewsSheet

The latest news and views from Potters, fine limit sheet metal manufacturer and finisher



## Scanning New Horizons

Quality and efficiency are always high on the list at Potters. As part of the manufacturing process an automated laser inspection scan is taken of the first cut blank of each production batch, providing an internal quality check after the laser cut and/or punching process. It confirms the part going forward to subsequent departments is dimensionally correct to the programmed drawing, thereby ensuring that the rest of the manufacturing process is working from an accurate foundation.

Our previous camera based scanner, although exact, was restricted by blank size and shape and a little on the slow side. It was also only capable of scanning flat blanks and so the time had come to upgrade this technology.

The new Virtek LaserQC AFM arrived at Potters just before Christmas and had an immediate impact. It is a non-contact, 3D laser scanning inspection machine

that provides automatic measurement and digitising capabilities with improved processing speeds over our previous model. Capturing more than 500 data points per second, it still has all the capability of a 2D system in measuring flat blanks but with the improved functionality of the 3D version it is now possible to scan raised features such as bushes and inserts and even completed formed parts.

This improved laser scanning process helps to decrease the first stage inspection time by generating a colour coded report to show the accuracy of the part against the original programmed flat development or model.

The tolerances can be adjusted to suit customer requirements. These scans are kept on file at Potters, becoming the electronic template, thus eliminating the need to maintain a physical template and forms an integral part of our ISO 9001 quality assurance procedure.

**POTTERS**

INNOVATORS IN  
SHEET METAL COMPONENTS

## “Young Guns – Go For It”

As part of our ongoing improvement policy we are always on the lookout to add to our skill base and expertise. However, trying to find skilled sheet metal workers of the right calibre for Potters is becoming increasingly difficult these days. Some years ago we realised that one of the best ways to overcome this was to develop our own talent pool and as part of this Jack Gussin joined us in February of this year as our latest apprentice, learning his trade from the wealth of experience available from our longer serving employees.

During our initial search and interviews it soon became apparent that Jack was made of the right stuff to join the ranks at Potters, having already started a broad based engineering NVQ course covering many aspects of engineering from construction to IT. The metalwork modules we offered particularly sparked his interest and since then he has not looked back.

Jack is currently attending college on a day release and will complete his engineering NVQ course this summer. In the autumn he will then specialise on the sheet metal fabrication and welding aspects of level 3. Jack is keen to pick up all the knowledge he can within the business and has expressed a desire to learn and understand the latest range of CNC machinery that Potters have recently invested in, especially the folding technology, highlighted in our last newsletter. His only regret at the moment is that he had to sell his bike recently to get a car and with summer arriving he always liked weekend bike-rides in the sun. We wish him all the luck and a bright successful future at Potters.



**Want to find out more?**

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## The Smallest Room in the House

**A**s part of our ongoing development we recently installed a new walk in welding extraction booth.

Over the years the work mix asked of us by our customers has been ever changing, and can create interesting challenges to overcome. This particular investment has been driven by some relatively new customers wanting us to help them resolve supply issues they had in their supply chain, by being able to manufacture parts that are larger than our historical product mix.

Traditional extraction methods using an air bench or movable hoods are perfect for small components and the like. However for larger products, such as cabinet and panel work, additional floor space and larger work bench jiggling areas are required.

Our new VertEx modular extraction system provides a complete extraction booth for both welding and fettling in a self contained working area. It utilises the very latest technology of VertEx ultra low power fans for highly efficient dust/fume capture. The ease of movement of large component parts into and out of the extraction booth combined with the ability to work around the component, rather than continually handling the part to gain access to the areas needing welding, ensures that products are manufactured both efficiently and safely, with minimal handling.



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## The Biggest Room in the House

**A**s part of our expansion plans, additional space was always going to be a prerequisite of providing increasing capacity. With the growing demands of an increased workload and a call for assembly areas, we needed to spread our wings a little. Luckily for us, the neighbours were restructuring their business requirements too. This enabled Potters to take over a 5000 sq ft factory unit adjacent to our automated powder line and existing stores area.

Once the decision was made, preparations on the new unit got underway immediately. A third of the new buildings space was cordoned off to create a single manufacturing cell, including a stand alone CNC press brake, inserting machine and a new walk in welding bay (see smallest room in the house article). With many operations all in one area this enabled larger products and certain components to be processed more efficiently. These new efficiencies extended throughout the existing factory also creating a faster workflow through the various manufacturing stages.

During a hectic weekend and with the help of many of the staff, the entire stores department moved into the remaining area of the new unit. Additional racking and storage along with a new mezzanine floor, has meant the stores areas has doubled in size. The increase in space and storage has enabled us to extend our already successful Kanban facilities and stock call off programs. Returnable packaging, used for some time at Potters with some long standing customers, has started to become of interest to many others too and demand is due to increase. With direct access via the estate access road to the main thoroughfare, our goods in/out are now much better located than previously.

Moving forward, the new factory unit have running along one side two large open plan offices and a large reception area. These are also due to be taken over by us in the coming months, and will further enable additional efficiencies with many smaller offices dotted around the existing factory being centrally located under one roof. Externally, it will enable much greater parking availability and a facade more in keeping with our internal facilities. For those of you who have visited Potters previously you will understand the improvements this will bring.

The benefits of the new biggest room in the house have consequently freed up the old stores area. Cleared of the stores racking it is now a good open space and perfect for our new assembly area. Its location at the end of the manufacturing process and next to the powder coat line means it's ideally located to increase workflow efficiencies and capacity alike.

## Stage One Youth Win Drama Award

**R**eaders of previous newsletters will already know that Stage One Youth is a local youth theatre group we have supported since they started in 2010. Last year's show, Miss Saigon, involved us in a more tangible form than normal as we manufactured the American Embassy gates used in the pivotal scene.

We are delighted to hear that Stage One Youth have once again won the National Operatic & Dramatic Association award of Best Youth Production in the London Region for their staging of the iconic musical with the innovative use of the gates being commended.

As you will see, right, this year's show is *Grease*. So far they haven't asked us to make a car but have said they are on the lookout for someone who may have a connection with an owner or club that may have an authentic 1950's american show car that they may be able to film as part of a dance routine. So if anyone has any links they would be delighted to hear. Contact can be made via email on stageoneyouth@yahoo.co.uk

