

WINTER 2015

NewsSheet

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



Welcoming a New Year with a New Vision

The last 12 months has been quite a year in Potters development. A new Sales Director has joined the team in addition to a number of new employees across many aspects of the business. We have taken delivery of two new Safan E-Brake Electric Pressbrakes, a TimeSaver 42RB Rotary Brush Deburring Centre and a 3D inspection scanner. Investments that are clearly not made without a belief in a strong and developing team, plan and future.

Much discussion has been taking place here at Potters about the future and it led us to re-examine various aspects such as mission statements, quality policies and our overall vision. Were they still relevant? As you might guess, we had a board on the wall with words such as quality, value, safety, excellence, innovative, customer focussed, profitable, investment, proactive... to name but a few. These are all words you would probably expect

to see, expect to hear and whilst they are all valid, all important, they are also all widely used. So we looked for a way to encompass these things, and others we value internally, into a feeling. Not just for customers, but for everyone that comes into contact with the company. The feeling turned out to be... PRIDE. Our vision is therefore:

To be the best in our field at making our customers' products by delivering pride; to our customers, to our employees, to our suppliers and to our owners.



POTTERS

INNOVATORS IN SHEET METAL COMPONENTS

So, there is a lot to bring you up to date with and the best place to start is with the people. As business has continued to increase year on year we have been conscious that an expansion of our Commercial Department would be needed in order to, not only maintain our levels of responsiveness to our customers needs, but also ensure that we continue to provide a proactive approach to a growing customer base. As a result Julian Fox has taken on the role of Managing Director in order to welcome Russell Bridger as

Sales Director. Russell joined the business in the summer having most recently had 16 years experience in the field of plant and equipment sales into our industry.

Julian commented "Russell has been a valued and respected supplier to Potters for more than 10 years and I am delighted that he has now chosen to join our Board to help Dean and I continue to develop the business in line with our collective vision".

Prior to Russell joining, as an interim step, Billie Hayden joined the department in the role of Customer Service and Internal Sales Co-ordinator. This is a pivotal role, being the link between our customers and our operations team. Most, if not all, of our customers will have been dealing with Billie regularly for some months now and we feel sure will have built a very positive view of her. As Julian puts it, "If I was a customer, I'd want Billie looking after me".

The operational team has also continued to grow under the guidance of our Operations Director Dean Bailey and we welcome all those who have joined over the last year. In addition, a further apprentice is planned in the near future to follow in the footsteps of Martin Hearn who continues to enhance his knowledge and skills with us.

Want to find out more?

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Going Green Takes On A Whole New Meaning

As you can see from the photos, our latest investments in state of the art press brake technology have taken us down a green path. Not as flippant a comment as you may think. Our two new Safan press brakes, both bought in 2015, have not only brightened the factory but as a result of their servo-electronic drive system they demand an electric power source rather than the traditional oil and pump technology. Therefore we use a cleaner, more environmentally friendly energy source that is only demanded when we are actually using it rather than also being consumed in idle mode.

In addition to saving energy, the ability to programme the forming operation from a 3D model prior to beginning to set the machine, store the programmes on our network and then visualise the part in 3D whilst carrying out the forming process has led to efficiency and capacity gains. The affiliated software can accept a 3D model and be used to determine the best method to complete the forming using our library of available tooling. The Safan then guides the operator on how and where to set the tools and the sequence of bends to carry out. Using the stored programme means that the same process will then be used next time the part is made, irrespective of whether the operator has changed, ensuring a consistent and best practise approach.

Julian Fox said, "As a Board of Directors, we analyse our investments in great detail, both before we make them and after they arrive. Technology is a wonderful thing but it is crucial that the people using new machines understand the reasons for the investments and feel part of any initiatives

to get the very best out of them. In the case of these two press brakes we bought one first, collected data from its use over 6 months and that data provided the justification to add a further machine. The team involved have even watched videos of a Ferrari pit crew doing a pit stop. In 1950 Ferraris were proud of a time of 67 seconds. In 2013 it was down to just 3 seconds. Ok, maybe we're not Ferrari, but that shouldn't stop us thinking along the same lines in seeking improvements. Oh, and by the way, no, I'm not about to buy a Ferrari... more press brakes, maybe!"





Smoothing Out Bottlenecks

2015 began with us being fully operational with our new TimeSaver Rotary Brush Centre. Dean Bailey, Operations Director, brings the decision-making process and subsequent experience into focus... but not sharp focus!

"In 2013 we invested in an Amada C1 Laser/Punch combination machine with automated load and unload in order to increase capacity. Naturally we needed to ensure that the subsequent departments could then process the extra work in a timely manner to avoid bottlenecks. As we had expected, within a short space of time the pressure on our graining and deburring areas was clearly growing and we therefore invested in the TimeSaver 42RB Rotary Brush.

Many trials had been carried out in preparation with a variety of existing customers' products and a range of materials and finishes. We were therefore very confident in proceeding with a not insignificant investment. The process uses a vacuum belt and a rotary brush motion with dedicated sets of brushes being used to avoid any cross contamination across different materials.

We manufacture a lot of Zintec parts (Zinc Coated Mild Steel) and were unable to use a graining process as the pressure required would remove the zinc coating, thus resulting in time consuming edge deburring processes. The 42RB ensures that burrs are removed and edges smoothed whilst just 'tickling the surface' meaning that all Zintec parts can now be processed in a much more efficient

semi-automated fashion. The same is true for poly-coated materials such as pre-grained stainless steel, which we can also process through the new method without damaging the protective coating. It is worth noting that, as a result of the rotary motion involved, the edges of all internal holes and apertures are also smoothed, something that is not the case when using a normal manual deburring process as it deals only with the outer edges. Levels of quality and consistency with regard to smoothness we offer have, without question, improved across a range of materials and we have been delighted that customers have been very happy with the results. The automated system has also enabled the department to increase its throughput, eliminating the anticipated bottleneck".



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Avoiding Conflict

The subject of Conflict Minerals has begun to grow in focus for many customers in recent times, particularly those supplying products into the American market. As a result we have been researching the subject and established a policy to support our customers confidence in meeting their obligations. A copy of this policy statement is available to be emailed upon request from our Sales Department.

Conflict Minerals Policy

L.L. Potter & Sons (Taplow) Ltd considers the issue of conflict minerals to be of major concern as a funding source for organizations that are involved with human rights abuses, environmental destruction, bribery, terrorism and other unlawful activities in conflict areas.

Whilst not subject to US Law, in seeking to fulfil its social responsibility in procurement, the company has therefore adopted, in principle, a policy of non-use of conflict-affected minerals as raw materials. Since the company does not source minerals directly, it seeks to ensure that its suppliers have similar policies in place and can clearly identify the sources of their minerals.

Being a sub-contract sheet metal fabricator we work with designs produced by our customers and as such may not have full control of whether Conflict Minerals are specified as part of the design. In products we see in the main this is not the case but each design would need to be considered in its own merit. Where possible we will strive to advise customers if we believe they are designing in Conflict Minerals in order that they may consider potential alternatives.

The company works with a number of suppliers who also have policy statements associated with this subject and in the unlikely event that we should discover that a supplier is inadvertently or otherwise using conflict affected minerals, the company will immediately take steps to ensure that the supplier discontinues their use of those minerals or will cease procurement from that supplier.

Stage One Youth Give Potters Centre Stage

In September, the local youth theatre group we are proud to support staged their latest production *Miss Saigon*. In this iconic musical the tension mounts to a scene set at the American Embassy in Saigon where the lead characters, Chris and Kim, have their growing love story ripped apart by the realities of war as Chris is forced to evacuate by helicopter.

When they asked for our help we were a tad concerned they wanted a helicopter made! Fortunately this was done with sound and lighting effects...Phew! They did however want to visually show the Embassy gates and the struggle of the Vietnamese citizens to get in to the compound, hoping to join the evacuation. In true dramatic theatrical style the gates needed to give the impression of an immovable obstacle whilst actually being constructed in sections that could be easily and safely moved by a cast of 14-21 year olds. Ultimately these gates prove to be the barrier that Chris and Kim cannot overcome in time and, though finally broken through, it is only for the Vietnamese to witness the horror of the helicopters disappearing into the sky, condemning them to a fate unknown.

Here's what we came up with.

