

The directors in front of one of the daily deliveries to Ventilator Challenge UK



Ventilator Challenge UK

2020, The year we may want to forget, but many valuable lessons have been learnt. The changes we have seen in the world this year are quite remarkable and have given rise to some unique challenges to our daily routines and lifestyles, that would have seemed inconceivable only a year ago.

As the Pandemic broke and the first Lockdown started in March 2020 Potters were approached by Ventilator Challenge UK to provide sheet metal components for the manufacture of new ventilators in the fight against Covid. The quantities of items required ranging into hundreds of thousands were initially overwhelming. We also had additional demands from other medical customers to Potters, who also dramatically increased their requirements and were stating the same comment, "This is to protect the NHS." - What could we say?

Potters got the staff together, explained the situation and took up the challenge.

We began delivering parts on a daily basis after only a few days. Operations Director Dean Bailey says "Our first priority was to identify the processes required and what we needed to do to make it happen. Within a matter of days we had increased our daily throughput by more than 250%. We all understood how important it was to achieve the deadlines given and this wouldn't have been possible without the

efforts and expertise of our team." After several months of non-stop, continuous manufacturing for the Ventilator Challenge UK consortium, Potters role in this challenge came to a satisfactory end. We are proud to have played our part in this historic project and have learnt a lot of valuable lessons about how we work with one another and how much better we can all be. The Ventilator Challenge along with demands from other medical supply companies took up all of our manufacturing capacity and then some, it stretched the company and the team to its limits. The phrase 'Adversity does not build character it reveals it' has never felt more appropriate about our staff and the manner in which they responded. Operations Director Dean Bailey concludes "The sheet metal manufacturing industry has changed greatly over the past eight months, standing out from our competition is essential. We need to innovate as well as motivate to achieve our customer's goals and expectations."

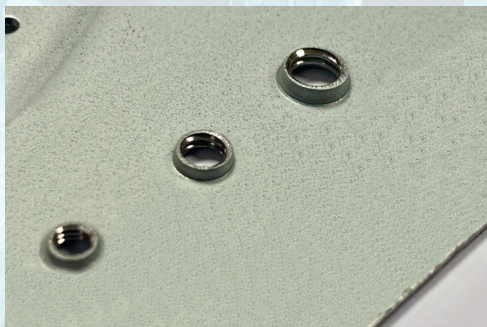
Normal service has now resumed at Potters. We have a highly motivated team, battle hardened, fresh from their recent experiences working in a well equipped factory that has the ability and capacity to shine in this brave new world.

Mechanical assembly units ready to be fitted out



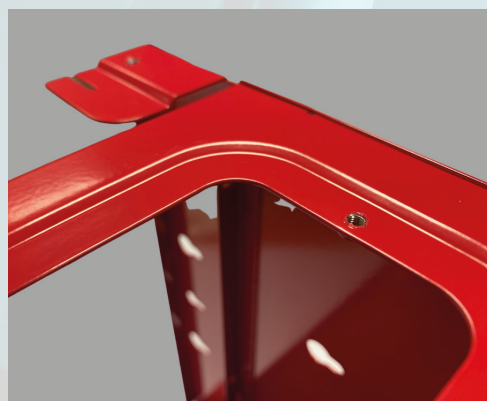
New tooling technology

Tapping Technology



The ability to create M3 & M4 taps whilst we are processing at the blanking stage of manufacturing enables the ability to create tapped holes via an automated process instead of adding a clinch nut at a later manufacturing stage using a separate machine and additional labour. The manufacturing efficiencies this provides ultimately provides additional savings when creating the end product.

Offset form tool



Offset, joggle, z-bend or lap form, are all terms for creating a second parallel plane within sheet metal components. This is usually a process carried out on a press brake as a secondary operation after the blanking process. It is also normally limited to straight edges. However utilising the new Offset joggle tool, we can now create this type of form within the automated blanking stage of manufacturing. This also makes the joggle form more consistent and repeatable because both bends that make the form are carried out in a single stroke. Furthermore we can now create joggle forms in a curved, nonlinear direction, in effect creating a lip in straight or circular patterns. **Talk to us to see if either of these processes would suit your designs.**



One of the bays in the new assembly area

All the bells and whistles

The next stage in Potters on going development has now been finalised. The refurbishment of the old blanking unit, into a dedicated 3,500 sq ft assembly area.

Over the last few years several Potters customers have been requesting a higher level of additional fitting of components and sub assemblies into completed mechanical frames prior to delivery. This additional service we provide, enables our customers to subcontract simple mechanical fit and form processes to Potters, leaving them with the far more complex process of installing the electronics for their final build.

The new unit has been extensively refurbished. Providing new offices, training rooms and a secure storage room for tooling, fittings and dedicated B.O.M items. New modular workstations and assembly lines that can be retasked for each customer's unique requirements have been fitted and updated lighting and heating have been installed to create the optimum environment for assembly

and inspection.

On completion of the unit, which was only handed over from the building contractors in late November, Dean Bailey, Operations Director at Potters commented "The new assembly unit will bring multiple workstations previously located around the existing factory under one roof, creating a far better managed and efficient assembly process."

We have been reviewing many of the build processes currently utilised on our customers jobs, and have identified several areas which have now been updated with new equipment to bring in a higher level of automation and improved working methods. This has created greater efficiencies to get products through to the dispatch department for finished goods storage or delivery. The new unit has created an improved service that Potters can now offer to customers old and new. Not only can we fabricate the sheet metal components you require we can add the bells and whistles too.

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- Meet the team
- We've got the drive!

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