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Chartered status

Dr Lee E J Styger FIMMM, engineering director at sub-contractor Springer Rapid Industries, has been awarded Charter Scientist (CSci) status by the Science Council.

Turnkey agreement

Callender Aeropart, Accrington, Lancs has entered into a relationship with Mazak Machine Tools which will see the Worcester-based machine tool maker provide turnkey solutions to the aerospace sub-contractor. Callender already has 32 Mazak machines. "We want to introduce Mazak machines to other areas of our business," says Callender's director/general manager, Ian Hindle. "We are looking more and more to turnkey solutions and, as a machine builder, Mazak probably knows better than us how to get the best out of their machines. The simple truth is that we are focusing so much energy on managing the opportunities offered by our customers that we need this trouble-free scenario of somebody supplying us with a manufacturing solution that works."

Furnace investment

West Bromwich-based ADI Treatments is installing high-tech furnaces that will expand production capacity by more than 50 per cent. The £1 million investment was supported by Regional Development Agency Advantage West Midlands to the tune of £95,000. Austempered ductile iron (ADI) is used in place of steel and aluminium, offering savings in weight (10 per cent) and cost (50 per cent). German-owned ADI supplies components to the automotive, earth moving and machinery industries and the wind turbine industry.

DMS slashes 5-axis programming times; boosts machine availability

Ludlow based DMS Plastics has slashed 5-axis machining programming times following the installation of SESCO's WorkNC CAM.

"Before we installed WorkNC we could spend a week programming a part in 5-axis with a combination of co-ordinates and teaching methods. Half our production time could be tied up with programming," explains Jeremy Ellis, technical sales manager. "We produce one or two new tools each month, making the non-productive time unacceptable.

"For a food dispenser panel, programming the 5-axis trimming of the customer's name and logo would have taken 20 hours manually – it only took 30 minutes with WorkNC."

For DMS, it was virtually impossible to fully recover programming costs without being uncompetitive.

"Downtime on the machines has



been dramatically reduced and the increased efficiency will delay the need to invest in further machine tools," says Mr Ellis.

DMS' work takes in ABS mouldings for vending machine enclosures and body armour for the police and prison

service, to signage for leading automotive manufacturers, who use the signs throughout their dealer networks. In addition, it machines its own prototype form tooling from model board prior to making production tooling in aluminium or epoxy resin.

MoD spend benefits UK suppliers

UK sub-contractors are set to benefit from the MoD's selection of MAN Nutzfahrzeuge AG as preferred bidder for 5,000 cargo, tanker and recovery support trucks worth £1.1 billion.

The MoD has also placed an option for further vehicles and will now negotiate exclusively with MAN.

Half the manufacturing for the MAN contract will be carried out in the UK. The impacts will be felt from Middlewich in Cheshire, the MAN ERF UK manufacturing base, to many other parts of the country. Truck deliveries are scheduled to start in 2007.

The Transport & General Workers Union said that the MoD's decision

would create more than 600 new jobs and secure 100s more across the UK. It had favoured a consortium which included Birmingham-based van maker LDV and defence contractor Stewart & Stevenson, but now recognised the MAN selection as the best alternative for the UK.

Other members of the successful consortium include: Marshalls in Cambridge; MAN UK in Swindon; EKA in Gerrards Cross; Claytons Commercial in Ainscough; Heil Trailers in Bilston; Fluid Transfer of Nailsworth; Andover Trailers from Andover; and Gloucester-based Permalli, as well as the nationwide MAN service network.

48-hour service

A 48-hour 'gold star' laser cutting service is being offered by Laserfab, the sub-contract sheet metal division of Spalding-based Guttridge Services. The service promises a 48-hour turnaround on orders for laser cut items.

"Our standard service aims to despatch most laser cutting orders within seven to 10 days but we recognise that situations can arise when customers are facing a real emergency. That's where our gold star service will come in, with despatch capability within 48 hours of receipt of order," says the firm.

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Hone-All's expansion plans

Hone-All Precision is to install a new deep hole borer at its Dunstable facility.

The company is, in fact, now more accurately described as a single-source supplier of fully machined components, and this transition has seen increased demand for the company's services, hence the investment.

Space for the new unit has been made through the move of manual honing activities to an adjacent site.

The company has reclaimed around 1500 ft² of floorspace, allowing it to site a smaller version of its Boehringer deep hole boring machine.

The intention is to transfer short billet and small batch work from the existing deep hole borer, reducing set-up times, shortening lead times and improving competitiveness.

The 24-employee company will be taking on two more skilled workers.

Getting the best from machines – remotely

Mid-Wales-based Tallet Engineering squeezes the most from its eight Citizen CNC sliding-head lathes. The machines work through most nights and at weekends when the factory doors are locked with no-one around. Their only connection to the outside world is a mobile phone that is at director Terry Frost's side.

Set up five years ago, the father-and-son firm services high-precision fastener and connector type parts from aerospace, defence, navigation control and electronics sectors, both here in the UK and abroad.

The company's rural setting poses no problems. A recent 10,000-part order from France saw Tallet able to reduce a French competitor's three operations into a single cycle on one of its Citizen lathes. "And we will deliver," maintains Terry Frost, "because of our round-the-clock production capability."

Looking to maximise the utilisation and return on investment, the company became the first in the UK to take on NC Engineering's NC Alarm Alert system.



Mr Frost says he can get up to three calls a week from machines. It might be minor such as low levels of lube oil or coolant, or the workpiece counter has reached its batch limit. However, it can be more serious such as failure of a bar jam or a tool.

"There would be nothing more disheartening than closing the factory door in the evening to return in the morning and find a machine had a problem and shut down, and we had lost eight or more hours' production. Worse still if we had a bucket full of scrap or reworks," he adds.

Dicker ups productivity with Mori Seiki Duracenter

Sub-contractor Dicker Precision Components has reduced set-up times and combined previously separate operations following the installation of a Mori Seiki Duracenter 5, 3-axis machining centre fitted with a 4th axis.

Since 1972, the company has been making pump components, flanged access fittings, heavy duty covers and solid and hollow plugs for the oil and gas industry in batches of up to 100. It machines a wide range of materials including plastics, mild steel, Inconel,

stainless and Hastelloy, some of which are tough to cut.

The Duracenter chosen by Dicker Precision included a 4th axis – which enables the company to complete many of its parts in one setting – and a chip-conveyor with powerful flushing, which makes keeping the machine clean a simple task. Compared with its old machine, the company has experienced dramatic performance improvements.

"Tool changes are a factor of five times quicker and rapid feed rates are

three times faster. The Duracenter is also very accurate, it has had a positive effect on our piece part costs and effectively provided us with additional capacity for work," says director David Painter.

Ease of setting is another strength, says director Raymond Love: "The probe on the machine allows you to pick up an edge, two faces for a centre line or three points for the centre of a circle. This saves us a lot of time over the dial indicator methods we used previously."

First in Europe

Birmingham-based Frost Electroplating is the first electroplating company in Europe to achieve the ISO/TS 16949:2002 quality management system for automotive production. Developed by the major worldwide motor manufacturers, the standard goes well beyond the better known ISO 9000:2000 and QS9000 quality standards.

Shearline simplicity

Sub-contractor Shearline of Ely, Cambs has worked with Linx Printing Technology, a world leader in industrial ink jet coding, in the design of one of its machined components used in industrial ink jet coders so that manufacturability was designed into the product. The key element has been the reduction of complexity through reduced part count supported by Shearline's single part, complex, integral feature machining capability.

Unicut cleans up

Sub-contract small mill/turned parts specialist Unicut Precision of Welwyn Garden City has installed a Dürr Ecoclean Minio 85C compact washing machine worth £60,000 from StarragHeckert UK. "We investigated all the options available using different cleaning processes and carried out numerous trials using parts which tend to be very difficult to clean due to internal slots, cross drillings, intersecting holes and grooves which tend to trap swarf," says joint managing director Charles Kenny. The decision to buy the Dürr Ecoclean was finalised after extended trials at the Brackley showroom of StarragHeckert UK which, Charles Kenny, adds, "achieved unbelievable results".