

P R E S S R E L E A S E

**TURNED PARTS SUBCONTRACTOR ANNOUNCES
MORE INVESTMENT AND REORGANISATION**



Brian Owen (right), Managing Director of Precision Products, and a CNC Setter, with the two new Citizen L12 sliding-head turn-mill centres at Rustington.

Investment in CNC lathes and metrology equipment totalling more than £500,000 in the first half of this year will be the main promotional theme on the Precision Products stand at MACH 2016.

The turned parts subcontractor, whose two factories are located near the south coast of England, will also announce a far-reaching internal reorganisation involving several new appointments, a 25 per cent increase in the number of night shift operators and 50 per cent more staff in the quality control department, which is now in a new, dedicated inspection area.

Two-fifths of this year's investment was spent before MACH. Two ageing CNC Swiss-type lathes have been replaced by two 12 mm bar capacity Citizen L12 sliding-head turn-mill centres with Lemca Elite 220 bar magazines, demisters and fire extinguishers to allow extended periods of unattended running between the day and night shifts. First onto the machine was a new contract to turn 60,000 components from 5 mm diameter mild steel bar to a length tolerance of 0.05 mm.

Another machine that has already been purchased is a Hommel Opticline for automatically inspecting exterior features on rotational parts. Installed in early March, it has taken over from conventional metrology equipment. Once programmed to measure features on a particular job, the machine will streamline quality control procedures in the inspection department when repeat batches are produced. Staff training is already under way.

Another advantage will be the equipment's ability not only to carry out measurement routines without tying up an operator, but also to produce PPAP and other inspection reports automatically. This facility will save a lot of time and eliminate the potential for manual transcription errors. There is even the capability to connect other digital metrology devices so that internal component features can be included in the reports.

Wickman multis to be phased out

Brian Owen, Managing Director of Precision Products, has taken the decision to discontinue the company's use of the remaining four Wickman multi-spindle cam autos at the firm's main factory and headquarters in Rustington.

The freed space will be used to accommodate new CNC sliding-head and fixed-head lathes in the capacity range 32 to 42 mm, which will account for the additional £300,000 spend before the middle of the year. A similar exercise was completed two years ago before the last MACH show, when a similar number of multi-spindle cam autos were replaced by single-spindle CNC turning plant.

The latest round of investment will mean that the subcontractor will operate exclusively CNC lathes, 20 sliding-head models from 12 mm up to 32 mm capacity and eight fixed-head turning centres. The largest of the latter, an existing Miyano ABX 64 triple-turret, 10-axis CNC turn-mill centre with a Y-axis on two turrets and driven tools in all three, can turn-mill complex components up to 65 mm in diameter.

So by mid-year, the only non-CNC machines operated by the company will be six Escomatic coil-fed autos at the firm's second manufacturing site at Hollingbury, near Brighton. These highly productive machines, which will continue to produce components from 0.5 mm to 7 mm in diameter from brass, mild steel and stainless steel, contribute to an output from that factory unit alone of a quarter of a million parts per week.

Alongside the capital plant acquisitions, the subcontractor is reorganising its management structure. Eric Mole has taken over as Operations Manager at Rustington, while Ian Jenkins, whose first project two years ago was to streamline the inspection and packing functions, has been appointed Production Manager.





The Hommel Opticline installed in a new, dedicated inspection area at Precision Products, Rustington for automatically inspecting exterior features on rotational parts.

Mr Owen notes that as much time and effort these days is being spent on careful packaging of machined components in returnable, foam packed containers as is spent on programming lathes to produce the parts in the first place. It is essential to maintain a high standard of cosmetic finish on components, from kitchen taps to drink dispensers, to which end in-cycle deburring is frequently included in programs to avoid the use of rumbling.

Almost every component machined needs environmentally friendly cleaning after machining, for which purpose the company operates an aqueous machine in Rustington and a totally enclosed solvent machine with ultrasonics at Hollingbury. In this way, the subcontractor can offer customers the cleaning process of their choice. Components are regularly transferred between the two sites to meet such requirements.

Some customers choose to single-source components from Precision Products, such as its reputation for reliability. An example is a manufacturer in the fluid connector sector that until recently dual-sourced its parts. The customer has signed a two-year agreement with the subcontractor for the supply of 100 per cent of a range of 30 components from brass and stainless steel.

Other trends that Mr Owen has noticed are an increase in the amount of R & D input by the subcontractor into its customers' projects, as well as growth in the amount of assembly work at Rustington.

Wide range of industry sectors and materials

Precision Products has more than 40 years' experience machining stainless steels, which account for around 40 per cent of throughput. Many of the company's lathes are equipped with high pressure coolant to promote chipping, especially the machines that process larger diameter bars. Other materials regularly processed include aluminium, brass, steels, titanium and nickel alloys.

Aerospace contracts have grown to account for 20 per cent of turnover, following Precision Products' accreditation to AS 9100 Rev C in 2014. The sector has been quiet in the recent past, according to Mr Owen, but is ramping up again in the run-up to MACH 2016. It is notable that non-aerospace work has also been won as a result of receiving AS 9100, such is the esteem in which the accreditation is held throughout manufacturing industry.

Components for drinks dispensing equipment accounts for another 20 per cent of the subcontractor's business, while the road vehicle, motorsport, food, gas, medical and electrical sectors continue to be important.

High level of staff retention

Precision Products recognises the importance of recruiting good people and retaining them. Many employees have worked for the subcontractor for 25 years and some have been with the firm for over 35 years. It is partly down to a policy of continually upgrading skill levels throughout the workforce to keep pace with advances in modern production and inspection technologies.

The company also has an active apprenticeship scheme. The latest member of staff, James Davis, is now fully qualified – the fourth apprentice in as many years – and the next will be a mature student who will train to be a setter-operator on day release to Northbrook College, Worthing.

At MACH 2016, visitors to the Precision Products stand, number 5699, will receive a warm welcome from Mr Owen and his team. It will be the fourth successive time that the subcontractor has participated in the MTA-run exhibition.

At the show two years ago, a lot of enquiries were received from existing customers as well as new prospects across a wide spectrum of industries and geographical areas, which more than justified participation at the event. Trade exhibitions continue to form the mainstay of the subcontractor's new business acquisition activities.

