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Honing & Deep Hole Boring



Move over, it's business as usual

Some 12 months after deciding it was time to move Hone-All Precision into larger premises, husband and wife team Colin and Andrea Rodney are putting the finishing touches to a 20,000ft² factory in Cherrycourt Way, Leighton Buzzard. Twice the size of the company's previous premises in Dunstable, the Leighton Buzzard site has been completely revamped, with little remaining of the original building apart from the exterior brickwork and external cladding.

Although deep hole boring and honing remains Hone-All's core expertise – honing being the ideal process to achieve mirror finishes of 0.1 μm or 4 CLA, the ISO 9001:2000 accredited company has in recent years expanded the range of machining and ancillary services it offers to customers. This enables the company to supply a finished component right through to the component marking that is included in the unit price. Also included is a bar sawing capacity up to 250mm diameter, which means that customers do not have to pay a material supplier for billeting when forwarding free issue material.

Re-location within five miles of Dunstable has enabled the specialist subcontractor to

retain its entire workforce, all of whom, according to managing director Colin Rodney, have contributed to the numerous environmental, health and safety and production efficiency initiatives intended to provide the best possible working environment. "Doubling the size of our premises has allowed us to plan the new shopfloor layout with the emphasis on improving the flow of work through the factory and eliminating possible bottlenecks," he says. "The intention is to avoid time-wasting 'back and forth' journeys as a fast response to customers' requirements and a tightly controlled quality environment is still the driver when dealing with companies in technology driven industries such as oil and gas."

Demand for Hone-All's services has remained steady with petrochemical and precision tubing among the most buoyant market sectors. Typical applications of the company's specialist capability include components such as drive shafts, rifle barrels, con rods, hydraulic tubing and compressor cylinders. Sizes range from a minimum bore maximum bore diameter of 300mm machined to tolerances of microns over a maximum overall length of three metres.

According to director Andrea Rodney, a key factor behind the move to Leighton Buzzard was the realisation that future investment in production equipment could possibly be influenced more by the limited floor space available on the Dunstable site than by the requirements of a diverse and growing customer base.

"By opting for a phased move of production equipment into the new factory, we have created an opportunity to purchase the machines we need rather than machines that would fit into the limited space available in the Dunstable factory," she explains. "To date we have added two honing machines, a deep hole borer, and a facing and centring machine – which has released capacity on our CNC lathes – and we will continue to invest. Hone-All currently focuses on the precision machining of components up to 250mm diameter by three metres long and the additional investment, while not extending that machining envelope, will bring further efficiency improvements demand for shorter leadtimes."

Consolidating onto a single site has eased the pressure on the management team – the previously separate manual

honing section having now relocated from its Houghton Regis premises to the mezzanine area of the new factory. The mezzanine runs virtually the entire length of the building, allowing oil tanks equipped with retractable hoses to be located at one end. This means that machine tanks no longer have to be filled by hand, while swarf spinning allows oil to be reclaimed and a higher price obtained for the cleaned swarf.

Mrs Rodney adds: "These and other measures such as high energy efficient lighting mean that Hone-All will over time recoup up to 10% of the total investment, while productivity improvements should contribute at least 15%. However, one aspect that defies a formal cost justification is customer perception. Hone-All now has the facilities to match what I believe is already a strong corporate image. This is crucial in terms of winning new business from advanced technology industry sectors such as petrochemical, because the market leaders in these sectors are themselves conscious of the image they project and the positive effect it has on their businesses."

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