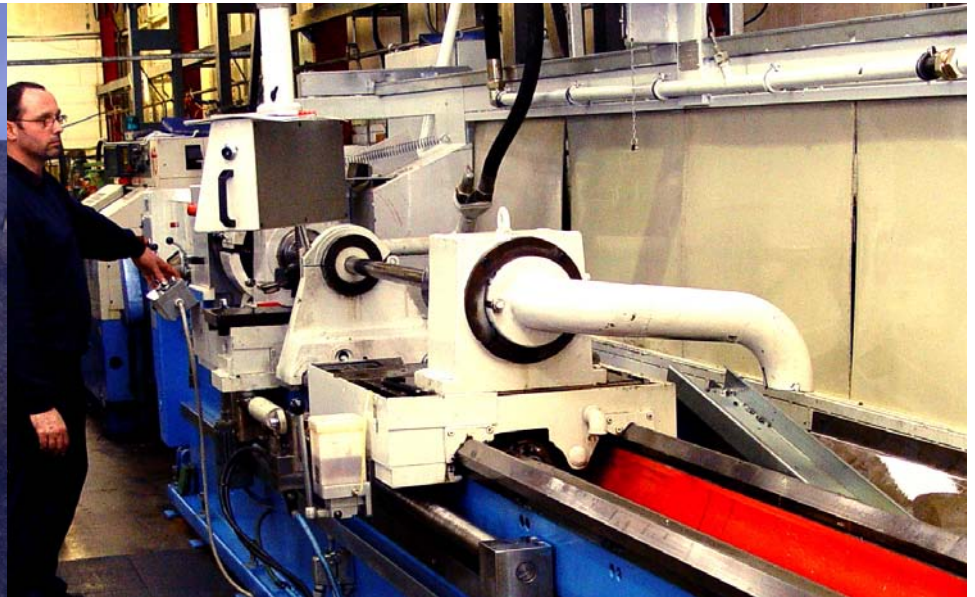




Editorial for Metalwork Production. Steady increase in involvement with the Oil and Gas industry



Typical examples of components machined in Hone-All Precision's 'one stop shop'.

Hone-All Precision's new Boehringer VDF B3 deep hole borer has delivered invaluable additional machining capacity.

A second wave of North Sea oil exploration and development is bringing with it the encouraging prospect of continuing orders for specialist OEMs and sub-contractors throughout the UK. It is certainly good news for Hone-All Precision Ltd, which has seen its involvement with the oil and gas industry increase steadily on the back of its expertise in machining exotic and difficult-to-machine materials.

Typical oil and gas components machined by this 25-employee sub-contractor include tubing hangers, turbine housings, rotors, flow tubes, sample bottles, manifolds and high-pressure assemblies. Materials tend to be high specification alloys such as Inconel, 4140 and 17/4PH stainless steel as well as more unusual materials such as Ferrulium, Staballoy and Datalloy. And, reflecting the nature of the oil and gas industry, many of the orders are small to medium batch, although they do repeat on a regular basis.

The ISO 9001:2000-accredited company defines itself as a one stop shop supplier of fully-machined components but honing remains at the heart of its business. "We can machine components up to 250 mm diameter by 3 metres long within our 10,000 sq.ft. Dunstable factory, and our

ability to hone bores to an extremely high standard of dimensional tolerance and surface finish continues to attract new customers," says Colin Rodney, Managing Director. "This expertise, combined with a commitment to a fast response to customers requirements and a tightly controlled quality environment, is particularly helpful when dealing with customers in technology-driven industries such as aerospace, motor sport, and oil and gas."

"Honing, he adds, is the ideal route to achieving the mirror finishes of 0.1 μ or 4 CLA often demanded by customers to prevent wear on the seals in hydraulic systems, for example."

"Tolerance stipulations of +/-0.025 mm or better are not unusual either," says Andrea Rodney, Director. "This should be seen in the context of the +/-0.05 mm tolerance that is the best we can achieve on a deep hole boring machine, where the surface finish, although very good, cannot match that achievable with honing."

According to Colin Rodney, growing demand, particularly from the oil and gas sector, is driving ongoing investment in new equipment, most recently in a £100,000 Boehringer VDF B3 deep hole borer.



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Another CNC lathe is top of the investment agenda at Hone-All Precision.

This can bore through-holes up to 140 mm diameter in difficult-to-machine materials such as Inconel. Installing a third deep hole borer has resulted in more orders, with many of these components requiring additional machining. But it has also increased the pressure on our turning section, so we are planning to order another CNC lathe."

This continuing investment in production equipment is backed by a similar commitment to inspection and quality control. "Our emphasis is on continuous improvement because that benefits both the customer and the people who work here," says Andrea Rodney. "One example is the creation of cells to minimise the movement of heavy material and components through the machine shop, which contributes to shorter lead times. This is also the reason for our emphasis on process flexibility, with individual machine operators encouraged, via on-the-job training, to broaden their skills set.

"Although price and component quality are always factors in a customer's decision to place an order, lead times are increasingly a major consideration. We are totally committed to improving delivery performance because we believe it is the key to staying one step ahead of the competition. It is, therefore, an integral part of our 'best practice' initiative."

Hone-All Precision, which also services other high value-added, short lead time industry sectors such as motor sport, gets much of its work via recommendations. However, Andrea Rodney acknowledges the value of participating in national exhibitions "because taking part helps to promote our 'unique selling point'. Our combination of in-house services – honing, deep hole boring, gun drilling, turning, grinding, milling and EDM drilling – is an unusual one that we believe allows customers to benefit from a more direct involvement with component quality, cost and lead times."

This all-round machining capability explains why, in addition to day-to-day work, the company is frequently asked to help out, often at very short notice, in instances where in-house machining has failed to achieve the tight tolerance, high quality surface finish specified on the drawing or out-of-tolerance tube is causing problems. "Whatever the reason for the 'phone call,'" says Andrea Rodney, "we are prepared to take on the challenge with the minimum of fuss and at a competitive price."



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