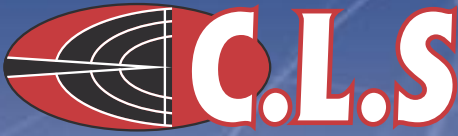




# Confederation of British Metalforming

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## DENNIS HELPS CARLTON LASER HIT THE SPOT



Many companies see globalisation as a threat, but Carlton Laser Services' Dennis Kent reckons the challenge of low-cost producers can be a positive catalyst.

"We lost some work to China, and the price was 30 per cent below ours. We looked at our design, re-engineered it and managed to achieve a 20 per cent saving. Now we've got the business back," he says.

It's typical of the positive mindset, which has helped Dennis take the Leicester firm from the cusp of financial collapse to become CBM's Supplier of the Year.

CLS has been trading since 1980, producing laser-cut, CNC-punched metal or fabricated assemblies, for a wide range of manufacturers and OEMs.

Its core markets include specialist vehicles, telecoms, vending machines, food processing equipment and hospital equipment.

Dennis acquired the business in 1998, having worked at Carlton for the previous fifteen years.

At the time, the firm was in the red, despite significant previous investment in automation, and lean manufacturing technology.

"It was a struggle. Morale was low, and the bank was keeping a close eye on us," he recalls.

However, thanks to support from NatWest, Dennis was able to embark on a new investment-led strategy.

"Price wasn't an issue for customers then, it was all about quality and delivery. We started seeing how we could drive costs out, to work smarter not harder."

The solution was to install a Bystronic £1.5 million fully automated laser-punching cell.

"We went to Switzerland to see the machine, and were very impressed. It was very rare for any UK firm to have such kit, especially for a sub-contractor, but we needed a machine that could run 'lights-out'," says Dennis.

The machine was so complex that it needed six months of bedding-in time.

"Eventually, we brought four engineers in at once, who were specialists in lasers, punch systems, materials handling and software," says Dennis.

"Finally, it worked as it should and made us the market leaders. It wasn't simply the quality, and the ability to operate seven days a week. We'd been working on lead times of three weeks, but we got

that down to five working days, and just 24 hours in some instances."

Major corporate customers, including GKN Sankey, were attracted by the performance of the new centre.

However, although their orders provided a much-needed short-term sales boost, Dennis was already looking elsewhere.

"We began to diversify, with a view to avoiding the real high-volume work. We wanted to focus on the tighter tolerance stuff, with low production runs but where we could add real value," he says.

"We were also determined to get in at the design stages, so we could save money for customers, and also become more a solutions provider, rather than a traditional sub-contractor."

Dennis also identified several niche operational areas; supplying components for horse-boxes to one customer, and machinery for sorting rice or coffee beans to another.

Medical technology has proved another lucrative sector, and Carlton now supplies brackets and panels for hospital beds.

Continued investment has also been critical to the company's renaissance.

"We spent around £400,000 on an automatic brake press cell. We could load it with ten different jobs on Friday night, then come in on Monday and they'd all be done," says Dennis.

"Again, no-one in the UK had that kit, which we brought in from Italy. Three manufacturers were involved in supplying us, as we had a Colgar press brake, a gantry-mounted Fanuc robot and a Starmatic handling system, all handled by UK Machine Tools"

By 2005, Carlton was so busy that its 17,000 sq ft Troon Industrial Estate premises were crammed to capacity, with equipment, orders and workers.

[continued >](#)

Associated Bodies:



Fastener Engineering and Research Association  
[www.fera.org.uk](http://www.fera.org.uk)



Cold Rolled Sections Association  
[www.crsauk.com](http://www.crsauk.com)



International Institute of Forging Technology  
[www.iiftec.co.uk](http://www.iiftec.co.uk)



## CBM at Fastener Fair in Coventry

The 12th Fastener Fair for the UK and Ireland took place at the Ricoh Arena, Coventry on 11 and 12 June, with 140 exhibitors from around the world. Just over 1000 visitors attended from all over the UK and Ireland, 75% of whom had purchasing responsibility for their companies. According to the organiser, Jerry Ramsdale, there were more visitors this year compared with the event of two years ago, which he considered to be a remarkable achievement for a mature event that's been running since 1995.

CBM had a stand at the Fair, as did CBM members Caparo Atlas Fastenings, Clyde Fasteners, and Smith-Bullough. The event was attended by many CBM Fastener Sector members over the two days, and most of these visited the CBM stand, which was

managed by Alan Arthur and John Newnham.

The Fair held a Gala Dinner at the end of the first exhibition day. Comedian John Moloney entertained the 230 guests, and also helped support an auction and other fundraising events that raised about £3000. This has been presented to the Dreams Come True charity, which was put forward by Gary Dickson of Caparo Atlas Fastenings, and gives terminally or seriously ill children the chance to live their dreams.

The organisers are planning to repeat the Coventry event in two years' time. The location will be the same, because of its easy access from most parts of the country, and the probable date will be June 2010. Fastener Fair also takes place in alternate years in Stuttgart, Germany, with the date already set at 7th and 8th October 2009. In addition, this year will see a new event, Fastener Fair Budapest, on 22nd and 23rd October 2008.

## Black Country engineering firm Metsec's Chief Executive Stephen Tilsley retires



Whilst Stephen intends to spend more time walking, golf and on the allotment, he is also keen to work part time, if he feels he can add value. He will also continue as MetSkill Chair and SEMTA Director as well as being a Diploma Champion.

CBM wishes him well in his retirement and would like to thank him for his overwhelming contribution to the metalforming industry: always available to promote the sector in front of Government, the press and fellow industrialists and overseeing the transformation of Metsec from a traditional Black Country business to a world class operation we can all be proud of.

I am sure his talents would be an asset as a Non Executive Director to any member company, for further information please contact:

John Houseman at the CBM offices on 0121 601 6350.

## CBM EVENTS UPDATE

Once again CBM teamed up with Crusteel to host a tooling event looking at increasing tool life and performance. The event was well attended and the speakers delivered excellent presentations. Early debate focused on choice of tool steel with some useful tips from Jerry Wright (VP of Crucible Steel, USA). The critical balance of Hardness, Wear resistance, and Toughness were demonstrated in a series of worked examples. From a practical perspective there was a clear message on tool failure analysis – ".....begin with an open mind and start with OBSERVATION".

The event on 5th June was a Mock tribunal hosted at the National Metalforming Centre in association with Holistics. The expertise of Holistics provides delegates

with an opportunity to experience a tribunal and its due process. To bring CBM Members up to date on legislation and HSE guidelines for ventilation in the workplace CBM convened an event on 26th June. A number of case studies were presented highlighting technical and legislative issues. The effectiveness of High Vacuum, Low vacuum, and Push-Pull systems were discussed. Health & Safety and energy efficiency were key topics. EMS Ltd provided a 'master class' on how to optimize power utilization and specification of energy efficient motors.

CBM has several further events in the planning stages for September - December. For further information please contact:

Alan Arthur at CBM on 0121 601 6350 or email [alan.arthur@britishmetalforming.com](mailto:alan.arthur@britishmetalforming.com).

### 2008 CBM Events

#### September

2	10.30am	CBM Accident Reduction Working Party Meeting
3		CBM Workshop – Energy Saving & Management - Furnaces
7-12		International Forging Congress - Chicago, USA
14-17		ICOSPA Congress (Sheet Metal) – USA
16	10.30am	CBM Health, Safety & Environment Group Meeting
18		CBM Forging Sector Meeting – venue tbc
22-23		Fastener Fair – Budabest. W: <a href="http://fastenerfair.com">fastenerfair.com</a>
24		CBM Workshop – Robotic handling of sheet metal products
30	10.30am	CBM Sheet Metal Sector Meeting – venue tbc

#### October

1	10.00am	CBM Executive Board Meeting
7	10.30am	CRSA AGM & Members' meeting

21-25		Euro Blech 2008 – Hanover, Germany. <a href="http://www.euroblech.com">www.euroblech.com</a>
22		CBM Workshop – Metallurgy for non-metallurgists

#### November

26		CBM Workshop – Heat treatment of steel
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#### December

11	am	CBM Sector Meetings – Venues to be confirmed
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### 2009 CBM Events

#### March

10-13		BLECH Russia
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#### April

8	7.30pm	CBM Metals Industry Dinner & Awards - Meriden, Nr Birmingham
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All events are held at the CBM Headquarters, National Metalforming Centre, West Bromwich, B70 6PY, unless otherwise stated.

If any member is particularly interested in attending any of the above events, and is not sure of registration details, please contact CBM for further details on 0121 601 6350

> "We needed more space desperately, and as it happened another unit of the same size came available, so we took it, doubling our size overnight" says Dennis.

Carlton's latest investment is another Bystronic laser, this time offering flat-bed cutting, which will cost close to £600,000.

"People increasingly want a one-stop shop approach, and we need to invest to meet their requirements," says Dennis.

"Turnover in the year to the end of December 2007 was £4.6 million, but we see the new kit really paying off in the next couple of years, and believe £8 million annual sales will be achievable in the short-term."

No successful business can ever be simply about numbers though, and the point was underlined when Dennis showed the CBM award to Carlton's 68-strong workforce.

"I thanked them for all their efforts and commitment, and the feedback was tremendously positive, especially from those who have been with us for several years," he says.

"Afterwards, one employee came up and thanked me, because they were so proud to be working for a firm which had been rated Supplier of the Year. It was a very touching moment."

[www.carltonlaser.co.uk](http://www.carltonlaser.co.uk)



Joss O'Brian an 18 years old Apprentice at BAE Systems, Brough won the main prize – the ISME Trophy. The trophy is awarded to the entrant judged as the overall winner based on their entries in both the Test Piece Class and the Open Class sections of the competition. Joss produced an excellent Test Piece Class fabrication and an Acoustic Guitar largely

made of copper sheet in the Open Class section of the competition, together with detailed project reports on how he tackled the problems faced in making the items.

Tom Gwynn, also aged 18, an Apprentice at Radshape Sheet Metal Ltd., Birmingham won the Jaguar Award for his double skinned Prototype Tailpipe fabricated from two grades of stainless steel with the outer rear portion of the Tailpipe being highly polished. Paul Stanton, Senior Manager – BIW Manufacturing, West Midlands Operations, presented the prize of a Jaguar Year book to him.

## AEROSPACE KEEPS RHODES FLYING HIGH

Group Rhodes has picked up its latest deal from the international aerospace sector; this time from a UK manufacturer.

The un-named client has ordered a 100-tonne super-plastic forming press, to produce outer guide vanes for jet engines.

Wakefield-based Rhodes is among only a handful of companies worldwide capable of making such a press, which will use the latest argon gas-forming technology and be capable of operating at 1,000 deg C.

The group has also achieved major success in the aerospace export market, winning an order to design and manufacture a 10,600-tonne flexible die-press, from one of the world's leading players in the nacelle sector.



Overseas orders, from some thirty countries, account for around a third of Rhodes' annual turnover, and Joseph Rhodes products are also manufactured abroad, under licence.

## ISME Sheet Metal Skills Competition

Jaguar Cars Limited, Castle Bromwich Visitor Centre was again the venue for the annual ISME Sheet Metal Skills Competition held on 25 June 2008. The competition, which attracted 40

entrants from colleges and companies throughout the UK, provides an opportunity for young people to measure their skills against others in the sheet metal industry.

During the afternoon the competition entrants together with their trainers and managers were taken on a tour the press shop, BIW assembly, and the trim and final assembly lines.

The Institute of Sheet Metal Engineering is a learned body that promotes the science of working and using sheet metal by providing opportunities for people to exchange ideas and information, and encouraging closer co-operation between industry, universities and research establishments

[www.isme.org.uk](http://www.isme.org.uk)

## CBM ENSURES THE GOVERNMENT IS LISTENING

Carlton Laser Services' Chairman Dennis Kent has been working hard to ensure the government understands the needs of the manufacturing sector. He represented the CBM at an East Midlands event addressed by Shriti Vadera; appointed Under-Secretary of State for Business and Competitiveness in February, after being made a life peer in 2007.

She was in the region to obtain feedback from industrialists, about the issues which they wanted to be addressed in the government's new manufacturing strategy review.

Vadera spent 14 years at UBS Warburg, and after a subsequent spell at the Treasury, is considered one of Gordon Brown's closest economic advisers.

Dennis was certainly impressed by her passionate

belief in the continued importance of manufacturing, to the UK economy.

"We emphasised that there needs to be a cultural change in the country, and particularly in the education system, about the way industry is perceived as a possible career," he said.

"I said it was also important that local MPs paid more than lip-service to their support for our sector."

Another issue was the complexity of the advisory system, established and funded by the public sector for companies; especially SMEs.

"We are considering using a partner in a low-cost country, but no-one was able to offer genuine advice. All people did was take our number, and ring

back with lists of data-bases to look at," says Dennis.

"If we had so much time on our hands, we wouldn't be ringing these organisations in the first place. We need advisors who understand manufacturing, not call centre staff."

Dennis and other delegates also urged Vadera to consider the impact of environmental legislation.

"We are pleased that the UK wants to be a market leader in combating greenhouse gases, but we don't want to be martyred as a result," he said.

"We stressed that adding to our costs, whilst not ensuring that manufacturers in other countries did likewise, only jeopardised our future. We need the government to stick up for us, much more than it is doing."

## DAVYMARKHAM CALLS IN THE REMOVAL MEN

One of Britain's best-known heavy engineers has carried out the industrial clearance sale of all time.

Workers at Sheffield-based DavyMarkham spent months clearing tonnes of redundant tools, and under-used equipment, out of its manufacturing plant.

Managing Director Kevin Parkin wanted to shift the fabrication department from its nearby site, and relocate it inside the main works.



DavyMarkham has now relocated and streamlined its in-house fabrication department, to improve and accelerate customer service.

"It had always operated from a separate 6,000 sq metre workshop, but rising energy prices meant heating costs had escalated during winter months," he says.

"Moving large and heavy fabrications to the machining bay for final finishing was time-consuming and complex. The welding bay's fume extraction system was also not capable of recovering heat from the discharged air."

Every piece of equipment in the main works was examined to see if it justified its continued existence, and two massive bays - 100 metres by 20 metres - were cleared for the fabrication unit.

"On a site dating back to the 1920s, it was inevitable that inefficiencies had crept in over the years," says Kevin.

"We disposed of tonnes of fixtures, fittings and machine tools. It took six months, but proved invaluable for cutting overheads, and increasing our competitiveness."

[www.davymarkham.com](http://www.davymarkham.com)

## CBM Fastener Sector Visits SPS Leicester



## Forging Sector meets at Doncasters Blaenavon

Forging sector members met on the 21st of May, hosted by Doncasters Blaenavon, a Forging Centre of Excellence for the Doncasters Group Ltd. Having previously invested £4 million for the development of engine ready components, the company's plans to spend a further £16 million to expand the capabilities of its Blaenavon plant, were outlined. Doncasters currently employs 340 people in South Wales and serves the needs of many of the world's leading gas turbine engine makers. The latest investment will create 125 new, highly-skilled jobs. On show was the company's turbine blade forging and finishing facilities, together with the open die and ring rolling equipment.

Issues discussed during the meeting included;

- The future state of trade resulting from raw material, energy and scrap price increases and the World economy in general.
- Notification that DEFRA wishes to impose a 4% tightening of targets for the current Climate Change Agreement.
- Concern that the EU Emissions Trading Scheme will result in increased electricity prices as the cost of carbon is passed through to customers.
- The recognition that some of the larger forging members may be included in Phase III of the EU

Emissions Trading Scheme from 2013.

- Know-How Protection Guidelines discussed at the recent EUROFORGE meeting held in Berlin.
- The programme and visit schedule for the 19th International Forging Congress to be held in Chicago in September.
- Plans for one-day awareness courses on Metallurgy for Non-metallurgists and Heat Treatment of Steel.

The next sector meeting will be held on 18th September - venue to be confirmed. For further information please contact:

Ken Campbell at the CBM offices on

0121 601 6350 or email:

[ken.campbell@britishmetalforming.com](mailto:ken.campbell@britishmetalforming.com)



## Engineering support in Japan

The CBM have taken the initiative and identified support for members of a former Wagon Automotive UK Engineer who has now taken residence in Japan.

With new vehicle production being developed by Honda and Nissan in the UK this could be a big opportunity for local support in Japan and a cost benefit to UK automotive metalformers.

Chris Spencer was formerly a Programme Manager for Wagon UK with vast experience gained working on the current production Honda Civic programme.

Chris has also worked for Johnson Controls as Quality Co-ordinator.

Chris is at an Intermediate stage learning the language but his business 'STARBLOOM Co Ltd.' is supported by his Japanese wife. Services include: project management, translation and seminars.

If you require any further information please contact:

Adrian Nicklin at the CBM on 0121 601 6350 or email [adrian.nicklin@britishmetalforming.com](mailto:adrian.nicklin@britishmetalforming.com)



In July, a CBM Fastener Sector meeting was held at the Rothley Court Hotel in Leicester, and was followed by a plant tour of SPS Technologies Ltd. SPS is the newest CBM fastener sector member, and is the biggest fastener manufacturing plant in the UK, with a workforce of about 650 people. Their products are aerospace bolts and nuts, and they are unusual because they make products for airframe and aero engine applications on the same site. Prior to the plant tour, an introduction to SPS and its products was given by Kevin Smith, HR Director.

At the sector meeting, there were 22 people in attendance when the President of the European Industrial Fastener Institute, Jean-Paul Micheau, talked about the new direction that he is taking EIFI, trying to make it more useful and effective for European fastener manufacturers. Following this, Lucy Prinsep, Lead project Manager at Birmingham Chamber, reviewed grants and other support that is available to fastener manufacturers, and

John Newnham of CBM identified what manufacturers should be doing in order to comply with the REACH Directive. Finally, there was a general discussion about steel price increases, and what support the industry needed during this time of unprecedented rises.

For further information please contact:

John Newnham at CBM on 0121 601 6350 or email [john.newnham@britishmetalforming.com](mailto:john.newnham@britishmetalforming.com)