

Firm forging ahead despite tough times

Precision is key for a Wolverhampton fastener company supplying industries as demanding as aerospace and power generation.

And it has allowed Bolt & Nut Engineering to move to bigger premises in recent months and take on more staff as it wins work around the world.

The company has deliberately steered clear of the automotive and construction industries – both struggling in the current economic climate – and has focused its energies on bespoke work for companies in fields like nuclear energy and oil & gas as well as aviation and power companies.

Joint managing director John Russell finds his background in the aerospace industry has proved invaluable in keeping the firm abreast of changes in the vital quality standards that apply to these industries.

Specialist

Fellow MD Matt Smith explained that it was quality that was important to customers, rather than price: "They are looking for high specification fasteners, fully traceable, with strong service – which is why we also run a 24-48 hour call-out service."

The nature of its work means the firm never makes more than 500 items in a production run. "We are more likely to make a dozen specialist fasteners for use in something like an aerospace test rig," said Matt Smith.

"The nuts, bolts and washers we produce will be made to the individual demands of the customer, often needing to stand up to extremes of temperature and stress. As a result we don't keep much metal in stock because we usually have to order a specific type for each job.

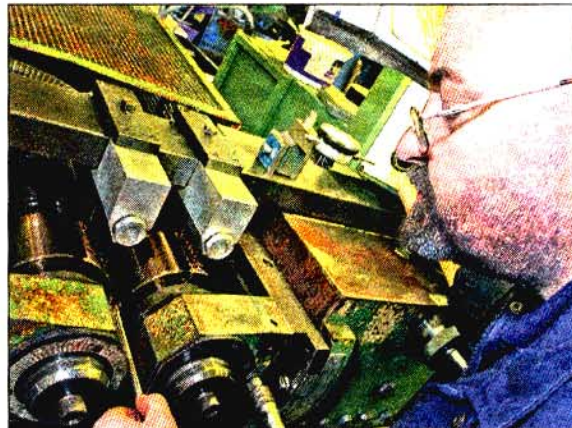
"It can be a nickel alloy, titanium or one of the wide range of stainless steels that can stand up to heat or corrosion."

Bolt & Nut moved to its new home in Sutherland Avenue, in Wolverhampton's Monmore Green area, in December, swapping a 7,000 sq ft unit for its current 12,500 sq ft factory.

"One of the benefits of the move has been that we have been able to lay out our machines much more efficiently – and we have been able to invest in more of them."



Hot forging is a traditional skill



Section leader Mike Edean thread rolling at Bolt & Nut



Joint directors Matt Smith, left and John Russell with some of the staff at Bolt & Nut Engineering



Drilling a stainless steel bush at Bolt & Nut Engineering's factory

Alongside a series of new CNC machines the company run a number of more traditional lathes and other machines including hot forging presses.

"Hot forging is a very efficient method, with very little waste in terms of material," said Matt Smith. "For some reason it has become a

particular speciality among West Midlands firms, and we are carrying that on."

The company, founded back in May 2006 with just five people, now has a workforce of 25. Two people have just joined and another pair of skilled technicians are currently being recruited.