

SIDDALL & HILTON PRODUCTS LTD
MESHING TOGETHER

WE LEARN HOW A LITTLE-KNOWN UK COMPANY IS QUIETLY DOMINATING AN INDUSTRY.

MESHING TOGETHER

PROJECT MANAGED BY: DAVID GARNER

Siddall & Hilton Products Ltd is the UK's largest welded mesh manufacturing business. It is a well-established business with a history in the wire processing sector that goes back to 1895. It has a long history that has most recently involved some big changes to the firm's ownership.

“We have been through two management buyouts in the last five years; In 2015 my former business partner and I, as Managing Director and Finance Director respectively, bought the company from the Siddall family who were fourth-generation owners of the business,” says Ian Thurley, CEO of Siddall & Hilton Products. “I then led a second management buyout, this time with the existing management team, to buy out my business partner in 2019.”

But while the ownership of the company has gone through some changes, the fundamental values of the business are the same that it had in 1895. Thurley's ambition for Siddall & Hilton Products is to become a world-class mesh manufacturer and the local employer of choice.

“We pride ourselves on quality products and outstanding customer service,” Thurley says simply. “We measure ourselves on a number of metrics but a major one is the on-time and in-full-measure that defines our delivery performance.” The world-class benchmark for this is 98.5% and it's a target the company is fast approaching.

“We are hitting around 97% most of the time. We've achieved world-class status on occasion, but we need to build consistency on that,” Thurley tells us.

For Thurley, this is about more than numbers, however. It's about creating a positive experience for customers, even when things don't go precisely according to plan.

“Customer service is paramount and we recognise things sometimes go wrong but when they do, we'll work with

the customer to put them right,” Thurley points out. “We have a good track record for service and support which builds trust and forms a deeper relationship with our customers.”

THE NEXT GENERATION

While Siddall & Hilton Products has a track record to be proud of, it's clear talking to Thurley that his primary concern is for the future of the business.

“The biggest challenge we face currently is the demographic of our workforce,” he admits. “We have an average age approaching 50 in our workforce, which means we need to be bringing the next generation onboard as a matter of some urgency.”

Thurley explains that the issue is that, although Siddall & Hilton Products is a company that provides essential products to a range of industries, with over a century in the business, Siddall & Hilton Products is far from a household name.

“We're in a manufacturing industry that's not in the public eye, particularly because we make an anonymous product and are selling business- >>



Ian Thurley, CEO of  Siddall & Hilton Products.



Equipment for Processing Wire

Since 1949 EVG is a mechanical engineering company with global operations specializing in the development and construction of machines and systems for processing wire and reinforcement steel. Our range of machinery includes welding equipment for the production of fine mesh, light mesh, industrial mesh, reinforcing steel mesh and gratings as well as automatic welding machines for manufacturing girders, spacers and other reinforcement elements. We also make automatic stirrup benders, straighteners for processing reinforcement steel that meet the highest demands, both technically and in terms of economy. All system components and auxiliary equipment are designed to satisfy our customers' specific requirements and feature superior product quality, top reliability and longevity.

One significant competitive advantage we enjoy is the cooperation with our sister firms, AVI, BSTG, Marienhütte and H+S Zauntechnik, who operate steel, wire and mesh plants and who support us in the development of new products as well as in test phases.

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SIDDALL & HILTON PRODUCTS LTD

EVG

SIDDALL & HILTON PRODUCTS AND EVG - MORE THAN THREE DECADES OF SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION

The close cooperation that has grown over three decades between SIDDALL & HILTON PRODUCTS as a manufacturer of fencing products known beyond the borders of Great Britain and the Austrian market leader EVG as equipment supplier for the manufacture of the same, goes far more than just a normal business relationship in today's mechanical and plant engineering industry. Over the many years of successful cooperation, a mutual relationship of trust has developed, on the basis of which it has also been possible to realise innovation projects with a high degree of technological novelty and the associated technical risks, which we look back on with pride.

Today, SIDDALL & HILTON PRODUCTS operates a large number of EVG welding plants for the processing of wire into a wide variety of welded fencing products. Due to the wide range of end products to be manufactured and, in addition, the various production-related requirements, different EVG machine systems are in use at the Brighthouse site.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH SUPPORTED BY 6 FULLY AUTOMATIC EVG WELDING PLANTS

It all started with the delivery of a GRS/85 welding line for the automatic production of industrial and fencing mesh fabric in panels and rolls in 1989. A few years later, in 1996, an LGR machine featuring a welding width of 52" followed, as well processing line and cross wires off coils and the possibility of trimming cuts on all sides.

At the turn of the millennium, an important milestone was reached with the delivery of the first high-performance welding plant of the ATT series - one of the first systems of its kind for the production of industrial mesh/fence mesh products equipped with an innovative single point welding system and alternating cross-wire positioning at the top/bottom of the line wires. The use of these new technical solutions developed by EVG opened up previously unimagined possibilities for manufacturers worldwide with regard to new end products, such as the now widely known triple-tier/double wire fence mesh styles.

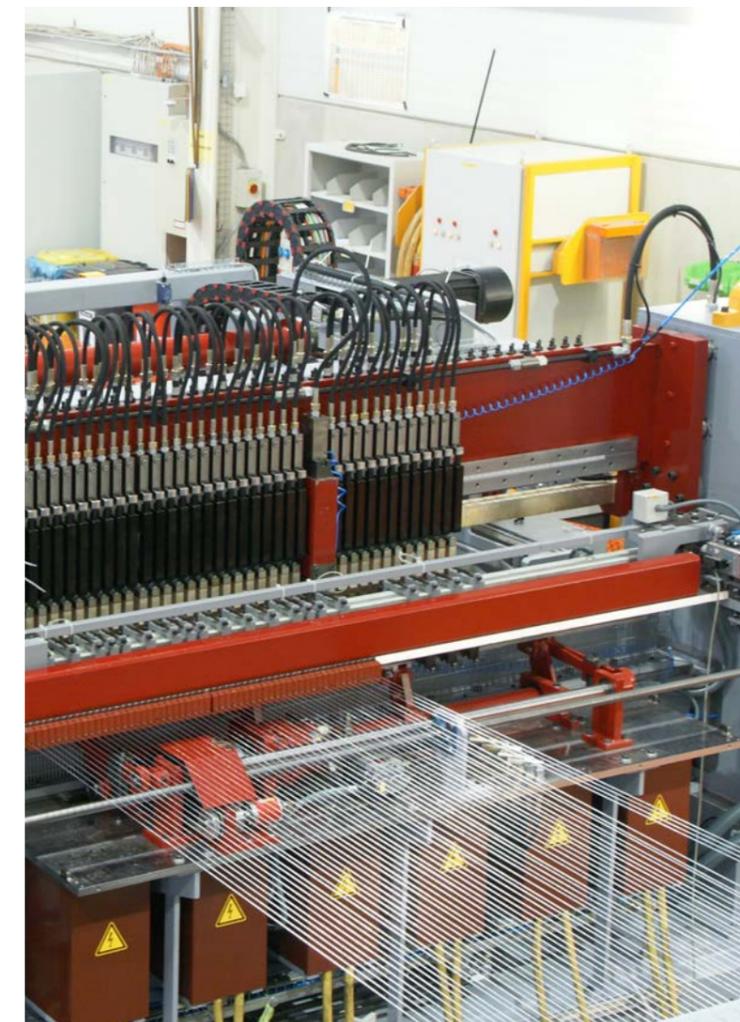
The delivery of a second welding line of the GRS series in 2005 enabled the production of extra-wide wire mesh consisting of up to 144 line wires with spacings of 1". With this project, EVG was once again able to underline its competence and pioneering role on the market by supplying a mesh welding line in a previously unknown width.

Finally, in 2009, the investment was made in another ATT mesh welding line, designed for the processing of line wires pre-straightened and cut-to-length which are fed by fully automatic wire magazines. Compared to welding machines working with line wires off coils this alternative solution allows for higher flexibility with regard to changes in the production programme.

We are now looking forward to the realisation of the current project - the installation and commissioning of a new high-performance mesh welder in the second quarter of 2021 - & hope for many more years of successful cooperation.

High-quality and modern machine equipment is the basis for cost-optimised production at the cutting edge. Of course, good maintenance, rapid availability of spare parts and periodic service by the manufacturer are also important factors for success. This guarantees a high level of plant availability and thus enables timely delivery of products in first-class quality and consequently satisfied and successful customers. This philosophy applies equally to SIDDALL & HILTON PRODUCTS and EVG.

www.evg.com



to-business, so we struggle to attract and retain talent," Thurley points out.

It's a problem that Siddall & Hilton Products is responding to with an ambitious outreach programme that marks the dawning of a new age for the company.

"We're embarking on a new era here," Thurley says proudly. "We are putting employees front and centre of our business. We're actively working with them to increase employee engagement and participation."

Word of mouth is an incredibly powerful recruitment tool, but for Thurley, it is also about improving the experience of his existing staff. >>

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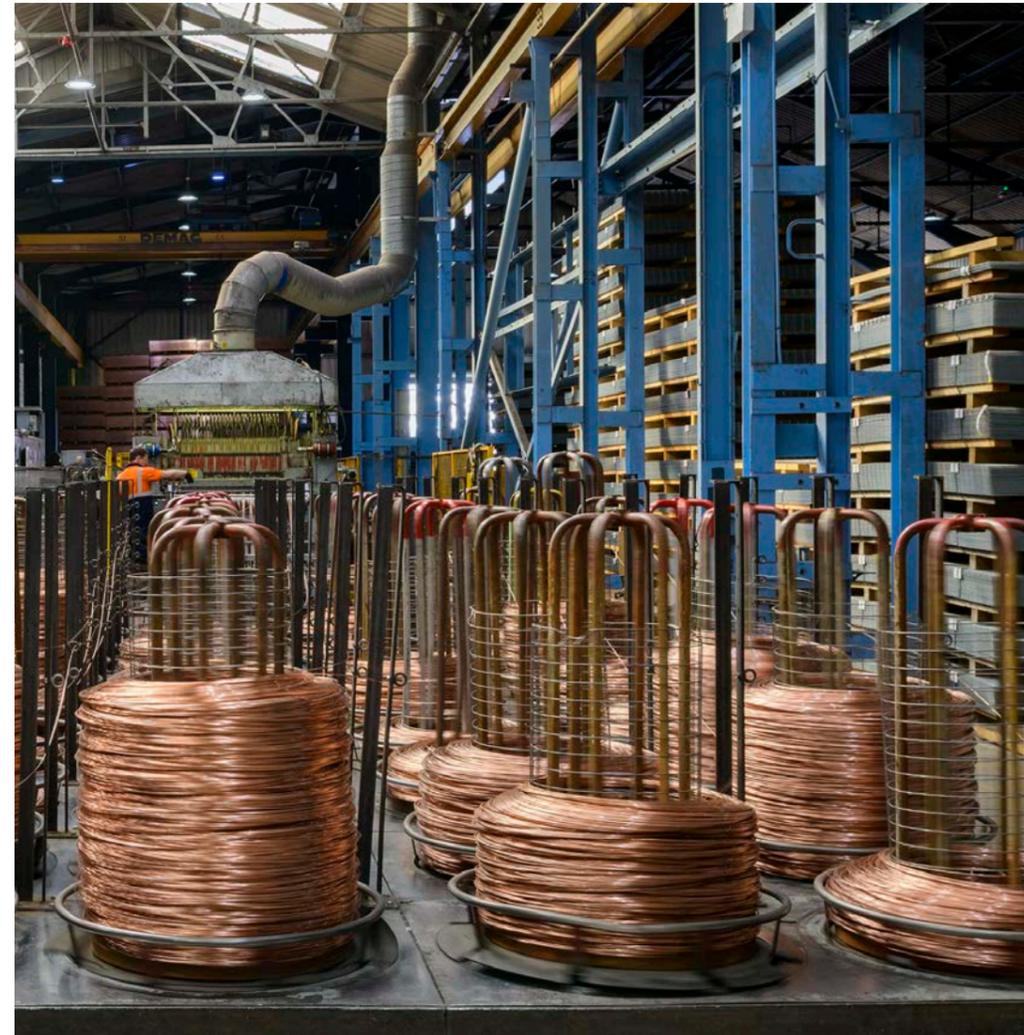
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**“MANUFACTURING IS A
COLLECTION DIFFERENT
TRADES, PROFESSIONS
AND SKILLS BROUGHT
UNDER ONE ROOF.**

**YOU MIGHT LEAVE SCHOOL
WANTING TO BE AN ENGINEER,
AN ACCOUNTANT OR AN HR
PROFESSIONAL BUT WE NEED
ALL THOSE SKILLS IN THE
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY.”**

“We're improving the work experience, and that goes far deeper than a decent day's pay for a decent day's work. It's about empowerment, training, development, and ensuring it's a fun and enjoyable place to work because we all spend a long time in work,” Thurley tells us. “It's something we've



introduced since the buyout, and we're already making good progress, despite the difficulties we've faced in 2020.”

As well as creating a company culture that people will want to be part of, Siddall & Hilton Products is also raising its profile by getting involved in the community.

“In a change to our ethos, we're partnering with local charities as we believe that it is a poor business that focuses only on profit and we recognise our social responsibilities to the community from which we draw our workforce,” Thurley says. “We've partnered with local men's mental health

charity, Platform 1, based in Huddersfield and will also be supporting both the Overgate Hospice and Forget-Me-Not children's hospice next year. We've also raised over £2,000 for the British Heart Foundation through a number of activities in the last couple of weeks and we've had a community defibrillator installed on our premises. We're also planning to engage with local schools, colleges and universities to promote a career in a manufacturing environment.”

The message Thurley wants to promote is that while “welded mesh manufacturing” may seem like an extremely niche sector,

it's one that encompasses an entire sphere of skills and experiences.

“Manufacturing is a collection of different trades, professions and skills brought under one roof,” he says. “You might leave school wanting to be an engineer, an accountant or an HR professional but we need all those skills in the manufacturing industry, alongside skilled machine operators and fork truck drivers. We need to get that message out there, so we're raising our company profile, getting more press coverage and letting the local community know that we're the largest mesh manufacturer in the UK and that we're a progressive, forward-thinking company, with a strong future.”

That forward-thinking approach is also why the company is looking to completely revamp some of its facilities.

“Part of our site is an old Victorian dye works, and the premises are past their sell-by date and not conducive to 21st-century operations, so we're working on plans to redevelop that,” Thurley says.

But while the company is going to evolve, it will still stay true to its historical roots.

“The company has been a wire products business for its entire history, although over time it has moved into different product ranges,” Thurley says. “We see the future of the business as staying in mesh, making it more efficiently and with significantly less process scrap. We're investing in new machinery to enable us to do that. We operate in a mature market with stable technology, but we are looking at ways of utilising our knowledge and expertise in other areas. The key focus for us is investing in >>

the future. We have recently committed to a £2 million project for a new welding machine, the first major investment we've made in twelve years, to increase our mesh welding fleet from four machines to five. This will be on stream by mid-2021, and the project also involves increasing our workforce by 25%. In the fullness of time, we will also be expanding our back-office operations as well." ☺



“WE ARE PUTTING EMPLOYEES FRONT AND CENTRE OF OUR BUSINESS.”



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