

HEAVENS ABOVE!

IT'S ALMOST A TON UP FOR ATTWATER'S LONGEST-STANDING CUSTOMER



Trading partner Richard Dowsett

A HEAVEN-sent customer that will shortly be celebrating their 100th anniversary is also one of our longest-standing trading partners.

Laminate and plastic suppliers Heaven Dowsett were established in 1908 by a far-sighted partnership between Mr Heaven and Mr Percy Swindler Dowsett. To top off their first year in business they began a lasting relationship with Attwater! The company, a relative youngster compared to Attwater which was established in 1868, came under the sole control of the Dowsett family in 1918. The business was originally situated in Cannon Street in the heart of Birmingham and moved several times before finding

their current location in Shady Lane, Great Barr.

Managing director Richard Dowsett said: "Attwater were one of our earliest suppliers of phenolic laminates and are still one of our key suppliers today for a whole range of technical composite products.

"We serve an industry that demands a quick response for materials, quality machined parts and cut pieces so Attwater's service perfectly complements the service levels that Heaven Dowsett have

strived to achieve."

Heaven Dowsett offers a full range of machining services and CNC machining on a complete range of industrial plastics.

Many things have changed during Richard's 35 years at Heaven Dowsett but the relationship with Attwater has remained. It is rare to find two companies who have traded together over such a long period.

"Long may it continue," said Richard.

And the winner is...

In the last issue of our newsletter we asked readers to register their name and e-mail address at our website.

Thank you to all those who logged on to register. You will now be receiving the electronic copy of our newsletter.

Congratulations and Cheers to Nigel at Rayburn Plastics whose name was selected at random from those who registered.

He is the winner of our prize draw and receives £20 in Oddbins vouchers.

Congratulations!

Customer Survey

A big thank you to all of those who completed our Customer Survey back in December.

The results have been analysed and once again your feedback has proven very useful in helping us to develop and improve our services in line with customer needs.

Laminate equivalents

Following recent market uncertainties we received a number of requests from worried customers asking if we could provide a list of equivalent grades to those previously supplied by Tufnol Ltd.

These have now been added to our web site and can be found at www.attwater.co.uk/quality



Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the third issue of The Press. It is one of those strange co-incidences that this issue includes an introduction to our production team. They have certainly had to live up to their reputations during the last few months, as events that overtook the industry at the back end of 2004 have certainly kept us all on our toes.

To keep up with this sudden influx of new orders, we have expanded our manufacturing capacity considerably. In fact, several of our production departments have been able to double capacity very quickly thanks to the flexibility and dedication of our staff.

To back this up, the investment in I.T. systems that we made in previous years has helped our office staff to deal with the high volumes of enquiries from new customers, while still maintaining our existing levels of customer service and personal contact.

We have continued with the development of www.attwater.co.uk and our web site now contains a very useful comparison chart of our materials to the old Tufnol grades.

We look forward to meeting the challenges that 2005 will bring and to introducing you to more of the team here at Attwater.

Richard Attwater

Attwater sign £150,000 contract for new machinery

Ever keen to improve the product quality and lead times for our customers, new machines have been sourced by engineering manager Andy Goode to enable us to keep pace with increasing demand.

Andy said: "They will enhance our machining capabilities and improve efficiency."



Andy Goode shakes hands with Jim Cox after signing the contract for the new machines.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER



Quality Manager Dave Swarbrick, Production Manager Paul Riley and Engineering Manager Andy Goode check the quality of an assembled part.

It is astonishing to consider that there is something that Attwater produce in every domestic (and commercial) interior you might walk into.

From electrical appliances to lighting, Attwater's goods are what you might call a household necessity without being a household name.

As a manufacturer, Attwater is reliant on the talent and industry of all its departments to successfully meet customer demands (and outwit the competition). It is the special flair of the production team that makes it the heart of the company and crucial to the success of the business.

That heart comprises production manager Paul Riley, responsible for press production, engineering manager and machined components expert Andy Goode and quality manager Dave Swarbrick. With over 70 years of combined experience in the industry it is small wonder that the trio are renowned for "achieving the almost impossible". Encompassing a unique skill set, including a collection of degrees and specialist training at all levels, the team is perhaps unique in its

ability to match the varied needs of their diverse customer base.

Dave said: "This team does bring a wide range of disciplines to each challenge which, coupled with the technical expertise throughout the company, ensures problems get solved."

Historically, Attwater has produced a greater proportion of laminate sheet than machined parts but now the split is nearer 50/50, and the machine shop with its new BAE authorization to

machine, is getting busier all the time. This new business is coming from

- New customers introduced by recommendation
- Laminate customers who buy our products and have made the decision to let us do the machining, rather than using an additional subcontractor.
- Customers who were machining our laminates themselves but who see the benefit of outsourcing that expertise.

Always looking towards investing in 'cutting edge' machinery, the production team will shortly be installing new machines which will aid accurate cutting of laminates and will shorten those all-important lead times for our customers.

Paul explained: "Because we are at the start of the build chain in many cases the pressure is on, so when a customer places an order they usually need it right away."

Dave added: "A significant part of our strategy is to remain competitive: improve efficiency, instigate lean manufacturing and invest in the skills of our staff. The use of a Kanban-type system has also helped reduce lead times"

As quality manager Dave oversees a system of operator approval, which requires staff to check their own and each other's work during the production process, ensuring quality is constantly monitored.

He said: "Traditionally, quality was checked at the end of the

line and if found wanting the part was either scrapped or sent back to the beginning of the process for reworking. The new quality system saves both time and money and has helped us achieve a near 100% quality pass rate. Our scrap levels are a fraction of what they were a few years ago. We've achieved this during a period in which our lead time has reduced drastically - up to 75% shorter than many of our competitors."

We should leave the last positive word from the production team to engineering manager Andy Goode. He said: "While perhaps not making the sexiest products, we do make essential ones for modern living. We're constantly matching the creativity of our customers - and we haven't been beaten yet. If it can be done with laminate, we'll do it."



Paul Riley in the vertical machining centre

Kanban – What Is It?

Kanban is an integrated Just In Time system that –

- Reduces costs by eliminating waste
- Creates work sites that can respond to changes quickly
- Facilitates the methods of achieving and assuring quality control
- Designs work sites according to mutual trust and support allowing workers to reach their potential.

Our Customers' Industries

We are currently making products for these industries:

Aerospace
Switchgear
Motor Control
Pumps
White Goods
Marine Industry
Military
Electrical machines
Electronics assembly
Electronics test