

# BUSINESS

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Business stories

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Your weekly guide to business across the West Midlands region

## 100 years and counting

### Euroclad in link-up

Cladding and roofing group Euroclad has bought a stake in Kidderminster-based Fabricolor, aiming to boost its aluminium fabrication and flashing services.

Cardiff-based Euroclad said it hoped the move would also boost its representation in the Midlands.

Fabricolor, set up in 1988, will continue to be run by Joe Rowe manufacturing purpose-made roofline building products.

Phil Cook, managing director of Euroclad, said: "We are always looking for opportunities to improve our products and services and our association with Fabricolor is another example of our commitment to this objective."

### Season's greetings

Your weekly Business supplement is taking an early Christmas break, but will be back on Monday January 5.

The Express & Star business team would like to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a prosperous and successful New Year.

One of the Black Country's best-known accountancy firms has celebrated its centenary.

Wolverhampton-based Tildesley & Tonks was founded in 1903 by Cecil Tildesley, who steadily built the firm's reputation by developing a loyal client base.

He was also known for having a wide range of interests; collecting original prints from Boswell's "Life of Johnson" with the same enthusiasm that he watched his beloved Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Head of the firm today, Mark Evans said that Cecil Tildesley's philosophy still underpinned the firm's strategy.

"Cecil was only 26 when he set up the firm but was very much in tune with modern thinking by realising that retaining clients was as important as winning them," he said.

"He also believed in giving the same level of commitment to his professional life and outside interests."

"Even after retirement Cecil was a director at Mollineux and chairman of the Wolverhampton Institute for the Blind."

The original firm was built on customer service, which is still very much in focus today. But the current Tildesley & Tonks is also embracing technology.

Mark, who bought the company eight years ago after leaving Deloitte & Touche, said it had been the catalyst for its dramatic recent growth.

### Significant

"When I arrived, we had fewer than 150 clients and the largest had turnovers of around £2 million. Now we have more than 200 and a significant number are turning over between £5 million and £15 million," he said.

"There wasn't even a fax when I joined. Now we have a sophisticated website, all staff are on-line and we have a specialist department so clients can be trained to use the latest accountancy and payroll software."

Tildesley & Tonks has maintained its traditional

focus on the small and medium-sized enterprise sector but has moved into new areas, notably charity work and property investment and development.

"We've also increased our range of corporate activity to include business consultancy services, such as holding in-house strategic planning days for our larger clients to help them achieve their long-term goals and aspirations."

Helping clients to raise project finance is another growth area," said Mark.

### Commercial

He also takes pride in being able to claim that Tildesley & Tonks was the first company in the Midlands to offer iCash, an online bookkeeping service, which allows clients to enter commercial transactions over the Internet and transmit them directly to the firm.

The company is also currently trialling new hardware and software, which will enable it to check on report

on the accuracy of client bank interest - and other first.

"I always remind clients that e-commerce is one area above all where you can't become complacent."

"Our site has won awards for its content but we're constantly refining and improving it."

Expansion in terms of clients and services has also led to staff numbers increasing at Tildesley & Tonks - doubling in the last five years with more recruits expected soon.

The firm also found it was outgrowing its home, and in March 2000 the firm moved from its historic Lichfield Street location to new offices in Compton Road, opposite Wolverhampton Grammar School, where Cecil was educated.

"We needed bigger and more modern space, with plenty of car parking, and this property was ideal," said Mark.

"I do like to think, though, that Cecil would have been pleased to see us based across from his old school."



How things have changed - Mark Evans (left) celebrates Tildesley & Tonks centenary with Alan Carter, vice-chairman of the Friends of the Black Country Living Museum



Making the new helix-shaped baffles at the Wellman works in Oldbury

## Wellman keeps North Sea oil & gas flowing

The skills of engineers from Oldbury's Wellman group are helping keep oil and gas flowing from the North Sea.

The company's Wellman Graham division is set to deliver a £1.6 million order of five heat exchangers that will be installed on oil and gas platforms operated by BP Exploration in the Bruce and Rhum fields.

The order was commissioned in May by AMEC Process and Energy Ltd, BP Exploration's engineering partners for the project.

Two of the new exchangers are of a conventional shell and tube design but three incorporate the state-of-the-art "Helixchanger" design of double helix baffles.

The baffles of a heat exchanger support tubes through which seawater flows. The tubes are welded to a tubesheet which is in turn connected to a header which allows

the seawater to enter the tubes. The bundle of tubes is contained inside a sealed metal shell. Natural gas, containing impurities flows outside the tubes in the shell and is cooled by the seawater inside the tubes.

A Wellman Graham spokesman explained: "In a conventional vertical baffle system the impurities collect as particles behind the baffle plates and over a period of time "foul" the unit.

This was done by carrying out the work in Wellman Graham's newly-refurbished Clean Shop Bay, at the site in Newfield Road.

The Wellman Group currently employs around 240 people at the Oldbury site.

Its Wellman Graham unit specialises in the design and manufacture of condensers and vacuum equipment, pressure vessels and heat exchangers.

It also holds the sole UK rights to produce the Helixchanger equipment.

By Simon Penfold

### Cleaned

"This means that the unit has to be taken out of service periodically and cleaned."

"The double helix baffles avoid this. The particles don't collect in anything like the same amount, which reduces the amount of maintenance work that is needed."

"It makes them an attractive alternative for oil and gas platform installation operators who are often involved with frequent and

costly maintenance programmes."

The heat exchangers range from three metres to 7.8 metres in length and their tubes and tube sheets are all made from titanium, rather than the carbon steel often used in ordinary heat exchangers.

An essential condition of the order was that Wellman had to observe strict procedures to protect the titanium from contamination, especially during the welding process.

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