



PRESS RELEASE

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New Technology Spurs Growth for Engineering Company

World-leading technology developed by a long-established Leeds engineering company will play a key role in a new environmentally friendly process set to rival cremation and burial.

LBBC Technologies in Stanningley has been chosen by Scottish-based Resomation as their exclusive technology development and manufacturing partner. The Scottish company has developed a water and alkali based process that accelerates natural decomposition and offers a greener alternative to burial and cremation. (Resoma is Greek for rebirth or reincarnation). The system has been approved in the USA and Canada and goes into action there shortly while the UK Government reviews legislation before introducing it to the UK.

It's the latest example of LBBC Technologies diversifying into developing technologies and products for global industries such as precision casting and other industrial processes involving high-pressure autoclave applications. And the strategy has seen sales figures double in recent years, putting LBBC Technologies in a strong position as the economy begins to move out of recession.

LBBC group operates from its original home in Stanningley with annual sales of £7.5m, some 65 skilled workers and a massive export business to all corners of the globe. With 80% of sales from the company's booming Technologies Division going overseas, the team of five service engineers logs thousands of miles a year commissioning, servicing and supporting the Leeds-made products around the world.

The family-owned business, founded over 130 years ago, is directed by the fifth generation of the Pickard family, who bought into the enterprise shortly after its launch in 1876. It has weathered the recession well with global orders for its world-leading autoclave products (sealed vessels that control processes under pressure) growing exponentially.

A recent re-shaping of the business has led to the Technologies division focusing on higher value products combined with sophisticated control equipment and extended service contracts that typically transform an initial £10,000 order into £50,000 worth of state of the art machinery.

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Customers include Rolls Royce, Pratt & Witney and GE, who all require the advanced machines for the production of precision aerospace parts, including turbine blades. New British-built submarines will feature LBBC Technologies watertight hatches, supplied to BAE Systems in Barrow and the firm's Thermoclave™ system is used for processing advanced carbon fibre composite materials at the AMRC in Rotherham and the Northwest Composites Centre at the University of Manchester.

Originally a manufacturer of steam boilers for industry, LBBC prospered in supplying the emerging town gas industry before moving into mine casings for use in the First World War. These traditional skills in machining and fabrication, continue in the LBBC Beechwood division of the business, which supplies many Northern customers, including Sulzer and Corrocoat in Leeds.

But a key figure in the company's future was Maurice Pickard, a gifted inventor, with some 30 engineering patents to his name. His invention – the Quicklock™ Door – led to the autoclave route, which has fuelled the growth in export sales and continues to be a speciality supplied across a wide range of industries. With safety an important feature of the door, Maurice was appointed adviser to the Health & Safety Executive.

His grandsons, Howard and Robert, are current directors of the company. As managing director, Howard has led a massive culture change in recent years, introducing a flatter management structure, while concentrating on design and development of technology.

“While traditional engineering remains an important part of our mix, its technology that has seen our sales grow substantially in recent years and carried us healthily through the recession. We have a range of acknowledged world-leading products, with orders coming from round the world.

“Consequently, we remain confident about the future. There is some manufacturing competition from China, but they cannot match us for quality and we see real opportunities for further growth there.” said Howard.

Leeds Chamber Policy Director Ian Williams commented: "UK manufacturers are amongst the toughest, leanest and most innovative businesses operating in today's global market place. They have learned hard lessons from the current and previous recessions about the need for continuous investment, workforce planning, productivity and innovation that have been crucial to their survival. There is a great deal that businesses operating in other sectors can learn from manufacturing"

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