

OPW EMEA- BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

This month our intrepid reporter and industry marketeer Cheryl Ashton made a journey to one of the UK's more northern regions and was given a crash course in everything there is to know about manhole covers, sumps and nozzles. Delving as usual, into all the important aspects of operating a manufacturing business, Cheryl leaves no cover unturned. This feature is part of a series of articles Cheryl will be writing on major manufacturers of key equipment across the international retail fuel sector.

THERE WAS A DEFINITE BUZZ IN THE ATMOSPHERE AS THE FACTORY STAFF WENT ABOUT THEIR DAILY DUTIES, WORKING IN UNITY LIKE A WELL-OILED MACHINE

Skipton is a historic market town nestling in the rolling hills of the North Yorkshire countryside in the UK. The town is synonymous with a rich culture, immense history, iconic castle, bustling marketplace and most of all, its fiercely proud and passionate Yorkshire people. It is also the European home of OPW, a Dover company, which is an internationally recognised manufacturer of glass-reinforced plastic (GRP) composite access covers and delivers its solutions to customers all over the world.

ERPEC NEWS TOURS OPW FACILITY IN SKIPTON

I was delighted to go on assignment with erpecnews publisher, Nick Needs to enjoy a comprehensive tour of the OPW, Skipton facility, especially in the light of the company's recent expansion into an additional building required to keep pace with market demand.

On arrival, Nick and I were welcomed by OPW's EMEA marketing director, Jo Stott, and marketing manager, Aaron McConkey, who provided us with the personal protective equipment needed for the tour, before introducing us to our guide - inventory controller, Jerry Hickson.

Jerry has been with the company since 1994, during which time he was entrusted with the responsibility of establishing the first-ever Asian

Fibrelite factory in Malaysia, where he remained for seven years. It is fair to say that Jerry is an expert in all things Fibrelite and consequently, he made an excellent tour guide.

MANUFACTURING OF TB600 LPG NOZZLE

Our first port of call was a zone dedicated to the manufacture of the new TB600 LPG nozzle, which is assembled by hand using imported parts, before undergoing intensive water pressure testing.

On entering the original factory building, I was struck by the unique blend of sounds and smells

that changed subtly as we advanced down the production line. There was a definite buzz in the atmosphere as the factory staff went about their daily duties, working in unity like a well-oiled machine, to make a diversity of access covers, including Fibrelite's best-seller - the FL90.

The FL90 has a standard load rating of 25 tonnes, however, heavy-duty covers (40, 60 or 90 tonnes) can be manufactured to order to suit the working environment. For instance, an F900 access cover will carry a load of 90 tonnes for use in areas where extremely high wheel loads are imposed such as ports, airports and docks.

BESPOKE CUSTOMER ORDERS AVAILABLE

Jerry's narrative covered every aspect of the manufacturing process and guided us through all of the access cover types and variants. He explained that many customer orders are completely bespoke depending on the business needs, location and the environment. Fibrelite's technical team will first visit the customer's premises and perform a site survey in order to ascertain the best possible solution for their needs, before advising accordingly.



Skipton, a picturesque historic town situated at the gateway to the Yorkshire Dales in the North of England



Cheryl learns all about the Fibrelite product range with OPW's Jerry Hickson, inventory controller, and Jo Stott, marketing director

SEEING CNG NOZZLES IN PRODUCTION

We then made a quick visit to one of the clean energy lines where we witnessed compressed natural gas (CNG) nozzles in production, including the requisite breakaway valves and swivels, which are key components that connect the hose to the nozzle and dispenser. All products are put through a stringent testing process to maintain OPW's high quality-control standards. On the same floor, the boxes of nozzles and components can be seen stacked high on the shelves ready for dispatch, to fulfil the constant flow of customer orders.

TOUR OF EXCITING NEW OPW BUILDING

Finally, we strolled the short distance to the main attraction - the new OPW building - constructed to satisfy the growing demand for Fibrelite products, coming from business owners across the globe. The new space doubles up as a storage facility, housing floor-to-ceiling racking, which is laden with machine tools that have been packed away, but remain ready for action as and when the order bank dictates.

The production line here is centred around the manufacture of Fibrelite's extensive range of GRP underground enclosures, which are designed to integrate with the watertight composite manhole covers. These chambers offer durable, sealed protection for equipment such as; pipework, conduits and electric/water utilities, whilst creating

the maximum possible space for installation and maintenance work. Manufactured from corrosion-resistant fibreglass material, these vacuum testable enclosures are one-piece moulded, and engineered to withstand harsh environmental conditions and hydrostatic pressure.

USE OF FIBRELITE PRODUCTS

Fibrelite products can not only be found on fuel station forecourts, as in fact, their manhole and trench access covers feature in a vast assortment of locations, including data centres, military and defence, power stations, substations, stadiums, hospitals, theatres, ports, airports and utilities to name but a few.



Welcome to OPW EMEA, the home of Fibrelite. L-R. Daniel Levy, Ben Powell, Nick Needs, Cheryl Ashton, Jo Stott, Jerry Hickson and Aaron McConkey

THE FUTURE LOOKS VERY BRIGHT INDEED FOR OPW EMEA, AS ITS CLIENT BASE CONTINUES TO EXTEND OUTSIDE OF THE FUEL INDUSTRY

As we headed back to the offices, I learned more about the OPW operation and the people who work there, who all demonstrate a great passion for the business and the role they play in making it the success story it is today.

The future looks very bright indeed for OPW EMEA, as its client base continues to extend outside of the fuel industry, into a large array of business sectors. It is clear this company is evolving to stay abreast of the ever-changing marketplace, devising innovative solutions and consistently delivering high-quality products - all key factors in remaining at the top of its game.

For further information on OPW EMEA and Fibrelite visit www.fibrelite.com



Cheryl takes a closer look at one of the tank sumps