

Parkegate Engineering – a UK success story

This presentation shows that in the short space of eight years, Parkegate Engineering has established itself as a leading international supplier of specialist services, plant and modernisation capabilities to the flat rolled aluminium sector.



The Sales Team at Parkegate Engineering, left to right, Dave Parkin, Mark Bumford and Chris Wilding

Despite its relatively recent origins, Parkegate Engineering has emerged as a leader in its chosen field. Based in Poole on the South Coast of England, the company provides specialist services to the ferrous and non-ferrous metals industries and in particular, rolling and processing equipment.

The organisation was set up on 1 April 1996 by four mill engineers previously in the employ of Davy International. The individuals concerned were Neil Winkley, Malcolm Townend, John Meaden and Alan Uff, now respectively Managing Director, Engineering Director, Technical Director and Sales Director of Parkegate Engineering.

Initially, the concept was to supply potential clients with process and engineering design solutions. The perceived attraction was the ready availability of Davy International experience and know-how, coupled with low overheads. Within a few months, it was realised that many customers were in search of turnkey solutions, so there was a return to the same market area which had been the province of Davy International in Poole, namely the "shiny metal" sector. This embraced stainless-steel and aluminium, and in particular the rolling and processing of flat products.

Within a short space of time, 16 people involved in engineering and administration were at work on two floors within Parkegate's headquarters building in Winchester Place, Poole. Today, the organisation, with an annual turnover in excess of £4 million, employs 28

permanent staff, housed on five floors within Winchester Place.

The company now lists its services as: Project concept analysis, process engineering studies, proposal engineering and plant specification, design and detail engineering, manufacturing, site installation, project management, used plant and spares.

During the last few years, the organisation has been able to expand its activities to embrace the downstream end of the rolling-mill process, a period which has also been

marked by a substantial growth in the sales figures. Today, Parkegate is positioned to supply all the necessary engineering and supply capability involved in an entire end-to-end rolling mill project. And the job's keep getting bigger all the time.

Whereas initial contracts were for work within the UK, orders were soon arriving from overseas, including major projects from South Africa, USA and Brazil.

In the first year of the company's existence, one of the most significant contracts was a multi-million pound order for the UK's Royal Mint. This was secured on the basis of the design strengths of the individual members of the team, and their past performance. The £2 million turnkey-order was received for the conversion and upgrading of the rolling mill at the Mint's Llanstrisant works in South Wales.

The initial involvement in relatively-small retrofit projects was to change, as the company graduated to the engineering of larger upgrade projects and complete smaller mills. As previously indicated, the company was also able to expand its horizons still further. From the early emphasis on rolling mills, there was a growing involvement with processing lines, a business sector seen to offer great potential. Today, this represents a substantial part of the organisation's activities.

An example of this new-found capability was the revamping of rolling mills and almost an entire process line for Hulett Aluminium in South Africa. This project called for the complete upgrading of the S4 Cold Mill, modifications to the S5 Cold Mill and an almost total rebuild of the Pre-treatment and Tension Level Line. In the event, some parts were manufactured in the UK, others in South Africa. The sitework upgrading of S4 Cold Mill was completed in only 15 days, during which period the mill was almost completely stripped down, rebuilt and re-commissioned. The success of this contract was to lead to a substantial amount of repeat business. Today work on rolling mills represents 50% of the



A group of some of the staff at Parkegate Engineering photographed outside the company's office in Poole



The exterior of Parkegate Engineering's offices at Winchester Place, Poole

company's activities, with 40% being directed towards process lines. The remaining 10% can be categorised as consultation.

One of the strengths of Parkegate Engineering is the organisation's very extensive in-house experience gained within the aluminium industry, including all types of rolling mills and process lines. The company has continued to expand its market share in this sector, with business rising from an initial 15% to a current 40% of its total activities. However, any future growth is very much tied to the prosperity, or otherwise, of the international aluminium market as a whole.

Amongst one of the more recent aluminium projects undertaken by Parkegate, has been the supply of both engineering and equipment as part of a hot line upgrade at Alcan Aluminium in the UK.

Apart from project work completed for its own customers, Parkegate has supplied contract design engineering services to many of

the major plant-builders, including Voest Alpine, Danieli, and Mannesmann Demag, as well as partnering with other major companies including ABB and Alstom.

The company's reference list is very impressive, with over 150 major contracts completed since the organization was set up in 1996, representing business total "project" value of more than US \$ 240 million.

The average age of the Parkegate team is progressively falling. The company actively seeks to employ promising young designers and engineers. To this end, suitable students are sponsored during their time at university in a bid to secure potential new member's for the company's workforce.

Every effort is being made to dispel any thoughts that Parkegate is a minor player when it comes to plant modernisation. Indeed, the company has its sights on winning an ever higher proportion of turnkey business. In this context, the firm already

stands out in its ability to offer bespoke engineering based on a very wide range of experience in its chosen field. Parkegate have also gained a reputation for the quality of its engineering solutions and project management. Some of this success stems from its policy of working closely with its customers personnel as a team.

In expanding the range of benefits provided by the company, Parkegate have set up a new service section designed to provide spares for the entire range of plant supplied to date. They can also engineer and supply spares for long-redundant equipment and, in some cases, can provide improvements over the original design.

Parkegate has also promoted the concept of personal service. Depending on the nature of the project, the customer is introduced at the beginning of the work to his lead project designer, whom he can contact at any time during the progress of the contract. The same designer is also present on site whilst the equipment is being installed. This close liaison is one of the strengths of a very "flat" organisation.



Dave Parkin, Project Engineer (Pre-sales) at work on a new design



Discussing a new project are, left to right, Graham Dicker, Wayne Roberts, Malcom Townend and Alan Uff – Engineering, Operations and Sales

The company's offices at Winchester Place are remarkable for their advanced design facilities, based on a fully networked CAD/CAE facility. The department is able to offer a choice of both Bentley Microstation and AutoCAD formats. Also available are 3D modeling and Finite Element Analysis.

In conclusion, it has been shown that in less than eight years, Parkegate Engineering has become a leading international provider of both design services and plant equipment for the metals industries, together with extensive plant modernisation capabilities. The company's involvement in the rolling sector of the aluminium industry is of particular importance, and this association is likely to grow over the coming years. Already, Parkegate has amassed a prestigious client base both in the ferrous and non-ferrous industries which includes some of the leading international processors of flat aluminium products. There seems little doubt that this success will continue to attract headlines in the financial and technical press.