

SERVICE THE KEY



Track restoration with a Meri crusher, the first step of a technique that recycles material in-situ and results in a long-lasting surface.

The speed and level of service and back up it provides its customers with has been the core of a Wiltshire company's success and growth

The 'phones in Reeds Construction & Engineering's offices at Market Lavington don't stop ringing. It's not surprising considering the number of multi-faceted operations the company is involved in: machine sales and hire; parts and spares; servicing; refurbishment and repairs; track restoration and soil stabilisation.

It is still a family business, run by joint managing directors Arthur Reed, who established the company in 1982, and

his son Thomas. Today Arthur tends to have responsibility for parts and service, and other aspects of the business such as health and safety, Tom handles machine hire and sales.

On leaving Lackham College of Agriculture, Arthur initially moved from Wiltshire up to Cheshire to join Caterpillar. But after a number of years, he returned to his native county and "went back to basics"; working out of the back of a van repairing construction and agricultural equipment. Over the next six years the amount of work coming in justified the employment of eight fitters and welders, working out of the company's base at Market Lavington. "Growing up in an area where everyone was involved in farming, I had a lot of contacts," he says.



Reed Construction and Equipment's founder Arthur Reed (left) and Tom Reed, who says: "Personal contact with our customers is still important; we're a family business that was predominantly a service company before moving into sales so we need to maintain the ability to back-up what we are selling."

The company was founded on the quality and speed of

the repairs service it offered and this is still one of the foundations on which it is based. Tom, who came into the business in 1994, having studied Agricultural Engineering at Lackham College and graduated to his present position after doing his apprenticeship as a fitter for two years before moving into sales, explains: "Our philosophy is the importance of the customer and the service we can give in after sales. We turnover £800,000 - £1m of spares and back-up to the construction equipment and we have a broad range of on-site repair facilities."

That is the foundation of the franchises the company has taken on. Among them are the Meri crushers and forestry equipment (a marque Reeds has handled for the past 15 years), Fransgard graders and Bugnot stone crushers. "It is ideal for road recycling, track reclamation and the fast clearance of overgrown woodland," Tom says.

"In agriculture it is used mainly for the restoration of farm drives and access roads. When we first started with Meri there was nothing like it. We put an advert in the press and the response was overwhelming. It demonstrated how much a machine was needed that would recycle

material in-situ, rather than having to use new stone and aggregate.

"The cost saving is extreme. As a service we can come in and quickly crush the existing track to produce a mat of a uniform size to a defined depth. It is then reshaped and regraded. Once it is compacted the track lasts much longer; where there is good drainage and stone it will have a five year lifespan.

"A large percentage of sales are to farmers and contractors, who can use their high horsepower tractors out of season."

For the past four years the company has also been building up a hire and sale fleet of Stehr stabilisation equipment. Through the use of Stehr stabilisation mixers, which Reeds also represents in the UK and Eire, stabilisation with lime or cement turns native soils into high quality material, on site, and provides a significantly more long-lasting surface resistance to water, frost, contraction and expansion.

The introduction of these machines and techniques has been highly successful. But the company is always looking to expand and also supplies parts and service back-up for New Holland machinery. Here chance played its part. Arthur laughs: "We were looking for spares for our New Holland equipment and we couldn't find a local dealer and the company asked us if we wanted to take it on!"

Last year the company also added the Dieci range of telescopic boom materials handlers to its portfolio, which gives it access to a 5500 unit market in both the construction and agricultural sectors. "These machines are only for sale and they have been selling well," Tom says. "The range runs from 2.5t to 6m to 6.5t to 8m, but our target market is the agricultural sector where I think the 2.5t/6m MiniAgri and 3t/7m AgriPower will be the best sellers."

Reeds' growth and success is reflected in its scale of operations, the number of franchises it holds and its staff of 22. Eleven are fitters and welders who maintain customer's heavy plant and machinery. There is constant training between brands and although some are specialist all have a broad knowledge and understanding of the products.

It has also meant the business has outgrown its present site and recently opened new premises in Melksham. Market Lavington remains as the repair centre and base for the hire equipment – "Tom smiles: "those operating in the 'dirty' jobs" – Melksham will be the sales base for another two

Company Profile



The use of Stehr stabilisation equipment to create the hard standing for enterprises such as biogas plants is a service that has grown over the past year.

new franchises: The Caterpillar Compact product line (telescopic materials handlers, skid steers, multi terrain and compact track loaders, utility compactors and a wide range of attachments) and the Street Sweep range of trailed mechanical-tip high road/street sweepers.

"As our interests are so diverse we have been lucky during the recession, as one side dipped, another lifted," Tom says. "But we always want to move on and develop. Dieci is a point of growth in the agricultural sector, where there is increasing demand for the stabilisation equipment for constructing the hard standing area for biogas plants; it's a service that has definitely grown in the last 12 months.

"But personal contact with our customers is still important; we're a

family business that was predominantly a service company before moving into sales so we need to maintain the ability to back-up what we are selling.

"We're looking to take on more sales staff and engineers as we promise to respond to a breakdown within 24hrs. It's difficult when it's in Scotland, but our engineers put their tools in the back of a van and go. Reaction time of the dealer is also important consideration when we are buying machinery and equipment.

"Every sector of the company is a priority. We have a very loyal customer base that stayed with us during the recession. We are available 24hrs/day, seven days a week so we can react to breakdowns. The true cost of a machine is not the price, it's the downtime."

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