



REVIEW OF THE YEAR THE WORLD SHUT DOWN

Thame Engineering has been trading, in one guise or another, for 75 years; in all those years there have been ups and downs – recovery after the war years, several recessions, a period of 3-day working weeks, a management buy-out, a millennium bug scare and last, but not least, a global pandemic! We're made of tough stuff, so here we are reviewing the year of COVID. In late 2019 and very early 2020, coronavirus was something weird happening in China, but by the spring of 2020 we had to adapt to a different way of life and learn a whole new lexicon: lockdown, furlough, social distancing, social bubble, rule of six, COVIDIOT...

March, April and May

Challenges: coronavirus became much more than just a word. The Government declared a national lockdown. To create space between people, we furloughed 18 of our 32 employees. We installed and implemented a raft of COVID safety measures and rules but some employees were reluctant to observe them. MTA postponed MACH 2020. We postponed the start dates for the newly recruited Operations Director and Midlands Area Sales Manager. An employee with 37.5 years service retired and took an awful lot of knowledge, experience and good wishes with him!

Bright spots: Lee Kimber joined us as our new Finance and HR Manager. We were very proud to deliver rapidly manufactured parts for a customer making hospital ventilators. Beautiful warm weather made queuing at supermarkets quite pleasant and empty roads for hand delivering pay slips were a joy! The introduction of Friday Treats, a wrapped biscuit for everyone, started as a bit of fun and continues to this day! A test of team ingenuity came when celebrating Hilary's birthday, the first Thame birthday in lockdown; singing Happy Birthday To You was no problem after singing it a thousand times a day as we washed our hands! Orders were coming in thick and fast so two machine operators were brought back to work from furlough. VE Day put things into perspective and brought communities together. Toilet rolls become available again after mass panic buying.

June, July and August

Challenges: still some non-compliance with safety rules from one or two employees. Stretching the working day to allow more employees to come back to work safely while keeping those already working happy proved problematic and too many employees for one shift meant six redundancies. Face coverings became mandatory alongside 1m+ social distancing.

Bright spots: enquiries and orders kept coming so more employees came back to work from furlough. Daren Waring, the Midlands Area Sales Manager and Mark Thomas, the Operations Director finally started.

September, October and November

Challenges: our first in-house case of COVID, thankfully not a serious case. Daren moved on to pastures new. The second lockdown was declared.

Bright spots: no one on furlough. MTDCNC spent the day with us making product videos – David was christened the Godfather of Workholding! Dedicated Swarf 'n' Chips on MTDCNC video channel garnered a lot of new interest in our products. We celebrated David's 70th birthday with party hats, wrapped sweets and three cheers from behind our face masks. The first remote ISO audit was a success and we retained our certified status.

December, January and February

Challenges: Tier 4 Christmas was a bit on the quiet side! The introduction of Brexit export paperwork was a headache. Our second in-house case of COVID; thankfully, again, not a serious case. Lockdown was declared for the third time.

Bright spots: we launched our Connect Space so we could carry out technical meetings and product demonstrations digitally. We welcomed new members of staff to cope with growing demand for our products and services. The second remote ISO audit resulted in a new period of certification.

March 2021

Over this last, difficult and unusual year, the team at Thame Workholding has really come together. We have delivered high-quality work in the face of real pressure both personal and economic, and have continued to support each other, our customers and our communities when they have needed us. We are incredibly proud of our efforts and we are very excited for the future.