



## Quest 4 Alloys, Millstock Stainless, CK Centreless Grinding Investing and Relocating for the Future

Twenty-one years ago two sales managers David Smith and Tony Jones with the same ideas and the same values took a leap of faith. During a period of recession they decided to trust their instincts and start Quest 4 Alloys, a stockholder and processor of stainless steel and nickel alloys. Now, more than two decades later, the same two have joined hands with another former colleague Graham Lloyd and together they are extremely busy running two more independent companies with the same values that made the first one a success. Stainless Steel World was lucky to catch David Smith, co-founder of Quest 4 Alloys, and Graham Lloyd, co-founder of Millstock Stainless, during five minutes of downtime from overseeing the construction of a new facility for Quest 4 Alloys Ltd., Millstock Stainless Ltd., and CK Centreless Grinding.

*By Anne Cunningham*

### Quest 4 Alloys

David Smith and Tony Jones started Quest 4 Alloys with one clear goal: customer satisfaction. "We both believe that customers' needs always have to come first. To be able to help a customer with an out of the ordinary request instead of dictating their choice to fit within a certain range was my drive, my satisfaction and Tony felt the same." Quest 4 Alloys was founded with that in mind and today still the motto is: Don't be told you just can't get that. The company name displays exactly what the owner's love doing – finding the perfect match between customer and alloy is what drives Quest 4 Alloys.

The drive to find the perfect match has certainly reflected on the company's

customer base. Sixty-five per cent of their customers are from abroad and are in search of something specific. "Because of our international customer base we are experienced in supplying many different alloys all over the world. Imports and exports by land, sea or air ensure that we find the alloy required however difficult that might be." Besides being international, Quest 4 Alloys' customer base is also broad with customers from numerous different industries (e.g. Petro-Chemical, Power Generation, Aerospace, Architectural, Automotive, Construction and General Engineering). In contrast to many others, Quest 4 Alloys has numerous other stockholders as customers. "Because we know where to find the out-of-the ordinary and have short lead

times we are often the easiest and cheapest solution for other stockholders. An example of this is our stainless steel type 310s range in all forms."

The independent company started offering high end stainless steels and the more unusual grades of strip in coil for welded tubes. Now, they carry the complete range of stainless steels and nickel alloys and even though the company has evolved and changed over the years strip in coil still forms an important part of Quest 4 Alloys' stock. "We have spring tempered materials, annealed materials and even thin gauge materials in stainless steels and nickel alloys down to 0.05 mm thick that we can supply from 2.5 mm wide up to 1000 mm wide. A new product range





for Quest 4 Alloys is bespoke special shapes and laser fusion welded structural sections and profiles in nickel alloys, exotic stainless steels and super duplex such as ALLOY 800 H /HT, ALLOY 625, STAINLESS STEEL TYPE 410S, 317 L / LN, 904 L, 321, 347, 309S, 310S and SUPER DUPLEX 32750 and 32760. We are working very closely with the producer Montanstahl who we are the official agents for the exotic and special grades and have had a long and very close relationship with them for many years and find this new project very exciting and a complement to our current product range in the same grades supplied in sheet, plates, bars and tubes.” To be able to meet all customer needs Quest 4 Alloys offers certain processing capabilities, such as slitting, profiling, forging, cutting to length, sawing, turning, boring, and testing.

Last September Quest 4 Alloys set up its first office abroad. Mr. Jean Marc Serres manages Quest 4 Alloys France, which is located in the Toulouse area. “We felt the need to employ someone who spoke the language and decided that if we were going to do so, why not have someone on location.

We have a lot of Aerospace and Oil & Gas Industry customers in Europe, although they have ISO 9000 and SC21 they are in the process of achieving AS9120, the Aerospace accreditation, and this is just another way to achieve our service goals.” Throughout the coming years the company is looking to expand even further into Europe and they are starting to look for employees in other countries. “We sell to over 40 countries, why not have as many native

speakers in these countries as possible!”

Colleagues and the work environment are both very important according to Mr. Smith. “Work is such a large part of life that you have to be able to have a laugh and enjoy yourself. Just this morning we joked about the job we do and came to the conclusion that between us, we have 300 years of experience. And trust me, we don’t have 300 employees, we have approximately 20 and they are the best in the business. We are very lucky to have them and appreciate the work and effort they put in very much, as do our customers,” he smiles. Their vast experience in the stainless steel and

nickel alloy industry enables Quest 4 Alloys the ability to meet even more exacting requirements to suit specific needs. From those hard to find nickel alloys, or cut to length precision strip in coil form, Quest 4 Alloys has both the in house processing capability and well established partnerships with key stainless steel and nickel alloy producers which enable them to offer material to meet exact specifications every time.

### Millstock Stainless

Graham Lloyd worked with Tony Jones and David Smith before they started Quest 4 Alloys, and when he had an







idea he did not hesitate to call his two former colleagues. “We met for lunch and four months later Millstock Stainless was a fact” says Graham. Millstock Stainless was established in 1991 and quickly built up a reputation for the fast, efficient, and reliable supply of quality stainless steel products and services. The company supplies specialist stainless steel materials and products ranging from precision ground shafting, which is used in a variety of applications, in the Marine, Petro-Chemical and automotive industries, to an extensive range of special stainless steel sections, including laser fusion welded sections and duplex sections, Millstock Stainless are proud to be the partners of Swiss producer Montanstahl S.A. for special projects which are used in the Nuclear & Power generation, water, construction and general engineering industries. Throughout the past ten years Millstock Stainless has built up a wealth of experience and knowledge in these specialised supply areas that ensures they can offer help with any stainless steel requirements. “Both the Nuclear & Power Generation and the Marine Industry have stringent requirements

and quality is essential, meaning we always have to be that one step ahead.” Millstock Stainless has successfully supplied thousands of marine propeller shafts to customers who subsequently manufacture the finished product. They have become so experienced with the requirements that they have even developed a brand specifically for the industry. “Through our experience we have been able to develop our own brand which we have called nauticALLOY, offering many different alloy grades some of which have been specially enhanced to ensure that the maximum corrosion resistance is achieved for all the Nauticalloy grades all of which have been developed specifically for the Marine Industry,” Graham proudly says, “All nauticALLOY shafting is produced to our own in-house specification which guarantees that each shaft supplied is fit for purpose, great care is taken over the surface finish which ensures that the corrosive resistance of the Nauticalloy grade chosen is enhanced to give the best possible quality to our customers. All shafts are supplied in accordance with the ISO 9001-2008 Quality Management System and upon request

can be supplied with appropriate certificates of conformity or manufacturing mill certificates along with a certificate of straightness.” Millstock material has been used on many high profile builds including: Aussie Rules, built by Oceafast for Greg Norman; The Eclipse, built by Blohm and Voss for Roman Abramovich; and Llona, built by Pendennis Shipyard for an American client. “Our product lines adhere to all requirements and thanks to investments for in-house grinding facilities we have been able to grow and launch the nauticALLOY grades”. Another project Millstock was closely involved with was the fabrication of special duplex beams and angles for the first water desalination plant in the UK, the Thames Gateway Water Treatment Works in East London, which opened in 2010. It treats water from the brackish waters of the River Thames, producing up to 150 mega litres of clean, fresh, drinking water a day (150,000,000 litres), enough for 400,000 households. The plant helps guarantee London’s future water supplies during times of drought or extended periods of low rainfall, and maintains supplies in the event of an incident at other water







## nautiALLOY

### Marine Propeller Shafting

treatment facilities. Within the plant, saline river water passes through lamella clarifiers to remove solid particles. The clarifiers are large, open tanks containing a coarse filter media that is supported by a grillage of 78 tonnes of Duplex stainless steel I-beams and angles.

#### CK Centreless Grinding

With two successful companies both focusing on customer needs, the next step the team took was to become even more independent. CK Centreless Grinding was an existing company that they acquired three years ago. "We came to a point where we couldn't always guarantee the shortest possible lead time due to outworking our centreless grinding needs. We realised that in order to deliver on our promise, we would have to take control of the entire process," David Smith explains.

#### The latest investment made by the team

Graham Lloyd assures us that "CK Centreless Grinding was founded only a few years ago but now has the most modern and efficient grinding shops in Europe thanks to \$500,000 euro investment in a new 4 head belt grinding and polishing line and straightening press that both can process up to 220 mm diameter bars and tubes with lengths up to 15 meters in Stainless Steel, Nickel Alloys, Copper, Brass, Titanium, Aluminium, Carbon Steels, or Mild Steels, we can grind what you need. We are very proud of our achievements in such a short time and thanks to years of hands on grinding experience it provides top class service to its ever growing

customer base from around the world." "By combining their experience and our high quality products we can now make promises to our customers once again. If they need immediate delivery I can see straight away what is possible and what is not to give them the accurate production information they need."

#### The joining of the companies

David Smith explained that although the 3 companies operate independently and from 3 different stockholding and

production sites they about to all come together for the first time in a purpose built stockholding and production facility in Willenhall in the West Midlands England. The new site is close to all the main transport links in the UK and with all the companies being under one roof we will be even more efficient and capable of looking after all our customers needs, this is a very exciting time for all of us and we are looking forward to the end of the year when we will be moving in to the new facility.

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