

Anglo-Indian collaboration offers improved market coverage

With concern over trading conditions in a post Brexit and Covid world, one Diecasting Society member company has highlighted how continued investment, a positive attitude and collaborative trading with international partners can offer a solution to the perils of global supply chains.

Known for his outspoken attitude, Simon Hanson of HCM Engineering Ltd is confident that there are plenty of opportunities to grow the business in the future thanks to an open minded approach and a long-standing relationship with a partner company on the other side of the world. HCM expanded into India in 2013 following a long association with Ibex Engineering, of Bangalore. Hanson said: "We at HCM have a similar ethos to everyone at Ibex. It is important for us to work with people who are equally committed to quality and advancing technology. Our combined skills sets means that we are achieving great things together."

Hanson explains: "Joining hands with our Indian cousins makes us stronger and more attractive to our end customers. Our UK/Indian trade partnership has enabled us to be more competitive, as we can compete with Eastern pricing. It means our customers benefit from the vast expertise of both HCM and Ibex. By collaborative trading we can provide customer solutions in a range of metals and processes and we can stimulate R&D into new ideas with our diverse range of ideas, providing both companies with a different way of thinking."

The Indian aluminium diecasting market is directly linked to the automotive industry, which is the fifth-largest in the world and is expected to become the third-largest imminently. India has a low per capita car ownership of 20 vehicles per 1,000 citizens, compared to 800 vehicles per 1,000 citizens in the United States and 85 per 1,000 citizens in China. Thus, there is a huge potential in the Indian automobile and ancillary industry. Out of the numerous diecasting companies in India, over 25 units produce around 12,000 tons of diecastings per year.

Ibex Engineering was established in 1998 as a young, fast track TS 16949 / ISO 14001 / OSHAS certified manufacturing company, based in Bangalore, India – the emerging global hub for outsourcing. A team of trained engineers and skilled technicians operating under a strict quality and delivery code, enables Ibex to be a one-stop, full service operation for all aluminium pressure diecasting, magnesium pressure diecasting, aluminium gravity diecasting and precision machining needs.

"The largest casting that is presently produced in our facility is about 3.5kg, with multiple steel inserts and a total shot weight of 5.5kg. Our real time control diecasting machines provide for a highly repeatable process with reduced casting rejections and are the most preferred equipment for some of our customers producing safety critical parts for the auto industry", says Srikanth GP, founder and MD, Ibex Engineering.

Armed with a mechanical engineering degree from Bangalore University and nearly two years' working experience with a leading manufacturing company, Srikanth GP set up this facility 23 years ago, with a strong determination and a focus on the ever-evolving manufacturing landscape. He is also a Harvard Business School Alumni and an avid wildlife and motorbiking enthusiast. Srikanth and Hanson have developed a strong working relationship, based on trust and mutual appreciation.

EXPERTISE WITHIN

With over two decades of manufacturing expertise, the quick response system delivers zero PPM and 100 per cent on time delivery. Ibex has manufacturing capabilities for low and high volume parts, including expertise in light weighting.

The company's in-house toolroom, was set up as a joint venture with HCM Engineering. HCM is a family owned business with over five decades of manufacturing expertise in the European die cast tooling market. This joint venture has enabled Ibex to support the in-house



tooling development needs as well as complement the UK operations with the smaller sized tooling needs of the UK market.

"In 2017, Ibex invested in developing magnesium diecasting under the guidance of its key European customer and M/s Rauch of Austria, which is a pioneer in magnesium melting," Srikanth explains. "A fully integrated facility with over 50,000 square foot of shopfloor area for magnesium diecasting has been built and began operating in January 2020. This is India's first magnesium diecasting facility and supplies castings into the Indian defence sector and safety critical parts into the Indian automobile industry."

"Located in the suburbs of Bangalore, Ibex plays a pivotal role in the rural integration of the workforce. Most of the employees are from the local neighbourhood, who were mainly working in the farmlands. Elaborate technical and management training processes have made this loyal workforce the main pillars of Ibex's success."

As one of the UK's leading manufacturers of tooling for a European-wide base of aluminium and iron foundries, HCM has continued to grow over the decades, thanks to its commitment to investment and an ability to see the wider picture. Hanson in particular is always on the look-out for development options and is keen to further strengthen the company's portfolio. Based in Lye in the West Midlands, HCM has high speed CNC milling, the latest CMM equipment, 3D design software, large surface grinding



and cylindrical capabilities, along with digitising and reverse engineering abilities. Its relationship with Ibex adds further strength and Hanson says this is how the company is able to survive and prosper during times of uncertainty and change. "You have to be flexible and collaborative working provides that additional strength," he says.

HCM has a reputation for working closely with OEMs to help produce complex component designs and working with a number of partners in a supply chain is nothing new to the company, with Hanson relishing the opportunity for company to company teamwork.

FUTURE PLANS

It is expected that the advent of electric cars in the near future will create a huge demand for magnesium diecastings due to its light weighting. Srikanth enthuses: "Ibex is rightly poised to encash this opportunity by being the pioneers in the Indian magnesium diecasting arena. The new facility already has a built area for magnesium recycling and is awaiting machinery. Post this installation, Ibex will be ready to challenge the Chinese monopoly in magnesium diecasting."

Post Covid lockdowns in India in April 2020, Ibex utilised



the opportunity to set up a state-of-the-art injection moulding facility with 15 machines to supply the health care industry. Supplies from this facility will replace parts that were previously imported from the Far East, thus pursuing the 'Made in INDIA' and 'ATMANIRBHAR' plans of the Indian central government.

Ibex LIFESTYLE is a new division which is designing and manufacturing European quality outdoor furniture from gravity die cast aluminium. The high end furniture is rust- and weather-proof and carries a ten-year warranty. Currently there is an online store www.ibexlifestyle.com to retail into the Indian market. The first physical experience store is expected to be ready in mid 2021. The products will eventually be supplied into the overseas market.

It seems that both HCM and Ibex have backed winners in their quest for collaborative working and Hanson says rather than complain about "changing times", companies need to find ways to embrace the change and look to the future.

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Join the Diecasting Society

Membership is open to both individuals and companies who have an interest in the manufacture of die cast metal products. That interest might be as a foundry or a supplier to a foundry.

Each member receives the *Diecasting Society Newsletter*, and reduced rate attendance at all the Society events, both technical and social. Annual membership is £40.00 for an individual member and £225.00 for companies (which includes four reduced rate places for named employees at the company). The cost for a student or trainee is just £8.50. *To start enjoying the benefits of membership email: dcs@dicme.org.uk or visit www.dcsoc.org.uk*



CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2021

Due to the current social distancing restrictions, all DCS re-scheduled events for 2021 will be announced in a coming issue.

Please refer to the website or contact us direct for updated information.

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