

Major investment in automated punching technology sets KMF up for the future.

# Punch press cell at KMF

**CONTINUOUS investment in technology, processes and people** has propelled KMF (Precision Sheet Metal) to its position as the UK's largest sub-contract manufacturer of precision sheet metal components and assemblies. The latest investment at the Newcastle-under-Lyme factory is a CNC punch press cell with many productivity-enhancing features. At a total cost of £750k this Trumpf TruPunch 5000 large format-punching machine, with a working range of 3000 by 1500mm, is part of KMF's strategy to meet changing demands from customers. The punch press has been enhanced with twin, 180 tonne sheet storage towers; ShearMaster scrap handling system (the first of its kind to be installed in the UK); SheetMaster automatic work loading and unloading system; and SortBox and SortMaster for parts sorting either in sheet form or as individual parts.

'While this new system will initially meet the requirements of three new customers, the versatility and the unmanned running capability will also provide us with additional capacity for potential new business when the demand arises,' says Gareth Higgins, KMF's Managing Director. 'This can be achieved due to the level of automation we have specified. For instance, by using the Trumpf ToolMaster system we can increase the number of tools available at any one time from 70 to 300 through use of multi-tools. This gives us much greater flexibility in terms of what work can go on the machine at short notice.'

Through investment of this type KMF has created a £20 million turnover business with over 450 active customers on its books. These customers range in size from £10k through to £5 million per year accounts with some working on annual contracts, while others are more impromptu. Irrespective of size of customer, KMF is finding that they are all demanding smaller batch sizes alongside lead-time reduction, hence the investment in additional automated manufacturing systems. With this, and previous investments, such as a number of deburring and surface finishing machines from Ellesco, KMF can get an order into production, typically within 24 hours of receipt of order, irrespective of complexity or quantities.

'Our policy is always to invest in new equipment before

we reach full capacity. By pre-empting capacity in this way we are in a better position to take on additional business and provide customers with the confidence that we are in a position to immediately meet their delivery requirements,' says Higgins. 'We have very positive ambitions for the business and envisage turnover increasing to £40 million within the next four years. With this latest investment we have the manufacturing capacity to achieve that figure.'

The features of this latest system from Trumpf will deliver significant productivity benefits to KMF and its customers. For example, the ShearMaster scrap material processing system has fully automated the removal of sheet skeletons from the work area. The system 'chops up' the skeleton into manageable sized pieces before removing them from the working area. 'This system alone is reducing machine downtime by around an hour a day as we no longer need to stop the machine to clear the sheet skeletons. When combined with the 3000mm x 1500mm sheet capacity our productivity levels, manufacturing capacity and flexibility have been greatly enhanced.'

KMF (Precision Sheet Metal) is one of UK manufacturing's success stories. Based in Staffordshire, an area more closely associated with pottery, the family-owned business has become the UK's leading supplier of precision sheet metal components and assemblies and has seen turnover grow from £9 million to over £20 million during the past five years. Established 37 years ago the company has achieved this position through a resolute commitment to quality, investment and innovation.

Recently the company has witnessed a dramatic increase in business, driven in part by the decision to consolidate all of its manufacturing activities to one site. This, combined with an annual investment in new equipment of around £1 million per year, has resulted in a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility that operates 24 hours, seven days per week, with the 250 permanent staff working a mix of conventional day / nights and continental shift patterns. This gives KMF the flexibility it needs to deliver the high levels of service expected by its diverse customer base, which range from blue chip organisations to sole traders.

[www.kmf.co.uk](http://www.kmf.co.uk)

The Trumpf TruPunch 5000 recently installed at KMF (Precision Sheet Metal), showing in the foreground the ShearMaster scrap system and at the rear the twin storage towers and automated sheet-handling system.

