

PROVING *THEIR* METAL

the Wall Colmonoy story

▶ Wall Colmonoy, a global leader in materials engineering and US family-owned, has been a major employer in South Wales for nearly 50 years.

The Scene visited the company's European HQ, Wall Colmonoy Limited, in the Swansea Valley to find out about the history, and plans for the future.

Steph Curtis, Managing Director of Wall Colmonoy Limited, is keen to explain in simple terms what they do.

"The products we make and services we provide play an integral role in many industries instrumental to our everyday lives," he says.

"They're fundamental in keeping aeroplanes in the sky, glass bottles in production, food fresh, pumps pumping, steel industries rolling, nuclear turbines powering, and transportation greener."

The advanced materials manufacturing company specialises in the design, development and manufacture of Colmonoy® (Nickel) and Wallex® (Cobalt) for hard surfacing applications, and Microbraz® (Nickel) brazing alloys for high temperature joining of metals.

Wall Colmonoy also manufactures precision castings and machined components. In addition, the company offers specialised services of brazing, welding and heat treatment of components for aerospace, oil and gas, food, steel and many other industries.

WALLCOLMONOY
PRECISION COMPONENTS



“ Over a quarter of the 200 employees at Pontardawe have been with the company for more than 20 years

“ We aim to provide customers with the products, services and tools they need for their own growth.”

“As the company continues robust growth, local area employment continues to increase,” says Port Talbot-born Steph, a Cardiff University mechanical engineering graduate, who joined Wall Colmonoy in 2014, with 30 years’ industrial and director-level experience in major international plcs and SME’s.

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Wall Colmonoy’s European HQ, based in Pontardawe, exports 90% of its products to Europe, Russia, Scandinavia, MENA, India and Australia – serving a long-established customer base in the aerospace, oil and gas, automotive, glass, food, steel and nuclear industries.

So why did the company choose South Wales?

The Welsh location, now boasting 70,000 square feet and 200 employees, was chosen back in 1969 due to the Welsh Government, who provided

W.P. Clark, then Chairman, with an offer of a building and land in Pontardawe.

“What attracted Mr Clark was the region’s 200-year metallurgical history, along with a skilled local workforce, highly qualified graduates from local universities, and its closeness to a major Nickel supplier, Inco (now Vale), in Clydach.”

“We’re extremely proud of our heritage,” says Steph.

Wall Colmonoy dates back to 1938, when entrepreneur and founder, Albert F Wall, met two metallurgists, who had developed Colmonoy, a specially formulated nickel-based alloy for application on down hole drill bits for the oil industry.

The word, Colmonoy, is an amalgam of the metallurgists’ names, Cole and Edmonds, and the term ‘alloy’.

Mr Wall purchased the Colmonoy patent and manufacturing processes, and named the company – Wall Colmonoy Corporation.

In 1950, the company’s Materials Engineer, Bob Peaslee, invented a new brazing technology involving nickel-based filler metals. The high temperature brazing alloy was named Nicrobraz.

Bob Peaslee pioneered successful applications for this new nickel brazing alloy for hydrogen braze of aircraft turbine engine components. The technology and process continues today.

In order to advance and educate engineers on furnace brazing technology, Steph cites the first European brazing school, that took place in Pontardawe in October 2014, as something the company is really proud of. The school teaches top engineers from around the world about high-temperature brazing. Since 1977 Wall Colmonoy Corporation has been hosting the brazing school in the USA.

In May of 2012, Wall Colmonoy opened a 23,500 square foot modern precision machine shop, supported by a £2m Welsh Government grant. Dedication

of the facility was made by First Minister, Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones MP accompanied by Local MP Peter Hain and AM Bethan Jenkins.

Wall Colmonoy’s Pontardawe team works closely with its colleagues in the US, sharing best practices on visits across the Atlantic. “We have developed a strategy focused on continuous improvement and profitable growth providing long-term employment in South Wales,” says Steph.

“The fourth generation of family members have joined in senior roles. We’re one of a few companies in this industry to be owned and operated by the same family for these past 75 years.”

The company is actively working on a broad range of workforce development initiatives and has also developed its own unique Wall Colmonoy apprenticeship programme to meet the future needs of the business. Wall Colmonoy plans to recruit four apprentices per year over the next four years.

Today Wall Colmonoy employs 200 people in Pontardawe, over a quarter of whom have been with the company for more than 20 years.

“I’m very proud to be part of the family business with its long-standing and proud history, and its major commitment to our local community for almost 50 years,” adds Steph.

“Everyone who works here has played a major part in the journey and we aim to continue to build upon the extraordinary accomplishments of the past whilst advancing forward into the future.”

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