

The big move

Moving house is said to be the most stressful life event after divorce; imagine having to move a priceless gunmaking factory, plus associated paraphernalia, 160 miles across Britain without breaking anything...

Well, we have finally done it. We have bitten the bullet, to coin a phrase, and moved from our tiny, cramped workshop in the depths of sunny Lancashire, which has served us so well in recent years, to our recently (well, March of this year) purchased factory in Northampton; I now appreciate why we kept putting the inevitable off!

We have, in fact, been waiting for yet another new machine to arrive in Northampton to replace one installed in Lancashire. It was to save us having to move the machine from Lancashire to Northampton, with the old machine due to be collected in a few months' time, saving us the hassle. The arrival of the new machine took longer than expected – these things always do –

and then arrived without much warning, like a new baby, which meant we had the green light to move.

I think the time we waited was a blessing as we have wanted to do quite a bit of cosmetic work to the building, not to mention installing a new security system, new office ceilings, and painting the outside. Although, even without all the renovations, the new factory is in stark contrast to the one in Lancashire, with 10,000 sq ft of workshop, 2,000 sq ft of assembly room, and 2,000 sq ft of office space... luxuries!

So, on Friday 16 October a 450-foot trailer arrived in the driveway ready to be packed with all the small stuff. Little did I know at the time that we

would need three of these for 'small stuff' alone (thank you Davenport Transport of Burscough for your assistance with this, for your great service and your 'chilled' attitude; you have been a pleasure to deal with).

Before we could remove any of the machines, we had to dismantle a section of the existing building's wall and roof. This was no mean feat; most of the steelwork was welded together so it was a little bit like trying to dismantle Fort Knox, and meant working late into Sunday night to prepare the site, ready for the machine removers' (Charles Russell Transport Group) trucks that would be arriving on Monday morning.

And arrive they did! Complete with 25-tonne forklift, 95-tonne Hiab, and drop-deck trailers which extended to 60 feet. Another four arrived on Wednesday after the first three had left on Tuesday morning (with Mr Longthorne, who would show them where to place the machines on site in Northampton). I must hand it to these guys; apart from the fact that they are intravenous tea-drinkers (and guess whose job it was to make the tea!), they do a great job and really know what they are doing, and conveniently they all seem to

The Lancashire factory was small and cramped, and difficult to keep clean and tidy



PICTURES: LONGTHORNE / MATTHEW BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY



The new site provides 10,000 sq ft of workshop, 2,000 sq ft of assembly room, and 2,000 sq ft of office space.

The new factory in Northampton



like their tea strong with no sugar... easy peasy.

Mr Longthorne returned from Northampton on Tuesday night (a little tired, but all in a day's work) in time to oversee the loading of the remaining machines – his babies – on Wednesday morning. Our largest machine, weighing in at 25 tonnes, was one of these. Then off to Northampton again

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on Thursday to supervise the offloading of the last four trucks, and back to Lancashire again on Friday; oh, the joys!

Apart from the inevitable inconvenient interruption to production smack bang in the middle of the season, there was never going to be a good time to do this. Surprisingly, the only little mishaps we incurred were a broken bandsaw, which we’d had for around 30 years and was still going strong, and a small crater in the concrete driveway created by the 25-tonne forklift; not bad, really, considering the amount of equipment being moved.

On Sunday night, 27 October, Mr Longthorne whizzed back down to Northampton in time to greet our first two new staff members on Monday morning, do the inductions and supervise the installation of machines.

At the time of writing we are busy cleaning the plant and equipment (anyone who has visited the

Lancashire workshop would appreciate how impossible it was to keep things clean and shipshape), wiring in the machines, installing the computer and telephone network, and unpacking. There is a little way to go yet, but we are on the home straight now and looking forward to being up and running again in early November. We really look forward to welcoming you to our new abode. ■

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