Architectural Terracotta Producer Goes from Strength to Strength

Submitted by: Ainsworth Maguire
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A year on from saving over 30 skilled jobs, Darwen Terracotta and Faience (http://www.darwenterracotta.com) report they have smashed their original £1.3 million turnover target. “There is a well justified buzz about the place and an optimism that the hard teamwork and effort have paid off and we have created a sustainable path to a better future for all, explained Jon Wilson.”

Recent orders include the Victoria Palace theatre in London, including both restoration and new build work, new work at the Natural History Museum, and a contract for the Savoy. Projects going through the works now include Wigan Town Hall, Harrods, the Windmill Theatre in Soho and a new-build commercial development in Clerkenwell. To meet demand the company have secured a grant from regenerate Pennine Lancashire that will help build a second kiln to increase capacity and flexibility.

Jon is a firm believer that every situation brings opportunities, not just perils. That was the approach taken by Jon and Steve Allen, the founders of Darwen Terracotta Limited, formed when another local firm closed its architectural ceramics business, making 39 people redundant. The new directors believed there was potential to create a new company to fill the gap in the market and then set about developing a business plan, finding financial backing, locating suitable premises, sourcing key plant items, while keeping in touch with former colleagues.

“We had our teething problems, but the whole team pulled together, production started and by the spring of this year we had begun to gather momentum. Past customers, suppliers, the local council and most people we deal with are incredibly supportive. We were encouraged to enter the local Hive Business Awards and were delighted to win in the new business category. University students have also toured our facility so we are playing our part in inspiring the next generation too,” explained Steve Allen.

Architectural terracotta and faience provides a backdrop to urban living and every town has numerous civic, religious, commercial and cultural buildings that use these materials. Restoration of this heritage is a huge market. Importantly, there is a surge in new interest from modern architects keen to reinterpret and incorporate these elegant and adaptive traditional materials into new build. Previously, the team even worked with FAT Architecture and renowned artist Grayson Perry on the House for Essex project.

More Information

United Kingdom
Jon Wilson, Director Tel. +44 (0)1254 460 500
E-mail: jonwilson@darwenterracotta.com Web: www.darwenterracotta.com
Darwen Terracotta Ltd, Building O, Ribble House, Ribble Business Park, Challenge Way, Blackburn, Lancashire. BB1 5RB

Images are on the web at www.ainsmag.co.uk/da260/5564da1a-darwen-terracotta-success.htm

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e: info@responsesource.com t: 020 3426 4051 f: 0345 370 7776 w: https://www.responsesource.com

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