



Karen Wallace

meets

Mark Gallop



A contract with the Royal Navy Air Station in Yeovilton 16 years ago helped Western Flooring get off the ground.

WINNING the RNAS contract was pure luck, according to Mark Gallop, md of Western Flooring.

'They found our name in a book and gave me a ring,' says Mark.

'That project was success and now we are the first port of call for McAlpine, Yeovilton's maintenance contractor.'

Mark has installed flooring in hangars, accommodation blocks, in the control tower and also at the Yeovilton Fleet Air Arm Museum where tiling was fitted in lines and dotted lines to look like a runway.

McAlpine has also specified Western Flooring to carry out work in Taunton at the RN's Norton Manor Camp and the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO).

'In some of the areas, we have to be escorted in. Or if we're standing examining the flooring, we get some very suspicious looks. It's amazing the checks you have to go through to work in these places, security checks, counter-terrorism checks, and it's not just you but your family as well.'

Since the first Yeovilton contract in 1992, business has thrived, most notably with an increase of around £50,000 in turnover every year for the past four years.

Mark started out in the flooring industry aged 17 working for Southern Tiling on all aspects of contract and domestic flooring.

Then 20 years ago, he decided to branch out and set up his own business from home. 'I was quite happy keeping things small and simple', says Mark. 'However, after a couple of years, it was fast becoming obvious there was too much work for one person.'

Flying start

In 1996, Mark moved the business to a unit in Yeovil and then again in 2002 to a second unit double the size of the first. 'I'd like to move again', says Mark, 'and this time I'd like to buy rather than rent.'

Around 20% of the company's business is for the domestic market and Mark runs a small showroom out of the current premises. The company took on limited status on June 1, 2005.

Mark has recently promoted Dave Warr to manager of the company. School friend Dave has worked for Mark for many years but he has been appointed as full-time manager to help Mark with the workload.

Dave's remit is also to focus on running the company more smoothly and efficiently.

Dave's two sons and nephew are also involved in the business. In total, Mark employs five fitters including Dave, and a further five full-time and three part-time self-employed fitters. The day-to-day running of the company is carried out by Carole Parsons and Sharon Rimmer.

'The contract side of the business runs itself', explains Mark. 'The majority of our work is repeat



An installation by Western Flooring at Westland Leisure Complex, Yeovil



Flooring installed by the company at Ribcraft, a rigid inflatable boat builder

projects have included the bar area at Yeovil Town Football Club and the skittle alley at Westland Leisure Complex.

'There are jobs that we've taken on that have resulted in a loss but I think it's important that you don't turn down work otherwise it gives other

people the chance to get their feet in the door and increases the competition. I believe this is a policy that has actually worked because we are the only flooring contractor in Yeovil.'

Mark's aim is to find an investor who will gradually buy into the business over the next 10 years. 'I don't just want to sell the company when I retire nor do I want it to simply cease to exist.'

'But it's a tough job working in the flooring business. We're always the last in and if there's been a problem with the earlier trades such as plumbing or electricians, then the pressure is on us.'

'I believe it's important to be reliable and not let people down. I've always had the attitude that the customer is always right but you'd be surprised at the amount of companies who can be too aggressive and stubborn.'

'I actually think that we've won lots of jobs where there has been a disagreement between the previous contractor and the specifier. Long may it continue!'

CFJ
T: 01935 473121

www.westernflooring.co.uk



The hospitality area at Yeovil Town Football Club showing flooring laid by Western