



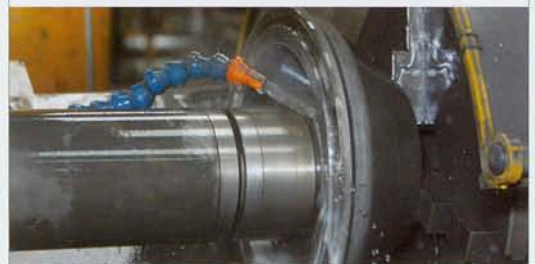
# A polished approach

Established in 1990 in Daventry, England, General Carbide Europe has grown to be one of the most prominent and recognisable suppliers of tungsten carbide products in the UK. Throughout its relatively short history the company has demonstrated its prowess in the field of wear part production, predominantly for those operating in the oil and gas industry. With a focus on continuous improvement, the organisation's 12,500 square foot, modern and well-equipped manufacturing plant provides an ideal platform for development. The 15-strong highly skilled and experienced team of engineers and specialists utilise the high tech machinery, along with their expertise, to produce perfectly ground and polished parts. Aside from the international oil and gas industry, General Carbide Europe is able to supply the pharmaceutical, press tooling, fastener, ammunition and coin manufacturing industries with bespoke solutions. Such depth of ability is aided by connections with its sister company General Carbide Corporation in the US, which is the company's greatest and most loyal supplier.

Though it operates from only one site in the UK, the company has the capability to take on large orders from international organisations, as Rod Print, director of sales at General Carbide Europe, explains: "We have recently been involved in a contract worth £926,000 for the manufacture of carbide trims for a severe service valve manufacturer in the UK. We are producing the tungsten carbide trims to be used in the manufacture of valves that will be utilised in the harsh and high-pressure environments of the

offshore industry. They are extremely large valves and we have really pushed the boundaries and provided a unique service for the manufacture of these carbide trims. We have also invested in and installed a lot of specialist equipment to complete this contract." The delivery of this order is imminent.

The reliability of such severe service parts is essential to prevent customer downtime and the need to change components mid-operation – an



asset that is highly desirable in the oil and gas market. Everything General Carbide Europe manufactures for the offshore industry passes through stringent quality control processes from the specification of carbide grades to the finished and polished piece.

The diverse and demanding environments of the offshore industry provide a number of challenges for operators and suppliers alike. As companies start to reach greater depths in the drilling process, the discovery of a substance known as 'black powder' is becoming more commonplace and is a challenge due to its highly erosive properties. Orders for tungsten carbide trims are on the rise in order to combat this problem, providing General Carbide Europe with a huge potential for market growth and subsequent expansion.

Rod outlines the company's strategy for development: "Our main goal is to double in size over the next ten years predominantly through organic growth. We have no plans to make any acquisitions but simply aim to grow by moving further into the oil and gas market, and we anticipate that the need for tungsten carbide trims will increase dramatically. At present, we are also working on a top secret product that will provide an alternative method for fixing tungsten carbide to stainless steel other than through brazing. Tests are currently being carried out on this method at Cambridge University and we are hoping it will be launched in the first quarter of 2010."

Despite this success, General Carbide Europe has experienced a significant downturn as a result of the economic crisis and major contracts are

## GENERAL CARBIDE CORP

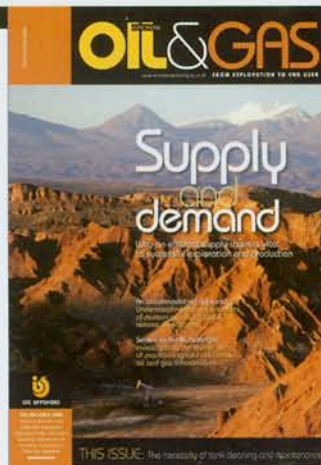
General Carbide Corp supports General Carbide Europe with application engineering knowledge and carbide blank manufacturing capability. Its application engineering and grade development staff has years of experience to reliably predict how successful a grade will be in a particular environment. Although high hardness is usually assumed to be the best physical property needed to resist wear, hardness is not the only property to consider. Grain size, type of binder and the overall operating environment also determine which grade will perform best. This knowledge coupled with the excellent finishing capability of General Carbide Europe in Daventry, provides a customer with an excellent metallurgical and manufacturing solution to his valve design or repair problem.



proving hard to find. As a result of this, gaining partnerships with large oil and gas companies is a key target for the coming years. The company's attendance at exhibitions such as Offshore Europe, where this year it had a booth, is essential for founding positive relationships. "Offshore Europe was very beneficial for us and we gained a number of interesting contracts and links. As the director of sales I spend a lot of my time travelling around the country to try and secure more business and develop long-term relationships with potential customers," Rod explains.

Once the organisation has won a client, a great deal of effort is put into retaining their business for the future by working closely with them to offer a tailor-made solution that meets every requirement. This goes some way to explaining why so many of General Carbide Europe's customers come back time and again, alongside the company's industry-wide reputation for very high quality. As an ISO 9000:2001 accredited business, all employees take pride in the quality machined parts they manufacture and no part leaves the plant until it has passed quality assessment. The company is also buoyed up by its strong supplier network, namely its sister company in the US that dependably delivers the tungsten carbide sintered parts ready to be fabricated.

Rod concludes with his vision for the future: "Once we start to lift out of the recession I believe there is a lot of growth potential for General Carbide Europe, and I predict that we will experience a 50 per cent increase in business year-on-year, for the next five years. Our core strategy will focus on product innovation and expansion into new markets."



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**Products**  
Tungsten carbide wear parts



## GENERAL CARBIDE®

General Carbide produces several specific grades of tungsten carbide for oil/gas production and flow control operations. We solve wear problems involving erosive wear, abrasive wear and chemical/mechanical corrosive wear in flow control applications.

Hardness, grain size, type of binder and the operating environment determine which grade will perform best. Our application engineering staff has the experience to reliably recommend a successful grade for a particular environment.

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