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Langley Alloys: striding

With over eighty years of experience, Langley Alloys provides a range of high-performance duplex and super duplex stainless steels, nickel-based alloys, and unique copper-nickel alloys for the harshest of conditions, whether it's for sub-sea systems at great depths, oil and gas industry components operating under intense pressures, or the aggressive environments found within modern chemical plants. Stainless Steel World News last interviewed company members in November 2018. Now we're back, this time to talk to Rodney Rice, their Business Development Director, and colleagues, about how they are reacting to changes in the marketplace and the exciting new projects they are working on.

By Joanne McIntyre and John Butterfield

New Houston facility

At the time that this article was finalised, Langley Alloys was in the process of fitting out its brand-new facility in Houston. Rodney Rice, the company's Business Development Manager, takes up the story: "The new unit we have taken is >30,000 sq. ft., which is effectively double the size of our original facility there. It is on a par with our United Kingdom site. The building is large enough to manoeuvre cranes inside, and it's fitted with high-density stocking that replicates the UK configuration. It may seem a bold move to commit to building a facility twice the size of the previous one, but we are confident that it will be a great

springboard to grow our presence and sales in the US market." David Jenkins, General Manager of the Houston site continues: "Our site in Houston used to stock a wide range of grades, but it didn't have the critical mass of stock. However, we realised that as a stockholder, you are either 'all-in' or 'all-out'; without the full variety of stock and the full range of sizes, it's inevitable that you won't always have what your customers need. Therefore, three years ago, we focused our US business purely on duplex and super duplex. Today our Houston site only stocks bars in four grades: Ferralium 255, S32750/SAF 2507, S32760, and the regular 2205 duplex. And it stocks them very well in every size."

"Now that we've moved into new, much larger facilities in Houston we will look to stock a wider product range there, including XM19 and nickel alloys such as grades 625, 825, 925 and 718. In this way, we will replicate our UK offering."

Further investment in nickel-based alloys, and beyond

"Our United Kingdom site stocks practically all grades of duplex, super duplex and nickel alloy bars," explains Rodney. "We significantly increased our focus on nickel-based alloys in recent years,



Rodney Rice, Business Development Director at Langley Alloys.

Piping packages

Since 2019 Langley Alloys has offered its customers piping packages, also known as PFF (pipes, flanges, fittings) in the USA. It's additive to their business as it utilises their existing capabilities such as in-house testing and inspection, first-stage machining, deciphering customer specifications, storage and processing, and of course their mill partnerships with the likes of Sandvik. Their business is known for super duplex, so it made sense to start supplying super duplex piping packages. The combination of pipes, flanges, fittings, plus bars and machined components is an attractive offer for many projects.



Richard Coates, Business Development Manager for Piping Packages.

Once any additional customer requirements such as tests or inspections are completed in-house, the complete package is delivered directly to a project. "While we already had all the building blocks in our day-to-day business; a warehouse, good relationships with suppliers and extensive stock etc., we were missing expertise in this sector for the commercial side. This year we were able to rectify that with the addition of Richard Coates, who is very experienced in the piping packages sector. Richard is now Business Development Manager for that segment of our business," explains Rodney Rice.

The direct delivery of piping packages offers clear advantages for the client who no longer needs to source components from many different suppliers. "We will deliver consignments containing every single piece required for their application. Our relationship with Sandvik brings further advantages because we can access their stock or running production for our package business."



Langley Alloys' new facility with an area in excess of 30,000 sq. ft., which is double the size of

to broaden our relevance to customers. Our focus has traditionally been on the development and distribution of super duplex stainless steels. As these are used in the most demanding applications, it seems logical that our customers will require complementary alloys. While we have stocked nickel alloys for some time, our levels of investment in this stock has increased significantly in recent years."

Since 2017 we've substantially increased our stockholding of nickel alloys. Grades such as Alloy 718 and K-500 had been in our

portfolio for many years, and initially we extended that to include Alloys 625, 725 and 825. Alloy 925 came a year later, in sizes specific to customers who are using this grade as a cost-effective alternative to Alloy 718. We have just invested heavily in Alloy 625, making us a more-rounded supplier than ever before.

Their nickel alloys are primarily used in offshore oil and gas applications and in the chemical processing industry, where there are often very aggressive and/or higher-temperature environments in which stainless steels are unsuitable.



David Jenkins, General Manager of Langley Alloys' Houston site.



Troy Walters, General Manager of Langley Alloys' Portland site.

Special relationship with Sandvik

Langley Alloys is Sandvik Materials Technology's preferred distribution partner for duplex and super duplex bars in the United States and the United Kingdom.

As Sandvik stepped back from direct distribution in those regions, Langley took over the stock, racking, equipment, and material. Today it maintains an inventory of hundreds of tonnes of Sandvik duplex and super duplex at its sites in the UK and USA.

confidently into the future



their previous facility.

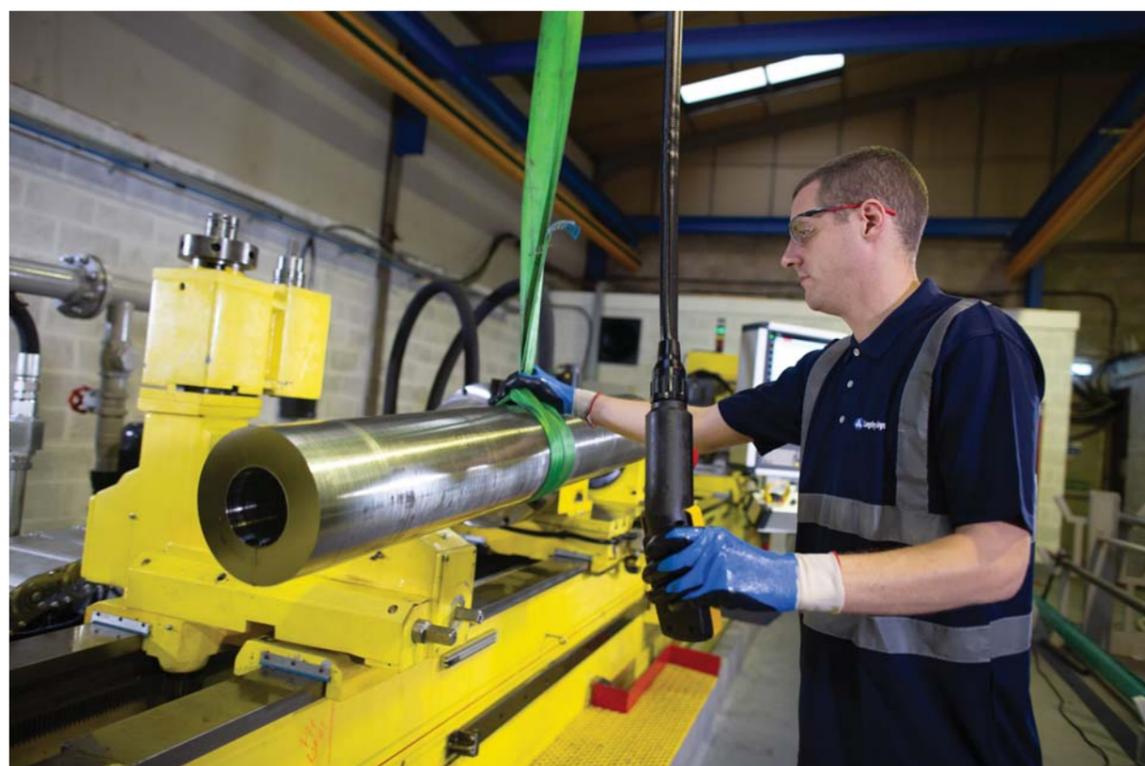
In addition to bars, Langley Alloys also supplies duplex plate through its Portland, USA site. "We acquired the Portland site in 2010, and it was our first large investment outside of the UK. It has specialised in the distribution and processing of plate for many years," explains Troy Walters, General Manager of the Portland site. "Because we are so closely associated with duplex and super duplex alloys, the ability to offer plate, pipe and fittings from our US site is an important part of our business."

1st stage machining capability

Langley Alloys' first-stage machining services have increased significantly in parallel with the expansion in the company's range of nickel alloy offerings. "We looked to where we could add value to customers who were purchasing bar. We set ourselves up to handle medium to high numbers of relatively simple operations, and this has become more important for us. Three years ago, we had just one lathe; now the machining shop has had to relocate into a separate facil-

ity in order to house the growing fleet of CNC lathes, millers and a large deep hole borer. We recently took delivery of another machine that has extended our turning capability to beyond 2 m lengths, consistent with that of our deep hole borer," relates Rodney Rice.

He further emphasises that the company is not taking on what its end-user customers do, i.e., super-precise and one-off components. "We are simply offering to carry out simple machining cost-effectively to simplify the supply chain for our



The deep hole borer, part of Langley Alloys' in-house 1st-stage machining capability.



Inside the warehouse of the UK facility.

customers. Instead of ordering sawn billets or bars, they can order rough machined items. It's an ideal service for customers who have a reasonably predictable annual requirement. We can produce these machined items in large numbers and hold them in stock."

Unique factors

Several factors reinforce Langley Alloy's unique position in the industry. They have a very clear focus on high-performance duplex, super duplex and nickel alloys. It is not just this focus that sets them apart; they carry a tremendous amount of these grades in stock, so the items customers require are always available.

The company also has a long heritage of material development, and it holds several original trademark products which are still very relevant today, including the very first patented super duplex stainless steel: Ferralium 255.

"We make a brisk trade in these grades, which today are often utilised for different applications than those for which they were initially developed," says Rodney Rice.

The range of products on offer at Langley Alloys is complimented by its capacity for in-house machining, testing and inspection. In addition to these tangible capabilities, the company is proud of its in-house expertise. "We have three metallurgists in the company: me, our Chairman, Ray Stone, and our Technical Lead David Coghill. That's quite a lot for a business which only employs forty people! Furthermore, our Quality Manager Kathy Stubbs is a mechanical engineer. As such, we can add a lot of value to the products we provide. Finally, our clients appreciate the range of our offering in bars, plates, piping packages, and components."

Knowledge Hub

In addition to the specialist alloys it supplies, Langley Alloys has also made a wealth of information available through its online Knowledge Hub. Easily accessible information is searchable by topic and clearly displayed in the form of questions and answers.

The Hub was added to their website mid-2020, and it's proving to be a popular information resource. Similarly to their webchat service, it is a good way to engage with potential new customers, and it's a way to demonstrate their in-house expertise. By investing the time in information and knowledge, it is akin to the investment in physical warehousing and stock. It provides reassurance and credibility to customers.

Plans for the future

Looking to the future, the team at Langley Alloys are planning to continue growing in both their home and export markets. "We already export to Brazil and Australia, and every land in between, so our future focus will be on continuing to grow our awareness with prospective customers, deepen our stock, and further develop our team. We are fortunate to count Sandvik and Voestalpine Bohler Edelstahl as our primary suppliers, giving us access to the highest-quality alloys, certification, and approvals," says Rodney Rice.

"The move to our large new facility in Houston is certainly a big step for us. Beyond that, we have invested significantly in stock and material recently. We've also invested a lot in equipment and added to our Sales team despite the market conditions. We are going to carry on in the way we have done, becoming more competitive in our field. We are confident that we will continue to meet the demanding requirements and expectations of the markets so that a bright future lies ahead of us."

Langley Alloys as part of the innovative AdvFlow project consortium

An exciting project, and one they were asked to participate in given their in-depth knowledge of super duplex stainless steels, is to support Krohne's efforts to develop the manufacture of large Coriolis mass flow meters to meet demanding operating conditions found in the oil, gas and chemical processing industries. Because the brazing of joints required for these high-precision units involves temperatures and times that may negatively impact on the integrity of the super duplex stainless steel grades, they will advise on the ideal material selection and optimum process settings to achieve the objectives of the project.