

CONVEYING NEWS

Contained Cutting Reduces Waste

Recent cutting developments by Western Mechanical Handling engineers have led to significant cost savings and increased quality for a large desserts bakery.

Over recent months WMH's trial robotic cutting cell has been out on long-term loan to a large desserts bakery where modifications to the unit have enabled the factory to reduce labour costs, improve product quality and reduce product wastage and give-away.

The cutting cell incorporates WMH conveyor and control technology with a Mitsubishi Electric 6-axis Robot and Telsonic ultrasonic cutting blades to provide a robust, hygienic unit with the flexibility to cope with a range of product cutting and portioning requirements.

Offering both radial and parallel cutting the unit has been used for dividing round cakes and rectangular tray-bakes into individual portions upstream of packing, it has also been used for slicing cheese and cutting large blocks into retail pack sizes.

The unit takes individual products, cuts them to the desired pattern then waits for the next cake to be loaded. To register the cakes in the correct position for cutting a jig is used. The original intention was for products, which are baked in a disposable carrier, to be removed from the carrier, placed in the jig and cut. While this worked reasonably well cutting the cakes there were several areas that needed to be addressed to improve the process further, these included; the carriers were awkward to remove without damaging the product; slices were moving during the cutting process meaning the jig was making small imprints on the edges of the cakes and it was found that a high level of waste was created when operators removed the unprotected individual slices.



Significant improvements were made when it was decided to try cutting the cakes in the outer carriers. By protecting the cake in its carrier, the product could be held more firmly in the jig without incurring damage to the outer edges and the delicate point was also supported when being handled, reducing waste caused by damaged pieces. In addition, the carrier was much easier to remove from the pieces once it had been cut.

Tests carried out on the product cut in this way confirmed that there was no contamination of the product by the carrier and therefore this method of production satisfied their standards.

"We are very pleased with the outcome of these trials which have seen significant benefits over and above those anticipated" said a spokesman for WMH.

This development in capabilities has formed the basis of a future project for another bakery and the manufacture of a second test-unit.

Food Processing Awards Winner 2017

We won! WMH beat off competition for three other nominated companies to win the Food Processing Magazine award for "Process and Packaging" at their 2017 Gala Dinner and awards ceremony.

WMH was represented by Tom Tomlinson who accepted the award. "I was delighted to accept the award on behalf of WMH, my colleagues who worked very hard to see the project through to completion." Said Tom



Electrical Apprentice Joins the Team

Western Mechanical Handling UK Ltd are pleased to announce the appointment a new member to the Automation Team. George Morgan joined WMH at the beginning of September as an Electrical Engineering Apprentice.

George has joined the company having completed A-levels at Okehampton College. Not wanting to run up huge student debts by going university he was keen to take up an apprenticeship which will enable him to continue his education alongside learning a practical trade. George was familiar with the work of WMH having spent time with the company on work experience before completing his A-levels.

When not working George plays hockey for Oakhampton and swims for Tavistock Swimming club.



New Supervisor

WMH are pleased to announce the internal appointment of Nathan Clark as Workshop Supervisor.

Nathan will be responsible for the assembly workshop, ensuring all machines are assembled to the highest possible standard ready for customer visits, trials in addition to working with the team to meet dispatch deadlines.

“This is quite a challenging role with the current workload, but will be made a little easier once the building works are completed we will have a dedicated clean assembly space again.” Said Nathan.

The supervisor role is hands-on enabling Nathan to continue to work as a multi-skilled engineer alongside his new supervisory responsibilities.



Building Project Nears Completion

WMH's factory expansion is nearing completion, the 3,600-square foot extension to the fabrication workshop has been slowly taking shape over the past nine months and will provide much needed additional space for their growing business.



When the build is complete it will deliver a doubling of the fabrication space for the company and enable the establishment of a dedicated clean-room assembly area for WMH's high-end food and pharmaceutical production machines. In addition to the additional manufacturing space the building will house new first-floor meeting rooms, staff canteen and changing facilities and a dedicated demonstration area.

“2017 was a really busy year for WMH and this additional space will enable to company to continue to thrive and grow to meet the demands of the future” said a spokesman for WMH.

The company is hoping to be able to move into the new space within the next month and will be holding a factory open day later in the year to showcase their latest developments and test equipment.



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