

Cutting die incorporating  
Braille & Tamper evident device.

# LASERCOMB GROUP

## ‘WHERE EVERY IMPRESSION COUNTS’

**T**he Lasercomb Group, which comprises of three complementary companies, has been supplying quality tooling for the converting industry since its management buyout from Bobst Group in 2006. Today, Lasercomb Dies, Lasercomb Engraving and CTE set the industry benchmark for combining state-of-the-art technology and customer service enabling the printing and packaging industry to deliver the highest possible standards to international brand owners and the retail sector. Outlining the company's history,

Group Managing Director and Operations Director Mark Ridings explained, "Lasercomb Group has been at the cutting edge of press-ready die tooling systems since 1984 and is an industry innovator of tooling solutions for the pharmaceutical, food, household, luxury goods, multi-packaging and beverage sectors. Lasercomb Engraving, which was formerly Palatine Engraving, has been servicing the printing and graphics industry since 1897 and has evolved into a state-of-the-art supplier of foiling and embossing tools for the packaging, labels,

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REPORT BY NICK COOMBES

greetings cards, books, and general print sectors of the industry. More recently we set up a joint venture with an American die making partner Converting Technology Inc. This is a great opportunity for us to transfer our expertise in the foiling and embossing market to the USA”.

Together, the Lasercomb Group offers a complete portfolio of tooling solutions to suit all the print related sectors both in the UK and internationally. The company prides itself on the fact that all products, including its high-end tooling systems, are designed and manufactured from within its own facilities, offering customers the peace of mind that Lasercomb has control over lead times, quality, service and costs. Mark Ridings says that Lasercomb Group's strategy is to focus on tooling design and innovation to ensure that its customers are kept at the forefront of press-ready tooling, thus maximising machine performance on its customers' equipment. These results can only be achieved by a combination of investing in cutting edge technology and people working together in close partnership with customers.

It is this combination of industry know how and modern technology that makes Lasercomb successful, according to Technical Sales Director, Alistair Baxter. “It's fundamentally still a craft process, so getting the right blend within our younger team and our experienced industry players, while utilising our state-of-the-art equipment is key to delivering precision bespoke tooling – but, that's the value to the customer. Of course, it's only possible to sustain this quality product and service in today's competitive market by an ongoing programme of investment in our workforce and in technology”

Proud of being the first die maker in Europe to combine both die making and engraving under one roof, and the first in the UK to install a laser

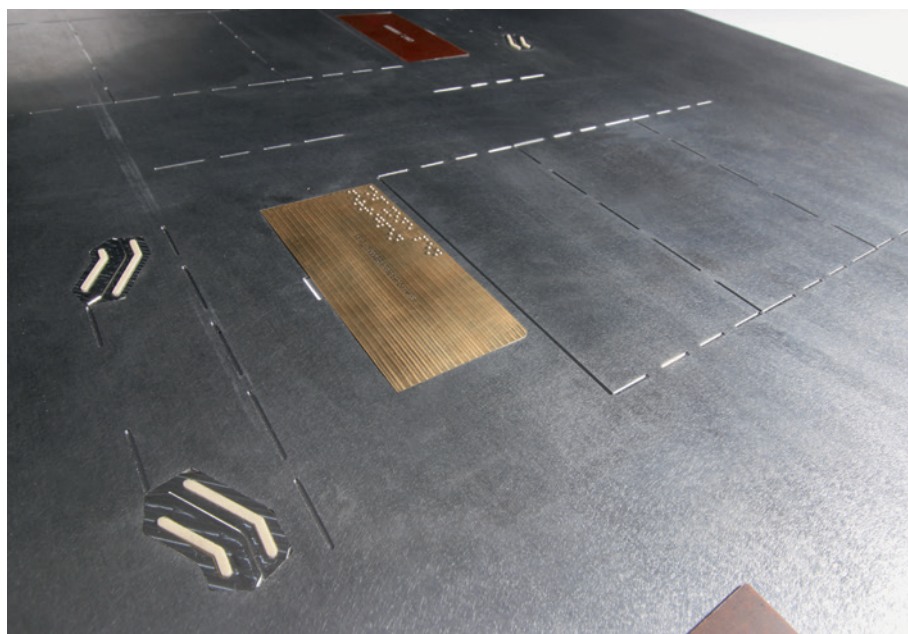
engraving machine that dispensed with environmentally damaging toxic chemicals, Lasercomb has recently entered into a joint venture with Converting Technology Incorporated (CTI). The Chicago based organisation is the first in North America to offer both techniques and services and supplies customers in the USA and Canada. The close affiliation actually dates back more than 30 years, with both companies being created from the original Lasercomb America, so a close synergy already existed which is proving to be of real benefit to customers.

Traditional markets for the cutting die business are in the carton and specialist corrugated and litho-lam sectors. Lasercomb Dies specialises in cutting dies, counter matrices, dynamix stripping and blanking tools for high speed die cutters, but also offers a solution for Braille embossing, stable die and machined steel plates (all in one) and reverse score plates for tamper evident packaging.

“The catalyst for the design and development of many of the tooling systems we offer is the pressure from customers to shorten make-ready

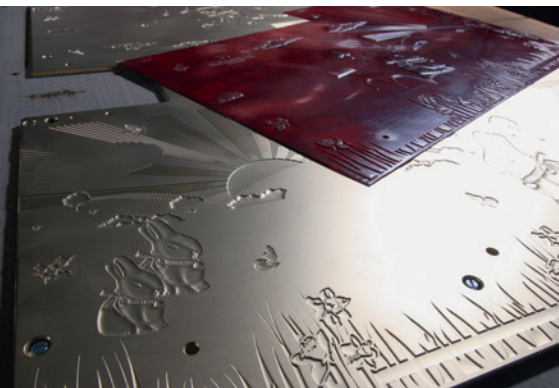
times and increase the number of sheets on the floor, while maintaining high quality standards on the die cutters and foiling machines. In addition to this, a key ingredient is supporting our customers technically and with best-practise processes,” explained Alistair Baxter, who added, “We are all in the box making business and fundamentally it's the die-cutter and the die-tooling that turns a flat printed sheet into a box - so it's mission critical to the process, but can be overlooked and therefore undervalued by those with a print dominated focus.”

Lasercomb Engraving designs and manufactures a wide range of foiling and embossing components, from single level embossing and flat foil dies through to complex multi-level embossing dies and foiling dies for a wide spectrum of customers. Enhancing the brand owners' packaging has never been more important, so demand for Lasercomb's bespoke tools that embellish the product and create more shelf-appearance can make all the difference to consumer brand choice. A range of specialist effects can be applied



**Machined steel plate incorporating Braille and Tamper evident device for single pass production.**





**CNC machined multi level embossing tool.**

to the dies, including a holographic effect that is created from the die using the latest technology, without the expense of specialist foils. The business has also diversified its offering to customers in recent times by introducing a range of consumable items for the cutting, creasing, foiling and embossing processes, all of which can be ordered online.

Currently employing 85 staff at its 28,000sq/ft facility in Redditch, England, and enjoying a sustained period of growth that has taken sales

turnover past £6m, Lasercomb serves multi-nationals and smaller SMEs with equal care and attention to detail. According to Mark Ridings: "The Lasercomb Group fully appreciates that capital investment is an integral part of servicing a customer base that itself is faced with ever-decreasing lead-times and the need for innovative cost-effective tooling solutions." To meet these critical industry demands Lasercomb Group has continued its strong investment programme by taking delivery at the end of 2018 of the latest generation laser cutting machine and added a new CNC milling machine in January this year. "As an industry, we have a great story to tell, and now even more so given the backdrop of environmental pressure on plastic packaging and film. So, we foresee demand for our products and services increasing and want to be well positioned to ensure we can continue to service our customers' requirements" said Alistair Baxter.

He concluded: "We see good growth potential in both the UK,

continental Europe and further afield, so have taken the step to offer communication with customers in five key languages. In addition to English, we now offer spoken and written French, Spanish, Polish and Italian, which is already bringing benefits from a more seamless and straightforward way of doing business with our international customers."

It may still be seen as a craft industry, but there is nothing old-fashioned about the Lasercomb Group operation – other than, perhaps, its great attention to detail and customer service. In a market where quality is a given and waste is not tolerated, converters rely on the skills, knowhow and precision technology of their suppliers to keep the brand owners satisfied. In a world that is finally coming to terms with the problems of excessive use of plastic packaging, there has seldom been a better time to form a strong alliance with the board market. With its in-house capabilities, the Lasercomb Group presents a fine example of how to serve converters in the 21st century. ■



**Mark Ridings MD and Alistair Baxter TSD with the latest CNC milling machine.**