

New factory will help Bailey Trailers meet its potential

LINCOLNSHIRE-based Bailey Trailers has started 2010 by moving into new premises. The firm has relocated five miles from its previous base at Aunsby to a custom-built production site on an industrial estate at Sleaford.

Constructed during the second half of 2009 on a green-field site, the company's new home occupies four-acres, with two buildings taking up almost half the area and the remainder having been concreted. The larger of the two buildings houses the production and assembly hall, and company offices, while a smaller structure houses the paintshop and finishing bay.

Bailey Trailers director Michael Bailey told Farmers Guide that the move had been necessary to allow the firm to continue the growth it had seen in recent years.

"We had outgrown the Aunsby site," he said. "Last year we sold 750 trailers, but we had to turn away about 100 orders from the UK and a further 70 or so from our export customers."

"We had also put the expansion of our dealer network on hold to try and keep the demand for our trailers at a manageable level."

The new factory at Sleaford means that there is no longer any need to try and limit production, and just three weeks into the new year Michael Bailey had already added Farols as a Bailey Trailers dealer for much of Central and Southern England. He is also in the process of expanding the factory workforce.

Small beginnings

Bailey Trailers has clearly come a long way since the company was started by Michael Bailey's father Tom, who is managing director, and Tom's step-brother David Hoyes, who is also still at the business. Originally steel-framed building manufacturers and erectors, a downturn in orders when Government grants dried up in 1982 led the pair to turn their hand to building trailers instead. The first model, a 10t tipping trailer, was sold to a Grantham-based farmer in February that year.

"I had previously worked for a trailer manufacturer so I had a fairly good idea what I wanted to build," Tom Bailey said. "After just six months we added a third member to the team – Graham Wright, who is now sales manager at Bailey Trailers – and in the first year we produced 26 trailers."

"Sales in year two were nearly double that level, and the turnover from trailer building soon exceeded that from putting up buildings. In

fact, our last building was sold in the mid 1980s."

In the 28 years Bailey Trailers was based at Aunsby the only way the company could grow was to add new production sheds.

"Because of the way that the Aunsby factory was expanded, the flow of components around the site during the build process was far from ideal," Michael Bailey said. "We hit a limit on production of about 14 trailers/week and had to move if we wanted to grow the business."

"At Sleaford, we have the potential to build up to 25 trailers/week, so doubling annual production should now be possible."

With turnover already exceeding £8 million in 2009, the firm is now free to grow this figure by increasing sales, but there should also be cost savings from increased efficiency.

"We're not setting our sights too high for 2010, as we get bedded in at the new site, but sending out 850 trailers would be nice," Michael Bailey said, "and we'll be aiming at 1,000 trailers in 2011."

"We're also looking forward to reaping the benefits of production efficiencies from the new factory. Everything has been set up so that the trailer-building process is as logical and methodical as possible, and it will be interesting to see how much quicker we can build our trailers without the complications we had at Aunsby."

The new Bailey Trailers production hall is a single, open-span building that is split into different zones that see sheet and hollow-section steel and components – like axles and hydraulic rams – coming in and complete trailers leaving.

A laser cutter, which can handle sheet up to 25mm thick, and a pair of brake presses are used to prepare steel plate components, while a series of saws cut the hollow sections as required. Chassis components go to a chassis jig to be set out and tacked together prior to welding, while trailer floor and side components also go to separate bays to be tacked together.

There are four dedicated trailer-assembly bays. Situated along one side of the building, each one has a large roller shutter door so that a chassis can be reversed in and the completed trailer pulled back out again.

When a chassis is brought into a bay, the floor and sides are simply lifted into place by overhead gantry cranes and the components are welded together and finished by skilled welders.

The fact that computer-aided



The new factory has four dedicated construction bays where the trailer's floor and sides are added to the chassis and welded up.

Right: Bailey Trailers director Michael Bailey.



design is used ensures that all components fit together with an accuracy that couldn't have been imagined when Bailey Trailers began in the 1980s. Design features like notches and tags mean that parts can be put together without complicated jigs and that finished trailers are identical.

Situated in the second of the two buildings on the factory site, the Bailey Trailers paintshop has two large paint booths, with the latest spraying equipment, as well as large preparation area and a finishing workshop. This building is where the trailers get the high-quality paint finish that customers expect, as well as a range of standard and optional ancillary equipment.

Quality product

Bailey Trailers' growth has been the result of customers being attracted by high-quality products. The company sells trailers with capacities from 1.5-22.0t and priced from £1,000-20,000, and it has been able to build an international marketplace with customers in Norway, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and New Zealand as well as here in the UK.

The firm offers a standard agricultural range and a more economical Tag range that includes root trailers, bale trailers, grain trailers, dump trailers and low loaders. All offer 3mm steel sides and 4mm steel floors as standard, the only difference is the Tag trailers have fewer floor runners (12-inch spacing is used on the standard trailers) and side supports to keep the price down.

For many years, the company's

14t grain trailer was the most popular in the range, but according to Michael Bailey it has now been overtaken by the firm's 16t, twin-axle trailer.

"We have also seen a big increase in the number of trailers going out on larger, low-ground-pressure tyres," he said. "Even though they add about £2,000 to the price."

"Commercial running gear is also becoming more popular and we can offer the full range of hydraulic, air and air/hydraulic braking systems."

With the new factory up and running, this family owned and managed firm, which also employs Michael Bailey's brothers Richard and Stephen, and sisters Michelle and Carol, is well placed to make the most of the opportunities the future presents.

With 80 dealer outlets across Great Britain, and a handful more abroad, the company can now meet the demand for its products that is evident from events like the annual Lamma Show, held not far from Sleaford at Newark.

"We always get a lot of enquiries at Lamma and convert many of them into sales," Michael Bailey said. "We face a lot of competition from trailer manufacturers both here in the UK and in Europe, but have always found that there is a strong demand for a quality product."

For more information contact your local Bailey Trailer dealer, or call the company direct on 01529 303411.