

# Celebration marks years of success for Aldridge firm

ALDRIDGE businessman, Alan Collins, has been defying expectations since the moment he was born.

Weighing just 2lbs 5 oz, he was christened immediately as he was not expected to make it through the night. Nine decades on he has recently celebrated his 90th birthday, on July 2nd, with a special event marking both his birthday and the continuing success of his former businesses, Collins Group, Superite Tools and Aldridge Accident Repair Centre – all of which continue to go from strength to strength in the capable hands of his grandson, Martin Collins.

Aldridge Accident Repair Centre, formerly known as Aldridge Garage and fondly remembered locally as 'Billy Bunns', was founded by Alan's his father-in-law, William 'Billy' Bunn, in 1921 and is just five years short of its 100th anniversary.

Alan worked hard developing his own business, Superite Tools, and took over Aldridge Garage from Billy when he retired at 70 years of age, and now both are owned managed by Billy's grandson, Martin. The family ties continue with Martin's son Will and daughter Jessica expect-

ted to come on board in the near future.

Alan's elder son Michael started in the family business at 18-years-old and he took over as MD of Superite Tools on Alan's retirement in 1991. Michael successfully ran Superite Tools for 40 years prior to retiring from the business in 2014. Both Michael and Martin worked together to expand and re-locate the businesses in 2005 to Vigo Place, Aldridge.

But although it may seem like a cliché, this friendly, family-run service has become like an extended family for all its staff too.

In a special event held on Friday, July 1, the Collins family and all staff celebrated Alan's 90th birthday as well as the exceptionally long service of Steve Taylor, technical and general manager of Superite Tools Ltd, who has amazingly worked for the Collins family for 50 years.

His long service and loyalty to the Collins businesses is not an isolated instance; over recent years many members of staff have celebrated 25 years of service, and many continue with 10 years or more.

On Friday Alan was joined by his former secretary Glenda, who is now in her 70s, and another Max – Superite's sales manager, now in his 80s, who travelled from the other side of Solihull to be there. They all shared fond memories of their times at the company and there was great



Alan (centre) with Superite staff both past and present.

camaraderie between old friends.

It is a real testament to the company that so many of their staff dedicated years of their life to working there and wish the family well, years after they have retired. Long service of staff continues in the Collins Group with many staff working to their 10 and 25-year anniversaries.

Over the 50 years Steve Taylor has worked at Superite Tools Ltd (which was founded by Alan Collins in 1955), Steve has seen many changes in the toolmaking industry Nationally and globally; emergence of Far Eastern and Chinese toolmaking and corresponding fall off of the skills required for toolmaking in the UK labour market are all big changes he has witnessed.

The Collins family and their loyal staff have proven

that they are stronger together by adapting to the changes thrown their way in sometimes difficult markets. The Superite Tools arm of the business originally specialised in manufacturing Plastic Mould Tools, but at one point they faced stiff competition from the Chinese and Far Eastern markets.

It was Michael Collins vision to adapt Superite Tools services to offer highly-skilled repairs and modifi-



Father and sons – Alan (centre) with Michael (left) and Martin.

cations of these Plastic Mould Tools that proved to be a turning point in the company's fortunes, ensuring their survival and success.

In 2006 Michael bought the assets and work book of a local precision engineering company to add further diversification and precision machining to Superites' repertoire of work.

And in 2012 they purchased another local welding company that allowed them to bring specialist and LAZER welding to their ever expanding range of services on offer.

Now Aldridge Accident Repair Centre and the Collins Group of businesses are firmly established and trusted members of the Walsall business community Martin continues to grow the family businesses.

Today, Aldridge Accident Repair Centre are holders of

the highest industry accreditations. They hold the PAS 10125 accreditation, awarded by an independent body who thoroughly audit standards of work during the process of vehicle repair.

And the centre holds manufacturer repair approvals from Renault, Nissan, Suzuki and PSA Peugeot, along with expertise and association with various prestige brands – showing they are more than equipped to keep up with the swiftly-advancing technologies of the motoring industries.

Aldridge Accident Repair Centre has demonstrated its commitment to remain at the forefront of the vehicle repair industry, shown dedication to the local community and their workers.

Surely this resilient family business has secured a strong future ahead for the businesses and all the staff.



Alan Collins and Steve Taylor.



L-R: Craig Dingle, Alan Collins and Steve Taylor.



Happy birthday! The team celebrates Alan's 90th birthday.



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