

# Press Release



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## JOINED UP THINKING HELPS SMF AUTOMATE ARC WELDING

SMF UK Ltd (Specialised Metal Fabrications) has installed a new TRUMPF TruArc Weld 1000 automated welding cell at its Wigston facility near Leicester. This latest investment builds on an already extensive portfolio of TRUMPF machines at SMF, further enhancing the company's ethos of providing precision sheet metal, laser cutting and fabrication solutions to industry using state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment.

Formed in 1990 by Managing Director Steve Morrison and his brother Ivan, SMF is an eight-man subcontract fabrication shop serving a broad spread of industries, such as architecture, automotive, point-of-sale retail and medical, to list but a few. The company's services include flat-bed laser cutting, tube laser cutting, laser marking, folding, rolling, and TIG and MIG welding. Until recently, the company relied on skilled sheet metal fabricators to perform manual welding tasks, but there are two issues here: the cost associated with using skilled labour, and finding it in the first place.

"We bought the TRUMPF TruArc Weld 1000 automated welding cell because it's so difficult to find people who can weld," confirms Mr Morrison. "We also come across some people who say they can weld, but not well enough to sell. If we're going to put our company name on it, it has to be fit for purpose. I won't let standards slip."

Today, SMF has far more machines than people based on a premise of cut, fold, weld and dispatch.

"This strategy is both efficient and economic, for us and our customers, without any compromise in quality: our entire way of working is set up to help customers manufacture quality products," states Mr Morrison.

"We view the TruArc Weld 1000 as a jobbing machine that is effectively a slave to our TRUMPF TruLaser Tube 7000," he adds. "The tube laser earns us more money, but while the tube laser is cutting, the operator can be assembling a welding job into the fixture on the automated welding cell. He then presses the start button and turns his attention back to the tube laser. Once he has removed work from the tube laser and got the next job running, the welding is complete, so in effect it is cost-free."

Although SMF looked at other automated welding cells, there was a consideration that programming was more complex in comparison with the TruArc Weld 1000.

“On the TruArc Weld 1000, the way that TRUMPF has partnered with Universal Robots on the automation side and Fronius on the welding side, makes the whole system gel together,” says Mr Morrison. “We’re currently manufacturing a series of turrets and the welding result is phenomenal. Furthermore, it’s very easy to make fixtures for the machine as it has a good welding table, manufactured by Demmeler. Additional advantages include a self-cleaning exhaust system and anti-glare protection, which is great for health and safety compliance.”

Installed in 2021, the TRUMPF TruArc Weld 1000 was the first in the UK at that time, since when SMF reports “it has been very reliable”.

The TruArc Weld 1000 has two workstations each able to handle 600 x 600 x 600 mm components up to 200 kg in weight for consistent and accurate welding. In single-station mode the system can also handle components up to 2000 mm in length with a maximum weight of 400 kg. The choice of configurations makes the system highly flexible, allowing one- or two-station operation according to requirements.

Says Mr Morrison: “The TruArc Weld 1000 is a really good concept. We’re now looking to retrofit some newly available TRUMPF accessories, such as a rotary table.”

Of course, the TruArc Weld 1000’s major advantage is that even in the absence of welding expertise users can achieve reproducible straight and uniform seams without any spatter or beads.

“It’s so much better than manual welding; far more consistent than trying to follow a line by eye,” explains Mr Morrison. “Automated welding deskills the entire operation. We can use anyone to put a part in the fixture, clamp it up and press the start button. He can then do something else while it’s welding. Nearly everything that comes off the machine is gratis. Why would I not invest in one?”

Aside from the TruArc Weld 1000 and TruLaser Tube 7000, other TRUMPF machines on site at SMF include an automated TruLaser 5030 Fiber 10kW flat-bed laser cutter, a TruBend 7036 Cell high-speed bending cell, and a TruMark Station 5000 laser marking system.

“We are committed to investing in new machinery and equipment as our customer expectations and technical requirements change,” concludes Mr Morrison. “We’re proud to have some of the latest TRUMPF manufacturing solutions at our disposal to support this mindset.”