

Solid presence for the BTMA

British Textile Machinery Association

Some 38 members of the British Textile Machinery Association (BTMA) will exhibit at ITMA 2019 in Barcelona in June this year, with the UK's vast textile machinery heritage putting many of them at the forefront of their fields.

Virtually all of today's textile manufacturing processes – from the carding, spinning, weaving, knitting, tufting and nonwoven bonding of fibres through to advanced colouration, finishing and printing techniques – can be traced back to initial British patents and research and development that have spread outwards across the globe.

The eagerness of BTMA members to break new ground continues to this day, and at ITMA 2019 visitors will learn that many are actively involved in pioneering new technologies to assist developments in a number of growing fields.

These include nonwovens, advanced medical materials, automotive interiors, performance sportswear, intelligent textiles and notably reinforcements for the highly automated composites industry, where both robotics and Industry 4.0 machine networks are coming into their own.

BTMA member Cygnet Texkimp, for example, has recently launched the world's first robotic 3D winding machines, for the creation of complex composite parts for the automotive and aerospace markets in high volumes and at high speeds.

New developments in weaving systems for technical applications are supplied by BTMA members including Vandewiele UK and new member Optima 3D – a specialist in 3D weaving systems. Advanced technologies for nonwovens are meanwhile provided by, Fibre Extrusion Technology (FET), Garnett Controls and



Alan Little, Director, BTMA.

William Tatham, among others, while Cobble leads the field in tufting technology for high speed carpet production.

Automation, fabric inspection and advanced machine control are other key fields of specialisation for a number of BTMA members, including Dent Instrumentation, whose founder Geoffrey Dent patented the very first contactless yarn sensor back almost half a century ago. Today Dent partners with many of the

leading textile machinery manufacturers, including Barmag, Murata, Savio, Schlafhorst and TMT and on average ships out 15,000 of its sensor units each week.

Shelton Vision enjoys a leading position in the field of automatic fabric inspection systems with its WebSpector, based on four essential steps. Firstly, the system provides unrivalled accuracy with real time defect classification and grading. Its WebReview then generates a defect map to provide a commercial overview. This is followed by the creation of a multiple cut plan for yield operation, allowing the calculation of a precise and cost-effective rate for high throughput cutting and rolling.

Strong exports

A good record in innovation and a reputation for high quality go hand in hand, says BTMA Director Alan Little, and currently around 80% of all of the sales achieved by BTMA member companies are exported,

“At a time when everyone wants everything faster, cheaper and better, producers have to constantly raise their game when it comes to quality assurance and supply chain efficiency,” he adds. “Customers have become accustomed to quality and they won't compromise. As the pressure increases, standards are going up, not down. BTMA member companies are world class in areas such as testing, monitoring and process improvement, so they can make a strong argument for becoming strategic partners to companies in any part of the supply chain and there isn't a product or process anywhere that can't be improved even further. Another key selling point of UK-made machinery is after sales service, which is backed up by historical and up-to-date advanced process machinery.” ♦



Cygnet Texkimp's 3D Winder, a robot-mounted rotary winding machine for creating complex composite parts.