

# NEWS



# THE BLAST SHOP

## HOLIDAY SPECIAL

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## NEWS FOR THE MEMORIAL INDUSTRY

### EXETER ROADSHOW



Phew! What an amazing day we had on our first ever Roadshow at Clockwise Exeter, in September.

The build up to any kind of trade show or event can be quite hectic, and this was no different. Even though it was only for one day, the amount of work that goes into preparing everything can be challenging.

Rob and Lee set-off on the Wednesday evening after work to arrive in Exeter late that night in preparation for the show on the Thursday, the last thing we wanted, was to put all that effort into setting things up and have some kind of catastrophe happen travelling down...

We had eleven companies visit us over the course of the day, so the conference room we booked was 'just' big enough to fit us all in.

On the machinery side of things, we had the Tripod Gantry with us, along with our mobile TrailerBlast system. These were both set-up in the underground parking area, which worked out well perfectly, demonstrating the TrailerBlast in a small office would have been a challenge!

In the actual conference room, we had a Diamond Impact Etching Machine, our new Memorial Order Management System (MOMS), a brand new Graphtec CE8000, MemorialDesignerUK and our Magic Size.

Our new roadshows (because we're already planning the next one) are intended to be similar to our Open Days in that you get more time to chat with us and other masons whilst getting a bit more hands on with the products we have on display. With that in mind we had originally planned a similar schedule for AM and PM sessions but with the majority of the attendees in the morning already having bought MemorialDesigner, that session became an advanced training session rather than an introductory one, something the attendees enjoyed.

Our order management system (MOMS) demonstration was particularly of interest, especially for the MDUK users, as the interaction between the two pieces of software is something we are planning to develop.

We had planned on having multiple demonstrations at the same time but neither Lee or Rob are known for talking quietly so we had to can those plans. However it was a very



successful event, attendees went away with more knowledge than they arrived with and one lucky company left with a new etching machine!

We know that TRADEX at Leamington Spa is central to England but it's not particularly convenient for everyone to get there or to our fantastic open days we have in Manchester. The Blast Shop Roadshow is intended to fill in the gaps to allow those that are in the more far-flung areas of the country to see some of the products we offer in the flesh. Consequently, our next Roadshow is all booked for **UHI Perth on 13th February 2025**. We will have limited spaces available so if you are interested then please contact Lee sooner rather than later.

### GRAPHTEC CE8000



We had Graphtec's own demonstration CE8000 at the Roadshow because it was that new into the country. The CE8000 replaces the popular CE7000 unit and competes with the Summa S1D60. We're not fully convinced with the quality of the S1D60 at the moment and, whilst the Graphtec FC9000 is a better product for the memorial trade, at over twice the price of the CE8000, it does stretch the budget of most masons.

## QR CODES



QR codes, you know those little, usually square barcodes that have steadily been appearing everywhere over the last few years? Well, we've put them on some of our popular products, starting with our Peg & Tubes.

As part of the regulations, we need to supply fixing instructions with our ground anchors. This historically meant we put printed basic paper instructions with every box. The QR codes replace these paper instructions. We agreed with NAMM Technical that this was not in keeping with trying to help the environment, so the QR Code printed on the label will direct you to a website which not only has the fixing instructions, but all kinds of other useful information such as an anchor selector chart and our BS8415 accreditation.

Just scan with the camera on your smart phone and, with the magic of modern technology, you will be directed to a webpage on our site, where a PDF is available for download.

You can still request, or print off all the information if required but think of the environment before doing so. QR codes are also more versatile. The next products we will incorporate this on to is our Stonemask Pink and Orange tapes, which will direct you to the MSDS safety information and more useful information like cutter and knife settings.

## BS8415 REVIEW

You'll be familiar with the BRAMM Blue Book and the NAMM Code of Working Practice – the methods by which you can ensure your memorials are fitted correctly. But BS8415-2018 is the standard that defines what a safely fitted memorial looks like. British standards are reviewed roughly every 5 years and the last major revision was in 2018 when all of the Memorial Ground anchor systems required re-testing due to changes

in the soil definitions in the standard.

The most recent review has been completed and, thankfully, it was decided that no further updates are to be made at this time. Does this mean that we don't need to do any CPD for the next 5 years? I doubt it, but worth a try the next time you get asked to prove you're up to date with changes in the industry!

NAMM Accredited ground anchors tested in compliance with BS8415-2018  
 G5 = General Sites = as hard or harder than marble.  
 Pull Height = Maximum height of memorial for accredited usage measured from ground level.  
 Anchors were accredited using foundation size as listed.

Manufacturer & GA Type	Pull Height	Memorial Base	Foundation
<b>BLAST SHOP</b> Tel 0161 3516545 Info@theblastshop.co.uk www.theblastshop.co.uk			
Blast Shop PT 25 Solid Peg + 600mm Tube x 1	68 40" (1115mm)	Single base	42"x18"x3"
Blast Shop PT 25 Solid Peg + 600mm Tube x 1	68 36" (915mm)	Single base	36"x15"x3"
Blast Shop PT 27 Solid Peg + 600mm Tube x 1	68 36" (915mm)	Single base	36"x15"x3"
Blast Shop PT 28 Hollow Peg + 600mm Tube x 1	68 48" (1220mm)	Single base	36"x15"x3"
Blast Shop LD & Plate 3"x 6" + 600mm Tube x 1	68 36" (915mm)	Single base	36"x15"x3"
Blast Shop LD & Expansion Bolt + 600mm Tube x 1	68 36" (915mm)	Single base	36"x15"x3"
<b>When fixing or re fixing a memorial, ground anchors used must comply with current listing.</b>			

Which leads us on nicely to an issue which was brought to our attention regarding a recent fixer mason assessment.

We had a call from a mason who uses our LockDown system, and was being assessed for a Fixer Licence. He was told by the assessor that the mechanical bolting and lockdown systems weren't part of his assessment and they would need to fix using traditional (cement) methods.

We found this to be totally unacceptable and a huge step backwards. We've been fixing with mechanical lockdown systems here for 20 years, it's not a new method.

Surely the assessment should cater for both traditional and mechanical fixing? Assessors should be familiar with all the fixing methods which are currently accredited.

We'd be interested to hear from you if you have been involved with, or encountered anything similar.

## BUDGET

The new Labour Government's first budget for 14 years had a few tax hikes which could prove harmful to small businesses – notably an increase in employers' national insurance contributions (NICs) and a reduction in the allowance before

you have to pay NIC. The national living wage is also rising by 6.7% to £12.21 per hour in April 2025 so what does that actually mean when working out how much it's costing to employ someone?

If we assume that you're wanting to attract people who aren't willing to stack shelves in supermarkets for the living wage then you're probably looking at £15 an hour but what does that actually cost your business per hour? You need to contribute towards pensions so add 3% to that starting position. Then you've got company NIC at 15% but this still only covers the pay elements, not what they actually do. Is it not reasonable to allow people 10-15 minutes at the start of the day to socialise and prepare themselves for the day, a break in the middle of any shift for a brew (another 10-15 minutes) and then 10-15 minutes to sort things out before they leave at the end of the day. Add all this up for an average 8 hour day and it costs the business over £20 for every hour your mason is productive.

We've glossed over the allowances before company NI becomes payable but our "back of a fag packet" calculations suggest that if you increase salaries in line with living wage increases then the budget changes have made employing a full time member of staff £1,000 more expensive than pre-budget – makes you think.



## SEASONS GREETINGS

2025 is a trade show year so lots to look forward, all that remains this year is to thank you for your business and continued support and to wish you a very Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year. Our last business day will be Friday 20th December, we return on the 6th January 2025.