

NEWS

THE BLAST SHOP

NAMM TRADEX

- **TRADEX 2025 REVIEW**
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NEWS FOR THE MEMORIAL INDUSTRY

TRADEX 2025



The NAMM TRADEX exhibition is the only show dedicated exclusively to memorial masons. With over 25 exhibitors, the show provides the opportunity to view new equipment, products, materials, machinery and services and also allows you to network with suppliers, wholesalers and fellow masons – an overlooked resource of information, particularly since they often face exactly the same issues that you do even though they may work hundreds of miles away.

It's held every three years, with the last Tradex taking place in 2022, so we were extremely eager to head down to The Warwickshire Event Centre in Leamington Spa, on Wednesday morning 3rd September to get our stand set up



ready for the show. Whilst stone suppliers may struggle to find new display pieces, we were especially excited this year as we were exhibiting our new ABRA Automatic Sandblaster as well as doing a full launch of our Memorial Order Management System (MOMS) software.

Anyone who has taken part in an exhibition or trade show knows exactly how much energy and effort goes into setting these up – never mind the costs involved. Setting up our stand took about 6 hours but wasn't without its challenges. We always have a plan in mind when we leave Manchester but I can't remember the last time the stand actually matched the plan by the start of the show. This time was no exception as the stand hoarding interfered with the location of the Tripod Gantry, cue much head scratching as we jiggled display items to make the stand more open and accessible. You literally have to think on your feet with these exhibitions.

Our 6m x 5m stand had to find space for an ABRA Automatic CNC and SandmasterPro System, a Trailerblast mobile blaster, two huge screens (it's not a size competition but I think we won!) to demonstrate MemorialDesignerUK and MOMS and our ever-popular Tripod Gantry. We also had some smaller screens running videos and a financial illustration tool for reviewing how quickly the

automatic system would pay for itself over time. Finally, we had a table with various smaller consumables such as the Magic Size and gold leaf.



We've won a lot of awards but best stand in show is never one of them, if only there was an award for most crowded. As you can see, yet again, our stand was quite full!

We're firm believers that having working machinery at a trade show helps visitors get a much better feel for the machinery so we brought a mobile compressor with us to drive the ABRA automatic sandblaster. It was nice and quiet until it overheated from over use and burst a pressure hose! However, rather than just see the head moving magically about, it was good for visitors to see how effective the unit was at ensuring no grit escapes from the sandblast head!

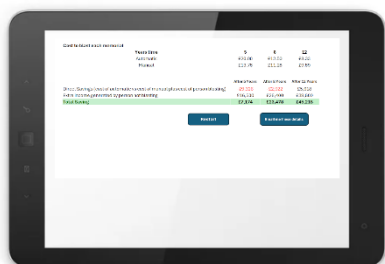
Trade shows are nothing without the visitors and the feedback we had received prior to the show was not promising, we had no idea what to expect...

Thursday:

For those who have never been to the Warwickshire Event Centre, it's not the biggest venue in the world, but it's ideal for our trade and when all the stands are taken it feels packed but this year there were a few noticeable absences and, when the doors opened at 09:30, there was just a concerning trickle of visitors coming through the doors...

However, after the initial slow start, at around 10:30 the floodgates opened and our stand was quickly mobbed! We had more staff on the stand this year, with Sian, Mike and Terry travelling down on the Thursday morning to help Rob, Lee and Steve. Even with 6 staff on the stand we were struggling at times to ensure we helped everyone who was interested so if you did visit and we didn't get a chance to speak with you we're very sorry.

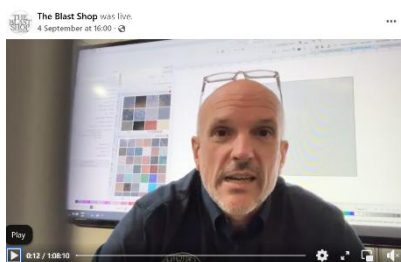
The ABRA Automatic Sandblaster got a lot of attention, it's very easy to set-up and use so visitors were able to have a go and sandblast an inscription themselves. The little compressor was working overtime, and the burst hose put pay to some of the demos, did we mention that things don't always go to plan!



Alongside the automatic demonstration, we created a financial illustrator installed on a tablet, so you could input critical information like, jobs per week, wages and time taken to blast a memorial; it works out how long it would take to recoup the investment in the machine. There were quite a few stunned faces when they realised how quickly it would pay for itself. For most it was less than 2 years, if you'd like us to do this for your business, just let us know.



We like to make some noise at trade shows, there's nothing more guaranteed to bring the crowds flocking than having a piece of equipment fire up. Throughout the show we would regularly use the tripod as the sound of the chain flowing through the block and tackle carried through the show. You never really get a break though, so come 4pm when things started to die down a bit, we were all worn-out. There were a few achy legs and sore throats by the end of that first day. It was Mike's first full trade show having only done one of our open days in the past, whilst you try to prepare people for them, it's still a surprise how hard they can be.



At the end of Thursday we made use of the NAMM presentation area to carry out a Memorial Designer seminar, which we'd hoped would be streamed live on Facebook – It didn't go exactly to plan, but with the help of a mobile phone we managed to save the day and it turned out to be well received. The day ended with a sold sign appearing on the ABRA automatic table, the success of trade shows are often measured well after the event but selling equipment off the stand is always nice.

Friday:

Whist Thursday had felt most busy around the ABRA automatic table, on Friday we generated a lot of enquiries for our software solutions. For the first time at a

TRADEX show, we were demonstrating MOMS and Memorial Designer on separate screens. One key feature we are developing allows Memorial Designer to communicate directly with MOMS. This is exciting as you can now grab all the information to create a memorial design straight from the office system.

A highlight of TRADEX is always the **CRAFTEX Competition**. Whilst it is now dominated by painted work, it is good to see that the traditional skills are still present in our trade. CRAFTEX is a competition that The Blast Shop has always supported, both in sponsoring prizes and regularly entering pieces of our own work. This year we were very proud to put on a display of work created by Mike Critchley. In the 1990's Mike's entries won almost as frequently as Odlings designs do now, eventually reaching the point where he stopped entering the competition and became a judge instead. Events this summer meant that all at The Blast Shop and S Critchley were short on time to create a piece of work for the exhibition so instead we entered a slate memorial first sandblasted by Mike in 1992. With his passing this year just before the show it only seemed fitting that we entered one of Mike's creations in the competition one last time. Winning best slate memorial in show is a fitting tribute to someone whose influence has been felt across the trade for 45 years.



By 4:30, with CRAFTEX judging completed, it was all over for another 3 years and the race to dismantle the stands began. It's always astonishing that a stand that took 8 hours to construct can be packed away in less than 3!