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NEWS FOR THE MEMORIAL INDUSTRY

ABRA UPDATE



We're pleased and excited to share that following on from TRADEX 25, we have sold 2 more of the ABRA Automatic Sandblast Systems. Both customers visited us post trade show to have a longer demonstration of our automated sandblasters, given by the masons who use the equipment every day. The feedback we received from these visits was extremely positive, just highlighting how valuable a trip to see us for a personal consultation can be.

As well as selling new ABRA equipment we've been trying to get hold of existing ABRA users and in October Rob and Steve spent several days visiting customers who had purchased their automatic sandblasters from a previous distributor. We were shocked to find that, in most cases, no servicing had taken place since purchase and the stories we were told about initial installation and after sales support were eye opening with equipment being

delivered direct, in kit form for end users to put together themselves with limited guidance and no training...

When you purchase an ABRA sandblaster, or any equipment for that matter, from The Blast Shop, you can be assured that, whenever possible, it will be delivered and installed by us and that full training will be provided. Obviously, we can also arrange to service and maintain your equipment to keep it in pristine working order too.

If you already have an older ABRA Sandblaster and it's been a bit neglected, a service by The Blast Shop at the beginning of next year may be the perfect opportunity to ensure it's working properly. We've been building up our stock of spares, so if you need anything, please let us know as we should have all the regularly replaced parts in stock now.

For those that haven't yet taken the plunge into automatic blasting is 2026 the year to right that wrong? We started automatic blasting in 1984 and still struggle to see how anyone can justify manual blasting costs when compared to modern automatic systems like the ABRA and Goldmann machines. If you need a financial illustration of how much these systems can save you in terms of time and money, call or send Lee an email, you might be surprised to learn that for most masons the sandblaster will pay for itself in less than 2 years.

ANCHOR HOLE SIZES

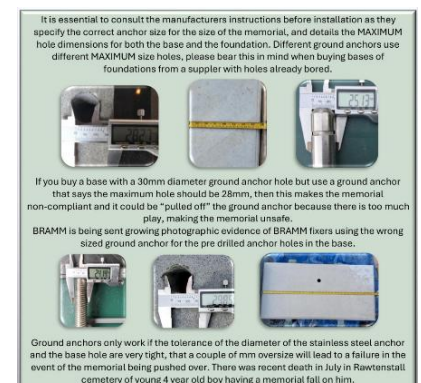
A recent article from BRAMM's Newsletter reminded memorial fixers of the BS8415 requirement to ensure that Memorial Ground Anchor diameters are rated for pre-drilled bases.

Our universal solid peg & tube system makes it easy for you – You can use 3 different sized diameter solid pegs in the same tube.

- 25mm Peg for a 28mm Hole**
- 27mm Peg for a 30mm Hole**
- 37mm Peg for a 40mm Hole**

To be safe, we always suggest carrying a few 27mm pegs just in case you have a "larger than specified" 28mm hole in your granite base!

You must also ensure that the peg or anchor is inserted the correct distance into the base. This is one of the reasons we've been hesitant in developing an adjustable peg system, as the tendency is to go below what is required, and this puts the fixer at risk of contravening the Standard.



PRICE INCREASES

Costs of raw materials and labour costs only seem to go in one direction (when was the last time your staff wanted a pay cut!) and that's before the changes in NI contributions. Price increases are never nice which is why we haven't done so since the end of 2023 on core products like tapes and anchors. The reason we've managed to achieve this, against a rising tide of costs, is the change in Sterling to Dollar exchange rate has been favourable most of the year. This upward swing on the exchange rates has now plateaued though and we will be introducing new prices in January 2026. As always, we will keep the price increase as small as possible by purchasing US Dollars at a consistent rate to reduce the impact of market fluctuations. That said, not allowing for further fluctuations in the marketplace can lead to multiple increases and nobody wants that. We'd rather have one fair price increase which covers increased material and overhead costs.

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

Without a trade show in '26 or '27 you might think it's a quiet time for The Blast Shop but we have some exciting plans - training courses, roadshows and an open day.

TRAINING

MEMORIAL DESIGNER UK



Training is all well and good but it needs to be relevant and useful. To work out what sort of training people need we've been conducting some polls on our exclusive MD-UK Facebook page.

We're still planning the exact content of these courses, but the feedback has been very useful and we look forward to getting the online course up and running in the first quarter of '26. Details to follow.

DIGITAL DESIGN COURSE



One course that has proved popular is our Digital Design Course. However, technology never stands still and, with the improvements to software and the continued advance of AI, we've basically had to add a whole new chapter to the course.

We expect to run the two-day Digital Artwork Course at least twice next year, so keep your eyes peeled for that.

We are also able to offer bespoke one-to-one training based around these courses. If this would be of interest, then send Lee your requirements and we'll work something out for you.

ROADSHOWS

2026 will be a year off for our ever popular Open Days (we'll be back in 2027) but in the meantime we will continue with our Roadshows. Rob and Lee will be back on the road, demonstrating some of The Blast Shop's most popular and interesting products at a venue near you.

We held three successful shows last year in Exeter, Swansea and Perth - It was hugely enjoyable getting out and meeting people, and the feedback we received was brilliant - People really appreciated us taking the time and effort to get out of the office.

We're already planning a two-day trip to the Southeast, and a long overdue visit to see our friends in

Northern Ireland. Look out for further details posted on our...

NEW WEBSITE

We know our website has been struggling for a while and can take ages to load on some browsers. But don't panic - we have a new one in development and will be launching it in early January.

ANNUS HORRIBILIS

It's been a challenging year for our company with the passing of Gill and Mike Critchley in quick succession this summer. Mike founded The Blast Shop in 1984 after purchasing an automatic sandblaster and realising there was going to be a demand for machinery and the consumables used to create the "new" blasted letters. The Blast Shop was born with the purpose of educating masons to get the best out of the equipment he sold them. Since then, we have always tried to sell the right product with the right advice so that everyone benefits from the experience we have gained using the products we sell.

Mike was also instrumental in developing many of the products we use today. In the 80's he brought hi-tack rubber tapes to the market, against the recommendation of the tape manufacturer, in the 90's a range of soft PVC tapes and in the 00's cement free and traditional ground anchors and impact engravers. His influence remains visible in many workshops throughout the country. As we look to the future, we continue to develop new products and provide advice to the trade, building on our knowledge from working in it, just like Mike and Gill did.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Our last day of business is 23rd December, returning on 5th January 2026. With that, we thank you for your support throughout 2025 and we look forward to 2026.

Rob, Lee, Monika, Sue, Steve and Andy wish you a Great Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.