Founded in the late 70’s but registered in 1982, and currently preparing to celebrate its 35th anniversary, Fairport Engineering mirrors the changing face of the UK’s industrial landscape over the last four decades. Fairport has developed and grown over this period by proactively adapting to change – both technologically and business wise – in such a manner that it is now one of the few remaining full service consultants and contractors in the UK bulk minerals and materials processing and handling sector. Successful and prominent in this niche market Fairport has developed this total capability in a sustainable manner over a considerable time. Originally created from a management buyout of Fairclough Materials Handling & Structural Stealwork, Fairport Engineering has operated from offices and factory works at Adlington, Lancashire since 1985. This capability was directed towards the coal and cement sectors. Work on coal projects spanned the entire range of surface activities, including:

- Headgear & Catchgear,
- ROM Coal Handling & Storage,
- Coal Preparation, and
- Road & Rail Loading Systems.

Much of Fairport’s success in headgear and catchgear was due to its unique “SELDA” Cage Arrestor safety system. In parallel with these activities in the coal sector Fairport was also undertaking significant projects in the domestic cement industry ranging from:

- Blending, Crushing & Handling Plants, to
- Grinding Mill & System Retrofitting & Rehabilitation, and
- Sack Filling & Polystyrene Plants.

Potently the bulk materials processing and handling technology used in the coal and cement industries was similar and allowed synergy to be achieved but Fairport’s appointment by Ventomatic of Italy as its UK partner provided even greater access to the cement industry. Ventomatic is one of the world’s leading suppliers of complete plants and single machinery for high accuracy and high capacity packaging and dispatching of powder and granulated products such as cement, dry mortar, lime, gypsum, sand, carbonates and salt. Notwithstanding these ongoing business activities, the mid 1990’s saw Fairport break through into the quarrying sector with the delivery of major flagships crushing and screening projects at Stancombe and Comely. A key component of this success was the assimilation in 1997 of an in-house electrical and systems control capability enabling Fairport to deliver a full multi-disciplinary engineering service into the early stages of the new millennium.

A marked increase in demand in building and concrete products caused the quarrying companies to increase their production capacity in these markets – particularly the advent of “dry silo mortars” and powders and aerated concrete blocks. Fairport with its proven major project capabilities and significant in-house resources was well placed to maximise its involvement in this expansion.

The new millennium saw Fairport continue these business streams in a successful and sustained manner. Cement projects driven by environmental concerns, quarrying projects to provide a raw material for higher added value building and concrete products and biomass fuel substitution for coal at power stations provided an enviable portfolio of projects being delivered by the company.

As will be evident it is not the norm for Fairport to sit on its laurels, and over the first decade of the 21st century many new innovative opportunities were considered and some implemented. Perhaps the most exciting being the research and development of new patented technologies to process municipal waste. Fairport developed a novel and unique process and associated equipment that would process residual household and commercial wastes to recover recyclables and a range of benefits.

The initial phase of development resulted in the build of a small scale pilot test machine, which successfully confirmed the chemistry of the process. The next stage involved the design and build in 2008 of a full sized demonstration plant in the UK, which was capable of processing operational levels of waste up to 80,000 t/s. This new venture into waste processing coincided with the worst global recession since the 1930’s. Capital expenditure was cut to minimal “stay in business” levels and Fairport was fortunate to have a ramp of major projects to sustain itself through the worst of these times. Surprisingly the largest of these projects were two high and recycling systems for “ELH” (End of Life Vehicles). One at Workhouse for MLA plastics and the other at Oldbury for EMR. Both plants were based on traditional minerals processing technology and represented an investment of over £100M.

During recent years Fairport’s competition has reduced considerably with the demise of many of its traditional competitors. In parallel the underlying supply chain to Fairport’s traditional industries has also diminished. To this end Fairport has formed an “Engineering Partnership” with FL Smidth to exploit their new TURBUFLUX® pneumatic conveying technology and in parallel is currently assessing potential associations with other technology providers. It is believed that these “Partnerships” can lead to a variety of CE, EPCM and EPC opportunities in the future, as it has in the past.

The scene is set for another few years in the ongoing, successful story that is Fairport Engineering Ltd.

For more information, please visit: www.fairport.co.uk