

Movers & Shakers

Expansion for laser technology firm

A FIRM which develops electronics for optics, laser drivers and controllers has traded up to larger offices at Harwell Innovation Centre.

Redwave Labs managing director Dr Demetri Permogorov, pictured, who set up the business 12 years ago, said it was benefiting from greater demand in the laser technology market.

Dr Permogorov said: "When I was looking for office space in 2004, Harwell Innovation Centre met all our needs. It's great office space on very flexible and reasonable terms in a location respected as a technology hub. The decisions made in 2004 stand true today and we are delighted to continue our expansion from Harwell Innovation Centre."



£2.4m sale advice

ACCOUNTANCY firm Shaw Gibbs has advised on the £2.4m sale of a lubricant company to a well-known car manual publishers.

The Oxford-based accountants' corporate finance team supported OATS shareholders throughout the deal with Haynes Publishing Group with advice on commercial issues and tax.

Somerset-based Haynes is best known for its car servicing and repair manuals but its HaynesPro division specialises in online automotive technical information.

Swindon-based OATS is a technology firm in the lubricant industry, working with multinational oil companies.

OATS chairman Sebastian Crawshaw said: "We have worked with Shaw Gibbs for many years for audit and tax aspects of the business.

"This was the first experience of the corporate finance activity and the co-operation was excellent."

Digital help for firms

SMALL FIRMS are being offered 100 days of free digital help.

Independent, not-for-profit campaign Do It Digital is running the 100 Days of Digital programme until March 31.

Do It Digital aims to help traders take their first steps online and to encourage those who are already digital-savvy to do more.

The campaign's support ranges from help setting up a simple website and using social media, to making the most of being online to boost sales and save time with banking and accounts.

The Lloyds Bank UK Business Digital Index in October showed more than one in three small traders lacked basic digital skills.

For more information see doitdigital.co.uk

US tyre monitoring

AN OXFORDSHIRE-BASED company has unveiled tyre-monitoring technology in the United States.

The new 'drive-over' system has been adopted on an 18-mile stretch of highway connecting Georgia and Alabama.

Tyre pressures are taken when the vehicle drives over the road-embedded sensor plates, and tread depth is measured via sophisticated multi-image technology and imaging software.

WheelRight, based at Begbroke Science Park in Woodstock Road, Begbroke, is working on the project with vehicle partner Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia (KMMG).

The Begbroke business believes its easy-to-use system could drastically improve safety on American highways.

Business

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ROLE MODEL: Kate Wyatt at Summertown-based builders Basil Wyatt. Picture: Marc West



Women urged to pick up their trowels and help build houses

Gill Oliver



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DEMAND: More female builders sought as workshop project fails to attract apprentices

MORE women must be lured into the building trade if the county is to meet demand for housing, say experts.

Following plans to build 2,000 new homes in a garden village off the A40 to the north of Eynsham by 2031, more bricklayers, plasterers and other builders will be needed.

But training bodies say they are struggling to attract enough apprentices, with the problem particularly bad when it comes to young women, who are seen as a source of untapped potential.

A recent project, Girls Allowed, encouraged women to sign up for half-day workshops to try their hand at bricklaying and carpentry. But although there was an in-

crease in numbers enquiring about and starting the courses, which ran all through last year, it did not seem to tempt girls into signing up for construction apprenticeships.

Lyndsey Fitzpatrick, of ACE Training, which runs the Girls Allowed scheme on behalf of Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, said: "The point of the project was to draw attention to the fact that females are so under-represented in the sector and while we can see a definite increase in

the number of females enquiring about and starting courses, we have yet to get a girl on to an apprenticeship."

Women make up just 11 per cent of the UK's total construction workforce. Of those, just one per cent work on site, with the majority admin or office-based.

And the Office for National Statistics says that the number of women working as roofers, bricklayers and glaziers is so low it is unmeasurable.

Former building site manager Kate Wyatt believes more must be done to attract women into the trade.

Ms Wyatt, who studied architecture at university, has also worked as a bid and project manager for a number of large construction companies, including Wates.

She is now business development manager at Oxford-based Basil Wyatt & Sons, which was set up by her grandfather 60 years ago.

She said: "There's nothing more exciting than working on site and seeing a building come out of the ground before your eyes.

"The people, projects and challenges that come with the industry are so diverse; no two days are the same.

"I would love to see more women enter the industry - it's more than muddy boots, although I like that part and can offer such a range of exciting and varied career paths."

She added: "There aren't a huge number of female role models of women working on site and that's partly down to how the construction industry is portrayed in schools and universities.

"We need to change perceptions. "There are many different roles from contractors and engineers to architects, interior designers and bid writers."

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New eaterie offers healthy choice at science park



OPENING: Piers Scrimshaw-Wright and catering manager Julian Such

BRAIN food is creating a buzz at the Oxford Science Park, following the opening of a new sandwich bar for the 70 firms on site.

The Deli, in the Sadler Building, will serve soups, salads, smoothies and paninis.

The food outlet is run by the park's catering manager Julian Such and head chef Miles Burton.

Science and technology hub Oxford Science Park is home to 2,500 scientists, researchers and

other workers. It already includes a brasserie and bar in its Sadler Building and a café in The Magdalen Centre.

Oxford Science Park managing director Piers Scrimshaw-Wright said: "The Sadler Deli is an extension of the need to provide our occupiers with amenities which contribute to their employees' health and wellness.

"The new Deli is the vision of our catering manager, who responded to

the findings from our recent catering survey."

He added: "We are able to provide quick and healthy food to the busy working community."

Mr Such said: "Feedback from our customers has been very positive and already we have seen a 25 per cent increase in footfall.

"Carrot and ginger energiser juice, smoked-ham and cheese panini, and mozzarella, sundried tomato and pesto panini are our best sellers."