



# LET'S TALK SPRINGS

Cabinet Maker paid a visit to manufacturer of spring interiors for the Furniture Seating industry, Wade Spring, to find out more about this long established and well respected company.



<b>Wade Spring</b>
<b>Founded:</b> 1921
<b>Current Turnover:</b> £6.3m p.a.
<b>Location:</b> 50,000sq ft site in Long Eaton, Nottingham
<b>Volumes Per Week:</b> 500,000+ Zig Zag/Superloop/ Medium Loops 1,200 Traditional/Mesh Units 3,000 Fishmouth/Bracewire
<b>Wire Used:</b> 4,000 tonnes p.a.

It's always heartening to hear a real life success story of a UK based business that has not only lasted the distance, but actually expanded and significantly grown. So when this editor was invited to visit UK spring interior manufacturer of some 95 years, Wade Spring, I jumped at the chance.

Founded in the 1920s as part of the Wade Spring and Upholstery Company by Frisby Wade - Grandfather of the current company chairman, Charles Wade - Wade Spring quickly established its own identity as a manufacturer of Traditional Mesh Top Units.

In 1977 the company acquired its first zig zag machine - from which fishmouth and bracewire units became a natural progression - helping the business' continual growth to become the leading manufacturer of furniture springs in the UK. Managing Director, Chris Woodcock believes quality, reliability and service is the basis of the Wade Spring success story.

But it's not product alone which has helped the company achieve this feat, as Sales Manager Steve Hollins explained during a tour of the 50,000 square foot site in Long Eaton. "When required, we get involved in the early stages with our customers, and

can be integral to the design process from the start." he explained. "If they are looking to launch a new model, they come to us. We work closely with them to ensure that it is feasible and supply the right components for what they want to achieve."

Little wonder perhaps that Wade Spring is the component supplier of choice to most of the biggest industry names. "That's true," admitted Steve, "but whilst we firmly believe that no company is too big, equally, no company or sole trader is too small, and many of Wade's customers - some of which are family businesses - started with one, two or three mesh units or a few zig zags. We pride ourselves on doing everything we can to ensure all customers get what they want, when they want it" This



Traditional Mesh Top Unit

philosophy is clearly working, as today Wade Spring employs 90 members of staff and annual turnover is £6.3m.

Steve explained: "In terms of what is available to upholstery manufacturers, there are three established spring product groups used in the UK: Traditional Mesh Top units, Zig Zags and Superloops, and Fishmouth/Bracewire units."

#### Traditional Mesh Top Units

The superior spring option is still very popular, and Wade are manufacturing around 1,200 of these units per week, each to the customer's individual specification.

We have a team of technicians who work with customers to achieve the 'sit' they require. There are more than 10,000 specifications on the Wade system, and new designs are being generated every day. This springing option is also popular in the rail industry and Wade Spring are currently half way through a 9,600 unit contract for the London underground network.

#### Zig zags, Superloops and Medium Loops

Zig Zags and Superloops are now the most popular spring products in the UK, Wade is currently producing more than a 500,000 springs per week from 14 machines. Standard sizes are kept in stock, so if customers have emergency requirements



Fishmouth Unit



Zig Zag Production

then next day delivery - or sometimes even same day delivery - is an option. A minimum of 300,000 springs of varying lengths and gauges are kept in stock at any time.

#### Fishmouth and Bracewire Units

Fishmouth and Bracewire units are a derivation of Zig Zags, with fishmouths allowing for the sprung edge favoured by many manufacturers. These are bespoke products and, as with the traditional mesh top units, Wade Spring are able to advise customers on good practice to get maximum value. Approximately 3,000 Fishmouth and Bracewire units are manufactured every week - another product which is becoming increasingly popular.

#### Wire

Whilst it may seem unglamorous, quality springs are absolutely crucial in upholstery manufacture, and Wade are conscious of this. As Steve explained "Springs are, of course, the Wade business, the specialty of the company and all its employees. There are no distractions with other products. Our springs are 'home grown' so the quality, service and reliability we see as our constant goal is totally within our control."

In fact, the company generally keeps a minimum of 500 tonnes of wire and steel raw material product in stock at any time, and this is sourced only from established and trusted suppliers. That's not to discount new suppliers, but to be considered for Wade Spring, a previously unused product must go through rigorous testing before it is let loose on production.

Speaking of testing, I was fortunate enough to get a glimpse of the test facility, which opened early in 2015 and which was developed to test the wire, both in its 'raw' state pre-production, and to sample test springs to ensure they are fit for purpose - this is also a secondary test on the wire. In addition, and following months of testing, both in-house and at FIRA, the test facility features a machine that simulates the kind of rigorous testing that customers undertake on their upholstered products.

In other recent developments, Wade



Wire Stocks

Spring was presented with the FIRA Gold Certification at Westminster Hall after a range of the most popular Zig Zags passed a 200,000 severe contract cycle test, complying with BS:EN 16139:2013. The company expects that this will be the industry standard going forward, and it goes to show that a company with such a long heritage - many employees have been in place for more than 25 year - can still lead the way in the modern market.

While I was visiting, I was also fortunate enough to be given a sneak preview of the major rebrand which has subsequently been unveiled, alongside the launch of a new website to reflect the changing market.

A significant amount of time and effort went into the new look brand and online presence after the company decided the time was right to return to a traditional 'Wade' blue', which has been used throughout the firm's 95-year history. Adding a more 'modern and quality feel', a bright turquoise was utilised for the Wade 'W' icon, which is used extensively throughout the branding. Though this 'W' alludes to the company's biggest selling Zig Zag Spring, the logo is overall less product specific, outlining Wade's confidence in providing all furniture spring requirements.

I left the Long Eaton site feeling positive after a morning finding out how Wade Spring is moving with the times in order to provide a modern, quality driven approach for its customers. In fact, you could say, I walked away with something of a spring in my step. 