

# MRO

October 2020

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# WORLD AERO

*Cleared for take off*

**W**orld Aero is an aircraft wheel and brake MRO based in West Sussex, England, close to London Gatwick airport. Founded in 1999, the company spent its formative years providing a range of technical services to support commercial aviation before settling into component MRO in 2008.

World Aero quickly established itself as the preferred wheel and brake MRO vendor for the world-renowned aircraft spares dealers based locally in West Sussex, as well as smaller airlines operating at London Gatwick. Considerable expansion came just a few years later, as the company geared up its capacity to meet the volumes required by a major low-cost carrier, overhauling in excess of 100 units a week during the peak season. More recently, World Aero have extended the capability list to include more types, whilst being mindful to ensure service levels are maintained across the wider range. Frequently supported aircraft types range in size from Learjet 45 to Boeing 747-8, with a constantly varied list of wheels and brakes being processed at any one time.

The company are EASA Part-145 approved and are authorised by the Federal Aviation Administration and Transport Canada to offer triple EASA/FAA/TCCA release where possible on its repairs.



Phil Randell, World Aero CEO



Repairs are conducted on several types including A320 brakes.  
All photos: World Aero

In line with many successful aviation companies in West Sussex, World Aero has remained privately owned throughout its journey of expansion. "Retaining control and leading with a hands-on attitude has enabled us to stay dynamic as the company has grown", says World Aero's owner and CEO Phil Randell. Never more has this been so important now during 2020, where the sudden impact of COVID-19 has been managed head-on, and for now at least, the company retains its strong market position. Conservative growth plans, modest overheads and extremely low gearing have enabled this. "Without a complex structure of shareholders and investors with differing needs and demands, there really are only two parties that need to be kept happy, and one of them is the customer" adds Randell with a smile.

Randell's background is total aviation. From his first flying lesson aged eleven, he later went onto study aircraft and powerplant during a lengthy apprenticeship with the UK Ministry of Defence. Later,

as a licensed aircraft engineer, he worked with airliners and business aircraft before moving on to a maintenance management role. It was at this point Randell gained a passion for the commercial side of aircraft maintenance. "I saw a lot of opportunity for improvement in the efficiency and performance of the MRO business, especially component maintenance, which always seemed so remote from operations. I was frustrated by the lack of awareness of what was needed from an airline operation perspective, and felt there was a need for better integration in order to tap into the knowledge of the component MRO, to really enhance the reliability and efficiency of the aircraft".

Randell's hands-on experience and knowledge is prevalent throughout the entire process at World Aero. "Great emphasis is placed on product knowledge, and my team like to demonstrate this first-hand to our customers by suggestion of enhancements to their repairs, perhaps by way of Service Bulletins, alternate build configu-

rations and many other improvements learned from our dedication to wheels and brakes. There will always be customers who just want their units to be cheap, fast and with a Form One, but I get enormous satisfaction from building lasting relationships with customers who see my long-term vision. That's success for me". The same goes for World Aero's staff, with a considerable number of the team having been employed from the start and themselves grown with the company. "I've got a truly exceptional team and the COVID situation has proved even further their dedication and determination to succeed. I'm immensely proud of them".

As well as enjoying single ownership, World Aero also remains a truly independent MRO, free from the control of any one particular wheel and brake equipment manufacturer or OEM. "We have always put our customers first and, without the influence of a powerful manufacturer partner, we can act in the best interests of the end-user. We see a lot of frustration from

operators who feel forced to use a particular MRO because that MRO is partnered with the equipment manufacturer. Not surprisingly, out-of-contract costs soon escalate, and it becomes apparent that the MRO is acting in the best interests of their partner and not the operator. It happens a lot and World Aero are poised to pick up, take over and develop a long-term, trustworthy relationship with the operator. And of course, most operators have a mixed fleet so diversity and flexibility are key. Nonetheless, we do have close ties with most manufacturers who respect the part we play in the supply chain; its sometimes not efficient for them to service the smaller customers".

World Aero's expansion plans involve enhancement of the existing facility to improve efficiencies rather than upsizing. "Floor space and extra buildings cost money when they're under-utilised, which is evident worldwide now during the pandemic" says Randell. "By being smart we can realise a lot more capacity

before we need to think about adding additional space. That was our strategy pre-COVID, and despite no visible end to the pandemic, we're sticking to our plan to ensure we're ready to build again". The company occupies a large, modern modular industrial unit in semi-rural West Sussex, which benefits from excellent transport links without the high costs of more central facilities. Rather than expand into other components, the company remains focused on wheels and brakes. "There are some strong wheel and brake MRO vendors in the market, so despite healthy competition, each vendor has a niche which appeals to a certain type of customer" summarises Randell.

It seems World Aero have certainly found their niche and the strategy is working well, despite unprecedented times. Strong foundations, support from a great team and the foresight to plan for every eventuality are crucial to ensure the future success of the business.

