

F.H. Brundle partners with Apex Solutions to optimise supply chain operations





Apex storage solutions optimises distribution centre productivity



To accommodate large mesh fencing panels, double deep bays were specified.



Upright and rack end protection was also installed.

F. H. Brundle is the UK's largest stockist of handrailing components, wrought iron components, welded mesh and expanded and perforated metal available from stock for immediate delivery. The firm, a family business, was established in 1889 by Frederick Henry Brundle and is currently managed by Michael Brundle (fifth generation).

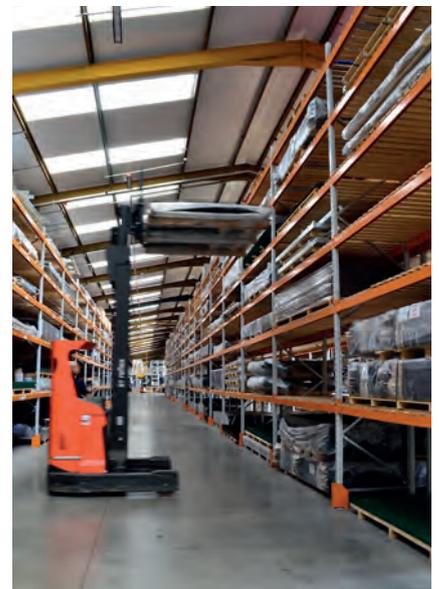
The company has maintained a policy of careful product selection and diversification, allowing it to proudly claim to be leading wholesale suppliers in their product ranges. F. H. Brundle has 7 branches nationwide, providing over 500,000 sq ft of warehouse space, supplying customers with over 8,000 product lines. The business has recently established a central distribution centre, located in Burton-on Trent.

The business has always delivered on its own vehicles, operating a fleet consisting of over 60 lorries and vans, supplemented with an external parcel carrier, allowing F. H. Brundle to maintain complete control on delivering anything; from the smallest package, to their largest steel section.

The Brief

Up until 2017, F. H. Brundle had successfully managed its business out of a UK-wide network of self supporting regional branches, with each stocking a significant range of products.

Whilst each location catered well for their local customers, where certain key products could be made readily available, the branches were carrying too much stock. Additionally, as new products were made available to the network, each location would be required to hold quantities of new stock, whether there was a requirement for those products or not. With the company's promise to ensure that any customer should be able to receive the products they wanted, in the quantities required and to an agreed time frame, the F. H. Brundle supply chain was becoming unwieldy and costly.



To release the pressure of over-stocking throughout the network, it was decided to locate a central distribution centre to hold all of F. H. Brundle's 8000+ product lines. The result being a central distribution centre with the capability to re-supply the network's 7 branches, daily with stock depending on their requirements. This would enable the branches, which range in size, from 45,000-90,000 sq ft, to carry much less stock, thereby creating supply chain and fulfilment efficiencies, whilst reducing cost.

A central 15 acre site was found in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire. Formerly owned by steel fabricators, Condor; the 200,000 sq ft facility was ideal, providing more than sufficient storage capacity for the company's extensive product lines. The site was purchased and underwent a complete fit out programme, including a new floor. Long term racking partners, Apex, were invited to survey the site and present a solution. Apex had provided each of F. H. Brundle's branches with racking for product storage, for over 20 years, so were well placed to understand the implications of the new distribution centre and the impact on the supply chain.

For planning purposes, the warehouse was divided into areas based on product type. As products ranged from small components, to irregular large heavy steel items, the racking solution needed to be configured to accommodate a wide selection of stock types, in varying sizes. The racking also had to take into account the logistical flow of the warehouse, which was to be based on a horseshoe layout, incorporating a goods-in arena, a central pick location and a large area for goods-out; accommodating multiple stock types.



Timber decking was installed throughout the racking to store a variety of different pallet sizes.

The Solution

The Apex racking solution was based on a wide-aisle design, providing 571 bays of pallet racking, together with a two-tier structure, providing bin storage for smaller products. The pallet racking, incorporating adjustable beams and maximising the full height of the eaves, was arranged to provide storage for the various product types in 9 assorted categories, with runs providing differing bay dimensions depending on the category.

For example, for 'Fencing' as a product type, which includes a mix of steel fencing; from high security mesh panel systems, palisade fencing, bow top railing systems, to chain link fencing, wire netting and stock

Benefits to F. H. Brundle

- Designing a system that complemented the nature of the product types, the pick operation and the need to maximise a clear-floor working environment.
- Increase warehouse efficiencies to reduce operational costs.

fencing, Apex provided 40 bays with 6 beam profiles; ranging from 1,350mm to 6,300mm to accommodate various fence panel dimensions.

In another example, for products in the 'Welded Mesh' category, 56 bays were provided, with 7 beam profiles, ranging from 1,050mm to 5,850mm.

Following the racking and two-tier structure installation, products from branches were centralised in the distribution centre, along with new product types. The products are fully stocked and readily available for clientele.

Beams were painted different colours, to give fork lift drivers a clear visual indication of the beam load capacity.

