

# the Competent Person

Number 1 2009



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# Sweet taste of success o

*Roger Ryan meets a NAPIT member from the Wirral specialising in industrial and commercial work*



Outside the cold stung like a jab in the ribs. His voice was hoarse. He could hardly speak a word. Electrical contractor and NAPIT member Simon Harding had spent the previous day on a bridge in the face of a wintry blast.

Working 30 feet up, he had been leading a team to fix in place a control panel at the Tate & Lyle plant in Birkenhead, by the banks of the Mersey. Sitting in his warm office, he was apologising for the roughness of his vocal chords: "We had no protection up there. It was hard work.

## Merseyside humour

"There was a bit of a push on the job. Automation is being introduced at the Tate & Lyle site. As part of this we designed and built an automative panel and had spent the day just getting it in place. The weather was at its worst, no snow but cold." The job at Tate and Lyle involved installing electric motors, new remote stop-start switches, supplies, tray work and cable runs up to 500 metres. Major changes were taking place on the storage site where surprisingly for a major sugar refiner there's nothing sweeter to be found than Merseyside humour. Down by the docks, Everton fan Simon and his team were busy ensuring that the electrical infrastructure would be ready for the big kick-off.

Simon runs Eurotech Electrical Services based at Prenton in Birkenhead, on the Wirral, specialists in industrial and commercial work. They've been NAPIT members for the best part of two years.

"Ninety five per cent is industrial and commercial. We also do domestic. We are busy at the moment. I haven't had a weekend off in 15. Sitting here with you is making a welcome change," he assured me.



Champion Spark Plugs, North West Water and a major hotel chain are among the names to have featured on Simon's client list.

"We've been fortunate," he added. "We've had a good few blue chip companies to work for."

On the Tate & Lyle job, Eurotech was also employing a full-time electrician, Paul Stott, and a sub-contractor, Marcus Levick. "The lads working for me are brilliant. On this job they've given 110 per cent. I couldn't fault them for their dedication." Simon is also looking to take on a new apprentice from 12 Quays College on the Wirral.

He began his career as an apprentice at Vauxhall Motors in Ellesmere Port. For 18 years he was employed as a maintenance electrician at the car plant. A change of direction in 1998 led him to opt for the world of self-employment and his own business.

"I knew a manager at Champion Spark Plugs," he recalls. "They couldn't get hold of someone to do a job. So I took it on. It really was the spark that started it all."

### Centre:

*Merseyside trio: Paul Stott, Simon Harding and Marcus Fraser.*

### Right:

*Simon and the sign of success.*

### Opposite right:

*Marcus at work in the control room.*





# Simon Tate & Lyle job



*Tate & Lyle project engineer Stewart Wakefield said: "Eurotech, and in particular Simon Harding, display a professional and expert approach to what is a very specialist area of work. He is approachable and accommodating at all times and the standard of work is always of exceptional quality, delivered on schedule. An excellent service is backed up by an excellent knowledge base – a credit to the electrical industry."*

courses have been of much benefit: "Qualifications are important. My lads all have the City & Guilds 2400. It's crucial when it comes to the job."

Simon has also completed a certificated course for working in hazardous environments.

Value for money persuaded Simon to join NAPIT: "I like their professional approach. I was very impressed with John Andrews and what he had to say. I am in good company being part of NAPIT. Dave Tinsley is a member of NAPIT too. I get on well with my field officer Lester Bell. Very approachable – always there for advice. I like that fact NAPIT always has someone available to talk on the phone. Membership of Trustmark is important to me too. The logo is always associated with good workmanship."

Simon believes that Part P has made a difference and is leading to rising standards in the industry. "If your workmanship is good you should never be out of a job," he added.

## Tanning studio

On the few occasions when he is not at work, Simon likes a game of golf and a visit to Goodison Park, the home of Everton FC. He is married to Lindy and has seven children. There is clearly never a dull moment in the Harding household.

A refurbishment at a riding school is in the pipeline for the Eurotech lads and maybe a spot of domestic work at a barn conversion. But one job they are really looking forward too is the outfitting of a hairdressers. There's a tanning studio involved. A warm diversion in the middle of the winter.

Simon ranks personal service as the key to success in business. He points out that some industrial and commercial firms grow large and then fail to remember the needs of their customers. "They all seem to employ 20 or 30 and continuity goes out the window. The customer never knows who is going to turn up from one day to the next. Customer service is my driving force."

## College lecturer

On the Wirral, 95 per cent of work available to electricians is in the domestic sector. By dedicating Eurotech to the commercial and industrial world, Simon has found a niche and his business has expanded. Most work comes his way via recommendation.

Studying and improving his knowledge of the job is important to Simon. He left Vauxhall with an HNC on the industrial side. Attending 12 Quays College has been a revelation. College lecturer Dave Tinsley has become something of a mentor to Simon. "I consult him on many things," he explains. "He's been fantastically supportive – a great help."

City & Guilds 2391 Inspection and Testing and the City & Guilds 2400 Design, Erection and Verification